

Groton Daily Independent

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“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.”

~ Author Unknown

Chicken Soup for the Soul

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
 - 1- Dairy Queen Ad
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- 2- Gov. Signs bills into law
- 2- Help Wanted at Groton Care & Rehab
 - 2- Book Fair Ad
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Oven Fresh Sandwiches



Hot Desserts



Snack Melts



11 E Hwy 12, Groton ~ 397-8627

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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Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Cheetahs 12, Jackelopes 11, Shih Tzus 10, Coyotes 10, Chipmunks 10, Foxes 7
Men's High Games: Brad Waage 246, 224, 215, Roger Spanier 224, Brad Larson 216, Chris Kassube 207
Women's High Games: Michelle Johnson 197, Vicki Walter 190, 187, 181
Men's High Series: Brad Waage 685, Brad Larson 565, Roger Spanier 552
Women's High Series: Vicki Walter 558, Darci Spanier 480, Michelle Johnson 462

Gov. Dugaard Signs Bills Into Law

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dugaard signed the following bills into law yesterday afternoon:

SB 110 – establish certain findings pertaining to pre-abortion counseling practices by abortion providers in South Dakota and to amend provisions regarding mandatory third-party pre-abortion counseling.

SB 151 – revise certain provisions regarding the sale of trailers at special events, and to declare an emergency.

HB 1070 – revise and repeal certain provisions regarding alcoholic beverages.

HB 1137 – revise certain provisions regarding the registration of lobbyists.

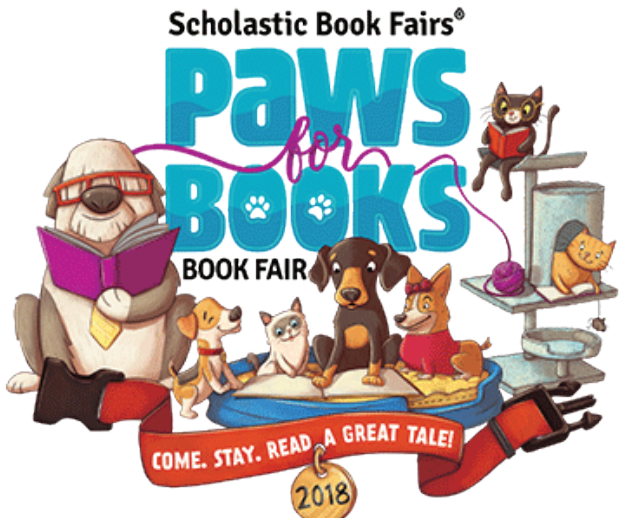
HB 1157 – authorize certain alcohol manufacturers and wholesalers to enter into sponsorship agreements with certain alcohol retail licensees.

HB 1163 – revise certain provisions regarding municipal publication deadlines.

HB 1168 – revise certain provisions regarding the abandonment or dissolution of television translator districts.

HB 1178 – provide a penalty for the failure to complete timely audits by certain entities.

HB 1183 – revise the deadline for the certification of certain municipal ballot language to the county auditor.



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

"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

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Langford Area Advances To State B

Langford Area used effective fouls in the closing seconds to spoil Colman-Egan's effort for an easy last second shot to win, 40-39.

Colman-Egan had the ball with 13 seconds left. The Lions only had two team fouls at that point and used three more to stop the Hawk's offense. A last second shot by the Hawks was no good and the Lions hung on for the thriller win at Huron.

VISITOR: Colman-Egan ()

| NO | PLAYER | P | TOT-FG | | 3-PT | | FT | FTA | REBOUNDS | | | PF | TP | A | TO | BK | S | MIN |
|---------------|----------------------|---|--------|-----|------|-----|----|-----|----------|-----|-----|----|----|---|----|----|---|-------|
| | | | FG | FGA | FG | FGA | | | OFF | DEF | TOT | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Groos, Kade | * | 4 | 13 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 32:00 |
| 4 | Hemmer, Chase | * | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 24:55 |
| 10 | Groos, Bodee | * | 5 | 13 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 30:10 |
| 22 | Crisp, Keith | * | 2 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 26:07 |
| 24 | Voelker, Dalton | * | 4 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 12 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 30:47 |
| 20 | Tolley, Tate | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1:50 |
| 40 | Gullickson, Chandler | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 14:11 |
| TEAM REBOUNDS | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | 0 | | | |
| Team Totals | | | 16 | 47 | 5 | 13 | 2 | 6 | 12 | 18 | 30 | 5 | 39 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 8 | 160 |

Total FG% - 1st: 10/21 0.476 2nd: 6/26 0.231 Game: 0.340 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 5/8 0.625 2nd: 0/5 0.000 Game: 0.385 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 1/4 0.250 2nd: 1/2 0.500 Game: 0.333 (2,0)

HOME: Langford ()

| NO | PLAYER | P | TOT-FG | | 3-PT | | FT | FTA | REBOUNDS | | | PF | TP | A | TO | BK | S | MIN |
|---------------|------------------|---|--------|-----|------|-----|----|-----|----------|-----|-----|----|----|---|----|----|---|-------|
| | | | FG | FGA | FG | FGA | | | OFF | DEF | TOT | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Widener, Zander | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0:00 |
| 5 | West, Benton | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0:00 |
| 30 | Carroll, Judd | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0:05 |
| 32 | Peterson, Bryce | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4:45 |
| 33 | Punt, Jacob | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0:00 |
| 3 | Block, Logan | | 2 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 29:59 |
| 20 | Frey, Dylan | | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 32:00 |
| 22 | Frey, Colin | | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 32:00 |
| 23 | Larson, Mason | | 4 | 11 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 32:00 |
| 34 | Punt, Ryan | | 6 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 24:20 |
| 40 | Kaplan, Nichloas | | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4:51 |
| TEAM REBOUNDS | | | | | | | | | 0 | 2 | 2 | | | | 0 | | | |
| Team Totals | | | 17 | 37 | 5 | 11 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 21 | 24 | 7 | 40 | 6 | 12 | 4 | 6 | 160 |

Total FG% - 1st: 10/23 0.435 2nd: 7/14 0.500 Game: 0.459 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 2/6 0.333 2nd: 3/5 0.600 Game: 0.455 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 0/1 0.000 2nd: 1/1 1.000 Game: 0.500 (0,0)

Technical Fouls: CE (0)
 : Lang (0)

OFFICIALS :
 ATTENDANCE : 0

| SCORE BY PERIODS | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | TOTAL |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Colman-Egan | 14 | 12 | 8 | 5 | 39 |
| Langford | 12 | 10 | 7 | 11 | 40 |

Last FG: Colman-Egan 4th- 3:09, Langford 4th- 2:52
 Largest lead: Colman-Egan by 3 1st- 8:00, Langford by 6 2nd- 2:19
 Score tied: 3 times, Lead changed: 5 times

The Life of Doraine Green



Services for Doraine Green, 93, of Groton will be 10:30 a.m., Saturday, March 10th at Augustana Lutheran Church, rural Claremont. Pastor Ramona Hayes will officiate. Burial will follow in Augustana Cemetery.

Visitation will be held at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel on Friday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7 p.m.

Doraine passed away Sunday, March 4, 2018 at Avera Mother Joseph Manor, Aberdeen.

Belva Doraine Benson was born on February 9, 1925 at her rural Verdon farm home. She was the sixth of eight daughters born to Leslie and Belva (Feller) Benson. Doraine went to grade school at Garden Prairie Country School and graduated from Groton High School in 1942. She moved to Aberdeen and was employed with Socony-Vacumn Company. On April 14, 1951, she married her high school sweetheart, Manly Green in Conde. They made their home on the farm by Claremont. Together they were blessed with two

children, Robbin and Kathy.

Doraine was a member of Augustana Lutheran Church. She was a Sunday school teacher and active in WELCA. Doraine loved to sew and made many quilts that the church donated. She enjoyed bowling in the Sunshine League in Claremont. Doraine was also involved in 4-H with her children.

She always loved visiting with her many friends.

Doraine loved her family and her Lord. Her grandchildren and great-grandchildren gave her so much love and joy. Her great-granddaughter, Abby, gave her the title "Grandma Great" as she was so great. She will forever be remembered for her kindness.

Celebrating her life are her children, Robbin Green (Vickie Anderson) of Groton, Kathy (Bob) Fischbach of Mina, her grandchildren, Karlie (Layton) Cooper, Matt (Amber) Sandve, Maggie Doraine Fischbach and her great-grandchildren, Abigail, Maxwell and Liam, her sister, Phyllis Taylor-Olson of Bloomington, MN, brother-in-law, Don Pigors and many nieces and nephews.

Preceding her in death were her parents, her husband in 2002, her sisters, Vella Schmieg, Lois Riddle, Norma Schwiesow, Betty Dunker, Leslie Ann Pigors and Nancy Zeck.

Honorary Casketbearers will be her Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren.

Casketbearers will be R. Van Johnson, Kent Johnson, Drew Johnson, Jay Johnson, Marc Johnson and John Zeck.

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Public Records are Yours!

By Kenneth Kramer

Happy Sunshine Week! Next week (March 11-17, 2018) newspapers nationwide grade the performance of government agencies on access to public records.

"Public records" generally are defined as records, regardless of their physical form, made or received in connection with official government business. "Regardless of physical form" means that public records come in various forms, not just paper records. They can also be electronic, such as email or can be photos, video or audio.

Examples of public records used by reporters are arrest reports, mug shots, lawsuits and property records. Add a quote or two and presto! Story!

The term FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) is an acronym commonly used when describing the activity of accessing records from government agencies. But each state has a name for its own public records law.

Some newspapers will report that they submitted identical requests for records to various agencies and compared the responses and compliance with public records laws. Some papers will expose an agency that stonewalls access to public records.

Public records are a big deal to newspapers. They form the backbone for many stories and access to records can affect the paycheck of a reporter. Perusing newspaper articles will often reveal information from a public record.

Since "NEWS" could be defined as "something that someone somewhere wants to withhold", reporters are constantly turning over rocks at the county courthouse, police station and any government agency that might contain THE public record which can be utilized in a story.

Allegations of "Fake News" can easily be countered with public records.

But reporters certainly don't have the market cornered on public records. They are public records. You paid for them with your tax dollars and they are yours! Does your daughter's new boyfriend have a criminal record? How much did your new neighbor pay for that house? Has your doctor ever been disciplined? Did your old flame ever get married? All can be found in public records.

Tips on becoming a crackerjack public records researcher:

1. If you are uncertain whether a government record is public or not – don't waste your time wondering about it. Just ask for it. It is the responsibility of the agency to tell you if the record is public or not.

2. Don't ask questions. Government types are not required to answer your questions. They are required to provide public records. So frame your question as a public record request. Don't ask:

"How much is our mayor making this year?" Better: "Please provide a copy of the record that shows how much the mayor makes per year."

3. The more exact the request, the better. Add as much detail as possible so the records custodian can find your record easily.

4. Be persistent and patient. Some governments are painfully slow.

5. Some records custodians will have your records to you before you finish drinking that cup of coffee. And to those records custodians please wish them a Happy Sunshine Week! And, if you give them flowers you will get your records even faster! (Yes, that is a proven technique!)

Good luck in your search!

BDM RURAL WATER SYSTEM, INC.

38th Annual Meeting

 Monday, March 26, 2018
6:00 p.m.
BDM Building, Britton, SD

Lunch after the meeting • Door Prizes

- **Board and Management Report**
- **Election of Directors**

Please attend your water system's annual meeting!

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Today in Weather History

March 8, 2000: High winds of 30 to 50 mph, combined with 3 to 7 inches of snow, caused widespread blizzard conditions across north central South Dakota. Many schools were closed early in the day. Travel was also significantly disrupted. Telephone service went down for several hours between Mobridge and Selby. Some heavy snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Eagle Butte, Selby, and Hoven, and 7 inches southwest of Keldron.

March 8, 2013: A surface low-pressure area moving across the region brought warm moist air overtop low-level cold air which resulted in the widespread freezing rain across much of northeast South Dakota during the evening and into the early morning hours of the 8th and 9th. For much of the area, the precipitation changed over to all rain before ending as temperatures rose to above freezing. Ice accumulations ranged from a tenth of an inch to a half of an inch. Some ice accumulation reports include; 0.25 inches at Garden City, Hayti, Waubay, Clear Lake, Sisseton, and Summit; and 0.50 inches near Florence and Clark. Travel became hazardous with no significant accidents reported. Also, no problems with power outages or tree damage were reported.

1909: The town of Brinkley, Arkansas was struck by an estimated F4 tornado which killed 49 people. The tornado, which was two-thirds of a mile wide, destroyed 860 buildings. Entire families were killed as houses were completely swept away by the storm.

1972: A wind gust of 207 mph was recorded at the Thule Air Force Base in Greenland. Winds were sustained at over 146 mph for three hours during the storm.

1989: While Arctic cold gripped the northeastern U.S., unseasonably warm weather prevailed across the southwestern states. Albany, New York reported a record low of 2 degrees below zero. Tucson, Arizona reported a record high of 90 degrees.

1717 - On Fishers Island in Long Island Sound, 1200 sheep were discovered to have been buried under a snow drift for four weeks. When finally uncovered, one hundred sheep were still alive. (The Weather Channel)

1984 - A freak thunder snowstorm produced high winds, vivid lightning, and up to seven inches of snow in the northern suburbs of Washington D.C. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - Thirty-two cities in the eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Madison WI with a reading of 71 degrees. Afternoon highs of 68 degrees at Houghton Lake MI and 72 degrees at Flint MI smashed their previous records for the date by fourteen degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A cold front brought wintry weather to the north central U.S. Snowfall totals in northwestern Minnesota ranged up to eight inches at Roseau and Hallock. Winds in South Dakota gusted to 61 mph at Brookings. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1990 - Late afternoon thunderstorms produced severe weather in east central Iowa and west central Illinois. Thunderstorms spawned a tornado south of Augusta IL which traveled 42 miles to Marbleton. Golf ball size hail was reported at Peoria IL and near Vermont IL. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)


2004 - The California coast warms up. San Francisco broke a 112-year record by reaching 82 degrees. Los Angeles soared to 93 degrees.

2005 - A line of strong to severe thunderstorms affected the eastern portions of North and South Carolina, with wind damage and a few tornadoes reported. Winds gusted over 70 MPH with some of the stronger storms.


