

Groton Daily Independent

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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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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**

South Dakota's 2017 Traffic Fatalities Rise; State's Five-Year Trend Among Nation's Lowest

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota remains one of the leading states in the nation for the lowest number of traffic fatalities in 2017. This, despite the fact that there were 13 additional fatalities on state roads from the previous year.

There were 129 traffic fatalities in South Dakota during 2017. That is up from the 116 reported in 2016, a year which saw the second lowest fatality total of all time.

"For most of 2017, we were actually on target to finish the year with fewer than 100 traffic fatalities for the first time in state history," says state Office of Highway Safety director Lee Axdahl. "But in the last three months of the year, there were 42 additional fatalities which dramatically affected our expectations."

Out of the 129 traffic fatalities, 101 were motor vehicle fatalities. There were 111 fatal crashes in 2017, compared to 103 in 2016.

"The 2017 numbers are up, but we still have one of the lowest five-year fatality trends in the nation," Axdahl says. "And, while even one traffic fatality is one too many, the numbers prove that South Dakota drivers are among the safest in the nation."

Axdahl says the two biggest causes of roadway crashes remain speed and alcohol. And, he says out of the 101 motor vehicle fatalities, 66 of those who died were not wearing seatbelts.

"We had many crashes this year where the victim would have survived had they been wearing a seatbelt," Axdahl says. "Clearly the odds are in your favor when you buckle up. Too many families were broken in 2017 because a loved one was not safely restrained in a crash. The Office of Highway Safety, through both education and cooperative enforcement efforts, will continue to aggressively promote the need of wearing seatbelts during 2018."

The Office of Highway Safety is part of the Department of Public Safety.



All auto owners!
Save \$2-\$4 /tank
& grow your local economy
by choosing low carbon
Super Premium E30's
94 octane, more power,
same mileage, fewer
carbon deposits, lower
maintenance costs,
slashed benzene & related
genotoxic, carcinogenic
tailpipe emissions;
*see sdfu.org's E30 tab for
info, E30 prices\locations.

***Farmers Union's
PSA: Courtesy Merle
Anderson (Merle is 94
year old founder of Ace
and legendary ethanol
supporter... "because it is
the right thing to do")**

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Early Thursday morning, the Kristi Noem campaign released this

FACT CHECK: Despite Claim, Jackley Didn't Create Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force

In Marty Jackley's first television ad, voters are told the candidate "created the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force." The Task Force, however, was created under the Janklow administration, nearly a decade prior to Jackley being appointed Attorney General.

"In July 2002, Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) was created under BIT [Bureau of Information and Telecommunications Agency] and then was moved in May 2003 to the Attorney General's office," explains the minutes from a June 2004 BIT agency review committee meeting. Jackley was not appointed as Attorney General until 2009.

By 2005, the ICAC was producing results. According to the 2007 South Dakota Legislative Manual, the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force reported performing 2,100 exams on 381 items, viewing 5.6 million image files, and completing 107 reports in 2005 - still, several years prior to Jackley's tenure as Attorney General.

ICAC received taxpayer support as well. In 2002, the Task Force received a \$1 million Internet Child Safety grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, which was to be "used by the Internet Crimes Against Children enforcement unit (ICAC) that Janklow started...." In FY2007, the South Dakota Office of The Attorney General was awarded a \$250,000 federal grant in support of the ICAC. In FY2009, the Task Force received additional support from taxpayers, winning a \$210,000 grant for the South Dakota Office of The Attorney General to "continue to operate its Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force."

"Marty Jackley needs to correct the record," said Justin Brasell, Kristi for Governor Campaign Manager. "Voters deserve to have honest and accurate information. Clarifying the facts on this claim would be a good first step."

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.

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1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

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!

Later in the morning, the Jackley campaigned released the following information

Jackley Created Statewide Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force

PIERRE, SD: As US Attorney, Marty Jackley created a stand-alone Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC) in South Dakota with an ICAC grant issued by the US Department of Justice in 2007.

Prior to 2007, South Dakota was an affiliate unit of the Minnesota ICAC Task Force. As a result of Jackley's efforts, South Dakota now has a stand-alone ICAC Task Force that is no longer under the authority of Minnesota.

An April 2005 Minnesota Senate bill summary that explains the mission of the Minnesota ICAC notes, "We also have the Department of Criminal Investigation for the state of South Dakota overseen by our task force."

