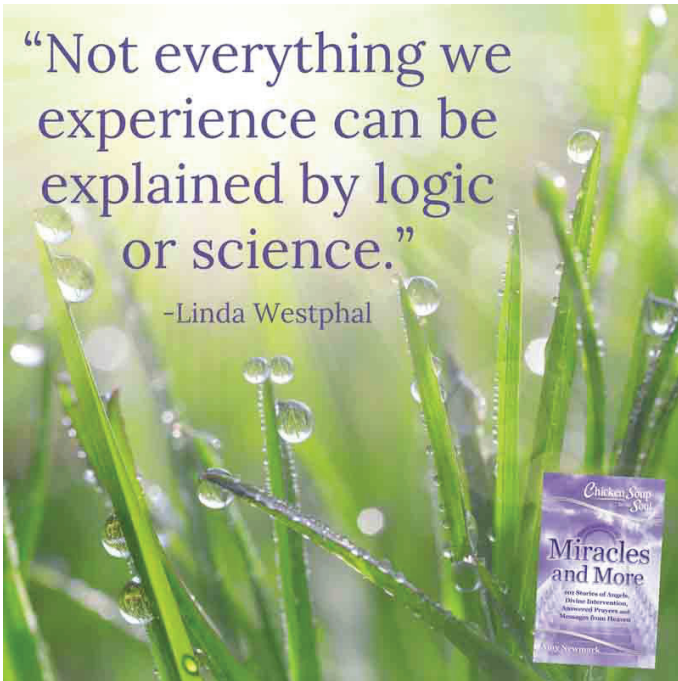


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“Not everything we experience can be explained by logic or science.”

-Linda Westphal



Midwest Masonry & concrete Pumping

Greg Heilman, owner

405 E 1st Ave., Groton

Greg: 253/929-9137

Mike: 605/492-7041

midwestmasonry1@yahoo.com



Trinity Church Fundrasier

The Groton Community Historical Society will hold its first fundraiser Monday, March 12, at the Groton Dairy Queen, from 5 to 9 pm. Owners Dale and Joyce Grenz offered to donate a percentage of sales during that time to the roofing fund for Groton's Historic Trinity Church.

Members of the Historical Society will be on hand to display information and answer questions about the church during the fundraiser. A booklet about the church and its need for a new roof is available for review at City Hall or online at <http://www.city.grotonsd.gov/>

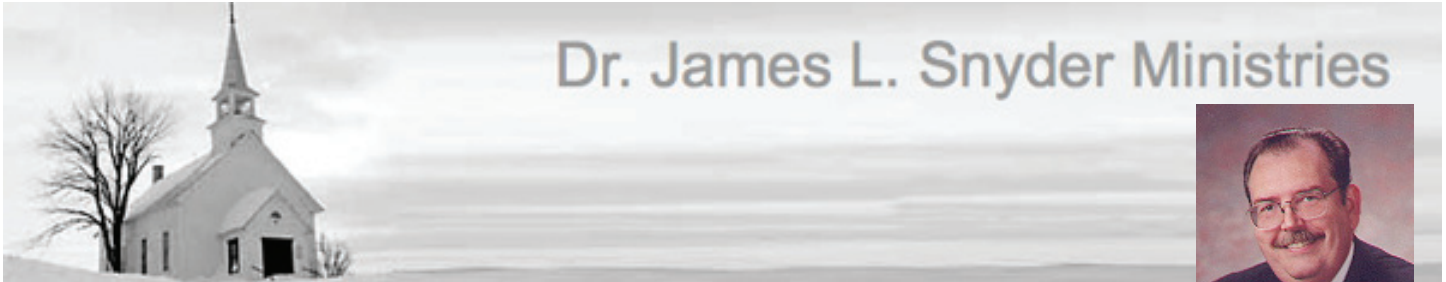
Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

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

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Midwest Masonry Ad
- 1- Trinity Church Fundrasier
- 2- Rev. Sndyer's Column
- 2- Help Wanted at Groton Care & Rehab
- 2- Book Fair Ad
- 4- Lana's Annals
- 5- Winter Storm Watch
- 6- Thune's Weekly Column
- 7- Noem's Weekly Column
- 8- Today in Weather History
- 9- Today's Forecast
- 10- Yesterday's Weather
- 10- Today's Weather Info
- 10- National Weather Map
- 11- Daily Devotional
- 12- 2018 Community Events
- 13- News from the Associated Press

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Looking for Money in All the Wrong Pockets

An incident happened this past week in which I am still scratching my head. Have you ever known you had something, but for the life of you could not find it? I will concede to the fact that occasionally, I do have a streak of absent-mindedness running through me. At times, I wish it would just walk.

I was fairly certain I had an extra \$20 in one of my pant's pockets. It was what I affectionately refer to as my "mad Money." My wife would be mad if she knew I had it. I do not remember where it came from but my real problem was, I could not find those pants.

Usually, if I find money in my pants pocket there is only one explanation. I'm wearing somebody's pants, but not mine. The truth is, my pants rarely see any extra money. If there is an occasion when I do have money in my pocket, my pants get all excited and wrinkly.

Only this was different. I distinctly remember putting a \$20 bill in one of my pants pockets and thinking what I could do with it. But now, I cannot find it. I knew I had an extra \$20. I distinctly remember putting it somewhere. I've looked everywhere... maybe I should have looked somewhere.

With the aimless look on my face, more aimless than normal, I wandered the house in search of the missing \$20. I tried to act inconspicuous so the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage would not discover

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

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what I was doing.

Obviously, no Emmy award will come my way because my acting inconspicuous was a complete failure.

"What are you looking for?" My wife queried.

"Nothing," I stammered.

"When you find it, let me know. I really don't know what nothing looks like."

Ha. Ha. Ha. Sometimes she thinks she is a comedian. However, I was not laughing. If I find that money, the joke will be on her. Then we will see who is laughing.

I had two fears facing me at this point. First, she could have found the money and was waiting for me to admit that I actually had some extra money. This would invite a great deal of grief on top of my balding head.

Second, if I told her I was looking for money she would want to know where I got extra money. If I cannot remember where the money is, how in the world am I going to remember where it came from?

Then, she would want to know how much more money I had misplaced somewhere in the house. Actually, I want to know that myself.

Such interrogation from her borders on waterboarding. If the FBI wants to learn a thing or two about torturing people, they could learn an awful lot from her. She can torture a person and not lay a glove on them. Of course it is not her glove I am worried about, it is her evil eye that goes through a person, me in particular, like a laser beam.

My wife always knows when I'm lying. My lips are moving.

Coming back to the missing \$20. I could offer to split it with her if she would help me find it, which would leave me with \$10. \$10 in the hand is worth more than \$20 that I do not know where it is.

Then, I would have to explain what I needed \$10 for at the time. Christmas is over and her birthday and our anniversary are a long way off, so I cannot tell her I want to buy her a present.

I did have plans for that \$20. Now, I cannot even remember what those plans were. Maybe, if I knew what I planned to do with the \$20 I might remember what I did with the \$20.

While I was musing on this situation, I discovered a correlation between money and love. Without love, you end up with a broken heart. Without money, you just end up broke.

Then out of nowhere, and I mean nowhere, an idea entered my head. I remembered wearing my brown suit when I got \$20. I went to my closet, but the suit was not there.

"Have you seen my brown suit?" I asked my wife.

"Yes," she said rather absent-mindedly, "I sent it to the dry cleaner. Why do you ask?"

Then, with a little smirk dancing on her face, she asked, "You weren't looking for \$20, were you?"

The only thing I hope is that I do not remember where the \$20 came from or what I planned to do with it. I guess a freshly dry cleaned suit is worth \$20.

Seeking that money reminded me of a verse of Scripture. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:33-34).

Then another verse. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

No matter how hard you search for something, if it is not there, you will never find it. But with God it is a different story. When we truly seek him, we always find him.

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Lana's Annals

**Lana
Greenfield
District 2
State
Representative**

Greetings once again from Pierre. We have been finishing our review of Senate bills in our chamber. All must be discussed and voted on by Tuesday of this week.

Our local government committee spent 2 hours on SB187, which sets forth requirements for wine sales. The issue was about incoming bulk wine that is labeled so that the purchaser's perception is that he/she is buying South Dakota pure wine. (i.e. Badlands wine). The small wine companies of our state saw this as misrepresentation. After expressing our displeasure of being dragged into the middle of a turf war, the two sides finally came up with an amendment upon which both could agree. Bulk wine makers can import 50 per cent of their product but may

not label it so as to look like the fruits were grown here. We put a year sunset clause on this bill to see how this goes forth. Future violations will result in contract cancellation on July 1, 2019.

SB70 was heard in our commerce committee. The bill defines the term "serve." According to testimony a sting was run in a particular establishment during peak business hours. The potential "consumer" came in, ordered, and was asked for ID. He went out to get this information and while gone, the bartender pulled out the product, opened it, and set it on the cooler. When the "customer" returned, he had another member of the sting operation who proceeded to write up a violation. When contested, the business owner found out nothing in statute defined "serve." Now that term means to "take physical possession of". We voted to honor that definition, and the entire body also passed the bill.

On the House floor, I was very happy that SB106, of which I was House prime, passed without problem. This bill provides one more option for Social Services when searching for a suitable home for a child who has been removed from his/her family for various reasons. It adds in language that allows a family friend or someone close to the child to be allowed custody. I think it is important to create one more avenue for a child to procure another chance at a stable, caring environment.

Another bill that came forth was to allow women who have served in the military to be allowed a special license plate. One of our female veterans spoke against it as she felt military is military and this request appeared to cause segregation. I tend to agree. My concern, however, was in ratifying this personal plate, one is advertising that a person of a certain gender is operating that vehicle. I cited that even in phone books many, many widows tend to keep their husband's name listed for safety's sake. In the end, I did vote for the bill as it something for the female veteran to decide for herself.

When SB24 was tabled in the House as requested, HB1081, a mirror of the latter, remained in tact and settled the non-meandered water issue. This passed bill kept the work of the summer study in force, The Governor had suggested putting a sunset clause of 2021 on the bill. To me, having that sunset clause would only mean that all aspects of the bill could be re-visited, and by 2021, many newly elected legislators may have the burden to go back, listen to all arguments, possibly come up with the same solutions, and spend a lot of unproductive time in the process. I think it is much more effective to have this bill go into law and then if defects occur, it can be reviewed. To just kick a can down the road appears to be passing the buck onto someone else.

We also passed SB9, which requires that an LRC (legislative research council) fiscal note accompany any upcoming initiated measures or changes to the Constitution. That way taxpayers have a clear idea of the money spent to use this process. These measures, if worthy of change, could be money well-spent, OR if out of staters are using South Dakota as a testing ground to promote their agendas, it may not be something we wish to pursue. One would be surprised how people in other states think, and if these people can work several states to push their legislation, it makes it easier for passage in their home state. For example, I have been contacted a few times by a person from Arizona who wants me to introduce a bill that makes divorce a crime. (My husband got to take one of the 45 minute calls on my behalf)! While we do not condone divorce, I am pretty sure that posing it as a punishable crime would not get much traction. I am also relatively certain that these types of calls will continue; if not on this issue, then on

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others of a different nature.

As the list of bills to discuss is getting shorter, so have been the tempers in our chambers. One good piece of advice given to us earlier is this: it is not a good idea to be "married" to any one bill. We all have things we fight for or against, but when the discussion is ended and the votes have been tallied, we must accept the verdict. We go on, knowing that a new day will dawn and new discussions will arise. Our colleagues we respect, not for all of their ideas or philosophies, but because they are lawmakers, sent by voters to be the voices of other districts.

I want to thank our area pages who faithfully served our chambers for the past two weeks: Beth Seeman, Warner, and Summer Raderschadt and Brock Brown of the Hamlin School District.

We pray for the Rounds family who lost a devout father this past week. We also continue to lift up our friends Karin Soli and Sean McPherson as they deal with serious illnesses. I want to add a message of comfort to any of you who may be dealing with illness, deaths, or difficult decision-making. May you receive healing and guidance. Have a good week!

Rep. Lana Greenfield

lanagreenfield@sdlegislature.gov

lana.greenfield@gmail.com

WINTER STORM WATCH

Expiration: 6:00 PM Tue, Mar 6, 2018

...Blizzard Conditions Expected Late Sunday Night Through Tuesday...

...WINTER STORM WATCH NOW IN EFFECT FROM MONDAY AFTERNOON THROUGH TUESDAY AFTERNOON...