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| Thu Mar 8 | Fri Mar 9 | Sat Mar 10 | Sun Mar 11 | Mon Mar 12 | Tue Mar 13 | Wed Mar 14 |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 28°F 10°F | 33°F 20°F | 35°F 22°F | 31°F 12°F | 33°F 10°F | 35°F 18°F | 41°F 25°F |
| SW 6 MPH | SE 10 MPH | SSW 10 MPH | NNW 14 MPH | NW 7 MPH | SSW 8 MPH | SSW 10 MPH |




Cool Weather Continues



Today
**20s to
low 30s**

FOG
patchy to areas of fog through mid morning
between the Missouri and James River



Tonight
10 to 18°

❄️ light snow possible overnight
little to no snow accumulation expected

National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/Aberdeen

Graphic Created
3/8/2018 4:40 AM

Published on: 03/08/2018 at 4:43AM

Patchy to areas of fog will be possible through mid morning between the Missouri River and James River. Otherwise, expect the cool air to remain in place. While light snow will be possible overnight and through Friday morning, little to no snow accumulation is expected.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 23.9 F at 1:06 PM

Low Outside Temp: 6.0 F at 11:26 PM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 21.0 Mph at 11:20 AM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 58° in 1927

Record Low: -32° in 1995

Average High: 36°F

Average Low: 17°F

Average Precip in March: 0.23

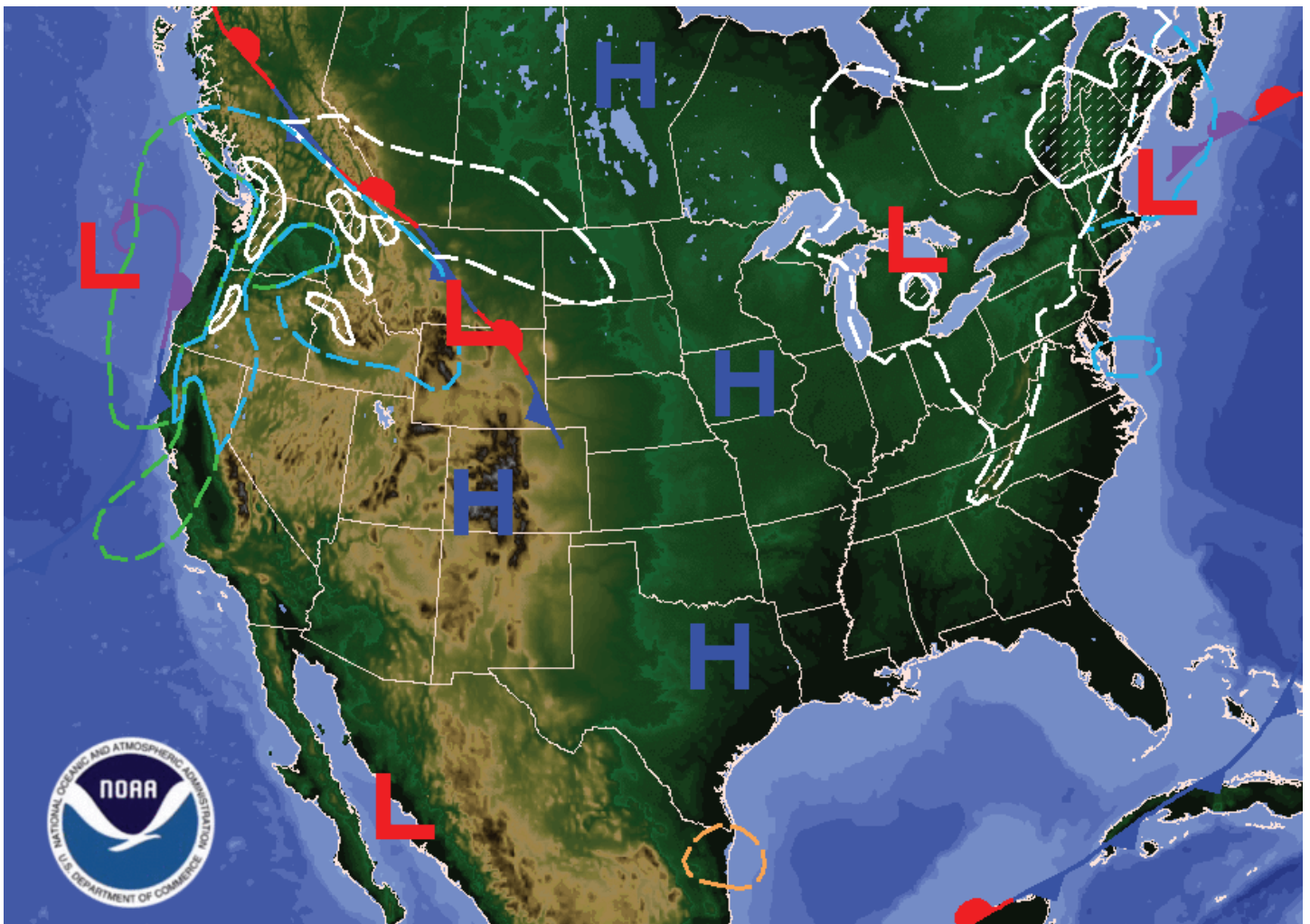
Precip to date in March: 0.94

Average Precip to date: 1.25

Precip Year to Date: 1.35

Sunset Tonight: 6:30 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:57 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Mar 08, 2018, issued 4:38 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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WORTHY OF WORSHIP

Everyone seems to worship someone or something for one reason or another. Early in life we realize that we need help to survive and cannot make it on our own. Initially it is a parent or a parent-substitute that is there to help us. Then, as we get older and become more independent, we begin to realize that there are other sources to meet our needs. We begin to look to them for what they can do for us or perhaps give to us in exchange for our allegiance or respect. We think that they will bring us something we need. It's only natural.

The question is not whether or not we worship - but what or whom we worship. It can be fame or fortune, power or prestige, a person or a philosophy, someone or something that we believe is greater than ourselves and will bring us peace and happiness, joy and satisfaction. It is someone or something that we believe is superior to us and we are willing to surrender and submit ourselves to it. But, really, it only reveals our lostness and our need for Someone Who is above us, beyond us - yet cares for us.

The Psalmist invites us to, "Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." He wants us to recognize the superiority and sufficiency of God our Creator. Once we acknowledged God as our Creator we immediately recognize Him as the source of all that we have or ever will have. Worship becomes God-centered and not man or thing centered. Worship results in turning our lives over to God and recognizing His grace and sovereignty as we bow before Him in awe.

Prayer: Lord, we join the Psalmist in worship and praise and thank You for meeting our every need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 95:6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

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)
- 5/27/2018 Historic Trinity Church Pump Organ Concert.
- 5/28/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- 6/14/2018 Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- 6/15/2018 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/16/2018 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2018 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/22/2018 Summer Fest (4th Sunday in July)
- 9/8/2018 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/6/2018 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/12/2018 Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)

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

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News from the Associated Press

Wednesday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Class A Round of 16

Crow Creek 53, Parker 50

Madison 62, Aberdeen Roncalli 42

Sioux Falls Christian 75, St. Thomas More 52

Tea Area 66, Sisseton 48

Class B Round of 16

Canistota 67, Castlewood 49

Langford 40, Colman-Egan 39

Sully Buttes 67, Harding County 33

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

SD Lottery By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

03-08-13-15-25

(three, eight, thirteen, fifteen, twenty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

01-02-13-20-36, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 2

(one, two, thirteen, twenty, thirty-six; Star Ball: nine; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$22.33 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$290 million

Powerball

06-13-19-36-51, Powerball: 18, Power Play: 2

(six, thirteen, nineteen, thirty-six, fifty-one; Powerball: eighteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$348 million

South Dakota lawmakers pass plan to build veterans cemetery

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Legislature has approved a plan to build a state veterans cemetery in Sioux Falls.

The Argus Leader reports senators voted Wednesday to send the bill to Gov. Dennis Daugaard. It would direct the state to submit a grant application to the National Cemetery Administration and build the project.

The bill would also let the state accept a land donation from the city of Sioux Falls for the project and allow for an endowment fund to pay for the construction and operation of the cemetery.

Tony Venhuizen, the governor's chief of staff, tells the newspaper that Daugaard would support the proposal as long as state budget writers come through with funding.

Ken Teunissen, commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, says it's a "day that'll go down in history."

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

SD legislators pass bill to hike pay last raised in 1998

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A bill that would give South Dakota's state lawmakers their first salary hike in two decades is headed to Gov. Dennis Daugaard's desk.

The House voted 52-15 Wednesday to send a bill to the Republican governor that would give the state's 105 legislators a major raise and tie their salaries to the state's median household income. A legislative pay increase was last signed into law in 1998.

Tony Venhuizen, the governor's chief of staff, said in an email that Daugaard supports a legislative pay bump and would sign the bill as long as the necessary funds are included in the state budget. Officials predict the bill would cost taxpayers about \$655,000 in the upcoming state budget year.

Supporters have said the measure aims to fairly compensate future lawmakers in order to encourage a wider range of qualified candidates to run for office. Legislators are currently paid \$6,000 per session plus the per diem allowance.

"For those of us that have served, we all know that we don't do this job for the money. We all know we're making a sacrifice to be here," Republican Rep. Chris Karr, a supporter, recently told a Senate panel. "But the question is: how big of a financial sacrifice are we expected to make?"

Former Republican Rep. Clarence Kooistra, who co-sponsored the 1998 pay raise bill, said the Legislature should put state dollars toward priorities such as a veterans cemetery, teacher pay and state employees before legislators.

"I would give them a passing grade," said Kooistra, a retired educator who has since become a Democrat. "As a schoolteacher, I'd give them a 'C.'"

Lawmakers currently decide their own pay, but the new measure would set their salaries at one-fifth of the South Dakota median household income, starting next year.

The Legislative Research Council estimates lawmakers' pay for 2019 would increase to approximately \$11,800. It would amount to a roughly 97 percent raise.

At least two states — Alabama and Massachusetts — link lawmakers' salaries to household earnings. Most states leave salaries up to the Legislature, while some use outside compensation commissions to directly set pay or give recommendations.

Sioux Falls officials dispute amid building collapse lawsuit

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls councilwoman says the city should end its partnership in a \$50 million mixed-use downtown development after the developer was sued this week.

The family of a construction worker killed in a 2016 building collapse filed a lawsuit Monday against Legacy Developments alleging the company is responsible for the man's death.

Councilwoman Theresa Stehly requested Tuesday for fellow council members to pull \$21 million in city funding for the mixed-use hotel and parking ramp project with Legacy Developments, the Argus Leader reported .

"We're still going forward with this thing and it's absurd," Stehly said.

In January, Stehly and Councilman Pat Starr tried to repeal the ordinance the authorized the city's finance office to sell bonds for the project. The effort followed the reveal that the U.S. Attorney's Office

was conducting a criminal investigation of Hultgren Construction, the construction company at the time of the Copper Lounge collapse. Hultgren Construction was closely associated with Legacy Developments because the company's president, Aaron Hultgren, also served as the director of development for Legacy.

Hultgren later left Legacy and was removed from his role as guarantor on the parking ramp project. Councilman Rex Roling disagreed with Stehly, saying the lawsuit against Legacy won't negatively affect the project.

"(The city of) Sioux Falls was not mentioned in that (lawsuit) at all. That should be a telling point of where we're at," he said. "I think it's a waste of our time to go back and try to stop a project that will be good for the downtown area."

Mayor Mike Huether didn't immediately respond to the newspaper's request for comment.

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

One-subject rule for constitutional changes heads to ballot

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers are asking voters to require that constitutional amendments encompass only a single subject.

The House voted 56-11 Wednesday to put the constitutional change on the November general election ballot. Representatives had to approve changes made in the Senate before the proposal advanced.

House Speaker Mark Mickelson, the sponsor, has said supporters want to make sure that voters understand what they're voting for at the polls. Critics have questioned how the proposal would work.

Tribe asks judge for 'meaningful role' in pipeline study

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The American Indian tribe leading the legal fight against the Dakota Access oil pipeline is accusing federal officials of being uncooperative as they complete more court-ordered environmental study of the project.

The Standing Rock Sioux is asking a federal judge to order that the tribe be allowed "a meaningful role" in the process. The Cheyenne River Sioux last month made a similar request. If U.S. District Judge James Boasberg grants the requests, it could delay the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' anticipated April 2 completion of the work.

The Corps has been working since last summer to meet Boasberg's order to further study the pipeline's impact on tribal interests, including how an oil spill under Lake Oahe in the Dakotas might impact the tribes' water supply. Late last year, he also ordered the Corps and Texas-based pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners to work with the tribes on completing a spill response plan and selecting an independent engineering company to review whether the project complies with federal laws and regulations.

Tribal attorney Jan Hasselman in court documents filed March 2 accuses the Corps of "consistently ignoring the requests of the tribe for information and meaningful consultation" and calls the tribe's participation "correspondingly handicapped."

"Government-to-government consultation has not even begun," he said. "The tribe furthermore remains in the dark about the exchange of information that is occurring between (ETP) and the Corps."

Hasselman also accuses the company of not adequately consulting with the tribe over selection of the independent third-party auditor and the scope of the review, and asks Boasberg to intervene.

"This relief will require postponing the April 2nd anticipated date for completion," Hasselman said.

Officials with the Corps and ETP didn't respond to requests for comment. Corps attorneys in their most recent status report filed with the court, on Feb. 1, detail difficulties in obtaining "substantive information" needed from the tribes. Letters from the tribes "generally concern the scope, timing and format of the Corps' prior information requests instead of responding with the actual information requested," Justice Department attorney Matthew Marinelli wrote.

The \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline began moving North Dakota oil to Illinois last June. Boasberg is allowing oil to flow while the additional environmental review is done.

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

Bill putting Marsy's Law fix on June ballot goes to governor

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers have sent a constitutional fix to the "Marsy's Law" victims' bill of rights to the ballot and a bill that would place it before June primary voters to Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

The House voted 58-9 Wednesday to advance the bill to the supportive Republican governor. It designates that the constitutional amendment will go before voters June 5 and budgets \$200,000 for costs such as printing a nonpolitical ballot.

An emergency provision on the bill would block opponents from referring it to the ballot for a public vote.

Voters have never decided a ballot question at a primary. A special election for statewide ballot questions was last held in April 2001.

Representatives also voted 61-6 Wednesday to approve the actual constitutional amendment that would ask voters to make changes to Marsy's Law.

