

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 15, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 244 ~ 1 of 42



**Hanlon Brothers**  
**Gravel Hauling**

New & Cleaning of  
Stockdams with our  
60' reach trackhoe

**605/395-6531**

## 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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- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Hanlon Brothers Ad
- 1- Henry Township Notice
- 1- Bates Township Notice
- 2- Several Brief Items
- 3- SDSU Extension Community Vitality Team Works with All Communities
- 3- BDM Rural Water Ad
- 4- Help Wanted at Groton Care & Rehab
- 4- Game, Fish and Parks to Stock Rainbow Trout Below Oahe Dam
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## Bates Township Review Board Notice

Bates Township Equalization Meeting Notice:  
The Bates Township Board of Equalization will meet at the Clerk's home on Tuesday, March 20th, 2018 at 7 pm.

All persons disputing their assessments are requested to notify the clerk prior to the meeting.

Betty Geist  
Bates Township Clerk  
14523 409th Ave  
Conde, SD 57434

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

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

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## Groton Prairie Mixed

**Team Standings:** Shih Tzus 13, Coyotes 13, Chipmunks 13, Cheetahs 13, Jackelopes 12, Foxes 8

**Men's High Games:** Brad Waage 224, 202, 197, Brad Larson, 196, Doug Jorgensen 188

**Women's High Games:** Vicki Walter 173, 163, Nicole Kassube 167, Lori Giedt 163

**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage 623, Brad Larson 553, Mike Siegler 511,

**Women's High Series:** Vicki Walter 498, Lori Giedt 472, Nicole Kassube 432

## Eagle Day 2018

Eagle Day 2018 will be held Sunday, March 25, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Come and meet the staff and visit the refuge. GET a tour of the visitor center with a biologist. Climb the fire tower to view the prairie landscape. See the local wildlife and catch the great migration. Auto tour route will be open weather permitting.

The refuge is located eight miles north of Columbia on Brown County 16.

## Living Stations of the Cross to be presented March 28th

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church will again be portraying "The Living Stations of the Cross" on Wednesday, March 28, 2018 at 7 pm. There will be refreshments served afterwards. The Confirmation Class and HS Class will be the actors. Hannah Lewandowski and Luke Thorson are the co-Senior directors and Wyatt Locke and Alexis Simon are the co-Junior Directors. Wyatt and Alexis will take over next year and become the senior directors.

## Harding III to perform Saturday in Groton

Leland Harding III to put on Gospel Show at the Groton Community Center Saturday, March 17th 3-5 pm. He will be performing songs of his Country Christian Album "You Got To Have Faith", along with some Gospel Standards. This is a Free Concert.

Leland Harding III - I'm A Believer- Spin 30 Christian Chart Leland is currently #29

## 2018 Spring Soccer Registration is open

\$55 per player with \$110 family cap. Registration open until March 25th. After March 25th \$75 per player. Register at <http://www.grotonsoccer.com/>

## Emmanuel's Pastor to be installed

Pastor Young Chung will be installed as the new pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church on Sunday, March 25 during the 9 am worship. Brunch following worship.

The Reverend David B. Zellmer, Bishop from the South Dakota Synod, will be here to lead Pastor Young's Installation

## Silver Skates Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Carnival of Silver Skates is set for Sunday, March 18, 2 p.m., at the skating house in Groton. Parents and volunteers are needed to continue this great community tradition!

## SDSU Extension Community Vitality Team Works with All Communities

BROOKINGS, S.D. - SDSU Extension's Community Vitality team works with any community to help plan, set actionable goals and achieve success.

"Community can be defined many ways," explained Kari O'Neill, SDSU Extension Community Vitality Field Specialist. "Some communities are set by geography, increasingly, however, the word community also defines a group of people with similar interests."

O'Neill explained that SDSU Extension Community Vitality team works to fulfill the Land Grant mission of outreach by helping people improve their lives.

"Literally," she said. "If a group wants to improve themselves or the lives of the people in the group, it's our job to help."

Since 2012, O'Neill has worked with the South Dakota Specialty Producers Association (SDSPA) to help them organize, market and distribute their products locally.

South Dakota Specialty Producers Association is a nonprofit membership organization of growers, processors, and others interested in producing specialty crops such as; fruits and vegetables, specialty meats, wine and honey. As the organization's treasurer, Kim Brannen explained, "things that can be grown in South Dakota, sold locally to benefit local economies, and produce good food for all of our citizens."

Like all volunteer members of the organization's leadership, Brannen is a specialty food producer. Brannen owns Gavin's Point Vineyards.

"The members have a passion," O'Neill said. "They are a community of individuals with a shared mission. This is a group that is on the move."

In the beginning, O'Neill worked closely with the South Dakota Specialty Producers Association, meeting with them frequently and providing evidence-based guidance on everything from hiring a director and building an efficient distribution model.

Today, they only rely on her for advice and periodic leadership training. She recently led a workshop during a South Dakota Specialty Producers Association meeting that focused on action planning for the future.

"The event was set up to figure out how we could work together with other interest communities and organizations to work out solutions and build communication and collaboration," Brannen said. "They (SDSU Extension Community Vitality team) have a background in agriculture and understand the issues."

To learn more about SDSU Extension Community Vitality and how the team can work with your community, contact Kenneth Sherin, SDSU Extension Community Vitality Program Director, 605.995.7378 or [kenneth.sherin@sdstate.edu](mailto:kenneth.sherin@sdstate.edu).

### BDM RURAL WATER SYSTEM, INC.

## 38th Annual Meeting



Monday, March 26, 2018

6:00 p.m.

BDM Building, Britton, SD

*Lunch after the meeting • Door Prizes*

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

***Please attend your water system's annual meeting!***

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## Game, Fish and Parks to Stock Rainbow Trout Below Oahe Dam

PIERRE, S.D. - South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) will stock rainbow trout at Oahe Marina on March 27, weather permitting.

Crews from Cleghorn Springs State Fish Hatchery in Rapid City will stock rainbow trout ranging in size from 10 to 12 inches in length.

Rainbow trout will not be stocked in Oahe Marina in 2019 or 2020 in order to free hatchery production space and allow biologists to explore different cold-water stocking opportunities for Lake Oahe.

Rainbow trout will be stocked in Mickelson Pond in Pierre each fall to provide trout fishing opportunity in the area.

Shoreline access and boat launching facilities below Oahe Dam provide opportunities for both boat and shore anglers.

### Maintenance Supervisor Wanted:

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

### Day Shift C.N.A. Wanted

#### Sign-on Bonus

☆☆☆ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ☆☆☆

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

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



1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

## Funds Available for Specialty Crop Advancement

PIERRE, S.D. –The South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDA) announces that funds are available for Specialty Crop Block Grants.

The funds can be used for marketing, promotion, research, food safety, nutrition, distribution and best management practices to advance the specialty crop industry. Specialty crops are generally defined as fruits, nuts, vegetables, honey and some turf and ornamental crops. A full list of specialty crops is also available on the SDDA website <http://sdda.sd.gov/>.

“These grants give farmers a way to increase the demand for the specialty crops they’re already growing,” says SDDA grant and loan specialist, Kimberly Sturm. “This year’s projects are maximizing the value of specialty crops and contributing to South Dakota’s greater agricultural economy.”

Stakeholders have identified this year’s top priorities as enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales, increased consumption and sustainable practices of specialty crop production. The deadline for applications is May 1, 2018. Details explaining the application are available at <https://sdda.sd.gov/grants/specialty-crop-block-grant/>.

Applications should be submitted via email to [kimberly.sturm@state.sd.us](mailto:kimberly.sturm@state.sd.us) and four printed copies, including an original must be mailed to SDDA at 523 E Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501. Applications are due May 1, 2018.

For additional information please contact Kimberly Sturm at 605.773.4516 or visit her at SDDA’s Ag Development Office at 523 E Capitol Ave, Pierre, SD 57501

Agriculture is a major contributor to South Dakota’s economy, generating \$25.6 billion in annual economic activity and employing over 115,000 South Dakotans. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture’s mission is to promote, protect and preserve South Dakota agriculture for today and tomorrow. Visit us online at <http://sdda.sd.gov> or find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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## South Dakota group shares \$50,000 Powerball prize

A last-minute decision proved worthwhile for many employees of the Lucky Dog Bar and Grill in Volga.

A group dubbed the "Lucky Dog 19" split Saturday's \$50,000 Powerball prize as several employees and their significant others collaborated to earn the game's second prize. The group purchased their tickets at Casey's General store in Volga and matched four of the five winning numbers, plus the Powerball.

"It was the first time we've ever done it," said Angela Tesch. "One of the employees insisted that we get tickets, so everyone put in \$2 about 45 minutes before the drawing."

Tesch noted that the group of 19 chose to purchase Powerball tickets due to a climbing jackpot that was at more than \$380 million. Shortly after the drawing, members of the Lucky Dog 19 began checking their tickets to see if their decision paid off. Tesch noticed that they were just one number from claiming the game's jackpot, which created excitement that only escalated once the group discovered that their tickets garnered a \$50,000 prize.

"I just kept looking at the number we didn't have and hoping that it would change," Tesch said. "I only thought that we won \$10,000, and everyone was excited until someone looked and found out we won \$50,000. That caused much more excitement."

Now that the shock of winning has subsided, the Lucky Dog 19 doesn't have huge plans for its prize, but the group may test its luck again in the future.

"It's a nice little cushion for everyone to have a fun day or anything else that they want to do," Tesch said. "We haven't gotten together and talked, but this may have been a one in a lifetime win. We will probably try again though."



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## Today in Weather History

March 15, 1941: Beware the Ides of March. The most severe blizzard in modern history strikes North Dakota and Minnesota. The blizzard began on a Saturday night while many are traveling, and thus claims 71 lives. Winds gust to 75 mph at Duluth, Minnesota, and reach 85 mph at Grand Forks, North Dakota. Snow drifts twelve feet high were reported in north central Minnesota. A cold front traveling 30 mph crosses Minnesota in just seven hours.

March 15, 2010: Snowmelt runoff from an extensive snow cover flooded many creeks, roads, along with thousands of acres of pasture and cropland throughout northeast South Dakota. There were numerous road closures. The flooding lasted through the end of the month and for many locations in April. The counties mainly affected were Brown, Marshall, Day, Spink, and Roberts. Numerous communities were affected including Aberdeen, Claremont, Waubay, Amherst, Kidder, and the Richmond Lake area. The Claremont, Amherst, and Britton areas were the hardest hit with flooded land and roads. Several farms were surrounded by water with some people stranded. Between Aberdeen and Britton, sixty percent of the area was under water. Thousands of acres of cropland will not be planted due to too much water with estimates that 20 to 25 percent of Brown county cropland would not be planted. Many people in northeast South Dakota have had too much water for many years. The road damage was extensive, and repairs will be in the millions of dollars. Many roads across the area will also have to be raised. Many people had extra-long commutes due to flooded streets with some people having to move out of their homes. Across Day and Marshall Counties, rising lakes threatened many homes and cabins with sandbagging taking place. Most lakes and rivers across northeast South Dakota were at or near record levels.

1938: A tornado hit McPaul, Iowa while moving from southeast to northwest. Another tornado raced through Batesville, Illinois at 60 to 65 mph. Another tornado causing F4 damage killed 10 and injured 12 in St. Clair County, Missouri. This tornado was part of an outbreak that produced four different tornadoes and was responsible for 11 deaths and 42 injuries.

1952: On Reunion Island, some 400 miles east of Madagascar 127.56 inches of rain fell in a three-day period in the spring of 1952. This set a world record for the most rainfall in a 72 hour period. Also from the 15th to the 16th 73.62 inches of rain fell in this 24 hours period at Cilaos, La Reunion Island in the South Indian Ocean to set a world record.

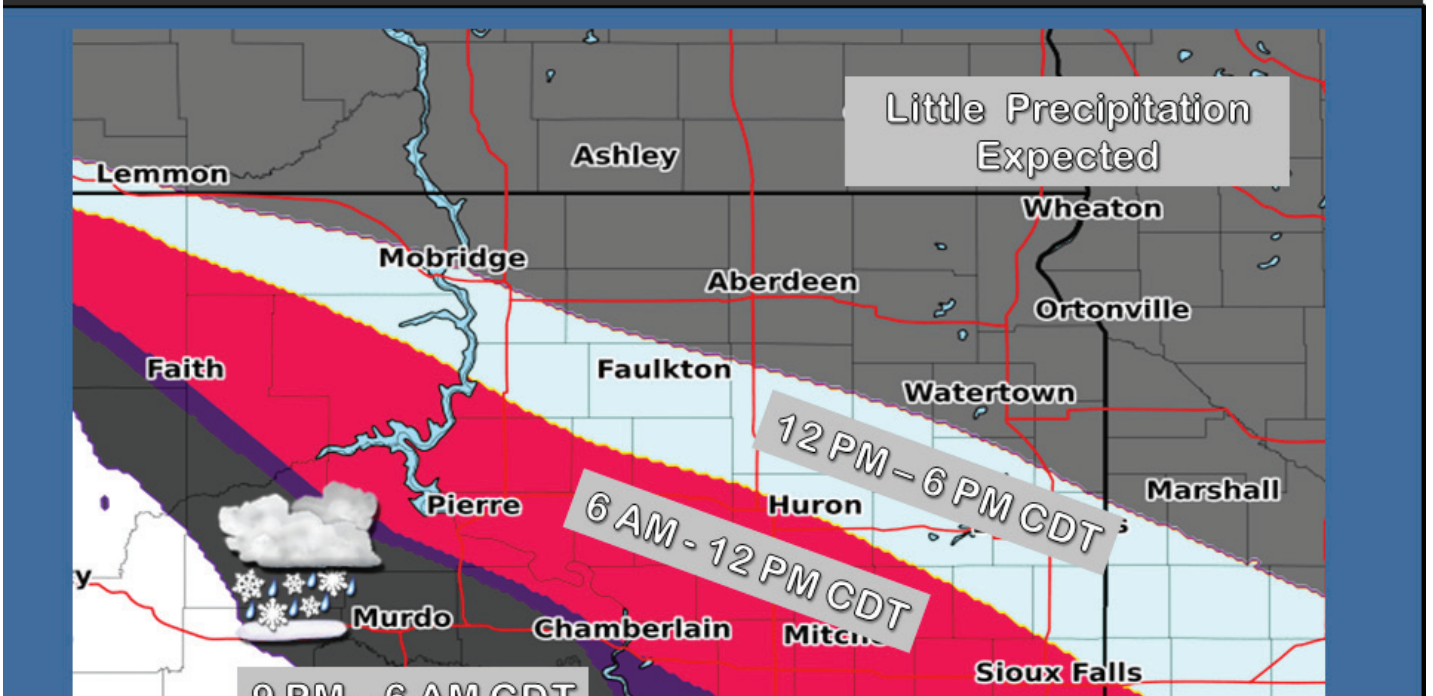
2004: Brownsville, Texas breaks a century-old record for the most significant daily rainfall accumulation for March with 3.23 inches.

