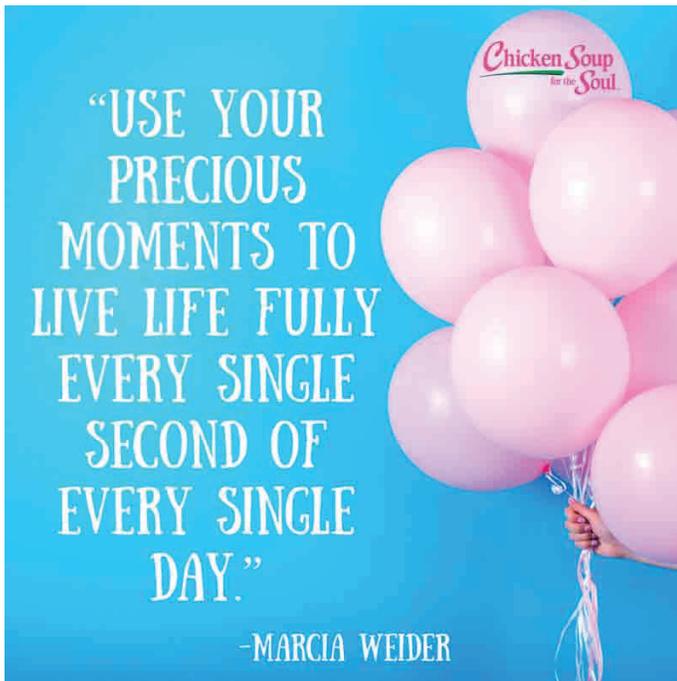


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- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Harr Auto Body Ad
- 1- Service Notice: Bert Raap
- 2- Water leak reported
- 2- Help Wanted at Groton Care & Rehab
- 2- Book Fair Ad
- 3- Moscow Times
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- 5- Latest thoughts on impending storm
- 6- Today in Weather History
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Harry Implement
"Family Owned & Operated Since 1935!"

 (605) 395-6421
Ferney

Service Notice: Bert Raap

Services for Bert Raap, 87, of Groton will be 11:00 a.m., Saturday, March 3rd at the Groton United Methodist Church. Rev. Thomas Carlson will officiate. Burial with military honors will follow in Sunset Memorial Gardens, Aberdeen under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the chapel on Friday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Bert passed away March 1, 2018 at Avera St. Lukes Hospital, Aberdeen.

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**

Water leak reported

It was the paper boy who noticed an abundant of water out on the street this morning and called Terry Herron about it. Herron investigated the site and discovered that there was a leak at the hydrant (shown in the background). The leak was on First Street and Sixth Avenue, just west of the high school at the football field. Herron is pictured getting access to the shut off pipe. It is not a major leak and can be repaired in the spring.

So when travelling in this area, be careful as there is a lot of ice.



Scholastic Book Fairs®

PAWS for BOOKS

BOOK FAIR

A colorful illustration featuring several anthropomorphic animals: a dog wearing glasses and reading a purple book, a cat sitting on a bookshelf reading a red book, a dog reading a book, a cat reading a book, and a dog reading a book. A red banner at the bottom says "COME. STAY. READ. A GREAT TALE!" and a gold medal with "2018" is shown.

"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

The logo for Groton Care & Rehabilitation Center, featuring three colored circles (red, blue, green) and the text "GROTON CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER".

1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

The Moscow Times

Vladimir Putin addressed the Federal Assembly on Thursday in a speech traditionally meant to give policy-makers a peek into his plans for the year ahead.

The venue was changed from the Kremlin to the Manege exhibition center with a screen large enough to fit some 30 minutes of nuclear saber-rattling. The animations met with applause from the hall but sent Cold War chills everywhere else.

With almost two weeks left until the election, Putin's competitors are heating up. Ksenia Sobchak threw a glass of water over Vladimir Zhirinovskiy during a television debate. He, in turn, has promised a "brutal dictatorship" in the unlikely event he is elected. Decisions, decisions.

#MeToo has arrived to Russia fashionably late after four journalists accused State Duma deputy Leonid Slutsky of sexual harassment.

Russia being Russia, the scandal quickly evolved into a competition over who could come up with the most sexist dismissal of the allegations.

A month after starring in an investigation by opposition politician Alexei Navalny, self-professed sex-huntress Nastya Rybka has been jailed in Thailand.

In an appeal for U.S. asylum, she promised to divulge information about "Russian government crimes." Soon after, Nikolai Patrushev, the former head of the FSB and now head of the Security Council, landed in Thailand on a plane linked to an Argentine cocaine heist. If it sounds confusing, it's because it is.

And a St. Petersburg activist has been handed a stint behind bars for displaying a giant inflated duck from an apartment window during a protest organized by Navalny last month.

Be careful who you bathe with.

A government reshuffle followed by the arrests of several top officials on corruption charges have rocked Dagestan, but not necessarily for the better, argues Nabi Abdullaev.

The Moscow Times' Evan Gershkovich tells the story of one man's titanic fight against Slavs-only apartment rentals in Moscow.

And Mark Galeotti argues that the cocaine heist embroiling Russian diplomats in Argentina and Moscow is a sign of weakness in the Russian leadership, starting at the very top.



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Week 8 Legislative Report by Jason Frerichs

Real South Dakota voices matter in the Legislative process. The recent defeat of HB 1199, which would have taken away collective bargaining rights of professors and employees at our public University system, proves that. This bill was not a request from administrators at the Board of Regents institutions, and it was brought as an effort to take away rights of public employees to organize. Administrators who have worked with the current process of appeals and are working with the collective bargaining unit expressed how the current system works well already.

Our Senate Transportation Committee held three hours' worth of testimony on HB 1184, which would have allowed manure pipes to be considered a utility and occupy the right of way. The bill was very broad to give permissive authority to county governments to regulate this possible activity. I am in support of moving liquid manure in this fashion, but I think the agreements should be made with the neighboring landowners and operators to allow the dragline or pipe to be installed in the right of way. Our committee did not support HB 1184, and the issue will go back to the drawing table for future consideration.

Legislation impacting farm wineries and the growing tourist-related industries have been debated in both chambers of the legislature. SB 187 restricts South Dakota wineries from using more than 50% imported bulk wine in their products. There are just a few wine bottling companies in South Dakota who are asking for this option so that they can manufacture their wine product. Farm wineries are proud of their ability to make wine with various ingredients. They do not really like SB 187 and asked for a 25% threshold instead of 50%. Our farm wineries have built their reputation and related tourism industry around their ability to make wine here in South Dakota. If SB 187 becomes law, it will not be as clear where South Dakota-made wine really originates. Farm wineries are different than wine bottlers, but yet they are all considered wineries who sell wine in our state.

SB 176 is a bill that aims to address the opioid crisis in South Dakota. Opioid addiction has become a problem in the United States, and has been declared a national public health emergency. Compared to the rest of the nation, the rate of opioid-related deaths in South Dakota is low. But, over the last ten years, that number has been rising every year. In 2015, enough opiates were prescribed to South Dakotans to keep every South Dakotan adult medicated around-the-clock for 19 straight days. We need to make sure that we have the resources they need to combat the opioid crisis. That's why SB 176 allocates \$230,000 to the Office of the Attorney General to hire a full-time attorney and paralegal whose sole responsibilities will be to investigate opioid addiction and misuse, and litigate as necessary. I support SB 176 because I believe we need to do everything in our power to combat opioid addiction. Challenging the big pharmaceutical companies on the amount of opioid's being dispensed is a worthy goal.

We are in the final stages of identifying the entire funding package for the precision agriculture building to be built on the campus of South Dakota State University (SDSU). Last week I was able to uncover some leftover ethanol fuel fund incentives that I am hopeful will be able to be used for further value-added agriculture incentives with the precision agriculture building and to do some ethanol infrastructure enhancements. I have really enjoyed working with the leaders at SDSU along with the agriculture industry to ensure we partner with the private donations to build this innovative facility to train workers and educate our young people.

HB 1081 was approved on the Senate floor, which removes the sunset and keeps the current law on public access to flooded land in effect. I am in favor of giving certainty to our landowners and outdoors enthusiasts on this issue, although the law could be amended in the future. I also encourage landowners to contact the Game, Fish and Parks to enter into agreements in an effort to reach a balance of respect and recreation on the waters of our state. Thank you to all for the interest in this topic which has the most effect on my legislative district compared to any other district in our state.

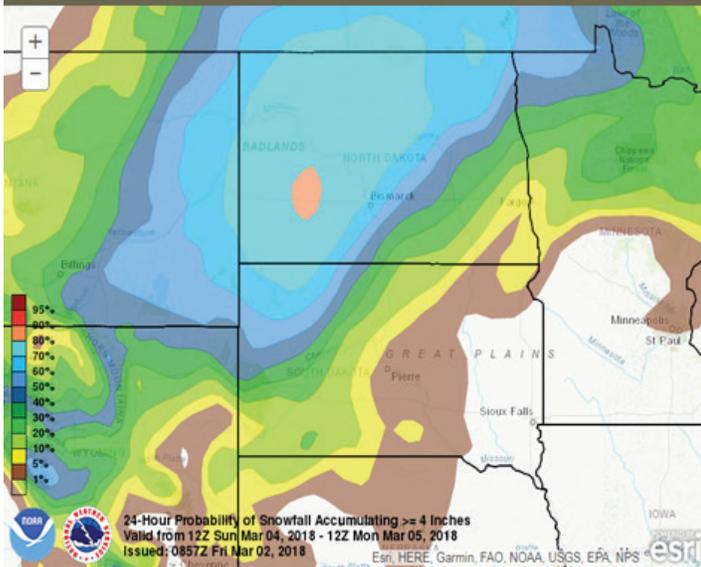
As we approach the final week of session I am confident that there will be at least an increase of 1% to Medicaid and the community support providers along with K-12 education. I also believe that state employees will receive an increase in pay in some fashion. Thank you for the opportunity to serve northeast South Dakota and please contact me at 949-2204 or Jason.Frerichs@sdlegislature.gov.



Latest Thoughts on Impending Storm

Probabilities for heavy snow and ice... (thru 6am Mon only!)

Probability for 4+ inches of snow



6am Sun – 6am Mon

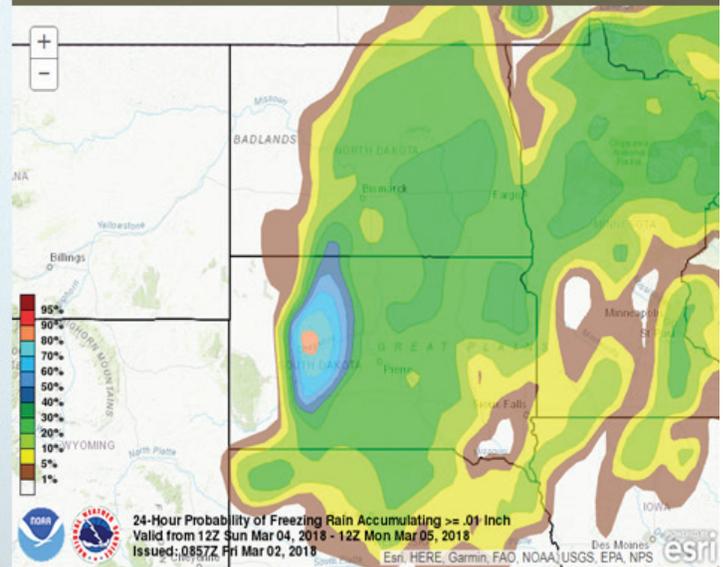
- Heaviest snow potential (4+ in.) over ND and northwest SD
- Minimal snow expected east of the Missouri River
- Snow spreads east Mon night into Tues (amounts unclear)



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Probability for at least 0.01 in. of ice



6am Sun – 6am Mon

- Ice accumulations (at least 0.01in) possible for entire area
- Warmer air could dominate, making precip mostly rain
- Much uncertainty in rain vs freezing rain and resultant ice accumulations

Graphic Created
3/2/2018 5:02 AM

Published on: 03/02/2018 at 5:11AM

We have some early thoughts on the storm system expected to affect the region Sunday through Tuesday. Keep in mind that these graphics only convey probabilities through 6am Monday, as confidence on precipitation after that is low at this time. Although, confidence is increasing somewhat on overall trends Sunday through Sunday night. It appears that the best chance for heavier snow (4+ inches) will be across North Dakota and northwest South Dakota. Models are beginning to show quite a bit of warm air moving into eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota through the day Sunday and even into Monday morning. This would keep most of the precipitation rain or freezing rain. Therefore, we do see some probability for accumulating at least 0.01 in. of ice through 6am Monday. After 6am Monday, we do expect colder air to begin spreading eastward over the region, switching all precipitation over to snow, which could be heavy. Snow amounts beyond 6am Monday are still unclear though. Strong winds seem to be almost certain throughout this event, initially over the western Dakotas, then spreading eastward through the day Monday. There will likely be changes and adjustments to the forecast over the coming days, so please stay tuned to the latest forecasts as this storm system will likely have significant travel impacts.

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Today in Weather History

March 2, 1966: The blizzard began late on March 2nd in the west and moved very slowly across the state reaching the extreme east on the 4th continuing into the 5th. Snow depths ranged from 2 to 4 inches in southeast South Dakota to nearly 3 feet in north central South Dakota. Winds of 40 to 55 mph with gusts to 70 mph caused widespread blowing snow and near zero visibilities during the storm. Drifts up to 30 feet were reported in sheltered areas with open fields nearly bare. The storm caused massive livestock losses. Estimated losses were 50,000 cattle, 46,000 sheep, and 1800 hogs. The most substantial losses were in the central and north central parts of the state. The heavy snow also collapsed many structures. The storm directly caused three deaths due to exposure and three deaths were indirectly caused by the storm; 2 due to heart attacks and one by asphyxiation. The blizzard was rated as one of the most severe that has been experienced in South Dakota. Many roads were blocked for days along with many schools and businesses closed.

March 2, 2007: An area of low pressure moved slowly northeast across the central and northern plains bringing widespread snowfall along with intense winds. The combination of the falling snow and the existing snow cover resulted in blizzard conditions with visibilities to zero at times. This blizzard event was part of the same upper-level low-pressure trough that brought the heavy snowfall to the area on February 28th. Additional snowfall occurred on March 1st and 2nd across the region as a large area of snow wrapped in from the east. Widespread blizzard conditions developed by noon on March 2nd and continued into the early morning hours of the 3rd. Snowfall amounts, including the snow on February 28th, ranged from 2 inches to as much as 22 inches across central and northeast South Dakota. The heaviest snowfall amounts were across northeastern South Dakota where total snow depths were in the 25 to 30-inch range. Northwest winds of 30 to 45 mph with gusts near 60 mph brought zero visibilities at times across the area along with creating large snowdrifts. Schools, businesses, airports, roads, and interstates were closed for up to two days. Travel was not advised across the area. Also, many cars were ditched along with several accidents. Many travelers were stranded and several shelters were opened. The Emergency Operations Center was activated in Pierre, and the Governor declared the blizzard area a disaster. Some of the most significant snowfall amounts over the 3 day period included, 11 inches at Andover, Hosmer, and Redfield, 12 inches at Webster, 13 inches at Miller, 14 inches at Victor, Groton, and Clark, 15 inches at Castlewood and Summit, 16 inches at Watertown and Roy Lake, 19 inches at Sisseton, 20 inches at Milbank, 21 inches at Bryant, and 22 inches at Clear Lake.

1927: Raleigh, North Carolina was buried under 17.8 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for that location until 2000. On January 25, 2000, Raleigh saw 17.9 inches of snow in 24 hours.

1988: Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the south-central U.S. A tornado in Baton Rouge, Louisiana injured two persons, and another tornado caused five million dollars damage at the airport in Lafayette, Louisiana.

1990: Twenty-two ships were trapped by ice in the worst ice jam in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 10 years. The ice was 23 feet thick.

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Fri Mar 2	Sat Mar 3	Sun Mar 4	Mon Mar 5	Tue Mar 6	Wed Mar 7	Thu Mar 8
35°F	39°F	42°F	36°F	28°F	26°F	28°F
26°F	30°F	27°F	19°F	11°F	8°F	19°F
SE 22 MPH	SE 9 MPH	ENE 13 MPH	NNW 23 MPH	NNW 18 MPH	NNW 13 MPH	SW 9 MPH
			Precip 80%	Precip 50%		



Winter Weather Returning late this weekend into early next week

Now is the time to double check those Emergency Kits!

**BUILDING AN EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT
FOR YOUR CAR**

WHY?
Because you never know when you will encounter winter weather or an emergency road closure

AMERICA'S PrepareAthon!