Immigrants say working at Kansas ranch was 'like slavery'

By ROXANA HEGEMAN, Associated Press

SYRACUSE, Kan. (AP) — Immigrants working on a remote Kansas ranch toil long days in a type of servitude to work off loans from the company for the cost of smuggling them into the country, according to five people who worked there.

There are no holidays, health insurance benefits or overtime pay at Fullmer Cattle Co., which raises calves for dairies in four states. The immigrants must buy their own safety gear such as goggles.

One worker spent eight months cleaning out calf pens, laying down cement and doing other construction work. Esteban Cornejo, a Mexican citizen who is in the U.S. illegally, left Kansas in November after paying off debt, which he figures was nearly \$7,000.

The pay stub Cornejo shared with The Associated Press shows he worked 182.5 hours at \$10 an hour over two weeks — an average of 15 hours a day with Sundays off. His pay was \$1,828.34 before taxes. Also deducted was a \$1,300 "cash advance repayment" that he said was a company loan for bringing him into the country.

His take-home pay was \$207.46, the pay stub shows, or just over \$1 an hour working at Fullmer Auto Co. Texas LLC, which does business as Fullmer Cattle.

"It is like slavery what they do to those poor people," said Rachel Tovar, another former worker who spoke to The Associated Press.

Tovar said she was interviewed recently by a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent, who asked about the company's Kansas employment practices, but ICE declined to say if it is investigating.

Dean Ryan, the company's attorney, said in an email that the allegations "are simply not true."

"There was no smuggler's fee and has never been," Ryan wrote, adding that there are "plenty of people willing to work in western Kansas without having to 'import' them."

Ryan said company policy is to give pay advances to workers who have no credit. He said those loans are made so employees can purchase a vehicle or put a down payment on a home.

President Donald Trump's administration has cracked down on immigrants living in the country illegally. But it has said less about the companies that employ them, let alone a company accused of using smugglers to bring workers to the United States.

The plight of the Kansas workers also highlights the exploitation that immigrants face when a company forces them to pay off debt with work, a practice called "debt peonage."

Under federal law, employers do not have to pay overtime to agricultural workers. Erik Nicholson, national vice president for the United Farm Workers union, said it is not unusual for employers to recruit immigrant

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farmworkers. Some employers use kickback schemes, although deducting from paychecks is "pretty brazen."

Arturo Tovar is Rachel's husband and a Mexican citizen who lived illegally in the U.S. and was a Fullmer manager for 11 years. He said the smuggling process worked like this: When the company needed workers, Arturo asked employees if they knew someone who wanted to work in the United States. The company gave him the phone number of the "coyote," or smuggler, in Piedras Negras, Mexico, to make the arrangements.

The company would give Arturo Tovar a check, which he would cash. A partial payment was made to the smuggler upfront and the rest when the immigrant reached San Antonio or Houston, where the immigrant would be picked up. If law enforcement asked questions about the cash, the employee was instructed to say it was for used cars the company bought at Texas auctions.

Rachel Tovar, a U.S.-born citizen, said that once the loan to bring an immigrant into the country was almost paid, the company often sold used vehicles to employees in what she believes was an effort to keep them in debt.

Arturo Tovar voluntarily left the country in lieu of deportation after pleading guilty last year to misdemeanor theft stemming from what the couple says was a false company accusation after he was hurt on the job. The company contends the Tovars have an agenda and lack credibility.

But another former employee told AP that Fullmer also loaned him money for the coyote to smuggle someone. AP is not naming the ex-worker out of concern for that person's safety.

A fifth ex-worker confirmed the general accounts of those who allowed their names to be used but asked for anonymity because that person also has safety concerns.

Fullmer Cattle's calf-feeding operation is outside of Syracuse, a farming community of 1,800 about 16 miles from the Colorado border. Former workers say some employees live in company-owned trailers at the ranch or a nearby property, for which the company deducts rent.

The company says it raises tens of thousands of Holstein calves for 18 dairies from Texas, Kansas, Colorado and South Dakota. Newborn calves are taken away from milk cows and sent to Fullmer to be bottle-raised and weaned. The heifers are sent back as milk cow replacements, while the bulls are sent to feedlots to be fattened for slaughter. Among the benefits Fullmer Cattle touts to customers on its website is "lower labor costs."

The Kansas ranch offered owner Que Fullmer a fresh start following a 1998 immigration raid at his Chino, California, ranch where authorities found workers in what a California labor official described as "economic slavery." The Kansas ranch also offered Fullmer a chance to rebuild after bankruptcies cost him the bulk of his operations in Muleshoe, Texas.

Fullmer pleaded guilty in 1999 in California federal court to a felony count of harboring and concealing immigrants in the country illegally. He was sentenced to six months of home detention, a \$10,000 fine and ordered to perform 500 hours of community service, court records show.

In December, he was charged with illegally casting election ballots in both Colorado and Kansas in 2016. The registered Republican is accused of voting more than once and other violations. The case is pending in Kansas.

As a result of Fullmer's past immigration-related conviction, the lawyer for the company said in an email that it takes "extra care" not to hire workers who are in the country illegally.

Associated Press researchers Jennifer Farrar and Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Jackley: Violent crime declines in South Dakota in 2017

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A new report finds violent crime in South Dakota declined last year while the overall number of arrests increased.

Attorney General Marty Jackley released the report compiled by his office's Criminal Statistical Analysis Center on Wednesday. Jackley says the report finds South Dakota remains a safe place to live.

Arrests for murder, kidnapping and child pornography were down in 2017. But Jackley says drug crimes

rose 7 percent last year.

Jackley has asked lawmakers to impose harsher penalties for methamphetamine dealing and manufacturing.

Law enforcement agencies in South Dakota reported 44,265 arrests in 2017, up from 42,200 in 2016. Both sex offenses and rape were below the 10-year average.

South Dakota had 1,958 certified law officers last year, down slightly from 2016 but up by nearly 300 officers since 2007.

Woman charged with 2 counts of vehicular homicide

SIBLEY, Iowa (AP) — Authorities have charged a driver whose sport utility vehicle collided with a car in northwest Iowa, fatally injuring the car driver and his 5-year-old son.

Court records say 49-year-old Ann Vanderpool, of Milford, faces two counts of vehicular homicide while driving intoxicated. Her attorney, Jack Bjornstad, declined to comment Wednesday. Vanderpool's preliminary hearing is scheduled for March 15.

The accident occurred June 10 on Iowa Highway 9 near Sibley. The car driver, 48-year-old Travis Mier, of Spirit Lake, was pronounced dead at Osceola Community Hospital. His son Elliot was pronounced dead later at a Sioux Falls, South Dakota, hospital.

Vanderpool also was hospitalized.

Aberdeen armed standoff linked to alleged domestic assault

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A man who Aberdeen police say barricaded himself in an apartment with a gun and a knife was arrested on charges of domestic aggravated assault and violation of a protection order.

The American News reports the 36-year-old man was taken into custody about 7:45 p.m. Monday after a standoff that lasted nearly seven hours. It prompted the evacuation of the apartment building and nearby residences, and several streets also were blocked off.

The standoff ended when the man surrendered to law officers after they used tear gas.

Brown County State's Attorney Chris White said Tuesday that he hadn't yet received the incident report.

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

Farm Rescue accepting spring crop-planting aid applications

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Plains farm aid nonprofit Farm Rescue is accepting applications for spring crop-planting assistance.

Farm Rescue provides free physical labor for farmers and ranchers dealing with an injury, illness or a natural disaster. It relies on volunteers from around the country, donations and corporate sponsors.

It was launched in North Dakota in 2006 and has since expanded to South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Montana and Nebraska. Its services include crop planting and harvesting, haying, and hay and grain hauling.

It has helped more than 525 farm families through the years.

Aid convoy to Damascus rebel-held suburb postponed

By BASSEM MROUE, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A second convoy with desperately needed aid for the besieged rebel-held eastern suburbs of Damascus was postponed on Thursday because of the violence and a rapidly evolving situation on the ground as Syrian government forces effectively split the eastern Ghouta enclave into two parts.

In rapid advances overnight, troops and allied militiamen seized more than half of the area, including a stretch of farmland, isolating the northern and southern parts of the rebel-held territory, cutting links between the rebels and further squeezing opposition fighters and tens of thousands of civilians trapped inside, state media and a war monitor reported.

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The government forces advanced from the east and were only about a mile away from forces on the western side of eastern Ghouta. The military gains have caused wide-scale internal displacement as civilians flee government advances toward areas in the territory still held by the rebels.

The most densely populated areas in eastern Ghouta are still under rebel control, including the towns of Douma, Harasta, Kfar Batna, Saqba and Hammouriyeh.

The government, determined to wrest the eastern Ghouta suburbs from rebel control after seven years of war, has intensified the shelling and bombardment to clear the way for its troops to advance on the ground. Hundreds have been killed in the past two weeks, including dozens of fatalities reported on Wednesday. Some 400,000 people are believed to be inside the territory, trapped under a relentless air and ground campaign.

A video released by the opposition's volunteer rescue group, also known as the White Helmets, captured the inferno in eastern Ghouta, including a shell exploding as an ambulance sped through the street after loading in an apparently wounded person.

Doctors and residents reported intense shelling and cases of suffocation and breathing difficulties, accusing the government of using chlorine gas Wednesday night. Hamza Hassan, a surgeon working at one of the hospitals in eastern Ghouta, said staff was overwhelmed with chlorine odor and that he treated 29 children with breathing problems.

Such reports, which have been recurrent in the past weeks, could not be independently confirmed. The government has repeatedly denied using chlorine gas.

Syrian state TV said dozens of families gathered in the town of Saqba in an attempt to use a humanitarian corridor to leave eastern Ghouta, adding that "terrorist groups" threatened and prevented them from getting out.

Ingy Sedky, the ICRC spokeswoman in Syria, said Thursday's aid convoy was postponed, and had no confirmation when it would take place.

"The situation is evolving rapidly on the ground, which doesn't allow us to carry out the operation in such conditions," she said.

Earlier this week, the first convoy in weeks made it into the town of Douma in eastern Ghouta, but 14 of the 46 trucks were not able to fully offload critical humanitarian supplies because of stepped-up violence.

Civilians are not safe anywhere in eastern Ghouta, and aid workers who entered briefly on Monday said some residents had not seen sunlight for two weeks because they were sheltering underground.

At least 800 civilians have been killed since the offensive started Feb. 18, according to the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights group, which monitors the conflict through a network of activists on the ground.

Russia's military has said it is playing a key role supporting the assault on eastern Ghouta to combat "terrorists" hiding there and threatening Damascus.

Will Gov. Rick Scott sign legislature's compromise on guns?

By CURT ANDERSON, BRENDAN FARRINGTON and JOSH REPLOGLE, Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — All eyes are now on Gov. Rick Scott to see if he'll sign the Florida legislature's narrowly approved response to last month's high school massacre of 17 people, a measure that isn't what he called for, falls short of what survivors demanded and challenges National Rifle Association orthodoxy.

"I'm going to take the time and I'm going to read the bill and I'm going to talk to families," said Scott, who wouldn't say whether he'll sign it.

The measure would raise the minimum age to buy rifles from 18 to 21 and create a waiting period on sales of the weapons. It also would create a so-called guardian program, enabling school employees and many teachers to carry handguns if they go through law enforcement training and their school district agrees to participate.

Other provisions would create new mental health programs for schools; establish an anonymous tip line where students and others could report threats to schools, ban bump stocks and improve communication between schools, law enforcement and state agencies.

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Scott has gotten top marks from the NRA in the past for supporting gun-rights measures, but he broke with the lobbying group after last month's slayings, calling for raising the minimum age to purchase any type of gun. He doesn't support arming teachers, however, and had wanted lawmakers to adopt his own \$500 million proposal to put one or more law enforcement officer in every school.

The bill's narrow passage reflected a mix of Republicans and Democrats in support and opposition. Survivors were split as well, but Andrew Pollack, who lost his 18-year-old daughter Meadow in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, and Ryan Petty, who lost his 14-year-old daughter Alaina, said there was enough good in the bill that it should pass.

"More needs to be done, and it's important for the country to be united in the same way the 17 families united in support of this bill," Pollack said after the vote. "My precious daughter Meadow's life was taken, and there's nothing I can do to change that, but make no mistake, I'm a father and I'm on a mission. I'm on a mission to make sure I'm the last dad to ever read a statement of this kind."

Democratic Rep. Jared Moskowitz, a former Parkland city commissioner, ended the eight hours of debate with an emotional account of seeing the high school after the shooting, attending victims' funerals and working with students and families while the House was forming the legislation. He broke down in tears after talking about how his 4-year-old son's writing teacher lost her daughter in the attack.

"You don't need to stand with me. I don't need you to stand with me. I need you to stand with the families," Moskowitz said.

Republican Rep. Jay Fant, who is running for attorney general, said raising the minimum age to buy a rifle from 18 to 21 was unconstitutional, and he voted no.

"I just can't imagine that Nikolas Cruz can commit such a heinous crime and then as a result we tell, potentially, a 20-year-old single mother living alone that she cannot purchase a firearm to defend herself," Fant said.

Democratic Rep. Kristin Jacobs, whose district includes Stoneman Douglas, voted yes, even though she doesn't like the idea of arming teachers.

"There is a cultural divide in this room, in this state and across the country. And there's a bill before us that is not perfect," she said.

Cruz was formally charged on Wednesday with 17 counts of first-degree murder. The grand jury in Fort Lauderdale also indicted the 19-year-old on 17 counts of attempted murder for the Valentine's Day massacre, which also wounded more than a dozen people.

Cruz's public defender has said he will plead guilty if prosecutors take the death penalty off the table and sentence him to life in prison instead. Prosecutors have 45 days to decide.

James and Kimberly Snead, who gave Cruz a home after his mother died late last year, testified before the grand jury. James Snead and the couple's attorney, Jim Lewis, wore silver "17" pins to honor the victims.

"We'll let justice take its course at this point," Lewis said. "They still don't know what happened, why this happened. They don't have any answers. They feel very badly for everybody."

The governor, who is expected to mount a U.S. Senate campaign to oust incumbent Democrat U.S. Bill Nelson, is in a tough spot, politically, after splitting with President Donald Trump and some Republicans over what should be done.

Nelson mocked Scott as lacking "guts" for skipping an emotionally charged town hall forum attended by survivors of the shooting, and criticized Scott over the incentives Florida has offered to gun manufacturers. Nelson also called for universal background checks and a ban of the types of assault rifles used in the Parkland shooting.

