

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 1 of 30



- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Groton Ford Ad
- 2- Dessert Theater held Sunday
- 2- Help Wanted at Groton Care & Rehab
- 2- Book Fair Ad
- 3- Glimpse from Greenfield
- 5- Weekly Vikings Roundup
- 6- GT Robotics Competes at State VEX Robotics Tournament in Harrisburg
- 7- Wolves Fall in Quarterfinal Round of Conference Tournament
- 8- Today in Weather History
- 9- Today's Forecast
- 10- Yesterday's Weather
- 10- Today's Weather Info
- 10- National Weather Map
- 11- Daily Devotional
- 12- 2018 Community Events
- 13- News from the Associated Press



Put our experienced team to work for you!

GROTON
Ford

GROTONFORD.COM 605-397-2311

Tuesday
Region 1A Boys Basketball
Groton Area at Tiospa Zina

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**

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 2 of 30



DI hold Dessert Theater

The Destination Imagination dessert theater was held Sunday afternoon in the Groton Area Elementary School commons. Each of the six teams made their first public presentation to the crowd on hand.

Scholastic Book Fairs®

PAWS for BOOKS

BOOK FAIR

COME. STAY. READ. A GREAT TALE!

2018

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

Maintenance Supervisor Wanted:

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

Day Shift C.N.A. Wanted

Sign-on Bonus

☆☆☆ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ☆☆☆

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

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



1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton



Glimpse From Greenfield

Brock Greenfield
State Senator
District 2

Last Friday marked the ever-important "crossover day" on which all Senate Bills had to be passed out of, or killed by, the Senate. Likewise with House Bills on the House side. This is a key date on the calendar, as it signals the beginning of the home stretch of the main run of session. From here on out, committees will work diligently to deliberate on bills from the other chamber, and all bills will ultimately

be decided on in some fashion within less than a week of the time you read this article.

On the Senate floor, we had been holding competing bills dealing with microbreweries, hoping to strike a compromise between the two sides. I mention this right out of the gate because the issue(s) had lingered for a while, and a lot of people had expressed interest in the broader topic. I am happy to report that a compromise agreement was reached, and the legislation met with unanimous support as it passed over to the House. As it stands, microbreweries will be able to increase their production and will be able to engage in self-distribution. There are a lot more intricacies to the bill, but those are two of the biggest issues that had to be agreed upon.

SB 81 revises the existing "building South Dakota" program that has benefitted a number of communities by providing government grants for housing projects. A few years back, I was asked to write a letter of support for a project in Doland, as my childhood hometown was seeking to provide a nice, modern housing opportunity for people in or new to the community. The rewrite of the program will focus the efforts more on housing and career and tech education where students hone their construction skills and will cut out other competing interests. With revenues lagging a bit in these past few years, building South Dakota has had to share limited resources with other budgetary priorities. This bill will make building SD the priority going forward, so long as dollars remain available.

In Judiciary Committee a couple weeks ago, I had been particularly involved in helping to amend SB 93, which revises our statute regarding intentionally exposing individuals to communicable venereal diseases. The bill would increase the penalty from a Class 2 to a Class 1 misdemeanor and would subject the person who knowingly infects others to civil penalties, as well as criminal sanctions. In its original form, there were many issues with the bill, and it was opposed by the Governor's office. At several times throughout the discussion on the bill, it appeared it might fail. However, we were able to refine the language in the bill through a series of amendments I offered, and the bill emerged from committee 6-1. On the floor last week, the bill picked up even more steam, as even the "no" vote in committee voted for it, and it passed 33-0.

I believe I discussed SB 155 a couple weeks ago. The bill seeks to allow judges to require certain county prisoners to compensate the county for the costs associated with transportation to and from jail and/or court and/or medical appointments in neighboring communities. This was another bill that was scrutinized throughout the committee hearing, and it passed out 5-2. However, after taking heed at some of the discussion in committee, the prime sponsor, Senator Maher, worked on an amendment that resulted in the bill passing the Senate unanimously last week. Again, if this bill passes, it will not mean that every prisoner is required to pay restitution for travel, but it does allow that as an option for people of means, and it may relieve counties of a portion of the fiscal burdens they are currently faced with.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 4 of 30

Unfortunately, SB 213 failed to meet with the support of the Senate. This bill sought to revise provisions of the funding formula rewrite of 2016. Under the new (2016) law, K-12 schools are required to meet certain benchmarks relative to teacher salaries. However, there is no provision for "forgiveness" if the state does not provide the necessary dollars in a given year to allow the schools to meet said benchmarks. SB 213 attempted to stipulate that if the legislature failed to make the necessary appropriations to allow schools to meet the requirements of the 2016 law, the schools would not be required to meet the accountabilities set forth in that law. This is simple common sense, but the opposition rose up from some of the biggest supporters of the current law, and they managed to kill the bill. As I have said before, in spite of the tax increase to provide additional monies for our schools, the education funding formula was crafted to force schools to consolidate. That we were not able to pass SB 213 should serve as a chilling reminder of that reality. The bill failed 13-22.

Finally, I had two bills that I helped to clear their next hurdles. Throughout session, I have been meeting with interested parties to discuss providing more regulation of grain moisture meters. Under a 1986 law, the Department of Ag "may" test such devices. However, that permissive legislation does not place any compulsion on anybody to do so. Last fall, when I was asked about testing of grain moisture meters, I replied that I was sure the Division of Weights and Measures under the Department of Public Safety (DPS) was required to do such testing. They test virtually everything imaginable, from scales at grocery stores and elevators to gasoline pumps. However, they were not even given the authority to check moisture meters for accuracy and compliance with federal law requiring updates & calibrations to be done twice a year. I might note that it appears neither the federal government nor the state government has any mechanism in place to ensure compliance. SB 166 has been rewritten to try to address this concern. As it currently stipulates, the language would be repealed from the Department of Ag's chapter in the code, and placed under DPS where it seemingly belongs. Weights and Measures, then would require each grain buying facility to provide sworn affidavits on an annual basis that they have complied with federal law regarding updating their equipment. Subsequently, if good cause is shown by grain sellers for Weights & Measures to conduct inspections, they would be given that authority. SB 166 passed the Senate 35-0. HB 1269 would require headlights and taillights to be utilized in motor vehicles from sunset to sunrise. This has been brought up to me a few times by concerned constituents. Although many vehicles have automatic lights, not all do. If this bill passes, it would change current law from requiring headlights and taillights from 30 minutes after sunset until 30 minutes before sunrise, thus resulting in people having to utilize their lights an extra hour each day. This is a safety concern for some, and it has been raised three or four times over the past six or seven sessions. Representative Tulson is the House prime sponsor, and he shepherded the bill through the House on a fairly close vote. Last Friday, he and I testified in front of Senate Transportation, and it passed out of there 4-0 with three members excused as they were pitching other bills in different committees. It remains a difficult slog to get it through the Senate, but this is as close as the issue has been to passing out of all the efforts to address it.

We remain busy working through budgetary concerns. Most notably—and in addition to the main priorities of providing more dollars for nursing homes, adjustment training centers, mental health institutions, state employees, and education—we are working to secure funding for a new State Veterans' Cemetery and for a new precision ag facility on the SDSU campus. I have been involved in multiple discussions on these matters, and I remain optimistic that we will be able to meet the challenges of finding ways to fund all these priorities at or above the levels recommended in the Governor's Budget Address. Stay tuned for more discussion on those fronts as the budgetary picture becomes clearer.

With that, I will sign off. Have a great week, and may God continue to bless you and yours!

Brock

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 5 of 30

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

Free agency begins March 14th, and the Minnesota Vikings will have plenty of decisions to make. There are 14 players from 2017 that are scheduled to hit free agency, with half of them being on the offensive side of the ball. The Vikings rarely make a big splash in free agency, and this year will likely be no different. However, there are certainly some holes in the Vikings roster, and bringing in a couple free agents could bring this team from an NFC contender to a Super Bowl winner.

The biggest question mark heading into this offseason centers around the quarterback position. The Vikings will have three quarterbacks who will be free agents – Sam Bradford, Teddy Bridgewater and Case Keenum – and the team will have to decide if they want to bring one back to lead the team or if they should bring someone in from outside the organization.

