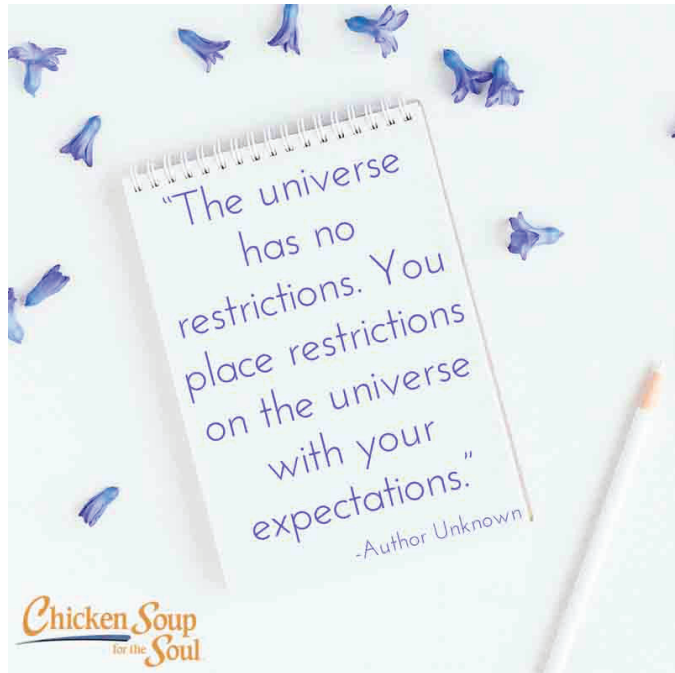


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The Groton Area School District will be closed on Mon., March 5.

The Math Family Game Night and Elementary Book Fair will be rescheduled for Tues., March 13.

1- Recycling trailers

1- Chicken Soup for the Soul

1- Schultz Construction Ad

1- Death Notice: Doraine Green

2- Warm weather melts snow quickly

2- Help Wanted at Groton Care & Rehab

2- Book Fair Ad

3- Glimpse from Greenfield

5- Winter Storm Warning

5- Blizzard Closes State Offices In Several Counties

5- Men's and Women's Basketball Qualifies for NCAA Central Region Tournament

6- Weekly Vikings Roundup

7- Daugaard'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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Death Notice: Doraine Green

Doraine Green, 93, of Groton passed away Sunday, March 4, 2018 at Avera Mother Joseph Manor, Aberdeen. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

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

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

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The rapid thaw in the last few days has left storm sewer issues in Groton. Terry Herron and Branden Abeln were out yesterday trying to move some of the water along curbside to storm sewers that have opened up. The area is under a winter storm warning with the potential of up to 13 more inches of wet, heavy snow.

Scholastic Book Fairs®

PAWS for BOOKS

BOOK FAIR

"Paws for Books"
Scholastic Book Fair
When: Tuesday, March 13, 2018
3:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Where: Groton Area Elementary
School Library

Maintenance Supervisor Wanted:

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

Day Shift C.N.A. Wanted

Sign-on Bonus

☆☆☆ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ☆☆☆

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

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



1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton



Glimpse From Greenfield

Brock Greenfield
State Senator
District 2

As I concluded last week's article, I mentioned Rep Tulson's HB 1270, which I have carried on the Senate side. This is the bill that would change existing law to require headlights and taillights to be used from sundown to sunrise. Currently—as I mentioned last week—a person must use lights from 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sun-up. Given the recent history of this issue, I said

it would be a heavy lift to get this bill through the Senate. I did have to work on a few people a little bit to impress upon them the logic behind the bill, so I was a little surprised that my floor pitch was not met with any debate. I was pleasantly shocked when the bill sailed through on a unanimous, 35-0 vote! Since the evening of that vote, I have paid particular attention to how dark it has been 30 minutes after sunset, and I can tell you, it is absolutely not safe on a cloudy winter day to wait until more than a few minutes after the sun sets to fire up your lights!

Speaking of Rep. Tulson, he also brought HB 1269 which I served as the Senate Prime on. The bill seeks to expedite the adoption process for prospective parents. In its original form, it would have affected both the birth mom and the putative (or likely) father. However, we heard from a lawyer who is currently litigating a case on behalf of the State of SD who said it was important to his case that we not keep the first section in the bill regarding the birth mother. As the bill came out of the House, it stated that a court could act within fifteen days of notice being given in an adoption case is a prospective father does not come forth to dispute said adoption. Currently, that standard is set at thirty days. We heard wonderful testimony both from children who have been adopted, as well as adoptive parents and those who work as adoption agents. It was clear from their testimony that it is important that South Dakota do its best to streamline the process to facilitate adoptions so families can be together and so parents can take responsibility for their adoptive children's health and well-being. The bill passed both the Senate committee and the floor unanimously.

As long as I have mentioned a couple bills I worked on with one of our District 2 Representatives, I would like to share something else I worked on with our other Rep, Lana Greenfield. Rep. Greenfield came to me last week and inquired as to whether we should put together a commemoration to honor an act of heroism by one of the Spink Co. Deputy Sheriffs. The language we came up with is embodied in HC 1027, and it honors and thanks Jason Kraft of Redfield for his life-saving actions. Back in December, Jason was trained to recognize the symptoms of opioid and opiate overdoses. On January 13, 2018, Jason responded to a 9-1-1 call and found a young girl unconscious, not breathing, and turning blue. He identified this as an overdose situation and put his recent training to use, as he administered Narcan to the unconscious girl. As she was being loaded into the ambulance, she awoke. The commemoration goes on to note that Deputy Kraft "humbly denied credit for the heroic act and instead credited the ambulance crew, 911 dispatchers, and other officers." In fact, all involved personnel can be proud of their life-saving actions. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate everybody for a job well-done!

Earlier this Session, the Senate had passed SB 24, which would have extended the sunset provision for another three years on the nonmeandered water law that was passed last summer. HB 1081 had been introduced on the House side, and as it was drafted, it contained identical language. However, on the House floor, the bill was amended to delete the sunset provision altogether, thus making the law perma-

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ment. The idea behind doing so was that we have had a brief look as to how the law is working. While there will always be some angst on either side of the law, generally speaking, feedback has been positive. There are some sportsmen who feel the law does not go far enough in allowing them access to waters over otherwise private ground, and there are definitely landowners who feel exactly the opposite, in that the law infringes upon their private property rights. The courts had laid the issue at the feet of the legislature, and we worked extremely diligently to try to strike a balance between the two sides. While the Department of Game, Fish & Parks has been working very hard to strike agreements with landowners regarding the access of more nonmeandered lakes, one of the identified impediments was that there was not yet certainty under the law. HB 1081 did pass the Senate, 20-15, and SB 24 was subsequently tabled by the House, thus sending only the bill deleting the sunset clause to the Governor for his consideration. We will see in the coming days whether it meets with his approval, but the general expectation is that he will sign HB 1081.

HJR 1004 will place on the ballot for your consideration changes to Marsy's Law which was adopted last year. A number of unintended consequences and exorbitant costs borne by the counties prompted individuals to come together to work on this new—and hopefully improved—language. Most notably, people who were directly involved in placing Marsy's Law on our ballot worked with legislators to craft this new language. In the end, this joint resolution and a companion bill emerged with widespread support. Previously, the House had passed HJR 1004, 65-0, and the Senate followed with a 27-8 vote after amending the measure to stipulate that it would appear on the primary election ballot, rather than the general election ballot. The House has to vote this week on whether or not to concur with the Senate amendment. If they do not, the bill will go to a conference committee where the differences will be ironed out.

Finally, HB 1110 passed the Senate, 35-0. This bill would create an enhanced penalty for second or subsequent offenses for engaging in hiring or promoting prostitution. In this day-and-age of rampant human trafficking, we are trying to be responsive to all elements associated with that horrific crime. It should come as no surprise that both the House and the Senate endorsed the bill unanimously.

During the past two weeks, Brock Brown from Hamlin High School served as a Senate page. Also, Summer Raderschadt from Hamlin and Bess Seaman from Warner served on the House side. Previously, Carter Lane of Warner and Emily Foiles of Raymond (and Doland HS) had dedicated two weeks of their senior years to working as a page. This week, Dani Houghtaling of Doland joins us on the Senate side to lend a helping hand to the legislative process. These high school juniors and seniors get a tremendous education in our representative form of democracy, and we really appreciate all their hard work and their tremendous attitudes. They help to make the process run as smoothly as possible by answering phones and taking messages in the House and Senate lobbies, working in the legislative post office, running errands during committee and on the floor, and staying late after session to make sure everything is ready to go for the next day. I want to thank them for their service, and I would encourage any young people to keep this in mind as they approach their final two years of high school.

Once again, I thank you for all your feedback, and I want to tell you how much I appreciate you reading my articles. I know they get long, but I want to provide some meaningful, and hopefully insightful, glimpses as to what we are working on for the people of District 2 and the entire state. As we embark upon the final week of session, many important deliberations, not the least of which are budgetary decisions will be forthcoming. Stay tuned for a final wrap up. Until then, may God bless each of you!

Brock

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WINTER STORM WARNING

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

...WINTER STORM WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL 6 PM CST TUESDAY...

* WHAT...Heavy snow and patchy light freezing rain expected. Total snow accumulations of 7 to 11 inches, with localized amounts up to 13 inches, and ice accumulations of a light glaze are expected.

* WHERE...Portions of north central and northeast South Dakota.

* WHEN...Until 6 PM CST Tuesday.

* ADDITIONAL DETAILS...Plan on difficult travel conditions, including during the morning commute. Winds gusting as high as 40 mph will cause patchy blowing and drifting snow.

A Winter Storm Warning means significant amounts of snow, sleet and ice will make travel very hazardous or impossible. The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

Men's and Women's Basketball Qualifies for NCAA Central Region Tournament

Indianapolis – The Northern State University men's and women's basketball team will head to the NCAA Central Region Tournament. The women earned the No. 5 seed and will head to Sioux Falls, as Augustana plays host after earning the No. 1 seed. The men earned the No. 2 seed and will hit the road to Maryville, Mo, as Northwest Missouri State earned the No. 1 seed.

The Wolves women will face the No. 4 seed Arkansas Tech on March 9 with game time still to be determined from the Elmen Center. The NSU men will face No. 7 seed Washburn on March 10 at 2:15 p.m. from Bearcat Arena.

The last time both the Northern State women and men advanced to the regional tournament was in 2014-15 when the Wolves faced Pittsburg State (women) and Central Missouri (men). The NSU women have qualified for the fifth straight NCAA Tournament, while the men are making their first return since 2014-15.

Stay tuned to nsuwolves.com for game updates and information on the NCAA Central Region Tournament.

Blizzard Closes State Offices In Several Counties

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard has ordered all state offices in 13 South Dakota counties closed today (Monday) because of the blizzard and winter storm impacting a majority of the state.

State offices are closed in the counties of: Brule, Campbell, Faulk, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Jones, Lyman, Potter, Stanley, Sully, Tripp and Walworth.

Only essential personnel within state offices in those counties should report to their work stations.

The state Capitol in Pierre remains open and the state Legislature is holding its regular committee meetings and floor sessions. People who plan to testify should call the Legislative Research Council at 605-773-3251.

Officials are monitoring the storm closely and evaluating whether further state-office closures might be necessary.

Citizens with business at state offices in other South Dakota counties impacted by the storm should call ahead to make sure the office remains open.

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

The Minnesota Vikings have 14 pending free agents this offseason. Last week we covered the seven players on the offensive side of the ball, so naturally this week we move to the defense and special teams. Even though every media outlet is talking about the Vikings need at quarterback, it's important to examine the other positions to see what possible holes will need to be filled by the team.

Below is a list of the pending free agents on defense/special teams, along with their position, age, and number of snaps played in 2017 (according to Pro Football Reference).

Tramaine Brock, cornerback, 29 years old (y/o), 51 snaps (5.13%)

Tom Johnson, defensive tackle, 33 y/o, 673 snaps (67.64%)

Emmanuel Lamur, linebacker, 28 y/o, 78 snaps (7.84%)

Terence Newman, cornerback, 39 y/o, 555 snaps (55.78%)

Marcus Sherels, cornerback/ return specialist, 30 y/o, 20 snaps (2.01%)

Shamar Stephen, defensive tackle, 27 y/o, 384 snaps (38.59%)

Kai Forbath, Kicker, 30 y/o

Tramaine Brock is a player the Vikings traded for last offseason, sending a conditional seventh-round pick to the Seahawks in exchange. He didn't play much last season, and at 29 years old, he'll likely find himself on a new team in 2018.

Tom Johnson would represent the biggest loss if he leaves in free agency. Johnson was supposed to be a rotational player this past season, but after the injury to Sharrif Floyd, he ended up playing two-thirds of the defensive snaps in 2017. There are reports coming out that the Vikings will try and re-sign Johnson, but he will have suitors around the NFL and the Vikings may not be able to afford to keep him.

Emmanuel Lamur is still relatively young and provided depth at linebacker, but he wasn't asked to play much and the Vikings can likely find a replacement in the middle or later rounds of the draft.

Terence Newman, the ageless wonder, is still playing at a high level at 39 years old. He has said he is leaning towards coming back for one more shot at a championship, and Mike Zimmer will likely welcome him back with open arms (at the right price, of course).

Marcus Sherels barely saw the field on defense, but his value as a punt and kick returner cannot be overstated. He is one of the best and most consistent returners in the NFL, and the Vikings will likely bring him back next season.

Shamar Stephen is another defensive tackle the Vikings will likely try and keep this offseason. He is young and proved he can step in and play well as a rotational player along the defensive line.

If the Vikings end up losing Tom Johnson and Shamar Stephen this offseason, there are a few players in free agency who could replace them. The biggest names at defensive tackle are Sheldon Richardson (27 y/o), Muhammad Wilkerson (28 y/o) and Dominique Easley (26 y/o). The Vikings would have the best defensive line in the NFL, bar none, if they were to sign Richardson or Wilkerson – although they would both cost a pretty penny to acquire. As a fan, I'm not getting my hopes up that one of them will be in purple and gold next season. But hey, it's fun to dream right?

With the team filled with young, ascending players who are going to need to be payed in the next couple of years (Stefon Diggs, Danielle Hunter, Anthony Barr, Eric Kendricks, Trae Waynes) the Vikings front office will need to be cautious on how they spend their cap space. It's fun to bring in big names during free agency, but the Vikings' priority will be ensuring the core of the team stays together so they are competitive for many years to come. Skoll!

Make sure to check back next week, when we cover the salary cap in depth, with a breakdown of how the money is currently spent and how money can be freed up this year so the Vikings can afford to bring in free agents while also signing their own guys. If you have any questions or comments, reach out to me on Facebook ([facebook.com/SkolJWright](https://www.facebook.com/SkolJWright)) or on Twitter (@SkolJWright)

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South Dakota's Economic Development Wins

There are many things happening in our state that lead me to be hopeful about South Dakota's future, especially in the realm of economic development. Overall, 2017 was a great year in terms of economic development wins. The Governor's Office of Economic Development helped facilitate deals that total over \$735 million in investment and are expected to create more than 1,400 new jobs.

Last July, we broke ground on the Long Baseline Neutrino Facility at the Sanford Underground Research Facility – the old Homestake mine. This Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment will fire a beam of neutrinos from Fermilab near Chicago to huge detectors at the Sanford Underground Research Facility in Lead. The experiment hopes to unravel one of the great mysteries of the universe: the oscillation of neutrinos. This experiment will require a \$400 million construction investment in Lead that will have an economic impact of nearly \$1 billion.

We also broke ground on a major new soybean processing facility in Aberdeen. When complete, AGP's soybean plant will be the largest investment in their history, with capacity enough to process 20% of South Dakota's entire soybean crop.

In Sioux Falls, we supported Gage Brothers, a 100-year old South Dakota manufacturer, as it launched a new \$40 million facility. We supported BalCon Enterprises' plans to construct a new 22,500 square foot processing and warehouse facility in Elk Point, a project that will add 22 full-time jobs. In Beresford, we secured a commitment from Hendrix Genetics to build a \$25 million commercial turkey hatchery, creating 79 new jobs. The facility will hatch over half a million baby turkeys every week.

There were many other business expansions in 2017, including OtterTail Power in northeast South Dakota, Red's All Natural Foods in North Sioux City, B9 Creations in Rapid City, Applied Engineering in Yankton, Performance Pet Products in Mitchell, Great Plains Processing in Yankton, Aero Trailers in Watertown and Harvard Integrations in Tea.

This year, 2018 began with a major announcement from AgroPur of a \$250 million expansion in Lake Norden. When complete, this expansion will increase the plant's daily milk processing capacity from 3 million pounds to more than 9 million pounds, equal to the output of an additional 85,000 cows.

