

Groton Daily Independent

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JOHNSON AGENCY

Real Estate & Insurance

Jay Johnson, Broker

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Today

Wrestling:

**Boys MS District Tournament at Arena
DI Regions at Elementary School**

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

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

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DI Regions is today

The regional DI tournament is set for today at the Groton Area Elementary School.

Schools participating are Groton Area, Rosholt, Webster, Deuel and Watertown.

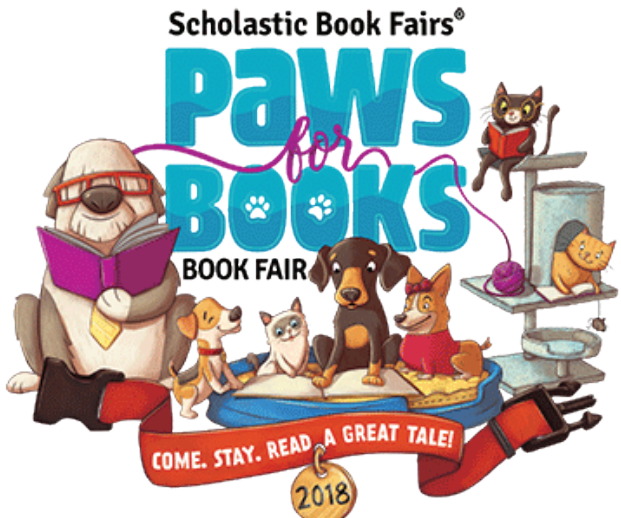
Two local teams will participate in Improv: Treasure.

At the senior level, the DIfunctional Nonsense made up of Alyssa Fordham, Kayla Jensen, Julianna Kosel, Hailey Monson, Sage Mortenson and Rylee Rosenau will be performing at 2:20 p.m.

The middle school team of the Bazang Boys made up of Carter Barse, Jackson Dinger and Ryan Groeblichhoff will perform at 1 p.m.

Three Groton Area teams will be competing in the Scientific: Unlikely Attraction division. The Snowbabes of Karlie McKane, Ashlynn Feser and Jeslyn Kosel will perform at 1 p.m. The Boiled Dino Dumpling Guys of Winston Clark, Corbin Weismantel, Axel Warrington, Lincoln Krause, Jacob Tewksbury and Nicholas Groeblichhoff will perform at 1:40 p.m. The Lava Girls of Keira Weismantel, Arabella Clark, Addison Hoffman, Claire Schuelke and Makenna Krause will perform at 1:20 p.m.

The non-competitive Rising Stars, Game Explorers, made up of Hudson Eichler, Novalea Warrington, Aurora Washenburger, Abby Fjeldheim, Shaydon Wood, Raelynn Feist and Mya Feser will perform at 2:20 p.m.



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

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

Maintenance Supervisor Wanted:

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

Day Shift C.N.A. Wanted

Sign-on Bonus

☆☆☆ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ☆☆☆

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

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



1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

March 5, 2018 – 7:00pm

Groton Community Center

1. Minutes
2. Bills
3. Department Reports
4. Ball field pole repair – insurance claim
5. Street Resurface Bids are open, and will be due April 2, 2018
6. Drinking Water Report
7. SDML Annual District Meeting – Selby, SD March 22 – Hope
8. Planning and Zoning Update
9. Donation to PAC for School Carnival
10. 2nd Reading Summer Salary Ordinance
11. Equalization Meeting – Dates to choose from: March 19th-26th
12. 2017 Annual Report Supporting documents
13. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
14. Hire summer employees

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Increased Trade Opportunities Vital for South Dakota's Farm Economy

In South Dakota, agriculture is our state's top industry but over the past four years, net farm income has collapsed due to low commodity prices. Opening up new trade markets for our ag products is vital as we continue working to improve the economy in South Dakota and the United States.

Net farm income in our country is projected to decrease \$4.3 billion from last year to \$59.5 billion in 2018, the lowest net farm income level since 2006. This marks the fourth straight year of decline, and is mainly the result of weak prices for crop and livestock products. Opening up new markets for American exports will greatly contribute to the overall health of the farm economy, since foreign markets absorb around one-fifth of all U.S. agriculture production today.

I recently joined a group of senators in a letter to President Trump to let him know we agree with comments he made at a meeting of world leaders in Davos, Switzerland, indicating that he is open to re-engaging in Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade negotiations. Increased economic engagement with the eleven countries currently in the TPP has the potential to substantially improve the competitiveness of U.S. businesses, including farms and ranches. It would also support millions of U.S. jobs, boost U.S. exports, increase wages and benefit consumers. Increasing access to a region and market that has a population of nearly 500 million—and is continuing to grow—is a smart move for our country. Additionally, U.S. participation in TPP could counter the influence of China in the Pacific Rim region.

Japan, a member of TPP, is the number one market for U.S. beef exports. In 2016, the U.S. exported 203,000 metric tons of beef to Japan, valued at \$1.3 billion. Currently, U.S. fresh, chilled and frozen beef enters the Japanese market at a 38.5 percent tariff rate. In the summer of 2017, Japan slapped a 50 percent tariff on frozen U.S. beef shipments. This tariff will continue through March 2018. Under TPP, this rate would have declined to 27.5 percent in year one, and ultimately would have declined to 9 percent over a 16-year phase in period. Australia is a top competitor to U.S. beef in Asia. In January 2015, the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement took effect, which set Australia's frozen beef tariff at 30.5 percent and fresh beef tariff at 32.5 percent, and will continue to be phased-down over the next 15-18 years.

According to the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC), TPP would provide significant benefits for U.S. agriculture and would increase U.S. ag exports by \$7.2 billion by 2032. Gains in farm and food exports would stem primarily from greater market access for U.S. products due to lower tariffs and expanded tariff-rate quotas. Additionally, according to an analysis by the American Farm Bureau, under TPP, U.S. net farm income is projected to be \$4.4 billion higher than without it. South Dakota exported nearly \$1 billion in products to TPP countries in 2015, including \$37 million in goods exported to Japan, \$4 million in goods to Vietnam and \$3 million in goods to Malaysia.

The president recently announced plans to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. While this may sound like good news for those industries, it is important to consider the negative impacts the policy change could have on goods produced in the United States that use these materials in production, such as farm machinery. Also, we must recognize potential repercussions from other countries, should they retaliate by restricting U.S. produced products being imported to their countries. If other countries do retaliate, it may impact our sales of corn, wheat, soybeans, livestock and other commodities to these countries. We will continue to monitor this development.

Free and fair trade has a proven record of keeping our economy healthy and vibrant. The president has been meeting with Congressional leaders to discuss trade and recently reiterated his commitment to free, fair and reciprocal trade, and remains open to potential future bilateral trade agreements, including in the Indo-Pacific region. I will continue working with the administration and my colleagues in the Senate to improve trade deals around the world.

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[View Bracket](#)

3/3/18, 9:33 AM

Class B Boys Basketball Round of 16

[Print Bracket](#)

The eight (8) winners of the Round of 16 contests will be re-seeded for the State Tournament.

#1 Bridgewater-Emery

Score:

Date: 3/6/2018

Time: 7:00 PM

Site: West Central HS

Score:

#16 De Smet

STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

#5 Clark/Willow Lake

Score:

Date: 3/6/2018

Time: 8:00 PM

Site: Huron Arena

Score:

Sanborn

#12 Central/Woonsocket

#2 Sully Buttes

Score:

Date: 3/6/2018

Time:

Site: Faith HS

Score:

#15 Harding County

STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

#6 Canistota

Score:

Date: 3/6/2018

Time: 6:30 PM

Site: Huron Arena

Score:

#11 Castlewood

#3 White River

Score:

Date: 3/6/2018

Time: 7:15 PM

Site: TF Riggs HS, Pierre

Score:

#14 Kimball/White Lake

STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

#7 Langford Area

Score:

Date: 3/6/2018

Time:

Site: Watertown Civic Arena

Score:

#10 Colman-Egan

#4 Corsica-Stickney

Score:

Date: 3/6/2018

Time: 5:00 PM

Site: Huron Arena

Score:

#13 Lower Brule

STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

#8 Herreid/Selby Area

Score:

Date: 3/6/2018

Time: 7:00 PM

Site: Stanley County HS

Score:

#9 Timber Lake

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Class A Boys Basketball Round of 16

Print Bracket

The eight (8) winners of the Round of 16 contests will be re-seeded for the State Tournament.

#1 SF Christian

Score:
Date: 3/6/2018
Time: 7:00 PM
Site: Chamberlain Armory

STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

Score:

#16 St. Thomas More

#5 Crow Creek

Score:
Date: 3/6/2018
Time: 7:30 PM
Site: Corn Palace

Score:

#12 Parker

#2 Madison

Score:
Date: 3/6/2018
Time: 6:00 PM
Site: Corn Palace

STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

Score:

#15 Aberdeen Roncalli

#6 Dell Rapids

Score:
Date: 3/6/2018
Time: 5:30 PM
Site: Winner Armory

Score:

#11 Pine Ridge

Seed	School	Seed Pts.
1	SF Christian	46.950
2	Madison	45.700
3	Sioux Valley	45.300
4	Miller	44.300
5	Crow Creek	44.150
6	Dell Rapids	44.050
7	Tea Area	43.950
8	Bon Homme	43.850

Seed	School	Seed Pts.
9	Dakota Valley	43.800
10	Sisseton	43.737
11	Pine Ridge	43.350
12	Parker	43.350
13	Red Cloud	43.250
14	Hot Springs	42.550
15	Aberdeen Roncalli	41.950
16	St. Thomas More	41.800

#3 Sioux Valley

Score:
Date: 3/6/2018
Time: 5:30 PM
Site: Pierre TF Riggs

STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

Score:

#14 Hot Springs

#7 Tea Area

Score:
Date: 3/6/2018
Time:
Site: Watertown Civic Arena

Score:

#10 Sisseton

#4 Miller

Score:
Date: 3/6/2018
Time: 7:15 PM
Site: Winner Armory

STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

Score:

#13 Red Cloud

#8 Bon Homme

Score:
Date: 3/6/2018
Time: 7:00 PM
Site: Yankton HS

Score:

#9 Dakota Valley

The Life of 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.

Harry Bert was born on August 1, 1930 in Andover to Harry and Lucy (Mielke) Raap. He attended school in Andover, graduating in 1949. He enlisted with the United States Army and served from January of 1953-1955. Following his honorably discharge, Bert returned to Andover where he farmed with his father and brother. He was united in marriage with Darlene Sturm on June 2, 1951 in Hancock, Minnesota. Together, they were blessed with three children. Bert was a farmer at heart, caring for the land and livestock. He retired and moved into Groton in 2000. Bert married Janice

Fenhaus on August 15, 2009.

Bert was a member of the United Methodist Church in Andover, and later in Groton. He enjoyed playing cards and bowling. Bert loved animals, especially his pet dogs.

Celebrating his life is his wife, Janice of Groton, three children, Tamara (George) Eberle of Watertown, Trudy (Barry) Smith of Andover, Torre (Denise) Raap of Andover, six grandchildren: Jody Heinemann and fiancé Eddie Haskell, Ryan (Kandi) Smith, Rene (Dan) Waldman, Whitney (Bryan) Sombke, Bryce Raap, Jeff Ringgenberg, two step-granddaughters, Christine Eberle and Michelle (Jon) Boer, 9 great-grandchildren: Mitchell, Zack, Alex Heinemann, Alexis and Alivia Ringgenberg, Hailey and Jaiden Smith, Jackson Waldman, Maryn Sombke and Baby Sombke. Bert is also survived by his four step-children, David Pauli, Darcy Dahlgren, Jody (Jim) Berg and Jennifer Knopp, 14 step-great-grandchildren, Chelsie Peterson, Tory Pauli, Carissa Pauli, Dustin Dahlgren, Derrick Dahlgren, Devin Dahlgren, Jared Berg, Jordan Berg, Jacob Berg, Savannah Berg, Lincoln Boer, Quinn Boer, Camden Rhodes and Reagan Rhodes. his siblings, Pat Lackey of Fayetteville, Arkansas, Joan VanDyke of Sioux Falls, Chuck (LaVonne) Raap of Groton, Laurel (Bob) Kost of Ft. Collins, Colorado, Kay (Lyle) Kranzler of Sioux Falls, Jerry (Carol) Raap of Andover, Tom Raap of Sioux Falls, Allana (Frank) Novotney of Windsor, Nebraska and Steven Raap of Yankton.

Preceding him in death were his parents and his first wife, Darlene in 2004.

Honorary Casketbearers will be Members of the Senior Citizens.

Casketbearers will be Jeff Ringgenberg, Mitchell Heinemann, Bryce Raap, Bryan Sombke, Ryan Smith and Dan Waldman.

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Today in Weather History

March 3, 1994: The melting of a very high snowpack resulted in flooding along the James River, as well as other lowlands and farmland. Widespread problems included damaged roads, washed out culverts, and flood damage to homes, especially basement flooding.

1896: The temperature in downtown San Francisco, California fell to 33 degrees, which was the lowest ever for the city in March.

1966: An F5 tornado hit Jackson, Mississippi killing 54 persons.

1980 - A coastal storm produced 25 inches of snow at Elizabeth City, NC, and 30 inches at Cape Hatteras NC. At Miami FL the mercury dipped to 32 degrees. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1983 - The last of a series of storms to strike the California coast finally came to an end. Waves fifteen to twenty feet high pounded the coast for two days, and in a four day period up to 18 inches of rain drenched the Los Angeles and Santa Barbara area. On the morning of the first, thunderstorms spawned two tornadoes which moved through the Los Angeles area. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm brought heavy rain and gale force winds to Washington and Oregon. Quillayute WA received 2.67 inches of rain in 24 hours, and winds gusted to 60 mph at Astoria OR. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A small but intense low pressure system roared across west central Mississippi at 90 mph early in the morning. A tornado in southern Mississippi picked up an automobile, carried it 150 feet, and tossed it through the brick wall of an unoccupied retirement home. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Wintry weather prevailed from the southern Rockies to the Upper Great Lakes. Negaunee MI received 19 inches of snow, and up to 24 inches of snow blanketed Colorado. Blizzard conditions were reported in Minnesota. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - An upper level weather disturbance produced snow in the Colorado Rockies, with eight inches reported at Winter Park, and a storm moving off the Pacific Ocean began to spread rain and snow across the western U.S. March continued to start off like a lamb elsewhere around the country. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)


1991: A major ice storm coated parts of central and northwestern New York State with up to two inches of ice. Damage was totaled at \$375 million dollars. It was the most costly natural disaster ever in the state up until that time. Nearly half a million people were without power at the height of the storm and many would not see their power restored until the 16th.

2003 - It was a day of temperature extremes. Miami reached a high temperature of 90 degrees, the earliest observed 90 degree temperature since March 5, 1964. Meanwhile Marquette, MI, dropped to 30 degrees below zero, the lowest temperature ever recorded in the city in March.

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Sat Mar 3	Sun Mar 4	Mon Mar 5	Tue Mar 6	Wed Mar 7	Thu Mar 8	Fri Mar 9
39°F	42°F	37°F	31°F	26°F	27°F	32°F
33°F	34°F	20°F	11°F	7°F	11°F	27°F
ESE 15 MPH	E 15 MPH	E 19 MPH Precip 90%	N 18 MPH Precip 50%	NNW 10 MPH	SW 8 MPH	WNW 8 MPH



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
www.weather.gov/abr

Winter Storm Watch

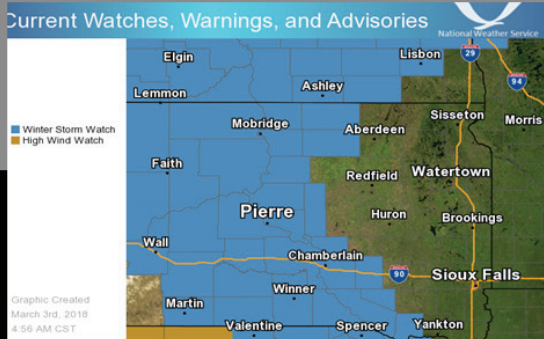
Late Sunday night through Tuesday afternoon



Snow & Blowing Snow


Blizzard conditions possible

Current Watches, Warnings, and Advisories




Graphic Created March 3rd, 2018 4:56 AM CST

Today



Upper 30s to mid 40s

Sunday

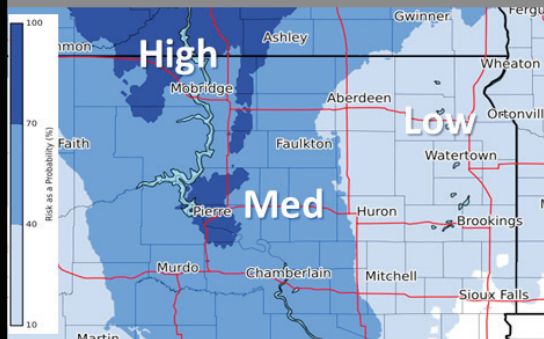


Upper 30s to mid 40s

Light freezing drizzle or drizzle, changing to just drizzle or rain by afternoon. Little to no icing expected.

3/3/2018 5:33 AM

Risk of 6" or More Snow



High probability (red) in central South Dakota, Medium (yellow) in west central Minnesota, and Low (blue) in the east.

Published on: 03/03/2018 at 5:42AM

A Winter Storm Watch remains in effect for central South Dakota beginning late Sunday night and lasting through Tuesday afternoon. Confidence is slowly increasing for heavy snow and blizzard conditions across the Missouri River valley. The graphics shown here reveal the current Winter Storm Watch area, as well as the probability of receiving 6 or more inches of snow. Medium to high probability exists over central South Dakota of receiving 6 or more inches of snow, and there are indications that some areas could receive as much as a foot or more of snow! Lesser amounts of snow are expected further east across the James River valley into west central Minnesota, where generally less than 6 inches are forecast. Although, we could be talking about light ice accumulations as well. This is a very complex and evolving storm system, please stay tuned to the latest forecast as things will certainly change over the next couple days. We are beginning to focus our attention though to central South Dakota, where it appears the most significant impacts from heavy snow and very strong winds will occur.

