

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 13, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 242 ~ 1 of 46



Groton Chiropractic Clinic

Carol McFarland-Kutter, D.C.
1205 N 1st St., Groton 397-8204

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

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Today

Third Annual Family Math Night
5-7 p.m., Elementary Commons Area
Elementary Book Fair
3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Elementary Library

The Oakes HS track meet scheduled for Thursday, April 5th has now been changed to Thursday, April 12th. Groton Area track team will NOT be attending.

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**

Safety remains administration's top priority

School safety was the topic of discussion at the Groton Area School Board meeting held Monday evening. "It's a touchy conversation to have," Schwan said. "If its out there and it's public, it's for real," he said about social media. He reported that the South Dakota Highway Patrol trained the staff in a school safety protocol at the inservice held February 16. The new protocol is now ALICE - Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate. The local police come into the buildings quite often and the county deputies have come in occasionally as well.

School achievement gets so much emphasis, but the major emphasis is making sure the students get home safe.

There are about 40 who have signed up for Clay Target League.

The last day of school is set for Friday, May 25, 2018.

Schwan said he is still looking for a school district app to help push out information to school patrons.

The other revenue that the district receives is \$175,000; however, with the the bills passed in the legislature, that money goes to the state and is redistributed to everyone. Groton Area will get back about \$15,000 of that revenue.

Elementary principal Brett Schwan said that the students have been selecting the menu items and it has gone over very well. He said the students eating has been in the 200s.

Kristen Sombke, middle/high school principal, talked about a number of items. Letters will be going out March 14 for Driver's Education. There will be an extra weeks of senior privileges for some students due to the entire class collectively performing well on last year's Smarter Balance Test.

High School Track and Field meeting will be March 14. National Honor Society is scheduled for March 26 at 7 p.m. Prom is scheduled for April 14.

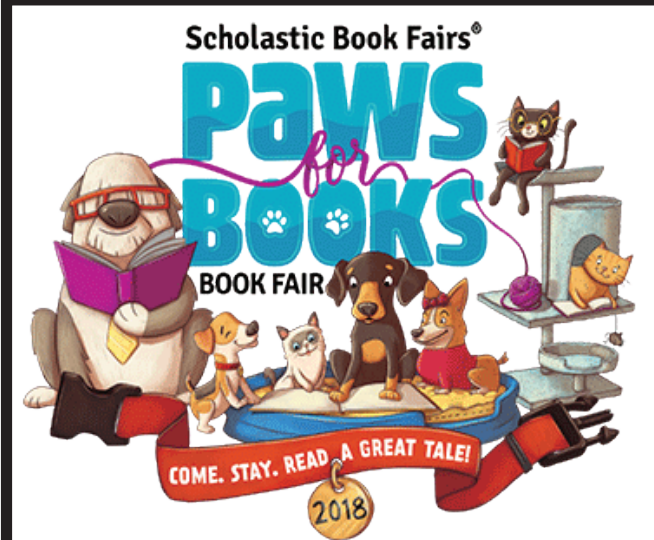
A short term loan from General Fund to Special Education Fund for \$80,000. When the tax dollars come in this spring, the loan will be paid back.

The board approved Mike Nehls request to run for Brown County Commissioner. The last commissioner

from this area was Merrill Rix and before that was Ben Anderson, some 40 or 50 years ago. He had to get the approval of the board per school policy.

Nicole Johnson submitted her resignation as a MS/HS Special Education teacher for the past 11 years. She has accepted a second grade teaching position in Aberdeen. Sydney Wilkinson was hired as MS/HS Special Education Teacher replacing Meri Erickson who will be retiring.

Contracts were signed and turned in by Superintendent Joe Schwan, Elementary Principal Brett Schwan, Middle/High School Principal Kristen Sombke, and Business Manager Mike Weber.



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

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

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Non-Partisan Redistricting Ballot Question Petition Rejected by Secretary of State

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Secretary of State Shantel Krebs announced that the petition submitted for an initiated amendment to the South Dakota Constitution providing for state legislative redistricting by a commission was rejected by her office.

“An Initiated Constitutional Amendment requires 27,741 valid signatures in order to be placed on the ballot,” stated Secretary Krebs. “This initiated constitutional amendment petition included 33,980 signatures. We reviewed a random sample of signatures and only 74.37 percent (33,980 x 74.3733% = 25,272 valid signatures, not meeting the 27,741 signature requirement) were found to be valid.”

A rejected petition cannot be challenged to the office of the Secretary of State, however that does not prohibit a citizen from challenging the denial of a ballot question petition in circuit court.

The remaining three ballot question petitions will be reviewed by the Secretary of State’s office in the order in which they were received.

The South Dakota Legislature submitted three constitutional amendments to the voters during the 2018 Legislative Session including:

SJR 1 (Constitutional Amendment X – to be placed on the General Election Ballot) an amendment to the Constitution of the State of South Dakota, relating to amendments to the Constitution,

HJR 1004 (Constitutional Amendment Y – to be placed on the Primary Election Ballot) an amendment to the Constitution of the State of South Dakota, to revise certain provisions relating to the rights of crime victims; and

HJR 1006 (Constitutional Amendment Z – to be placed on the General Election Ballot) an amendment to the Constitution of the State of South Dakota, relating to amendments to the Constitution.

South Dakota citizens have the ability to submit a referendum petition concerning laws passed during the 2018 Legislative session.

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



By **Richard P. Holm M.D.**

Don't Miss the Ball and Boy Jetting Out from Behind That Car

The first indication of my having glaucoma came when I was at the eye doctor for a regular checkup. It was discovered by machine-testing that I had lost peripheral vision in my left eye. Loss of peripheral vision is a sign that glaucoma might be occurring, and indeed, when they measured the pressure within my eyes, it was increased

on the left. Before that, I had no idea something was wrong.

An estimated three million people in the U.S. have glaucoma; half of which have no idea something is wrong, and 120,000 become blind as a result. Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world, especially for those coming from African origins. Treatment is available once the condition is discovered, so the best preventive move is to get routine glaucoma testing.

Glaucoma causes peripheral vision loss and preserves central vision until late in the disease. Central vision is that concentrated view we have of the object at which we are staring. It is the eye-of-the-needle into which we are trying to put the thread; the subtle smile of the mysterious woman about which we are painting; the target at which we are aiming our arrow. Say it again, early on, central vision is preserved in glaucoma.

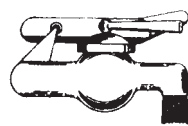
Just because our central vision is retained until late-stage glaucoma, that doesn't mean it isn't causing problems. Peripheral vision is important, allowing us to see the shooting star that flashes suddenly from the eastern horizon while we're staring at the big dipper; to see the boy that might jet out from behind a car in pursuit of his ball while we drive down the road; to see the guy across the room who has captured our attention, secretly watching him without letting him know.

For comparison, macular degeneration causes the opposite kind of vision loss. More specifically, it results in a loss of central vision while preserving peripheral vision. Both conditions affect the retina, the blanket of nerves covering the back side of the eye, which, like a camera, captures the image of an autumn moon rising above a South Dakota lake, a wind-wave of grass moving on a prairie hill, or the surprised face of discovery on a visiting grandchild.

Take home message: people don't realize there is peripheral vision loss resulting from glaucoma until the damage has been done. Get in to have routine eye testing. You may have no idea something is wrong.

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!

Insecticide Safety: How to Prevent Unnecessary Exposure

BROOKINGS, S.D. - Insecticide applications occur year-round to manage insect pests that would otherwise reduce crop yields, damage stored grain or infest houses and other structures.

When applying insecticides, South Dakotans need to take appropriate precautions to ensure their own health and safety.

"Insecticide products can be useful for the management of insect pests, especially when they are a part of an integrated pest management program. However, be sure follow label instructions and utilize caution, as misuse can prove harmful or even fatal," said Adam Varenhorst, Assistant Professor & SDSU Extension Field Crop Entomologist.

Below Varenhorst outlines the steps that should be taken prior to application to enhance safety.

Know Your Insecticides

Pesticides, of which insecticides are a type, are classified as either general or restricted use.

The products that can be purchased over the counter are those that are classified as general use. As the name implies, restricted use pesticides require a license to purchase and use.

Follow Label Instructions

The most important thing to remember when working with insecticides is to always follow the label instructions.

"Labels contain important safety and allowed use information," Varenhorst said. "Insecticide labels also provide the information regarding the proper personal protective equipment to wear when handling, mixing, loading or applying the product."

For most foliar applied insecticides, this list usually includes chemical resistant protective gloves, a respirator with organic vapor/acid gas cartridges, long-sleeve shirt, long pants, and eye protection.

For fumigants, the required personal protective equipment depends on the fumigant that is being used as well as the levels of the associated gas in the environment that they are being applied to.

Fumigant personal protective equipment usually consists of dry cotton gloves, long-sleeve and loose fitting clothing, and either a canister type or a self-contained breathing apparatus.

Get Licensed

If there is a need to apply restricted use insecticides to reduce insect pests, a license is required - either a commercial pesticide applicator license or a private applicator certification card.

"These licenses must be kept up-to-date in order to legally purchase and apply any restricted use products," Varenhorst said.

Commercial and private applicator licenses can be renewed either through testing at an approved site or by attending a commercial or private applicator training session.

The purpose of these renewals is to ensure that individuals dealing with restricted use insecticides remain aware of the hazards associated with these products and the methods to ensure safe and appropriate use.

"If carelessness of use or misuse occurs, exposure to these products may lead to serious injury or death," Varenhorst said.

Pappas team competes at state debate

The GHS debate team competed at the South Dakota High School Activities Association State Debate Meet March 2-3, 2018 at Watertown High School. Sophomore KaSandra Pappas and Freshman Samantha Pappas were named Quarter Finalists. Pappas and Pappas were defeated in the quarter finals round by a team from Sioux Falls Christian. Samantha also competed in Domestic Extemporaneous Speaking. SDSU debate and speech student Keri Pappas served as a volunteer coach for the weekend.



Pictured left to right- KaSandra Pappas, Coach Keri Pappas, Samantha Pappas

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Today in Weather History

March 13, 1971: During an evening thunderstorm in Moody County, South Dakota, lightning destroyed a transformer plant in Coleman. Damages were estimated at \$250,000.

March 13, 1997: A winter storm began with widespread freezing drizzle, creating icy roadways and walkways, before changing over to snow. Before the snow was over, 2 to 8 inches had fallen on an already expansive and deep snowpack. The winds accelerated to 20 to 40 mph, resulting in widespread blowing and drifting snow. Visibilities were reduced to near zero at times, making travel treacherous. Many roads again became blocked by snowdrifts, and several were closed. Many area schools were still closed, adding to an already substantial total of days missed for the winter season. Some people were stranded and had to wait out the storm. Some airport flights were canceled. The icy roads and low visibilities resulted in several vehicle mishaps as well. There was a rollover accident west of Mobridge and an overturned van 7 miles west of Webster. On Interstate-29 there were several rollover accidents, including vehicles sliding off of the road. Some snowfall amounts included, 4 inches at Timber Lake, Mobridge, Eureka, Leola, Britton, and Clark, 5 inches at Leola, 6 inches at Waubay and Summit, and 8 inches at Pollock.

1907 - A storm produced a record 5.22 inches of rain in 24 hours at Cincinnati, OH. (12th-13th) (The Weather Channel)

1951 - The state of Iowa experienced a record snowstorm. The storm buried Iowa City under 27 inches of snow. (David Ludlum)

1977 - Baltimore, MD, received an inch of rain in eight minutes. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in the Sierra Nevada Range of California, and the Lake Tahoe area of Nevada. Mount Rose NV received 18 inches of new snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1988 - Unseasonably cold weather prevailed from the Plateau Region to the Appalachians. Chadron NE, recently buried 33 inches of snow, was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 19 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Residents of the southern U.S. viewed a once in a life-time display of the Northern Lights. Unseasonably warm weather continued in the southwestern U.S. The record high of 88 degrees at Tucson AZ was their seventh in a row. In southwest Texas, the temperature at Sanderson soared from 46 degrees at 8 AM to 90 degrees at 11 AM. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from northwest Texas to Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska during the day, and into the night. Severe thunderstorms spawned 59 tornadoes, including twenty-six strong or violent tornadoes, and there were about two hundred reports of large hail or damaging winds. There were forty-eight tornadoes in Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa, and some of the tornadoes in those three states were the strongest of record for so early in the season, and for so far northwest in the United States. The most powerful tornado of the day was one which tore through the central Kansas community of Hesston. The tornado killed two persons, injured sixty others, and caused 22 million dollars along its 67-mile path. The tornado had a life span of two hours. Another tornado tracked 124 miles across southeastern Nebraska injuring eight persons and causing more than five million dollars damage

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Tue Mar 13	Wed Mar 14	Thu Mar 15	Fri Mar 16	Sat Mar 17	Sun Mar 18	Mon Mar 19
						
32° F	35° F	35° F	37° F	41° F	38° F	35° F
15° F	16° F	22° F	25° F	26° F	21° F	29° F
NW 8 MPH	SSW 8 MPH	ENE 11 MPH	E 13 MPH	S 10 MPH	NNE 11 MPH	NE 13 MPH
				Precip 20%		Precip 30%

Cool Temperatures Today



Mostly sunny skies are expected today with highs in the lower 30s. These readings are 5 to 10 degrees below average for this time of year. Areas with limited snow cover will see warmer temperatures today.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 32.8 F at 4:46 PM

Low Outside Temp: 12.0 F at 8:16 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 11.0 Mph at 4:58 PM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 71° in 1912

Record Low: -28° in 1896

Average High: 38°F

Average Low: 19°F

Average Precip in March: 0.40

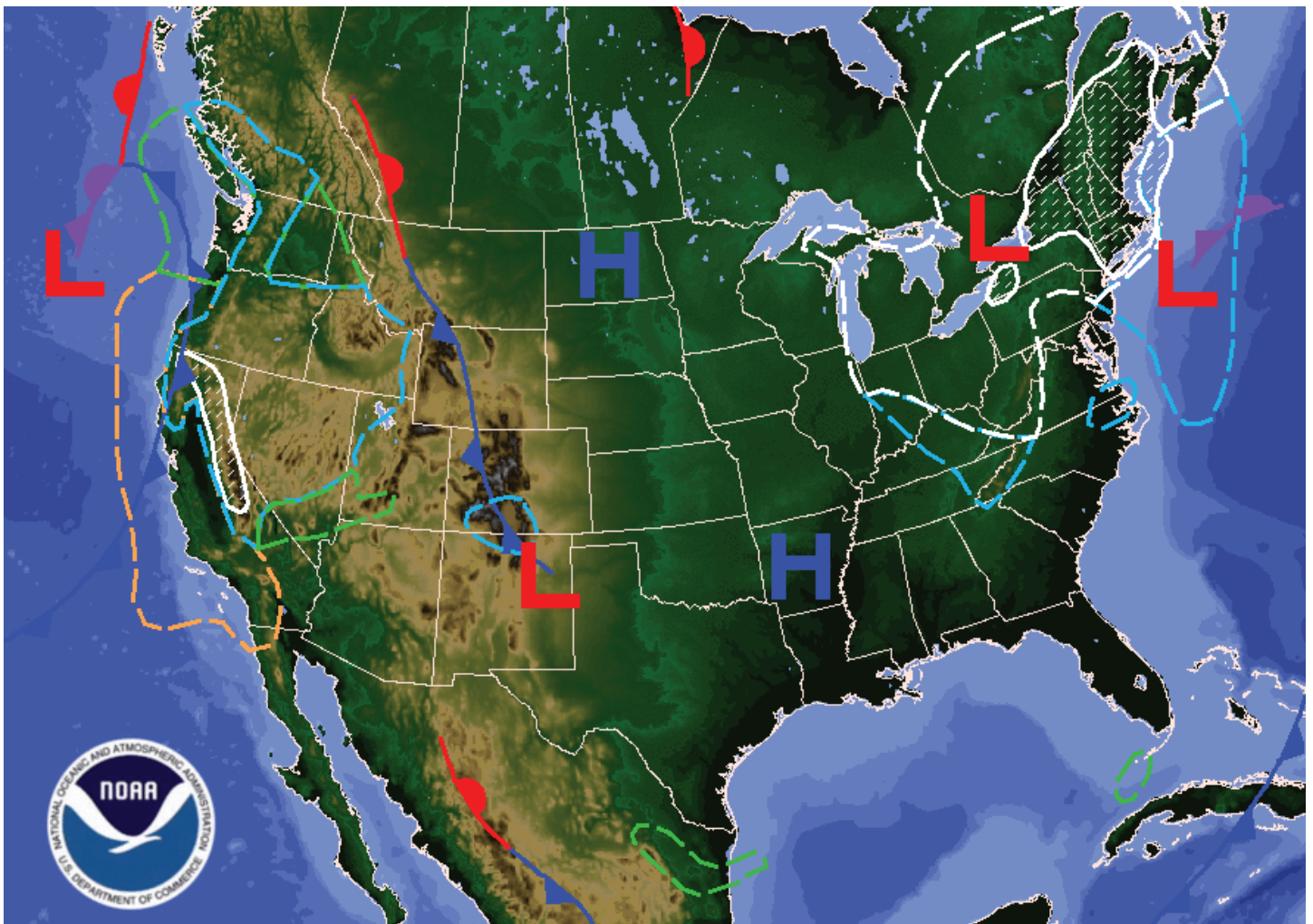
Precip to date in March: 0.94

Average Precip to date: 1.42

Precip Year to Date: 1.35

Sunset Tonight: 7:37 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:47 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Tue, Mar 13, 2018, issued 4:56 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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



WORTHY OF PRAISE

Bud Wilkerson, a nationally respected football coach was once asked by a reporter, "Coach, how much has football contributed to the nation's desire to be physically fit?"