The summary includes an Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention map of statewide ICAC task forces then in existence, which is attached below.

"I applaud Marty Jackley for his efforts to create a stand-alone ICAC Task Force for South Dakota," said Kendall Light, South Dakota's ICAC Commander in 2007. "The stand-alone SD ICAC Task Force has given our state more flexibility in charging decisions, including mandatory sentences for sexual predators, and additional resources to work with our federal, state, and local investigative partners."

A Department of Justice press release from October 15, 2007 announced the creation of the new South Dakota ICAC Task Force.

The DOJ release states, "The Department of Justice announced today that 13 new state and local law enforcement agencies will receive more than \$3 million to form Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task forces in their regions."

"The creation and recognition of our own stand-alone South Dakota ICAC Task Force has provided our law enforcement officers with more freedom and ability to protect our kids in South Dakota," Jackley said. "The true heroes in the ICAC Task Force are the men and women in uniform that run these important operations. I also appreciate the efforts of Governor Bill Janklow, Sheriff Mike Milstead and others who were involved in getting funding to establish initial operations for internet crimes against children in our state."

Jackley is also leading the national fight to protect children as Chair of Project Child Rescue with Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring. Project Child Rescue is an ambitious new campaign to locate and rescue children from sexual exploitation and trafficking.

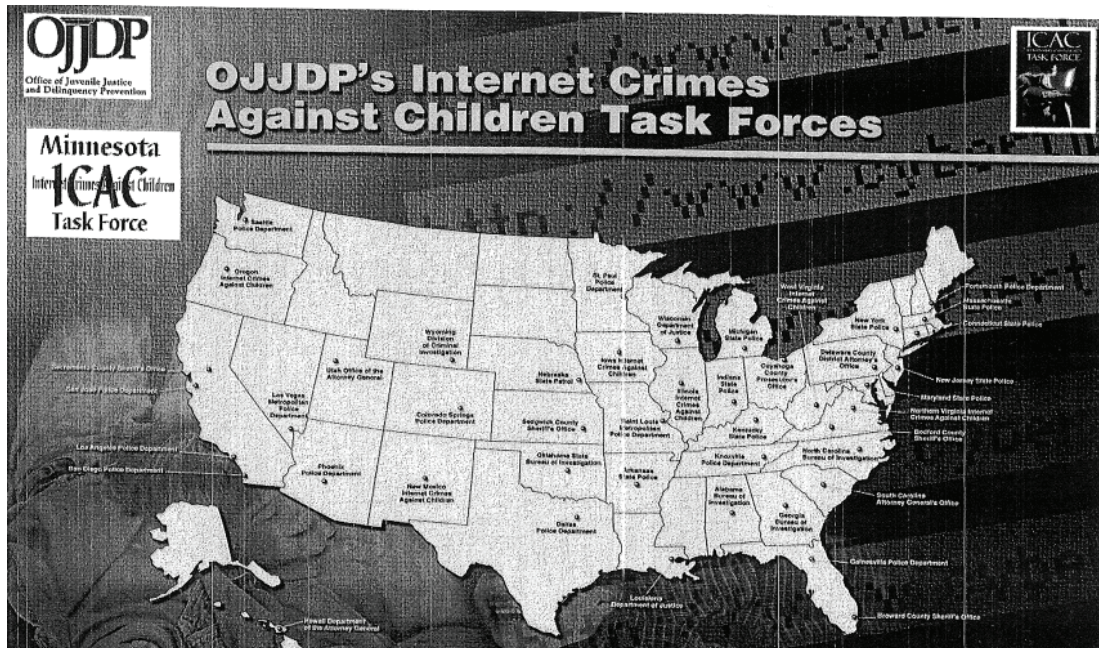
The application submitted by Jackley to create the South Dakota ICAC Task Force affiliated with the Department of Justice, which includes a Memorandum of Understanding, can be found here.

Also attached is an email showing Jackley's efforts to create a stand-alone ICAC program in South Dakota. Initially Jackley's request to DOJ was not accepted and was limited to a joint South Dakota and North Dakota recognized ICAC. (see next page for details) However, after continued efforts by Jackley, South Dakota was recognized as its own stand-alone ICAC Task Force in October 2007.

South Dakota Department of Justice ICAC statistics from 2007, the year the stand-alone South Dakota ICAC Task Force began, through the end of the year 2017 are available upon request.