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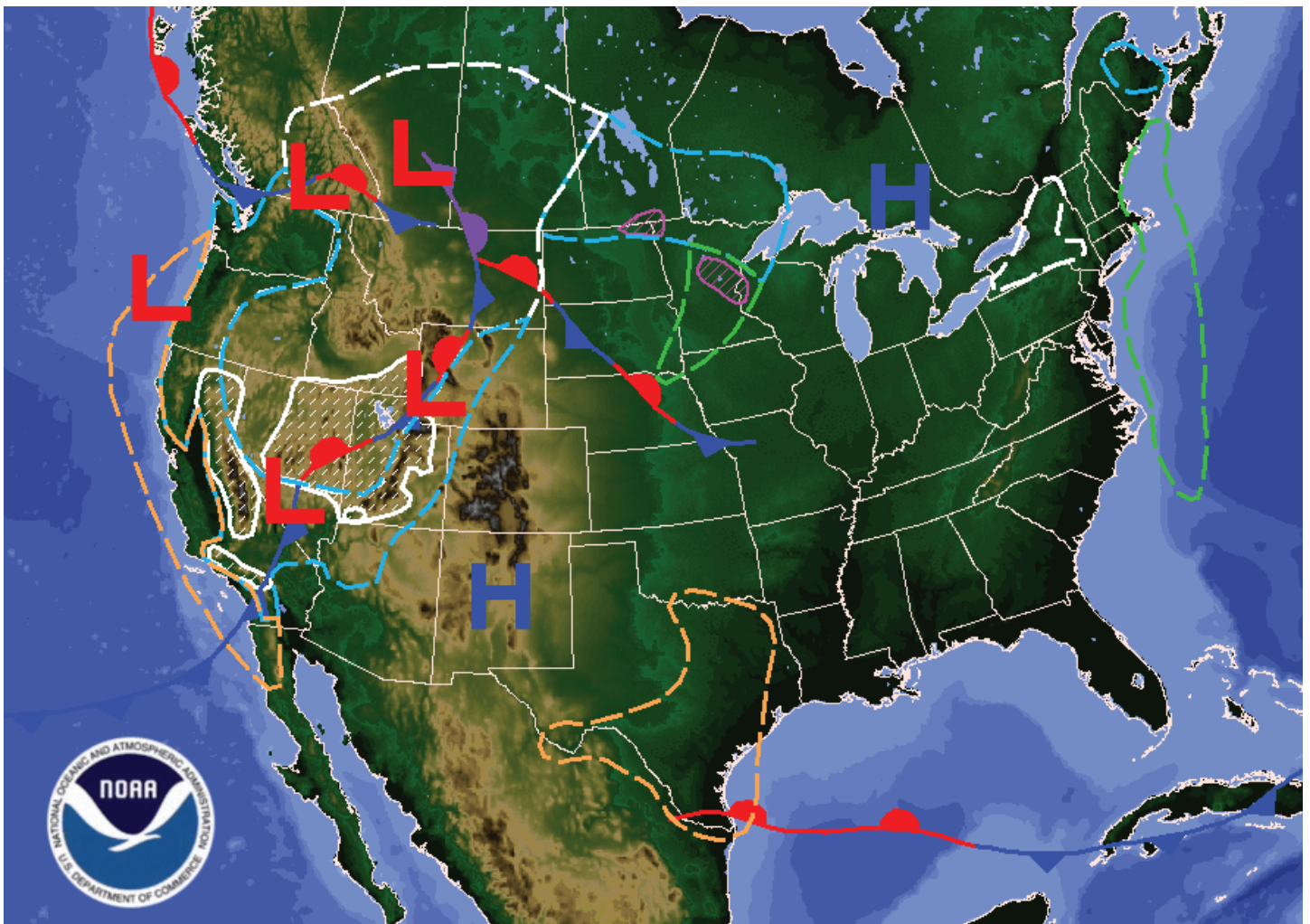
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 38.9 F at 3:20 PM
Low Outside Temp: 11.3 F at 12:00 AM
Wind Chill:
High Gust: 24.0 Mph at 11:27 AM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 72° in 1905
Record Low: -15° in 1916
Average High: 34°F
Average Low: 14°F
Average Precip in March: 0.09
Precip to date in March: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.11
Precip Year to Date: 0.57
Sunset Tonight: 6:23 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:06 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sat, Mar 03, 2018, issued 4:52 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)



PAIN MANAGEMENT

"This is going to hurt me more than it does you," said the father to his young son as he took him from the family room for interrupting our conversation. I'd heard that statement many times and always wondered what the parent wanted the child to understand when it was used. If it was used to redirect a child's behavior and teach him or her an important lesson about life, why not say so. That's what the author of Psalm 94 meant when he wrote, "If God disciplines you, consider yourself blessed" or "full of blessings!"

To discipline means "to teach." Discipline is not punishment as we understand it - though it may involve suffering and loss, disappointment and feelings of rejection. When God disciplines us, it is His method to bring us back to live within His commandments and laws and the teachings of Jesus. It is about "getting our attention" when we are overcome by temptation and fall into sin. It's about being confronted by God when He corrects us for allowing the "things or the people or the attractions of this world" to take His place. It is about worshiping those things rather than the Creator of those "things."

One of the blessings of discipline is that it has long term benefits for the Christian. If in His mercy He brings loss or suffering to teach us a lesson today, and if we are willing to learn from the loss or suffering when it happens, we will be spared from greater losses or more suffering in the future - and bring more honor to Him.

Prayer: May we understand, Father, that when You discipline us it is a sign of Your love and care for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 94:12a Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O Lord

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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

News from the Associated Press

Sioux Falls event center had attendance pass 700,000 in 2017

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Headliners including Garth Brooks and the Foo Fighters helped Sioux Falls' \$117 million events center sell more than 700,000 tickets last year.

It was the first time the Denny Sanford Premier Center had attendance that topped 700,000, the Argus Leader reported. The three-year-old facility also saw a net operating income of more than \$2 million for the second straight year.

"It was a huge year for the venue and for Sioux Falls," said Terry Torkildson, the center's general manager. "We welcomed 38,000 more people through our doors in 2017 across all events. And just for concert tour attendance, we were up 68,000 over 2016."

Torkildson credits the success to the diversity of events.

The venue hosted 18 sold-out events including performances by Tim McGraw and Faith Hill, Twenty One Pilots, Eric Church and Def Leppard. Brooks had the most sold out events with nine concerts.

The center also had 24 touring events and hosted multiple shows by Cirque du Soleil, Disney on Ice and the Professional Bull Riders tour.

"The touring concert industry had a phenomenal year in 2017, both in terms of quality and quantity of concerts," said Chris Semrau, assistant general manager at the center who's responsible for booking events and entertainers. "We benefited from that, and we see no slow-down in the concert market for 2018."

The center currently has 13 concerts scheduled for this year, including Imagine Dragons, Smashing Pumpkins and Metallica.

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

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Region 1A Semifinal

Aberdeen Roncalli 59, Tiospa Zina Tribal 51

Sisseton 61, Milbank 45

Region 2A Semifinal

Madison 58, Hamlin 45

Sioux Valley 65, Flandreau 63

Region 3A Semifinal

Dell Rapids 60, Tri-Valley 50

Sioux Falls Christian 81, West Central 33

Region 4A Semifinal

Dakota Valley 61, Vermillion 60

Tea Area 79, Elk Point-Jefferson 47

Region 5A Semifinal

Bon Homme 46, Platte-Geddes 39

Parker 54, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 41

Region 6A Semifinal

Crow Creek 80, McLaughlin 61

Miller 78, Stanley County 49

Region 7A Semifinal

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Pine Ridge 95, Todd County 76
Red Cloud 72, Little Wound 64
Region 8A Semifinal
Hot Springs 71, Belle Fourche 60
St. Thomas More 56, Rapid City Christian 28
Region 1B Semifinal
Clark/Willow Lake 61, Britton-Hecla 38
Langford 50, Warner 34
Region 2B Semifinal
Herreid/Selby Area 52, Potter County 51
Sully Buttes 61, Leola/Frederick 43
Region 3B Semifinal
Castlewood 53, Wolsey-Wessington 34
DeSmet 56, Arlington 37
Region 4B Semifinal
Colman-Egan 46, Ethan 42
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 55, Chester 42
Region 5B Semifinal
Bridgewater-Emery 67, Irene-Wakonda 41
Canistota 66, Viborg-Hurley 57
Region 6B Semifinal
Corsica/Stickney 62, Gregory 43
Kimball/White Lake 65, Colome 49
Region 7B Semifinal
Lower Brule 73, Jones County 52
White River 81, Lyman 60
Region 8B Semifinal
Harding County 51, Faith 46
Timber Lake 79, Takini 47

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Class AA Round of 16
Aberdeen Central 58, Yankton 34
Brandon Valley 51, Mitchell 40
Harrisburg 56, Sturgis Brown 40
RC Central 51, Brookings 48
Rapid City Stevens 46, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 23
Sioux Falls Lincoln 54, Watertown 38
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 61, Spearfish 31
Sioux Falls Washington 40, Pierre 34

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

24-28-42-60-64, Mega Ball: 8, Megaplier: 4

(twenty-four, twenty-eight, forty-two, sixty, sixty-four; Mega Ball: eight; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$243 million

Powerball: Estimated jackpot: \$321 million

South Dakota residents stand out with vehicle vanity plates

By TREVOR MITCHELL, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Since 1988, South Dakota drivers have taken nearly 50,000 opportunities to use the tiny space of real estate on the back of their vehicle to express something about themselves — in seven characters or less.

Some of these vanity license plates are funny. Some are political.

Others show allegiance to a sports team or alma mater, while some are obscure references difficult to interpret for inquiring minds.

Some personalized plates — 3,000, in fact — have been denied by state officials since 2008, often for carrying “connotations offensive to good taste and decency.”

What they all have in common is that a South Dakotan had an idea that they thought was worth an extra \$25 annual fee.

That’s pretty affordable compared to Maryland’s \$50 annual fee, or the eye-popping \$100 fee that Washington D.C. asks of aspiring vanity plate owners.

On the other hand, Virginia sets the bar even lower — you only have to put down an extra \$10 a year.

Despite the low cost, a national study showed only 1.39 percent of registered motor vehicles in South Dakota had personalized plates — 44th in the country.

When Argus Leader Media filed a records request recently with the South Dakota Department of Revenue, we got them all. Even the rejected ones.

What can’t be on a license plate? There are no “vulgar words, terms or abbreviations” allowed, and the characters “cannot express represent or imply a profane, obscene or sexual meaning.”

You can’t be offensive or disrespectful of a race, religion, color, deity, ethnic heritage, gender, sexual orientation, disability status or political affiliation.

You can’t support lawlessness, unlawful activities, or have anything related to illegal drugs or paraphernalia.

But other than that? Go wild.

Wade LaRoche, public affairs manager with the South Dakota Department of Revenue, said staff reviews the plate applications as they arrive — using Google and even Urban Dictionary to see if you’re trying to sneak something through.

That’s why you’ve got denied plates like 3SOME, AZZKIKR and the multiple people trying to trick the system with BADA55.

But for the people who aren’t trying to shock or surprise you as you drive down I-29, the reasons for getting vanity plates are often a lot more personal.

In our interviews with vanity plate owners, the inspirations ranged from college pride or self-promotion, or maybe just trying to make people laugh while they’re stuck in traffic, the Argus Leader reported .

Let’s take a look at some of the highlights.

Let’s be clear — we’re just talking license plates, but South Dakota State University clearly has the edge here over the University of South Dakota. Plates containing SDSU or JACKS outnumber those with USD or YOTES considerably.

Two drivers in the state refuse to take a side, as shown by the plates SDSUUSD and USDSDSU.

Black Hills State University shows up as BLKHILS, BLKHILZ, BLKHLLS, BLKHLS, and BLKHLZ.

As the schools get smaller, so do the chances that they make plate appearances — but Augustana University has still had six “AUGIE” plates, and at least one devoted fan of Mitchell’s Dakota Wesleyan University had DWUTGRS for a time.

It should be no surprise that the Minnesota Vikings dominate this category. From SKOLMOM to DAVIKES, VIKEFAN to VIKEGAL, MNVIKES to GOVIKES, South Dakota’s primary football fandom is evident.

GBPACK, PACKRMN and 4PACKRS are just a few of the plates from the state’s Green Bay Packers fans, although “PACK” also shows up in less-clear situations. (Is 12PACK a reference to Aaron Rodgers or beer? These are the mysteries that vanity plates bring us).

In fact, every NFL team from the Chicago Bears to the Jacksonville Jaguars appears to be represented

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on a South Dakota plate, save for the Carolina Panthers. The plate PANTHER is in use, but none of the PANTHRS or PNTHERS plates you might expect.

What gives, South Dakota? Cam Newton isn't good enough for you?

The state has less interest in plates showing off non-Minnesota teams in the other three major professional sports leagues, although some are oddly popular.

At least 18 people have used their plate to cheer on the Boston Red Sox, while only two went for the Chicago White Sox. (One person, on the other hand, just wants to inform you that IKNTSOX).

The plate records obtained by the Argus Leader were pulled in December, before the Vikings pulled off a last-second win over the New Orleans Saints — but a quick check with the Department of Revenue shows that you should still be clear to go apply for MNMIRCL.

Fingers crossed you don't run into the car sporting EAGLES, though.

Now we run into what is perhaps the subtlest category of vanity plates. Sure, if you're parked behind ECTO1, you can guess it's being driven by a Ghostbusters fan. Here are a few more that would likely pass you by, but have all adorned a South Dakota vehicle.

CQB241 seems pretty unassuming — except that it's the license plate of Christine, an evil car that kills people in John Carpenter's 1983 film "Christine," based on the Stephen King novel of the same name. If you notice this plate on a 1958 Ford Plymouth, make a U-turn.

In the same vein, someone in South Dakota is driving around with the plate BEATNGU. You may remember this from "Jeepers Creepers," a movie in which an ancient, winged demon drives around in a rusty old truck, killing and eating people.

So, you know, if that's the vibe you're going for ... good for you.

With no list of cars supplied by the Department of Revenue, it's impossible to tell whether OUTATME is on a DeLorean DMC-12, or if EAGLE5 is on a Winnebago-turned-spaceship, or if NRVOUS is on a Ferrari 250 GT Spyder.

It's possible, sure ... but it's also possible some South Dakotans are just fans of "Back to the Future," "Spaceballs" and "Ferris Bueller's Day Off."

Not all inspiration comes from license plates, either — OHIMARK is a clear reference to one of the most famous lines from "The Room," the 2003 movie so bad it became a cult classic.

They tell you never to discuss politics or religion in polite company. But we all know the roads aren't polite.

OBAMA, 4OBAMA and NOBAMA once adorned cars in the state, although they appear to have fallen out of use.

In their place the state now has TRUMP, TRUMP45 and MAGA.

In the way of even higher powers, we've got GOD, SHIVA, GANESHA, JESUS, ZEUS, YAHWEH, ATHENA and YAALLAH.

Ancient Egyptian goddess ISIS also made an appearance on a plate at one point. That plate is now, understandably, not in use.

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

South Dakota man raises Malaysian prawns as hobby

By ELIZABETH VARIN, Aberdeen American News

IPSWICH, S.D. (AP) — In a series of tanks in the basement of a house in Ipswich, 10-legged creatures are growing.

Ky Tran has been raising Malaysian freshwater prawns as a hobby for about six years, learning by doing. "When I was in Texas, I went to a farm that actually grows these guys," he said. "They grow them in June and they harvest in October. We bought some and we ate them, and that's when I got hooked."

Nobody wanted to share their secrets on how to grow prawns, so Tran started figuring out how to do it on his own.

He and his family moved to South Dakota from Texas about two years ago. There are problems keeping

the pools and tanks heated in this climate, Tran said.

Even so, he hopes to expand his operation in spring, Aberdeen American News reported .

Tran also hopes to increase interest in raising prawns. He sells some live prawns through his website — ktprawns.com — for people to raise at home and has a YouTube channel where he describes different aspects of growing the crustaceans.

“As a country we’ve imported hundreds of thousands of tons of shrimp from overseas,” he said. “I’m trying to encourage more people to do this.”

Aquaculture is not a large portion of the agriculture industry in South Dakota, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s annual census. There were 14 farms that sold aquaculture products in 2012. That includes catfish, trout, other food fish, bait fish, ornamental fish, sport or game fish and other aquaculture products.

Aquaculture is the raising of aquatic animals or the cultivation of aquatic plants for food.

The total market value of aquaculture in South Dakota was just shy of \$2.5 million in 2012 — the most recent numbers available. An aquaculture survey is done only every five years in the state.

For perspective, the market value of all agriculture products in South Dakota was more than \$10 billion in 2012.

Regions of the country where freshwater prawn farming has been seriously attempted include Kentucky, northern Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee, California, the Carolinas and Florida, according to Greg Lutz, professor at the Aquaculture Research Station at Louisiana State University. He’s also editor-in-chief of Aquaculture Magazine.

There has been interest in producing marine shrimp in low-salinity indoor systems throughout the Upper Midwest, Lutz said. However, those ventures are scattered in various places and few seem to last long enough to turn a profit, he said.

While millions of tons of marine shrimp are farmed each year around the world, there is almost no viable marine shrimp farming in the U.S. due to unsuitable climate conditions and high production costs, he said.

There are some scattered “mom and pop” freshwater prawn operations, mostly in inland regions, Lutz said. That is because most of the retail price of shrimp in those regions involves transportation and cold storage, allowing local producers to compete by marketing their products live or fresh.

Information from: Aberdeen American News, <http://www.aberdeennews.com>

Man accused of killing Andover woman, setting apartment fire

ANDOVER, S.D. (AP) — A man accused of killing a woman in Andover before starting her apartment on fire is facing numerous charges.

State prosecutors say 36-year-old Jose Quinones-Rodriguez, of Aberdeen, was indicted Thursday on first-degree murder, arson and burglary, among other charges,

Authorities say Quinones-Rodriguez shot and killed 25-year-old Tawny Rockwood between Feb. 8 and 9. Court documents show that Quinones-Rodriguez and Rockwood had been in a relationship for about four months and had a history of verbal confrontations.

Quinones-Rodriguez is being held on \$1 million cash bond.

‘Top two’ primary backers fail to gather enough support

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A group trying to bring a “top two” primary system to South Dakota didn’t collect enough valid signatures to get the issue onto the November ballot, the state’s chief elections official said Friday.

Secretary of State Shantel Krebs’ office said in a statement that a random sampling of signatures collected by Open Primaries South Dakota found that the campaign submitted about 25,500 valid signatures, not the nearly 28,000 needed for the proposed constitutional amendment to go to voters. The rejection could be challenged in court.

The group's treasurer, De Knudson, said she's contacted the group's attorney but that a decision hasn't been made on whether to challenge the decision.

"I'm just a little stunned right now," said Knudson, a former Sioux Falls City Council member. "I'm just extremely disappointed."

The amendment would have moved South Dakota to a system in which the top two finishers in a primary would have advanced to the general election, regardless of party. Such a model is sometimes referred to as a "jungle primary" system.

The proposal would have applied to primaries for county offices, the Legislature, governor and U.S. House and Senate. For example, in a gubernatorial race under the plan, there would be an open primary for all candidates in which the top two vote-getters would compete in the general election.

Supporters say the measure would be fairer because many elections now are effectively decided in partisan primaries closed to independent voters. In South Dakota, the Democratic primary is open to independents, while the Republican primary is closed. No groups had filed with the Secretary of State's office to run a campaign against the proposal.

Knudson said the campaign used paid signature gatherers, and about 75 volunteers collected roughly 2,400 names. She said the group's top volunteer circulator had already contacted her Friday to say he would gather signatures again to put the measure before voters.

Knudson said she thinks her group's proposed system is much better than South Dakota's current primary model.

"You don't know what the future holds, but I believe that our group will be back even stronger in 2020," she said.

Dakota Access developer links Earth First to rogue protests

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The company that built the Dakota Access oil pipeline says an environmental entity it's trying to sue for opposing the project was organized enough to fund a rogue group of protesters that allegedly engaged in criminal activity.

Earth First provided \$500,000 to what became the Red Warrior Camp, a pipeline protest group that Texas-based developer Energy Transfer Partners and law enforcement have accused of advocating aggressive tactics.

"Red Warrior Camp drove many of the violent protests that took place between August 2016 and February 2017 on the ground in North Dakota," said ETP attorney Lawrence Bender.