Looking at the reporter, he said, "Nothing - not one thing."

Surprised, the reporter asked, "Would you care to elaborate on that?"

"Certainly," said Wilkerson. "I define football as twenty-two men on a field desperately needing rest and forty-thousand people in the stands desperately needing exercise."

The writer of Psalm 96 must have thought the same way the coach did. "For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise." Here the Psalmist is talking about those who are in the stands cheering and shouting about His greatness. But before there was cheering he wrote of those who were taking God's message of salvation to the lost and dying - those who were on the "field" involved in a battle for the souls of mankind - the ones who were "declaring God's glory and marvelous deeds" and "sharing and proclaiming His salvation!"

John R. Mott once said, "If a man has religion he must do one of two things with it. If it is false, he must give it up. And if it is true, he must give it away."

Imagine how loud the shouts would be in heaven if we had more people on the field battling for the souls of the lost and dying? We must give it away.

Prayer: We pray, Father, that we may work with You to win the lost and then shout for joy when they believe. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 96:4a For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised;

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

News from the Associated Press

Independent redistricting initiative falls short of ballot

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The campaign for a proposed constitutional amendment that would have taken control of redistricting from state legislators and given it to an independent commission didn't submit enough valid signatures to put the measure before November voters, South Dakota's chief elections official said Monday.

Secretary of State Shantel Krebs' office said in a statement that a random sampling of signatures collected by Citizens for Fair Elections found that the group turned in about 25,300 valid signatures, not the nearly the 28,000 needed for the proposed constitutional amendment to go on the general election ballot.

Krebs said supporters submitted roughly 34,000 signatures total, but only 74 percent were found to be valid. The rejection could be challenged in court.

The amendment called for switching control of the legislative redistricting process from legislators to an independent commission of nine people, with no more than three from any one political party. It mirrored an amendment that voters rejected in the 2016 election.

Charles Parkinson, chairman of Citizens for Fair Elections, said the group will discuss its options, but that the chances of a court challenge are "slim."

Redistricting is the process of redrawing electoral district boundaries every 10 years to account for population changes. When the process is carried out by elected officials, it often sparks lawsuits and claims of gerrymandering — attempting to draw the districts for political advantage.

Republicans control every statewide office and hold supermajorities in the state Legislature.

"I would be much more comfortable if a group that was not politically lopsided was making those decisions," said Parkinson, a Republican. "What is the problem with a multi-partisan approach to this?"

The South Dakota Republican Party opposed the unsuccessful 2016 amendment. GOP Sen. Jim Bolin has said the proposal would give away power to nonelected officials to decide on something the Legislature did well in 2011.

Boy cited for setting Sioux Falls playground on fire

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police say a 10-year-old boy is accused of arson after allegedly setting fire to an apartment playground.

Crews were called Sunday night to the fire at a private playground on the grounds of Autumn Park Apartments.

A police spokesman says an investigation found the fire began with the boy playing with a lighter and a piece of paper. The fire then spread to the rest of the playground.

The playground had just been installed in December and cost \$65,000.

The Argus Leader reports the child was cited for second-degree arson and intentional damage to property.

Law governing use of lakes on private land made permanent

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has signed a bill to make permanent an expiring law that governs the use of lakes on private land for recreation.

The Republican governor initially pushed the Legislature during the 2018 session to move the law's June expiration to 2021, but lawmakers instead sent him a bill that removed the sunset. He wrote in a recent column that the water rules are working.

"Although access to public waters will always be an issue, after twenty years we have finally brought certainty and found an answer that is working for landowners and sportsmen," said Daugaard, who signed the permanent extension into law on Friday.

The new rules were the product of a June special legislative session on so-called nonmeandered waters.

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Nonmeandered waters are bodies of water that weren't specially designated during government surveys in the late 1800s. Some private property has since flooded, forming new, unofficial bodies of water and creating good fishing. But that has come at the cost of farmland and pastures lost by agriculture producers.

The issue has long vexed landowners and outdoor enthusiasts. Eric Cleveringa, a lobbyist for the South Dakota Wildlife Federation Camo Coalition, told a state Senate panel in January that the law violates the public trust doctrine by allowing private control of public water.

The law signed June 12 restored access to nearly 30 specific lakes for public recreation hampered after a state Supreme Court decision that year. State officials intervened after the high court said the Legislature needed to decide the extent the public could use the waters on private land for recreation.

The law also says lakes on private property are open for recreational use unless a landowner installs signs or buoys saying an area is closed, though property owners could still grant permission to use the water.

Daugaard has called the lakes an "economic engine," saying their closure hurt small-town businesses. Donna Bumann's bait shop and motel in Lake Preston suffered "crippling" sales declines after the state restricted access to a lake called "Dry #2." Business stayed down all summer.

Bumann said she's concerned a lot of people traveled elsewhere last year and will return to those places instead of coming to South Dakota.

"Man, I would really love to see the Department of Tourism do something to let people know that this is a good place for a sportsmen again, let them know that our lakes are open, we welcome you, we missed you, we'd love to see you again," Bumann said. "If people don't come back this summer, then you will not be calling me in 2019, I can tell you that. I need the people to come back."

North Dakota lawmakers sign off on medical marijuana rules

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota lawmakers on Monday signed off on rules for the state's developing medical marijuana program, a necessary move if the drug is to be available to patients later this year.

The Legislature's Administrative Rules Committee reviewed the dozens of pages of proposed rules that the advisory State Health Council in January approved to cover such things as testing, security and transportation requirements.

The committee didn't take a formal vote on the rules but did not call for any changes or a delay in implementing them, effectively approving them.

The Health Department expects to announce an application period for medical marijuana manufacturers by the end of the week, said Jason Wahl, director of the Health Department's Medical Marijuana Division. That will be followed by application periods for dispensaries, patients and caregivers.

State voters approved medical marijuana in November 2016. The law crafted by North Dakota lawmakers last year allows for use of the drug for 17 medical conditions, along with terminal illnesses. The Health Department aims to have the drug available late this year.

State Rep. Mary Schneider, of Fargo, questioned the two-year time lag between voter approval and planned drug availability.

"For people in pain, every day is a day of misery and too long to wait," she said.

Wahl said the time frame is in line with what other states that have set up medical marijuana programs have experienced — an assertion backed up by the advocates group, Americans for Safe Access.

Wahl said North Dakota also is working to devise a system that will pass any federal government scrutiny. U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions in January rescinded an Obama administration policy pledging that federal authorities wouldn't crack down on legal medical marijuana operations in states, as long as the states maintained tight regulations.

The impact of the decision isn't known, but Wahl said North Dakota officials believe that well-regulated state programs still will pass muster.

"We were always cognizant of the fact that the federal government would be looking at this program very closely," he said.

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The Health Department held a public comment period late last year on the administrative rules, including six public hearings around the state. Some of the proposed rules were fine-tuned following that process, but other aspects of the program are set in state law and can only be changed by the Legislature, according to Wahl.

One example is the \$90,000 fee for a two-year state certificate for a medical marijuana dispensary. Paul Aughinbaugh, who wants to set up a dispensary in Fargo, questioned the amount and whether the state would refund the money if recreational marijuana is ever legalized in North Dakota. Proponents of that are trying to gather enough petition signatures to force a statewide vote.

Should all marijuana become legal, "then what, do we have an empty building?" Aughinbaugh said.

In South Dakota, supporters of a medical marijuana ballot measure submitted roughly 15,000 signatures to the state to put the initiative before November voters. Secretary of State Shantel Krebs' office will conduct a random sampling to determine if the campaign turned in the 13,871 valid signatures required to qualify for the ballot.

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

45 years in prison for attack on South Dakota trooper

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Washington state man convicted of trying to kill a South Dakota state trooper following a traffic stop has been sentenced to 45 years in prison.

Thirty-six-year-old Donald Willingham was convicted by a Pennington County jury in December of attempted first-degree murder, aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer and three other charges.

The Rapid City Journal reports the sentence Monday comes more than two years after Trooper Zachary Bader stopped Willingham and his three friends along Interstate 90 near Box Elder for speeding. Willingham and his friends were driving from Seattle to Chicago with marijuana and cash in the car.

Bader was severely beaten and left for dead as he tried to arrest Willingham. The three other defendants pleaded guilty last year to drug charges and being an accessory to a crime.

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

Convicted laser swindler pays \$637,000 in restitution

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Federal court records show a Rapid City man convicted of running an illegal medical laser scheme has paid \$637,000 in restitution so far while he awaits sentencing.

Larry Lytle, 82, pleaded guilty in January to criminal contempt and conspiracy. He has agreed to reimburse all customers who purchased one of his phony QLaser medical devices. The plea agreement states that sales of the handheld devices totaled more than \$16 million.

Lytle made his initial restitution payment of \$637,000 by check on Feb. 5, the Rapid City Journal reported. Scam victims who believe they might be owed restitution can contact the U.S. Attorney's Office in Rapid City. The court will determine how restitution money is distributed.

Lytle admitted to selling hundreds of QLasers from 2005 through 2015 that were purchased for about \$4,000 each. Investigators said he placed veterinary labels on the bogus handheld devices to evade review by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

He and his co-conspirators claimed the devices could treat more than 200 medical conditions, including AIDS. The only condition the FDA approved for treatment by Lytle's devices was pain associated with osteoarthritis of the hand.

Lytle has filed a motion to delay his sentencing until his appeals against prior court orders are settled. Two co-conspirators have also pleaded guilty. They're awaiting sentencing.

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

No one hurt in fire at Sioux Falls apartment building

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — No one was hurt in a fire that prompted the evacuation of a Sioux Falls apartment building.

Fire officials say the Sunday night blaze happened in a second-story unit. Everyone got out of the building safely.

The cause of the fire wasn't immediately determined.

National Cowboy Museum awards film by South Dakota director

By STEPHEN LEE, The Capital Journal

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The film, "Floating Horses: The Life of Casey Tibbs," produced and directed by Midland, South Dakota native Justin Koehler about the rodeo legend born northwest of Fort Pierre, will be named the Best Documentary Film by the National Cowboy Museum at its Western Heritage Awards night on April 14 in Oklahoma City.

"It's a huge feather in his cap," said Cindy Bahe on Feb. 28. She is director of the Casey Tibbs Rodeo Center in Fort Pierre. "I just hope it's going to bring more awareness to Casey and his history."

It also should provide Koehler with some new possible backers to help him finance the film's distribution, she said.

The prestigious award will put Koehler in the same field of dreams as legendary filmmaker John Ford, and Western movie legends John Wayne, Maureen O'Hara, Clint Eastwood, Jimmy Stewart, Tom Selleck and Kevin Costner, and cowboy poet, singer and actor Red Steagall, who have received the Western Heritage awards.

The emcees at the Western Heritage Awards on April 14, in fact, include a famous old flame of Casey Tibbs: actress Katherine Ross, who will make the presentations along with her longtime husband, Sam Elliott, who also has been honored by the Cowboy Museum.

"He will probably make some joke about it," Bahe said of Elliott's possible stance on Casey Tibbs having dated Ross long ago.

Koehler, who lives in Colorado, called Bahe to tell her the news.

"The Western Heritage Award is like the Academy Award of the Western genre," Koehler said in a news release from Bahe. "It's a very prestigious award for anyone producing films, literature or music honoring the American West and the men and women who shaped it."

Koehler premiered the film last spring in Rapid City and has shown it across the nation and Canada, hitting California, Texas, New York and Georgia, he said.

Bahe said more than 1,000 attended two showings last year in Pierre in the Riggs High School theater, The Capital Journal reported.

Koehler also has shown it at film festivals.

The film includes interviews from about 30 people, including local friends and family members from South Dakota as well as celebrity friends of Casey's, such as Charlie Daniels and Steve Ford. It also includes rare footage of many bronc rides by Casey which haven't been seen in decades, if ever, Koehler said.

The Tibbs Center in Fort Pierre, Casey's hometown, has supported Koehler's project, with lots of hours of research and other help and by footing the \$3,000 bill for turning historic film footage of Tibbs on old reel-to-reel formats into digital formats which Koehler could use in his new film, Bahe said.

"We have been honored to work with him over the last four years," she said. "Justin has worked feverishly on a cheap beer budget and crafted a top-shelf whiskey creation."

Rodeo champion Cole Elshere of Faith, South Dakota, played Casey in the film in several rodeo ride scenes. The outfit he wore is on display in the rodeo center in Fort Pierre, Bahe said.

She plans to be at the awards banquet in Oklahoma City, Bahe said.

Koehler still is seeking financial support to finish paying movie interests for the rights to commercially show the rare footage he has of Tibbs' many rides, Bahe said.

The attention from the Western Heritage award can only help, she said.

Information from: Pierre Capital Journal, <http://www.capjournal.com>

Insurer approves special radiation for teacher's rare cancer

By MEGAN RAPOSA, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Katie Blunck faced one rejection after another after she was diagnosed with a rare brain cancer in January.

But at 11:45 a.m. on Feb. 27, her luck changed with one phone call.

Blunck, a 32-year-old Sioux Falls music teacher, learned her insurance company was going to cover the special type of focused radiation recommended by her doctor, the Argus Leader reported. That decision came after two rejection letters where Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield called the radiation "not medically necessary."

A letter confirming the approval from the insurance company read: "In this instance, for you and your specific condition, the treatment would be appropriate."

"I'm relieved, for one, to finally get the answer I've been working towards," Blunck said.

She's already had her first round of chemotherapy, and she was scheduled to begin what's called "pencil-beam proton radiation therapy" on Feb. 28.

Blunck attributed the insurance company's change of heart to her Mayo Clinic doctor, Andrea Arnett, and her attorney, Mark Haigh of Evans, Haigh & Hinton, LLP in Sioux Falls.

Haigh reached out to Blunck after seeing an Argus Leader story about her situation and how she was twice denied coverage for proton radiation by her insurance company.