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From: Jackley, Marty J. (USASD) [<mailto:Marty.J.Jackley@usdoj.gov>]

Sent: Monday, January 22, 2007 10:27 AM

Subject: Project Safe Childhood

I hope the PSC group is doing well, and I want to take this opportunity to update you on some events. It is anticipated that Project Safe Childhood may launch with National Awareness Day on March 12 or 13. The Lincoln school teacher child porn case that has been drawing significant media coverage is presently scheduled for Sent. On March 2. Our office has been reluctant to comment much about the case until after sentencing; however, once sentencing is complete I anticipate that we will begin educating the public through the media on PSC. I would appreciate your thoughts on when and what we should do in South Dakota on PSC including media releases/joint press conferences?

Although we did not get full ICAC funding that we had all hoped, we are eligible for \$300,000 grant (award ceiling) with North Dakota on a combined state service area (see below). I hope we are able to continue to build on our partnering efforts in SD to avoid duplication and work toward the best combined use of these resources. The application dealing with the joint service area and the sharing of these resources provides us with the opportunity to demonstrate the strength of our existing resources and systems and the ability to assist North Dakota. Thank you and I look forward to your thoughts and comments.

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The Moscow Times



**KEEP
CALM
AND
CARRY
ON**

The UK has expelled 23 Russian diplomats after the Kremlin failed to meet a deadline to explain the chemical attack on former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter.

The move might come as a relief to some Russians in England who are finding it difficult to stay alive these days.

In an all-too-familiar scenario, London also hinted it might oust the Kremlin-funded RT television network, eliciting a mirror threat from Russia's Foreign Ministry to ban British media outlets: It's a thin line between double agent and foreign agent.

Meanwhile, Russia's denials it had anything to do with the incident have become ever more creative. The poisoning is an attempt to interfere with Sunday's presidential elections, ruin its World Cup and — worst of all — contradicts the logic of extrajudicial killings, according to Russia's former FSB head. There are rules to killing spies, you know.

With several days to go until the elections, Vladimir Putin traveled to Crimea to inspect the new Kerch Bridge that will link the annexed peninsula to the Russian mainland.

The visit will have been a crowd pleaser: according to the Levada Center pollster, 70 percent of Russians support the annexation. Now if only there was a way to tie the anniversary of the annexation to the presidential election ...

Students at Moscow's prestigious Moscow State University are protesting a decision to set up a FIFA fan venue next to their university. Sports officials are hitting back with soft power by naming the official oracle for the World Cup Achilles. The blind cat, a resident of the Hermitage Museum, is bound to hit a weak spot with fans.

After the tournament, Achilles might follow in the footsteps of Paul the Octopus who, as far as we can tell, correctly guessed the name of Russia's next president before taking his secret to the grave.

Meanwhile, a cyclist has been handed a fine for "damaging a pothole," after filing a complaint about that very pothole. The wheels of justice are turning in Russia.

Editor's Picks

The Moscow Times' Andrei Muchnik looks back on the life of prominent theater director Oleg Tabakov who died this week aged 82.

Evan Gershkovich visits the campaign headquarters of Maxim Suraikin, Russia's least popular presidential candidate, just days ahead of the vote.

And Russia's long history of liquidating defectors and enemies of the state is ruining its political reputation, argues Pavel Aptekar.

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Today in Weather History

March 16, 2012: Temperatures reaching eighty degrees or higher in March across central and northeast South Dakota is a rare occurrence, and for this to occur in mid-March is exceedingly rare. On March 16th, several locations across the area set record highs by topping the 80-degree mark including Aberdeen, Mobridge, and Pierre. Sisseton and Watertown also set records for March 16th. Aberdeen topped out at 81 degrees, Mobridge reached 83 degrees, with 86 degrees at Pierre.

1885: On this date through the 21st, Pointe-des-Monts, Quebec Canada received 98 inches of snowfall.

1942: A deadly tornado outbreak occurred over the Central and Southern US on March 16-17th. The tornado outbreak killed 153 people and injured at least 1,284. The best estimate indicates this event contained 13 F3 tornadoes, 6 F4s, and one F5. The F5 tornado occurred north of Peoria, Illinois, in the towns of Alta, Chillicothe before crossing the Illinois River and striking the town of Lacon. A quarter of the homes in Lacon were destroyed, and debris was carried for 25 miles.