Cell Phone Charger

First Aid Kit

Jumper Cables

Spare Tire

Flares

Water, Snacks

Full Tank of Gas

Sand or Kitty Litter

Mittens, Hat, Boots Warm Clothes

Flashlight

Snow Shovel and Brush

Blankets

Tow Rope

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Published on: 03/01/2018 at 1:51PM

Time to check those emergency kits! Stay tuned to the latest forecast on evolving wintery mix late this week to early next week. www.weather.gov/abr

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 28.2 F at 4:16 PM

Low Outside Temp: -3.3 F at 7:30 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 8.0 Mph at 3:11 PM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 60° in 1974

Record Low: -21° in 1913

Average High: 33°F

Average Low: 14°F

Average Precip in March: 0.06

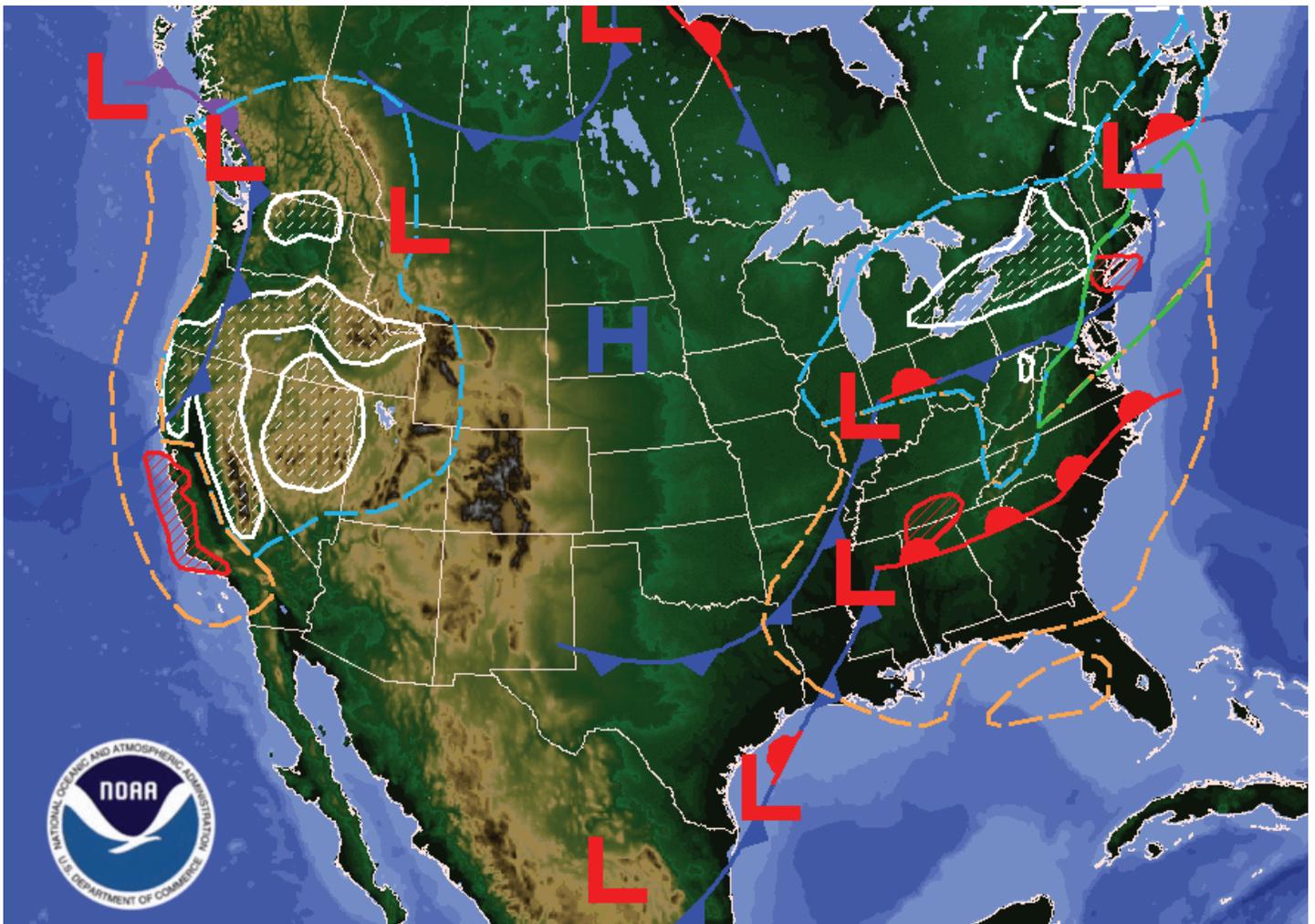
Precip to date in March: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.08

Precip Year to Date: 0.57

Sunset Tonight: 6:22 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:08 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Mar 01, 2018, issued 5:21 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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THE EYES HAVE IT!

Returning to earth after several orbital circles in outer space, a Russian cosmonaut proudly boasted, "I looked everywhere, but I didn't see God." That statement made me wonder what evidence would have been acceptable to him to prove that there is a God. Paul once wrote, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen."

The eye, our "window to the world," seems to be a very special part of God's creation. But before the eye was formed, in His unfathomable wisdom a process was set in motion: "Let there be light!" He ordered. For us to see anything light must be reflected off of an object to form a "picture" or the eye is useless.

Before God created our eyes He prepared a special place for them: He formed the bones of the skull to give them a safe place to do their work. He then fashioned our eyelids to keep out dirt and dust and made eyebrows to keep glaring light from damaging them. Finally He developed a lubricating process to keep our eyes moist and clean by causing tears to flow.

Finally, there is the cornea. It allows rays of light to pass through the iris and form a scene in our brain. And here the process becomes complete: Our brain takes what we see and enables us to make sense of God's creation, love and salvation through His word.

"Seeing" God, however, takes more than the eye. "If you search for Me with all your heart, you'll find Me."

Prayer: Open our hearts, Father, as well as our eyes to discover Your beauty and majesty, love and salvation. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 94:9b He who formed the eye, shall He not see?

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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

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News from the Associated Press

2 men sentenced in rape of unconscious woman in Box Elder

BOX ELDER, S.D. (AP) — Two men have been sentenced to prison in the rape of an unconscious woman in Box Elder.

The Rapid City Journal reports that 44-year-old Toby Rolfe was sentenced to serve eight years for raping a female acquaintance at his home in September 2016.

Fifty-year-old Colorado resident Marvin Payne was sentenced to two years for being an accessory by taking photos of Rolfe molesting the woman.

Defense attorney Ellery Grey said Rolfe and the woman were engaging in consensual sex while partying at his house, and the sexual activity continued after the woman passed out from alcohol and drugs.

Prosecutors said Rolfe didn't express remorse, take responsibility for his actions or show concern for the victim. Judge Robert Mandel agreed.

Rolfe will be eligible for parole after serving six years.

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

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Class A

Round of 16

Aberdeen Roncalli 54, Todd County 44

Belle Fourche 50, Wagner 38

Crow Creek 88, Pine Ridge 71

Madison 51, Lennox 47

McCook Central/Montrose 59, Miller 47

St. Thomas More 52, Redfield/Doland 28

Vermillion 51, Dell Rapids 48

West Central 49, Flandreau 42

Class B

Round of 16

Avon 60, Irene-Wakonda 49

Castlewood 47, DeSmet 44

Ethan 68, Lower Brule 46

Faith 57, Kadoka Area 55

Hanson 43, Timber Lake 42

Sully Buttes 59, Freeman 56, 2OT

Tripp-Delmont/Armour 55, Waubay/Summit 50

Warner 64, Ipswich 56

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

Owner-operator found for closed grocery store in Tyndall

TYNDALL, S.D. (AP) — A group of local investors that bought the recently closed lone grocery in Tyndall has found an operator.

Dan Cahoy tells the Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan that he and his wife are finalizing a lease-purchase agreement with Tyndall Market LLC.

That group bought the store from the previous owner who closed it on Jan. 31 because of insufficient sales and revenue.

The Cahoy's have experience in the small-town grocery business. They've owned Cahoy's General Store in Bonesteel since 1986. About a year ago, they purchased a Lake Andes store that had been closed for several months.

The Cahoy's plan a March 9 open house in Tyndall, which has about 1,100 residents.

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

SD Democrats fight putting 'Marsy's Law' fix on June ballot

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Emergency legislation that would place a constitutional fix to the "Marsy's Law" victims' bill of rights on the June primary ballot advanced Thursday over protests from Democratic lawmakers in South Dakota.

The Senate Committee on Appropriations voted 7-2 to approve the bill, which would put the constitutional amendment before voters on June 5 and budget \$200,000 for the secretary of state to pay for the unusual move, among other provisions.

Senate Democratic Leader Billie Sutton said he opposes spending \$200,000 to place the measure before voters in the lower-turnout primary election. Democrats don't currently have primary contests for governor or U.S. House that would draw their voters to the polls.

"I just don't think we want to continue to go down this road of putting it on the primary when we clearly know that in the general you're going to have a better turnout and more people are going to weigh in on that," said Sutton, who is the sole Democratic candidate for governor.

Secretary of State Shantel Krebs said voters have never decided a ballot question in a primary. A special election for statewide ballot questions was last held in April 2001.

The Marsy's Law constitutional amendment passed with about 60 percent support in November 2016, but critics say it's causing problems for law enforcement and prosecutors and spiking costs for counties. It guarantees crime victims and their family members the right to privacy, protection from harassment or abuse and timely notice of trial, sentencing and post-judgment proceedings.

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

Lawmakers are advancing changes to the amendment under an agreement with the campaign that has persuaded voters in several states to approve versions of Marsy's Law. Supporters say approving the tweaks in June would fix problems sooner than waiting until November and could save counties money.

Republican House Speaker Mark Mickelson, who negotiated the compromise, said he's confident Democratic voters "will support fixing this problem whenever the election is." He also said it would be helpful for the measure to stand out as the only question on the ballot.

Ryan Erwin, a strategy consultant for the Marsy's Law for All campaign, said the group would work to pass the compromise amendment if it appears on the June or November ballot. But he said it's better to clear up any ambiguity sooner rather than later.

"If there were an election tomorrow, we would be for that," he said.

The bill will require a two-thirds vote in the House and Senate to pass. An emergency provision means it would take effect immediately and would also block opponents from referring it to the ballot for a public

vote. Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard said he would sign the bill.

The actual constitutional amendment that would ask voters to make changes to Marsy's Law is advancing at the Republican-controlled Capitol as a separate piece of legislation. The state Senate voted Wednesday to approve that measure.

South Dakota would be the first state to alter Marsy's Law out of the six that have enacted it. It's named after California college student Marsalee "Marsy" Nicholas, who was stalked and killed in 1983 by an ex-boyfriend.

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

Lawmakers seek option to alter impact of ballot initiatives

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST, Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Facing the possibility that voters could change laws on several hot-button issues, Utah lawmakers are considering giving themselves the option to change any voter-approved measure before it goes into effect, a move that comes as lawmakers around the country work to limit the effects of ballot initiatives.

Utah voters could have the opportunity to consider an unusually high six ballot initiatives, ranging from medical marijuana, school funding and Medicaid expansion, making at least one lawmaker uneasy.

"I'm nervous about the concept of empowering the citizenry to intervene so swiftly and rapidly as to even derail the deliberative and systematic processes of the Legislature," said Republican Rep. Travis Seegmiller of St. George.

Opponents argue there's already a high bar to get questions on the ballot and creating an approximately six-month delay for any successful measures would undercut the will of the voters.

"I just have concerns with ... moving the goalpost in the middle of the game," said Chase Clyde with the Utah Education Association, which supports an initiative to boost annual education funding by \$715 million annually through tax increases.

The state House of Representatives will soon vote on the proposal to delay implementation and let lawmakers make changes to the voter-passed laws before they go into effect. They can already change any law once it's on the books.

Republican Rep. Brad Daw said his plan wouldn't undermine the will of the voters, but rather deal with practical challenges. Some ballot initiatives could conflict with laws passed by the Legislature, he said, while others might need money that's not yet in the budget.

"All we're saying is, if you pass your initiative in November we want to have a chance at the Legislature, for practical reasons — possibly for political reasons, but largely for practical reasons — to be able to correct any errors, to fix our budget," said Republican Rep. Norm Thurston of Provo.

Under current state law, if voters approve a ballot initiative it goes into effect after the election results are certified, usually in late November. Daw's plan would delay the effective date until May, when most other laws passed by the legislature go into effect.

Daw said there are a "freakishly high" six ballot initiatives that groups are trying to get on the ballot in November. State law requires more than 100,000 signatures on petitions from all over the state, and initiative backers will face their deadline to see if they can get on the ballot next month.

No initiative has passed in nearly 20 years, Daw said.

Utah lawmakers say they don't want to undercut the will of the voters, and Gov. Gary Herbert said he'd be reluctant to sign anything that would go against a law that passes through the ballot box.

But nationally, legislatures from the Dakotas to Maine have brushed aside voter measures and some have taken steps to hamper people's ability to get on the ballot. Since the 2016 election, lawmakers in at least 10 states have floated or approved proposals that would make it harder for voters to pass laws or change their constitutions.

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Republican lawmakers say the changes are needed to neutralize the impact of special interests, especially those from outside the state.

In Ohio, a Republican lawmaker who proposed tougher requirements to get on the ballot pointed to efforts on recreational marijuana and prescription drug prices when he said Ohioans were sick of outsiders "trying to buy our ballot." In South Dakota, the House speaker wants to ban out-of-state political contributions for ballot questions.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Yankton, Feb. 26

Port Yankton hits a wall in Pierre

After almost a year of introduction and promotion, the Port Yankton proposal seeking a constitutional amendment that would allow for the establishment of a gaming facility in Yankton ran into a brick wall in Pierre last week.

On Wednesday, the measure was heard in a Senate committee and ran into considerable opposition from groups representing already-established gaming interests, as well as from some who did not want to see the expansion of gambling in South Dakota. The measure ultimately got out of committee on a 4-3 vote, but with no recommendation attached. That wasn't a good sign.

On Thursday, the full Senate rejected the measure by a comfortable margin, but there was talk of bringing it up for reconsideration Friday.

However, Friday came and went without the measure being brought up. Since that was the final day to hear bills in their chamber of origin, it appears Port Yankton is dead, at least for now. A sponsor of the bill said other approaches on the measure may be considered. That may likely include collecting petition signatures to put the measure on the 2020 ballot — a very long 33 months away.

This was a surprising turn of events, based on what local residents have been told by those promoting the bill since it was announced last March. In public updates or media stories, promoters said they were talking with a lot of legislators who seemed receptive to the idea of granting a single casino license to Yankton, with the revenues feeding South Dakota's tax coffers. But when the bill was finally put before those lawmakers, there appeared to be little in the way of receptiveness evident. There was also a lot of background discussion going on with the bill, including the reported possibility of the Yankton Sioux and Santee Sioux tribes having a hand in running the facility (which may not have been constitutionally legal), but it didn't make any headway.

That's very frustrating — at least as much for the promoters as for anybody else. This is nearly a year of planning and selling that seemingly went for naught. Ultimately, it feels like another in a line of ideas for Yankton that offered a lot of promise, only to fade away. Perhaps that's an unfair comparison — there are still other avenues for pursuing the idea — but that's how it feels right now.

Indeed, there may still be life in the Port Yankton proposal because the issues it was created to address are still prevalent. South Dakota's threadbare budgeting desperately needs some new streams of revenue, and since increasing taxes would be unpopular, new ideas are required. Also, this state is still seeing a leakage of revenue to casinos located right across the border in Iowa; it's money that's leaving South Dakota completely.

The gambling component to the Port Yankton idea remains a point of contention for some people, and it's an issue that won't go away as long as it's attached to the idea. Some people have mentioned liking the Port Yankton idea without the gambling component, but whether it's economically possible without the gambling revenue is a big, big question. Nevertheless, non-gaming possibilities could also be created, and if it's workable, strongly considered.

So, after a year of anticipation, we must now wait to see the next step in this proposal, assuming there is one. It would seem that too much effort has been put into it to date to give up on it now, but last week's showing in Pierre was disappointing. We're curious to see what's next.

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Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, Feb. 23

Pheasant Fest proved what Sioux Falls knew all along: We can do it

If there is one thing citizens of Sioux Falls have proven over the years, it's that we know how to host a party. We show up in numbers that belie our city's size, and at a fever pitch that most organizers, from tournaments to conventions, rarely see.

Case in point: last weekend's Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic. Sioux Falls is the smallest city ever to have hosted the three-day convention and trade show.

Nonetheless, exhibition attendance pushing 29,000 made this year's event one of the biggest in Pheasants Forever history. Saturday night's dinner banquet? The organization's largest ever.

Sioux Falls has nailed a host-city challenge yet again, with an estimated local economic impact of \$5.6 million. But the implications of the Pheasant Fest success go well beyond being able to bask in a self-congratulatory afterglow.

As Teri Schmidt, executive director of the Sioux Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau, put it, "Sioux Falls proved itself, that without a doubt we can host large conventions. ... (It) will open a lot of other doors for us with other convention groups."

After a dozen years of the CVB relentlessly lobbying Pheasants Forever, the final necessary piece of the puzzle slid into place with the opening of the Denny Sanford Premier Center. The contiguous floor space it added to the Convention Center/Arena footprint finally provided the room Sioux Falls needed to land something of this size.

And this was just the latest test of our punching-above-our-weight mettle.

We've had to prove ourselves to the NCAA at both Division II and Division I levels and more than delivered. We've had to prove we can host women's basketball Elite Eight. We've had to prove we can host the NSIC (this weekend marks the fifth year in a row that the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference men's and women's basketball tournament has been played here).

And since the Sports Authority netted the Summit League Conference men's and women's basketball tournaments for Sioux Falls in 2009, we've regularly set and broken attendance records. Next month, the Summit League tourney returns to the city for the 10th consecutive year.

So, after passing what has arguably been our biggest test to date with flying colors, it's time again to take stock and set about achieving new goals.