Blunck's battle with the insurance company started shortly after she was diagnosed January with Anaplastic Pleomorphic Xanthro Astrocytoma Grade 3 (out of 5).

Her doctor, Arnett, advocated for the proton beam therapy because it's a more targeted treatment that would minimize exposing healthy brain cells to radiation.

She's won the battle with the insurance company, but she still has a long road ahead. Blunck is at the start of six weeks of a combination of chemotherapy and proton radiation treatment, which will be followed by four weeks of recovery and six more months of chemotherapy.

Starting with a win gives her the momentum she needs to get through the rest, though, Blunck said.

"I just have faith that this is going to get me all fixed up," she told Argus Leader.

The end goal is to return to teaching her orchestra students, Blunck said, and music is playing a big role in the healing process.

"Mayo Clinic has grand pianos all throughout the buildings for anyone to play on at any time... part of my healing process will be to go there and play music with my identical twin sister, friends, and anyone who wants to join me whenever I can," she said.

Another part of the healing process is spending time with her cat, Turbo, who is in Rochester, Minnesota with Blunck as she goes through treatment.

Blunck said she's grateful for the support she's seen from her attorney to letters from her students to the more than \$20,000 raised on her GoFundMe page, and she hopes to someday pay it forward to other cancer patients like her in the future.

"It's been a difficult journey," Blunck said. "With the appeals and the denials and the appeals and the denials. It's exhausting work, but worth it."

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

Nepal plane crash came after confused pilot-airport chatter

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA, Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — "I say again, turn!" the air traffic controller called over the radio, his voice rising, as the flight from Bangladesh swerved low over the runway at Kathmandu's small airport.

Seconds later, the plane crashed into a field beside the runway, erupting in flames and leaving 50 of the 71 people on board dead.

That moment Monday appeared to result from minutes of confused chatter between the control tower and the pilot of the US-Bangla passenger plane, as they discussed which direction the pilot should use to land safely at the airport's single runway.

A separate radio conversation between the tower and at least one Nepali pilot reflected the sense of miscommunication.

"They appear to be extremely disoriented," a man said in Nepali, watching as Flight BS211 made its approach, though it was not clear if the voice belonged to a pilot or the tower. "Looks like they are really confused," said another man.

In the recording, posted by air traffic monitoring website liveatc.net, the pilot and the tower shifted back and forth about whether the pilot should approach the runway from the north or the south.

Just before landing, the pilot asked, "Are we cleared to land?"

Moments later, the controller came back on the air, his voice clearly anxious, and told the pilot, "I say again, turn!" Seconds after that, the controller ordered firetrucks onto the runway.

The plane, which was heading from Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, to Kathmandu, was carrying 67 passengers and four crew members.

Kathmandu officials and the airline laid the blame for the accident on each other.

The airport's general manager told reporters Monday that the pilot did not follow the control tower's instructions and approached the runway from the wrong direction.

"The airplane was not properly aligned with the runway. The tower repeatedly asked if the pilot was OK and the reply was 'Yes,'" said the general manager, Raj Kumar Chetri.

But Imran Asif, CEO of US-Bangla Airlines, told reporters in Dhaka that "we cannot claim this definitely at the moment, but we are suspecting that the Kathmandu air traffic control tower might have misled our pilots to land on the wrong runway."

After hearing the recording between the tower and the pilots, "we assumed that there was no negligence by our pilots," he said.

He said the pilot, who initially survived the accident but succumbed to his injuries Tuesday, was a former air force officer. Capt. Abid Sultan had flown the Bombardier Q400 series aircraft for more than 1,700 hours and was also a flying instructor with the airline.

Prior to the crash, the plane circled Tribhuvan International Airport twice as it waited for clearance to land, Mohammed Selim, the airline's manager in Kathmandu, told Dhaka-based Somoy TV.

Police spokesman Manoj Neupane said Tuesday that 49 people were confirmed to have been killed and 22 injured. The injured were being treated in various hospitals in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital.

Autopsies on the dead were being performed at the Kathmandu Medical College and Teaching Hospital morgue, where some 200 relatives waited to hear about their loved ones.

Dr. M.A. Ansari of the hospital's forensic department said positively identifying all the dead could take as long as a week because many of the bodies were badly burned. By late Tuesday morning, four bodies had been identified.

Anita Bajacharya waited at the hospital with her parents and other relatives for details on her 23-year-old sister, a medical student who had just finished school in Bangladesh and was returning home on the flight. The sister, Asma Shakya, had called her mother from the airport, excited about returning home. Now her family sat outside a hospital waiting for her body to be identified.

Relatives of the passengers from Bangladesh arrived in Kathmandu late Tuesday afternoon and were escorted to the hospital by airline officials.

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Nepal's government has ordered an investigation into the crash. However, Mohammed Kamrul Islam, a spokesman for US-Bangla Airlines, said the governments of both Nepal and Bangladesh need to "launch a fair investigation and find the reason behind the accident."

According to the airline, the plane was carrying 32 passengers from Bangladesh, 33 from Nepal and one each from China and the Maldives. It did not provide the nationalities of the four crew members.

US-Bangla operates Boeing 737-800 and smaller Bombardier Dash 8 planes, including the Q400, the model that crashed.

The airline is based in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, and flies domestically and internationally. The parent company, part of US-Bangla Group, is also involved in real estate, education and agriculture.

Kathmandu's airport has been the site of several deadly crashes. In September 2012, a Sita Air turboprop plane carrying trekkers to Mount Everest hit a bird and crashed shortly after takeoff, killing all 19 people on board.

Associated Press journalists Niranjan Shrestha and Upendra Mansingh in Kathmandu and Julhas Alam in Dhaka, Bangladesh, contributed to this report.

US Defense Secretary Mattis arrives in Afghan capital

By ROBERT BURNS, AP National Security Writer

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Tuesday he believes victory in Afghanistan is still possible — not necessarily on the battlefield but in facilitating a Taliban reconciliation with the Afghan government.

Mattis spoke shortly before arriving in Kabul, where security concerns were so high that reporters traveling with him were not allowed to publish stories until his party had moved from the Kabul airport to the U.S.-led military coalition's headquarters. That was the first such restriction on coverage of a Pentagon chief's visit in memory.

Mattis said he would be meeting with President Ashraf Ghani and top U.S. commanders.

"We do look toward a victory in Afghanistan," he said, adding, "Not a military victory — the victory will be a political reconciliation" with the Taliban, which has achieved a stalemate in recent years and shown little interest in conceding to the Kabul government.

Mattis, a retired Marine general who commanded U.S. troops in southern Afghanistan in the opening weeks of the war in 2001, said getting the Taliban to reconcile en masse may be "a bridge too far." So the emphasis is on drawing in Taliban elements piecemeal.

He described this approach as an effort to "start peeling off those who are tired of fighting," after more than 16 years of war.

"We know there is interest on the Taliban side," he said.

He defined victory in Afghanistan as a political settlement between the Taliban and the government, and an Afghan military that is capable of securing the country largely on its own. At that point, he said, Afghanistan would not be "a haven for attacks internationally" as it was when al-Qaida used the country as a launching pad for the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Ghani opened his meeting with Mattis at the Presidential Palace by expressing appreciation for the U.S. military's sacrifices over the years, and offering praise for the new war strategy approved by U.S. President Donald Trump last August.

Ghani called the new U.S. approach a "game changer."

"It has forced every actor to re-examine their assumptions," he said, adding that in the short run this could intensify the conflict. On the positive side, he said, it enables his government to make an unconditional peace offer to the Taliban without it looking like a surrender. He said it also allowed his government to approach Pakistan with an offer of a "comprehensive dialogue."

U.S. intelligence officials are predicting the war will remain stalemated as the traditionally most intensive fighting season begins this spring.

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The visit is Mattis' second since Trump announced last August that, despite his instinct to pull U.S. troops out of Afghanistan, his administration would take a more aggressive approach to the conflict, now in its 17th year.

As part of an effort to bolster Afghan fighting strength, the U.S. in recent weeks sent an Army group of about 800 soldiers, accompanied by several hundred support troops, to advise the Afghans closer to the front lines. The U.S. also shifted A-10 attack planes and other aircraft from striking Islamic State militants in Syria and Iraq to Afghanistan as part of Trump's new approach. These and other moves boosted the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan by at least 3,500 to a total of more than 14,000.

Mattis has said that the U.S. goal is to enable Afghan forces to weaken the Taliban to the point where the Afghans can manage their own security. Put another way, the aim is to convince the insurgents they cannot win on the battlefield, thus driving them to reconcile with the Afghan government.

Stephen Biddle, a George Washington University political science professor and longtime observer of the Afghan conflict, is skeptical that the new U.S. strategy will make a decisive difference militarily, although he sees "glimmers of hope" for progress toward a peace settlement. He noted that both the Taliban and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani have spoken recently of pushing for reconciliation. In late February, Ghani called on the Taliban to take part in peace talks to "save the country," offering security and incentives such as passports to insurgents who are willing to join the negotiations.

Alice Wells, the State Department's top official for South and Central Asian Affairs, said Friday at the United States Institute for Peace that Ghani's approach is more accommodating toward the Taliban than previous overtures by Kabul and deserves a thoughtful response from the Taliban.

Trump, however, said on Jan. 29 that he sees no basis for peace talks as long as the Taliban are "killing people left and right."

The Taliban stance is that talks for a conflict-ending compromise must take place with Washington, not Kabul.

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

On the military front, U.S. officials assert that years of effort to build a credible and effective Afghan army and air force are beginning to pay off. At the same time, it has become harder to gauge such progress because the American-led military coalition has stopped releasing information such as the size of the Afghan army and rates of attrition in its ranks. The number of Afghan combat deaths also is withheld by the Afghan government.

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee late last month, Gen. Joseph Votel, the head of U.S. Central Command, said the Afghan security forces are getting better. He said they do not, however, have the ability to "prevent the insurgency from maintaining a rural presence and occasionally threatening a population center" or important roadway.

In Votel's view, the greatest risk to stability in Afghanistan is the Kabul government's "uncertain political situation" as it prepares for planned July 2018 parliamentary elections.

In a late-February report, the Pentagon's special inspector general for Afghanistan reported that the Afghan government's control of the country is at its lowest recorded level since the end of 2015 and that Taliban control it at its highest.

China's new anti-graft body set to boost Xi's extended rule

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China is set to give President Xi Jinping a powerful new weapon as he prepares to rule indefinitely — a Communist Party-led anti-corruption agency to police not only the party's cadres, but also doctors, teachers, entertainers and other state employees.

The move is part of a sweeping government reorganization to boost the authority of the party headed

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by Xi, who has firmly established himself as China's most formidable leader since Mao Zedong.

On Sunday, China's rubber-stamp legislature scrapped a two-term limit on the presidency, paving the way for Xi to rule for as long as he wants. That has dismayed critics who fear a return to one-man rule and the destruction of modest measures in place since 1982 to constrain power in China.

The National People's Congress on Tuesday began a third and final reading of a draft supervision law that would extend the newly formed anti-graft body's authority, led by the party, over vast numbers of workers in the public sector.

Chinese University of Hong Kong law professor Ryan Mitchell said expanding the scope of the anti-graft agency's powers to include government workers may have been "calculated as a way to intimidate the bureaucracy into more closely following the party line."

The law would merge the party's anti-graft watchdog body with one overseeing the civil service to form a new National Supervision Commission, defined as a political body independent of the Cabinet, courts and prosecutors, raising fears of political abuse.

The body will have the right to detain suspects for up to six months without seeking a judge's permission. Authorities must inform the suspect's family and work unit of their detention within 24 hours, except in cases where evidence might be destroyed or the investigation otherwise impeded, according to a text of the draft law.

Other details, such as where suspects will be held, who will be responsible for their welfare and what form of legal representation they will be permitted, have not been announced.

A chief flaw of the new commission is that it will operate outside standard legal procedures ensuring due process, said Mitchell and other experts, including Hong Daode, a professor of criminal law at Beijing's China University of Political Science and Law.

"There should never be two different sets of procedures when handling criminal cases," Hong said.

The bill will establish supervisory commissions at various levels down to the counties. They will have the power to scrutinize government employees, as well as people working in state-owned companies and research institutes, schools, hospitals, sporting bodies and elsewhere. In Beijing alone, a pilot program instituted last year quadrupled the numbers under scrutiny to almost 1 million.

The commission also replaces the party's previous procedure for investigating corruption suspects known as "shuanggui," whose opaque nature led to frequent allegations of torture, forced confessions and other abuses.

"Replacing 'shuanggui' with rigorously regulated detention will help settle a long-lingering legal problem," Li Jianguo, a senior official with the legislature, said in introducing the draft law. "This has displayed our resolve and confidence to realize a full, law-based governance."

Hong questioned that assertion, saying the commission would be free to operate with few constraints, especially in the detention of suspects and denying them the right to legal representation.

"Now they've broken all the restrictions," he said.

Also Tuesday, the congress began a review of a major reorganization of government agencies, including the establishment of a ministry of veterans' affairs to oversee the welfare of China's millions of retired soldiers.

Veterans who served as far back as the 1950-53 Korean War have staged sporadic street protests, including in Beijing, demanding higher pensions and improved benefits. Currently, local governments are placed in charge of veterans' welfare, creating huge inequalities in services and compensation across the country.

Plans were also announced to create a newly powerful regulator to oversee the scandal-plagued banking and insurance industries as they try to reduce debt and financial risk.

The move is in line with the ruling party's efforts to gain more direct control over the state-dominated economy and reduce financial risk following a run-up in debt that prompted global rating agencies to cut Beijing's government credit rating last year.

The new agency, a merger of separate Cabinet bodies that oversee banks and insurers, will be charged with "preventing and dissolving financial risks," said the plan, submitted to the legislature for endorsement.

It did not mention the third financial regulator, which oversees the securities market.

Separately, the plan also calls for creating a national market regulator, incorporating anti-monopoly, pricing and other powers from food and drug, industry and product quality agencies.

The proposed Cabinet reshuffle and draft supervision law are almost certain to be passed during the legislative session, which wraps up next week.

Turkey, allies say siege of Syria's Afrin underway

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **SUZAN FRASER**, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Turkish troops and allied Syrian opposition fighters have begun a siege of the Syrian Kurdish-held town of Afrin, the Turkish military said Tuesday, marking a significant advance in Ankara's seven-week operation that also encircled hundreds of thousands of civilians.

The military said in a brief statement that the siege of Afrin, the main town in the enclave of the same name, had begun on Monday. It said the military took control of "critical areas" of the town but did not provide details.

Thousands of people started to flee Afrin on Monday as the Turkish troops got closer to the town, heading toward nearby areas controlled by the Syrian government.

Turkey launched a military offensive into the border enclave on Jan. 20 to drive out Syrian Kurdish forces that it considers to be "terrorists" and an extension of Kurdish rebels fighting inside Turkey.

Meanwhile Monday, dozens of civilians evacuated the rebel-held Damascus suburb of eastern Ghouta, arriving on foot and in buses to an army checkpoint set up by the Syrian and Russian militaries.

Russian news agencies said at least 100 civilians have been evacuated from eastern Ghouta, including 20 women and children. The Syrian government and the Russian military have set up a corridor outside eastern Ghouta to arrange the evacuation from the area, which is home to some 400,000 people.

Syrian government forces have split eastern Ghouta into three separate rebel-held pockets amid rapid advances in the past few days, dealing a major blow to the rebels.

The largest rebel group in eastern Ghouta, the Army of Islam, vowed in a statement to stay in the area and fight advancing government forces until the end.

The Army of Islam's statement came hours after it said it had reached an agreement with government-allied Russian forces to evacuate the wounded from the enclave. Its statement said the deal with the Russians was reached through the United Nations.

Syrian TV showed some people arriving at the Wafideen crossing with government-held territory, including a man walking on crutches and a woman who said she has been waiting for more than a year to evacuate her sick child.