He referred questions about the basis for the claims to the company, which did not immediately respond Friday.

ETP's allegations come in a dispute over whether Earth First is an actual group that can be sued. The Center for Constitutional Rights maintains Earth First is an unstructured social movement such as Black Lives Matter that can't be sued.

Bender maintains that "Earth First directed and participated in a coordinated campaign against DAPL" by, among other things, funding what became the Red Warrior Camp. It operated within a much larger camp that drew thousands of pipeline opponents, including some who regularly clashed with police. There were 761 arrests in the region in a six-month span. The Tribal Council of the Standing Rock Sioux, which has led the opposition to the pipeline near its reservation, voted in November 2016 to ask the Red Warrior Camp to leave. It did a month later.

Calls to a cellphone for Cody Hall, who was a spokesman for the Red Warrior Camp at the height of the protests in 2016, did not go through on Friday. The Red Warrior Society, which formed from the remnants of the camp when it disbanded, did not respond to an email and Facebook message seeking comment.

Energy Transfer last August sued Earth First, Greenpeace and BankTrack for up to \$1 billion, alleging they worked to undermine the \$3.8 billion pipeline that's now moving oil from North Dakota to Illinois.

Company lawyers have asked U.S. District Judge Daniel Hovland to declare that Earth First has been

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served with the lawsuit via Earth First Journal, whose website bills the publication as a forum for discussion within the Earth First movement.

Center for Constitutional Rights attorney Pamela Spees, who represents the journal, maintains that Earth First is a social movement or philosophy that can't be sued, and that ETP's attempt to circumvent that by serving the journal warrants sanctions. She wants Hovland to order the company to pay attorney fees and to educate lawyers at the plaintiff firms about court procedural rules she claims have been violated.

ETP has asked Hovland to reject that request, calling it a "publicity stunt" and maintaining that Earth First "was instrumental in funding, training and directing these violent out-of-state protesters — conduct that Earth First is known for."

Spees maintains that ETP has presented no evidence to back its claims and calls the allegations "ridiculous."

Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

Billie Sutton: Contract transparency law is 'common sense'

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Democratic governor candidate Billie Sutton says a new law requiring state contracts to include the printed names of those who sign them is "common sense" and a normal practice at businesses everywhere.

The state Senate minority leader said Friday in a statement that officials sometimes need to ensure government "follows the rules the rest of us do." Sutton was the Senate sponsor of the measure.

Sutton's governor campaign said in the statement that as he and others have examined taxpayer-funded contracts, they've occasionally been unable to read the signatures of the people who signed them. He says it seems like common sense to print the names below the signature.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed the bill into law Thursday. Sutton's campaign says he's sure the governor's signature was "impeccable as always."

Minnesota man gets 17 years for South Dakota sex crime

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Minnesota man has been sentenced to 17 years in prison for traveling to South Dakota with the intent of having sex with girls at a Sioux Falls hotel.

Authorities say 60-year-old Roger Blaisdell, of Pipestone, Minnesota, arranged to have sex with what he thought were 10- and 13-year-old girls in October 2016 through an online ad that was part of a law enforcement sting operation.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security investigated.

Blaisdell pleaded guilty last October to federal sexual misconduct and child pornography charges.

Convicted embezzler pleads guilty to embezzling again

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Pierre woman who admitted embezzling from the Fort Pierre Development Corp. in 2015 has now pleaded guilty to stealing from a church group.

The Capital Journal reports 61-year-old Joni Boub was accused of embezzling \$46,000 from the Dakota Association of the United Church of Christ, where she worked in 2015 and 2016.

The association is a group of about a dozen congregations mainly located on American Indian reservations.

Boub faces up to 10 years in prison when she's scheduled March 27. She also faces a Tuesday hearing at which her probation could be revoked in her first embezzlement conviction.

Boub was given a suspended 10-year prison sentence and six years of probation in 2015 for stealing about \$39,000 from the development group while working as its office manager.

Information from: Pierre Capital Journal, <http://www.capjournal.com>

County worker accused of hauling drug items to gravel pit

IPSWICH, S.D. (AP) — Bond has been set at \$10,000 cash for an Edmunds County Highway Department worker accused of manufacturing methamphetamine and dumping drug paraphernalia at a county gravel pit.

The American News reports that 33-year-old David Becker, of Northville, was arrested Tuesday and made his first court appearance Thursday. He didn't immediately enter a plea to felony drug and weapons charges.

Authorities allege Becker hauled the drug paraphernalia to the gravel pit in a county vehicle and a personal vehicle. Two other county workers reported suspicious activity at the gravel pit.

The most serious charge against Becker is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a \$20,000 fine.

Information from: Aberdeen American News, <http://www.aberdeennews.com>

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>

Man convicted of murder hopeful ruling leads to freedom

By JIM SALTER, Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Witnesses have recanted. Another man has confessed. Now, a man who was convicted in 2001 of killing a woman in his Missouri hometown is awaiting a decision from the state's highest court that could determine whether he will be released — and finally get to spend time outside of a prison visitors room with a college-age daughter who was just a baby when he was first arrested.

It will be up to the Missouri Supreme Court to ultimately decide whether 49-year-old David Robinson will go free after a special master appointed to review the case ruled last month that his first-degree murder conviction should be tossed out. In doing so, Judge Darrell Missey cited "clear and convincing evidence" that Robinson "is actually innocent of that crime."

It's not clear when the Supreme Court will rule.

Robinson is anxious to get out, but feels a sense of relief that someone in authority finally believes him. He thinks about his daughter, now a college student, and about being able to spend time with her and other relatives.

"It ain't been no easy task," he said in a phone interview from the state prison in Jefferson City. "It's been rough on me."

But he feels good now. "I'm in a good frame of mind. I'm praying they'll go along with his recommendation," he said.

Robinson was convicted in the August 2000 killing of Sheila Box, who was shot to death in her SUV after leaving the Sikeston bar she and her fiancée owned with \$300 in cash and checks. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Missey was appointed to review the case after an extensive investigation by the Southeast Missourian

newspaper in Cape Girardeau called into question the actions of a Sikeston police detective.

"You sit back and you think: How can David Robinson still be in prison?" said Charlie Weiss, the attorney handling Robinson's appeal. "This is a very compelling and overwhelming case of actual innocence."

In a court filing Friday, the Missouri attorney general's office cited several "erroneous" findings in Missey's ruling. But it wasn't immediately clear whether charges would be refiled if the conviction is thrown out. A spokeswoman for Attorney General Josh Hawley did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Robinson grew up in Sikeston, a city of about 16,000 people about 140 miles (225 kilometers) southeast of St. Louis. He admits that he got into trouble plenty of times. His extensive record dates to age 15, with crimes that included burglary, drug charges, and assault.

But, Robinson said, "I didn't do anything of this magnitude to deserve this treatment."

No physical evidence tied Robinson to Box's killing. Two witnesses connected Robinson to the crime, but they have since recanted. Another Sikeston man, Romanze Mosby, confessed on tape in 2004 that he was the real killer. Mosby, who killed himself in 2009, never signed an affidavit confirming his confession, and judges refused to allow it as evidence.

Robinson claimed he was at a family gathering at the time of the shooting, and three relatives backed him up in testimony.

"When I first got arrested they did gunshot residue, DNA, fingerprints," Robinson said. "It showed I didn't have any connection to this crime. My whole case was based on fabricated and inflammatory evidence."

The investigator, Sikeston detective John Blakely, was placed on administrative leave after Missey's ruling. Blakely does not have a listed phone number and a phone message seeking comment from Sikeston police was not returned. In court testimony, Blakely denied allegations that he framed Robinson.

In his court filing, Hawley disputed Missey's finding that Blakely "ignored or suppressed facts" to tilt the investigation toward Robinson.

The city of Sikeston has asked U.S. prosecutors to review the investigation.

Robinson's mother, Jennett McCaster, said she never doubted her son's innocence.

"I want to hug him, I want to kiss him," McCaster said. "I want to just enjoy life with him and not have to see him behind a wall and in handcuffs."

It's clear Trump is hazy in outlining gun measure priorities

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In his quest to tackle gun violence, President Donald Trump has alternated between calling for tougher laws and declaring his fealty to the Second Amendment's right to bear arms, leaving a trail of befuddled lawmakers and advocates in his wake.

One thing he still has not done: clearly outline his legislative priorities.

Washington's week closed Friday without further explanation from the president, the White House indicating that for now, he is backing an incremental proposal on background checks and a bill that would provide new federal dollars to stem school violence.

Just what Trump would like to see in the "beautiful" and "comprehensive" bill he called for earlier in the week remained unclear. That comment came at a bipartisan meeting with lawmakers Wednesday, which was quickly followed by a private session with the National Rifle Association on Thursday.

"Good (Great) meeting in the Oval Office tonight with the NRA!" Trump tweeted Thursday night.

He had outlined some of his preferences via Twitter earlier Thursday, saying that both good and bad ideas had come out of the bipartisan meeting. He said: "Background Checks a big part of conversation. Gun free zones are proven targets of killers. After many years, a Bill should emerge. Respect 2nd Amendment!"

Amid the confusion, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has shelved the gun debate for now, saying the Senate will turn next week to other measures.

Disagreement continues among legislators over the appropriate response after the Florida school shooting that left 17 dead. Republicans have largely backed away from stricter gun limits, while Democrats

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emboldened by Trump's rhetoric are pushing for ambitious action, including expanded background checks and even a politically risky ban on assault weapons.

As is often the case, the president has been an unreliable negotiator.

Sen. Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat who is a leading advocate of tougher gun laws, predicted on Twitter: "The White House is going to bob and weave on guns. Accept it."

Still, he added: "Trump's instinct on this issue is not wrong — if his party doesn't get behind background checks soon, they're cooked in 2018 and 2020." And he argued that Trump's "willingness to buck the gun lobby in public, rule out the NRA agenda and talk up background checks, has changed this debate nationally."

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Friday that Trump supports a limited proposal from Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Murphy that would boost participation in the existing federal background check program, as well as a bill that would provide new federal grant funding to stem school violence.

Sanders said Trump had not signed on to a more sweeping background check bill that would require the 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.

Sanders sought to clarify Trump's comments earlier in the week expressing support for tougher background checks and interest in raising the minimum age to buy certain weapons. She said he was interested in improving background checks, but "not necessarily universal background checks." And she said that while Trump "conceptually" supports higher age requirements to purchase certain weapons, "he also knows there's not a lot of broad support for that."

The president also wants to use an executive order to bar the use of "bump stock" devices that enable guns to fire like automatic weapons.

After Republican anxiety about Trump's comments seeming to express openness to tougher gun controls, the executive director of the NRA, Chris Cox was positive about their Thursday night meeting. He tweeted that Trump and Vice President Mike Pence "support the Second Amendment, support strong due process and don't want gun control."

As part of Trump's efforts to consider various responses to gun violence, he plans to host members of the video game industry this coming week. He has repeatedly referenced the violence in movies and video games during conversations about guns and school safety since the Florida shooting.

Sanders said invitations started going out Thursday, and event details were being finalized. The Entertainment Software Association, a trade group that represents the video game industry, said Friday the group and its members had not been invited.

Nicole Hockley, who lost a child at Sandy Hook, has attended two White House meetings with Trump and said she remained optimistic.

"By listening to President Trump's words I do feel he is committed to finding a way forward and he is committed to putting a plan together," she said. "I don't know what the content will be."

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro and Matthew Daly contributed to this story.

Police: Suspect in college campus shooting apprehended

By ED WHITE and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER, Associated Press

MOUNT PLEASANT, Mich. (AP) — A 19-year-old student suspected of killing his parents at a Central Michigan University dormitory before running from campus was apprehended early Saturday following an intensive daylong search that included more than 100 police officers, some heavily armed in camouflage uniforms, authorities said.

James Eric Davis Jr. was arrested without incident after someone spotted him on a train passing through the north end of campus shortly after midnight, according to a release posted on Central Michigan's emergency communication website.

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CMU President George E. Ross thanked the campus, surrounding community and law enforcement personnel "who came together to keep each other safe and apprehend the suspect," according to the university police website.

Friday's shooting at Campbell Hall happened on a day when parents were arriving to pick up students for the beginning of a weeklong spring break.

The university identified the two dead as Davis' mother Diva Davis and father James Davis Sr., a part-time police officer in the Chicago suburb of Bellwood. The shooting occurred around 8:30 a.m. at a residence hall at Central Michigan, which is about 70 miles (110 kilometers) north of Lansing.

Following the shooting, police released a photo of Davis and urged the public to call 911 if they saw him but also warned that he shouldn't be confronted. Hours after a campus lockdown, police started a "slow, methodical removal" of staff and students who were ordered to take shelter in campus buildings, Lt. Larry Klaus said, adding that he "should be considered armed and dangerous."

Klaus said video at the dorm suggested Davis had fled on foot after the shooting. He was wearing a hoodie but had been shedding certain clothes while on the run.

"This has been a tragic day. ... The hurting will go on for a while," Ross said.

The search focused on Mount Pleasant neighborhoods near campus. Officers in camouflage knocked on doors and checked possible hiding places, such as yards and porches. In the surrounding community, students and staff in the Mount Pleasant school district were told not to leave nine buildings.

Klaus said Davis was taken to a hospital Thursday night by campus police because of a drug-related health problem, possibly an overdose.

"Whether there was a mental health component that was in conjunction with that, we don't know," Klaus told reporters, adding that police were still putting together "pieces of the puzzle" about the shooting and any motive.

The Davis family is from Plainfield, Illinois, about 35 miles (55 kilometers) southwest of Chicago. Davis Jr. graduated from Central High School in 2016, said Tom Hernandez, a spokesman for Plainfield School District 202.

Bellwood Police Chief Jiminez Allen released a statement Friday night praising Davis Sr.'s work.

Davis' "contributions to our community positively impacted everyone he served and served with," Allen said.

The shooting occurred on the last day of classes before a weeklong break. Parents who were trying to pick up students were told instead to go to a local hotel where staff would assist them while the manhunt was ongoing.

Student Tyler Whipple was driving through campus when his route was blocked by police cars at the scene of the killings. He had to catch a flight to Florida.

"These roads are kind of spooky right now," Whipple said.

The school posted an alert Friday morning on social media about shots being fired at Campbell Hall. An automated phone message was sent to students.

Halie Byron, 20, said she locked herself in her off-campus house, about a 10-minute walk from the dorm. She had planned to run errands before traveling home to southeastern Michigan.

"It's scary thinking about how easy a shooter can come into a college campus anywhere — a classroom, a library. There's so much easy access," Byron said.

White reported from Detroit. News researcher Rhonda Shafner contributed from New York City

New headaches for Trump's Mideast hopes as Netanyahu visits

By MATTHEW LEE and JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Under the best of circumstances, a Mideast peace deal is the Holy Grail of diplomacy, a goal that has eluded American presidents for generations.

With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu set to visit Washington this coming week, the mix of

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politics, personalities and historical grievances that has stood in the way of Israeli-Palestinian peace is even more combustible than normal.

President Donald Trump's point man for mediation, Jared Kushner, is in the middle of a political firestorm, his plan remains a mystery and the Palestinians aren't even speaking to the White House. If that weren't enough, Netanyahu and Trump are both distracted by mushrooming legal investigations at home.

It's all contributing to an intensified pessimism in the U.S., Israel and the West Bank about prospects for a Trump-brokered initiative to succeed.

Kushner and a small team have spent the past year preparing a much-awaited blueprint for peace, but no details have emerged. Many in the region wonder whether the vaunted plan will ever come.

On the surface, Israel's relationship with the White House has never been better, buoyed by the Jewish state's thunderous support for Trump's decision to relocate the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem and recognize the disputed city as Israel's capital. The announcements only reinforced Palestinians impressions of Trump as biased against them.

"A mediator will have to mediate between two semi-equal parties. Otherwise it's not a mediation process," said Husam Zomlot, the Palestinian ambassador to Washington, in a recent Associated Press interview. "You have to level the field and level your relationship between the two sides in order to be an honest mediator."

The world may soon be able to judge for itself.

The Trump administration's peace proposal is near completion, according to U.S. officials, but faces an uncertain future as Kushner, the Trump son-in-law leading the effort, recently lost his top-secret security clearance. Former negotiators say Kushner's downgraded status probably will severely impair his ability to do the job.

Beneath the veneer of U.S.-Israeli unity, there is lingering disagreement and suspicion.

Israel is increasingly worried that Trump is backsliding on a pledge to "fix" or dismantle the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Israel also is concerned that behind Trump's tough public stance toward Tehran is an acquiescence to Iran's growing presence in Syria and influence in Lebanon — two Israeli neighbors.

"The Israelis now are undoubtedly sounding the alarm," said Jonathan Schanzer, who researches Iran's regional influence at the hawkish Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. "The assets the Israelis see on the other side of the border to its north — they are not happy."

Nevertheless, it's in Netanyahu's interest to keep such disputes out of the public eye, said David Makovsky, a former State Department official who worked on Mideast peace negotiations. The Israeli leader faces multiple investigations related to allegations of bribery and corruption.

"It's important for him not to run afoul of Trump," said Makovsky, now at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "It's necessary for him to show he's not so engulfed by his own legal problems that he's not functioning as a leader."

Trump and Netanyahu are scheduled to meet Monday, in the middle of the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee policy conference, which brings thousands of pro-Israel officials, lawmakers, activists and academics to Washington.

Vice President Mike Pence, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and Trump's envoy to Israel, David Friedman, will give speeches, and each is likely to hammer away at Iran.

Israel views Iran as an existential threat and Netanyahu has repeatedly implored Trump to "fix it or nix it" when it comes to the nuclear deal. That agreement, negotiated by the Obama administration and other world powers, rewarded Iran with billions of dollars in sanctions relief for curbing its nuclear program.

Critics, including Netanyahu and Trump, say Tehran got too much for too little. Among the remedies they're advocating: removal of several of the deal's clauses that allow Iran to gradually resume advanced nuclear work starting in 2024.

Trump has said he won't renew U.S. waivers for sanctions when they next expire on May 12 unless European countries agree to a new deal that would force them to punish Tehran if the Iranians resume advanced nuclear work. He wants tougher inspections and penalties for Iranian missile testing. He also wants Europe to punish Iran's support for the anti-Israeli militant group Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthi rebels

and Syrian President Bashar Assad's government.

Israeli officials are most immediately concerned about Iran's missile work. They want U.S. and European commitments to punish Iran for work on medium-range missiles capable of hitting Israel and Iran's Arab rivals. The Europeans have balked, citing U.N. restrictions that focus only on longer-range projectiles. U.S. officials negotiating with Britain, France and Germany appear to agree with the Europeans, prompting the Israeli concern.

Trump's Mideast peace aspirations aren't any more certain. After winning praise in Israel for his Jerusalem proclamation, he made clear the Israelis would have to make concessions, too. He hasn't said what those might be.

"You won one point, and you'll give up some points later in the negotiation, if there's ever a negotiation," Trump said in January.

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Oklahoma freshman Trae Young revels in role of hometown hero

By CLIFF BRUNT, AP Sports Writer

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — Trae Young heard the familiar shouts as he tried to focus during his pregame warmup routine.

About a half hour before Oklahoma tipped off its comeback win over Kansas in late January, a small group of children gathered near the court and yelled his name, hoping the hometown hero would notice.