* WHAT...Heavy Snow possible. Minor Ice accumulation possible.

Total snow accumulations of 6 to 10 inches are possible. Ice accumulations of a light glaze are possible.

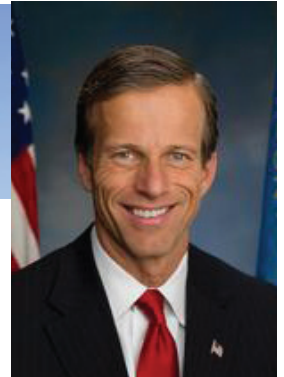
* WHERE...Brown and Spink Counties.

* WHEN...From Monday afternoon through Tuesday afternoon.

* ADDITIONAL DETAILS...Plan on difficult travel conditions, including during the evening commute on Monday. Winds gusting as high as 35 mph could cause patchy blowing and drifting snow.

A Winter Storm Watch means there is potential for significant snow, sleet or ice accumulations that may impact travel. Continue to monitor the latest forecasts.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Big Wins for South Dakota

I've often said that my Senate committee assignments put me in a unique position to give issues that are important to South Dakota the attention they deserve, and there are plenty of results to show for it. For example, my spot on the Agriculture Committee allows me to advocate for South Dakota's farmers and ranchers, and with their help, I've been introducing bill after bill over the last year as we approach this fall's deadline on the next farm bill. No one knows agriculture policy better than the folks who help make agriculture our state's top industry, and because of them, we're in a much stronger position.

Serving on the Finance Committee, which sets our nation's tax policy, gave me the opportunity to help deliver tax relief to South Dakota families and businesses, including farms and ranches. These reforms, which are the most significant changes to tax law in a generation, are already benefiting South Dakotans. While there have been plenty of good stories to share lately – like bonuses, higher wages, and expanded benefits for workers – I believe there's still more to come.

I've served as chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation since January 2015, and while not everything generates front page headlines, there's significant work that takes place behind the scenes, and it's having a big impact on the state's economy and the folks who call South Dakota home.

The Commerce Committee has one of the largest jurisdictions of all the committees in the Senate, covering everything from planes, trains, and automobiles to federal communications policy to interstate commerce to technology and beyond. Since so many of these issues have a direct effect on South Dakota, I've invited numerous South Dakotans, including Gov. Dennis Daugaard, former Pierre Mayor Laurie Gill, and Lake Area Technical Institute President Michael Cartney, to testify at committee hearings over the years. Their perspective on these issues has proven to be invaluable.

I recently released a report, which can be found on my website, that highlights my work on the Commerce Committee and several big ticket items that have positively affected South Dakota, including my effort to expand cybersecurity research at Dakota State University, enhance Ellsworth Air Force Base's strategic value, address unique needs for agricultural transportation, and promote internet-enabled health care solutions for South Dakotans who live in rural parts of the state.

Last year alone, 10 committee-approved proposals were enacted into law, including my Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act. The committee approved nearly 50 bills overall, of which 20 received the full Senate's stamp of approval. We approved 20 of the president's nominees, including two cabinet officials and the Federal Communications Commission chairman, and we held 63 hearings and eight legislative markups.

The committee has more opportunities to deliver for South Dakota and the rest of the American people in 2018, not the least of which is getting my Senate-passed MOBILE NOW bill, legislation that would help lay the groundwork so America – specifically South Dakota, I hope – can lead the way on 5G technology, to the president's desk.

Our goals are big, but achievable, and I'm continually humbled by the opportunity to pursue them on behalf of South Dakotans.

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One Nation, Under God

The U.S. Capitol is typically a busy place. But on a Wednesday morning in February, the halls went quiet as Reverend Billy Graham was laid in honor under the Capitol Dome. He is just the fourth private citizen in history to receive that rite, and I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent South Dakota at the ceremony. Rev. Graham's spiritual influence has helped shape the way I view the role of faith in government, so to be present as our country came together to honor his contributions is an opportunity I will long treasure.

Rev. Graham was known as America's Pastor for good reason. He shared the hope we find in Christ with 13 presidents, millions of service members, and countless others across the globe. He brought people from every background together as One Nation, Under God.

President Reagan once said, "If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a nation gone under." How true that statement is!

I believe that faith, family and freedom are essential to America's long-term prosperity, and I have consistently worked to restore these principles in public life. We're starting to make some meaningful progress.

Early in President Trump's term, Justice Neil Gorsuch was confirmed, adding another conservative, pro-life member to the Supreme Court bench.

Later that year after a series of natural disasters, churches stepped up to provide housing for the homeless. They served as meeting points for families. And they offered a central location from which volunteers could organize. Many were damaged by the disasters too, but "Houses of Worship" were prohibited from receiving certain support from FEMA. As a result, there was little help when it came time to rebuild. We worked with the Trump administration to lift those restrictions, helping ensure churches could continue their community-driven missions.

More recently, President Trump announced a plan to better protect medical workers who object to performing abortions and other services that go against their moral values. This is a policy I've long supported as the cosponsor of the Conscience Protection Act. Simply put, no person should ever have to go to work and be forced to deny their deepest religious convictions.

These positions, as well as my work to defund Planned Parenthood, recently earned me a 100 percent rating from the Family Research Council, a conservative religious liberty policy center. Even so, I recognize more must be done to secure religious liberty in our country.

Rev. Graham once said that "being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion. It is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ." The same is true for our nation. Even our Constitution acknowledges this fact in its opening line: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union..."

May Rev. Graham's legacy continue to inspire our journey toward a more perfect union. May the message of Christ's love that he shared guide our leaders and unite us all as One Nation, Under God.

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Today in Weather History

March 4, 1994: Two to five inches of snow fell across northeast and part of central South Dakota from the 3rd into the 4th. This new snowfall, combined with the already deep and expansive snowpack and winds of 20 to 40 mph, brought widespread blowing and drifting snow. Visibilities were reduced to near zero at times, making travel treacherous. Snowdrifts blocked many roads. Many schools, as well as several highways, were closed. Several vehicles became stuck and had to be pulled out. Some snowfall amounts included 4 inches at Clear Lake, Britton, Waubay, and Wilmot; and 5 inches at Onida, Blunt, Highmore, Miller, and Milbank.

1873: The second inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant remains Washington, DC's, record cold March day. The low was 4 degrees, and by noon with the sunshine, the temperature was 16 degrees. Wind chills were around 30 degrees below zero. The 40 mph winds made his inaugural address inaudible to most on the platform with him.

1899: Cyclone Mahina, aka "The Bathurst Bay Hurricane" in Australia was credited with having produced the highest storm surge on record in the world. The cyclone, with an estimated central pressure of 911 millibars or 26.90 inches of mercury caused a 42.6-foot surge when it came ashore on the coast of northern Australia. The storm killed as many as 400 people and is currently Australia's deadliest cyclone.

1983: Brownsville, Texas recorded a high of 100 degrees, the earliest the city has ever hit the century mark.

1909 - Though fair weather was forecast, President Taft was inaugurated amidst a furious storm. About ten inches of wet snow disrupted travel and communications. The storm drew much criticism against the U.S. Weather Bureau. (David Ludlum)

1953 - Snow was reported on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. (The Weather Channel)

1966 - A severe blizzard raged across Minnesota and North Dakota. The blizzard lasted four days producing up to 35 inches of snow, and wind gusting to 100 mph produced snow drifts 30 to 40 feet high. Bismarck ND reported zero visibility for 11 hours. Traffic was paralyzed for three days. (2nd-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Rain and high winds prevailed in the northwestern U.S. A wind gust to 69 mph at Klamath Falls OR was their highest in 25 years, and winds at the Ashland Ranger Station in the Siskiyou Mountains of northern California reached 85 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow and freezing rain made travel hazardous in Ohio and Indiana. A six car pile-up resulted near Columbus OH, with seven injuries reported. Up to two inches of ice glazed central Indiana. Up to ten inches of snow blanketed northern Ohio. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Lower Mississippi Valley. A strong (F-3) tornado injured five persons near Brownsville MS, and killed seven cows and two hogs in one pasture. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 90 mph at Canton MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1990 - A Pacific cold front working its way across the western U.S. produced heavy snow over parts of Idaho, Nevada and Utah. Up to eleven inches of snow blanketed the valleys of northwest Utah, while 12 to 25 inches fell across the mountains of northern Utah. Up to six inches of snow blanketed the valleys of east central Nevada, while more than a foot of snow was reported in the high elevations. In Idaho, 6 to 8 inches of snow was reported around Aberdeen and American Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)


2004 - An F0 tornado 2 miles north of Muldrow breaks a record stretch of days without a reported tornado, 292 days.

2008 - Only two days after reaching 78 degrees, St. Louis receives nearly a foot of snow in seven hours, the biggest snowstorm in 15 years.

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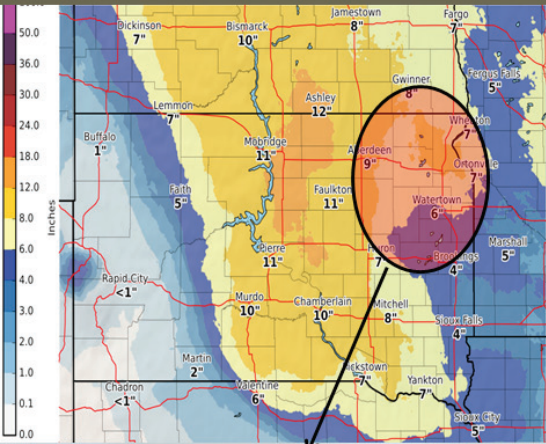
Sun Mar 4	Mon Mar 5	Tue Mar 6	Wed Mar 7	Thu Mar 8	Fri Mar 9	Sat Mar 10
						
43°F	36°F	30°F	27°F	28°F	33°F	36°F
34°F	23°F	11°F	8°F	10°F	14°F	23°F
ESE 23 MPH	E 18 MPH	N 18 MPH	NW 9 MPH	SW 7 MPH	SSW 9 MPH	WNW 11 MPH
Precip 70%	Precip 100%	Precip 40%				



Current Snow and Wind Forecast

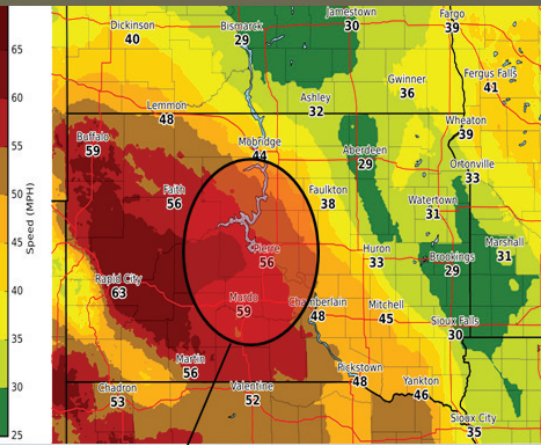
Conditions begin to deteriorate late tonight and Monday

Latest Snowfall Forecast




- Greatest uncertainty in snowfall amounts for this area
- Track of the low, along with timing of when rain changes to snow makes this area toughest to forecast snowfall
- Still a "dry slot" potential here too (would reduce snowfall)

Highest Wind Gust Forecast



- 50 to 60+ mph gusts over central SD on Monday
- Whiteout conditions possible
- Travel nearly impossible Monday into Monday night
- Lesser wind speeds further east



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created
3/4/2018 5:45 AM

Published on: 03/04/2018 at 5:54AM

Here is a look at the latest snowfall forecast across the area. A solid 8 to 12 inches of snow is forecast across central South Dakota into the James River valley, with some areas possibly receiving over a foot. Further east across northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota, there is some uncertainty highlighted here in just how much snow will fall. Things such as the exact track of the low, along with how long it takes the rain to change to snow will determine just how much snow falls. There is also a potential for a "dry slot" to work into portions of northeast or east central South Dakota, which would lower snow totals from what you see here. What's certain is that strong winds will develop over central South Dakota on Monday, with gusts around 60 mph or greater. Blizzard conditions are expected here, with whiteout conditions possible. Travel will be nearly impossible due to heavy blowing and drifting snow.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 40.5 F at 5:03 PM

Low Outside Temp: 29.6 F at 6:53 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 25.0 Mph at 12:18 AM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 73° in 1905