Polls suggest voters in Florida want tougher restrictions than what's in the bill before Scott. A Quinnipiac University poll done more than a week after the shootings said 62 percent support a nationwide ban on "assault weapons" and 96 percent support background checks on all gun buyers. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.6 percentage points.

Anderson reported from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Replogle reported from Parkland, Florida. Associated Press writers Gary Fineout in Tallahassee, Florida, and Freida Frisaro, David Fischer and Jennifer Kay

in Miami contributed to this report.

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

Spanish women strike as Europe, Asia mark Women's Day

By The Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Women across Europe and Asia shouted their demands for respect and empowerment Thursday to mark International Women's Day, with protesters in Spain launching a 24-hour strike and crowds of demonstrators filling the streets of Manila, Seoul and New Delhi.

Spanish women were staging dozens of protests across the country against the wage gap and gender violence. In Madrid, a massive demonstration was planned for the evening. In Barcelona, protesters who disrupted traffic into the city center were pushed back by riot police.

In some countries, protests were more muted, however.

International Women's Day is a public holiday in Russia, but opposition presidential candidate Ksenia Sobchak was one of the few demonstrators in Moscow.

In a protest reminiscent of the #MeToo movement, which aims to hold those involved in sexual misconduct, and those who cover it up, accountable, Sobchak staged a solo picket outside the lower house of the Russian parliament to demand the resignation of a prominent lawmaker whom several female journalists accuse of sexual harassment.

The allegations against Leonid Slutsky, head of the Duma's foreign affairs committee, include sexual groping and making demeaning comments. Parliament speaker Vyacheslav Volodin has dismissed the complaints, saying that journalists who feel unsafe covering the Duma should get other jobs.

Across Asia, women came out to mark the day. In China, students at Tsinghua University used the day to make light of a proposed constitutional amendment to scrap term limits for the country's president. One banner joked that a boyfriend's term should also have no limits, while another said, "A country cannot exist without a constitution, as we cannot exist without you!"

But photos of the students' banners, like other content about the proposed amendment, were quickly censored on social media.

In Manila, they decried the president as a violator of women's rights. In Seoul, the surging #MeToo movement took to the streets. In India, where endemic violence against women has only recently become part of the public conversation, they marched toward Parliament loudly demanding their rights.

Hundreds of activists in pink and purple shirts protested in downtown Manila against Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, calling him among the worst violators of women's rights in Asia. Protest leaders sang and danced in a boisterous rally in Plaza Miranda, handing red and white roses to mothers, sisters and widows of drug suspects slain under Duterte's crackdown on illegal drugs.

Human rights groups have condemned Duterte's sexist remarks, including one in which he asked troops to shoot female communist rebels in the genitals. Protest leader Jean Enriquez also railed against Duterte's anti-women remarks, saying: "We're so alarmed. We have seen his direct attacks on women under his iron-hand rule and it's now time to heighten our resistance."

Myanmar's embattled leader Aung San Suu Kyi urged women to build peaceful democracies using their strength in politics, economics and social issues.

In Afghanistan, hundreds of women, who would have been afraid to leave their homes during Taliban rule, gathered in the capital to commemorate the day— and to remind their leaders that plenty of work remains to be done to give Afghan woman a voice, ensure their education and protect them from increasing violence.

Hundreds of South Koreans, many wearing black and holding black #MeToo signs, rallied in central Seoul. South Korea's #MeToo movement has gained significant traction since January, when a female prosecutor

began speaking openly about workplace mistreatment and sexual misconduct. The list of women who speak out is growing day by day.

Several high-profile South Korean men have resigned from positions of power, including a governor who was a leading presidential contender before he was accused of repeatedly raping his female secretary.

In India, hundreds of women, including students, teachers and sex workers, marched through the capital to bring attention to domestic violence, sexual attacks and discrimination in jobs and wages.

"Unite against violence against women," one placard urged. "Man enough to say no to domestic abuse," said another. "My body, My choice."

India had its first female leader in 1966 when Indira Gandhi became prime minister, but Indian women are still often relegated to second-class citizenship.

Back in Europe, Belgian women's groups spoke out angrily as the world of sport provided an immediate and visible target for their struggle.

The Belgian football federation, saying it did not want to be taken "hostage" by pro-women groups, refused Thursday to back down from its decision to choose a rapper known for lacing his songs with misogynistic lyrics to produce its official World Cup song.

The Women's Forum, a coalition of Belgian women's groups, said it was unacceptable that an artist using degrading lyrics could be picked to produce what should be a unifying song.

Tim Sullivan in Delhi, Barry Lisbon in Lisbon, Portugal, and AP correspondents around the world contributed to this report.

1 student dead, another hurt by gun in Alabama high school

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Birmingham closed one of its largest schools for a thorough safety sweep Thursday after metal detectors and other security measures failed to keep students from handling a gun in a classroom where one 17-year-old was fatally shot and another wounded in an apparent accident.

Birmingham Interim Police Chief Orlando Wilson said investigators are reviewing surveillance video for clues and interviewing students and staff to figure out exactly what led to Wednesday afternoon's shooting at dismissal time at Huffman High School.

"We consider it accidental until the investigation takes us elsewhere," Wilson said. "We have a lot of unanswered questions. There are so many unknowns at this time."

The gun was recovered, but Wilson declined to say who fired it. No arrests were immediately reported.

"We're hoping if we have footage, that it will reveal it," he said. "If we have witnesses, we're hoping they will tell it."

The two students weren't officially identified, but Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin said young woman killed was a senior, about to turn 18 and had been accepted at college, with "aspirations and dreams to be a nurse."

"We are not just talking about some person, we're talking about losing a part of our future. Our hearts are heavy," the mayor said.

The chief said he had not been told of any kind of argument, fight or struggle that preceded the shooting, which also wounded a 17-year-old junior on the football team, [al.com](#) reported.

"We're not saying he shot her, we're not saying he didn't shoot her," the chief said. "We're asking those questions ourselves so we can determine exactly what happened."

The shooting prompted a brief lockdown, with students and teachers sheltering in place. Wilson also confirmed that metal detectors were in place and functioning in the school. "This should not happen in schools," he said.

Birmingham City Schools Superintendent Lisa Herring announced late Wednesday night that school will be closed on Thursday, to give authorities time and space for a thorough security sweep and enable collaboration with community organizations to counsel students and staff.

"The magnitude of this event causes us to pause," Herring said. "However, we want to assure our parents,

students, staff and community that safety and security are a top priority for Birmingham City Schools.” Security was being increased at all city schools. Just last week, as police and school officials investigated a reported threat at Huffman Middle School, a gun was found outside an entrance door, believed to have been left there as students prepared to be scanned and have their backpacks checked.

Gov. Kay Ivey said she’s “praying for the family of this young lady who has tragically lost her life way too early ... it reaffirms that there is no place for students to have firearms or other weapons on campus.”

The shooting happened the day after the Ivey created a school safety council to make recommendations on security in Alabama’s schools, including updated threat plans and training for students and staff on emergency situations.

Alabama lawmakers have proposed multiple measures in response to last month’s killings of 17 people in a Florida high school. Republicans would arm either teachers or volunteer security forces in schools. Democrats would limit or ban the sale of assault weapons. All these proposals face a tight deadline before the end of Alabama’s legislative session this election year.

White House gears up campaigning for PA special election

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

GREENSBURG, Pa. (AP) — Fighting to stave off another special election embarrassment, the White House is strengthening its final-days offensive in western Pennsylvania.

President Donald Trump has long been scheduled to rally voters on Saturday behind Republican congressional candidate Rick Saccone, a state representative whose underwhelming campaign has some Washington-based Republicans fearing the worst. It will be the president’s second visit to the district on Saccone’s behalf. Daughter Ivanka Trump appeared with Saccone in a separate visit last month as well and praised him as “a champion” for Republican priorities.

The national GOP confirmed late Wednesday that Trump counselor Kellyanne Conway would visit the region on Thursday and the president’s eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., would campaign for Saccone on Monday, the eve of the election.

The high-profile reinforcements from the president’s orbit were welcomed by Saccone, who has wholeheartedly embraced Trump in his message to Pennsylvania’s 18th Congressional District, a region that extends from the Pittsburgh suburbs to West Virginia that Trump carried by nearly 20 percentage points in 2016. With the election just days away, polls suggest that Saccone is essentially tied with Democrat Conor Lamb, a Marine and former federal prosecutor who has never before run for office.

Former Vice President Joe Biden campaigned on Lamb’s behalf earlier in the week, but national Democrats were not expected to bring in additional high-profile surrogates in the campaign’s waning days.

“We’ve got Donald Trump. We’ve got his son. We’ve had Ivanka. What does the other side have? They’ve have crazy uncle Joe Biden,” Saccone told two dozen supporters gathered in a Greensburg campaign office on Wednesday.

“Everybody wants to help,” the Republican candidate continued. “It’s like President Trump with winning — there’s so much help we’re going to get tired of help.”

The White House is not taking any chances in the latest Trump-era special election, knowing that the result will inevitably reflect upon the president.

Democrats have over-performed in virtually every contest across the country since Trump took the White House. And the sting of the GOP’s embarrassing December defeat in Alabama’s special Senate race, in which Trump lent his name and time to failed Republican nominee Roy Moore, is still fresh.

Beyond surrogates, the Republican National Committee, which is the White House’s political arm, has spent more than \$1.1 million so far to support Saccone, said committee spokesman Rick Gorka. Other national groups allied with the GOP have spent nearly \$8 million on advertising in the race, which is more than seven times the amount invested by national Democratic allies not affiliated with the Lamb campaign.

“The RNC is heavily focused on winning this race,” Gorka said.

Conway’s Thursday appearance comes just days after a federal watchdog determined that she violated

the federal law prohibiting government officials from using their positions to influence political campaigns.

The Office of Special Counsel, which is unrelated to Robert Mueller's office, said Conway violated the Hatch Act twice last year when she spoke out in support of Moore in Alabama's Senate race. The White House disputed the independent agency's findings.

Lamb, meanwhile, shrugged off news of the White House's final-week offensive when asked late Wednesday.

"This is the first I'm hearing about it," he told The Associated Press in a brief interview. "I think our ground game is just really strong. It's people that are from here talking to neighbors and going to their churches. I just think that's a lot stronger."

"We'll find out," Lamb said.

Associated Press writer Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

Trump to meet with video game industry representatives

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump plans to meet with video game industry representatives as he considers responses to gun violence after the Florida school shooting that killed 17 people.

The White House says attendees at Thursday's meeting include representatives of the Entertainment Software Association, the Entertainment Software Rating Board and the Parents Television Council. Others represent the Media Research Center, a video game distributor, a software company, along with the author of a book linking mass killings to violent video games.

Florida's Republican Sen. Marco Rubio is among the lawmakers expected to attend.

Trump has repeatedly referenced the violence in movies and video games during his public comments about guns and school safety since last month's Florida shooting. Decades of research have failed to find such a link.

What swamp? Lobbyists get ethics waivers to work for Trump

By **MICHAEL BIESECKER, JULIET LINDERMAN and RICHARD LARDNER, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and his appointees have stocked federal agencies with ex-lobbyists and corporate lawyers who now help regulate the very industries from which they previously collected paychecks, despite promising as a candidate to drain the swamp in Washington.

A week after his January 2017 inauguration, Trump signed an executive order that bars former lobbyists, lawyers and others from participating in any matter they lobbied or otherwise worked on for private clients within two years before going to work for the government.

But records reviewed by The Associated Press show Trump's top lawyer, White House counsel Don McGahn, has issued at least 24 ethics waivers to key administration officials at the White House and executive branch agencies.

Though the waivers were typically signed by McGahn months ago, the Office of Government Ethics disclosed several more on Wednesday.

One allows FBI Director Chris Wray "to participate in matters involving a confidential former client." The three-sentence waiver gives no indication about what Wray's conflict of interest might be or how it may violate Trump's ethics order.

Asked about the waivers, Lindsay Walters, a White House spokeswoman, said, "In the interests of full transparency and good governance, the posted waivers set forth the policy reasons for granting an exception to the pledge."

Trump's executive order on ethics supplanted a more stringent set of rules put in place by President Barack Obama in 2008. Nearly 70 waivers were issued to executive branch officials during Obama's eight years, though those were generally more narrowly focused and offered a fuller legal explanation for why the waiver was granted.

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Craig Holman, who lobbies in Washington for stricter government ethics and lobbying rules on behalf of the advocacy group Public Citizen, said he was initially optimistic when Trump issued his executive order.

"I was very surprised and at the same time very hopeful that he was going to take his pledge to 'drain the swamp' seriously," Holman said Wednesday. "It is now quite evident that the pledge was little more than campaign rhetoric. Not only are key provisions simply ignored and not enforced, when in cases where obvious conflicts of interest are brought into the limelight, the administration readily issues waivers from the ethics rules."

An analysis by the AP shows that nearly half of the political appointees hired at the Environmental Protection Agency under Trump have strong industry ties. Of 59 EPA hires tracked by the AP over the last year, about a third worked as registered lobbyists or lawyers for chemical manufacturers, fossil fuel producers and other corporate clients that raise the very type of revolving-door conflicts of interests that Trump promised voters he would eliminate.

Most of those officials have signed ethics agreements saying they would not participate in actions involving their former clients while working at the EPA. At least three have gotten waivers allowing them to do just that.

Erik Baptist, a top EPA lawyer, worked until 2016, as senior lawyer and registered federal lobbyist for the American Petroleum Institute, the national trade group for the oil and gas industry. According to disclosure reports, he lobbied Congress to pass legislation repealing the Renewable Fuel Standard, a program created more than a decade ago to set minimum production quotas for biofuels to be blended into gasoline, heating oil and jet fuel.

Baptist signed an ethics agreement pledging to recuse himself from any issues involving his former employer, including several lawsuits filed against the agency where he now works. But in August, McGahn granted him approval to advise EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on issues surrounding the renewable fuel law.

McGahn wrote that he was exempting Baptist from the ethics pledge because "his deep understanding of the RFS program and the regulated industry, make him the ideal person to assist the administrator and his senior leadership team to make EPA and its renewable fuel programs more efficient and effective."

Pruitt, a Republican who was closely aligned with the oil and gas industry as an elected official in his home state of Oklahoma, proposed modest cuts last summer to production quotas for biofuels that include ethanol, despite promises from Trump to leave the Renewable Fuel Standard alone.