The dynamic freshman did more than just hear. He stopped his routine and walked over to pose for photos and shake hands with the kids before going back to shooting.

"I remember me being that kid growing up," said Young, who was a ball boy for the Sooners. "Me being the kid that grew up going to games and being a ball boy and wanting a high five from Blake Griffin or the other players. I don't forget where I came from, so I like doing it because those kids look up to me like I used to look up to other people."

Young was born in Lubbock, Texas, but he grew up in Norman, Oklahoma as a Sooners fan. He spent his childhood dreaming of being like Griffin, yet seemingly in the blink of an eye, he might already have played his last game at the Lloyd Noble Center. He scored 15 points in Oklahoma's regular-season finale, an 81-60 win over Iowa State on Friday night. He's projected to be a first-round NBA draft pick if he leaves school, though the slender 6-foot-2 guard hasn't made a decision about his future.

"It's crazy," he said Thursday. "It all went by so fast."

Kentucky and Kansas were in the running to sign Young, but he chose to stay in Norman with hopes of bringing his beloved Sooners back to glory after a down year. He has exceeded expectations and posted one of the best freshman seasons in NCAA history, leading the nation with averages of 27.5 points and 8.9 assists per game. But the Sooners also suffered through a six-game losing streak, and Young has at times been criticized for shooting too much and committing too many turnovers. The Sooners have gone from a No. 4 ranking to an unranked team fighting for a spot in the NCAA Tournament.

Through the ups and downs, Young continues to cherish all that has come with going through it in Norman. He's enjoyed taking those who have invested in him over the years along for the ride.

"It appears he's handled it exceptionally well," Oklahoma coach Lon Kruger said. "From an outside perspective, one of the most satisfying things is to see all the family and all the friends, extended family, be able to share in just an outstanding season that Trae has had."

Young first began honing his skills at the Cleveland County Family YMCA in Norman. After that, he started his youth basketball career with the Junior Jammers, a league the City of Norman Parks and Recreation department runs. He remained loyal to Norman in high school, too. Instead of going to a prep school for his senior year, he finished out his career at Norman North High. He averaged 42.6 points, 4.1 assists and 5.8 rebounds as a senior and was a McDonald's All American.

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He maintained his local loyalty with his college decision. His choice to attend Oklahoma has given him a special experience with his father, former Texas Tech guard Rayford Young.

"I can't tell you how exciting it's been having him right down the road," Rayford said. "It's 10 minutes down the street from me, and he comes home a lot, or he will meet my wife for lunch or we will meet somewhere in Norman just to talk. At the same time, he has been able to experience college and be a kid and be on campus and just do college things. It's been great."

But Trae hasn't been just any college kid — he's been one of the most visible and successful players in college basketball. He got onto the nation's radar when he scored 43 points against Oregon on Nov. 26. He gained more attention when he tied the NCAA record with 22 assists against Northwestern State on Dec. 19. He later unleashed three games of at least 40 points in a six-game span. Along the way, a who's who of NBA stars, including LeBron James, Stephen Curry and Chris Paul became fans.

Trae hears the bad with the good, though. He's keenly aware of his critics, sometimes mentioning slights he's heard or read during postgame interview sessions.

Dad hears it all, too.

"Quite frankly, he has had some naysayers here locally, which I never thought would be the case," Rayford said. "I mean, it's just part of it. As a dad, it is my job to make sure I teach him the lessons of this game and just keep reminding him that things aren't going to be always rosy. Him staying here has been great. It's been the best decision of his life to go to Oklahoma rather than other schools, but at the same time, it's been tough."

Even with the doubters mixed in, he remains accessible to the locals, his 620,000 Instagram followers and his 118,000 Twitter followers. He often uses the live feature on Instagram to allow fans a closer look into his life. After the Iowa State game, he returned to the courtside area after changing out of his uniform and signed autographs and posed for photos with fans for about five minutes.

Dewitt Zepu, associate student pastor at Victory Family Church in Norman, said Young has been that way for years. He said Young gets swarmed when he comes to church and always handles it gracefully.

"Every time I see him before games, on social media, all that — he's interacting with people because he knows the importance of when you touch somebody or inspire somebody, they're going to remember that when they get older, and they are going to grow with that," Zepu said. "He's always loving on people and interacting with people — especially children who aspire to be like him someday."

Soon, though, he might leave town for good.

"I know pretty soon he will have to step out and be on his own and dad won't always be there, but I think this was a critical time for both of us to be together and go through this process," Rayford said. "College is a big step from high school, but he was able to make that adjustment as a freshman, which is just amazing. It's really been a blessing."

Freelancer Mackenzie Richardson in Norman, Oklahoma, contributed to this report.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <http://collegebasketball.ap.org> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Emma Stone, Viola Davis help fete female Oscar nominees

By LINDSEY BAHR, AP Film Writer

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP) — Viola Davis is good in a pinch.

Last year's best supporting actress Oscar-winner was sipping champagne at the annual Women in Film pre-Oscar cocktail event Friday night when the organization's president, Cathy Schulman, herself an Oscar-winner for "Crash," asked Davis if she could give a few remarks.

"I'm only doing this Cathy because I love you," Davis said before launching into a story about a time when she told her then five-year-old daughter that she was "complicated" and had to explain to her why that was a good thing.

"With all of our imperfections, with all of our complexities and confusion, we're worth it. This is a year

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of owning who we are," Davis said. "Even the women who are still in silence, the women who stepped up and spoke up, the women nominees, the women who could have been, should have been nominees. We're all worth it. That's what we need to come into the room with. That's what we need to go into 2018 and '19 with. The privilege of a lifetime is being exactly who we are."

The event's co-host Emma Stone, who won the best actress Oscar last year, took the stage next. "No one should ever have to follow Viola Davis," she sighed.

The event held at the Beverly Hills restaurant Crustacean saw a host of Oscar nominees including Greta Gerwig, Margot Robbie, Agnes Varda, Diane Warren and entertainment bigwigs mingling before Sunday's big event. Keegan Michael-Key posted up at Davis's table, before finding "The Big Sick" screenwriting nominees/real-life couple Kumail Nanjiani and Emily V. Gordon. "La La Land" producer Jordan Horowitz made the rounds with his wife, director Julia Hart, whose next film "Fast Color" premieres at the SXSW Film Festival in March. And "Battle of the Sexes" actress Andrea Riseborough met "Thoroughbreds" star Anya Taylor-Joy, while Jason Sudeikis and Olivia Wilde roamed the party side-by-side.

This marked the 11th annual Women in Film Pre-Oscar Cocktail party, although the organization has been working to advance women's careers in film and television since 1973. The organization was one of the first in the #MeToo era to launch a helpline to advise and counsel women who are experiencing sexual harassment or discrimination.

Schulman also noted that there has been a small increase in female nominees at this year's Oscars, up from 46 to 48, but that there is still work to be done.

"We're at an absolute tipping point right now," Schulman said. "And it takes all of us to do the important work necessary to turn this tipping point into actual systemic change so that women's careers can be long, sustainable and successful."

___ For full coverage of awards season, visit: <https://apnews.com/tag/AwardsSeason>

On guns, companies are getting out ahead of the politicians

By ALEXANDRA OLSON, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In 1960, black students staged sit-ins that forced Woolworth's to desegregate its lunch counters, and other stores and restaurants followed suit. In 1986, General Motors, Coca-Cola and dozens of other U.S. corporations pulled out of apartheid-era South Africa after years of pressure from activists, college students and investors.

This week, four major retailers slapped restrictions on gun sales that are stronger than federal law.

Those are all rare examples of American companies getting out ahead of the politicians and the law on socially explosive issues. Such decisions are almost always made reluctantly, under huge pressure and with an eye toward minimizing the effect on the bottom line.

The Feb. 14 massacre of 17 students and teachers at a Florida high school has set off a response from U.S. businesses unlike any previous mass shooting.

Major corporations, including MetLife, Hertz and Delta Air Lines, have cut ties to the National Rifle Association. Walmart, Kroger, L.L. Bean and Dick's Sporting Goods announced they will no longer sell guns to anyone under 21. Dick's also banned the sale of assault-style rifles, a step Walmart took in 2015. And Dick's CEO went even further by calling for tougher gun laws.

Those actions amounted to an act of defiance against the NRA and its allies in Washington who have vehemently opposed any ban on AR-15s and other semi-automatic weapons or a higher age limit for gun purchases.

"What we are seeing is a real shift," said Mimi Chakravorti, executive director of strategy at the brand consulting firm Landor. "I think right now, companies are acting ahead of the government because they are seeing that the changes are too slow."

Still, business leaders are not exactly leading the charge for the stricter guns laws. Their actions came in response to protests by the students who survived the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and to growing calls by consumers for boycotts against companies that do business with the NRA

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or gun manufacturers.

And their decisions didn't represent much of a sacrifice from a strictly business point of view. Most of Dick's business, for instance, is in other types of sporting goods, such as sneakers and basketballs. Guns and ammunition are estimated to account for only 8 percent of sales.

Walmart has not said how much of its business comes from guns, but when the company stopped offering AR-15s in 2015, it cited declining sales.

The actions of those retailers will have very little practical effect on the availability of guns.

Roger Beahm, a professor of marketing at Wake Forest University School of Business, said smaller retailers will probably capitalize on the situation by selling the weapons the major chains will no longer handle.

It remains to be seen what effect the corporate reaction will have on the wider gun debate.

Adam Winkler, a law professor at UCLA who has written extensively about gun policy, said the NRA is unlikely to budge, but politicians might.

"I don't think the NRA is going to bow down or buckle to pressure," Winkler said. "However, the gun debate may change to the extent that this is being driven by companies' sense of what consumers want. That might affect elected officials on Election Day. Today, they are consumers. On Election Day, they are voters."

It is rare for a company to drop products out of social concern. When it happens, the calculation is that any loss of revenue will be offset by increased customer loyalty in the long term, Beahm said.

He cited the example of CVS Health, which stopped selling cigarettes and other tobacco products in 2014, a decision that cost \$2 billion in revenue but was well received by its customers.

That move was a rare example of a company taking a socially conscious step under no public pressure. Most of the time, corporations act when it becomes untenable for them to ignore the pressure, as in the case of Woolworth and the corporations that left South Africa.

In the case of guns, the calculation of whether to jump into the debate or sit on the sidelines is tricky because the country is so divided on the issue.

Delta Air Lines, for example, faced swift retribution for cutting ties to the NRA. Georgia's Republican state lawmakers voted Thursday to kill a proposed tax break on jet fuel that would have saved the airline millions.

While polls show the country is split on the broad issue of gun controls, there is widespread support for some measures opposed by the NRA, such as universal background checks.

"The business leaders who make these decisions are betting on the future as opposed to a distorted view of the past," said Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, senior associate dean for leadership studies at Yale School of Management.

The debate over whether it is the business of corporations to weigh in on social issues goes back decades. In 1962, the celebrated economist Milton Friedman, in his book "Capitalism and Freedom," argued that the only social responsibility of business was to increase profits and play by the rules.

But in recent years, U.S. companies have found it increasingly difficult to avoid being drawn into America's culture wars.

That was dramatically illustrated when Indiana and North Carolina faced a backlash from businesses that threatened to boycott the states over laws that were deemed discriminatory toward gay and transgender people. Bank of America, American Airlines and IBM were among dozens of companies that spoke out.

A big difference from decades past is the strengthening voice of consumers, who now have a plethora of choices for where to spend their money and social media platforms for making their views heard, Chakravorti said.

That new landscape can make it impossible for businesses leaders to stay out of controversy. That was the case when Merck CEO Kenneth Frazier dropped out of one of President Donald Trump's advisory councils over the president's remarks about the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Other chief executives followed suit, some reluctantly, and the business councils fell apart.

"Either you stay on the sidelines and get dragged into the debate — and if you do that, you don't own the conversation around your brand — or you step up and own the conversation around your brand," Chakravorti said.

Republicans ignore Trump's policy whims _ but not on trade

By LISA MASCARO, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans in Congress have learned to ignore President Donald Trump's policy whims, knowing whatever he says one day on guns, immigration or other complicated issues could very well change by the next.

But Trump's decision to seek steep tariffs on steel and aluminum imports has provoked rarely seen urgency among Republican lawmakers, who are scrambling to convince the president he would spark a trade war that could stall the economy's recent gains if he doesn't reverse course.

The issue pits Trump's populist promises to his voters against GOP free trade orthodoxy and the interests of business leaders. And unlike recent immigration and gun policy changes that require legislation, Trump can alter trade policy by executive action. That intensifies the pressure on congressional Republicans to change his mind before he gives his final approval for the penalties as early as next week.

House Speaker Paul Ryan called Trump after the president's surprise announcement, and continues to hope the White House will reconsider the decision. Top lawmakers, including Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., have also offered the president their own private counsel. Some are appealing to his desire for a robust stock market and warning the tariffs could unravel some of the gains they attribute to the tax bill he signed last year.

Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, tried one of the most direct lines that lawmakers have to the White House: Talking to Trump through cable TV news.

"The president has not yet issued these tariffs," Brady told Fox News Thursday, hours after Trump announced the tariff targets. "He's been continuing to listen."

Listening to various viewpoints, though, has never been the gripe against Trump.

Unlike former President Barack Obama, who often irked lawmakers for lecturing them during meetings, Trump retains a level of popularity among Capitol Hill Republicans in part because he's more than happy to invite lawmakers in and hear them out. But problems have arisen when members of the legislative branch leave the White House under the impression Trump was on their side — or at least willing to consider their views — only to find out later that his support drifted away.

The dynamic played out repeatedly during last year's health care debate over replacing the Affordable Care Act. Just this week, Trump publicly belittled a modest gun background check bill from the No. 2 Republican senator, John Cornyn of Texas, during a televised White House meeting. Democrats appeared giddy with the president's praise of gun control proposals, while Republicans fumed.

"I love the president, but people disagree sometimes," Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., said.

But true to form, Trump's flirtations with gun control showed signs of subsiding by week's end. A day after his meeting with lawmakers, the president tweeted that he had a "Good (Great!) meeting" in the Oval Office with the National Rifle Association. The gun lobby's executive director also tweeted afterward that Trump and Vice President Mike Pence "don't want gun control."

While it's still unclear what gun control measures, if any, Trump will formally endorse, his back-and-forth on the matter was reminiscent of his waffling on immigration earlier this year. With a government shutdown looming, Trump welcomed lawmakers for a Tuesday meeting at the White House to discuss immigration law changes. During the televised session, he told them he would take the political "heat" and sign into law whatever Congress could agree to pass.

Two days later, on Thursday, Sens. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Dick Durbin, D-Ill., dashed to the White House to present their bipartisan agreement. But the session ended in heated exchanges after Trump rejected the bill and used crude language to question why the U.S. would want to welcome immigrants from Africa and some other nations.

"Let's talk about two Trumps - the Tuesday Trump and the Thursday Trump," Graham said later during a Judiciary Committee hearing as he replayed the week that was. "Tuesday we had a president that I was proud to golf with, call my friend."

"I don't know where that guy went. I want him back," Graham said.

Republicans, who have the majority in the House and Senate, have largely learned to take these setbacks

in stride. They all but shrug off the president's policy pivots, just as Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell often decline to comment on the Trump tweet of the day.

But on trade tariffs, Republicans say the stakes are too high for them to sit back and wait for Trump to change his mind. Indeed, their relentless public condemnation of the tariffs was notably sharper than their typical handling of the president's policy whims.

Not wise, said Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah. A "big mistake," said Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Penn. "Kooky," said Sasse.

Trump, after the White House's own internal deliberations, proposed a 25 percent tariff on imported steel and 10 percent on aluminum. That quickly sparked global warnings of retaliation and left the financial markets reeling.

Republican lawmakers, and some outside groups, want Trump to at least consider a more targeted approach, or exemptions for countries that engage in what they view as fair trade practices.

"We're all urging the president, look, continue to narrow this to these unfairly targeted products," Brady said.

Follow Lisa Mascaro at <http://twitter.com/LisaMascaro>

Next up at the Kennedy Center? A new focus on hip-hop

By ASHRAF KHALIL, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was late October 2017 and a packed house of VIPs had gathered at Washington's Kennedy Center to watch David Letterman receive the Mark Twain award for a career in comedy. A stream of comedians took the stage to sing Letterman's praises, and several couldn't resist taking good-natured shots at the crowd.

Martin Short deadpanned, "It says a lot about America when people from different white backgrounds can gather together like this."

Jimmie Walker — J.J. from the 1970s sitcom "Good Times" — put it more bluntly: "Look at the diversity in this crowd! I feel like Ben Carson at a Trump Cabinet meeting."

Walker may have been going for the easy joke there, but he spoke to a deeper belief — that the Kennedy Center exists to serve an elite white audience despite its presence in a largely black city. That perception may linger for a while, but the reality is changing.

One of America's pre-eminent performing arts institutions, the Kennedy Center is embracing hip-hop culture in a major way. The center has gradually introduced rap music into its programming, with rappers like Nas and Kendrick Lamar performing with the National Symphony Orchestra. Hip-hop has also been showcased regularly at the center's daily Millennium Stage concerts.

The process is accelerating. The center has tapped two members of hip-hop royalty to act as bridges into the rap world. Q-Tip from A Tribe Called Quest has been named artistic director for hip-hop culture. Last year, LL Cool J became the first rapper inducted into the elite ranks of Kennedy Center Honors recipients.

"I consider them as important to our culture as Bach or any other composer," said pianist Jason Moran, the center's artistic director for jazz.

Moran is credited with pushing for this change. He was part of the committee that chose Q-Tip to found the hip-hop department.

"He's the perfect person to advocate for us," Moran said. "It had to be someone from the bedrock of hip-hop."

Equally important was the hiring of a full-time staffer, Simone Eccleston, as director of the new hip-hop culture department.

"This is not a diversity effort. We're not just checking boxes," Eccleston said. "This is a firm commitment to having hip-hop as an ongoing program."

Last year's Kennedy Center Honors program — an annual centerpiece event — may have been one of the blackest nights in the history of the institution. In addition to LL Cool J — whose program included a

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speech by Queen Latifah and a performance by rapper Busta Rhymes — the honorees included African-American singer Lionel Richie and dancer Carmen De Lavallade. Cuban-American singer Gloria Estefan was also saluted. The only white honoree was TV producer Norman Lear, the man who helped bring black family life into mainstream culture with shows like "Good Times" and "The Jeffersons."

The 2017-18 season, Q-Tip's first at the helm, kicked off with a performance by him and Moran. The veteran rapper calls it "just a flash of our potential."

He plans to appoint a "brain trust" council of fellow rappers and says the real impact will be felt around year four or five when both sides are more comfortable with each other.

"I have to grow into the position and the Kennedy Center has to get acclimated to the nuances that exist in our thing," Q-Tip said.

Inside the building, staffers refer to the traditional programming staples by the acronym SOB: symphony, opera and ballet. President Deborah Rutter acknowledged that the shift has sparked some concern among what she called "the dyed-in-the-wool, I only want to hear 'La Traviata'" audience.

"Some people get a little nervous," she said. "They ask, 'If you do this other stuff, will there be less of what I love?'"

The traditionalists aren't the only nervous ones. Moran laughingly recalls a moment before Lamar's 2015 performance when a member of Lamar's team came up to him, genuinely confused, and asked, "Who's coming to this thing, man?"

