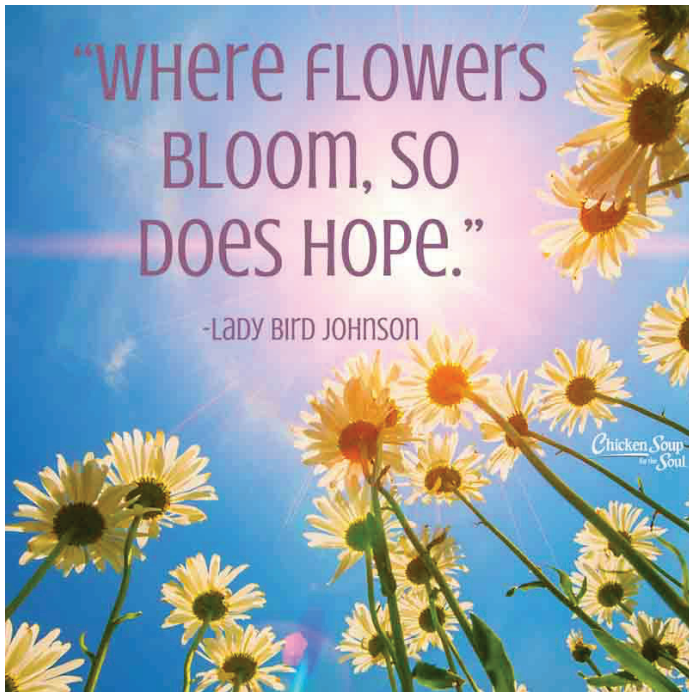


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Removal, Grinding, Chipping, Trimming

605-725-WOOD

Mason Dinger: 605-216-6098

Trevor Zeck: 605-216-8910



**DAKOTA TREE
COMPANY**

Don't be late for church!

You should have turned your clocks ahead one hour by now for Daylight Savings Time!

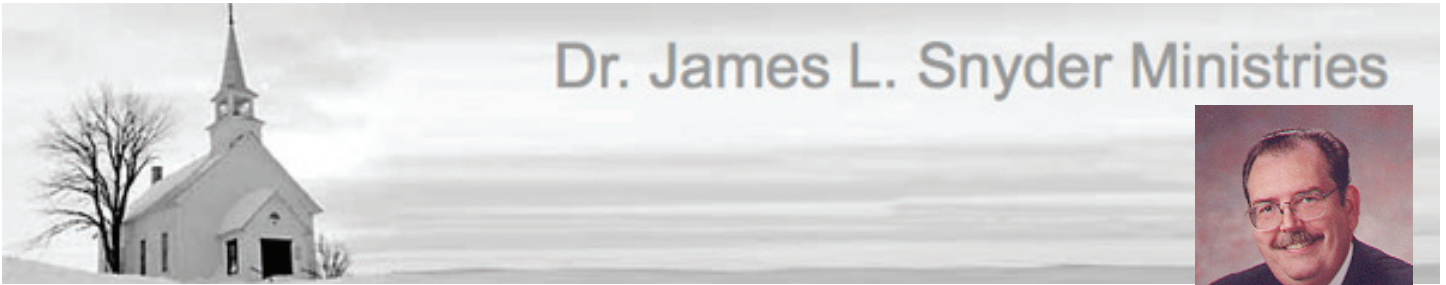
- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
 - 1- Dakota Tree Ad
- 2- Rev. Snyder's Column
- 4- No. 6 Wolves Spread the Wealth in 16-Point NCAA Victory over Washburn
- 5- Obit: Jerroll Erdmann
- 6- Wolves Fall Short in Semifinals of Central Region
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- 12- 2018 Community Events
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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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Can I get an amen?

An interesting aspect to people is their proclivity toward hypocrisy. By that I mean we say one thing but we really do not mean it or it does not really apply to us personally.

I was complaining about this to the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage this past week.

"Why is it," I said most curiously, "people really don't mean what they say?"

She responded by saying, "I always mean what I say."

Being the kind of husband that I am, I refused to contradict her reply. Therefore, I am not referring to her in these comments. People just don't say what they mean.

For the past month, I've been having issues with shingles and nerve pain all the way down my right arm. It's very painful and I hope it goes away soon. Let it be clear that pain and me are not friends. The sooner the pain leaves, the better it's going to be for me.

But I digress. My condition has been a very clear focus of my life these days. After all, it's my pain that I have to live with every day.

It happened just the other day when somebody that I was passing on my way into Publix said to me, "Hi, how are you doing?"

Well, I thought to myself, he asked so I begin to tell him about my condition and all of the aspects associated with it. Within a few moments I could tell he was not very much interested in how I was doing.

I continued with all of the details and then he suddenly looked at his watch and said, "That's interesting, but I am late for an appointment and I have to leave right now."

Well, okay, but after all, he asked the question I didn't. If he wasn't interested in how I was doing, why did he ask?

See how people say things they don't really mean?

This happened to me several times with people I had never met before. They asked the question about how I was doing, when I began telling them how I was doing, they had no real interest in how I was doing.

That rather frustrated me. How I was doing was a very important aspect of my life and sharing my pain with someone else was something I wanted to do. However, nobody was interested in my pain.

It brought me down to a point of discouragement. I had to stay home for several days because of the condition I was in. I could not drive and so I stayed home.

Then something different opened up for me.

As I was sitting there, reveling in my displeasure and discomfort, the telephone rang.

I answered the phone and it was somebody trying to sell me something. They began by saying, "Hello, how are you doing today?"

That is all I needed to hear. I began to tell him exactly how I was doing with all of the pain and discomfort I was experiencing. I went on and on even though several times he tried to interrupt my little speech. He asked and so I was telling.

Three minutes into my little speech, I heard the telephone go "click" and there was nobody on the other end of the line.

I sat back in my chair and smiled rather deeply. Why did this person asked me how I was doing if he wasn't interested in it?

It was quite an afternoon, I'll tell you that. I don't know if the word got out that I was sick and at home,



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but the phone rang constantly all afternoon. Everybody asked me, "Hello, how are you doing?" And, I told them how I was doing.

All that afternoon I dominated the conversation of every telephone solicitor that called. I never allowed them to get a word in edge wise because they asked me how I was doing and I was going to tell them.

My wife came home from the office and saw me smiling.

"What in the world," she said as she walked towards me, "are you smiling about?"

"All afternoon," I explained to her, "people were calling me asking me how I was. And so I spent all afternoon telling these people exactly how I was." I then chuckled.

She just looked at me and then broke out laughing herself.

I found out the telemarketers are not really interested in "How you are." All they're interested in is selling something I really don't need. But I enjoyed the day telling them how I was doing.

That's the way it is with most people today. They say one thing but they really do not mean it. They do not want to know how I am doing. It is just something they politely say when they do not know what else to say.

David understood this when he wrote, "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak" (Psalm 12:2).

How often does this happen in our daily life.

Then David said this about himself, "My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding" (Psalm 49:3).

As I was sitting in my chair nursing my pain, I came to at least one conclusion. I am not going to ask people how they are unless I really want to know how they are.

No. 6 Wolves Spread the Wealth in 16-Point NCAA Victory over Washburn

Maryville, Mo. – The No. 6 Northern State University men's basketball team advanced to the semifinal round of the NCAA Central Region Tournament with a 16-point victory over Washburn University on Saturday afternoon. The win moves the Wolves to 32-3 overall this season, as they handed the Ichabod's their tenth and final loss.

The Wolves took charge early on and did not look back, notching 47 points in the first half and shooting 70.4 percent from the floor. They extended their 12-point halftime leading, notching another 44 in the final 20 minutes of action. Northern held their largest lead of 23 points with 2:33 remaining in regulation.

For the game, the Wolves shot 68.6 percent from the floor, 59.1 percent from the arc, and a perfect 8-of-8 from the foul line. Defensively they held the Ichabods to a 48.3 field goal percentage and 35.3 3-point percentage. Northern tallied 42 points in the paint, 17 points off the bench, 11 points off turnovers, and nine second chance points. They added 19 assists, four blocks, and three steals, while out-rebounding Washburn 26-21 in the game.

Gabe King led five Wolves in double figures, dropping 20 points while shooting 7-of-9 from the floor and 6-of-7 from the arc. The sophomore added three rebounds, one assist, one block, and one steal. Darin Peterka and Carter Evans each notched 18 points, with Peterka hitting 6-of-7 from the floor and Evans knocking down 9-of-11. Peterka tallied two rebounds and one assist, going 2-for-2 from the free throw line, while Evans notched a team second best five rebounds, as well as two assists and one block.

DJ Pollard added 13 points to the team total, shooting 66.7 percent from the floor and a perfect 4-of-4 from the foul line. The senior added a team second best five assists, as well as one rebound and one block. Ian Smith rounded out the starting five with five points of his own, while leading the team with seven assists and six rebounds.

Logan Doyle led the Wolves off the bench and was the final Wolf in double figures notching ten points and shooting 66.7 percent from the field. Doyle added three rebounds, as well as two assists and one block. Bo Fries tallied the final seven points for the Wolves, draining 3-of-5 from the floor and adding three rebounds, one assist, and a team high two steals.

Northern returns to Bearcat Arena tomorrow evening for a 5 p.m. tip against NSIC rival St. Cloud State. The match-up will be the third meeting between the two teams this season.

The Life of Jerroll Erdmann



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

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

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

Jerroll Lee Erdmann, son of Gilbert and Estella (Craig) Erdmann was born on May 13, 1932 in Groton, SD. He was raised on the family farm near Groton and graduated from Groton High School in 1950. After high school, Jerry worked with his parents on the farm before enlisting in the US Air Force in 1952. He was stationed at Gary Air Force Base in San Marcos, Texas where he worked as a helicopter mechanic during the Korean War. On August 31, 1956 he was united in marriage to Bonnie McCormick at San Marcos, Texas. After being honorably discharged from the US Air Force in 1956, Jerry and Bonnie moved to rural Groton, SD where they began their own farming operation while also working with Jerry's parents on the farm. Jerry continued farming for the next 54 years before retiring and moving

to Aberdeen, SD in 2010. Jerry had a love for the farm including his Registered Angus cattle herd, which he continued to expand and improve during his farming and ranching career. Jerry was always passionate about completing required farm work meticulously and efficiently, and loved to see the bounty of good crops and quality cattle which resulted from his hard work and dedication to the farm.

Jerry served on area boards for many years including the Henry Township Board, Brown County Co-op in Aberdeen, Brown County Livestock Improvement Association, where he also served as president and the Ferney Farmers Elevator in Groton. He was a member of the American Legion Post #39 in Groton for the past 61 years and also was a member of the Masonic Lodge in Groton for the past 57 years, serving as Master of the Lodge in 1967 and again in 1971. He belonged as a life member to the American Angus Association since he began ranching in 1954. Jerry was a life long member of Presbyterian Churches in Groton, San Marcos, Texas (where he met Bonnie), and Aberdeen, SD. He was as an ordained elder and deacon of the Presbyterian Church.

Jerry had countless friends and acquaintances. He was always very social with a great sense of humor, and it seemed regardless of where he traveled, he would greet someone who he had met previously. In later years he loved to travel and over the past 22 years he and Bonnie had spent the winters in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. He loved the weather in Cabo, and also the many new friends they met while there. Jerry was a selfless man and always more interested in others than himself. He will be missed by so many.

Grateful for having shared Jerry's life are his wife, Bonnie, daughter, Peri Lee Erdmann (Lyn Halvorson), Aberdeen, two sons, Michael Lee Erdmann (Marge Rohrbach), Aberdeen, and Darrin Lee (Julie) Erdmann, Groton; grandchildren: Derek (Kristen) Tvinnereim (Webster, SD), Brock Halvorson (Kelsey Mundt) (Westfield, New Jersey), Caleb (Christine) Halvorson (Sioux Falls), Brandon (Kristen) Dirksen (Des Moines, Ia), Dawson Erdmann (Aberdeen), Tessa Erdmann (Groton) and Jarrett Erdmann (Groton); great grandchildren: Kaden, Karter, Mia, and Max; one sister, Annette Rabasca, (Wilmington, Delaware), and many nieces, nephews, and friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents, and several brothers-in-law and sisters in-law.

Honorary Urnbearers will be his Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren.

Memorials will be given to the Episcopal Church in Groton, the Lazy Farmers 4-H Club, Groton FFA Chapter & the American Cancer Society.

Wolves Fall Short in Semifinals of Central Region

Sioux Falls S.D. – The Northern State University women’s basketball team fell short in overtime Saturday evening in the semifinal round of the NCAA Central Region Tournament to No. 7 Augustana University, 90-86. The Wolves finish the season with a 26-6 record overall, after notching their first regional win in five seasons as well as a share of both the NSIC Overall and North Division titles.

Northern State trailed by five points on multiple occasions in the first quarter but cut the Viking lead to two points heading into the second. The Wolves out-scored Augustana in the second and led 37-36 at the half. After three quarters of play the Wolves held a 9-point advantage. NSU had a seven point lead with 1:54 left in the fourth quarter, however Augustana went on a 9-2 run, forcing the overtime period. The Vikings out-scored the Wolves 12-8 in OT sealing the victory and advancing to the regional finals.

The Wolves shot 43.2 percent from the field and 41.4 percent from behind the arc, while recording 50 rebounds as a team. Defensively, NSU held Augustana to a 37.0 field goal percentage from beyond the arc, and gave up just 32 rebounds. Northern added 28 points in the paint, nine second chance points on 16 offensive rebounds, nine points off of nine turnovers, and 25 bench points. They combined for 25 assists, a season high 12 made 3-pointers, six steals, and four blocks.