It's worth noting that way back during the discussion around whether to build an events center — and where to put it — the CVB talked specifically about Pheasant Fest and what Sioux Falls needed to do to land it. Over the years, we've taken those steps. We've made that progress. Then, once we got it, we nailed it. That's something to be proud of as a city.

But rest on our laurels we cannot. As we look at options to upgrade or replace the aging Arena, it is clear we need more floor space — and not just any floor space, but appropriate floor space that fills the bill for drawing more large conferences and conventions.

And in the shorter term, we need to remember that March is upon us. From NCAA hockey to the previously mentioned Summit League basketball tournaments, there are still challenges to continue this story of Sioux Falls as a draw.

We think we're up for it.

Daily Leader, Madison, Feb. 28

Moving Beadle statue seems a bit symbolic

After 81 years, the statue of William Henry Harrison Beadle has been moved from its location at the southwest corner of the Dakota State University campus.

Considering all that's happened at the university in the last eight decades, it's remarkable it stayed as long as it did in that spot.

The southwest corner was more like a park in 1937, with grass, shrubs and an outdoor amphitheater known as the "Garden Theater." Lowry Hall, which is now being demolished to make way for the Madison

CyberLabs, wasn't constructed until 1958.

Since then, most of the buildings at DSU were constructed: the Mundt Library, Science Center, Trojan Center, the Tyrell physical plant, Smith-Zimmermann Museum, five dormitories, the Fieldhouse, Kennedy Center and the Beacom Institute. Beadle's statue stood proudly through all those years.

But in real life, Beadle seemingly never stood still. He was born in Indiana, went to school in Michigan, enlisted in the Union Army and rose to the rank of brigadier general. He went back to school to get his law degree and was appointed surveyor-general of the Dakota Territory by President Ulysses S. Grant. He wrote the school lands provision in South Dakota's Constitution, which was so admired it was adopted by six other new states, preserving 22 million acres of the West for schools. He served as DSU's president for 17 years, then continued as a history professor.

So we think it's more symbolic for Beadle to be moving than standing still.

Since the Madison CyberLabs building required the statue and a WWI memorial to be moved, a campus committee was formed to determine their new locations. The statue will be in the center of campus, between the Habeger Science Center and the Tunheim Classroom Building. Beadle will face west, symbolizing the westward expansion of the U.S. that he was prominent in developing.

We're eager to see the new location honoring this great man, and we expect future generations will learn of his service to education and South Dakota.

South Dakota school cancels student walkout amid backlash

GARRETSON, S.D. (AP) — School administrators in eastern South Dakota have canceled a planned student walkout after talk of it drew hundreds of negative comments on Facebook.

With administrators' support, students at Garretson High School planned a 17-minute walkout and period of silence to honor the 17 people killed in the recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida. Garretson students joined others nationwide in scheduling the walkout for April 20, which will mark the 19th anniversary of the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado.

Student Peyton Sage, 18, told the Argus Leader that her Facebook post about the event drew backlash from angry adults.

"We had over 300 Facebook comments with adults just throwing a huge fit about it," she said. "They were just being really, really rude. They were insulting our intelligence ... making us feel like we did not have a voice."

The comments ranged from opinions on the Second Amendment to attacks on the student organizers. Some parents' comments expressed concern about how the walkout would affect students.

Superintendent Guy Johnson said many of the people commenting made assumptions about the event without understanding its purpose. Nevertheless, Principal Chris Long canceled the event Tuesday in response to the criticism.

Resident Misten Long, who recently moved to the area with her husband and young children, expressed disappointment over the principal's decision. Long followed the comments on Facebook, and said she believes school is a space where students should learn how politics work.

"I really felt like he was caving to the pressure of some vocal members of the community," Long said.

Sage said she and others still plan to demonstrate and will accept the school's consequences. She encouraged students throughout South Dakota to follow her lead.

"They tried to silence us, but we're still going to make a statement," Sage said. "We're still going to take a stand, and we're still going to be walking out of the school on April 20."

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In ND Senate race, Democrat Heitkamp takes GOP tone on taxes

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and JAMES MacPHERSON, Associated Press

BISMARCK, North Dakota (AP) — In places like Boston and Los Angeles, Democrats are blasting the new tax law as a boon to the rich and a corporate giveaway. In North Dakota, Sen. Heidi Heitkamp is lashing it, too. But in the VFW halls and farm co-ops of her state's wind-swept prairies where cows outnumber people, Democrat Heitkamp sounds more like a deficits-hating Republican — circa 2011 — than she does her coastal colleagues.

"Most people in North Dakota — they don't want to pass debt on to their kids," she told The Associated Press this week. "And this is \$1.5 trillion worth of debt."

The first-term senator's line of attack on the new tax cuts could well be pivotal in her fight to hold her seat and maintain the Democrats' toehold in deeply Republican North Dakota. With the entrance last month of a top-shelf challenger, Republican Rep. Kevin Cramer, the race has emerged as an early indicator of whether Democrats can persuade conservative and moderate voters that the tax deal is bad policy, even if they begin to see their own paychecks grow.

"North Dakotans are pretty smart people. And they know that when you give somebody a tax break, they know that means either you have to cut a budget if you're going to be responsible, or you have to pass that debt on to our citizens and our children," Heitkamp said.

Cramer, on the other hand, told the AP last week: "She opposed the tax cuts and she could not have been more wrong."

Heitkamp, a former gas company executive, secured her seat by reflecting her state's conservative bent. She's largely backed the oil-rich state's corporate interests on energy, and has opposed some restrictions on guns. She is one of the least reliably partisan Democratic votes in the Senate.

President Donald Trump considered her a top target for persuasion as he launched his ultimately failed effort to win bipartisan support for his tax overhaul plan, which slashes corporate tax rates permanently and temporarily cuts taxes for some 80 percent of American households.

Heitkamp hitched a ride on Air Force One when Trump flew to Bismarck to promote the plan, but ultimately didn't break from her party. She's now one of 10 Democratic senators seeking re-election this year in states Trump carried in 2016, including five running against Republican House members who supported the tax bill.

While Cramer has broadly accused Democrats as blindly criticizing the measure as "a tax break for the wealthy," Heitkamp, a former state tax commissioner, spends less time than her party colleagues stoking populist anger and more time on the long-term fiscal impact. At times she essentially sides with the conservative wing of the GOP, which also once fretted about the bill's impact on the debt, but voted for it anyway.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the legislation will add \$1.4 trillion to the national debt over the next decade.

"When you look at the impact of this bill long term, I just didn't buy the economic growth projections," she said. "We're going to explode the debt and deficit, so it's fiscally irresponsible."

Heitkamp's message plays to North Dakotans' frugal streak.

After an unprecedented oil bonanza prompted billions in increased state spending over the past decade, Republican Doug Burgum won the governorship in 2016 on a message of belt-tightening, and he balanced the budget last year through a series of austerity measures.

The economy in the state is on an upswing — with an unemployment rate of less than 3 percent — suggesting voters may not be clamoring for the tax breaks headed their way.

But other trends in the state are working against Heitkamp.

The new law doubles the standard deduction and favors states with low state and local taxes. Those changes are likely to disproportionately benefit North Dakotans, who benefit from lower-than-average property taxes, income taxes and housing costs, giving them less mortgage interest to claim.

The doubling of the standard deduction in the new law will allow, for example, a married North Dakota

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couple with two children earning a combined \$85,000 to pay roughly \$2,400 less in federal taxes in 2018, North Dakota Tax Commissioner Ryan Rauschenberger said.

"We're one of the states that came out of this debate with one of the highest degrees of benefit nationally," said Rauschenberger, a Republican.

National Republican groups are ready to pounce on Heitkamp for her tax vote, and other instances where she lined up with her party.

Unlike in 2012, when she beat Rep. Rick Berg by a scant 3,000 votes, Heitkamp now has a voting record Republicans can attack, including her recent vote against a measure to ban abortions after 20 weeks, said Lance Trover, a former strategist with the National Republican Senatorial Committee. North Dakota's Legislature in recent years has passed some of the strictest abortion laws in the country.

"Now, she's made some votes, including on tax cuts," Troyer said.

But Heitkamp says "so be it," if the tax vote, which she calls a "defining" decision, makes her a one-term senator.

Her tax vote is seen as a vulnerability, she says. But "quite honestly I think this tax vote is a vulnerability for the other side, And you know that is a discussion I'll have any day of the week with anyone."

South Dakota football coach arrested for drunken driving

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota State University's football coach is apologizing to his family and athletics officials and staff for his drunken driving arrest.

The Brookings Register reports longtime coach John Stiegelmeier admitted Wednesday to driving under the influence Jan. 27. Stiegelmeier says he didn't think about how much he had to drink before he went out to get some food that night.

Stiegelmeier says his poor decision to drive intoxicated reflects on him and not the football team or staff.

Stiegelmeier is the winningest football coach in South Dakota State University history, leading the Jackrabbits to a 148-97 record in 21 seasons.

Athletic Director Justin Sell said in a statement that the arrest is out of character for Stiegelmeier and doesn't reflect on values of the football program.

Information from: Brookings Register, <http://www.brookingsregister.com/>

Midwest economy: February state-by-state glance

By The Associated Press

The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began formally surveying its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions.

The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey to consult supply managers and business leaders. Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss oversees the report.

The overall index ranges between 0 and 100. Growth neutral is 50, and a figure greater than 50 indicates growth in that factor over the next three to six months.

Here are the state-by-state results for February:

Arkansas: The overall index for Arkansas advanced to 55.4 from January's 50.0. Components of the index were new orders at 53.4, production or sales at 65.4, delivery lead time at 47.9, inventories at 59.1 and employment at 51.2. "Average hourly earnings for Arkansas private sector workers expanded by a solid 2.9 percent over the past 12 months. Nondurable manufacturing in the state is growing at a very strong pace, while Arkansas durable-goods producers continue to expand at a slow rate," Goss said.

Iowa: Iowa's overall index climbed to a very healthy 59.4 last month from 58.0 in January. That included new orders at 61.5, production or sales at 63.8, delivery lead time at 56.4, employment at 59.1 and inventories at 56.1. "Average hourly earnings for Iowa private sector workers expanded by a tepid 1.2 percent over the past 12 months. Nondurable manufacturing in the state is growing at very strong pace, and Iowa

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durable-goods producers continue to expand at an equally healthy rate," Goss said.

Kansas: The overall Kansas index advanced to 62.4 from January's strong 59.6. The components were new orders at 64.7, production or sales at 66.6, delivery lead time at 59.7, employment at 62.1 and inventories at 59.0. "Average hourly earnings for Kansas private sector workers expanded by a tepid 1.6 percent over the past 12 months. Both nondurable manufacturing and durable-goods producers in the state are expanding at a very slow pace," Goss said.

Minnesota: The state's overall index rose to 57.6 last month from 55.8 in January. Components of the overall index were new orders at 62.2, production or sales at 59.8, delivery lead time at 51.8, inventories at 52.1 and employment at 62.2. "Average hourly earnings for Minnesota private sector workers expanded by a solid 3.2 percent over the past 12 months. Both nondurable- and durable-goods firms in the state are growing a steady pace," said Goss.

Missouri: Missouri's overall index jumped to 58.0 in February from 53.6 in January. Index components were new orders at 61.9, production or sales at 58.2, delivery lead time at 50.0, inventories at 58.8 and employment at 61.1. "Average hourly earnings for Missouri private sector workers expanded by a very healthy 4.5 percent over the past 12 months," Goss said. Durable-goods manufacturers are expanding at a very strong rate, while nondurable-goods producers are growing slower, he said.

Nebraska: The state's overall hit 58.3 last month, compared with 53.7 in January. Components of the index were new orders at 58.1, production or sales at 65.5, delivery lead time at 58.8, inventories at 53.1 and employment at 55.8. "Average hourly earnings for Nebraska private sector workers expanded by a very healthy 5.4 percent over the past 12 months. Nondurable-goods manufacturers are expanding at a very healthy rate, while durable-goods producers are experiencing pullbacks in economic activity," he said.

North Dakota: The overall index for North Dakota rose above growth neutral last month, hitting 53.3, compared with 49.6 in January. Components of the overall index were new orders at 54.6, production or sales at 51.7, delivery lead time at 58.3, employment at 57.8 and inventories at 43.9. "Both durable-and nondurable-goods manufacturers in the state are expanding at a slow but positive pace," said Goss.

Oklahoma: Boosted by higher oil prices, Oklahoma's overall index has remained above growth neutral for the past seven months and rose to 60.5 in February from 57.8 in January. Components of the overall index were new orders at 62.7, production or sales at 64.8, delivery lead time at 57.6, inventories at 57.2 and employment at 60.2. "Average hourly earnings for Oklahoma private sector workers expanded by a solid 3.3 percent over the past 12 months," Goss said.

South Dakota: South Dakota's overall index slipped to 56.6 last month from 56.8 in January. Index components were new orders at 59.4, production or sales at 61.9, delivery lead time at 50.2, inventories at 54.2 and employment at 57.1. "Average hourly earnings for South Dakota private-sector workers improved by a tepid 1.3 percent over the past 12 months. Both durable-and nondurable-goods producers in the state are expanding at a healthy pace," he said.

Confidential settlement ban voted down by House committee

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota House lawmakers have shelved a bill that would have barred government officials from negotiating confidential settlements.

The House Judiciary Committee voted 10-3 Wednesday to reject the measure. It had cleared the Senate.

The Argus Leader reports that state law currently allows state and local officials to negotiate confidential settlements, which lets them hide payouts and misconduct such as sexual harassment.

Republican Sen. Arthur Rusch's bill would have required that settlements negotiated by public entities be public. Opponents of the bill argued that negotiating confidential settlements saves taxpayer dollars.

Republican Rep. Tona Rozum says she was concerned sexual harassment victims' names could become known if public entities couldn't sign confidential settlements.

Montana-Dakota Utilities expanding North Dakota wind farm

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Montana-Dakota Utilities Co. will expand its North Dakota wind farm with a project developed by ALLETE Clean Energy.

Montana-Dakota owns the 43 turbines at Thunder Spirit Wind, near Hettinger, which were built by ALLETE. The expansion by ALLETE will add another 16 turbines at a cost of about \$85 million.

Montana-Dakota says the purchase of the expanded wind farm will boost its renewable energy from 22 percent to 27 percent. The North Dakota Public Service Commission approved Montana-Dakota's request for an expansion in November 2017. The PSC said electricity produced at the site is expected to be more economical than energy purchased on the market.

ALLETE Clean Energy is a subsidiary of ALLETE, headquartered in Duluth, Minnesota.

Father, son plead guilty to fatal shooting in Martin

MARTIN, S.D. (AP) — A father and his adult son have pleaded guilty to fatally shooting a man in Martin in 2016.

The South Dakota Attorney General's Office says 57-year-old Daniel Ceplecha and 23-year-old Rangler Ceplecha each pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter in the death of Moses Red Bear.

Firefighters found Red Bear's body while extinguishing a grass fire in western Bennett County in November 2016. Earlier in the day police investigated a possible homicide at a residence in Martin, but didn't find a body.

The father and son face a sentence of up to life in prison. Sentencing is June 6.

Rapid City jail worker pleads guilty to wrongdoing

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City woman accused of having sexual contact with an inmate while employed at the Pennington County Jail has been given a suspended one-year jail sentence after pleading guilty to a lesser offense.

Thirty-eight-year-old Kimberly Johnson was accused of having a romantic relationship with a 39-year-old male inmate last September, while working as a staff assistant in the jail's medical department. She was fired after the alleged incident.

The Rapid City Journal reports Johnson on Monday pleaded guilty to delivering prohibited items to an inmate. Her lawyer says letters she sent to an inmate under a pseudonym constituted contraband.

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

Trump to Persian Gulf: Resolve Qatar crisis or no Camp David

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump wants to bring feuding Persian Gulf leaders to Camp David for a show of solidarity with the United States. But there are strings attached: No breakthrough in the Qatar crisis, no Camp David.

A potential summit of the six-country Gulf Cooperation Council in May at the prestigious presidential retreat in Maryland's Catoctin Mountains will be scuttled unless Qatar and neighbors Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain are on track to resolve the nearly year-long spat. A pair of Trump administration emissaries will deliver the message next week as they crisscross the Gulf in a renewed bid to try to end the crisis.

It's not clear that the Gulf countries even want to attend such a summit, which would require leaders who have spent the last eight months bashing Qatar to put all of that aside and pose for friendly group photo-ops. But if there's one trait that unifies Qatar and its neighbors, it's an unwavering desire to show they're simpatico with Trump.

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Yet even as the White House holds out hope for a summit, it's telling Gulf nations there's no sense in proceeding as long as the quarreling countries are still not on speaking terms, according to several U.S. officials and others briefed on the situation. There's also concern that holding the summit while the crisis is still raging could lead to drama that would reflect poorly on Trump the host, the individuals said.

Short of one side or the other fully capitulating, it's unclear what steps the countries could take that would demonstrate enough progress to merit moving ahead with the summit. But one proposal being floated by the U.S. is for Qatar's neighbors to end the air blockade that has prevented Qatari flights from landing in the other nations or using their airspace, officials said.

There was no comment from the White House or the embassies of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. A Saudi official said the notion that the U.S. was pressing Saudi Arabia to end the crisis to make way for a summit was "false," adding that the leaders of both countries "are keen on continuing cooperation between both our countries and between the G.C.C. and the U.S.A."