That triggered bipartisan outrage among members of Congress from major corn-growing states, who threatened last fall to block Senate votes on the administration's environmental nominees unless Pruitt backed down.

Jeffrey M. Sands previously worked as a top lobbyist for Syngenta, a major pesticide manufacturer. Following a request from the EPA, McGahn determined it was "in the public interest" to allow Sands to work as Pruitt's senior adviser for agriculture.

Dennis "Lee" Forsgren, the deputy assistant administrator helping oversee the EPA's enforcement clean water regulations, was allowed to work on the EPA's hurricane response efforts involving the Miccosukee, a Native American tribe in Florida for whom he was a registered lobbyist up until 2016.

"All EPA employees get ethics briefings when they start and continually work with our ethics office regarding any potential conflicts they may encounter while employed here," EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said when asked whether the ethics waivers violate the spirit of Trump's executive order.

The Treasury Department asked McGahn for three waivers. Anthony Sayegh, appointed as the assistant secretary for public affairs, previously worked as a Fox News contributor. His waiver allows him to "participate in matters involving his former client."

Brian Callahan, the department's top lawyer at Treasury, was granted a waiver concerning issues involving his former position as general counsel at Cooper and Kirk PLLC. The law firm represents Fairholme Funds, which recently filed a lawsuit against the Treasury Department and the Fair Housing Finance Agency.

McGahn's waiver allows Callahan to participate in discussions about policy decisions pertaining to housing finance reform, even though "some of these discussions could at some point touch upon issues that

might impact the litigation.”

The State Department got five waivers. The former law firm of Edward T. McMullen, the U.S. ambassador to Switzerland, represented Boeing. The Swiss government recently announced its intent to purchase military equipment and accept bids from American companies.

Another waiver, which was heavily redacted before release, allows communications director Heather Norby to work with employees of Fox News even though she used to work as a broadcast journalist for the network.

At the Pentagon, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Randall G. Schriver got a waiver allowing him to “participate in any particular matter involving specific parties,” including his former client: the Japanese government.

Health and Human Services asked for waivers for senior counselor to the secretary Keagan Lenihan, a registered lobbyist who recently worked for a pharmaceutical and health services company and for chief of staff Lance Leggitt, who recently lobbied on behalf of his law firm’s health law practice group.

Agriculture Department policy adviser Kailee Tzacz is allowed to “participate personally and substantially in matters regarding the Dietary Guidelines for Americans,” a guide that offers nutritional information and recommendations.

McGahn’s waiver didn’t offer much detail into the potential conflict Tzacz’s appointment would pose. But other records show she most recently served as food policy director for the Corn Refiners Association, a trade organization representing producers of corn starch, corn oil and high fructose corn syrup.

Before that, she lobbied on behalf of SNAC International, a trade association for snack food manufacturers.

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Storm moves up East Coast dumping snow, knocking out power

By **KAREN MATTHEWS and DAVID PORTER, Associated Press**

NEW YORK (AP) — The second major storm in less than a week moved up the East Coast early Thursday, dumping heavy snow and knocking out power to hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses from Pennsylvania to New England.

Some places saw more than 2 feet of snow by late Wednesday. Montville, New Jersey, got more than 26 inches from the nor’easter. North Adams, Massachusetts, registered 24 inches and Sloatsburg, New York, got 26 inches.

Major cities along the Interstate 95 corridor saw much less. Philadelphia International Airport recorded about 6 inches, while New York City’s Central Park saw less than 3 inches.

The storm made traveling treacherous. Thousands of flights across the region were canceled.

It was not much better on the ground. Members of the Northeastern University women’s basketball team pushed their bus back on course after it was stuck in the snow outside a practice facility in Philadelphia. The Huskies were in the city to compete in the 2018 CAA Women’s Basketball Tournament. The team posted a video of the feat on its Twitter account.

Amtrak suspended service between New York City and Boston until at least 10 a.m. Thursday. New York City’s Metro-North commuter railroad suspended service on lines connecting the city to its northern suburbs and Connecticut because of downed trees. It was not immediately known when service would be restored.

“It’s kind of awful,” said New York University student Alessa Raiford, who put two layers of clothing on a pug named Jengo before taking him for a walk in slushy, sloppy Manhattan, where rain gave way to wet snow in the afternoon. “I’d rather that it be full-on snowing than rain and slush. It just makes it difficult.”

The storm was not predicted to be as severe as the nor’easter that toppled trees, inundated coastal communities and caused more than 2 million power outages from Virginia to Maine last Friday.

It still proved to be a headache for the tens of thousands of customers still in the dark from the earlier storm — and for the crews trying to restore power to them.

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In New Jersey, the state's major utilities reported more than 300,000 customers without power by late Wednesday, with some left over from last week. Utilities across the Northeast also reported tens of thousands of homes and businesses without electricity.

The National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning through Thursday for most of New England as the storm continued to make its way through.

In Worcester, Massachusetts, public works crews late Wednesday had a hard time keeping up with the snow.

"It's heavy. Well, it was so warm earlier that it just melted when it hit the ground and now it's heavy," said Jesse Nadeau. "It's the heaviest part of the storm right now for the next couple of hours. Heavy and wet."

In North White Plains, New York, 10 people were taken to hospitals with symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning after running a generator inside a home, police said. All were expected to survive.

In Manchester Township, New Jersey, police said a teacher was struck by lightning while holding an umbrella on bus duty outside a school. The woman felt a tingling sensation but didn't lose consciousness. She was taken to a hospital with minor injuries.

Porter reported from Newark, New Jersey. Associated Press writers Michael Catalini in Morrisville, Pennsylvania; Michael Sisak and Rod Hicks in Philadelphia; Wayne Parry in Atlantic City, New Jersey; Bruce Shipkowski in Toms River, New Jersey, and Rodrique Ngowi in Worcester, Massachusetts, contributed.

Lawmakers, business brace for rollout of Trump's tariff plan

By **KEN THOMAS, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House says Mexico, Canada and other countries may be spared from President Donald Trump's planned steel and aluminum tariffs under national security "carve-outs," a move that could soften the blow amid threats of retaliation by trading partners and dire economic warnings from lawmakers and business groups.

Press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters the exemptions would be made on a "case by case" and "country by country" basis, a reversal from the policy articulated by the White House just days ago that there would be no exemptions from Trump's plan.

The update came as congressional Republicans and business groups braced for the impact of expected tariffs of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on aluminum, appearing resigned to additional protectionist trade actions as Trump signaled upcoming economic battles with China. Trump was expected to announce the tariffs Thursday afternoon.

The looming departure of White House economic adviser Gary Cohn, a former Goldman Sachs executive who has opposed the promised tariffs, set off anxiety among business leaders and investors worried about a potential trade war.

"We urge you to reconsider the idea of broad tariffs to avoid unintended negative consequences to the U.S. economy and its workers," 107 House Republicans wrote in a letter to Trump.

At the White House, officials were working to include language in the tariffs that would give Trump the flexibility to approve exemptions for certain countries.

"He's already indicated a degree of flexibility, I think a very sensible, very balanced degree of flexibility," Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross told CNBC. "We're not trying to blow up the world."

Trump signaled other trade actions could be in the works. In a tweet, he said the "U.S. is acting swiftly on Intellectual Property theft." A White House official said Trump was referencing an ongoing investigation of China in which the U.S. trade representative is studying whether Chinese intellectual property rules are "unreasonable or discriminatory" to American business.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said an announcement on the findings of the report — and possible retaliatory actions — was expected within the next three weeks.

Business leaders, meanwhile, continued to sound the alarm about the potential economic fallout from

tariffs, with the president and CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce raising the specter of a global trade war. That scenario, Tom Donohue said, would endanger the economic momentum from the GOP tax cuts and Trump's rollback of regulations.

"We urge the administration to take this risk seriously," Donohue said.

The president has said the tariffs are needed to reinforce lagging American steel and aluminum industries and protect national security. He has tried to use the tariffs as leverage in ongoing talks to revise the North American Free Trade Agreement, suggesting Canada and Mexico might be exempted from tariffs if they offer more favorable terms under NAFTA.

Lawmakers opposed to the tariffs, including House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, have suggested more narrowly focused approaches to target Chinese imports. But members of Congress have few tools at their disposal to counter the president, who has vowed to fulfill his campaign pledge.

"I don't think the president is going to be easily deterred," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, who has suggested hearings on the tariffs.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., said Trump had listened to him and others who disagree with the direction of the trade policies. "I thank him for that and he's been a good listener. The difficulty is so far I haven't persuaded him," Alexander said.

Republicans in Congress have lobbied administration officials to reconsider the plan and focus the trade actions on China, warning that allies such as Canada and members of the European Union would retaliate.

The EU said it was prepared to respond to any tariffs with counter-measures against U.S. products such as Harley-Davidson motorcycles, Levi's jeans and bourbon. EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstroem said the EU was circulating among member states a list of U.S. goods to target with tariffs so it could respond quickly.

The president plans to rally Republicans in western Pennsylvania on Saturday in support of Rick Saccone, who faces Democrat Conor Lamb in a March 13 special House election. Trump has told associates the tariffs could be helpful to the GOP cause in the election in the heart of steel country.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller, Matthew Daly and Alan Fram in Washington and Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed to this report.

Follow Ken Thomas on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/KThomasDC>

Mississippi could test how soon state can restrict abortion

By JEFF AMY and SARAH MEARHOFF, Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — For decades, the U.S. Supreme Court has been telling states that they can't ban abortions before a fetus can survive outside the womb on its own.

But states continue to try to restrict abortion before viability. One of the most recent is Mississippi, where lawmakers are on the brink of approving a measure that would ban most abortions after 15 weeks.

House Bill 1510 passed the Mississippi Senate on Tuesday and is one House vote away from the desk of a governor who is eager to sign it.

The owner of Mississippi's only abortion clinic has said she'll sue if the bill goes into law — a move lawmakers not only know to expect, but seem to be encouraging, in hopes of eventually getting the nation's highest court to revisit its rulings and allow states to begin restricting abortion earlier in pregnancy.

"It seems like a pretty simple bill designed to test the viability line that the Supreme Court has drawn," said David Forte, a law professor at Ohio's Cleveland State University.

A number of states, including Mississippi, have already tiptoed up to the viability line with 20-week bans, although the U.S. Senate earlier this year rejected such a ban nationwide when supporters couldn't reach a 60-vote supermajority to act.

An appeals court in 2015 struck down efforts in North Dakota to ban most abortions after six weeks,

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when a fetus develops a detectable heartbeat, and in Arkansas after 12 weeks. Abortion rights supporters are dubious that the outcome in Mississippi would be any different.

"The Supreme Court has said and resaid again and again that states cannot prohibit women from obtaining abortions prior to viability, which is what a 15-week ban would do," said Hillary Schneller, staff attorney for the Center for Reproductive Rights. The New York-based group advocates for free access to abortion.

Mississippi's own 20-week ban has never been legally challenged, in part because the state's only abortion clinic, the Jackson Women's Health Organization, doesn't perform abortions that late in pregnancy. According to state Department of Health statistics, 85 percent of abortions in Mississippi took place before 12 weeks in 2016.

But Diane Derzis, who owns the clinic, has said the 15-week ban would stop her from offering some abortions and she would sue. Most of Mississippi's 2,500 abortions in 2015 took place at the clinic. By comparison, Mississippi recorded 38,000 births in 2016.

Proponents of the Mississippi law outside the Legislature generally regard abortion as a moral evil. But those handling the bill inside the state Capitol are arguing on narrower grounds aimed at the Supreme Court.

"The reason for going to 15 weeks is that obviously, the state has several interests, including the health and well-being of mother," state Sen. Joey Fillingane said Tuesday as he shepherded the bill through the Senate. "The state has interest in the potential life of the unborn child, as well."

Fillingane, a Republican from Sumrall, acknowledged that 15 weeks is "pre-viability" but argued that medical technology is allowing fetuses to survive earlier and earlier.

University of Chicago Law Professor Geoffrey Stone, though, said arguing that advancing technology should move the viability window to 15 weeks is a stretch.

"I'm quite sure it hasn't gone anywhere near 15 weeks," Stone said.

Abortion opponents take heart from a 2007 Supreme Court case, *Gonzalez v. Carhart*, that allowed bans on what some call partial-birth abortions, an abortion performed relatively late in pregnancy, in which the living fetus is extracted in stages through the birth canal. The opponents believe the decision opened a window for states to restrict abortion before a fetus is viable.

"We would welcome the court to clarify the extent to which states can regulate abortions, particularly with regard to maternal health," said Jameson Taylor, acting president of the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, a conservative-leaning group that helped lawmakers write Mississippi's bill.

Taylor said the Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian conservative legal advocacy group, was among those who vetted the bill's language. The Arizona-based alliance didn't respond to questions, with senior counsel Kevin Theriot saying only that the alliance "supports states' important and legitimate efforts to protect the health and safety of women and children."

It's unclear if a 15-week ban will move forward elsewhere. A bill has been filed for Louisiana's upcoming legislative session. Mississippi state Rep. Andy Gipson, a Republican from Braxton, said lawmakers in Texas, Georgia, and "some midwestern states" are exploring the idea.

"They're playing the short, immediate game in circuit courts where they just try and try again, and then they're also playing the long game where they're trying to change the composition of the Supreme Court," said Leslie McGorman, deputy policy director for NARAL Pro-Choice America, a national group supporting abortion rights.

Stone and Forte both said they believe the chances the court will consider a major abortion case are slim as long as the current justices remain, though a case could ascend quickly on an emergency appeal of a lower court ruling.

"I think the court wants to stay out of this for a while," Forte said.

The likely hope of Mississippi lawmakers is that one of the justices more favorable to abortion rights, such as Anthony Kennedy or Ruth Bader Ginsburg, will have stepped down by the time the state's case reaches the Supreme Court.

Kennedy, for example, has twice in the past 26 years been part of a 5-4 majority upholding abortion rights.

"If Anthony Kennedy has already stepped down, this would make perfect sense," Stone said.

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S. Korea leader sees more obstacles ahead to disarm N. Korea

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president said Thursday that many "critical moments" still lie ahead to end the nuclear crisis despite North Korea's recent outreach to Seoul and Washington.

Moon Jae-in spoke before two senior Seoul officials left for the United States to brief officials about the outcome of their recent visit to North Korea.

The Seoul officials said North Korea offered talks with the United States over normalizing ties and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Seoul said the North also agreed to suspend nuclear and missile tests during such future talks.