Jill Conrad led the Wolves with 17 points, nine rebounds, and five assists. The senior shot 46.7 percent from the floor and a perfect 2-of-2 from the foul line. Alexis Tappe followed with 16 points, leading the team off of the bench. She added a team second best eight rebounds, as well as three assists and two steals, while shooting 7-of-12 from the floor.

Brianna Kusler and Miranda Ristau each tallied 15 points for the Wolves. Kusler notched eight rebounds, six assists, one steal, and a team high five made 3-pointers, while Ristau tallied seven rebounds, one assist, three blocks, and two steals. Jessi Marti was the last player in double figures, notching 12 points, four rebounds, five assists, and one steal.


Gabby Laimer added six points off the bench for the Wolves, while Brynn Flakus recorded two points, three rebounds, and two assists. Haley Froelich tallied two points, four rebounds, one assist, and one block, while Alayna Johnson and Anika Fredrick combined for one point, one rebound, and two assists.

Northern State seniors Miranda Ristau, Jill Conrad, Alexis Tappe, Gabby Laimer, Brynn Flakus, and Haley Froelich played their final games in a Wolves uniform. The group propelled the program to new heights, qualifying for 5-straight NCAA Central Region Tournaments, and winning two NSIC/Sanford Health Basketball Tournament titles, three NSIC North Division titles, and one NSIC Overall Championship.

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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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Today in Weather History

March 11, 1991: A developing winter storm, centered to the south of the Black Hills, caused heavy snow to fall on the northern Black Hills the evening of March 11 until the morning of March 12th. Snowfall totals of 3-9 inches were reported, including 9 inches at Custer, 8 inches at Deerfield, and 8 inches at Lead.

March 11, 2011: A very intense low-pressure area moving across North Dakota brought widespread blizzard conditions to central and northeast South Dakota. The low-pressure area brought 1 to 3 inches of snowfall to the region. This new snow combined with 30 to 50 mph winds with gusts to 60 to 70 mph brought widespread whiteout conditions. Traffic was brought to a standstill with many motorists having to be rescued and taken to a shelter. Hundreds of cars were stranded on mainly Highway 12 and Interstate-29. Two people traveling on Highway 10 in McPherson County told about how they became stuck and were picked up by another vehicle and that it took them over 2 1/2 hours to travel just a few miles to safety. Interstate-29 was closed from Watertown to Sisseton from 6 pm on the 11th until noon on the 12th. Many events were affected including the Girls State Basketball Tournament in Watertown. There were several overturned semis along with several vehicle accidents across the area. Some of the highest wind gusts included 56 mph at Watertown; 58 mph at Mobridge, Sisseton, and Faulkton; 59 mph at Aberdeen; 61 mph at Bowdle; 66 mph near Hillhead, and 71 mph west of Long Lake.

1888: The Great Blizzard of 1888 paralyzed the east coast from the Chesapeake Bay to Maine on March 11 through the 14th. The blizzard dumped as much as 55 inches of snow in some areas, and snow drifts of 30 to 40 feet were reported. An estimated 400 people died from this blizzard.

1897: The coldest March reading at Medicine Hat, Alberta Canada occurred as the temperature dropped to 38 degrees below zero.

1911: Tamarack, California reported 451 inches of snow on the ground, a record for the U.S.

1948 - Record cold followed in the wake of a Kansas blizzard. Lows of -25 degrees at Oberlin, Healy and Quinter established a state record for the month of March. Lows of -15 at Dodge City, -11 at Concordia, and -3 at Wichita were also March records. (The Weather Channel)

1962 - One of the most paralyzing snowstorms in decades produced record March snowfalls in Iowa. Four feet of snow covered the ground at Inwood following the storm. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Unseasonably cold weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S., and a storm over the Gulf of Mexico spread rain and sleet and snow into the Appalachian Region. Sleet was reported in southern Mississippi. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A blizzard raged across the north central U.S. Chadron NE was buried under 33 inches of snow, up to 25 inches of snow was reported in eastern Wyoming, and totals in the Black Hills of South Dakota ranged up to 69 inches at Lead. Winds gusted to 63 mph at Mullen NE. Snow drifts thirty feet high were reported around Lusk WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1989 - Twenty-one cities in the central and southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 95 degrees at Lubbock TX equalled their record for March. (The National Weather Summary)

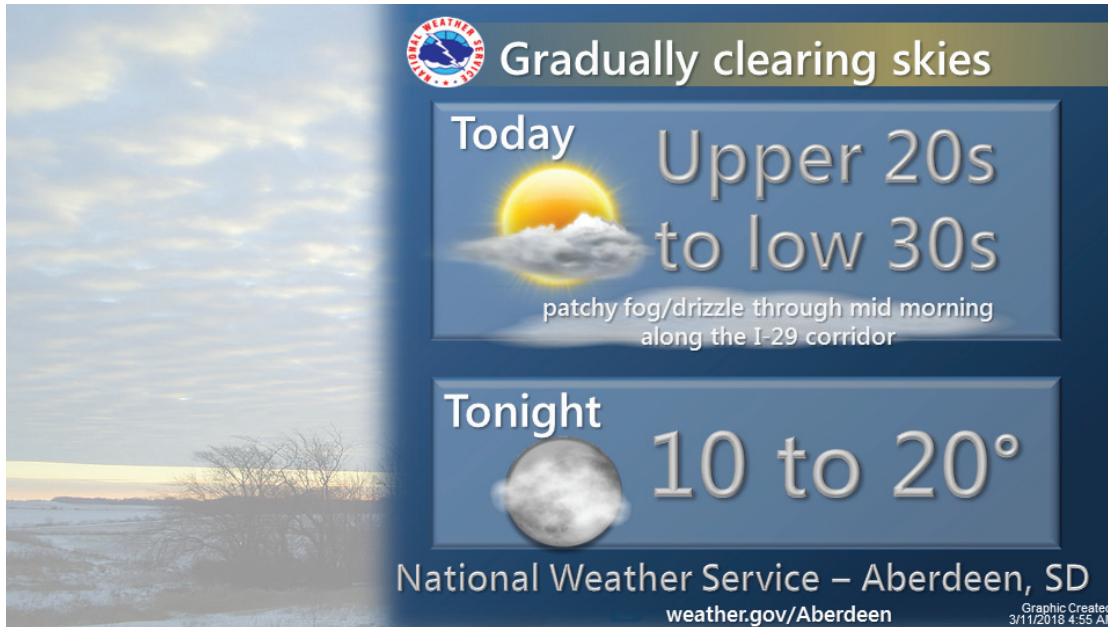
1990 - Forty-four cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Record highs included 71 degrees at Dickinson ND and Williston ND, and 84 degrees at Lynchburg VA, Charleston WV and Huntington WV. Augusta GA and Columbia SC tied for honors as the hot spot in the nation with record highs of 88 degrees. A vigorous cold front produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains of Utah. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006 - Phoenix's record run for dry days finally ends at 143 days. The last measured rain fell on October 18, 2005. Not only did the rain break the dry spell, the 1.40 inches that fell was a record amount for the date.

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Sun Mar 11	Mon Mar 12	Tue Mar 13	Wed Mar 14	Thu Mar 15	Fri Mar 16	Sat Mar 17
						
32°F	31°F	30°F	38°F	42°F	41°F	40°F
12°F	8°F	14°F	23°F	28°F	24°F	32°F
NNW 11 MPH	NNW 9 MPH	N 5 MPH	S 9 MPH	E 9 MPH	SE 10 MPH Precip 20%	N 9 MPH



Gradually clearing skies

Today
Upper 20s
to low 30s
patchy fog/drizzle through mid morning
along the I-29 corridor

Tonight
10 to 20°

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

Graphic Created 3/11/2018 4:55 AM

Published on: 03/11/2018 at 5:05AM

Patchy fog/freezing drizzle along the I-29 corridor will end this morning. Otherwise, today will feature gradually clearing skies and slightly below normal temperatures. Seasonal temperatures are expected by the end of the workweek!

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 35.5 F at 12:07 PM

Low Outside Temp: 24.2 F at 7:04 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 20.0 Mph at 9:13 PM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 71° in 2016

Record Low: -27° in 1948

Average High: 37°F

Average Low: 18°F

Average Precip in March: 0.33

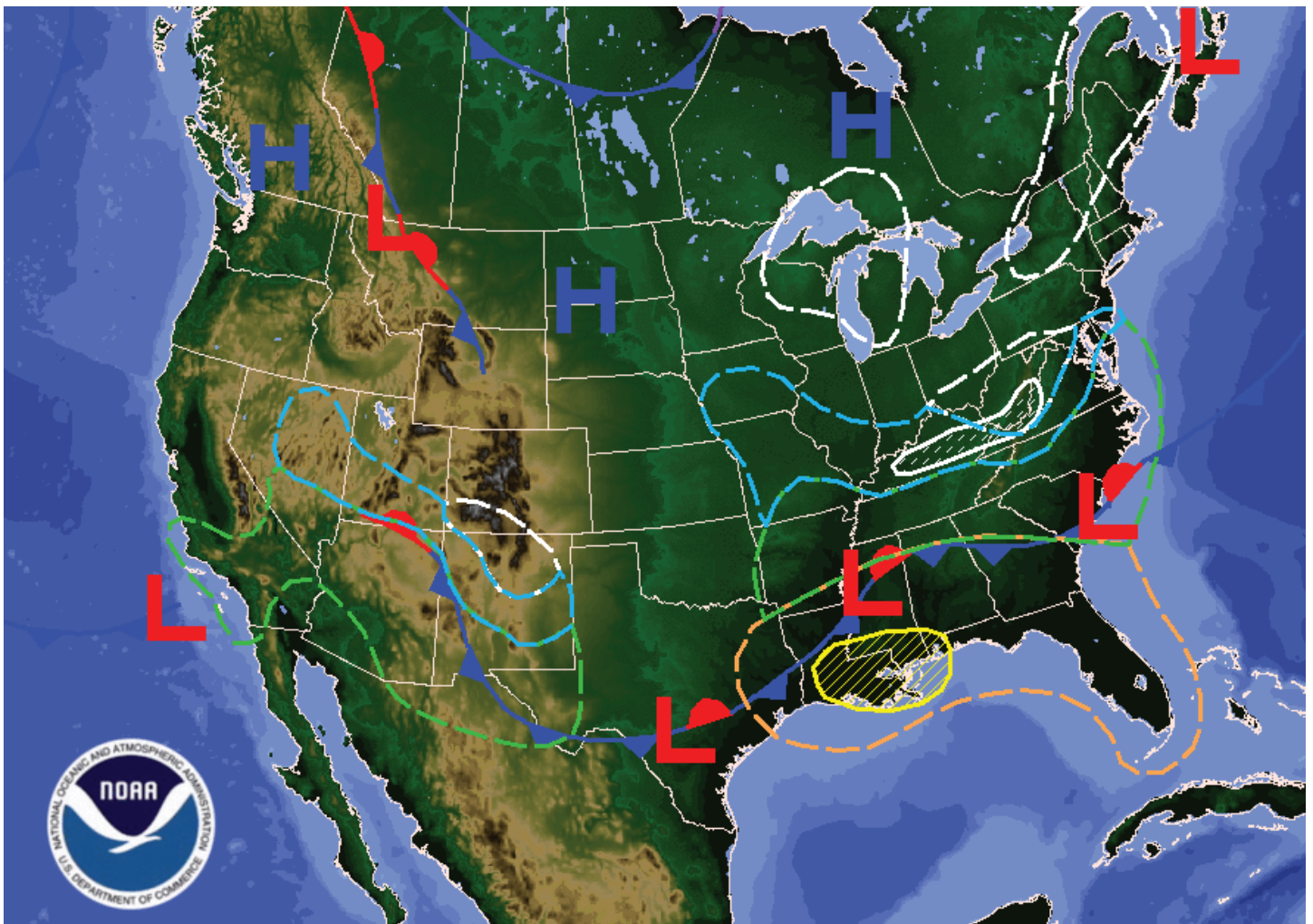
Precip to date in March: 0.94

Average Precip to date: 1.35

Precip Year to Date: 1.35

Sunset Tonight: 7:34 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sun, Mar 11, 2018, issued 6:56 AM EDT

DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center

Prepared by Hamrick with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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TIME FOR A NEW SONG?

Sunday church bulletins quite often reveal more than the words printed on them. Other than the date on the front of the bulletin the order of service changes very little. There seems to be three important words that appear in every order of service: Invocation, Offering and Benediction. And in between those words the hymns, Scripture and special music will be "recycled" from week to week. But there is little new or different. Even contemporary worship services seem to follow the same format and formula week after week.

Sounds boring, doesn't it?

Perhaps that's why Psalm 96:1 explodes with a challenge: "Sing to the Lord a NEW SONG!" - which literally means "NEW THINGS!" If God is alive and well in our lives and in our churches we will surely be seeing new things and singing new songs because we will see Him at work in our lives and in the life of our churches. Prayers will be answered and lives changed, sinners will be saved and His disciples will be called to serve Him in new and different ways showing His love and care to those around us. We will have to rearrange the order of service to make time for public praise to share what He is doing and sing new songs because He is doing new things!

And then in verse two we read, "Proclaim His salvation day after day!" When the proclamation of His salvation is the centerpiece of our work and worship, we will be overcome with His joy and "sing new songs!"