We are seeing success because South Dakota allows businesses to prosper. We have a low tax burden – no corporate income tax, no personal income tax, no business inventory tax, no personal property tax or inheritance tax. We also have low costs and reasonable regulations.

It is also thanks to the hard work of the Governor's Office of Economic Development and our economic development partners throughout the state. They do the work of identifying prospects from around the country and selling our state and our communities. More often, they work with local businesses, already in our state, to help them expand. By keeping South Dakota a business-friendly state, I'm confident 2018 will be even better than last year.

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Today in Weather History

March 5, 1966: The historic blizzard of 1966, which started on March 2, comes to an end in the Dakotas. North Dakota saw severe livestock losses with an estimated 18,500 cattle, 7,500 sheep, and 600 hogs killed. On a farm in eastern North Dakota, 7,000 turkeys perished. The total damage to livestock was estimated at near \$4 million. In South Dakota, an estimated 50,000 cattle, 46,000 sheep, and 1,800 hogs were killed. Most of the deaths occurred in the central and northern central part of the state.

1894: The low temperature of 36 degrees at San Diego, California on this day was their lowest on record for March.

1959: Near blizzard conditions occurred over northern and central Oklahoma. Up to seven inches of snow fell and winds up to 50 mph created snow drifts 4 to 8 feet deep. In Edmond, a bus slid off the road into a ditch and overturned, injuring 16 people.

1966: A plane crashes near Mount Fuji in Japan after encountering severe turbulence. The pilot veered a few miles off course to give the passengers a better view of Mount Fuji when it tremendous wind gusts. All 124 people on board the aircraft were killed.

1972: Palm Springs, California recorded a high of 100 degrees, the earliest the city has ever hit the century mark.

1989: A F2 tornado killed one person and injured six others in Heard County, Georgia. A stronger, F3 tornado injured 23 persons and caused more than 5 million dollars damage around Grantville, Georgia.

2007: The morning temperature dropped to 51 degrees below zero at Key Lake, Saskatchewan Canada.

1960 - Eastern Massachusetts greatest March snowstorm of record began to abate. The storm produced record 24 hour snowfall totals of 27.2 inches at Blue Hill Observatory, 17.7 inches at Worcester, and 16.6 inches at Boston. Winds gusted to 70 mph. (3rd-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1962 - A tremendous storm raged along the Atlantic coast. The great Atlantic storm caused more than 200 million dollars property damage from Florida to New England. Winds along the Middle Atlantic Coast reached 70 mph raising forty foot waves, and as much as 33 inches of snow blanketed the mountains of Virginia. The Virginia shoreline was rearranged by historic tidal flooding caused by the combination of the long stretch of strong onshore winds and the Spring Tides. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy rain and high winds in California. Up to six inches of rain soaked the San Francisco Bay area in 24 hours, and winds gusted to 100 mph at the Wheeler Ridge Pumping Plant near the Tehachapi Mountains. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1988 - While snow blanketed eastern Kansas and northern Oklahoma, eight cities in North Dakota reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 61 degrees at Bismarck ND was 27 degrees warmer than that at Chanute KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the southeastern U.S. A strong (F-2) tornado killed one person and injured six others in Heard County GA. A strong (F-3) tornado injured 23 persons and caused more than five million dollars damage around Grantville GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

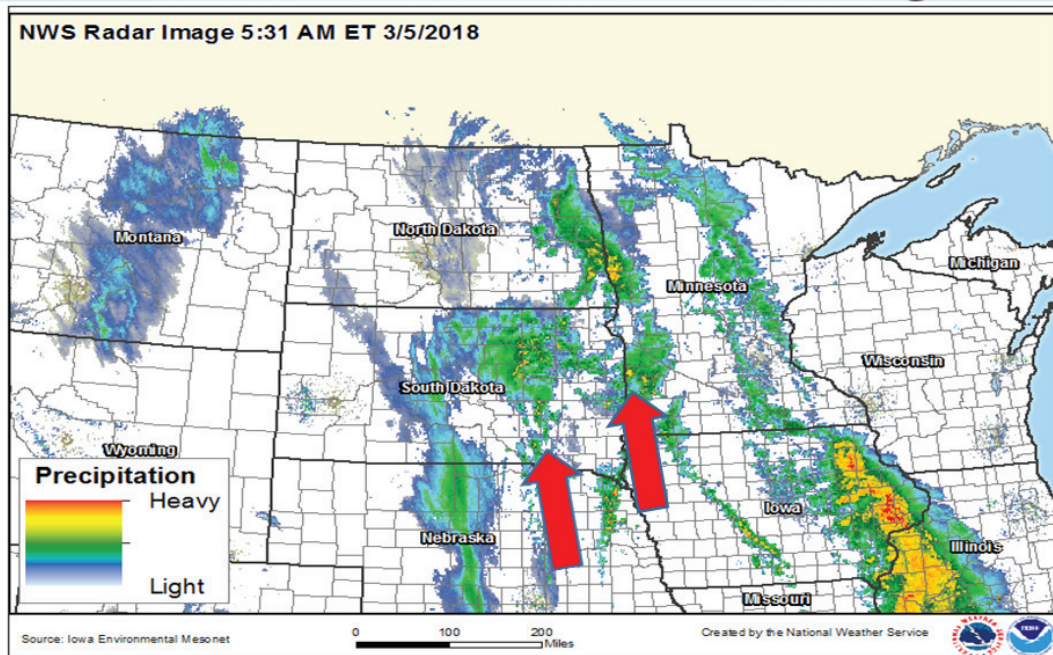
1990 - Thunderstorms over eastern Colorado, developing ahead of a major storm system, produced up to three inches of small hail around Colorado Springs in the late morning and early afternoon. Strong thunderstorms swept through southeastern sections of the Denver area during the evening hours. These strong thunderstorms also produced up to three inches of small hail, along with wind gusts to 50 mph, and as much as 2.4 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Mon Mar 5	Tue Mar 6	Wed Mar 7	Thu Mar 8	Fri Mar 9	Sat Mar 10	Sun Mar 11
						
35°F 23°F	29°F 12°F	27°F 4°F	27°F 12°F	33°F 17°F	34°F 14°F	35°F 24°F
ENE 21 MPH Precip 100%	N 19 MPH Precip 40%	NW 11 MPH Precip 10%	S 6 MPH	S 9 MPH	NW 10 MPH Precip 30%	NW 9 MPH

...Rain and Snow Has Begun... A switch to all snow this morning



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created 3/5/2018 5:05 AM

Published on: 03/05/2018 at 5:15AM

The much talked about storm system is moving in, with rain and snow spreading north-northwest across the area. Central South Dakota is currently seeing snow, with reports of low visibility already in the Pierre area. Much of the eastern part of the forecast area is seeing a mix of rain, sleet and snow, with even some thunder and lightning as well! This precipitation is expected to change over to snow by sunrise for most areas. We are still expecting heavy snow across the region today and tonight, with blizzard conditions developing over central South Dakota.

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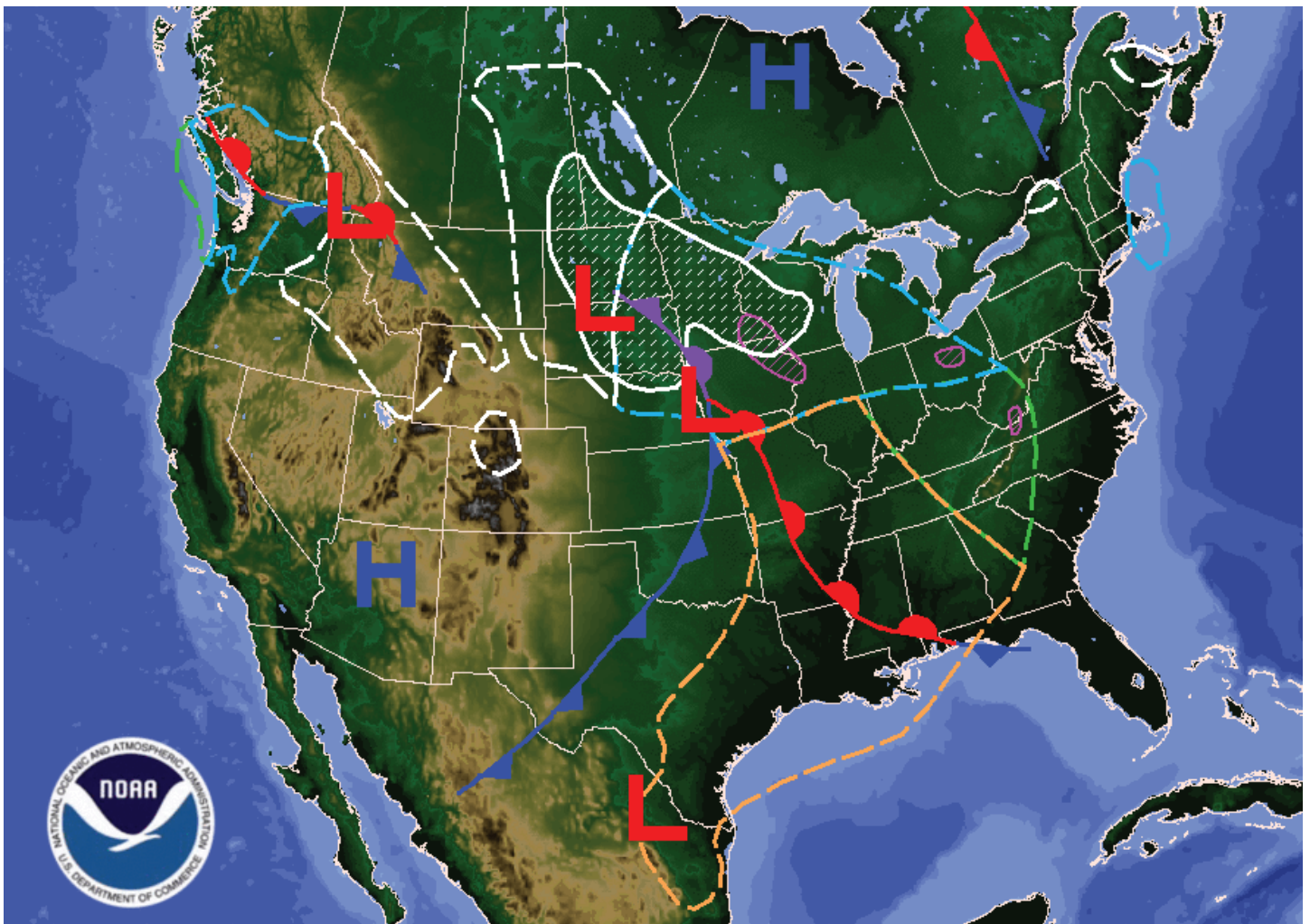
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 40.1 F at 8:56 PM
Low Outside Temp: 34.5 F at 6:15 AM
Wind Chill:
High Gust: 30.0 Mph at 4:28 PM
Precip: Sleetng, snowng, lightning & thunder

Today's Info

Record High: 74° in 2000
Record Low: -22° in 1919
Average High: 35°F
Average Low: 15°F
Average Precip in March: 0.14
Precip to date in March: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.16
Precip Year to Date: 0.57
Sunset Tonight: 6:26 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:02 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Mon, Mar 05, 2018, issued 4:30 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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HOPE WHEN WE NEED IT

There is a big difference between power and influence. Power comes from a position we have in a group or organization. We gain influence by what we know or are able to do. In our relationship with God, He has all of the power and He uses it to shape us into the plan He has for us. But we can go to Him in prayer and ask Him to grant us His power to overcome some sin in our life and bring hope, healing and wholeness to us or our loved ones when we are sick or broken.

Our Psalmist reminds us of this important fact. When we feel alone or abandoned, depressed or have a doubt about God's care or concern for us, he reminds us to look to God for help: "Unless the Lord had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death."

Unfortunately, we do not know what was going on in the life of the writer. He may have been facing a life-threatening illness, grieving over the loss of a loved one or perhaps facing financial disaster. He reminds us that "it" made no difference. Whatever problem he was facing or whatever disaster may have been on the horizon or whatever sickness may have stricken him no one could have made a difference in his life but God.

"Unless the Lord...," he wrote. Not "unless I find" or "a friend helps me find" the right physician or the right attorney or the right banker. No. He realized the limitations of man. His situation was beyond them. But he knew first hand that only his Lord could rescue him.

Prayer: What a blessed reality it is to know, Lord, that You have the power to solve any problem we have. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 94:17 Unless the Lord had been my help, My soul would soon have settled in silence.

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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 oil expected to meet most of world's growth in demand

HOUSTON (AP) — A global energy watchdog says booming production in the United States will meet 80 percent global growth in demand for oil over the next five years.

The International Energy Agency believes slow growth from OPEC will be offset by oilfields in the U.S. The group, based in Paris, issued its annual oil market report on Monday. The resurgence in U.S. production is the most prominent change since the group's last forecast.

The retreat by oil producers during an oil-price plunge between 2014 and 2016, however, continues to raise the specter that not enough money has been spent on exploration, which can result in shortages and price spikes.

The IEA predicts that within five years, the cushion of production capacity over expected demand will fall to its lowest level since 2007. That was the year that the price for oil in the U.S. surged close to \$150. Prices are less than half that today.

The energy agency, which advises energy-consuming countries, said Monday that global energy demand will grow about 7 percent by 2023, to 104.7 million barrels of oil per day. Citing the production capabilities of drillers operating in U.S. shale fields, the world capacity to produce oil will hit 107 million barrels a day.

The strongest growth is expected to come from the Permian Basin, a vast oil and gas pool that lies under parts of Texas and New Mexico. Output there is expected to double by 2023.

While the U.S. will play the largest role, the energy agency predicts that Canada, Brazil and Norway will pump enough oil to meet the rest of the growth in world demand through the next five years.

OPEC, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, will increase capacity only modestly through 2023 because of sharply falling production in Venezuela, according to the energy agency forecast.

New Watertown Development Co. director sees bright future

By DAN CRISLER, Watertown Public Opinion

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — In many ways, Chris Schilken embodies the new entrepreneurial era Watertown looks to bring forth.

At 35 years old, the new executive director of the Watertown Development Company is young enough to bring fresh expansionism ideas to the table. Yet he is seasoned enough to know what works and what doesn't, having previously served five years in a similar position in Devils Lake, North Dakota. Before coming to Watertown, Schilken most recently worked as a loan manager for Prairie Federal Credit Union in Minot, North Dakota, where he and his wife, Erika, still have family.

Schilken's business experience extends back to his college days, where he earned a business degree from Minot State University.

"I've always had a passion for getting involved in a community's economic development and helping business people out and cities grow," Schilken told the Public Opinion recently.

Having previously attracted high-profile businesses such as Walmart and Applebee's to Devils Lake, which has a population area of about 12,000, Schilken views Watertown as poised to take advantage of a bright future.

"I think it is a good location. You've got the best two-year college (in Lake Area Technical Institute) in the nation. You've got a board that, from what I can tell, has been pretty aggressive in the past as far as acquiring land and building industrial parks and getting sites ready," he said. "In my mind, it's kind of a perfect spot to be in."

Schilken was also attracted to Watertown's standing as the fifth most populous city in the state. He believes that ranking will attract companies.

"That opens up a lot of new possibilities. When companies are looking, they know there's growth,"

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Schilken said. "You can see that happening as you got an expanded hospital coming online and you see new buildings going up."

To continue attracting interest from the outside, Schilken believes the city's current companies and organizations must keep investing in their properties and city.

"Current investment in current development definitely brings on more interest (from potential new employers)," Schilken said. "As they look and wonder why they should invest millions of dollars in Watertown, all they would have to do is look around and see that existing companies are investing. That just helps when you sell prospects on the possibility of moving here."

One of Schilken's first tasks may be to help develop a new industrial park with land the WDC and the City of Watertown agreed in early-February to acquire. The park is located in the city's southeast corner along the 20th Avenue South and 29th Street East curve directly south of Walmart.

Nothing is imminent, but Schilken said there has been interest.

"There have been people that have reached out looking for some new locations. Acquiring that land will help us market that to potential manufactures or different suppliers that maybe want to expand locally or ones from outside and see if they may want to relocate there," he said.

The deliberate nature of that process fits in with Schilken's development philosophy of patience.

"You've got to just keep moving forward. Not everything is going to happen overnight," he said. "It's nice to grow steady and in a responsible way to make sure we're doing it correctly. There has been history in other towns where they try to grow too fast and it doesn't work out the way they thought it would."

Schilken, however, doesn't believe that fate will befall Watertown.

"I think there are a lot of good things ahead for Watertown. I'm excited to be a part of it and move forward," he said. "Everyone has been really welcoming and they're all in it for the right reasons."