Some experts question how sincere North Korea is about its reported offers, citing what they call its track record of using past disarmament talks to wrest aid and concessions while covertly continuing its bomb program.

According to the South Korean officials, North Korea said it has no reason to possess nuclear weapons as long as military threats against the country are removed and its security is guaranteed. That's the same position North Korea has long maintained to justify its nuclear program or call for the withdrawal of 28,500 U.S. troops and a halt to annual U.S.-South Korean military drills as a condition for scrapping its nuclear program. The North sees the allies' drills as an invasion rehearsal.

Choi Hyunsoo, spokeswoman of Seoul's Defense Ministry, said the military will announce the schedule for the joint drills after the Pyeongchang Paralympics, which start Friday and run through March 18.

"We've overcome one critical moment. But there are many critical moments that we still have to go through before reaching the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and a permanent peace," Moon said in a meeting with church leaders.

Moon still described the outcome of his envoys' North Korea trip "a big step toward denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" that was possible with "a strong support" by the U.S. government.

It's unclear whether the United States would accept the North's reported offer for talks. President Donald Trump expressed both hope and skepticism, calling the North's move "possible progress" that also "may be false hope."

Seoul and Washington plan to kick off their delayed springtime drills next month, and how sensitively the North reacts will affect the reconciliation mood revived by the North's participation in last month's Winter Olympics held in the South. The North responded to past joint drills by the allies with its own weapons tests and fiery rhetoric.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Japan's policy of pressuring North Korea does not change just because its leadership is now open to dialogue.

"We should not ease our stance, for instance relax sanctions, just because North Korea agreed to have a dialogue," Abe told a parliamentary session. "We should not give North Korea a reward in exchange for a dialogue."

China, the North's most important ally, encouraged follow-up measures while noting the progress was in part due to the suspension of both North Korean nuclear tests and U.S.-South Korean military exercises during the Olympics.

"This proves that China's proposal of suspension for suspension was the right prescription for the problem and created basic conditions for the improvement of inter-Korean relations," Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters in Beijing. Wang said Pyongyang's security concerns should be addressed in return for denuclearization.

Moon and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un are to meet at a border village in late April, when the South Korea-U.S. drills would likely be still under way. If realized, the Moon-Kim meeting would mark the rivals' third-ever summit talks since their 1945 division, according to Moon's office.

Associated Press writers Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

Views of Trump's trade adviser carry the day at White House

By JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the squabbling Trump White House, no insider is ever above rebuke and no one blacklisted beyond redemption. Trade adviser Peter Navarro, once barred from sending private emails and spotted skulking in West Wing hallways, has abruptly emerged from the chaos ascendant.

With his chief ideological rival, Gary Cohn, now headed for the exit, Navarro and his protectionist trade policies are taking center stage as President Donald Trump prepares to impose the steep tariffs on steel and aluminum imports that Navarro has long championed.

Navarro, a 68-year-old former economics professor whose ideas were once considered well outside the mainstream, joined the Trump campaign in 2016 after one of his books on China happened to catch the eye of Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner during an internet search.

From the presidential campaign, Navarro made the leap to the new administration to head a new White House National Trade Council. But he was quickly sidelined by chief of staff John Kelly and closely managed by former staff secretary Rob Porter.

As alliances shifted and staffers departed, though, Navarro made his move, encouraging Trump to embrace a plan that many economists, lawmakers and White House aides warn could lead to a trade war and imperil U.S. economic gains.

The president and the combative Navarro share the same hard-line views on trade that were a centerpiece of Trump's campaign. For decades, both men have accused China of unfair trade practices that have displaced American workers and hobbled the U.S. manufacturing base.

"Peter speaks the same language as Trump does on these issues," said Stephen Moore, a former Trump campaign adviser who is now a visiting fellow at The Heritage Foundation. "He and Trump agree on an America First policy when it comes to trade and other issues, so he has emerged as a policy force in this administration."

Like Stephen Miller on immigration, Navarro has now become the face of Trump's trade plan. In interviews since Trump's surprise promise to impose the sweeping tariffs, Navarro has forcefully defended his boss and minimized any potential negative impact on the U.S.

"There's negligible-to-nothing effects," he said dismissively on CBS, later accusing the media of hyping prospects of a trade war.

Navarro had limited contact with Trump world until early in the campaign, when Kushner was drawn to his book, "Death by China," while researching China policy. Kushner reached out and Navarro quickly became an economic adviser.

Despite his credentials as a Harvard Ph.D. and former professor at the University of California, Irvine, Navarro was less an academic focused on research than a master of controversy writing books such as "The Coming China Wars." He has professed views that go further even than academic peers who see China's emergence in the global economy as hurting many U.S. workers.

"Trump has unconventional views on many issues. And here was an economist of some acclaim who was validating those positions," Moore said.

Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing, who has known Navarro for more than a decade, described him as "someone who certainly speaks his mind and is not afraid to present ideas and data that are contrarian. And I think way more often than not, he makes a very persuasive case."

Persuasive to like-minded Trump, perhaps, but not to many free-trade-loving Republicans.

"I think he's wrong on a lot of things," said Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch of Utah, who opposes the tariffs.

"We urge you to reconsider the idea of broad tariffs to avoid unintended negative consequences to the U.S. economy and its workers," 107 House Republicans wrote in a letter to Trump on Wednesday.

A day away from the president's expected official action, his spokeswoman did say Mexico, Canada or other countries may be spared under national security "carve-outs," a possible move that could soften the tariff blow.

But Navarro is still riding high.

Early in Trump's term, Navarro at first was outmaneuvered by Cohn, the Goldman Sachs president-turned-Trump economic adviser.

Cohn-Navarro discussions sometimes turned into shouting matches, occasionally in front of Trump.

Navarro, excluded from Trump's trip to Asia last fall, was sometimes seen walking the West Wing halls at night. In an especially personal blow, he was required to copy in Cohn on all his emails after being accused of trying to circumvent West Wing processes, according to two people familiar with the policy. They spoke only on condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration roles.

The White House regimen included a weekly trade policy meeting in the Roosevelt Room where aides with opposing views could talk through ideas to ensure recommendations brought to the president were fully vetted and legally sound. When Porter left, said one of the people, the process broke down and Navarro and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross made their move.

Asked on Fox whether he'd conducted "guerrilla warfare," sneaking around the West Wing and trying to making an end-run around staffers, Navarro dismissed the narrative as a "cheap shot" spread by "all sorts of malicious" leakers.

Others said Navarro had bided his time, keeping his head down, persistently building his case. He waited as tariff decision deadlines set by Ross ticked closer, and the White House turned its attention back to trade after deciding to table the divisive issue while it worked on health care and taxes.

"For a long time, there were a lot of long knives out to get him," said Paul, who served as a member of the White House Manufacturing Jobs Initiative before resigning last summer.

In the end though, said Paul, "I think it's pretty clear that the president is siding with the economic nationalists."

Associated Press writers Josh Boak and Alan Fram contributed to this report.

Follow Colvin on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/colvinj>.

'Kind of awful': Another snowstorm clobbers the Northeast

By KAREN MATTHEWS and DAVID PORTER, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For the second time in less than a week, a storm rolled into the Northeast with wet, heavy snow Wednesday, grounding flights, closing schools and bringing another round of power outages to a corner of the country still recovering from the previous blast of winter.

The nor'easter knocked out electricity to hundreds of thousands of customers and produced "thundersnow" as it made its way up the coast, with flashes of lightning and booming thunder from the Philadelphia area to New York City. A New Jersey middle school teacher was struck by lightning but survived.

Officials urged people to stay off the roads.

"It's kind of awful," said New York University student Alessa Raiford, who put two layers of clothing on a pug named Jengo before taking him for a walk in slushy, sloppy Manhattan, where rain gave way to wet snow in the afternoon. "I'd rather that it be full-on snowing than rain and slush. It just makes it difficult."

The National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning into Thursday morning from the Philadelphia area through most of New England.

The storm unloaded snow at a rate of 2 or 3 inches an hour, with some places in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut getting well over a foot by Wednesday night. Butler, New Jersey, got 22 inches, Sloatsburg, New York, 23 inches and Newtown, Connecticut, 14 inches.

Major cities along the Interstate 95 corridor saw much less. Philadelphia International Airport recorded

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about 6 inches and New York City received a little over 2.

More than 2,600 flights across the region — about 1,900 in the New York metro area alone — were canceled.

It wasn't much better on the ground, with Pennsylvania and New York banning big rigs from some major highways and transit agencies reducing or canceling service on trains and buses.

The storm wasn't predicted to be as severe as the nor'easter that toppled trees, inundated coastal communities and caused more than 2 million power outages from Virginia to Maine last Friday.

But it still proved to be a headache for the tens of thousands of customers still in the dark from the earlier storm — and for the crews trying to restore power to them.

In New Jersey, the state's major utilities reported more than 300,000 customers without power by Wednesday night, with some left over from last week. PECO, Pennsylvania's largest electric utility, reported more than 100,000 homes and businesses without power.

Wind gusts up to 60 mph were forecast on Cape Cod, 45 mph at the Jersey shore and 30 mph around suburban Philadelphia.

The wind knocked gobs of slush and snow off buildings and trees in Philadelphia and New York, forcing pedestrians to watch out. Across the region, power lines and tree branches sagged precariously under the weight of the wet show. Suburban streets were littered with downed trees and branches.

"I don't think I'm ready for this to happen again," Caprice Dantzler said as she walked through Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square. She said many trees that crashed into cars and homes and blocked streets during the last storm had yet to be removed.

A few hardy tourists waded through puddles and slush to visit the World Trade Center memorial, where Juan Escobar, visiting from Cali, Colombia, with his wife, Daniela, snapped a selfie in front of one of the reflecting pools. Escobar said it was the second time in his life he had seen snow.

"It's awesome!" he said. "We are cold as hell, but we are happy."

Ten people were taken to hospitals with symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning after running a generator inside a home in North White Plains, New York, police said. All were expected to survive.

A teacher was struck by lightning while holding an umbrella on bus duty outside a school in Manchester Township, New Jersey, police said. The woman felt a tingling sensation but didn't lose consciousness. She was taken to a hospital with minor injuries.

Members of the Northeastern University women's basketball team pushed their bus back on course after it was stuck in the snow outside a practice facility in Philadelphia. The Huskies were in the city to compete in the 2018 CAA Women's Basketball Tournament. The team posted a video of the feat on its Twitter account.

Amtrak suspended service between New York City and Boston until at least 10 a.m. Thursday. New York City's Metro-North commuter railroad suspended service on lines connecting the city to its northern suburbs and Connecticut because of downed trees, and the Long Island Rail Road also was experiencing delays. School districts and government offices from Delaware northward closed, and the governors of New Jersey and Pennsylvania declared states of emergency.

Officials warned homeowners of the danger of heart attacks from shoveling heavy snow.

In New Jersey, a volunteer firefighter used the snow to save a house from major fire damage.

Stillwater firefighter Joe McAllister didn't have any firefighting equipment when he got to the house, so he improvised, grabbing a shovel and tossing snow onto the fire, according to nj.com. McAllister knocked down most of the flames by the time other firefighters arrived.

Porter reported from Newark, New Jersey. Associated Press writers Michael Catalini in Morrisville, Pennsylvania; Michael Sisak and Rod Hicks in Philadelphia; Wayne Parry in Atlantic City, New Jersey; and Bruce Shipkowski, in Toms River, New Jersey, contributed.

Gun legislation passes Florida House, goes to governor

By **CURT ANDERSON, BRENDAN FARRINGTON and JOSH REPLOGLE, Associated Press**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — The Florida House passed a school safety bill Wednesday that includes new restrictions on rifle sales and a program to arm some teachers, sending the measure to the governor for his signature.

The vote of 67-50 reflected a mix of Republicans and Democrats in support and opposition. The measure, a response to the shootings at a Parkland high school that left 17 dead, is supported by the victims' families.

Andrew Pollack, who lost his 18-year-old daughter Meadow in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, and Ryan Petty, who lost his 14-year-old daughter Alaina, said there was enough good in the bill that it should pass.

"More needs to be done, and it's important for the country to be united in the same way the 17 families united in support of this bill," Pollack said after the vote. "My precious daughter Meadow's life was taken, and there's nothing I can do to change that, but make no mistake, I'm a father and I'm on a mission. I'm on a mission to make sure I'm the last dad to ever read a statement of this kind."

Democratic Rep. Jared Moskowitz, a former Parkland city commissioner, ended the eight hours of debate with an emotional account of seeing the high school after the shooting, attending victims' funerals and working with students and families while the House was forming the legislation. He broke down in tears after talking about how his 4-year-old son's writing teacher lost her daughter in the attack.

"You don't need to stand with me. I don't need you to stand with me. I need you to stand with the families," Moskowitz said.

Democratic Rep. Kristin Jacobs said she did not like the idea of arming teachers, but she voted yes. Republican Rep. Jay Fant said raising the minimum age to buy a rifle from 18 to 21 was unconstitutional, and he voted no.

"There is a cultural divide in this room, in this state and across the country. And there's a bill before us that is not perfect," said Jacobs, whose district includes Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

The bill would raise the minimum age to buy rifles from 18 to 21 and create a waiting period on sales of the weapons. It would also create a so-called guardian program that would let school employees and many teachers carry handguns if they go through law enforcement training and if the school district decides to participate in the program.

Other provisions would create new mental health programs for schools; establish an anonymous tip line where students and others could report threats to schools, ban bump stocks and improve communication between schools, law enforcement and state agencies.

Fant, who is running for attorney general, said the gun restrictions violated the constitution.

"I just can't imagine that Nikolas Cruz can commit such a heinous crime and then as a result we tell, potentially, a 20-year-old single mother living alone that she cannot purchase a firearm to defend herself," Fant said.

The Florida Senate narrowly passed the bill Monday. Gov. Rick Scott declined to say Wednesday whether he would sign the legislation.

Scott has repeatedly said he doesn't support arming teachers and pushed lawmakers adopt his proposal, which called for at least one law enforcement officer in every school and one for every thousand students who attend a school.

"I'm going to take the time and I'm going to read the bill and I'm going to talk to families," Scott told reporters.

Shooting suspect Cruz was formally charged with 17 counts of first-degree murder Wednesday, which could mean a death sentence if he is convicted.

The indictment returned by a grand jury in Fort Lauderdale also charges the 19-year-old with 17 counts of attempted murder for the Valentine's Day massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland in which 17 people died and more than a dozen others were wounded.

