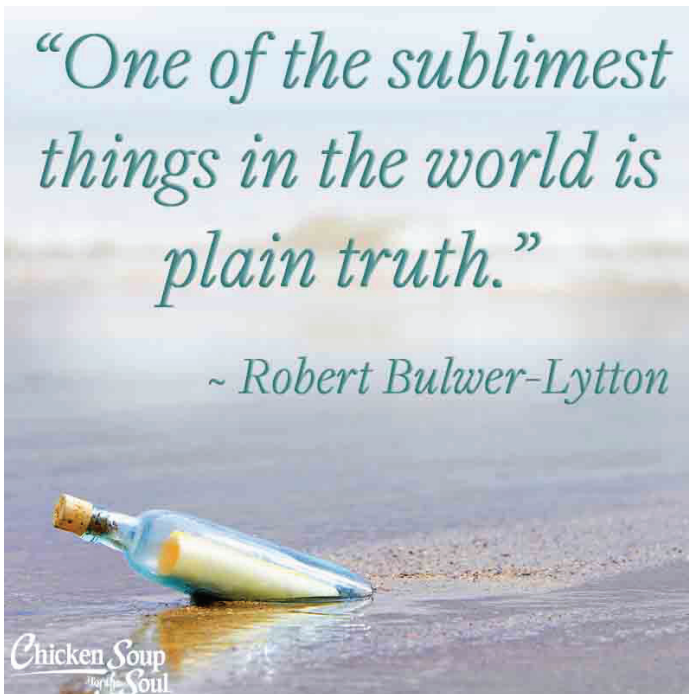


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**Dakota Outdoors**



**Erik Dean**  
402 N Main St  
Aberdeen, SD 57401  
605.229.0123

dakoutdoors@midconetwork.com

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Dakota Outdoors Ad
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- 5- World of Experience
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**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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## G.A.T. Wrenches invited to VEX World Championship



G.A.T. Wrenches received the invitation because one South Dakota team qualified twice for the World Championship, if this happens the second invite goes to the team with the highest score in the skills competition that has not received an invitation. G.A.T. Wrenches members are Noah Tullis, Tyler Iverson and Adrian Knudson.

GT Robotics Competes at State VEX Robotics Tournament in Harrisburg

Thirty teams from 12 schools competed in South Dakota's 2018 VEX Robotics State Tournament in Harrisburg Feb. 24. Six teams from Mitchell and Chamberlain did not attend because of the weather. In attendance were teams from Box Elder, Britton, Canton, Eureka, Groton, Harrisburg, Lead-Deadwood, Menno, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Spearfish and Vermillion.

**G.A.T. Wrenches L to R Tyler Iverson, Noah Tullis, Adrian Knudson.** (Courtesy Photo)

Only 16 of the 30 teams made it to the elimination rounds, and a quarter of them were from GT Robotics! Although GT robotists did not bring home any trophies, they can hold their heads high with that showing.

The day started kind of tough for Groton robotists. Two robots were not even quite built yet when Groton teams arrived in Harrisburg at 8 a.m. Those two teams had had to rebuild after previous tournaments and between sickness, basketball, band and usual challenges of redesigning a new robot, they were not done. Then four teams lost their first match. However, Galaxy won their first match and stayed undefeated until their last match of the qualifying rounds. G.A.T. Wrenches won their next four matches and then lost their last qualifying match.

Galaxy placed third in the skills competition (think free throw contest) at the state tournament, and also second in the state for the entire year in the middle school division. G.A.T. Wrenches placed third in the state skills competition for the entire year in the high school division.

### Rankings of GT Robotics Teams at the end of qualifying rounds for each tournament.

Tournament		Groton	Mitchell	Harrisburg	Rapid City	Groton	Chamberlain	State
Teams in Tourney		15	13	22	22	22	18	30
9050A	G-Force	10	12	8	19	7	1	22
9050B	Gear Heads	10	11	17	20	12	16	26
9050C	G.A.T. Wrenches	7	1	3	11	4	7	8
9050D	Geek Squad	5	10	20	3	16	NA	28
9050E	Galaxy	4	6	16	18	21	3	7



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How far did GT Robotics teams get in elimination rounds? (think sports playoffs)

Tournament	Groton	Mitchell	Harrisburg	Rapid City	Groton	Chamberlain	State
9050A G-Force	Final	Semi	Final	Final	Semi	Semi	Semi
9050B Gear Heads	<u>Qtr</u>		<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>
9050C G.A.T. Wrenches	Semi	Champion	Final	Final	Semi	Semi	<u>Qtr</u>
9050D Geek Squad		Semi	<u>Qtr</u>	<u>Qtr</u>	Semi		
9050E Galaxy		Semi			<u>Qtr</u>	Champion	Semi

The next and final competition of the year for GT Robotics is the U.S. Open in Council Bluffs, Iowa April 5-7. Teams will be busy until then improving their robots and working on strategies. They also have several additional fundraisers scheduled for March, including a Tour of Tables luncheon Saturday March 24 at SEAS Catholic Church, selling raffle tickets for a greenhouse built by Groton Area technical education students and having a booth at the Parent Action Committee (PAC) Carnival April 13. Watch for more news on these fundraisers to learn how you can help support GT Robotics. Participating students, their parents and volunteer coach Jim Lane are very grateful for the great community support of this program.



**Geek Squad L to R Andrew Marzahn, Isaac Smith.** (Courtesy Photo)



**G-Force Tannor McGannon, Hunter Monson, Lee Iverson.** (Courtesy Photo)

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**L to R Galaxy River Pardick (left with remote control), Travis Townsend (left team, right one with remote control) and Gear Heads (right team) Jack Dinger, Dan Feist, Ethan Clark.**

(Courtesy Photo)



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I had figured that my Livestream setup was done until fall, until I received a message on Tuesday asking if I could Livestream the Langford Area game in Huron Wednesday evening. He even said he had sponsors lined up.

Well, it took me by surprise. I did not commit right away as there were some technical things that I needed to find out before pursuing the event. I fired off an email and called the Huron Arena over my noon hour to find out the availability of internet service. I was told that Wifi was available for the media and that as a backup, Verizon had a good signal in the Arena. Once I got that information, I made the decision to Livestream the game.

Jeslyn and I went to Huron right after school on Wednesday. When I arrived, the first thing I always do is take a speed test of the internet to see what we have going. I got my phone out, logged into the network and started the speed test. The download was around 40mg, which I really don't care

about. I more interested in the upload speed. I waited for the needle to move during the upload part of the test. It didn't move. Not at all. I thought there was something wrong with the app, so I restarted it again. Same results. It was 35 minutes before the game was ready to start.

I took out my hotspot and looked at it. It had 2 out of 5 bars. Maybe 3 at times. With that strength, I would be pushing very low quality of my stream. I need a minimum of 5 mgs for uploading. I wasn't getting it. I'm starting to get real nervous now.

I go down to the ticket booth and asked if the IT guy was around. He didn't know, so he went into the Arena to ask someone else. The other guy got on the phone and then gave me the phone to the Arena's IT guy. I told him my story and he was surprised that it was that poor. He said he would be there in a few minutes as he was only a couple of blocks away.

Back up to the crow's nest I went and waited. Now it was about 20 minutes before game time. Mike, the IT guy, shows up. He asks if I could use a hardwired connection and I said yes. He got a cable out and hooked it up. He said he would be able to get me through the firewall. I asked if it was the school's firewall and he said yes. That made me even more nervous as only one other IT guy in the area has been able to get me through the school's firewall to Livestream. He went over to his computer and in a couple of minutes, he told me to give it a try. I pushed my buttons and it fired right up. I was so relieved and excited that we were able to do Livestream in HD. I thanked Mike several times for his help and he just brushed it off as doing his job. Needless to say, he saved the day!

We had a record number of viewers for a basketball game with 1154. There have been an additional 68 views after the game and throughout the day on Thursday.

The game was hit, especially with Langford Area winning the nail biting, 40-39, score. As I was looking through Facebook, there was one comment that caught my attention. It went like this: "I was on the edge of my seat at archery practice - all of us adults huddled around my phone at the end while the kids are just staring at us like "can we shoot now?"" I can visually see that in my mind.

So now - the basketball season is now officially done for GDILIVE.COM.

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## AAA Cautions Pedestrians and Drivers:

### Sunday's "Spring Forward" means Monday morning's commute to work and school will be in darkness.

March 9, 2017 – One of the most anticipated "signs of spring" arrives this weekend when the clocks "spring forward" (Daylight Saving Time officially begins at 2:00 a.m. Sunday, March 11), losing an hour of morning daylight in exchange for the extended daylight hour we enjoy in the evening. However, come Monday morning, the commute will take on a new look for school students waiting for buses and walking or biking to school and for motorists driving to work – in the dark.

"We'll see a dramatic difference during our morning commute this Monday. Roadways will remain darker longer, causing concern for pedestrians," said Marilyn Buskohl, spokesperson for AAA South Dakota. "Motorists and pedestrians need to be aware of these dangers, remain alert, and minimize distractions to reduce the risk of motor vehicle crashes."

Losing an hour of sleep can also increase a motorist's risk of drowsy driving. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that 35 percent of U.S. drivers sleep less than the recommended minimum of seven hours daily. In a recent related AAA Foundation survey, nearly all drivers (96 percent) say they view drowsy driving as a serious threat to their safety and a completely unacceptable behavior. However, 29 percent admitted to driving when they were so tired they had a hard time keeping their eyes open at some point in the past month.

"A change in time can mean that drivers are more tired than they realize," said Buskohl. "AAA warns that drivers who miss between one to two hours of the recommended seven hours of sleep in a 24-hour period nearly double their risk for a crash."

The auto club offers motorists and pedestrians the following safety tips:

AAA South Dakota's Tips for Drivers

Slow down, pay attention and eliminate all distractions.

Watch out for pedestrians when backing up in parking lots and driveways.

Sun glare can make it difficult to see so:

increase your following distance between you and the vehicle in front of you;

use your sun visor and invest in polarized sunglasses; both can help reduce glare.

Turn on your headlights to make your vehicle more visible during the early morning and evening hours.

Keep vehicle headlights and windows clean.

Watch the high beams. Do not use them when other cars or pedestrians are around.

Yield to pedestrians at crosswalks. Do not pass vehicles stopped at crosswalks.

AAA South Dakota's Tips for Pedestrians

Cross at intersections or crosswalks – not in the middle of the street or between parked cars.

Avoid walking in traffic where there are no sidewalks or crosswalks. If you have to walk on a road that does not have sidewalks, walk facing traffic.

Evaluate the distance and speed of oncoming traffic before you step out into the street.

Wear bright colors or reflective clothing if you are walking near traffic at dawn, dusk and at night. Carry a flashlight when walking in the dark.

Allow extra time and distance for a vehicle to stop in inclement weather.


While walking, pocket the cell phone and avoid using headphones at volumes that don't let you hear what the traffic is doing around you.

Do not let umbrellas or jacket hoods block your view of approaching traffic.

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Scholastic Book Fairs®



**Paws for Books**  
BOOK FAIR

**"Paws for Books"**  
Scholastic Book Fair

**When: Tuesday, March 13, 2018**  
**3:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

**Where: Groton Area Elementary**  
**School Library**

**Maintenance Supervisor**  
**Wanted:**

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

**Day Shift C.N.A. Wanted**

**Sign-on Bonus**

☆☆☆ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ☆☆☆

Contact Brynn Pickrel or Nellie Hatfield at 605-397-2365 or apply in person.  
EOE/AA/M/F/V/D-Drug Free Workplace



**GROTON**  
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

**1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton**

## Henry Township Review Board Notice

Henry Township Equalization Meeting Notice:  
Notice is hereby given that the governing body section will serve as review board of Henry Township, Brown County. They will be meeting at 7 p.m. Monday, March 19, 2018, at Doug Abeln Seed Company office for the purpose of reviewing and correcting of the assessment set of the tax districts for the year 2018. All persons considering disputing their assessments are requested to notify the clerk of the board no later than March 15, 2018. Hearings are by appointment only.

Darlene Sass  
13120 403 Ave, Groton  
Henry Township Clerk

**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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## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6 School Board Meeting March 12, 2018 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

### AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.
- POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3
- CONSENT AGENDA:
1. Approval of minutes of February 12, 2018 school board meeting as drafted or amended.
  2. Approval of February 2018 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments
  3. Approval of February 2018 School Transportation Report
  4. Approval of February 2018 School Lunch Report
  5. Approval of North Central Special Education Co-Op (NCSEC) agenda items...as fiscal agent.
  6. Approval of February District bills for payment.
- OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:
1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
  2. School Board Committee Reports:
    - a. Building, Grounds, & Transportation: Clint Fjelstad, Merle Harder
    - b. Personnel, Policy, & Curriculum: Deb Gengerke, Kara Pharis
    - c. Negotiations: Steve Smith, Grant Rix, Marty Weismantel
  3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report
- NEW BUSINESS:
1. Authorize promissory note from General Fund to Special Education Fund of \$80,000 retroactive to March 1, 2018.
  2. Approve Request for Proposal for Copiers and Managed Print Services.
  3. Consider request from Mike Nehls, Head Custodian, for approval to campaign for and hold elective public office pursuant Policy GBG Staff Participation in Political Activities.
  4. Approve 2018-2019 signed administrative contracts.
  5. Approve resignation from Nicole Johnson, MS/HS Special Education Teacher, effective at the end of the 2017-2018 contract.
  6. Approve hiring Sydney Wilkinson, MS/HS Special Education Teacher, for the 2018-2019 school year.
  7. Executive Session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(1) for personnel issues including Superintendent Evaluation and SDCL 1-25-2(4) for negotiations.
- ADJOURN



## Fire Marshal: Change Batteries When Changing Clocks

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakotans are being reminded that it's a good time to change the batteries in their smoke alarms as they change their clocks.

Daylight Saving Time starts at 2 a.m. local time Sunday morning. That means pushing clocks ahead one hour.

"Nationally, three of every five home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes that either had no working smoke alarms or none at all," says State Fire Marshal Paul Merriman. "Many of those could have been prevented if smoke alarms were present in the home and were properly working."

Residents can check their smoke alarms by pushing the test button on the alarm. Merriman says if the alarm doesn't sound, the batteries should be replaced.

"Testing your smoke alarms is a very easy thing to do," says Fire Marshal Merriman. "By making sure the smoke alarms are working in your home, you could protect your family from a tragic incident."

Additional fire safety tips include:

- At least once a month, press the test button on smoke alarm.
- For maximum protection, install smoke alarms in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. Install alarms on every level of the home.
- Smoke alarms lose sensitivity over time and should be replaced periodically. They are usually good for about 10 years.
- Make sure your family has an emergency exit plan in case there is a fire in the home. If your family doesn't have a plan, this is a good time to develop one.

The Fire Marshal's Office is part of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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## Legislative Report by Jason Frerichs

Wrapping up the 93rd South Dakota Legislative Session is bittersweet for me. I am term-limited and not allowed to serve in the State Senate next term. I could run for the State House of Representatives again, but I do not intend to go that route. After eight years in the Senate and two years in the House, I am looking forward to being able to be home more with my family and focus on our farm and ranch operations. I have enjoyed serving in the legislature for ten years and look forward to assisting future legislators should they welcome any of my input.

As we finish up this session, I am pleased with the success of the precision agriculture building for South Dakota State University. We have the first program in the nation that offers this type of four-year degree, and now we have identified a funding program to construct the building on the northwest portion of campus at our land grant university. When I was working on SB 210 to transfer some leftover ethanol fuel fund revenues, I was surprised to find over \$1 million available in this next fiscal year. I wasn't able to get SB 210 approved, but we were able to secure at least \$170,000 a year for ethanol infrastructure through SB 183. SB 183 is the funding bill for the new precision agriculture classroom and laboratory. SB 183 allows for modest deposits into the ethanol infrastructure incentive fund from 2019 to 2023 and slightly larger deposits into the ethanol fuel fund. The ethanol infrastructure incentive fund provides grants to people who want to install the infrastructure that is necessary to sell mid-range ethanol blends, like blender pumps, hoses, and tanks. I've been fighting for the ethanol industry since I first became a legislator. Ethanol is better for the environment, less expensive for consumers, offers similar performance for vehicles, and is great for farmers, who are the backbone of South Dakota's economy. I hope to see ethanol production and consumption continue to grow in the future, and I would urge the next administration to take a serious look at implementing policies to encourage the continual expansion of ethanol.

This year I continued the fight to expand ethanol production to benefit producers and consumers. I brought SCR 12, which urged the EPA to allow mid-range ethanol blends to be used in standard vehicles. Ethanol is cleaner than traditional fuel, so using more ethanol would benefit the environment. SCR 12 was adopted unanimously in the Senate and received very strong support in the House as well for approval.

As we finalized the budget, I am proud that many of my fellow legislators agreed we should do more for our front-line community support providers along with our nursing homes who depend on Medicaid funding. We also were able to give more support to K-12 education and the technical schools over and above the Governor's original budget. The providers and nursing homes will need significant support in the near future in order to continue to provide their important services.

South Dakota is currently engaged in a legal battle to secure tax revenue from online retailers like Amazon. If the Supreme Court rules in our favor, we'll have a lot of tax revenue that we didn't have before. There have been several proposals as to what to do with that potential new money, and perhaps the most interesting proposal was SB 159, a bill to use online sales tax revenue to reduce the tax on food. SB 159 reduces the tax on food by 1% for every \$20 million of new sales tax revenue collected. Reducing the tax on food would make South Dakota's tax system less regressive. Making our tax system less regressive should be a goal of the legislature, because, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy in 2015, South Dakota has the 4th most regressive tax structure in the United States. The regressivity of South Dakota's tax system comes partially from our dependence on sales tax. According to the NCSL, sales tax claims a larger share of low-income taxpayers' income than it does of high-income taxpayers', especially in states where food is included in the sales tax. The food tax hurts seniors, individuals on fixed incomes, and contributes to food insecurity. According to Dr. Norbert Wilson of Auburn University, taxes on food increase the probability that households will be insecure. Because South Dakota has a 4.5% tax

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on foods, research indicates that all households in South Dakota are over 2.4% more likely to be food insecure than if South Dakota had no tax on food. Mississippi, Alabama, Kansas and South Dakota are the only states taxing food at the full rate with no offset, and it's time that South Dakota joined the ranks of states who lessen or eliminate the tax on food.

My fellow legislators and I spent a lot of time this session debating nonmeandered waters. We passed a bill to repeal the sunset on the original open waters compromise. Repealing the sunset clause brings certainty to landowners and sportsmen. I believe that Secretary Hepler from Game Fish & Parks does great work, and this should give him the tools he needs to negotiate agreements with landowners and keep waters open. We also passed HB 1140. HB 1140 says that townships cannot vacate roads that provide access to public water bigger than 40 acres. I voted against this bill because I believe it takes a tool out of county and township policy toolboxes. Opponents of the current law brought SB 199 to deal with nonmeandered waters. This bill favored sportsmen much more than property owners, and was never able to be calendared to be heard in the Senate. The main reason the bill wasn't debated entirely in the Senate was due to the fact that SB 199 was not a good-faith compromise effort. I believe we made good progress on the nonmeandered waters issue this session. The current compromise is working, and it will continue to work in the foreseeable future. I encourage those passionate on this issue to work with the Game, Fish & Parks to establish agreements on flooded lands while building more respect on both sides of the issue.