Information from: Watertown Public Opinion, <http://www.thepublicopinion.com>

Newlyweds church group still together after 64 years

By MEGAN RAPOSA, Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The stained-glass windows in the First United Methodist chapel cast colorful shadows on the white plastic tables as 17 people find their seats.

The youngest among them is 80 years old.

It's the monthly meeting of Wedded Band, a group of married couples who share the Methodist tradition, and the recently remodeled chapel feels like a family reunion.

Wedded Band started as a group for newlyweds in 1954, and six decades later, many of the same couples keep the fellowship alive. These couples have raised children together, celebrated grandchildren and great-grandchildren together, and now, in the late stages of their life, offer companionship.

"We trust each other implicitly," said Carolyn Vollan, 82. "We love each other no matter what, and I don't think there's ever been a divorce in the group."

Vollan, the secretary for the group, leads a prayer at the start of the meeting. She ends with: "And all God's people say, 'Amen.'" And the rest join her for the final word.

Beverly Halbritter, 85, was one of the first members to join Wedded Band, a group started by the late Rev. Henry Lewis.

When the group began, "none of us had babies," Halbritter said. "But that changed the next year."

Lewis was the type of pastor who taught couples how to work through their differences and stick together during the hard times, said Rev. Rodney Gist.

Gist remembers Lewis both as a fellow pastor and as a mentor for he and his wife, Doris, to whom he's been married 65 years.

"He knew how to plant people in the place where they could grow and blossom," Gist said.

The Gists joined Wedded Band shortly after their wedding, and, after several years moving from parish to parish across the state, they retired near Sioux Falls and became more active in the group.

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The couple met when Doris, a lifelong musician, played piano at the funeral for Rodney's grandmother. They courted long-distance, writing letters between seminary in Chicago and Doris' hometown of Inwood, Iowa, and around Christmas, Rodney proposed under the moonlight in an Iowa cemetery.

"I asked her if she'd like to be part of the gene pool," he said.

Sixty-five years of telling that story and the couple still can't tell it without giggling.

In the early years, Wedded Band served as an outlet for newlyweds and young parents, the Argus Leader reported. For Vollan the group meetings were therapeutic as a young mother.

She and her husband, Clare Vollan — who will celebrate his 90th birthday in April — joined the group soon after their marriage in September 1956. Once the couple began having their four children, Carolyn relied on Wedded Band to network (and sometimes commiserate) with other moms.

"It became a support system," Vollan said. "I didn't have to feel guilty about being really wrung out."

Over the years, she recalls many instances of inviting other families in the group over for playdates or time to socialize. They became so close, they practically raised each other's children.

"At any time you can call somebody and say, 'Why don't you come over for a cup of coffee?'" she said.

Vollan credits faith for the group's longevity. It's not only served as a support system, but it's also given couples something to focus on beyond themselves and their marriage.

Service is at the center of Wedded Band's mission. They've helped with everything from mowing the church lawn to supporting missionaries in New Guinea.

They've also helped build houses, supported the church daycare, served breakfast to churchgoers and volunteered as bell-ringers collecting change in the Christmas season. Their age hasn't slowed down their service. While they can't physically volunteer as much anymore, last year they donated \$1,500 to various charities in Sioux Falls.

Doris Gist credits those acts of service as a factor in the strength of her marriage.

"We've always had a mission or two outside of ourselves," she said.

The secret to a strong marriage, by the way, is "renegotiating the contract" over time, Rodney Gist said. It helps if you can see things from your spouse's perspective, a lesson he learned from Lewis.

"I think we had better guidance on how to put ourselves in the other person's shoes," Gist said. "Once you know a person who does that, you don't want to be without them."

It's a religious group, but Wedded Band members hold patriotism close to their hearts. Nearly all of the men in the group are veterans, and at every meeting, they begin with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

They don't talk politics, but they do share a common respect for the flag.

Vollan recalled one member in particular, Marv Stadum, who spent the last part of his life in a wheelchair. Stadum served in the United States Air Force in Korea and went on to sing in the Legion choir.

When he died in March 2017, his obituary described him as a "patriot."

"It really hurt all of us when he wasn't able to stand anymore to say the Pledge of Allegiance," Vollan said.

Stories like Stadum's are becoming more common in the Wedded Band group. Between the December and January meetings, the group lost three members, including their oldest member who died at 100.

Now, Wedded Band is again becoming a support group, not for new mothers, but for widows and widowers who've lost their decades-long partners. They've been to the funerals of close friends, and they've seen wives and husbands take care of one another through all of the medical issues, immobility and memory issues that come with the end of one's life.

The remaining couples find strength in their marriage and gratitude for the time they have. They celebrate their lives and the successful marriages of their children and grandchildren.

And, at the end of the day, faith carries them through.

"After all is said and done, we can say we've done what we wanted to do," Vollan said. "And we can do nothing but be thankful."

And all God's people say, "Amen."

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Denver wins in Summit League tourney's 2nd two-overtime game

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Joe Rosga banked in an off-balance 3-pointer with 3.2 seconds left in regulation and Denver held off Oral Roberts for a 90-88 victory on Sunday night in the second double-overtime game in Summit League Tournament history.

Freshman R.J. Fuqua made two free throws to give Oral Roberts a 68-65 lead, but Rosga quickly drove to the basket, was fouled at 11.3 and made two at the line. Austin Ruder made it a three-point lead again but Rosga took a handoff at the 3-point arc and his 3 hit the corner of the backboard and went through the net.

Denver forward Jake Krafka went 1 of 2 at the line with 21 seconds left in the second OT and the Pioneers didn't get off a final shot after losing control of it in the lane.

Third-seeded Denver (15-14) will play No. 2 seed South Dakota in the semifinals on Monday.

Daniel Amigo had his sixth double-double of the season with 22 points and 11 rebounds for Denver. Ade Murkey had a career-high 20 points, eight rebounds and seven assists. Rosga finished with 18 points and four 3-pointers.

Emmanuel Nzekwesi and Ruder each scored 20 points for six-seeded Oral Roberts (11-21).

Miller, NDSU hold off Fort Wayne, advance in Summit tourney

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Paul Miller scored 18 of his 29 points in the second half to help North Dakota State hold on for an 86-82 win over Fort Wayne on Sunday night in the first round of the Summit League Tournament.

Miller hit 5 of 8 from 3-point range and grabbed eight rebounds. Deng Geu added 14 points on 6-of-7 shooting, Tyson Ward scored 13 and AJ Jacobson 12 for No. 5 seed North Dakota State (15-16).

The Bison will play top-seeded South Dakota State in the semifinals on Monday.

Ward and Miller each hit a 3-pointer before Ward made a layup to make it 10-0 fewer than two minutes in and Jared Samuelson hit two 3s in a 40-second span to spark a 15-3 run that made it 45-27 after Geu's 3-point play with 3:31 left in the first half. NDSU pushed its lead to 23 points on three occasions in the second half, but the Mastodons used runs of 17-5 and 10-3 to trim their deficit to 81-80 after a layup by Bryson Scott with 1:29 to play. Fort Wayne committed two turnovers and went 1 for 3 from the field from there and NDSU held on.

Scott and John Konchar scored 29 points apiece for fourth-seeded Fort Wayne (18-14).

FBI: Spike in Pine Ridge Reservation homicides tied to meth

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — An increased prevalence of meth at South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation led to an unusual number of homicides in 2016, according to the FBI.

The reservation had 14 homicides in 2016 — a number that's much higher than the yearly average in Pine Ridge, said FBI Assistant Special in Charge Robert Perry. The Rapid City Journal reports that Perry said a bureau analysis of homicides at the reservation over the past decade found that the yearly average is five.

"We wanted to understand, 'Is there something we're missing?' Is there a trend here that we haven't identified that we could affect?' The answer really is we didn't find anything other than the drug use," said Perry, who oversees FBI offices in North Dakota and South Dakota. The bureau investigates homicides at Native American reservations along with tribal police and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The spike in homicides began with nine in 2015, the year the FBI said it began noticing the prevalence of meth at the reservation.

"You had a new drug, basically, come in, and with that there were growing pains, just like a new business — turfs, who are the connections, who gets the drugs from whom," Perry said.

Pine Ridge had three homicides in 2017. The eight other Native American reservations in South Dakota had five homicides that year.

Pine Ridge's interim police chief, Mark Mesteth, credited the drop in homicides to officers having an increased presence at the reservation. The Oglala Sioux Tribe Department of Public Safety also created a

drug team of three officers and four K-9s.

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

'Trump slump' in gun sales continues despite control debate

By **ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS, Associated Press**

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Gun store owners called it the "Trump slump." Sales of firearms slowed dramatically after the election of Donald Trump as president in 2016 allayed fears of a Democratic crackdown on gun owners.

That trend has continued in recent weeks even with talk of gun control in Congress and among business leaders following the Feb. 14 massacre of 17 people at a Florida high school.

In the past, gun massacres generally led to an uptick in sales as people worried about the government restricting access. But with Parkland, things are different.

"The day after the election, it's just like somebody turned a faucet off," said David Dobransky, 67, who owns Dobransky Firearms, a small gun shop in North Canton, Ohio. Since then, sales there have been cut in half, and nothing the president or Congress has done or said following the Florida shooting has improved business.

Gun owners apparently have faith that Trump won't impose more restrictions, gun show owners say. That's even with the confusing messages Trump has sent in the past week.

He has cast himself as a strong supporter of the National Rifle Association but on Wednesday criticized lawmakers for being too fearful of the NRA to take action. He also reaffirmed positions opposed by the NRA, such as banning gun sales to those under 21.

Then the next day, Trump met with NRA officials and tweeted they'd had a "Good (Great) meeting." The NRA's executive director, tweeting about the same meeting, said Trump and Vice President Mike Pence "don't want gun control."

At Rapid-Fire Firearms in Rapid City, South Dakota, business is "just like normal," owner Robert Akers said Thursday, contrasting business with the panic buying under President Barack Obama.

In an earnings conference call last week, American Outdoor Brands, which owns Smith & Wesson, said revenue fell by one-third over the past three months, consistent with a drop since Trump was elected.

Demand dropped in December and January, before the Florida shooting and the debates on gun laws that followed, he said. The company doesn't expect sales to improve much over the next year.

Sturm Ruger and American Outdoor Brands have both seen their stocks plunge since Trump was elected, as they have mostly reported disappointing sales in recent months. American Outdoor Brands has plunged 67 percent since the presidential election and Sturm Ruger is down 28 percent.

Potentially dampening sales further, four major retailers last week — Kroger, Dick's Sporting Goods, L.L. Bean and Walmart — announced they will no longer sell guns to anyone under 21.

In addition, outdoor retailer REI says it's halting future orders of some popular brands — including CamelBak water carriers, Giro helmets and Camp Chef stoves — whose parent company also makes ammunition and assault-style rifles.

Over the past 30 years, U.S. gun production has tripled. Nine million were produced in 2015, compared with 3 million in 1986, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Those figures don't reflect sales since Trump took office, bringing with him the perception he was friendlier to gun owners.

The U.S. also imports millions of guns annually.

At Duke's Sport Shop in New Castle, Pennsylvania, gun sales have gone up in recent days, but that's thanks to the annual infusion of tax refund checks, shop owner Wes Morosky said Thursday.

The family-owned business started by Morosky's father, Duke, has about 2,000 firearms in stock at any one time, including AR-15s, the assault-style rifle used in the Florida shooting and the main subject of new debate about an assault rifle ban.

After the 2012 Sandy Hook school massacre, the store had a hard time keeping stock on shelves as fears

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arose that Obama would ban assault rifles through an executive order, Morosky said.

Today?

"Generally, people are still comfortable with the government that's intact right now," Morosky said.

On Friday morning, a few customers browsed shelves at L.E.P.D. Firearms & Range, a small gun shop on the northwest side of Columbus. In the back, a handful of people practiced target shooting at the shop's indoor range. A UPS driver dropped off a delivery while co-owner Eric Delbert awaited another package from FedEx. The store sells a full array of new and used firearms, including the AR-15.

After Trump's election, the drop in sales was almost "instantaneous," said Delbert, a part-time police officer, following nearly eight years of panic buying with a Democrat in the White House.

Recently, "We really haven't seen any uptick in sales, other than the normal trends for the time of year," Delbert said.

Associated Press Business Writer Marley Jay in New York and AP photographer Keith Srakocic in Pittsburgh contributed to this report.

South Dakota Highway Patrol seeks more female troopers

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol has been seeking to recruit more women to join the state troopers for several years.

Brynn Rist is one of only 13 female troopers that work for the state Highway Patrol.

Rist told KSFY News that the job has its challenges, but can be rewarding as well.

"I've definitely had times where I pull a car over, I walk up to the window and someone's super surprised that it's me walking up there," Rist said. "I get 'Oh you're a woman' all the time or 'Oh I was expecting a man's voice.'"

But Rist said she's treated with the same level of respect as her male colleagues.

"More females are getting interested and realizing that we also can do the job," said Rist. "It's not just for guys. We can do it too."

South Dakota Highway Patrol Captain Jason Husby said they want to facilitate a conversation with women they're looking to hire and women who already work for the agency.

The Highway Patrol is continuing to host seminars across the state for recruitment. Upcoming seminars include two on March 6, one in Aberdeen and one in Watertown.

Information from: KSFY-TV, <http://www.ksfy.com>

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."

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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-Flagstaff, 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."

Trump's Mideast peace plan in limbo as Netanyahu visits

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There's much to celebrate but plenty of cause for trepidation, too, as President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meet Monday at the White House.

For all his talk about brokering the "ultimate deal" between Israelis and Palestinians, Trump's long-awaited peace plan has yet to arrive, even as Palestinians and other critics insist it will be dead on arrival. And although Israel's government is overjoyed by Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital — with a U.S. embassy set to open in the holy city in May — misgivings are percolating under the surface over Iran, where Israel sees Trump's efforts to date to crack down on Israel's arch-enemy as lacking.

One major, growing concern: that the United States is acquiescing to Iran's growing presence in Syria and influence in Lebanon — two Israeli neighbors.

"If we don't come up with a strategy against Iran, we're going to make Israel go to war here pretty soon," Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

Swirling legal investigations distracting both leaders at home, and a stunning fall from grace for Trump's son-in-law and would-be peace negotiator, Jared Kushner, have added to the mix of politics, personalities and historical grievances that have always hindered Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. An already volatile situation now looks even more combustible than normal.

Netanyahu arrived in the United States over the weekend as Washington was gearing up for the annual

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conference of AIPAC, the powerful pro-Israel lobby. He planned to hold a meeting and working lunch with Trump on Monday before speaking at the conference later in the week. Top-ranking U.S. officials including Vice President Mike Pence and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley will also address the conference.

In a pointed reminder of his troubles at home, Netanyahu and his wife were questioned separately by police for hours on Friday before the prime minister left the next day for Washington. Those interviews were part of an investigation into a corruption case involving the country's telecom giant, and police have recommended indicting Netanyahu on corruption charges in two other cases as well.

The Trump family has legal problems of its own. Kushner, Trump's point-man for the Mideast, is under intense scrutiny over his business dealings as special counsel Robert Mueller barrels forward with his Russia probe. Kushner has also been stripped of his top security clearance in another blow to his credibility as an international negotiator.

Kushner's peace proposal is near completion, U.S. officials have said, but Palestinians have already written off Trump's administration as a viable mediator following his decision last year to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the U.S. embassy there from Tel Aviv. A ribbon-cutting for an interim facility is being planned to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Israel's independence.

Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer, speaking at AIPAC on Sunday, said that the Jewish people will "forever" remember Trump's decision.

But while the visit may give Trump a chance to bask in Israel's delight, Netanyahu also comes with serious concerns to raise about the president's broader approach on the Middle East.

Israel is increasingly worried that Trump is backsliding on a pledge to "fix" or dismantle the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Of particular concern is that Trump may push new restrictions to prevent Iran from developing intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of hitting the U.S., but will allow Iran to keep developing medium-range ballistic missiles that could strike Israel.

The Europeans have balked at the possibility of medium-range missile restrictions, arguing that existing U.N. resolutions on Iran only focus on longer-range projectiles. U.S. officials negotiating with Britain, France and Germany appear to agree with the Europeans, prompting the Israeli concern.

At least publicly, Israel is still giving Trump some political cover, while gently reminding the president that he's long vowed to scrap the deal if it can't be sufficiently strengthened.

"I have no doubt whatsoever that this president is willing to walk away," Dermer said.

AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

90th Oscars dance between honoring and correcting the past

By LINDSEY BAHR, AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Held one year ago, the 90th Academy Awards would have very likely been a rose-colored nostalgia fest.