Case Keenum is 30-years old and is coming off the best season of his career. He was supposed to be a backup last year but ended up playing most of the season and helped the team reach the NFC Championship game. He played well, but it's hard to trust that he will continue playing at such a high level. Sportrac believes Keenum's market value will be around \$21 million per year, so if the Vikings resign him it will be clear they believe he can be the team's starting QB for the foreseeable future.

Sam Bradford started for the Vikings in 2016 and would've been the starter in 2017 if he hadn't gotten hurt. Bradford can throw the ball exceptionally well, but his injury history is cause for concern. He is 30-years old and has played eight seasons in the NFL, but he has only played all 16 games twice in his career.

Teddy Bridgewater is the biggest wildcard of the bunch. He was looking like the Vikings' franchise quarterback before a freak injury occurred in practice right before the 2016 season started. Teddy has been out of football for nearly two seasons, and there is no guarantee he will ever be fully healthy again. He is the youngest of the trio at 25-years old, so he presumably has the biggest upside. If the Vikings resign him, it'll be because they know he is healthy enough to resume his career.

If the Vikings elect to bring in a free agent quarterback, there are a few on the market that make sense. The biggest name floating around is 29-year old Kirk Cousins, who has averaged 4,392 yards, 27 touchdowns and 12 interceptions over the past three seasons. Cousins will command a huge contract – likely close to \$30 million a season – so the Vikings will have to be confident he can propel the team to new heights if they decide to sign him.

Other options at quarterback are:

Drew Brees, who will probably resign with New Orleans but would clearly be the best quarterback the Vikings could get. Brees is 39-years old, so he would only be a temporary fix, but he is one of the best quarterbacks in the NFL.

Josh McCown, who is 38-years old, but is coming off a good season with the New York Jets and would hopefully provide the Vikings with a year or two of play similar to what Keenum provided last season.

A.J. McCarron, who is only 27-years old, and is a relative unknown because he's been a backup in Cincinnati since being drafted in the fifth round of the 2014 draft.

If I had to put money on it, I would say the Vikings bring back Bridgewater along with a veteran quarterback who will be the backup but could start if Bridgewater gets injured again.

The Vikings also have a few more offensive players who will be hitting free agency. Running back Jerick McKinnon played a vital role for the Vikings in 2017 – and the Vikings would love to bring him back if possible – but with Dalvin Cook coming back, it's likely McKinnon leaves for another team that will give him a more prominent role. Joe Berger has been an important offensive lineman for the last few seasons, since he is able to play both guard spots and center, but he is 35-years old. If the Vikings bring him back it will only be for a year or two. Michael Floyd signed a one-year contract last offseason, but with the emergence of Stefon Diggs and Adam Thielen at wide receiver, Floyd will likely leave for another team that will give him a chance to start. The only other free agent on the Vikings offense is Bishop Sankey at running back, who will likely be let go since the Vikings could easily find a younger, cheaper option in the draft.

Next week, we will be looking at the Vikings defense and which players' contracts are up. If you have any questions or comments, reach out to me on Facebook ([facebook.com/SkolJWright](https://www.facebook.com/SkolJWright)) or on Twitter (@SkolJWright). Skol!

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 6 of 30

GT Robotics Competes at State VEX Robotics Tournament in Harrisburg

Thirty teams from 12 schools competed in South Dakota's 2018 VEX Robotics State Tournament in Harrisburg Feb. 24. Six teams from Mitchell and Chamberlain did not attend because of the weather. In attendance were teams from Box Elder, Britton, Canton, Eureka, Groton, Harrisburg, Lead-Deadwood, Menno, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Spearfish and Vermillion.

Only 16 of the 30 teams made it to the elimination rounds, and a quarter of them were from GT Robotics! Although GT robotists did not bring home any trophies, they can hold their heads high with that showing.

The day started kind of tough for Groton robotists. Two robots were not even quite built yet when Groton teams arrived in Harrisburg at 8 a.m. Those two teams had had to rebuild after previous tournaments and between sickness, basketball, band and usual challenges of redesigning a new robot, they were not done. Then four teams lost their first match. However, Galaxy won their first match and stayed undefeated until their last match of the qualifying rounds. G.A.T. Wrenches won their next four matches and then lost their last qualifying match.

Galaxy placed third in the skills competition at the state tournament, and also third in the state for the entire year.

Rankings of GT Robotics Teams at the end of qualifying rounds for each tournament.

Tournament		Groton	Mitchell	Harrisburg	Rapid City	Groton	Chamberlain	State
Teams in Tourney		15	13	22	22	22	18	30
9050A	G-Force	10	12	8	19	7	1	22
9050B	Gear Heads	10	11	17	20	12	16	26
9050C	G.A.T. Wenches	7	1	3	11	4	7	8
9050D	Geek Squad	5	10	20	3	16	NA	28
9050E	Galaxy	4	6	16	18	21	3	7

How far did GT Robotics teams get in elimination rounds? (think sports playoffs)

Tournament		Groton	Mitchell	Harrisburg	Rapid City	Groton	Chamberlain	State
9050A	G-Force	Final	Semi	Final	Final	Semi	Semi	Semi
9050B	Gear Heads	<u>Qtr</u>		<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>
9050C	G.A.T. Wenches	Semi	Champion	Final	Final	Semi	Semi	<u>Qtr</u>
9050D	Geek Squad		Semi	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	Semi		
9050E	Galaxy		Semi			<u>Qtr</u>	Champion	Semi

The next and final competition of the year for GT Robotics is the U.S. Open in Council Bluffs, Iowa April 5-7. Teams will be busy until then improving their robots and working on strategies. They also have several additional fundraisers scheduled for March, including a Tour of Tables luncheon Saturday March 24 at SEAS Catholic Church, selling raffle tickets for a greenhouse built by Groton Area technical education students and having a booth at the Parent Action Committee (PAC) Carnival April 13. Watch for more news on these fundraisers to learn how you can help support GT Robotics. Participating students, their parents and volunteer coach Jim Lane are very grateful for the great community support of this program.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 7 of 30

Wolves Fall in Quarterfinal Round of Conference Tournament

Sioux Falls S.D. – Northern State University Women’s basketball team lost 57-44 in the second round of the NSIC/Sanford Health Basketball Tournament. With the loss the Wolves drop to 25-5.

After one quarter of play the Wolves had a four point advantage, 17-13. Winona State won the remaining quarters, the Wolves only scored five points in the quarter and trailed heading into the second half. The Wolves shot 43.4 in the first half but trailed by 11 heading into the intermission. The Wolves brought the Warrior lead to nine early in the third quarter but couldn’t get it any closer in the game as NSU fell Sunday afternoon.

Northern State shot 34.0 percent from the field, had 32 points in the paint, and five bench points. Defensively, the Wolves gave up 44.0 percent from the field, 40.0 percent from the 3-point line, and had 27 points off NSU turnovers. The Wolves out-rebounded the Warriors 39-24, had 11 second chance points off of 14 offensive rebounds, and had 8 points off of 15 Winona State turnovers.

Miranda Ristau led the Wolves with a double-double with 23 points and 10 rebounds. She also added one assist, and two steals. Jill Conrad had seven points, five rebounds, and three assists. Brianna Kusler had four points, five rebounds, and three assists. Alexis Tappe added three points, four rebounds, and two assists. The final starter for the Wolves was Jessi Marti and she added two points, two rebounds, and one steal.

Off the bench, Haley Froelich had three points, three rebounds, one assist, and one steal. Brynn Flakus had the final two points in the box score for the Wolves with four rebounds, two assists, and one block. Gabby Laimer had one assist off the bench for the Wolves. Anika Fredrick and Sara Tvedt had two and one rebounds respectively.

The NCAA Women’s Basketball Selection Show is set to air on NCAA.com at 9 p.m. (CT) on Sunday, March 4. The NCAA Elite 8 will take place on March 19-21-23 at the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 8 of 30

Today in Weather History

February 26, 1995: Heavy snow fell on the 26th and the 27th in western and central South Dakota near the northern border of the state. McLaughlin received 14 inches, Eureka 12 inches, and McIntosh 11 inches. Snowfall amounts dropped off to two to four inches about 20 miles south of the northern border.