Early childhood development and education has been a priority for the Democrat Caucus and that tradition continued this year. We know that the early years of a child's life, from the prenatal period onward, are when the brain is developing faster than any other time. Children who do not have access to high quality early care and intervention enter school unprepared. South Dakota is one in seven states that does not fund a preschool program even though steady research has shown the personal and economic benefit of investing our dollars here. We are near last place when it comes to early childhood development and learning programs. Recognizing the need for early childhood development outlines our commitment to the children and future of South Dakota.

I wish to thank all of you for your input over the past ten years as I have served District 1 in the South Dakota Legislature. I have really enjoyed representing the northeast part of our state and communicating our issues to the rest of my fellow legislators. Please keep in touch if I can be of assistance now or in the future. You can reach me at [Jason.Frerichs@sdlegislature.gov](mailto:Jason.Frerichs@sdlegislature.gov) or 949-2204. Thank you for allowing me to serve!

## **Service Notice: Jerroll Erdmann**

Memorial services for Jerroll (Jerry) L. Erdmann, 85, of Aberdeen, SD will be 11:00 AM, Wednesday, March 14, 2018 at the Presbyterian Church, Groton, SD with the Reverend James Clarke officiating.

Visitation will be Tuesday, March 13th from 5-7 p.m. at Paetznick Garness Funeral Chapel in Groton, SD followed by a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Jerry died Wednesday, March 7, 2018 at Manor Care Health Services in Aberdeen.



## Gov. Dugaard Signs Bills Into Law

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

- SB 9 – require fiscal notes for certain initiated measures and initiated amendments to the Constitution.
- SB 19 – revise certain provisions regarding lease-purchase agreements for a local education agency.
- SB 20 – enact the State and Province Emergency Management Assistance Memorandum of Understanding.
- SB 23 – reduce the driver license renewal requirements regarding the submittal of documentation of social security numbers and to update certain references to federal regulations.
- SB 43 – revise certain provisions regarding the regulation of limited gaming in Deadwood, South Dakota.
- SB 44 – establish a license for certain gaming equipment manufacturers and distributors and to establish a license fee.
- SB 59 – authorize the Department of Tourism to permit certain commercial advertising in information centers.
- SB 69 – allow certain registration and permit documents to be stored and presented electronically.
- SB 70 – define the term, serve, for the purposes of regulating the sale and use of alcoholic beverages.
- SB 73 – authorize a vehicle dealer to lease space in the common area of a shopping mall for displaying new vehicles.
- SB 80 – establish term limits for members of the Board of Regents.
- SB 82 – revise certain provisions providing for the inspections of large passenger vehicles used by non-profit organizations.
- SB 83 – authorize certain patriotic societies access to public schools.
- SB 86 – revise certain requirements when a local unit of government sells surplus property through a real estate broker.
- SB 89 – establish term limits for members of the Board of Education Standards.
- SB 93 – revise certain provisions regarding the intentional exposure of others to certain diseases.
- SB 96 – designate chislic as the official nosh of the State of South Dakota.
- SB 99 – authorize the release of certain 911 emergency surcharge information to public safety answering points.
- SB 105 – authorize a health care practitioner to administer a toxicology test to an infant under certain circumstances.
- SB 117 – revise certain provisions regarding the partners in education tax credit program.
- SB 153 – require disclosure of certain fees being imposed by overnight lodging accommodations.
- SB 154 – revise certain provisions concerning the transfer of motor vehicle titles to satisfy unpaid motor vehicle repair bills.
- SB 185 – revise certain provisions regarding criminal record expungement.

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## Today in Weather History

March 9, 1993: High winds gusting more than 50 mph moved east across South Dakota behind a strong cold front. Peak wind gusts reported included 62 mph at Pierre and 49 mph at Aberdeen. Also, high winds flipped over a mobile home on top of a car and a utility shed near The Oahe Reservoir. A semi-tractor trailer was overturned while crossing Ft. Randall Dam. An office trailer was also tipped over at the same location.

1891: From March 9th through the 13th, a blizzard struck southern England and Wales with gale force winds. 220 people were killed; 65 ships foundered in the English Channel, and 6,000 sheep perished. Countless trees were uprooted and trains buried. Up to a foot of snow and snowdrifts of 11.5 feet were reported in Dulwich, London, Torquay, Sidmouth, and Dartmouth. Click [HERE](#) for more information about this storm from the National Maritime Museum.

1956: A whopping 367 inches of snow was measured on the ground at the Rainier Paradise Ranger Station in Washington. The snow depth was a state record and the second highest total on record for the continental U.S.

1957: An earthquake measuring a magnitude 8.6 struck the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. A Pacific-wide tsunami was generated that caused damage in Hawaii, but fortunately, no lives were lost. Hardest hit was the island of Kauai, where houses were destroyed and roads washed away. Waves reached 34.1 feet high at Haena, HI.

1960 - A winter storm produced a narrow band of heavy snow from north central Kentucky into Virginia and the mountains of North Carolina. Snowfall amounts ranged from 12 to 24 inches, with drifts up to eleven feet high in western Virginia. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Gale force winds ushered arctic air into the north central U.S. Some places were 50 degrees colder than the previous day. Northeast winds, gusting to 60 mph, produced 8 to 15 foot waves on Lake Michigan causing more than a million dollars damage along the southeastern shoreline of Wisconsin. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1988 - A cold front brought high winds to the southwestern U.S. Winds in the Las Vegas Valley of Nevada gusted to 70 mph, and one person was injured by a falling tree. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-two cities in the southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. In New Mexico, afternoon highs of 72 at Los Alamos, 76 at Ruidoso, and 79 at Quemado, were records for March. (The National Weather Summary)


1990 - Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in West Texas. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 71 mph at Lubbock, and golf ball size hail was reported at several other locations. Strong thunderstorm winds injured two persons north of the town of Canyon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Fri Mar 9	Sat Mar 10	Sun Mar 11	Mon Mar 12	Tue Mar 13	Wed Mar 14	Thu Mar 15
						
33°F 20°F	35°F 22°F	31°F 12°F	33°F 10°F	35°F 18°F	41°F 22°F	42°F 31°F
SE 10 MPH	SSW 10 MPH	NNW 14 MPH	NW 7 MPH	SSW 8 MPH	SSW 10 MPH	S 14 MPH


Today's Outlook



light morning snow ending

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD  
[www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)

Saturday's Outlook



light mixed precipitation  
Snowfall around 1" or less  
Little to no icing expected  
Highs in the 30s

Highs **near 30°**, except  
in the mid 30s southwest of Pierre

Graphic Created  
3/9/2018 5:11 AM

Published on: 03/09/2018 at 5:17AM

Temperatures should top out near 30 degrees across much of the area today, under a mostly cloudy sky. Light snow will end this morning, with a mix of light rain, freezing rain, and snow Saturday into Saturday night. Snowfall of around 1" or less is expected Saturday.



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## Yesterday's Weather

**High Outside Temp: 20.6 F at 3:20 PM**

**Low Outside Temp: 5.9 F at 12:12 AM**

**Wind Chill:**

**High Gust: 14.0 Mph at 1:22 PM**

**Precip:**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 64° in 1936**

**Record Low: -20° in 1951**

**Average High: 36°F**

**Average Low: 17°F**

**Average Precip in March: 0.27**

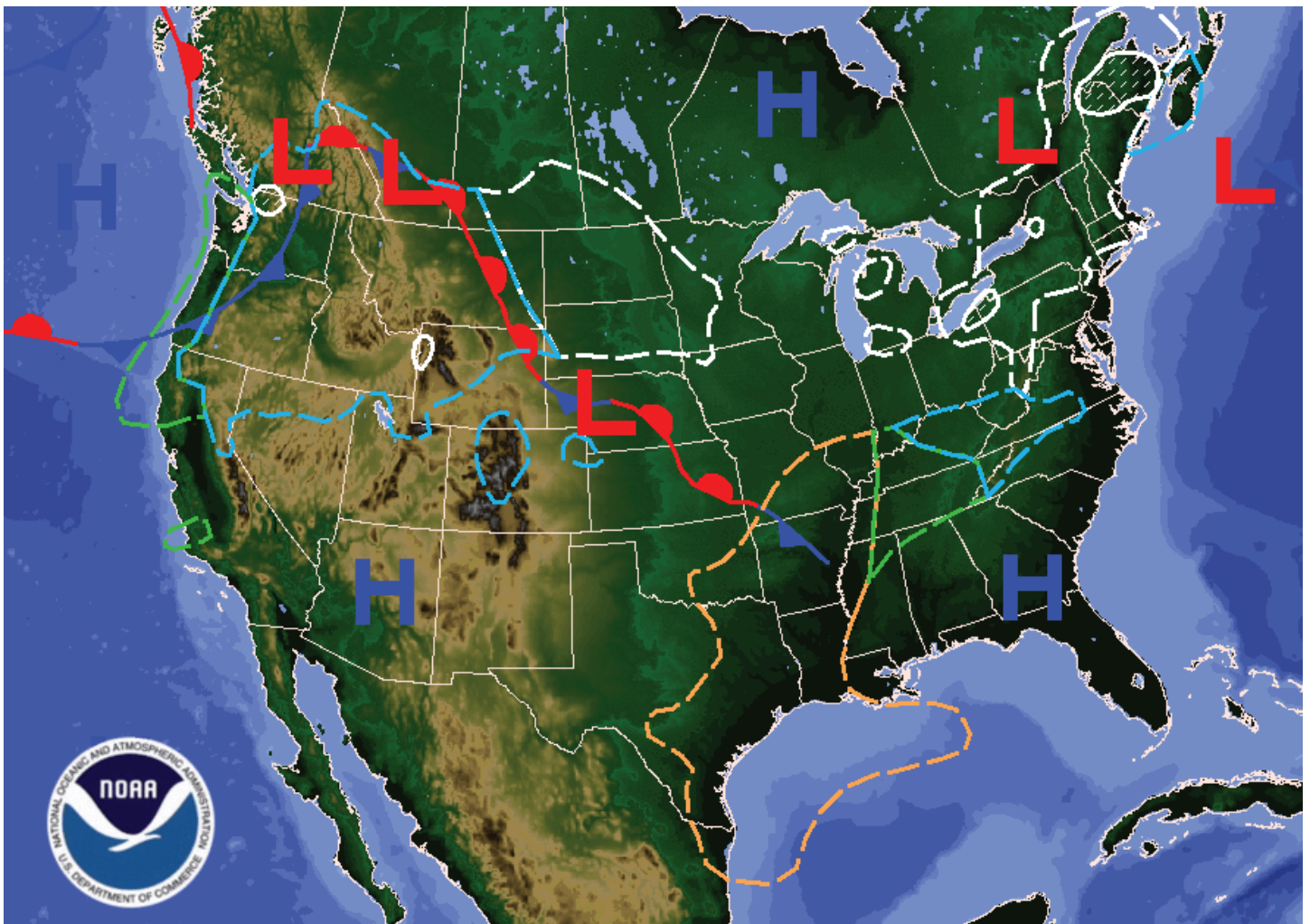
**Precip to date in March: 0.94**

**Average Precip to date: 1.29**

**Precip Year to Date: 1.35**

**Sunset Tonight: 6:31 p.m.**

**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:55 a.m.**



### Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Mar 09, 2018, issued 4:41 AM EST  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by Mcreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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## THE GREAT GOD WHO IS OUR GOD!

Little Mary Beth was ill and unable to attend church. When her father went into her room to see how she was doing she asked, "What did the preacher preach about this morning?"

"God," was his response as he felt her forehead to see if she had a temperature.

"God?" she asked. "Was He our God?"

What a difference our makes! We worship Him because we belong to Him. More than our Creator, He is our Redeemer who, through the work of His Son on the cross, reclaimed us to become His very own!

Our worship leader wrote in Psalm 95:3 that "The Lord is a great God." As he continued to write, he emphasized the fact that this God "is our God!" This God whom we worship is a personal God - our very own God. He wants us to understand the implications of this important fact: God has redeemed us - reclaimed us - through the work of His Son on the cross and we now belong to Him.

As he continues to write about our God, he draws a picture that illustrates our relationship to Him. He reminds us that "we are the people of His pasture and the flocks under His care." How very touching! Our God is the good shepherd who feeds His people in His pasture and protects them with His hand. But the picture does not end there. This picture only becomes complete when Jesus declared Himself as the "Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep."

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, for being our God. May we honor You each day of our lives and bless Your name. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 95:3-7 For the Lord is the great God, And the great King above all gods.

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## 2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/28/2018 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 3/24/2018 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 4/13/2018 Elementary School Carnival, 5 p.m.
- 5/5/2018 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/27/2018 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

### Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

#### BOYS BASKETBALL

Class A Round of 16

Dakota Valley 59, Bon Homme 50

Pine Ridge 69, Dell Rapids 66

Red Cloud 79, Miller 55

Sioux Valley 79, Hot Springs 56

Class B Round of 16

Bridgewater-Emery 74, DeSmet 60

Clark/Willow Lake 54, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 37

Lower Brule 61, Corsica/Stickney 36

Timber Lake 58, Herreid/Selby Area 54

White River 77, Kimball/White Lake 44

#### GIRLS BASKETBALL

Class A State Quarterfinals

Madison 56, Belle Fourche 42

McCook Central/Montrose 52, Aberdeen Roncalli 45

St. Thomas More 44, Vermillion 26

West Central 61, Crow Creek 39

Class B State Quarterfinals

Castlewood 54, Warner 28

Ethan 37, Sully Buttes 36

Hanson 53, Avon 42

Tripp-Delmont/Armour 48, Faith 39

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

### Rapid City standoff ends with arrest

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A police standoff in Rapid City has led to the arrest of a man wanted on a felony warrant for possessing controlled substances.

Pennington County sheriff's deputies tried to serve a warrant at a residence Thursday, but the man who was wanted barricaded himself inside the home. Rapid City police and sheriff's deputies cordoned off the area and called in a special response team because of the man's history of domestic violence, weapons violations and drug offenses. Authorities did not know if he was armed.

KOTA-TV reports authorities say the suspect climbed out of a window and onto the roof for a time, but then went back in the house. He eventually surrendered.

Information from: KOTA-TV, <http://www.kotatv.com>

## South Dakota lawmakers approve precision ag project at SDSU

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers have approved a major new precision agriculture facility at South Dakota State University.

The Senate voted 30-2 Thursday to send the bill authorizing the project to Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

The roughly \$55 million project includes building a precision agriculture classroom and laboratory, with renovations to an existing building expected later.

Lawmakers address about \$46 million of the cost in their plan. That includes \$16.6 million in private donations, \$11 million from SDSU and \$18.4 million from other sources including a fertilizer fee hike and a one-time \$2 million state appropriation.

Senators voted earlier Thursday to send a different part of the funding plan to Daugaard.

The university says its bachelor's degree in precision agriculture is the first in the nation. Supporters say the new project will provide modern research and education space.

## Autopsy: 20-year-old Box Elder man was fatally shot

BOX ELDER, S.D. (AP) — An autopsy has determined that a 20-year-old Box Elder man was shot to death.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office says Lake Taylor died Wednesday evening. Preliminary autopsy results show the cause of death was a single gunshot wound.

Box Elder police and sheriff's officials were called to a shooting at an apartment complex. Both law enforcement agencies continue to investigate.

## South Dakota agency streams Black Hills conditions online

LEAD, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department is using cameras to give outdoor enthusiasts a glimpse of snowmobile trail conditions in the Black Hills.

The three cameras currently in use are placed at Kirk Trailhead south of Lead, Hardy Station and near Savoy. The Kirk Trailhead camera shows the actual trail, while the other two show general conditions in close proximity to trails. Anyone can view the conditions by visiting the department's website.

Department official Shannon Percy told the Black Hills Pioneer that they're looking to acquire more trail cameras.

"We are trying to get a couple more," Percy said. "The problem is we need power and cell phone coverage where we put the cameras. Out on the trails it's really hard to get cell service, and to get service with a power line close-by is even harder."

He said the Department of Transportation is testing new camera systems that use solar power.

The trails are still in good condition, according to Percy, who said this season saw some of the best conditions in several years.

"It's been a really good February," he said. "I talked to the businesses along the trails, and they are all smiling. It's been a tough couple years."

Trail grooming will cease on March 31.

Information from: Black Hills Pioneer, <http://www.bhpioneer.com>

## Standing Rock students to perform in national talent show

FORT YATES, N.D. (AP) — A group of students from the Standing Rock Indian Reservation will take the stage this weekend at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., to perform in a national talent show.

Standing Rock Elementary School and Standing Rock Middle School are part of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' national Turnaround Arts program, which helps incorporate the arts into K-12 curriculum. Now 11 students have the opportunity to perform together at the program's talent show this Sunday.

The students plan to showcase a song about how growing up on a reservation has helped shape them.

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It's written by Taboo, a member of pop group the Black Eyes Peas, and Mic Jordan, a hip hop artist from the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe Tribe.

"Even if you're a kid from the reservation, you can be somebody; you just have to believe in yourself and that's what the song is about — not backing down and believing in yourself," said Jordan, who has been mentoring the Standing Rock schools through the program.

Most of the students haven't performed in an event of this scale, and some said they haven't ever left North Dakota or been on a plane.

Helixo Eagle, 13, will be rapping in the performance. He said he enjoys this style of music because he can send a positive message.

Student Alice Brownotter, 14, will be performing a traditional dance in the show. She told the Bismarck Tribune that "getting recognized as a reservation school doing, like, big things is pretty cool." She said she's looking forward to Sunday's performance to share her culture.

Brownotter also performed at the Oscars last weekend with artists Andra Day and Common for their song, "Stand Up for Something."

"It showed that I could stand up for Native people and be a representative," she said.

Information from: Bismarck Tribune, <http://www.bismarcktribune.com>

## Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

### Daily Leader, Madison, March 7

#### Legislature, candidates on opposite sides?

By coincidence, the South Dakota Legislature voted down an open government issue in the same week one of the leading candidates for governor put the issue front and center of her campaign.

A bill that would bar local governments from negotiating confidential settlements passed through the Senate but died in a house committee. Vermillion legislator and retired judge Art Rusch had championed the bill, but opposition in the House Local Government committee put an end to it, at least for this session.

Meanwhile, U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem, who is running for governor, announced her "Sunshine Initiative," a series of open government ideas to improve transparency for both state and local governments.