The TV also showed an older man being carried while on a wheel chair before boarding an ambulance. Another woman was held as she could hardly walk.

Hamza Bayraqdar, Army of Islam's chief military spokesman, said in a video statement posted online that "our revolutionary ideology does not allow us to sell the blood of the holy warriors who liberated Ghouta."

Speaking to his fighters, he added that "we will stay in our Ghouta to defend it until we achieve one of two good things," he said using an Islamic term that means either "victory or martyrdom."

Eastern Ghouta's residents have survived harsh condition because of bombardment and lack of food due to a monthslong government siege. Opposition activists say that since the latest wave of bombings and the government ground offensive began, more than 1,100 civilians have been killed in the enclave.

The Observatory and the opposition's Syrian Civil Defense reported a wave of airstrikes and shelling Tuesday morning on the towns of Saqba, Jisreen, and Kfar Batna, killing and wounding more than 20 people.

The Observatory said evacuations of insurgents and their families began from another rebel-held pocket, south of Damascus. It said hundreds of fighters and their families began leaving on board buses from the neighborhood of Qadam toward the rebel-held province of Idlib in northwestern Syria.

It said the government reached an agreement with rebels in Qadam to evacuate the area recently.

The move appears to have angered the Islamic State group, which controls two areas adjacent to Qadam.

IS attacked areas that were evacuated by the rebels and handed over to Syrian troops, the Observatory said.

IS issued a statement saying its fighters attacked Syrian army positions — ones that the army had taken from the rebels — in Qadam, inflicting casualties among the troops.

Fraser reported from Ankara, Turkey. Associated Press writer Maamoun Youssef in Cairo contributed to this report.

Explosion strikes Palestinian PM's convoy in Gaza

By FARES AKRAM, Associated Press

JABALIYA, Gaza Strip (AP) — An explosion struck the convoy of the Palestinian prime minister on Tuesday as he was making a rare visit to Gaza, in what his Fatah party called an assassination attempt it blamed on Gaza militants.

The blast further complicated what already is a troubled reconciliation process between Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group and the internationally backed Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. It also cast a cloud over a meeting later Tuesday at the White House, where international representatives were to discuss economic development and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The explosion went off shortly after the convoy entered Gaza through the Erez crossing with Israel. Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah was unharmed and went on to inaugurate a long-awaited sewage plant project in the northern part of the strip.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Some officials in the Fatah movement quickly blamed rival Hamas for a "cowardly attack," while others said it was too early to say.

Witnesses said the bomb was planted under an electric pole on Gaza's main north-south road and went off shortly after Hamdallah's 20-vehicle convoy had entered through the Israeli-controlled crossing.

"I could not see anything because smoke and dust filled the air. When the smoke cleared, the explosion was followed by heavy gunfire, apparently from police securing the convoy. When the dust cleared, I saw people running everywhere, and police were running around," said a witness who declined to be identified because of security concerns.

Two vehicles were badly damaged and could not continue while at least four others were damaged, with windows or sunroofs blown out. One had signs of blood on the door. At least two bodyguards were lightly wounded.

Hamdallah, who is based in the West Bank, arrived in Hamas-run Gaza to inaugurate the internationally funded sewage plant. He delivered a speech, and immediately left without sticking around for the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"This will not deter from seeking to end the bitter split. We will still come to Gaza," he said.

Hamas condemned the explosion, calling it a crime and an attempt to "hurt efforts to achieve unity and reconciliation." It promised an "urgent" investigation.

In the West Bank, President Mahmoud Abbas blamed Hamas for the blast. But his security chief Majed Farraj, who was in the convoy, said it was "too early" to say who was responsible.

Hanan Ashrawi, another senior Palestinian official in the West Bank, condemned the "cowardly act" and said the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

"We believe that this act targeted also all attempts at creating Palestinian unity, putting an end to the rift or the division in Palestine," she said.

The rival factions have been trying to reconcile since 2007 when Hamas seized control of Gaza from Fatah forces. The takeover left the Palestinians with two rival governments, Hamas in Gaza and the Western-backed Palestinian Authority governing autonomous enclaves in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

In November, Hamas handed over control of Gaza's border crossings to the Palestinian Authority. It was the first tangible concession in years of Egyptian-brokered reconciliation talks. But negotiations have bogged down since then.

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Hamdallah's visit comes amid a time of crisis in Gaza. The economy has been devastated by three wars between Hamas and Israel, and a decade-long blockade by Israel and Egypt meant to weaken the militant group.

Amid warnings of a looming humanitarian catastrophe, the White House was hosting a gathering of international representatives Tuesday to discuss economic development projects and the dire situation.

Hamas is sworn to Israel's destruction, and the U.S., Israel and other Western allies consider Hamas a terrorist group. White House envoy Jason Greenblatt has blamed Hamas for wreaking devastation on the territory.

"The challenge will be determining which ideas can be realistically implemented in light of the fact that the Palestinians of Gaza continue to suffer under the authoritarian rule of Hamas," he said in a statement.

The United Nations Mideast envoy also condemned the attack, calling it a "grave incident" whose perpetrators should be brought to justice.

Nickolay Mladenov said until the "legitimate" Palestinian Authority takes power in Gaza, Hamas is responsible for enabling the internationally backed government to work without fear of intimidation, harassment and violence.

The sewage plant in question was envisioned in 2007 after overburdened sewage reservoirs collapsed, killing five villagers.

The World Bank, European Union and other European governments have paid nearly \$75 million in funding. The Hamas takeover, the ensuing Israeli-Egyptian blockade, power shortages and conflicts delayed the opening of the project for four years.

Besides the old reservoirs, the plant will receive wastewater from four towns and villages. After treatment, the water will be transferred for irrigation and the remainder will be safely dumped to the sea.

No term limit could allow Xi to be bold on Hong Kong, Taiwan

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's move to scrap term limits and allow Xi Jinping to serve as president indefinitely puts him on track to deal with some of the country's weightiest long-term sovereignty challenges, especially the fates of Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The question is, will Xi bet big on bold moves that could result in potentially disastrous consequences?

Hong Kong offers a delicate initial test. Since passing from British to Chinese rule in 1997, the financial hub has operated as a "special administrative region," retaining its own legal and economic system and enjoying a considerable degree of autonomy from Beijing.

That arrangement was supposed to last 50 years, until 2047, but calls for political reform in the city and what many see as Beijing tightening its controls and encroaching on freedoms there have created rising tensions.

Earlier this month, a member of the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee delivered a stern warning to Hong Kong delegates to China's rubber-stamp parliament over the central government's limits of tolerance.

"Using the high degree of autonomy to reject, fight and erode the central government's comprehensive jurisdiction is absolutely not allowed," Zhao Leji told members of the National People's Congress, which passed a constitutional amendment Sunday abolishing presidential term limits, opening the door for Xi to rule for as long as he wants.

Hong Kong activists had already been set on edge by the disqualification of pro-democracy lawmakers from the city's Legislative Council and the apparent abduction by Chinese security forces of several men who published salacious tomes about China's leadership.

Still, Hong Kong remains one of the world's freest economies and a window to the outside for the Chinese financial system, which operates under much tighter restrictions. The cosmopolitan city of 6 million, with its vibrant tourism, arts and education sectors, also remains a beacon to many aspiring Chinese.

"I don't think bold action is necessary with respect to Hong Kong," said Michael Mazza of the American

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Enterprise Institute think tank in Washington, D.C.

Xi is "already well along in the process of turning (Hong Kong) into just another Chinese city," he said. Self-governing Taiwan, however, is quite a different story, posing a direct challenge to the Communist Party's claim as the representative of all Chinese and guardian of Chinese sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Since splitting from the mainland amid civil war in 1949, the former Japanese colony has evolved into a wealthy, vibrant democracy whose 23 million people take an increasingly dim view of any form of political integration with Beijing.

By casting himself as a leader of historic standing, Xi has assumed the mantle of unifier and may regard failure in this regard as a stain on his reputation. In his most direct comments on the issue, he told a Taiwanese envoy in 2013 that a final resolution was required, and that what he regards as the "sacred mission" of unification "cannot be passed on from generation to generation."

"Action on Taiwan is certainly possible. Unification is a key aspect of Xi Jinping's goal of 'national rejuvenation,' necessary for achieving the 'China Dream,'" Mazza said, referencing two of Xi's chief goals.

Xi "may conclude that peaceful unification is not in the cards any time soon, leaving him to rely on coercion or outright force to achieve his goals," he said.

Already, China over the past two years has been ratcheting up political, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan's independence-leaning president, Tsai Ing-wen.

A military attack, however, could quickly draw in the U.S., which is legally bound to respond to threats against the island.

Yet the risks of an attack on Taiwan remain prohibitively high, to the point of threatening regime stability in China, due in no small part to its embrace by the U.S. and Japan, said Miles Yu Maochun, a China politics expert at the U.S. Naval Academy. Hong Kong, meanwhile, remains too valuable to Beijing in its present form to risk upsetting, he said.

Xi views Taiwan and Hong Kong as equally important to cementing his authority, said analyst Teng Biao, a visiting scholar at New York University's U.S.-Asia Law Institute.

"When he has strengthened his own power, he will show zero tolerance for Taiwan and Hong Kong independence, and even more threaten the use of force," Teng said.

While it is broadly assumed that an increasingly dictatorial Xi will also grow more aggressive on the world stage, it's unclear how that will manifest itself. China says it is committed to seizing a group of uninhabited flyspeck islands in the East China Sea from Japan, but is also aware that such action would trigger the U.S.-Japan security alliance.

And despite President Donald Trump's "America first" policy and his withdrawal of the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Washington and its armed forces show no sign of giving up the West Pacific to China.

While Xi's position appears unassailable, domestic political risks remain that may prompt him to take an even harder line at home and abroad, said Teng, who was detained by Xi's regime while working as a human rights lawyer.

"When the Communist Party faces political, economic and ideological challenges, and given the fact that the party firmly refuses a democratization, the only way seems to become more dictatorial and oppressive," Teng said.

House panel's initial report says no collusion with Russia

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee have completed a draft report concluding there was no collusion or coordination between Donald Trump's presidential campaign and Russia, a finding that pleased the White House but enraged Democrats who had not yet seen the document.

After a yearlong investigation, Texas Rep. Mike Conaway announced Monday that the committee has finished interviewing witnesses and will share the report with Democrats for the first time Tuesday. Conaway is the Republican leading the House probe, one of several investigations on Russian meddling in the

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2016 elections.

"We found no evidence of collusion," Conaway told reporters, suggesting that those who believe there was collusion are reading too many spy novels. "We found perhaps some bad judgment, inappropriate meetings, inappropriate judgment in taking meetings. But only Tom Clancy or Vince Flynn or someone else like that could take this series of inadvertent contacts with each other, or meetings or whatever, and weave that into sort of a fiction page-turner, spy thriller."

Hours later, Trump tweeted his own headline of the report in excited capital letters: "THE HOUSE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE HAS, AFTER A 14 MONTH LONG IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATION, FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF COLLUSION OR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE TRUMP CAMPAIGN AND RUSSIA TO INFLUENCE THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION."

Conaway previewed some of the conclusions, but said the public will not see the report until Democrats have reviewed it and the intelligence community has decided what information can become public, a process that could take weeks. Democrats are expected to issue a separate report with far different conclusions.

In addition to the statement on coordination with Russians, the draft challenges an assessment made after the 2016 election that Russian meddling was an effort to help Trump. The January 2017 assessment revealed that the FBI, CIA and NSA had concluded that the Russian government, at the direction of President Vladimir Putin, waged a covert influence campaign to interfere in the election with the goal of hurting Democrat Hillary Clinton's candidacy and helping Trump's campaign.

House Intelligence Committee officials said they spent hundreds of hours reviewing raw source material used by the intelligence services in the assessment and that it did not meet the appropriate standards to make the claim about helping Trump. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the intelligence material.

Conaway said there will be a second report just dealing with the intelligence assessment and its credibility.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence issued a statement soon after the GOP announcement, saying it stood by the intelligence community's findings. DNI spokesman Brian Hale said the office will review the findings of the committee's report.

According to Conaway, the report will agree with the intelligence assessment on most other details, including that Russians did meddle in the election. It will detail Russian cyberattacks on U.S. institutions during the election and the use of social media to sow discord. It will also show a pattern of Russian attacks on European allies — information that could be redacted in the final report. And it will blame officials in President Barack Obama's administration for a "lackluster" response and look at leaks from the intelligence community to the media.

It will include at least 25 recommendations, including how to improve election security, respond to cyberattacks and improve counterintelligence efforts.

Democrats have criticized Republicans on the committee for shortening the investigation, pointing to multiple contacts between Trump's campaign and Russia and saying they have seen far too few witnesses to make any judgment on collusion. The Democrats and Republicans have openly fought throughout the investigation, with Democrats suggesting a cover-up for a Republican president and one GOP member of the panel calling the probe "poison" for the previously bipartisan panel.

The top Democrat on the intelligence panel, California Rep. Adam Schiff, suggested that by wrapping up the probe the Republicans were protecting Trump. He called the development a "tragic milestone" and said history would judge them harshly.

Republicans "proved unwilling to subpoena documents like phone records, text messages, bank records and other key records so that we might determine the truth about the most significant attack on our democratic institutions in history," Schiff said.

The report is also expected to turn the subject of collusion toward the Clinton campaign, saying an anti-Trump dossier compiled by a former British spy and paid for by Democrats was one way that Russians tried to influence the election. Conaway did not suggest that Clinton knowingly coordinated with the Russians, but said the dossier clearly "would have hurt him and helped her."

He also said there was no evidence that anything "untoward" happened at a June 2016 meeting in Trump

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Tower between members of the Trump campaign and Russians, though he called it ill-advised. Despite a promise of dirt on Clinton ahead of the meeting, there's no evidence that such material was exchanged, he said.

The Senate Intelligence Committee, which is also investigating the Russian intervention, is expected to have a bipartisan report out in the coming weeks dealing with election security. The Senate panel is expected to issue findings on the more controversial issue of coordination between the Trump campaign and Russia at a later date.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, also investigating the meddling, is expected to release transcripts soon of closed-door interviews with several people who attended the 2016 meeting between the Trump campaign and Russians. It's unclear if the Judiciary panel will produce a final report.

The congressional investigations are completely separate from special counsel Robert Mueller's probe, which is likely to take much longer. It has already resulted in charges against several people linked to Trump's campaign.

Associated Press writer Chad Day contributed to this report.

Under spotlight, special Pa. House race goes to voters

By BILL BARROW and MARC LEVY, Associated Press

CARNEGIE, Pa. (AP) — Shadowed by the Trump presidency and the potential impact of a special election in a midterm year, voters in a western Pennsylvania congressional district find themselves on an unlikely national stage.

Ostensibly, they are choosing Tuesday between Republican Rick Saccone and Democrat Conor Lamb to replace Tim Murphy, who resigned last fall amid a sex scandal.

But the outcome promises to reverberate well beyond the suburbs, small towns and rural swaths that surround Pittsburgh in a region known for its once-dominant steel and coal concerns.

A Lamb victory would hearten Democrats as they look to reclaim a House majority in November, while shaking Republican self-assurance that their new tax law is an omnipotent defense of whatever weakness comes with defending an all-GOP government helmed by President Donald Trump.

Those possibilities are enough to leave national Republicans already offering explanations for what would be an embarrassing defeat.

The president won the district by 20 percentage points just 16 months ago, when Democrats didn't even field a candidate against Murphy in a district gerrymandered by state GOP lawmakers. When the eight-term congressman vacated the seat in October, there came no chest-puffing from national Democrats plotting how to reclaim the 24 additional seats they need to take over the House.

Now, polls suggest Lamb well-positioned for an upset, despite Saccone's urging to a GOP-leaning electorate that their choice is about "making America great again," just as the president says.