But this year, with a culture-wide reckoning over decades of sexual misconduct, a film business in decline, a volatile political climate and the fact that last year the esteemed show couldn't even manage to present its biggest award correctly, the film academy and host Jimmy Kimmel on Sunday staged a complex and sometimes incongruous dance of attempting to both honor and atone for the past.

In many ways, the show inside the Dolby Theatre went exactly as planned — scripted, tight, full of past-looking montages, forward-thinking speeches and produced to appeal to all. Presenters Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty got a best picture redo, ("What happened last year is Waterhouse under the bridge," Kimmel quipped) and 86-year-old Rita Moreno got to wear her dress from the 1962 ceremony again.

The Walt Disney Co. sneaked a fair amount of promos ("A Wrinkle in Time," and "Mary Poppins Returns") and self-congratulations (for "Black Panther") into its ABC broadcast and the production did its best to appeal to the "regular moviegoer" by trotting out Gal Gadot and other stars to literally give candy to a theater full of people.

The awards also effectively skirted the awkwardness of having an accused man in the spotlight by

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shifting around long-held presenter traditions and having Jodie Foster and Jennifer Lawrence present the best actress award instead of Casey Affleck. Emma Stone got her Natalie Portman moment, presenting the directing award to "four men and Greta Gerwig." Activists like #MeToo creator Tarana Burke were included in a song segment. And three Harvey Weinstein accusers, Ashley Judd, Salma Hayek and Annabella Sciorra, were given a moment to themselves on stage for nothing more than the fact that they were brave enough to speak up before a hopeful video played highlighting a changing industry, post #MeToo and more diverse.

The video highlighted Greta Gerwig, the fifth woman to ever be nominated for best director, Yance Ford, the first transgender nominee for "Strong Island," Dee Rees, whose "Mudbound" scored a historic cinematographer nomination and the Pakistan-born Kumail Nanjiani, nominated for "The Big Sick."

The nominees signaled a renaissance. The winners told a slightly different story.

With a more diverse, more international and younger infusion of voting members into the film academy, the movie in love with movies still won the top awards. Guillermo del Toro's fantasy romance "The Shape of Water," won best picture, director, score and production design.

"Growing up in Mexico, I thought this could never happen," del Toro said. "It happens."

The acting awards, which have been locked for three months, went to the expected winners — all esteemed veterans and three of whom had never been nominated before: Frances McDormand won best actress for "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" and her co-star Sam Rockwell won for his supporting performance. Gary Oldman picked up the best actor prize for transforming into Winston Churchill in "Darkest Hour" and Allison Janney for becoming Tonya Harding's mother in "I, Tonya."

At 89, James Ivory became the oldest Oscar-winner for his adapted screenplay for "Call Me By Your Name." And Christopher Nolan's ambitious World War II nail-biter "Dunkirk" picked up three technical awards.

But Gerwig's "Lady Bird" left empty handed, Rachel Morrison did not become the first female cinematography winner (the long-snubbed Roger Deakins got that honor finally for "Blade Runner 2049" after 14 nominations) and Ford was not the first transgender Oscar-winner.

There were glimpses of progress, in Chile's "A Fantastic Woman," which starred the transgender actress Daniela Vega, won best foreign film. Disney and Pixar's celebration of Mexican culture, "Coco," took best animated feature, as well as best song for "Remember Me."

"The biggest thank you of all to the people of Mexico," said director Lee Unkrich to loud applause. "Marginalized people deserve to feel like they belong. Representation matters."

And Jordan Peele became the first African-American to win best original screenplay for his horror sensation "Get Out."

Peele said he stopped writing it "20 times," skeptical that it would ever get made.

"But I kept coming back to it because I knew if someone would let me make this movie, that people would hear it and people would see it," said Peele. "So I want to dedicate this to all the people who raised my voice and let me make this movie."

Even McDormand used her moment on stage to make a statement on behalf of women.

"If I may be so honored to have all the female nominees stand with me," McDormand said.

"We all have stories to tell and projects we need financed," she added, before uttering the phrase "inclusion rider," referring to actors signing contracts that mandate a film's gender and racial inclusivity.

Everyone seemed to take this moment of an industry in flux to heart.

"We can't let bad behavior slide anymore," said Kimmel at the show's start. "The world is watching us."

And indeed as the last show in this very long season, made even longer thanks to the Olympics, and with an unprecedented pressure to address all the ills of society and 90 years of movies it was perhaps always going to be too big a feat for one group of entertainers to tackle in a single nearly four-hour production.

There's only so much they can do, after all, and there is no one like Kimmel to remind everyone that it is still the movie industry.

In an aside about the pay disparity between Mark Wahlberg and Michelle Williams for "All the Money in the World" reshoots, Kimmel said upon discovering that both actors were represented by the same talent

agency that, "This one shook me."

"If we can't trust agents, who can we trust?"

AP Film Writer Jake Coyle and writers Andrew Dalton, Nicole Evatt, Sandy Cohen and Kristin M. Hall contributed to this report.

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

Aid convoy enters besieged rebel-held Damascus suburbs

By ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Desperate for food and basic medicines, many of the besieged and bombarded Syrian civilians in Damascus' eastern suburbs of Ghouta waited on Monday as a 46-truck convoy organized by the United Nations and key aid agencies began entering the rebel-held enclave.

The U.N.'s humanitarian office said the convoy with health and nutrition supplies, along with food for 27,500 people in need, entered the town of Douma in the besieged eastern Ghouta. In a Twitter posting, it said however that many life-saving health supplies were not allowed to be loaded.

The delivery would be the first to the region in nearly three weeks and the first to Douma, the largest and most populated town in eastern Ghouta, since November.

U.N. officials had said that lack of approvals and consensus among the warring parties, as well as the limited duration of a daily, five-hour Russian-ordered humanitarian pause, had made aid delivery impossible.

Eastern Ghouta, home to some 400,000 people, has been under a crippling siege and daily bombardment for months. More than 600 civilians have been killed in the last two weeks alone.

"This delivery of assistance is a first positive step that would lessen the suffering of the civilians in the area," said Ingy Sedky, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Damascus.

"However, more needs to be done in the coming period," she added. "A one-time aid delivery will never be enough to fulfil the needs. Repeated and continuous access to Eastern Ghouta by humanitarian organizations is a must."

Sedky said Monday's delivery includes 5,500 food and flour bags enough for 27,500 people, in addition to wheat flour, medical and surgical items.

Pawel Krzysiek of the International Committee of the Red Cross said earlier that the inter-agency convoy had arrived in Wafideen, a key crossing point set up by the Syrian government for civilians wishing to leave eastern Ghouta and also for aid to enter the enclave.

"Feels like racing with time," Krzysiek said in a tweet.

Tarik Jaserevic, a spokesman for the World Health Organization, also said that during Monday's obligatory routine inspection conducted by Syrian authorities, many of the supplies in the WHO shipment were rejected — including all trauma, surgical, dialysis kits and insulin.

The only U.N. delivery of assistance to eastern Ghouta so far this year was on Feb. 14, when a convoy with assistance for 7,200 people reached Nashabiyah, a town in the suburbs.

Syrian President Bashar Assad vowed on Sunday to continue with the military offensive in eastern Ghouta, saying the five-hour daily "humanitarian pause" for the area would continue, to allow for any civilians wishing to leave to do so.

"There is no contradiction between the truce and the military operation," Assad said in comments broadcast on Syrian TV.

The daily humanitarian pause was ordered last week by Russian President Vladimir Putin, a key ally of Assad. It has been implemented with daily violations for the past week, although no civilians have left the encircled region.

The Syrian government, meanwhile, said it achieved "significant" progress in its ongoing military operation in eastern Ghouta, seizing around 36 percent of the total area held by different armed groups.

Syria's Central Military Media said troops continued their advance from the east and were only 3 kilome-

ters (1.8 miles) from meeting up with troops advancing from the west, which would cut eastern Ghouta into two parts.

Monday's announcement came a day after troops recaptured Nashabiyah and a number of villages and farms in eastern Ghouta in the largest advances since the government's wide-scale operation began last month.

In Geneva, the U.N.'s top human rights body on Monday called for U.N.-mandated investigators for Syria to conduct an urgent and targeted probe of the recent violence in eastern Ghouta.

The Human Rights Council adopted a resolution proposed by Britain instructing its Commission of Inquiry on Syria, created six-and-a-half years ago, to conduct a "comprehensive and independent inquiry into the recent events" in eastern Ghouta and report back at the next council session in June.

The resolution also threw the council's support behind a Security Council resolution passed last month, calling for a 30-day cease-fire across Syria to allow humanitarian aid in and to evacuate the sick and injured.

Associated Press writer Jamey Keaten in Geneva contributed to this report.

China pledges strong growth as Xi bids to rule indefinitely

By **JOE McDONALD** and **GILLIAN WONG**, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's government pledged Monday to deliver robust growth, pursue advanced technology and boost military spending while urging the public to embrace President Xi Jinping's rule as its ceremonial legislature prepared for changes to allow Xi to stay in power indefinitely.

The plan to end constitutional limits on Xi's term as president has overshadowed the meeting of the National People's Congress, which usually is used to showcase economic initiatives and plans for social programs and other government work.

In a nearly two-hour speech to the legislature, Premier Li Keqiang did not mention the scrapping of term limits but emphasized the primacy of Xi and the ruling Communist Party he leads in all aspects of Chinese life.

"Resolutely safeguard General Secretary Xi Jinping's core status and the authority of the party's central committee and its centralized and unified leadership," Li said in a speech to nearly 3,000 delegates to the ceremonial legislature in the Great Hall of the People.

The slide toward one-man rule under Xi, already China's most dominant figure of recent decades, has fueled concern that Beijing is eroding efforts to guard against the excesses of autocratic leadership and make economic regulation more stable and predictable.

The president's office has few powers, but Xi's posts as ruling party general secretary and chairman of the commission that controls the party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, already have no term limit. By tradition since the early 1990s, one person has held all three posts at the same time.

"If it gets approved, you can describe his attempt to abolish term limits as really to make China medieval again, not to make China great again," said Warren Sun, a historian of the Chinese Communist Party at Australia's Monash University.

The 64-year-old Xi has appointed himself to head bodies that oversee national security, finance, economic reform and other functions, effectively sidelining Li, the party's No. 2 figure.

Chinese officials have defended the end of Xi's term limits as necessary to ensure continuity as Beijing undertakes a sprawling long-range agenda aimed at making state industry competitive and productive, developing profitable high-tech industry, reducing poverty and cleaning up China's battered environment.

In line with this agenda, Li set this year's growth target at around 6.5 percent, which would be among the world's strongest if achieved.

It comes amid a marathon campaign to nurture self-sustaining growth based on domestic consumption instead of trade and investment and to rein in surging debt that prompted ratings agencies to cut Beijing's government credit rating last year.

Li said the target would enable China to achieve "relatively full employment."

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Private sector analysts have questioned whether Beijing can achieve such strong growth without infusions of bank lending and government spending, which would set back its reforms.

Last year's growth came in at 6.9 percent, but that was supported by a boom in bank lending and real estate sales that regulators are trying to rein in amid concern about debt that has soared to the equivalent of 270 percent of annual economic output — unusually high for a developing country.

Li promised progress on an array of politically challenging plans, including the restructuring or bankruptcy of "zombie enterprises," money-losing but politically favored companies that are kept afloat by loans from government banks.

The premier said Beijing will speed up state-led development of integrated circuits, mobile communications, aircraft engines, electric cars and other technology.

China's military spending, already the world's second-highest behind the United States, will rise 8.1 percent to 1.1 trillion yuan (\$173 billion) as Beijing prepares to launch its second aircraft carrier and develop stealth fighters and advanced missiles.

"We will stick to the Chinese path in strengthening our armed forces, advance all aspects of military training and war preparedness," Li said. He said the military would "firmly and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests."

The move to consolidate even more power under Xi comes as foreign governments, already wary of China's expanding influence abroad, are closely watching shifts toward greater authoritarianism.

Chinese investments abroad in technology and banking are under closer scrutiny, while foreign companies and governments complain that Beijing hampers access to its markets in violation of its free-trade commitments.

Xi's ambitious "Belt and Road" initiative to link up Asia and Europe by building roads, ports and other infrastructure has raised concerns about Beijing's strategic ambitions and debt burdens for host countries.

The move has been met with widespread concern among liberal intellectuals and political observers. Members of the ceremonial legislature, unsurprisingly, expressed support for the scrapping of term limits.

"This is conducive to the continuation of the management of our country," said delegate Li Xiuxiang, a professor at the Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics. "It can keep the system stable over the long term and lay a good foundation for the system's gradual reform."

Legislators also are due to endorse the appointment of economic and other officials picked by the party. That is widely expected to include the promotion of Xi's top economic adviser to a post overseeing reform.

Associated Press writer Christopher Bodeen and researchers Fu Ting and Yu Bing contributed to this report.

Trump embracing potential for trade war

By **ZEKE MILLER** and **KEVIN FREKING**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is embracing the potential for a trade war after announcing his intent to place tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, as he rebuffs allies who have pushed to be exempted from the stiff duties.

The protectionist policy will be made official in the next two weeks, White House officials said Sunday, as the administration defended the decision from critics in Washington and overseas.

Trump appeared unbowed Sunday, as he tweeted that American "Steel and Aluminum industries are dead. Sorry, it's time for a change!"

Trump's pronouncement Thursday that he would impose tariffs of 25 percent and 10 percent, respectively, on imported steel and aluminum, roiled markets and rankled allies. While his rhetoric has been focused on China, the duties will also cover significant imports from Canada, Mexico, South Korea, Japan and the European Union.

Speaking on CNN's "State of the Union," White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said: "At this point in time there's no country exclusions."

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The across-the-board action breaks with the recommendation of the Pentagon, which pushed for more targeted tariffs on metals imports from countries like China and warned that a wide-ranging move would jeopardize national security partnerships. But Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, whose agency oversaw reviews of the industries that recommended the tariffs, said Sunday ABC's "This Week" that Trump is "talking about a fairly broad brush."

Republican South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham said the sweeping action would let China "off the hook," adding the tariffs would drive a wedge between the U.S. and its allies.

"China wins when we fight with Europe," he said on CBS's "Face the Nation." "China wins when the American consumer has higher prices because of tariffs that don't affect Chinese behavior."

Trump has threatened to tax European cars if the EU boosts tariffs on American products in response to the president's plan to increase duties on steel and aluminum.

British Prime Minister Theresa May raised her "deep concern" at the tariff announcement in a phone call with Trump Sunday.

May's office says she "raised our deep concern at the president's forthcoming announcement on steel and aluminum tariffs, noting that multilateral action was the only way to resolve the problem of global overcapacity."

But Ross rejected threats of retaliation from American allies as "pretty trivial" and not much more than a "rounding error."

Few issues could blur the lines of partisanship in Trump-era Washington. Trade is one of them.

Labor unions and liberal Democrats are in the unusual position of applauding Trump's approach, while Republicans and an array of business groups are warning of dire economic and political consequences if he goes ahead with the tariffs.

Trade politics often cut along regional, rather than ideological, lines, as politicians reflect the interests of the hometown industries and workers. But rarely does a debate open so wide a rift between a president and his party — leaving him almost exclusively with support from his ideological opposites.

"Good, finally," said Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat and progressive as he cheered Trump's move. Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, a Democrat who has called for Trump to resign, agreed.

"I urge the administration to follow through and to take aggressive measures to ensure our workers can compete on a level playing field," Casey tweeted.

This moment of unusual alliance was long expected. As a candidate, Trump made his populist and protectionist positions on trade quite clear, at times hitting the same themes as one of the Democratic presidential candidates, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

"This wave of globalization has wiped out totally, totally our middle class," Trump told voters in the hard-hit steel town of Monessen, Pennsylvania, during one of his campaign stops. "It doesn't have to be this way."

Trump's criticism of trade agreements and China's trade policies found support with white working-class Americans whose wages had stagnated over the years. Victories in big steel-producing states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania and Indiana demonstrated that his tough trade talk had a receptive audience.

Both candidates in a March 13 House election in Pennsylvania have embraced the president's plans for tariffs. They addressed the topic Saturday in a debate that aired on WTAE in Pittsburgh.

"For too long, China has been making cheap steel and they've been flooding the market with it. It's not fair and it's not right. So I actually think this is long overdue," said Democratic candidate Conor Lamb.

"Unfortunately, many of our competitors around the world have slanted the playing field, and their thumb has been on the scale, and I think President Trump is trying to even that scale back out," said Republican candidate Rick Saccone.

But Trump's GOP allies on Capitol Hill have little use for the tariff approach. They argue that other industries that rely on steel and aluminum products will suffer. The cost of new appliances, cars and buildings will rise if the president follows through, they warn, and other nations could retaliate. The end result could erode the president's base of support with rural America and even the blue-collar workers the president says he trying to help.