Bullet point No. 5: "Limit confidential settlement agreements. You deserve to know how your money is being spent, but current law allows the state to negotiate confidential agreements so as to protect wrongdoers — even when your tax dollars are used to pay out a settlement. As governor, I would work to limit the state's ability to engage in secret transactions like this, allowing it only when necessary to protect a victim's privacy."

The other two leading candidates for governor, Attorney General Marty Jackley and state Sen. Billie Sutton, have also pledged to support open government policy improvements (and have demonstrated that commitment in their current jobs). Some Sioux Falls mayoral candidates have made openness a cornerstone of their campaigns.

So does this lead to a governor vs. Legislature disagreement next session? We believe whoever is elected governor will introduce legislation similar to that just defeated. Will the Senate support it again? Will the House Local Government committee oppose it again? We're eager to see progress on the confidential settlement issue in 2018. It deserves support from both the governor and the legislature.

### Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, March 5

#### A new arena is the best path forward

After months of study that led to a considerably less costly plan for a new arena at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, the city council voted 9-1 Monday for a \$130 million facility. The other option was to spend at least \$25 million on repairs and upgrades for a 41-year-old arena.

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It's a plan that does not raise taxes. The money comes from the Vision Fund, the beneficiary of sales tax revenue that built the civic center in 1972 and Barnett Arena, which opened in 1977. It also is money that if not dedicated to a new arena will be spent on other projects that might not have an economic impact for the city.

But despite the undeniable success of a facility that has generated millions of dollars of sales tax revenue and the equally undeniable fact that the arena is outdated, there are opponents and that could lead to yet another special election. If that is the case, it will be a referendum on Rapid City's future.

Some residents feel like this was resolved when voters rejected a plan in 2015 offered by the Sam Kooiker administration. Therefore, it should never be considered again, a preposterous notion. Mayor Kooiker's plan was vastly different. It called for an arena that could seat 19,000 people with room for an indoor football field. Plans also called for a 2,000-stall parking garage.

The price tag was \$180 million. The financing was estimated to cost \$240 million. It would have required the city to spend nearly 100 percent of its Vision Funds for 30 years to service the debt. At the time, concerns arose that the city would have to dip into the Capital Improvement Fund to help pay the enormous debt.

Mayor Steve Allender's plan calls for an arena that seats 12,000 to 13,000 and costs \$130 million. The interest payments add \$50 million to the bill. The city now has \$25 million for an initial payment. As a result, the city plans to borrow no more than \$110 million for the project and would initially use 51 percent of Vision Funds — projected to be a total of \$11.8 million in 2018 — with that percentage decreasing in future years.

Those who have made up their minds to oppose any plan proposed by Mayor Allender got a boost recently when five former mayors came out against the project in an op-ed on this page. Their primary concerns focused on what they called unanswered questions. Former mayors Hanks, Shaw, McLaughlin, Carlyle and Munson had questions about return on investment, operation costs, parking, the future of the existing Barnett Arena and who future tenants might be in a new arena.

Another former mayor, Don Barnett, said those were the same arguments he heard while leading the city when it built the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. He dismisses those concerns now. Instead, he points to all that has happened since the civic center and arena were built.

In addition to bringing state basketball tournaments to Rapid City for the first time — one of the goals of what would later become known as the Don Barnett Arena — the civic center attracted events unforeseen at the time.

"No one dreamed," he said, that the civic center would need to double its convention space in just eight years and the facility would someday host Elvis Presley, the annual Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo, the annual Lakota National Invitational event, the Rapid City Thrillers basketball team and more recently the Rapid City Rush hockey team.

Looking back, there's no question the civic center and Barnett Arena have provided a tremendous economic stimulus to the community. It boosted the hospitality industry, created jobs and opportunities, and helped Rapid City expand from a summer tourism town to a community that attracts visitors year-round.

Rapid City has grown considerably since 1972 when around 44,000 people lived here. It now has a population of around 75,000 and continues to grow with valuable additions like Black Hills Energy's new \$70 million corporate headquarters, the Buffalo Crossing mixed-use project, Regional Health's expansion and new apartment complexes that offer attractive amenities.

Rapid City is changing into a more modern community, while Barnett Arena now largely stands as a monument to the past.

Since 2009, attendance has dropped around 25 percent at the civic center and the number of events at Barnett Arena dropped from around 90 in 2009 to 60 in 2016, according to the city. Its vintage design no longer accommodates top-tier acts or events that generate a significant economic impact and help put Rapid City on the map. It is even getting increasingly difficult to comfortably host successful events like the stock show in December, which attracts thousands of visitors from the entire northern plains over a two-week period.

If the city were to only upgrade the facility and make it compliant with the Americans with Disabilities



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Act, it would do little to keep up with the demands of the modern economy.

Some opponents say that what we have is good enough for Rapid City and that a new facility is a waste of taxpayers' dollars. If those voices had prevailed in 1972, Rapid City would be a smaller and less dynamic community today.

The city council has approved a reasonable plan that does not raise property taxes or the sales tax for the Vision Fund, which was initially approved to build the civic center. It only makes sense that the same fund be used to build a new arena now rather than later when it will be far more costly to maintain a vision for a more prosperous community that seeks to improve the quality of life for current and future residents.

Mayor Allender and the city council deserve credit for learning from the past and looking to the future. They were elected to study the issues and make decisions. In this case, they made the right one.

## American News, Aberdeen, March 8

### Basketball takes center stage in Aberdeen, across state

Brace yourself for an abundance of basketball.

The sport will take center stage in Aberdeen for the next week-plus.

In fact, it has already been a big week for hoops all across South Dakota.

In northeastern South Dakota, fans are stoked because both Northern State University teams are doing well.

The Wolves will be playing this weekend in the first rounds of the NCAA Division II national tournaments, both qualifying for the Central Regional. The men start Saturday in Missouri, and the women Friday in Sioux Falls.

It would take either team six wins to claim a national title.

Win or lose, it has been a tremendously exciting season with a combined 56 games won by the Wolves.

We hope both squads can add to that total.

Meanwhile in Aberdeen, the city will be hosting back-to-back weekends of high school state basketball championships.

The Class B girls will take center stage Thursday through Saturday. Two-time defending champion Sully Buttes is in town, as are the always-competitive Warner girls.

Welcome all.

The Class B boys will take over Aberdeen next weekend.

Over those six days at the Barnett Center on the Northern campus, there will be 24 games played and two state champions crowned.

Aberdeen always seems to earn rave reviews for its hosting of state tournaments. We hope everyone does his or her part and goes the extra mile so those four- and five-star reviews continue. Make our visitors feel welcome and special.

Even though there can only be two champions, all of the teams can leave Aberdeen with high marks if they play hard, display good sportsmanship and are respectful of others.

That goes for the fans as well. One or two bad fans can tarnish a town's reputation for months.

Of course, there is still a lot of basketball being played across South Dakota even though the seasons are nearing an end. Sioux Falls is in the final week of hosting 66 college basketball games in 18 days.

Sioux Falls also will host the State AA high school boys and girls basketball state championships March 15-17 at the Premier Center and the connected Sioux Falls Arena.

The Central High School girls will play in the AA tourney, while the Roncalli High School girls will play in the State A tourney this weekend in Watertown. Good luck to both.

Meanwhile, Rapid City will host the State A boys' tourney next weekend.

In addition to that, South Dakota will send at least two representatives to the NCAA Division I national tournaments in the South Dakota State University men's and women's teams. On Tuesday, combined crowds of 19,818 watched the Jackrabbits defeat their University of South Dakota rivals in the two Summit League championships in Sioux Falls.

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The Coyote women have an outside chance of being selected for the NCAA tournament. If not, both USD squads will continue play in the NIT tournaments.

That's a lot of success in a basketball-loving state. South Dakotans should take some time in the next 10 days or so to appreciate it and maybe even take in a game or two.

The season — and the many fans visiting Aberdeen — will be gone before you know it.

## **Governor approves term limits for regents, education board**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has signed a pair of bills that impose 12-year term limits on members of the state Board of Regents and a board that sets content standards for elementary and secondary schools.

The Republican governor signed the bills into law Thursday.

Regents appointed after July 1 will be limited to two consecutive six-year terms. That board governs South Dakota's six state universities and two special schools.

Board of Education Standards members will be restricted to three consecutive four-year terms. The laws allow people who have hit the term limits to be re-appointed after sitting out two years.

Republican Sen. Jim Bolin, the bills' sponsor, recently told a legislative panel that after 12 years, board members should relinquish their positions so people with potentially different perspectives can be appointed.

## **Lawmakers back conduct code change to include social media**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota legislative panel has endorsed updating the Legislature's anti-harassment rules to include social media.

The Joint Legislative Procedure Committee voted Thursday for the change, which would specify that harassing or offensive behavior could include electronic communications. Both chambers of the Legislature would have to adopt the update for it to take effect.

House Speaker Mark Mickelson, the sponsor, says it's a clarification of what may constitute harassing or offensive behavior in the Legislature's code of conduct.

## **Report shows that Andover woman was shot in back of head**

ANDOVER, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say an Andover woman who was killed last month was shot twice in the back of the head.

Thirty-six-year-old Jose Quinones-Rodriguez, of Aberdeen, is charged with first-degree murder, arson and burglary, among other charges. Prosecutors say Quinones-Rodriguez killed 25-year-old Tawny Rockwood between Feb. 8 and 9 and set her apartment on fire.

The American News reports that an affidavit released this week following an autopsy shows that two shell casings were found near Rockwood's body and no firearm was found, leading officials to rule out suicide as a cause of death.

Investigators recovered a gas can, a propane torch and a gun holster in the search of vehicles registered to Quinones-Rodriguez.

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

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

## **Backers gathering signatures for Rapid City arena options**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Some Rapid City residents want voters to decide whether a new arena should be built or if the existing facility should be renovated.

The Rapid City Journal reports backers must collect and submit at least 2,095 valid signatures to the city's finance office by the close of business on March 20.

If the signatures are collected, residents could decide in June whether a new \$130 million arena should

be built or whether the Barnett Arena should be renovated for about \$25 million.

Mayor Steve Allender has said the outdated design and size of Barnett Arena has contributed to a decline in the "top tier" events that can generate more revenue for the local economy.

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

## Mount Vernon man pleads no contest to stealing grain

MOUNT VERNON, S.D. (AP) — A Mount Vernon man accused of stealing \$400,000 worth of grain from a Davison County farm family has pleaded no contest to a grand theft charge.

Authorities allege 47-year-old Merle Northrup sold loads of corn and soybeans under his own name while working for the farm family, keeping the proceeds. The thefts are alleged to have occurred over a span of five years.

The Daily Republic reports Northrup entered his plea Wednesday. He faces up to 15 years in prison and a \$30,000 fine when he's sentenced next month.

Information from: The Daily Republic, <http://www.mitchellrepublic.com>

## Protection order issued for mother who lost son

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A doctor and lawyer who are associated with a lawsuit filed by a mother whose teenage son died while in state custody have asked a judge in Minnehaha County for protection from the woman.

But, Dawn Van Ballegooyen has denied stalking or harassing Dr. Raed Sulaiman and attorney Gary Thimsen. Sulaiman performed the autopsy on Ballegooyen's son, Brady Folkens, who died in 2013 after becoming ill at the State Treatment and Rehabilitation Academy in Custer. Thimsen is defending the state in Ballegooyen's lawsuit.

The Argus Leader says a judge has issued a temporary order restricting Ballegooyen from being within 500 feet of Sulaiman and Thimsen. The judge will hold a hearing later to determine whether the temporary order should be made permanent.

## A look at what's ahead in a landmark Trump-Kim summit

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — After a year of threats and diatribes, U.S. President Donald Trump and third-generation North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un have agreed to meet face-to-face for talks about the North's nuclear program.

It remains to be seen whether a summit, if it takes place, could lead to any meaningful breakthrough after an unusually provocative year. North Korea tested its most powerful nuclear weapon to date and test-launched three intercontinental ballistic missiles theoretically capable of striking the U.S. mainland.

Will there be a breakthrough? Failure? Or merely the start of another long and difficult process meant to remove the North's nuclear capabilities?

Here's a look at what may lie ahead and the challenges that remain:

### WHY NOW?

Analysts say Trump's decision to accept Kim's invitation for a summit and to do it by May could be linked in part to a desire to claim a significant achievement in his most difficult foreign policy challenge before the U.S. midterm elections in November.

Kim, on the other hand, seems desperate to save a sanctions-battered North Korean economy.

Both leaders have interests in striking a big deal, said Cheong Seong-Chang, a senior analyst at South Korea's Sejong Institute. Should it happen, the May summit between Trump and Kim will come shortly

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after a planned meeting between Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in in April.

It's likely that North Korea will also push for summits with China, Russia and Japan later in the year to further break out of its isolation, Cheong said.

Trump will likely try to achieve something dramatic in his meeting with Kim, said Hong Min, an analyst at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification, including a possible exchange of verbal commitments on the denuclearization of North Korea and a peace treaty between the two countries.

## WHERE TO MEET?

The United States and North Korea will likely be talking quite a bit in coming months and maybe even exchanging high-level delegations to set up the logistics of the summit.

One of the biggest questions is where it will take place.

The United States would prefer Washington, while North Korea will want Trump to come to Pyongyang, its capital.

Unless the countries agree to a third-country location, which would likely be South Korea, experts see it as more likely that Trump will fly to Pyongyang.

While no incumbent U.S. president has ever set foot in North Korea, Trump might be willing to become the first because it would fit the strong-willed, in-your-face type of leadership he tries to project, Hong said.

It's hard to imagine Kim going to Washington because he is much less diplomatically experienced; the planned meeting with Moon in April will be his first with any state leader since he took power in 2011.

They could also meet in the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone between the rival Koreas or, Hong said, the southern South Korean resort island of Jeju.

## WHAT WILL NORTH KOREA WANT?

A big question will be whether Trump can accept a freeze of North Korea's nuclear weapons program rather than its elimination, said Koh Yu-hwan, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Dongguk University.

Kim will likely want to keep some nukes as a deterrent, but that might be hard for Trump to tolerate when he spent so much time harshly criticizing his predecessor, Barack Obama, for allegedly standing by and watching as North Korea became a nuclear threat.

Still, Kim might express a firmer commitment to denuclearization to Trump, including giving a full report on the North's current nuclear weapons arsenal and allowing thorough international verification once the denuclearization process takes hold, said Choi Kang, vice president of Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

While some experts speculate that North Korea might ask for a halt of annual military drills between the United States and South Korea or even the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula, Choi said it's meaningful that Kim, at least according to South Korean presidential official Chung Eui-yong, said he understands that the joint military exercises between the allies "must continue." This signals an important departure from the past when the North thoroughly rejected the U.S.-South Korea alliance.

Kim might even free several American citizens currently detained in the North to brighten the atmosphere of his summit with Trump, Choi said.

## HAVE WE SEEN THIS BEFORE?

The whirlwind events of the past months might be compared to 1994, when former U.S. President Bill Clinton concluded a major nuclear agreement between Washington and Pyongyang.

Under the "Agreed Framework," North Korea halted construction of two reactors the United States believed were for nuclear weapons production in return for two alternative nuclear power reactors that could be used to provide electricity but not bomb fuel, and 500,000 annual metric tons of fuel oil for the North.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright traveled to Pyongyang in 2000, and there were talks of a summit between Clinton and then-North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, the father of Kim Jong Un. But there was no arrangement before George W. Bush's election. The Agreed Framework broke down after U.S. intelligence agencies said North Korea was pursuing a second way to make bombs, using enriched uranium,



leading to the breakdown of the agreement.

North Korea is clearly a different country than it was two decades ago, holding a legitimate nuclear program as a bargaining chip. But Trump, in just his second year in office and facing a similarly strong-willed leader eager to directly break a diplomatic deadlock, could be in a better position to cut a meaningful deal with North Korea than Clinton was at the end of his presidency.

"Chemistry wise, Trump and Kim might get along; they both strive to be bold and could be eager to strike a deal," said Choi. "After years of diplomatic stalemate over the North's nuclear program, we could use an injection of top-down decision making."

Follow Kim Tong-hyung on Twitter at @KimTongHyung.

## President Trump plans to meet Kim Jong Un for nuke talks

By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump plan to meet in May for nuclear disarmament talks, a whiplash development that would put two leaders who've repeatedly insulted, threatened and dismissed each other in the same room, possibly in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang.

It would have been an unthinkable suggestion just a few months ago, when the insults were at their peak — Trump was a "senile dotard" and Kim was "Little Rocket Man" — and the North was snapping off regular weapons tests in a dogged march toward its goal of a viable nuclear arsenal that can threaten the U.S. mainland.

Liberal South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who some believe has maneuvered the two leaders to this position, reflected the hope and relief many here feel about the planned summit when he declared Friday that it will be a "historical milestone" that will put the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula "really on track."

But there's also considerable skepticism.

North Korea, after all, has made a habit of reaching out, after raising fears during previous crises, with offers of dialogue meant to win aid and concessions. Some speculate that the North is trying to peel Washington away from its ally Seoul, weaken crippling sanctions and buy time for nuclear development. It has also, from the U.S. point of view, repeatedly cheated on past nuclear deals.

And now the North has landed a face-to-face meeting with the leader of the world's most powerful country, a nation that North Korea has long sought to draw into talks that it hopes would establish a peace treaty to end the technically still-active Korean War and drive out all U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula, removing what the North says is a hostile encirclement of its territory by Washington and Seoul.

Trump's hastily reached decision to accept the meeting sent White House staff scrambling.

Earlier Thursday, South Korean national security director Chung Eui-yong had briefed Trump and other top U.S. officials about a rare meeting with Kim in the North Korean capital.

Trump then made a surprise visit to the White House press briefing room to alert reporters of an upcoming "major statement" on North Korea by South Korea.

At a quickly called appearance on a White House driveway, Chung told reporters that Kim had "expressed his eagerness to meet President Trump as soon as possible" and that "President Trump appreciated the briefing and said he would meet Kim Jong Un by May to achieve permanent denuclearization."

"Great progress being made," Trump tweeted after the announcement.

That remains to be seen.

North Korea still produces propaganda declaring its continuing dedication to the "treasured sword" of its nuclear program. Washington still remains publicly dedicated to annual war games with the South that the North claims are invasion rehearsal — they're expected to resume next month, after being postponed during the Winter Olympics in the South — and to keeping 28,500 troops in the South and 50,000 in Japan,

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largely as a way to deter North Korean aggression.

North Korea is engaged in "a ploy to serve its own interests" and make Kim look like "a bold leader of a normal, peace-loving nuclear power," according to Duyeon Kim, a visiting research fellow at the Korean Peninsula Future Forum think tank in Seoul.

"But in spite of the deceptive cloak, the agreement posed an opportunity for the United States. It put the ball in Washington's court, and provides a window for the Trump administration to engage and test the regime through direct negotiations," Kim wrote on the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists web page.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in Djibouti on Friday that the decision to meet with Kim was made by Trump himself and resulted from a sharp change in the North Korean leader's stance.