"Everywhere I get it's 100-to-1 for Rick Saccone," the candidate said Monday during one of his final campaign stops, with Donald Trump Jr. flanking him two days after the president himself made his second campaign visit on Saccone's behalf.

The 60-year-old Air Force veteran turned state lawmaker and college instructor enjoys enthusiastic backing from social conservatives who've anchored his state career, and he's perhaps at his most animated when he touts his opposition to abortion rights.

Yet Saccone struggled to raise money and stir the same passions that helped Trump sweep the industrial Midwest on his way to the White House. The consistent fundraising deficit has left him with limited resources to air the message he delivers one-on-one: His four decades of experience in the private sector, international business and now the legislature make voters' choice a no-brainer.

Meanwhile, Democrats' opted for a 33-year-old Marine veteran and former federal prosecutor who hails from a well-established political family in Allegheny County.

Lamb took to the role, positioning himself as a centrist even as national Republican forces descended on

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the district to fill airwaves and social media with depictions of the first-time candidate as little more than a lemming for Nancy Pelosi — the California Democrat, House minority leader and GOP punching bag.

Seemingly embracing the attacks, Lamb cut an ad calling it all “a big lie” since he’d already declared he wouldn’t support Pelosi as floor leader, much less a return to the speaker’s rostrum. He’s added his opposition to major new gun restrictions — though he backs expanded background checks — and declared himself personally opposed to abortion, despite his support for its legality.

Lamb mostly avoids Trump, who remains generally popular in the district, even if slightly diminished from his Election Day dominance.

He adds those tacks to Democratic Party orthodoxy on the new GOP tax law, hammering it as a giveaway to corporations at the certain future expense of Social Security, Medicare and the nation’s fiscal security. And he embraces unions, highlighting Saccone’s anti-labor record at the statehouse — a noticeable deviation from Murphy’s status as a union-friendly Republican. The AFL-CIO counts 87,000 votes from union households — around a fifth of the electorate.

Lamb’s campaign has inspired Democrats’ core supporters. “I was really down after the presidential election, but Conor has me totally enthusiastic again,” said Patricia Bancroft, 62, as she took a break from working the phones at a Lamb campaign office Monday afternoon.

Over the weekend, Lamb celebrated an endorsement from the United Mine Workers, a union that sat out the 2016 election rather than endorse Trump or Hillary Clinton.

The Democrat’s efforts also have been effective enough to frustrate and even spook Republicans.

Dan Greene, a GOP committeeman in Westmoreland County, grouched Monday about Lamb distinguishing himself from his party on guns and, less so, on abortion. “What has he done to prove that?” Greene questioned. “Rick Saccone has walked the walk.”

The Congressional Leadership Fund, a political action committee aligned with House Speaker Paul Ryan, at one point deviated from its Pelosi-bashing scripts to send Democratic voters mailers praising Lamb for opposing new gun restrictions. It was part of the fund’s \$3.5 million investment in the race, about a third of the total that outside GOP forces have injected.

Trump, begrudgingly admiring of Lamb’s tactics, added his own warning Saturday. “The people of Pittsburgh,” he declared, “cannot be conned by this guy Lamb.”

As for Saccone, he plans to be a congressman, not a punchline.

“I’m ready,” he said.

Levy reported from Waynesburg. Associated Press writer Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report. Follow Barrow and Levy on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarowAP> and <https://twitter.com/timelywriter>.

Military bases unprepared for childhood sex assault

By The Associated Press

When the children of U.S. service members sexually assault one another on a military base there often is no justice.

That’s because federal law governs civilians on many U.S. military installations, and federal prosecutors have little interest in pursuing juvenile sex assault cases. As a result, both victims seeking closure and young offenders needing treatment often receive neither, an Associated Press investigation found.

One solution, known as “retrocession,” offers some hope.

WHAT IS THAT?

It’s a legal process in which the Pentagon and a state’s governor or legislature transfer jurisdiction over juvenile cases that occur on base to local authorities, who have the resources and experience to counsel victims and rehabilitate, or punish, young offenders.

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IS THIS AN EFFECTIVE SOLUTION?

Results are mixed.

Since the start of 2007, Army criminal investigators at Kentucky's Fort Knox concluded that nine juvenile sex assault and rape cases were credible, AP found, and Hardin County court officials received eight felony criminal complaints.

Army investigators at Joint Base Lewis-McChord outside Tacoma, Washington, referred 14 cases to Pierce County, said Kevin Benton, the county's chief juvenile prosecutor. But no charges were filed, mostly because of insufficient evidence, he said.

ARE THERE OTHER ALTERNATIVES?

Some bases have tried less formal fixes.

At Camp Pendleton, the Marines' combat training base in Southern California, officials have been passing cases to San Diego County prosecutors for several years. "We're trying to accomplish justice," said Matt Brower, a deputy district attorney and a former military lawyer at Pendleton.

However, without a formal transfer of jurisdiction, legal experts say, a defense attorney could have grounds to argue that prosecutors cannot pursue charges.

ARE THERE OTHER BARRIERS?

Prosecutors who review civilian cases on base typically are military lawyers with little experience in civilian law. And they quickly learn that their Justice Department supervisors do not support them taking child sex offense cases, attorneys said.

Money also plays a role. Scott Stevens, a prosecutor in rural Coryell County, Texas, could not afford to meet the county's needs and send all offenders from massive Fort Hood to secure juvenile sex offender treatment. "It would take maybe two or three of those to wipe out our entire placement budget for a year," Stevens explained.

SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

Given inaction by the Defense and Justice departments, some experts have suggested a comprehensive legislative fix, such as funding a mandate that state and local officials handle juvenile crimes on base.

Roger Haines was an assistant U.S. attorney in San Diego in the 1980s when he tried to get Congress to mandate that states share jurisdiction over civilian crimes on federal installations. Base commanders objected, and state officials worried they would inherit new problems, said Haines, a 29-year federal prosecutor who wrote a book about the issue.

"The situation is so ridiculous," Haines said. "It's not an answer to simply say, 'We can't do anything.'"

AP Investigation: US military overlooks sex abuse among kids

By JUSTIN PRITCHARD and REESE DUNKLIN, Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, N.C. (AP) — A decade after the Pentagon began confronting rape in the ranks, the U.S. military frequently fails to protect or provide justice to the children of service members when they are sexually assaulted by other children on base, an Associated Press investigation has found.

Reports of assaults and rapes among kids on military bases often die on the desks of prosecutors, even when an attacker confesses. Other cases don't make it that far because criminal investigators shelve them, despite requirements they be pursued.

The Pentagon does not know the scope of the problem and does little to track it. AP was able to document nearly 600 sex assault cases on base since 2007 through dozens of interviews and by piecing together records and data from the military's four main branches and school system.

Sexual violence occurs anywhere children and teens gather on base — homes, schools, playgrounds, food courts, even a chapel bathroom. Many cases get lost in a dead zone of justice, with neither victim nor offender receiving help.

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"These are the children that we need to be protecting, the children of our heroes," said Heather Ryan, a former military investigator.

The tens of thousands of kids who live on bases in the U.S. and abroad are not covered by military law. The U.S. Justice Department, which has jurisdiction over many military bases, isn't equipped or inclined to handle cases involving juveniles, so it rarely takes them on.

Federal prosecutors, for example, pursued roughly one in seven juvenile sex offense cases that military investigators presented, according to AP's review of about 100 investigative files from Navy and Marine Corps bases.

In one unprosecuted case from Japan, witnesses confirmed that a 17-year-old boy pulled a 17-year-old girl from a car in a school parking lot and took her to his residence, where she said he raped her. A medical exam of the girl found his semen.

On a U.S. Army base in Germany, Leandra Mulla told investigators that her teenage ex-boyfriend dragged her to a secluded area and thrust his hand down her pants while forcibly trying to kiss her. Four years later, Mulla still wonders what came of her report.

Offenders, meanwhile, typically receive neither therapy nor punishment, and some are shuffled off to other installations or into the civilian world.

In North Carolina, at Camp Lejeune, the coastal training ground for U.S. Marines, a 9-year-old boy admitted to Naval Criminal Investigative Service investigators that he had fondled toddlers in his home and classmates at Heroes Elementary School. He said he couldn't help himself.

Military child abuse specialists couldn't help him either — they intervene only when the alleged abuser is a parent or other caretaker. A federal prosecutor twice declined to take action.

A dozen current or former prosecutors and military investigators described to AP how policies within the Pentagon and Justice Department thwarted efforts to help victims and rehabilitate offenders.

"The military is designed to kill people and break things," said former Army criminal investigator Russell Strand, one of the military's pioneering experts on sexual assault. "The primary mission, it's not to deal with kids sexually assaulting kids on federal property."

Sexual assault cases can be difficult to investigate and messy to prosecute, more so when they involve children. Offenders may threaten further harm, and victims or their parents may not want to relive the trauma through lengthy investigations and prosecutions.

AP began investigating sexual violence among military children after readers of its 2017 investigation of sex assault in U.S. public schools described an even more complex problem on bases.

AP found the otherwise data-driven Pentagon does not analyze reports it receives of sexual violence among children and teens on base. When the Defense Department said it could not pinpoint the number of assault reports, AP used U.S. Freedom of Information Act requests to obtain investigative reports and data from the agencies that police the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines. AP also analyzed documents released by the Pentagon's school system, which educates 71,000 students in seven U.S. states and 11 other countries.

Records the military initially released omitted a third of the cases AP identified through interviews with prosecutors, military investigators, family members, whistleblowers and data that officials later provided. Other cases get buried.

Strand, now a private-sector consultant, estimated that in the Army alone colleagues passed on opening several hundred sex assault cases involving offenders under 14. Strand said he learned of those alleged assaults in the 32 years that he was a military investigator and, later, as a trainer.

Responding to AP's findings, the Defense Department said it "takes seriously any incident impacting the well-being of our service members and their families." The department promised to take "appropriate actions" to help juveniles involved in sex assaults. It said it was "not aware of any juvenile sex offender treatment specialists" working in the military or its school system.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense described child-on-child sexual assault as "an emerging issue" that merited further review. AP found that military lawyers have warned about a juvenile justice black hole since the 1970s.

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The military's school system said student safety was its highest priority, that school officials were obligated to report all incidents and that "a single report of sexual assault is one too many."

MISSING REPORTS

Leandra Mulla was a freshman at Vilseck High School on a U.S. Army base in Germany when, she recalls, her former boyfriend dragged her off campus and sexually assaulted her one afternoon in February 2014. Her basketball coach saw her crying and alerted the principal's office.

At a police station on base, Army criminal investigators and local authorities met with Mulla. They took some of her clothes as evidence, she said, and when it was over an officer explained someone would be in touch.

After no one followed up and the boy remained in school, her father sought answers. Pete Mulla, a civilian Army employee, said military investigators offered fuzzy details about German officials possibly having done something.

All the family could glean was that some sort of restraining order had been issued.

"I just really want closure," said Mulla, who graduated last spring. "At least tell me something."

Prosecutors in Germany, who share jurisdiction over crimes on U.S. military bases there, told AP they investigated but found insufficient evidence to file charges. The Pentagon school system told AP it had "no responsive records" on the Mulla case.

Leandra Mulla said neither the Army nor the school offered her any help, such as counseling.

"The military is a great field to be in," she said. "But they just like to cover up what goes on because they have an expectation and they try to uphold an image."

How sexual assault reports are handled can hinge on personality and rank. Whether their child is the accused or accuser, higher-ranking families receive more consideration, several former military investigators and lawyers told AP. Supervisors with kids of their own were more likely to push an investigation, they said, while in Army offices preoccupied with case backlogs investigators would stash less serious allegations in a "raw data" file, where they languished.

Regulations require that all credible reports of sexual assault be investigated, Army Criminal Investigation Command spokesman Chris Grey said, adding that raw data files are checked for cases that merit a second look.

AP unearthed just over 200 cases missing from records the military and Pentagon school system initially provided when asked about assaults. At least 44 had been criminally investigated.

Some agencies resisted providing all data sources or defined cases in ways that led to undercounts. Pressed about missing cases, for example, Grey said that data initially released representing "the number of sex crimes reported at installations" in fact reflected a much narrower subset — full investigations "closed" only after an extensive, bureaucratic paperwork process.

Among the missing cases was one in which an Army investigator's step-daughter reported being assaulted in a pool at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. According to the official data provided AP, there were no assaults at that base. The last assault on any Army base in Germany was, according to the records, in 2012 — two years before Mulla reported being attacked.

AP also found undisclosed cases at large military bases in Alaska, Colorado, Texas and Italy, which reported having no or only a few sexual assaults.

Unlike many U.S. school districts, Pentagon schools do not publicly share statistics on student sex assaults. Responding to AP's request for total incidents since the start of 2007, school officials said they had information only as of fall 2011 and produced documents that showed 67 sexual assault or rape reports through last summer.

A review of the school system's underlying records, though, showed they were in such disarray that, for four years, forms recording sexual assaults were misclassified as "child pornography" reports.

Reporters also learned of a separate student information database that logs student misconduct. After arguing the database could not be analyzed, school system officials released logs showing 157 confirmed cases — mostly fondling and groping — that fit the criteria for a federal felony charge. They acknowledged

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those records were incomplete.

Presented with AP's findings before publication, school system officials said their primary incident tracking system "has had some challenges" and acknowledged that the student information database included "additional cases of interest."

ELUSIVE JUSTICE

On most bases, the military's criminal branches investigate sex assault reports, and U.S. Justice Department attorneys decide whether to prosecute.

Federal prosecutors tend to be "allergic" to any case involving juveniles, said James Trusty, a Washington, D.C., attorney who as a longtime Justice Department section chief advised colleagues considering juvenile prosecutions.

Department policy is that federal prosecutors should hand juvenile cases to their local counterparts whenever possible. AP found few military bases where local authorities regularly assumed such cases.

The federal reluctance to prosecute is clear in an AP analysis of about 100 juvenile-on-juvenile sex assault investigations on Navy and Marine Corps bases over the last decade.

Investigators referred 74 cases to federal prosecutors who, according to records released to AP, pursued only 11 cases. In contrast, local prosecutors were presented with 29 cases and acted on 11.

Cases from overseas bases were almost never prosecuted, including those that came with a confession.

In one unprosecuted case, a 14-year-old boy told investigators that over many months he broke into the bedrooms of two girls on an Air Force base in Japan while their families slept. He later recanted an admission that he molested one girl, though records noted video evidence of a sexual assault.

The findings come from more than 600 pages of investigative summaries the Naval Criminal Investigative Service released after redacting some details on personal privacy grounds.

One case involved the alleged assaults by the 9-year-old boy at Heroes Elementary on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune.

Less than 24 hours after the initial report of an assault in the boy's home, the federal prosecutor on base declined to take the case because of "the age of the parties involved and the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident," according to the case file.

That decision came before NCIS agents had interviewed the boy. When agents pressed on, they found he'd also fondled kids in school and at a sleepover. Approached again by investigators, the prosecutor stood firm. AP was unable to locate the families involved, and no official would discuss the case.

A Justice Department spokesman said the agency does not comment on how its attorneys select cases. Prosecution rates are not a good way to assess how the system is working, spokesman Wyn Hornbuckle wrote in an email, though he said there was no alternative measure for such "a niche area" as juvenile sex assault cases on bases.

Former prosecutors and criminal investigators described to AP a legal netherworld in which justice for the children of service members depends on luck and location.

When a call came into the Air Force Office of Special Investigations on bases where Nate Galbreath was a special agent, his first move was to a map. Even bases that are governed by federal law can have nooks where, due to historical quirks and formal or informal agreements, local law enforcement takes the lead.

"It got very complicated very quickly," recalled Galbreath, now the top expert at the Pentagon's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, which monitors and responds to incidents among service members.