"They were unsure just what they were getting into. I told them to just be themselves and let it rip," Moran said.

As far back as 2008, rapper Mos Def performed at the Kennedy Center, sneaking in as part of the jazz programming. But the idea of a dedicated hip-hop department didn't come together until more recently. In 2014, the center sponsored the two-week One Mic hip-hop culture festival, which culminated in Nas performing with the NSO. The festival was already planned when Rutter joined the center, but she said its success made her focus on deepening the relationship.

"That was a tipping point for us to say that this hunger for a connection between this art form and the Kennedy Center is very real. This is too good to let go of," she said.

The dual choices of Q-Tip and LL Cool J are particularly crucial. Both have achieved mainstream popularity and name recognition while still retaining respect within hip-hop circles. That legitimacy will be important, as they're expected to act as ambassadors in both directions. They won't just be asked to help introduce hip-hop to the Kennedy Center; they'll be asked to help introduce the Kennedy Center to the hip-hop community.

The ultimate goal is to draw younger and more diverse audiences, showcasing what Rutter calls "a truly American art form" while also bringing new blood to the 46-year-old institution.

"These conversations we're going to have will be complex and will ruffle feathers," Moran said. "Serving the same audience over and over again, we know that doesn't grow your audience."

Q-Tip says his message to the core SOB-loving Kennedy Center audience is not to worry.

"The Kennedy Center stands for top-flight programming. That's not going to stop," he said. "It's going to draw more attention, more people, more bodies. ... We're widening and stretching the territory."

Billy Graham remembered for humility at home and on crusades

By TOM FOREMAN Jr. and JONATHAN DREW, Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The Rev. Billy Graham's children remembered "America's Pastor" as a man devoted to spreading the Gospel, living his life at home as he preached it in stadiums, with a personable humility and an unwavering focus on the Bible. As his oldest son told the funeral congregation, "There weren't two Billy Grahams."

His adult children — all speakers or preachers in their own right — recalled during a funeral service Friday being taught by their parents how to read Scripture aloud and deliver sermons, but also taking quiet walks with their father and feeling his embrace even when they made mistakes.

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Franklin Graham, who delivered the main funeral message, said all of those qualities were part of the whole.

"The Billy Graham that the world saw on television, the Billy Graham that the world saw in the big stadiums, was the same Billy Graham that we saw at home. There weren't two Billy Grahams," he said. "He loved his family. He stood by us. He comforted us."

Franklin Graham's funeral message, which included a Gospel call to repentance and salvation, followed shorter remarks by his siblings in a service that lasted just over an hour before an invitation-only crowd of approximately 2,000.

"I believe, from Heaven's perspective, that my father's death is as significant as his life. And his life was very significant. But I think when he died, that was something very strategic from Heaven's point of view," said his daughter Anne Graham Lotz, later adding: "I believe God is saying: 'Wake up church! Wake up world!'"

The congregation included President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and their wives. Neither Pence nor Trump spoke during the service that was streamed live online, but they met privately with the family beforehand.

The funeral planning began a decade ago with Billy Graham himself. It also reflected his family's desire to capture the feeling of the crusades that made him the world's best-known Protestant preacher of his era. Graham, who died Feb. 21 at age 99, brought a message of salvation to millions during visits and live broadcasts to scores of countries.

The funeral served as a Billy Graham crusade told through his children. Lotz read Scripture, inserting her name into the passages to make her relationship with God more personal and breaking it down intellectually, like her father. Youngest daughter Ruth told about how she sinned and didn't listen to her father with a hasty marriage, but he was waiting for her with open arms when she realized her mistake.

And oldest son Franklin, now CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, wrapped up with his father's central theme: that the only path to salvation is to accept Jesus Christ.

While Franklin Graham steered clear of politics during his message, the Trumps and Pences were the first guests he welcomed as he began.

And his invitation to be saved by Jesus contained this barb: "The world, with all of its political correctness, would want you to believe that there are many roads to God. It's just not true."

Like Graham's famous crusades, the funeral featured singers who had shared his stage in years past: Linda McCrary-Fisher, Michael W. Smith and the Gaither Vocal Band.

The lineup of clergy and singers from as near as North Carolina and as far away as Asia, was racially diverse — more so than the mostly white audience.

Other notable guests included television host Kathie Lee Gifford, musician Ricky Skaggs, evangelist Rick Warren and politician Rudy Giuliani. North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper attended, as did his predecessor Pat McCrory.

The funeral came at the end of more than a week of mourning that included crowds lining the road for a procession from Graham's 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.

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

Friday's goodbye also emphasized the message that only Graham's earthly journey has come to an end, a point underscored by Franklin Graham as he stood behind the same pulpit his father used in the 1990s.

Graham recalled one of his father's frequent sayings that people shouldn't believe it when they hear the famous evangelist had died: "He said: 'I'll be more alive than I am now. I'll have just changed addresses, that's all.'"

Drew reported from Raleigh, North Carolina. Associated Press writer Jeffrey Collins in Columbia, South Carolina, contributed to this report.

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

French stars say 'Time's Up,' seek equality at film awards

By ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The French film world may be having its #MeToo moment.

One after another, stars showed up at the industry's top awards show Friday wearing a white ribbon in a protest against sexual misconduct. Throughout the Cesar Awards ceremony, presenters and winners referenced the movement that has campaigned for an end to abuses by powerful men.

And the packed concert hall stood in ovation as the presenter called on everyone to support the #MaintenantOnAgit (Now We Act) campaign launched this week, aimed at raising money to help women pursue legal complaints against abusers.

Anger over sexual violence and demands for gender equality in the cinema industry charged the atmosphere around this year's Cesars — much like around the Oscars coming up Sunday in Hollywood.

Instead of wearing black — as actors in the U.S. and Britain have done at recent awards shows — French stars chose to wear a white ribbon to make their statement.

So did special guests like Penelope Cruz, given a special award for her career's work.

"The entire world is talking about this, it's not only a problem of our industry, but of all industries and of any woman who does not have the opportunity to have a microphone in front of her as I have myself," she told reporters.

The most Cesar awards went to the AIDS drama "120 Beats Per Minute," which took six prizes, including best film. Directed by Robin Campillo, the movie centers on the activist group ACT UP in Paris in the 1990s at the height of the AIDS crisis.

Producer Marie-Ange Luciani hailed the social change since that era, including growing acceptance of gay marriage. She also had a message for those disconcerted by the turmoil prompted by the #MeToo movement that started in Hollywood with sexual abuse accusations against producer Harvey Weinstein.

"Don't be afraid of what will happen. This moment is not a threat. It is a promise. And history will show we are right," she said.

France's entertainment industry has seen divisions over the #MeToo movement, with Catherine Deneuve notably saying it had gone too far.

No one at the Cesars publicly said anything similar.

The ceremony's president, Vanessa Paradis — singer and actress and Johnny Depp's ex-wife — set the tone by opening the show saying: "I am wearing this white ribbon for the fight against violence against women."

More than 100 personalities, including actress Sandrine Bonnaire, director Agnes Jaoui and actor-director Julie Gayet, asked for donations destined for associations helping women pursue cases before justice, "so that no woman ever again has to say #MeToo."

French film stars including Juliet Binoche called in a proposal in newspaper Le Monde on Friday for quotas to guarantee that more government film subsidies go to movies directed by women.

The ceremony was dedicated to Jeanne Moreau, the smoky-voiced femme fatale of the French New Wave who died last year, known for her distinctive blend of sensuality, intellect and resolve.

Best actress winner Jeanne Balibar praised actresses for supporting each other amid discrimination, injustice and abuses. "Despite our differences and our competition, we hold on."

In addition to a white ribbon, actor Blanche Gardin wore a pin with the picture of comedian Louis C.K., accused of sexual harassment, and earned laughter with a sarcastic plea:

"Producers no longer have the right to rape actresses. But do we still have the right to sleep with them

to get roles?" she asked. "Because if we don't, then we have to learn our lines, pass auditions, and we don't have the time. You realize how much time that takes?"

Associated Press writer Chris Den Hond in Paris contributed to this report.

For full coverage of awards season, visit: <https://apnews.com/tag/AwardsSeason>

Trump leaves lawmakers hanging on gun priorities

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In his quest to tackle gun violence, President Donald Trump has ricocheted between calling for tougher laws and declaring his fealty to the Second Amendment's right to bear arms, leaving a trail of befuddled lawmakers and advocates in his wake.

One thing he still has not done: clearly outline his legislative priorities.

Washington's week closed Friday without further explanation from the president, the White House indicating that for now, at least, he is backing an incremental proposal on background checks and a bill that would provide new federal dollars to stem school violence.

Just what Trump would like to see in the "beautiful" and "comprehensive" bill he called for earlier in the week remained unclear. That comment came at a bipartisan meeting with lawmakers Wednesday, which was quickly followed by a private session with the National Rifle Association on Thursday.

"Good (Great) meeting in the Oval Office tonight with the NRA!" Trump tweeted Thursday night.

He had outlined some of his preferences via Twitter earlier Thursday, saying that both good and bad ideas had come out of the bipartisan meeting. He said: "Background Checks a big part of conversation. Gun free zones are proven targets of killers. After many years, a Bill should emerge. Respect 2nd Amendment!"

Amid the confusion, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has shelved the gun debate for now, saying the Senate will turn next week to other measures.

Disagreement continues among legislators over the appropriate response after the Florida school shooting that left 17 dead. Republicans have largely backed away from stricter gun limits, while Democrats emboldened by Trump's rhetoric are pushing for ambitious action, including expanded background checks and even a politically risky ban on assault weapons.

As is often the case, the president has been an unreliable negotiator.

Sen. Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat who is a leading advocate of tougher gun laws, predicted on Twitter: "The White House is going to bob and weave on guns. Accept it."

Still, he added, "Trump's instinct on this issue is not wrong — if his party doesn't get behind background checks soon, they're cooked in 2018 and 2020." And he argued that Trump's "willingness to buck the gun lobby in public, rule out the NRA agenda and talk up background checks, has changed this debate nationally."

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Friday that Trump supports a limited proposal from Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Murphy that would boost participation in the existing federal background check program, as well as a bill that would provide new federal grant funding to stem school violence.

Sanders said Trump had not signed on to a more sweeping background check bill that would require the 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.

Sanders sought to clarify Trump's comments earlier in the week expressing support for tougher background checks and interest in raising the minimum age to buy certain weapons. She said he was interested in improving background checks, but "not necessarily universal background checks." And she said that while Trump "conceptually" supports higher age requirements to purchase certain weapons, "he also knows there's not a lot of broad support for that."

The president also wants to use an executive order to bar the use of bump-stock devices that enable

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guns to fire like automatic weapons.

After Republican anxiety about Trump's comments seeming to express openness to tougher gun controls, the executive director of the NRA, Chris Cox, was positive about their Thursday night meeting. He tweeted that Trump and Vice President Mike Pence "support the Second Amendment, support strong due process and don't want gun control."

As part of Trump's efforts to consider various responses to gun violence, next week he plans to host members of the video game industry. He has repeatedly referenced the violence in movies and video games during conversations about guns and school safety since the Florida shooting.

Sanders said invitations started going out Thursday, and event details were being finalized. The Entertainment Software Association, a trade group that represents the video game industry, said Friday the group and its members had not been invited.

Nicole Hockley, who lost a child at Sandy Hook, has attended two White House meetings with Trump and said she remained optimistic.

"By listening to President Trump's words I do feel he is committed to finding a way forward and he is committed to putting a plan together," she said. "I don't know what the content will be."

Associated Press reporters Lisa Mascaro and Matthew Daly contributed to this report.

China: Trump's tariffs to have 'huge impact' on global trade

By JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China has warned that U.S. President Donald Trump's vow to impose high tariffs on steel and aluminum would have a "huge impact" on the global trading order and said Beijing would work with other nations to protect its interests.

A Commerce Ministry official said late Friday that Trump's plan to levy tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum would "seriously damage multilateral trade mechanisms represented by the World Trade Organization and will surely have huge impact on normal international trade order."

"If the final measures of the United States hurt Chinese interests, China will work with other affected countries in taking measures to safeguard its own rights and interests," Wang Hejun, head of the ministry's trade remedy and investigation bureau, said in a statement on the ministry's website.

Chinese leaders have threatened in the past to retaliate if Trump raises trade barriers, but now need to weigh whether to back up those threats with action and risk jeopardizing U.S. market access for smartphones and other exports that matter more to their 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."

Global stock markets fell sharply Friday over worries of a possible trade war following Trump's announcement.

Trump thumbed his nose Friday at the concerns over rising trade tensions and higher prices for U.S. consumers, tweeting that "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!"

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.

Canada, Japan and South Korea, all U.S. allies and major exporters of steel and aluminum, are asking for exemptions from the tariff hike, which Trump justified in part on national security grounds.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said it "made no sense" to highlight national security issues not-

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ing the countries' military cooperation and defense of North America.

"This is absolutely unacceptable and it's a point we've made many times," Trudeau said.

Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said Canada is prepared to take responsive measures to defend its trade interests.

Canada is the biggest steel exporter to the U.S., and Freeland noted that Canada buys more American steel than any other country in the world, accounting for 50 percent of U.S. exports. She also noted the steel and aluminum industry in North America is highly integrated and said the Canadian government will continue to make that point directly with the Trump administration.

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

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

'Naked politics' of punishing Delta could haunt Georgia

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

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia lawmakers' decision to punish Delta Air Lines for publicly distancing itself from the National Rifle Association was an extraordinary act of political revenge.

By killing a proposed tax break on jet fuel, pro-gun Republicans won a political victory that could pay off in the short term, but other companies won't soon forget that Georgia allied itself with the NRA over one of its largest private employers, with 33,000 workers statewide.

"When you inject naked politics — and that's what this is — into the economic equation, I think that it does have the chance of spooking the business community," said Tom Stringer, a New York-based consultant for the business-advisory firm BDO. "One thing about the business community is that it has a very long memory."

The uproar began last Saturday when Delta stopped offering fare discounts to NRA members in the wake of the school massacre in Florida. On Friday, Delta CEO Ed Bastian insisted in a memo to employees that the company was "not taking sides" on gun control and made the decision in hopes of removing itself from the gun debate. He said the company's "values are not for sale" and "we are proud and honored to locate our headquarters here."

Delta recently signed a 20-year lease to keep its hub at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, and business consultants said other Atlanta-based firms, such as Coca-Cola and UPS, will likely stay put too. But GOP lawmakers' willingness to use public money to try to intimidate corporations could damage Georgia's ability to attract new industry — including Amazon, which recently named metro Atlanta a finalist for its coveted second headquarters.

"I think it's fair to say that this situation would not be helpful to the state of Georgia in potentially securing the Amazon site," said Jerry Funaro, Chicago-based vice president for global marketing at TRC Global Mobility, a relocation management company. "They could certainly say that this would be a reason to look elsewhere."

Amazon didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Republican Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, who is running in a crowded primary for governor in May, set the stage for the fight with Delta with a tweet Monday saying conservatives would fight back. He defended the move Friday.

"We cannot continue to allow large companies to treat conservatives differently than other customers, employees and partners," Cagle wrote in an opinion piece published by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "The voters who elected us and believe strongly in our rights and liberties expect and deserve no less."

Another GOP candidate for governor, Secretary of State Brian Kemp, even suggested using the estimated \$38 million the state would save by killing jet fuel tax break to pay for a tax-free "holiday" on purchases of guns and ammunition.

Other GOP leaders openly cringed at the combative tone Cagle and others took.

Republican Gov. Nathan Deal, who is term-limited and serving his final year, bemoaned the controversy as an "unbecoming squabble" fueled by election-year posturing. GOP House Speaker David Ralston called it "not one of our finer days" when the firestorm erupted Monday.

Republicans have controlled the governor's mansion in Georgia since 2003, a deep red streak that makes this year's GOP gubernatorial nominee a likely favorite in November.

Deal and other governors for decades have made it a priority to ensure Georgia was an attractive location for prospective employers, said Charles Bullock, a political science professor at the University of Georgia. Before the NRA controversy, he said, many GOP lawmakers defended the jet fuel tax break as necessary to protect jobs.

"What this really does is it says, in terms of setting priorities, that taking a stand on the NRA is more significant," Bullock said. "The jobs thing now is pushed to the back."

After Delta announced it was cutting ties with the NRA, it took pro-gun Republicans just days to make good on their threats by passing a sweeping tax bill — minus the jet fuel tax break.

Deal, who said an estimated \$5.2 billion in overall tax savings was too important to sacrifice, swiftly

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signed the measure into law Friday. He vowed to keep pursuing the jet fuel exemption as a separate issue.

Delta revealed Friday that the NRA discount that triggered the shutdown had barely been used. Offered recently for NRA members flying to the group's 2018 convention in Dallas, only 13 discounted tickets had been sold, Delta spokesman Trebor Banstetter said.

Delta isn't the only company to take action since the Feb. 14 slayings of 17 students and educators in Parkland, Florida, by a gunman armed with an AR-15 assault-style rifle. Walmart, Kroger and Dick's Sporting Goods have tightened their gun sales policies. Meanwhile, MetLife, Hertz and others have joined Delta in ending business ties with the NRA.

The extent of the backlash Georgia might face from businesses is unclear. But firms from outside the South may think twice about Georgia if they see a clash of corporate values on guns and other social issues, said Jon Gabrielsen, a business-strategy consultant who worked 17 years in Georgia before moving recently to Mexico.

"If you're not there yet, why would you want to subject yourself to that potential grief with what the legislature just pulled?" Gabrielsen said.

AP reporter Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia, and Airlines Writer David Koenig in Dallas contributed to this story.

This story corrects the month of the primary to May, not April.

Deadly attacks by extremists strike Burkina Faso capital

By BRAHIMA OUADRAOGO, Associated Press

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso (AP) — Islamic extremists struck the French Embassy and army headquarters in simultaneous attacks of gunfire and explosives Friday in Burkina Faso's capital, killing eight people and wounding more than 80 others. All eight militants were slain by security forces.

The violence, which the government called a terrorist attack, marked a further deterioration in the former French colony's perilous security situation. Islamic militants already have struck twice since January 2016 in the West African country, prompting criticism of the military response each time.

No group claimed responsibility for Friday's attacks.

One of the militants' assaults destroyed a room in the army headquarters where senior officers were to have met but was relocated at the last minute, according to Security Minister Clement Sawadogo.

"If the meeting had taken place in the first room, our army would have been beheaded," Sawadogo said, adding that some of the assailants wore military clothing and seemed to be aware of the planned gathering.

The French Embassy came under attack around 10:15 a.m., with witnesses at the nearby state TV offices telling The Associated Press that the attackers had arrived in a pickup truck, shouted, "Allahu akbar!" and began shooting.

No one in the embassy was hurt, but a gendarme and the four attackers were killed, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in televised remarks.

Gunfire and explosions resounded for hours, subsiding by midday. Workers fled nearby offices and helicopters were seen above the embassy.

A similar attack unfolded at the army headquarters across town. The assailants also arrived in a pickup and starting shooting at soldiers, said Moussa Korbeogo, a trader at a nearby market.

Heavy smoke rose from the army joint chief of staff's office, where witnesses reported loud explosions. Windows were broken there and in nearby buildings.

"Some of the soldiers ran into a nearby bank to seek shelter. Several were killed outside and inside the premises," Korbeogo said.