February 26, 1998: A strong area of low pressure moved across central and northeast South Dakota from the morning of the 26th to the morning of the 27th. As the low moved northeast, cold north winds of 25 to 35 mph gusting to 45 mph caused widespread rain to change over to snow. Many roads became icy and poor visibilities in snow and blowing snow and low wind chills developed. Four to 8 inches of snow fell across the counties bordering the Missouri river and in far western McPherson and far western Edmunds counties. Many area schools were dismissed early or canceled. Some residents, especially West River, lost power during the storm. Many McIntosh residents were without power for over 24 hours. Numerous activities and sports events were canceled. There were also some car accidents which did not result in injury. A semi rolled onto its side northwest of Gettysburg on the 26th. Ranchers also experienced some calving problems as a result of the winter storm. Some snowfall amounts included, 4 inches at Selby, Herreid, and Mobridge, 5 inches at Isabel, 6 inches at Gettysburg, 7 inches about 11 miles east of Hosmer, and 8 inches at McIntosh. Some large drifts also developed, especially West River, as a result of the heavy snow and strong winds.

February 26, 2009: A vigorous, but relatively fast moving winter storm system tracked across South Dakota Wednesday night and Thursday. Even with the fairly quick movement of the system, storm total snowfall amounts were quite impressive. In fact, during the peak of the snowstorm, snowfall rates of 1" to 2" per hour were observed!

1910: Parts of Washington State were in the midst of a storm which produced 129 inches of snow at Laconia between the 24th and the 26th, a single storm record for the state. A series of storms, which began on the 23rd, led to a deadly avalanche on the first of March. By late on the 28th, the snow had changed to rain, setting the stage for disaster.








1972: The Buffalo Creek disaster occurred in the Buffalo Creek Hollow of Logan County in West Virginia. A coal slag dam on the Middle Fork of Buffalo Creek burst sending a fifty-foot wall of water down a narrow valley killing 125 persons and causing 51 million dollars damage. Three days of rain atop a six inch snow cover caused the dam to break.

2000: Both Buffalo, NY and International Falls, Minnesota set new record high temperatures for February with 71 and 58 degrees, respectively.

2011: The tallest tree in Wales falls after a wind storm. Located on the Lake Vyrnwy Estate, this 124-year-old Douglas fir stood at 63.7 m (208.9 feet). The tree reportedly was leaning over and had two substantial cracks in the main trunk. This tree would be carved into a giant hand.






Groton Daily Independent




Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 9 of 30

Mon Feb 26	Tue Feb 27	Wed Feb 28	Thu Mar 1	Fri Mar 2	Sat Mar 3	Sun Mar 4
						
34°F	29°F	29°F	28°F	34°F	35°F	33°F
4°F	7°F	9°F	11°F	21°F	21°F	18°F
S 16 MPH	N 7 MPH	SW 6 MPH	W 6 MPH	SE 16 MPH	SSE 16 MPH	SSW 10 MPH
						Precip 20%

Work-Week Forecast

February 26th – March 2nd

Today	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	PATCHY FOG 			BREEZY 
Above freezing, more snow melt	Patchy morning fog possible	Seasonable and dry	Seasonable and dry	Southerly breezes, mild
HI: 32 to 42	HI: 28 to 32	HI: 28 to 34	HI: 26 to 36	HI: 32 to 42
LO: 4 to 14	LO: 8 to 12	LO: 8 to 14	LO: 10 to 24	LO: 18 to 24

 National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD   Updated: 2/26/2018 5:04 AM Central

Published on: 02/26/2018 at 5:06AM

After a snowy past 7 days, the next 5 at least should be dry with plenty of chances for sunshine.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 10 of 30

Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 27.3 F at 12:49 PM

Low Outside Temp: -3.2 F at 4:00 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 15.0 Mph at 8:49 AM

Precip: 6" snow = .32 moisture

Today's Info

Record High: 65° in 1896

Record Low: -20° in 1962

Average High: 32°F

Average Low: 12°F

Average Precip in Feb: 0.50

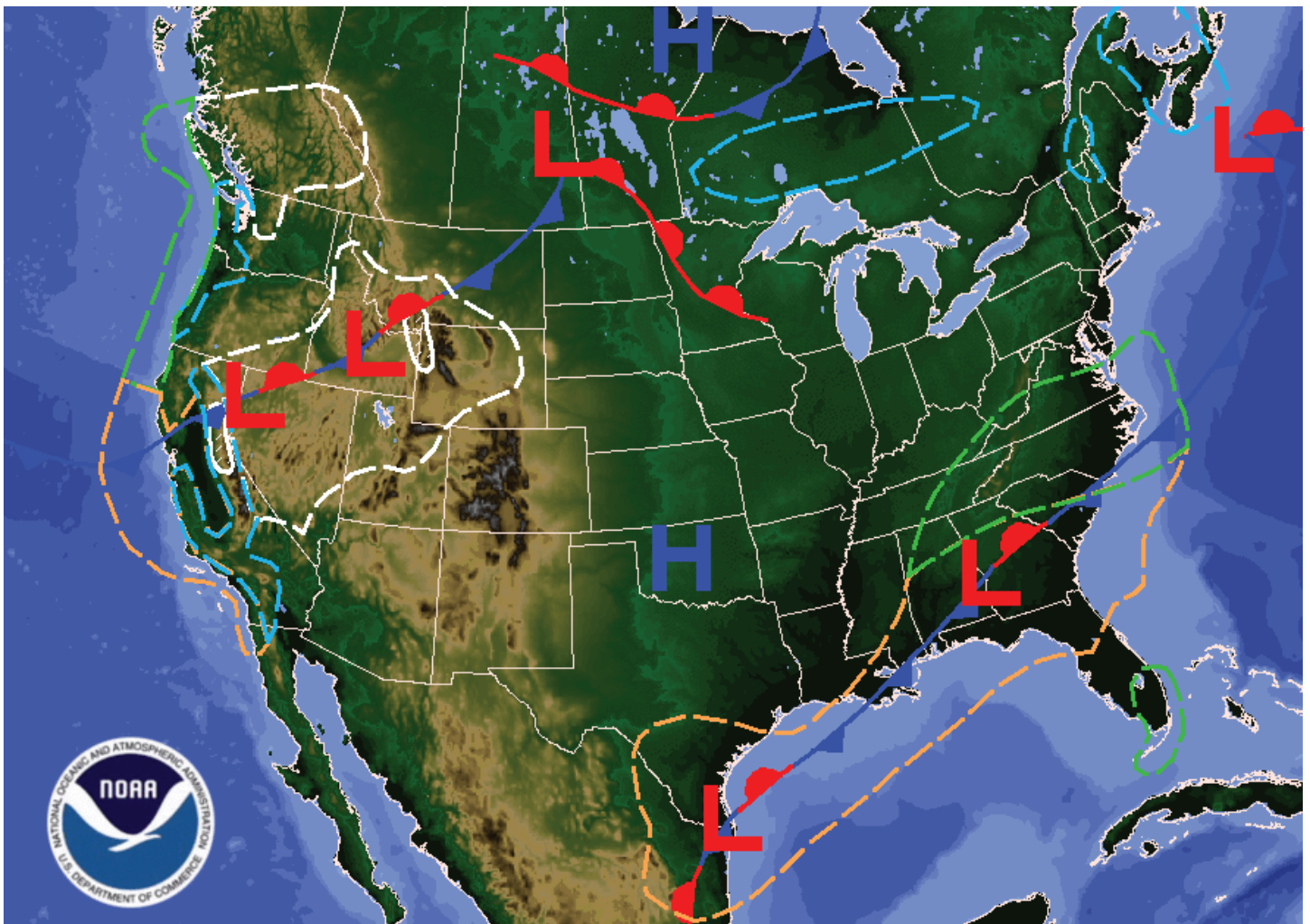
Precip to date in Feb: 0.57

Average Precip to date: 0.97

Precip Year to Date: 0.57

Sunset Tonight: 6:16 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:15 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Mon, Feb 26, 2018, issued 4:48 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 11 of 30



"FROM ALL ETERNITY"

A small child recently asked me, "Mr. Larry, I believe there is a God. And I know He's in my heart. But who made Him?"

"Nobody," I answered.

"Well, when did He begin to live?" she asked politely.

"He always was," I replied.

"Well, will he ever stop living?" she wondered.

"No," I answered. "He always was, and always will be," I answered.

"But," she admitted, "I don't understand."

"Neither do I," came my confession.

We who are finite cannot ever understand the infinite.

Every rational person who is endowed with a mind that has the capacity to reason finds questions about God – even in early childhood. This search for God, at an early age, is significant. Obviously, this question about God arising in the mind of a child seems to provide convincing evidence that there is a compassionate Creator who has planted Himself in the mind of everyone. Otherwise, why would anyone ever ask the question, "Is there a God?"