Prayer: Lord, may we accept Your challenge to sing a "new song" by living and sharing Your great salvation. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 96:1 Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

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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

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Tripp-Delmont/Armour 58, Ethan 46

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Class A

Championship Game – St. Thomas More defeated Madison 54-41

3rd Place Game – West Central defeated McCook Central/Montrose 50-44

5th Place Game – Aberdeen Roncalli defeated Belle Fourche 42-30

7th Place Game – Vermillion defeated Crow Creek 76-54

Class B

Championship Game – Castlewood defeated Hanson 47-41

3rd Place Game – Tripp-Delmont/Armour defeated Ethan 57-46

5th Place Game – Warner defeated Sully Buttes 54-44

7th Place Game – Faith defeated Avon 50-45

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

04-05-21-23-34

(four, five, twenty-one, twenty-three, thirty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

23-24-41-43-44, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 3

(twenty-three, twenty-four, forty-one, forty-three, forty-four; Star Ball: three; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$22.46 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$318 million

Powerball

43-44-54-61-69, Powerball: 22, Power Play: 3

(forty-three, forty-four, fifty-four, sixty-one, sixty-nine; Powerball: twenty-two; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$385 million

SD lawmakers give raises, push state constitutional changes

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers have left the Capitol after eking out raises for thousands of teachers, state workers and Medicaid providers in the roughly \$4.7 billion state budget, funding hikes that seemed unattainable when the Legislature started work in January.

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Friday's votes closed a legislative session tinged with lingering Republican frustration over ballot questions that voters approved in 2016. GOP lawmakers flexed their majorities in Pierre to mandate new rules for citizens' initiative campaigns and to ask voters in November to make the state constitution harder to change.

But not before voters will be asked make tweaks to the constitution in a first-ever ballot question election at the June primary. Supporters say approving the changes to the "Marsy's Law" victims' bill of rights in June would fix problems sooner.

Officials say it's causing issues for law enforcement and prosecutors and spiking costs for counties. Marsy's Law guarantees crime victims and their family members the right to privacy, protection from harassment or abuse and timely notice of trial, sentencing and post-judgment proceedings. The changes would require victims to opt into many of their rights, explicitly allow authorities to share information with the public to help solve crimes and limit the definition of a victim.

South Dakota would be the first state to alter Marsy's Law out of the six that have enacted it. Republican House Speaker Mark Mickelson negotiated the changes, which enjoyed support from Republicans, Democrats and the Marsy's Law campaign.

Democrats unsuccessfully pushed back against the June vote. They argued turnout will be lower for parties without primaries.

The minority party also failed at fighting off several measures that critics say will restrict people's ability to pass their own laws or constitutional changes.

Republicans sent an amendment to the November ballot asking voters to increase the majority vote threshold required for constitutional changes to 55 percent of the votes cast. GOP Sen. Jim Bolin, the sponsor, told a Senate panel that it's a "legitimate and desirable method of protecting our fundamental political document."

Colorado, Florida and New Hampshire have thresholds ranging from 55 percent to two-thirds support required for voters to approve constitutional changes.

Republican lawmakers also passed a bill that would require ballot measure signature gatherers to give the secretary of state information including their driver's license number and the length of time at their current and past two addresses. Mickelson has said it would make it easier for courts to determine whether circulators are residents.

"I think that the Republican Party has successfully made it harder to put measures on the ballot, has made it harder to pass them as constitutional amendments and will make the entire process far more litigious than it was in the past," said Democratic Sen. Reynold Nesiba, who helped lead a successful 2016 initiative to cap payday loan interest rates.

Lawmakers did come together on a bill that would ease a state production limit and reduce other rules for microbreweries. Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard pushed for the brewing overhaul in his last legislative session as governor, saying state regulations are stifling the industry. The measure sent to Daugaard would create a microbrewery license allowing the businesses to produce 30,000 barrels of beer annually, up from 5,000 barrels, and let craft brewers skip distributors to sell up to 1,500 barrels of their beer each year directly to bars and stores.

The Legislature approved a new precision agriculture facility at South Dakota State University and a state veterans cemetery in Sioux Falls. The roughly \$55 million SDSU project involves building a precision agriculture classroom and laboratory, with renovations to an existing building expected later. Supporters say it will provide modern research and education space for the university's first-in-the-nation bachelor's degree program in precision ag.

A slew of high-profile bills didn't make it to Daugaard. Legislators voted down measures that would have ended collective bargaining at public universities, put a proposed casino complex in Yankton on the ballot and raised the age to buy tobacco to 21.

Bills that would have banned elementary and middle schools from teaching about gender identity and sought to suspend refugee resettlement into South Dakota from countries on "any federal travel ban list" also didn't advance.

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Lawmakers return March 26 to debate any vetoes that could come from the governor. But they finished the main part of the 2018 legislative session Friday after setting state spending.

The Legislature benefited from state tax collections projected to climb higher than Dugaard anticipated when he proposed a budget in December. The budget for the next fiscal year includes about \$1.63 billion in general state spending, about \$18 million — or 1.1 percent — above the governor's proposal.

The final budget included increases of 1 percent for education, 1.2 percent for state employees and 2 percent for community-based providers and 0.5 percent for other providers.

Legislators, too, are set to get a raise — their first salary hike in two decades. Lawmakers sent a bill to Dugaard that would set their salaries at one-fifth of the South Dakota median household income, starting next year. Officials estimate lawmakers' pay for 2019 would increase 97 percent to about \$11,800.

House Majority Leader Lee Qualm told his colleagues Friday that they had good session.

"We have a lot of great accomplishments, and moving forward it is going to be tremendous for this state. I don't doubt that one bit," Qualm said. "Could we have done more? Sure, we could have always done more, but there's always next year."

Canadian company begins gold search in South Dakota

ROCHFORD, S.D. (AP) — A Canadian company exploring for gold in western south Dakota has drilled and capped its first hole despite protests and a court challenge.

Mineral Mountain Resources is conducting the drilling on privately owned land in a secluded portion of the Black Hills. The drilling of the first hole began Feb. 13 and was completed this week, the Rapid City Journal reported.

After completing the first hole, workers filled it with a mixture of water and bentonite and capped it with concrete, while an inspector from the state Department of Environment and Natural Resources monitored.

Eight more holes are planned for the company's first phase of drilling, which is expected to take about six weeks. The drill creates cylinders of rock known as core samples, which will eventually be hauled to a lab in Nevada for analysis. The analysis will be used to decide whether and where more drilling will be conducted within the permitted area.

The drilling comes after three members of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe filed a court appeal last month against the project. The appeal alleged that the Canadian company lacked a certificate of authority required for foreign corporations to do business in South Dakota when it obtained its state drilling permit. State regulators allowed the company to transfer the permit to an affiliate company of the same name in South Dakota, but the appeal said that the transfer was illegal because the original permit was never valid.

Mineral Mountain has not filed a legal response to the appeal.

A group called Defend the Sacred Black Hills also recently conducted a protest walk along roads and trails in the project area.

"They have every right to protest," said Kevin Leonard, drilling project manager. "It's a free country."

Mineral Mountain has also filed an operating plan with the Black Hills National Forest to conduct additional exploratory drilling on public land in the Rochford area. A review by the Forest Service is still pending.

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

South Dakota park works to contain zebra mussel population

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Conservation officials in a southeast South Dakota park are ramping up containment of invasive zebra mussels for the upcoming season.

Tourists nationwide visit Yankton's Lewis and Clark Recreation Area, which has become infested with the damage-causing mussels.

Conservation officer Dan Altman told the Yankton Press & Dakotan that they're trying to manage the mussels and prevent them from spreading elsewhere. He said one gallon of water from Lewis and Clark Lake could infest Lake Oahe in Pierre with zebra mussels so long-term plans include containing Yankton's

waters.

Officers have increased enforcement of aquatic invasive species (AIS) violations, particularly through outreach to visitors or those unaware of the problem.

"We've got a team in Pierre that focuses solely on social media, website hits and mobile app users," said Altman. "They've made a lot of improvement to the Game, Fish and Parks mobile app, and right now they're trying to find ways to specifically target app users in Yankton through cell phone location. So, if you're going to come to Yankton for a weekend and camp, and you login for a camping reservation online, you're going to be forced to look at pictures to educate you on zebra mussels."

They've also stationed department interns at three main points where boaters push off to track boats trying to decontaminate, collect data and educate people.

"At this point we're still considering them a growing population. We don't think they've capped out at this point and time," Altman said. "Based on how many we're seeing summer to summer, there's just an exponential growth that you can see with the naked eye, without even counting them."

Information from: Yankton Press and Dakotan, <http://www.yankton.net/>

Schools brace for massive student walkouts over gun violence

By DENISE LAVOIE, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — As schools around the country brace for student walkouts following the deadly shooting in Parkland, Florida, principals and superintendents are scrambling to perform a delicate balancing act: How to let thousands of students exercise their First Amendment rights while not disrupting school and not pulling administrators into the raging debate over gun control.

Some have taken a hard line, promising to suspend students who walk out, while others are using a softer approach, working with students to set up places on campus where they can remember the victims of the Florida shooting and express their views about school safety and gun control.

Since the Feb. 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, demonstrations have sprung up on school campuses around the country. But the first large-scale, coordinated national demonstration is planned for March 14, when organizers of the Women's March have called for a 17-minute walkout, one minute for each of the 17 students and staff members killed in Florida.

National demonstrations are also planned for March 24, with a march on Washington, D.C.; and on April 20, the 19th anniversary of the Columbine High School massacre in Colorado.

No matter how schools decide to deal with the demonstrations, students have been reassured by Harvard, Yale, MIT, the University of Connecticut, UCLA and dozens of other colleges and universities that their participation won't affect their chances of getting admitted.

But for middle-school and high-school administrators, figuring out how to allow the demonstrations during school hours has proven challenging. In some cases, it hasn't gone smoothly.

In Needville, Texas, near Houston, Superintendent Curtis Rhodes was castigated on social media after he warned that students who leave class would be suspended for three days, even if they get parental permission.

"SHAME, SHAME, SHAME ON YOU," wrote one woman.

In Garretson, South Dakota, administrators canceled a student walkout planned for April 20 after a Facebook posting about the plan drew more than 300 negative comments from adults.

And in Arizona, dozens of students at Ingleside Middle School, near Phoenix, were given one-day suspensions after they left campus on Feb. 27.

Layla Defibaugh, an eighth-grade student at Ingleside, said she wanted to participate in the walkout, but didn't because of the threatened suspensions. She does plan to join the March 14 walkout, even it means getting suspended.

"It's important for me to speak my mind on this topic," she said. "At the end of the day, they shouldn't be able to punish us for exercising our First Amendment rights."

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AASA, The School Superintendents Association, has fielded dozens of calls and emails from school administrators asking for advice, while the American Civil Liberties Union has received hundreds of inquiries from students about what their rights are and if they can be disciplined for participating in the protests.

The answer depends on each school's code of conduct and disciplinary policies. Generally, the ACLU has been advising students that because they are required to go to school by law, administrators can discipline them for unexcused absences. But the ACLU also told students in an online training video that administrators can't punish them more harshly because of the political nature of their demonstrations.

The superintendents association — which is supporting the April 20 walkout— has drafted a list of suggestions for school administrators, including holding a teach-in, a school-led walkout to a spot on campus, or a session on bullying.

"There are ways to engage and harness the students in civic engagement without compromising policies in place on attendance, participation and student safety," said Noelle Ellerson Ng, associate director for policy and advocacy.

Some schools have embraced the walkouts.

In Mooresville, Indiana, administrators met with 10 high-school student leaders to work out a plan. Mooresville High School Principal Brian Disney said the students plan to use the school's public address system to read short statements about mental illness, the importance of kindness and standing up against all school violence before inviting all students to gather in a school hallway for 17 minutes of silence.

In Anne Arundel County, Maryland, administrators are still talking with students about how they can participate without violating school rules.

"I think we all realize that for folks who are teenagers right now, this could well be a defining moment in their lives. We want to very much encourage and empower student voices. That said, it has to be done in ways that are safe and appropriate," said spokesman Bob Mosier.

Some schools are taking a middle ground, neither encouraging nor discouraging students from participating. In Henrico County, Virginia, near Richmond, administrators sent an email to parents saying they are not sanctioning the March 14 walkout, but feel obligated to manage the event because of its heavy promotion on social media. Middle-school principals asked parents to sign a Google document stating whether they give their children permission to participate. Schools plan to provide campus locations for the walkout.

In Somerville, Massachusetts, students say they won't stop after a single walkout. They've started a weekly movement they hope will keep public attention focused on school safety and put pressure on lawmakers to pass stricter gun control laws. The walkouts will be held every Wednesday, said Anika Nayak, 16, a student organizer.

"We're really just fed up with the lack of action that's been taken in our country," Nayak said.

"We don't think enough people are listening."

China makes historic move to allow Xi to rule indefinitely

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's rubber-stamp lawmakers on Sunday passed a historic constitutional amendment abolishing a presidential two-term limit that will enable Xi Jinping to rule indefinitely.

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

"This marks the biggest regression in China's legal system since the reform and opening-up era of the 1980s," said Zhang Lifan, an independent Beijing-based political commentator.

"I'm afraid that this will all be written into our history in the future," Zhang said.

Voting among the National People's Congress' nearly 3,000 hand-picked delegates began in the mid-afternoon, with Xi leading members of the Communist Party's seven-member all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee in casting their votes. He placed his orange ballot paper in a red box bearing the official seal of state placed front and center on the stage inside the cavernous hall.