No place illustrates the intricate legal terrain quite like Fort Campbell, which as home to the Army's 101st Airborne Division straddles the Kentucky-Tennessee line. Even though it is a base where federal law prevails, the local court handled some alleged assaults on the Kentucky side. Cases on the Tennessee side were routed to federal prosecutors.

There is only one legally bulletproof way to move civilian cases from a federal jurisdiction base, experts said. It involves a rarely used legal process in which the Pentagon formally transfers jurisdiction to local authorities, as has been done at Kentucky's Fort Knox and Joint Base Lewis-McChord outside Tacoma,

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Washington.

When prosecutors don't get involved, a base commander may ban an offender from returning, pending therapy, or transfer the family. But commanders don't have to take any action.

"There's not necessarily any kind of justice, it's just, 'You can't be here anymore,'" said Marcus Williams, a former NCIS investigator who now handles discrimination claims, including sex assault reports, at Brigham Young University.

Relocating a kid rather than requiring rehabilitative therapy through a court process misses a crucial opportunity for reform. The most comprehensive research suggests that only 5 percent of juveniles who are arrested for a sex offense will get caught reoffending. Experts worry that when adults do not intervene, children may conclude assaults are acceptable.

The fear of future victims still gnaws at Heather Ryan, who worked as an NCIS investigator for more than two years at Camp Lejeune.

In 2011, two sisters, 7 and 9, said their 10-year-old half-brother sexually assaulted them and threatened violence if they talked. The boy confessed.

Ryan worried the boy could become a lifelong offender, but said she struggled to get him help from the military's vast support structure. Desperate, Ryan persuaded a federal prosecutor to take the case with a plan of forcing the 10-year-old into sex offender treatment in the civilian world.

When the boy stopped cooperating, the case fell apart. His family was later transferred to a base in another state. It's unclear whether he ever received therapy.

"This child needed help. He really, really needed help," Ryan, who retired from NCIS in 2015, said. "I think of him a lot and wonder how he's doing, and if he has hurt anybody else."

Pritchard reported from Los Angeles. David Rising in Berlin, Germany, contributed reporting. Also contributing were Rhonda Shafner and Jennifer Farrar in New York, and Yuri Kageyama in Tokyo.

If you have a tip, comment or story to share about child-on-child sexual assault on U.S. military bases, please email: schoolhousesexassault@ap.org. See AP's entire package of stories here: <https://www.ap-news.com/tag/HiddenVictims>

Contact the reporters on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/lalanewsman> or <https://twitter.com/ReeseDunklin>

Protests to await Trump's visit to California border

By JULIE WATSON, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Rallies for and against Donald Trump's "big beautiful border wall" with Mexico are expected to mark his first visit to California as president amid growing tensions between his administration and the state over immigration enforcement.

Trump will visit eight towering prototypes of his planned wall Tuesday before addressing Marines in San Diego and attending a fund-raiser in Los Angeles.

A top federal immigration official lashed out at some of the state's elected leaders ahead of the visit. Thomas Homan, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's acting director, singled out Gov. Jerry Brown, U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi on Monday for recent criticism of a spate of immigration arrests in the state and a federal lawsuit challenging state laws that limit cooperation on immigration.

Homan said Pelosi's comments about federal agents terrorizing immigrant communities were "beyond the pale" and challenged Feinstein to change laws if she disagreed with how they are enforced.

Protests are also being planned across the border in Tijuana, Mexico, when Trump will examine the 30-foot-tall prototypes built along the international border to fulfill his signature campaign promise. Trump has insisted Mexico pay for the wall but Mexico has adamantly refused to consider the idea.

Organizers on both sides were urging people to remain peaceful after recent scuffles at rallies in Southern

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California, including brawls at a Dec. 9 rally near where the prototypes stand.

San Diego is the largest city on the U.S.-Mexico border to formally oppose his plans, passing a resolution in 2017.

Immigrant activists, church leaders and elected officials held a press conference at the city's historic Chicano Park to call for demonstrations to show border communities do not support a wall. Standing in front of murals of Mexican revolutionaries and other Latin American icons, they chanted "We reject your hate! We don't need your racist wall!"

"It's really important that as a region, as a city that has firsthand understanding of what the border wall means for our communities that we stand against (this) and we send a strong message to DC to say this is something that we don't welcome," City Councilwoman Georgette Gomez said Monday.

Gomez sponsored the resolution opposing the wall, calling it detrimental to the city's environment and tourism. It also expressed the city's intent to divest from the companies involved in the construction, financing and design of the wall.

Republican Mayor Kevin Faulconer — who is not expected to meet with Trump during his visit — did not support the resolution but also did not veto it. The mayor's office said Faulconer has been clear in his opposition to walls along the border but he did not want to blacklist companies involved in the construction of the prototypes.

"When some people look at the U.S.-Mexico border, they see division," Faulconer said in his state of the city address in 2017. "But here in San Diego we view it much differently. Rather than allowing the border to divide us, we're building bridges that connect us."

Jeff Schwilk, founder of San Diegans for Secure Borders, whose group participated in the rally in December near the prototypes that ended in clashes with counter-protesters, said the city council's resolution does not reflect the views of many residents, who feel the border is not secure. He said his organization respects free speech and hopes Tuesday's rally will be safe for participants.

"We absolutely want President Trump to feel welcome and to come inspect the prototypes so we can get the wall built," he said.

Trump on Tuesday is expected to be briefed on lessons learned from the construction of the prototypes built in San Diego last fall. He also will meet with border agents and officers to ask what they need, said Jonathan Hoffman, Homeland Security spokesman.

The president will not be swayed by California Republican lawmakers concerned the wall is a waste of money, White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Monday.

"The president campaigned on this, he talked about it extensively and he's the president and this is something that he is not going to back away from," she said. "It's something that he's going to continue to push for."

California Gov. Jerry Brown on Monday invited Trump to also visit the state's high-speed rail construction projects.

"You see, in California we are focusing on bridges, not walls," Brown, a Democrat, said in a letter sent to Trump.

Trump's visit comes just days after his Justice Department sued to block California laws designed to protect people living in the U.S. illegally and U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions followed up with a speech in Sacramento that was immediately denounced by Brown, who said the Trump administration was "full of liars."

AP writers Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, John Antczak in Los Angeles, Elliot Spagat in San Diego, and Nancy Benac in Washington contributed to this report.

Texas bombs likely connected; no obvious links among sites

By WILL WEISSERT and PAUL J. WEBER, Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Three package bombs left on doorsteps in suburban neighborhoods have exploded in less than two weeks in Texas' capital city, killing two people, wounding two others and leaving investigators vowing to look at any possible explanation for a motive.

Police said the bombings in eastern Austin — two Monday and one on March 2 — are likely linked. All the victims were minorities, and investigators are looking into whether race was a factor. However, they backed off initial suggestions that hate crimes could be a core cause.

The attacks unfolded as tens of thousands of visitors arrived for the busiest days of the South By Southwest music festival. The gathering didn't appear related, but police urged tourists to be vigilant while warning residents to call authorities immediately if they receive unexpected parcel deliveries.

The first of Monday's blasts occurred early in the morning when a package was carried into the kitchen and exploded upon being opened, killing a 17-year-old boy and wounding a 40-year-old woman, both of them black.

Hours later, authorities were called to the scene of another explosion also triggered by the opening of a package. That blast wounded a 75-year-old Hispanic woman, who was taken to a hospital with potentially life-threatening injuries.

Both of those explosions are thought to be linked to another early morning blast, this one on March 2, which killed a black man. Monday's victims were not immediately identified but police said previously that the March 2 victim was 39-year-old Anthony Stephan House.

"This is the third in what we believe to be related incidents over the past 10 days," Austin police Chief Brian Manley said during the second of two news conferences he held near each of Monday's explosion sites.

At first Manley suggested that the blasts could constitute a hate crime, but later amended that to say authorities had not settled on a motive since the intended targets weren't clear because multiple people live in the homes where explosives were placed. He also said they may possibly have been left at the wrong addresses.

"We are not ruling anything out at this point," Manley said.

Investigators refused to provide many details about how the explosives were packaged, citing the ongoing investigation. But Manley described them as "not particularly large." In all three cases, he said, the packages did not appear to have gone through the U.S. Postal Service or private carriers, but were left on doorsteps without knocking or ringing doorbells.

In a tweet, organizers of South By Southwest said they were "heartbroken by the explosions" and urged visitors to stay safe. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott offered a \$15,000 reward for information leading to an arrest.

Manley told festival-goers, "There's no reason to believe that you are at any greater risk." But he added that they should "be aware" and "look for things that are suspicious."

Four years ago, a driver plowed through a barricade and into a crowded street of South By Southwest revelers, killing four people and injuring many others. Extra security measures were taken, including additional policing, tougher security checks and brighter street lighting.

Keith Reynolds lives near the site of Monday's second blast and said he heard what sounded like a propane explosion. He rushed outside and saw a cloud of hazy smoke and people running to help.

"There was a horrible screaming. You knew that something terrible was happening," Reynolds said, adding that the victim's body was riddled with holes as emergency responders took her out of the house.

There was nothing obvious linking the three areas where the bombs exploded, other than all were east of Interstate 35 that divides the city. The east side has historically been more heavily minority and less wealthy than Austin's west side, although that has changed as gentrification has raised home prices and rents everywhere. It is also less true on the city's northern outskirts, closer to where the first explosion occurred and where major firms like Dell, Apple and Samsung have sprawling complexes.

Monday's first blast happened in Springdale Hills, a leafy neighborhood of houses mostly from the 1960s and 1970s. That was about 12 miles (20 kilometers) south of the home where the March 2 package bomb-

ing occurred. Monday's second explosion, meanwhile, occurred about 5 miles (8 kilometers) south of the day's first blast.

"It's just a regular family neighborhood," Reynolds said. "It's just a grandmother, you know what I mean? Like, why?"

From his house at the end of the same street, 77-year-old retiree Gilbert Rendon heard the boom of Monday's second blast and then saw a crush of scared people running his way — barefoot neighbors, some carrying babies with dogs chasing behind.

"They're saying, 'Somebody put a bomb! Somebody put a bomb!'" Rendon said.

FBI teams are investigating along with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Manley said anyone receiving a package they don't recognize should call 911. "Under no circumstances should you touch them, move them or handle them in any way," he said.

Associated Press writer Jim Vertuno contributed to this report.

Military reviews rules for helmet cams after Niger attack

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. military leaders are considering new guidelines for the use of helmet cameras on the battlefield after Islamic State-linked fighters in Niger exploited footage taken by a fallen American soldier to make a propaganda video that highlighted the killing of four U.S. forces.

Weeks after the deadly October ambush, people linked to the militants shopped around the grisly footage to news organizations. When few expressed interest, the insurgents added music and propaganda, made a short movie and posted it online. Then it was written about in a number of news stories around the world.

The Islamic State group's capitalization on its fortunate find after the northern Niger battle highlighted the risk for the U.S. military of its men and women using the popular mini-cameras on missions. Experts say military officials are likely to respond with tighter controls.

"The need for clear guidance on the use of cameras in operations was amplified by the ambush in Niger," said Navy Capt. Jason Salata, spokesman for Special Operations Command, based in Florida. And U.S. Africa Command, which doesn't have its own policy on the issue, is also doing a review to determine whether new guidelines are required, said Army Col. Mark Cheadle, spokesman for the command.

The goal is to ensure commanders understand the risks when they authorize helmet cameras or other video to be recorded. One idea centers on security measures that would make it harder for enemies who get their hands on such footage to use it.

"I think they're doing the right thing by saying, 'Well, we can't limit its usage, we've got to limit its vulnerabilities, things like encrypting them,'" said Spencer Meredith, associate professor of national security at the National Defense University. "So, how do we take something like a helmet cam, which is a vital tool for ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance), for training, for mission analysis, for after action reports and put limits on its vulnerabilities?"

While some form of encryption would be the most likely approach, Meredith said, other technological fixes include ways to limit the battery life or otherwise make a device inoperable after a certain period of time. Other guidelines could address who can approve the use of helmet cameras and similar technology, and where and how they can be used.

The commanders of U.S. forces in Africa and the Middle East will testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

The military's increased usage of GoPros and other video cameras reflects their booming presence in our everyday lives. Such technology can deliver bird's-eye views of skiers hurtling down the slopes, divers exploring the sea floor, breathtaking parasailing tours and whitewater rafting. It takes no special training for amateurs to get in on the act.

But the technology's penetration of the military over the years has been uneven. It was originally more prominent among special operations forces, but has since expanded to conventional troops as the cameras

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became more widespread and more commanders became convinced of their value.

The benefits range from training to assistance on the battlefield. Troops often wear the cameras during drills as a way to hone skills, identify shortcomings and work through various exercise scenarios. Once deployed, forces use them on missions, capturing film of enemy operations or gathering intelligence.

The video is generally stored on the camera, not live-streamed back to observers or commanders. It can be useful after a mission to review details, analyze enemy tactics, or to prove or rebut charges of abuse or civilian casualties. For example, U.S. forces have tried to use video to capture dangerous incidents involving Iranian or Russian aircraft or ships, hoping to document what happened in case complaints are challenged.

Combat camera photographs or video footage from training or military missions also are often released to the public or posted on Defense Department websites and social media accounts, after being declassified and cleared.

"The value is after the fact, when you're analyzing it," Meredith said. "Is there something that you missed, a person over here you may want to go back and talk to? It's the after action report where it becomes useful."

Rules on helmet camera use have lagged, however. Instead of having their own guidelines, such devices so far have been lumped in with other more general restrictions on photography and videotaping. These largely prohibit pornography or any unauthorized imagery of casualties, detainees, classified or sensitive equipment or locations, or intelligence gathering.

But those rules were designed to address unrelated problems. After video surfaced of several Marines urinating on the bodies of enemy fighters in Afghanistan, U.S. Central Command in 2013 beefed up the photography and video regulations for troops deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas in the Middle East.

They stipulated troops can use videos for official purposes when collecting evidence or intelligence or on other missions that would be aided by recordings, if approved by an officer who is a lieutenant colonel or higher. In the Navy, that would be a commander or higher.

In the Niger mission, the team of American and Nigerien forces traveled to the last known location of a senior militant and sought to collect any remaining evidence. A helmet camera could be used appropriately in that type of mission.

Latest nor'easter starts to slam storm-battered Northeast

BOSTON (AP) — The third major nor'easter in two weeks started to slam the storm-battered Northeast Tuesday morning with blizzard conditions expected in some areas.

The National Weather Service issued a blizzard warning for much of the Massachusetts coast, a winter storm warning for most of New England and a winter weather advisory for portions of New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

"Three nor'easters in less than 2 weeks isn't easy on anyone — and we are extremely grateful for the hard work of our first responders, utility and road crews, and municipal officials who have been working nonstop to clean up after these powerful storms," Republican Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker wrote on Twitter Monday night.

The storm is expected to last through most of the day Tuesday, disrupting road and air travel.

The flight-tracking site FlightAware already is reporting more than 1,300 canceled flights within, into or out of the U.S. on Tuesday. Amtrak suspended service from Boston to New York's Penn Station until 11 a.m.

While the first two storms of the month brought coastal flooding and hundreds of thousands of power outages, this one is expected to be different.

"This one's main impact is going to be snow," said Kim Buttrick, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in Taunton, Massachusetts.

More power outages are possible, but they are not expected to be as widespread as last week. Only minor coastal flooding is predicted.

The blizzard warning means sustained winds of greater than 35 mph (56 kph), along with visibility of less than a quarter mile for prolonged periods, according to the weather service. Wind gusts as high as

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65 mph (104 kph) are forecast in coastal areas.

Boston and eastern Massachusetts, as well as Rhode Island, could get a foot and a half of snow, with less to the west of the city.

Schools across the region announced they would be closed on Tuesday including in Boston and Providence.