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Thu Mar 15	Fri Mar 16	Sat Mar 17	Sun Mar 18	Mon Mar 19	Tue Mar 20	Wed Mar 21
36°F	34°F	38°F	39°F	36°F	35°F	38°F
18°F	21°F	22°F	27°F	21°F	19°F	26°F
NE 13 MPH	E 16 MPH Precip 20%	E 7 MPH	SSE 8 MPH	NE 11 MPH Precip 50%	NNW 8 MPH Precip 30%	S 10 MPH

## Good Weather Today Precipitation Start Time For Friday



A winter weather system will begin to affect the region late tonight through Friday. This system will bring mixed precipitation with a tenth of an inch of ice and six inches of snow possible. Locations along and south of Highway 212 will have the best potential of seeing precipitation.



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## Yesterday's Weather

**High Outside Temp: 39.0 F at 4:20 PM**

**Low Outside Temp: 22.9 F at 7:10 AM**

**Wind Chill:**

**High Gust: 17.0 Mph at 12:15 AM**

**Precip:**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 79° in 2015**

**Record Low: -29° in 1897**

**Average High: 39°F**

**Average Low: 20°F**

**Average Precip in March: 0.47**

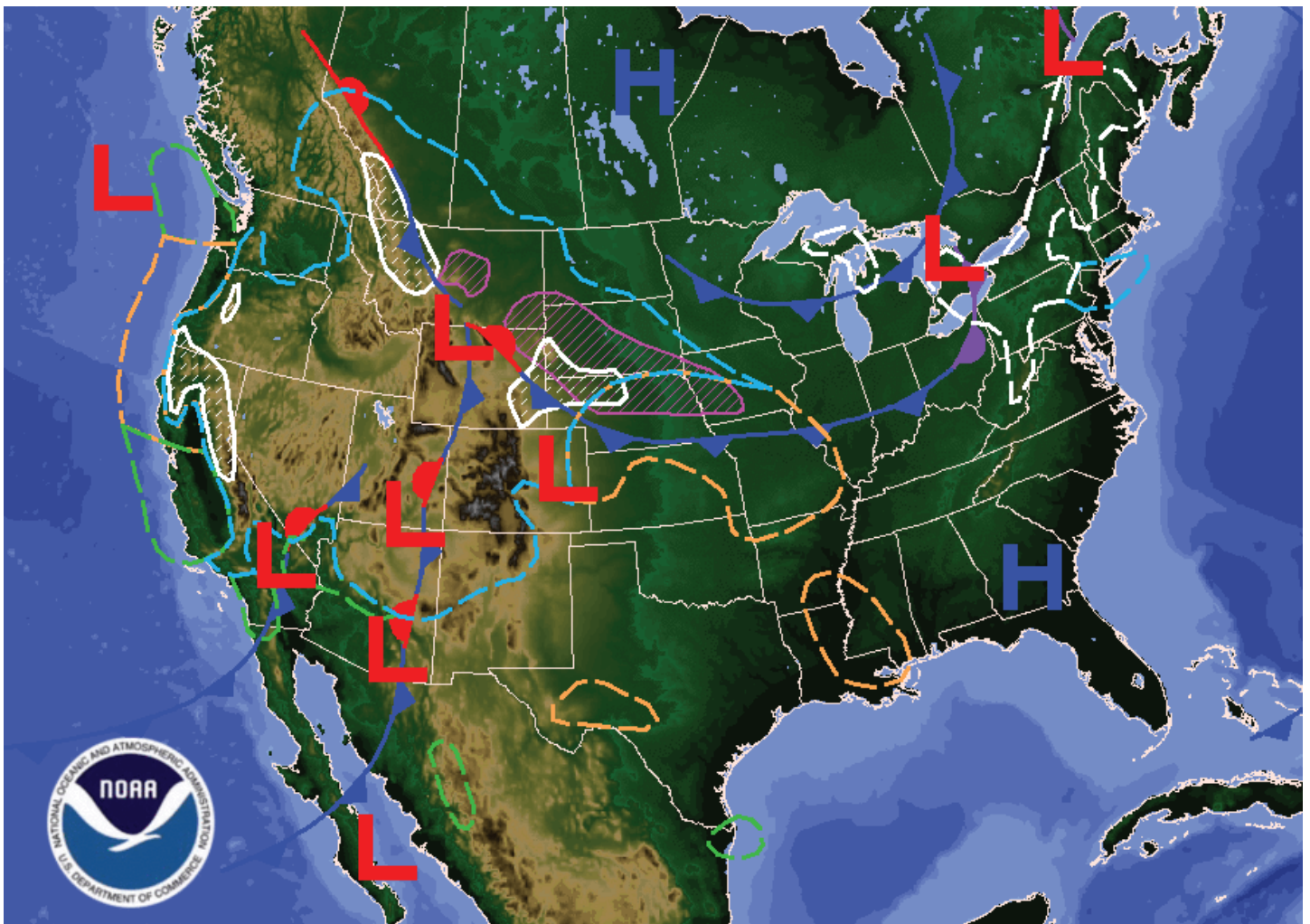
**Precip to date in March: 0.94**

**Average Precip to date: 1.49**

**Precip Year to Date: 1.35**

**Sunset Tonight: 7:39 p.m.**

**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:44 a.m.**



### Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Mar 15, 2018, issued 5:14 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)

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## THE LORD REIGNS!

"Religion is an illusion of the emotions," declared Sigmund Freud the psychiatrist, "and its funeral is at hand." Frederick Nietzsche one day announced, "God is dead!"

No doubt that their gods died with them but our God is alive! Proclaimed the Psalmist in Psalm 97:1, "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad!"

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," wrote Moses. And He never abandoned nor cast aside His role in controlling it. He continues to be the source and sustainer of all its life, the strength in all of its movements and the power behind its journey.

The earth spins like a top at a speed of 1,000 miles per hour without ever speeding up or slowing down so that we might have a predictable number of hours for each day and night. It is tilted at a specific angle that causes our seasons. And these two facts are simply the beginning of the marvelous miracles of our earth. And why is this so? To demonstrate the fact that "The Lord reigns."

Our sun maintains a temperature that is warm enough to sustain us but never hot enough to burn us intentionally or freeze us to death when winter arrives. Why this consistency that we never question? "The Lord reigns."

Wherever we look and whatever we study we see a pattern of consistency and continuity, predictability and potential. God does reign. God does rule. And because He does, we can rest assured in His love and salvation.

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, that You reign over all Your creation. May You also reign in our lives, too. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 97:1 The Lord reigns; Let the earth rejoice; Let the multitude of isles be glad!

## 2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/28/2018 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 3/24/2018 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 4/13/2018 Elementary School Carnival, 5 p.m.
- 5/5/2018 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/27/2018 Historic Trinity Church Pump Organ Concert.
- 5/28/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- 6/14/2018 Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- 6/15/2018 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/16/2018 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2018 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/22/2018 Summer Fest (4th Sunday in July)
- 9/8/2018 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/6/2018 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/12/2018 Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
  
- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- SDSU Golf Tourney
- Sunflower Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Tour of Homes
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash  
03-06-22-25-27  
(three, six, twenty-two, twenty-five, twenty-seven)  
Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America  
08-21-38-50-51, Star Ball: 4, ASB: 2  
(eight, twenty-one, thirty-eight, fifty, fifty-one; Star Ball: four; ASB: two)  
Estimated jackpot: \$22.8 million

Mega Millions  
Estimated jackpot: \$345 million

Powerball  
06-12-24-41-68, Powerball: 9, Power Play: 3  
(six, twelve, twenty-four, forty-one, sixty-eight; Powerball: nine; Power Play: three)  
Estimated jackpot: \$420 million

### Zags are back, this time hoping for one more win and a title

By EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A handful of players from Gonzaga's history-making Final Four team have moved on. As a program, though, the Zags are right where they expect to be: In the tournament, playing well and, as always, a threat to stick around for a while.

Gonzaga is in March Madness for the 20th straight time, making it only the sixth program to accomplish that. Hoops fans have heard of the others: Kansas, North Carolina, Arizona, Duke, Michigan State.

Despite losing four of their top five scorers, including lottery pick Zach Collins, to the NBA and other corners of pro basketball, the Bulldogs (30-4) rolled through the 2017-18 season, winning their conference regular-season and tournament titles en route to a No. 4 seed in the West. Their path to the program's second Final Four starts Thursday against 13th-seeded UNC-Greensboro (27-7), which last made the tournament in 2001, when Gonzaga was in Year 3 of its current streak.

"Gonzaga is basically, like, almost an ideal blueprint for what a mid-major program aspires to be," Spartans forward Jordy Kuiper says.

Part of the sustained success involves not taking anything for granted, especially this time of year.

Junior guard Josh Perkins has been harping on the mantra "Little things matter in March" — a nod to the notion that every rebound and every loose ball could be the difference between going home early and getting to San Antonio for the Final Four.

"We're heading into the tournament with a little chip on our shoulder because of memories of last year," senior Silas Melson said, referencing the 71-65 loss to North Carolina in the final. "I wouldn't say it's a burden. It's more motivation than anything."

Coach Mark Few said he has walked the fine line between using last year — when the Zags finally made the Final Four after years of close calls — as fuel, without putting the burdens of the close call on a team



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that is fundamentally different.

"I needed to take a step back and be fair to them," Few said. "Holding them to the standard of last year's team, it was probably very unfair for a couple of months there. I reached the point in January or February where I backed off and let them be who they are. They've definitely thrived with that."

Other things to watch in the West region Thursday:

**DIOP VS. THE DAUMINATOR:** The matchup between No. 5 Ohio State and No. 12 South Dakota State features two of the country's best forwards.

It pits Big Ten player of the year Keita Bates-Diop (19.4 points, 8.8 rebounds) against Summit League Player of the Year Mike Daum (23 and 10), aka "The Dauminator." Daum is one of only three Division I players to average a double-double this season.

The 5 vs. 12 upset has become so common it can't really be seen as an upset anymore. Especially not in this case. This game has been targeted by no fewer than a dozen pundits as ripe for a Jackrabbits win. South Dakota State is in its third straight tournament. Last year, it came in as a 16 seed and was playing nose-to-nose with Gonzaga for 35 minutes before falling 66-46.

This year: "Obviously, expectations are really different for us," Daum said. "We're a group of guys who play really well together."

**COUGARS, AZTECS DANCE AGAIN:** In Wichita, sixth-seeded Houston (26-7) will make its first NCAA Tournament appearance since 2010 when it faces No. 11 seed San Diego State (22-10).

The once-proud Cougars have been to five Final Fours, including three straight by the Phi Slama Jama teams of 1982-84, but have not won a game in the tournament since that last foray. But their coach, Kelvin Sampson, has some experience making deep runs, including a Final Four trip when he was with Oklahoma.

San Diego State is back in the tournament under Brian Dutcher, who's in his first season in charge but is no stranger to this stage. He was on Steve Fisher's bench for eight previous NCAA trips.

**ROLLING WOLVERINES:** Michigan earned the No. 3 seed in the West Region after five straight wins to cap the regular season and four wins in four days to win a second straight Big Ten Tournament title.

The streaking Wolverines (28-7) will face No. 14 seed Montana on Thursday night in Wichita.

Michigan is certainly familiar with this stage, featuring four players who were part of its Sweet 16 team a year ago. Among them are Moe Wagner, one of the tournament's breakout stars, and Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman, who also played in the NCAA Tournament the previous season.

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AP Sports Writers Dave Skretta and John Marshall contributed to this story.

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More AP college basketball: <https://collegebasketball.ap.org>; [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25) and <http://apne.ws/SYS9Fwu>

## Native American overdose deaths surge since opioid epidemic

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Overdose deaths in Native American communities have skyrocketed in the time the opioid epidemic has swept the U.S. and federal officials are looking for solutions.

Native Americans and Alaska Natives saw a fivefold increase in overdose deaths between 1999 and 2015, Dr. Michael Toedt told the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on Wednesday.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention figures indicate the increase in that period was higher for Native Americans than any other group, jumping to roughly 22 deaths for every 100,000 people in metropolitan areas and nearly 20 for every 100,000 people in non-metropolitan areas.

But the statistics, while staggering, may represent an undercount for Native Americans and Alaska Natives by as much as 35 percent, because death certificates often list them as belonging to another race, said Toedt, who is the Indian Health Services' chief medical officer.

The hearing in Washington comes as a growing number of tribes file lawsuits against drug manufacturers and distributors, saying they misrepresented addiction risks.

Federal officials said the opioid epidemic is straining tribal resources.



U.S. Attorney John Anderson, of New Mexico, said tribal leaders in a northern stretch of the state had called for solutions. One pueblo police chief described losing a brother and sister to overdoses, he said.

"The opioid epidemic knows no boundaries," he said, "and so our pueblos are equally affected by heroin and prescription opioids."

Several senators questioned whether a decline in prosecutions in Indian Country cases also had contributed to the crisis.

"We need a plan and it can't just be about treating the addiction," said U.S. Heidi Heitkamp, D-North Dakota. "It needs to be a plan that gets law enforcement on the ground."

## Judge: Corps responsible for flooding, damage in 4 states

By JIM SALTER, Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should act immediately to make flood control the top priority on the Missouri River, an attorney for hundreds of farmers, landowners and business operators said Wednesday after a federal judge ruled the agency was responsible for recurring flooding.

Judge Nancy B. Firestone's ruling Tuesday in Washington cited river management changes initiated by the Corps of Engineers starting in 2004, including efforts to aid endangered fish and birds, that led to damages estimated to exceed \$300 million in four states: Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa. The Corps manages the Missouri River's system of dams and locks and decides when and how much water is released from reservoirs into the river.

In her 259-page ruling, Firestone wrote that flooding "was caused by and was the foreseeable result" of the Corps' management of the river. Another trial will start in October to determine how much money the lawsuit's 372 plaintiffs will receive.