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Rank-and-file deputies then rose to vote on the floor of the hall as jaunty instrumental music played. Ten minutes later, the process had ended and delegates were asked to return to their seats while the votes were counted.

Shortly after 3:50 p.m., the results were read out over the public address system and flashed briefly on a screen in the hall. The delegates voted 2,958 in favor, with two opposed, three abstaining and one vote invalidated.

"The constitutional amendment item has passed," the announcer declared to polite applause.

The 64-year-old Xi appeared to show little emotion, remaining in his seat with other deputies to listen to a report on the work of the congress delivered by its outgoing chairman.

The slide toward one-man rule under Xi has fueled concern that Beijing is eroding efforts to guard against the excesses of autocratic leadership and make economic regulation more stable and predictable.

The head of the legislature's legal affairs committee, Shen Chunyao, dismissed such concerns as "speculation that is ungrounded and without basis."

Shen told reporters the party has accumulated extensive experience over its 90-year history that has led to a system of orderly succession to "maintain the vitality and long-term stability of the party and the people."

"We believe in the future that we will continue with this path and discover an even brighter future," Shen said.

The amendment also inserted Xi's personal political philosophy into the preamble of the constitution and phrasing that emphasizes the leadership of the ruling Communist Party.

"It is rare nowadays to see a country with a constitution that emphasizes the constitutional position of any one political party," said Zhang, the political commentator.

In a sign of the issue's sensitivity, government censors have aggressively scrubbed social media of expressions ranging from "I disagree" to "Xi Zedong." A number of prominent Chinese figures have publicly protested the move, despite the risk of official retaliation.

Officials have said the abolishing of the presidential term limits is aimed only at bringing the office of the president in line with Xi's other positions atop the Communist Party and the Central Military Commission, which do not impose term limits.

While some scholars questioned the wisdom of the move, others said they saw value in sending the message that Xi would be setting policy for many years to come.

"In fact, the more Xi Jinping's position is consolidated and the longer his governing time is to last, the more secure it is for the continuity of the policies," said Liu Jianguo, a professor at Renmin University's School of International Relations.

The move is widely seen as the culmination of Xi's efforts since being appointed leader of the party in 2012 to concentrate power in his own hands and defy norms of collective leadership established over the past two decades. Xi has appointed himself to head bodies that oversee national security, finance, economic reform and other major initiatives, effectively sidelining the party's No. 2 figure, Premier Li Keqiang.

It has crushed faint hopes for political reforms among China's embattled liberal scholars and activists, who now fear even greater repression. China allows no political opposition in any form and has relentlessly persecuted independent groups seeking greater civic participation. Leading Chinese officials have meanwhile repeatedly rejected any chance of adopting Western-style separation of powers or multiparty democracy.

To be sure, Xi's confident, populist leadership style and tough attitude toward official corruption have won him a significant degree of popular support.

Zhao Minglin, 32, a vice president of an investment firm in Beijing, said it was easier for Xi to carry out his ambitious vision of raising living standards in China if more power were concentrated in his hands.

"I will definitely support this constitutional amendment and this government. This is a powerful and strong government," Zhao said. He added, however, that he was concerned that the public discourse lacked a space for dissenting voices.

___ Associated Press researchers Fu Ting and Shanshan Wang contributed to this report.

Most stores shut in Poland as Sunday trade ban takes effect

By VANESSA GERA, Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — A new Polish law banning almost all trade on Sundays has taken effect, with large supermarkets and most other retailers closed for the first time since liberal shopping laws were introduced in the 1990s after communism's collapse.

The change is stirring up a range of emotions in a country where many feel workers are exploited under the liberal regulations of the past years and want workers to have a day of rest. But many Poles also experience consumer freedom as one of the most tangible benefits of the free market era and resent the new limit.

In Hungary, another ex-communist country, a ban on Sunday trade imposed in 2015 was so unpopular that authorities repealed it the next year. Elsewhere in Europe, however, including Germany and Austria, people have long been accustomed to the day of commercial rest and appreciate the push it gives them to escape the compulsion to shop for quality time with family and friends instead.

The law was proposed by a leading trade union, Solidarity, which says employees deserve the day of rest. It found the support of the conservative and pro-Catholic ruling party, Law and Justice, whose lawmakers passed the legislation. The influential Catholic church, to which more than 90 percent of Poles belong, has welcomed the change.

Among the Poles who see it as a good step toward returning a frazzled and overworked society to a more a more traditional lifestyle is 76-year-old Barbara Olszewska, who did some last-minute shopping Saturday evening in Warsaw.

She recalled growing up in the Polish countryside with a mother who was a full-time homemaker and a father who never worked on Sundays.

"A family should be together on Sundays," Olszewska said after buying some food at a local Biedronka, a large discount supermarket chain.

Olszewska said that before she retired she sold cold cuts in a grocery store, and was grateful that she never had to work Sundays.

The new law at first bans trade two Sundays per month, but steps it up to three Sundays in 2019 and finally all Sundays in 2020, except for seven exceptions before the Easter and Christmas holidays.

Pro-business opposition parties view the change as an attack on commercial freedom and warn that it will lead to a loss of jobs, and in particular hurt students who only have time to work to fund their studies on the weekends. Even the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions opposes it, arguing that it will just push employees to work longer hours Fridays and Saturdays and that the work will be harder because there will be more customers.

Poles are among the hardest-working citizens in the European Union and some complain that Sundays are sometimes the only days they have free time to shop. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, only the Greeks put in longer working hours than Poles in the 28-member European Union. The average Polish employee worked 1,928 hours in 2016, according to OECD statistics.

Another last-minute shopper on Saturday evening, Daniel Wycech, 26, saw more drawbacks than benefits.

"It's not really a problem to do more shopping a day ahead of time, but if something breaks in my kitchen or bathroom on a Sunday, there will be no way to go to the store and fix it," said Wycech, an accountant loaded down with bottled water, bananas and other groceries.

"I am angry because this law wasn't prepared properly. It would have been much better to force store employers to make two Sundays per month free for each worker," Wycech added.

There are some exceptions to the ban. For instance, gas stations, cafes, ice cream parlors, pharmacies and some other businesses are allowed to keep operating Sundays. Stores at airports and train stations will also be allowed to open, as will small mom-and-pop shops, but only on the condition that only the owners themselves work.

Anyone infringing the new rules faces a fine of up to 100,000 zlotys (\$29,500), while repeat offenders may face a prison sentence. Solidarity, the union that pushed for the law, appealed to people to report

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any violators to the National Labor Inspectorate, a state body.

Mateusz Kica, a 29-year-old tram driver in Warsaw, did his weekly shopping early Saturday to avoid the huge crowds he expected later in the day. He complained that the new law only relieves shop employees, but that workers like himself will still have to keep working weekends.

"This law isn't really just," Kica said.

Trump: Voters must support GOP in Pittsburgh-area House race

By **BILL BARROW** and **JILL COLVIN**, Associated Press

MOON TOWNSHIP, Pa. (AP) — President Donald Trump told western Pennsylvania voters Saturday night that his new tariffs were saving the steel industry and urged them to send a Republican to the House so he can keep delivering those kinds of results.

The president lent his weight to Republican Rick Saccone in the final days of a surprisingly competitive special election outside Pittsburgh that could reverberate nationally ahead of the November midterm elections.

"We need our Congressman Saccone," Trump said, unabashedly framing the race as a tune-up for the GOP's efforts to maintain its control of Capitol Hill. Hitting peak campaign mode for himself, he revived many of his favorite 2016 riffs and even touted his planned 2020 slogan, "Keep America Great!"

But, the president warned, "we can only do that if we elect people who are going to back our agenda," repeatedly urging his backers to support Saccone and stave off an upset by Democrat Conor Lamb in a district the president won by 20 percentage points over Hillary Clinton.

"The people of Pittsburgh cannot be conned by this guy Lamb," Trump said, dismissing Lamb's efforts to run as a moderate Democrat. "He's never going to vote for us. He can say, 'I love President Trump.' ... I don't want to meet him. I might like him."

Democrats need to flip 24 GOP-held seats to claim a House majority. A victory in such a Republican-leaning district would boost their hopes and renew GOP concerns of a bad November.

Lamb, a 33-year-old Marine veteran and former prosecutor, has positioned himself as more representative of the district than Saccone, a 60-year-old state lawmaker. Lamb touts his resume and declares that he wouldn't vote for Democratic House leader Nancy Pelosi as party leader. He also avoids criticizing Trump.

Trump conceded Lamb might not back Pelosi but said most House Democrats will. And if Pelosi were in charge of the House, Trump said, Lamb would simply "vote the party line."

While Trump was ostensibly in Pennsylvania for Saccone, the rally was as much about the president as it was an underperforming congressional candidate. The president repeatedly reminisced about his election, when Pennsylvania helped put him over the top after decades of landing in the Democrats' column.

The president criticized Democrats for blocking his long-promised border wall and attacked so-called sanctuary cities that refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities. He also called for harsher punishments for drug dealers, including the death penalty, pointing to China and Singapore as models.

Trump continued his attacks on the press, criticizing media coverage of his decision to meet with the leader of North Korea and complaining that he doesn't get credit for accomplishments. He singled out NBC's Chuck Todd as a "sleeping son of a bitch."

He also made sure the workers in this industrial-heavy region see the new steel tariffs as "my baby," even as Lamb and Saccone have endorsed the move. Pennsylvania's 18th Congressional District has an estimated 17,000 steelworkers and almost 90,000 voters from union households.

"Not all of our friends on Wall Street love it, but we love it," Trump said of the tariffs. He added that Lamb's party leadership opposes his protectionist policy. He sidestepped the fact that most of his own party's leaders oppose tariffs, as well.

Trump's appearance was part of a White House push to help Saccone avoid a once-unlikely defeat. National GOP forces could exceed \$10 million in spending on the race, and Saturday was the president's second recent visit to the area. But Trump risked another embarrassing defeat after backing Republican Roy Moore in last December's Alabama Senate election, only to watch Moore lose a seat his party had

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held since 1997.

The Pennsylvania special election is to replace Republican Rep. Tim Murphy, who resigned last year amid revelations of an extramarital affair in which the anti-abortion lawmaker urged his mistress to get an abortion when he thought she was pregnant.

Murphy, an eight-term congressman who had union support, never had a close election and had no Democratic challenger in his last two elections. But Saccone has struggled with his own fundraising, is a union foe and hasn't run as aggressive a campaign as Lamb, prompting criticism from Republicans in Washington who quietly concede Lamb is a stronger candidate.

Trump acknowledged those dynamics, noting talk of Lamb as a handsome candidate. But he said he thinks he's better looking, and added that Saccone "is handsome," too.

For his part, Saccone was thrilled to have the president's help.

"The president's support is key to attaining victory," Saccone told rally attendees about 45 minutes before Trump took the stage. "There's no one that I would rather have in my corner than President Trump. Are you with me on that?"

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

No. 1 Virginia wins ACC title, 71-63 over No. 12 NCarolina

By RALPH D. RUSSO, AP College Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With no one-and-dones, no sure-fire NBA lottery picks, No. 1 Virginia put together one of the most dominant seasons in the storied history of Atlantic Coast Conference basketball.

Kyle Guy, Devon Hall and the Cavaliers beat No. 12 North Carolina 71-63 in the ACC championship game Saturday night to finish 20-1 against league competition.

Virginia (31-2) set a school record for victories, won the conference tournament for the second time in five seasons under coach Tony Bennett and will most certainly enter the NCAA Tournament as the No. 1 overall seed when the field of 68 is announced Sunday.

Not bad for a bunch that started the season unranked and picked to finish sixth in the ACC.

"I think we always knew this could be a special team," guard Ty Jerome said.

And now that the Cavaliers are favorites, Hall said they try to out-underdog the underdogs.

"You fight like you're not supposed to win or nobody expects you to win," he explained.

With plenty of their fans packing Barclays Center in Brooklyn, the top-seeded Cavaliers beat sixth-seeded North Carolina (25-10) for the second time this season and snapped a seven-game losing streak to the Tar Heels in ACC Tournament play.

Guy, the tournament MVP, scored 11 of his 16 points in the second half and Hall added 15 points, five rebounds and four assists. Jerome had 12 points, six assists and six rebounds for Virginia. Contributions from everywhere, a microcosm of this special season.

The Cavaliers dominated the ACC with efficiency, tenacity and teamwork. They went 17-1 in the regular season, the one loss by one point in overtime to Virginia Tech, and finished first by four games.

"I think that we know who we are," senior Isaiah Wilkins said. "We don't have a really big room for — a really big margin for error. As older guys, you develop over the years from going to playing, like five minutes my first year to now, and you grow. I've grown with Devon over time like that, so I think that's our way. It's not going to be questioned or changed, unless you've got any plans, Coach?"

Bennett said at Virginia, one-and-done means grabbing a defensive rebound after a missed shot.

"This is one of the most connected groups I've ever coached," Bennett said as he accepted the championship trophy.

Virginia held the Tar Heels scoreless for five minutes and took a 58-49 lead on De'Andre Hunter's baseline fadeaway with 3:32 left. North Carolina snapped the drought with a 3-pointer by Luke Maye, who scored 20, but Jerome nailed a 3 out of a timeout to restore the nine-point lead.

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UNC, playing in its record 35th ACC championship game, never got closer than five again as Virginia closed it out from the foul line. The Cavaliers hit their first 15 free throw attempts and finished 20 of 22.

The Tar Heels played about as well as any team has this season against the best defensive team in the country, shooting 40 percent and committing only nine turnovers. In the regular season, the Tar Heels managed only 49 points and 29 percent shooting while committing 19 turnovers in a loss at Virginia.