"I feel that we haven't really seen this type of storm since 2015," Democratic Boston Mayor Marty Walsh said at a Monday night news conference. "We've had storms in '16 and '17 and a couple this year, but it seems like this one is gonna be a big one."

Maine also is bracing for a hard hit. The Portland International Jetport has had 75.5 inches (1.9 meters) of snow, far above the normal for the date of 51.8 inches (1.3 meters) with another 12 to 18 inches is on the way, said James Brown, of the National Weather Service.

In New Hampshire, where as much as 14 inches of snow is forecast, the storm is wreaking havoc with the age-old town meeting tradition. But Secretary of State William Gardner and Attorney General Gordon MacDonald said under state law, town meeting elections must go on.

More than a foot of snow is expected in parts of Connecticut, where Democratic Gov. Dannel P. Malloy is urging people to "take it slow and remember their winter weather driving skills."

In New York, heavy, wet snow is forecast for Long Island, which could get 5 to 10 inches of accumulation, while 2 to 4 inches are possible in New York City.

In New Jersey, the storm is expected to start out as light rain before changing over to all snow by early Tuesday, leaving behind up to 4 inches.

Givenchy, designer of Hepburn's little black dress, has died

By SYLVIE CORBET, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French couturier Hubert de Givenchy, a pioneer of ready-to-wear who designed Audrey Hepburn's little black dress in "Breakfast at Tiffany's," has died at 91.

The house of Givenchy paid homage to its founder in a statement as "a major personality of the world of French haute couture and a gentleman who symbolized Parisian chic and elegance for more than half a century."

"He revolutionized international fashion with the timelessly stylish looks he created for Audrey Hepburn, his great friend and muse for over 40 years," the house of Givenchy said. "His work remains as relevant today as it was then."

Along with Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent and mentor Cristobal Balenciaga, Givenchy was part of the elite cadre of Paris-based designers who redefined fashion after World War II.

Givenchy, speaking last year at an exhibition of his creations at the City of Lace and Fashion in Calais, said "too much artifice" detracts from clothing.

"A piece of material has a life. You must never upset it, if you want the material to speak," he said.

A towering man of elegance and impeccable manners, he forged close friendships with his famous clients, from Hollywood screen sirens of the likes of Elizabeth Taylor and Lauren Bacall to women of state, including Jackie Kennedy and Princess Grace of Monaco.

Born into an aristocratic family in the provincial city of Beauvais on Feb. 21, 1927, Givenchy struck out for Paris in his late teens.

Couturier Jacques Fath hired Givenchy on the strength of his sketches. He spent two years learning the basics of fashion design, from sketching to cutting and fitting haute couture styles.

After apprenticing with other top names, Givenchy founded his own house in 1952.

His debut collection ushered in the concept of separates — tops and bottoms that could be mixed and matched, as opposed to head-to-toe looks that were the norm among Paris couture purveyors.

Working on a tight budget, Givenchy served up the floor-length skirts and country chic blouses in raw white cotton materials normally reserved for fittings.

"Le Grand Hubert," as he was often called for his 6-foot, 5-inch (1.96 meters) frame, became popular with privileged haute couture customers, and his label soon seduced the likes of Gloria Guinness, Wallis

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Simpson and Empress Farah Pahlavi of Iran.

But the client whose name would become almost synonymous with the house was Audrey Hepburn, whom he met in 1953, when he dressed her for the romantic comedy "Sabrina."

Legend has it that Givenchy — told only that Mademoiselle Hepburn would be coming in for a fitting — was expecting the grand Katharine Hepburn. Instead, the diminutive Audrey showed up, dressed in cigarette pants, a T-shirt and sandals.

Thus began a decades-long friendship that saw Givenchy dress the star in nearly a dozen films, including the 1961 hit "Breakfast at Tiffany's." The sleeveless black evening gown she wore in the movie, complete with rows of pearls, elbow-length gloves and oversized shades, would end up becoming Givenchy's most famous look.

The French president's office praised Givenchy as a designer whose name became an emblem for French elegance, with one principle: "to respect and celebrate the woman's body."

His classical approach eventually "led him to no longer see himself in more unstructured styles" taking over the fashion world, the Elysee Palace statement said.

"France loses a master, the Master of elegance, of creation, of invention," the statement said, sharing the condolences of President Emmanuel Macron and his wife, Brigitte, to Givenchy's companion and friends.

Aiming to reach a wider market, Givenchy launched a line of upscale ready-to-wear and accessories in the 1960s. Its commercial success soon enabled him to buy out his backers, making him one of only a handful of Paris couturiers to own their own label outright.

In 1988, he sold the house to French luxury conglomerate LVMH, the parent company of a stable of top fashion labels that now includes Dior, Celine, Marc Jacobs, Pucci and Kenzo.

Givenchy retired in 1995, and was succeeded by John Galliano, Alexander McQueen, Julien Macdonald, Italy's Riccardo Tisci and its current chief designer, Clare Waight Keller, the first woman in the role.

Waight Keller, at the helm of the brand since last year, said in an Instagram post Monday she is "deeply saddened by the loss of a great man and artist I have had the honor to meet."

"Not only was he one of the most influential fashion figures of our time, whose legacy still influences modern day dressing, but he also was one of the chicest most charming men I have ever met," she wrote.

Bernard Arnault, CEO of LVMH, said he is "deeply saddened" by Givenchy's death.

"He was among those designers who placed Paris firmly at the heart of world fashion post 1950 while creating a unique personality for his own fashion label," according to a statement released by LVMH.

Givenchy is survived by his companion, French couturier Philippe Venet.

This story has been updated to correct the spellings of two names, Cristobal, not Christobal, Balenciaga and Katharine, not Katherine, Hepburn.

Elaine Ganley in Paris contributed to this report.

Levine fired by Met after it finds evidence of sexual abuse

By RONALD BLUM, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — James Levine, whose 46-year career at the Metropolitan Opera established him as a towering figure in classical music, was fired by the company on Monday after an investigation found evidence of sexual abuse and harassment.

Levine made his Met debut in 1971 and became one of the signature artists in the company's 135-year history, conducting 2,552 performances and ruling over its repertoire, orchestra and singers as music or artistic director from 1976 until he stepped down two years ago due to Parkinson's disease. He became music director emeritus and remained head of its young artists program but was suspended on Dec. 3 after accounts in the New York Post and The New York Times of sexual misconduct dating to the 1960s.

The Met hired former U.S. Attorney Robert J. Cleary, now a partner at Proskauer Rose, to head its investigation, and the company said more than 70 people were interviewed.

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"The investigation uncovered credible evidence that Mr. Levine had engaged in sexually abusive and harassing conduct both before and during the period when he worked at the Met," the company said in a statement. "The investigation also uncovered credible evidence that Mr. Levine engaged in sexually abusive and harassing conduct towards vulnerable artists in the early stages of their careers, over whom Mr. Levine had authority. In light of these findings, the Met concludes that it would be inappropriate and impossible for Mr. Levine to continue to work at the Met."

The Met did not release specifics of the evidence.

Tim Fox of Columbia Artists, who represents the 74-year-old conductor, did not respond to an email seeking comment.

Levine has not been charged with any criminal offense. The Lake County state's attorney's office in Illinois said in December it investigated a sexual abuse allegation of misconduct dating to the 1980s but concluded "no criminal charges can be brought" and cited multiple factors, including "the relevant age of consent in Illinois at the time of the alleged incidents."

Levine's downfall follows that of 81-year-old Charles Dutoit. After The Associated Press reported sexual assault allegations against him, the Swiss conductor resigned as artistic director and principal conductor of London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and engagements were canceled at numerous orchestras. Dutoit has denied the allegations.

The Met said in its statement "the investigation also found that any claims or rumors that members of the Met's management or its board of directors engaged in a cover-up of information relating to these issues are completely unsubstantiated."

Following the death of Leonard Bernstein in 1990, Levine was regarded as the top American conductor and was given a starring role in the film "Fantasia 2000." Many of his performances were televised by PBS, and singers rearranged their schedules to appear in his performances or even to audition for him.

He was revered by the Met's orchestra, board and patrons during a reign as chief conductor (1973-76), music director (1976-86 and 2004-16) and artistic director (1986-2004). In addition, he was music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Ravinia Festival from 1973-93 and the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 2004-11, and chief conductor of the Munich Philharmonic from 1999-2004.

Instantly recognizable by his bushy frock of hair and towel draped over a shoulder during rehearsals, he regularly conducted at the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Bayreuth Festival and Salzburg Festival.

His power waned only because of health problems.

Levine started conducting from a chair in late 2001 and tremors in his left arm and leg became noticeable a few years later. His health worsened in 2006, when he tripped and fell on the stage of Boston's Symphony Hall during ovations that followed a performance and he tore a rotator cuff, which required shoulder surgery. Levine had an operation in 2008 to remove a kidney and another in 2009 to repair a herniated disk in his back. He then suffered spinal stenosis, leading to surgeries in May and July 2011. He had another operation that September after falling and damaging a vertebra, an injury that sidelined him until May 2013.

Yannick Nezet-Seguín was hired two years ago to replace Levine as music director starting in 2020-21, but last month the Met said it had moved up the start of his tenure to next season.

"While this termination of the Met's relationship with Levine obviously brings a certain degree of closure, it is our hope that the Met's early introduction of Yannick Nezet-Seguín portends a willingness to invest more robustly both in talent and creating a healthy workplace culture," clarinetist Jessica Phillips, chair of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra Committee, said in a statement. "Such commitment to the future is essential if the institution wishes to attract the world's finest musicians, several of whom have already departed due to wage cuts, among other workplace issues. The artists of the Metropolitan Opera, like workers in every industry, deserve a safe place of work."

Immigrants sue US over end to temporary protected status

By SUDHIN THANAWALA and AMY TAXIN, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The Trump administration's decision to end a program that lets immigrants from four countries live and work legally in the U.S. was motivated by racism and leaves the immigrants' American born children with an "impossible choice," according to a federal lawsuit filed on Monday.

Nine immigrants and five children filed the suit in federal court in San Francisco to reinstate temporary protected status for people from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan.

The status is granted to countries ravaged by natural disasters or war. It lets citizens of those countries remain in the U.S. until the situation improves back home.

The lawsuit — at least the third challenging the administration's decision to end temporary protected status — cites President Donald Trump's vulgar language during a meeting in January to describe African countries.

"They did it because of xenophobia, and we need to make sure that we say it loudly so that everyone knows," said Martha Arevalo, executive director of the immigrant advocacy group, Central American Resource Center.

Arevalo spoke at a rally to announce the lawsuit outside the federal courthouse in San Francisco that was attended by some of the plaintiffs and dozens of demonstrators, some carrying signs that read, "Let Our People Stay."

One of the plaintiffs, Cristina Morales, said she came to the U.S. in 1993 at the age of 12 after fleeing El Salvador to escape domestic violence. She received temporary protected status in 2001 and now works as an after-school teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area.

She was accompanied at the rally by her 14-year-old daughter, Crista Ramos, who along with her 11-year-old son, Diego Ramos, are U.S. citizens.

"I don't want the government to split my family and to lose my home, my friends and the opportunity for a good education," Crista said.

Morales, 37, her voice quivering with emotion, said she has nothing to go back to in El Salvador.

"If I pay taxes, health insurance, my house and the education of my children, what I have done wrong," she said.

The lawsuit names the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as a defendant. The department declined to comment on pending litigation.

More than 200,000 immigrants could face deportation because of the change in policy, and they have more than 200,000 American children who risk being uprooted from their communities and schools, according to plaintiffs in the case filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California and other immigrant advocates.

The children face the "impossible choice" of leaving their country with their parents or staying without them, according to the suit.

"These American children should not have to choose between their country and their family," Ahilan Arulanantham, advocacy and legal director of the ACLU of Southern California, said in a statement.

It's the latest lawsuit filed against the Trump administration over its crackdown on immigration. A case filed last month by Haitian and Salvadoran immigrants in Massachusetts also alleges the decision to end temporary protected status was racially motivated. The NAACP has filed a separate lawsuit in Maryland on behalf of Haitian immigrants who received temporary protected status.

The program was created for humanitarian reasons, and the status can be renewed by the U.S. government following an evaluation.

El Salvador was designated for the program in 2001 after an earthquake and the country's status was repeatedly renewed. The Trump administration announced in January that the program would expire for El Salvador in September 2019.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen concluded that El Salvador had received significant international aid to recover from the earthquake, and homes, schools and hospitals there had been rebuilt.

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The Trump administration has ended the program for the other three countries as well.

The lawsuit in California alleges that the U.S. narrowed its criteria for determining whether countries qualified for temporary protected status and is violating the constitutional rights of people with temporary protected status and their U.S. citizen children.

The lawsuit seeks a court order to reinstate temporary protected status for people from the four countries, but it also proposes an alternative that would protect recipients with school-aged U.S. citizen children for as long as the children remain between five and 18 years old.

Taxin reported from Santa Ana, California.

AP source: Bag may have hit fuel switch before chopper crash

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A pilot who survived a helicopter crash that killed his five passengers told authorities he believed a passenger's bag might have hit an emergency fuel shutoff switch in the moments before the chopper went down, a federal official told The Associated Press on Monday.

The official was briefed on the investigation but was not authorized to speak publicly about it and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The National Transportation Safety Board said it would look at the switch, the chopper's flotation devices and even the photos on passengers' cameras to figure out what caused the crash Sunday in the East River.

NTSB member Bella Dinh-Zarr said the agency hasn't spoken to the pilot but hopes to do so.

"Mayday, mayday, mayday," pilot Richard Vance said in an emergency radio call as the Eurocopter AS350 tour helicopter foundered. "East River — engine failure."

The chopper flipped over and quickly sank, killing a Texas firefighter, an Argentine woman, a young video journalist, a former basketball team assistant and another person on what authorities said was a charter flight to take photos.

The helicopter's six emergency floats inflated, but Dinh-Zarr said investigators would look at whether there were any problems with those devices or the harnesses available to passengers on a chopper that was legally allowed to fly with its doors open. The NTSB and other agencies involved in the probe also hope to recover the passengers' cameras and electronics "to capture a digital portrait of the last moments of this flight," she said.

No one answered an email Monday to Vance, a 33-year-old licensed commercial pilot for seven years who's also licensed as a flight instructor. A possible phone number for him in Danbury, Connecticut, wasn't working.

A floating crane slowly raised the submerged helicopter to the surface Monday and towed it off to be examined, as Democratic U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer said federal regulators should suspend flights by the helicopter's owner until the facts of the crash are known.

The owner, Liberty Helicopters, referred all inquiries to federal authorities. The Federal Aviation Administration said it was investigating whether the flight had met regulations.

Liberty, a tour and charter helicopter company, has been involved in at least five accidents or other incidents in the last 10 years, according to FAA data. Three incidents ended in safe landings after, for example, one chopper clipped another while taking off from a helipad. But an August 2009 collision over the Hudson River between a Liberty chopper and a small private plane killed nine people, including a group of Italian tourists.

The company paid \$23,576 in fines in 2010 and 2011 for violating maintenance, record-keeping and flight operations rules, the FAA said. Three subsequent maintenance violations in 2011 and 2012 didn't result in any fines.

Witnesses to Sunday's crash said the helicopter was flying noisily, then suddenly dropped and quickly submerged. A bystander's video showed the helicopter land hard and then capsize in water about 50 feet (15 meters) deep.

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Emergency divers had to get the passengers out of tight safety harnesses while they were upside down, fire department Commissioner Daniel Nigro said. Vance freed himself.

The passengers who died included Dallas fire Officer Brian McDaniel, 26, and his high school friend Trevor Cadigan, 26, a journalist who hailed from Dallas but had recently moved to New York.

McDaniel had been with the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department since May 2016.

"He decided he wanted to help people" and set out to do it, said Cole Collins, a childhood friend from Dallas. "He didn't care about being a flashy person or making a lot of money. He loved his family and friends and this city."