Five emergency centers to treat casualties were set up in hospitals, a military barracks and at a stadium in Ouagadougou, said Col. Amade Kafando, director general of Burkina Faso's army health unit.

French President Emmanuel Macron spoke with President Roch Marc Christian Kabore to express his

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condolences and support, and also to thank the country's forces for their quick intervention. Burkina Faso is one of five countries in the Sahel contributing to the so-called G5 force in the region battling extremists.

Macron "reaffirms his determination and the full commitment of France, alongside its G5 Sahel partners, in the fight against terrorist movements," according to a statement from the French leader.

The Paris prosecutor's office said it has opened a preliminary attempted murder investigation into the attack because the embassy was among the targets, a French judicial official said on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to talk to the media identified.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the attacks and expressed solidarity with Burkina Faso's government and people. In a statement, he affirms the United Nations' commitment "to support Burkina Faso in its efforts to fight violent extremism and terrorism, sustain the security sector reform, promote national reconciliation and create the conditions for sustainable peace and development."

Ouagadougou has been attacked by Islamic extremists targeting foreigners at least twice in the past few years. Security forces have struggled to contain the attacks.

In August, extremists opened fire as patrons dined at a restaurant, killing at least 18 people. In January 2016, Islamic extremists attacked another cafe popular with foreigners, killing 30 people.

Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility for the 2016 killings along with the jihadist group known as Al Mourabitoun. But experts say the terror threat in Burkina Faso is increasingly homegrown.

The landlocked nation of Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world. It shares a northern border with Mali, which has long battled Islamic extremists.

The northern border region near Mali is the home of Ibrahim Malam Dicko, a preacher who has claimed responsibility for recent deadly attacks on troops and civilians. His association, Ansarul Islam, is considered a terrorist group by Burkina Faso's government.

Among his objectives has been ending the use of French in regional schools. Forces backed by the French military have failed to capture Dicko.

But he is not the only threat. Northern areas near the border with Mali have been a regular target of attacks by various extremist groups, some of them vowing to step up the bloodshed in response to the recent deployment of the G5 Sahel force. The 5,000-member force combines troops from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad and Mauritania, with France leading the efforts to bring in international funding.

The countries' troops join forces where they can. In response to the new violence in eastern Burkina Faso, troops from Burkina Faso and nearby Mali and Niger have increased patrols. Extremists are thought to be hiding in forested areas in the border region.

Longtime President Blaise Compaore was ousted in a popular uprising in late 2014, and a coup was mounted the following year but ultimately failed. Some critics say the military has suffered during the years of political upheaval.

During the 2016 assault, security forces waited for hours before trying to intervene.

Threats by Islamic extremists also moved into new parts of Burkina Faso in February with an attack by 10 people in an eastern town that killed an officer and wounded two others.

Increased attacks at the border with Mali have forced thousands to flee in the past year. An Australian doctor who had spent decades treating civilians was also abducted along this border and remains missing.

___ Associated Press writers Carley Petesch and Krista Larson in Dakar, Senegal, and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed to this report.

APNewsBreak: Questions surround Trump's 1st wall contract

By MARGERY A. BECK, Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A tiny Nebraska startup awarded the first border wall construction project under President Donald Trump is the offshoot of a construction firm that was sued repeatedly for failing to pay subcontractors and accused in a 2016 government audit of shady billing practices.

SWF Constructors, which lists just one employee in its Omaha office, won the \$11 million federal contract in November as part of a project to replace a little more than 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) of a current fence

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with post-style barriers 30 feet (9.1 meters) high in Calexico, California.

It's the first wall contract awarded in the Trump administration outside of eight prototypes that were built last year in San Diego. The project represents a sliver of the president's plan that was central to his presidential campaign promise for a wall at the border with Mexico.

It remains unclear why SWF was listed on the bid for the wall contract instead of Edgewood, New York-based Coastal Environmental Group, which online government documents list as its owner.

Thomas Anderson, an Omaha lawyer who initially represented a subcontractor that sued Coastal in 2011, said he wouldn't be surprised if it was an attempt to dodge scrutiny of past legal problems. He says such a practice is relatively common in construction projects.

"If you kick up a little dust on the trail, it makes the trail harder to follow," Anderson said.

Richard Silva, who is listed in government documents as the primary contact for both SWF and Coastal, did not return numerous phone and email messages left by The Associated Press seeking comment. Messages left with a general voicemail box for Coastal also were not returned.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Fort Worth, Texas, bid the Calexico wall project, according to federal records. The agency told The Associated Press on both Thursday and Friday that it would provide information on the process used to select and vet SWF, but had provided no such information by late Friday afternoon.

In 2011, the federal government sued Coastal on behalf of Anderson's client as part of a multimillion-dollar lead cleanup project at an EPA Superfund site in northeast Omaha. The lawsuit accused Coastal of failing to pay the subcontractor, Enviroworks Inc., nearly \$400,000 in labor and equipment costs and of renegeing on a profit sharing agreement that cheated the subcontractor out of about \$1.7 million.

Government lawyers said Coastal's refusal to pay forced the subcontractor to lay off most of its employees. Immediately after employees were notified of the layoffs, the lawsuit alleged, "Coastal hired and used the Enviroworks employees as its own and continued to perform the work that Enviroworks was entitled to do," the lawsuit alleged.

The lawsuit was settled in 2015 for an undisclosed amount.

In 2014, Coastal was again sued by the federal government for failing to pay another subcontractor, SF Marina Systems of Gloucester, Virginia, more than \$175,000 for construction of concrete docks at the U.S. Coast Guard facility at Fire Island, New York.

The government said that after repeated requests for payment, Coastal sent SF Marina a photocopy of a check for payment in full, along with a "release and waiver of lien" that Coastal said had to be signed before the check could be sent. But when SF Marina returned the signed release, Coastal still refused to pay and attempted to rely on the signed release to claim SF Marina could not collect on the debt. The lawsuit was settled in 2015, also for an undisclosed amount.

A year later, an audit by the U.S. Interior Department found \$2 million in questionable spending that should have flagged it as a problem company, but did not.

That audit looked at billing by Coastal Environmental for work to clean up two wildlife refuges in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. The report found that Coastal billed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for labor and material, subcontractors, lodging and meals and miscellaneous items without providing supporting documents like timesheets, invoices and receipts.

Nancy DiPaolo, with the Interior Department's Office of the Inspector General, said the department negotiated the repayment of the audit's findings to \$200,000, and Coastal was given five years to pay it back.

The audit's findings required the Interior Department to file a "past performance report" on Coastal that would have flagged it to other government departments, DiPaolo said. But that report was never filed, she said, for reasons she didn't know.

"It was probably an oversight," she said.

Coastal's new Omaha company, SWF, is not registered with either the Nebraska Secretary of State's office or the Nebraska Department of Labor, which is required for any company doing business within the state. Labor department officials are investigating whether SWF violated state registration requirements.

Report: Deputies told to form perimeter at school shooting

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — A sheriff's office captain told deputies to form a perimeter instead of rushing into the Florida high school where 17 people were killed in a mass shooting, according to documents obtained by the Miami Herald.

The newspaper reported late Thursday that it had obtained a partial Broward Sheriff's Office dispatch log, which showed that Capt. Jan Jordan gave the order for deputies to establish a perimeter.

An earlier report on the call logs published by Fox News showed that the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School would have been over by the time Jordan gave her order.

However, the log may raise fresh questions about the department's handling of the mass shooting on Feb. 14, including whether police could have gone in sooner to help the wounded.

"If detectives had answers to all of the questions, then there would be no need for an investigation," sheriff's office spokeswoman Veda Coleman-Wright wrote in an email to the Herald late Thursday.

Sheriff Scott Israel has said his office's training and nationwide active-shooter procedure call for armed law enforcement officers to confront shooters immediately rather than secure a scene. He has blasted Deputy Scot Peterson, the school's resource officer, for not entering the school building while 19-year-old former student Nikolas Cruz was shooting.

Israel told CNN that Coral Springs Police were the first law enforcement officers to enter the building, about four minutes after Cruz left the school.

Peterson resigned and has defended his actions.

The sheriff's office has not responded to requests for the logs from The Associated Press. The agency and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement are investigating the actions of officers responding to the shooting.

The head of the Broward Sheriff's Office Deputies Association called for more transparency in the investigation in a Miami Herald report Friday, saying Israel should release all surveillance videos, audio recordings and dispatch logs documenting the law enforcement response to the school.

"Our deputies are being called cowards in public, even if they had nothing to do with (the shooting response)," said Jeff Bell. "The deputies on the street are the ones taking the heat."

On Friday afternoon, Florida Gov. Rick Scott proclaimed Feb. 14 as Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Remembrance Day. Scott invited Floridians to join him for a moment of silence at 3 p.m. Saturday, which is 17 days after 17 people died during a shooting at the Parkland school.

Also Saturday, the Florida Senate is scheduled to hold a rare Saturday session to consider a bill addressing school safety and gun sales. The bill was scheduled to be heard Friday, but it was postponed so the Senate could keep working behind the scenes to reach an agreement with the House on bill language. Saturday's session will allow questions on the bill, but a final Senate vote wouldn't be held until Monday.

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

An earlier version of this report misidentified Jeff Bell as the head of the Broward Sheriff's Office instead of the head of the Broward Sheriff's Office Deputies Association.

Olympic star Raisman files suit against USOC, USA Gymnastics

By WILL GRAVES, AP Sports Writer

Aly Raisman spent months urging the U.S. Olympic Committee and USA Gymnastics to get serious about taking a long hard look into how Larry Nassar's abusive conduct was allowed to run unchecked for so long.

Frustrated by what she considers a lack of progress, the six-time Olympic medalist is hoping she can get some answers in court.

Raisman has filed a lawsuit against both organizations, claiming they "knew or should have known" about abusive patterns Nassar, a disgraced former national team doctor now in prison for sexually abus-

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ing young athletes.

Raisman filed the lawsuit in California on Wednesday. The filing alleges negligence by the USOC and USA Gymnastics for failing to make sure appropriate protocols were followed in regards to monitoring Larry Nassar. Nassar, who is named as a co-defendant in the lawsuit, is serving decades in prison for molesting some of the sport's top athletes and others as well as child pornography crimes.

The 23-year-old Raisman, captain for both the gold-medal winning 2012 and 2016 U.S. women's Olympic gymnastics teams, says she was abused by Nassar in multiple locations beginning in 2010, including at the U.S. national team training facility at the Karolyi Ranch training center in Texas and the 2012 Games in London. Raisman said she initially felt she was receiving medically necessary treatment by Nassar before realizing it was abuse. She battled shame, guilt and depression in the aftermath, Raisman said.

Nassar spent nearly three decades at USA Gymnastics before being fired in 2015 after complaints about his behavior. He continued to work at Michigan State University through the fall of 2016 before being hit with federal charges. Raisman said the USOC and USA Gymnastics allowed Nassar to continue abusing athletes by not telling the university about the conduct that led them to fire him.

USA Gymnastics and the USOC broke their stated mandates to protect children in their programs by not revealing Nassar's past misconduct to athletes and their parents or guardians, the lawsuit said.

Raisman joins a list of more than 100 civil actions filed against Nassar and USA Gymnastics. McKayla Maroney, an Olympic teammate of Raisman's in 2012, named the USOC as a co-defendant in a lawsuit she filed last December.

Raisman filed her lawsuit the same day that roughly 115 additional plaintiffs, including a current University of Michigan male gymnast, joined a federal suit against Michigan State University, USA Gymnastics and others. Jacob Moore, a freshman, said he was treated by Nassar multiple times and described a 2016 incident in which Nassar administered acupuncture in and around Moore's genitalia after pulling down Moore's pants in front of a female gymnast who was a minor. The suit in Michigan now has more than 250 plaintiffs.

USA Gymnastics said in a statement Friday it is doing "doing everything we can to prevent this from happening again by making bold decisions and holding ourselves to the highest standards of care." The USOC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Raisman, who has become a vocal critic of both organizations after initially revealing the abuse in her autobiography released last fall, did not plan to go to court but says she felt compelled to press forward because she believes USA Gymnastics and the USOC are not making a sincere effort to "properly address the problem."

"I refuse to wait any longer for these organizations to do the right thing," Raisman said in a statement. "It is my hope that the legal process will hold them accountable and enable the change that is so desperately needed."

The USOC is conducting an independent review of when former CEO Scott Blackmun and others learned the details about abuse cases at USA Gymnastics and whether they responded appropriately. Blackmun stepped down earlier this week to deal with prostate cancer, though Raisman, several high-profile gymnasts and two U.S. Senators had been calling for his ouster for weeks.

USA Gymnastics has undergone a massive overhaul in the last year. Former president Steve Penny, named as a co-defendant in Raisman's lawsuit, resigned last March. Longtime chairman of the board Paul Parilla, another co-defendant in the suit, and the rest of the board stepped down in January under heavy pressure from the USOC. USA Gymnastics also ended its relationship with the Karolyi Ranch in January and is currently searching for a new training center.

Raisman doesn't believe either organization is going far enough fast enough for future generations of athletes.

"It has become painfully clear that these organizations have no intention of properly addressing this problem," Raisman said. "After all this time, they remain unwilling to conduct a full investigation, and without a solid understanding of how this happened, it is delusional to think sufficient changes can be implemented."

Raisman's lawsuit claims both organizations focused on medals instead of the well-being of the athletes, a model that allowed Nassar's behavior to go unchecked for years.

The lawsuit says the USOC "had a culture and atmosphere that conceals known and suspected sexual abusers, which transcends all policies and procedures that are set-in place." Raisman believes the USOC ignored its own mandates "to protect its reputation and blind itself to known abusers within the ranks of the NGBs (National Governing Bodies) for which it is responsible."

Billy Graham funeral: Evangelist's children carry on crusade

By TOM FOREMAN Jr. and JONATHAN DREW, Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The Rev. Billy Graham's children remembered "America's Pastor" on Friday as a man devoted to spreading the Gospel, living his life at home as he preached it in stadiums, with a personable humility and an unwavering focus on the Bible. As his oldest son told the funeral congregation, "There weren't two Billy Grahams."

His adult children — all speakers or preachers in their own right — recalled being taught by their parents how to read Scripture aloud and deliver sermons, but also taking quiet walks with their father and feeling his embrace even when they made mistakes.

Franklin Graham, who delivered the main funeral message, said all of those qualities were part of the whole.

"The Billy Graham that the world saw on television, the Billy Graham that the world saw in the big stadiums, was the same Billy Graham that we saw at home. There weren't two Billy Grahams," he said. "He loved his family. He stood by us. He comforted us."

Franklin Graham's funeral message, which included a Gospel call to repentance and salvation, followed shorter remarks by his siblings in a service that lasted just over an hour before an invitation-only crowd of approximately 2,000.

"I believe, from Heaven's perspective, that my father's death is as significant as his life. And his life was very significant. But I think when he died, that was something very strategic from Heaven's point of view," said his daughter Anne Graham Lotz, later adding: "I believe God is saying: 'Wake up church! Wake up world!'"

The congregation included President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and their wives. Neither Pence nor Trump spoke during the service that was streamed live online, but they met privately with the family beforehand.

The funeral planning began a decade ago with Billy Graham himself. It also reflected his family's desire to capture the feeling of the crusades that made him the world's best-known Protestant preacher of his era. Graham, who died last week at age 99, brought a message of salvation to millions during visits and live broadcasts to scores of countries.

The funeral served as a Billy Graham crusade told through his children. Lotz read Scripture, inserting her name into the passages to make her relationship with God more personal and breaking it down intellectually, like her father. Youngest daughter Ruth told about how she sinned and didn't listen to her father with a hasty marriage, but he was waiting for her with open arms when she realized her mistake.

And oldest son Franklin, now CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, wrapped up with his father's central theme: that the only path to salvation is to accept Jesus Christ.

While Franklin Graham steered clear of politics during his message, the Trumps and Pences were the first guests he welcomed as he began.

And his invitation to be saved by Jesus contained this barb: "The world, with all of its political correctness, would want you to believe that there are many roads to God. It's just not true."

Like Graham's famous crusades, the funeral featured singers who had shared his stage in years past: Linda McCrary-Fisher, Michael W. Smith and the Gaither Vocal Band.

The lineup of clergy and singers from as near as North Carolina and as far away as Asia, was racially diverse — moreso than the mostly white audience.

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Other notable guests included television host Kathie Lee Gifford, musician Ricky Skaggs, evangelist Rick Warren and politician Rudy Giuliani. North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper attended, as did his predecessor Pat McCrory.

The funeral came at the end of more than a week of mourning that included crowds lining the road for a procession from Graham's 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.

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

Friday's goodbye also emphasized the message that only Graham's earthly journey has come to an end, a point underscored by Franklin Graham as he stood behind the same pulpit his father used in the 1990s.

Graham recalled one of his father's frequent sayings that people shouldn't believe it when they hear the famous evangelist had died: "He said: 'I'll be more alive than I am now. I'll have just changed addresses, that's all.'"

Drew reported from Raleigh, North Carolina. Associated Press writer Jeffrey Collins in Columbia, South Carolina, contributed to this report.

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

US makes Cuba embassy cuts permanent after 'health attacks'

By JOSH LEDERMAN and MATTHEW LEE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Citing mysterious "health attacks" in Havana, the United States said Friday it is making permanent its withdrawal of 60 percent of its diplomats from Cuba, extending an action that has hurt the island nation's economy and cramped Cubans' ability to visit the U.S.

Last October, the State Department ordered non-essential embassy personnel and the families of all staff to leave Havana, arguing the U.S. could not protect them from unexplained illnesses that have harmed at least 24 Americans. But by law, the department can only order diplomats to leave for six months before either sending them back or making the reductions permanent.

The six months expire Sunday. So the department said it was setting in place a new, permanent staffing plan that maintains a lower level of roughly two-dozen people — "the minimum personnel necessary to perform core diplomatic and consular functions." The department also said that the embassy in Havana would operate as an "unaccompanied post," meaning diplomats posted there will not be allowed to have spouses or children live with them in the country.

The downsizing of the embassy staff — and a travel warning the U.S. issued warning Americans to reconsider travel to the island — have had significant effects for Cuba's economy and for its citizens. With fewer employees on hand, the U.S. Embassy in Havana halted visa processing, forcing Cubans who wish to visit the United States to seek visas through U.S. embassies in other countries. The U.S. is also expected to fall far short of granting the 20,000 immigrant visas to Cubans that have been allotted annually for decades.

In Havana, hundreds of Cubans waited in line Friday outside the Colombian Embassy seeking visas to visit that country, from which they would have to apply for a separate visa at the American Embassy in Bogota to travel to the United States. Some slept under trees, having traveled to Cuba's capital from the provinces.

"This whole situation is making me very sad," said Ana Maria Velazquez, an accountant from neighboring Matanzas Province with two children in Florida. She had been waiting for her appointment with Colombian officials for three days. "There should be normal relations between the two countries, but if the U.S. doesn't want them, at least they should do something that doesn't hurt people."

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Maria Angeles Reyes said she and her husband paid \$1,400 for flights to Bogota and lodging there. "Those who are paying are ordinary Cubans," she said.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson signed off on the permanent plan for reduced staffing out of concern for "the health, safety and well-being of U.S. government personnel and family members," the department said in a statement Friday.

"We still do not have definitive answers on the source or cause of the attacks, and an investigation into the attacks is ongoing," the department said.