"What changed was his posture in a fairly dramatic way. It was a surprise to us that he was so forward-leaning," Tillerson said. He said it would take "some weeks" before the timing of the talks is worked out.

North Korea appeared to confirm the summit plans. A senior North Korean diplomat at the United Nations in New York, Pak Song Il, told The Washington Post in an email that the invitation was the result of Kim's "broad minded and resolute decision" to contribute to the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula.

Talks between Washington and Pyongyang have previously been overseen by lower-level experts, and have often bogged down, even when so-called "breakthroughs" have come, in the pesky details, such as allowing outsiders in to inspect North Korea's nuclear compliance, for instance.

Now, the talks will start at the top. And there will be no time to settle all the problems that have scuttled previous negotiations.

It's anyone's guess what Trump and Kim might decide in the highest-level meeting in what has been essentially a bloody, seven-decade standoff between their countries.

The announcement Friday followed weeks of softening ties between the Koreas, orchestrated by the South Korean leader, Moon, and culminating in a visit by Kim Jong Un's sister to the South to observe the Olympics in Pyeongchang and then Chung's trip to meet with Kim in Pyongyang.

"This is a tried-and-true North Korean tactic, reaching out at the height of crisis in hopes of breaking out of spiraling tensions with the United States," according to a report by Zhixing Zhang and Evan Rees, Asia specialists at Stratfor, a geopolitical analytical group. "In this instance, Pyongyang has skillfully played on South Korea's fear of a military strike and hopes of reunification."

Trump took office vowing to stop North Korea from its pursuit of a working long-range nuclear-tipped missile. He's oscillated between threats and insults directed at Kim that have fueled fears of war, and more conciliatory rhetoric.

The historic announcement comes during a period of unparalleled tumult in the Trump's West Wing, with the president's policy agenda stalled and morale sinking as staff departures proliferate and disrupt efforts to instill more discipline and order.

Chung, who credited Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign for the diplomatic opening on the nuclear issue, said Kim understands that routine U.S.-South Korea military drills "must continue."

Kim, who had used his annual New Year's address to warn the United States of a supposed nuclear button on his desk, has an economy that's been battered by heavy international sanctions.

Trump said the sanctions against the North will remain in place until there's a deal.

Koh Yu-hwan, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Dongguk University, said the Trump-Kim meeting's success could depend on whether the United States can accept a freeze of North Korean nuclear weapons, rather than a direct process to eliminate them.

But already Trump seemed to have bigger goals in mind: "Kim Jong Un talked about denuclearization with the South Korean Representatives, not just a freeze," the U.S. president said in a tweet.

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Associated Press writers Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul and Matthew Pennington in Washington contributed to this report.

## School shooting calls released; gun bill on governor's desk

By **BRENDAN FARRINGTON** and **GARY FINEOUT**, Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — In a newly released recording from the day of a deadly Florida school shooting, the parents of a 17-year-old girl tell a 911 dispatcher their daughter is texting from a classroom where the door's glass was shot out. Later, the student texts that police have arrived. After getting the rest of the message, the mother raises her voice, "Three shot in her room. Oh my God. Oh my God."

As a gun-control bill sits on the governor's desk, the Broward County Sheriff's Office released 12 minutes of radio transmissions from its deputies and a neighboring police agency highlighting the chaos during the Feb. 14 attack at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. That material also included 10 of the 81 recordings of frantic calls by students and parents to a 911 center.

The excerpts showed a deputy on school grounds first thought the loud bangs were firecrackers, then realized they were gunshots — yet he never ran toward them. Other responding deputies and officers desperately tried to sort through a chaotic scene, treat the injured, lock down the school and locate the shooter.

Three weeks after the Parkland high school shooting, Florida Gov. Rick Scott has a gun-control bill on his desk that challenges the National Rifle Association but falls short of what the Republican and survivors of the massacre demanded.

Now he must decide whether to sign it. Scott has not said what he will do, and he plans to take up the issue Friday with relatives of 17 people slain in the attack.

"I'm going to take the time and I'm going to read the bill and I'm going to talk to families," he said.

In the shooting's aftermath, Scott broke with the NRA. He had received top marks from the lobbying group in the past for supporting gun-rights measures, and his new stance reinvigorated the gun-control movement.

The governor, who is expected to seek a U.S. Senate seat later this year, has called for raising the minimum age to purchase any type of gun, but he does not support arming teachers. Instead, he wanted lawmakers to adopt his own \$500 million proposal to put at least one law enforcement officer in every school.

The NRA opposes raising age limits to buy weapons or imposing new waiting periods. In a statement Thursday, NRA and Unified Sportsmen of Florida lobbyist Marion Hammer called the bill "a display of bullying and coercion" that would violate Second Amendment rights and punish law-abiding citizens.

State lawmakers formally delivered the reform package Thursday. The governor has 15 days to sign it, veto it or let it become law without his signature.

The measure would raise the minimum age to buy rifles from 18 to 21 and extend a three-day waiting period for handgun purchases to include long guns. 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 districts agree to participate.

Other provisions would create new mental health programs for schools and establish an anonymous tip line where students and others could report threats to schools. The bill would also ban bump stocks that allow guns to mimic fully automatic fire and seek to improve communication between schools, law enforcement and state agencies.

President Donald Trump congratulated Florida on the legislation, saying state lawmakers "passed a lot of very good legislation last night."

During a Cabinet meeting Thursday, Trump said the White House was working on a plan to ban bump stocks and that efforts to enhance background checks were "moving along well" in Congress.

The Florida bill's narrow passage reflected a mix of Republicans and Democrats in support and opposition. Survivors were split as well.

Andrew Pollack, whose daughter was among those killed, said more needed to be done, but there was enough good in the bill that it should pass.

"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.”

The suspect in the attack, Nikolas Cruz, a 19-year-old former Stoneman Douglas student, faces 17 counts of first-degree murder and 17 counts of attempted murder for the massacre.

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 not announced a decision.

Associated Press writers Terry Spencer, Jennifer Kay and Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami contributed to this report.

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

## **UK military aiding spy probe; Russia says it’s not to blame**

**By JILL LAWLESS and DANICA KIRKA, Associated Press**

LONDON (AP) — British police asked the military on Friday to help investigate the nerve-agent poisoning of a former spy, as Russia’s foreign minister expressed resentment at suggestions Moscow was behind the attack.

The Metropolitan Police force said counterterrorism detectives had asked for military help “to remove a number of vehicles and objects from the scene” of Sunday’s attack in the city of Salisbury.

Police said troops were being called in because “they have the necessary capability and expertise” and health advice remains the same — there is no broader risk to the public.

British investigators are scrambling to trace the nerve agent that has left former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in critical condition.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow was “ready to consider” lending a hand, “whether it’s poisoning of some British subjects, whether it’s rumors about interference in the U.S. election campaign.”

“But in order to conduct such cases, it is necessary not to immediately run out on TV screens with unfounded allegations,” Lavrov was quoted as saying by Russian state news agency Tass in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

Skripal, a former Russian military intelligence officer, was convicted in 2006 of spying for Britain and released in 2010 as part of a spy swap.

He had been living quietly in Salisbury, where he and his daughter Yulia were found unconscious on a bench Sunday. They are in critical but stable condition in a hospital in the city, 90 miles (140 kilometers) southwest of London.

A police officer who treated them at the scene is in serious condition, and a total of 21 people have received medical treatment.

The U.K. has vowed to take strong action against whoever was responsible for the “brazen and reckless” attack.

British authorities say it’s too soon to lay blame, but suspicions have fallen on Russia.

Those branded enemies of the Russian state have sometimes died mysteriously abroad, and the Skripal case echoes the death of Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian agent who was poisoned in London in 2006 with radioactive polonium-210.

A British public inquiry found that Russia was responsible for Litvinenko’s killing, and that Russian President Vladimir Putin probably approved it.

A former head of London’s Metropolitan Police called Friday for new investigations into the deaths of 14 Russians in the U.K. amid suggestions they were targeted by the Russian state.

Former Commissioner Ian Blair, who led the London force when Litvinenko was fatally poisoned, told the BBC it is important to find out “whether there is some pattern here.”

A BuzzFeed News investigation claimed U.S. spy agencies have linked 14 deaths to Russia, but U.K. police shut down the cases.



Russian media have mocked suggestions of Moscow involvement in the attack — but also noted that those who betray Russia seem to come to a bad end.

One anchorman on a Russian state television news show began a report on Skripal's poisoning with a warning to anyone considering becoming a double agent.

Channel One anchorman Kirill Kleimenov said in the Wednesday broadcast that he didn't wish death or suffering on anyone but wanted those "who dream of such a career" to know that traitors rarely live long.

"Alcoholism, drug addiction, stress and depression are inevitable professional illnesses of a traitor resulting in heart attacks and even suicide," Kleimenov said.

Jim Heintz in Moscow contributed to this story.

## **Watchdog: Western tech used for hacking in Turkey, Syria**

**By RAPHAEL SATTER, AP Cybersecurity Writer**

PARIS (AP) — A Canadian company's hardware is being used to hack internet users along Turkey's border with Syria, researchers said Friday, adding that there were signs that Kurdish forces aligned with the United States might have been targeted.

The revelation comes as Turkey presses its offensive against the Kurds dug in along the country's frontier with northwestern Syria — a conflict that threatens to disrupt the American-led effort to extinguish the Islamic State group. The apparent use of Canadian technology to target a U.S. ally was an irony underlined by Ron Deibert, the director of the internet watchdog group Citizen Lab, which published a report on the spying.

"These companies are not closely regulated — and that can lead to a lot of unintended consequences, including consequences that harm our foreign policy interests and human rights interest as well," said Deibert. "It's a strong argument for government control over this kind of technology."

Citizen Lab identified the hardware behind the hacking as PacketLogic devices produced by Procera — a Fremont, California-based company that was recently folded into Canada-based network management firm Sandvine, which is owned by American private equity group Francisco Partners.

In a statement issued before the report's release, Sandvine said it investigates all allegations of abuse, but said it had been unable to complete its inquiry because Citizen Lab refused to provide the company with its findings in full.

"Once we have the necessary data, we will conduct a full investigation and take appropriate action," Sandvine said.

The statement also said Citizen Lab's allegations were "technically inaccurate and intentionally misleading," but a representative for the company has yet to supply an example of a misleading or inaccurate claim.

Citizen Lab said it discovered the hacking after a European cybersecurity company reported that network service providers in two unidentified countries were trying to compromise their users using a powerful hacking technique known as network injection. Citizen Lab scoured the internet for signs of the spying and eventually traced the activity to the Turkish provinces of Adana, Hatay, Gaziantep, Diyarbakir and to the Turkish capital, Ankara, as well as parts of northern Syria and Egypt.

Network injection — so-called because malicious software is injected into everyday internet traffic by whoever controls the network — has long been feared as a particularly powerful form of government spying.

"This can potentially be used to target anyone in the country with the click of the button," said Bill Marczak, the lead author of the report.

Although the identities of those being spied on in Turkey and Egypt aren't clear, Marczak said that the devices appeared to be installed on the network belonging to Turk Telekom, a leading phone and internet provider in Turkey as well as parts of northern Syria. He said there were hints suggesting some of the targets are affiliated with the YPG, the Kurdish Marxist rebel group which is fighting Turkish forces for control of the northwestern Syrian province of Afrin. Although Turkey considers the YPG a terrorist organization, the group provides the backbone of the U.S.-backed operations against the Islamic State in eastern Syria.

American officials acknowledged Monday that ground operations against the jihadist group's remnants in eastern Syria were on hold because Kurdish fighters were being diverted to the battle against Turkey.

Turk Telekom said in a statement that it complies with Turkish law and doesn't interfere with internet users' access. It added that the company "does not redirect any internet user to receive malicious downloads of popular software applications." A representative for the company did not immediately respond to follow-up questions.

Sandvine's ties to the Turkey government have been the subject of previous reporting. In 2016, Forbes reported that engineers at Procera were so troubled at the prospect of supplying surveillance hardware for use by Turk Telekom that six of them quit in protest.

"I do not wish to spend the rest of my life with the regret of having been a part of (Turkish President Recep Tayyip) Erdogan's insanity, so I'm out," one of the engineers said in a letter of resignation quoted by Forbes.

LinkedIn shows at least 16 Procera-Sandvine employees listed as working in Egypt or Turkey. One Sandvine engineer based in Cairo listed "lawful interception" — a commonly used euphemism for state-sanctioned surveillance — as one of his interests.

Online:

Citizen Lab's report:

<https://citizenlab.ca/2018/03/bad-traffic-sandvines-packetlogic-devices-deploy-government-spyware-turkey-syria/>

Sandvine:

<https://www.sandvine.com/>

Raphael Satter can be reached at: <http://raphaelsatter.com>

## China builds ambitiously in Africa as US sounds the alarm

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — The sleek, green-and-white trains glide past the congested, ragged streets of Addis Ababa along the city's new light rail — built and financed by China. The towering silver African Union headquarters here was built by China, too. So was the new ring road system around the city. And the new railway connecting landlocked Ethiopia to Djibouti.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, America has noticed.

From Ethiopia to Djibouti, Kenya to Egypt, the United States is sounding the alarm that the Chinese money flooding Africa comes with significant strings attached. The warnings carry distinct neocolonial undertones: With Beijing's astonishing investments in ports, roads and railways, the U.S. says, come dependency, exploitation and intrusion on nations' basic sovereignty.

"We are not in any way attempting to keep Chinese investment dollars out of Africa. They are badly needed," U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said this week in the Ethiopian capital. "However, we think it's important that African countries carefully consider the terms."

Those terms lead to deals in which Chinese workers, not Africans, get the construction jobs, Tillerson and other U.S. officials warn. They say Chinese firms, unlike American ones, don't abide by anti-bribery laws, fueling Africa's pervasive problems with corruption. And if countries run into financial trouble, they often lose control over their own infrastructure by defaulting to a lender that historically has not always been forgiving.

Some African countries now owe sums of up to 200 percent of their annual economic output, the U.S. has said, with most debt owed to China.

There are obvious reasons why the United States would want to cast itself and its companies as a more favorable alternative to China, the geopolitical rival and economic competitor whose influence is also on the rise in Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.

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But there's a problem, African politicians and economists say: China, unlike the United States, is showing up on the continent with a generous checkbook in hand. Given the unpredictability involved in investing in poorer countries, China is often the only one willing to take the risk.

And African nations realize that China's investments don't come with the same nagging about human rights and good governance that often accompanies U.S. assistance.

"They're ready to basically do business," said Brahima Coulibaly, a former Federal Reserve economist and Africa scholar at the Brookings Institution. "They're ready to partner with any country that is also willing to partner with them in a way that it makes sense to them and furthers their agenda."

China vehemently disputes that its enterprises in Africa or elsewhere are exploitive, arguing instead that its generosity illustrates its commitment to the rest of the world's economic and social development.

"No one dominates, and all parties participate on an equal footing," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in his annual news conference Thursday. "There is no secret operation, but an open and transparent operation — no 'winner-take-all,' but all see mutual benefits and 'win-win' results."

The eye-popping investments through China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, believed to run into the trillions of dollars, form just one part of the Asian power's bid to promote a new global system that puts Beijing at the center. Equally alarming to the U.S. are China's military designs.

In Djibouti, where Tillerson visited Friday, China has built its first overseas base along the key shipping route that links Europe and Asia. Its "string of pearls" plan calls for building a network of ports stretching from China to the Persian Gulf. Beijing has also been busy building artificial islands and then taking steps toward militarizing them in a bid to expand its control over waters far from its coast.

China's new base in Djibouti, another country immensely indebted to Beijing, is just miles away from the only permanent U.S. military base in Africa. Though it's China's only African base so far, Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, head of U.S. Africa Command, predicted this week that "there will be more."

"We are not naive to think that some of the activities the Chinese are doing in terms of counterintelligence there — they are taking place," Waldhauser told the House Armed Services Committee. "But it just means that we have to be cautious, we have to be on guard."

For better or worse, U.S. suspicions about China's ambitions are playing out far beyond the confines of Africa. Chinese companies are building or financing power plants in Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, managing a port in Greece and launching railway projects in Thailand and Tajikistan, with aggressive plans to continue its expansion into Latin America.

Already, there are cautionary tales, critics say.

In Sri Lanka, the former president suffered a surprise election defeat in 2015 after his opponent criticized him for running up some \$5 billion in debt to China to fund construction. In December, Sri Lanka's government sold an 80 percent stake in the port in Hambantota to a Chinese state-owned company after falling behind in repaying \$1.5 billion borrowed to build it.

In Africa, some of the China-funded roads have started to crumble, the U.S. has said, due to shoddy construction. And in January, the French newspaper Le Monde reported that China planted listening devices in the \$200 million headquarters it built for the African Union in 2012. China denies that claim.

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Associated Press writers Joe McDonald in Beijing and Lolita C. Baldor in Washington contributed to this report.

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

## Tillerson says 'talks,' but no 'negotiations' with NKorea

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

DJIBOUTI (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson drew a distinction Friday between "talks" with North Korea and "negotiations," arguing that President Donald Trump's willingness to chat with Kim Jong Un shouldn't be construed as anything more than that.

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The stunning announcement that Trump had agreed to a meeting with the North Korean leader raised questions about what had changed after months of Tillerson and other Trump officials insisting the conditions weren't right for negotiations with Pyongyang. Tillerson said that Trump has been open to mere talks and a meeting with Kim "for some time," and had decided on Thursday that "the time was right."

"In the president's judgment, that time has arrived now," Tillerson told reporters in Djibouti during a trip to Africa.

Tillerson did not define the precise difference between talks and negotiations, and it was unclear what there was for the two countries — still technically at war — would have to discuss if not a deal to address concerns about the North's nuclear weapons program. Ostensibly, they could hold preliminary conversations to see if there's enough common ground and good will to proceed to formal negotiations.

Explaining Trump's decision-making about the meeting, Tillerson said that the U.S. had witnessed a shift from North Korea that became apparent when a South Korean delegation visited Pyongyang, then traveled to Washington to brief U.S. officials on the rare meeting. He said the dispatch from that meeting "was the most forward-leaning report that we've had, in terms of Kim Jong Un's not just willingness but his strong desire for talks.

"What changed was his posture in a fairly dramatic way," Tillerson said. "In all honesty, that came as a little bit of a surprise to us as well."

As Trump's administration ramped up its "maximum pressure campaign" on North Korea over the last year, Tillerson was one of the more enthusiastic advocates within the Cabinet for trying to talk to the North Koreans, even as other officials warned Trump of the risks of rewarding Kim too soon. For months the administration gave mixed messages about just what "preconditions" — if any — needed to be met to merit talks.

Ultimately, Trump decided that Kim's willingness to discuss denuclearization and commit to halt testing was enough. Tillerson said the decision to agree to the meeting was "a decision the president took himself."