All of the officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to comment by name.

Qatar has been under siege since early June, when its neighbors severed ties over claims the small, gas-rich monarchy was funding terrorism, disrupting Gulf unity and fomenting opposition across the region. They cut Qatar's air, sea and land routes, creating a de facto blockade. The countries vowed to isolate Qatar economically until it heeds their demands, but Qatar has insisted it can survive indefinitely on its own. Eight months later, the crisis is at a standstill, with both sides dug in firmer than ever.

Early on, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson tried to broker a resolution, even shuttling between the countries for indirect talks. When that failed, the United States stepped back, and has largely left it to Kuwait — another GCC country — to mediate.

Since then, the U.S. has offered cautious praise for steps Qatar has taken to address concerns about lax financial regulations that allowed funds to flow to terror groups. But those steps have failed to satisfy Saudi Arabia and the other neighbors, whose list of demands also includes shutting down Qatar-based news network Al-Jazeera and cutting ties with Islamist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar claims those demands constitute a major infringement on its sovereignty.

"Qatar's steps in addressing Trump's concerns regarding terror financing gave room for Tillerson to make the case to Trump that at least for Washington, the U.S. concerns were largely addressed, and the outstanding differences between Qatar and its neighbors had become a distraction," said Andrew Bowen, who studies the Persian Gulf at the conservative American Enterprise Institute.

In a fresh push to resolve the dispute, the Trump administration is sending Tim Lenderking, the top State Department official for the Persian Gulf, and retired Marine Corps. Gen. Anthony Zinni to the region to meet with officials from the countries involved in the dispute.

The renewed U.S. involvement comes as Trump prepares for a string of visits by leaders from the feuding nations. Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, will visit Washington in mid-March, and the UAE's Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed, is expected in the coming weeks as well.

Trump spoke by phone this week with both leaders, as well as with Qatar's ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. The White House issued nearly identical descriptions of all three calls, saying Trump had discussed "a range of security and economic issues" without mentioning whether the regional crisis even came up.

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

Turnover, investigations have Trump administration adrift

By **JULIE PACE, ZEKE MILLER and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rattled by two weeks of muddled messages, departures and spitting matches between the president and his own top officials, Donald Trump is facing a shrinking circle of trusted advisers and a staff that's grim about any prospect of a reset.

Even by the standards of Trump's often chaotic administration, the announcement of Hope Hicks' im-

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minent exit spread new levels of anxiety across the West Wing and cracked open disputes that had been building since the White House's botched handling of domestic violence allegations against a senior aide late last month.

One of Trump's most loyal and longest-serving aides, Hicks often served as human buffer between the unpredictable president and the business of government. One official on Thursday compared the instability caused by her departure to that of a chief of staff leaving the administration — though that prospect, too, remained a possibility given the questions that have arisen about John Kelly's competence.

Hicks' departure comes as special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation appears to be circling the Oval Office, with prosecutors questioning Trump associates about both his business dealings before he became president and his actions in office, according to people with knowledge of the interviews. Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, has also been weakened after being stripped of his high-level security clearance amid revelations about potential conflicts of interest.

The biggest unknown is how the mercurial Trump will respond to Hicks' departure and Kushner's more limited access, according to some of the 16 White House officials, congressional aides and outside advisers interviewed by The Associated Press, most of whom insisted on anonymity in order to disclose private conversations and meetings. Besides Kushner and his wife, presidential daughter Ivanka Trump, most remaining White House staffers were not part of Trump's close-knit 2016 campaign. One person who speaks to Trump regularly said the president has become increasingly wistful about the camaraderie of that campaign.

Rarely has a modern president confronted so many crises and controversies across so many fronts at the same time. After 13 months in office, there's little expectation among many White House aides and outside allies that Trump can quickly find his footing or attract new, top-flight talent to the West Wing. And some Republican lawmakers, who are eyeing a difficult political landscape in November's midterm elections, have begun to let private frustrations ooze out in public.

"There is no standard operating practice with this administration," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota. "Every day is a new adventure for us."

Thune's comments described the White House's peculiar rollout Thursday of controversial new aluminum and steel tariffs. White House aides spent Wednesday night and Thursday morning scrambling to steer the president away from an announcement on an unfinished policy, with even Kelly in the dark about Trump's plans. Aides believed they had succeeded in getting Trump to back down and hoped to keep television cameras away from an event with industry executives so the president couldn't make a surprise announcement. But Trump summoned reporters into the Cabinet Room anyway and declared that the U.S. would levy penalties of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum imports.

Some of Trump's populist supporters cheered the move. The stock market, which Trump looks to for validation for his economic policies, plunged.

Some officials are bracing for more departures. On Thursday, NBC News reported that the White House was preparing to replace national security adviser H.R. McMaster as early as next month.

White House Sarah Huckabee Sanders told "Fox & Friends" on Friday that "Gen. McMaster isn't going anywhere."

As for talk of a White House in upheaval, Sanders pointed out the tax cuts passed late last year: "If they want to call it chaos, fine, but we call it success and productivity and we're going to keep plugging along."

For those remaining on the job, the turbulence has been relentless. Just two weeks ago, Kelly, the general brought in to bring order, was himself on the ropes for his handling of the domestic violence allegations against a close aide, Rob Porter. Trump was said to be deeply irritated by the negative press coverage of Kelly's leadership during the controversy and considering firing him. But first, the president planned to give his chief of staff a chance to defend himself before reporters in the briefing room and gauge the reaction, according to two people with knowledge of the episode. The briefing, however, was canceled after the school shooting in Parkland, Florida. Kelly's standing has stabilized somewhat as media attention to the Porter issue has waned.

One Kelly backer said the chief of staff's standing remains tenuous, in part because of his clashes with

Kushner over policy, personnel and White House structure. The tensions were exacerbated by Kelly's decision to downgrade Kushner's security clearance because the senior adviser had not been permanently approved for the highest level of access.

Kushner and Ivanka Trump, who also serves as a senior White House adviser, have been frustrated by Kelly's attempt to restrict their access to the president, and they perceive his new crackdown on clearances as a direct shot at them, according to White House aides and outside advisers. Kelly, in turn, has grown frustrated with what he views as the couple's freelancing. He blames them for changing Trump's mind at the last minute and questions what exactly they do all day, according to one White House official and an outside ally.

The ethics questions dogging Kushner relate to both his personal financial interests and his dealings in office with foreign officials. Intelligence officials expressed concern that Kushner's business dealings were a topic of discussion in conversations he was having with foreign officials about foreign policy issues of interest to the U.S. government, a former intelligence official said. Separately, The New York Times reported that two companies made loans worth more than half a billion dollars to Kushner's family real estate firm after executives met with Kushner at the White House.

Allies of Kushner and Ivanka Trump insist they have no plans to leave the White House in the near future. As for Kelly, he appeared to hint at his tough spot during an event Thursday at the Department of Homeland Security, where he served as secretary before departing for the White House.

"The last thing I wanted to do was walk away from one of the great honors of my life, being the secretary of homeland security," he said at the agency's 15th anniversary celebration in Washington. "But I did something wrong and God punished me, I guess."

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking and Catherine Lucey contributed to this report.

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China weighs whether to retaliate over Trump's tariff hikes

By JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — After threatening to retaliate if U.S. President Donald Trump raised trade barriers, Chinese leaders need to decide whether his hikes in steel and aluminum tariffs justify starting a fight that might disrupt access to one of China's biggest markets.

Beijing had no immediate reaction Friday to Trump's plan for tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum. Asian stock markets fell amid talk of a "trade war."

Chinese leaders need to weigh the need to back up threats with action against the risk of disrupting U.S. market access for smartphones and other exports that matter more to the economy than metals.

"China will definitely respond. It doesn't want to be seen as weak. But it will be relatively restrained," said economist Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics. "They don't want to be seen as a party that is wrecking the international trading system."

Beijing has accused Trump of undermining global trade regulation by taking action over steel, technology policy and other disputes under U.S. law instead of through the World Trade Organization.

Chinese officials have appealed to the White House since last March to avoid hurting both sides by disrupting aluminum trade. Their tone hardened after Trump launched a probe in August of whether Beijing improperly pressures companies to hand over technology and in January raised duties on Chinese solar modules and washing machines.

"China will take necessary measures to defend its interests," a Commerce Ministry official, Wang Hejun, said in a statement this week.

Japan and South Korea, both U.S. allies and major exporters of steel and aluminum, said they would ask for exemptions from the tariff hike, which Trump justified in part on national security grounds.

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"We don't think imports from Japan, an ally, have any effect at all on U.S. national security," said Japan's trade and industry minister, Hiroshige Seko, at a news conference.

A South Korean trade envoy, Kim Hyun-chong, met with Trump's chief economic adviser, Gary Cohn, and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross to "strongly demand" they keep the impact on South Korean companies to a minimum, according to a trade ministry statement.

The president of the European Union's governing body, Jean-Claude Juncker, said the 28-nation trade bloc will retaliate if Trump follows through.

"Risks of trade wars are rising, but should be contained for now," said Cesar Rojas and Ebrahim Rahbari of Citigroup in a report. "We expect U.S. major trade partners' reaction to be moderate, including by taking cases to the WTO."

Adding to the political stakes in China, Trump's announcement came ahead of next week's meeting of its ceremonial legislature, the year's most prominent political event. Action against American companies or goods would compete for attention with the National People's Congress, which the ruling Communist Party uses to showcase its economic plans.

Beijing has an array of high-profile targets for retaliation including suppliers of soybeans, the biggest American export to China. A curb on purchases could hurt farm state voters who supported Trump.

"We've clearly heard from the Chinese" that soybeans "are definitely one of the largest things that could be targeted," said Jake Parker, vice president for China operations for the U.S.-China Business Council.

However, Parker said, soybeans might be held for use later on a bigger issue such as the "301" investigation into Beijing's technology policy, which could have a broader impact.

Trade makes up a smaller share of China's economy than it did a decade ago. But export-driven industries support millions of jobs, raising the potential political cost of any disruption.

The United States, China's No. 2 trade partner after the EU, buys about 20 percent of Chinese exports but allows Beijing to run multibillion-dollar surpluses that offset its deficits with other partners.

Last year, China exported goods worth \$2.80 to the United States for every \$1 of American goods it bought, according to Chinese data. Its trade surplus of \$275.8 billion with the United States was equal to 65 percent of its global total.

"That makes China the more vulnerable partner in this," said Kuijs.

Also Friday, the Commerce Ministry expressed "grave concern" about a trade policy report sent to the U.S. Congress by the White House this week that accuses China of moving away from market principles. It pledges to prevent Beijing from disrupting global trade.

The ministry said Beijing has satisfied its trade obligations and appealed to Washington to settle market access and subsidy disputes through negotiation.

AP writers Gerry Shih in Beijing, Tong-hyung Kim in Seoul, South Korea, and Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

Explosions rock Burkina Faso capital in extremist attack

By BRAHIMA OUADRAOGO, Associated Press

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso (AP) — Gunfire and explosions rocked Burkina Faso's capital early Friday in what the police said was a suspected attack by Islamic extremists.

By midday the gunfire became intermittent and helicopters flew over the French Embassy in Ouagadougou. Witnesses at the national television office which faces the French Embassy told The Associated Press that five people came in a pick-up truck in front of the embassy and started shooting after saying "Allahu Akhbar." They then set fire to the truck and began shooting.

Heavy smoke rose from the army joint chief of staff's office in Ouagadougou, and witnesses said loud explosions were still heard around the military headquarters in the western part of the capital's city center and far from the other area under attack that houses the embassies, the prime minister's office and United Nations offices.

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Burkina Faso's police director general Jean Bosco Kienou told AP "the form is that of a terrorist attack." Plumes of black smoke could be seen above the army offices in western Ouagadougou where police and gendarmerie responded. Barricades were erected to keep people from all areas under assault.

Burkina Faso's police said the defense and security forces are responding to attacks around the Prime Minister's office and the United Nations.

France's foreign affairs ministry published a message on their website warning of gunfire in the capital, and said that security forces are now intervening and enhanced security measures could be taken by authorities. It recommended people stay off the streets and remain in a safe place.

Ouagadougou has been attacked by Islamic extremists targeting foreigners at least twice in the past few years.

In August, extremists opened fire as patrons dined on a Sunday night at the Aziz Istanbul restaurant, killing at least 18 people. In January 2016, Islamic extremists attacked another cafe popular with foreigners in the capital, killing 30 people.

Both times security forces have struggled to contain the violence, waiting for hours before intervening at the scene.

Islamic extremist threats also moved into new parts of Burkina Faso earlier this month with an attack by 10 people in an eastern town that killed an officer and wounded two others. Increased attacks staged at the border with Mali have forced thousands to flee over the past year. An Australian doctor who had spent decades treating civilians was also abducted along this border and remains missing.

The region is also now the home of a Burkina Faso extremist figure, Malam Dicko, who has collaborated with militants across the border in Mali. Among his objectives has been seeking to end the use of French, the former colonizer's language, in regional schools. Burkinabe forces backed by French military counterparts have tried to capture Dicko but he remains at large.

Associated Press writer Carley Petesch in Dakar, Senegal contributed to this report.

Trump: "Trade wars are good, and easy to win"

By KEN THOMAS and PAUL WISEMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday insisted "trade wars are good, and easy to win," a bold claim that will likely find many skeptics, including those on Wall Street and even some Republicans.

Trump has declared that the U.S. will impose punishing tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, escalating tensions with China and other trading partners and raising the prospect of higher prices for American consumers and companies. After the announcement Thursday, stocks closed sharply lower on Wall Street. China has expressed "grave concern."

Early Friday, Trump took to Twitter to defend himself: "When a country (USA) is losing many billions of dollars on trade with virtually every country it does business with, trade wars are good, and easy to win. Example, when we are down \$100 billion with a certain country and they get cute, don't trade anymore—we win big. It's easy!"

He later tweeted: "Our steel industry is in bad shape. IF YOU DON'T HAVE STEEL, YOU DON'T HAVE A COUNTRY!"

His announcement came only after an intense internal White House debate. It brought harsh criticism from some Republicans and roiled financial markets with concerns about economic ramifications.

Overseas, Trump's words brought a stinging rebuke from the president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, who denounced his plan as "a blatant intervention to protect U.S. domestic industry." Juncker said the EU would take retaliatory action if Trump followed through.

While not immediately offering a specific response on what it would do, the Chinese Commerce Ministry statement said: "The Chinese side expresses grave concern." The ministry said Beijing has satisfied its trade obligations and appealed to Washington to settle disputes through negotiation.

Beijing faces mounting complaints from Washington, Europe and other trading partners that it improperly

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subsidizes exports and hampers access to its markets in violation of its free-trade commitments.

Canada, the largest source of steel and aluminum imports in the U.S., said it would "take responsive measures" to defend its trade interests and workers if restrictions were imposed on Canadian steel and aluminum products.

Should restrictions be imposed on Canadian steel and aluminum products, Canada will take responsive measures to defend its trade interests and workers."

Trump, who has long railed against what he deems unfair trade practices by China and others, summoned steel and aluminum executives to the White House and said next week he would levy penalties of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on aluminum imports. The tariffs, he said, would remain for "a long period of time," but it was not immediately clear if certain trading partners would be exempt.

However, critics raised the specter of a trade war, suggesting other countries will retaliate or use national security as a reason to impose trade penalties of their own.

Trump's move will likely raise steel and aluminum prices here. That's good for U.S. manufacturers. But it's bad for companies that use the metals, and it prompted red flags from industries ranging from tool and dye makers to beer distributors to manufacturers of air conditioners. The American International Automobile Dealers Association warned it would drive prices up "substantially."

"This is going to have fallout on our downstream suppliers, particularly in the automotive, machinery and aircraft sectors," said Wendy Cutler, a former U.S. trade official who is now vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute. "What benefits one industry can hurt another. What saves one job can jeopardize another."

Steel-consuming companies said steel tariffs imposed in 2002 by President George W. Bush ended up wiping out 200,000 U.S. jobs.

The decision had been strenuously debated within the White House, with top officials such as economic adviser Gary Cohn and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis raising concerns.

The penalties were pushed by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, an economist who has favored taking aggressive action.

Mattis, in a memo to Commerce, said U.S. military requirements for steel and aluminum represent about 3 percent of U.S. production and that the department was "concerned about the negative impact on our key allies" of any tariffs. He added that targeted tariffs would be preferable to global quotas or tariffs.

Plans for Trump to make an announcement were thrown into doubt for a time because of the internal divisions. The actual event caught some top White House officials off guard and left aides scrambling for details. Key Senate offices also did not receive advance notice.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the decision "shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone," noting that the president had been talking about it "for decades."

But some Republicans in Congress were plainly upset.

"The president is proposing a massive tax increase on American families. Protectionism is weak, not strong," said Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska. "You'd expect a policy this bad from a leftist administration, not a supposedly Republican one."

GOP Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said, "Every time you do this, you get a retaliation and agriculture is the No. 1 target." House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said through a spokesman he hoped Trump would "consider the unintended consequences of this idea and look at other approaches before moving forward."

Trump met with more than a dozen executives, including representatives from U.S. Steel Corp., Arcelor Mittal, Nucor, JW Aluminum and Century Aluminum. The industry leaders urged Trump to act, saying they had been unfairly hurt by a glut of imports.