Cuba has repeatedly denied either involvement in or knowledge of any attacks, and has said its own investigation into the illnesses has turned up no evidence of deliberate action. The United States has not accused Cuba of such action but has said Havana holds responsibility nonetheless, arguing that such incidents could not have occurred on the small, communist-run island without the knowledge of Cuban officials.

The mysterious case has sent U.S.-Cuba relations plummeting from what had been a high point when the two countries, estranged for a half-century, restored full diplomatic ties under President Barack Obama in 2015.

In late 2016, U.S. Embassy personnel began seeking medical care for hearing loss and ear-ringing that they linked to weird noises or vibrations — initially leading investigators to suspect "sonic attacks."

An interim FBI report disclosed by The Associated Press in early January said the investigation has uncovered no evidence that sound waves could have damaged the Americans' health. But Tillerson has said he's still convinced the diplomats were hit by deliberate, specific attacks targeting their health.

Doctors treating the patients said in a study published last month that the sounds heard by diplomats might have been a byproduct of something else that might help explain the full symptom list: memory problems, impaired concentration, irritability, balance problems and dizziness. The study in the Journal of the American Medical Association said doctors still have no clear diagnosis of just what happened to trigger the mysterious health problems.

AP writer Andrea Rodriguez in Havana contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP> and Matthew Lee at <http://twitter.com/APDiploWriter>. Follow the AP's coverage of the Cuba mystery at <http://apnews.com/tag/CubaHealthMystery>.

S&P 500 erases early plunge and rises to cap frenetic week

By STAN CHOE, AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks went on another dizzying ride Friday and worked their way back from an early-morning plunge to send the Standard & Poor's 500 index to its first gain in four days. It was just the latest swing in a frenetic week for markets around the world as investors recalibrated — again and again — how worried to be about a possible trade war and a more aggressive Federal Reserve.

When U.S. markets opened for trading, the S&P 500 lost as much as 1.1 percent to join a worldwide sell-off after President Donald Trump doubled down on "trade war" talk. He took to Twitter to defend his promise from Thursday to impose stiff tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum, saying that the United States is losing on trade with virtually every country and that "trade wars are good" and "easy to win."

Investors had a different impression. Markets tumbled from Asia to Europe on fears that escalating retaliation between countries could choke off trade and the global economy. The president of the European Union's governing body suggested possible tariffs on blue jeans and motorcycles.

The S&P 500 trimmed its loss as the day went on and was bouncing between gains and losses by the early afternoon. It accelerated in the last half hour of trading and ended at 2,691.25, up 13.58 points, or 0.5 percent. The Dow Jones industrial average fell 70.92, or 0.3 percent, to 24,538.06, and the Nasdaq composite rose 77.31, or 1.1 percent, to 7,257.87.

Stocks pared their losses as investors questioned how far Trump will end up going, said Brent Schutte, chief investment strategist at Northwestern Mutual Wealth Management.

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"I view nearly every one of Trump's actions through a negotiation lens," he said. "This was an anchor, an opening bid. ... I think the market senses some of that, and I would imagine that we will see some horse trading going on with what ultimately happens with these tariffs."

The S&P 500 still ended the week with a loss of 2 percent, its third decline that severe in the last five weeks. Last year, the worst weekly loss was just 1.4 percent.

If a trade war does indeed break out, it could threaten a key reason investors were optimistic about stocks coming into 2018: The global economy is finally strengthening in sync, which should lead to higher corporate profits.

Big U.S. companies are heavily reliant on global trade, and companies in the S&P 500 got 43 percent of their sales from outside the United States in 2016, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices. That means Apple and other big U.S. companies are dependent on customers not only in Peoria but also Paris and Peru.

Stocks of smaller U.S. companies, which tend to do more of their business at home, did much better than the rest of the market. The Russell 2000 index of small-cap stocks rose 25.78, or 1.7 percent, to 1,533.17.

The trade worries are piling onto a market that was already nervous. Concerns about the possibility of higher inflation and interest rates have rocked markets since the S&P 500 set its latest record high in late January.

Inflation has been low in the years following the Great Recession, but if it jumps higher, it could force the Federal Reserve to raise short-term rates more sharply than investors are expecting. That could easily upset markets, which had been enjoying a remarkably smooth ride last year.

The Fed's chairman, Jerome Powell, jolted markets on Tuesday, when he said that he's feeling more optimistic about the U.S. economy. Some investors took that as a signal that the Fed may get more aggressive, which sent stocks down and Treasury yields higher. Later in the week, though, Powell may have calmed some of the fears when he said that he does not see inflation in wages "at a point of acceleration."

Such a dance is typical when central banks are raising interest rates and "tightening" financial conditions, rather than easing, said Schutte.

"When central banks ease, the goal is shock and awe, or to use a football analogy, to throw the deep ball," he said. "When they hike, it's three yards and a cloud of dust. They want to advance the ball gradually."

The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 2.86 percent from 2.81 percent late Thursday.

The biggest loss in the S&P 500 came from Foot Locker, which plunged after it said sales trends were weaker last quarter than analysts expected. Shares dropped \$5.84, or 12.7 percent, to \$40.04.

McDonald's stock dropped on fears that its value menu isn't drumming up much in sales, and an analyst at RBC Capital Markets cut his expectations for the chain's sales in the United States. Its shares dropped \$7.43, or 4.8 percent, to \$148.27.

The losses follow up sharp drops in markets overseas. In Asia, Japan's Nikkei 225 plunged 2.5 percent, the Hang Seng in Hong Kong fell 1.5 percent and South Korea's Kospi dropped 1 percent.

In Europe, France's CAC 40 lost 2.4 percent, and Germany's DAX fell 2.3 percent. The FTSE 100 in London gave up 1.5 percent.

In the commodities markets, benchmark U.S. crude rose 26 cents to settle at \$61.25 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, rose 54 cents to \$64.37 a barrel.

Gold rose \$18.20 to settle at \$1,323.40 per ounce. Gold usually rises when investors are feeling more nervous about inflation and the economy. Silver climbed 19 cents to \$16.47 per ounce, and copper added 2 cents to \$3.12 per pound.

Natural gas was virtually flat at \$2.70 per 1,000 cubic feet, heating oil slipped a cent to \$1.88 per gallon and wholesale gasoline gained a penny to \$1.90 per gallon.

The dollar fell to 105.54 Japanese yen from 106.24 yen late Thursday. The euro rose to \$1.2331 from \$1.2255, and the British pound rose to \$1.3790 from \$1.3768.

Sheriff: Guns taken from Georgia teacher after car set afire

By JEFF MARTIN, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A Georgia teacher accused of firing a handgun in his classroom had three rifles taken away after setting the family car ablaze at his home two years ago, according to a sheriff's report obtained Friday by The Associated Press.

But authorities responsible for protecting his workplace -- Dalton High School -- say they didn't learn about the disturbing episode until this week.

Deputies in Dade County, where social studies teacher Jesse Randal Davidson lives, took him to a hospital for a mental evaluation and seized the rifles for safe-keeping after he torched the Mitsubishi Outlander on Aug. 13, 2016.

This sheriff's report and two others from Dalton Police in Whitfield County show Davidson has been hospitalized at least three times in recent years as people worried about his state of mind.

Davidson didn't hit anyone when he allegedly fired a handgun out his classroom window at Dalton High School on Wednesday, but it caused chaos and immediate calls to abandon the idea of arming teachers as a solution to school shootings. President Donald Trump and other Republicans have endorsed arming teachers following the killings of 17 people at a Florida high school two weeks ago.

Davidson faces six charges including aggravated assault; terroristic threats and acts; and having a weapon on school property. His lawyer hasn't returned phone and email messages from the AP.

The additional details about Davidson's past run-ins with law enforcement emerged as the school reopened Friday.

A deputy saw heavy smoke and flames pouring from the Mitsubishi as he pulled up to Davidson's home in the small community of Rising Fawn, Georgia, the sheriff's report said. The deputy told Davidson's wife Lisa and their daughter Megan to seek safety in his patrol car.

Davidson's adult son, Johnny, told the deputy that his father "was not acting like himself and was sitting down with a rifle in the back yard watching the vehicle on fire."

Johnny Davidson was eventually able to talk his father into giving up the gun, described in the report as a Russia 7.62 rifle. No injuries were reported. Two other weapons — described as an Ithaca .22-caliber rifle and a Savage 7 mag rifle — also were seized.

In March 2016, Davidson walked into the lobby of the Dalton police headquarters and told a wild story including his suspicions that someone had been murdered, police said. Detectives couldn't verify that any of it was true, and he was taken to the hospital since he'd expressed thoughts of hurting himself, police wrote in their report on that episode.

In January 2017, school employees and a police officer began searching Dalton High after Davidson went missing. He was finally found sitting on the curb along a street a few blocks from the campus, being propped up by two school staff members, police said.

Dalton police informed school officials after they investigated the rambling story at the police station, but spokesman Bruce Frazier said police investigators only became aware of the burning car situation this week.

The family has faced financial hardship in recent years, federal court records show.

Davidson's wife told the sheriff's deputy who arrived to find the Mitsubishi engulfed in flames that the couple had argued that morning about money, a few hours before the car was burned. They'd filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy in late 2015. As part of that case, the Dalton teacher listed six rifles and one shotgun on a list of assets he owned.

School officials say they can't talk about mental health issues of specific staff members. But Dalton High Principal Steve Bartoo told reporters that "as far as I know he was fit to be at work."

"We don't allow anyone in a classroom unless they are capable of doing their job and fit for their position," school system spokeswoman Pat Holloway said.

But school officials might not have been aware that his guns had been taken the day his family car was burned.

"I very seriously doubt that they knew about that incident," Dade County Sheriff's Sgt. Chad Payne said

Friday.

"It resulted in him being transported for a mental evaluation," Payne said. "Once he's in that ambulance and on the way to the hospital, his medical care becomes private so I doubt that they would know anything about it."

SEC dropped inquiry a month after firm aided Kushner company

By STEPHEN BRAUN, BERNARD CONDON and TAMI ABDOLLAH, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Securities and Exchange Commission late last year dropped its inquiry into a financial company that a month earlier had given White House adviser Jared Kushner's family real estate firm a \$180 million loan.

While there's no evidence that Kushner or any other Trump administration official had a role in the agency's decision to drop the inquiry into Apollo Global Management, the timing has once again raised potential conflict-of-interest questions about Kushner's family business and his role as an adviser to his father-in-law, President Donald Trump.

The SEC detail comes a day after The New York Times reported that Apollo's loan to the Kushner Cos. followed several meetings at the White House with Kushner.

"I suppose the best case for Kushner is that this looks absolutely terrible," said Rob Weissman, president of Public Citizen. "Without presuming that there is any kind of quid pro quo ... there are a lot of ways that the fact of Apollo's engagement with Kushner and the Kushner businesses in a public and private context might cast a shadow over what the SEC is doing and influence consciously or unconsciously how the agency acted."

Apollo said in its 2018 annual report that the SEC had halted its inquiry into how the firm reported the financial results of its private equity funds and other costs and personnel changes. Apollo had previously reported that the Obama administration SEC had subpoenaed it for information related to the issue.

The SEC, which often makes such inquiries of financial firms, declined Friday to comment on the probe or its decision to halt it.

Apollo said the company founder who met with Jared Kushner did not discuss with him "a loan, investment, or any other business arrangement or regulatory matter involving Apollo." It added that the Kushner loan to refinance a Chicago skyscraper went through the "standard approval process" and that the founder was not involved in the decision.

Kushner Cos. said in a statement that the implication that Kushner's position in the White House had affected the company's relationships with lenders is "without substantiation."

Peter Mirijanian, a spokesman for Jared Kushner attorney Abbe Lowell, had no comment on the dropped SEC inquiry or whether it was influenced by Kushner's contacts with Apollo. He added that Kushner has "had no role in the Kushner Companies since joining the government and has taken no part of any business, loans or projects with or for the Companies after that."

According to the Times report, Kushner also met with the CEO of Citigroup at the White House early last year. Property records show that Citigroup lent \$325 million in March to Kushner Cos. and two partners for a collection of buildings in Brooklyn.

Both lenders had important business before the federal government last year, according to lobbying records and regulatory filings. Both Apollo and Citigroup were pushing for tax breaks in the recently passed overhaul, and Citigroup was lobbying for a rollback of some financial crisis regulation.

Combined, the two companies spent nearly \$7 million on lobbying last year.

For its part, Citigroup said in a statement that it didn't deal with Kushner Cos. at all in arranging the loan, and talked instead to one of the Kushner Cos. partners. It added that its CEO was not involved in the transaction and "never discussed it" with Jared Kushner.

Details on the loans, like the interest rates charged, are not publicly available, so it's unclear whether the Kushner Cos. got any special breaks.

The Kushner family's biggest holding, a skyscraper on Fifth Avenue, is 30 percent unoccupied and has

a \$1.2 billion mortgage due early next year. That has fueled speculation that the company needs money, and fast.

But the Kushner Cos. has repeatedly pushed back on depictions that it is anything but in solid financial shape and needs help.

The company said Thursday that linking the loans to Jared Kushner's meetings at the White House has "nothing to do with reality."

"Jared does not tell us who he meets with nor do we ask him," said Kushner Cos. spokeswoman Christine Taylor. "We do not update Jared on what's going on in our business nor does he ask."

Regardless, ethics experts said the optics are bad and Kushner should not have been having meetings with Apollo and Citigroup officials while his family business was seeking loans from them.

"I'd never seen anybody come in to the government with as much debt exposure as Trump and Kushner," said Virginia Canter, a former ethics official in the Obama and Clinton White Houses who is now with Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

Associated Press writer Garance Burke in San Francisco contributed to this report. AP researcher Jennifer Farrar contributed from New York.

Worst of bad US flu season finally over as illnesses decline

By **MIKE STOBBE, AP Medical Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — The worst of the nation's nasty flu season is finally over.

The season apparently peaked in early February and has been fading since, health officials said Friday. The number of people going to the doctor with symptoms of the flu has continued to decline. Deaths from the flu or pneumonia are going down, too.

While the peak may have passed, the season isn't finished yet. Reports of flu remained widespread in 45 states, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported.

"The season's not over but we're definitely on the downward trend right now," said Dr. Anne Schuchat, the CDC's acting director.

Flu usually takes off after Christmas and peaks around February. This season started early and was widespread in many states by December. In early January, it hit what seemed like peak levels — but then continued to surge.

It had been driven by a kind of flu that tends to put more people in the hospital and cause more deaths, and officials lately are seeing less of that. But another kind that hits children hard has picked up steam. So far this season, health officials say 114 children have died from the flu.

Making a bad year worse, this year's flu vaccine didn't work very well and health officials are trying to figure out why it did so poorly.

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness, spread by a virus. It can cause a miserable but relatively mild illness in many people, but a more severe illness in others. In a bad season, there are as many as 56,000 deaths connected to the flu.

In Friday's report, the CDC said one key measure showed doctor visits last week for fever, cough and other symptoms of the flu dropped again, down to 1 in 20 visits. The number of states reporting heavy patient flu traffic last week dropped to 32.

Amber Smith, a recruiter for a furniture store chain in Charlotte, North Carolina, thought she didn't have to worry about the flu after a wave of illnesses that hit her company's warehouse in January and February seemed to fade. But she started to feel sick Monday and found out she had the flu. She hadn't gotten a flu shot; her boyfriend did and he hasn't been sick.

"I feel like my head weighs 20 pounds," said Smith, who tried to go to work Friday, but was sent home after a morning meeting. "But my throat isn't as sore. I feel like the flu is running its course."

World leaders push back against Trump's trade war threat

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 prompted threats of retaliation against U.S. exports like blue jeans and motorcycles.

"Make no mistake: If the president goes through with this, it will kill American jobs -- that's what every trade war ultimately does," said Sen. Ben Sasse, a Nebraska Republican.

Trump has declared that the U.S. will impose punishing tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. The 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."

Markets tumbled in Asia, where China had already expressed a "grave concern" about U.S. trade policy. And the European Union promised retaliation against American exports if Trump follows through. In the United States, the S&P 500 dropped as much as 1.1 percent before paring its decline.

"None of this is reasonable, but reason is a sentiment that's very unevenly distributed in the world," said Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the EU's executive body.

Asked if a trade war is brewing, he said: "I can't see how this isn't part of war-like behavior."

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!"

Sen. Sasse echoed a sentiment of many U.S. lawmakers when he issued a statement in response: "Kooky 18th century protectionism will jack up prices on American families."

Trump's 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.

Trump has long railed against what he deems unfair trade practices by China and others. This week, he summoned steel and aluminum executives to the White House and declared 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.

"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." On Friday, she told reporters

that Trump wasn't concerned about the day's market decline, adding that the "president is still focused on long term economic fundamentals."

Sasse wasn't the only Republican in Congress who was plainly upset.

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/PaulWisemanAP>.

A new "Kraken" arises? Russians eager to name doomsday arms

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — In just one day, the suggestions have been pouring in: "Kraken" for a new underwater drone capable of blasting coastlines with a powerful nuclear explosion. "Balalaika" for a futuristic nuclear-powered cruise missile capable of circling the globe.

Russians are showering the Defense Ministry with proposed names for the country's new nuclear weapons, relishing the online contest announced by President Vladimir Putin in his state-of-the-nation address Thursday.

Many of the entries Friday reflected the wry dark humor Russians are known for.

Someone suggested calling the missile "Sanction," an apparent reference to Western economic sanctions against Russia for its support of separatists in Ukraine.

Another proposed calling it "Thaw," adding in a note of sarcasm that it would finally help warm the ties between Russia and the U.S.

The kraken — a fictional gigantic Arctic sea monster that was made popular by the "Pirates of the Caribbean" film series — seemed to reflect the nature of the nuclear-powered drone intended to sneak close to the shore unnoticed and slam a heavy nuclear warhead into the coast.

And naming the stealth atomic-powered cruise missile after a Russian folk musical instrument tapped into a long Russian tradition of giving innocuous names to some of the deadliest weapons.

There were quite a few four-letter entries as well. Many others were driven by patriotic feelings, suggesting that the weapons be named after legendary Russian warriors or Putin himself.

The regional leader of the province of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, proposed calling the nuclear-powered cruise missile "Palmyra," after the historic heritage site in Syria that was taken back from the Islamic State group under the Russian air cover. The site suffered extensive damage in the fighting.

"The missile's name should honor our guys who died in Syria," Kadyrov said. "The Russian victory in Palmyra marked a turning point in the fight against the IS."

Russian diplomats have sought to spread the contest beyond Russia's borders, with the Russian Embassy in Washington tweeting a link to the Defense Ministry's web site.

Speaking Friday at a public forum in Kaliningrad, Putin again boasted about the new weapons, saying that the still-anonymous underwater drone, the nuclear-powered cruise missile and the intercontinental hypersonic strike vehicle called Avangard border on science fiction.

He said the underwater drone "goes faster than any surface ship that exists today, I wouldn't even tell you the speed, it's incredible."

The hypersonic vehicle "flies at a speed 20 times the speed of sound ... and it can maneuver thousands of kilometers up and down and right to left," Putin said, gesticulating energetically. "It's like science fiction."

He said the Avangard's development had become possible thanks to the creation of new materials.

"We have been working on them for quite a long time," he said. "Other countries also have tried but apparently so far have failed to make them, and we succeeded thanks to new materials."