"This is something he's had on his mind for quite some time," Tillerson said. "So now I think it's a question of agreeing on the timing of that first meeting between the two of them and a location and that will take some weeks before we get all that worked out."

## 'Pharma Bro' faces high stakes sentencing in fraud case

By TOM HAYS, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Is "Pharma Bro" Martin Shkreli a master manipulator who conned wealthy investors or a misunderstood eccentric who used unconventional means to make those same investors even wealthier?

A federal judge in Brooklyn will have to weigh the conflicting portrayals of the former pharmaceutical company CEO on Friday at his sentencing on a securities fraud conviction.

The stakes are high: The defense wants U.S. District Judge Kiyoko Matsumoto to give Shkreli a sentence of 18 months or less because, in the end, his investors in two failed hedge funds got all of their money back and more from stock he gave them in a successful drug company. Prosecutors say he deserves at least 15 years behind bars for pilfering funds behind his investors' backs to start the drug company and cover up his fraud.

Shkreli, 34, became notorious for raising the price of a life-saving drug by 5,000 percent and trolling critics on the internet with his snarky "Pharma Bro" persona.

To make its case for leniency, the defense asked the judge to consider several letters from Shkreli and his supporters, which included professionals he worked with who vouched for his credentials as a self-made contributor to pharmaceutical advances.

Other testimonials were as quirky as the defendant himself. One woman described how she became an avid follower of Shkreli's social media commentary about science, the pharmaceutical industry, but mostly, about himself. She suggested that those who were annoyed by it were missing the point.

"I really appreciate the social media output, which I see on par with some form of performance art," she wrote.



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Another supporter said Shkreli's soft side was demonstrated when he adopted a cat from a shelter — named Trashy — that became a fixture on his livestreams. Another letter was from a man who said he met Shkreli while driving a cab and expressed his appreciation at how he ended up giving him an internship at one of his drug companies.

And then there was this from Shkreli: "I was wrong. I was a fool. I should have known better."

In court filings, prosecutors argued that Shkreli's remorse about misleading his investors was not to be believed.

"At its core, this case is about Shkreli's deception of people who trusted him," they wrote. "Indeed, he compounded the lies with a pattern of corrupt behavior designed to cover up those lies. He lied to get investors' money, he lied to keep them invested in his funds and he lied once those investors wanted their money back."

Even after his arrest in 2015, Shkreli went against his lawyers' advice to lay low by taunting authorities in Facebook posts. And after his conviction last year, the judge revoked his bail and jailed him when he said he would pay a \$5,000 bounty to anyone who could get a lock of Hillary Clinton's hair while the Democrat was on a book tour.

The defense suffered a setback earlier this week when the judge ruled Shkreli would have to forfeit more than \$7.3 million in a brokerage account and personal assets including his one-of-a-kind Wu-Tang Clan album that he boasted he bought for \$2 million. The judge said the property would not be seized until Shkreli had a chance to appeal.

## Democrats' Texas rift shows difficulty in retaking Congress

By WILL WEISSERT and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Democrats are salivating at the prospect of flipping a wealthy Houston enclave that has been solidly Republican since sending George H.W. Bush to Congress in 1967 — the kind of race they'll have to win for any hope of retaking the House in the November midterms.

But their new opportunities, here and in other states, sometimes have them going after each other instead of the Republicans, and that could spoil their chances. Aside from the normal conflicts of ambition and personality, there's a more significant Democratic rift lingering from the 2016 presidential primary between the party's Bernie Sanders progressive wing and its Hillary Clinton establishment.

The tensions clouding the upcoming runoff between the party's top two candidates in the Houston district — corporate attorney Lizzie Pannill Fletcher and activist Laura Moser — could shadow other House races nationwide. Party leaders believe frustration with President Donald Trump, coupled with a surge of energized female candidates, could spell a banner midterm election season. But with so many Democratic candidates in so many districts, party power brokers may try and tip the scales, sometimes with clumsy results.

In Houston, Moser advanced to the May 22 runoff despite opposition from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. The national campaign group published an opposition research memo calling her "a Washington insider who begrudgingly moved to Texas to run for Congress" and targeted her for once joking that she'd rather have "my teeth pulled out without anesthesia" than live in small-town Texas.

Sanders, whose Our Revolution group endorsed Moser, called the party's attack "appalling."

Such tactics go beyond the 2016 fallout to the kind of negative campaigning that is why "so many people are disgusted with politics," Sanders said in an interview with The Associated Press.

"The party is becoming more progressive," said Sanders, the progressive, and "part of the old establishment who are not enthusiastic about that kind of change" will resist it. He said he understands that, "but I hope that resistance does not come in the form of ugly, negative advertising. It should come in the form of debating the issues."

National Democrats say the problem in Houston isn't that Moser is too liberal. It's that she doesn't match the congressional district where the party has set its sights on picking up the seat that Republican John Culberson has held since 2001. Every seat is important as the Democrats try to win majority control in Washington.

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Even though Moser is a Houston native, they worry her time in Washington and flip comment about Texas will become ready-made ads against her in a general election, and could make her unelectable. They don't want to miss their chance in a district that re-elected a Republican to Congress yet voted for Clinton over Trump in 2016 — one of 23 nationwide to do so.

Meredith Kelly, a spokeswoman for the DCCC, said the organization "has long recognized and appreciated the unprecedented influence that the grassroots have in these races. As we've indicated all cycle, the DCCC is keeping all options on the table to work with our allies and ensure that there's a competitive Democrat on the ballot for voters to elect in November."

But the move drew the ire of another wing of the same national party. Democratic National Chairman Tom Perez criticized the DCCC, pointing to lingering resentments against party leaders from Sanders' supporters still angry over the 2016 nominating process.

"When voters, whether it's Texas or elsewhere, perceive that someone from Washington, from the outside is trying to put their thumb on the scale, they don't take kindly to that," Perez said.

Still, he said he has no problem with House or Senate Democrats' campaign committees choosing favorites, adding that they should involve only "the high road" of boosting a preferred candidate.

Progressive groups point to more intraparty showdowns to come, including in Illinois, where moderate Democratic Rep. Daniel Lipinski, who is backed by Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, faces a primary challenge from Our Revolution-endorsed Marie Newman in a safely Democratic district.

Other daunting races will be in California, particularly for two seats now held by Republicans that are coming open in Southern California districts where Clinton won. There are so many Democratic hopefuls that the party might have to choose front-runners to make sure one of them makes the general election. Under the state's unusual primary system, the top vote-getters face off, even if they are from the same party.

Former DCCC official Jesse Ferguson said when he was at the committee, "we would have begged to have even one candidate in some of these districts."

"Now we have multiple candidates and it's evidence of enthusiasm to take control of Congress away from Trump," said Ferguson, who went on to work for Clinton. "Ultimately, it may fuel some healthy internal debates and some awkward moments, but it's a fundamentally good problem to have."

Some activists see the 2018 primary contests as a continuation of the long-running progressives-versus-establishment conflict from a decade ago between former DCCC chairman Rahm Emanuel and then-Democratic National Committee head Howard Dean.

"The DCCC just has to stay out of these races," said Neil Sroka, spokesman for Democracy for America, the group founded by Dean. "Part of the reason why Democrats have been stuck in this cul-de-sac of loss over the past 10 years is we are not running the candidates who can inspire and turn out the new American majority that is essential to winning elections."

The party's opposition to Moser in Houston may have backfired, since it focused national attention and helped spike her fundraising. She produced an ad before Tuesday's Texas primary in which she talked about "rejecting the system where Washington party bosses tell us who to choose."

"Texans don't like being told what to do and I think that was the biggest miscalculation," Moser said by phone.

Pannill Fletcher is trying to focus on other issues in the race than the DCCC's action.

"My opponent is and has always been John Culberson," she told supporters at her victory party Tuesday night.

Voter Michelle Umengan, a pediatrician who cast her ballot for Moser, said the candidate's comments were "insensitive" but not a deal-breaker.

"It's definitely more offensive to have the DCCC spend time and money smearing one of their own," she said. "Moser was born and raised in Houston. I think her Houston upbringing is well balanced with the perspective of her worldly career. That's more important than any distaste she might have for small town living."

Follow Weissert on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/apwillweissert> and Mascaro at <https://twitter.com/LisaMascaro>

## 911 calls, radio traffic show chaos in high school massacre

By TERRY SPENCER, Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — In the minutes after a gunman opened fire in a Florida high school, killing 17, frantic students and parents begin flooding 911 with calls.

A deputy on the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School campus first thought the loud bangs were firecrackers but quickly realized they are gunshots — yet he never ran toward them.

Other responding deputies and police officers desperately tried to sort through a chaotic scene, treat the injured, lock down the school and locate the shooter.

The Broward County Sheriff's Office on Thursday released 12 minutes of radio transmissions from its deputies and neighboring Coral Springs police, along with recordings of 10 of the 81 calls its 911 center received during the Feb. 14 shooting. The sheriff also released a written timeline laying out how the radio calls correlated with what was seen on unreleased school security video.

Investigators say video shows suspect Nikolas Cruz opening fire with an AR-15 assault rifle 15 seconds after he enters the school's freshman building, and firing periodically over the next six minutes. Deputy Scot Peterson, the resource officer assigned to protect the school, is at the nearby administration building. It will be more than 90 seconds before he heads toward the shooting. The first 911 call comes in 68 seconds after Cruz opens fire. The first responding deputies arrive two minutes after that.

The 911 calls came from students hiding in the freshman building's classrooms and parents who were getting calls and text messages from their children.

The first calls show the operators' confusion. A male inside the school, possibly a student, whispers, "There's shots at Stoneman Douglas, Someone is shooting up the school at Stoneman Douglas."

"I'm sorry. I can't hear you. What's happening?" the dispatcher responds.

"Someone is shooting up Marjory Stoneman Douglas" he whispers. She still can't hear him, "Hello... hello...hello."

But soon a sense of order begins to emerge among the Broward dispatchers and they start giving instructions on keeping the students safe. Just 13 months earlier, the same 911 center had handled a mass shooting at Fort Lauderdale's airport that left six dead.

In a call relayed from nearby Boca Raton, lasting more than 16 minutes, a man reports information from a mother standing beside him. She's on another line with her daughter who is in a classroom with just one other girl. They have no closet or enclosed desks to hide behind.

The 911 dispatcher soon instructs the man to tell the girls to remain silent and turn off their cellphone ringers in case the shooter is nearby.

As the call drags on, the mother can be heard in the background encouraging the girl, who hears noises in the hallway. "I love you, I love you. It's going to be fine if you hide somewhere. Can you play dead? You need to fake dead," the mother tells the girl.

Seconds later, officers burst into the room and the girls are safe. The mother can be heard telling her daughter, "Tell them to pray, tell them to pray for strength." The two girls are led out and the call ends.

The operator sighs, "Oh my God."

Outside the freshman building, Peterson makes his first radio call almost two minutes after Cruz first fired. "Be advised we have possible, could be firecrackers, I think we have shots fired, possible shots fired," he tells dispatchers. Investigators say 18 seconds later he took up a position near the building and remained there for several minutes. His subsequent transmissions focus on getting nearby streets and the school shutdown and keeping deputies away from the building. Deputies set up a perimeter. Sheriff Scott Israel has said Peterson should have charged into the building and killed Cruz. Peterson, who has

denied wrongdoing, retired rather than accept a suspension and investigation.

By now, students are flooding out of the school. Officers from nearby Coral Springs are arriving to assist deputies. Soon, their calls appear to be more aggressively assessing what they face.

About this time Cruz discards his jammed gun. His burgundy hoodie from his days as member of the school's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps allows him to mix into the fleeing mass and get away.

Deputies and officers begin finding their first victims outside the building. A student shot in the leg. Another wounded by an entrance, another in the parking lot. A staff member not moving.

Eleven minutes after Cruz first fired — five minutes after he fled — four Coral Springs officers and two deputies enter the freshman building. More deputies and officers soon follow. They find bodies. They find frightened teenagers huddling in classrooms.

Another mother on a 911 call hears her daughter's rescue but then exclaims, "Three shot in her room. Oh my God. Oh my God."

An hour and 19 minutes after the first shots were fired, an hour and 13 minutes after Cruz left the building, 47 minutes after Cruz bought a soda at Walmart, Coconut Creek police officer Michael Leonard turns onto a quiet suburban street about a mile south of the school. He spots a teen wearing a burgundy hoodie walking. He yells at Cruz to get on the ground.

He does.

Associated Press writers Ian Mader, Adriana Gomez Licon and Curt Anderson in Miami contributed to this story.

## White House aide launches first wave in final-days PA push

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — In the first wave of the White House's new western Pennsylvania offensive, one of President Donald Trump's chief aides on Thursday attacked Democratic congressional candidate Conor Lamb on abortion while casting Republican Rick Saccone as "a reliable vote" for the president.

White House counselor Kellyanne Conway, the first of three Republican heavyweights set to campaign in the region before Tuesday's special election, charged that even a single vote could affect Trump's policy agenda on Capitol Hill.

"Every vote counts at the ballot box, but every vote counts in Washington right now too," she told a dozen campaign volunteers at an Allegheny County GOP office. She added later, "The president wants a reliable vote in Washington."

Conway acknowledged she was the "warm-up band" for the White House's final-days push to preserve a Republican congressional seat in Pennsylvania's 18th district, a working-class region that stretches from the Pittsburgh suburbs to the West Virginia border. The president is scheduled to attend a local rally on Saturday followed by his son, Donald Trump Jr., on Monday.

The high-profile reinforcements from the president's orbit were welcomed by Saccone, a 60-year-old state representative, who has wholeheartedly embraced Trump throughout his campaign. Trump carried the region by nearly 20 percentage points in 2016. Yet with the election just days away, polls suggest that Saccone is essentially tied with Lamb, a 33-year-old 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 got crazy uncle Joe Biden," Saccone said before Conway's visit.

"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."



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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.

Trump's Saturday visit will be his second in two months. Daughter Ivanka Trump appeared with Saccone in a separate visit last month as well and praised him as "a champion" for Republican priorities.

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 lashed out at Lamb as "extreme" on abortion, seizing on his opposition to a ban on abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

"Most pro-choicers say they're for reasonable restrictions. But the Democratic Party platform is not. It essentially is abortion for anyone, anytime, anywhere," Conway said.

At a GOP dinner later in the day, she linked Lamb to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, a common theme in the GOP's strategy against Democrats nationwide this year.

"Conor Lamb said he'll vote against Nancy Pelosi, but he sounds a lot like her most times," she said. "So I don't believe it."

Lamb has said he personally opposes abortion as a Catholic, but he supports a woman's right to choose as set in law.

Conway's 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.

She repeatedly noted Thursday that she was in Pennsylvania "in her personal capacity" and not on official White House business.

Lamb, meanwhile, shrugged off news of the White House's aggressive strategy 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.

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

## Trump orders stiff trade tariffs, unswayed by grim warnings

By KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Unswayed by Republican warnings of a trade war, President Donald Trump ordered steep new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports to the U.S. on Thursday, vowing to fight back against an "assault on our country" by foreign competitors. The president said he would exempt Canada and Mexico as "a special case" while negotiating for changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The new tariffs will take effect in 15 days, with America's neighbors indefinitely spared "to see if we can make the deal," Trump said. He suggested in an earlier meeting with his Cabinet that Australia and "other countries" might be spared, a shift that could soften the international blow amid threats of retaliation by trading partners.

Those "other countries" can try to negotiate their way out of the tariffs, he indicated, by ensuring their

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trade actions do not harm America's security.

Surrounded by steel and aluminum workers holding hard hats, Trump cast his action as necessary to protect industries "ravaged by aggressive foreign trade practices. It's really an assault on our country. It's been an assault."

His move, an assertive step for his "America First" agenda, has rattled allies across the globe and raised questions at home about whether protectionism will impede U.S. economic growth. The president made his announcement the same day that officials from 11 other Pacific Rim countries signed a sweeping trade agreement that came together after he pulled the U.S. out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership last year.

Though he focused on workers and their companies in his announcement, Trump's legal proclamation made a major point that weakened steel and aluminum industries represent a major threat to America's military strength and national security.

The former real estate developer said U.S. politicians had for years lamented the decline in the steel and aluminum industries but no one before him was willing to take action.

Despite a week of furious lobbying against his plan by Republican lawmakers and some of his own advisers, Trump said he would go ahead with penalty tariffs of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on aluminum. But he also said the penalties could "go up or down depending on the country, and I'll have a right to drop out countries or add countries. I just want fairness."

Century Aluminum Chief Executive Michael Bless said the tariffs would allow his company, which produces high-purity aluminum used in military aircraft, to recall about 300 workers and restart idled production lines at its smelter in eastern Kentucky by early 2019. And Trump took note of U.S. Steel's announcement that it planned to ramp up activity at its plant in Granite City, Illinois, and recall about 500 employees because of the new tariffs.

But there was political criticism aplenty, especially from Trump's own Republican Party.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, appearing with Home Depot employees in Atlanta, warned of "unintended consequences." And Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin called the tariffs "a very risky action" that could put agricultural and manufacturing jobs at risk.

"I'm not sure there are any winners in trade wars," said Johnson, who once ran a plastics manufacturing business in his home state.

Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois said Trump's action was "like dropping a bomb on a flea" and could carry "huge unintended consequences for American manufacturers who depend on imported materials."

Business leaders, too, sounded their alarm about the potential economic fallout, warning that American consumers would be hurt by higher prices. They noted that steel-consuming companies said tariffs imposed in 2002 by President George W. Bush ended up wiping out 200,000 U.S. jobs.

"Tariffs are taxes, and the American taxpayer will pay the cost of a trade war," said Cody Lusk, president and CEO of the American International Automobile Dealers Association. "Even with limited exemptions, tariffs will raise the sale prices of new vehicles."

Stocks ended the day higher after the announcement, with investors relieved by the carved out exceptions for key allies.

At the White House, an upbeat Trump chatted with the steelworkers, invited them to the Oval Office and autographed a hard hat. He invited some of the workers to speak from the presidential podium, and several said that excessive "dumping" of foreign steel and aluminum had negatively affected their jobs and families.

Nations around the globe that were not excluded from the tariffs reacted with dismay.

The European Union warned before the announcement that it was ready to retaliate with countermeasures against iconic U.S. products such as Harley Davidson motorcycles, Levi's jeans and bourbon.

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom tweeted after Trump's announcement that "the EU should be excluded from these measures." Malmstrom said she would be meeting with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer in Brussels on Saturday.

The British government said tariffs "are not the right way to address the global problem of overcapacity" and said it would work with EU partners "to consider the scope for exemptions outlined today." Japanese

Foreign Minister Taro Kono called the decision "extremely regrettable," predicting it could have a major impact on the economy and the relationship between the U.S. and Japan, as well as the global economy.

Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, meanwhile, called the announcement a "step forward" and said Canadian officials had exerted tremendous efforts to get the exemption. "That Canada could be seen as a threat to U.S. security is inconceivable," she said.