Questions about the existence of God are nothing new. God Himself put a curiosity within each of us to ask questions and seek answers. If we did not have a capacity to question things, we would not be human. Remember, it was God who said, "You will find me when You seek me with all your heart." The seeking heart will find God.

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, that You created us with minds to seek, hearts to believe and lives to serve You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 93:2b You are from everlasting.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 12 of 30

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

First Dakota Access deer poaching case resolved

MANDAN, N.D. (AP) — One of four men charged with poaching deer during the Dakota Access pipeline protests has reached a deal with prosecutors to dismiss his case.

Danny LeClaire of Pocatello, Idaho, was charged last year with a misdemeanor count of unlawful taking of a big game animal. The Bismarck Tribune reports that a judge last week approved a pretrial diversion agreement.

Under the deal, Morton County State's Attorney Al Kopyy will dismiss the case after six months if LeClaire commits no other crimes in North Dakota and pays \$350 to the state's Report All Poachers program. LeClaire will also forfeit his \$150 bond to help pay \$710 in court fees.

Three other men have been charged in poaching cases related to the pipeline protests.

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

South Dakota college wrestler gets second chance on the mat

By **MATT ZIMMER, Argus Leader**

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Seth Gross came one agonizing point away from winning a Division I wrestling national championship last March, when the 133-pound South Dakota State star was defeated 4-3 by Cory Clark of the Iowa Hawkeyes.

Gross returned this year intent to finish the job, and has spent the entire year ranked No. 1 in the nation at his weight class. He's 20-1 on the year, unbeaten at 133 pounds. Anything less than the title March 15-17 in Cleveland will be disappointing.

Gross is the centerpiece of a surging and growing SDSU wrestling program, and the individual expectations, coupled with what he means to the team, could make for a suffocating level of pressure for the fourth-year junior from Apple Valley, Minnesota.

But Gross doesn't approach it that way. He knows he's lucky to be wrestling at all.

After winning three state championships at three different weight classes at Apple Valley, Gross joined the Iowa Hawkeyes, arguably the premier college wrestling program in the country. After a redshirt season, he was in line to be the team's starter at 141 pounds in 2015-16.

Then one night and one bad decision changed everything. Gross was arrested, kicked off the team, shunned by other programs, and possibly staring down the end of his wrestling career before it ever got started.

But South Dakota State coach Chris Bono, desperate to build momentum for a program that had been flailing along at the Division I level, saw an opportunity for Gross and his team, and gave the youngster a second chance.

Now Gross is one of the very best wrestlers in America, a junior world team qualifier whose career will continue after college whether he brings a national title to Brookings or not.

Gross has almost 27,000 followers on Twitter, where his handle is @Godswrestler133. It might seem a pretentious choice, but he believes that his journey was part of a plan, one to test his faith, and, along the way, teach Gross and his teammates and followers lessons in perseverance, forgiveness, second chances and redemption.

"The farther away I am from what happened at Iowa the more I realize God was saying, 'Hey, you're not supposed to be there, you're supposed to be here,'" Gross said recently from the Jackrabbit wrestling room. "He kind of picked me up and dropped me where I needed to be. Maybe if I was still at Iowa I wouldn't have dropped down to 133 pounds and I wouldn't be having success. It turned out to be the best thing that happened to me."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 14 of 30

It happened in March of 2015. The Hawkeyes were competing in the NCAA tournament. Gross wasn't there, since he had redshirted that season. He and several teammates decided to blow off steam and have a few drinks. Gross was not a drinker, but decided to indulge.

Soon enough they were intoxicated, and ended up stealing items from parked cars. Someone saw them and gave chase. Eventually the police apprehended them.

Gross and two teammates were charged with two counts of felony third degree burglary, seven counts of misdemeanor third degree burglary, two counts of conspiracy to commit a felony and one count of conspiracy to commit an aggravated misdemeanor. Gross was also charged with open container, possession of alcohol under the legal age and interference with official acts, the Argus Leader reported .

Iowa coach Tom Brands immediately dismissed all three wrestlers from the team. The charges were eventually lowered, and Gross completed probation, clearing the incident from his record. But his expulsion from the Hawkeyes was permanent.

Gross almost left school entirely, but decided to finish the year before returning home to Apple Valley. He got a job and more or less forgot about wrestling. His weight ballooned to almost 170 pounds.

Eventually, though, with prodding from family, Gross decided he wanted to continue wrestling, but was unsure if there would be any takers. He reached out to his home state squad of Minnesota but they said no thanks. Ditto Northern Iowa.

"I was pretty down at that point," Gross said.

South Dakota State coach Chris Bono took over a Jackrabbit team in 2012-13 that had lost 29 of 30 duals and couldn't get more than a few hundred people to come out to duals at Frost Arena. Bono was confident his infusion of enthusiasm and social media marketing would eventually get some momentum going for the program, but he needed good wrestlers, too.

And one day an email showed up in Bono's inbox. It was from Gross.

"I got back to him within two minutes," said Bono, who'd been a national champion himself and assistant coach at Iowa State. "I knew the name and knew what had happened at Iowa. We talked, I said get to campus when you can, and he came down the very next day."

Bono checked with administration, who told the coach he was free to decide if Gross was worth the risk.

"He sat me down and said tell me what happened," Gross said. "I told him, and said nothing like it would ever happen again. And he said, OK, but there will be no leeway. One strike and you're out. I said you won't be disappointed."

Said Bono: "I was looking for him to take ownership of what had happened, and he did that. He looked me in the eye and said, 'I did it. I messed up. I just need a second chance.' I knew then I was dealing with a pretty good kid."

Still, the margin for error was razor thin for Gross.

"It wasn't just one strike and you're out," Bono said. "It was, be late to one practice and you're done. I was trying to change a culture here, and I couldn't compromise my principles."

Gross wanted to keep a low profile, so he put his head down, kept it down and went to work. He wrestled at 141 pounds, the same class he'd wrestled at Iowa, and had his ups and downs.

"Halfway through the year I had about a .500 record, and I remember one tournament my dad came down and watched and I got pinned by an NAIA kid," Gross remembers. "I went and sat down with my dad after that and I was like, 'I don't know about this. I'm doing terrible.'"

But the winter break gave Gross a chance to recalibrate, and he got into better shape and started to come into his own. He had a much better second half of the season, and finished the year with a solid 26-14 record. He won 11 of 12 matches before falling in the Big 12 championships, and went 3-2 at nationals, leaving him one win shy of All-America honors.

"I was like, 'I can do this, let's see where it takes me,'" Gross said. "I just had to get my mindset turned around."

Gross really began turning heads that summer. He dropped a weight class and competed in the 60-kilo-gram division at the Junior Freestyle World Team Trials. He won, earning a spot on the USA junior world team. While Gross would enter the 2016-17 college season as a contender for a national championship at

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 15 of 30

133 pounds, his success on the world stage was a personal revelation. Gross has long dreamed of being an Olympic champion, and landing a spot on the junior world team was a sure sign that goal is attainable.

"That motivated me more than ever," Gross said.

He would put together the best season by an SDSU wrestler in the Division I era, going 34-2 and 17-0 in duals. He earned bonus points in an astounding 30 matches, including a team-high 13 pins.

He took a 22-match winning streak into the national championship bout, where he was nipped 4-3 by Cory Clark, his old Iowa teammate.

Coming so close to the ultimate goal would be all-consuming to many an athlete, but Gross shrugged it off.

"It was a cool experience," he said of the finals. "But once you get there it's just another match. I lost. So what? You lose, you learn from it and try to get better. I was immediately fired up and got right back to practice that week."

"That's Seth," said Bono. "We were sitting there (before the finals) last year and he was laughing and talking and I was like, 'Dude are you ready?' and he said 'I'm always ready.' He's a laid back guy, but one reason he's so successful is he doesn't stress out a lot."

Bringing SDSU its first Division I national championship is a driving force for Gross, but he admits the big picture is at least as important. A week after the NCAA championships, win or lose, he's heading to New York for a freestyle tournament. His Olympic dream burns bright, and Bono, who himself was an Olympic team alternate, said it's well within reach.

This season Gross is 20-1 with 10 pins, the only loss coming when he moved up to his old weight class in a dual against Wyoming to wrestle top-ranked 141-pounder Bryce Meredith, an extremely rare No. 1 vs. No. 1 bout in which Gross held his own.