The Cavaliers played defense with their offense, turning the ball over just four times and allowing the up-tempo Tar Heels only two fast-break points. Virginia makes every possession feel crucial.

"That's where they take advantage of teams," said North Carolina guard Joel Berry II, who had 17 points and four 3-pointers.

BIG PICTURE

North Carolina: UNC won three games in four days in Brooklyn and might have played its way into a high enough seed — probably a No. 2 — to open the NCAAs in Charlotte. The Tar Heels are 33-1 in NCAA games played in their home state.

"You guys think I'm whacko, hell, I just want to go someplace warm," coach Roy Williams said. "I've been freezing my butt off up here."

Virginia: The school's other ACC Tournament titles came in 1976 and 2014. ... In nine seasons in Charlottesville, Bennett has built one of the most successful programs in the country on a foundation of slow-paced but precise offense and sound and suffocating defense. When he climbed the ladder to cut down the last piece of string holding up the net at Barclays, Virginia fans filled the arena with chants of "To-ny! To-ny!"

They love him at UVA, but one accomplishment has eluded him: Virginia has yet to reach the Final Four since he took over. An Elite Eight run in 2016 is Virginia's best tournament showing.

"I think we have the group to do it," Hall said.

BYE, BYE BROOKLYN

The ACC Tournament heads back to North Carolina after a two-year stint in New York City, but expect it to be back sooner rather than later. Maybe even as soon as 2022, when the arena is free and the ACC has no plans set. Next year's ACC Tournament will be played in Charlotte.

UP NEXT

Both teams will head home and find out their NCAA Tournament destinations. The Cavaliers can pick their first-round spot as the top seed and will likely open in Charlotte next week as the top seed in the South Region.

Follow Ralph D. Russo at <https://twitter.com/ralphDrussoAP>

More AP college basketball: <https://collegebasketball.ap.org> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Afghanistan war impacted Army vet behind California attack

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and ELLEN KNICKMEYER, Associated Press

YOUNTVILLE, Calif. (AP) — The Army veteran who killed three women after a siege in California had long dreamed of serving his country in the military, but his skill as a marksman led to dangerous missions in Afghanistan that left him anxious and wary when he came back home, according to people who knew him.

Authorities said 36-year-old Albert Wong, who served a year in Afghanistan and returned highly decorated, took the women hostage Friday at the Yountville veterans center where he had sought help.

Hours later, authorities found all four of their bodies in a room at the center that aids people with post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injuries.

"We lost three beautiful people," Yountville Mayor John Dunbar said. "We also lost one of our heroes who clearly had demons that resulted in the terrible tragedy that we all experienced here."

As family and friends of the victims tried to make sense of the tragedy, authorities offered little information Saturday about why Wong attacked The Pathway Home and whether he targeted his victims.

Those who knew the women said they had dedicated their lives to helping those suffering like Wong,

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and they would've been in a good position to assist him if things had ended differently.

Authorities said Wong slipped into a going-away party for some employees of The Pathway Home. He let some people leave, but kept the three women.

Police said a Napa Valley sheriff's deputy exchanged gunshots with Wong but nothing was heard from him after that. From a vet-center crafts building across the street from the PTSD center, Sandra Woodford said she saw lawmen with guns but the only shots she heard were inside Pathway.

"This rapid live-fire of rounds going on, at least 12," Woodford said.

The victims were identified as The Pathway Home Executive Director Christine Loeber, 48; Clinical Director Jennifer Golick, 42; and Jennifer Gonzales Shushereba, 32, a clinical psychologist with the San Francisco Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare System.

A family friend told The Associated Press that Gonzales was seven months pregnant.

"These brave women were accomplished professionals who dedicated their careers to serving our nation's veterans, working closely with those in the greatest need of attention after deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan," The Pathway Home said in a statement.

Wong always wanted to join the Army and serve his country and was "soft-spoken and calm," said Cissy Sherr, his legal guardian when he was a child.

Sherr and her husband became Wong's guardians after his father died and his mother developed health problems, she said. He moved back in with them for a little while in 2013 after he returned from his deployment in Afghanistan and kept in touch online.

Wong thought the Pathway program would help him readjust after the Army, she said.

"I can't imagine what happened. It doesn't make any sense to me," she said.

Dunbar, a member of The Pathway Home's board of directors, said the program has served over 450 veterans in more than a decade.

The program is housed at the Veterans Home of California-Yountville in Napa Valley wine country. The largest veterans home in the nation cares for about 1,000 elderly and disabled vets.

Golick's father-in-law, Mike Golick, said in an interview she had recently expelled Wong from the program.

After Wong entered the building, Golick called her husband to say she had been taken hostage by the former soldier, her father-in-law said.

He didn't hear from his wife again.

Dunbar said veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan come home with "a lot of need for special care." But he did not answer questions about why Wong was removed from the program.

At the veterans home, people who served in earlier wars passed the building that houses The Pathway Home, which was surrounded by crime tape.

Muriel Zimmer, an 84-year-old Air Force veteran of the Korean War, said she feels badly for Wong, saying she "cannot blame him. It's because of the war."

Wong served in the Army Reserve from 1998 until 2002 and then enlisted for active duty in May 2010 and was deployed to Afghanistan in April 2011, according to military records.

He was a decorated soldier and was awarded the Expert Marksmanship Badge. But that meant that he was tasked with dangerous assignments, where he saw "really horrible things" that affected his mental well-being, Sherr said.

When Wong found the veterans program in Yountville, he told Sherr, "I think I'm going to get a lot of help from this program," she said.

AP writers Amy Forliti in Minneapolis and Frank Baker in Los Angeles also contributed to this report.

Shooter saw vets program as path to heal after deployment

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

When Albert Wong returned from an Army deployment in Afghanistan in 2013, he knew it had affected him. He had trouble adjusting to regular life, couldn't sleep at night and was hyper-vigilant about his surroundings.

But when he found a treatment program for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who suffer from post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injuries, he saw it as a way to get help and readjust to civilian life, said Cissy Sherr, who was his legal guardian and raised him for several years as a child. Until he was recently expelled.

On Friday, police said Wong slipped into a going-away party at the program, The Pathway Home, and took three employees hostage. After an hours-long standoff, Wong and the three female workers were all found dead.

As a child, Wong had always dreamed of joining the Army, said Sherr, who began caring for him when he was 6 after his father died and his mother developed medical issues.

"He had a lot of role models in the Army," Sherr said Saturday in an interview with The Associated Press. "He was patriotic and he wanted to do that forever."

Sherr and her husband raised Wong for several years, enrolled him in Catholic school and signed him up for baseball, basketball and track teams. Together, they traveled to Florida, Hawaii and Boston, where he experienced snow for the first time.

"He was a pretty happy-go-lucky kid," Sherr said. "He always had a smile on his face."

When Wong became a teenager and Sherr and her husband worked full-time, they decided to put him in foster care. He stayed with a foster father in San Francisco who had other teenage boys and he attended high school near San Francisco.

Wong served in the Army Reserve from 1998 until 2002, enlisted for active duty in May 2010 and was deployed to Afghanistan in April 2011, according to military records.

He was a decorated soldier and was awarded the Expert Marksmanship Badge. But that also meant Wong was tasked with dangerous assignments, where he saw "really horrible things" that affected his mental well-being, Sherr said. He sometimes called her before he'd go on a mission, when Army officials told the soldiers to call their families.

"I had the impression he was kind of put in harm's way, knowing that he didn't have a family," she said. "He didn't seem the least bit resentful."

Sherr said after Wong was honorably discharged from the Army in 2013, he planned to enroll in school and earn a degree in computer programming and business.

"He loved computers and he liked music. He was thoughtful and independent," Sherr said. "He didn't have a traditional upbringing but still he became a fine young man."

Wong, who had a passion for working out at the gym, would often bring his ailing mother her favorite foods and spent a lot of time with her before she died last year, Sherr said.

But post-traumatic stress affected his ability to adjust to everyday life, Sherr said. He had trouble sleeping and was always wary of his surroundings.

"I think he realized that it started to catch up with him," she said. "A couple of years ago, he told us if a door opens unexpectedly, I ask, 'What is that?'"

Wong told Sherr he had found a program at the veterans home in Yountville, California, and had met people who helped him enroll in a treatment program. He was also receiving assistance at a veterans hospital in San Francisco, she said.

He told Sherr: "I think I'm going to get a lot of help from this program," she said, seeing the program as a possible path to recovery with other veterans in a similar position.

Officials have declined to provide additional information about why Wong was thrown out of the group.

But they say the former Army rifleman went to the center about 50 miles (85 kilometers) north of San Francisco Friday morning before exchanging gunfire with police and holding the women hostage in a room

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inside the center.

The victims were identified as Executive Director Christine Loeber, 48; Clinical Director Jennifer Golick, 42; and Jennifer Gonzales Shushereba, 32, a clinical psychologist with the San Francisco Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare System.

After the shooting, John Dunbar, the mayor of Yountville and a member of The Pathway Home's board of directors, said Wong was "one of our heroes who clearly had demons."

The shooting has left Sherr with more questions than answers. Chief among them: Why did it happen and could more have been done to help Wong?

"In less than a year — less than half a year — things started to unravel," she said. "He may have been without any resources to support him."

Trump believes North Korea will keep word on missile tests

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Saturday he believes North Korea will abide by its pledge to suspend missile tests while he prepares for a summit by May with the North's leader, Kim Jong Un.

Trump noted in a tweet that North Korea has refrained from such tests since November and said Kim "has promised not to do so through our meetings."

"I believe they will honor that commitment," the president wrote.

The president continued the optimistic tone Saturday night when he led a rally for the Republican candidate in a special House race in western Pennsylvania. When he mentioned Kim's name, the crowd booed but Trump responded: "No, it's very positive ... no, after the meeting you may do that, but now we have to be very nice because let's see what happens, let's see what happens."

Trump shocked many inside and outside his administration Thursday when he told South Korean officials who had just returned from talks in North Korea that he would be willing to accept Kim's meeting invitation.

Earlier Saturday, Trump tweeted that China was pleased that he was pursuing a diplomatic solution rather than "going with the ominous alternative" and that Japan is "very enthusiastic" about the agreed-to talks.

Trump has spoken with both Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe since Thursday's announcement, and said Xi "appreciates that the U.S. is working to solve the problem diplomatically rather than going with the ominous alternative."

Trump had previously threatened North Korea with "fire and fury like the world has never seen."

Trump also said China, North Korea's most important ally and trading partner, "continues to be helpful!" Trump has repeatedly urged China to do more to pressure North Korea into abandoning its nuclear program.

Trump said in another tweet Saturday that Abe is "is very enthusiastic about talks with North Korea" and that the two discussed how to narrow the U.S.-Japan trade deficit. Trump wrote, "It will all work out!"

Trump misspelled Xi's first name as "Xinping" in the first version of his tweet about China but later corrected it.

Vet in California attack had trouble after return from war

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and AMY FORLITI, Associated Press

YOUNTVILLE, Calif. (AP) — The man who killed three women after a daylong siege at a Northern California veterans home had trouble adjusting to regular life after he returned from the Afghanistan war and had been kicked out of the treatment program designed to help him.

As family and friends of the victims tried to make sense of the tragedy, authorities offered little information Saturday about why Albert Wong, 36, attacked The Pathway Home and whether he targeted his victims. Those who knew the women said they had dedicated their lives to helping those suffering like Wong, and they would've been in a good position to assist him had Friday's hostage situation ended differently.

"We lost three beautiful people yesterday," Yountville Mayor John Dubar said. "We also lost one of our heroes who clearly had demons that resulted in the terrible tragedy that we all experienced here."

Authorities said Wong, a former Army rifleman who served a year in Afghanistan in 2011-2012 and re-

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turned highly decorated, went to the campus about 50 miles (85 kilometers) north of San Francisco on Friday morning, slipping into a going-away party for some employees of The Pathway Home. He let some people leave, but kept the three.

Police said a Napa Valley sheriff's deputy exchanged gunshots with Wong around 10:30 a.m. but after that nothing was heard from him. From a vet-center crafts building across the street from the PTSD center, witness Sandra Woodford said she saw lawmen with guns trained outside, but said the only shots she heard were inside Pathway early Friday. "This rapid live-fire of rounds going on, at least 12," Woodford said.

Hours later, authorities found four bodies, including Wong.

His victims were identified as The Pathway Home Executive Director Christine Loeber, 48; Clinical Director Jennifer Golick, 42; and Jennifer Gonzales Shushereba, 32, a clinical psychologist with the San Francisco Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare System. A family friend told The Associated Press that Gonzales was seven months pregnant.

"These brave women were accomplished professionals who dedicated their careers to serving our nation's veterans, working closely with those in the greatest need of attention after deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan," The Pathway Home said in a statement.

Wong always wanted to join the Army and serve his country and was "soft-spoken and calm," said Cissy Sherr, who was Wong's legal guardian when he was a child.

Sherr and her husband became Wong's guardians after his father died and his mother developed health problems, she said. He moved back in with them for a little while in 2013 after he returned from his deployment in Afghanistan and kept in touch online.

"He always had a great smile on his face," she said. "He didn't have a traditional upbringing but still he just became a fine young man. I can't imagine what happened. It doesn't make any sense to me."

Wong wanted to go back to school to study computers and business and thought the Pathway House program would help him readjust after the Army, she said.