The exemptions for Canada and Mexico could be ended if talks to renegotiate NAFTA stall, the White House said. The talks are expected to resume early next month.

The run-up to Thursday's announcement included intense debate within the White House, pitting hard-liners against free trade advocates such as outgoing economic adviser Gary Cohn. Recent weeks have seen other departures and negative news stories that have left Trump increasingly isolated, according to senior officials speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal discussions.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaró, Darlene Superville, Jill Colvin, Zeke Miller, Martin Crutsinger and Alan Fram in Washington, Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin, and Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

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

## Northeast tries to dig out, power up after latest storm

By **DAVE COLLINS** and **MICHAEL MELIA**, Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Residents in the Northeast dug out from as much as 2 feet of wet, heavy snow Thursday, while utilities dealt with downed trees and power lines that snarled traffic and left hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses in the dark after two strong nor'easters — all with the possibility of another storm headed to the area.

With many schools closed for a second day, forecasters tracked the possibility of another late-season snowstorm to run up the coast early next week.

"The strength of it and how close it comes to the coast will make all the difference. At this point it's too early to say," said Jim Nodchey, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Massachusetts. "We're just looking at a chance."

At least two deaths were blamed on the storm.

Snow still was falling Thursday in places including Vermont, where storm warnings were in effect until the evening.

More than 800,000 customers were without power in the Northeast, including some who have been without electricity since last Friday's destructive nor'easter. Thousands of flights across the region were canceled, and traveling on the ground was treacherous.

A train carrying more than 100 passengers derailed in Wilmington, Massachusetts, after a fallen tree branch got wedged in a rail switch. Nobody was hurt. Tory Mazzola, a spokesman for Keolis Commuter Services, which runs the system for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, said the low-speed derailment remains under investigation.

In New Hampshire, Interstate 95 in Portsmouth was closed in both directions because of downed power lines, leaving traffic at a standstill for hours.

Amtrak restored modified service between New York City and Boston on Thursday after suspending it because of the storm. New York City's Metro-North commuter railroad, which had suspended service on lines connecting the city to its northern suburbs and Connecticut because of downed trees, restored partial service Thursday.

In Wells, Maine, the Maine Diner remained open even though much of the town was without power after the storm dumped a foot-and-a-half of snow.

"If people are going to lose power, then they need some place to go. We do everything we can to stay open and provide that service," said Jim MacNeill, the restaurant's general manager.

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Steve Marchillo, a finance director at the University of Connecticut's Hartford branch, said he enjoyed the sight of heavily snow-laden trees on his way into work Thursday but they also made him nervous.

"It looks cool as long as they don't fall down on you and you don't lose power," he said.

The Mount Snow ski area in Dover, Vermont, received 31 inches of snow by Thursday morning with more still falling. The resort said the snowfall from the past two storms would set it up for skiing through the middle of April.

Montville, New Jersey, got more than 26 inches from Wednesday's 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 was not as severe as the nor'easter that toppled trees, flooded 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. Eversource, an electric utility serving Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire, said it could take several days to restore power for everyone due partly to the challenge of clearing storm debris and repairing damage.

Massachusetts was hardest hit by outages, with more than 345,000 utility customers losing service Thursday. Republican Gov. Charlie Baker shut down all non-essential state offices.

In Maine, Republican Gov. Paul LePage also closed state offices and encouraged residents to stay off roads "unless it is an absolute emergency."

In New Jersey, the state's major utilities reported more than 247,000 customers without power a day after the storm.

An 88-year-old woman in the New York City suburb of Suffern was crushed to death by a tree that fell as she shoveled snow Wednesday, and a man died Thursday in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, when he apparently drove around cones warning motorists about a downed live wire and the vehicle caught fire.

A pickup truck driver who was struck by a snowplow Thursday morning in Lebanon, New Hampshire, also died. Police said an investigation would determine if weather conditions were a factor.

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This story has been corrected to show New Jersey has more than 247,000 power outages, not 247,000,000.

## Mississippi close to having most-restrictive abortion law

By JEFF AMY and SARAH MEARHOFF, Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi lawmakers on Thursday passed what would be the nation's most restrictive abortion law, making the procedure illegal in most cases after 15 weeks of pregnancy. The state's only abortion provider pledged to sue, and the attorney general said he expected a tough legal battle ahead.

Lawmakers in the Republican-controlled Legislature appeared to not only expect, but to encourage, such challenges in hopes the issue will eventually make its way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The House voted 75-34 in favor of the bill, and Republican Gov. Phil Bryant said again Thursday that he would sign it. Because of necessary paperwork, it won't reach his desk until next week. The Senate passed the measure Tuesday.

"We are protecting more women, we are protecting more children," said House Judiciary B Committee Chairman Andy Gipson, a Braxton Republican. "By 15 weeks, you have a child in the womb who has a heartbeat, who for all practical purposes has taken on the form of a person."

Under the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling establishing a nationwide right to abortion, states were permitted to restrict abortions after viability — the point when the fetus has a reasonable chance of surviving under normal conditions outside the uterus. The ruling offered no legal definition of viability, saying it could range between 24 and 28 weeks into a pregnancy.

The Mississippi measure "seems like a pretty simple bill designed to test the viability line that the Supreme



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Court has drawn," said David Forte, a law professor at Ohio's Cleveland State University.

Abortion-rights-groups immediately spoke out against the bill, saying it is not legally or medically sound.

"We certainly think this bill is unconstitutional," said Katherine Klein, equality advocacy coordinator for the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi. "The 15-week marker has no bearing in science. It's just completely unfounded and a court has never upheld anything under the 20-week viability marker. ... We expect that this bill will be challenged in court and it will lose and, in the process, Mississippi will lose thousands upon thousands of taxpayer dollars."

Anti-abortion groups applauded the measure.

"We're thrilled that Mississippi lawmakers are taking a step to protect the basic right to life, as well as protecting maternal health," said Jameson Taylor, acting president of the conservative-leaning Mississippi Center for Public Policy. The center helped craft the bill.

There are two exceptions to House Bill 1510: if the fetus has a health problem that would prevent it from surviving outside the womb at full term, or if the pregnant woman's life or a "major bodily function" is threatened by the pregnancy. Pregnancies as a result of rape and incest are not exempt.

It's unclear if a 15-week ban will move forward elsewhere. A bill has been filed for Louisiana's upcoming legislative session. Gipson said lawmakers in Texas, Georgia, and "some Midwestern states" are exploring the idea. An appeals court in 2015 struck down efforts in North Dakota to ban most abortions after six weeks, when a fetus develops a detectable heartbeat, and in Arkansas after 12 weeks.

Democratic Attorney General Jim Hood said Thursday that he expected legal challenges and he noted that less-restrictive measures banning abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy have been struck down in other states. The U.S. Senate earlier this year rejected such a ban nationwide when supporters couldn't reach a 60-vote supermajority to act.

Mississippi's 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.

Diane Derzis, who owns the clinic, has said it provides abortions as late as 18 weeks after pregnancy. Most of Mississippi's 2,500 abortions in 2015 took place at the clinic. Before the bill was passed, Derzis said she would sue. She did not respond to text or telephone messages seeking comment Thursday.

Abortion opponents have been encouraged by 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," Taylor said.

He 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."

Forte and University of Chicago Law Professor Geoffrey Stone both said they believe the chances the Supreme 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.

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.

## Trump discusses violence with video game execs and critics

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump raised concerns about the graphic depiction of violence in video games at a White House meeting Thursday with members of the industry and some of their most vocal critics.

Searching for ways to respond to last month's Florida school shooting, Trump has questioned the impact of video games, although decades of research have failed to find a link between gun violence and graphic depictions of violence in games. Meeting attendees said he sought to hear from all sides.

"He asked a lot of questions and he raised concerns with the violent nature of these games and asked the question: Is this causing the kids to have (this) violent behavior?" said Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Mo.

The White House put out a statement after the meeting, saying Trump "acknowledged some studies have indicated there is a correlation between video game violence and real violence." The statement included a link to a YouTube video with clips of video game violence.

While some studies have shown a connection between gaming and emotional arousal, there's no evidence that this heightened emotional state leads to physical violence.

Attendees offered opposing views after the meeting.

The Entertainment Software Association released a statement saying it had brought up "the numerous scientific studies establishing that there is no connection between video games and violence, First Amendment protection of video games, and how our industry's rating system effectively helps parents make informed entertainment choices."

Melissa Henson, program director for the Parents Television Council, a conservative watchdog group, said there is evidence that video games can "contribute to violent attitudes" or feelings of isolation. She said she sought to convey the challenges of keeping violent games away from kids "even for the most diligent parent."

She described the meeting as a listening session, saying there were no decisions about next steps.

"I don't think there are easy answers and I don't think that we're going to be able to figure out the solution in the course of a one-hour conversation," Henson said.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., also attended. He noted in a statement that there was "no evidence" tying video games to the Florida shooting, but said he was interested "in making sure parents are aware of the resources available to them to monitor and control the entertainment their children are exposed to."

Trump has focused on video games as he seeks solutions to deal with the scourge of guns in the wake of the Florida school shooting that killed 17 people. After weeks of public deliberation — including expressing support for some gun control measures — Trump has not yet outlined what he would like to see in legislation.

During a Cabinet meeting Thursday, Trump congratulated Florida on school safety legislation approved by state lawmakers, saying the state "passed a lot of very good legislation last night."

The measure would raise the minimum age to buy rifles from 18 to 21 and create a waiting period on weapons sales. 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 districts agree to participate. Republican Gov. Rick Scott has not said if he will sign the bill.

Trump also said the White House is working to ban "bump stocks" and said efforts to enhance background checks are "moving along well" in Congress. No votes have been scheduled yet in the Senate on a pending background checks bill, but the House has said it will consider school safety legislation next week.

This is not the first time Washington has focused on video game violence.

In 2013, after the shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, Vice President Joe Biden held three days of wide-ranging talks on gun violence prevention, including a meeting with video game industry executives. After the 2013 meetings wrapped up, the White House called for research on the effect of media and video games on gun violence, but nothing substantial came out of that.

While Trump has suggested rating both games and movies for violence, ratings already exist.

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Following an outcry over violent games such as 1992's "Mortal Kombat," the Entertainment Software Ratings Board was established in 1994 by the Entertainment Software Association to give each game a rating based on five categories ranging from "E" for "Everyone" to "Adults Only" for those 18 and older.

In 2011, the Supreme Court rejected a California law banning the sale of violent video games to children. The decision claimed that video games, like other media, are protected by the First Amendment.

Associated Press writer Mae Anderson contributed to this story from New York.

## Official: School metal detectors not in use day of shooting

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Metal detectors at an Alabama high school were not in use the day a 17-year-old student was killed in a shooting on campus, the district's superintendent said Thursday.

Birmingham City Schools Superintendent Lisa Herring said the school system is reviewing security measures and protocols that were in place Wednesday, when Courtlin Arrington was fatally shot in a classroom at Huffman High School.

"We have not only heightened our procedures, but we are revamping and revisiting, with an extreme amount of urgency, those protocols, not just for Huffman High School, but for every single school in Birmingham," Herring said at a news conference Thursday.

The superintendent said Huffman has more than 43 entry points with a combination of wand and stationary metal detectors in place, but they were not in use Wednesday. She didn't give details about why.

Herring said Arrington, a senior who had aspirations to be a nurse, was a bright student "lost to senseless gun violence."

"She was friendly, energetic and well-liked by peers and teachers alike," Herring said.

The shooting took place as class was dismissing for the day, killing Arrington and injuring another student. Police said Wednesday that it was possible the shooting was accidental, but they were reviewing video footage and interviewing witnesses to determine exactly what happened.

Police took a "person of interest" in the shooting into custody Thursday but did not identify the person because no formal charges have been filed.

"Charges are pending a review of the case by the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office," the police statement read.

Birmingham interim police Chief Orlando Wilson said Wednesday that investigators were reviewing the possibility that the firearm had accidentally discharged.

"We have a lot of unanswered questions," Wilson said.

Huffman High School was closed Thursday. 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 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.

A state senator became emotional on the Alabama Senate floor Thursday as she discussed the shooting, which happened in the district she represents.

"I can't imagine a parent sending their child to school and that child never coming home. I can't imagine what those children have gone through, not just in Huffman High School but all over this state," state Sen. Linda Coleman-Madison said.

Alabama lawmakers have proposed multiple measures in response to last month's killings of 17 people at 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.

## **UK police: 21 people sought treatment after ex-spy poisoning**

**By JILL LAWLESS, GREGORY KATZ and DANICA KIRKA, Associated Press**

LONDON (AP) — Around 21 people have received medical treatment after a nerve-agent attack on an ex-Russian spy, British police said Thursday, as the U.K. vowed strong action against whoever was responsible for the "brazen and reckless" act.

Three people remain hospitalized after the poisoning Sunday in the southern English city of Salisbury — former spy Sergei Skripal, his daughter and a British police officer who tried to help them.

Health authorities say there is little risk to the wider public. But Wiltshire county acting police chief Kier Pritchard said "around 21 people" have had treatment, including the Skripals, who were found unconscious on a bench.

Pritchard said "a number" of the 21 were having "blood-tests, support and advice." Previously, authorities had said only that "several" people had sought treatment.

The ex-spy and his daughter remain in critical condition in a Salisbury hospital. A police officer who came to their aid, Sgt. Nick Bailey, is hospitalized in a serious condition, though he is conscious and talking, officials said.

British Home Secretary Amber Rudd said enormous resources are being devoted to determining who poisoned Skripal, 66, and his 33-year-old daughter Yulia. They were found unconscious on a bench, triggering a police inquiry headed by counterterrorism detectives.

"The use of a nerve agent on British soil is a brazen and reckless act," Rudd told Parliament. "This was attempted murder in the most cruel and public way."

Rudd said Britain would respond strongly when it is clear who is to blame.

The Russian Embassy in London, which has mocked other British politicians for suggesting Russian involvement, tweeted that it agreed with Rudd: "First evidence then conclusions on Mr. Skripal's case. Responsible political approach."

Police have refused to publicly speculate on who is behind the attack, but many experts have focused on Russia because of the similarity to the 2006 killing of another former Russian spy who was poisoned in London with radioactive polonium-210.

A public inquiry found that Russia was responsible for killing Alexander Litvinenko, and that President Vladimir Putin probably approved it.

The Russian government has denied any involvement in the Litvinenko killing or the attempted killing of Skripal, a former Russian agent who had served jail time in his homeland for spying for Britain before being freed in a spy swap.

"Russia does seem like the most likely story, given what we know both of the background of this case ... given the track record in the state of the relationship, the fact that we have seen things like this before," Sam Greene, director of the Russia Institute at King's College London, told Sky News.

But Greene said that even if the attack was planned in Russia, it may not have been ordered by the Kremlin.

"A lot of these things are being done by people operating at sort of an arm's length's distance from the command and control structure," Greene said.

Chemical weapons expert Richard Guthrie of the research project CBW Events, which records the use of chemical and biological weapons, said the highly public attack appeared to be "an expression of power" intended to send a message.

"There's echoes of Litvinenko — you are doing it in a way that makes it obvious you're doing it," he said.

Russia is "obviously a clear candidate," but it is too soon to say who was behind the attack, Guthrie added.

"It's also possible there could be some troublemaker out there who wants to make it look like it was Russia," he said.

Nerve agents are chemical compounds that block nerve cells from sending messages to each other and



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the organs, preventing the body from working normally. They can be administered in gas or liquid form, causing symptoms including vomiting, breathlessness, paralysis and often death.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the global chemical weapons watchdog based in The Hague, said Thursday the Skripal case was "of great concern," adding that it was in touch with British authorities over the attack.

Sally Davies, the chief medical officer for England, has said there was a low risk to the public, but experts say that nerve agents are highly dangerous and volatile.

"Nerve agents are not materials that can be made at home," said Andrea Sella, a chemistry professor at University College London. "Their level of toxicity is such that they are only to be manufactured in specialized facilities."

Sella said authorities will be looking to find impurities and residues that might provide clues to the precise chemical process used to manufacture the material. He added that if authorities found the container used to deliver the material, "it might well be possible to trace the origin of the substance."

Police and forensics officers are searching Skripal's home in Salisbury, a medieval city known for its towering cathedral, located 90 miles (145 kilometers) southwest of London, as well as a pub and a restaurant he and his daughter are believed to have visited Sunday.

Skripal, a former colonel in Russia's GRU military intelligence service, was convicted in 2006 of spying for Britain and imprisoned. He was freed in 2010 as part of a widely publicized spy swap in which the U.S. agreed to hand over 10 members of a Russian sleeper cell found operating in America in return for four Russians convicted of spying for the West.

Those who knew him in Salisbury were shocked, describing him as friendly and outgoing — hardly a man hiding out.

The owner of a local convenience shop frequented by Skripal described him as one of her favorite customers. Ebru Ozturk said she made sure to stock the food he liked, particularly smoked bacon and Polish salami.

"Usually he plays lottery and scratch cards," said Ozturk, 41. "Plus a few weeks he was lucky as well and laughed about it."

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Jo Kearney in Salisbury, England, and Mike Corder in The Hague, Netherlands, contributed to this report.

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An earlier version of this story incorrectly referred to Richard Guthrie as Griffiths on one occasion.

## **Bones found in 1940 seem to be Amelia Earhart's, study says**

**By MALCOLM RITTER, AP Science Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — Bones found in 1940 on a western Pacific Ocean island were quite likely to be remains from famed aviator Amelia Earhart, a new analysis concludes.

The study and other evidence "point toward her rather strongly," University of Tennessee anthropologist Richard Jantz said Thursday.

Earhart disappeared during an attempted flight around the world in 1937, and the search for an answer to what happened to her and her navigator has captivated the public for decades.

Jantz's analysis is the latest chapter in a back-and-forth that has played out about the remains, which were found in 1940 on Nikumaroro Island but are now lost.

All that survive are seven measurements, from the skull and bones of the arm and leg. Those measurements led a scientist in 1941 to conclude the bones belong to a man. In 1998, however, Jantz and another scientist reinterpreted them as coming from a woman of European ancestry, and about Earhart's height. But in 2015, still other researchers concluded the original assessment as a man was correct.

Now Jantz weighs in with another analysis of the measurements, published in January in the journal *Forensic Anthropology*.

For comparison, Jantz used an inseam length and waist circumference from a pair of Earhart's trousers.

He also drew on a photo of her holding an oil can to estimate the lengths of two arm bones.

Analysis showed "the bones are consistent with Earhart in all respects we know or can reasonably infer," he wrote in the journal article. It's highly unlikely that a random person would resemble the bones as closely as Earhart, he wrote.

In a phone interview, Jantz noted that some artifacts found on the island also support the possibility that the bones came from Earhart.

"I think we have pretty good evidence that it's her," he said.