"We are evaluating the court's ruling, and considering next steps, in coordination with the Department of Justice," Corps spokesman Gene Pawlik said in an email.

The lawsuit, filed in 2014, contended the Corps unconstitutionally deprived people of their land, essentially taking it without compensation. Firestone found in favor of the plaintiffs in five of the six years in which flooding was blamed on Corps management, disallowing flood claims in 2011.

R. Dan Boulware, an attorney for the plaintiffs, said he will ask the judge to reconsider her decision disallowing the 2011 flood claims. Still, Boulware said the ruling makes it clear that the Missouri River is changed and is more prone to flooding.

"Now Congress needs to do something. They need to step in and say, 'We've got a problem here,'" Boulware said in a phone interview Wednesday.

U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt, a Missouri Republican, agreed.

"I hope this decision is the first step in a new direction for the Corps," Blunt said in a statement. "I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure the river is managed in a way that prioritizes flood control, while balancing other interests."

The lawsuit contended the Corps made a management shift in 2004 that downplayed flood control while emphasizing restoring ecosystem and habitat creation for threatened and endangered species. The court ruled that practices such as notching of dikes and reopening of chutes worsened the flood risk.

The lawsuit also cited the Corps' practice of releasing threatened and endangered species from reservoirs, even when river levels below the dams were high. And, it cited increasing reservoir storage as a factor in the recent floods.

The 63-day trial began in Kansas City, Missouri, before moving to Washington. It concluded in December.

## Grocer group asks judges to bar food stamp figures' release

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A grocery trade group has asked the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals to block disclosure of annual food stamp revenues for stores participating in the federal program.

The Argus Leader reports a Food Marketing Institute lawyer told a three-judge panel Wednesday that

releasing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program information would cause competitive harm.

The group appealed a judge's 2016 ruling that the sales figures through the program are public records. They appealed after the program's administrator, the U.S. Agriculture Department, declined to do so in the Argus Leader newspaper's Freedom of Information Act lawsuit.

Gavin Villareal, a Food Marketing Institute attorney, says the numbers could be used to determine a store's total sales. Newspaper lawyer Jon Arneson says there's no way to know the percentage of a store's overall sales that come from the program.

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

## Big Dance becoming commonplace for South Dakota State

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

The South Dakota State men's basketball team is bringing more to the Big Dance than just a big man with an intimidating nickname and NBA potential.

While two-time defending Summit League Player of the Year Mike "The Dauminator" Daum is the team's centerpiece, the squad from the small Midwestern university features seven other tournament-experienced players seeking the school's first NCAA Tournament win.

It won't be easy — the West Region No. 12 seed takes on fifth-seed Ohio State (24-8) on Thursday in Boise, Idaho. But the Jackrabbits (28-6) have had plenty of practice. The school will be making its third straight appearance in the tournament and its fifth in the last seven seasons.

The spotlight will be on Daum, a 6-foot-9 junior who is sixth nationally in scoring and a finalist for the Karl Malone Award given annually to the nation's top power forward. But the Jackrabbits are a diverse team, according to head coach T.J. Otzelberger.

"We've got a team that has depth. We've got a team that can go big, that can go small. We've got different guys that can step up," he said. "We can beat you where Mike has 30 points, and we can beat you where seven guys are in double figures. It's really a credit to our guys — their togetherness and unity."

The success of the men's program — and the SDSU women, who are making their eighth NCAA Tournament appearance in 10 years — can be credited to several factors, athletic director Justin Sell said.

When the school with an enrollment of 12,500 made the jump from Division II in 2004, it already had a history of basketball success, including a 2003 women's national championship.

"That just carried over," Sell said. "I really believe that group was the one that gave our university and its supporters the idea or notion that we can do this, and we can be good."

Rather than compete with major D-1 schools that recruit in high school hotbeds such as Florida and California, SDSU has concentrated on talent regionally. Twenty of the players on this year's men's and women's squads are from South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Another five hail from North Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa, with one each coming from Illinois and Washington state.

"I think it shows the talent in the region," Sell said. "You wonder how many kids have left our state and region (in the past) to go somewhere else because they had Division I talent."

The university attracts those athletes in part with a solid sports program — the athletic department's operating budget has grown from about \$11 million in 2009, the school's first year of Division I postseason eligibility, to \$21 million. In recent years it has built a \$65 million football stadium and a \$32 million multi-sport indoor practice facility it bills as the largest of its kind at the Division I level.

Fundraising by the Jackrabbit Club boosters group has grown from about \$333,000 annually to more than \$1.4 million since 2009, and the city of 23,000 people puts about 2,800 in the seats for every men's home game.

"We've got a Big Ten or Big 12 mentality with ma-and-pa values, and I think that's hard to find nowadays," Sell said.

Daum, from Kimball, Nebraska, in a recent interview posted online by the NCAA said the "fantastic" atmosphere he found at the school during a recruiting visit sold him on SDSU.

"There was just a great program, and you could tell that this community had such a great feel and atmosphere to it, that it was something hard to resist," he said.

Daum also credited players like Nate Wolters for "laying such a solid foundation for the coaching staff to bring in high-level recruits." Wolters was an All-American for SDSU in 2013 and has gone on to play in the NBA.

David Richman, head coach of rival North Dakota State, which made NCAA Tournament appearances in 2009, 2014 and 2015, said SDSU is a tough opponent because of "the passionate fan base that they have, their history and tradition."

SDSU's success has progressed to the point where simply making it to the tournament is no longer the primary goal. The men want a win. For the women, who have advanced to the tournament's second round twice and will face Villanova on Friday, the target is even loftier — the Sweet Sixteen.

"That's how we've built these teams — to win games in the tournament," Sell said.

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## Deal reached to fix unintended tax break for certain farmers

By **STEVE KARNOWSKI, Associated Press**

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Congressional committees and farm groups have crafted language to fix a provision in the federal tax overhaul that gave an unintended tax advantage to farmers who sell their crops to cooperatives instead of other buyers. Both sides now hope to include it in a massive spending bill.

The deal announced Tuesday is meant to keep the playing field level between co-ops and other crop buyers, ranging from independent local grain companies to agribusiness giants such as Cargill and ADM.

The agreement "achieves this goal and restores balanced competition within the marketplace," said a joint statement issued by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch of Utah and Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts of Kansas, plus GOP Sens. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, John Thune of South Dakota and John Hoeven of North Dakota.

"I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House and Senate to enact this solution as quickly as possible," House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady of Texas said in a similar statement.

The complex language is the product of weeks of negotiations among committee leaders and staffers with farm groups, including the National Grain and Feed Association and the National Council of Farm Cooperatives. If Congress approves, the fix would be retroactive to Jan. 1.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture endorsed the agreement Wednesday.

"Federal tax policy should not be picking winners and losers in the marketplace," Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Greg Ibach said.

The agreement now needs to get folded into a \$1.3 trillion spending bill that Congress must pass by March 23 to avert another federal government shutdown.

But negotiations over the package have been roiled by a host of divisive issues, such as abortion and President Donald Trump's proposed border wall. The bill needs at least some support from Democrats to pass the Senate.

Randy Gordon, president of the National Grain and Feed Association, urged his members Wednesday to lobby their lawmakers, saying time is of the essence.

But the National Farmers Union urged Congress to reject the language. The group advocates for smaller-scale farmers and has deep connections with the co-op movement.

"To repeal parts of this important tax break would be to strike at the single most important benefit family farmers received from tax reform," NFU President Roger Johnson said.

## South Dakota students join national gun violence walkout

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Students at some South Dakota schools joined their counterparts around the country in a walkout to take a stand against gun violence.

The walkout happened at 10 a.m. Wednesday and comes one month following the Feb. 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Some of the demonstrations lasted 17 minutes — one minute for each of the 17 students and staff members killed in Florida.

Students in Sioux Falls, Rapid City and Aberdeen were among those who took part in the walkout.

## Jackley: State gets \$27M tobacco settlement, sues drugmakers

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota will get \$27.5 million that has been tied up in a long legal dispute between the state and large tobacco companies, Attorney General Marty Jackley said Wednesday.

Jackley's office said the agreement settles a long dispute over enforcement of a 1998 settlement that requires tobacco companies to compensate 46 states, including South Dakota, for public health costs from smoking-related illnesses. The companies had argued the state wasn't properly enforcing tobacco-control laws, Jackley said.

Alaska and North Dakota this week announced tobacco settlements for \$26 million and \$34 million. In South Dakota, Jackley said the settlement money will go to a state fund for education to "help teachers and their students."

The Education Enhancement Trust Fund currently provides funding for state aid to education and the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship, according to the Bureau of Finance and Management.

"I'm here today to really announce the conclusion of one lawsuit that's significant to the state and the beginning of another," Jackley told reporters at a press conference in which he also said that his office is suing several prescription drug manufacturers for deceptively marketing opioid medications.

The civil complaint dated Wednesday was filed in state court against Purdue Pharma, Endo Health Solutions and Janssen Pharmaceuticals. South Dakota is among more than a dozen states that have filed lawsuits against drugmakers.

The lawsuit alleges the drug companies broke state deceptive trade and Medicaid fraud laws, and created a public nuisance by spreading false information about the risks and benefits of opioid medications. The state is seeking damages, civil penalties and an end to any current "unlawful promotion of opioids."

Janssen Pharmaceuticals spokesperson Jessica Castles Smith said in a statement that the company's actions to promote the medications were appropriate and responsible. She said the allegations against the company are "baseless and unsubstantiated."

Purdue and Endo didn't immediately return requests for comment from The Associated Press.

## Retired South Dakota state official sentenced in scam

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A retired fraud investigator for the South Dakota Department of Revenue has been sentenced to two years in federal prison for bank fraud and money laundering.

Steven Knigge, 71, was accused of fraudulently asking banks in several states to wire money to an account belonging to him while he was working as a state official in 2015. Banks in Georgia, Arizona, Washington and Texas were targeted.

Court documents show the Rapid City resident requested a total of \$146,000 from five banks between July and September 2015. Most of the transactions were blocked by banks, but about \$42,000 were transferred into his account.

Knigge also wired about \$30,000 of the scammed money to individuals overseas, including \$9,500 to Nigeria, which constitutes money laundering.

Knigge reached a plea deal with prosecutors last fall and pleaded guilty. Charges of conspiracy, wire fraud and tampering were dismissed.

He received his prison sentence Friday. Knigge was also ordered to repay a bank in Arizona and Wash-



ington a total of about \$32,000, the Rapid City Journal reported .

"You were perfectly armed not to get caught in such a scheme," U.S. District Court Chief Judge Jeffrey Viken told Knigge.

Knigge's attorney, Angela Colbath, said he committed the offenses amid marital problems and after meeting someone overseas on an online dating site.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Benjamin Patterson said Knigge first started using his own money to send money overseas in November 2014. He said Knigge ran out of funds, and then used money from his children's accounts and assets before delving into "criminal conduct."

Patterson said Knigge tried to cover up his crimes by deleting 1,800 emails off his government-issued computer while working at the state revenue department in Rapid City.

Knigge told the court that he's still trying to understand why he committed the crimes, which he said brought him heartache and lost him friendships.

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

## Arsonist sues over medical care at Walworth County Jail

SELBY, S.D. (AP) — A woman serving a prison sentence for setting her bar on fire is suing Walworth County, its sheriff and jailers after she suffered a stroke while in their custody.

Lori Brandner alleges jail staff failed to adequately care for her despite knowing she had a history of strokes and required medical monitoring. Brandner suffered a stroke while in the Walworth County Jail in March 2016. She was hospitalized for more than two weeks.

The Argus Leader says Brandner is currently incarcerated at the South Dakota Women's Prison in Pierre. She and three co-defendants were convicted of setting fire to the Roadhouse Bar and Grill in Herreid in January 2015. Brandner submitted a \$310,000 insurance claim for the fire.

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

## South Dakota files lawsuit against 3 opioid manufacturers

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley has filed a lawsuit against several prescription drug manufacturers for deceptively marketing opioid medications.

Jackley filed the civil complaint dated Wednesday in state court against Purdue Pharma, Endo Health Solutions and Janssen Pharmaceuticals. The lawsuit alleges the drug companies broke state deceptive trade and Medicaid fraud laws and created a public nuisance by spreading false information about the risks and benefits of opioid medications.

Jackley says pharmaceutical companies that "knowingly and deceptively" hurt consumers must be held accountable. The defendants didn't immediately return requests for comment from The Associated Press.

The lawsuit says the state is seeking damages, civil penalties and an end to any current "unlawful promotion of opioids." The state says nearly 600,000 opioid prescriptions were written in South Dakota last year.

## Former grocer facing charges for failing to pay sales tax

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — The former owner of several rural grocery stores in South Dakota is facing charges for failing to pay seven months of sales tax.

The Daily Republic reports Mark Mora is accused of not paying sales tax for Corner Grocery stores in Tyndall, Tripp and Scotland between September 2016 and March 2017.

Mora and his wife ran the stores for less than a year and abruptly closed them last March. A South Dakota Department of Revenue official declined to disclose how much sales tax Mora allegedly failed to pay.

Mora has been charged with three felonies and 15 misdemeanors out of two area counties. It wasn't immediately clear if Mora has an attorney to comment on his behalf.



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

## **Dakota Wesleyan women's basketball team wins national title**

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — The Dakota Wesleyan University women's basketball team has won the program's first national title.

The Mitchell school beat Concordia University 82-59 on Tuesday in Sioux City, Iowa, to capture the NAIA Division II championship.

Tigers sophomore guard Kynedi Cheeseman scored 26 points in the title game and was named tournament most valuable player.

DWU finished the season with a 32-6 record, tying the school record for most wins in a season.

## **Yankton police investigating bogus bills circulating in city**

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Yankton police are investigating reports of counterfeit money circulating in the city. Police Chief Brian Paulsen tells the Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan that authorities have received five separate reports of fake \$100 bills being passed at businesses in recent days.

He says it's uncommon to see so many bogus bills passed in such a short span of time.

Some of the bills that have been confiscated are labeled as "for motion picture use only."

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

## **Without Toys R Us, 30,000 jobs, a black hole for toy makers**

**By ANNE D'INNOENZIO, AP Retail Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — The demise of Toys R Us will have a ripple effect on everything from toy makers to consumers to landlords.

The 70-year-old retailer is headed toward shuttering its U.S. operations, jeopardizing the jobs of some 30,000 employees while spelling the end for a chain known to generations of children and parents for its sprawling stores and Geoffrey the giraffe mascot.