Dunbar, a member of The Pathway Home's board of directors, said the program has served over 450 veterans in more than a decade. Six members are currently in the nonprofit men's residential recovery program for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who suffer from PTSD or traumatic brain injuries, he said.

The program is housed at the Veterans Home of California-Yountville in the Napa Valley wine country region. The largest veterans home in the nation cares for about 1,000 elderly and disabled vets.

Golick's father-in-law, Mike Golick, said in an interview she had recently expelled Wong from the program. After Wong entered the building, Golick called her husband to say she had been taken hostage by the former soldier, her father-in-law said.

He didn't hear from his wife again.

Marjorie Morrison, the founder of a nonprofit organization known as PsychArmor, recalled Gonzales Shushereba as a "brilliant" talent who did amazing work with veterans with PTSD, and also focused on helping college campuses successfully reintegrate veterans when they return to school.

Gonzales Shushereba, a mother-to-be, had planned to travel to Washington, D.C., this weekend to celebrate her wedding anniversary, family friend Vasiti Ritova said.

"Jennifer and her colleagues died doing the work they were so passionate about — helping those in critical need," her husband, T.J. Shushereba, said in a statement.

Loeber, who had taken over The Pathway Home 18 months ago, was known by all as dedicated and caring.

"She would sleep in her office more often than not because she had to be there to fill a shift, that's the kind of personal dedication she showed all of us," Dunbar said.

Family friend Tom Turner said Loeber would be helping others understand and deal with the tragedy if she were still alive.

"She'd have a better perspective than I would," he said. "And she wouldn't be as angry I am."

Dunbar said all three of the women were excellent at what they did, and will be sorely missed. He added that veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan come home with "a lot of need for special care."

Dunbar did not answer questions about why Wong was removed from the program. There was no answer

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at the small, neatly kept Napa ranch house listed on property records as Wong's most recent address. A neighbor told a reporter he hadn't lived there for a couple years, but declined to say more.

President Donald Trump tweeted Saturday morning: "We are deeply saddened by the tragic situation in Yountville and mourn the loss of three incredible women who cared for our Veterans."

California Secretary of Veterans Affairs Vito Imbasciani said some veterans and employees at the home were traumatized and Gov. Jerry Brown had offered the state's employee assistance program, which had already sent counselors to the campus.

When asked whether armed CalVet guards might have stopped Wong, he said that such questions were akin to politicizing the tragedy, though a union representing guards at veterans homes had raised the issue Friday. But Imbasciani said he would take input from every reliable source, including law enforcement.

At the veterans home, those who served in earlier wars passed the building that houses The Pathway Home, which was surrounded by crime tape.

Muriel Zimmer, an 84-year-old Air Force veteran of the Korean War, said she feels badly for Wong, saying she "cannot blame him. It's because of the war."

Older vets didn't always interact with the Iraq and Afghan vets at The Pathway Home, because older vets tended to bring up their own war stories too much with the younger ones, Zimmer said. But she would exchange encouraging words and hugs with vets at The Pathway Home when she could.

"That PTSD program has helped so many, and we are so afraid this is going to affect it," she said.

This story corrects the first name of Jennifer Golick's father-in-law and corrects to show Jennifer Gonzales Shushereba was 32 years old, not 29, according to new information from police.

Forliti reported from Minneapolis. Associated Press writers Frank Baker and Michael Balsamo in Los Angeles also contributed to this report.

Veterans home workers remembered as devoted caregivers

By FRANK BAKER, Associated Press

After a work conference, Maura Turner was looking forward to a girls' weekend with her close friend, Christine Loeber, a social worker and executive director of The Pathway Home that treats veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Turner went to Loeber's home in Yountville, California, on Friday and found the door locked. Soon after, she heard about a shooting and apparent hostage situation at the nearby veterans home where Pathway is located. And then came the devastating realization her friend was among the three women being held.

She called her husband, Tom Turner, in Dedham, Massachusetts.

"We heard the guy was a former patient and so I thought that was a positive," he said in a telephone interview Saturday with The Associated Press. "I figured he had to like her."

Loeber and two other women who worked for the program were killed, leaving the Turners reeling. The girls' weekend Maura Turner eagerly anticipated turned into a time to mourn her friend and await the arrival of Loeber's mother, who was traveling from the East Coast after getting word of her daughter's death.

"She's been a part of just about every significant event we've had as a couple," Tom Turner said. "Our wedding, our boys' christenings. She'd always spend Labor Day weekend at our lake house in Maine. She was always so fun. On a rainy day she'd be first to open up the Monopoly board and play with the kids."

The 48-year-old from Easton, Massachusetts, was gregarious, funny and awash in friends, most of whom referred to her affectionately as "Loeber," Turner said.

She graduated from the University of New Hampshire and went into sales, then decided social work was her calling. She got her master's degree from Boston College in clinical social work and took a job with the Veterans Administration in Boston and then moved to the VA in Santa Rosa, California. She became executive director at Pathway 18 months ago.

Sandra Woodford, an Army veteran who lives at the veterans homes and works at the crafts center just

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across the street from Pathway, said Loeber came in occasionally to make sure the younger vets from Pathway would be treated warmly if they came to the crafts building to work on projects.

"She was delightful, intelligent, outgoing, charming," Woodford said Saturday morning as she stared across the veterans center grounds, where Pathway Home was still surrounded by police tape. "Very dedicated to the veterans."

Tom Turner said Loeber, who was divorced, loved her work and was proud of it. Were she still alive, she'd be helping others understand and deal with the tragedy, Turner said.

"She'd have a better perspective than I would," he said. "And she wouldn't be as angry I am."

Friends and co-workers remembered Jennifer Gonzales Shushereba, 32, as a "brilliant" psychologist who was committed to both her family and her job treating veterans with post-traumatic stress.

Gonzales Shushereba was seven months pregnant. She was married a year ago and was supposed to travel to Washington, D.C., with her husband this weekend to celebrate their anniversary, family friend Vasiti Ritova said.

"Jennifer and her colleagues died doing the work they were so passionate about — helping those in critical need," her husband, T.J. Shushereba said in a statement. "Jennifer was adored by all who knew her and will always be remembered for her unconditional love and incredibly giving heart."

Ritova, whose niece cares for Gonzales Shushereba's grandmother, said she would spend time caring for her grandmother and would visit her every other week. She said the loss was "devastating."

"She was always singing to her grandma, giving her baths. She was always coming to look after her grandma — so that is how we come to know this sweet lady," she said.

Marjorie Morrison, who founded the nonprofit group PsychArmor, said in addition to working with vets with PTSD, Gonzales Shushereba also focused on helping college campuses successfully reintegrate veterans when they return to school.

Gonzales Shushereba partnered with PsychArmor to create the VA Campus Toolkit, which PsychArmor put online. Many colleges use it, she said.

"She was brilliant for being so young," Morrison said. "Absolutely brilliant." She added that PsychArmor partners take on these projects without pay, which "says a lot about someone's character."

Associated Press writers Amy Forliti in Minneapolis, Michael Balsamo in Los Angeles and Ellen Knickmeyer in Yountville, California contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show Jennifer Gonzales Shushereba was 32 years old, not 29, according to new information from police.

Trump: Don't fall for Democrat Lamb's moderate talk

By BILL BARROW and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

MOON TOWNSHIP, Pa. (AP) — President Donald Trump told western Pennsylvania voters Saturday night that his new tariffs were saving the steel industry and urged them to send a Republican to the House so he can keep delivering those kinds of results.

The president lent his weight to Republican Rick Saccone in the final days of a surprisingly competitive special election outside Pittsburgh that could reverberate nationally ahead of the November midterm elections.

"We need our Congressman Saccone," Trump said, unabashedly framing the race as a tune-up for the GOP's efforts to maintain its control of Capitol Hill. Hitting peak campaign mode for himself, he revived many of his favorite 2016 riffs and even touted his planned 2020 slogan, "Keep America Great!"

But, the president warned, "we can only do that if we elect people who are going to back our agenda," repeatedly urging his backers to support Saccone and stave off an upset by Democrat Conor Lamb in a district the president won by 20 percentage points over Hillary Clinton.

"The people of Pittsburgh cannot be conned by this guy Lamb," Trump said, dismissing Lamb's efforts

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to run as a moderate Democrat. "He's never going to vote for us. He can say, 'I love President Trump.' ... I don't want to meet him. I might like him."

Democrats need to flip 24 GOP-held seats to claim a House majority. A victory in such a Republican-leaning district would boost their hopes and renew GOP concerns of a bad November.

Lamb, a 33-year-old Marine veteran and former prosecutor, has positioned himself as more representative of the district than Saccone, a 60-year-old state lawmaker. Lamb touts his resume and declares that he wouldn't vote for Democratic House leader Nancy Pelosi as party leader. He also avoids criticizing Trump.

Trump conceded Lamb might not back Pelosi but said most House Democrats will. And if Pelosi were in charge of the House, Trump said, Lamb would simply "vote the party line."

While Trump was ostensibly in Pennsylvania for Saccone, the rally was as much about the president as it was an underperforming congressional candidate. The president repeatedly reminisced about his election, when Pennsylvania helped put him over the top after decades of landing in the Democrats' column.

The president criticized Democrats for blocking his long-promised border wall and attacked so-called sanctuary cities that refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities. He also called for harsher punishments for drug dealers, including the death penalty, pointing to China and Singapore as models.

Trump continued his attacks on the press, criticizing media coverage of his decision to meet with the leader of North Korea and complaining that he doesn't get credit for accomplishments. He singled out NBC's Chuck Todd as a "sleeping son of a bitch."

He also made sure the workers in this industrial-heavy region see the new steel tariffs as "my baby," even as Lamb and Saccone have endorsed the move. Pennsylvania's 18th Congressional District has an estimated 17,000 steelworkers and almost 90,000 voters from union households.

"Not all of our friends on Wall Street love it, but we love it," Trump said of the tariffs. He added that Lamb's party leadership opposes his protectionist policy. He sidestepped the fact that most of his own party's leaders oppose tariffs, as well.

Trump's appearance was part of a White House push to help Saccone avoid a once-unlikely defeat. National GOP forces could exceed \$10 million in spending on the race, and Saturday was the president's second recent visit to the area. But Trump risked another embarrassing defeat after backing Republican Roy Moore in last December's Alabama Senate election, only to watch Moore lose a seat his party had held since 1997.

The Pennsylvania special election is to replace Republican Rep. Tim Murphy, who resigned last year amid revelations of an extramarital affair in which the anti-abortion lawmaker urged his mistress to get an abortion when he thought she was pregnant.

Murphy, an eight-term congressman who had union support, never had a close election and had no Democratic challenger in his last two elections. But Saccone has struggled with his own fundraising, is a union foe and hasn't run as aggressive a campaign as Lamb, prompting criticism from Republicans in Washington who quietly concede Lamb is a stronger candidate.

Trump acknowledged those dynamics, noting talk of Lamb as a handsome candidate. But he said he thinks he's better looking, and added that Saccone "is handsome," too.

For his part, Saccone was thrilled to have the president's help.

"The president's support is key to attaining victory," Saccone told rally attendees about 45 minutes before Trump took the stage. "There's no one that I would rather have in my corner than President Trump. Are you with me on that?"

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

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Putin on alleged US election interference: I don't care

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin says he doesn't care about alleged Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election because the actions weren't connected to his government.

In an interview with American broadcaster NBC News that aired Saturday, Putin also suggested that some of the 13 Russian nationals indicted by the United States may not be ethnically Russian.

"Maybe they are not even Russians, but Ukrainians, Tatars or Jews, but with Russian citizenship, which should also be checked," he said.

Putin responded brusquely when interviewer Megyn Kelly asked if he condoned the interference that was alleged in last month's U.S. indictment by special counsel Robert Mueller.

"It's all the same to me. To me it absolutely makes no difference because they do not represent the government," Putin answered, according to the Russian-language interview transcript posted Saturday by the Kremlin.

Putin said Russia has neither the tools nor the will to meddle in elections. He repeatedly complained during the interview that Washington has brushed off Russian initiatives to work together on cybersecurity issues.

"But the U.S. refuses to work like this and instead throws 13 Russians to the media," he said, going on to list the possible ethnicities that would make the suspects "not even Russian."

"Maybe they have dual citizenship or a green card; maybe the U.S. paid them for this. How can you know that? I do not know, either," the Russian leader said.

In the indictment, the 13 Russians are accused of an elaborate plot to disrupt the U.S. election including running a huge but hidden social media trolling campaign aimed in part at helping Trump win. Among the 13 was Yevgeny Prigozhin, who has been dubbed "Putin's chef" by Russian media because his restaurants and catering businesses have hosted the Kremlin leader's dinners with foreign dignitaries.

In the interview, Putin claimed that the United States interferes in Russian elections "all the time" but that it was "impossible for us" to do the same.

"First, we have principles whereby we do not allow others to interfere in our domestic affairs and do not get into the affairs of others....Secondly, we don't have this quantity of tools," he said.

The NBC News interview was conducted in two parts, on March 1 and March 2. Kelly noted that Putin made the remark about not having the tools to disrupt the U.S. election shortly after he announced that Russia had developed major new nuclear weapons.

"This isn't missiles. This is an absolutely different sphere of activity," Putin responded.

China's move to end Xi term limits blanketed in censorship

By GERRY SHIH and YANAN WANG, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The day China's ruling Communist Party unveiled a proposal to allow President Xi Jinping to rule indefinitely as Mao Zedong did a generation ago, Ma Bo was so shaken he couldn't sleep.

So Ma, a renowned writer, wrote a social media post urging the party to remember the history of unchecked one-man rule that ended in catastrophe.