## **Int'l Women's Day: Protests, a strike, a Russian's apology**

**By DAVID CRARY, AP National Writer**

A 24-hour strike by millions of Spanish women. A crackdown in France on companies violating gender-equal pay policies. In Russia, a candid apology from a powerful legislator to women he sexually harassed.

Many of the International Women's Day events on Thursday powerfully echoed the #MeToo movement that has mobilized women against sexual violence and workplace harassment.

Demonstrators filled the streets in several Asian cities, including Manila, Seoul and New Delhi. Clad in pink and purple shirts, the activists in Manila lambasted Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, calling him among the worst violators of women's rights in Asia. Human rights groups have condemned Duterte's sexist remarks, including a suggestion that troops shoot female communist rebels in the genitals.

In Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, a throng of activists was joined by a victim of one of the acid attacks frequently perpetrated in the country by embittered men. Black glasses covered part of her badly burned face.

Hundreds of women gathered in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, to commemorate the occasion and urge more progress on women's political rights, education and safety. During Taliban rule, many women would have been afraid to leave their homes.

In Spain, major unions estimated that 5.3 million people joined the strike, which targeted gender violence and unequal pay. The day culminated with street protests in scores of cities. The theme was "If we stop, the world stops."

Social services worker Teresa Sonsur, protesting in Madrid, said she wanted to end workplace discrimination at her agency.

"The women are doing all the hard work, dealing with the customers, but in the positions of management it is always men," the 38-year-old woman said.

French companies that treat women unequally may soon face new pressure and penalties. President Emmanuel Macron says his government is going to name and shame such companies. He predicted positive changes "because no one wants to be the worst student in the class."

Another government initiative would fine companies with more than 50 employees if there is an "unjustified" gender wage gap.

The left-leaning French daily Liberation said that for one day only, men would have to pay 50 cents more than women for the newspaper, a reminder that women in France, on average, are paid 25 percent less than men.

In a striking development in Russia, the head of Parliament's foreign affairs committee apologized after being accused of sexual harassment by several female journalists. Noting it was International Women's Day, Leonid Slutsky said on Facebook, "I am using the occasion to ask forgiveness from those of you whom I freely or involuntarily caused suffering."

The apology came after demonstrators, including opposition presidential candidate Ksenia Sobchak, picketed outside Parliament, demanding Slutsky's resignation.

In Italy, actress Asia Argento, who helped sparked the #MeToo campaign last year, said she is launching a new movement, #WeToo, to unite women against a power imbalance favoring men.

Argento told Radio 24 that her aim is "to finally change the patriarchal system so rooted in our culture, not just in Italy."

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Argento helped embolden other women to report sexual assault and harassment when she accused Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein of rape in an expose by The New Yorker. She faced a backlash in Italy, with critics questioning why she waited 20 years to come forward.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, one of the world's most powerful women, said in a video message that the quest for greater gender equality in Germany and worldwide must continue.

"Many women before us have made sacrifices and fought persistently so that women would have more rights," she said. "But there's still a lot to do."

In Rome, Catholic women challenged Pope Francis to give women a greater voice in church affairs. Former Irish President Mary McAleese, an advocate for women's ordination and gay rights, accused the church's all-male leadership of refusing to change women's second-class status.

"The Catholic Church has long since been a primary global carrier of the toxic virus of misogyny," McAleese said.

In Uganda, where domestic violence is common and often goes unreported, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni urged men to stop abusing their wives.

"If you want to fight, why don't you look for a fellow man and fight?" said Museveni, calling domestic abusers cowards.

At a star-studded event at the United Nations, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on men to join in making gender equality "a reality for all."

"This is what women and girls want. And that is what I want," he said. "It is what every sensible man and boy should want."

International Women's Day, created over a century ago by the socialist and labor movements, traditionally has been a higher-profile occasion abroad than in the United States, where women's rights activists have been energized over the past 14 months by huge protest marches and the emergence of the #MeToo movement.

Nonetheless, several U.S. companies, including McDonald's, Kroger and Old Navy, made gestures in recognition of the day, and the White House announced that first lady Melania Trump would present State Department courage awards to women from around the world at a March 21 ceremony.

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Associated Press reporters around the world contributed to this report.

## Study finds false stories travel way faster than the truth

By **SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Twitter loves lies. A new study finds that false information on the social media network travels six times faster than the truth and reaches far more people.

And you can't blame bots; it's us, say the authors of the largest study of online misinformation.

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology looked at more than 126,000 stories tweeted millions of times between 2006 and the end of 2016 — before Donald Trump took office but during the combative presidential campaign. They found that "fake news" sped through Twitter "farther, faster, deeper and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information," according to the study in Thursday's journal *Science*.

"No matter how you slice it, falsity wins out," said co-author Deb Roy, who runs MIT's Laboratory for Social Machines and is a former chief media scientist at Twitter.

Twitter funded the study but had no say in the outcome, according to the researchers.

The scientists calculated that the average false story takes about 10 hours to reach 1,500 Twitter users, versus about 60 hours for the truth. On average, false information reaches 35 percent more people than true news.

While true news stories almost never got retweeted to 1,000 people, the top 1 percent of the false ones got to as many as 100,000 people.

And when the researchers looked at how stories cascade — how they link from one person to another

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like a family tree — false information reached as many as 24 generations, while true information maxed out at a dozen.

Concern over bogus stories online has escalated in recent months because of evidence the Russians spread disinformation on social media during the 2016 presidential campaign to sow discord in the U.S. and damage Hillary Clinton.

Social media companies have experimented with using computer algorithms and human fact-checkers to try to weed out false information and abuse online. Twitter earlier this month said it is seeking help from outside experts to better deal with the problem. And Facebook this week announced a partnership with The Associated Press to identify and debunk false and misleading stories about the midterm elections.

"We have witnessed abuse, harassment, troll armies, manipulation through bots and human-coordination, misinformation campaigns and increasingly divisive echo chambers," tweeted Twitter co-founder and CEO Jack Dorsey. "We aren't proud of how people have taken advantage of our service, or our inability to address it fast enough."

The MIT study took the 126,285 stories and checked them against six independent fact-checking sites — snopes.com, politifact.com, factcheck.org, truthorfiction.com, hoax-slayer.com and urbanlegends.about.com — to classify them as true, false or mixed. Nearly two-thirds were false, just under one-fifth were true, and the rest were mixed.

The six fact-checking websites agreed with each other on classification at least 95 percent of the time, plus two outside researchers did some independent fact-checking to make sure everything was OK, said co-author Sinan Aral, an MIT management professor.

Lead author Soroush Vosoughi, an MIT data scientist, said the three false stories that traveled the farthest and fastest were about a Muslim guard called a hero in the Paris bombings of 2015; an Iraq war veteran finishing as runner-up to Caitlyn Jenner for an ESPN courage award ; and an episode of "The Simpsons" that had a story line in 2000 about a Trump presidency. (It was in 2015.)

University of Pennsylvania communications professor Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a co-founder of factcheck.org, had problems with the way the study looked at true and false stories. The MIT team characterized a story's truth on a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 being completely false. Factcheck.org, Jamieson said, looks more at context and does not label something either true or false.

She also suggested that calling this bogus information "false stories" does not capture how malignant it is. She said it would "better be called viral deception. VD. And treated as analogous to venereal disease."

The researchers looked at obvious bots — automated accounts — and took them out. While the bots tweeted false information at a higher rate than humans, it wasn't that much of a difference, and even without bots, lies still spread faster and farther, Roy said.

David Lazer, a political and computer scientist at Northeastern University who wasn't part of the study but wrote an accompanying report, praised the MIT research but said the scientists may have missed a lot of bots and cyborgs — sort of in-between humans. His ongoing, not-yet-published research has found that about 80 percent of false stories come from just one-tenth of 1 percent of users.

The researchers dug deeper to find out what kind of false information travels faster and farther. False political stories — researchers didn't separate conservative versus liberal — and stuff that was surprising or anger-provoking spread faster than other types of lies, Aral said.

"Falsehood was significantly more novel than the truth," Aral said. "It's easy to be novel when you make things up."

That fits perfectly with previous research on the psychology of fake information, said Yale University's Dan Kahan and Dartmouth College's Brendan Nyhan, scientists who study the phenomenon.

"The more strange and more sensational the story sounds, the more likely they are going to retweet," Kahan said.

Nyhan and Lazer said that while more fact-checking and education of people on how to tell fake from real can be helpful, the more effective solution will have to come from the social media platforms themselves.

Roy said the study results reminded him of the often-cited quotation that essentially says a lie can travel



halfway around the world before the truth can get its boots — or pants — on. It's been attributed to Mark Twain and Winston Churchill. But that would be misinformation. Politifact traced a version of it back to Jonathan Swift in 1710.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears . His work can be found here .

## Syria aid convoy on hold, top UN official appeals for calm

By ZEINA KARAM and BASSEM MROUE, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A top U.N. aid official appealed to the Syrian government and its Russian backers for a cessation of hostilities in eastern Ghouta on Thursday when a second convoy with desperately needed aid was postponed after government forces split the enclave in two, creating an evolving, unpredictable situation on the ground.

Jan Egeland said it is "impossible" to deliver aid to the rebel-held eastern suburbs of Damascus amid the current fighting, which he described as the worst ever.

"I'm very worried for a repeat of very many of the bad things we saw in the final days of the battle of Aleppo but to some extent this is worse," he told The Associated Press in an interview from Oslo, Norway.

Recapturing eastern Ghouta, a short drive away from the Syrian capital, would mark the biggest victory yet for President Bashar Assad in the seven year war. It would also be the worst setback for rebels since the opposition was ousted from eastern Aleppo in late 2016 after a similar siege and bombing campaign.

Eastern Ghouta is larger and more populated, with some 400,000 people believed to be living there, trapped under a relentless air and ground bombardment and a crippling years-long siege. More than 800 people have been killed just in the past three weeks.

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 territory, cutting links between the rebels and further squeezing opposition fighters and civilians trapped inside, state media and a war monitor reported.

Videos 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.

The government forces advanced from the east and were only about a mile away from linking with 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. As government troops bombed their way into the town of Beit Sawa on Wednesday, many terrorized civilians fled east to the towns of Arbeen and Hammouriyeh.

"The fact is we have seen possibly the worst fighting ever in eastern Ghouta in these last 24 hours and in that kind of situation you cannot deliver anything," Egeland said. "It is impossible to cross into the frontline and to go in to help desperate civilians, women and children that we know are on the starvation point."

Egeland said there are intensive diplomatic efforts for a humanitarian pause that would lead to the evacuation of 1,000 priority cases for medical treatment and expressed hope that another convoy would be able to make its way there Friday. He called on the Syrian government and Russia as the stronger parties, but also on countries that have influence over the armed rebel groups, to secure a period of calm.

Egeland also confirmed there are talks between the parties on the possible evacuation of fighters and civilians which he said aid workers are not party to.

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.

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

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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.

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.

Meanwhile, fighting continued in the north between Turkish troops and allied militiamen and Syrian Kurdish forces in the Kurdish-controlled enclave of Afrin.

Turkey's foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said his government hopes that the cross-border military offensive in Afrin will end before May. He spoke during a joint news conference with his Austrian counterpart in Vienna.

Turkey's military said meanwhile that Turkish troops and their allies had taken control of the town of Jinderes, in the enclave's southwest, after engaging in street clashes with Syrian Kurdish forces.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that a siege of Afrin's main city would begin after Jinderes is taken.

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Associated Press writer Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed reporting.

## Danish inventor denies killing journalist at murder trial

By JAN M. OLSEN, Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — The Danish inventor accused of torturing and killing Swedish journalist Kim Wall during a private submarine trip before dismembering her body strongly denied killing her, asserting at his trial Thursday that she died accidentally because of a pressure problem in the submarine.

Peter Madsen, who is accused of torturing Wall before he either cut her throat or strangled her on his submarine, also denied he was sexually attracted to her.

Sitting on his hands as he testified at the opening of his trial in Copenhagen City Court, Madsen appeared irritated at times as he brushed off any suggestion of sexual activity with Wall before or after her death.

Prosecutor Jakob Buch-Jepsen read from a psychiatric report describing Madsen as an intelligent man "with psychopathic tendencies." Madsen himself told the court Thursday that he was "a promiscuous person."

Madsen has admitted to dismembering Wall's body before he "buried her at sea," saying he could not lift her up the submarine tower in one piece to throw her overboard so he had to cut her up.

Wall, a 30-year-old freelance journalist who wrote for The New York Times, The Guardian and other publications, embarked on Madsen's submarine on Aug. 10 to interview the 47-year-old co-founder of a company that develops and builds manned spacecraft. Her remains were found in plastic bags on the Baltic Sea bed weeks later, and her torso was found stabbed multiple times.

Buch-Jepsen started the 12-day trial by reading out the charges, describing in detail how Wall's body parts were found on the ocean bed. He said Madsen has "no empathy or feelings of guilt," citing the court-ordered psychiatric evaluation.

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If found guilty, Madsen faces between five years and life in prison — which in this case means 16 years that could be extended as long as Madsen is deemed dangerous — or he could be locked up in a secure mental facility if deemed necessary by psychiatrists, for as long as he's considered sick and a danger to others.

Madsen, wearing glasses, a dark shirt and jeans, listened quietly with his fists closed. Wall's parents were also present Thursday at the trial.

Testifying, Madsen repeated his claim that Wall died accidentally inside the UC3 Nautilus while he was on deck. He said Wall "had a wonderful evening until it ended in an accident."

Madsen had offered shifting explanations for Wall's death prior to the trial. He initially told authorities he had dropped Wall off on a Copenhagen island several hours into their submarine trip. Then he said that Wall died accidentally inside the submarine when a hatch fell and hit her on the head.

On Thursday, he described how he found Wall lifeless after a sudden pressure problem in the submarine. "I could not open the hatches. I heard Kim, it was not good," he said. He added that he tried to give her first aid when he finally reached her, but stopped because it was impossible to stay inside. "There was a risk of having a submarine with two deaths," he told the court.

The prosecution claims Wall's murder was premeditated because Madsen brought along tools he normally didn't take when sailing.

Buch-Jepsen said the cause of Wall's death has not yet been established. He said Wall's blood was found on Madsen's nose and his bodysuit, and that detectives found violent videos and texts about killing women on Madsen's laptop and an external hard drive.

Members of the court were shown a drawing of the multiple stab wounds to Wall's torso. An audio file of a radio exchange between Madsen and maritime officials on Aug. 11 — the day after Madsen and Wall embarked on their submarine trip— was also played. In the recording, Madsen said he had let Wall on an island, and that there were no injured persons aboard but only technical problems.

The 33-ton, nearly 18-meter-long submarine sank south of Copenhagen shortly after being spotted afloat. Madsen reported "man overboard" over the radio and was then picked up alone.

Wall, who had previously reported on topics including tourism in post-earthquake Haiti, studied at Paris' Sorbonne university, the London School of Economics and Columbia University in New York.

Caterina Clerici, a friend from Columbia, said Wall had "a soft spot for misfits, for places and people that did not conform."

Madsen was a co-founder of Copenhagen Suborbitals, a private aerospace consortium that developed and constructed manned spacecraft. In 2011, it launched a 30-foot (nine-meter) rocket five miles (eight kilometers) into the sky over the Baltic Sea, a step toward its unrealized goal of launching a person into space.

In an interview with Danish weekly Soendagsavisen in 2014, Madsen said he one day "hoped to have a criminal career," adding he didn't want to rob a bank because "no one must be hurt."

Police believe Madsen sank the submarine on purpose, and later found videos of women being tortured and killed on his personal computer in his hangar. He did not make the videos himself, investigators said.

The next court session is scheduled for March 21. The trial ends April. 25. A verdict is expected that day.

On the net:

<https://www.rememberingkimwall.com/>

[www.facebook.com/kimwallmemorialfund/](http://www.facebook.com/kimwallmemorialfund/)

## Women strike, protest as the world marks Int'l Women's Day

By The Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Women across Europe and Asia shouted their demands for equality, 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.

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Spanish women were staging dozens of protests across the country against the wage gap and gender violence. In Barcelona, protesters disrupting traffic into the city center were pushed back by riot police.

In Madrid, hundreds of women gathered in its central square to demand change. Teresa Sonsur, a 38-year-old social services agency worker, said she wanted to end workplace discrimination.

"What we see in our job in social services is that the women are doing all the hard work, dealing with the customers, but in the positions of management it is always men," she said.

In some countries, protests were more muted.

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.

On a lighter note, a leading French newspaper found a witty way of making its point about discrimination and the gender pay gap — by upping its price for men. The left-leaning daily Liberation said that for one day only, men would pay 50 euro cents more than women, in a reflection of the 25 percent less that women in France are paid, on average.

French President Emmanuel Macron said vowed to name and shame companies that don't respect the law on gender equality.

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.

At rallies in the Pakistan capital Islamabad, its largest city Karachi, and the cultural capital of Lahore, women denounced violence against them in Pakistan, where nearly 1,000 women are killed by close relatives each year in so-called honor killings. Pakistani women have largely been deprived of their rights since the country gained independence in 1947.

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.

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.

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.

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.

In Africa, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni urged men to stop physically abusing their wives. Domestic violence is common in Uganda, although victims rarely report perpetrators to the police for fear of being



stigmatized or thrown out of their homes.

"If you want to fight, why don't you look for a fellow man and fight?" Museveni said, calling domestic abusers cowards.

Back in Europe, the European Commission said in a statement published on Twitter that the continent "is one of the safest and most equal places for women in the world." On the other hand, it noted that "the path to full equality in practice is still a long one."

"The issue of gender equality is high on the agenda," Frans Timmermans, the European Commission's first vice-president, said, "but progress is still slow on the ground."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, considered by many to be one of the world's most powerful women, echoed those sentiments, saying in a video message the struggle for greater equality in Germany and worldwide must continue. She said "many women before us have made sacrifices and fought persistently so that women would have more rights ... but there's still a lot to do."

As if to prove that point, 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 women's 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.

In Rome, Catholic women challenged Pope Francis to give women a greater voice. Former Irish President Mary McAleese, an outspoken advocate for women's ordination and gay rights, accused the church's all-male leadership of refusing to change their entrenched second-class status.

Asia Argento, an Italian actress who helped launch the #MeToo movement, said she is launching a new movement, #WeToo, which aims to unite women against the power imbalance in favor of men.

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

## 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 if 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 in South Korea and a halt to annual U.S.-South Korean military drills as conditions for scrapping its nuclear program. The North sees the allies' drills as an invasion rehearsal.

Choi Hyunsoo, spokeswoman for 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

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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 will 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."

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, speaking Thursday during a news conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, said the United States has seen "potentially positive signals coming from North Korea" illustrated by its talks with South Korea.

"We've maintained very close communication with President Moon. They are keeping us well-informed of their meetings," he said. "We're providing them input as well."

He said the U.S. and North Korea were still "a long ways from negotiations," and the United States needed to remain "very clear-eyed and realistic."

The first step is to have talks about whether to hold negotiations — "to have talks about talks," Tillerson said.