Record Low: -23° in 1917

Average High: 34°F

Average Low: 15°F

Average Precip in March: 0.11

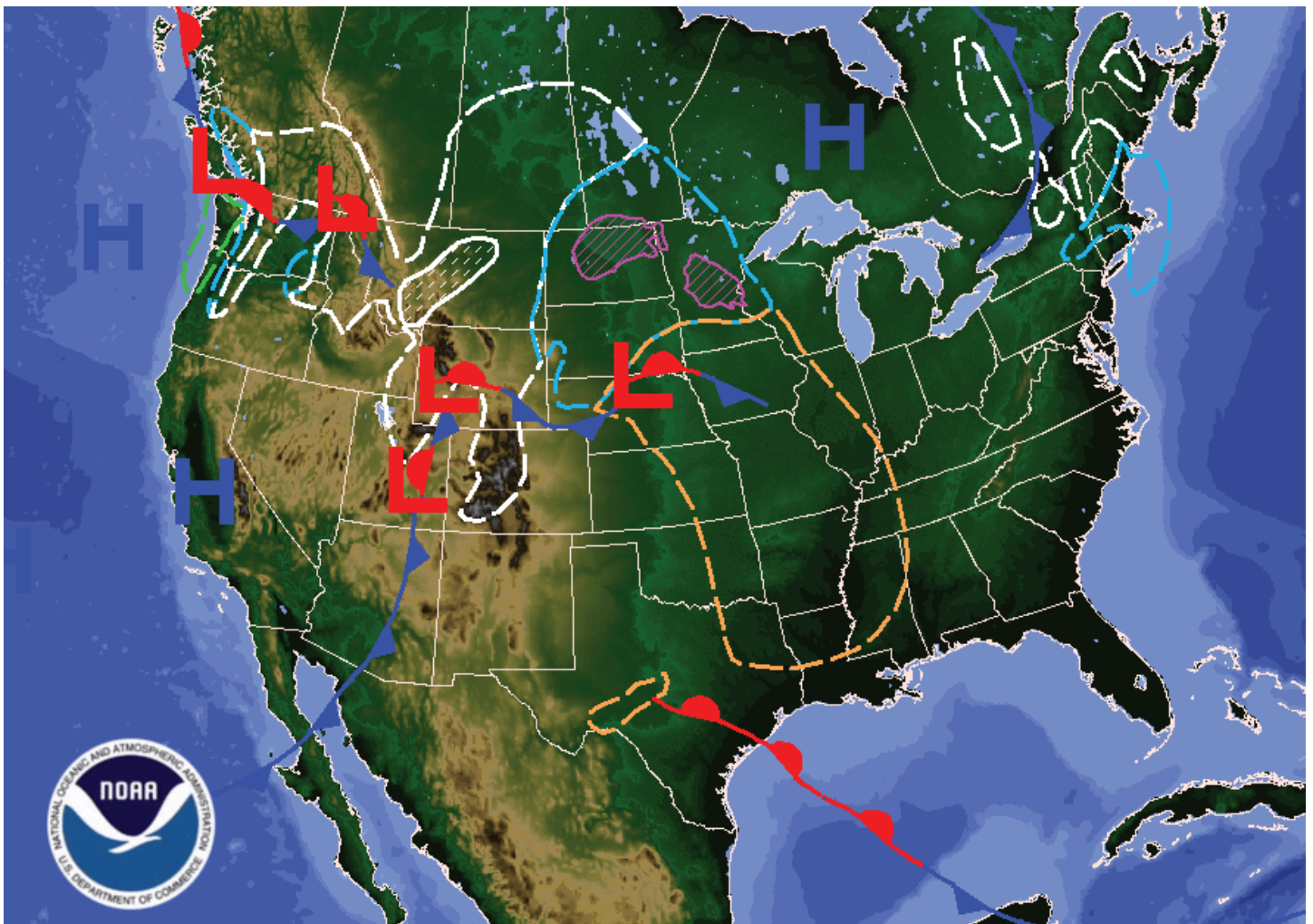
Precip to date in March: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.13

Precip Year to Date: 0.57

Sunset Tonight: 6:24 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:04 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sun, Mar 04, 2018, issued 4:01 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Reinhart with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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WHEN DOES NEVER END?

Can you remember a time in your life when you thought, "God has abandoned me! I can't find Him anywhere! When I pray, my words bounce back from the sky and when I cry God won't wipe away the tears. What did I do to deserve this?"

Often in our journey to become disciples of Christ we resent the discipline that comes with our calling. We want the journey to be sunshine and flowers and not showers and lightening. Yet in the midst of those times of drought we do indeed wonder. No doubt that's why the Psalmist gave us some choice words of comfort: "The Lord will not abandon or reject His people, He will never forsake His inheritance."

The Bible tells us of two men who "went out from the presence of the Lord." One was Cain and the other Jonah. When Cain went out, the Lord left Him alone. He chose not to go after him and bring him back into His presence. But when Jonah went out, the Lord did not choose to leave him alone. Why the difference? Cain was not one of the Lord's - but Jonah was.

Jonah was disobedient to the calling of God but was willing to accept God's discipline. He had a terrible time surrendering to God but God never left him because he did want God's will for his life. God stayed with him and disciplined him because he accepted God's plan for his life. Cain was different. He refused to honor God and do what was right. And God rejected him because he would not give God his best.

Prayer: Father, may our hearts always be open to hear Your voice and answer You in sincerity and love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 94:14 For the Lord will not cast off His people, Nor will He forsake His inheritance.

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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

US House OKs bill extending Amber Alerts to tribal lands

By KYLEY SCHULTZ, Cronkite News

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House gave final approval Monday to a bill that will give tribes direct access to funds that will let them quickly post AMBER alerts over text messaging, radio and television to counties within reservation borders.

The AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act was sparked by the May 2016 abduction of Ashlynnne Mike, an 11-year-old Navajo girl. Authorities did not post an alert that Ashlynnne was missing until the day her body was found near Shiprock, New Mexico.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, passed the House on a voice vote Monday evening and now goes to the president for his signature. It is identical to a House version that was co-sponsored all nine members of the state's congressional delegation, among others.

"There is a massive hole in the system when the only areas in the country not protected with AMBER Alert access are those in tribal lands," said Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Gilbert, lead sponsor of the House version. "By expanding already available grants to include tribes, we are ensuring Indian country communities have resources that better protect their children."

AMBER alerts — for America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response — are used to quickly spread the word about missing children. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children says there are currently 144 open missing children cases in Arizona.

"We know that AMBER Alerts are often critical in the safe recovery of an abducted child," said Emily Farrell, a spokeswoman for the center. "The Amber Alert in Indian Country Act of 2017 will help improve and lead to the expansion of the AMBER Alert system on Native American reservations."

Until now, tribal law enforcement agencies had to work through state and local police agencies to get an alert posted. The bill passed Monday would give funding directly to tribes to help them improve their technology and post alerts on their own.

Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Tucson, said the bill provide "567 tribes across Indian Country with the funding they need to secure and protect their children in the unfortunate event that they go missing."

"By creating tribal AMBER alert systems and integrating them with existing state systems, we're renewing our commitment to the communities of Indian Country to ensure that their children are protected," Grijalva said in a statement Monday.

Virginia Davis, a senior policy adviser for the National Congress of American Indians, called it another example of tribes suffering because they do not have a seat at the table.

"What we see across the board in public safety legislation is that tribes aren't really included upfront in the decision making, so years later we have to go back and rectify policies that end up not working for us," Davis said. "Unfortunately, this is one of many examples where we are forced to advocate for our voice in legislation that should have included us from the start."

She welcomed the bill's requirement for reports to Congress, saying they will let federal lawmakers "understand exactly what safety barriers tribes are facing."

Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Prescott, said the bill is just the beginning of improving public safety on tribal lands.

"Increasing the tribes' access to funding and support is the first step, but we need to be able to assess what other safety barriers there are so we can fix them and make this new system really work," Gosar said in a prepared statement.

Davis said the change is long overdue.

"Indian tribes shouldn't be an afterthought to Congress when they are passing these national public safety laws," she said. "They should be included right there on the frontlines, in a direct manner than can help each of their unique circumstances."

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SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

03-22-24-28-33

(three, twenty-two, twenty-four, twenty-eight, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

06-21-30-32-45, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 3

(six, twenty-one, thirty, thirty-two, forty-five; Star Ball: seven; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$22.28 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$265 million

Powerball

13-17-25-36-40, Powerball: 5, Power Play: 2

(thirteen, seventeen, twenty-five, thirty-six, forty; Powerball: five; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$321 million

South Dakota cruises by Omaha 87-73 in Summit quarterfinals

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Matt Mooney scored 20 and second-seeded South Dakota beat seventh-seeded Omaha 87-73 in the quarterfinals of the Summit League Tournament on Saturday night.

The Coyotes (25-7) led by 27 in the first half and easily held on to advance to a Monday semifinal matchup against Sunday's Denver-Oral Roberts winner.

South Dakota scored the first seven points of the game and had additional first-half runs of 12-0, 6-0 and 10-0 to lead 44-17.

Omaha closed the first half with an 11-2 run to get within 18 at halftime and closed within 13 early in the second half but got no closer.

Nick Fuller had 17 points on 6-of-9 shooting, Trey Burch-Manning made 6 of 7 from the field to score 14 and Brandon Armstrong added 11 points for the Coyotes.

Zach Jackson had 17 of his 26 points in the second half for the Mavericks (9-22). Daniel Norl scored 11.

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Class AA

Round of 16

Douglas 72, Brandon Valley 69, 2OT

Harrisburg 54, Watertown 48

RC Central 100, Spearfish 41

Rapid City Stevens 60, Pierre 45

Sioux Falls Lincoln 69, Huron 54

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 61, Sturgis Brown 57, OT

Sioux Falls Washington 50, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 43

Yankton 47, Aberdeen Central 44

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Daum leads South Dakota St. over W. Illinois 66-60

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Mike Daum scored 33 points and grabbed a career-high 19 rebounds and top-seeded South Dakota State beat No. 8 seed Western Illinois 66-60 on Saturday night in the Summit League Tournament quarterfinals.

The Jackrabbits advance to play Sunday's winner between No. 4 seed Fort Wayne and fifth-seeded North Dakota State.

Western Illinois extended its 32-29 halftime lead to 43-34 before the Jackrabbits went on an 8-0 run with Daum making two free throws, a layup and a jump shot. Isaac Johnson's jumper made it 45-42 for the Leathernecks, and Brandon Key sandwiched a pair of layups between one from Skyler Flatten and South Dakota (26-6) led the rest of the way. Daum sealed it with a 3-pointer and four three throws in the final 2:15.

Daum missed 14 of 23 shot but made 12 of 13 from the foul line. South Dakota shot just 33 percent from the field but was 17 of 25 from the foul line.

Johnson led Western Illinois (12-16) with 17 points and a career-high 15 rebounds.

Roger Bannister, first to run sub 4-minute mile, dies at 88

LONDON (AP) — Roger Bannister, the first runner to break the 4-minute barrier in the mile, has died. He was 88.

Bannister's family said in a statement that he died peacefully on Saturday in Oxford, the English city where the runner cracked the feat many had thought humanly impossible on a windy afternoon in 1954.

Bannister, who went on to pursue a long and distinguished medical career, had been slowed by Parkinson's disease in recent years.

He was "surrounded by his family who were as loved by him, as he was loved by them," the family said in a statement announcing his death on Sunday. "He banked his treasure in the hearts of his friends."

British Prime Minister Theresa May remembered Bannister as a "British sporting icon whose achievements were an inspiration to us all. He will be greatly missed."

Helped by two pacemakers, Bannister clocked 3 minutes, 59.4 seconds over four laps at Oxford's Iffley Road track on May 6, 1954, to break the 4-minute mile — a test of speed and endurance that stands as one of the defining sporting achievements of the 20th century.

"It's amazing that more people have climbed Mount Everest than have broken the 4-minute mile," Bannister said in an interview with The Associated Press in 2012.

The enduring image of the lanky Oxford medical student — head tilted back, eyes closed and mouth agape as he strained across the finishing tape — captured the public's imagination, made him a global celebrity and lifted the spirits of Britons still suffering through postwar austerity.

"It became a symbol of attempting a challenge in the physical world of something hitherto thought impossible," Bannister said as he approached the 50th anniversary of the feat. "I'd like to see it as a metaphor not only for sport, but for life and seeking challenges."

He might not have set the milestone but for the disappointment of finishing without a medal in the 1,500 meters, known as the metric mile, in the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki. Instead of retiring from the sport, he decided to chase the 4-minute mark.

Swedish runner Gundar Haegg's mile time of 4:01.4 had stood for nine years, but in 1954 Bannister, Australian rival John Landy and others were threatening to break it.