Cruz's public defender has said he will plead guilty if prosecutors take the death penalty off the table,

which would mean a life prison sentence. Prosecutors have 45 days to decide whether they want to seek the death penalty.

James and Kimberly Snead, the couple who gave Cruz a home after his mother died late last year, testified before the grand jury. James Snead and the couple's attorney, Jim Lewis, wore silver "17" pins to honor the victims of the shooting.

"We'll let justice take its course at this point," Lewis said. "They still don't know what happened, why this happened. They don't have any answers. They feel very badly for everybody."

Anderson reported from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Replogle reported from Parkland, Florida. Associated Press writers Gary Fineout in Tallahassee, Florida, and Freida Frisaro, David Fischer and Jennifer Kay in Miami contributed to this report.

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

Mexico, Canada and others may be exempted from US tariffs

By KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House said Wednesday that Mexico, Canada and other countries may be spared from President Donald Trump's planned steel and aluminum tariffs under national security "carve-outs," a move that could soften the blow amid threats of retaliation by trading partners and dire economic warnings from lawmakers and business groups.

Peter Navarro, Trump's trade and manufacturing adviser, said in an interview on Fox Business that the tariffs would go into effect within about 15 to 30 days and the proclamation the president intends to sign would include a clause that would not immediately impose tariffs on Canada and Mexico.

Press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters the exemptions would be made on a "case by case" and "country by country" basis, a reversal from the policy articulated by the White House just days ago that there would be no exemptions from Trump's plan.

The update came as congressional Republicans and business groups braced for the impact of expected tariffs of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on aluminum, appearing resigned to additional protectionist trade actions as Trump signaled upcoming economic battles with China. Trump was expected to announce the tariffs by the end of the week.

The looming departure of White House economic adviser Gary Cohn, a former Goldman Sachs executive who has opposed the promised tariffs, set off anxiety among business leaders and investors worried about a potential trade war.

"We urge you to reconsider the idea of broad tariffs to avoid unintended negative consequences to the U.S. economy and its workers," 107 House Republicans wrote in a letter to Trump.

At the White House, officials were working to include language in the tariffs that would give Trump the flexibility to approve exemptions for certain countries.

"He's already indicated a degree of flexibility, I think a very sensible, very balanced degree of flexibility," Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross told CNBC. "We're not trying to blow up the world."

Trump signaled other trade actions could be in the works. In a tweet, he said the "U.S. is acting swiftly on Intellectual Property theft." A White House official said Trump was referencing an ongoing investigation of China in which the U.S. trade representative is studying whether Chinese intellectual property rules are "unreasonable or discriminatory" to American business.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said an announcement on the findings of the report — and possible retaliatory actions — was expected within the next three weeks.

Business leaders, meanwhile, continued to sound the alarm about the potential economic fallout from tariffs, with the president and CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce raising the specter of a global trade

war. That scenario, Tom Donohue said, would endanger the economic momentum from the GOP tax cuts and Trump's rollback of regulations.

"We urge the administration to take this risk seriously," Donohue said.

The president has said the tariffs are needed to reinforce lagging American steel and aluminum industries and protect national security. He has tried to use the tariffs as leverage in ongoing talks to revise the North American Free Trade Agreement, suggesting Canada and Mexico might be exempted from tariffs if they offer more favorable terms under NAFTA.

Lawmakers opposed to the tariffs, including House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, have suggested more narrowly focused approaches to target Chinese imports. But members of Congress have few tools at their disposal to counter the president, who has vowed to fulfill his campaign pledge.

"I don't think the president is going to be easily deterred," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, who has suggested hearings on the tariffs.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., said Trump had listened to him and others who disagree with the direction of the trade policies. "I thank him for that and he's been a good listener. The difficulty is so far I haven't persuaded him," Alexander said.

Republicans in Congress have lobbied administration officials to reconsider the plan and focus the trade actions on China, warning that allies such as Canada and members of the European Union would retaliate.

The EU said it was prepared to respond to any tariffs with counter-measures against U.S. products such as Harley-Davidson motorcycles, Levi's jeans and bourbon. EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstroem said the EU was circulating among member states a list of U.S. goods to target with tariffs so it could respond quickly.

The president plans to rally Republicans in western Pennsylvania on Saturday in support of Rick Saccone, who faces Democrat Conor Lamb in a March 13 special House election. Trump has told associates the tariffs could be helpful to the GOP cause in the election in the heart of steel country.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller, Matthew Daly and Alan Fram in Washington and Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed to this report.

Follow Ken Thomas on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/KThomasDC>

Indian architect of innovative, low-cost homes wins Pritzker

By **TIM SULLIVAN, Associated Press**

NEW DELHI (AP) — Architect and educator Balkrishna Doshi, best-known for his innovative work designing low-cost housing, has been awarded the 2018 Pritzker Architecture Prize, the first Indian to win architecture's highest honor in its 40-year history.

The award was announced Wednesday by Tom Pritzker of the Chicago-based Hyatt Foundation.

Doshi has been an architect, urban planner, and educator for 70 years. The foundation called the 90-year-old's work "poetic and functional," and noted his ability to create works that both respect eastern culture and enhance quality of life in India.

Among Doshi's achievements: the Aranya low-cost housing project in Indore, which accommodates over 80,000 people, many of them poor, through a system of houses, courtyards and internal pathways.

Reached at home in the western city of Ahmedabad, Doshi said his life's work has been "to empower the have-nots, the people who have nothing."

The housing itself, he said, can transform how residents see their world. "Now, their life has changed. They feel hopeful," he said. "They have ownership of something."

He called the prize an honor both for himself and for India.

"What I have done for close to the last 60 years, working in rural areas, working in low-cost housing, worrying about India's future. Now all this comes together and gives me a chance to say "Here we are!"

he said.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted his congratulations.

"This honour is a fitting recognition of his outstanding work, which has spanned decades and made a notable contribution to society," He said.

Doshi was influenced early by two of the great 20th-century architects, Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, known as Le Corbusier, and Louis Kahn.

The prize citation noted how their influence "can be seen in the robust forms of concrete which he employed."

But he grew into his own. "With an understanding and appreciation of the deep traditions of India's architecture, he united prefabrication and local craft and developed a vocabulary in harmony with the history, culture, local traditions and the changing times of his home country India," the citation read.

Doshi's work ranges from the blocky, concrete Life Insurance Corporation Housing buildings in Ahmedabad to the naturalist curves of that city's Amdavad ni Gufa underground art gallery.

"My work is the story of my life, continuously evolving, changing and searching . searching to take away the role of architecture, and look only at life," the prize announcement quoted him as saying.

While the work of Pritzker winners are often scattered across the globe, Doshi is known for working almost completely in his homeland, designing buildings for government offices, companies and universities.

Born in 1927 in the city of Pune, Doshi studied architecture in Mumbai and later worked under Le Corbusier, overseeing his projects in the cities of Chandigarh and Ahmedabad. He was the founding director of Ahmedabad's School of Architecture and Planning, which is now known as CEPT University.

He founded his own practice in 1956, and lives and works in Ahmedabad.

Doshi will be formally awarded the prize in a May ceremony at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto.

Associated Press National Writer Jocelyn Noveck in New York contributed to this report.

Back to school: West Virginia teachers return to classroom

By JOHN RABY, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — At Stonewall Jackson Middle School in West Virginia, students filed past a sign that read: "Welcome back, let's roll."

It's been nine school days without class. Students returned Wednesday to Stonewall Jackson and other schools across West Virginia, a day after the state's teachers wangled a 5 percent pay increase from their elected leaders. Their victory came after walking off the job in all 55 counties of this poor Appalachian mountain state to protest some of the lowest pay for their profession in the country.

Stonewall Jackson teacher Hannah Silverman said she was "pumped" to be back at work.

"I was like a kid on the first day of school last night, I literally couldn't sleep," Silverman said. "So, I was really excited, this is my passion. I want to be here and I've been excited since we found out yesterday."

After the long layoff, Stonewall Jackson student Angel Davis said she tried to persuade her sister that getting back to school was a good thing.

"I was happy," said Davis. "I said I want my education."

Despite losing the school days, the teachers had support from parents and students. Never mind the difficulties some parents had arranging for child care and finding activities for their idle children.

Nannette Higginbotham had mixed feelings as she said goodbye to her daughter on her first day back at Andrew Jackson Middle School in Cross Lanes.

"I love having her home, but I'm glad they're getting back to school and getting it over with," she said.

At the Village of Barboursville Elementary School, teachers traded holding picket signs for ones such as "I Missed You" to welcome students back. The teachers stood outside as their charges arrived Wednesday.

"I'm sure not only was it stressful for us as educators, (but for) parents and the students," special education teacher Jamie Robinette told WSAZ-TV. "The students want to be here. We want to be here. I'm so glad that it's over."

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice has asked county superintendents to be flexible as they decide how to meet the requirement of having 180 days of school, saying students "have suffered enough." He wants families to have time for summer vacation and doesn't want summer feeding programs placed in jeopardy if classes go too far into June.

Some superintendents are mulling whether to cut short spring break, typically in late March, although families often have vacations already scheduled during that time.

The paralyzing walkout shut 277,000 students out of classrooms, forced their parents to scramble for child care and cast a national spotlight on government dysfunction in West Virginia. These 35,000 public school employees had gone four years without a salary increase.

From outside the state, GoFundMe campaigns bought pizza for the striking teachers and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for their immediate needs such as lost pay and child care.

Embracing the hashtag "55strong" in a nod to the number of counties in the state, teachers and school service personnel gathered at the Capitol daily in the thousands, waiting in long lines in the cold and rain as they remained steadfast in their demands.

Their euphoria after winning the fight carried over with them into the schools on Wednesday.

At Robert C. Byrd High School in Clarksburg, teachers lined up to greet students heading to their lockers. "We were giving them high fives and chanting 'You matter to us!'" teacher Connie Buffey told The Exponent Telegram.

Associated Press writers Robert Ray in Charleston, West Virginia, and Michael Virtanen in Morgantown, West Virginia, contributed to this report.

Porn actress sues to end silence on alleged Trump affair

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An adult film actress who has said she had sex with Donald Trump filed a lawsuit seeking to invalidate a nondisclosure agreement and "set the record straight," her lawyer said Wednesday.

Stormy Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles County Superior Court on Tuesday. She alleges that the agreement she signed days before the 2016 presidential election, which prevented her from discussing the alleged sexual encounters, is "null and void and of no consequence" because Trump didn't personally sign it.

Her lawyer, Michael Avenatti, said on morning news shows Wednesday that she wants "to set the record straight." He said on NBC there was "no question" Trump knew about the agreement, though he did not offer any proof.

Avenatti said Clifford wasn't looking to profit from her story. But he told CBS: "I don't know whether she's going to ultimately seek payment or not."

Clifford initially claimed she had sex with Trump once and then carried on a subsequent yearslong platonic relationship.

But the lawsuit filed Tuesday refers to her beginning an "intimate relationship" with Trump in 2006 that continued "well into the year 2007." She said the relationship included encounters in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, and Beverly Hills, California. Trump married his current wife, Melania Trump, in 2005.

She also has also previously denied through a lawyer that the two had an affair, but Avenatti said Wednesday that was to meet the terms of the nondisclosure agreement. Trump's attorney Michael Cohen has denied there was ever an affair.

Cohen has said he paid the porn actress \$130,000 out of his own pocket as part of the agreement. He has also said that "neither the Trump Organization nor the Trump campaign was a party to the transaction with Ms. Clifford, and neither reimbursed me for the payment, either directly or indirectly."

The lawsuit charges that the Oct. 28, 2016, "hush agreement" is legally invalid because it was only signed by Clifford and Cohen. The agreement refers to Trump as David Dennison and Clifford as Peggy Peterson, but an attached exhibit details their true identities.

On Wednesday, White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said Trump has "made very well clear that none of these allegations are true."

"The president has denied the allegations against him and again this case has already been won in arbitration," Sanders said.

Sanders declined to elaborate and referred additional questions to Cohen, who did not respond to requests for comment on Tuesday and Wednesday.

An arbitrator in California issued a temporary restraining order last week that barred Clifford from disclosing any confidential information tied to the nondisclosure agreement or details about the arbitration hearing, according to a copy of the order that was obtained by NBC News.

Clifford's lawsuit alleges that Cohen had "surreptitiously initiated a bogus arbitration proceeding" against Clifford and within the last week used an "improper and procedurally defective arbitration proceeding hidden from public view."

The suit also charges that Trump and Cohen "aggressively sought to silence Ms. Clifford as part of an effort to avoid her telling the truth, thus helping to ensure he won the Presidential Election."

"To be clear, the attempts to intimidate Ms. Clifford into silence and 'shut her up' in order to 'protect Mr. Trump' continue unabated," the lawsuit said. Clifford alleges that as recently as last week, Trump's attorney tried to initiate an arbitration proceeding against her.

Lucey reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Jill Colvin in Washington contributed to this report.

Jeff Sessions, California governor clash as feud escalates

By **DON THOMPSON** and **ELLIOT SPAGAT**, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions dramatically escalated the Trump administration's war with California on Wednesday, suing over its so-called sanctuary state law and clashing with Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown in a fiery exchange of words.

Sessions was defiant as he spoke to local law enforcement officials about the lawsuit, citing a series of California laws that he says are unconstitutional and violate common sense.

"I can't sit by idly while the lawful authority of federal officers are being blocked by legislative acts and politicians," he said, straying from his prepared remarks.

Brown didn't hold back in his response, calling Sessions a liar and saying it was unprecedented for the attorney general to "act more like Fox News than a law enforcement officer." He accused Sessions of "going to war" with California to appease President Donald Trump.

"What Jeff Sessions said is simply not true and I call upon him to apologize to the people of California for bringing the mendacity of Washington to California," the governor told reporters.

The lawsuit is the latest salvo in an escalating feud between the Trump administration and California, which has resisted the president on issues from marijuana policy to climate change and defiantly refuses to help federal agents detain and deport immigrants. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has said it will increase its presence in California, and Sessions wants to cut off funding to jurisdictions that won't cooperate.

The governor and state Attorney General Xavier Becerra, who has sued the Trump administration numerous times, held a news conference just blocks from where Sessions spoke at a hotel, but they never interacted.

Sessions also used his speech to sharply criticize Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf for warning the public about an unannounced raid by federal deportation officers recently in California. Sessions said it allowed hundreds of "wanted criminals" to avoid arrest.