The closing of the company's 740 U.S. stores over the coming months will finalize the downfall of the chain that succumbed to heavy debt and relentless trends that undercut its business, from online shopping to mobile games.

And it will force toy makers and landlords who depended on the chain to scramble for alternatives.

CEO David Brandon told employees Wednesday the company's plan is to liquidate all of its U.S. stores, according to an audio recording of the meeting obtained by The Associated Press.

Brandon said Toys R Us will try to bundle its Canadian business, with about 200 stores, and find a buyer. The company's U.S. online store would still be running for the next couple of weeks in case there's a buyer for it.

It's likely to also liquidate its businesses in Australia, France, Poland, Portugal and Spain, according to the recording. It's already shuttering its business in the United Kingdom. That would leave it with stores in Canada, central Europe and Asia, where it could find buyers for those assets.

Toys R Us Asia Ltd. has more than 400 retail outlets in Brunei, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. It is a Hong Kong-based joint venture with the Fung Group, which owns a 15 percent stake. It also controls Asian sourcing giant Li & Fung, a major supplier to Western retailers like Wal-Mart.

A Fung spokesperson did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

When Toys R Us initially announced it was filing for bankruptcy protection last year, the Asian venture said it was not affected and operated as a separate legal entity independent of other Toys R Us businesses around the world.

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In Hong Kong, where Toys R Us has 15 stores, parents said there were few other choices in a retail market dominated by a few big players.

"If you want something like a mainstream toy shop, then Toys R Us is the only place you can go," said Ching-ying Choi, whose home and office are both within walking distance of Toys R Us shops.

"Basically either it's Toys R Us or you go to specialized and very expensive toy shops that sell, for example, wooden toys that come from very far away countries like in Europe," she said.

Toys R Us had about 60,000 full-time and part-time employees worldwide last year.

Brandon said on the recording that the company would be filing liquidation papers and there would be a bankruptcy court hearing Thursday.

"We worked as hard and as long as we could to turn over every rock," Brandon told employees.

When the chain filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection last fall, saddled with \$5 billion in debt that hurt its attempts to compete as shoppers moved to Amazon and huge chains like Walmart, it pledged to stay open.

But Brandon told employees its sales performance during the holiday season was "devastating," as nervous customers and vendors shied away. That made its lenders more skittish about investing in the company. In January, it announced plans to close about 180 stores over the next couple of months, leaving it with a little more than 700 stores.

The company's troubles have affected toy makers Mattel and Hasbro, which are big suppliers to the chain. But the likely liquidation will have a bigger impact on smaller toy makers that rely more on the chain for sales. Many have been trying to diversify in recent months as they fretted about the chain's survival.

Toys R Us has been hurt by the shift to mobile devices taking up more play time. But steep sales declines over the holidays and thereafter were the deciding factor, said Jim Silver, who is editor-in-chief of toy review site TTPM.com.

The company didn't do enough to emphasize that it was reorganizing but not going out of business, Silver said. That misperception led customers to its stores because they didn't think they would be able to return gifts.

Now, the \$11 billion in sales still happening at Toys R Us each year will disperse to other retailers like Amazon and discounters, analysts say. Other chains, seeing that Toys R Us was vulnerable, got more aggressive. J.C. Penney opened toy sections last fall in all 875 stores. Target and Walmart have been expanding their toy selections. Even Party City is building up its toy offerings.

"Amazon may pick up the dollars, but won't deliver the experience needed for a toy retailer to survive and thrive in today's market," said Marc Rosenberg, a toy marketing executive.

Toys R Us had dominated the toy store business in the 1980s and early 1990s, when it was one of the first of the "category killers"— a store totally devoted to one thing. Its scale gave it leverage with toy sellers and it disrupted general merchandise stores and mom-and-pop shops. Children sang along with commercials about "the biggest toy store there is."

But the company lost ground to discounters like Target and Walmart, and then to Amazon, as even nostalgic parents sought deals elsewhere. GlobalData Retail estimates that nearly 14 percent of toy sales were made online in 2016, more than double the level five years ago. Toys R Us still has hundreds of stores, and analysts estimate it still sells about 20 percent of the toys bought in the United States.

It wasn't able to compete with a growing Amazon: The toy seller said in bankruptcy filings that Amazon's low prices were hard to match. And it said its Babies R Us chain lost customers to the online retailer's convenient subscription service, which let parents receive diapers and baby formula at their doorstep automatically. Toys R Us blamed its "old technology" for not offering its own subscriptions.

But the company's biggest albatross was that it struggled with massive debt since private-equity firms Bain Capital, KKR & Co. and Vornado Realty Trust took it private in a \$6.6 billion leveraged buyout in 2005. Weak sales prevented them from taking the company public again. With such debt levels, Toys R Us did not have the financial flexibility to invest in its business. The company closed its flagship store in Manhattan's Times Square, a huge tourist destination that featured its own Ferris wheel, about two years ago.

In filing for bankruptcy protection last fall, Toys R Us pledged to make its stores more interactive. It added demonstrators for the holiday season to show people how toys work, and began opening Play Labs at 42 stores, areas where children can play with different items.

AP Retail Writer Joseph Pisani contributed to this report in New York. AP Business Writer Kelvin Chan contributed from Hong Kong.

Follow Anne D'Innocenzio: <http://twitter.com/ADInnocenzio>

## Go Time? Rumor mill puts NCAA coaches, teams in awkward spot

By WILL GRAVES, AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Danny Hurley doesn't want to make it about himself.

And yet Hurley has been around the game all his life. He knows how these things go. A young(ish) coach with a pedigree and a track record of success gets it going at one level of college basketball, and soon the next level comes calling offering more money, more exposure, more resources and well, did we mention the money?

It happened to Hurley at Wagner. It took him all of two years to turn around the Seahawks, a makeover that landed him the job at Rhode Island in the spring of 2012.

Six years later, the rebuilding project Hurley envisioned when he took over the Rams is complete. Rhode Island (25-7) is in the NCAA Tournament for a second straight season for only the second time in school history and is the seventh seed in the East Region heading into Thursday's showdown with 10th-seeded Oklahoma.

The Rams are deep, talented and hard-working. And their coach is in demand, perhaps nowhere more so than in Pittsburgh, where the Panthers are looking for someone to replace Kevin Stallings, let go last week after an 8-24 season that included an 0-18 pratfall in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Hurley's name has been floated out there as a potential replacement. Whether it's true or not doesn't really matter. He hears it. And he knows his players hear it.

"It's something, social media age, for me to sit up here and say I have no awareness would be, you know, it wouldn't be truthful," Hurley said.

Call it a symptom of the trickle-down economics of March Madness. Each year a handful of coaches in smaller leagues get it going. And every year the schools they work for gird themselves for the inevitable run that will be made at them by more traditional powers.

"Sure, 100 percent (there's anxiety)," said Iona athletic director Rick Cole Jr.

The feeling forms in the pit of Cole's stomach whenever the Gaels capture the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference's NCAA bid, which they've done five times in the last seven seasons under Tim Cluess. And it really doesn't go away until the annual coaching carousel stops with Cluess staying put, opting to keep on heading to his office every day at the school's New Rochelle, New York, campus with brown lunch bag in hand.

"When you have greatness you're always worried about retaining greatness," Cole said.

And with good reason. The list of coaches who built their reputations at Iona (20-13) and used it as a springboard to higher-profile gigs includes Jim Valvano, Pat Kennedy and Kevin Willard. Yet Cluess has remained. Partly because he was born in Queens and spent most of his career within a 30-mile radius of New York City. Partly because his two sons are students at Iona. Partly because there's something to be said for happiness. And partly because, hey, there are worse places to be than in the NAAs as a No. 15 seed in the Midwest against second-seeded Duke (26-7), where Cluess and the Gaels will find themselves on Thursday.

"I've had a couple of opportunities where people have called me and I really haven't expressed much interest in it," Cluess said. "It wasn't something that I thought would be that right fit for my family at the time. I'm thrilled to be at Iona and we're just trying to get better there."

Cluess' players shrug their shoulders when asked if they ever find themselves scanning Twitter to see if their coach's name pops up.

"I'm sure if he did have the opportunity, I'm sure he'd come to us and tell us," junior guard Schadrac Casimir said. "But I don't really go off what the media is saying or anything."

Cluess, however, is in a different spot in his career than Hurley. Cluess is 59. He's from the area. He's had his program at the top of the MAAC for the better part of a decade and he's stuck around. Even his boss acknowledges that's atypical.

"He's 110 percent where he's at," Cole said. "There's nothing going on here. Lot of folks in a lot of industries are always looking."

Folks like, say, Hurley's older brother Bobby. The Duke great served as an assistant for his younger brother for two years and parlayed that into the head job at Buffalo. A pair of Mid-American Conference East Division titles and an NCAA Tournament berth later, Bobby Hurley moved on to Arizona State and led the Sun Devils to the tournament this season before losing to Syracuse on Wednesday night in the First Four.

Bobby Hurley actually finds himself out of the tournament ahead of his old squad. Buffalo and coach Nate Oats — who was elevated from assistant to head coach after Hurley's departure — is the 13th seed in the South Region and will play fourth-seeded Arizona on Thursday.

Oats is 43. He's averaged 21 wins in three seasons. He makes \$355,000, hardly chump change — unless you compare it to the bigger paydays that lie elsewhere. And yes, his players have noticed.

"When a coach is rising, you've always got to have that in the back of your mind," Bulls guard Wes Clark said. "It's a business. Any time it may change. ... He wouldn't just leave us for money or anything that's not significant. We wouldn't want him to be stuck in this position if he felt there was a better spot for him. You have to have the mindset of, it's a business."

Any time Oats finds his name surfacing in a coaching search, he makes it a point to tell his players immediately. So far, there hasn't been much to say. That could change as the years pass. It has at Rhode Island, where the program that went 8-21 in Danny Hurley's first season has won at least 23 games in three of the last four years.

It hasn't gone unnoticed. Yet Hurley has stayed — so far. It's only going to get harder.

Hurley redirected all praise to his players, the ones who he believes have done the heavy lifting.

"Their efforts have made me, you know, I guess attractive to other schools," he said.

And the dance continues.

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AP College Basketball Writer John Marshall in Boise, Idaho, contributed to this report.

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More AP college basketball: <https://collegebasketball.ap.org> ; [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25) and <http://apne.ws/SYS9Fwu>

## Tillerson's dismissal may hasten demise of Iran nuclear deal

By MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Iran nuclear deal was in near terminal condition and on life support even before President Donald Trump fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. Tillerson's dismissal this week may hasten its demise.

As CIA chief and Iran hawk Mike Pompeo prepares to run the State Department, the Trump administration is weighing a speedier withdrawal from the agreement than even the president has threatened, according to two U.S. officials and two outside advisers briefed on the matter. They were not authorized to discuss the sensitive negotiations publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

While such a scenario is unlikely, the fact it is being floated as an option may give U.S. officials more leverage in negotiations with European signatories to salvage the accord by toughening it. Two such negotiating sessions have already been held and a third is set for Thursday in Berlin.

Trump, who calls the Obama administration's signature foreign policy achievement the worst deal ever



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negotiated, has vowed to walk away from the 2015 agreement in mid-May unless Britain, Germany and France join the U.S. in addressing what the president says are its fatal flaws. These include no penalties for Iran's missile work and support for militant groups in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere.

The deal that was negotiated by the Obama administration and six other countries limits Iran's enrichment and stockpiling of material that could be applied to a nuclear weapons program. In exchange, Tehran was granted widespread relief from international trade, oil and banking sanctions. Trump's next deadline to extend some of those concessions is May 12, and he has vowed not to do so again unless the Europeans meet his demands.

Any U.S. withdrawal would likely crater the agreement. If the U.S. begins threatening fines and other punishments for sanctions violations, countries around the world are likely to curtail commerce with Iran. That could prompt the Iranians to walk away as well, and perhaps even restart nuclear activities banned under the accord.

An indication of the Trump administration's thinking could come Friday, when the U.S., Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia, the European Union and Iran meet for a periodic review at the International Atomic Energy Agency headquarters in Vienna.

State Department policy planning chief Brian Hook, who is running the negotiations with Europe, will lead the U.S. delegation to the larger meeting in Austria's capital. Hook, who Tillerson leaned on heavily for policy advice and direction, could meet separately in Vienna with the Iranian delegation head, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi. For his part, Aragchi sees the writing on the wall. He told a parliamentary committee in Tehran on Wednesday that Tillerson's ouster was proof that Trump would pull out and promised that Iran would withdraw if the U.S. does.

In the U.S., Iran deal supporters braced for what they see as the inevitable. Pompeo "is certain to advise the president to withdraw the United States from our obligations under the nuclear agreement," said Diplomacy Works, a group of mainly former Obama administration officials that lobbies for staying in the deal.

Hook had been tasked by Tillerson with getting the Europeans to agree to as many of Trump's demands as possible, with an eye toward selling the president on extending the sanctions waivers. Doing so would buy U.S. negotiators time to deal with elements of the agreement Trump has disparaged — such as its expiration dates on key nuclear constraints — and missile and terrorism concerns.

With Tillerson gone, the emphasis will likely change.

The ex-oilman had waged an often lonely battle within Trump's Cabinet to save the deal. He succeeded for 13 months. But each time Trump faced another sanctions deadline, Tillerson met increased resistance to keeping the agreement alive.

In firing Tillerson on Tuesday, Trump in particular noted his disagreement over the Iran accord. Trump won't have that problem with Pompeo, who has lambasted the deal on a level similar to Trump, making clear the two men are of the same opinion.

Trump said that he and Pompeo "have a very similar thought process" on the deal.

As a congressman, Pompeo vociferously denounced the accord when it was struck.

"The (deal) can perhaps delay Iran's nuclear weapons program for a few years," he wrote at the time. "Conversely, it has virtually guaranteed that Iran will have the freedom to build an arsenal of nuclear weapons at the end of the commitment."

His stance and position with Trump could give Pompeo leverage with the Europeans that Tillerson never enjoyed.

U.S. officials said American positions have hardened over the past several weeks, notably on Iranian ballistic missile testing and the deal's provisions that allow Iran to gradually resume advanced atomic work. Because Iran and the Europeans refuse to renegotiate the nuclear deal, U.S. officials are seeking to create a supplemental agreement with Europe to address these matters.