"We are not protectionist. We want a level playing field," said Dave Burritt, president and chief executive officer at U.S. Steel.

Associated Press writers Lolita C. Baldor, Zeke Miller, Darlene Superville, Tom Krisher and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Follow Thomas on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/KThomasDC> and Wiseman at <https://twitter.com/Paul-WisemanAP>.

Suicide bomb in Afghan capital kills young girl, wounds 15

By AMIR SHAH, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A suicide car bombing in the eastern part of the Afghan capital on Friday morning killed at least one person, a young girl, and wounded 15, Afghan officials said.

Basir Mujahid, spokesman for the Kabul police chief, said the blast occurred in the neighborhood of Qabil Bay, in an area that is home to a police station, the government's customs offices and some guest houses.

Mohammad Musa Zahir, a doctor at the area's Wazir Akbar Khan hospital, said 15 people were also wounded in the blast, including five children and two women.

Najib Danish, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said the suicide bomber targeted a "convoy of foreigners" but did not offer further details or clarify whether it was foreign forces who were targeted or contractors.

No non-Afghan casualties were reported in the bombing. NATO forces in Kabul confirmed the attack was a suicide car bombing.

Capt. Tom Gresback, spokesman for the NATO-led forces, said in a statement that "no Resolute Support service members were injured in the incident," referring to the mission's name.

No militant group claimed responsibility for the attack.

At the blast site in the Qabil Bay neighborhood, blood pooled on the pavement amid rubble in front of a destroyed building. Residents in the area were the first to say the explosion was a suicide attack, before Danish's statement. They spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing for their own safety.

Kabul has recently seen a spate of large-scale militant attacks by the Taliban and also the Islamic State group, whose affiliate in Afghanistan has grown stronger since it emerged in 2014.

In late January, a Taliban attacker drove an ambulance filled with explosives into the heart of the city, killing at least 103 people and wounding as many as 235.

The Taliban claimed the ambulance attack, as well as an attack a week earlier in which militants stormed a luxury hotel in Kabul, killing 22 people, including 14 foreigners, and setting off a 13-hour battle with security forces.

The recent attacks have underscored the weaknesses of Afghan security forces more than 16 years after the U.S.-led invasion toppled the Taliban.

On Wednesday, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani called on the Taliban to take part in peace talks to "save the country," offering security and incentives such as passports to insurgents who join the negotiations.

"We fully endorse President Ghani's call for the Taliban to join the peace process," Gresback, the NATO spokesman, said in his statement.

Meanwhile, the Taliban said Friday that they released five out of a total of 19 people they say they abducted on Tuesday along the boundary between the southern Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces.

At the time, Gen. Abdul Raziq, Kandahar's police chief, said insurgents wearing army uniforms stopped a bus and abducted 30 people. There was no information on the fate of the others.

Trump's gun stance a struggle for Congress, NRA

By LISA MASCARO and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Action on gun legislation has skidded to a halt in Congress — not for a lack of bipartisan proposals, but because President Donald Trump's stunning shift on gun policy left some in his party confused, irritated and scrambling to figure out what to do next.

Republicans squirmed over Trump's call for stricter gun laws after the assault on a Florida high school, while Democrats seized on the opening to reach beyond a modest measure gaining traction in Congress. They unveiled a more ambitious priority list, with expanded background checks and even a politically risky ban on assault weapons.

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The tug of war over the appropriate response on the school shooting remains far from settled.

Late Thursday, Trump tweeted that he'd had a "Good (Great) meeting in the Oval Office tonight with the NRA!"

The executive director of the National Rifle Association, Chris Cox, also tweeted about the meeting, saying Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and the NRA "want safe schools, mental health reform and to keep guns away from dangerous people." Cox added that Trump and Pence "support the Second Amendment, support strong due process and don't want gun control."

The NRA has called the bulk of the proposals discussed at the White House this week "bad policy" that would not keep people safe.

Without a clear path forward for any legislation, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell shelved the gun debate, for now, saying the Senate would turn next week to other measures. McConnell had been preparing to push ahead with an incremental proposal from Sens. John Cornyn and Chris Murphy, but even that measure faced some GOP opposition.

"I'm hoping there's a way forward," he told reporters.

Congress is under pressure to act after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting last month that left 17 dead. Lawmakers had been making incremental progress on a bill to boost participation in the existing federal background check bill.

But after Trump's pronouncements this week, that legislation hardly mattered. Trump panned the bipartisan bill as little more than a building block for the "beautiful" and "comprehensive" legislation he envisioned would protect Americans from mass shootings.

"Many ideas, some good & some not so good," Trump tweeted Thursday, singling out background checks. "After many years, a bill should emerge."

Trump suggested — but did not declare — his support for a more sweeping background check bill that would require review of firearm purchases online and at gun shows. The measure, from Sens. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., and Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., has found new momentum since it was first introduced after the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut that left 20 children dead.

The president reached out to Toomey on Thursday, after the senator endured the brunt of Trump's public criticism of lawmakers as "afraid" of the NRA, and encouraged him to pursue the bill.

The senator told Trump his backing would be needed to build support. "He wants to be helpful," Toomey told The Associated Press.

Amid the shifting debate, the president convened yet another meeting on school safety, this time with school shooting survivors and family members of victims, and the White House considered releasing the president's list of legislative priorities.

Beyond background checks, the president wants to use an executive order to bar the use of bump stock devices that enable guns to fire like automatic weapons. And he backs more controversial ideas, including increasing the minimum age for the purchase of assault weapons from 18 to 21, which is opposed by the NRA, and arming certain teachers, which the gun lobby supports.

Lawmakers were frustrated by Trump's comments. Cornyn insisted his bill with Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat, was "our best and only option" for passage.

The Texas Republican dismissed Wednesday's "brainstorming" session at the White House — calling it "Legislating 101" — and said he was not waiting for the president to produce a plan.

"Obviously, he's important," Cornyn said about Trump. "But it's our job to write the legislation and he either vetoes it or he signs it."

Democrats wasted no time quickly outlining their top three priorities: background checks, the ability to take guns away from those who pose a "clear danger," and at least a debate on banning assault weapons like the AR-15 used at the Florida high school.

"Not every Democrat will agree with every piece, but my caucus is prepared to provide a very large number of votes to get these passed," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "But we can't do it alone."

Without clear leadership, Republicans were outwardly divided over what to do next, as their offices are

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being flooded with calls on both sides of the issue.

Several senators doubted Trump would be able to move an intensely partisan Congress to act on new gun laws.

"I love my president, but I just respectfully disagree with him on this issue," said Sen. John Kennedy, R-La. "So far, there's been a lot of chopping, but I don't see any chips flying, and I'm not sure that's going to change."

Ohio Republican Sen. Rob Portman suggested that even if the Senate can find agreement, Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Ohio, will face a tougher legislative lift in the House.

"There are some pretty strong views," Portman said. "Trust me, I'm hearing from my Second Amendment supporters and my ban-the-gun supporters. They're very concerned on both sides."

And some Republicans worked in the opposite direction, introducing legislation to expand gun owners' rights and forcefully criticizing Trump's suggestion that the federal government could take away guns without due process.

"Is anyone ok with this, because I'm sure as hell not," Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., tweeted Thursday. He produced a bill to lower the handgun purchase age requirement to 18.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said conversations are "ongoing."

"It's going to be an ongoing process and something that we don't expect to happen overnight," she said.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Alan Fram contributed to this report.

Israeli police question Netanyahu over telecom case

By IAN DEITCH, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police questioned Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife as part of an investigation into a corruption case involving the country's telecom giant on Friday, casting a shadow on the prime minister's upcoming visit to Washington.

Police investigators entered Netanyahu's residence Friday morning. An Associated Press cameraman saw them leave about five hours later.

Reports said Netanyahu's wife, Sara, was being questioned at another location at the same time as the prime minister.

Police declined comment.

Last month, two Netanyahu confidants were arrested on suspicion of promoting regulation worth hundreds of millions of dollars to the Bezeq telecom company. In return, Bezeq's news site, Walla, allegedly provided positive Netanyahu coverage.

It's the first time that Netanyahu, who as prime minister also held the communications portfolio until last year, is being questioned over the affair, known as Case 4000.

The development comes ahead of Netanyahu's visit to Washington where he is to meet with President Donald Trump and speak before the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC next week.

Police have recommended indicting Netanyahu on corruption charges in two other cases.

Netanyahu is accused of accepting nearly \$300,000 in lavish gifts from Hollywood mogul Arnon Milchan and Australian billionaire James Packer. In return, police say Netanyahu operated on Milchan's behalf on U.S. visa matters, legislated a tax break and connected him with an Indian businessman.

In the other case, Netanyahu is accused of offering a newspaper publisher legislation that would weaken his paper's main rival in return for more favorable coverage. Netanyahu reportedly was recorded asking Arnon Mozes, the publisher of Yediot Ahronot, for positive coverage in exchange for helping to weaken Israel Hayom, a free pro-Netanyahu newspaper that had cut into Yediot's business.

Netanyahu has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and has dismissed the accusations as a witch hunt orchestrated by a hostile media.

China criticizes US trade report but silent on tariff hikes

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BEIJING (AP) — China on Friday expressed “grave concern” about a U.S. trade policy report that pledges to pressure Beijing but had no immediate response to President Donald Trump’s plan to hike tariffs on steel and aluminum.

The report Thursday accused China of moving away from market principles and pledged to prevent Beijing from disrupting global trade.

“The Chinese side expresses grave concern,” said a Commerce Ministry statement.

The ministry said Beijing has satisfied its trade obligations and appealed to Washington to settle disputes through negotiation.

However, there was no immediate response to Trump’s announcement that he will increase duties on steel and aluminum imports. Chinese officials have threatened to take “necessary measures” to defend their country’s interests.

Beijing faces mounting complaints from Washington, Europe and other trading partners that it improperly subsidizes exports and hampers access to its markets in violation of its free-trade commitments.

“The United States aims to hold countries that break the rules accountable for their actions,” said a White House statement on Thursday.

Delta subjected to retribution in Georgia for crossing NRA

By BEN NADLER and R.J. RICO, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — As companies across America take a stand on guns after the Florida school massacre, Delta Air Lines withstood swift political retribution in its home state of Georgia for cutting ties with the National Rifle Association.

Ignoring warnings that the state’s business-friendly image could be tarnished, Republicans in the state legislature voted Thursday to kill a tax break that would have saved Delta millions of dollars in sales tax on jet fuel. The proposal wasn’t controversial until Delta announced last weekend it would no longer offer discounted fares to NRA members.

“I hope they are better at flying airplanes than timing P.R. announcements,” Georgia House Speaker David Ralston, a Republican, said after his chamber gave final approval to a larger tax-cut bill that was stripped of the jet fuel tax exemption.

The Feb. 14 slayings of 17 students and educators in Parkland, Florida, by a gunman armed with an AR-15 assault-style rifle has prompted retailers including Walmart, Kroger and Dick’s Sporting Goods to tighten their gun sales policies. Meanwhile, Delta and other companies including MetLife and Hertz have ended business ties with the NRA.

Delta’s decision triggered a showdown with pro-gun lawmakers in Georgia, where the Atlanta-based airline is one of the largest employers with 33,000 employees statewide. Republican Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, the state Senate’s presiding officer, vowed Monday to stop any tax break that would benefit Delta.

“Corporations cannot attack conservatives and expect us not to fight back,” tweeted Cagle, who is also running for governor.

GOP lawmakers amended a sweeping tax bill to eliminate a fuel-tax exemption worth at least an estimated \$38 million to Delta and other airlines.

The Senate passed the tax measure 44-10, with Democrats accounting for all of the no votes. The House — which had passed an earlier version with the jet fuel exemption before the Delta controversy erupted — followed with a 135-24 vote.

Republican Gov. Nathan Deal criticized the Delta controversy as an “unbecoming squabble” but said he would sign the broader tax measure in whatever form it passed.

Delta did not immediately return messages seeking comment Thursday. NRA spokeswoman Catherine Mortensen had no immediate comment.

The Delta provision barely came up Thursday in either legislative chamber during debate on the underlying tax bill, designed in part to give back to Georgia taxpayers \$5.2 billion in extra state revenue expected

over the next five years because of the recent federal tax overhaul.

Cagle took a softer tone in celebrating victory Thursday.

"Obviously the political environment does sometimes get a little testy, but in the end, it's all about the product," said Cagle, who is running this year to succeed the term-limited governor. "And the product we have today is something that all of us can be very proud of."

GOP Sen. Michael Williams, another gubernatorial candidate, praised Republicans for holding out in the face of criticism from the news media and corporate America.

"We've stayed strong," Williams said. "We've even stayed strong against our own governor."

Among Democrats voting against the tax bill was Sen. Nikema Williams of Atlanta, who applauded companies that have taken swift action on guns after the Florida tragedy. She said Delta's decision to end its NRA discounts led her to support the jet fuel tax break.

"The small steps that Delta and Dick's Sporting Goods are taking, to take a stand and say enough is enough, is what we all need to be doing as adults," Williams said. "We're the leaders of this state and we need to be coming together for solutions, not bullying corporations who are trying to do the right thing."

Critics of the GOP effort to retaliate against Delta have warned it could backfire by harming Georgia's ability to lure businesses — including Amazon, which recently named Atlanta a finalist in its search for a second headquarters.

"It definitely could have an effect when an outside company looks at something that happens this quickly around election time to one of the largest employers in the state," said William Hatcher, a professor at Augusta University who studies economic development. "But will it be the dominant factor? I don't think so."

AP reporter Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia, contributed to this story.

US companies take a stand, raise age to purchase guns

By JOSEPH PISANI, AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Kroger and L.L. Bean said Thursday they will no longer sell guns to anyone under 21, becoming the third and fourth major retailers this week to put restrictions in place that are stronger than federal laws. The announcements follow those by Dick's Sporting Goods and Walmart, emphasizing the pressure companies are facing to take a stand.

Kroger, the nation's largest grocery chain, said that since a mass shooting last month at a Florida high school that killed 17 people, it's become clear that gun retail outlets must go beyond what current U.S. laws requires.

The 19-year-old accused in the school slaying bought the AR-15 used in the attack legally. Federal law allows people 18 and older to purchase long guns such as rifles.

"In response to the tragic events in Parkland and elsewhere, we've taken a hard look at our policies and procedures for firearm sales," Kroger Co. said in a release. Kroger has sold guns from 44 of its Fred Meyer stores in the West and will raise the age to 21 for purchasing.

L.L. Bean, which says it only sells firearms at its flagship store in Maine and only guns specific to hunting and target shooting, released a statement late Thursday saying the company will no longer sell firearms or ammunition to anyone under 21.

The change comes one day after Walmart and Dick's Sporting Goods, both prominent gun sellers, tightened their company policies, and also a day after students returned to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, for the first time since the shooting there.

And late Thursday outdoor retailer REI says it's halting future orders of some popular brands — including CamelBak water carriers, Giro helmets and Camp Chef stoves — whose parent company also makes ammunition and assault-style rifles. Seattle-based REI has been facing mounting pressure from some customers.

Companies like Dick's had already changed gun-sale policies in the wake of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut, but the Parkland shooting has opened a fissure between a portion

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of corporate America and organizations like the National Rifle Association.

MetLife, Hertz and Delta Air Lines and other major U.S. corporations have already cut ties with the National Rifle Association, and at some political risk.

Georgia lawmakers passed a bill Thursday that effectively punishes Delta for cutting ties with the NRA, following through on Republican vows to deny a tax break worth an estimated \$38 million to airlines after Delta ended discounts for NRA members in the wake of the most recent school massacre. The Atlanta-based airline would have been the chief beneficiary of the tax break.

One industry analyst said after the announcement from Dick's, and strong words from its CEO about the need for change, that other retailers that devote a small percentage of their business to hunting will probably follow suit.

"It is a risky game but you can't please everyone," said Joseph Feldman, a senior managing director at Telsey Advisory Group.

The announcements from Walmart and Dick's so far have drawn hundreds of thousands of responses on social media for and against the moves, from those who pledged to buy more from one company to campaigns urging people to thank the companies for their decisions to those who vowed never to buy from them again.

Penny Stalder, a Walmart customer Thursday in Atlanta, supports the company's decision and says people mature a lot between 18 and 21.

"I am a member of the NRA, and I have a concealed carry license, I just don't see the need for young people. They can wait," she said. "There are other kinds of weapons that they can use to hunt or do whatever they want to do but they don't need military-style weapons certainly."

But Ryan Terlecki, outside a Walmart in Milwaukee, said he didn't think the three years from 18 to 21 would make that much difference. "I guess they have their reasons, you know, but as far as I'm concerned the law is that we can carry guns and that's our right and I believe we should have that right."

Other companies have tried to stay out of the debate. Some gun sellers haven't responded to requests for comment, including Bass Pro Shops, which owns Cabela's, or Camping World Holdings, which owns Gander Outdoors. The Outdoor Industry Association hasn't responded to requests for comment.

Besides major chains, guns are also bought from gun shows, local stores and from online stores.

"If large retailers, like Dick's, reduce their exposure to guns, it could impact gun manufacturers," says Maksim Soshkin, a senior analyst at IBISWorld. "Manufacturers could see a decrease in sales or have to find new avenues to sell their product."