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

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 on Thursday. "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. He said North Korea'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 be the rivals' third-ever summit since their 1945 division.

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Associated Press writers Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo and Josh Lederman in Addis Ababa 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.

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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."

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

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

## **AP Analysis: NRA gave \$7.3 million to hundreds of schools**

**By COLLIN BINKLEY and MEGHAN HOYER, Associated Press**

The National Rifle Association has given more than \$7 million in grants to hundreds of U.S. schools in recent years, according to an Associated Press analysis, but few have shown any indication that they'll follow the lead of businesses that are cutting ties with the group following last month's massacre at a Florida high school.

Florida's Broward County school district is believed to be the first to stop accepting NRA money after a gunman killed 17 people at one of its schools Feb. 14. The teen charged in the shooting had been on a school rifle team that received NRA funding.

Denver Public Schools followed Thursday, saying it will turn down several NRA grants that were to be awarded this year. But officials in many other districts say they have no plans to back away.

The AP analysis of the NRA Foundation's public tax records finds that about 500 schools received more than \$7.3 million from 2010 through 2016, mostly through competitive grants meant to promote shooting sports. The grants have gone to a wide array of school programs, including the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, rifle teams, hunting safety courses and agriculture clubs.

"Whatever I think of the NRA, they're providing legitimate educational services," said Billy Townsend, a school board member in Florida's Polk County district, whose JROTC programs received \$33,000, primarily to buy air rifles. "If the NRA wanted to provide air rifles for our ROTC folks in the future, I wouldn't have a problem with that."

The grants awarded to schools are just a small share of the \$61 million the NRA Foundation has given to a variety of local groups since 2010. But it has grown rapidly, increasing nearly fourfold from 2010 to 2014 in what some opponents say is a thinly veiled attempt to recruit the next generation of NRA members.

The NRA Foundation did not return calls seeking comment.

Broward announced Tuesday that it would no longer accept NRA grants, following more than a dozen major businesses that have split with the group in recent weeks. Companies including Delta Air Lines, MetLife insurance and the Hertz car agency have said they will no longer offer discounts to NRA members.

Annual reports from the pro-gun group say its grant program was started in 1992 and raises money through local Friends of NRA chapters. It says half the proceeds from local fundraisers go to local grants and half goes to the national organization. Tax records show roughly \$19 million in grants going to the group's Virginia headquarters in 2015 and in 2016.

Besides schools, other typical recipients include 4-H groups, which have received \$12.2 million since 2010, Boy Scout troops and councils, which received \$4 million, and private gun clubs. Overall, about half the grants go to programs directed at youth.

Nearly half of the 773 grants awarded to schools have gone to JROTC programs, which put students



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through a basic military curriculum and offer an array of small competitive clubs, like the rifle team at Broward's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. But JROTC leaders say few students ultimately enlist in the military, and the primary goal is to teach students skills like discipline and leadership.

"The safety that we're teaching, the good citizenship that we're teaching here, those are the things you don't hear about," said Gunnery Sgt. Jim Flores, a JROTC instructor at Cibola High School in Albuquerque, New Mexico. "The majority of people walk out of here awesome young men and women, respectful of authority, things of that nature. Not so much little tin soldiers."

In some parts of the country, shooting clubs draw the same sort of following as any school sport. Bill Nolte, superintendent of the Haywood County district in North Carolina, says he still shows up at school sportsman's club tourneys even though his son graduated. Starting in sixth grade, students can join the clubs to compete in shooting events, archery and orienteering. For many families, Nolte said, it's just like any other weekend sports event.

"You take your lawn chair and your coffee in a thermos, and do much like you would do if you were going to a youth soccer or travel basketball or baseball event," Nolte said, adding that NRA grants have helped buy firearms and ammunition and cover other costs that otherwise would fall to the parents. "We are constantly seeking revenue for sportsman's club just like we do for cheerleading and track."

Districts that tallied the largest sums of NRA money typically used it for JROTC programs, including \$126,000 given to Albuquerque schools, \$126,000 to Broward County and \$125,000 to Anchorage, Alaska. The most awarded to a single district was \$230,000, given to Roseville schools near Sacramento, California, which say much of the funding went toward ammunition and gear for trap-shooting teams.

Grants are often provided as equipment rather than cash, with schools given rifles, ammunition, safety gear and updates to shooting ranges. Nationally, about \$1.3 million was provided as cash, while \$6 million was provided through equipment, training and other costs.

Ron Severson, superintendent of the Roseville Joint Union High School District, says no parents have raised concerns over the funding, but administrators may reconsider it in the wake of the Florida shooting.

"After we get through this spring, we will probably take some time to assess how to move forward," he said.

School board members in some districts said they didn't know about the grants. Donna Corbett, a Democrat on the school board in southern Indiana's New Albany-Floyd County School Corporation, said she never heard about \$65,000 that went to a JROTC program at one of the high schools. Corbett said she plans to raise the issue with her board but feels conflicted about it.

"I am not a big NRA fan, but I also realize that ROTC is a good program," she said. "I'm not sure I would be willing to pull it to the detriment of the kids and their programs."

In some ways, the issue reflects the nation's deep political divide over guns. Nearly three-quarters of the schools that received grants are in counties that voted for President Donald Trump in the 2016 election, while a quarter are in counties that voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton, according to the AP analysis. Most are in medium-sized counties or rural areas, with few near major cities.

In Massachusetts, for example, known for its strict gun laws, no schools have received NRA grants since 2010, tax records show. Terry Ryan, a school board member in the Westford district northwest of Boston, says a local teacher considered applying for a grant in 2014, but the district ultimately didn't pursue it.

"We were not interested in any way, shape or form endorsing the NRA or its philosophy," Ryan said in an interview.

By contrast, parent Jana Cox in Louisiana's Caddo Parish says few in the area would have a problem with the \$24,000 in NRA grants that have gone to school JROTC programs.

"Everybody here has guns," Cox said. "This is north Louisiana. You've got a lot of hunters and you've got a lot of guns."

Without NRA grants, some programs would struggle to stay afloat, officials say. For JROTC groups, which receive most of their money from their respective military branches, the grants have become more important as federal budgets have been cut. Programs at some high schools in Virginia, Missouri and other

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states have folded in recent years amid the pinch.

Lt. Colonel Ralph Ingles, head of the JROTC program at Albuquerque schools, says the Florida shooting has sparked a conversation about NRA grants, but he doesn't anticipate cutting ties anytime soon.

"I don't see anybody really backing down," he said. "I think it's just ingrained that we're going to continue to move forward in a positive direction."

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Collin Binkley has covered higher education since 2014. Meghan Hoyer has been a data editor since 2011.

Follow Binkley on Twitter at @cbinkley and Hoyer at @MeghanHoyer

## Amsterdam power outage halts trams, forces museum evacuation

AMSTERDAM (AP) — Trams ground to a halt across Amsterdam and the Rijksmuseum was evacuated after workers hit an electricity cable in the Dutch capital Friday, causing a power outage that left 28,000 homes without electricity, the company that manages the network said.

Electricity network company Liander said in a tweet that the outage started around 11 a.m. (1000 GMT), when an underground cable was hit during construction work in the city. It was not immediately clear power would be restored.

The Rijksmuseum, whose vast collection includes Rembrandt van Rijn's "The Night Watch," tweeted late morning that it would likely be closed for hours and visitors with tickets for Friday would be able to use them on another date.

## Jobs report to show whether pay gains portend high inflation

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The February U.S. jobs report being released Friday will help address a question on the minds of many: Is worker pay finally accelerating?

January's jobs data had shown the sharpest year-over-year average pay increase in eight years. That news ignited a sustained sell-off in stocks on fears that inflation might be picking up.

In the week that followed the release of the January wage data, traders sent stock prices tumbling 10 percent — deep enough to qualify as a "correction" — for the first time in two years. And bond yields surged to their highest levels in four years. That increase reflected anticipation that the Federal Reserve might step up its rate hikes to control inflation.

A broad and sustained pickup in pay gains is considered good news by most people, especially since average wage increases have been mostly stagnant since the Great Recession ended in 2009. But Wall Street worries that an acceleration in pay would force companies to raise prices to cover their higher labor costs.

Higher corporate expenses could, in turn, depress profits and intensify inflation pressures. And if the Fed followed by raising short-term rates more quickly, the economy could slow and bonds would become more attractive relative to stocks.

Most economists foresee a slightly more tepid wage figure this time: They have forecast that the government's February jobs report will show that average hourly wages grew 2.8 percent in February from 12 months earlier, down slightly from the 2.9 percent increase in January. It's possible, too, that January's wage increase will be revised lower on Friday.

"There's been so much talk about inflation now that unless it's a meaningful surprise to the upside, the market can absorb a stronger economy coupled with higher wages," said Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial. "The real inflationary impact tends to come when wages move up by 4 percent. We're not there."

Economists have forecast that the report will show employers added a solid 200,000 jobs in February, the same as in January, according to data provider FactSet. They have also predicted that the unemployment rate dipped to a low 4 percent from 4.1 percent, where it's remained for four months.

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But when the report is released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time, attention will be fixed mainly on the wage figure.

"I think they'll be watching that closer than any data point I can remember as of late," said Emily Roland, head of capital markets research for John Hancock Investments.

January's sharp wage increase might have reflected, in part, temporary factors. Some economists note, for example, that freezing temperatures that month might have kept many lower-paid workers off the job by shutting down construction sites and reducing retail and restaurant business. If so, the one-time loss of those lower-paying jobs might have given average overall pay increases an artificial boost in January.

In the meantime, economists are calculating how the Trump administration's decision Friday to impose a 25 percent tariff on steel imports and a 10 percent tariff on aluminum might affect the job market. The Trade Partnership, a consulting firm, estimates that the tariffs will eliminate roughly 145,000 jobs.

Steel and aluminum producers would hire more people. But the gains would be more than offset, the firm calculates, by sharp losses among companies that use the metals, such as automakers, packaged food companies and those that make industrial machinery.

During 2017, the stock market, as measured by the S&P 500 index, surged 19 percent, partly on anticipation of corporate and individual tax cuts. Yet barely a month after the tax cuts became law, investors shifted their focus to the potential consequences: Faster growth that might intensify inflation and lead the Fed to accelerate its rate hikes.

There have been some signs that price pressures are picking up. But overall, inflation remains in check. The inflation gauge that the Fed tends to monitor most closely shows an increase of just 1.7 percent from a year earlier, below the central bank's 2 percent target level.

Most economists expect growth to pick up in the coming months and to accelerate inflation slightly by year's end. They have forecast that the economy will expand at just a 2 percent annual rate in the January-March quarter before topping 3 percent in the next two quarters.

For now, consumers have pulled back somewhat on spending despite income gains, thereby setting the stage for potentially stronger spending gains in coming months. After-tax incomes in January — which include benefit payments from the government and business income as well as wages — climbed by the most in a year. They were boosted, in part, by the Trump administration's tax cuts and company bonuses that were paid out in response to corporate tax cuts.

And manufacturers expanded at the fastest pace in nearly 14 years in February, according to a survey of purchasing managers.

AP Business Writers Alex Veiga in Los Angeles and Stan Choe in New York contributed to this report.

## Asian shares rise as trade fears on Trump's tariffs ease

By YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were mostly higher Friday on relief that President Donald Trump's tariffs on U.S. steel and aluminum imports may not be as harsh as earlier feared. News Trump and North Korea's leader will meet also lifted sentiment.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 0.9 percent to 21,554.67. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 added 0.4 percent to 5,965.30. South Korea's Kospi jumped 1.6 percent to 2,470.80. Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 1.0 percent to 30,947.02, while the Shanghai Composite index inched down nearly 0.1 percent to 3,285.98.

TARIFFS IMPACT: Wall Street rallied following reports that Canada and Mexico will be exempted indefinitely from the tariffs and that other countries will be invited to negotiate for exemptions as well. Although the tariffs are likely to hurt some Asian nations, the impact may be not that damaging to countries like Japan that export more to other Asian countries such as China.

ANALYST TAKE: Junichi Makino, analyst at SMBC Nikko said the tariffs were more damaging in principle to the idea of free trade than on the actual realities of economic growth. The tariffs will lower the profit-

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ability of Japan's major companies by 0.02 percent only, he said. "When protectionism grows, this can lead to a trade war," he warned.

**NORTH KOREA:** Trump agreed to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jung Un by May to negotiate an end to Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program, South Korean and U.S. officials said Thursday. No American president has ever met with a North Korean leader while still in office.

**WALL STREET:** The Standard & Poor's 500 index climbed 0.4 percent to 2,738.97. The Dow Jones industrial average also gained 0.4 percent, to 24,895.21. The Nasdaq composite rose for the fifth day in a row, adding 0.4 percent to 7,427.95.

**ENERGY:** Benchmark U.S. crude added 13 cents to \$60.25 barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It fell \$1.03 to \$60.12 a barrel in New York overnight. Brent crude, used to price international oils, rose 21 cents to \$63.82 a barrel in London.

**CURRENCIES:** The dollar rose to 106.73 yen from 105.97 yen late Thursday. The euro fell to \$1.2304 from \$1.2408.

\_\_\_\_ AP Markets Writer Marley Jay contributed to this report. He can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MarleyJayAP>

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## Toys R Us looking to shut down US Operations

Toys R Us Inc. is making preparations for a liquidation of its bankrupt U.S. operations after so far failing to find a buyer or reach a debt restructuring deal with lenders, according to people familiar with the matter.

While the situation is still fluid, a shutdown of the U.S. division has become increasingly likely in recent days, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the information is private. Hopes are fading that a buyer will emerge to keep some of the business operating, or that lenders will agree on terms of a debt restructuring, the people said.

The toy chain's U.S. division entered bankruptcy in September, planning to emerge with a leaner business model and more manageable debt. A new \$3.1 billion loan was obtained to keep the stores open during the turnaround effort, but results worsened more than expected during the holidays, casting doubt on the chain's viability.

The situation has also deteriorated for many of the retailer's overseas divisions, which weren't part of the bankruptcy. Toys R Us's U.K. unit put itself in the hands of a court administrator after discussions about selling the business fell apart. Its European arm is seeking takeover bids.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 9, the 68th day of 2018. There are 297 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 9, 1862, during the Civil War, the ironclads USS Monitor and CSS Virginia (formerly USS Merrimack) clashed for five hours to a draw at Hampton Roads, Virginia.

On this date:

In 1661, Cardinal Jules Mazarin, the chief minister of France, died, leaving King Louis XIV in full control.

In 1796, the future emperor of the French, Napoleon Bonaparte, married Josephine de Beauharnais (boh-ahr-NAY'). (The couple later divorced.)

In 1841, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *United States v. The Amistad*, ruled 7-1 in favor of a group of illegally enslaved Africans who were captured off the U.S. coast after seizing control of a Spanish schooner, La



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Amistad; the justices ruled that the Africans should be set free.

In 1916, more than 400 Mexican raiders led by Pancho Villa attacked Columbus, New Mexico, killing 18 Americans. During the First World War, Germany declared war on Portugal.

In 1918, writer Mickey Spillane, famous for his pulp detective novels, was born Frank Morrison Spillane in Brooklyn, New York.

In 1933, Congress, called into special session by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, began its "hundred days" of enacting New Deal legislation.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. B-29 bombers began launching incendiary bomb attacks against Tokyo, resulting in an estimated 100,000 deaths.

In 1954, CBS newsman Edward R. Murrow critically reviewed Wisconsin Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy's anti-communism campaign on "See It Now."

In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, raised the standard for public officials to prove they'd been libeled in their official capacity by news organizations.

In 1977, about a dozen armed Hanafi Muslims invaded three buildings in Washington, D.C., killing one person and taking more than 130 hostages. (The siege ended two days later.)

In 1983, Margaret Heckler was sworn in as secretary of Health and Human Services, the same day Anne M. Burford resigned as head of the embattled Environmental Protection Agency.

In 1997, gangsta rapper The Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace) was killed in a still-unsolved drive-by shooting in Los Angeles; he was 24.

Ten years ago: Highway and utility crews worked overtime to recover from a huge storm that buried Ohio and other parts of the Midwest in snow and tore down power lines elsewhere. Spain's Socialist prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, won re-election as voters dismissed worries about a slumping economy, immigration and resurgent Basque militants to hand him a second term.

Five years ago: During U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's first trip to Afghanistan as defense chief, two suicide bombings, one outside the Afghan Defense Ministry and the other near a police checkpoint in eastern Khost province, killed at least 19 people; a Taliban spokesman said the blast outside the defense ministry was a message to the visiting Pentagon chief. Egyptian soccer fans rampaged through the heart of Cairo, furious about the acquittal of seven police officers while death sentences against 21 alleged rioters were confirmed in a trial over a stadium melee that had left 74 people dead.

One year ago: Fox News Channel's parent company announced it had settled a sexual assault complaint made by Tamara Holder, a former network contributor; The New York Times said the company had fired an executive, Francisco Cortes, and paid more than \$2.5 million. Human rights lawyer Amal Clooney urged Iraq and the world's nations not to let the Islamic State extremist group "get away with genocide," telling a U.N. meeting that what was "shocking" was not just the group's brutality but the "passive" response by the world's nations.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. James L. Buckley, Conservative-N.Y., is 95. Singer Lloyd Price is 85. Actress Joyce Van Patten is 84. Country singer Mickey Gilley is 82. Actress Trish Van Devere is 77. Singer-musician John Cale (The Velvet Underground) is 76. Singer Mark Lindsay (Paul Revere and the Raiders) is 76. Former ABC anchorman Charles Gibson is 75. Rock musician Robin Trower is 73. Singer Jeffrey Osborne is 70. Country musician Jimmie Fadden (The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band) is 70. Actress Jaime Lyn Bauer is 69. Magazine editor Michael Kinsley is 67. TV newscaster Faith Daniels is 61. Actress Linda Fiorentino is 60. Actor Tom Amandes is 59. Actor-director Lonny Price is 59. Country musician Rusty Hendrix (Confederate Railroad) is 58. Actress Juliette Binoche is 54. Rock musician Robert Sledge (Ben Folds Five) is 50. Rock musician Shannon Leto (30 Seconds to Mars) is 48. Rapper C-Murder (AKA C-Miller) is 47. Actor Emmanuel Lewis is 47. Actress Jean Louisa Kelly is 46. Actor Kerr Smith is 46. Actor Oscar Isaac is 39. Comedian Jordan Klepper (TV: "The Daily Show") is 39. Rapper Chingy is 38. Actor Matthew Gray Gubler is 38. Rock musician Chad Gilbert (New Found Glory) is 37. Roots rock musician Ben Tanner (Alabama Shakes) is 35. Actress Brittany Snow is 32. Rapper Bow Wow is 31. Rapper YG is 28. Actor Luis Armand Garcia is 26. Actress Cierra Ramirez is 23.

Thought for Today: "Inspiration is an empty bank account." — Mickey Spillane (1918-2006).