"As it became clear that somebody was going to do it, I felt that I would prefer it to be me," Bannister told the AP.

He also wanted to deliver something special for his country.

"I thought it would be right for Britain to try to get this," Bannister said. "There was a feeling of patriotism. Our new queen had been crowned the year before, Everest had been climbed in 1953. Although I tried in 1953, I broke the British record, but not the 4-minute mile, and so everything was ready in 1954."

His chance finally came on a wet, cool, blustery May afternoon during a meet between Oxford and the

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Amateur Athletic Association.

When Bannister looked up at the English flag whipping in the wind atop a nearby church, he feared he would have to call off the record attempt. But, shortly before 6 p.m., the wind died down. The race was on.

With Chris Brasher setting the pace on the cinder track, they ran a first lap in 57.5 seconds, then 60.7 — 1:58.2 for the half mile. Chris Chataway, a distance specialist, paced a third lap of 62.3 — 3:00.4. Bannister would need to run the final lap in 59 seconds.

With 250 yards to go, Bannister surged past Chataway, his long arms and legs pumping and his lungs gasping for oxygen.

"The world seemed to stand still, or did not exist," he wrote in his book, "The First Four Minutes."

"The only reality was the next 200 yards of track under my feet. The tape meant finality — extinction perhaps. I felt at that moment that it was my chance to do one thing supremely well. I drove on, impelled by a combination of fear and pride."

After Bannister crossed the finish line, the announcer read out the time: "3..." The rest was drowned out by the roar of the crowd.

The record lasted just 46 days, as Landy ran 3:57.9 in Turku, Finland, on June 21, 1954. That set the stage for the showdown between Bannister and Landy at the Empire Games, now called the Commonwealth Games, in Vancouver, British Columbia on Aug. 9, 1954.

Landy set a fast pace, leading by as much as 15 yards before Bannister caught up as the bell rang for the final lap.

"Around the last bend, I think the crowd was making so much noise he couldn't hear whether I was behind, or whether he'd dropped me, and he looked over his left shoulder, and I passed him on his right shoulder," Bannister said.

Bannister won the race in 3:58.8, with Landy second in 3:59. It was the first time two men had run under 4 minutes in the same race.

Bannister considered that victory even more satisfying than the first 4-minute mile because it came in a competitive race against his greatest rival.

Bannister capped his brilliant summer of 1954 by winning the 1,500 meters at the European Championships in Bern, Switzerland, in a games record of 3:43.8.

Bannister, who was chosen as Sports Illustrated's first Sportsman of the Year in 1954, retired from competition and pursued a full-time career in neurology. As chairman of the Sports Council between 1971 and 1974, he developed the first test for anabolic steroids.

"None of my athletics was the greatest achievement," he said. "My medical work has been my achievement and my family with 14 grandchildren. Those are real achievements."

IAAF President Sebastian Coe said Bannister's death represented a "day of intense sadness both for our nation and for all of us in athletics."

Coe ran a mile in a world record 3 minutes, 47.33 seconds in 1981 between winning gold medals in the 1,500 meters at the 1980 and 1984 Olympics.

"There is not a single athlete of my generation who was not inspired by Roger and his achievements both on and off the track," Coe tweeted.

Bannister also served as master of Oxford's Pembroke College from 1985-93.

Bannister married Moyra Jacobsson, an artist, in 1955. They had two sons and two daughters and lived in a modest home only minutes away from the track where he made history.

Bannister outlived his 4-minute mile pacemakers: Brasher, who founded the London Marathon, died in 2003 at the age of 74. Chataway died in 2014 at 82.

Former Associated Press European Sports Editor Stephen Wilson contributed to this report.

During Trump hotel strife, a 'Trump Mojito' but no water

By MARK STEVENSON and JEFF HORWITZ, Associated Press

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PANAMA CITY (AP) — If you can overlook the intermittently running water, Friday's four-hour power outage and occasional police presence in the lobby, the Trump hotel in Panama City retains its status as one of the city's finest.

The hotel remains open for business against a backdrop of service interruptions, bad press and a fight over the Trump Organization's management contract that ended in fisticuffs and repeated police calls last week.

"This isn't what you expect from a luxury hotel," one guest was heard fuming when told Thursday that access to running water would not be restored for hours.

The hotel's lobby is notable mostly for its shortage of guests, compensated for by a generous allotment of reporters and security staff bracing for renewed confrontations after investor Orestes Fintiklis tried to wrest the administrative office back from the Trump Organization last week.

Armed with termination notices for the hotel's management, he met stiff resistance from Trump lawyers and security — the first skirmish in a battle for physical control of the hotel property.

Unlike the Trump International Hotel in Washington or the Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, which draw guests hoping to bask in Donald Trump-style affluence, guests who spoke to The Associated Press seemed less enamored of the Panama City property's fondness for aggressive branding.

"I could really do without the Trump Mojito. There are like four of five Trump drinks on the menu," said Leanne Horning, a tourist from Chicago staying at the hotel because she got a good deal online.

Horning is "adamantly not" a supporter of the U.S. president and said it irked her that instead of ordering standard cocktails, guests had to choose from among the Tropical Trump, Trump Breeze and Trump Rose.

While Trump Meritage and Trump Chardonnay also were available, what was lacking a good chunk of this past week was Trump water, at least when guests turned on the hotel's faucets.

According to municipal authorities, Trump receptionists, housekeepers and a maintenance man, city workers spent much of last Tuesday and Wednesday repairing a damaged water main at the hotel. Though water was restored late Wednesday, the Trump Organization seized the opportunity to perform some additional maintenance, extending the cutoff into late Thursday.

A helpful worker distributed cases of Trump-branded bottled water to guests.

Fintiklis, who manages the Miami-based private equity fund Ithaca Capital, has alleged financial misconduct by Trump Hotels dating back years and has said Donald Trump's statements on immigration have destroyed his brand in Latin America. Fintiklis is waging a bitter battle to oust the Trump team from the hotel.

The dispute has left hotel employees not knowing from one day to the next who they should take orders from or whether they will have jobs when the dust settles.

"Many of us came to work at the hotel precisely because of the Trump brand — it meant quality" said one bellhop, who did not want his name used for fear of reprisals. "Now, we don't know. We just want to work."

Anibal Herrera, a lawyer for Fintiklis, said that while 10 Trump management employees had been fired — though they refused to leave the property or attend labor hearings — none of the 230 other employees has anything to fear.

Representatives at Trump Hotels dispute the firings' validity.

Herrera did say that Fintiklis had control of the hotel's finances and would stop paying bills incurred by the Trump management team.

Under a decade-old agreement with the property's original developer, Trump Hotels was supposed to manage the property until at least 2031.

As part of a deal to sell 202 of the hotel's 369 condo units last year, the Trump team attempted to extract an ironclad concession from the buyer, Fintiklis, not to challenge that management contract.

That is precisely what Fintiklis is now doing. Whether the Trump business got a legally binding commitment is a matter of contention.

Trump Hotels maintains that the company will not give in to "mob style tactics" intended to remove it from the property until courts or arbitrators have settled the contractual matter.

"To be clear, Trump Hotels is highly confident that it will prevail in these proceedings," the company said

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in a statement released this week.

According to emails sent by Fintiklis to fellow owners of the hotel condo units, his units alone are running a six-figure monthly deficit.

"Our investment has no future so long as the hotel is managed by an incompetent operator whose brand has been tarnished beyond repair," Fintiklis wrote the owners in January.

During that month, supposedly the peak of Panama's high season, occupancy ran around 30 percent and hotel unit owners didn't make enough to cover their maintenance fees, he said.

Donald Trump's June 2017 financial disclosure shows his company earned a little over \$800,000 from the property during the previous 15 months — a paltry amount compared with the payout of between \$32 million and \$55 million that the company was on track to receive, according to a deal that emerged from the property's 2013 bankruptcy.

Unlike Trump Hotels' exit from buildings in Toronto and New York — in which hotel owners and the Trump team negotiated a muted departure and compensation for the Trump Organization — the Panama dispute seems set to end only when Fintiklis or the Trump family business suffers a public defeat.

In the meantime, the stalemate is a source of distress for hotel unit owners and Panama at large.

Algerd Monstavicius, a retired doctor from Nevada who owns a penthouse hotel unit, favors a change in management, citing the troubled Trump brand in Latin America.

"Trump has his name on almost everything from the doors to the toothpaste," Monstavicius wrote to an Associated Press reporter. "Everything he says and does in respect to immigration will have an impact on my rental income."

Monstavicius said his condo formerly rented for \$1,200 a night, but was recently occupied for three days at a daily rate of \$118.

Panamanian authorities are striving to minimize the tumult at the hotel. Labor ministry officials have sought to ensure employees don't miss paychecks, and Panamanian police are poised to rush in at any sign of trouble.

Tourism officials are seeking to play down the bad publicity.

"This is private issue of administration and management," said Armando Rodriguez, president of Panama's association of hotels. "This doesn't affect Panamanian tourism because the tourism industry is much more than this."

Robert Eisenmann, a leading Panamanian businessman, also dismissed the significance of the dispute.

"There a lot of luxury hotels here where you can stay without these problems," he said.

Horwitz reported from Washington.

US, Afghan leaders agree on peace push, Taliban doesn't

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Despite U.S. support, the Afghan government's surprising new peace offer to the Taliban is immediately running into a wall. The insurgents show no sign of shifting from their demand that talks for a conflict-ending compromise take place with Washington, not Kabul.

The impasse is blocking a diplomatic path out of America's longest-running war and could prove as fateful as fortunes on the battlefield.

The Trump administration says it's escalating pressure on the Taliban to advance a negotiated solution to the fighting. But diplomacy is a distant second to military efforts right now, and the U.S. isn't offering carrots of its own to persuade the insurgents to lay down their arms.

Laurel Miller, who until last June was a senior American diplomat for Afghanistan and Pakistan, said the U.S. should be clearer about what it's willing to negotiate on, including when it might start pulling forces from Afghanistan. "That could set the stage for talks," she said.

Such a timetable seems a remote prospect, and President Donald Trump has consistently railed against the idea of telling the enemy when the U.S. might leave. The U.S. involvement in the Afghan conflict is

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now in its 17th year, and 10,000 Afghan civilians were killed or wounded in 2017 alone. All sides are hung up on even the format for potential negotiations. The Obama administration's peace push, which relied heavily on Afghanistan's neighbor Pakistan, floundered in 2015.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's new effort, announced at an international conference in Kabul this past week, includes incentives for insurgents that join negotiations and enter the political mainstream. The government would provide passports and visas to Taliban members and their families, and work to remove sanctions against Taliban leaders, he said. The Islamist group could set up an office.

Alice Wells, America's top diplomat for South Asia, endorsed the overture and said the "onus" was on the Taliban to demonstrate they're ready to talk, "not to me or the United States, but to the sovereign and legitimate government and people of Afghanistan."

With wounds and emotions still raw in Kabul after a wave of brutal Taliban attacks in Kabul in late January, Ghani's offer was a significant olive branch. Still, it's one unlikely to change the calculus of hard-line insurgents, said Michael Kugelman, senior associate for South Asia at the Wilson Center think tank.

And Barnett Rubin, a New York University expert on Afghanistan who advised the Obama administration, said: "The trouble is that the major issue the Taliban is interested in talking about is the one he has no control over — the presence of American troops in Afghanistan."

Top Afghan security officials maintain back-channel discussions with Taliban, The Associated Press has learned, but the officials' efforts are not coordinated and more formal talks are impeded by the Taliban's insistence that its "Islamic Emirate," ousted in a U.S.-led invasion in 2001 for hosting al-Qaida, remains Afghanistan's legitimate government.

"America must end her occupation and must accept all our legitimate rights including the right to form a government consistent with the beliefs of our people," the militant group said in a rambling Feb. 14 letter addressed to the American people and "peace-loving congressmen." It sought "peaceful dialogue" with Washington.

Events on the ground are moving in the opposite direction.

Since August, when Trump recommitted America to an indefinite military presence in the country, the U.S. has sent in thousands of additional forces to train Afghans, bringing the total U.S. troop figure to more than 14,000. The U.S. has intensified airstrikes, though there has been no significant dent on the Taliban, which control or contest nearly half the country.

Shortly after a Taliban suicide bomb using an ambulance that killed more than 100 people in Kabul, Trump declared on Jan. 29: "We don't want to talk with the Taliban. There may be a time, but it's going to be a long time."