American Outdoor Brands, which owns Smith & Wesson, said Thursday it expects gun sales to be more or less flat for the next year to 18 months. The company's third-quarter results and fourth-quarter forecasts were much weaker than Wall Street expected, and its stock fell 11 percent in aftermarket trading, while Sturm, Ruger fell 6 percent.

"We believe the firearms market will eventually return to long term growth," American Outdoor Brands Corp. CEO James Debney said on a conference call. He said the impact of the move by Dick's would very small, and it would be "pure speculation" to say what the effect might be of other companies following suit.

Kroger, based in Cincinnati, said it has been tweaking some of its gun departments as it renovates stores due to softer demand from customers. The company ended sales of assault-style rifles at Fred Meyer several years ago in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. It will extend that ban to Alaska, where customers could get such guns via special order.

The NRA, which also didn't respond to request for comment Thursday, has pushed back on calls for raising age limits for guns or restricting the sale of assault-style weapons.

Could a person between the ages of 18 and 21 challenge the companies over the new policies and argue that they are discrimination based on age? Some experts say retailers can set age restrictions without violating the Second Amendment.

Los Angeles-based attorney Angela Reddock-Wright, who focuses on workplace discrimination disputes, said anti-discrimination laws mostly protect people 40 and older from being fired based on their age. Mike Glassman, who chairs the employment law group at the Cincinnati-based firm Dinsmore & Shohl, said the

Second Amendment “only limits the government and not private entities.”

AP Business Writers Marley Jay and Anne D’Innocenzio in New York, Patrick Whittle in Portland, Maine, and video journalists Carrie Antlfinger in Milwaukee and Marina Hutchinson in Atlanta contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that Delta would have been the chief beneficiary of the \$38 million Georgia tax break, not the sole beneficiary.

Mourners to say goodbye to Billy Graham, ‘America’s Pastor’

By TOM FOREMAN Jr. and JONATHAN DREW, Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Mourners are gathering to pay their respects to the Rev. Billy Graham at a funeral that marks the culmination of more than a week of tributes to “America’s Pastor.”

The service, scheduled to start at noon Friday, is to include performances by musicians who shared the stage with Graham at his crusades. The Rev. Franklin Graham will deliver the main funeral address for his father after personal messages from Billy Graham’s three daughters and younger son. President Donald Trump is expected to attend, but isn’t scheduled to speak.

The funeral planning began a decade ago with Billy Graham himself, and grew into his family’s desire to capture the feeling of the crusades that made the world’s best-known Protestant preacher of his era.

“His fingerprints are on this service for sure,” family spokesman Mark DeMoss said in a phone interview. “The Graham family has long considered that his funeral eventually would really be his last crusade.”

Graham, who died last week at age 99, brought a message of salvation to millions during visits and live broadcasts to scores of countries. While the invitation-only crowd Friday on the grounds of his Charlotte library is limited to 2,000 or so, internet livestreams are allowing many more to watch.

The service features songs from gospel musicians who performed at Graham’s events: Linda McCrary-Fisher, Michael W. Smith and the Gaither Vocal Band. They are all friends who sang for Graham at his home in recent years, DeMoss said.

Afterward, Billy Graham will be buried next to his wife in a memorial prayer garden at the library, with his grandchildren serving as pallbearers. His casket was made of pine by inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. The grave marker reads: “Preacher of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The funeral serves as the culmination of more than a week of tributes that included crowds lining the road for a procession from his home in the mountains to Charlotte, where Graham grew up. Approximately 13,000 people — including former presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton — filed past his casket during a public viewing in Charlotte this week. And on Wednesday, Graham became the first private citizen since civil rights icon Rosa Parks in 2005 to lie in honor at the Capitol Rotunda in Washington.

Drew reported from Raleigh, North Carolina.

Follow Foreman at www.twitter.com/SkipForeman1 and Drew at www.twitter.com/JonathanLDrew

Parents, officials scramble for US school security upgrades

By REBECCA REYNOLDS YONKER and MICHAEL MELIA, Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — In Kentucky, parents have pooled money to pay an armed officer to begin patrolling schools. A mayor outside Cleveland, Ohio, is urging a security levy to pay for guards. And a town in New Jersey has begun assigning off-duty police to stand vigil inside all its school buildings.

In the jittery aftermath of the shooting in Parkland, Florida, novel efforts to ramp up school security are flying fast as districts across the United States respond to heightened fears as well as threats and rumors of violence that have only seemed to multiply since the latest tragedy.

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American schools have been stepping up investment in security for years, and many districts have offered assurances about procedures already in place since the Feb. 14 shooting that left 17 dead. But some parents are saying it's just not enough.

In Monroe Township, New Jersey, 400 people crowded a meeting last week on school security, some rattled by rumors about an unsubstantiated threat online. The school system already has unarmed guards, but the mayor and police chief agreed to immediately assign armed, off-duty police officers to patrol each of the town's eight schools. It's expected to cost the town \$200,000 for the first two months.

"As wonderful as our security team is, unarmed, you're not going to fight an assault rifle," Monroe parent Chrissy Skurbe said. "If somebody wants to get in with a gun, they're going to get in. You need somebody there to be able to react."

Officials and parents have also come ahead with plans to introduce security cameras, metal detectors, door locks and other defenses. President Donald Trump has endorsed fortifying schools, to make them less appealing targets, and he repeatedly suggested arming teachers.

In Kentucky, many were already on edge following a January shooting rampage that killed two students and injured 21 others at Marshall County High School. Since the Florida shooting, parents have been leading the way on fundraising efforts to boost security in local schools.

A week ago, an armed resource officer took up duty at a 670-student campus in Barbourville, paid by parent donations for at least the rest of the year. Barbourville Police Chief Winston Tye said it was a couple of parents who approached him with the idea and they're working on raising money for next year.

"They said that would make their kids feel better, all the kids feel better, and make them feel better," Tye said.

Shane Romines, a Kentucky father of two 6-year-olds in kindergarten, announced two days after the Parkland shooting that his law office would donate \$25,000 toward metal detectors in Knox County schools. When he reached out to school officials, they said they were also in need of funding to replace a grant so they could keep school resource officers. The effort, which has drawn support from other businesses and parents, has so far has raised more than \$50,000.

In Laurel County, Kentucky, where school officials decided against installing metal detectors, parents and students picketed a Board of Education building last week holding signs that said "Protect our Children."

State legislatures are considering new measures. Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin said on a radio interview Thursday that he expects to push for changes in state law and is leaning toward allowing more guns in schools with beefed-up training. Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson signed an executive order Thursday forming a commission that will look at school designs, security policies and mental health. Its initial report is due by July 1.

The range of products available to schools includes bulletproof doors and backpacks, and even bunkers decked out with cameras and air filtration systems. School officials in Healdton, Oklahoma, in recent years have purchased nine such pods that can turn classrooms into fortresses capable of withstanding fire from high-powered rifles.

"These are the things you have and hope you never have to use them," Superintendent Terry Shaw said. "The sense of security is bar none."

Around the country, many of the proposals for immediate action have come from parents, elected officials or police, and not education leaders, who have seen security costs take up an ever larger amount of their budgets. With most school districts strapped financially, security expenses threaten to take money away from instructional programs, according to Dan Domenech, executive director of the School Superintendents Association.

There is also debate over the effectiveness of investments in hardware and additional security staff.

In reviews of shootings, school security expert Kenneth Trump said, fault-finding generally focuses on allegations of failures of people and procedures, and not hardware or products. While many have emphasized fortifying schools, especially since the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, he said districts often would be better served by investing in prevention strategies and school counselors.

"What I'm hearing today is parents, educators and students want to know what are we doing to keep

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and make my school safety today and tomorrow," said Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services. "The mantra since Sandy Hook has been, 'Do something, do anything, do it now.'"

While some have proposed that states do more for school security, as Florida's governor has done with a request for an officer inside every school, others are turning to local taxpayers.

The mayor of Streetsboro, Ohio, Glenn Broska, said he would support asking voters to approve a "security levy" to generate \$500,000 or more to fund two armed security guards at each of his town's four schools. The proposal received some support while other parents questioned whether the benefits would outweigh the risks, such as an accidental discharge of a firearm.

"Everybody is concerned for our children, and we all want the best solution. And I am absolutely for acting quickly if we can find a solution that works," Streetsboro parent Bethany Kulka said. "But my concern is we have to also look at potential risks of these solutions."

Associated Press writers Kantele Franko in Columbus, Ohio, and Mike Balsamo in Los Angeles contributed to this report. Melia reported from Hartford, Connecticut.

West Virginia teacher strike reaches 7 days without classes

By JOHN RABY and MICHAEL VIRTANEN, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Many West Virginia public school students were at loose ends again Friday, with their classrooms closed for a seventh straight class day as teachers fought for pay raises.

The state Senate's Republican majority refused Thursday to take up legislation to give them a 5 percent pay raise after four years without one. The Republican-controlled House passed it 98-1 on Wednesday night.

According to union officials, members were upset by the Senate and its leader's comments and would stay out of work.

By Thursday evening, the Department of Education said public schools in all 55 counties remained shuttered.

The statewide strike over low pay and rising insurance costs had been expected to end Thursday under a deal negotiated between Gov. Jim Justice and teachers union leaders. It included the proposal of 5 percent raises and the appointment of a task force to find a long-term state funding source to offset public workers' rising health care costs.

However, the Senate voted 20-14 to send the legislation with raises to its Finance Committee instead of quickly voting on it as the House did the night before. All but one of the Senate's majority Republicans voted against holding an immediate floor vote.

Outside the Senate chamber, hundreds of teachers chanted, "Pass that bill!"

"We don't trust the Senate," said Jacob Staggers, a sixth-grade teacher at South Middle School in Morgantown.

Sen. Craig Blair, a Martinsburg Republican, announced on the floor Thursday afternoon that the Finance Committee he chairs would meet Friday to consider budget legislation for the coming fiscal year and other bills.

"That budget will also have to have whatever we do for pay raises ... and all the other host of things that we need to be able to manage," Blair said. "I don't like feeling bullied into when we're going to do something."

Del. Saira Blair, his daughter, had been the sole 'no' vote in the House. She told the Charleston Gazette-Mail that legislators had already passed a fiscally responsible pay raise package and the higher proposed raise was a political ploy.

The raise Justice announced Tuesday night for the fiscal year starting July 1 is a more generous offer than a pay raise bill he signed less than a week earlier with 2 percent raises. The teachers haven't had a raise for four years.

West Virginia teachers and service personnel, noting that they were among the lowest paid in the country, walked off the job Feb. 22. The governor said a projected \$58 million increase in state revenues during

that fiscal year would cover the higher raises.

Sen. John Unger, a Martinsburg Democrat, said it was the Senate's fault the walkout would continue Friday. He'd heard rumblings that opponents of the settlement were delaying to create a divide and turn parents against teachers. "I hope that's not the intention," he said.

Justice had announced he's forming a task force to find a solution to rising costs in the insurance plan covering West Virginia teachers and other public workers through the Public Employees Insurance Agency, or PEIA. The PEIA board has agreed to freeze rates in the coming year.

Staggers said teachers want to know the task force's makeup and expectations "because our insurance is what sent us out of the classroom."

Senate President Mitch Carmichael said sustainably funding the insurance is "paramount." In the Senate plan, the revenue surplus the governor identified would be dedicated to insurance costs and would benefit all public employees and retirees, he said.

All 100 seats in the House are up for election this year, along with half the 34 seats in the Senate. Teachers have promised to pay close attention to each lawmaker's actions and vote accordingly.

Those include 10 Senate seats held by Republicans seeking re-election, five held by Democrats and two where incumbent Republicans aren't running.

Congress stalls on guns as Trump's stance scrambles debate

By LISA MASCARO and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Action on gun legislation skidded to a halt Thursday in Congress — not for a lack of bipartisan proposals, but because President Donald Trump's stunning shift on gun policy left some in his party confused, irritated and scrambling to figure out what to do next.

Republicans squirmed over Trump's call for stricter gun laws after the assault on a Florida high school, while Democrats seized on the opening to reach beyond a modest measure gaining traction in Congress. They unveiled a more ambitious priority list, with expanded background checks and even a politically risky ban on assault weapons.

Without a clear path forward for any legislation, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell shelved the gun debate, for now, saying the Senate would turn next week to other measures. McConnell had been preparing to push ahead with an incremental proposal from Sens. John Cornyn and Chris Murphy, but even that measure faced some GOP opposition.

"I'm hoping there's a way forward," he told reporters.

Congress is under pressure to act after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting last month that left 17 dead. Lawmakers had been making incremental progress on a bill to boost participation in the existing federal background check bill.

But after Trump's pronouncements this week, that legislation hardly mattered. Trump panned the bipartisan bill as little more than a building block for the "beautiful" and "comprehensive" legislation he envisioned would protect Americans from mass shootings.

"Many ideas, some good & some not so good," Trump tweeted Thursday, singling out background checks. "After many years, a bill should emerge."

Trump suggested — but did not declare — his support for a more sweeping background check bill that would require review of firearm purchases online and at gun shows. The measure, from Sens. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., and Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., has found new momentum since it was first introduced after the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut that left 20 children dead.

The president reached out to Toomey on Thursday, after the senator endured the brunt of Trump's public criticism of lawmakers as "afraid" of the National Rifle Association, and encouraged him to pursue the bill.

The senator told Trump his backing would be needed to build support. "He wants to be helpful," Toomey told The Associated Press.

Amid the shifting debate, the president convened yet another meeting on school safety, this time with school shooting survivors and family members of victims, and the White House considered releasing the

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president's list of legislative priorities.

Beyond background checks, the president wants to use an executive order to bar the use of bump stock devices that enable guns to fire like automatic weapons. And he backs more controversial ideas, including increasing the minimum age for the purchase of assault weapons from 18 to 21, which is opposed by the NRA, and arming certain teachers, which the gun lobby supports.

The NRA called the bulk of the proposals discussed at the White House this week "bad policy" that would not keep people safe.

Late Thursday, though, Trump tweeted that he'd had a "Good (Great) meeting in the Oval Office tonight with the NRA!"

The group's executive director, Chris Cox, also tweeted about the meeting, saying Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and the NRA "want safe schools, mental health reform and to keep guns away from dangerous people." Cox added that Trump and Pence "support the Second Amendment, support strong due process and don't want gun control."

Lawmakers, though, were frustrated by Trump's comments. Cornyn insisted his bill with Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat, was "our best and only option" for passage.

The Texas Republican dismissed Wednesday's "brainstorming" session at the White House — calling it "Legislating 101" — and said he was not waiting for the president to produce a plan.

"Obviously, he's important," Cornyn said about Trump. "But it's our job to write the legislation and he either vetoes it or he signs it."

Democrats wasted no time quickly outlining their top three priorities: background checks, the ability to take guns away from those who pose a "clear danger," and at least a debate on banning assault weapons like the AR-15 used at the Florida high school.

"Not every Democrat will agree with every piece, but my caucus is prepared to provide a very large number of votes to get these passed," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "But we can't do it alone."

Without clear leadership, Republicans were outwardly divided over what to do next, as their offices are being flooded with calls on both sides of the issue.

Several senators doubted Trump would be able to move an intensely partisan Congress to act on new gun laws.

"I love my president, but I just respectfully disagree with him on this issue," said Sen. John Kennedy, R-La. "So far, there's been a lot of chopping, but I don't see any chips flying, and I'm not sure that's going to change."

Ohio Republican Sen. Rob Portman suggested that even if the Senate can find agreement, Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Ohio, will face a tougher legislative lift in the House.

"There are some pretty strong views," Portman said. "Trust me, I'm hearing from my Second Amendment supporters and my ban-the-gun supporters. They're very concerned on both sides."

And some Republicans worked in the opposite direction, introducing legislation to expand gun owners' rights and forcefully criticizing Trump's suggestion that the federal government could take away guns without due process.

"Is anyone ok with this, because I'm sure as hell not," Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., tweeted Thursday. He produced a bill to lower the handgun purchase age requirement to 18.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said conversations are "ongoing."

"It's going to be an ongoing process and something that we don't expect to happen overnight," she said.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Alan Fram contributed to this report.

Trump adrift: Tumult in West Wing amid exits, investigation

By **JULIE PACE, ZEKE MILLER and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rattled by two weeks of muddled messages, departures and spitting matches between the president and his own top officials, Donald Trump is facing a shrinking circle of trusted advisers and a staff that's grim about any prospect of a reset.

Even by the standards of Trump's often chaotic administration, the announcement of communications director Hope Hicks' imminent exit spread new levels of anxiety across the West Wing and cracked open disputes that had been building since the White House's botched handling of domestic violence allegations against a senior aide late last month.

One of Trump's most loyal and longest-serving aides, Hicks often served as human buffer between the unpredictable president and the business of government. One official on Thursday compared the instability caused by her departure to that of a chief of staff leaving the administration — though that prospect, too, remained a possibility given the questions that have arisen about John Kelly's competence.

Hicks' departure comes as special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation appears to be circling the Oval Office, with prosecutors questioning Trump associates about both his business dealings before he became president and his actions in office, according to people with knowledge of the interviews. Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, has also been weakened after being stripped of his high-level security clearance amid revelations about potential conflicts of interest.