At Thursday's meeting in Berlin, U.S. and the European officials are hoping to compare draft written proposals and combine points of agreement into a new document that could form the basis of a side deal.

U.S. and European diplomats say they're closer on long-range ballistic missile launches, inspections and new sanctions on Iranian-backed militant groups. Gaps are larger on medium-range missiles that could



hit Israel, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states and on the deal's particulars for when advanced atomic work can restart.

The U.S. focus turned to medium-range missiles after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Trump in Washington earlier this month. Iran maintains that it must have medium-range missiles to defend itself, an argument the Europeans have been sympathetic to.

The differences are even more stark on the sunset provisions, which are codified in the nuclear deal and which the Europeans and Iran regard as inviolable, according to the diplomats. One senior negotiator involved in the talks said last week that Europe is prepared to be "creative" in addressing the provisions but would not budge from opposing any measure that would punish Iran for activity that is otherwise permitted under the 2015 agreement.

## Students around US stage huge walkout against gun violence

By COLLIN BINKLEY, Associated Press

They bowed their heads in honor of the dead. They carried signs with messages like "Never again" and "Am I next?" They railed against the National Rifle Association and the politicians who support it.

And over and over, they repeated the message: Enough is enough.

In a wave of protests one historian called the largest of its kind in American history, tens of thousands of students walked out of their classrooms Wednesday to demand action on gun violence and school safety.

The demonstrations extended from Maine to Hawaii as students joined the youth-led surge of activism set off by the Feb. 14 massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

"We're sick of it," said Maxwell Nardi, a senior at Douglas S. Freeman High School in Henrico, Virginia, just outside Richmond. "We're going to keep fighting, and we're not going to stop until Congress finally makes resolute changes."

Students around the nation left class at 10 a.m. local time for at least 17 minutes — one minute for each of the dead in the Florida shooting. Some led marches or rallied on football fields, while others gathered in school gyms or took a knee in the hallway.

At some schools, hundreds of students poured out. At others, just one or two walked out in defiance of administrators.

They lamented that too many young people have died and that they're tired of going to school afraid they will be killed.

"Enough is enough. People are done with being shot," said Iris Fosse-Ober, 18, a senior at Washburn High School in Minneapolis.

Some issued specific demands for lawmakers, including mandatory background checks for all gun sales and a ban on assault weapons like the one used in the Florida bloodbath.

While administrators and teachers at some schools applauded students for taking a stand — and some joined them — others threatened punishment for missing class.

As the demonstrations unfolded, the NRA responded by posting a photo on Twitter of a black rifle emblazoned with an American flag. The caption: "I'll control my own guns, thank you."

The protests took place at schools from the elementary level through college, including some that have witnessed their own mass shootings: About 300 students gathered on a soccer field at Colorado's Columbine High, while students who survived the Sandy Hook Elementary School attack in 2012 marched out of Newtown High School in Connecticut.

In the nation's capital, more than 2,000 high-school age protesters observed 17 minutes of silence while sitting on the ground with their backs turned to the White House. President Donald Trump was out of town.

The students carried signs with messages such as "Our Blood/Your Hands" and "Never Again" and chanted slogans against the NRA.

In New York City, they chanted, "Enough is enough!" In Salt Lake City, the signs read, "Protect kids not guns," "Fear has no place in school" and "Am I next?"

At Eagle Rock High in Los Angeles, teenagers took a moment of silence as they gathered around a circle

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of 17 chairs labeled with the names of the Florida victims.

Stoneman Douglas High senior David Hogg, who has emerged as one of the leading student activists, livestreamed the walkout at the tragedy-stricken school on his YouTube channel. He said students couldn't be expected to stay in class while there was work to do to prevent gun violence.

"Every one of these individuals could have died that day. I could have died that day," he said.

In joining the protests, the students followed the example set by many of the survivors of the Florida shooting, who have become gun-control activists, leading rallies, lobbying legislators and giving TV interviews. Their efforts helped spur passage last week of a Florida law curbing access to assault rifles by young people.

Another protest against gun violence is scheduled in Washington on March 24, with organizers saying it is expected to draw hundreds of thousands.

But whether the students can make a difference on Capitol Hill remains to be seen.

Congress has shown little inclination to defy the powerful NRA and tighten gun laws, and Trump backed away from his initial support for raising the minimum age for buying an assault rifle to 21.

A spokeswoman for Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, newly appointed head of a federal panel on school safety, said DeVos "gives a lot credit to the students who are raising their voices and demanding change," and "their input will be valuable."

David Farber, a history professor at the University of Kansas who has studied social change movements, said it is too soon to know what effect the protests will have. But he said Wednesday's walkouts were without a doubt the largest protest led by high school students in the history of the U.S.

"Young people are that social media generation, and it's easy to mobilize them in a way that it probably hadn't been even 10 years ago," Farber said.

Wednesday's coordinated protests were organized by Empower, the youth wing of the Women's March, which brought thousands to Washington last year.

At Aztec High School in a rural, gun-friendly part of New Mexico where many enjoy hunting and shooting, students avoided gun politics and opted for a ceremony honoring students killed in shootings — including two who died in a December attack at Aztec.

"Our kids sit on both ends of the spectrum, and we have a diverse community when it comes to gun rights and gun control," Principal Warman Hall said.

In Brimfield, Ohio, 12-year-old Olivia Shane, an avid competitive trap shooter who has owned her own guns since she was about 7, skipped the gun protest and memorial held at her school.

"People want to take away our guns and it's a Second Amendment right of ours," she said. "If they want to take away our Second Amendment right, why can't we take away their amendment of freedom of speech?"

About 10 students left Ohio's West Liberty-Salem High School — which witnessed a shooting last year — despite a warning they could face detention or more serious discipline.

Police in the Atlanta suburb of Marietta patrolled Kell High, where students were threatened with unspecified consequences if they participated. Three students walked out anyway.

The walkouts drew support from companies such as media conglomerate Viacom, which paused programming on MTV, BET, Nickelodeon and its other networks for 17 minutes during the walkouts.

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Associated Press writers Ken Thomas and Maria Danilova in Washington; Jeff Martin in Atlanta; Kantele Franko in Columbus, Ohio; Jonathan Drew in Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Mike Householder in Detroit; Denise Lavoie in Richmond, Virginia; Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston; Jeff Baenen in Minneapolis; Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Krysta Fauria in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

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Find all of AP's coverage on the walkouts and the Parkland, Florida, shooting at <https://apnews.com/tag/Floridaschoolshooting>

## Toys R Us is planning to liquidate its US operations

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO, AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Toys R Us is headed toward shuttering its U.S. operations, jeopardizing the jobs of some 30,000 employees while spelling the end for a chain known to generations of children and parents for its sprawling stores and Geoffrey the giraffe mascot.

The closing of the company's 740 U.S. stores over the coming months will finalize the downfall of the chain that succumbed to heavy debt and relentless trends that undercut its business, from online shopping to mobile games.

CEO David Brandon told employees Wednesday the company's plan is to liquidate all of its U.S. stores, according to an audio recording of the meeting obtained by The Associated Press.

Brandon said Toys R Us will try to bundle its Canadian business, with about 200 stores, and find a buyer. The company's U.S. online store would still be running for the next couple of weeks in case there's a buyer for it.

It's likely to also liquidate its businesses in Australia, France, Poland, Portugal and Spain, according to the recording. It's already shuttering its business in the United Kingdom. That would leave it with stores in Canada, central Europe and Japan, where it could find buyers for those assets.

Toys R Us had about 60,000 full-time and part-time employees worldwide last year.

Brandon said on the recording that the company would be filing liquidation papers and there would be a bankruptcy court hearing Thursday.

"We worked as hard and as long as we could to turn over every rock," Brandon told employees. He put much of the blame on its woes on the media, saying negative stories about the company's prospects scared customers and vendors.

The Wayne, New Jersey-based company declined to comment.

The chain filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection last fall, saddled with \$5 billion in debt that hurt its attempts to compete as shoppers moved to Amazon and huge chains like Walmart.

It pledged then to stay open, but Brandon told employees that it had a "devastating" sales performance during the critical holiday season as nervous customers and vendors shied away. That made its lenders more skittish about investing in the company. In January, it announced plans to close about 180 stores over the next couple of months, leaving it with a little more than 700 stores.

The company's troubles have affected toy makers Mattel and Hasbro, which are big suppliers to the chain. But the likely liquidation will have a bigger impact on smaller toy makers, who rely more on the chain for sales. However, many have been trying to diversify in recent months as they worried about the chain's survival.

Toys R Us was also hurt by the shift to mobile devices taking up more play time. But steep sales declines over the holidays and thereafter were the deciding factor, said Jim Silver, who is editor-in-chief of toy review site TTPM.com.

The company didn't do enough to emphasize that it was reorganizing but not going out of business, Silver said. That misperception led customers to its stores because they didn't think they would be able to return gifts.

Now, the \$11 billion in sales still happening at Toys R Us each year will disperse to other retailers like Amazon and discounters, analysts say. Other chains, seeing that Toys R Us was vulnerable, got more aggressive. J.C. Penney opened toy sections last fall in all 875 stores. Target and Walmart have been expanding their toy selections. Even Party City is building up its toy offerings.

"Amazon may pick up the dollars, but won't deliver the experience needed for a toy retailer to survive and thrive in today's market," said Marc Rosenberg, a toy marketing executive.

Toys R Us had dominated the toy store business in the 1980s and early 1990s, when it was one of the first of the "category killers"— a store totally devoted to one thing. Its scale gave it leverage with toy sellers and it disrupted general merchandise stores and mom-and-pop shops. Children sang along with commercials about "the biggest toy store there is."

But the company lost ground to discounters like Target and Walmart, and then to Amazon, as even nostalgic parents sought deals elsewhere. GlobalData Retail estimates that nearly 14 percent of toy sales were made online in 2016, more than double the level five years ago. Toys R Us still has hundreds of stores, and analysts estimate it still sells about 20 percent of the toys bought in the United States.

It wasn't able to compete with a growing Amazon: The toy seller said in bankruptcy filings that Amazon's low prices were hard to match. And it said its Babies R Us chain lost customers to the online retailer's convenient subscription service, which let parents receive diapers and baby formula at their doorstep automatically. Toys R Us blamed its "old technology" for not offering its own subscriptions.

But Toys R Us's biggest albatross was its massive debt load since private-equity firms Bain Capital, KKR & Co. and Vornado Realty Trust took it private in a \$6.6 billion leveraged buyout in 2005. The plan had been to take the company public again, but weak sales have prevented that from happening. With such debt levels, Toys R Us did not have the financial flexibility to invest in its business. The company closed its flagship store in Manhattan's Times Square, a huge tourist destination that featured its own Ferris wheel, about two years ago.

In filing for bankruptcy protection last fall, Toys R Us pledged to make its stores more interactive. It added demonstrators for the holiday season to show people how toys work, and began opening Play Labs at 42 stores, areas where children can play with different items.

Follow Anne D'Innocenzio: <http://twitter.com/ADInnocenzio>

AP Retail Writer Joseph Pisani contributed to this report in New York.

## Docs link Trump Org lawyer to effort to silence porn star

WASHINGTON (AP) — New documents show a second lawyer with ties to President Donald Trump was involved in legal efforts to keep adult film star Stormy Daniels from talking about her alleged affair with Trump.

Attorney Jill A. Martin signed the documents, which were filed Feb. 22 as part of confidential arbitration proceedings. She's referenced in the filing as counsel for "EC LLC," though the address she lists is that of Trump's Los Angeles golf club.

EC appears to be a reference to a company formed by Trump's personal attorney, Michael Cohen, to facilitate a \$130,000 payment to silence Daniels in the closing days of the 2016 presidential campaign. Cohen has acknowledged making the payment, but said he was not reimbursed and denied the campaign and the Trump Organization were involved in the transaction.

Daniels' attorney, Michael Avenatti, confirmed the authenticity of the new documents to The Associated Press. The documents were first reported by CNN and the Wall Street Journal.

Avenatti said the documents show that "contrary to Mr. Cohen's representations, there is little to no difference between EC LLC and The Trump Organization/Donald Trump."

In a statement late Wednesday, the Trump Organization said Martin worked on the filing in her "individual capacity" and the company "has had no involvement in the matter."

The White House says Trump has denied the affair with Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford. Earlier this month, Clifford filed a lawsuit seeking to invalidate her "hush agreement" because it was signed only by her and Cohen, but not Trump. She's also offered to return the money she was paid for agreeing not to discuss the alleged relationship.

Clifford alleges that she began an "intimate relationship" with Trump in 2006 and that it continued "well into the year 2007," according to the lawsuit. She said the relationship included encounters in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, and Beverly Hills, California.



## **GOP considers recount, lawsuit in special House race in Pa.**

**By BILL BARROW and MARC LEVY, Associated Press**

CANONSBURG, Pa. (AP) — Republicans eyed a recount and a lawsuit over perceived irregularities in a closely watched U.S. House race in Pennsylvania where Democrat Conor Lamb clung to a slender lead in the longtime GOP stronghold friendly to President Donald Trump.

With the last batch of absentee ballots counted, Lamb, a 33-year-old former prosecutor and first-time candidate, saw his edge over Republican Rick Saccone shrink slightly, to 627 votes out of more than 224,000 cast, according to unofficial results.

The four counties in the Pittsburgh-area district reported they had about 375 uncounted provisional, military and overseas ballots. They have seven days to count the provisional ballots, and the deadline to receive military and overseas ballots is next Tuesday.

With the margin so close, supporters of either candidate can ask for a recount.

The GOP is considering lodging a recount request, and county officials reported receiving a letter from a law firm requesting that they preserve their records, something the counties say they do anyway under state law.

Separately, Republicans mulled legal action, according to a person familiar with the deliberations. This person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal planning.

Complaints could include that party lawyers were prevented from observing the counting of some absentee ballots, voting machines erroneously recorded votes from Lamb, and voters were confused by some information from the state elections website.

Officials in Allegheny County, the most populous and Democratic-leaning county in the district, pushed back on Republican claims Wednesday, saying the lawyers had lacked written authorization from the GOP and they had received no reports Tuesday of malfunctioning voting machines.

The Associated Press has not called the race, which is seen nationally as indicator of Democratic enthusiasm and GOP vulnerability heading into the November elections that will determine whether Republicans retain their control of Congress.

Lamb has declared victory. Saccone, a 60-year-old Air Force veteran turned state lawmaker and college instructor, hasn't conceded. Both men stayed out of sight Wednesday, and Saccone's campaign said that Saccone had no plans to concede before vote counting was finished.