"How dare you?" Sessions said of Schaaf at a California Peace Officers Association meeting in Sacramento. "How dare you needlessly endanger the lives of law enforcement just to promote your radical open borders agenda?"

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Schaaf later echoed the refrain to slam Sessions for tearing apart families and distorting the reality of declining violent crime in a "sanctuary city" like Oakland.

"How dare you vilify members of our community by trying to frighten the American public into believing that all undocumented residents are dangerous criminals?" she told reporters.

Sessions received a polite if not warm reception from law enforcement officials, even when he told them his goal was to make their jobs safer. They applauded politely as he was introduced and after his speech, and more than a dozen gave a standing ovation at the end in a room of about 200 officials.

But many sat expressionless, some listening with arms crossed or chins on their folded hands, and his 25-minute speech was never interrupted by applause or protest.

Outside, dozens of demonstrators chanted "stand up, fight back" and "no justice, no peace" and some blocked traffic on a major thoroughfare. There was a heavy police presence but no arrests.

"This is a reminder that California does not see his federal policies," said Steven Lynn, 33, a Sacramento graduate student. "We are a state of immigrants."

Brown speculated that Sessions' dig on California may be an attempt to ease an openly rocky relationship with the president, saying, "Maybe he's trying to keep his job because the president is not too happy with him."

Trump is set to visit California next week for the first time since his election to see models of his proposed wall along the Mexican border.

California passed sanctuary laws in response to Trump's promises to sharply ramp up the deportation of people in the U.S. illegally. Sessions said several of them prevent U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers from making deportation arrests.

State officials say the policies increase public safety by promoting trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement, while allowing police resources to be used to fight other crimes.

One law prohibits employers from letting immigration agents enter work sites or view employee files without a subpoena or warrant, an effort to prevent workplace raids. Another stops local governments from contracting with for-profit companies and ICE to hold immigrants. Justice Department officials said that violates the Constitution's supremacy clause, which renders state laws invalid if they conflict with federal ones.

The U.S. Supreme Court reinforced the federal government's primacy in enforcing immigration law when it blocked much of Arizona's tough 2010 immigration law on similar grounds. The high court found several key provisions undermined federal immigration law, though it upheld a provision requiring officers, while enforcing other laws, to question the immigration status of people suspected of being in the country illegally.

Associated Press writers Jonathan J. Cooper and Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, Paul Elias in San Francisco, John Antczak in Los Angeles and Sadie Gurman in Washington contributed to this report.

This story corrects the spelling of Attorney General Xavier Becerra's first name.

Texas primary turnout buoys Democrats' hopes again

By WILL WEISSERT and PAUL J. WEBER, Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas is the latest place where Democrats are finding optimism for 2018 after kicking off the nation's primary election season with their biggest midterm turnout in more than a quarter-century.

But beneath the eye-opening numbers — more than 1 million votes cast for Democrats on Tuesday night, their strongest showing in a Texas midterm primary since 1994 — lurk buzzkills for a party eager to believe that the GOP will pay in November for the erratic presidency of Donald Trump.

Republicans still won the turnout battle in Texas by a half-million votes. The brightest star on the ballot for Democrats, Senate challenger Beto O'Rourke, revealed weak spots after letting two primary rivals take 38 percent of the vote. And he's the biggest draw on a Democratic ballot that is otherwise littered with

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little-known candidates for statewide office who've struggled to raise attention and money.

"When you net the results, there are hundreds of thousands more voting in the Republican primary than the Democratic primary, so we absolutely have our work cut out for us," O'Rourke said by phone Wednesday. "This is an uphill, very tough fight for the next eight months."

About failing to win such a high percentage of the vote against overmatched rivals, O'Rourke noted that he has focused on campaigning all over Texas, including strongholds for those who cast ballots in the Republican primary.

"We could concentrate in blue parts of Texas and really run up the score in the primary," he said. "Or we could walk the walk. Talk to every Texan in every part of the state."

Since Trump took office last year, Democrats have seized on surprises on Republican turf as signs that a midterm reckoning is afoot — winning a U.S. Senate seat in Alabama, wiping out a GOP majority in the Virginia statehouse, flipping a Wisconsin state senate district that overwhelmingly backed Trump a year earlier. In Texas, where Republicans haven't lost a statewide race since 1994, Democrats are especially starved for an upset.

Tuesday's primary made clear Democratic enthusiasm is real, but in Texas, the party still faces long odds.

"The votes have been counted and we know that so-called 'blue wave' never made landfall," Republican Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said Wednesday, referring to the GOP voters still turning out in greater numbers. Patrick himself sailed past a little-known GOP primary challenger and is expected to have an even easier time against only token Democratic opposition in November.

More than 1.5 million people voted Tuesday in the GOP primary for U.S. Senate, won by incumbent Ted Cruz. The turnout for Republicans was mostly in line with primary midterms in 2014 and 2010. Democrats, meanwhile, nearly doubled their numbers from four years ago behind big increases around Dallas and Houston, but the GOP still had the upper hand in rural and suburban counties.

Texas has a record eight open congressional races this year, including two currently held by entrenched Republicans who opted against re-election amid scandal. Republican pollster Chris Wilson, who has worked for Cruz, said the turnout surge to him reflected the number of open races while Democrats pinned the increase on Trump backlash and enthusiasm.

In Republican U.S. Rep. John Culberson's district in Houston, which Hillary Clinton carried in 2016, Democratic primary turnout was roughly five times higher than the last midterms. A big Democratic surge also took place in the district of Republican U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions, which Clinton also carried and is among the races where Democrats think they can compete. In a third GOP-controlled district targeted by Democrats in San Antonio, Republican had the lower turnout.

Nationwide, Democrats need to flip 24 GOP-seats to reclaim a majority this fall.

"It's clear Texas Democrats are fired up, exceeding expectations, and charging forward to November," Texas Democratic Party chairman Gilberto Hinojosa said.

A big problem for Texas Democrats is that their biggest-name politicians opted not to run in statewide races. So Republican Gov. Greg Abbott will face either Lupe Valdez, who was Texas' first Hispanic, lesbian sheriff, or Andrew White, who opposes abortion and whose father, Mark, was governor in the 1980s. Valdez and White will need a May 22 runoff to decide who wins their party's nomination — but either will be prohibitive underdogs against well-funded and popular Abbott.

The Texas primary did put on display the surge in women running for office to resist Trump. Of the nearly 50 women running for Congress in Texas, more than half won their primaries outright or advanced to runoffs. What's more, at least three of those runoffs in May will feature women going head-to-head, including a key race for Democrats in their bid to take control of the U.S. House this fall.

Trump won Texas by 9 points in 2016, the smallest margin of victory by a Republican presidential candidate in Texas in 20 years.

"It's Trump. It's Trump," said Veronica Escobar, who won her Democratic primary and is now poised to become one of the first Hispanic women to represent Texas in Congress.

"I've spoken to innumerable senior citizens, retirees, parents of disabled children, people who understand

what this administration means to their families. And they're afraid."

Follow Will Weissert on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/apwillweissert> and follow Paul J. Weber on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/pauljweber>.

Mariners bring back 44-year-old Ichiro Suzuki

PEORIA, Ariz. (AP) — Ichiro Suzuki's wish was granted. He is back in the familiar white and blue jersey of the Seattle Mariners.

"Even in the offseason when I would go back to Japan, I always came back to Seattle. This was my home ... has always been my home," the 44-year-old outfielder said through a translator Wednesday after finalizing a \$750,000, one-year contract. "Somewhere deep inside, I wanted to return and wear this uniform again."

Almost six years away, Suzuki returned to help patch an injury-depleted outfield on the team he played for from 2001-12. The 10-time All-Star can earn an additional \$1.25 million in performance bonuses based on plate appearances: \$200,000 each for 150 and each additional 50 through 350, and \$250,000 for 400.

Suzuki earned the 2001 AL Rookie of the Year and MVP, with the Mariners and won a pair of AL batting titles. He was traded to the New York Yankees midway through 2012, played parts of three seasons with the Yankees, then spent three seasons with Miami.

He has a .312 average and 3,080 hits, not including the 1,278 hits he amassed in nine seasons in Japan. Suzuki appeared in 136 games last year for the Miami Marlins and hit .255 with a .318 on-base percentage.

"I still have things that I want to do and I want to accomplish," Suzuki said. "I'm really thinking about this year and what the Seattle Mariners need, what I can do to help. Everything that I've gained, everything that I've done in my career, I want to just give it all right here in Seattle."

Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto said discussions about Suzuki's return intensified about a week ago, when the club's injury situation became a greater concern.

"It did not take very long to put a deal together that brought Ichiro back home," Dipoto said, adding that Suzuki's presence will help a young outfielder and veteran Dee Gordon, who is playing center field for the first time.

"It's huge for our club and our ability to step forward," Dipoto said.

Projected left fielder Ben Gamel is sidelined for at least a month with a strained oblique muscle, Right fielder Mitch Haniger is dealing with a hand injury that has limited his activity for a couple of weeks, and Guillermo Heredia is still in the final stages of recovery from offseason shoulder surgery.

Suzuki underwent a physical in Seattle on Monday. His return is similar to the Mariners' reunion with Ken Griffey Jr. in 2009 that was good for one year but had an ugly conclusion.

Seattle has significant concerns about depth in the outfield. Other options were available, including free agents Jose Bautista, Carlos Gonzalez and Jon Jay.

"Bringing him in, what he can do on the field, still think he's got plenty left in the tank there," Mariners manager Scott Servais said. "What he adds in the clubhouse I think is very, very valuable."

Suzuki is slated to play left field and will need a few days of workouts and batting practice before he plays in a game, Servais said.

Suzuki had 2,533 hits with the Mariners, including 262 in 2004 when he set the big league season record. His trade to New York during the 2012 season was a stunning conclusion to his time in Seattle, but gave Suzuki the chance to play in the postseason for the first time since his rookie season.

Suzuki reunites with former Yankees teammates Robinson Cano and David Phelps, and he played with Gordon and Phelps in Miami. Third baseman Kyle Seager, pitcher Felix Hernandez and hitting coach Edgar Martinez were Suzuki's teammates in Seattle before he was traded.

On Wednesday, a stall in the Mariners' spring training clubhouse awaited Suzuki, situated between journeyman outfielder Kirk Niewenhuis and starting shortstop Jean Segura. The team shop at the Peoria Sports Complex was already stocked with shirts and jerseys bearing Suzuki's No. 51. ore merchandise

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was en route.

More AP baseball: <https://apnews.com/tag/MLBbaseball>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 8, the 67th day of 2018. There are 298 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 8, 1965, the United States landed its first combat troops in South Vietnam as 3,500 Marines arrived to defend the U.S. air base at Da Nang.

On this date:

In 1618, German astronomer Johannes Kepler devised his third law of planetary motion.

In 1702, England's Queen Anne acceded to the throne upon the death of King William III.

In 1854, U.S. Commodore Matthew C. Perry made his second landing in Japan; within a month, he concluded a treaty with the Japanese.

In 1874, the 13th president of the United States, Millard Fillmore, died in Buffalo, New York, at age 74.

In 1917, Russia's "February Revolution" (referring to the Old Style calendar) began; the result was the abdication of the Russian monarchy in favor of a provisional government, which was overthrown later the same year by the Bolsheviks. The U.S. Senate voted to limit filibusters by adopting the cloture rule.

In 1930, the 27th president of the United States, William Howard Taft, died in Washington at age 72.

In 1948, the Supreme Court, in *McCullum v. Board of Education*, struck down voluntary religious education classes in Champaign, Illinois, public schools, saying the program violated separation of church and state.

In 1979, technology firm Philips demonstrated a prototype compact disc player during a press conference in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

In 1983, in a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals convention in Orlando, Florida, President Ronald Reagan referred to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire."

In 1988, 17 soldiers were killed when two Army helicopters from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, collided in mid-flight.

In 1999, baseball Hall of Famer Joe DiMaggio died in Hollywood, Florida, at age 84.

In 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, a Boeing 777 with 239 people on board, vanished during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, setting off a massive search. (To date, the fate of the jetliner and its occupants has yet to be determined.)

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush vetoed a bill that would have banned the CIA from using simulated drowning and other coercive interrogation methods to gain information from suspected terrorists. Barack Obama captured the Wyoming Democratic caucuses.

Five years ago: The government reported the jobless rate dropped to 7.7 percent the previous month, the lowest level since President Barack Obama took office. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel arrived in Afghanistan for his first visit as Pentagon chief. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (OO'-goh CHAH'-vez) was lauded at his state funeral as a modern-day reincarnation of Latin American liberator Simon Bolivar and a disciple of Cuba's Fidel Castro.

One year ago: Hawaii became the first state to sue to stop President Donald Trump's revised travel ban (the state had previously sued over Trump's initial travel ban, but that lawsuit was put on hold while other cases played out across the country). Many American women stayed home from work, joined rallies or wore red to demonstrate how vital they were to the U.S. economy, as International Women's Day was observed with a multitude of events around the world, including the Day Without a Woman in the U.S. Fire swept through a crowded youth shelter near Guatemala City, killing 40 girls.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Sue Ane (correct) Langdon is 82. College Football Hall of Famer Pete Dawkins is 80. Baseball player-turned-author Jim Bouton is 79. Songwriter Carole Bayer Sager is 74. Actor-director

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Micky Dolenz (The Monkees) is 73. Singer-musician Randy Meisner is 72. Pop singer Peggy March is 70. Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Rice is 65. Jazz musician Billy Childs is 61. Singer Gary Numan is 60. NBC News anchor Lester Holt is 59. Actor Aidan Quinn is 59. Country musician Jimmy Dormire is 58. Actress Camryn Manheim is 57. Actor Leon (no last name) is 55. Rock singer Shawn Mullins (The Thorns) is 50. Neo-soul singer Van Hunt is 48. Actress Andrea Parker is 48. Actor Boris Kodjoe is 45. Actor Freddie Prinze Jr. is 42. Actress Laura Main is 41. Actor James Van Der Beek is 41. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kameelah Williams (702) is 40. Actor Nick Zano is 40. Rock singer Tom Chaplin (Keane) is 39. Rock musician Andy Ross (OK Go) is 39. Actress Jessica Collins is 35. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kristinia (kris-teh-NEE'-ah) DeBarge is 28.

Thought for Today: "In every person, even in such as appear most reckless, there is an inherent desire to attain balance." — Jakob (YAH'-kawb) Wassermann, German author (1873-1934).