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"There is always retaliation, and typically a lot of these countries single out agriculture when they do that. So, we're very concerned," said Sen. John Thune, R-S.D.

Gov. Scott Walker, R-Wis., asked the administration to reconsider its stance. He said American companies could move their operations abroad and not face retaliatory tariffs.

"This scenario would lead to the exact opposite outcome of the administration's stated objective, which is to protect American jobs," Walker said.

The Business Roundtable's Josh Bolten, a chief of staff for President George W. Bush, called on Trump to have "the courage" to step back from his campaign rhetoric on trade.

"Sometimes a president needs to, you need to stick to your principles but you also need to recognize in cases where stuff you said in the campaign isn't right and ought to be drawn back," he said on "Fox News Sunday." "The president needs to have the courage to do that."

Tim Phillips, president of the Koch Brothers-backed Americans for Prosperity, noted that Trump narrowly won in Iowa and Wisconsin, two heavily rural states that could suffer if countries impose retaliatory tariffs on American agricultural goods.

"It hurts the administration politically because trade wars, protectionism, they lead to higher prices for individual Americans," Phillips said. "It's basically a tax increase."

The president wasn't backing down, at least on Twitter, where he posted this message: "Trade wars are good, and easy to win."

Follow Zeke Miller on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ZekeJMiller> and Kevin Freking at <https://twitter.com/APkfreking>

Seoul envoys to meet N. Korea's Kim during Pyongyang trip

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Envoys for South Korean President Moon Jae-in planned to meet Monday with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the start of a rare two-day visit to Pyongyang that's expected to focus on how to ease a standoff over North Korea's nuclear ambitions and restart talks between Pyongyang and Washington.

The 10-member South Korean delegation is led by Moon's national security director, Chung Eui-yong. The meeting with Kim, which was announced by Moon's office, would mark the first time South Korean officials have met with the young North Korean leader in person since he took power after his dictator father's death in late 2011. Chung's trip is the first known high-level visit by South Korean officials to the North in about a decade.

It wasn't immediately clear what they would discuss or what else is on the itinerary of South Korean envoys' trip. But hopes are high that the Koreas can extend the good feelings created by North Korea's participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea last month. Kim's barrage of weapons tests over the last year has raised fears of war.

If North Korea shows a willingness to disarm during the visit by the South Koreans, there is speculation that it and Washington could set up their own talks on the North's nuclear weapons. But North Korea has repeatedly said it won't put its nuclear program up for negotiation, while the United States has made clear that it doesn't want empty talks and that all options, including military measures, are on the table. Previous warming ties between the Koreas have come to nothing because of North Korean weapons tests and the North's claims that annual U.S.-South Korean war games, which will likely happen this spring, are a rehearsal for an invasion.

After their arrival in Pyongyang, the South Korean envoys met North Korean officials and worked out details of their trip, which includes attending a dinner hosted by Kim on Monday, according to Moon's office.

North Korean officials had no immediate comment. The country's state-run media reported that the delegation had arrived but had no further details.

Before leaving for Pyongyang, Chung said he will relay to North Korea Moon's hopes for North Korean

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nuclear disarmament and a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.

"I will certainly deliver President Moon's firm resolve to achieve a denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and genuine and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula," Chung said. He said he'll push for "in-depth" talks to find ways to help arrange the restart of dialogue between Pyongyang and Washington.

Chung's delegation includes intelligence chief Suh Hoon and Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung. The presidential Blue House said the high-profile delegation is meant to reciprocate the trip by Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, who became the first member of the North's ruling family to come to South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Kim Yo Jong and other senior North Korean officials met with Moon, conveyed Kim Jong Un's invitation to visit Pyongyang and expressed their willingness to hold talks with the United States.

After the Pyongyang trip, Chung's delegation is to fly to the United States to brief officials about the outcome of the talks with North Korean officials.

President Donald Trump said talks with North Korea will happen only "under the right conditions." Moon has yet to accept Kim's invitation to visit Pyongyang for what would be the third inter-Korean summit talks. The past two summit talks, one in 2000 and the other in 2007, were held between Kim's late father, Kim Jong Il, and two liberal South Korean presidents.

Some experts say the North's outreach during the Olympics was an attempt to use improved ties with South Korea as a way to break out of diplomatic isolation and weaken U.S.-led international sanctions and pressure on the country.

US Navy carrier's visit to Vietnam puts China on notice

By TRAN VAN MINH, Associated Press

DANANG, Vietnam (AP) — For the first time since the Vietnam War, a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier is paying a visit to a Vietnamese port, seeking to bolster both countries' efforts to stem expansionism by China in the South China Sea.

Monday's visit by the USS Carl Vinson brings more than 5,000 crewmembers to the central coastal city of Danang, the largest such U.S. military presence in Vietnam since the Southeast Asian nation was unified under Communist leadership after the war ended in 1975.

The Carl Vinson, accompanied by a cruiser and a destroyer, is visiting as China increases its military buildup in the Paracel islands and seven artificial islands in the Spratlys in maritime territory also claimed by Vietnam. China claims most of the South China Sea and has challenged traditional U.S. naval supremacy in the western Pacific.

"The visit of aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson to Vietnam signifies an increased level of trust between the two former enemies, a strengthened defense relationship between them, and reflects America's continued naval engagement with the region," said Le Hong Hiep, a research fellow at the Singapore-based ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

The ship's mission includes technical exchanges, sports matches and visits to an orphanage and a center for victims of Agent Orange, a toxic defoliant sprayed by U.S. forces to deny cover for Communist fighters during the war. It marks a fine-tuning, rather than a turning point, in relations. The U.S. Navy has staged activities in Vietnam for its Pacific Partnership humanitarian and civic missions in nine of the past 12 years.

U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink praised the carrier's visit.

"I think the visit by USS Carl Vinson demonstrates our commitment to the U.S.- Vietnam partnership. It also demonstrates the dramatic progress we made in our bilateral relationship in recent years," he said.

The ambassador said the two countries share a range of interests that include "a desire to maintain peace, prosperity, unimpeded commerce, freedom of navigation upon which the region and its economies depend."

The United States normalized relations with Vietnam in 1995 and lifted an arms embargo in 2016, and the two former adversaries have steadily improved relations in all areas, including trade, investment and security.

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The visit of an aircraft carrier — a more than 100,000-ton manifestation of U.S. global military projection — reaffirms closer relations as Beijing flexes its political, economic and military muscle in Southeast Asia, and Washington seeks to re-establish its influence.

“Although the visit is mainly symbolic and would not be able to change China’s behavior, especially in the South China Sea, it is still necessary in conveying the message that the U.S. will be there to stay,” Hiep said.

Separately from this week’s mission, U.S. officials say American warships continue sailing without prior notice close to China-occupied islands and atolls, an aggressive way of signaling to Beijing that the U.S. does not recognize its sovereignty over those areas.

Hiep said the Carl Vinson’s visit is likely to irritate China, but that Beijing will not take it too seriously.

“They understand well the strategic rationale behind the rapprochement between Vietnam and the U.S., which was largely driven by China’s growing assertiveness in the South China Sea,” he said. “However, China also knows that Vietnam is unlikely to side with the U.S. militarily to challenge China.”

Vietnam, while traditionally wary of its huge northern neighbor, shares China’s system of single-party rule and intolerance for political dissent.

Economic relations with the United States in recent years have served as a counterbalance to Vietnam’s political affinity with China.

“The United States now is a very important trading partner with Vietnam and it is the most important destination of Vietnam’s exports,” said Joseph Cheng, a professor of political science at the City University of Hong Kong. “In terms of security, both countries certainly share substantial common interest in the containment of China in view of the territorial dispute between China and Vietnam.”

“However, it seems that Vietnam does not intend to become an ally of the United States. It is basically a kind of hedging strategy, a kind of balance of power strategy,” he said.

The first U.S. Marines arrived in Danang in 1965, marking the beginning of large-scale American involvement in the Vietnam War. Some 58,000 American soldiers and an estimated 3 million Vietnamese were killed in the war.

Danang, which was a major U.S. military base during the war, is now Vietnam’s third-largest city and is in the midst of a construction boom as dozens of resorts and hotels pop up along its scenic coastline.

Several Danang residents said Monday that they welcomed the Navy visit.

“During the war, I was scared when I saw American soldiers,” said Tran Thi Luyen, 55, who runs a small coffee shop in the city. “Now the aircraft carrier comes with a completely different mission, a mission of peace and promoting economic and military cooperation between the two countries.”

Huynh Quang Nguyen, a taxi driver, echoed the sentiment.

“I’m very happy and excited with the carrier’s visit,” he said. “Increased cooperation between the two countries in economic, diplomatic and military areas would serve as a counterbalance to Beijing’s expansionism.”

This story has been corrected to show that ship has more than 5,000 crewmembers, not 6,000.

Euroskeptic parties surge in Italy election, but no majority

By FRANCES D’EMILIO and COLLEEN BARRY, Associated Press

ROME (AP) — A rival pair of populist and stridently anti-European Union political forces surged in Italy’s parliamentary election at the expense of the country’s traditional political powers, but neither gained enough support to govern alone, preliminary results showed Monday.

With no faction winning a clear majority and a hung Parliament expected, the results confirmed that negotiations to form a new government that can win a confidence vote will be long and fraught. Financial markets opened lower and were volatile in early trading Monday.

“Ungovernable Italy” headlined daily newspaper La Stampa as the early numbers rolled in.

Preliminary results released by Italy’s interior ministry showed the center-right coalition winning about 37 percent of the parliamentary vote and the 5-Star Movement getting about 32 percent, with the center-left

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coalition far behind with 23 percent.

In an upset, the results showed the right-wing, anti-immigrant and euroskeptic League party of Matteo Salvini surpassing the longtime anchor of the center-right, the Forza Italia party of ex-Premier Silvio Berlusconi. According to the partial results, the League captured around 18 percent of the vote, while Forza Italia had less than 14 percent.

With the anti-establishment 5-Stars the highest vote-getter of any single party, the results confirmed the defeat of the two main political forces that have dominated Italian politics for decades — Forza Italia and the center-left Democrats — and the surging of populist and right-wing, euroskeptic forces that have burst onto the European scene.

“The European Union is having a bad evening,” French far-right leader Marine Le Pen tweeted. British far-right, pro-Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage also congratulated the 5-Stars.

The 5-Star Movement considers itself an internet-based democracy, not a party, and views established parties as a parasitic caste. Since its birth in 2009 under the auspices of comic Beppe Grillo, the 5-Stars have attracted legions of mostly young Italians who are facing few job prospects and are fed up with Italy’s traditional politicians.

The 5-Stars had a remarkably strong showing in the south, which has long been a stronghold of the center-right and Forza Italia.

The 5-Stars’ 31-year-old candidate to be premier, Luigi Di Maio, exulted as first projections appeared on TV screens in a Rome hotel. He jumped for joy and hugged aides.

Another 5-Star leader, Alessandro Di Battista, said other parties “will have to come to us” to negotiate, not the other way around. But in a sign of the 5-Stars’ longtime aversion to forming coalitions, he warned that they only would hold such talks if those parties use the movement’s methods of “transparency and correctness.”

During the campaign, Di Maio backed off early 5-Star policy to push for a referendum to get Italy out of the euro-currency group. But 5-Star members, who espouse a range of ideology-defying pro-green, anti-bank views, rail against what they say are excessive EU rules.

The League, which only captured 4 percent of the national vote in the last general election in 2013, was particularly strong in the north, its traditional base. In Veneto, where it won 11 percent in 2013, it captured around 48 percent this time around.

Salvini, who never has held public office in Italy, fed public anger at the EU’s inability to help handle hundreds of thousands of migrants who flooded the country in recent years after being rescued while crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

Between the League and the 5-Stars, the partial results showed that the two parties with the most euroskeptic platforms together topped the 50 percent needed to rule Italy. While the two are rivals, that scenario has been seen as the key barometer to gauge Italy’s future relations with Brussels, and a “nightmare scenario” for the European Union and markets if they were to form an unlikely alliance.

Claudio Borghi of the League told Sky that the election results send a clear message to Brussels, and he didn’t rule out a melding of positions with 5-Star.

“I think the will of the Italian people is very clear. The forces in favor of what Europe has done have been redimensioned,” Borghi told Sky TG24. “It’s a very strong message.”

It will now be up to President Sergio Mattarella, a constitutional scholar, to sound out the political parties to determine who has the best chances of forming a government. The head of state has a ceremonial position that is meant to be above the political fray.

Headed to a stunning loss and potentially historic low was the Democratic Party, the main partner in the center-left government that has ruled Italy since 2013.

Agriculture Minister Maurizio Martina called the outcome “a complete defeat.” The Democrats received 25 percent in 2013 and have occupied the premier’s office since then.

Under former Premier Matteo Renzi’s heavy-handed party leadership, the Democrats bickered and splintered, with more left-leaning elements defecting to form a smaller party. Many pundits hypothesized Renzi would have to resign as Democratic party secretary.

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While before the election one possible outcome had been a grand coalition uniting the center-right and center-left, that option seemed less likely given the League's victory over Forza Italia and the utter defeat of the Democrats.

Political analyst Lorenzo Codogno of London-based LC Macro Advisors observed that a hung Parliament would make it "extremely difficult for a narrow mainstream coalition to have the numbers to govern."

Barry reported from Milan; Nicole Winfield in Rome also contributed to this report.

Phil Mickelson a winner again and wants more

By DOUG FERGUSON, AP Golf Writer

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Phil Mickelson knew this was coming, even when he had so little to show for it. Mickelson had gone 101 tournaments around the world since he last won at Muirfield in the 2013 British Open, which moved him to No. 2 in the world and gave him the third leg of the career Grand Slam. In more than two decades on the PGA Tour, he had gone only two seasons without winning.

And then it was up to four straight years and counting.

There was more frustration than self-doubt. And with Mickelson, even at age 47, there was never a loss of confidence.

"I knew that wasn't going to be my last one, no," he said Sunday. "And this isn't either."

The most recent one came in the high altitude of the Mexico Championship, and it was another pulsating performance, as often is the case with Mickelson.

Five birdies in the opening 10 holes gave him the lead. Right when he was on the verge of taking control, he went for the green on the par-5 11th hole only for the shot to carom off a tree and into the bushes near the edge of Chapultepec Golf Club. Deep in the bushes, he blasted out and hit the crowd. He wound up making bogey. Then came another wild drive that bounced along the cart path, forcing him to scramble for par.

Three groups ahead of him, Justin Thomas delivered the shot of the tournament. Eleven shots behind going into the weekend and suddenly tied for the lead, Thomas holed out from 119 yards on the final hole for eagle to cap off a 62-64 weekend as he went for his second straight victory.

"I didn't know that he holed out," Mickelson said. "I just saw that he finished at 16 under when I was playing the 15th, and that meant that I needed to birdie two to get even with him."

And that's what he did. A perfect drive and a 6-iron for a two-putt birdie, and then a 20-foot birdie on the 16th.

Mickelson closed with a 66 and headed to a sudden-death playoff with Thomas, a duel between players separated by 23 years of age. Missing from the group was Tyrrell Hatton, who delivered his own charge with four straight 3s on his card, the last one an eagle to tie for the lead. But he missed the 18th green with a wedge, chipped strong and missed the par putt.

The sudden-death playoff ended quickly. Thomas went long with a gap wedge to the par-3 17th and chipped to 10 feet short of the hole. Mickelson hit the green, narrowly missed the birdie putt and walked off a winner — finally — when Thomas missed his putt.

The disappointment was tempered by the guy who beat him.

Mickelson took interest in Thomas before he even reached the PGA Tour. They played a practice round at the 2014 U.S. Open, and Mickelson said that day to the media, "You'll get to know Justin Thomas soon enough."

Thomas, the PGA Tour player of the year last season and already a two-time winner this season, moved to No. 2 in the world.

He is the type of player — along with Dustin Johnson, Jordan Spieth, Jon Rahm, Jason Day and Rory McIlroy — who represent a powerful young generation that Mickelson now has to beat if he wants to reach one of his goals.

Mickelson, who captured his third World Golf Championship, now has 43 victories on the PGA Tour. The

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first was in 1991 — before Thomas, Spieth and Rahm were even born — when he was an amateur. He has long said he wants to get to 50.

The more pertinent number might be 48. That's how old Mickelson will be in June. No one has won more than five times on the PGA Tour after turning 47.

"Oh, I will," Mickelson said about reaching 50 titles. "I'll get there."

That's not all he wants. One of his chief goals for the year was to be on his 12th consecutive Ryder Cup team for a chance to win in Europe, which he has never done. The victory should be enough to move him to No. 4 in the standings. Given his value in the team room, winning the Mexico Championship makes it hard to overlook Mickelson.