The counties, under state law, perform an audit of the results on the electronic voting machines that typically involves comparing the overall tally on a hard drive, a flash drive and a paper tape that separately record each vote. Deviations are a rarity, county officials say.

Absentee ballots are open to inspection to determine whether the person is eligible to vote or whether the voter's intent was clear, and that is more likely where a review might alter a final count, said Douglas Hill, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.

But a difference is "never large numbers, it's always around the margins," Hill said.

Regardless of the outcome, Lamb's showing seemed certain to stoke anxiety among Republicans nationwide and renew enthusiasm among Democrats.

Trump won the district by about 20 percentage points in 2016, and the seat has been in Republican hands for the past 15 years. It was open now only because Republican Rep. Tim Murphy, who espoused strong anti-abortion views, resigned last fall amid revelations that he had asked a woman with whom he was having an extramarital affair to get an abortion.

Democrats must flip 24 GOP-held seats this fall to seize control of the House, and months ago few had counted on this district to be in play.

Lamb asserted his independence from national Democratic leaders and played down his opposition to Trump. But he also fully embraced organized labor in a district with influential labor unions and a long history of steel-making and coal-mining, hammering Republican tax cuts as a giveaway to the rich and promising to defend Social Security, Medicare and pensions.

Trump and his allies, meanwhile, invested tremendous time and resources in the seat, mindful the con-



test could be used to measure Trump's lasting appeal among white, working-class voters and Democrats' anti-Trump fervor.

Outside groups aligned with Republicans poured more than \$10 million into the contest, about seven times the outside money that helped Lamb.

Saccone had cast himself as the president's "wingman." But where Murphy had long allied himself with unions, Saccone's conservative voting record alienated them.

A White House spokesman on Wednesday warned against reading too much into the razor-thin outcome, saying Trump's campaigning for Saccone "turned what was a deficit for the Republican candidate to what is essentially a tie."

Lamb's victory is somewhat symbolic.

Under a state court order in a gerrymandering case, the seat is one of Pennsylvania's 18 U.S. House districts whose boundaries will change next year, and the new ones will be in play in this year's mid-term elections.

Even before Tuesday night's vote, Saccone was making plans to seek the nomination in a different district in May's primary, a new southwestern Pennsylvania district that leans solidly Republican without the Pittsburgh suburbs that helped Lamb.

Neither Saccone nor Lamb lives in that district, but Saccone is planning to run there since, under the new boundaries, Saccone's home is in a Pittsburgh-based district that is heavily Democratic and home to longtime Democratic Rep. Mike Doyle.

Lamb is expected to run in a new district west of Pittsburgh against Republican Rep. Keith Rothfus. That district is far less friendly to Republicans than Rothfus' existing district and is described by Republicans as a toss-up.

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Associated Press writer Lisa Mascaro in Washington contributed to this report. Follow Barrow and Levy on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> and <https://twitter.com/timelywriter>.

## Trump picks camera-proven Kudlow as top economic aide

By JOSH BOAK and KEN THOMAS, AP Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has chosen Larry Kudlow to be his top economic aide, elevating the influence of a longtime fixture on the CNBC business news network who previously served in the Reagan administration and has emerged as a leading evangelist for tax cuts and a smaller government.

Kudlow told The Associated Press on Wednesday that he has accepted the offer, saying the U.S. economy is poised to take off after Trump signed \$1.5 trillion worth of tax cuts into law.

"The economy is starting to roar and we're going to get more of that," he said.

Kudlow will join an administration in the middle of a tumultuous remodeling as a wave of White House staffers and top officials have departed in recent weeks. Trump on Tuesday dumped his secretary of state, former Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson.

The famously pinstripe-suited Kudlow would succeed Gary Cohn, a former Goldman Sachs executive who is leaving the post in a dispute over Trump's decision to impose tariffs on imported steel and aluminum.

With Trump's tax cuts already being implemented, Kudlow would be advising a president who appears increasingly determined to tax foreign imports — a policy Kudlow personally opposes. Kudlow said he is "in accord" with Trump's agenda and his team at the White House would help implement the policies set by the president.

Trump has promised to reduce the trade imbalance with China and rewrite the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico. Kudlow declined to say what advice he would give the president on trade issues, saying instead that Trump is "a very good negotiator."

Kudlow, 70, has informally advised the Trump administration in the past and he has spoken with the president "at some length in recent days," so he is ready "to hit the ground running."

Kudlow told CNBC on Wednesday that he will be going to Washington on Thursday to meet with Trump.

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White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the administration is preparing for an orderly transition and “will keep everyone posted” on when Kudlow officially assumes the job.

Friends and colleagues say Kudlow possesses two critical attributes prized by the president: He is a bluntly spoken debater and is resolutely loyal.

“He’s a very sensitive man and a very logical man, which is exactly what Trump needs,” said Arthur Laffer, a well-known economist and longtime friend of Kudlow.

The two men and their wives used to celebrate New Year’s Eve together outside San Diego, where Laffer lived at the time. In the Reagan administration, Kudlow worked in the White House budget office and Laffer served on an economic policy advisory board. Both built their economic visions around the notion that tax cuts are critical for maximizing economic growth, a principle at the heart of the \$1.5 trillion tax reduction Trump signed into law late last year.

In 1987, Kudlow moved to Wall Street and, though he never completed a master’s program in economics and policy at Princeton University, served as chief economist at Bear Stearns. He left that position in the early 1990s to treat an addiction to alcohol and drugs, after which he worked at Laffer’s research and consulting firm.

Kudlow soon settled comfortably into the world of political and economic punditry, working at the conservative National Review magazine and ultimately becoming a host of CNBC shows beginning in 2001. He has remained a contributor to CNBC and a colleague and friend for many at the network. Indeed, among the first to report on Kudlow’s possible move to the White House was Jim Cramer, the stock market guru and his former co-host on “Kudlow & Cramer.” It was on CNBC that Kudlow gained a high-profile platform for explaining, defending and — at times — faulting Trump’s economic agenda.

Kudlow channeled his push for lower taxes into a 2016 book he co-wrote, in which he argued that President John F. Kennedy’s tax cuts had boosted economic growth. The book, “JFK and the Reagan Revolution,” asserted that Reagan’s 1980s tax cuts followed the same template. When Trump’s own tax cuts ran into resistance over the higher budget deficits that would result, Kudlow downplayed the risks of debt. He argued on CNBC that Reagan ran even higher deficits to finance tax cuts and military spending — a formula that Kudlow contends helped accelerate growth.

Kudlow has, at times, been overly optimistic — if not outright mistaken — about what Republican administrations can achieve for the economy. He declared in a December 2007 column for National Review that George W. Bush’s presidency was ushering in a new golden era.

“There’s no recession coming,” Kudlow wrote. “It’s not going to happen.”

Economists later concluded that the Great Recession and the financial meltdown it triggered began the month that column was published.

Laffer described Kudlow as someone who would be inclined to offer “unvarnished” advice to the president on the appropriate path for economic policy.

“And if by chance, he doesn’t convince the president of something, he will be a loyal employee,” Laffer said. “He stays loyal even if the decision goes against him.”

Kudlow has shown himself willing to embrace personal transformations. He converted from Judaism to Catholicism, according to a 2000 interview with the religious magazine Crisis. After graduating as a history major from the University of Rochester in 1969, he worked on Democratic campaigns in New York. But he evolved into a committed Republican who considered entering the 2016 race to challenge Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat.

Jared Bernstein, who was an economic adviser to Vice President Joe Biden during Barack Obama’s presidency, said he’s been debating Kudlow from the opposite side of the ideological fence for decades and still likes him. Bernstein said he has never managed to convince Kudlow that tax cuts that he has zealously championed have failed to deliver the promised growth, a view shared by many academic economists. But Kudlow understands trade, the Federal Reserve, employment, inflation and the financial markets, Bernstein said.

“And, at least on those issues, he listens,” said Bernstein, a senior fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal think tank.

For a president who pays close attention to image and wants advisers who look every inch the part, Kudlow seems to fit the role of high-powered presidential aide. Customarily attired in narrow-lapelled suits, Kudlow has relied on the same Savile Row-trained, New York-based tailor, Leonard Logsdail, for 26 years. Logsdail said Kudlow still wears some of the first suits he made for him. "He does take care of them," the tailor said.

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey and Zeke Miller contributed to this story.

## Senate passes bill easing Dodd-Frank rules for banks

By KEVIN FREKING and MARCY GORDON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate passed bipartisan legislation Wednesday designed to ease bank rules that were enacted to prevent a relapse of the 2008 financial crisis that caused millions of Americans to lose their jobs and homes.

The Senate voted 67-31 for a bill from Republican Senator Mike Crapo of Idaho that would dial back portions of the law known as Dodd-Frank.

The legislation would increase the threshold at which banks are considered so big and plugged into the financial grid that if one were to fail it would cause major havoc. Those banks are subject to stricter capital and planning requirements. Lawmakers are intent on loosening the restraints on them in hopes that it will boost lending and the economy.

President Donald Trump signaled that he'll sign the bill once it gets through Congress. Dismantling Dodd-Frank was one of his campaign pledges.

"The bill provides much-needed relief from the Dodd-Frank Act for thousands of community banks and credit unions, and will spur lending and economic growth without creating risks to the financial system," the White House said in a statement after the vote.

Republicans unanimously supported the bill, while Democrats splintered into two camps. One included several senators from rural states who worked out the compromise with Crapo. The other, led by Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Sherrod Brown of Ohio, said the bill catered too much to the banks that contributed to the financial crisis and would increase the likelihood of future taxpayer bailouts.

"Big banks and their lobbyists are about to score a touchdown at the expense of hardworking families across the country," Brown said shortly before the vote.

The bill makes a fivefold increase, to \$250 billion, in the level of assets at which banks are deemed to pose a potential threat if they failed. The change would ease regulations and oversight on more than two dozen financial companies, including BB&T Corp., SunTrust Banks, Fifth Third Bancorp and American Express.

Eventually, the exempted banks would no longer have to undergo an annual stress test conducted by the Federal Reserve. The test assesses whether a bank has enough of a capital buffer to survive an economic shock and continue lending. The banks also would be excused from submitting plans called "living wills" that spell out how a bank would sell off assets or be liquidated in the event of failure so that it wouldn't create chaos in the financial system.

Crapo, chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, emphasized that the Federal Reserve would still have the authority to apply tougher standards for banks with between \$100 billion and \$250 billion in assets. "This bill, Mr. President, is a bill designed to protect community banks and credit unions, and that's why we have such bipartisan support for it."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said Dodd-Frank proved to be "too blunt" an instrument. He said it hurt smaller lenders who provide more than 50 percent of small business loans and more than 80 percent of agricultural loans.

"Regulations meant for Wall Street are crushing Main Street," McConnell said.

Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., said that while he had helped write some provisions of the Dodd-Frank leg-

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islation, he knew at the time it would have to be tweaked in the years ahead. He said the new bill is not designed to be an overhaul.

"If the banking bill before us today becomes law, 90 percent of Dodd-Frank would remain unchanged," Carper said.

In arguing against the bill, Brown noted that the Congressional Budget Office found that it would slightly increase the probability of a big bank failure, which would add to the deficit.

Other features of the bill would exempt certain banks and credit unions from requirements to report some mortgage loan data. That exempted data includes the age of a loan applicant, credit score, total loan costs and interest rate. Warren, an outspoken opponent of the change, said the bill would make it easier for banks to discriminate against minorities seeking home mortgages and go undetected.

In response to the Equifax breach that exposed personal information for more than 145 million Americans, the bill would require free credit freezes for all consumers affected by data breaches. Currently most states allow the credit reporting companies to charge consumers a fee for freezing their credit.

The House has already passed a more expansive rollback of Dodd-Frank. Now, lawmakers will try to work out a compromise that both chambers can support. That may be difficult as negotiators try to appease GOP lawmakers without losing the support of the core group of Democratic senators who backed Crapo's legislation.

In all, 16 Democrats and one independent senator voted with Republicans on the bill, a rarity for major legislation.

"Many people are worried about the gridlock in Congress," Crapo said. "This bill shows that we can work together and can do big things that make a big difference in the lives of people across this country."

## **Pennsylvania wake-up call for GOP: Almost no one is safe**

**By LISA MASCARO, AP Congressional Correspondent**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The message to Republicans from the Pennsylvania special election was simple: Almost no one is safe.

Rattled Republicans were hit with a day-after reality check Wednesday after the startlingly strong performance of a fresh-faced Democrat deep in Trump country.

House Speaker Paul Ryan privately warned his ranks that the election, still officially undecided, should serve as a "wake-up call" as the party tries to defend its majorities in Congress this fall. Democrats boasted optimistically of an impending wave, and produced a new list of races that suddenly seemed within reach.

Even as ballot counting dragged on with several hundred votes separating Democrat Conor Lamb from Republican Rick Saccone, it was clear the single, short-term contest in western Pennsylvania had sounded the starting gun for the battle for control of the House.

Republicans looking for lessons found several. Candidates matter. Campaigns, too. And fundraising. President Donald Trump can't save them, it seems, not even in a coal-and-steel region he carried by nearly 20 percentage points just 16 months ago.

Trump won more than 100 districts nationwide by narrower margins than that, arguably making them comparably competitive now. Democrats produced an updated watch-list Wednesday of GOP representatives they suggested might want to think about retirement.

In Pennsylvania, the tally of absentee ballots ate into Lamb's lead slightly, though analysts doubt Saccone will make up the deficit. Officials have seven days to count provisional ballots, and either side can ask for a recount. The Associated Press has not declared a winner.

"Obviously, this is a very tough environment for Republicans," said Courtney Alexander, a spokeswoman for the Ryan-aligned Congressional Leadership Fund, which supports GOP candidates for the House. "Now more than ever, candidates and campaigns matter."

Publicly, Republican officials sought to downplay the outcome as a one-off that won't be replicated as they protect their majority nationwide this fall, especially if voters start to see benefits from the GOP tax bill in paychecks.



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They portrayed Lamb, the 33-year-old former prosecutor, as a unicorn-like figure in the Democratic Party whose centrist views — support of gun owner rights, personal opposition to abortion and refusal to back Nancy Pelosi as House floor leader — would not be replicated in other races.

With so many Democrats revved up to run in so many House districts across the country, both sides are expecting a brutal primary season. Republicans are counting on that ending up in their favor, with Democrats nominating more-liberal candidates who won't survive general elections against GOP rivals.