"Winning a national championship is a stepping stone on the way to being an Olympic champ," Gross said. "If I do everything right I know I can do it. I've just got to wrestle aggressively and get after it. I'll be disappointed if it doesn't happen."

National champ. Olympian. Those are lofty goals, but Gross's path to get where he is has given him a healthy perspective on chasing them.

"I like pressure — you can use it to help you," he said. "But at the end of the day, it's wrestling, and there's more to life. I've got a family that loves me and a God that loves me. A lot to be happy about. Wrestling is just a way I can glorify God and use the second chance I was given. I'm trying to have fun, because I love this sport more than almost anything."

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

Family-owned butcher shop serves South Dakota community

By MATTHEW GADE, The Daily Republic

DELMONT, S.D. (AP) — Bill Bietz prides himself and his business on customer service.

For 49 years, Bietz has worked at Blue Bird Locker in Delmont. And for more than a decade, he's been the owner of the butcher shop, and he said it's the customers and his employees who have made the business successful.

"It's been a super business. The customers have been outstanding. They're the backbone of what we do," said Bietz, a 1989 Delmont High School graduate and now Parkston resident. "Seeing them come in with a smile on their face and meeting them, talking with them and seeing how they're doing in terms of the production of their farm life is going. Just being able to custom cut whatever they need."

The locker, which employs 10 to 12 full- and part-time employees, has always been a family-owned business, the Daily Republic reported .

Bietz purchased the shop from his father Ervin, who was looking to retire. And although Ervin may now be retired, that doesn't keep him from continuing to help out at the shop.

"He's 75, still comes in three hours a day or four hours a day in the morning early and kind of puts things together. He's got his routine. We've been working together quite a while," Bietz said.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 16 of 30

Particularly known for its German sausage sold in 15 area grocery stores, Blue Bird Locker has handled a variety of animals throughout the years, including buffalo. But it usually sticks to cattle, hogs and sheep.

"We kind of limit to those three items. With the inspection program, it just gets very hard to continue to do what you used to do 20 years ago," Bietz said, adding that it helps keep a fresh inventory fully supplied at the locker.

The locker slaughters on Tuesdays and Fridays, handling about 15 to 20 head of cattle and hogs each week. Bietz said the locker is typically booked out two to three months year round.

"We schedule them like you would schedule a visit to the dentist. Obviously, our fall season is busier than the summer," Bietz said, noting he has customers who come from Nebraska and Iowa, and as far west as Bonesteel.

Being able to interact and serve his customers is the best part of the business for Bietz.

"We want to make an imprint on the town here. I love what I do. It's making products; people bring in their own stuff. We feel we do a very good job at processing their animals and returning it back to them how they want it."

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

Critics target partisan gerrymandering with state reforms

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 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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 17 of 30

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 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.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 18 of 30

"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>

The day after: Pyeongchang breathes, bids Olympics farewell

By TED ANTHONY, Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — From volunteers to support staff to the joint Korea women's hockey team, people from many cultures bid farewell to each other and to the 2018 Winter Olympics on Monday as a swath of the eastern Korean Peninsula readied itself for something novel: relative normalcy.

Seven years after a successful Olympic bid that changed its people and its landscape forever, Pyeongchang exhaled.

"Farewell! Bye bye! Gamsahamnida!" volunteers using the Korean word for "thank you" shouted to departing buses in Gangneung, the coastal city near Pyeongchang where many events were held.

Workers yanked down paper signs by the hundreds and busloads of Olympians, journalists and support workers rolled toward train stations and highways Monday in the aftermath of a Winter Games that was as political as it was athletic.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach echoed that sentiment in the closing ceremony Sunday night, saying that the centerpiece political event of the games — a joint Korea team marching together and, in some cases, competing together was a beacon for a troubled world.

"With your joint march you have shared your faith in a peaceful future with all of us," Bach said. "You have shown our sport brings people together in our very fragile world. You have shown how sport builds bridges."

The Korean women's hockey team did that for sure.

Thrown together a just few weeks before the games, players from North and South were thrust together to make a go of it. With the help of their Canadian coach, they came together as a competent, if not particularly effective, team that captured the attention of many Olympics watchers.

Along the way, they developed what they uniformly say was camaraderie, and even great affection. On Monday morning, at the athletes' village, they said their goodbyes with tears and extended hands.

"I feel really strange," said South Korean hockey player Choi Ji-yeon. "I told them to take care and not get sick and meet again later."

She added: "If they were people whom we can continue to keep in touch and meet again, then I would feel better, but I might never be able to meet them again."

Their governmental counterparts were showing signs of communication as well. The detente achieved through the Olympic connections between North and South Korea fits the longtime goals of the South's president, Moon Jae-in, who has advocated engagement with Kim Jong Un's Pyongyang regime.

That happened at the opening and closing ceremonies, both with U.S. representatives looking on from nearby — Vice President Mike Pence for the opening, first daughter and presidential adviser Ivanka Trump for the closing Sunday night.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration, a patron of South Korea and a loud opponent of the North's nuclear program, is watching the contacts closely, particularly after South Korea's presidential office said during the closing ceremony that the North was willing to hold talks with the United States.

Washington viewed that development warily. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, with Ivanka Trump on her South Korea Olympic trip, issued a written statement to that effect after the closing ceremony.

"We will see if Pyongyang's message today, that it is willing to hold talks, represents the first steps along the path to denuclearization," she said. "In the meantime, the United States and the world must continue to make clear that North Korea's nuclear and missile programs are a dead end."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 19 of 30

North Korea's official news agency, KCNA, known for its invective toward the United States and the Seoul government, has been playing it low key when it comes to these Olympics. On Monday, it issued a synopsis of the games that was notable for its anodyne tone.

"When the players of the north and south of Korea participating in the 23rd Winter Olympics and other players and agents of different countries and region from across the world entered the stadium, the spectators welcomed them with applause," it practically whispered.

Contrast that with this dispatch hours earlier about the United States: "We will never have face-to-face talks with them even after 100 years or 200 years. This is neither an empty talk nor any threat. The U.S. will have to pay dearly for stupid and wild vituperation."

Twelve hours later, news of its willingness to talk emerged from Seoul.

North Korea's delegation to the games, including more than 200 cheerleaders whose perfect synchronicity made for some of the Olympics' most popular visuals, returned over land in buses to the North on Monday.

The group — whose members experienced more of the world this month than many of their fellow North Koreans do in a lifetime — also included 45 athletes, four Olympic officials and 21 journalists.

As for the Olympics and the attention and people they bring to this relatively remote plateau of north-eastern South Korea, it's not quite finished yet. The Paralympic Games, held immediately after the Olympics using the same facilities, will be staged from March 9 to 18, albeit with a lower profile and attendance.

But for a few days, at least, with traffic cones down and most Olympic checkpoints removed, Pyeongchang can take a breather as the eyes of the world shift somewhere else.

Ted Anthony has been Asia-Pacific news director for The Associated Press since 2014. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram at @anthonyted.

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

Students resolute as they re-enter school shooting site

By TERRY SPENCER, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — The line of students and their parents wrapped around Stoneman Douglas High School, several thousand people entering the campus for the first time since a gunman took 17 lives nearly two weeks ago.

They walked solemnly but resolutely Sunday through gates that had been locked to all but law enforcement and school officials since the Valentine's Day shooting, set to collect backpacks and other belongings left behind as they fled the massacre. To enter, they passed within feet of the three-story building where the shooting happened. It is now cordoned off by a chain link fence that was covered with banners from other schools showing their solidarity.

"Just seeing the building was scary," freshman Francesca Lozano said as she exited the school with her mom. Still, she was happy to see her friends. "That made it a lot better."

The 3,200-student school reopens Wednesday and administrators said families would get phone calls about details later. Sunday was a day to ease into the return.

"Two of my best friends aren't here anymore," said freshman Sammy Cooper, who picked up the book bag he had dropped as he saw the accused gunman, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz, begin shooting. "But I'm definitely going to school Wednesday. I will handle it."

Junior Sebastian Pena said the gathering was a chance to see friends and his teachers, and to "come together as a family."

The students were greeted by 17 people dressed in white costumes as angels standing beside a makeshift memorial outside the school. Organizer Terry Decarlo said the costumes are sent to every mass shooting and disaster so the survivors "know angels are looking over them and protecting them." Many of those dressed as angels at Stoneman Douglas on Sunday were survivors of the 2016 mass shooting at the Orlando nightclub Pulse, where 49 people died.