U.S. officials have conveyed messages to Taliban political representatives in Qatar, urging the group to join talks with the Afghan government. Neighboring countries are doubtful about America's commitment to a political resolution. Pakistan, Iran and Russia are thought to maintain ties to militant proxies inside Afghanistan in case the war-ravaged country collapses.

Miller, now a senior foreign policy expert at Rand Corp., said peace would require heavy lifting by the Trump administration, which has yet to appoint a top diplomat for the region. The war might need international mediation.

"It's not enough to say the door is open, let's have a peace process," she said. "You have to make it happen."

Merkel set for 4th term after Social Democrats OK coalition

By FRANK JORDANS, Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — German Chancellor Angela Merkel cleared the last major hurdle on her path to a fourth term Sunday, after members of the center-left Social Democrats voted in favor of continuing their governing coalition with her conservative bloc.

The decision ends almost six months of political uncertainty in Germany, the longest time the country has been without a government in its post-war history.

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"I congratulate the SPD on this clear result and look forward to continuing to work together for the good of our country," Merkel's party quoted her saying on Twitter.

The Social Democrats had furiously debated whether to extend the so-called grand coalition of left and right for another four years after suffering a slump in last September's election. In the end, almost two-thirds of the valid votes cast by the party's 464,000 members favored a coalition deal with Merkel's Christian Democrats and their Bavarian sister party.

Had the long-time German leader faced a "no" result, she would have been left with only two realistic options: forming a minority government or seeking a new election.

"This was a really important democratic decision for our country," acting Social Democrat leader Olaf Scholz said in Berlin.

In the next few days, the Social Democrats will put forward six names — three women and three men — to lead the ministries they will control in the upcoming coalition, he said.

Parliament is expected to meet next week to elect Merkel as chancellor.

Merkel has worked since September, negotiating with rival parties to form a new government.

After September's national election, which saw the Social Democrats received just 20.5 percent of the vote and the anti-migrant Alternative for Germany party come in third place, then-Social Democrats' leader Martin Schulz ruled out another grand coalition with Merkel. This forced Merkel to negotiate with two smaller parties, one of which eventually rejected a deal.

Pressure from German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier prompted Schulz to rethink and weeks of haggling between his party and Merkel's bloc resulted in a coalition agreement. Fewer Social Democrats approved the deal this time round than in 2013, when 76 percent backed a government with Merkel.

Many Social Democrats, particularly on the left, had argued that the party failed to make its mark on the last government and wouldn't benefit from propping up Merkel for another term.

The head of the Social Democrats' youth wing, Kevin Kuehnert, said he was disappointed by the outcome but insisted the membership ballot had resulted in an important political debate inside the party and beyond.

"The SPD needs to be more like it's been in the last weeks and less like in the last years," he said.

Dietmar Woidke, a member of Social Democrats' national executive, said the new government can't simply cite its strong economic record but needs to address the everyday concerns of voters that contributed to the rise of the right-wing Alternative for Germany, especially in the east of the country.

"The country has never been so successful, but there's a lot of insecurity," Woidke, who is also governor of the eastern state of Brandenburg, told The Associated Press. "If you don't take care of people's everyday worries, then you won't reach them anymore."

Follow Frank Jordans on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/wirereporter>

China's Xi poised to make historic grab at indefinite rule

By GILLIAN WONG, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — President Xi Jinping is poised to make a historic power grab as China's legislators gather beginning Monday to approve changes that will let him rule indefinitely and undo decades of efforts to prevent a return to crushing dictatorship.

This year's gathering of the ceremonial National People's Congress has been overshadowed by Xi's surprise move — announced just a week ago — to end constitutional two-term limits on the presidency. The changes would allow Xi, already China's most powerful leader in decades, to extend his rule over the world's second-largest economy possibly for life.

"This is a critical moment in China's history," said Cheng Li, an expert on elite China politics at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

The move is widely seen as the culmination of the 64-year-old Xi's efforts since being appointed leader of the ruling Communist Party in 2012 to concentrate power in his own hands and defy norms of collective

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leadership established over the past two decades. Xi has appointed himself to head bodies that oversee national security, finance, economic reform and other major initiatives, effectively sidelining the party's No. 2 figure, Premier Li Keqiang.

Once passed, the constitutional amendment would upend a system enacted by former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in 1982 to prevent a return to the bloody excesses of a lifelong dictatorship typified by Mao Zedong's chaotic 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution.

"Deng Xiaoping's abolishment of lifetime tenure for the leadership and more institutionalized transitions in power are very much in question," said Li, the politics expert.

Passage of the proposed constitutional amendment by the congress' nearly 3,000 hand-picked delegates is all but certain. But observers will be looking to see how many delegates abstain from voting as an indication of the reservations the move has encountered even within the political establishment.

On Sunday, Zhang Yesui, the legislature's spokesman, told reporters that the move is only aimed at bringing the office of the president in line with Xi's other positions atop the party and the Central Military Commission, which do not impose term limits.

"It is conducive to upholding the authority of the Central Committee of the party with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core and also to unified leadership," Zhang said.

Chinese authorities have tightly controlled discussion about the move, scrubbing social media of critical and satirical comments. State media have been largely muted about the topic, but the official People's Daily sought to reassure the public by saying in a commentary that the move did not signal a return to lifelong rule.

"This amendment does not mean changes in the system of retirement for party and state leaders and also does not imply that leaders will have lifetime tenure," the party's mouthpiece said Thursday.

Still, a number of prominent Chinese figures have publicly protested the move, despite the risk of official retaliation.

Li Datong, a former editor for the state-run China Youth Daily, wrote that lifting term limits would "sow the seeds of chaos" and urged Beijing's lawmakers to exercise their power by rejecting the amendment. Wang Ying, a businesswoman who has advocated government reforms, called the proposal "an outright betrayal."

Many expressed shock and disbelief at what they perceived to be a return to the Mao era, and the massive upheaval, violence and chaos of the Cultural Revolution 50 years ago that has barely faded from memory.

Already, the blanket and entirely positive coverage of Xi in official propaganda has drawn comparisons of a cult of personality to rival Mao's.

State network China Central Television broadcasts near-daily segments featuring anyone from factory workers and farmers to space engineers and soldiers applauding for Xi in uniform enthusiasm for several minutes. His airbrushed, blemish- and nearly-wrinkle-free face often dominates the front pages of state newspapers.

But some analysts note there are a number of key differences between Xi and communist China's revolutionary founders that mean any major policy failure could obstruct Xi's ambitions.

"Xi Jinping is not loved and admired the way that Deng Xiaoping was. Xi Jinping is feared within the party," said Steve Tsang, director of the China Institute at London's School of Oriental and African Studies.

Xi has also waged expansive anti-corruption crackdown that some perceive as at least in part a purge of his rivals. This has surely won him many enemies, making the prospect of ceding power potentially risky.

Tsang said the party would follow Xi as long as things went well but that any serious economic misstep over the next five years would threaten Xi's ability to extend his rule.

"I don't think it's a foregone conclusion that he will have a third term," Tsang said.

Xi's power grab will be seriously tested by how he tackles grave challenges at home and abroad.

Chief among them is slowing growth in the state-dominated economy that is forecast to fall further as regulators try to get rising debt in check by tightening controls to cool booms in bank lending and real estate sales.

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Abroad, China is faced with the task of maintaining stability and avoiding the outbreak of war on the neighboring Korean Peninsula, while also managing escalating frictions with the U.S. that threaten to evolve into a trade war.

Some observers say extending Xi's rule gives him greater authority to address such challenges and carry out his vision of fighting corruption, eliminating poverty and transforming China into a modern leading nation by midcentury. The argument goes that lower-level officials tasked with carrying out needed changes won't be able to assume they can do the bare minimum and wait for his term to end.

Others say the risk of policy missteps is multiplied because Xi has made it politically risky for people to disagree with him and challenge his unbridled power.

The decision to scrap term limits was a case in point, Tsang said, noting that party leaders must have foreseen that such a move was going to be deeply unpopular, yet seemed unable — or unwilling — to steer Xi away from it.

"What it does reveal is Xi Jinping is creating and deepening a moral hazard that now people will not want to say anything to contradict him, not only in public but even in private," Tsang said.

"If this is the kind of pattern of policymaking, moving forward, the risk of bad decisions being made because they were not properly debated before they were made is getting higher and higher," he added.

What has been particularly alarming to many about the proposed removal of term limits was not only the move itself but seeming hastiness with which it was introduced. The Chinese public has grown accustomed to some measure of public debate about new laws or changes to existing laws. Some laws go through three or even four readings, but not in this case, observers pointed out.

"When it comes to the revision of the constitution, how could it be that there is not a significant public commenting process, that there is not a more deliberative review process?" said Dali Yang, a China expert at the University of Chicago. "That's truly a remarkable contrast."

Few experts expected China to adopt a Western-style, freewheeling democracy. But a return to one-man rule diminishes the likelihood that China's one-party system could move — as some had hoped — toward governing with greater accountability through the establishment of rules-based, impartial institutions.

This shows "the one-party system cannot be fully institutionalized. They operate as secret societies; nothing is public," said Jean-Pierre Cabestan, an expert on Chinese politics at Hong Kong Baptist University.

"He's kind of a 'Godfather' and he will remain the Godfather until the next one comes along."

A year later, the Oscars return to the scene of the flub

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The (right) envelope, please.

The Oscars will hope to live down their most infamous blunder at the 90th Academy Awards, which begin at 8 p.m. EST and will be broadcast live by ABC from the Dolby Theatre. But more than redemption is on the line Sunday for last year's embarrassing best-picture flub — the fiasco known as Envelope Gate.

The ceremony, to be hosted again by Jimmy Kimmel, will be the crescendo of one of Hollywood's most tumultuous awards seasons ever — one that saw cascading allegations of sexual harassment topple movie moguls, upended Oscar campaigns and new movements launched to improve gender equality throughout the industry.

No Golden Globes-style fashion protest is planned by organizers of Time's Up, the initiative begun by several hundred prominent women in entertainment to combat sexual harassment. Their goals go beyond red carpets, organizers said in the lead-up to the Oscars.

But the #MeToo movement is sure to have a prominent place in the ceremony. Greta Gerwig ("Lady Bird") is just the fifth woman nominated for best director. Rachel Morrison "Mudbound" is the first woman nominated for best cinematography. Ashley Judd, the first big-name actress to go on the record with allegations of sexual misconduct against Harvey Weinstein, is among the scheduled presenters.

Before he was tossed out of the film academy after a storm of sexual harassment and sexual abuse allegations, Weinstein was for the last two decades the grand poobah of the Oscars. By one study's find-

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ings, Weinstein was thanked more often than God in acceptance speeches.

As if his presence Sunday wasn't already felt, a golden, life-sized statue of Weinstein seated on a couch with Oscar in hand was erected ahead of Sunday's show just down Hollywood Boulevard.

Just as Seth Meyers did at the Globes, Kimmel will have a particularly steep challenge balancing a night of celebration for a Hollywood still reeling with shame and regret over "open secret" behavior that for years went unpunished in a largely male-dominated industry. In December, the film academy unveiled its first code of conduct.

It's been an unusually lengthy — and often unpredictable — awards season, already an increasingly protracted horse race begun as most of the contenders bowed at film festivals last September. The Academy Awards, which will also be available for streaming on abc.com, are coming a week later this year because of the Olympics.

While the night's acting categories are widely expected to go to Frances McDormand ("Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"), Gary Oldman ("Darkest Hour"), Allison Janney ("I, Tonya") and Sam Rockwell ("Three Billboards"), the lengthy season hasn't produced a clear best-picture favorite.

Guillermo del Toro's monster fable "The Shape of Water" comes in with leading 13 nominations, but many peg Martin McDonagh's darkly comic revenge drama "Three Billboards" as the front-runner despite the film's divisiveness among critics. And still, many aren't counting out Jordan Peele's horror sensation "Get Out" or Christopher Nolan's World War II epic "Dunkirk," which is expected to dominate the technical categories.

The field is made up largely of modest independent film successes except for the box-office phenomenon "Get Out" (\$255 million worldwide after opening on Oscar weekend 2017) and "Dunkirk" (\$255 million).

Twenty years ago, a "Titanic" sweep won record ratings for the Oscar broadcast. But ratings have recently been declining. Last year's show drew 32.9 million viewers for ABC, a four percent drop from the prior year. Even more worrisome was a slide in the key demographic of adults aged 18-49, whose viewership was down 14 percent from 2016.