As the weapon name contest went on, Russian officials and lawmakers insisted that Putin's speech wasn't an announcement of a new arms race but a warning to Washington to treat Russia as an equal partner.

"Russia has no intention of entering an arms race," Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Friday, adding that the weapons presented by the Russian leader aimed to maintain a "strategic parity, which is essential for maintaining peace and stability."

The Pentagon on Thursday dismissed Putin's boasts about developing a new array of nuclear weapons, saying America's missile defense is ready to protect the nation but is not directed at Russia.

Trump, Alec Baldwin renew Twitter feud

By **MARK KENNEDY, AP Entertainment Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump and Alec Baldwin — his chief impersonator — traded online barbs Friday, each describing the other as causing "agony," the latest salvos in an ongoing feud between the commander in chief and the actor.

Trump, who has long grumbled about the way he is portrayed by Baldwin on "Saturday Night Live," began the latest spat in a tweet sandwiched between his observations about world trade and the opioid crisis. (In an initial tweet that was later deleted, he misspelled the actor's first name as "Alex," prompting "Alex Baldwin" to trend on Twitter.)

The president seemed to be reacting to an interview Baldwin gave to The Hollywood Reporter that was published Thursday in which the actor said he doesn't enjoy parodying Trump: "Every time I do it now, it's like agony. Agony. I can't."

Wrote Trump on Friday: "Alec Baldwin, whose dying mediocre career was saved by his terrible impersonation of me on SNL, now says playing me was agony. Alec, it was agony for those who were forced to watch."

In a final dig, the president said Baldwin's performance wasn't as good as comedian Darrell Hammond, who portrayed Trump on "Saturday Night Live" for years before Baldwin took over in September 2016. "Bring back Darrell Hammond, funnier and a far greater talent!" Trump tweeted.

Baldwin responded in a series of tweets.

"Agony though it may be, I'd like to hang in there for the impeachment hearings, the resignation speech, the farewell helicopter ride," he wrote.

Baldwin also tweeted that he was "Looking forward to the Trump Presidential Library" and suggested that it would contain a live Twitter feed and "a little black book w the phone numbers of porn stars." (He also misspelled Trump's Florida estate Mar-a-Lago as "Mara-A-Lago.")

Hammond did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Baldwin, a Democratic activist, received an Emmy Award for his parody last year on "Saturday Night Live." He and Trump, who appeared as a guest host on "SNL" in November 2015, have attacked each other on Twitter before. In 2016, the then-president elect called a skit that satirized Trump's tweets as "sad," prompting Baldwin to respond: "Release your tax returns and I'll stop. Ha."

Trump also complained to Matt Lauer in an interview that year that Baldwin's portrayal of him wasn't funny. "The skits are terrible. I like Alec, but his imitation of me is really mean-spirited and not very good ... It's very biased and I don't like it."

Baldwin and Trump also exchanged sharp tweets after the election when the president-elect called "Saturday Night Live" a "totally one-sided, biased show" and asked, "Equal time for us?" Baldwin responded:

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"Election is over. There is no more equal time."

"Saturday Night Live" has found higher ratings and more cultural relevance since Trump ran for office, with skits that have also lampooned Oval Office figures such as Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Jeff Sessions, Sean Spicer, Steve Bannon, Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump. Five days before his 2017 inauguration, Trump tweeted about the show: "Not funny, cast is terrible, always a complete hit job. Really bad television!"

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

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.

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

Police later issued a statement saying the couple "were questioned for a number of hours as part of an investigation" by police and the Israel Securities Authority.

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 was the first time that Netanyahu, who as prime minister also held the communications portfolio until last year, was 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. He reiterated his belief that "nothing" will come out of the investigations in a Facebook post Friday evening.

Congress' immigration push sputters as guns grab attention

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's taken just two weeks for Washington's immigration battle to fade from blistering to back-burner. Lawmakers now seem likely to do little or nothing this election year on an effort that's been eclipsed by Congress' new focus on guns, bloodied by Senate defeats and relegated to B-level urgency by a Supreme Court ruling.

Talks have gone dormant that sought a bipartisan package: A chance for citizenship for young immigrants brought to the country illegally and \$25 billion for President Donald Trump to erect his treasured wall with Mexico. Even a proposal dangling modest wins for both sides — a three-year renewal of a program protecting hundreds of thousands of those young immigrants from deportation in exchange for a \$7.6 billion down payment for the wall — seems a longshot.

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"The prospects for immigration legislation, big or small, are very, very bleak," concedes Frank Sharry, executive director of America's Voice, an immigrants' rights group.

Distrust between the two parties has intensified, with each suspecting the other of weaponizing the impasse to rouse loyal voters for November's contest for congressional control. There are tactical rifts between Democrats and the coalition of liberal and immigrants' rights organizations over how aggressively to force the issue, and differences between conservative organizations and some Republicans over the wisdom of even a narrow accord.

Looking to furnish political cover to rank-and-file Republicans, House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., only want to consider immigration bills that have Trump's support. Democrats say Trump's portrayal of immigrants as threats who commit crimes and steal jobs, plus his vulgar references to their countries, shows he's not serious about compromise — yet leaves him pivotal for any deal.

"There are certain people and certain countries that Donald Trump does not envision as part of America's future," said No. 2 Senate Democratic leader Richard Durbin of Illinois. "Until the president and the Republicans in Congress believe that deporting the Dreamers is so much of a political negative that they must do something, I think it's unlikely that we'll move forward."

Rather than making new offers, Trump is blaming Democrats for the stalemate.

"I'm the one that's pushing DACA and the Democrats are nowhere to be found," he tweeted days ago, referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Hoping to recapture attention, immigrant and civil rights groups plan demonstrations in Washington and elsewhere on Monday. When Trump announced last year that he was terminating the program, he gave Congress until that date, March 5, to replace it.

The program, which President Barack Obama created administratively without enactment of a law, lets immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children get jobs for renewable two-year periods. It's currently protecting 680,000 of them.

The Supreme Court this week erased that deadline's impact with a ruling that requires the administration to renew DACA permits while lower court challenges to Trump's action continue. Those lawsuits could drag on for months, easing pressure on Congress to act quickly.

Lawmakers are now fixated on last month's shooting deaths of 17 students and faculty members at a high school in Parkland, Florida. The shift accentuates how rapidly priorities shift in Congress, fueled by today's hyper speed news cycles and a president whose tweets and utterances add additional volatility.

Last month, the Senate rejected a Trump proposal offering citizenship to people protected by DACA, fully financing his wall, cutting legal immigration and ending a visa lottery for people from countries with low U.S. immigration rates. A bipartisan plan backed by nearly all Democrats included potential citizenship for DACA recipients and money for Trump's wall, barred the young immigrants from sponsoring their parents and left the visa lottery intact.

Neither side is showing any indication of sweetening its offer.

"We've offered the sun and the moon and that wasn't enough," said Texas Sen. John Cornyn, the second-ranking GOP leader. "I guess we'll see what happens."

Democrats face pressure from liberal groups like Indivisible and United We Dream to use coming budget legislation to crimp money for immigration enforcement programs. But with several Senate Democrats facing tough re-election fights in Trump-friendly states leery of that stance, the party has little leverage.

Clarissa Martinez, a policy chief for UnidosUS, an immigrants' rights group, said Democrats should force votes on the issue any to drive home how immigrants bolster the economy. She cited the repeated, doomed votes Republicans forced under President Barack Obama to repeal his health care law "because they had a narrative they were building."

Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., who's joined bipartisan efforts to forge compromise, says he'll try forcing a vote next week on his plan to extend DACA for three years and supplying three years of financing for Trump's wall.

But many Democrats oppose it, saying they abhor financing the wall in exchange for merely a tempo-

rary DACA extension. Groups like the Center for Immigration Studies that favor tight restrictions are also opposed, saying it would inscribe DACA into law, and conservatives such as Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, seem certain to block Flake.

Flake said he'd keep trying anyway.

"At some point we're going to want to put this behind us, even if there's no deadline. I don't think this plays into our favor in the midterms," he said.

In the House, Republicans are hunting votes for a conservative package that cuts legal immigration, requires employers to verify workers' citizenship and makes it easier to deport immigrants who are drunk drivers or gang members. Facing solid Democratic opposition, GOP leaders remain short and it's unlikely they'd consider more moderate alternatives that lack majority Republican support.

Merkel, Trump discuss Syrian cease-fire, Putin's new weapons

BERLIN (AP) — German Chancellor Angela Merkel has spoken with U.S. President Donald Trump about Syria, and both sides agreed that Syrian government forces and their Russian and Iranian allies must abide by a U.N. Security Council cease-fire resolution, her office said Friday.

Following their call Thursday, Merkel and Trump urged Russia to stop participating in the bombardment of Damascus' rebel-held suburbs known as eastern Ghouta, according to her office.

"The five-hour cease-fire announced by the Russian side isn't being adhered to. The Syrian regime in particular is constantly breaking it," Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, told reporters.

Germany appeals "to all parties to the conflict to fully implement this U.N. resolution and we see a particular responsibility on the part of Russia," he added.

Seibert said attacks should stop for 48 to 72 hours in order for aid to be effectively delivered to civilians. He called it "particularly cynical that the regime in Damascus used chlorine gas against its own population again just one day after the passing of the U.N. resolution."

According to Merkel's office, both she and Trump also expressed concern about Russian President Vladimir Putin's unveiling of new weapons systems Thursday "and their negative consequences for international arms control efforts."

Seibert said Germany watched Putin's announcement with concern, noting the Russia's military modernization program and what he described as doubts about Moscow's adherence to international treaties, its annexation of Crimea and threats against some of its neighbors.

Still, Seibert said Berlin was always ready to talk with the Kremlin even when the two sides differ significantly on the issues.

Suicide bomb in Afghan capital kills young girl, wounds 22

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 22, 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.

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.

Nasrat Rahimi, deputy spokesman for the ministry, said 22 were wounded in the blast. Mohammad Musa Zahir, a doctor at the area's Wazir Akbar Khan hospital, said the wounded included five children and two women.

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.

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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 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.

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.

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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>

Vatican indicts ex-bank head, says embezzlement loss is \$62M

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Vatican prosecutors have indicted the former president of the Vatican bank and his lawyer on embezzlement charges, holding them responsible for losses of more than 50 million euros (\$62 million) from real estate sales.

The trial of Angelo Caloia and his lawyer, Gabriele Liuzzo, begins March 15. A third suspect died while under investigation.

The Institute for Religious Works said late Friday that Caloia and his lawyer were charged with alleged embezzlement and self-laundering between 2001 and 2008, when the bank disposed of "a considerable part of its real estate assets."

The scam allegedly involved the suspects selling Vatican-owned real estate at under value prices to offshore companies that then resold the buildings at market rates, with the suspects allegedly profiting from the difference, according to a person familiar with the investigation.

The IOR, as the bank is known, is joining a civil case alongside the criminal trial to try to recover some of the losses.

The Vatican announced the criminal investigation into Caloia, the IOR president from 1989-2009, attorney Liuzzo and the late bank director general, Lelio Scaletti, in 2014 after bank officials discovered irregularities in IOR accounts and operations.

The suspects have denied wrongdoing.

It's the latest attempt by the IOR to try to recover money it claims it lost due to the crimes or bungled decisions of its former managers.

Just last month, the Vatican's civil tribunal found two other former bank heads, Paolo Cipriani and Massimo Tulli, liable for mismanagement for bad investments during their tenure and ordered them to repay the institution. The two resigned from the bank in 2013.

The IOR launched a massive internal overhaul and reform of its operations as part of a process launched by Pope Benedict XVI to clean up its reputation as a scandal-plagued off-shore tax haven.

Marshall Islands creates its own virtual money to pay bills

By HILARY HOSIA and NICK PERRY, Associated Press

MAJURO, Marshall Islands (AP) — The tiny Marshall Islands is creating its own digital currency in order to raise some hard cash to pay bills and boost the economy.

The Pacific island nation said it became the first country in the world to recognize a cryptocurrency as its legal tender when it passed a law this past week to create the digital "Sovereign," or SOV. In the nation of 60,000, the cryptocurrency will have equal status with the U.S. dollar as a form of payment.

Venezuela last month became the first country to launch its own cryptocurrency when it launched the virtual Petro, backed by crude oil reserves. The Marshall Islands said the SOV will be different because it will be recognized in law as legal tender, effectively backed by the government.

The Marshall Islands is partnering with Israeli company Neema to launch the SOV. It plans to sell some of the currency to international investors and spend the proceeds.

The Marshall Islands says the SOV will require users to identify themselves, thus avoiding the anonymity that has kept bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies from gaining support from governments.

"This is a historic moment for our people, finally issuing and using our own currency, alongside the USD (U.S. dollar)," President Hilda Heine said in a statement. "It is another step of manifesting our national liberty."

The Marshall Islands is closely aligned with the U.S. under a Compact of Free Association and uses the dollar as its currency. Under the compact, the U.S. provides the Marshall Islands with about \$70 million each year in assistance. The U.S. runs a military base on Kwajalein Atoll.

Lawmakers passed the cryptocurrency measure Monday following five days of heated debate. It's unclear when the nation will issue the currency.

Leaders hope the SOV will one day be used by residents for everything from paying taxes to buying groceries.

The law states that the Marshall Islands will issue 24 million SOVs in what it calls an Initial Currency Offering. Half of those will go to the government and half to Neema.

The Marshall Islands intends to initially sell 6 million SOVs to international investors. It says it will use the money to help pay for the budget, invest in projects to mitigate the effects of global warming and support those people still affected by U.S. nuclear testing.

The country also intends to hand out 2.4 million SOVs to residents.

Neema Chief Executive Barak Ben-Ezer said the SOV marked a new era for cryptocurrency.

"SOV is about getting rid of the excuses" for not shifting to digital assets, he said in a statement. He said it solved a huge problem with cryptocurrencies, which haven't previously been recognized as "real" money by banks, regulators and the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

Some lawmakers expressed concern about the large amount of the new currency that would go to the Israeli company, while others argued the country had urgent needs and the cash would help.

Jehan Chu, the Hong Kong-based co-founder of blockchain platform Kenetic, said he thought it was an amazing move by the Marshall Islands and was the way of the future.

"Physical currency is going by the wayside as an antiquated, obsolete form of transacting," he said.

But Chu added that he didn't think the currency would hold much appeal for international investors or be particularly valuable outside the Marshall Islands.

And many people in the Marshall Islands and beyond remain skeptical of cryptocurrencies.

Bank of England Governor Mark Carney said this past week that a global speculative mania had encouraged a proliferation of the currencies, and that they needed to be held to the same standards as the rest

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of the financial system.

"The prices of many cryptocurrencies have exhibited the classic hallmarks of bubbles ... reliant in part on finding the greater fool," Carney said in a speech to the Scottish Economics conference in Edinburgh.

Perry reported from Wellington, New Zealand.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, March 3, the 62nd day of 2018. There are 303 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 3, 1931, "The Star-Spangled Banner" became the national anthem of the United States as President Herbert Hoover signed a congressional resolution.

On this date:

In 1791, Congress passed a measure taxing distilled spirits; it was the first internal revenue act in U.S. history.

In 1845, Florida became the 27th state.

In 1849, the U.S. Department of the Interior was established.

In 1918, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire and Russia signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which ended Russian participation in World War I. (The treaty was rendered moot by the November 1918 armistice.)

In 1923, Time magazine, founded by Briton Hadden and Henry R. Luce, made its debut.

In 1943, in London's East End, 173 people died in a crush of bodies at the Bethnal Green tube station, which was being used as a wartime air raid shelter.

In 1959, the United States launched the Pioneer 4 spacecraft, which flew by the moon. Comedian Lou Costello died in East Los Angeles three days before his 53rd birthday.

In 1960, Lucille Ball filed for divorce from her husband, Desi Arnaz, a day after they had finished filming the last episode of "The Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Show" ("Lucy Meets the Mustache") on Arnaz's 43rd birthday.

In 1974, a Turkish Airlines DC-10 crashed shortly after takeoff from Orly Airport in Paris, killing all 346 people on board.

In 1985, coal miners in Britain voted to end a year-long strike that proved to be the longest and most violent walkout in British history.

In 1991, motorist Rodney King was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers in a scene captured on amateur video. Twenty-five people were killed when a United Airlines Boeing 737-200 crashed while approaching the Colorado Springs airport.

In 2002, voters in Switzerland approved joining the United Nations, abandoning almost 200 years of formal neutrality.

Ten years ago: Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama said his campaign had never given Canada back-channel assurances that his harsh words about the North American Free Trade Agreement were for political show, despite a Canadian memo indicating otherwise. Four adults and two children were found slain in a Memphis, Tennessee, house; three children survived the rampage. (The brother of one of the victims was convicted of murder and sentenced to death.) A gunman opened fire inside a Wendy's restaurant in West Palm Beach, Florida, killing a paramedic who'd gone back to fetch a missing meal toy for his child; the gunman wounded five others before turning the gun on himself. Operatic tenor Giuseppe Di Stefano died in Santa Maria Hoe, Italy, at age 86.

Five years ago: Vice President Joe Biden led civil rights leaders and national political figures in a ceremonial crossing of a Selma, Alabama, bridge where voting rights marchers were beaten by law enforcement officers in 1965. The SpaceX company's Dragon capsule made good on its latest shipment to the International Space Station, overcoming earlier mechanical difficulty to deliver a ton of supplies. Bobby

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Rogers, a founding member of Motown group The Miracles and a songwriting collaborator with Smokey Robinson, died at his suburban Detroit home; he was 73.

One year ago: President Donald Trump toured St. Andrew Catholic School, a private religious facility in Orlando, Florida, praising it as an ideal institution for "disadvantaged children" while re-emphasizing that his education agenda would focus on school choice. The Nintendo Switch, a hybrid game machine that works as both a console at home and a portable tablet on the go, made its debut.

Today's Birthdays: Socialite Lee Radziwill is 85. Singer-musician Mike Pender (The Searchers) is 77. Movie producer-director George Miller is 73. Actress Hattie Winston is 73. Singer Jennifer Warnes is 71. Actor-director Tim Kazurinsky is 68. Singer-musician Robyn Hitchcock is 65. Actor Robert Gossett is 64. Rock musician John Lilley is 64. Actress Miranda Richardson is 60. Rock musician John Bigham is 59. Radio personality Ira Glass is 59. Actress Mary Page Keller is 57. Olympic track and field gold medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey is 56. Former NFL player and College Football Hall of Famer Herschel Walker is 56. Actress Laura Harring is 54. Contemporary Christian musician Duncan Phillips (Newsboys) is 54. Rapper-actor Tone Loc (lohk) is 52. Actress Julie Bowen is 48. Country singer Brett Warren (The Warren Brothers) is 47. Actor David Faustino is 44. Gospel singer Jason Crabb is 41. Singer Ronan Keating (Boyzone) is 41. Rapper Lil' Flip is 37. Actress Jessica Biel is 36. Rock musician Blower (AKA Joe Garvey) (Hinder) is 34. Musician Brett Hite (Frenship) is 32. Pop singer Camila Cabello is 21. Actor Thomas Barbusca (TV: "The Mick") is 15.

Thought for Today: "Some people stay longer in an hour than others do in a month." — William Dean Howells, American author and editor (1837-1920).