Left unsaid is the U.S. Open, the only major keeping him from the career Grand Slam. It returns this summer to Shinnecock Hills, where Mickelson was on the cusp of winning the last two times in 1995 and 2004.

For now, the focus is on the Masters and a chance to add a fourth green jacket.

"I needed to get a win before Augusta so I wasn't trying to win for the first time in four-and-a-half, five years at that event," he said.

He got his validation in Mexico City. It was meaningful because it was the first victory since he began working with Andrew Getson, and the first victory with his younger brother, Tim, as his caddie. And it was the next victory, no matter how long it took.

"I don't think this is the peak," he said. "I think I'm going to continue to get better."

Ohio race shows how NRA flexes its political muscle

By RICHARD LARDNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The National Rifle Association pounced when former Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland, a Democrat running for the U.S. Senate, declared at an AFL-CIO event in Cleveland that the death of conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia "happened at a good time."

Scalia remains a hero to many gun owners and the NRA alerted its members to Strickland's disrespect. It was part of a barrage by the group to portray its one-time ally as an anti-gun politician interested only in money and power.

"That was painful," said Strickland, recalling the NRA's effort to tear down the public trust he'd spent years building. "They were out to get me."

The anti-Strickland campaign in the battleground state of Ohio two years ago is a window into how the influential gun rights group wields its political muscle. That clout will be on display heading into the 2018 midterm elections as gun control advocates demand swift action following the Feb. 14 shooting at a high school in Florida.

The NRA's deep pockets and bare-knuckled approach leave the impression it effectively purchases loyalty from lawmakers. But the NRA actually donates small amounts of money to candidates when compared to the large sums it spends on potent get-out-the-vote operations and ad campaigns.

NRA-funded advertisements that air on cable networks and travel across the internet during the months and weeks before an election are carefully crafted to warn members of candidates that, if elected, will come for their guns. The NRA's political action committee, the Political Victory Fund, also grades elected officials on an A to F scale, a shorthand voting guide that steers members to pro-gun candidates.

The Political Victory Fund and the NRA's lobbying arm spent about \$52.5 million overall during the 2016 elections on "independent expenditures," according to political money website OpenSecrets.org. There's no limit on this type of campaign spending and it includes money for television and online advertising, mailers and other forms of communication designed to support or oppose a particular candidate.

Nearly 70 percent of the NRA's 2016 budget was used to target Democrats, with Hillary Clinton topping the list of candidates the group sought to defeat. The rest went to backing Donald Trump and congressional Republicans who've consistently shot down attempts by Democrats to approve gun control measures in the wake of mass shootings in the United States.

But pressure for at least modest firearms restrictions is heavy after 17 people were killed at Marjory

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Stoneman Douglas High School, which in turn raises the stakes for the NRA. Trump stunned his GOP allies last week when he sided with Democrats by urging quick and substantial changes to the nation's gun laws. Yet later, after meeting with Trump, NRA leaders declared the president and his administration "don't want gun control." The mixed messages brought action on gun legislation in Congress to a halt.

The figures compiled by Open Secrets show that in Ohio the NRA spent nearly \$1.6 million to oppose Strickland in the 2016 Senate race, while devoting about half as much to support the Republican incumbent, Sen. Rob Portman, who defeated Strickland by a wide margin.

The NRA donated \$9,900 directly to Portman's campaign, the same amount the group gave to 12 other Republican lawmakers. Unlike independent expenditures, donations from individuals and PACs are capped for each election cycle. Portman said the NRA's money represented just a fraction of the more than \$25 million his campaign raised in 2016 and he denied the gun group acquired any leverage through the donations.

"I never make a decision based on a contribution," Portman said. "That's just not how you operate."

The NRA's Political Victory Fund ran its first ad against Strickland in July when the Ohio Senate race was still competitive, and the 30-second spot illustrates the gun group's tactics. Strickland is portrayed as a traitor for turning his back on gun rights.

"Ted Strickland. Out for power. Out for money. Out . . . for himself," the narrator said as suspenseful music plays in the background.

Strickland said the NRA succeeded in shifting the impression many Ohioans had of him. Suddenly it didn't matter as much that he was a steelworker's son who'd grown up on a dirt road in the state's Appalachia region. Or that he was raised among guns and just a few years before the Senate race had earned the NRA's coveted A+ rating.

All that mattered to the NRA was that Strickland, troubled by a spate of mass shootings, had changed his mind. After stepping down as governor, he joined a liberal advocacy group and backed comprehensive background checks for gun buyers and a ban on assault-style rifles.

David Niven, a professor of American politics at the University of Cincinnati, said the NRA almost certainly wanted to punish Strickland for being an "apostate" on top of ensuring the gun-friendly GOP maintained its majority in the Senate. Political action committees and other outside groups tend to sweep in during the last stages of an election, but Niven said the NRA got an early start in Ohio.

"I don't think there's any question that they intended their participation in this race to send a message," Niven said. "There was something intolerable to them about having an ally turn into a skeptic."

Strickland served in Congress for more than a decade until 2006, when he successfully ran for governor with the NRA's backing. He got the group's support a second time when he ran for re-election in 2010, but lost to Republican John Kasich as the governor's race centered on economic woes gripping the state.

The NRA's endorsement commended Strickland as "an unwavering defender of our Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms" and noted his opposition to a 2004 ban on certain semi-automatic weapons while in Congress and his signature on an update of concealed carry laws.

But that opinion changed drastically after Strickland in 2014 became president of the left-leaning Center for American Progress Action, which the NRA called a "radical anti-gun group" for proposing gun control measures.

When Strickland sought to unseat Portman two years later, the NRA "reframed the race in ways that were detrimental to me," he said. Trump won Ohio by about 447,000 votes. Scioto, Strickland's home county on the border with Kentucky, backed Trump and Portman overwhelmingly.

The NRA's opposition had an effect, Strickland said, but he didn't believe it was the deciding factor in his loss to Portman.

Portman raised \$25 million, more than twice as much as Strickland did, and won over labor unions that had once been firmly in Strickland's corner. As Strickland failed to gain traction with voters, national Democrats pulled millions of dollars in planned pro-Strickland ads out of the state more than a month before the election.

The NRA wasn't the only one funneling money into Ohio. Outside groups, including those tied to the billionaire Koch brothers, spent upward of \$30 million on anti-Strickland ads focused on Ohio's economy during his governorship, which coincided with the national recession.

The NRA struck out in Nevada and New Hampshire, where the Democratic candidates won despite the gun group's opposition. In Nevada, a battleground state like Ohio, the NRA plowed \$2.4 million into the race to stop Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto. She won narrowly.

"They spent millions of dollars to try to beat me and didn't," said Masto, a former federal prosecutor who served for eight years as Nevada's attorney general before her Senate run. "It was ridiculous."

Contact Richard Lardner on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/rplardner>

Frances McDormand caps win streak with best-actress Oscar

By BETH HARRIS, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Frances McDormand capped an awards season of accolades with the biggest one of all: an Oscar for best actress.

After sweeping trophies at the Golden Globes, Screen Actors Guild, Independent Spirit and BAFTA ceremonies, McDormand won for "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri."

She played Mildred Hayes, a hardened woman seeking justice for her daughter's murder in the crime drama.

McDormand rarely does anything A-list actresses are known to do: wear designer gowns, walk red carpets or politic during awards season. Yet she collected all the biggest trophies.

"I don't do everything, as you know," she said backstage. "I don't show up all the time. I only show up when I can and when I want to."

At the Spirit awards on Oscar eve, McDormand said it had been hard not to swear the last couple months because "this awards convention goes on (expletive) forever."

After offering thanks on Sunday night, McDormand turned serious and said, "Now I want to get some perspective."

She asked all the other female nominees in every category to stand up in the audience.

"Meryl, if you do it, everyone else will," she said to best-actress nominee Meryl Streep, who sat in the front row of the Dolby Theatre.

"Look around everybody, because we all have stories to tell and projects that need to be financed," McDormand said, urging the decision-makers not to talk about proposals at the post-show parties but to meet in the office.

Backstage, she noted the Time's Up movement that took hold at the Golden Globes in January.

"We're going to be one of the small industries that try to make a difference," McDormand said. "I think \$21 million in the legal defense fund is a great way to start and the commission that's being headed by Anita Hill. That's really smart. We actually started a conversation that will change something."

McDormand picked up her trophy that she had set down backstage, thrust it upside down in the air and marched out of the room.

She beat out Sally Hawkins of "The Shape of Water," Margot Robbie of "I, Tonya," Saoirse Ronan of "Lady Bird," and 21-time nominee Streep of "The Post."

It was the second Oscar win for McDormand. Her first came in 1996 for "Fargo," directed by her husband Joel Coen and his brother Ethan.

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

'Shape of Water' triumphs at an Oscars awash in change

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Against all odds, love won out at the 90th Academy Awards.

Guillermo del Toro's lavish, full-hearted monster romance "The Shape of Water" swam away with best picture at an Oscar ceremony flooded by a sense of a change for a movie business confronting the post-Harvey Weinstein era. The ceremony, held Sunday at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, exorcised some demons — like last year's envelope fiasco — and wrestled with other, deeper problems in Hollywood, like gender equality and diversity.

"The Shape of Water," which came in with 13 nods, took a leading four awards, including best production design, best score and best director for del Toro. The Cold War-set movie, about a mute woman and a captive fish-man, is del Toro's Technicolor ode to outsiders of all kinds — and species.

"The greatest thing that art does, and that our industry does, is erase the lines in the sand," said del Toro, accepting the best director award.

Del Toro became the third Mexican-born filmmaker to win the award, joining his friends and countrymen Alejandro Inarritu and Alfonso Cuarón — who once were dubbed "the Three Amigos." He dedicated the best picture award to young filmmakers — "the youth who are showing us how things are done."

The night's final award was handed out again by Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway, a year after the infamous "Moonlight"/"La La Land" error. "It's so nice seeing you again," said Beatty with a grin.

The ceremony was the crescendo of one of Hollywood's most turbulent awards seasons ever — one that saw cascading allegations of sexual harassment topple movie moguls, upended Oscar campaigns and new movements sparked like Time's Up.

Much of Sunday's broadcast, hosted for the second straight year by Jimmy Kimmel, seemed to point a way forward for the industry. "It's a new day in Hollywood," said presenter Jennifer Lawrence, who with Jodie Foster, subbed for last year's best-actor winner, Casey Affleck, in presenting the best-actress award.

The award went to Frances McDormand for "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri," a movie about a furious woman out for justice. McDormand asked all the attending female nominees stand up in the theater. There weren't nearly as many as men, despite the historic nominations for Greta Gerwig (the fifth woman nominated for best director) and Rachel Morrison ("Mudbound"), the first woman nominated for best cinematography.

"Look around, ladies and gentlemen, because we all have stories to tell and projects that need financing," declared McDormand. "I have two words to leave with you tonight, ladies and gentlemen: Inclusion Rider" — referring to actors signing contracts that mandate a film's gender and racial inclusivity.

Jordan Peele won for his script to his horror sensation "Get Out," becoming the first African-American to win for best original screenplay. Peele said he stopped writing it "20 times," skeptical that it would ever get made.

"But I kept coming back to it because I knew if someone would let me make this movie, that people would hear it and people would see it," said Peele. "So I want to dedicate this to all the people who raised my voice and let me make this movie."

Things went expected in the acting categories, where three widely admired veteran actors won their first Oscars. Gary Oldman won for his Winston Churchill in "Darkest Hour," Allison Janney ("I, Tonya") took best supporting actress, and Sam Rockwell ("Three Billboards") won best supporting actor. Oldman thanked his nearly 99-year-old mother. "Put the kettle on," he told her. "I'm bringing Oscar home."

But many of the show's most powerful moments came in between the awards. Ashley Judd, Anabella Sciorra and Salma Hayek — who all made allegations of sexual misconduct against Weinstein — together assembled for a mid-show segment dedicated to the #MeToo movement that has followed the downfall of Weinstein, long an Oscar heavyweight. They were met by a standing ovation.

"We work together to make sure the next 90 years empower these limitless possibilities of equality, diversity, inclusion and intersectionality," said Judd. "That's what this year has promised us."

Kimmel opened with a monologue that mixed Weinstein punchlines with earnest comments about re-

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forming gender equality in Hollywood. And of course, Kimmel — returning to the scene of the flub — dove straight into material about last year's infamous best-picture mix-up.

"I do want to mention, this year, when you hear your name called, don't get up right away," said Kimmel. "Give us a minute."

But while Kimmel spent a few moments on the fiasco known as Envelopegate, he expended far more minutes frankly and soberly discussing the parade of sexual harassment allegations in the wake of the revelations regarding Weinstein. Kimmel cited the industry's poor record for female directors and equal pay.

"We can't let bad behavior slide anymore," said Kimmel. "The world is watching us."

Gesturing to a giant statue on the stage, he praised Oscar, himself for keeping "his hands where you can see them" and for having "no penis at all." But Kimmel introduced the broadcast as "a night for positivity," and cited, among other things, the box-office success of "Black Panther" and "Wonder Woman."

"I remember a time when the major studios didn't believe a woman or a minority could open a superhero movie — and the reason I remember that time is because it was March of last year," said Kimmel.

In a year lacking a clear front-runner the awards were spread around. Christopher Nolan's World War II epic "Dunkirk" landed three awards, all for its technical craft: editing, sound editing and sound design.

Several cinema legends won their first Oscar. James Ivory, 89, won best adapted screenplay for his script to the coming-of-age drama "Call Me By Your Name," becoming the oldest winner ever. After 14 nominations, revered cinematographer Roger Deakins finally won for his photography on "Blade Runner 2049."

Pakistan-born comedian Kumail Nanjiani joined Kenyan-born Lupita Nyong'o to salute the so-called Dreamers — immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children and here without permanent protection from deportation. "Dreams are the foundation of Hollywood and dreams are the foundation of America. And, so, to all the Dreamers out there, we stand with you," Nanjiani said.

Later, Pixar's colorful ode to Mexican culture "Coco" won best animated film as well as best song for "Remember Me." Best foreign language film went to Chile's "A Fantastic Woman," Sebastian Lelio's drama starring transgender actress Daniela Vega.

"The biggest thank you of all to the people of Mexico," said director Lee Unkrich to loud applause. "Marginalized people deserve to feel like they belong. Representation matters."

Netflix scored its first feature-film Oscar, with best documentary going to "Icarus," Bryan Fogel's investigation into doping in sports, aided by the assistance of Grigory Rodchenkov, the head of the Russian anti-doping laboratory who candidly discussed the doping scheme under Vladimir Putin. Fogel dedicated the award to Rodchenkov, "our fearless whistleblower who now lives in grave danger."

"Darkest Hour" won for best makeup. The period romance "Phantom Thread" won for costume design.

No Golden Globes-style fashion protest was held 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. "We did the dress code thing and now we're doing the work," said #MeToo founder Tarana Burke on the red carpet.

The parade of sexual harassment allegations made the normal superficial red carpet a place of sometimes more serious discussion than attire. Scrutiny fell Sunday on E! host Ryan Seacrest after his former stylist, Suzie Hardy, alleged sexual harassment against the red-carpet regular. Seacrest has denied it and E! has supported him. Best supporting actress Oscar nominee Mary J. Blige said Seacrest is "fighting for his life right now."

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 4 percent drop from the prior year. Movie attendance also hit a 24-year low in 2017.

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 \$500 million domestically — a kind of tally that dwarfs most of this year's Oscar nominees. The film's star, Chadwick Boseman, was placed front-and-center, at the Dolby Theatre.

With just a few minutes before the show started, Kimmel and his team emerged from his dressing room

chanting, "Let's get it right this time!"

Associated Press' Lindsey Bahr, Nicole Evatt, Sandy Cohen and Kristin M. Hall contributed to this report.

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

Republicans in Congress look to keep a low profile

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After last year's successful drive to cut taxes, what does the majority party in Congress do for an encore? The answer for Republicans seems to be, "Not so much."

For sure, Republicans in Washington feel good about the effect their overhaul of the nation's tax code is having on the economy, and recent polling suggests it's getting more popular as the midterm elections draw closer. But looking ahead to other potential legislation to boast about in hopes of boosting GOP chances of retaining control of the House and Senate, the agenda is pretty thin.

President Donald Trump's trillion-dollar-plus plan to boost infrastructure has landed with a thud. Hopes in the House of taking on welfare reform seem likely to fizzle in the Senate. And issues like immigration and now even gun control invite internal GOP divisions at the height of primary season. Repealing and replacing former President Barack Obama's health care law is off the table.

Instead, the GOP-controlled Congress is looking ahead to a year of abbreviated workweeks and low-profile and small-bore initiatives. The House is spending more and more time on the obscure and the arcane; the Senate chamber is being turned over for weeks at a time to routine nominations.