"History is regressing badly," Ma thundered in his post. "As a Chinese of conscience, I cannot stay silent!" Censors silenced him anyway, swiftly wiping his post from the internet.

As China's rubber-stamp legislature prepares to approve constitutional changes abolishing term limits for the president on Sunday, signs of dissent and biting satire have been all but snuffed out. The stifling censorship leaves intellectuals, young white-collar workers and retired veterans of past political campaigns using roundabout ways to voice their concerns. For many, it's a foreshadowing of greater political repression ahead.

The result has been a surreal political atmosphere laced with fear, confusion, and even moments of dark comedy that undermines the picture of swelling popular support for the measure being peddled relentlessly by state media.

"There's a lot of fear," said Ma, who writes under the pen name Old Ghost. "People know that Xi's about to become the emperor, so they don't dare cross his path. Most people are just watching, observing."

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

Party media say the proposed amendment is only aimed at bringing the office of the president in line with Xi's other positions atop the party and the Central Military Commission, which do not impose term limits.

Its passage by the National People's Congress' nearly 3,000 hand-picked delegates is all but certain. But observers will be looking to see how many delegates abstain from voting as an indication of the reservations the move has encountered even within the political establishment.

After Ma's post on Chinese social media went viral two weeks ago, the 70-year-old writer decided to switch to Twitter, which can only be accessed inside China using a virtual private network, to continue issuing warnings about China moving dangerously backward.

"The police have not visited me yet," he told The Associated Press on Friday from his Beijing home. "But I'm preparing for it."

Ma remains in the capital, but some well-known dissidents and potential troublemakers have already been "holidayed" — bundled off to faraway cities, their travel expenses paid by state security. Retired elders from the Communist Party's liberal wing have been warned to stay quiet.

The government's censorship apparatus had to spring into action after the term limit proposal was unveiled, suppressing keywords on social media ranging from "I disagree" to "shameless" to "Xi Zedong." Even the letter "N" was blocked after it was used as part of an equation for the number of terms Xi might serve.

Yet, occasionally, dissent has surfaced through the cracks.

On Wednesday, International Women's Day, law students at the prestigious Tsinghua University in Beijing — Xi's alma mater — hung red banners that ostensibly celebrated the school's female classmates but also satirized national politics.

"I love you without any term limits, but if there are, we can just remove them," read one, while another banner declared that "A country can't survive without a constitution, we can't go on without you."

University administrators weren't amused. A student witness said the banners were quickly removed and notices posted requiring campus shops to register students who use printers to make large banners.

Chinese studying overseas have been more blunt. Posts in recent days popped up at the University of California, San Diego, with Xi's picture and the text "Never My President" and spread to more than eight overseas universities, said Lebao Wu, a student at Australian National University in Canberra.

To be sure, Xi's confident, populist leadership style and tough attitude toward official corruption has won him a significant degree of popular support.

Sipping on a Starbucks drink in Beijing's business district on Friday, a 56-year-old surnamed Zhang who works in insurance said citizens desired freedom, but wanted a powerful leader who could deliver stability and wealth even more.

Letting Xi rule indefinitely "will strengthen the party's leadership and offer the quickest path toward development," Zhang said. "We need a powerful leader. People need an emperor in their hearts. The Western idea that you are not alive unless you are free has not taken root in people's hearts."

However, a 35-year old IT industry worker surnamed Huang said her friends were concerned about China returning to the Mao era.

"I saw on (state broadcaster) CCTV's evening news that they were saying everyone fully supports the constitutional amendments, but no one asked us for our opinion. Our opinion is quickly censored," she said. "This is China. What can we do about it?"

Neither would give their full names as is common among Chinese when commenting on politics.

Even some of the government's most outspoken critics have been reluctant to loudly criticize the constitutional amendment.

He Weifang, a well-known blogger and law professor at Peking University, limited his remarks this week to the observance that the constitutional amendment proposal contained 21 articles, and if a delegate supported some articles but opposed others, he or she was entitled to vote against it.

He, who lost his job once for supporting the late dissident writer and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu

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Xiaobo, declined to discuss the term limit amendment, saying the subject was "a bit sensitive."

Others haven't held back, driven by an urgent sense that their country is at a crucial point in its history.

Li Datong, a former editor of the China Youth Daily state newspaper and one of the few voices of open opposition, said delegates know the amendment is wrong but no one has the courage to speak out. He compared Chinese citizens to Germans who allowed Adolf Hitler to seize power in the 1930s.

"I know that just a few ordinary Chinese citizens coming out and expressing their opinion will not change anything, but I'm doing this so I can face future generations," Li said.

"When they look back at this time, I don't want them to say, 'Not a single person in China stood up and opposed this.' When people talk about Nazi Germany, they always ask why the people living during that time didn't do anything about it," Li said. "I want to be able to face my past."

In the run-up to the vote, congress delegates have lavished extra praise on Xi. The party boss of a north-western province that contains a significant Tibetan population compared him to a living Buddhist deity.

"If you do good things for the people, bring good lives to the people, you should be able to keep serving forever," said Zhou Shuying, an artist and delegate representing a rural county about 130 kilometers (80 miles) west of Beijing.

"I'm speaking from the bottom of my heart," she said, then paused to make sure reporters heard her clearly. "I'm really speaking from the heart."

Justice Department proposes banning rapid-fire bump stocks

By SADIE GURMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration said Saturday it has taken the first step in the regulatory process to ban bump stocks, likely setting the stage for long legal battles with gun manufacturers while the trigger devices remain on the market.

The move was expected after President Donald Trump ordered the Justice Department to work toward a ban following the shooting deaths of 17 people at a Florida high school in February. Bump stocks, which enable guns to fire like automatic weapons, were not used in that attack — they were used in last year's Las Vegas massacre — but have since become a focal point in the gun control debate.

The Justice Department's regulation would classify the hardware as a machine gun banned under federal law. That would reverse a 2010 decision by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives that found bump stocks did not amount to machine guns and could not be regulated unless Congress amended existing firearms law or passed a new one.

A reversal of the department's earlier evaluation could be seen as an admission that it was legally flawed, which manufacturers could seize on in court. Even as the Trump administration moves toward banning the devices, some ATF officials believe it lacks the authority to do so.

But any congressional effort to create new gun control laws would need support from the pro-gun Republican majority. A bid to ban the accessory fizzled last year, even as lawmakers expressed openness to the idea after nearly 60 people were gunned down in Las Vegas.

Some states have sought their own restrictions in light of the inaction. A ban on bump stocks was part of a far-reaching school safety bill signed by Florida Gov. Rick Scott, a Republican, on Friday that was immediately met with a lawsuit by the National Rifle Association. The powerful group has said it supports ATF regulations on the accessory but opposes any legislation that would do that same. The NRA did not immediately return calls for comment Saturday.

Calls mounted for a bump stock ban after the Las Vegas shooting, and the Justice Department said in December it would again review whether they can be prohibited under federal law. Trump told officials to expedite the review, which yielded more than 100,000 comments from the public and the firearms industry. Many of the comments came from gun owners angry over any attempt to regulate the accessory, a move they view as a slippery slope toward outlawing guns altogether.

The proposal still needs the approval of the Office of Management and Budget.

Gun background check system riddled with flaws

By MARTHA BELLISLE, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Recent mass shootings have spurred Congress to try to improve the nation's gun background check system that has failed on numerous occasions to keep weapons out of the hands of dangerous people.

The problem with the legislation, experts say, is that it only works if federal agencies, the military, states, courts and local law enforcement do a better job of sharing information with the background check system — and they have a poor track record in doing so. Some of the nation's most horrific mass shootings have revealed major holes in the database reporting system, including massacres at Virginia Tech in 2007 and at a Texas church last year.

Despite the failures, many states still aren't meeting key benchmarks with their background check reporting that enable them to receive federal grants similar to what's being proposed in the current legislation.

"It's a completely haphazard system — sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't," said Georgetown University law professor Larry Gostin. "When you're talking about school children's lives, rolling the dice isn't good enough."

In theory, the FBI's background check database, tapped by gun dealers during a sale, should have a definitive list of people who are prohibited from having guns — people who have been convicted of crimes, committed to mental institutions, received dishonorable discharges or are addicted to drugs.

But in practice, the database is incomplete.

It's up to local police, sheriff's offices, the military, federal and state courts, Indian tribes and in some places, hospitals and treatment providers, to send criminal or mental health records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS, but some don't always do so, or they may not send them in a timely fashion.

Some agencies don't know what to send; states often lack funds needed to ensure someone handles the data; no system of audits exists to find out who's not reporting; and some states lack the political will to set up a functioning and efficient reporting process, experts said.

"The system is riddled with opportunities for human error," said Kristin Brown, co-president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence.

A proposal in Congress seeks to establish a structured system for federal agencies to send records to the NICS database. Sen. John Cornyn of Texas says the legislation — often referred to as "Fix NICS" — will save lives.

"We should start with what's achievable and what will actually save lives, and that describes the 'Fix NICS' bill. It will help prevent dangerous individuals with criminal convictions and a history of mental illness from buying firearms," the Republican said.

Often left out of the debate in Washington is the fact that similar legislation passed after the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre, but many records are still not being sent to the database.

The Justice Department even set up a new grant program that offered states help with their reporting system, but many didn't even bother to apply. In 2016, only 19 states and one tribe received funds totaling \$15 million. The number of states currently participating is 31.

Several states aren't eligible for the grant because they haven't set up a system that allows a person who was prohibited from having a gun due to mental health issues get their rights restored. The National Rifle Association has long pushed for those types of restoration requirements, Brown said.

Important mental health records that would have kept Seung-Hui Cho from getting the guns he used to kill 32 people at Virginia Tech were never entered into NICS. The gunman who killed dozens at a Texas church in November was able to purchase weapons because the Air Force didn't send his domestic violence conviction to the database.

And the father of a teenager who killed himself and four classmates at a Washington state high school in 2014 was able to purchase several guns, including the one his son used, because the Tulalip Tribal Court had not shared his domestic violence protection order with Marysville, Washington, authorities, who would

have sent it to the background check system.

Since then, the tribe received a \$333,841 grant to help improve its criminal records reporting.

The man who walked into a Carson City, Nevada, IHOP restaurant with an assault weapon in 2011 and killed four people had a history of mental illness, had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and had been taken into custody by police in nearby California under the state's involuntary commitment law. But under federal law, people are only prohibited from having a firearm if they have been "adjudicated as a mental defective" or committed to a mental institution.

The federal law doesn't include involuntary commitments.

Some states have enacted their own laws that limit gun ownership based on mental health issues, but they're all different, according to a report by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Experts say many agencies don't know what type of mental health information to send to NICS. Brown said many agencies, hospitals and treatment providers are under the mistaken impression that federal medical privacy laws prevent them from sharing information with the system.

Carson City Sheriff Ken Furlong, who handled the IHOP mass shooting, said the biggest roadblock to creating a comprehensive NICS system is privacy concerns. Some are afraid that if they report their family members, they'll be arrested, he said, and agencies feel stifled by privacy laws.

"When someone is in crisis, why are we waiting to respond?" Furlong asked. "We have a public safety responsibility to prevent something from happening before we have to use force."

The federal legislation being considered in Congress might help ensure more criminal records reach the background check database, but it has limitations because Congress can't force states to enact laws. And it doesn't address gaps in mental health commitment reporting, said Gostin.

"Because mental health records are critical to the integrity of the system," he said, "the bill leave a significant gap."

Some states have passed their own laws requiring agencies to report to NICS, but few keep track of whether that's happening and most don't have penalties for failing to submit records.

"They're not reporting but there are no repercussions," said Cassandra Crifasi, with the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research. "What is there to encourage people to follow the law?"

Follow Martha Bellisle at <https://twitter.com/marthabellisle>

Imported guard dogs deployed as part of US wolf-sheep study

By KEITH RIDLER, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Federal scientists are trying to decide if it's time to let the big dogs out.

Nearly 120 dogs from three large breeds perfected over centuries in Europe and Asia to be gentle around sheep and children but vicious when confronting wolves recently underwent a study to see how they'd react to their old nemesis on a new continent.

The dogs were gathered as puppies in Portugal, Bulgaria and Turkey and sent to the American West, where they spent four years guarding sheep.

"When we were first looking at doing this, a lot of people wanted to know: What dog do I use in dealing with wolves and grizzly bears?" said Julie Young, a Utah-based research biologist with the U.S. Agriculture Department's National Wildlife Research Center.

The department looked to areas where dog breeds developed to guard sheep against wolves and brown bears. Then scientists supplied Cao de Gado Transmontanos, a large though lean and agile dog developed in a mountainous region of Portugal; Karakachans, developed by nomadic shepherders in a mountainous area of Bulgaria; and Kangals, another powerful breed with an instinct for guarding, this one originating in Turkey.

Dogs from all three breeds can weigh up to 140 pounds (64 kilograms), about the size of a wolf. The dogs were sent to guard 65 herds in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Washington and Oregon.

Scientists are still analyzing information from notes, remote cameras and GPS collars, Young said, with

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four or five scientific papers expected in the next year. But overall, she said, the dogs did well keeping away wolves and better than traditional guard dogs at deterring coyotes.

One dog died during the study. It was hit by a vehicle as sheep crossed a road.

For decades, most U.S. sheep producers have used large white dogs such as Great Pyrenees, Akbash or Maremma Sheepdogs. Light brown Anatolian Shepherds are also used.