Movie attendance also hit a 24-year low in 2017 despite the firepower of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi," "Beauty and the Beast" and "Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol. 2." An especially dismal summer movie season was 92 million admissions shy of summer 2016, according to the National Alliance of Theater Owners.

But this year is already off to a strong start, thanks largely to Ryan Coogler's "Black Panther," which many analysts believe will play a prominent role at next year's Oscars. In three weeks, it has already grossed about \$500 million domestically. The film's star, Chadwick Boseman, will be a presenter Sunday.

This year, the academy has prohibited the PwC accountants who handle the envelopes from using cell-phones or social media during the show. Neither of the PwC representatives involved in the mishap last year, Brian Cullinan or Martha Ruiz, will return to the show.

However, multiple reports say that Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway will be returning to again present best picture, a year after they announced "La La Land" as the winner instead of "Moonlight," because Cullinan handed them the wrong envelope. The "Bonnie and Clyde" duo will, 12 months later, get "take two."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

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

Trump puts aside the feud with media for a night at Gridiron

By ZEKE MILLER and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump engaged in a good-natured duel of one-liners with political rivals and the press at the annual Gridiron Dinner this weekend, largely putting aside his ongoing criticism of the media for a night.

Trump dished out sharp one-liners throughout his comments Saturday night, occasionally lapsing into recurring themes about the 2016 election and media bias.

"Nobody does self-deprecating humor better than I do. It's not even close," said Trump, who skipped last

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year's dinner. He also said: "I was very excited to receive this invitation and ruin your evening in person. That's why I accepted."

The annual dinner of the Gridiron Club and Foundation, now in its 133rd year, traced its history to 1885, the year President Grover Cleveland refused to attend. Every president since has come to at least one Gridiron.

"Rest assured, Mr. President, this crowd is way bigger than Cleveland's," Club President David Lightman, congressional editor for McClatchy News, told the white-tie audience at the Renaissance Washington Hotel. The organization said the event attracted about 660 journalists, media executives, lawmakers, administration officials and military officers.

Members of the Washington press corps sharpened their wits for musical and rhetorical takedowns of the president, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama. Trump's speech lasted more than a half hour and included plenty of one-liners.

A sampling:

—On his son-in-law: "We were late tonight because Jared could not get through security."

—On Vice President Mike Pence: "He is one of the best straight men you're ever going to meet ... he is straight. Man." Trump also said, "I really am proud to call him the apprentice"

—On Attorney General Jeff Sessions: "I offered him a ride over and he recused himself. What are you going to do?"

—On The New York Times: "I'm a New York icon. You're a New York icon. And the only difference is I still own my buildings."

—On former chief strategist Steven Bannon: "That guy leaked more than the Titanic."

—On the first lady: Trump said he doesn't understand why everyone says #freemelandia. He said she's actually having a great time.

Toward the end of his comments, Trump couldn't resist some of his favorite themes, revisiting his election night victory and chiding reporters to be fair.

He closed by saying: "I just want to say this, this is one of the best times I've had with the media — this might be the most fun I've had since watching your faces on election night."

He recalled the close race in Michigan, saying the media wouldn't call it for him, even though he had a good margin of victory. And he accused some reporters of not being impartial in their coverage.

For much of the night he was a good sport — laughing and applauding at times during the evening's entertainment. Hours earlier, Trump had fired off a sharp tweet at the national press:

"Mainstream Media in U.S. is being mocked all over the world. They've gone CRAZY!" He linked to a story by a conservative pundit saying Trump and his family are victims of "unparalleled" press attacks.

The major political parties found themselves skewered in parody songs in musical skits. By Gridiron tradition, comments came from one Republican, Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas, and one Democrat, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu.

Cotton made light of what he called the source of his personality: the common touch of Harvard, the sensitivity of the Army, and the personal touch of Dick Cheney. On the Russia investigation, he said, "Everyone knows the Trump campaign couldn't collude with the RNC in Pennsylvania." The only senator in his 30s says he's looking for a role model and "the search continues."

With an eye on the president, Landrieu said: "We're both overweight and balding. I just have an easier time admitting it." Noting that Trump had a lonely job, the mayor remarked, "I understand lonely because I'm a Democrat from the South." The New Orleans official also observed, "No matter how many times we say it, we don't drain the swamps either."

The Gridiron Dinner's reputation as a night of bipartisan mirth was evidenced by those who accepted invitations, including last year's headliner, Vice President Pence. Also accepting invitations were at least eight members of Trump's Cabinet, six senators, four House members, and presidential relatives-turned-advisers Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, the foundation said in a statement.

By tradition, the evening's musical entertainment revolved around musical skits and takeoffs of well-known songs performed by journalists pretending to be newsmakers.

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A cast member playing House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi turned to "I'm Against It," a song from the Marx Brothers film "Duck Soup," to explain her attitude toward Trump: "I don't know what Trump has to say/It makes no difference anyway/Whatever it is, we're against it/Even if our own side once professed it/We're against it."

A cast member playing Hillary Clinton offered her version of the song "You're So Vain," the title referring to her, but the lyrics aimed at the president: "You walked into my West Wing/My White House or so I thought/Your tie strategically dropped below your belt/Your hair it was apricot."

A charitable organization, the Gridiron Club and Foundation contributes to college scholarships and journalistic organizations. Active membership is limited to 65 Washington-based journalists.

Trump wrapped up the evening on an upbeat note.

"I want to thank the press for all you do to support and sustain our democracy," he said in closing.

Associated Press writer Tom LoBianco contributed to this report.

Police investigate why student gunned down his parents

By RICK CALLAHAN, Associated Press

Investigators were trying to figure out why a Central Michigan University student charged with fatally shooting his parents acted so strangely the day before the killings that he was taken to a hospital.

The shooting happened Friday after James Eric Davis Jr.'s parents picked him up from that hospital and brought him to his dorm to pack up for spring break. University police Chief Bill Yeagley said the 19-year-old can be seen on video in the dorm's parking lot with the gun before he entered the residence hall where his parents were shot around 8:30 a.m.

Davis Jr. has been charged with two counts of murder and a weapons charge in the shootings of his father, Eric Davis Sr., and mother, Diva Davis, university spokeswoman Heather Smith said. Davis Sr. was a part-time police officer in Bellwood, Illinois, and Yeagley said the gun used by Davis Jr. belonged to his father.

At a press conference Saturday, Yeagley declined to say whether drugs were found in Davis Jr.'s system. He declined to say what type of gun was used or whether it was his father's service revolver.

Davis Jr. was initially taken to a hospital after his arrest early Saturday but will be moved to a jail once he's discharged. It was not immediately clear when he will make his first court appearance.

Authorities said Davis Jr. fled after the shootings, prompting an intensive manhunt in the area. He was arrested without incident shortly after midnight when someone aboard a train spotted a person along railroad tracks in Mount Pleasant, and called police, Yeagley said.

Central Michigan is at Mount Pleasant, about a 285-mile (460-kilometer) drive from the family's hometown of Plainfield, Illinois, in south suburban Chicago. The shooting occurred on a day when parents were arriving to pick up students at the university for the beginning of a weeklong spring break.

Yeagley said witness statements and video indicate that at the time they were shot, Davis Jr.'s parents were in his fourth-floor dorm at the campus' Campbell Hall "simply packing up for spring break."

Davis Sr. had been a longtime member of the Illinois Army National Guard, serving in the Iraq War and later as a recruiter, according to Illinois National Guard spokesman Lt. Col. Brad Leighton.

An officer was so concerned about Davis Jr.'s erratic behavior that he had spoken to his mother about possible drug use before the parents arrived on campus.

"The mother said she too was concerned this could be drugs," he said.

Yeagley said Davis Jr. had not been previously identified by campus officials as someone that others on campus were concerned about.

"Mr. Davis was not ever reported, and we had no interaction that we're aware of with him in any negative fashion — with anybody — prior to this incident," he said.

University President George E. Ross said the shooting had left the campus and surrounding community traumatized. "There were thousands of people who were sheltering in place yesterday and they will be

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dealing with this for the rest of their lives," he said.

As Italy votes, Europe fears populist, euroskeptic gains

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italians voted Sunday in one of the most uncertain elections in years and one that could determine if Italy will succumb to the populist, euroskeptic and far-right sentiment that has swept through Europe.

The campaign was marked by the prime-time airing of neofascist rhetoric and anti-migrant violence that culminated in a shooting spree last month against six Africans. While the center-right coalition that capitalized on the anti-migrant sentiment led the polls, analysts predict the likeliest outcome is a hung parliament.

That will necessitate days and weeks of back-room haggling and horse trading to come up with a coalition government that can win confidence votes in Parliament. Just which parties coalesce from among the three main blocs - the center-right coalition, center-left coalition and the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement - will determine Italy's course.

"Basically it is very likely that, at the end of the day, none of these three groups will have an absolute majority and they will be forced to start talking to each other and see how to put together a coalition government," said Franco Pavoncello, dean of the John Cabot University in Rome.

More than 46 million Italians were eligible to vote from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. (0600-2200GMT), including Italians abroad who already mailed in ballots. Exit polls were expected after polls closed, projections sometime thereafter and consolidated results Monday.

Some polling stations remained closed in Palermo hours into election day because the wrong ballots were delivered and 200,000 new ones had to be reprinted overnight. The outgoing Senate president, Pietro Grasso, complained that such delays were "unacceptable" and that he hoped they wouldn't discourage turnout.

In Rome, meanwhile, some early voters said the ballots were confusing and the process to cast them — which for the first time requires an anti-fraud check by polling authorities — too time consuming.

"You feel as if you have gone there prepared but it is not that clear," complained Sister Vincenza as she cast her ballot on Rome's Aventine hill before heading to Mass.

With unemployment at 10.8 percent and economic growth in the eurozone's third-largest economy lagging the average, many Italians have all but given up hope for change. Polls indicated a third hadn't decided or weren't even sure they would vote.

"The situation is pretty bad," said Paolo Mercurio from Ragusa, Sicily, who said he had decided not to even bother casting a ballot. "There aren't candidates who are valid enough."

The 5-Star Movement hoped to capitalize on such disgust, particularly among Italy's young, and polls indicated the grassroots movement launched in 2009 by comic Beppe Grillo with the mantra for Italy's political establishment to "(expletive)-off" would be the largest vote-getter among any single party.

But the 5-Stars weren't expected to win enough to govern on their own, and they have sworn off forming coalitions. The movement's leader Luigi Di Maio has recently suggested he would be open to talking with potential allies, however.

Analysts predict the only coalition with a shot of reaching an absolute majority is the center-right coalition anchored by ex-Premier Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia party. The coalition includes the anti-migrant League and the nationalistic, neofascist-rooted Brothers of Italy party.

Berlusconi, 81, can't run for office because of a tax fraud conviction, but he has tapped European Parliament President Antonio Tajani, considered a pro-European moderate, as his pick if the center-right is asked to form a government.

League leader Matteo Salvini is gunning for the top job too though, and some pro-European analysts envision a possible "nightmare scenario" of an extremist alliance among the 5-Stars, the League and Brothers of Italy. The presence in Rome this weekend of Steve Bannon, right-wing populist architect of Donald Trump's White House campaign, was an indication of the stakes.

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Roberto D'Alimonte of Rome's LUISS University said such an outcome would be "catastrophic" for the markets. But he said the 5-Stars will have to decide if they're going to join the right or the left if they're going to move from their longtime perch in the opposition to actually help govern.

"This will be the moment of truth," he said.

With polls showing the center-left trailing, Democratic Party leader Matteo Renzi and the current premier, Paolo Gentiloni spent the final days of the campaign warning that the only way to guard against a turn to populists and extremists was to vote for the Democrats. Because Renzi alienated so many in the coalition, Gentiloni has been cited as a possible candidate for premier who would even be acceptable to some in the center-right.

A new law passed last year, ostensibly to make Italy more governable, calls for a combination of direct and proportional voting for both the lower Chamber of deputies, which has 630 seats, and the Senate, which has 315 seats.

A few quirks could affect the outcome, particularly for the 5-Stars.

For starters, the names of about a dozen 5-Star candidates will appear on the ballot, but they no longer represent the party. After party lists were finalized, these 5-Stars were kicked out for a variety of sins. If they actually win, other parties can woo them away to beef up their own ranks.

Analysts have also warned that the ballot itself might confuse voters and result in a higher-than-usual percentage of invalid votes.

While European capitals and Brussels were watching the outcome for its effects on policy and markets, some in Italy had more at stake personally. Even the three-time premier Berlusconi vowed in the heat of the campaign to repatriate 600,000 migrants if the center-right wins.