"The primaries bring them to the left," Ryan told reporters, and the prospect of more centrist Democratic candidates like Lamb "is something that you're not going to see repeated."

But Democrats, and many outside observers, say Trump's inability to pull Saccone to victory, after swooping in for a rousing campaign rally days before the election, shows the limits of presidential persuasion and the GOP brand.

Trump still wows the crowds. But the president's supporters are not necessarily a lock for Republican candidates. Saccone stumbled by relying on Trump's coattails and failing to raise enough money to push his own message, strategists said.

House Minority Leader Pelosi told Democrats at the Capitol to forget about Trump and concentrate on their own message of what Democrats can do for voters if they wrest control of the majority this fall.

"We said it over and over: It's not about Trump," Pelosi privately told House Democrats, according to someone who was in the room.

"Just tell people what you have in your heart and in your plan for them," she told the AP later.

The White House insists GOP candidates shouldn't shy away from the president. Trump's people say he boosted Saccone beyond what the Republican could have accomplished on his own.

"Candidates that embrace the president going into this fall we think will have a better prospect," said White House spokesman Raj Shah. Trump's campaigning for Saccone, "turned what was a deficit for the Republican candidate to what is essentially a tie."

But Lamb showed Democrats that there's a path through Trump country by focusing on economic issues much the way Doug Jones did to win the special election Senate seat in Alabama in December.

And Democrats contend the young Pennsylvanian is hardly a "unicorn" with his moderate views and military background. There are plenty of others, they say.

As House Republicans huddled privately at campaign headquarters across from the Capitol, Ryan told them they need to "get to work," fundraise and not take anything for granted, acknowledging the enthusiasm among Democrats.

Republicans have been counting on the GOP tax bill, with follow-up announcements of bonuses or bigger take-home pay, to push voters to their side. But results so far are mixed. They have few other big-ticket accomplishments for the campaign trail, having failed in efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

To promote the tax cuts, the Ryan-aligned American Action Network has poured \$30 million into ads in 40 House districts since fall. More spending is expected.

But even in Trump country, Republican lawmakers are "very cautious, concerned," said Rep. Frank Lucas, R-Okla. "They understand that we are in potentially a challenging year. They're cautious in how they're preparing for it, and they're taking it seriously."

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Associated Press writers Zeke Miller, Alan Fram, Bill Barrow, Marc Levy, Steve Peoples and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

Follow Mascaro on Twitter at <https://Twitter.com/LisaMascaro>

## After UK slaps penalties on Russia, attention turns to Trump

By JULIE PACE, AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — After the brazen poisoning of a former spy, British Prime Minister Theresa May quickly pinned the blame on Russia. So did U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, in what ultimately became one of his last public statements before being fired.



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But at the White House, President Donald Trump's initial response was more circumspect, with his spokeswoman pointedly avoiding naming Russia as the likely perpetrator of the attack. Tougher rhetoric came only on Wednesday evening, when White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders put out a statement saying the U.S. "stands in solidarity with its closest ally" and shares Britain's assessment that "Russia is responsible for the reckless nerve agent attack."

For U.S. allies and some congressional lawmakers, it was another befuddling example of the president appearing to soft-pedal in the face of Moscow's provocations. Some Russia watchers said the fact that the U.S. had to play catch-up to align itself with the British was glaring, particularly at a time of uncertainty over the trajectory of American foreign policy.

"It's striking the contrast between what the Brits have done and what the U.S. has not done," said Angela Stent, director of Georgetown University's Center for Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies. Stent said that while it's unlikely the U.S. would levy new sanctions on Russia over an incident on British soil, "you would still expect solidarity" from Washington.

The pressure on Trump to forcefully respond to the poisoning of Sergei Skripal, a former Russian agent convicted of spying for Britain, and his daughter Yulia escalated Wednesday when May announced the expulsion of 23 Russian diplomats and severed high-level contacts with Moscow. May also vowed both open and covert action against Russia, which denies being behind the nerve agent attack.

The White House initially said Trump agreed with May on "the need for consequences" following the attack, but did not specify whether the U.S. planned any punishment of its own. Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said Wednesday that Russia must cooperate with the British investigation and "account for its actions."

Sanders' statement Wednesday evening went further: "The latest action by Russia fits into a pattern of behavior in which Russia disregards the international rules-based order, undermines the sovereignty and security of countries worldwide, and attempts to subvert and discredit Western democratic institutions and processes. The United States is working together with our allies and partners to ensure that this kind of abhorrent attack does not happen again."

Some congressional lawmakers had nudged Trump to bolster the U.S. response, including Republican Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska, who said, "Americans ought to be leading a conversation with our NATO allies about a collective response to this act and future acts of aggression."

May's rapid response stands in stark contrast to Trump's handling of Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election, which is now a centerpiece of special counsel Robert Mueller's sprawling investigation. Trump has often muddied the conclusion of U.S. intelligence agencies, declaring that while Russia interfered, others likely did as well. And he's irritated Russia hawks in Congress, including numerous Republicans, by declining to use a new law letting the U.S. slap sanctions on foreign companies or governments that do business with Russia's defense or intelligence sectors. Those powers took effect in January, but so far nobody has been punished.

This latest Russian provocation against a close U.S. partner comes at a particularly delicate moment for the Trump administration, with both allies and adversaries closely watching U.S. foreign policy after Tillerson's ouster. Though Tillerson faced initial skepticism about his posture toward Russia given his business relationships with the Kremlin, the former head of ExxonMobil emerged as a leading Russia critic in the Trump Cabinet. He repeatedly took Moscow to task for its actions in Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere.

"Rex Tillerson was the person that Donald Trump was relying on for Russia policy," said Andrew Weiss, who held national security positions during the Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush administrations and now serves as vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "That's all now up for grabs."

Trump has tapped CIA Director Mike Pompeo to replace Tillerson at the State Department. The former Republican congressman has accepted the intelligence agencies' conclusion that Russia interfered in the election, but has downplayed the notion that the meddling was an effort to help Trump get elected.

"The Russians attempted to interfere in the United States election in 2016. They also did so before that,"

Pompeo told Fox News Sunday. "There's a long history of Russian efforts to influence the United States and conduct influence operations against the United States."

Pompeo also raised eyebrows earlier this year by meeting senior Russian security officials in Washington days before the Trump administration declined to impose new sanctions on Moscow over the election interference. Pompeo described the meetings as normal contacts for the heads of espionage services.

If Pompeo is confirmed by the Senate, the U.S. relationship with Russia will be among the most vexing issues he has to tackle. Tillerson lamented the state of affairs with Moscow on one of his final days as America's top diplomat, unaware he was about to hand off the problem to a new secretary of state.

"I've become extremely concerned about Russia," he said. "We spent most of last year investing a lot into attempts to work together, to solve problems, to address differences. And quite frankly, after a year, we didn't get very far. Instead what we've seen is a pivot on their part to be more aggressive."

Associated Press writers Matthew Lee and Lisa Mascaro in Washington, Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations and Greg Katz in London contributed to this report.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

## Britain boots 23 Russian diplomats over spy poisoning

By JILL LAWLESS and DANICA KIRKA, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Relations between Britain and Russia plunged Wednesday to a chilly level not seen since the Cold War as Prime Minister Theresa May expelled 23 diplomats, severed high-level contacts and vowed both open and covert action against Kremlin meddling after the poisoning of a former spy.

Russia said it would respond soon to what it called Britain's "crude" and "hostile" actions.

While May pledged to disrupt Russian espionage and "hostile state activity," she gave few details about how hard Britain would hit Russian politicians and oligarchs where it really hurts — in their wallets.

"Expelling diplomats is a kind of a standard response," said Natasha Kuhrt, a Russia expert at King's College London. "I'm not sure it's going to make Moscow stand up and think."

May told the House of Commons that 23 Russian diplomats who have been identified as undeclared intelligence officers have a week to leave Britain.

"This will be the single biggest expulsion for over 30 years," May said, adding that it would "fundamentally degrade Russian intelligence capability in the U.K. for years to come."

May spoke after Moscow ignored a midnight deadline to explain how the nerve agent Novichok, developed by the Soviet Union, was used against Sergei Skripal, an ex-Russian agent convicted of spying for Britain, and his daughter Yulia. They remain in critical condition in a hospital in Salisbury, southwestern England, after being found unconscious March 4.

May said "there is no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian state was culpable for the attempted murder of Mr. Skripal and his daughter."

She announced a range of economic and diplomatic measures, including the suspension of high-level contacts with Russia. An invitation for Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to visit Britain has been canceled, and British ministers and royals won't attend the soccer World Cup in Russia this summer.

May also said Britain would clamp down on murky Russian money and strengthen its powers to impose sanctions on abusers of human rights, though she gave few details.

"We will freeze Russian state assets wherever we have the evidence that they may be used to threaten the life or property of U.K. nationals or residents," May said, promising to use all legal powers against criminals and corrupt elites, and to "increase checks on private flights, customs and freight."

"There is no place for these people — or their money — in our country," she said.

May said some of the measures "cannot be shared publicly for reasons of national security."

The Russian Embassy in London said the expulsion of diplomats was "totally unacceptable, unjustified and shortsighted." Ambassador Alexander Yakovenko called Britain's actions were "a provocation."

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Russia did not immediately announce retaliatory measures, but its Foreign Ministry said "our response will not be long in coming."

It said Britain's "hostile measures" were "an unprecedentedly crude provocation."

Britain called an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council in New York at which U.K. and Russian diplomats traded accusations, with Britain blaming the Russian state for the attack and Russia vehemently denying responsibility.

Some Russia experts said the measures announced by May were unlikely to make Russian President Vladimir Putin's government change its behavior. She didn't expel Russia's ambassador or announce sanctions against any individuals or companies.

Critics of the British government have long claimed that the U.K. is reluctant to act against Russia because London's property market and financial sector are magnets for billions in Russian money.

"There does not seem to be any real appetite so far to investigate the ill-gotten gains of the Russian elite that have been laundered through London," said John Lough, an associate fellow in the Eurasia program at the Chatham House think-tank. "It is not clear to me that London's response will hit the Kremlin where it hurts."

Moscow has denied responsibility for Skripal's poisoning. It refused to comply with Britain's demand for an explanation, saying the U.K. must first provide samples of the poison collected by investigators.

Some in Russia have suggested that the nerve agent could have come from another former Soviet country. Lawmaker Vladimir Gutenev, a member of Russia's state commission for chemical disarmament, said Russia had scrapped its stockpile of Novichok.

"It is hard to say what may be happening in neighboring countries," he was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

Britain is seeking support from allies in the European Union and NATO in response to the use of an illegal chemical weapon on British soil. May's office said President Donald Trump told the prime minister the U.S. was "with the U.K. all the way."

But Britain faces an uphill battle in rallying international backing for any new measures against Moscow.

European Council President Donald Tusk said he would put the attack on the agenda at an EU summit meeting next week.

The U.N. Security Council — of which Russia is a veto-wielding member — was due to meet later Wednesday at Britain's request to discuss the investigation.

At U.N. headquarters, deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was not in a position to attribute responsibility for the attack, but "he strongly condemns the use of any nerve agent or chemical weapons and hopes that the incident will be thoroughly investigated."

NATO promised to help investigate what it called "the first offensive use of a nerve agent" in Europe or North America since the military alliance was founded in 1949.

But it's unclear what, if anything, NATO can do to put more pressure on Russia. Relations between the old Cold War foes are already poor and short of military action the alliance has little leverage.

May said Russia's use of a chemical weapon was "an affront to the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. And it is an affront to the rules-based system on which we and our international partners depend."

"We will work with our allies and partners to confront such actions wherever they threaten our security, at home and abroad," she said.

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Associated Press writers Vladimir Isachenkov and Jim Heintz in Moscow, Lorne Cook and Raf Casert in Brussels, and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations, contributed to this report.

## Ex-student charged in Florida shooting silent in court

By CURT ANDERSON, AP Legal Affairs Writer

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — The former student charged with killing 17 people at a Florida high school last month remained silent in court Wednesday and had a not guilty plea entered on his behalf as

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police released more recordings that captured the terror of the Valentine's Day slayings.

Nikolas Cruz, shackled and wearing red jail clothes, sat in the jury box with his head bowed and said nothing during the brief hearing. Because he refused to announce his plea, the judge entered it for him on each of the 34 counts he faces.

His attorney Assistant Public Defender Melisa McNeill reiterated that Cruz would plead guilty if prosecutors waived the death penalty, which they refused to do.

Cruz is accused of carrying out the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida that also wounded 17 people in a case that has reignited a national debate about gun control and school safety. It also prompted a nationwide walkout of thousands of students Wednesday, who showed solidarity with the Parkland students a month after the shooting.

As Cruz sat in the courtroom, more details of the shooting emerged as the Coral Springs Police Department released recordings of 911 calls and police radio traffic.

In the recordings, students and dispatchers were uncertain about the shooter's location and how to hide from him.

Some were frightened the gunman would return to their location when asked if they could perform CPR on the wounded.

"Please, please, please, there are people here. They are bleeding. They are all going to die," a teenage girl calling from Room 1216 said through tears and heavy breathing. "There's a lot of people around us that are injured, people that are injured, people that are bleeding. He is upstairs now."

Moments later, the girl starts screaming "They are coming in, oh no!" before discovering it was police officers who were entering the room.

A teacher from Room 1216 also called for help and told the 911 operator that a student had been hit in the chest, and wasn't breathing.

"He's twitching. There's blood all over," she said.

At one point, the operator warned that the shooter was still in the hallway, advising the teacher to keep the students still. "Stay down, he's by your room, OK. Everyone be quiet."

The police radio recordings showed that the Coral Springs police officers were the first to enter the school building after confirming that Broward County Sheriff's Office deputies had not gone in.

As they clear each of the building's three floors, the officers describe seeing shell casings on the floor and bullet holes in the windows.

They warned that the suspect may have changed clothes after they reported finding a camouflaged jacket, ski mask and backpack on the first floor.

On the third floor, officers said they found an AR-15 with a magazine still attached.

The officers found wounded victims and bodies, and they prioritized evacuating the wounded before allowing other students and teachers to leave. On the third floor, they said they shattered windows in some locked classroom doors because terrified students would not open doors.

Cruz was arrested a few blocks away from the school.

His next hearing is scheduled for April 11.