Earlier Sunday, Florida Gov. Rick Scott's office said he had asked Florida Department of Law Enforcement

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 20 of 30

Commissioner Rick Swearingen to investigate the law enforcement response to the shooting. The agency confirmed it would begin the probe immediately.

Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel has come under withering scrutiny after the revelation last week that deputy Scot Peterson, the school's assigned security officer, was nearby when the shooting began but did not go into the building to confront Cruz during the attack. The sheriff's office is also facing a backlash for apparently mishandling some of the 18 tipster calls related to the suspected shooter. The tips were among a series of what authorities now describe as the clearest missed warning signs that Cruz, who had a history of disturbing behavior, posed a serious threat.

Israel defended his leadership Sunday and said investigators were looking into claims that three other deputies were on the scene but failed to enter the school when the chance to save lives still existed. To date, the investigation has pointed to only one deputy being on school grounds while the killer was present, he told CNN.

Israel also labeled as "absolutely untrue" reports that the deputies waited outside even though children were inside the building needing urgent medical treatment.

State Rep. Bill Hager, a Republican lawmaker from Boca Raton, has called on Scott to remove Israel from office because of the missed red flags.

Israel vowed not to resign, saying Hager's letter "was full of misinformation" and "shameful, politically motivated."

House Speaker Richard Corcoran stepped up the pressure Sunday, calling on Scott to suspend the sheriff.

"In the years leading up to this unspeakable tragedy, Sheriff Israel, his deputies, and staff ignored repeated warning signs about the violent, erratic, threatening and antisocial behavior of Nikolas Jacob Cruz," Corcoran said in a letter signed by more than 70 lawmakers.

Scott said in a statement Sunday that he understands Corcoran's concerns, but added "there must be an independent investigation."

"Like me, he wants the families to have answers and for there to be full accountability. That's what the victims and their families deserve," Scott said.

Israel insisted that lapses were being investigated. He told CNN that a deputy who responded to a Nov. 30 call referring to Cruz as a "school shooter in the making" was being investigated by internal affairs for not filing a report and had been placed on restrictive duty.

"There needed to be report. And that's what we are looking into—that a report needed to be completed, it needed to be forwarded to either Homeland Security or a violent crimes unit," Israel said.

The FBI has acknowledged that it failed to investigate the tip about Cruz that the agency received on Jan. 5.

Associated Press writers Gary Fineout in Tallahassee, Florida, Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami and Jeffrey Collins in Columbia, South Carolina, contributed to this report.

2 lions from Mideast war zones head to South African refuge

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Two lions rescued from neglected zoos in war zones in Iraq and Syria were transported to South Africa on Monday to live at a sanctuary with other animals that survived harsh conditions in captivity elsewhere in the world.

The male lions arrived in Johannesburg in metal crates on a Qatar Airways flight after leaving an animal refuge in Jordan on Sunday. They were loaded onto vehicles for a drive of several hours to their new home at the Lionsrock facility near the town of Bethlehem.

The lions were emaciated and dehydrated after the international animal welfare group Four Paws extracted them from a zoo in eastern Mosul in Iraq and an amusement park near Aleppo in Syria. The two cities have experienced some of the worst fighting that has hit both countries in recent years, killing large numbers of people and leaving neighborhoods in ruins.

Most of the 40 animals at the Mosul zoo died of starvation or were killed in bombings while some escaped from their enclosures, according to Four Paws. The group's members reached the location a year ago and evacuated the only two animals they found — a bear and the roughly 4-year-old lion named Simba — to Jordan.

The other lion, 2-year-old Saeed, was rescued in July along with 12 other animals from Syria's Magic World amusement park. The animals reached Jordan after staying for two weeks in Turkey, whose government assisted with the evacuation.

Both lions were traumatized when they arrived at the Al-Ma'wa Animal Sanctuary in Jordan, Four Paws said. Since then, they have received medical care, including vasectomies and dental work, and have gained weight on a steady diet that included lamb meat treats.

The lions can expect similar treatment at Lionsrock, whose 80 lions came from a German circus and zoos in France, Romania, Congo and elsewhere. Some are from South African captive-bred lion operations that often earmark the predators for "trophy" killings by customers.

Some of the captive-bred residents of Lionsrock have deformities from inbreeding, and none can be released into the wild, said Fiona Miles, director of Four Paws' South Africa operation.

She said a key goal is to raise awareness about the conditions of lions and other animals in captivity around the world.

Conservationists point to broader challenges facing Africa's wild lions, whose population has plummeted. Problems include shrinking habitats and poaching, in which lions get trapped in snares laid down indiscriminately.

Another concern is demand in some Asian countries for lion bones used in traditional medicine. Currently, South Africa allows the legal, annual export of bones from hundreds of captive-bred lions to China and Southeast Asia.

There are nearly 2,900 wild lions and about 7,000 captive lions in South Africa, according to the government.

Security at Lionsrock is tight, a necessary precaution in a country where poaching is a frequent threat. Last year, poachers broke into another wildlife sanctuary in South Africa, killing two of its big cats.

Organized labor case goes in front of Supreme Court

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is hearing arguments in a case that could deal a painful financial blow to organized labor.

All eyes will be on Justice Neil Gorsuch Monday when the court takes up a challenge to an Illinois law that allows unions representing government employees to collect fees from workers who choose not to join. The unions say the outcome could affect more than 5 million government workers in 24 states and the District of Columbia.

The court split 4-4 the last time it considered the issue in 2016. Gorsuch joined the court in April and has yet to weigh in on union fees. Organized labor is a big supporter of Democratic candidates and interests. Unions strongly opposed Gorsuch's nomination by President Donald Trump.

Illinois government employee Mark Janus says he has a constitutional right not to contribute anything to a union with which he disagrees. Janus and the conservative interests that back him contend that everything unions representing public employees do is political, including contract negotiations.

The Trump administration is supporting Janus in his effort to persuade the court to overturn its 1977 ruling allowing states to require fair share fees for government employees.

The unions argue that so-called fair share fees pay for collective bargaining and other work the union does on behalf of all employees, not just its members. People can't be compelled to contribute to unions' political activities.

The American Civil Liberties Union is on the unions' side against an individual's free speech claims. ACLU

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 22 of 30

Legal Director David Cole said fair share fees do not violate nonunion workers' rights.

Labor leaders fear that not only would workers who don't belong to a union stop paying fees, but that some union members might decide to stop paying dues if they could in essence get the union's representation for free.

"This is the place, sisters and brothers, where we make a stand today," said Lee Saunders, president of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, at a rally Saturday in New York City. A union local is the defendant in the case.

AP Radio Correspondent Julie Walker contributed to this report.

Congress returns amid pressure to act on gun violence

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 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.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 23 of 30

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.

"Our president can play a huge and, in fact, probably decisive role in this. So I intend to give this another shot," Toomey said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press."

The Senate more likely 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.

"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>

Trump: Florida shooting to dominate governors meeting

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump says the deadly mass shooting at a Florida high school is the top issue he wants to discuss with the nation's governors.

Under pressure to act to stem gun violence on school grounds, Trump planned to solicit input from the state chief executives during meetings Monday at the White House. The governors are in Washington for their annual winter meeting.

But socializing was the focus Sunday night as Trump and first lady Melania Trump hosted the governors for an annual black-tie ball.

In brief remarks before dinner beneath dimmed lights in the State Dining Room, Trump said the governors are "very, very special people."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 24 of 30

"The job you do is really incredible. It's not easy, but we're very proud of you and we're very proud to have you here," he said as tall candles flickered and bouquets of hydrangeas adorned an assortment of round and oblong dinner tables.

Previewing Monday's talks, Trump said they would also discuss the economy "and many other things."

Seventeen students and teachers were killed in a Valentine's Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, sparking a public outcry for new gun-control measures as well as action to improve school safety.

"We'll be talking about Parkland and the horrible event that took place last week," Trump said. "That will be one of the subjects. We'll make it first on our list."

Trump thanked Florida Gov. Rick Scott, a close political ally who attended the ball, and told everyone he's "doing a great job."

The president also boasted about the economy, saying numbers that weren't so good under his predecessor are improving under his leadership.