"Yes indeed I fear these results because I have arrived here with all my thoughts and dreams," said Musab Badur, an asylum seeker from Sudan who is living in a Milan shelter. "And I never thought that one day maybe I would have to go back or anything like that."

Bill restricting gun purchases goes to Florida Senate

By **BRENDAN FARRINGTON, Associated Press**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — The Florida Senate agreed to advance a bill that would increase school safety and restrict gun purchases during a rare weekend session that often turned into a debate on gun control and arming teachers in the aftermath of last month's Parkland school shootings.

The Senate spent nearly eight hours on Saturday debating dozens of amendments to the 100-page bill before finally approving the legislation for a final vote on Monday. Democratic proposals to ban assault rifles and large-capacity magazines were rejected, as was a Democratic proposal to strip language from the bill that would create a program to arm teachers who have gone through law-enforcement training if school districts choose to take part in the so-called marshal plan.

The Senate began the session at 10 a.m. and was originally supposed to wrap up discussion by 1 p.m. But senators extended the session and didn't wrap up until after 6 p.m.

It was clear that senators were divided on the bill, and not just on party lines. While crafted by Republicans, some GOP senators still opposed it because they don't agree with raising the minimum age to buy a rifle from 18 to 21 or requiring a waiting period to buy the weapons.

Democrats believe the legislation doesn't go far enough in some ways and too far in others. And while some oppose the bill, others believe it's at least a first step toward gun safety.

Democrats want to ban weapons such as the AR-15 assault-style rifle, which was used to kill 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Feb. 14. Many also oppose arming teachers. The bill also includes provisions to boost school security, establish new mental health programs in schools, and improve communication between schools, law enforcement and state agencies.

But much of the debate Saturday revolved around gun control and whether people should have a right to own an assault rifle.

"Every constitutional right that we hold dear has a limitation," said Democratic Sen. Gary Farmer. "These

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are just military-style killing machines and the right of self-defense and the ability to hunt will go on.”

Republicans argued that banning such weapons would violate the Second Amendment right to bear arms.

“Our founding fathers weren’t talking about hunting, and they weren’t talking about protecting themselves from the thief down the street who might break in,” said Republican Sen. David Simmons. Simmons said people need guns to protect themselves from a tyrannical government.

“Adolf Hitler confiscated all the weapons — took all the weapons, had a registry of everybody — and then on the night of June 30th, 1934, sent out his secret police and murdered all of his political opponents,” Simmons said. “You think it doesn’t happen in a free society? It does.”

The Legislature wraps up its annual session on Friday. Lawmakers are scrambling to take some kind of action before then. The full House has yet to take up its version of the bill.

Republican Gov. Rick Scott has been lobbying lawmakers to pass his plan to assign at least one law-enforcement officer for every 1,000 students at a school. Scott is opposed to arming teachers.

West Virginia teachers: No raise? No school; strike goes on

By MICHAEL VIRTANEN, Associated Press

Unions representing West Virginia teachers and service personnel say they will stay out on strike after the state Senate voted to cut the 5 percent pay raise they had negotiated with Gov. Jim Justice.

In a joint statement Saturday, the American Federation of Teachers-West Virginia, West Virginia Education Association and the School Service Personnel Association said Senate President Mitch Carmichael and his leadership team had left them with no choice after they voted to reduce the raise to 4 percent.

The statement said all public schools in West Virginia would be closed again Monday “and remain closed until the Senate honors the agreement that was made.”

The Republican-controlled Senate voted Saturday evening to approve the lower pay raise, bucking teachers, Republican Gov. Jim Justice and the Republican-controlled House, which approved the 5 percent raise on Wednesday. The two bills will now have to be reconciled. It was unclear how soon that process would begin.

The Senate’s vote came as the teachers’ strike rolled into its second weekend. Republican Sen. Greg Boso of Nicholas introduced the amendment to lower the raise, which the full Senate adopted by a vote of 19-15.

Senate Republicans have repeatedly emphasized exercising restraint with state spending, while agreeing that teachers and West Virginia’s other public workers are all underpaid.

“That compensation increase is long overdue,” said Sen. Charles Trump, a Berkeley Springs Republican. “We’ve been able to do this without tax increases.”

Approving a 4 percent raise, instead of the 5 percent hike, will save the state \$17 million, Boso said.

Democratic lawmakers said their Republican counterparts should approve the deal the governor negotiated with union leaders for a 5 percent raise.

“We’re all caught up in our egos,” said Democratic Sen. Douglas Facemire of Sutton. He noted the impact of the impasse on students, including those who depend on schools for their meals. “For 1 percent we’re going to let kids go hungry,” he said.

Hundreds of teachers and supporters, including students, rallied at the Capitol on Friday, the seventh day they’ve shuttered classrooms.

Teachers are protesting pay that’s among the lowest in the nation, rising health care costs and a previously approved 2 percent raise for next year after four years without any increase.

Justice told school superintendents gathered at the Capitol on Friday that he believed the votes for the raise were there. One administrator noted the impasse is affecting 277,000 students and 35,000 employees.

Protesting teachers have argued that education in West Virginia — where more than 700 classrooms lack fully certified full-time teachers — needs to be a higher priority among politicians. Pay starts at about \$33,000 a year, lower than in surrounding states.

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Power outages, flooding linger following powerful nor'easter

By PHILIP MARCELO and DAVE COLLINS, Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Tens of thousands of utility workers in the Northeast raced to restore power to more than 1.5 million homes and businesses just days after a powerful nor'easter caused flooding and wind damage from Virginia to Maine.

As conditions slowly improved on Saturday, the cleanup of snapped trees, damaged structures and mountains of debris began. Flood waters had receded in most areas, but Friday's storm had taken huge chunks out of the coastline in Massachusetts and other states. Meanwhile, forecasters were watching another potential weather system that could bring rain, or even more snow, to the region later in the week.

"We've been here a long time and we've never seen it as bad as this," said Alex Barmashi, who lives in the hard-hit village of Sagamore Beach in Massachusetts.

Up the coast in Scituate, Becky Smith watched as ocean waters started to fill up a nearby marina's parking lot from her vantage point at the Barker Tavern, a restaurant overlooking the harbor.

"It looks like a war zone," she said Saturday, describing the scene in the coastal town near Boston where powerful waves dumped sand and rubble on roads and winds uprooted massive trees. "It's a lot of debris, big rocks and pieces of wood littering the streets."

Residents in other areas, meanwhile, bailed out basements and surveyed the damage while waiting for power to be restored, a process that power companies warned could take days in some areas. Power outages on the East Coast dipped by about 500,000 from a peak of 2 million earlier Saturday, but officials said lingering wind gusts were slowing repair efforts.

The storm's aftermath also was still affecting travel, with airports from Washington, D.C. to Boston reporting dozens of delays and cancellations, while service was slowly returning to normal on rail systems throughout the region. Amtrak said nearly all of its northeast corridor trains should return to service on Sunday.

The death toll from the storm increased by four, with authorities saying at least nine people had lost their lives.

A 41-year-old New Jersey man was killed Friday night when he came in contact with live power lines, NJ.com reported. A 25-year-old man in Connecticut, a 57-year-old Pennsylvania man and a 37-year-old Massachusetts man were killed when trees fell on their vehicles Friday. The other five people killed included two children. A man and a 6-year-old boy were killed in different parts of Virginia, while an 11-year-old boy in New York state and a man in Rhode Island, both died. A 77-year-old woman died after being struck by a branch outside her home near Baltimore.

Forecasters said the storm had mostly headed out to sea by Saturday afternoon, but noted its impact likely would still be felt on Sunday.

"Minor flooding may continue in Massachusetts around high tide, though not as bad as Saturday, and there could still be some gusty winds over New England, but the storm is pretty much gone," said Marc Chenard, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center in Maryland. He said forecasters were monitoring what could become another storm Wednesday into Thursday, less than two weeks before spring officially begins.

Despite the gloomy conditions, many residents refused to let the stormy conditions dampen their enthusiasm.

Charlanne Nosal and her daughter Abby huddled on the beach Saturday in Avalon, New Jersey, as a biting wind whipped sand around them. The two, who were in town for a cheerleading competition, told The Philadelphia Inquirer that the storm put a damper on their trip, but not their spirit.

"Any day at the beach," said Charlanne Nosal, "is a good day."

Communities pick up pieces as deadly nor'easter recedes

By PHILIP MARCELO and DAVE COLLINS, Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Coastal communities in the Northeast experienced damaging high tide flooding and

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the lingering effects of powerful, gusting winds Saturday even as residents tried to shake off a nor'easter that had already inundated roads and basements, snapped trees and knocked out power to more than 2 million homes and businesses from Virginia to Maine.

All along Massachusetts' heavily populated coast that includes Boston and Cape Cod, Saturday's midday high tide saw roaring, white-capped waves crashing onto shorelines, the churning surf battering beachfront homes, dousing docks and harbors and taking huge chunks out of the eroding coastline.

"We've been here a long time and we've never seen it as bad as this," said Alex Barmashi, as he took in the fearsome spectacle along Cape Cod Bay in Bourne, Massachusetts.

Up the coast in Scituate, Massachusetts, Becky Smith assessed the damage wrought in the coastal town near Boston, where on Friday powerful ocean waves dumped mounds of sand and rubble on roads and winds uprooted entire trees. "It looks like a war zone," she said. "Just a lot of debris, big rocks and pieces of wood littering the streets."

Residents elsewhere bailed out basements and surveyed the damage while waiting for power to be restored, a process that power companies warned could take days in parts.

"The rest of today will be clean up," said Miles Grant, after he secured a generator to run a pump to remove standing water from his basement in Marion, Massachusetts. "Usually when you think of bad weather in New England, you think of snow. But it's been all wind and coastal flooding."

By Saturday evening, power outages on the East Coast had dipped by about 500,000 from a peak of 2 million earlier in the day. Officials said the lingering wind gusts — up to 40 mph (64 kph) in some areas — were slowing power repair efforts by tens of thousands of utility workers even through the main thrust of the storm had moved some 350 miles (560 kilometers) southeast of Cape Cod that morning.

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The storm prompted more than 2,800 flight cancellations, mostly in the Northeast on Friday. LaGuardia and Kennedy airports in New York City were brought to a near standstill. A day later, airports from Washington, D.C. to Boston were still reporting dozens of delays and cancellations, but they were recovering.

The storm knocked out Amtrak service between Washington D.C. and New York before it was restored Saturday morning. Other regional train lines were similarly affected.

In Virginia, the 23-mile (37-kilometer) Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel had reopened and ships were being allowed to enter the Chesapeake Bay.

Meanwhile, Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency Saturday, joining governors in Maryland and Virginia who had earlier made the declarations.

Floodwaters in Quincy, Massachusetts, submerged cars and trapped people in their homes. Local first-responders and National Guard troops rescued dozens of people overnight and were continuing to implore people not to try and navigate floodwaters on their own.

"There's still a lot of water out there. There are parts where it really hasn't receded," said Rob Reardon, a fire department captain in Duxbury, another hard-hit Massachusetts town. "We're a coastal community and we deal with this on a regular basis, but this one packed a good punch."

On New Jersey's coast, Charlanne and Abby Nosal huddled on the beach in Avalon despite the biting wind and crashing waves. The mother and daughter, who were in town for a cheerleading competition, told The Philadelphia Inquirer the storm may have put a damper on their trip, but not their spirits.

"Any day at the beach," said Charlanne Nosal, "is a good day."

___Associated Press editor Bill Kole in Bourne, Massachusetts, Bruce Shipkowski in Trenton, New Jersey, and Julie Walker in New York City contributed to this story. Collins reported from Hartford, Connecticut.

Vulnerable lawmakers answer a noisy gun debate with silence

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — They crowded around the White House conference table this past week, lawmakers from California, Connecticut, Texas and Florida, eager to share their state's painful experience with gun violence.

One key state was not represented. No one from Nevada, home to the deadliest shooting in modern U.S. history just five months ago, attended the televised discussion with the president.

But in the politics of gun control, even those who say the least have considerable sway. Despite a clamor for action in the wake of the Florida school shooting, a powerful group of vulnerable lawmakers — both Republicans and Democrats — have pointedly avoided the national conversation about guns.

They often choose strategic silence rather than get crosswise with the National Rifle Association's die-hard supporters on the right or the growing movement of passionate gun control advocates on the left.

The office of Nevada's senior senator, Republican Dean Heller, would not say why he did not attend the White House meeting. Heller, who is facing a tough re-election fight, has avoided the spotlight in the subsequent days as well, declining to address specifics about his positions on gun legislation.