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Associated Press writers Adriana Gomez Licon, Jennifer Kay and Frieda Frisaro contributed to this report from Miami.

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This story has been corrected to show the teen girl was calling from Room 1216, not 1215.

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Follow Curt Anderson on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/Miamicurt>

## Stephen Hawking: 'His laboratory was the universe'

By **SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Everyone knew of Stephen Hawking's cosmic brilliance, but few could comprehend



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it. Not even top-notch astronomers.

Hawking, who died at his home in Cambridge, England, on Wednesday at age 76, became the public face of science genius. He appeared on "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and "The Big Bang Theory," voiced himself in "The Simpsons" cartoon series and wrote the best-seller "A Brief History of Time." He sold 9 million copies of that book, though many readers didn't finish it. It's been called "the least-read best-seller ever." Hollywood celebrated his life in the 2014 Oscar-winning biopic "The Theory of Everything."

In some ways, Hawking was the inheritor of Albert Einstein's mantle of the genius-as-celebrity, and he died on the 139th anniversary of Einstein's birth.

"His contribution is to engage the public in a way that maybe hasn't happened since Einstein," said prominent astronomer Wendy Freedman, former director of the Carnegie Observatories. "He's become an icon for a mind that is beyond ordinary mortals. People don't exactly understand what he's saying, but they know he's brilliant. There's perhaps a human element of his struggle that makes people stop and pay attention."

With Einstein, most people are familiar with  $e=mc^2$ , but they don't know what it means. With Hawking, his work was too complicated for most people, but they understood that what he was trying to figure out was basic, even primal.

"He was asking and trying to address the very biggest questions we were trying to ask: the birth of the universe, black holes, the direction of time," said University of Chicago cosmologist Michael Turner. "I think that caught people's attention."

And he did so in an impish way, showing humanity despite being in a wheelchair with ALS, the degenerative nerve disorder known in the U.S. as Lou Gehrig's disease. He flew in a zero-gravity plane. He made public bets with other scientists about the existence of black holes and radiation that emanates from them — losing both bets and buying a subscription to Penthouse for one scientist and a baseball encyclopedia for the other.

"The first thing that catches you is the debilitating disease and his wheelchair," Turner said. But then his mind and the "joy that he took in science" dominated. And while the public may not have understood what he said, they got his quest for big ideas, Turner said.

Andy Fabian, an astronomer at Hawking's University of Cambridge and president of the Royal Astronomical Society, said Hawking would start his layman's lectures on black holes with the joke: "I assume you all have read 'A Brief History of Time' and understood it." It always got a big laugh.

"You'd find the average astronomer such as myself doesn't even try to follow the more esoteric theories that (Hawking) pursued the last 20 years," Fabian said. "I've been to talks Hawking has given and cannot follow them myself."

Hawking, who was born 300 years to the day after Galileo died, was the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University. It was the same post that Isaac Newton held. Both physicists and astrophysicists claimed him as their own. And much of Hawking's work was in the field of cosmology, a deep-thinking branch of astronomy that tries to explain the totality of the universe.

Hawking's title "is not relevant here; what matters is what his brain did," said Neil deGrasse Tyson, director of New York's Hayden Planetarium. "We claim him as an astrophysicist because his laboratory was the universe."

And Hawking's black hole work in the mid-1970s made a crucial connection in physics. Until Hawking discovered radiation coming from black holes — named "Hawking radiation" after him — the two giant theories in physics, Einstein's general relativity and quantum mechanics, often conflicted. Hawking was the first to show they connected, which Turner and others described as breakthrough at the time.

The concept that stuff, radiation, comes out of black holes may have upset science fiction authors, but it inspired young scientists such as Tyson, who described it as "spooky profound."

The idea behind this was also novel because it said "black holes aren't forever," Turner said.

Hawking also pioneered a "no hair" theory of black holes that they were simple, with just spin, mass and charge and nothing else.

Both of those concepts are cornerstones of current black hole theory.

Hawking's other work went beyond black holes into the more cosmic, the origins of the universe. Initially he theorized about the "singularity" of the baby universe in thick but elegant mathematical equations comparing early time to wave functions. Later, his own work contradicted some of that and he was instrumental to theories about inflationary cosmology, where the universe's beginning is more of a half ball. That theory got its kick-start at a conference Hawking hosted in 1982 with a dinner party and croquet match, Turner said.

The high-concept theory-making didn't quite match the personality behind it. Colleagues often mention his off-the-wall humor, his big grin, his stubbornness.

And even the public picked up on his cheeky attitude instantly, Turner and Freedman said.

"He added a human face to science," Turner said. "It goes well beyond the wheelchair."

The bigger story was how the public became fascinated with this small man, stuck in a wheelchair with a worsening disease, and an intellect that few could fathom. They related to the man, Stephen Hawking, and his story, Freedman said.

The insight he gave on the mysteries of the cosmos was just a bonus.

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

## Parkland students lead walkouts to protest gun violence

By KELLI KENNEDY, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — Students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida walked out of their classrooms Wednesday and held a brief rally on the football field before making their way to makeshift memorials for their fallen classmates where they cried, embraced and passionately called for new gun control measures.

It was a month to the day after a former student wielding an AR-15 assault-style rifle strode into one of the school buildings and opened fire, killing 14 students and three staff members.

The Parkland protest was echoed in schools across the nation as students staged 17-minute walkouts — one minute for each of the shooting victims — aimed at pressuring federal lawmakers to enact gun control laws.

The rally came less than a week after Florida Republican Gov. Rick Scott, citing the students' actions, signed into law a bill that raises the minimum age for the purchase of long guns, including assault weapons such as the AR-15. The bill also extends the three-day waiting period for handguns to long guns, and creates a program to enable some teachers or other school employees to carry guns.

For many of the students, the bill was a sign of progress, but didn't go far enough.

"We are here to protest because we know that more can be done, not just statewide but nationwide," said Stoneman Douglas junior Susana Matta, 17.

"This problem affects absolutely everyone and we will not stop until change happens. It's been a whole month and we're still out here protesting."

The students are working hard to maintain the momentum of their movement; they know such persistence is necessary if they are going to persuade lawmakers at the state and national level to take more action.

"It's been quite a journey," Stoneman Douglas student Alex Goodchild said to his fellow classmate, David Hogg, who was livestreaming the event online. "My fear is that we're going to lose the momentum on the national level."

Students have organized a march on Washington for later this month, and since the shooting have taken trips to Washington and the Florida capital of Tallahassee to confront lawmakers.

On Wednesday, many Stoneman Douglas students left campus after the short rally, laughing and chanting as they walked. The mood immediately became somber when they arrived at a park about 2 miles (3 kilometers) away, where 17 memorial crosses ringed by flowers stood.

A dozen girls sat around one for Meadow Pollack, a senior who was slain in the Feb. 14 shooting. Others

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sobbed at the memorial for Aaron Feis, a popular football coach.

Sophomore Tanzil Philip, 16, grabbed a megaphone and led a group of students in a chant as he stood near 17 makeshift angels for the victims. "What do we want?" he yelled.

"Gun control now!" the group yelled back.

Alexis Grogan, whose friend Luke Hoyer was killed in the shooting, stayed home from school Wednesday, afraid of another violent incident, but was heartened by the support she saw on TV from around the country.

"It's a very emotional day for me and I miss my friends too much," the 15-year-old said via text.

For other Parkland students as well, the day was yet another reminder of the trauma that they and their community continue to process, and a chance to be together as they continue grieving.

"It is such a symbol of unity after such a terrible tragedy but also a symbol of change. ... Today I was reminded of why we began this fight and why we are working so hard to make a change," said 17-year-old Stoneman Douglas student Casey Sherman.

Sherman is organizing the Parkland march on March 24 that is expected to draw more than 20,000. The march is one of nearly 500 planned around the world, including a demonstration in Washington that is expected to draw thousands as well.

Find all of AP's coverage on the walkouts and the Parkland, Florida, shooting at <https://apnews.com/tag/Floridaschoolshooting>

## Asian shares waver as market mulls Kudlow, trade tensions

By KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian shares were mixed Thursday as investors assessed President Donald Trump's pick for his new economic adviser amid lingering worries over a possible global trade war.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 0.2 percent to 21,810.63 while South Korea's Kospi was nearly flat at 2,485.80. Hong Kong's Hang Seng edged up 0.1 percent to 31,473.14 and the Shanghai Composite in mainland China fell less than 0.1 percent to 3,290.08. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 fell 0.2 percent to 5,925.20. Shares were mixed in Southeast Asia.

TRADE FEARS: Trump named Larry Kudlow, a CNBC commentator, to replace Gary Cohn as his top economic aide. Kudlow said he is "in accord" with Trump's agenda, which includes reducing the trade imbalance with China — marking a reversal from his previous stance. He told the network after the announcement that "China has not played by the rules for a long time" and the country "needs a comeuppance on trade." He said his team at the White House would help implement policies set by the president, including stiff new tariffs on steel and aluminum. Separately, European Union head Donald Tusk urged Trump to cooperate with the continent instead of slapping tariffs on European goods.

QUOTE WORTHY: Kudlow's appointment "interestingly had not been significantly well-received by the market," said Jingyi Pan, market strategist at IG in Singapore. "One reason underpinning this lingering fear may be the new chief economic advisor's stance on China which adds to the tension with Kudlow having targeted the country in his first public remark."

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks ended lower. The S&P 500 index lost 0.6 percent to finish at 2,749.48. The Dow Jones industrial average lost 1 percent to 24,758.12. The Nasdaq composite fell 0.2 percent to 7,496.81.

ENERGY: Oil futures extended gains. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 12 cents to \$61.08 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract gained 25 cents to \$60.96 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added 13 cents to \$65.01 per barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 106.03 yen from 106.31 yen in late trading Wednesday. The euro strengthened to \$1.2380 from \$1.2369.

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## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 15, the 74th day of 2018. There are 291 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 15, 1493, Italian explorer Christopher Columbus arrived back in the Spanish harbor of Palos de la Frontera, two months after concluding his first voyage to the Western Hemisphere.

On this date:

In 44 B.C., Roman dictator Julius Caesar was assassinated by a group of nobles that included Brutus and Cassius.

In 1767, the seventh president of the United States, Andrew Jackson, was born in the Waxhaw settlement along the North Carolina-South Carolina border.

In 1820, Maine became the 23rd state.

In 1917, Czar Nicholas II abdicated in favor of his brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich, who declined the crown, marking the end of imperial rule in Russia.

In 1922, Sultan Fuad I proclaimed himself the first king of modern Egypt.

In 1937, America's first hospital blood bank was opened at Cook County Hospital in Illinois.

In 1944, during World War II, Allied bombers again raided German-held Monte Cassino.

In 1956, the Lerner and Loewe musical play "My Fair Lady," based on Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion," opened on Broadway.

In 1964, actress Elizabeth Taylor married actor Richard Burton in Montreal; it was her fifth marriage, his second. (They divorced in 1974, remarried in 1975, then divorced again in 1976.)

In 1977, the U.S. House of Representatives began a 90-day closed-circuit test to determine the feasibility of showing its sessions on television. The situation comedy "Three's Company," starring John Ritter, Joyce DeWitt and Suzanne Somers, premiered on ABC-TV.

In 1985, the first internet domain name, symbolics.com, was registered by the Symbolics Computer Corp. of Massachusetts.

In 1998, CBS' "60 Minutes" aired an interview with former White House employee Kathleen Willey, who said President Bill Clinton had made unwelcome sexual advances toward her in the Oval Office in 1993, a charge denied by the president. Dr. Benjamin Spock, whose child care guidance spanned half a century, died in San Diego at 94.

Ten years ago: A construction crane, 19 stories tall and attached to an apartment tower under construction on Manhattan's East Side, broke away and toppled like a tree onto buildings as far as a block away, killing seven people. China's legislature re-appointed Hu Jintao (hoo jin-tow) as president, giving him a second five-year term.

Five years ago: The Pentagon announced it would spend \$1 billion to add 14 interceptors to an Alaska-based missile defense system, responding to what it called faster-than-anticipated North Korean progress on nuclear weapons and missiles. The chief of Syria's main, Western-backed rebel group marked the second anniversary of the start of the uprising against President Bashar Assad by pledging to fight until the "criminal" regime was gone. Canadian Patrick Chan won his third title at the World Figure Skating Championships in London, Ontario.

One year ago: President Donald Trump, speaking in Ypsilanti, Michigan, announced that his administration would re-examine federal requirements governing the fuel efficiency of cars and trucks, moving forcefully against Obama-era environmental regulations that Trump said were stifling economic growth; Trump then flew to Nashville to lay a wreath at the tomb of President Andrew Jackson. For the second time, a federal court blocked President Trump's efforts to freeze immigration by refugees and citizens of some predominantly Muslim nations. The Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate for the second time in three months, increasing its key short-term rate by a quarter-point to a still-low range of 0.75 percent to 1 percent.



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Today's Birthdays: Musician DJ Fontana is 87. Former astronaut Alan L. Bean is 86. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is 85. Actor Judd Hirsch is 83. Jazz musician Charles Lloyd is 80. Rock musician Phil Lesh is 78. Singer Mike Love (The Beach Boys) is 77. Rock singer-musician Sly Stone is 75. Rock singer-musician Howard Scott (War; Lowrider Band) is 72. Rock singer Ry Cooder is 71. Actor Craig Wasson is 64. Rock singer Dee Snider (Twisted Sister) is 63. Actor Joaquim de Almeida is 61. Actress Park Overall is 61. Movie director Renny Harlin is 59. Model Fabio is 57. Singer Terence Trent D'Arby (AKA Sananda Maitreya) is 56. Rock singer Bret Michaels (Poison) is 55. Rhythm-and-blues singer Rockwell is 54. Actor Chris Bruno is 52. Rock singer Mark McGrath (Sugar Ray) is 50. Actress Kim Raver is 49. Rock musician Mark Hoppus is 46. Country singer-musician Matt Thomas (Parmalee) is 44. Actress Eva Longoria is 43. Rapper-musician will.i.am (Black Eyed Peas) is 43. Rock DJ Joseph Hahn (Linkin Park) is 41. Rapper Young Buck is 37. Actor Sean Biggerstaff is 35. Rock musician Ethan Mentzer is 35. Actor Kellan Lutz is 33. Actress Caitlin Wachs is 29.

Thought for Today: "Life's meaning has always eluded me and I guess it always will. But I love it just the same." — E.B. White, American author and humorist (1899-1985).