"You're going to see some numbers coming up over the next year, the likes of which we haven't seen in our country for many, many years," Trump said. He briefly mentioned his efforts to eliminate regulations, saying that because of his administration "people are building and farming and doing lot of things that they were having a very hard time doing."

Trump's session with the governors will be the latest in which he solicits ideas for stopping gun violence at schools as the White House works to finalize an expected legislative proposal. Trump spent several days last week hearing emotional pleas from parents and students, including some who survived the Parkland shooting, and others who suffered through school shootings in Connecticut and Colorado. He also solicited input from state and local officials.

Trump has floated numerous ideas since the shooting, including raising the minimum age for the purchase of assault-style weapons, improving background checks for gun purchases, arming educators and paying them bonuses, and re-opening mental institutions.

Trump's daughter and senior adviser, Ivanka Trump, expressed uncertainty when asked whether arming teachers would make children safer.

"To be honest, I don't know," the mother of three said in an interview with NBC News from South Korea, where she attended the closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics. "Obviously, there would have to be an incredibly high standard for who would be able to bear arms in our school. But I think there is no one solution for creating safety."

The National Rifle Association, which backed Trump for president, opposes increasing the minimum age for assault-style weapons purchases but favors arming teachers.

"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, because it doesn't seem to make sense that you have to wait until you are 21 years old to get a pistol, but to get a gun like this maniac used in the school, you get that at 18," Trump said during a late Saturday telephone interview with Fox News Channel. "That doesn't make sense."

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsuperville>

California Democratic Party won't endorse Dianne Feinstein

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein failed to win the official endorsement of the California Democratic Party as she seeks her fifth term, another sign that the party is divided over how best to battle Republicans in Washington.

Democratic activists were more eager to back her primary challenger, state Senate leader Kevin de Leon, who is touting himself as a fresh face with stronger progressive credentials, particularly on immigration.

However, he too failed to earn the 60 percent support needed to win the endorsement Saturday at

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 25 of 30

Democrats' annual convention. That means neither candidate will get the party's seal of approval or extra campaign cash leading into the June primary.

With Democrats still licking their wounds from the 2016 election, some of the party's biggest stars, including U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris and U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, urged unity ahead of the midterm elections. They reminded more than 3,000 activists gathered this weekend that President Donald Trump is their common enemy.

Though party activists rebuked Feinstein, she has millions of dollars to run a successful campaign and polling has shown she enjoys wide support among Democratic voters and independents, a critical piece of the electorate in a race without any well-known Republicans.

The top-two primary system in heavily Democratic California allows the two highest vote-getters to advance to the general election regardless of party identification.

It's the first time Feinstein has failed to win the party's backing since 1994, when she won her first full-term to the U.S. Senate, though she's lacked a credible Democratic challenger in most previous races.

Delegates who withheld their support said they think Feinstein, 84, has been in Washington too long and hasn't stood strong enough for immigrants.

When she spoke longer than her allotted time, some in the crowd chanted "Time's up!" — referring to her lengthy tenure in Congress. Thirty-seven percent of Democrats backed Feinstein, while 54 percent supported de Leon. He called it "an astounding rejection of politics as usual" and a boost to his campaign's momentum.

De Leon didn't appear to lose support despite a sexual misconduct scandal at the California Capitol during his leadership. His former roommate, Tony Mendoza, resigned Thursday after an investigation concluded he likely sexually harassed six women. De Leon had called for him to be expelled. Mendoza is running for re-election but failed to win the party's backing this weekend.

Feinstein supporters, meanwhile, said her long track record as a fighter for Democrats and women makes her the party's best choice.

"She has so much seniority, it's hard to give that up," said Cathy Jorgensen, a delegate from the farm-rich Central Valley.

Her political strategist, Bill Carrick, said the campaign was "in good shape."

But the party was fractured. It failed to unite behind a single candidate in the majority of statewide races, including for governor, where four Democrats are vying to replace outgoing Gov. Jerry Brown.

Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, a former San Francisco mayor crafting himself as a warrior for progressive ideals, took 39 percent of the vote, with state Treasurer John Chiang and former state schools chief Delaine Easton not far behind. Former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who is courting more moderate and even conservative voters, won just 9 percent.

Party leaders also implored activists to rally behind one candidate in U.S. House races with as many as seven Democratic hopefuls, warning a failure to unite could boost Republicans.

Perhaps best underscoring party tensions is the race between Feinstein and de Leon.

The longtime senator focused on her specific legislative record, including on gun control and sexual assault, saying she's a long fighter for Democratic values with the clout to get things done.

Feinstein touted her successful measure banning assault weapons in 1994, which has since expired, and pledged she would not rest until a similar bill passes again. As a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, she promised she would never back funding for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

But de Leon, who authored "sanctuary state" legislation to limit California authorities from cooperating with federal immigration officials, has argued that Feinstein historically failed to stand up for young immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children.

Feinstein voted against two federal spending measures that left out deportation protections for "dreamers," but some activists felt it was a forced vote.

"She shows up now that she's being challenged," said Ana Gonzalez of San Bernardino County.

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 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.

“Our president can play a huge and, in fact, probably decisive role in this. So I intend to give this another shot,” Toomey said Sunday on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

The Senate more likely 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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 27 of 30

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.

"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>

Political end to Olympics: NKorea offers talks with US

By TED ANTHONY, Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — The overtly political 2018 Winter Olympics closed Sunday night very much as they began, with humanity's finest athletes marching exuberantly across the world stage as three nations with decades of war and suspicion among them shared a VIP box — and a potential path away from conflict.

Senior North Korean official Kim Yong Chol, South Korean President Moon Jae-in and U.S. presidential adviser and first daughter Ivanka Trump sat in two rows of seats behind the Olympic rings, meant to represent a competition of peace and international unity. In close proximity — though with no apparent communication between Trump and Kim — they watched a spirited, elaborate show that concluded the Pyeongchang Games.

Even as dancers performed cultural stories to music before an enormous crowd, South Korea's presidential office released a brief statement saying that Pyongyang had expressed willingness to hold talks with Washington.

The North has "ample intentions of holding talks with the United States," according to the office. The North's delegation also agreed that "South-North relations and U.S.-North Korean relations should be improved together," Moon's office, known as the Blue House, said.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, just before declaring the games closed, addressed the two Koreas' cooperation at the closing ceremony, saying, "The Olympic games are an homage to the past and an act of faith for the future."

"With your joint march you have shared your faith in a peaceful future with all of us," Bach said. "You have shown our sport brings people together in our very fragile world. You have shown how sport builds

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 28 of 30

bridges.”

It was all an extraordinary bookend to an extraordinary Olympics that featured athletic excellence, sideline surprises and unexpected lurches forward toward a new detente on the Korean Peninsula. Thrilled athletes marched into the arena around the world’s flags, relaxed after showing their athletic best to themselves and to the world.

“We have been through a lot so that we could blaze a trail,” said Kim Eun-jung, skip of the South Korean women’s curling team, which captured global renown as the “Garlic Girls” — all from a garlic-producing Korean hometown. They made a good run for gold before finishing with runner-up silver.

That these games would be circumscribed by politics was a given from the outset because of regional rivalries. North Korea, South Korea, Japan and China are neighbors with deep, sometimes twisted histories that get along uneasily with each other in this particular geographic cul-de-sac.

But there was something more this time around. Hanging over the entire games was the saga — or opportunity, if you prefer — of a delicate diplomatic dance between the Koreas, North and South, riven by bloodshed and discord and an armed border for the better part of a century.

The games started with a last-minute flurry of agreements to bring North Koreans to South Korea to compete under one combined Korea banner. Perish the thought, some said, but Moon’s government stayed the course. By the opening ceremony, a march of North and South into the Olympic Stadium was watched by the world — and by dozens of North Korean cheerleaders applauding in calibrated synchronicity.

Also watching was an equally extraordinary, if motley, crew. Deployed in a VIP box together were Moon, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s envoy sister, Kim Yo Jong. The latter two, at loggerheads over North Korea’s nuclear program, didn’t speak, and the world watched the awkwardness.

What followed was a strong dose of athletic diplomacy: two weeks of global exposure for the Korean team, particularly the women’s hockey squad, which trained for weeks with North and South side by side getting along, taking selfies and learning about each other.

On Sunday night, though K-pop megastars EXO claimed center stage, leaders rejoined athletes as a primary focus.