The White House did not respond to requests for comment about whether Heller was invited to the event. The state's Democratic senator, Catherine Cortez Masto, and its three Democratic representatives also did not attend.

Heller spokeswoman Megan Taylor declined to say whether the senator supported universal background checks, raising the age for gun purchases to 21, or provisions to ban high-capacity magazines and assault rifles, all ideas tossed out by lawmakers or President Donald Trump in recent days.

"He looks forward to continuing discussions with his colleagues as Congress explores ways to enhance compliance with existing law and keep our communities safe," Taylor said.

Heller has signed on to legislation known as "Fix NICS," a modest measure supported by the NRA and intended to encourage better participation in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. It was one of the few gun bills to find bipartisan support and appeared poised to move ahead, only to be sidelined.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican who has said little about the gun debate in recent days, said Thursday that no gun-related legislation would be heard in the coming week.

Without this silent majority's support, there is little chance for significant gun control legislation to become federal law, no matter how loud the outcry from high school students and others who are pushing for action.

The stalemate infuriates Ryan Works, a 40-year-old father of two, who hid under a table at an October concert in Las Vegas as a gunman shot and killed 58 and wounded more than 800. A Republican, Works offered an emotional message to Heller and elected officials in both parties who are reluctant to take on gun violence.

"Step up and do something," he said in an interview, almost shouting as he described shopping for bullet-proof backpacks for his 5- and 8-year-old children. "Show us that you care and you're going to protect us."

Heller's muted response at an extraordinary moment highlights the weight of his political predicament.

Running for re-election in a state Trump lost, he must win over a significant number of independents and moderate Democrats in November's general election to earn a second term. But first, he must survive a primary challenge from a conservative firebrand in a state where GOP primary voters value gun rights above almost all else.

The challenge is easy to see in recent polls. Two out of three adults in the United States want stricter gun laws, CBS found in a poll conducted a week after the Feb. 14 shooting in Parkland, Florida. But among Republicans, 54 percent want gun laws left alone or made less strict.

That's likely why the most politically vulnerable elected officials have kept their heads down, leaving the heavy lifting to elected officials facing less political risk this fall.

On the Senate floor this week, blue-state senators such as Vermont's Bernie Sanders, Massachusetts' Ed Markey and New Jersey's Cory Booker offered fiery speeches about gun violence. Pennsylvania Sen.

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Pat Toomey, a swing-state Republican whose current term ends in 2022, re-emerged as the face of the push to expand background checks. Arizona Sen. Sen. Jeff Flake, a Republican who is retiring at the end of this year, was partnering with California Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein on legislation to move the age to buy long guns to 21.

Those Democrats running in Republican-leaning states this fall were far less conspicuous.

North Dakota Sen. Heidi Heitkamp and Indiana Sen. Joe Donnelly, both Democrats running for re-election in states Trump won handily, have said nothing about gun violence from the Senate floor in recent days, but made statements honoring constituents who had recently passed away.

Heitkamp supports the "Fix NICS" plan and co-sponsored a bill that would prevent those on the terrorist watch list from buying guns, her spokeswoman said. The senator has previously opposed so-called bump stocks, which the Las Vegas shooter used to increase the firing speed of his semi-automatic rifle. But the spokeswoman did not clarify whether she would support universal background checks, higher age limits, or provisions to ban high-capacity magazines and assault rifles.

In a statement, Heitkamp decried "horrific mass shootings" and called for "a bipartisan conversation in Congress about long-term solutions to gun violence."

Similarly, Donnelly, who previously voted for universal background checks and backs "Fix NICS," said little more about the issue when pressed for specifics.

"I believe that Congress should take steps to reduce gun violence, while protecting the rights of law-abiding citizens," he said in a statement.

At the White House meeting, the Democratic Party's most vulnerable 2018 class was represented only by Sen. Joe Manchin, a former West Virginia governor, who encouraged the president to help promote the so-called Toomey-Manchin plan to expand background checks.

Trump seemed to embrace the proposal during the Wednesday meeting, but he hasn't mentioned it since a Thursday night meeting with the NRA, which opposes the plan.

Don't expect Heller to mention it either.

Should he win his primary, he will likely face Democratic Rep. Jacky Rosen, who isn't shy about her support for virtually every gun control measure on the table. She was quick to note Heller's low profile in the debate.

"His silence speaks volumes," Rosen said. "How can you have tragedy in your own state, like the massive one we had here, and not have it forever change you, and not speak out, and not respond to these families?"

___Associated Press writers Kevin Freking and Jill Colvin in Washington contributed to this report.

Florida lawmakers debate school-safety bill in rare session

By **BRENDAN FARRINGTON, Associated Press**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — The Florida Senate agreed to advance a bill that would increase school safety and restrict gun purchases during a rare Saturday session that often turned into a debate on gun control and arming teachers in the aftermath of last month's Parkland school shootings.

The Senate spent nearly eight hours debating dozens of amendments to the 100-page bill before finally approving the legislation for a final vote on Monday. Democratic proposals to ban assault rifles and large-capacity magazines were rejected, as was a Democratic proposal to strip language from the bill that would create a program to arm teachers who have gone through law-enforcement training if school districts choose to take part in the so-called marshal plan.

The Senate began the session at 10 a.m. and was originally supposed to wrap up discussion by 1 p.m. But senators extended the session and didn't wrap up until after 6 p.m.

It was clear that senators were divided on the bill, and not just on party lines. While crafted by Republicans, some GOP senators still opposed it because they don't agree with raising the minimum age to buy a rifle from 18 to 21 or requiring a waiting period to buy the weapons.

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Democrats believe the legislation doesn't go far enough in some ways and too far in others. And while some oppose the bill, others believe it's at least a first step toward gun safety.

Democrats want to ban weapons such as the AR-15 assault-style rifle, which was used to kill 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Feb. 14. Many also oppose arming teachers. The bill also includes provisions to boost school security, establish new mental health programs in schools, and improve communication between schools, law enforcement and state agencies.

But much of the debate Saturday revolved around gun control and whether people should have a right to own an assault rifle.

"Every constitutional right that we hold dear has a limitation," said Democratic Sen. Gary Farmer. "These are just military-style killing machines and the right of self-defense and the ability to hunt will go on."

Republicans argued that banning such weapons would violate the Second Amendment right to bear arms.

"Our founding fathers weren't talking about hunting, and they weren't talking about protecting themselves from the thief down the street who might break in," said Republican Sen. David Simmons. Simmons said people need guns to protect themselves from a tyrannical government.

"Adolf Hitler confiscated all the weapons — took all the weapons, had a registry of everybody — and then on the night of June 30th, 1934, sent out his secret police and murdered all of his political opponents," Simmons said. "You think it doesn't happen in a free society? It does."

The Legislature wraps up its annual session on Friday. Lawmakers are scrambling to take some kind of action before then. The full House has yet to take up its version of the bill.

Republican Gov. Rick Scott has been lobbying lawmakers to pass his plan to assign at least one law-enforcement officer for every 1,000 students at a school. Scott is opposed to arming teachers.

____The short headline of this story has been edited to reflect that bill has not been passed.

Authorities say man shoots himself to death near White House

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Secret Service says a man shot himself to death Saturday as he stood near the fence along the north side of the White House.

President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump were in Florida at the time. The White House says Trump has been briefed on the shooting.

Authorities are seeking to notify the man's relatives and haven't released his name.

Speaking for the Secret Service, Mason F. Brayman says the man approached the fence shortly before noon and fired several rounds from a handgun. Brayman says none of the shots appear to have been directed toward the White House.

Secret Service officers set up a perimeter around the White House grounds Saturday afternoon, limiting access and rerouting tourists as they investigated.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, March 4, the 63rd day of 2018. There are 302 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 4, 1793, George Washington was sworn in for a second term as president of the United States during a ceremony in Philadelphia.

On this date:

In 1193, Saladin (SAL'-uh-dihn), the Muslim warrior who opposed the Crusades, died in Damascus.

In 1681, England's King Charles II granted a charter to William Penn for an area of land in North America that later became Pennsylvania.

In 1791, Vermont became the 14th state.

In 1893, Grover Cleveland was inaugurated for his second, non-consecutive term as president.

In 1925, President Calvin Coolidge's inauguration was broadcast live on 21 radio stations coast-to-coast.

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In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt took office as America's 32nd president.

In 1943, "Mrs. Miniver" won six Academy Awards, including best picture and best actress for Greer Garson (whose 5½-minute acceptance speech became the butt of industry jokes). James Cagney won best actor for "Yankee Doodle Dandy."

In 1952, Ronald Reagan and Nancy Davis were married in San Fernando Valley, California.

In 1968, "Romeo and Juliet," Franco Zeffirelli's film adaptation of the Shakespeare play starring Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey, premiered in London. "We're Only in It for the Money," a satirical concept album by Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, was released by Verve Records.

In 1977, some 1,500 people were killed in an earthquake that shook southern and eastern Europe.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan addressed the nation on the Iran-Contra affair, acknowledging that his overtures to Iran had "deteriorated" into an arms-for-hostages deal.

In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that sexual harassment at work can be illegal even when the offender and victim are of the same gender.

Ten years ago: Republican John McCain clinched his party's presidential nomination, surpassing the requisite 1,191 GOP delegates as voters in Ohio, Vermont, Rhode Island and Texas put him over the threshold. Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton won primary victories in Ohio, Texas and Rhode Island, while Barack Obama prevailed in Vermont. Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre retired after 17 years, saying he was "tired." (Favre later made a comeback with the New York Jets, then the Minnesota Vikings, before retiring again.) Dungeons & Dragons co-creator Gary Gygax died in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, at age 69.

Five years ago: Cardinals from around the world gathered inside the Vatican for their first round of meetings before the conclave to elect the next pope, following the retirement of Benedict XVI. Kenya's presidential election drew millions of eager voters, but the balloting was marred by deadly violence. (Uhuru Kenyatta beat seven other presidential candidates with 50.07 percent of the vote.) Five-time Grand Slam singles champion Martina Hingis headed the 2013 class for the International Tennis Hall of Fame; also named were Cliff Drysdale, Charlie Pasarell, and Ion Tiriac. (Australian player Thelma Coyne Long's election was announced earlier.)

One year ago: President Donald Trump accused former President Barack Obama of tapping his telephones during the 2016 election; an Obama spokesman declared the assertion was "simply false." From Colorado's state Capitol to Trump Tower in New York and the Washington Monument, groups of hundreds of people rallied for President Trump. Tommy Page, a former pop star whose song "I'll Be Your Everything" went to No. 1 in 1990 and who later became a record company executive, died in New York at age 46. Former U.S. Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yeutter (YEYE'tuhr), 86, died in Potomac, Maryland.

Today's Birthdays: Former Congressional Budget Office director Alice Rivlin is 87. Actress Paula Prentiss is 80. Movie director Adrian Lyne is 77. Singer Shakin' Stevens is 70. Author James Ellroy is 70. Energy Secretary Rick Perry is 68. Singer Chris Rea is 67. Actor/rock singer-musician Ronn Moss is 66. Actress Kay Lenz is 65. Musician Emilio Estefan is 65. Movie director Scott Hicks is 65. Actress Catherine O'Hara is 64. Actor Mykelti (MY'-kul-tee) Williamson is 61. Actress Patricia Heaton is 60. Sen. Tina Smith, D-Minn., is 60. Actor Steven Weber is 57. Rock musician Jason Newsted is 55. Actress Stacy Edwards is 53. Rapper Grand Puba is 52. Rock musician Patrick Hannan (The Sundays) is 52. Rock singer Evan Dando (Lemonheads) is 51. Actress Patsy Kensit is 50. Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., is 50. Gay rights activist Chaz Bono is 49. Actress Andrea Bendewald is 48. Actor Nick Stabile (stah-BEEL') is 48. Rock musician Fergal Lawler (The Cranberries) is 47. Country singer Jason Sellers is 47. Jazz musician Jason Marsalis is 41. Actress Jessica Heap is 35. Actor Scott Michael Foster is 33. TV personality Whitney Port is 33. Actress Audrey Esparza is 32. Actress Margo Harshman is 32. Actor Josh Bowman is 30. Actress Andrea Bowen is 28. Actress Jenna Boyd is 25.

Thought for Today: "I am glad that I paid so little attention to good advice; had I abided by it I might have been saved from some of my most valuable mistakes." — Edna St. Vincent Millay, American author and poet (1892-1950).