The biggest unknown is how the mercurial Trump will respond to Hicks' departure and Kushner's more limited access, according to some of the 16 White House officials, congressional aides and outside advisers interviewed by The Associated Press, most of whom insisted on anonymity in order to disclose private conversations and meetings. Besides Kushner and his wife, presidential daughter Ivanka Trump, most remaining White House staffers were not part of Trump's close-knit 2016 campaign. One person who speaks to Trump regularly said the president has become increasingly wistful about the camaraderie of that campaign.

Rarely has a modern president confronted so many crises and controversies across so many fronts at the same time. After 13 months in office, there's little expectation among many White House aides and outside allies that Trump can quickly find his footing or attract new, top-flight talent to the West Wing. And some Republican lawmakers, who are eyeing a difficult political landscape in November's midterm elections, have begun to let private frustrations ooze out in public.

"There is no standard operating practice with this administration," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota. "Every day is a new adventure for us."

Thune's comments described the White House's peculiar rollout Thursday of controversial new aluminum and steel tariffs. White House aides spent Wednesday night and Thursday morning scrambling to steer the president away from an announcement on an unfinished policy, with even Kelly in the dark about Trump's plans. Aides believed they had succeeded in getting Trump to back down and hoped to keep television cameras away from an event with industry executives so the president couldn't make a surprise announcement. But Trump summoned reporters into the Cabinet Room anyway and declared that the U.S. would levy penalties of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum imports.

Some of Trump's populist supporters cheered the move. The stock market, which Trump looks to for validation for his economic policies, plunged.

Some officials are bracing for more departures. On Thursday, NBC News reported that the White House was preparing to replace national security adviser H.R. McMaster as early as next month. A White House spokesman did not deny the report.

"We frequently face rumor and innuendo about senior administration officials," spokesman Raj Shah said. "There are no personnel announcements at this time."

For those remaining on the job, the turbulence has been relentless. Just two weeks ago, Kelly, the general brought in to bring order, was himself on the ropes for his handling of the domestic violence allegations against a close aide, Rob Porter. Trump was said to be deeply irritated by the negative press coverage

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of Kelly's leadership during the controversy and considering firing him. But first, the president planned to give his chief of staff a chance to defend himself before reporters in the briefing room and gauge the reaction, according to two people with knowledge of the episode. The briefing, however, was canceled after the school shooting in Parkland, Florida. Kelly's standing has stabilized somewhat as media attention to the Porter issue has waned.

One Kelly backer said the chief of staff's standing remains tenuous, in part because of his clashes with Kushner over policy, personnel and White House structure. The tensions were exacerbated by Kelly's decision to downgrade Kushner's security clearance because the senior adviser had not been permanently approved for the highest level of access.

Kushner and Ivanka Trump, who also serves as a senior White House adviser, have been frustrated by Kelly's attempt to restrict their access to the president, and they perceive his new crackdown on clearances as a direct shot at them, according to White House aides and outside advisers. Kelly, in turn, has grown frustrated with what he views as the couple's freelancing. He blames them for changing Trump's mind at the last minute and questions what exactly they do all day, according to one White House official and an outside ally.

The ethics questions dogging Kushner relate to both his personal financial interests and his dealings in office with foreign officials. Intelligence officials expressed concern that Kushner's business dealings were a topic of discussion in conversations he was having with foreign officials about foreign policy issues of interest to the U.S. government, a former intelligence official said. Separately, The New York Times reported that two companies made loans worth more than half a billion dollars to Kushner's family real estate firm after executives met with Kushner at the White House.

Allies of Kushner and Ivanka Trump insist they have no plans to leave the White House in the near future. As for Kelly, he appeared to hint at his tough spot during an event Thursday at the Department of Homeland Security, where he served as secretary before departing for the White House.

"The last thing I wanted to do was walk away from one of the great honors of my life, being the secretary of homeland security," he said at the agency's 15th anniversary celebration in Washington. "But I did something wrong and God punished me, I guess."

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking and Catherine Lucey contributed to this report.

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APNewsBreak: Greitens sent political invite on charity email

By DAVID A. LIEB, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens used an email address for a veterans charity he founded to arrange political meetings as he prepared to launch his first bid for public office, despite a federal ban on nonprofits participating in political campaigns, according to records obtained by The Associated Press.

Greitens, who was on the board of directors of The Mission Continues at the time, sent meeting invitations from the charity's email address to three political consultants. He asked them to join him for a series of meetings over two days in January 2015 with more than a dozen state lawmakers, a lobbyist and an anti-abortion activist, according to copies of the emails obtained by the AP.

The emails indicate the meetings were hosted at the Jefferson City offices of two Republican consulting firms, less than a month before Greitens officially created a candidate exploratory committee. Participants at the meetings told the AP the topic of discussion was Greitens' impending candidacy.

Federal tax law prohibits 501(c)(3) charities such as The Mission Continues from participating in any political campaign on behalf of a candidate for public office, with penalties ranging up to the loss of their

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tax-exempt status. The legal consequences for individual charity directors are less clear.

Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley confirmed through a spokeswoman later Thursday that the office "has an open inquiry into the charitable activities of The Mission Continues." The office has authority to enforce charitable reporting laws and consumer protections laws. It was unclear when its inquiry began. Hawley is running for U.S. Senate with the support of many top Republicans.

Greitens also is facing an ongoing investigation by the St. Louis prosecutor's office after a grand jury indicted him last week on a felony invasion-of-privacy charge. The indictment alleges Greitens took a nonconsensual photo of a partially nude woman with whom he was having an affair in March 2015.

Some people interviewed by investigators say their questions have extended to Greitens' political activities, which could add to the mounting troubles facing the first-term Republican governor. Two law firms confirmed Thursday that they have been retained to represent several Greitens' staff members who have been subpoenaed by the grand jury. Also, the Missouri House voted overwhelmingly Thursday to proceed with its own investigation of Greitens that could determine whether to initiate impeachment proceedings to try to remove him from office.

Experts on rules governing nonprofits told the AP that a scenario such as Greitens' use of the charity's email account could cross the line of what's allowed, though they said that line is not clearly defined.

"It is not appropriate to use 501(c)(3) charitable assets — charitable email addresses, the charitable name — to promote a candidacy for public office," said David L. Thompson, an attorney who is vice president of public policy at the National Council of Nonprofits, based in Washington, D.C.

Greitens officially opened a candidate exploratory committee on Feb. 24, 2015. The fact that the meeting invitations were sent before then muddies questions about legality but doesn't automatically mean it was fine, particularly if Greitens was already functioning like a candidate, several experts said.

Guidance from the Internal Revenue Service on nonprofits' election activities says an individual who hasn't yet announced he is candidate for public office may still be considered one, but that determination is based on the circumstances of each case.

"There is really no clear line when a candidate is a candidate," said Bryan Del Rosario, an attorney for the Arlington, Virginia-based Council on Foundations.

Mission Continues spokeswoman Laura L'Esperance said she was unaware that Greitens' charity email account had been used to send meeting invitations to political consultants in 2015.

"The Mission Continues would discourage any partisan activity using assets or resources of The Mission Continues," L'Esperance told the AP.

L'Esperance said The Mission Continues hasn't been contacted by the Missouri attorney general's office about an inquiry but would cooperate if there is one.

Greitens' campaign spokesman Austin Chambers did not respond to messages left Thursday and Wednesday by the AP.

Greitens, 43, is a former Navy SEAL officer who founded The Mission Continues in 2007 to help veterans become involved in their communities. He stepped down as CEO in July 2014 but remained as a director until September 2015, according to the charity's IRS filings.

A meeting invitation email was sent from Greitens' Mission Continues account to political consultants Michael Hafner, Steve Michael and Danny Laub for a series of scheduled meetings Jan. 28, 2015, at the Jefferson City office of the Republican consulting firm Victory Enterprises, for which Michael works. A similar invitation was sent to the consultants for a series of meetings Jan. 29, 2015, at the Jefferson City office of Republican consultant David Barklage, with whom Hafner was affiliated. Laub was working directly for Greitens at the time.

Former state Sen. Jim Lembke, an early Greitens supporter, told the AP he helped arrange some of the meetings at the Victory Enterprises office in order for elected officials to meet Greitens and hopefully support his campaign.

"It was definitely political activity," Lembke said.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Kehoe confirmed to the AP that he attended a meeting with Greitens and

Hafner at Barklage's office. Kehoe said he doesn't recall their precise conversation but added, "it was probably for him to tell me about political aspirations."

Greitens also came under scrutiny during his campaign for the overlap between his charitable and candidate connections.

In October 2016, the AP reported that Greitens' campaign staff had accessed a spreadsheet listing Mission Continues donors in early 2015. An AP analysis found that Greitens' gubernatorial campaign had raised nearly \$2 million from donors who had previously given significant amounts to the charity.

Greitens told the AP in October 2016 that his campaign didn't work off the Mission Continues donor list, but he acknowledged asking some people who had supported the Mission Continues to also support his campaign. In April 2017, Greitens' campaign agreed to pay a \$100 penalty to the Missouri Ethics Commission for failing to report the receipt of the charity's donor list. His campaign finance report was amended to show the donor list as an in-kind donation valued at \$600 from Laub on March 1, 2015.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported earlier this week that it had obtained a copy of an email indicating that a Greitens employee had shared The Mission Continues donor list with Hafner and Laub in January 2015.

Follow David A. Lieb at: [//twitter.com/DavidALieb](https://twitter.com/DavidALieb)

Mother testifies about horror of finding kids slain by nanny

By COLLEEN LONG, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Manhattan apartment was eerily quiet for a home with three little kids. The only light glowed from a bathroom. That's where Marina Krim found her two children — covered in blood, slaughtered by the family's trusted nanny.

"It's like a horror movie," she said Thursday, testifying in the murder trial of the caretaker, Yoselyn Ortega. "I go down, I walk down the hall and I see the light on under the back of the door, and I'm like, 'Oh God it's so quiet in here, oh God. Why is it so ... quiet?'"

"And I open the door ... And I open the door, oh God!" she wept.

Krim was the first witness at Ortega's trial. Prosecutors said the nanny planned the Oct. 25, 2012, killing, waiting until she was alone in the apartment, selected two knives from the kitchen and then killed 2-year-old Leo and 6-year-old Lucia, who went by Lulu.

Krim was at a swimming class with their then 3-year-old daughter, Nessie. They had gone to pick up Lulu from dance class, but she wasn't there. After she found them in the home, she ran outside with Nessie and called for help after finding her kids, and then started screaming.

"It was a scream you can't imagine is even inside of you," she said. "I don't even know where it came from. I just thought: I'm never going to be able to talk to them ever again. They are dead. I just saw my kids dead."

The central mystery of the trial isn't whether Ortega killed the children, but why she did it — and whether she was too mentally ill to be held responsible.

Krim said she saw Lucia first, and knew instantly that she was dead, because her eyes were fixed.

"And I look next to her and I see Leo, and he has blood on him ... blood all over Lulu's little dress ..." Krim said.

Prosecutors said Lucia had fought back and was slashed and stabbed about 30 times. Leo suffered five wounds. Their throats were cut so severely it appeared at first they'd been decapitated, Assistant District Attorney Courtney Groves said in her opening statement.

"There was no way to save them," Groves said. "The devastation the defendant had inflicted on their little bodies was too much."

Before she took the stand, Krim turned on the courtroom floor and angrily faced Ortega, who showed no emotion. Krim said she wanted to get a good look at the woman.

The jurors sat quietly as Krim struggled to explain the deaths through tears.

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As she left the silent courtroom, Krim yelled to Ortega: "You're gross. You're disgusting."

The only time Ortega appeared to show any emotion was when she appeared to dispute Krim's testimony on using Ortega as a housekeeper as well as a caregiver, and other spats they had. Ortega leaned toward her attorney as Krim talked about it, forcefully shaking her head and saying "No." Otherwise, she stared straight ahead.

Ortega's lawyer said the slayings were an act of madness, but prosecutors argued Ortega said she knew exactly what she was doing.

"She knows that killing them was wrong," Groves said.

But prosecutors conceded there isn't a clear motive.

Groves said it's possible Ortega's resentment and jealousy of Marina Krim, coupled with an inability to provide for her own son, sent her into a calculated rage.

"You may believe you have not heard a satisfactory answer, because there just isn't a satisfactory answer," Groves said. "But not knowing why the defendant slaughtered Lucia and Leo Krim does not mean that she is not responsible for those actions or for those murders. It merely means there is no good answer."

Ortega had worked for about two years for the Krims, who lived in one of the city's wealthiest neighborhoods, a block from Central Park. By some measures, she had a close relationship with her employers.

Krim testified that she bought her a plane ticket home to the Dominican Republic for Christmas. Another time the family went to the island with Ortega to meet her family, and so her bilingual children could practice Spanish.

Defense attorney Valerie Van Leer-Greenberg said Ortega suffered from severe, undiagnosed mental illness that was not taken seriously in her home country. She said she heard voices, saw visions and that sometimes the voices commanded her to act.

But she was "guarded in her symptoms, reluctant to seek care," Van Leer-Greenberg said.

"I will ask you to determine at the end of this case whether or not these acts were driven by my client's acute psychotic state," she told jurors.

But Krim testified Thursday she saw no signs of severe mental distress, and Ortega's family never came to her with any concerns. "Never!" she yelled angrily into the microphone.

Prosecutors said Ortega gave police interviews that paint a picture of an unhappy employee: She told authorities that she hurt the children because she was having money problems and was angry at the parents. She also said her schedule constantly shifted and that she had to act as a cleaning lady though she didn't want to, prosecutors said.

Marina Krim's husband, Kevin, is a former CNBC executive now at a startup. They use a Facebook page to post updates on how they are doing, writing about the arrival of two new children, Felix born in 2013 and Linus in 2016.

The couple started the Lulu and Leo Fund, which aims to support innovative art programs for children. They recently posted a video message on Facebook asking that people mention the fund as their case becomes news again.

Pro-gun Georgia lawmakers punish Delta for crossing the NRA

By BEN NADLER and R.J. RICO, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Pro-gun Georgia lawmakers Thursday took revenge on Delta for crossing the National Rifle Association, killing a proposed tax break on jet fuel that would have saved the airline millions.

A sweeping tax bill with the fuel exemption stripped out by the Republicans passed the GOP-controlled House and Senate by wide margins, just days after Delta reacted to the school massacre in Florida by announcing it would no longer offer discount fares to NRA members.

Republican Gov. Nathan Deal criticized the Delta controversy as an "unbecoming squabble" but said he would sign the broader tax measure in whatever form it passed.

Delta, which is based in Atlanta and has 33,000 employees in Georgia, would have been the prime beneficiary of the tax break, estimated to be worth at least \$38 million a year to airlines.

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The political battle at the Georgia Capitol was the latest in the debate over gun control and school safety that flared after the Feb. 14 shooting rampage in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 students and educators dead.

Delta did not immediately return messages seeking comment. NRA spokeswoman Catherine Mortensen had no immediate comment.

The state Senate's presiding officer, Republican Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, set up the showdown between gun-rights supporters and one of Georgia's biggest private employers when he vowed Monday to stop any tax break that would benefit Delta.

"Corporations cannot attack conservatives and expect us not to fight back," he tweeted.

The dispute stirred fears of damage to Georgia's business-friendly reputation, and politicians in several other states seized on the furor in recent days, urging Delta to move its headquarters.

"Hey @delta — Virginia is for lovers and airline hubs. You're welcome here any time," Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam, a Democrat, tweeted.

The Delta provision barely came up Thursday in either legislative chamber during debate on the underlying tax bill, designed in part to give back to Georgia taxpayers \$5.2 billion in extra state revenue expected over the next five years because of the recent federal tax overhaul.

Cagle took a softer tone in celebrating victory Thursday.

"Obviously the political environment does sometimes get a little testy, but in the end, it's all about the product," said Cagle, who is running this year to succeed the term-limited governor. "And the product we have today is something that all of us can be very proud of."

The Senate passed the tax measure 44-10, with Democrats accounting for all of the no votes. The House — which had passed an earlier version with the jet fuel exemption intact before the Delta-NRA controversy erupted — followed with a 135-24 vote.

"It's been strenuous," said GOP Sen. Michael Williams, another candidate for governor. "We've been attacked by the media, we've been attacked by the left. Big corporate has gone after us. And we've stayed strong. We've even stayed strong against our own governor."

House Speaker David Ralston, a Republican, bemoaned the combative tone some had taken toward Delta. But he put some of the blame on the airline, noting the jet fuel exemption wasn't controversial before Delta crossed the NRA.

"I hope they are better at flying airplanes than timing P.R. announcements," Ralston said.

Among Democrats voting against the tax bill was Sen. Nikema Williams of Atlanta, who applauded companies that have taken swift action on guns after the Florida tragedy. She said Delta's decision to end its NRA discounts led her to support the jet fuel tax break.

"The small steps that Delta and Dick's Sporting Goods are taking, to take a stand and say enough is enough, is what we all need to be doing as adults," Williams said. "We're the leaders of this state and we need to be coming together for solutions, not bullying corporations who are trying to do the right thing."

Dick's Sporting Goods has said it will no longer sell assault-style weapons like the one used in the Florida attack.

Critics of the GOP effort to retaliate against Delta have warned it could backfire by harming Georgia's ability to lure businesses — including Amazon, which recently named Atlanta a finalist in its search for a second headquarters.