Instead of repealing "Obamacare," lawmakers are promising bipartisan legislation to free smaller banks from stricter regulations passed in 2010, fund the fight against opioids, and implement the party's promise for a huge military buildup.

To many Republicans, that's plenty.

"We're going to have the largest defense buildup since Ronald Reagan. Most Republicans, they'd consider that a pretty big accomplishment. We're going to clearly do more on opioids than we've ever done," said veteran Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla. "They may be secondary issues to most people, but if you can pick off three or four big things like that I think you've got something to run on."

Opioid funding and the Pentagon increases are on track to pass this month as part of a \$1.3 trillion catchall spending bill, a follow-on measure to a long-sought bipartisan budget outline that passed in February. That omnibus bill is one of the few legislative trains that's guaranteed to leave the station this year.

But for now, the Capitol Hill agenda is remarkably light.

The Senate spent last week on a series of confirmation votes, continuing a pattern since Trump took office of devoting one out of every three weeks, on average, solely to voting on Trump nominees.

And at other times, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., steers clear of controversial legislation and avoids Democratic filibusters. Every bill that passed the Senate last year either advanced under filibuster-proof rules or with the support of Democrats. In other words, there wasn't a single filibuster last year, simply because McConnell kept the floor free of anything that Democrats could block.

The result was that the Senate floor became, for weeks at a stretch, a legislative dead zone.

For its part, the House had a two-day workweek on noncontroversial legislation last week after GOP leaders canceled votes for Wednesday and Thursday, citing the decision to have Rev. Billy Graham lie in honor in the Capitol Rotunda.

But some Democrats weren't buying it, noting that the supposed precedent cited by GOP leaders to cancel votes wasn't an ironclad tradition. They suggested the real reason was that the House had nothing to do and that lawmakers wanted to stay out of town to avoid political pressure on guns.

Rep. Bill Pascrell, D-N.J., said they should have spent last week working on legislation to reduce gun violence.

Instead, the House passed legislation aimed at cracking down on sex trafficking on the internet, which

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is part of a low-profile but widely backed Capitol Hill effort to combat human trafficking.

This week, though, it's back to the obscure BRICK Act, an Obama-era chestnut that would delay new Environmental Protection Agency rules for brick makers. There's also legislation to ease clean air rules for power plants that burn low-quality coal refuse.

Bigger issues like a hoped-for renewal of farm programs are a possibility, but a fight over House GOP demands to cut food stamps could kill it in its crib.

In the Senate, Republicans are looking ahead to a scaled-back assault on the 2010 Dodd-Frank law. Rather than an outright repeal, Republicans appear set to embrace a Senate effort that's focused more on providing regulatory relief to smaller banks. A number of Senate Democrats have signed on, especially those from rural states won by Trump.

That's the type of smaller victory that may not have mass appeal but that is important to key constituencies back home.

"It's incumbent upon members to go home and sell what we're doing up here," said Rep. Doug Collins, R-Ga. "If we're always playing to the big event or playing to get on the news, then I think you're running a race that puts you behind the curve. They need to be in their districts, they need to have their focus on communicating with their districts."

Roles reduced, Kushner and Ivanka Trump's fate uncertain

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — They spent their first year in Washington as an untouchable White House power couple, commanding expansive portfolios, outlasting rivals and enjoying unmatched access to the president. But Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump have undergone a swift and stunning reckoning of late, their powers restricted, their enemies emboldened and their future in the West Wing uncertain.

Kushner, long the second-most powerful man in the West Wing, is under siege. President Donald Trump's son-in-law has lost influential White House allies. He remains under the shadow of the Russia probe and has seen his business dealings come under renewed scrutiny. He has been stripped of his top security clearance, raising questions how he can successfully advance his ambitious agenda — including achieving Mideast peace, a goal that has eluded presidents for generations.

Kushner's most powerful patron, the president himself, has wavered recently on whether his daughter and son-in-law belong in the White House anymore.

A frustrated Trump has griped about the wave of bad headlines generated by probes into Kushner's business dealings and the status of his security clearance, according to two people familiar with the president's thinking but not authorized to publicly discuss private conversations. The president also has wondered aloud if the couple would be better off returning home to New York.

At the same time, though, Trump has said he believes many of the attacks against Kushner are unfair and has lamented that the couple is going through such a turbulent time, according to the two people.

"I think he's been treated very unfairly," Trump said late last month. "He's a high-quality person."

Kushner's woes mushroomed in the past month, when accusations of spousal abuse emerged against White House staff secretary Rob Porter. Initially, the resulting firestorm — including questions about how Porter had interim clearance for top-secret information despite red flags in his background — threatened to engulf Chief of Staff John Kelly, the retired Marine hired to bring order to Trump's chaotic West Wing.

Kelly seemed to stabilize his own standing, in part by ordering a reform of the White House security clearance process. And among senior aides, that change fell the hardest on Kushner, who had been working with interim access to top-secret information. And he was doing that as investigators worked through his family's complicated real estate dealings and as special counsel Robert Mueller probes Russian connections to the Trump team.

A week ago, Kushner's security clearance level was downgraded, leaving White House aides to wonder just how many indignities Kushner and Ivanka Trump are willing to suffer. Even if recent events and revelations don't trigger a departure, they have demonstrated that the West Wing clout of "Javanka," as the

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couple is often referred to, is a far cry from what it once was.

Since taking office last year, Kelly has prioritized creating formal lines of authority and decision-making. Kushner resisted efforts to formalize his role — which early in the administration made him something of a shadow secretary of state — and he has grown frustrated with the chief of staff's attempts to restrict the couple's access to the president. The couple perceives Kelly's crackdown on security clearances as a direct shot at them, according to White House aides and outside advisers.

Kelly, in turn, has been angered by what he views as the couple's freelancing. He blames them for changing Trump's mind at the last minute and questions what exactly they do all day, according to one White House official and an outside ally. Kushner prevailed in previous power struggles within the White House, including one against former chief strategist Steve Bannon, but allies of the president on the outside openly cheered the power couple's weakened position.

"Only a son-in-law could withstand this sort of exposure and not be fired," said Jennifer Palmieri, former communications director for President Barack Obama. "Kushner's vulnerable and in an accelerated fall from grace. Even though his departure would leave Trump even more isolated, a decision could be made that it's just not worth it for him to stay."

Those close to the couple insist the duo has no plans to leave Washington. But a soft landing spot has emerged if they choose to take it.

At a senior staff meeting Wednesday, Kushner spoke about the 2020 campaign at Kelly's behest, talking up the selection of Brad Parscale to run the campaign, according to an administration official who was not authorized to speak publicly about internal discussions. Kushner has a close relationship with Parscale, whom he recruited to work on the 2016 campaign.

News of Parscale's appointment was first reported in the Drudge Report, a favored outlet of Kushner's, in a move that was seen by some in the West Wing as an attempted reminder of Kushner's clout just hours before his humbling security clearance downgrade became public.

One veteran of the 2016 campaign suggested that there had always been a tentative plan for Kushner to resume a role on the re-election campaign but not this early in the president's first term.

In a White House populated with attention-seekers, Kushner has been an ascetic, discreet figure. Almost always standing at the periphery in dark business suits, Kushner is rarely heard in public, his impact felt but not seen. His diplomatic trips abroad have either been shrouded in secrecy or conducted with minimal media coverage.

"I am not a person who has sought the spotlight. First in my business and now in public service, I have worked on achieving goals, and have left it to others to work on media and public perception," Kushner told congressional investigators in a prepared statement last July.

But it is not immediately obvious what he's achieved. There has been little progress on Mideast peace and relations with Mexico, another top Kushner priority, remain contentious over Trump's proposed border wall. Kushner's much ballyhooed project to reinvent the federal government has gained little traction. And questions persist about his family business's global hunt for cash just a year before a \$1.2 billion mortgage on a Manhattan skyscraper must be paid off by the company.

The Kushner Co. says it is in solid financial shape, but skeptics note that the company has been scrambling to raise funds from investors in nations with which Kushner has had government dealings and questions about potential Kushner conflicts of interest have scuttled some efforts.

Ivanka Trump, meanwhile, promotes the administration's tax overhaul, including a family-friendly tax credit she championed. She continues to talk with lawmakers about paid family leave and recently led the U.S. delegation to the closing ceremonies at the Winter Olympics in South Korea.

But her role has come with unique challenges and calculations. Trump has portrayed herself as an advocate for women and families within the administration, which at times puts her in an awkward position given the allegations against her father and some of his public comments about women.

Trump recently said in an NBC interview that she believes her father's denials of sexual misconduct, but argued that questions to her on the topic were "pretty inappropriate" — an answer that prompted eyerolls

in some quarters of the West Wing yet again.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller in Washington and Bernard Condon in New York contributed reporting.

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Election projections point to euroskeptic shift in Italy

By **FRANCES D'EMILIO** and **COLLEEN BARRY**, Associated Press

ROME (AP) — A rival pair of populist and stridently anti-European Union political forces surged in Italy's election for Parliament, but without enough support to govern the country alone, projections showed early Monday.

With the prospect of a hung Parliament looking increasingly likely, the nation faced a long slog to the formation of a viable government.

"Ungovernable Italy" headlined daily newspaper La Stampa as the early numbers rolled in.

In projections based on samples from Sunday's voting, a center-right coalition that included former Premier Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the anti-immigrant League and a small far-right party had a slight lead over the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement.

However, the RAI State TV television projections showed the two parties with the most euroskeptic platforms — the 5 Stars and the League — together topping the 50 percent needed to rule Italy. The 5-Star Movement was projected to receive 32.5 percent of the vote, the League nearly 18 percent.

At the same time, the north-based League, led by Matteo Salvini, was widening its lead on campaign partner Forza Italia, Berlusconi's party. Projections gave the League 17.7 percent compared to Forza Italia's 13.3 percent.

If the final results have the League topping the prevailing coalition, it would determine the tenor of postelection talks on forming a new government and deal another blow to Berlusconi's political fortunes.

The media mogul has long been the dominant figure in a center-right bloc that propelled him to Italy's premiership three times. Now, ineligible to be premier due to a tax fraud conviction, Berlusconi, 81, could be eclipsed by the brash Salvini.

Salvini, 43, who never has held public office in Italy, fed public anger at the EU's inability to help handle hundreds of thousands of migrants who flooded the country in recent years after being rescued while crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

"My first word: Thanks!" he tweeted.

One of Salvini's top aides, Lorenzo Fontana, was more expansive. The League's performance gives a "clear signal" that the European Union "thought more about reports, numbers, deficits" than citizens, Fontana said.

Based on the 5-Star Movement's stronger-than-predicted showing, its candidate for premier, Luigi Di Maio, 31, exulted as the projections appeared on TV screens in a Rome hotel. He didn't comment, but jumped for joy and hugged aides.

The Movement considers itself an internet-based democracy, not a party, and views established parties as a parasitic caste.

Whether Di Maio might accept a coalition government deal with the League, which served in all three of Berlusconi's governments and therefore is the kind of establishment party the Movement loathes, was unclear.

Another top Movement leader, Alessandro Di Battista, said early Monday that other parties "will have to come to us" given the 5-Stars' "triumph." Addressing supporters, he said the 5-Stars only would hold such talks if those parties use the Movement's "methods" of "transparency and correctness."

During the campaign, Di Maio backed off early 5-Star policy to push for a referendum to get Italy out of the euro-currency group. But 5-Star members rail against what they say are excessive EU rules.

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Headed to a stunning loss in the vote was the Democratic Party, the main partner in the center-left government that has ruled Italy since 2013. Agriculture Minister Maurizio Martina called the projections giving the party just under 20 percent “a complete defeat.” The Democrats received 25 percent in 2013 and have occupied the premier’s office since then.

Under former Premier Matteo Renzi’s heavy-handed party leadership, the Democrats have bickered and splintered, with more left-leaning elements defecting to form a smaller party that was doing poorly in Sunday’s vote.

Wolfgang Piccoli, a London-based analyst with Teneo Intelligence, noted that Berlusconi and Salvini had forged a “gentleman’s agreement” that whichever of their parties received more support could pick Italy’s next premier, if their bloc secured a majority of the vote,

Berlusconi has tapped European Parliament President Antonio Tajani as his choice for premier. Salvini wants the job for himself. Despite Salvini’s professed criticism of the EU, he has served as a lawmaker in the European Parliament.

Weeks or even months of political negotiations to line up a governing coalition appeared likely.

Political analyst Lorenzo Codogno of London-based LC Macro Advisors observed that a hung Parliament would make it “extremely difficult for a narrow mainstream coalition to have the numbers to govern.”

“Financial markets are likely to take these figures negatively,” he added.

Ahead of the vote, some pro-European analysts had envisioned a possible “nightmare scenario” of an extremist alliance among the 5-Stars, the League and the right-wing Brothers of Italy.

Steve Bannon, right-wing populist architect of Donald Trump’s White House campaign, was in Rome this weekend, cheering on the populists.

“I think if they create a coalition among all the populists, it would be fantastic, it would terrify Brussels and pierce it in its heart,” Bannon was quoted as saying in Sunday’s *Corriere della Sera* newspaper.

Barry reported from Milan; Nicole Winfield contributed from Rome. Frances D’Emilio is on Twitter at www.twitter.com/fd

In Texas GOP primary, it’s who can love Trump the most

By PAUL J. WEBER, Associated Press

NEW BRAUNFELS, Texas (AP) — George P. Bush’s campaign flyers in Texas declare that he’s “standing beside our president” — the one who called his dad, Jeb, an embarrassment to his family and a pathetic person.

At a political forum outside San Antonio, another Republican candidate brags about his “bigly” wins over Democrats. Another hopeful in Houston, just days after a mass shooting at a Florida high school killed 17 people, sent voters a photo of herself holding an assault rifle — below the words “Kathaleen Wall stands with Trump.”

Texas holds the nation’s first 2018 primary elections Tuesday, and the campaign is providing a vivid exhibition of the Trump effect in GOP politics. Some races are playing out in a roadshow of one-upping emulation of the combative president, in which there’s no such thing as cozying up too close or too ardently, regardless of his rough edges or low approval ratings nationwide.

“I’m Robert Stovall, and like President Trump, I realize the swamp is the problem,” begins a campaign ad for Stovall, a San Antonio Republican Party leader now running for Congress. He stands in a literal swamp wearing a “Make America Great Again” hat and cocks a shotgun at the end.

It’s like nothing seen before in Texas politics, even when a Texan was in the White House. Love of George W. Bush’s style of big government conservatism wasn’t a staple of campaigns here. A decade later, his nephew George P. Bush, the Texas land commissioner, is thanking President Donald Trump’s son Donald Trump Jr. for endorsing him in his bid for re-election.

Texas candidates aren’t alone in courting Trump diehards who make up the GOP base — and who can be counted on to show up in typically low-turnout primary elections. Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette,

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who is running for governor, has trumpeted Trump's endorsement, while an outside group accuses his GOP rival of "abandoning" the president. In Indiana, three Republicans running for Senate are all portraying themselves as his most steadfast ally.

The impression of a Trump White House at war with its enemies is stoking the atmosphere. "It's about he's our Republican president and if we don't stand together and we don't defend the party and conservative ideas, no one is," said Brendan Steinhauser, an Austin-based Republican strategist. A Quinnipiac University survey in late February put Trump's approval rating at 86 percent among Republicans but just 37 percent overall.

As Republicans brace for a difficult election this November — the president's party typically loses congressional seats in the midterm cycle — they could not have asked for a gentler warm-up than Texas, where the GOP holds such a commanding edge that most election-year drama dissolves once the primaries are done. Democrats haven't won a statewide race since 1994 and are not seen as favored to flip any of six congressional seats opened up by GOP retirements on Capitol Hill.

Among those leaving is U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith, who in January lauded Trump's physical fitness and said Americans were better off getting their news straight from Trump than from the media. Some of the 18 Republicans trying to replace him don't stop there: Outsider candidate Mauro Garza says he is running because "Donald Trump said I could be here." Chip Roy, a former top aide to Republican U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, opens rallies by rhetorically asking how much better citizens' lives were a year into a Trump presidency.

Congressional candidate Francisco Canseco cast the alternative in dark terms to one crowd in Comal County, which is sandwiched between Democratic-leaning San Antonio and liberal Austin and went more than 70 percent for Trump in 2016. "If Hillary had won last election, America would be gone. Our Republic as we know it would be lost. But we are blessed to have Donald Trump," he said.

It was just what Al Torres, an undecided 64-year-old retired federal worker wearing a CIA jacket, needed to hear. His friends blame the news media for not giving Trump a fair shake and want a candidate on board with his agenda.

"That was important to hear somebody say that they're not going there and fighting him, but supporting him," Torres said.