Kim, President Donald Trump’s daughter and Moon sat in close proximity as the Olympics’ end unfolded before them and the statement was released in Seoul. Also seated nearby was Gen. Vincent Brooks, commander of U.S. forces Korea. Unlike Pence, Ivanka Trump was smiling as she turned in the North Koreans’ direction. It was not clear what she was smiling at, but a White House official said it was not the North Koreans.

The developments Sunday both inside and outside the VIP box were particularly striking given that Kim Yong Chol, now vice chairman of North Korea’s ruling Workers’ Party Central Committee, is suspected of masterminding a lethal 2010 military attack on the South.

Outside the stadium, North Korea was not welcomed as much.

More than 200 anti-Pyongyang protesters, waving South Korean and U.S. flags, banging drums and holding signs like “Killer Kim Yong Chol go to hell,” rallied in streets near the park. They denounced the South Korean government’s decision to allow the visit. There were no major clashes.

That wasn’t all when it came to these odd games. Let’s not forget Russia — or, we should say, “Olympic Athletes from Russia,” the shame-laced moniker they inherited after a doping brouhaha from the 2014 Sochi Games doomed them to a non-flag-carrying Pyeongchang Games.

Two more Russian athletes tested positive in Pyeongchang in the past two weeks. So on Sunday morning, the IOC refused to reinstate the team in time for the closing but left the door open for near-term redemption from what one exasperated committee member called “this entire Russia drama.”

Away from the politics, humanity’s most extraordinary feats of winter athletic prowess unfolded, revealing the expected triumphs but also stars most unlikely — from favorites like Mikaela Shiffrin, Shaun White and Lindsey Vonn to sudden surprise legends like Czech skier-snowboarder Ester Ledecka and the medal-grabbing “Garlic Girls.”

Other Olympic trailblazers: Chloe Kim, American snowboarder extraordinaire. The U.S. women’s hockey

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 29 of 30

team and men's curlers, both of which claimed gold. And the Russian men's hockey team, with its nail-biting, overtime victory against Germany.

What's next for the games? Tokyo in Summer 2020, then Beijing — Summer host in 2008 — staging an encore, this time for a Winter Games. With the completion of the 2018 Pyeongchang Games, that Olympic trinity marks one-third of a noteworthy Olympic run by Asia.

For those keeping score at home: That means four of eight Olympic Games between 2008 and 2022 will have taken place on the Asian continent. Not bad for a region that hosted only four games in the 112 years of modern Olympic history before that — Tokyo in 1964, Sapporo in 1972, Seoul in 1988 and Nagano in 1998. Japan and China will, it's likely, be highly motivated to outdo South Korea (and each other).

As signs came down, shipping boxes were loaded and the area emptied out early Monday, the departing Olympians left behind a Korean Peninsula full of possibility for peace, or at least less hostility.

The steps taken by North and South toward each other this month are formidable but fluid. People are cautiously optimistic: The governor of Gangwon, the border province where Pyeongchang is located, even suggested Sunday that the 2021 Asian Games could be co-hosted by both Koreas.

It probably won't happen. But it could. That could be said about pretty much anything at an Olympic Games, inside the rings and out. Corporate and political and regimented though it may be, that's what makes it still the best game in town for an athletic thrill every other year — and yes, sometimes a political one, too.

Ted Anthony has been the director of Asia-Pacific news for The Associated Press since 2014. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram at @anthonyted.

Trump to attend Rev. Billy Graham's funeral on Friday

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House says President Donald Trump will attend Friday's funeral for the Rev. Billy Graham.

The evangelist and spiritual adviser to numerous presidents died last week at his North Carolina home. Graham was 99.

Before the funeral, Graham will be afforded the rare tribute of lying in honor in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda on Wednesday and Thursday.

He is to be buried Friday on the grounds of his namesake library in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Trump said last week that Graham was a "great man" who had a "great family" and was "for us" — meaning Trump's campaign — from the beginning.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, Feb. 26, the 57th day of 2018. There are 308 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 26, 1993, a truck bomb built by Islamic extremists exploded in the parking garage of the North Tower of New York's World Trade Center, killing six people and injuring more than 1,000 others. (The bomb failed to topple the North Tower into the South Tower, as the terrorists had hoped; both structures were destroyed in the 9/11 attack eight years later.)

On this date:

In 1616, astronomer Galileo Galilei met with a Roman Inquisition official, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, who ordered him to abandon the "heretical" concept of heliocentrism, which held that the earth revolved around the sun, instead of the other way around.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte escaped from exile on the Island of Elba and headed back to France in a bid to regain power.

In 1904, the United States and Panama proclaimed a treaty under which the U.S. agreed to undertake

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Feb. 26, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 227 ~ 30 of 30

efforts to build a ship canal across the Panama isthmus.

In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed a congressional act establishing Mount McKinley National Park (now Denali National Park) in the Alaska Territory.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson signed a congressional act establishing Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.

In 1929, President Calvin Coolidge signed a measure establishing Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming.

In 1945, authorities ordered a midnight curfew at nightclubs, bars and other places of entertainment across the nation.

In 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that Britain had developed its own atomic bomb.

In 1962, after becoming the first American to orbit the Earth, astronaut John Glenn told a joint meeting of Congress, "Exploration and the pursuit of knowledge have always paid dividends in the long run."

In 1970, National Public Radio was incorporated.

In 1987, the Tower Commission, which probed the Iran-Contra affair, issued a report rebuking President Ronald Reagan for failing to control his national security staff.

In 1998, a jury in Amarillo, Texas, rejected an \$11 million lawsuit brought by Texas cattlemen who blamed Oprah Winfrey's talk show for a price fall after a segment on food safety that included a discussion about mad cow disease.

Ten years ago: A power failure later blamed primarily on human error resulted in sporadic outages across large parts of Florida. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, visiting Beijing, won a verbal assurance from Chinese officials to use their influence to jump-start the stalled process of dismantling North Korea's nuclear programs. The New York Philharmonic, led by Lorin Maazel, performed a historic concert in North Korea before the communist nation's elite. Former Israeli military chief Dan Shomron, who commanded the 1976 hostage rescue at Entebbe, died in Tel Aviv at age 70.

Five years ago: A deeply divided Senate voted, 58-41, to confirm Republican Chuck Hagel to be U.S. defense secretary. A hot air balloon burst into flames during a sunrise flight over the ancient Egyptian city of Luxor and then plummeted 1,000 feet to earth, killing 19 tourists (one tourist and the balloon's pilot survived).

One year ago: At the 89th Academy Awards, "Moonlight," an LGBT coming of age drama, won three Oscars, including best picture of 2016 (in a startling gaffe, the musical "La La Land" was mistakenly announced as the best picture winner before the error was corrected). Joseph Wapner, the retired Los Angeles judge who presided over "The People's Court" from 1981 to 1993, died at age 97. Kurt Busch won the Daytona 500, surviving a crash-filled season opener to win the race for the first time in 16 tries.

Today's Birthdays: Game show host Tom Kennedy is 91. Country-rock musician Paul Cotton (Poco) is 75. Actor-director Bill Duke is 75. Singer Mitch Ryder is 73. Actress Marta Kristen (TV: "Lost in Space") is 73. Rock musician Jonathan Cain (Journey) is 68. Singer Michael Bolton is 65. The president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (REH'-jehp TY'-ihp UR'-doh-wahn), is 64. Actor Greg Germann is 60. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., is 60. Bandleader John McDaniel is 57. Actor-martial artist Mark Dacascos is 54. Actress Jennifer Grant is 52. Rock musician Tim Commerford (Audioslave) is 50. Singer Erykah Badu (EHR'-ih-kah bah-DOO') is 47. Actor Maz Jobrani (TV: "Superior Donuts") is 46. Rhythm-and-blues singer Rico Wade (Society of Soul) is 46. Olympic gold medal swimmer Jenny Thompson is 45. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kyle Norman (Jagged Edge) is 43. Actor Greg Kikaart is 41. Rock musician Chris Culos (O.A.R.) is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Corinne Bailey Rae is 39. Country singer Rodney Hayden is 38. Pop singer Nate Ruess (roos) (fun.) is 36. Tennis player Li Na is 36. Latin singer Natalia Lafourcade is 34. Actress Teresa Palmer is 32. Actor Alex Heartman is 28. Actress Taylor Dooley is 25.

Thought for Today: "One resists the invasion of armies; one does not resist the invasion of ideas." — Victor Hugo, French author (born this date in 1802, died 1885).