"It definitely could have an effect when an outside company looks at something that happens this quickly around election time to one of the largest employers in the state," said William Hatcher, a professor at Augusta University who studies economic development. "But will it be the dominant factor? I don't think so."

Delta has helped make Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport the busiest airport in the world.

The broader tax bill would cut the top tax rate for individuals and businesses and double the standard deduction for all filers.

Trade war? Trump orders big tariffs on steel, aluminum

By KEN THOMAS and PAUL WISEMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ordering combative action on foreign trade, President Donald Trump declared Thursday the U.S. will impose steep tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, escalating tensions with China and other trading partners and raising the prospect of higher prices for American consumers and companies.

With “trade war” talk in the air, stocks closed sharply lower on Wall Street.

Trump said firm action was crucial to protect U.S. industry from unfair competition and to bolster national security. However, his announcement came only after an intense internal White House debate. It brought harsh criticism from some Republicans and roiled financial markets with concerns about economic ramifications.

Overseas, Trump’s words brought a stinging rebuke from the president of the European Commission. Though the president generally focuses on China in his trade complaining, it was the EU’s Jean-Claude Juncker who denounced his plan as “a blatant intervention to protect U.S. domestic industry.”

Juncker said the EU would take retaliatory action if Trump followed through.

Canada, the largest source of steel and aluminum imports in the U.S., said it would “take responsive measures” to defend its trade interests and workers if restrictions were imposed on Canadian steel and aluminum products.

Should restrictions be imposed on Canadian steel and aluminum products, Canada will take responsive measures to defend its trade interests and workers.”

Trump, who has long railed against what he deems unfair trade practices by China and others, summoned steel and aluminum executives to the White House and said next week he would levy penalties of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on aluminum imports. The tariffs, he said, would remain for “a long period of time,” but it was not immediately clear if certain trading partners would be exempt.

“What’s been allowed to go on for decades is disgraceful. It’s disgraceful,” Trump told the executives in the Cabinet Room. “When it comes to a time when our country can’t make aluminum and steel ... you almost don’t have much of a country.”

The president added: “You will have protection for the first time in a long while, and you’re going to regrow your industries. That’s all I’m asking. You have to regrow your industries.”

Increased foreign production, especially by China, has driven down prices and hurt U.S. producers, creating a situation the Commerce Department has called a national security threat.

However, critics raised the specter of a trade war, suggesting other countries will retaliate or use national security as a reason to impose trade penalties of their own.

Trump’s move will likely raise steel and aluminum prices here. That’s good for U.S. manufacturers. But it’s bad for companies that use the metals, and it prompted red flags from industries ranging from tool and dye makers to beer distributors to manufacturers of air conditioners. The American International Automobile Dealers Association warned it would drive prices up “substantially.”

“This is going to have fallout on our downstream suppliers, particularly in the automotive, machinery and aircraft sectors,” said Wendy Cutler, a former U.S. trade official who is now vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute. “What benefits one industry can hurt another. What saves one job can jeopardize another.”

Steel-consuming companies said steel tariffs imposed in 2002 by President George W. Bush ended up wiping out 200,000 U.S. jobs.

The decision had been strenuously debated within the White House, with top officials such as economic adviser Gary Cohn and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis raising concerns.

The penalties were pushed by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, an economist who has favored taking aggressive action.

Mattis, in a memo to Commerce, said U.S. military requirements for steel and aluminum represent about 3 percent of U.S. production and that the department was “concerned about the negative impact on our key allies” of any tariffs. He added that targeted tariffs would be preferable to global quotas or tariffs.

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Plans for Trump to make an announcement were thrown into doubt for a time because of the internal divisions. The actual event caught some top White House officials off guard and left aides scrambling for details. Key Senate offices also did not receive advance notice.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the decision "shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone," noting that the president had been talking about it "for decades."

But some Republicans in Congress were plainly upset.

"The president is proposing a massive tax increase on American families. Protectionism is weak, not strong," said Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska. "You'd expect a policy this bad from a leftist administration, not a supposedly Republican one."

GOP Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said, "Every time you do this, you get a retaliation and agriculture is the No. 1 target." House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said through a spokesman he hoped Trump would "consider the unintended consequences of this idea and look at other approaches before moving forward."

Trump met with more than a dozen executives, including representatives from U.S. Steel Corp., Arcelor Mittal, Nucor, JW Aluminum and Century Aluminum. The industry leaders urged Trump to act, saying they had been unfairly hurt by a glut of imports.

"We are not protectionist. We want a level playing field," said Dave Burritt, president and chief executive officer at U.S. Steel.

Trump last year ordered an investigation into whether aluminum and steel imports posed a threat to national defense. Ross said last month that the imports "threaten to impair our national security," noting, for example, that only one U.S. company now produces a high-quality aluminum alloy needed for military aircraft.

Under section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, the president has the authority to restrict imports and impose unlimited tariffs if a Commerce Department investigation finds a national security threat.

Commerce recommended a number of options. The president's plan is more stringent than any of them.

It was the latest move by the president to engage in trade actions after campaigning to revitalize the "forgotten" workers of the country. Trump earlier raised duties on Chinese-made washing machines, solar modules and some aluminum and steel products to offset what he said were improper subsidies.

Associated Press writers Lolita C. Baldor, Zeke Miller, Darlene Superville, Tom Krisher and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Follow Thomas on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/KThomasDC> and Wiseman at <https://twitter.com/Paul-WisemanAP>.

Greek museum strike shut sites in Athens, Crete

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Museums and archaeological sites in the wider Athens area and on the Greek island of Crete are shut for the day because of a strike by guards over a benefits dispute with the Culture Ministry.

Sites affected by Friday's strike included Greece's famed Acropolis in Athens, where disappointed tourists hoping to visit the Parthenon headed instead to a nearby hill to view the monument from afar. The nearby Acropolis Museum, however, remained open.

The museum guards' union described the 24-hour work stoppage as a "warning strike."

Q&A: How Trump's tariffs could affect people and companies

By PAUL WISEMAN, JOSH BOAK and TOM KRISHER, AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's vow Thursday to slap tariffs on imported steel and aluminum spooked investors, raised fears that other nations would punch back with their own sanctions

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and threatened to raise prices for U.S. consumers and companies that use steel and aluminum.

Here's a close look at the tariffs and their potential to trigger a trade war and bruise the U.S. economy:

WHAT EXACTLY DID TRUMP DO?

The president said that sometime next week, he will formally announce tariffs of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on imported aluminum. It's unclear whether any countries would be exempt from what would amount to a heavy new tax on imports. That tax would, in turn, make imported steel and aluminum more expensive for American companies and individuals who use goods containing those materials, ranging from cars to air conditioners to beer cans.

Trump had directed the Commerce Department nearly a year ago to investigate whether imported steel and aluminum posed a threat to national security. The premise is that a healthy industrial base is crucial to the nation's military. The Trump administration has said, for example, that America now has only one smelter that provides the high-purity aluminum that military aircraft require.

Commerce last month issued its conclusion that national security concerns justified sanctions on steel and aluminum imports. Among its recommendations were across-the-board tariffs of 24 percent on steel and 7.7 percent on aluminum. Trump said Thursday that he wants even higher tariffs.

In his decision, Trump deployed a little-used weapon in U.S. trade law: Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which authorizes the president to restrict imports and impose unlimited tariffs on national security grounds. Since the United States joined the World Trade Organization in 1995, it has pursued only two such investigations. On both occasions — a 1999 case involving oil imports and a 2001 case concerning iron ore and steel imports — the Commerce Department declined to recommend sanctions.

WHAT'S THE LIKELY IMPACT ON COMPANIES AND THE ECONOMY?

American steel and aluminum producers would benefit from a tax on imports and the higher prices that are likely to result.

"You will have protection for the first time in a long while, and you're going to regrow your industries," Trump told U.S. aluminum and steel company executives at the White House.

But there's a flip-side to that calculation: Fewer choices and higher costs for companies that buy steel and aluminum and for their customers.

"Tariffs on steel and aluminum are a tax hike the American people don't need and can't afford," said Utah Republican Orrin Hatch, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. "I encourage the president to carefully consider all of the implications of raising the cost of steel and aluminum on American manufacturers and consumers."

Freed of the need to compete with imports, U.S. steelmakers would likely raise their own prices. That, in turn, would force automakers to raise prices of new vehicles, although some might decide to absorb their higher costs.

"Simple supply and demand," says Lee McMillan, a steel and aluminum analyst at Clarksons Platou Securities. "You eliminate or substantially tax a good portion of supply, and the overall price, the domestic price, rises."

The American International Automobile Dealers Association said it fears that the tariffs would send car prices up "substantially." U.S. auto sales plateaued in 2016 at 17.5 million vehicles a year. They fell slightly last year and are expected to dip again in 2018.

"You start throwing in higher prices from more expensive steel for automakers — that's going to start to pile on multiple factors that could really slow down U.S. car sales," says Karl Brauer, executive publisher for Kelley Blue Book.

Other industries are concerned as well.

"It's going to be a big problem," said James Kaufman, president of Indianapolis Metal Spinning Co., which makes metal components for hubcap and lighting manufacturers. Kaufman said most U.S. aluminum producers don't make the alloys his company needs. So he has little choice but to import them.

"If the domestic mills are choosing not to make these alloys, I don't think the users should be penalized

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for having to bring them in from overseas," he said.

Kaufman said he also worries that the tariffs would raise the price of the steel that goes into his products, making his company less competitive with foreign rivals.

Fearful of such higher costs, the prospect of a trade war and a potential blow to corporate profits, investors dumped stocks with abandon on Thursday. The Dow Jones industrial average plunged 420 points, or 1.7 percent.

DO U.S. STEEL AND ALUMINUM PRODUCERS NEED HELP?

Overproduction by China has flooded world markets with steel and aluminum, driving prices down and intensifying pressure on American producers. Nearly half the steel produced in December, for example, came from Chinese mills, according to the World Steel Association. China accounted for more steel production than the United States, Russia, Japan and 28 countries of the European Union combined.

But the U.S. has already thrown up barriers to Chinese imports. As a result, China ranks only 11th in steel and fourth in aluminum imports to the United States. Trump's tariffs appear far more likely to hurt a staunch American ally, Canada, which is No. 1 in both areas: It supplies 16 percent of steel and 44 percent of aluminum imported to the U.S.

"Any suggestion that Ontario-made steel or aluminum constitutes a 'national security threat' to the U.S. is false," said Kathleen Wynne, premier of Ontario. "Canada and the U.S. are key allies and partners and are integral to each other's national security."

HOW MIGHT THE REST OF THE WORLD RESPOND?

Not well. Trade analysts predict that countries hit hard by the steel and aluminum tariffs could complain to the World Trade Organization.

Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, denounced the Trump tariffs as "a blatant intervention to protect U.S. domestic industry."

Chad Bown, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, argues that U.S. has "an extraordinarily weak case" that imports jeopardize national defense. Indeed, the U.S. Defense Department says the military needs just 3 percent of domestic steel and aluminum production.

Still, the WTO is usually wary of making judgments about member countries' security requirements. So it could balk at second-guessing the White House and could reject complaints against Trump's tariffs.

Spurned by the WTO, other countries might then retaliate with sanctions, perhaps using national security as a pretext for imposing tariffs of their own.

Krisher reported from Detroit.

Asian stocks skid, tracking Wall St loss on tariff fears

By KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian shares posted steep declines Friday, adding to global stock market losses after President Donald Trump vowed to impose stiff steel and aluminum tariffs, sparking fears of a trade war.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 2.8 percent to 21,109.44 and South Korea's Kospi slid 1.5 percent to 2,391.81. Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1.8 percent to 30,489.57 and the Shanghai Composite in mainland China fell 0.4 percent to 3,260.33. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 sank 1 percent to 5,914.00.

TARIFF TROUBLE: Trump, who campaigned on an "America First" trade policy, told industry executives he planned to levy penalties of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on aluminum imports. The tariffs would be in place for "a long period of time," though it wasn't immediately clear if certain trading partners would be exempt. The comments renewed investor concerns that increasingly nationalistic governments will impose barriers hurting the global economy and trade.

ANALYST INSIGHT: Trump's tariff plan "is bad policy at a bad time and will only add to the risk of a trade war," said Shane Oliver, head of investment strategy at AMP Capital in Sydney.

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CHINA SESSION: Also on investors' radar is next week's annual session of the National People's Congress. The meeting of the rubber-stamp parliament's 3,000-plus delegates is mainly ceremonial but China's communist leaders use it to publicize new initiatives and set the tone for the year's development plans. Investors will be looking to see whether Beijing brings in painful reforms to curb surging debt and overhaul state industry while widening the economy to private competitors.

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks sold off. The Standard & Poor's 500 index tumbled 1.3 percent to 2,677.67, the third straight day it has lost at least 1 percent. The Dow Jones industrial average dropped 1.7 percent to 24,608.98 and the Nasdaq composite fell 1.3 percent to 7,180.56.

CURRENCIES: The dollar weakened to a fresh 15-month low, slipping to 106.01 from 106.24 yen late Thursday. The euro rose to \$1.2275 from \$1.2263.

ENERGY: Oil prices rebounded. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 14 cents to \$61.13 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract lost 65 cents to settle at \$60.99 per barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, rose 17 cents to \$64.00 a barrel.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 2, the 61st day of 2018. There are 304 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 2, 1943, the three-day Battle of the Bismarck Sea began in the southwest Pacific during World War II; U.S. and Australian warplanes were able to inflict heavy damage on an Imperial Japanese convoy.

On this date:

In 1793, the first (and third) president of the Republic of Texas, Sam Houston, was born near Lexington, Virginia.

In 1836, the Republic of Texas formally declared its independence from Mexico.

In 1867, Howard University, a historically black school of higher learning in Washington, D.C., was founded. Congress passed, over President Andrew Johnson's veto, the first of four Reconstruction Acts.

In 1877, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was declared the winner of the 1876 presidential election over Democrat Samuel J. Tilden, even though Tilden had won the popular vote.

In 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship as President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones-Shafroth Act.

In 1933, the motion picture "King Kong" had its world premiere at New York's Radio City Music Hall and the Roxy.

In 1939, Roman Catholic Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli (puh-CHEL'-ee) was elected pope on his 63rd birthday; he took the name Pius XII. The Massachusetts legislature voted to ratify the Bill of Rights, 147 years after the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution had gone into effect. (Georgia and Connecticut soon followed.)

In 1958, a multinational expedition led by British explorer Vivian Fuchs completed the first overland crossing of Antarctica by way of the South Pole in 99 days.

In 1965, the movie version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "The Sound of Music," starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, had its world premiere in New York.

In 1978, the remains of comedian Charles Chaplin were stolen by extortionists from his grave in Cosier-sur-vevey, Switzerland. (The body was recovered near Lake Geneva 11 weeks later.)

In 1989, representatives from the 12 European Community nations agreed to ban all production of CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons), the synthetic compounds blamed for destroying the Earth's ozone layer, by the end of the 20th century.

In 1995, the Internet search engine website Yahoo! was incorporated by founders Jerry Yang and David Filo.

Ten years ago: Dmitry Medvedev, Vladimir Putin's hand-picked successor, scored a crushing victory in

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Russia's presidential election.

Five years ago: The day after \$85 billion in across-the-board federal spending cuts went into effect, President Barack Obama and congressional Republicans refused to concede any culpability for failing to stave off the sequester. Alaska's 41st Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race kicked off with a festive ceremonial start in Anchorage.

One year ago: Under intensifying pressure, Attorney General Jeff Sessions abruptly agreed to recuse himself from any investigation into Russian meddling in America's 2016 presidential election, acting after revelations he twice spoke with the Russian ambassador during the campaign and failed to say so when pressed by Congress. Retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson was confirmed as secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development on a Senate vote of 58-41; a few hours later, the Senate backed former Texas Gov. Rick Perry to be energy secretary, 62-37.

(Stations: Rock musician Casey, one name, is correct)

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Cullum is 88. Author Tom Wolfe is 88. Former Soviet President and Nobel peace laureate Mikhail S. Gorbachev is 87. Actress Barbara Luna is 79. Author John Irving is 76. Actress Cassie Yates is 67. Actress Laraine Newman is 66. Former Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., is 65. Former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar is 63. Singer Jay Osmond is 63. Pop musician John Cowsill (The Cowsills) is 62. Tennis player Kevin Curren is 60. Country singer Larry Stewart (Restless Heart) is 59. Rock singer Jon Bon Jovi is 56. Blues singer-musician Alvin Youngblood Hart is 55. Actor Daniel Craig is 50. Actor Richard Ruccolo is 46. Rock musician Casey (Jimmie's Chicken Shack) is 42. Rock singer Chris Martin (Coldplay) is 41. Actress Heather McComb is 41. Actress Rebel Wilson is 38. Actress Bryce Dallas Howard is 37. NFL quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is 36. Musician Mike "McDuck" Olson (Lake Street Dive) is 35. Actor Robert Iler is 33. Actress Nathalie Emmanuel is 29. Singer-rapper-actress Becky G is 21.

Thought for Today: "Humor has a tremendous place in this sordid world. It's more than just a matter of laughing. If you can see things out of whack, then you can see how things can be in whack." — Theodor Seuss Geisel (GY'-zuhl), AKA "Dr. Seuss," American children's author (born this date in 1904, died 1991).