Follow Paul J. Weber on Twitter: www.twitter.com/pauljweber

White House: No exemptions from steel, aluminum tariffs

By KEVIN FREKING and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's administration appears unbowed by broad domestic and international criticism of his planned import tariffs on steel and aluminum, saying Sunday that the president is not planning on exempting any countries from the stiff duties.

Speaking on CNN's "State of the Union," White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said: "At this point in time there's no country exclusions."

Trump's announcement Thursday that he would impose tariffs of 25 percent and 10 percent, respectively, on imported steel and aluminum, roiled markets, rankled allies and raised prospects for a trade war. While his rhetoric has been focused on China, the duties will also cover significant imports from Canada, Mexico, South Korea, Japan and the European Union.

Addressing criticism of the proposed action, Trump tweeted Sunday that American "Steel and Aluminum industries are dead. Sorry, it's time for a change!"

The Pentagon had recommended that Trump only pursue targeted tariffs, so as not to upset American partners abroad. But Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said Sunday that was not the direction the president would take.

"He's talking about a fairly broad brush," Ross said on ABC's "This Week." He rejected threats of retaliation from American allies as "pretty trivial."

Few issues could blur the lines of partisanship in Trump-era Washington. Trade is one of them.

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Labor unions and liberal Democrats are in the unusual position of applauding Trump's approach, while Republicans and an array of business groups are warning of dire economic and political consequences if he goes ahead with the tariffs.

Trade politics often cut along regional, rather than ideological, lines, as politicians reflect the interests of the hometown industries and workers. But rarely does a debate open so wide a rift between a president and his party — leaving him almost exclusively with support from his ideological opposites.

"Good, finally," said Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat and progressive as he cheered Trump's move. Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, a Democrat who has called for Trump to resign, agreed.

"I urge the administration to follow through and to take aggressive measures to ensure our workers can compete on a level playing field," Casey tweeted.

This moment of unusual alliance was long expected. As a candidate, Trump made his populist and protectionist positions on trade quite clear, at times hitting the same themes as one of the Democratic presidential candidates, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

"This wave of globalization has wiped out totally, totally our middle class," Trump told voters in the hard-hit steel town of Monessen, Pennsylvania, during one of his campaign stops. "It doesn't have to be this way."

Trump's criticism of trade agreements and China's trade policies found support with white working-class Americans whose wages had stagnated over the years. Victories in big steel-producing states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania and Indiana demonstrated that his tough trade talk had a receptive audience.

Both candidates in a March 13 House election in Pennsylvania have embraced the president's plans for tariffs. They addressed the topic Saturday in a debate that aired on WTAE in Pittsburgh.

"For too long, China has been making cheap steel and they've been flooding the market with it. It's not fair and it's not right. So I actually think this is long overdue," said Democratic candidate Conor Lamb.

"Unfortunately, many of our competitors around the world have slanted the playing field, and their thumb has been on the scale, and I think President Trump is trying to even that scale back out," said Republican candidate Rick Saccone.

But Trump's GOP allies on Capitol Hill have little use for the tariff approach. They argue that other industries that rely on steel and aluminum products will suffer. The cost of new appliances, cars and buildings will rise if the president follows through, they warn, and other nations could retaliate. The end result could erode the president's base of support with rural America and even the blue-collar workers the president says he trying to help.

"There is always retaliation, and typically a lot of these countries single out agriculture when they do that. So, we're very concerned," said Sen. John Thune, R-S.D.

Gov. Scott Walker, R-Wis., asked the administration to reconsider its stance. He said American companies could move their operations abroad and not face retaliatory tariffs.

"This scenario would lead to the exact opposite outcome of the administration's stated objective, which is to protect American jobs," Walker said.

The Business Roundtable's Josh Bolten, a chief of staff for President George W. Bush, called on Trump to have "the courage" to step back from his campaign rhetoric on trade.

"Sometimes a president needs to, you need to stick to your principles but you also need to recognize in cases where stuff you said in the campaign isn't right and ought to be drawn back," he said on "Fox News Sunday." "The president needs to have the courage to do that."

Tim Phillips, president of the Koch Brothers-backed Americans for Prosperity, noted that Trump narrowly won in Iowa and Wisconsin, two heavily rural states that could suffer if countries impose retaliatory tariffs on American agricultural goods.

"It hurts the administration politically because trade wars, protectionism, they lead to higher prices for individual Americans," Phillips said. "It's basically a tax increase."

The president wasn't backing down, at least on Twitter, where he posted this message: "Trade wars are good, and easy to win."

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Drama in red and neutrals on Oscars red carpet

By **LEANNE ITALIE, AP Entertainment Writer**

Looks in neutrals, reds and purples brought the drama Sunday on the Oscars carpet, along with a healthy dose of shiny gold, but Nicole Kidman stood out in stunning cobalt blue at Hollywood's biggest fashion show.

Kidman, a presenter, was among the last to walk in Los Angeles when she showed up with a wave to the cameras in her power look, a strapless gown with a huge bow in front. Sandra Bullock brought the strength in a gold Louis Vuitton custom halter dress that draped at the waist and went black at the hem.

Salma Hayek looked like exotic royalty in a custom Gucci gown in lilac. It was heavily jeweled and had a busy, ruffled tiered skirt. Rita Moreno, meanwhile, honored Academy Awards history by donning the same gown (with a bold-pattern full skirt) she wore in 1962, when she won an Oscar for "West Side Story."

"It's been hanging in my closet this whole time," Moreno told The Associated Press.

A few recently returned Olympians showed up on the red carpet, including skier Lindsey Vonn in a fringed black gown and diamond choker with statement red stones. Figure skaters Adam Rippon and Mirai Nagasu walked together. He wore belt-leather straps that crossed his chest and she chose a sheer, long-sleeve gown in soft blue.

Allison Williams of "Get Out" went for neutral. So did Gina Rodriguez in a nude sheath with silver embellishment, a plunging neckline and full princess skirt, courtesy of Zuhair Murad.

But those princess moments were at a minimum, in favor of reasonably safe and easy looks.

"It wasn't about elaborate or embellished tonight. The winners in the fashion stakes kept to the simple, sleek and gorgeous, and still packed the wow factor," said Avril Graham, executive fashion and beauty editor for Harper's Bazaar U.S.

Among those who said it in red was Allison Janney of "I, Tonya," with long sleeves that fell to the ground. Sofia Carson wore a red cape gown with 26.10 carats of diamonds in her Chopard choker. Meryl Streep also wore red, a Dior with a deep plunge at the neck. Last year's best actress Emma Stone chose skinny trousers and a pink-belted, red tuxedo jacket.

The purple peeps also included presenter Ashley Judd, who went strapless in a dark shade by Badgley Mischka, accompanied by diamond strands.

There was an abundance of white, including fitted looks worn by Margot Robbie (in Chanel Haute Couture), Jane Fonda (in Balmain), Laura Dern (in Calvin Klein) and Mary J. Blige. One actress, Taraji P. Henson, was all leg in ethereal black with a high slit.

"In general, as we typically see with the Oscars, women played it safe in beautiful styles that are a little less risky," said Rachel Torgerson, fashion editor for Cosmopolitan.com. "

She counted Stone among those who went outside the box.

"Those pants were amazing and such a departure from the typical floor-length gown," she said. "You hardly ever see that."

Among the standout guys: "Get Out" writer-director Jordan Peele, in a creamy white tuxedo jacket, and Chadwick Boseman, who honored his kingly T'Challa character in "Black Panther" with a long embellished coat.

Boseman's co-star, Lupita Nyong'o, repped Wakanda in royal, one-sleeved gold with a studded sash element that had black detailing.

One of the evening's brightest pops of color came on Viola Davis in electric pink from the Michael Kors Collection, hoops in her ears and a clutch to match. "Lady Bird" star Saoirse Ronan wore soft pink from Calvin Klein, while Greta Gerwig, who wrote and directed the coming of age film, offered another bright pop — hers in marigold yellow.

In beauty, a side-part trend took hold, both in updos and loose.

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

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 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.

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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.

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."

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 the governor.

A joint legislative committee has been formed to address differences in the pay raise bills of the state Senate and House.

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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." Teachers walked out of classrooms statewide starting Feb. 22.

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 Wednesday.

House members later Saturday wouldn't agree to the Senate's move, and the two bills will now have to be reconciled by a legislative conference committee.

House of Delegates spokesman Jared Hunt said Sunday no meeting had been scheduled yet of the conference committee. It wasn't yet clear when it would meet.

The committee will include Delegates Bill Anderson, R-Wood, and Brent Boggs, D-Braxton, and House Education Chairman Paul Espinosa, R-Jefferson; and Senate Majority Leader Ryan Ferns, R-Ohio, Senate Finance Chairman Craig Blair, R-Berkeley, and Sen. Robert Plymale, D-Wayne.

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.

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.

Justice said in a statement Saturday night that his sole focus is "getting our children back to school. This wrangling needs to stop right now."

Associated Press writer John Raby in Charleston contributed to this report.

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

By MARK STEVENSON and JEFF HORWITZ, Associated Press

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.

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"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 or 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 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

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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.

Democrats' seek to help wealthy in response to tax changes

By GEOFF MULVIHILL, Associated Press

CHERRY HILL, N.J. (AP) — Resistance to the Republican tax overhaul comes with an ideological twist for some Democratic state officials: They've styled themselves as champions of the working class but are pushing hard for measures that would reduce taxes mostly for the wealthy.

Democratic governors and lawmakers in a handful of high-income, high-tax states are promoting policies that are intended to spare their residents the pain of the new \$10,000 cap on deductions for state and local taxes. Connecticut, New Jersey and New York are even planning to sue the federal government over the new cap, which was a key provision of the Republican tax overhaul adopted in December.

The legislative workarounds have moved swiftly through state Senate chambers in California and New Jersey. A bill with similar components passed the Oregon Senate and House in the last two weeks. The concept is under consideration in Connecticut, Maryland, New York, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia.

Proponents say the cap on state and local tax deductions disproportionately affects states controlled by Democrats and raises the cost of living. They say that has the potential to drive well-off residents to other states.

California state Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de Leon, a Democrat sponsoring the bill there, said the state budget would take a big hit if wealthier residents flee California because they pay the bulk of the taxes.

"We have to offer services like schools, like health care, like resources for senior citizens who have Al-

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zheimer's," he said.

John Moorlach, a Republican state senator, finds irony in the Democrats' efforts.

Last year, a Democratic colleague sarcastically thanked him for taking a stance that would protect yacht owners. This year, Moorlach had a retort: "It's rich that you guys are trying to help the wealthy now in California," he said at a January committee meeting. "So welcome aboard."

De Leon, who is running for U.S. Senate, said it's the first time he's ever been criticized for helping the wealthy.

Republican critics say the states should be reassessing their taxes instead of trying to circumvent the new tax law.

"What's worse?" asked New Jersey state Sen. Joe Pennacchio, a Republican who voted against the work-around measure there. "Not being able to take the tax deduction or having high taxes to begin with?"

Under the deductions, known as SALT for state and local taxes, money paid to state and local governments is not counted as taxable income by the federal government in many cases. The higher a taxpayer's state and local taxes, the bigger the benefit the federal deduction can be.

The new law caps the deduction while also lowering tax rates. Overall, it's expected to result in reduced tax bills for most Americans, with the biggest savings going to high earners.

But in California, New Jersey and New York, a much larger share of the top 1 percent of earners — 24 to 43 percent of them — actually would see their federal taxes rise under the GOP tax law, according to an analysis from the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center. That is largely because they would lose most of the benefit of the SALT deduction.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy's office describes the push for a work-around to the new cap on local taxes as a matter of fairness, especially if many of the federal tax breaks expire as scheduled in 2027.

"If you eliminate the cap on tax deductions, rich people who are already getting a tax break would be getting a bigger tax cut," said Steve Wamhoff, a senior fellow at the progressive Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

His organization found that the average federal tax savings from eliminating the cap would be well under \$1,000 per tax filer in every state for every income group, except the highest 20 percent of earners. But it would add up to tens of thousands in annual tax savings for the top 1 percent in most states — and more than \$100,000 in California.

The New Jersey legislation would let local governments and schools set up charity funds. Taxpayers who donate would receive deductible tax credits toward their property taxes. Under the California bill, the contributions would be to state government entities, and 85 percent of the donations could count against state taxes.

The idea is that counting state and local taxes as charitable donations would allow them to continue being deducted from federal income. Critics say the IRS might not allow it, potentially putting tax filers in those states at risk.

Follow Mulvihill at <http://www.twitter.com/geoffmulvihill>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, March 5, the 64th day of 2018. There are 301 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 5, 1868, the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson began in the U.S. Senate, with Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase presiding. Johnson, the first U.S. president to be impeached, was accused of "high crimes and misdemeanors" stemming from his attempt to fire Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton; the trial ended on May 26 with Johnson's acquittal.

On this date:

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In 1766, Antonio de Ulloa arrived in New Orleans to assume his duties as the first Spanish governor of the Louisiana Territory, where he encountered resistance from the French residents.

In 1770, the Boston Massacre took place as British soldiers who'd been taunted by a crowd of colonists opened fire, killing five people.

In 1867, thousands of members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood launched the Fenian Rebellion in Ireland in an attempt at overthrowing British rule; the poorly-organized rising was swiftly put down by British and Irish authorities.

In 1927, "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place," the last Sherlock Holmes story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was published in the U.S. in Liberty Magazine.

In 1933, in German parliamentary elections, the Nazi Party won 44 percent of the vote; the Nazis joined with a conservative nationalist party to gain a slender majority in the Reichstag.

In 1946, Winston Churchill delivered his "Iron Curtain" speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, in which he said: "From Stettin in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, an 'iron curtain' has descended across the continent, allowing police governments to rule Eastern Europe."

In 1953, Soviet dictator Josef Stalin died after three decades in power. Composer Sergei Prokofiev died in Moscow at age 61.

In 1963, country music performers Patsy Cline, Cowboy Copas and Hawkshaw Hawkins died in the crash of their plane, a Piper Comanche, near Camden, Tennessee, along with pilot Randy Hughes (Cline's manager).

In 1966, BOAC Flight 911, a Boeing 707, crashed into Japan's Mount Fuji after breaking up in severe turbulence; all 124 people on board were killed.

In 1970, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons went into effect after 43 nations ratified it.

In 1982, comedian John Belushi was found dead of a drug overdose in a rented bungalow in Hollywood; he was 33.

In 1993, Palair Macedonian Airlines Flight 301, a Fokker 100, crashed after taking off from Skopje (SKOHP'yah) Airport, killing 83 of the 97 persons aboard.

Ten years ago: John McCain, having sewn up the Republican presidential nomination, got a White House embrace from President George W. Bush, who praised the Arizona senator's "incredible courage and strength of character and perseverance."

Five years ago: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (OO'-goh CHAH'-vez), Latin America's most vocal and controversial leader, died in Caracas at age 58 after a struggle with cancer. Transportation Security Administration head John Pistole (PIH'-stohl) announced that airline passengers would be able to carry small knives, souvenir baseball bats, golf clubs and other sports equipment onto planes (the plan was dropped three months later amid fierce congressional and industry opposition).

One year ago: Throngs of people converged in the city of Selma, Alabama, for the annual re-enactment of a key event in the civil rights movement: the 1965 march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge by demonstrators seeking voting rights. A bus carrying farm workers ran off a highway and ended up in a stream southwest of Panama's capital, killing 18 people and injuring dozens more.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Paul Sand is 86. Actor James B. Sikking is 84. Actor Dean Stockwell is 82. Actor Fred Williamson is 80. Actress Samantha Eggar is 79. Actor Michael Warren is 72. Actor Eddie Hodges is 71. Singer Eddy Grant is 70. Rock musician Alan Clark (Dire Straits) is 66. Actress-comedian Marsha Warfield is 64. Magician Penn Jillette is 63. Actress Adriana Barraza is 62. Actress Talia Balsam is 59. Rock singers Charlie and Craig Reid (The Proclaimers) are 56. Pro Football Hall of Famer Michael Irvin is 52. Actor Paul Blackthorne is 49. Rock musician John Frusciante (froo-SHAN'-tee) is 48. Singer Rome is 48. Actor Kevin Connolly is 44. Actress Eva Mendes is 44. Actress Jill Ritchie is 44. Actress Jolene Blalock is 43. Model Niki Taylor is 43. Actress Kimberly McCullough is 40. Actress Karolina Wydra is 37. Singer-songwriter Amanda Shires is 36. Actress Dominique McElligott is 32. Actor Sterling Knight is 29. Actor Jake Lloyd is 29.

Thought for Today: "Boredom is the root of all evil — the despairing refusal to be oneself." — Soren Kierkegaard, Danish philosopher (1813-1855).