But the reintroduction of wolves in the American West in the 1990s has led to questions about whether those breeds are up to the task. Since wolves returned to Idaho in 1995, the Agriculture Department's Wildlife Services says, wolves have killed 50 guard dogs through the end of last year and injured nearly 40 others in the state. Federal officials in 2017 killed 56 wolves in Idaho due to attacks on livestock.

Young said the study found wolves left areas when sheep bands, dogs and herders arrived, but their absence emboldened smaller predators such as coyotes.

Not all dogs in the study succeeded. Jill Swannack, president of the Washington State Sheep Producers, is a veterinarian who also has a ranch with about 800 sheep on private land in eastern Washington state. She received three Karakachans.

"When we came home, they preferred to be home with us," she said. "They really didn't bond to the sheep."

She also said the dogs were only about 70 or 80 pounds (32 to 36 kilograms). One went to a young family with sheep near their house, and now that dog plays with the children and has successfully guarded those sheep against coyotes.

The dogs that work best at her ranch are Anatolian Shepherds, though wolves killed one in 2014.

Wolves are a "phenomenal predator," Swannack said. "I would be happy if we didn't have them, but I'm also a realist, and we do have them. So we need the tools to deal with them and the support."

Ranchers can call the Agriculture Department's Wildlife Services to kill wolves that attack livestock. Environmentalists, though, have been working to reduce the need for that and see guard dogs as one solution.

"Most of the year, the livestock guardian dogs are an excellent deterrent," said Suzanne Stone of Defenders of Wildlife, noting the exception is in the spring when wolves are guarding dens with pups.

The imported guard dogs cost about \$500 apiece, including transportation to the U.S., Young said, and nearly all were just a few months old when they arrived.

She said the Karakachans tended to be more vigilant, the Kangals inclined to investigate, and the Cao de Gado Transmontanos better at assessing threats. Ultimately, she said, sheep producers might benefit from a mix of dogs that includes some that stick near the sheep and others that patrol the perimeter.

Another part of the study involved the relationship between dogs and herders, many Peruvians, which will be one of the scientific papers.

"There's a bond there," Young said. "Just from watching them and looking at data, the ones who were better bonded, the dogs just seemed to perform better."

Michigan seeks changes to abuse reporting law after Nassar

By DAVID EGGERT, Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan is looking to shore up its law that requires certain people to report suspected child sexual abuse to authorities to address gaps that were exposed after disgraced former sports doctor Larry Nassar admitted to sexually assaulting female athletes.

Nassar's victims are spearheading the initiative, saying he could have been stopped decades ago if coaches, athletic trainers or others at Michigan State University had listened to them. More than 250 women and girls have said the now-imprisoned Nassar molested them with his ungloved hands under the guise of medical treatment.

No one has faced charges yet for not reporting the abuse, but multiple investigations are underway into Michigan State's handling of complaints.

Like all other states, Michigan requires health providers, psychologists, teachers, police, clergy and others to report suspected child abuse or neglect to authorities. A bill up for approval by the state Senate would

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add college employees and youth sports coaches, trainers and volunteers.

Additional legislation would increase potential punishments. Paid professionals who willfully do not report suspected abuse or neglect could face a felony charge and up to two years in prison, up from what is now a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum 93 days in jail.

"It puts stronger incentives in place to properly motivate adults to respond to disclosures of sexual assaults," said Rachael Denhollander, who was 15 when Nassar assaulted her in his campus office in 2000. "As much as it is difficult and as much as we don't want to recognize this fact, there are adults who will not be motivated by an ethical, moral code to report sexual assault of children."

Eleven other states already require college employees to report abuse. Eighteen more require anyone aware of suspected abuse or neglect to report it, according to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, a service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In five states, all youth coaches — not just those who are school employees — are mandatory reporters.

Michigan isn't the only state to explore changes. Illinois is looking to increase the punishment for not reporting abuse and may require coaches and other athletic workers to undergo training. Legislation in Georgia would give victims of childhood sexual abuse more time to sue for damages — something Michigan is also considering .

Michigan's legislation would address ambiguity surrounding who must report abuse. Nassar's accusers contend in a lawsuit that four current or former Michigan employees they told — including ex- gymnastics head coach Kathie Klages, Nassar's physician supervisors and a psychology professor who saw one victim through his separate private practice — were mandated reporters already.

The bill would cover college workers along with coaches, assistant coaches and trainers involved in youth sports that are both affiliated and unaffiliated with schools and universities, such as Twistars, a Lansing-area gymnastics club where Nassar molested athletes.

"Enablers need to be held accountable," said Larissa Boyce, who said she was 16 when she complained about Nassar to Klages in 1997, while she was training with the Spartan youth gymnastics team.

Boyce said Klages dissuaded her from taking it further despite confirming that a 14-year-old girl had received similar "treatments." Klages has denied that anyone reported Nassar to her.

While the legislation has bipartisan support, it has some opponents.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan says volunteer coaches, who can include high school students and young adults, do not get training they would need to recognize signs of abuse or neglect. Kimberly Buddin, the group's policy council, also said harsher criminal penalties could lead to unintended consequences in instances where no abuse has occurred.

"We don't want to create a culture where people are just reporting things that don't need to be reported because they're afraid of going to jail," Buddin said.

But Republican Sen. Margaret O'Brien, the main bill sponsor, said not much is asked of mandatory reporters.

"This is not a difficult thing to do. All you have to state is the people involved and what information you were given," she said. "You don't have to investigate. Mandated reporters are not judge and jury."

Online:

Senate Bill 873: <http://bit.ly/2HjKXex>

SB 874: <http://bit.ly/2Fw8zMD>

Follow David Eggert on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/DavidEggert00> . His work can be found at <https://apnews.com/search/David%20Eggert>

Study: Cholesterol drug lowers risk of death, heart attack

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE, AP Chief Medical Writer

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — A newer cholesterol drug, used with older statin medicines, modestly lowered heart risks and deaths in a big study of heart attack survivors that might persuade insurers to cover the pricey treatment more often.

Results on the drug, Praluent (PRALL-yoo-ent), were announced Saturday at an American College of Cardiology conference in Florida. It's the first time a cholesterol-lowering drug has reduced deaths since statins such as Lipitor and Crestor came out decades ago.

"It's the ultimate outcome; it's what matters to patients," said study leader Dr. Philippe Gabriel Steg of Hospital Bichat in Paris.

But the benefit was small — 167 people would need to use Praluent for nearly three years to prevent a single death.

"That's a high cost" that may still hinder its use, said one independent expert, Dr. Amit Khera, a preventive cardiologist at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas and a spokesman for the American Heart Association.

The drug's makers, Sanofi and Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, sponsored the study and said they would work with insurers on pricing to get the medicine to those who need it the most.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Doctors focus on lowering LDL, or bad cholesterol, to prevent heart problems. Statins are the main medicines for this, but some people can't tolerate or get enough help from them.

Praluent and a similar drug, Amgen's Repatha, work in a different way and lower cholesterol much more. Patients give themselves shots of the medicine once or twice a month. The drugs have been sold since 2015 but cost more than \$14,000 a year, and insurers have balked at paying without proof that they reduce health problems, not just the cholesterol number.

Last year, a study showed Repatha cut heart problems but did not improve survival. The new study tested the rival drug, Praluent, for a longer time and in patients at higher risk — nearly 19,000 people who in the previous year had a heart attack or chest pain serious enough to put them in the hospital.

All had LDL over 70 despite maximum statin use. Half were given Praluent and the rest, dummy shots. Praluent was started at a lower dose and increased if LDL did not drop below 50.

After nearly three years, 9.5 percent of those on Praluent and 11.1 percent of those on dummy medicine had suffered a heart attack, stroke, heart-related death or serious chest pain; 3.5 percent on Praluent and 4.1 percent on dummy medicine died.

That worked out to a 15 percent lower risk with Praluent. Benefits were greater for those whose LDL was 100 or more at the start of the study. The drug had no major safety issues.

WHAT DOCTORS SAY

"We need to reset our expectations" and realize that benefits for any new drug are going to be fairly small when added to already good treatments such as statins, said Dr. Jeffrey Kuvin, conference leader and cardiology chief at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. The new drugs clearly help people at high risk and are not aimed at people at low risk, such as those who have high cholesterol but have never had a heart attack, he said.

"I've been unconvinced" of the drugs' benefits but now may prescribe them for certain very high risk patients, said Duke University cardiologist Dr. Christopher Granger. But preventing fewer than one heart problem a year at the drug's current price is not cost-effective, he said.

PRESSURE ON PRICE

An independent group, the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review, on Saturday released a new range for what Praluent should cost, based on the new results — \$2,300 to \$3,400 per year for people like those in the study. A price of \$4,500 to \$8,000 per year would be justified for patients at higher risk, with LDL over 100.

From 300,000 to 400,000 people in the U.S. each year fall in that second category. Praluent's makers say they will aim for those price ranges for insurers that remove barriers to coverage for people at the

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highest risk.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/MMarchioneAP>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, March 11, the 70th day of 2018. There are 295 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 11, 1918, what are believed to be the first confirmed U.S. cases of a deadly global flu pandemic were reported among U.S. Army soldiers stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas; 46 would die. (The worldwide outbreak of influenza claimed an estimated 20 to 40 million lives.)

On this date:

In 1513, Giovanni de' Medici was proclaimed pope, succeeding Julius II; he took the name Leo X.

In 1810, French Emperor Napoleon I was married by proxy in Vienna to Archduchess Marie Louise of Austria.

In 1888, the Blizzard of '88, also known as the "Great White Hurricane," began inundating the north-eastern United States, resulting in some 400 deaths.

In 1927, New York City's legendary Roxy Theatre held its grand opening; the evening featured the premiere of the silent film drama "The Love of Sunya," starring Gloria Swanson, who was among the celebrities in attendance.

In 1935, the Bank of Canada began operations, issuing its first series of bank notes.

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Bill, providing war supplies to countries fighting the Axis.

In 1957, Charles Van Doren's 14-week run on the rigged NBC game show "Twenty-One" ended as he was "defeated" by attorney Vivienne Nearing; Van Doren's take was \$129,000. American explorer Richard E. Byrd died in Boston at age 68.

In 1965, the Rev. James J. Reeb, a white minister from Boston, died two days after being beaten by whites during civil rights disturbances in Selma, Alabama.

In 1977, more than 130 hostages held in Washington, D.C. by Hanafi Muslims were freed after ambassadors from three Islamic nations joined the negotiations.

In 1985, Mikhail S. Gorbachev was chosen to succeed the late Konstantin U. Chernenko as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

In 1993, Janet Reno was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to be U.S. attorney general.

In 2004, ten bombs exploded in quick succession across the commuter rail network in Madrid, Spain, killing 191 people in an attack linked to al-Qaida-inspired militants.

In 2011, a magnitude-9.0 earthquake and resulting tsunami struck Japan's northeastern coast, killing nearly 20,000 people and severely damaging the Fukushima Dai-ichi (foo-koo-SHEE'-mah dy-EE'-chee) nuclear power station.

Ten years ago: The top U.S. military commander for the Middle East resigned amid speculation about a rift over U.S. policy in Iran; Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that Adm. William J. Fallon had asked for permission to retire and that Gates agreed. Democrat Barack Obama defeated Hillary Rodham Clinton in the Mississippi primary.

Five years ago: Former Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick (D) was convicted of a raft of crimes, including racketeering conspiracy (he was later sentenced to 28 years in prison). North Korea said it was no longer bound by the 1953 armistice that ended fighting in the Korean War, following days of increased tensions over its latest nuclear test. (A U.N. spokesman said that North Korea could not unilaterally dissolve the armistice.)

One year ago: Preet Bharara, an outspoken Manhattan federal prosecutor known for crusading against

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public corruption, announced on his personal Twitter account that he was fired after refusing a request to resign from Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who had asked that leftover appointees of former President Barack Obama leave. Duke became the first team to win the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament with four wins in four days by rallying past Notre Dame for a 75-69 victory.

Today's Birthdays: Media mogul Rupert Murdoch is 87. Former ABC News correspondent Sam Donaldson is 84. Musician Flaco Jimenez (FLAH'-koh hee-MEH'-nez) is 79. Actress Tricia O'Neil is 73. Actor Mark Metcalf is 72. Rock singer-musician Mark Stein (Vanilla Fudge) is 71. Singer Bobby McFerrin is 68. Movie director Jerry Zucker is 68. Singer Cheryl Lynn is 67. Actress Susan Richardson is 66. Recording executive Jimmy Iovine (eye-VEEN') is 65. Singer Nina Hagen is 63. Country singer Jimmy Fortune (The Statler Brothers) is 63. Actor Elias Koteas (ee-LY'-uhs koh-TAY'-uhs) is 57. Actor-director Peter Berg is 56. Actor Jeffrey Nordling is 56. Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead is 56. Actress Alex Kingston is 55. Country musician David Talbot is 55. Actor Wallace Langham is 53. Former U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill., is 53. Actor John Barrowman is 51. Singer Lisa Loeb is 50. Neo-soul musician Al Gamble (St. Paul & the Broken Bones) is 49. Singer Pete Drogé is 49. Actor Terrence Howard is 49. Rock musician Rami Jaffee is 49. Actor Johnny Knoxville is 47. Rock singer-musicians Benji and Joel Madden (Good Charlotte; The Madden Brothers) are 39. Actor David Anders is 37. Singer LeToya is 37. Actress Thora Birch is 36. TV personality Melissa Rycroft is 35. Actor Rob Brown is 34.

Thought for Today: "Real success is finding your lifework in the work that you love." — David McCullough, American historian.