McDaniel was visiting Cadigan, who had recently finished an internship at the Business Insider news site.

"He was a smart, talented, and ambitious young journalist and producer who was well-liked and made a big contribution," Business Insider said in a statement.

A 2016 graduate of Southern Methodist University, Cadigan had previously freelanced with an entertainment and culture site managed by the Dallas Morning News and interned with his hometown's WFAA-TV. His father is the station's production manager.

Carla Vallejos Blanco, 29, was a tourist from Corrientes, Argentina, who'd been in New York for a few days, said her country's consul in New York, Mateo Estreme.

Tristan Hill, 29 and engaged to be married, was most recently working at a sightseeing tour company but had previously been a basketball operations assistant with the Westchester Knicks, a Development League affiliate of the New York Knicks.

He "brightened every room he entered, with a contagious smile and an unparalleled enthusiasm for life," the team said in a statement.

The fifth victim was Daniel Thompson, 34, police said.

Balsamo reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Claudia Lauer in Dallas, Michael Sisak in Philadelphia and Deepti Hajela and Claudia Torrens in New York contributed to this report.

Amid Trump visit, it's business as usual for border towns

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

CALEXICO, Calif. (AP) — The daily commute from Mexico to California farms is the same as it was before Donald Trump became president. Hundreds of Mexicans cross the border and line the sidewalks of Calexico's tiny downtown by 4 a.m., napping on cardboard sheets and blankets or sipping coffee from a 24-hour doughnut shop until buses leave for the fields.

For decades, cross-border commuters have picked lettuce, carrots, broccoli, onions, cauliflower and other vegetables that make California's Imperial Valley "America's Salad Bowl" from December through March. As Trump visits the border Tuesday, the harvest is a reminder of how little has changed despite heated immigration rhetoric in Washington.

Trump will inspect eight prototypes for a future 30-foot border wall that were built in San Diego last fall. He made a "big, beautiful wall" a centerpiece of his campaign and said Mexico would pay for it.

But border barriers extend the same 654 miles (1,046 kilometers) they did under President Barack Obama and so far Trump hasn't gotten Mexico or Congress to pay for a new wall.

Trump also pledged to expand the Border Patrol by 5,000 agents, but staffing fell during his first year in office farther below a congressional mandate because the government has been unable to keep pace with attrition and retirements. There were 19,437 agents at the end of September, down from 19,828 a year earlier.

In Tijuana, tens of thousands of commuters still line up weekday mornings for San Diego at the nation's busiest border crossing, some for jobs in landscaping, housekeeping, hotel maids and shipyard maintenance. The vast majority are U.S. citizens and legal residents or holders of "border crossing cards" that are given to millions of Mexicans in border areas for short visits. The border crossing cards do not include work authorization but some break the rules.

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Even concern about Trump's threat to end the North American Free Trade Agreement is tempered by awareness that border economies have been integrated for decades. Mexican "maquiladora" plants, which assemble duty-free raw materials for export to the U.S., have made televisions, medical supplies and other goods since the 1960s.

"How do you separate twins that are joined at the hip?" said Paola Avila, chairwoman of the Border Trade Alliance, a group that includes local governments and business chambers. "Our business relationships will continue to grow regardless of what happens with NAFTA."

Workers in the Mexicali area rise about 1 a.m., carpool to the border crossing and wait about an hour to reach Calexico's portico-covered sidewalks by 4 a.m. Some beat the border bottleneck by crossing at midnight to sleep in their cars in Calexico, a city of 40,000 about 120 miles (192 kilometers) east of San Diego.

Fewer workers make the trek now than 20 and 30 years ago. But not because of Trump.

Steve Scaroni, one of Imperial Valley's largest labor contractors, blames the drop on lack of interest among younger Mexicans, which has forced him to rely increasingly on short-term farmworker visas known as H-2As.

"We have a saying that no one is raising their kids to be farmworkers," said Scaroni, 55, a third-generation grower and one of Imperial Valley's largest labor contractors. Last week, he had two or three buses of workers leaving Calexico before dawn, compared to 15 to 20 buses during the 1980s and 1990s.

Crop pickers at Scaroni's Fresh Harvest Inc. make \$13.18 an hour but H-2As bring his cost to \$20 to \$30 an hour because he must pay for round-trip transportation, sometimes to southern Mexico, and housing. The daily border commuters from Mexicali cost only \$16 to \$18 after overhead.

Scaroni's main objective is to expand the H-2A visa program, which covered about 165,000 workers in 2016. On his annual visit to Washington in February to meet members of Congress and other officials, he decided within two hours that nothing changed under Trump.

"Washington is not going to fix anything," he said. "You've got too many people - lobbyists, politicians, attorneys - who make money off the dysfunction. They make money off of not solving problems. They just keep talking about it."

Jose Angel Valenzuela, who owns a house in Mexicali and is working his second harvest in Imperial Valley, earns more picking cabbage in an hour than he did in a day at a factory in Mexico. He doesn't pay much attention to news and isn't following developments on the border wall.

"We're doing very well," he said as workers passed around beef tacos during a break. "We haven't seen any noticeable change."

Jack Vessey, whose family farms about 10,000 acres in Imperial Valley, relies on border commuters for about half of his workforce. Imperial has only 175,000 people and Mexicali has about 1 million, making Mexico an obvious labor pool.

Vessey, 42, said he has seen no change on the border and doesn't expect much. He figures 10 percent of Congress embraces open immigration policies, another 10 percent oppose them and the other 80 percent don't want to touch it because their voters are too divided.

"It's like banging your head against the wall," he said.

Bids to curb health care costs offer little more than talk

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It started as a bipartisan attempt to curb soaring health care premiums.

But Congress' effort to stabilize the nation's insurance markets is faltering amid escalating demands by each party and erratic positions by President Donald Trump. Democrats want bigger federal subsidies for consumers under President Barack Obama's health care law while Republicans, still fighting that statute, aim to relax its coverage requirements and win abortion restrictions.

The bickering could collapse the whole effort, with each side blaming the other when next year's expected higher insurance rates are announced — just weeks before Election Day, on Nov. 6.

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Last week, Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, a lead Democratic negotiator, called GOP demands on abortion limitations "a complete nonstarter." A spokeswoman for Rep. Ryan Costello, R-Pa., sponsor of the House GOP package, said if Democrats want to oppose the effort "by playing abortion politics, then shame on them."

Some Democrats think they'd reap political gains if the talks collapse since polls show the health care statute is widely popular and the public would largely fault Republicans if consumer costs spiral skyward. "Either Republicans help stabilize the market or they own these premium and deductible increases," said Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore. "And I'd be glad to help crucify them if they don't want to do something very reasonable."

The effort forces Republicans to choose between trying to avert bad news about premiums shortly before elections or standing by their opposition to anything that could be viewed as propping up "Obamacare."

Trump hasn't clarified things for his party. In a single day last October, he bounced from praising one bipartisan plan as "a very good solution" to labeling it "bailouts to insurance companies."

Signs indicate insurance prices will likely continue upward. So try containing those increases, lawmakers crafted two bipartisan bills last year.

One by Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Bill Nelson, D-Fla., would provide billions to states for reinsurance. The funds would help insurers afford covering some of the sickest, costliest customers.

Another by Murray and Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., would revive federal payments to carriers to subsidize discounts they give lower-earning consumers for costs like deductibles and copayments. Trump halted the subsidies in October as part of his effort to upend Obama's law after federal courts said Congress hadn't properly approved the money.

Providing ammunition for the sponsors, an analysis released Monday by Oliver Wyman Actuarial Consulting, a private firm, estimated that if Congress enacted the proposals, premiums could be at least 40 percent lower than if no legislative action was taken.

Obama's statute requires insurers to provide those cost reductions, which last year cost the government \$7 billion to help around 6 million people. Insurers boosted premiums to make up the difference.

Complicating what Congress might do, Trump's halt of those subsidies to insurers has had an unanticipated, positive impact for low-income consumers.

Because of how most state regulators let carriers raise premiums, federal tax credits that help lower-income customers buy coverage grew so robustly that many were better off than before. Reviving the subsidies could actually increase out-of-pocket costs for at least 1.6 million people, the liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities says.

In other changes since last fall, the new GOP tax law has erased the tax penalties enforcing the "Obamacare" individual mandate, which requires most people to buy coverage. Trump has also proposed making it easier for insurers to sell policies that last less than a year and have fewer consumer protections than Obama's statute imposes, like required coverage for people with pre-existing conditions.

Citing those blows to Obama's law, Democrats say the tax credits that help millions pay premiums need to be more generous and cover more people. They want to restore spending that's used to encourage people to buy coverage and block Trump from allowing the sale of low-cost, low-coverage plans.

Republicans have their own demands.

A White House memo says any effort to strengthen markets must have language that "ensures all federal dollars are life-protected" — a reference to restrictions on using the programs to finance abortions.

AshLee Strong, spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said last week that the effort to stabilize insurance markets must heed the GOP's long-imposed legal bar against using federal funds for nearly all abortions.

"That is not negotiable for House Republicans," Strong said.

The White House memo also demanded that insurers be allowed to charge older customers higher premiums than Obama's law permits and get more leeway to renew short-term, low-coverage policies.

An agreement would likely be included in a government-wide spending bill Congress wants to finish by

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March 23. It's probably the year's last must-pass measure, so proposals left behind will face difficulties becoming law.

Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Asia shares mixed on trade outlook, tighter China oversight

By ELAINE KURTENBACH, AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares were mixed in Asia on Tuesday following a lackluster day on Wall Street. Investors are keeping a close eye on tensions over trade following President Donald Trump's announcement of hikes on steel and aluminum tariffs. Shares in Shanghai and Hong Kong fell as China announced a revamp of its financial regulatory regime.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 index edged 0.2 percent higher to \$21,875.43 while South Korea's Kospi added 0.1 percent to 2,486.31. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong fell 0.3 percent to 31,507.76 and the Shanghai Composite index declined 0.2 percent to 3,319.12. Australia's S&P ASX 200 dropped 0.5 percent to 5,965.00. Shares rose in Taiwan and were mixed in Southeast Asia, with the SET in Thailand falling 0.2 percent.

WALL STREET: U.S. stocks were split Monday as technology companies climbed while Boeing and other industrial companies gave back some of the ground they won on Friday. The S&P 500 index 0.1 percent to 2,783.02 and the Dow Jones industrial average declined 0.6 percent to 25,178.61. Almost all of that loss came from three industrial stocks: Boeing, Caterpillar and United Technologies. The Nasdaq composite finished at another record high, adding 0.4 percent to 7,588.32. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks rose 0.2 percent to 1,601.06.

CHINA WATCHDOG: China announced plans Tuesday to create a newly powerful regulator to oversee scandal-plagued banking and insurance industries as they try to reduce debt and financial risks. The move is in line with the ruling Communist Party's efforts to tighten control over state-owned entities that dominate industries including banking, telecoms and energy in an effort to make them more efficient and productive.

QUALCOM-BROADCOM: Singapore computer chipmaker Broadcom said in a statement that it strongly disagrees with Trump's order to block its proposed acquisition of Qualcomm on the grounds it raises national security concerns. The decision, announced late Monday, abruptly ended Broadcom's four-month, \$117 billion bid to buy Qualcomm — a deal that would have been the largest ever completed in the technology industry. Broadcom's Singapore connections complicated matters, even though the company maintained its physical headquarters in Silicon Valley and virtually all of its shareholders are in the U.S. In U.S. trading, Broadcom jumped \$9.06, or 3.6 percent, to \$262.84 while Intel fell 67 cents, or 1.3 percent, to \$51.52. Qualcomm gave up 22 cents to \$62.81.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude fell 13 cents to \$61.23 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 68 cents, or 1.1 percent, to \$61.36 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gave up 12 cents to \$64.83 per barrel. It shed 54 cents to \$64.95 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose to 106.66 yen from 106.41 late Monday. The euro fell to \$1.2330 from \$1.2336.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, March 13, the 72nd day of 2018. There are 293 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 13, 1928, at least 400 people died when the San Francisquito Canyon in Southern California was inundated with water after the nearly two-year-old St. Francis Dam collapsed just before midnight the evening of March 12.

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On this date:

In 1639, New College was renamed Harvard College for clergyman John Harvard.

In 1781, the seventh planet of the solar system, Uranus, was discovered by Sir William Herschel.

In 1865, Confederate President Jefferson Davis signed a measure allowing black slaves to enlist in the Confederate States Army with the promise they would be set free.

In 1901, the 23rd President of the United States, Benjamin Harrison, died in Indianapolis at age 67.

In 1925, the Tennessee General Assembly approved a bill prohibiting the teaching of the theory of evolution. (Gov. Austin Peay (pee) signed the measure on March 21.)

In 1933, banks in the U.S. began to reopen after a "holiday" declared by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1947, the Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe musical "Brigadoon," about a Scottish village which magically reappears once every hundred years, opened on Broadway.

In 1954, the Battle of Dien Bien Phu began during the First Indochina War as Viet Minh forces attacked French troops, who were defeated nearly two months later.

In 1964, bar manager Catherine "Kitty" Genovese, 28, was stabbed to death near her Queens, New York, home; the case gained notoriety over the supposed reluctance of Genovese's neighbors to respond to her cries for help.

In 1980, Ford Motor Co. Chairman Henry Ford II announced he was stepping down, the same day a jury in Winamac, Indiana, found the company not guilty of reckless homicide in the fiery deaths of three young women in a Ford Pinto.

In 1988, yielding to student protests, the board of trustees of Gallaudet University in Washington D.C., a liberal arts college for the hearing-impaired, chose I. King Jordan to become the school's first deaf president.

In 1996, a gunman burst into an elementary school in Dunblane, Scotland, and opened fire, killing 16 children and one teacher before killing himself.

Ten years ago: The body of Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho (POW'-loh fah-RAHJ' rah-HOO') was found in a shallow grave in northern Iraq, two weeks after he was kidnapped by gunmen in one of the most dramatic attacks against the country's small Christian community. Gold hit a record, rising to \$1,000 an ounce for the first time. Bode Miller clinched the men's overall World Cup ski title in Bormio, Italy.

Five years ago: Jorge Bergoglio (HOHR'-hay behr-GOHG'-lee-oh) of Argentina was elected pope, choosing the name Francis; he was the first pontiff from the Americas and the first from outside Europe in more than a millennium.

One year ago: The Congressional Budget Office said that 14 million Americans would lose coverage the next year under House Republican legislation remaking the nation's health care system, and that number would balloon to 24 million by 2026. Once the world's most-wanted fugitive, Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, the man known as "Carlos the Jackal," appeared in a French court for a deadly 1974 attack on a Paris shopping arcade that killed two people. (He was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for the third time.)

Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician Roy Haynes is 93. Country singer Jan Howard is 88. Songwriter Mike Stoller (STOH'-ler) is 85. Singer-songwriter Neil Sedaka is 79. Opera singer Julia Migenes is 69. Actor William H. Macy is 68. Political commentator Charles Krauthammer is 68. Comedian Robin Duke is 64. Actress Dana Delany is 62. Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., is 61. Rock musician Adam Clayton (U2) is 58. Jazz musician Terence Blanchard is 56. Actor Christopher Collet is 50. Rock musician Matt McDonough (Mudvayne) is 49. Actress Annabeth Gish is 47. Actress Tracy Wells is 47. Rapper-actor Common is 46. Rapper Khujo (Goodie Mob, The Lumberjacks) is 46. Singer Glenn Lewis is 43. Actor Danny Masterson is 42. Bluegrass musician Clayton Campbell (The Gibson Brothers) is 37. Actor Noel Fisher is 34. Singers Natalie and Nicole Albino (Nina Sky) are 34. Actor Emile Hirsch is 33. Olympic gold medal skier Mikaela Shiffrin is 23.

Thought for Today: "Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing." — John Stuart Mill, English philosopher and economist (1806-1873).