1942 - Two tornadoes, 24 minutes apart, struck Baldwin, MS, resulting in 65 deaths. (David Ludlum)

1975 - A single storm brought 119 inches of snow to Crater Lake, O,R establishing a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - A small but rare tornado touched down perilously close to Disneyland in Anaheim CA. (Storm Data)

1987 - Softball size hail caused millions of dollars damage to automobiles at Del Rio TX. Three persons were injured when hailstones crashed through a shopping mall skylight. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1988 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in the Central Rockies. Winds gusted to 80 mph at Centerville UT. Eighteen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported new record low temperatures for the date, including Tallahassee FL with a reading of 24 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A winter storm brought heavy snow and high winds to the southwestern U.S. Winds gusted to 60 mph at Lovelock NV, Salt Lake City UT, and Fort Carson CO. Snow fell at a rate of three inches per hour in the Lake Tahoe area of Nevada. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced large hail and damaging winds from northwest Florida to western South Carolina. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 75 mph at Floridatown FL. Sixteen cities across the northeastern quarter of the nation reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 78 degrees at Burlington VT smashed their previous record for the date by 23 degrees. New York City reported a record high of 82 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

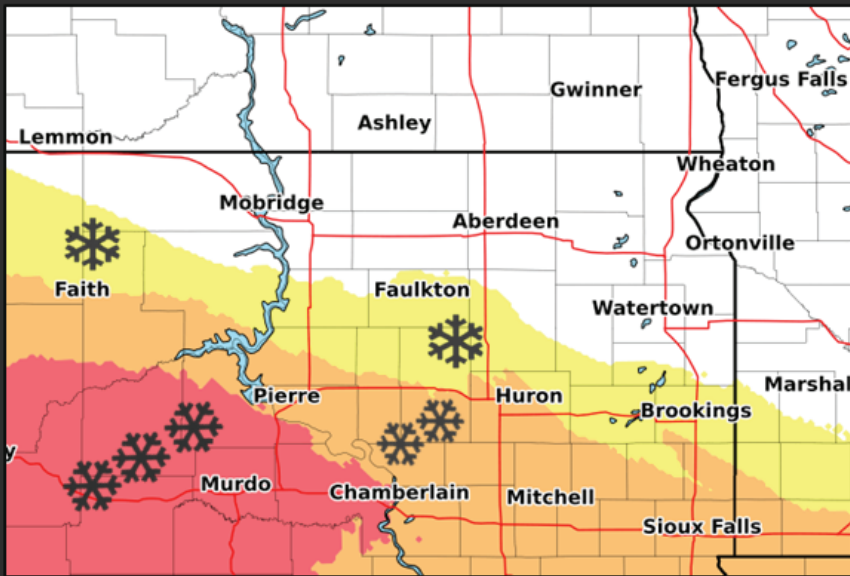
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Fri Mar 16	Sat Mar 17	Sun Mar 18	Mon Mar 19	Tue Mar 20	Wed Mar 21	Thu Mar 22
34°F	38°F	41°F	37°F	34°F	39°F	43°F
21°F	23°F	28°F	22°F	19°F	23°F	37°F
ENE 16 MPH	E 7 MPH	S 8 MPH	NNE 8 MPH Precip 50%	NW 8 MPH	NNW 7 MPH	SSE 13 MPH



Heavy Snow & Ice Threat Impact Outlook: Today



None
No impacts are expected at this time

Minor ❄️
Light accumulations with minor road impacts possible

Moderate ❄️❄️
Slippery roads and low visibility are possible

Significant ❄️❄️❄️
Snow over roads and greatly reduced visibilities are possible

Extreme ❄️❄️❄️❄️
Major impacts are possible, travel may be impossible

What you need to know

Freezing rain and sleet will spread into central South Dakota this morning. The mixed precipitation will transition over to all snow by midday. Snow will move east through this afternoon, but will weaken by this evening. Several inches of snow is expected in central South Dakota. Light freezing drizzle may linger across the area during the evening and overnight hours as well.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 37.7 F at 4:03 PM

Low Outside Temp: 18.0 F at 7:09 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 21.0 Mph at 6:01 PM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 81° in 20152

Record Low: -17° in 1906

Average High: 40°F

Average Low: 20°F

Average Precip in March: 0.51

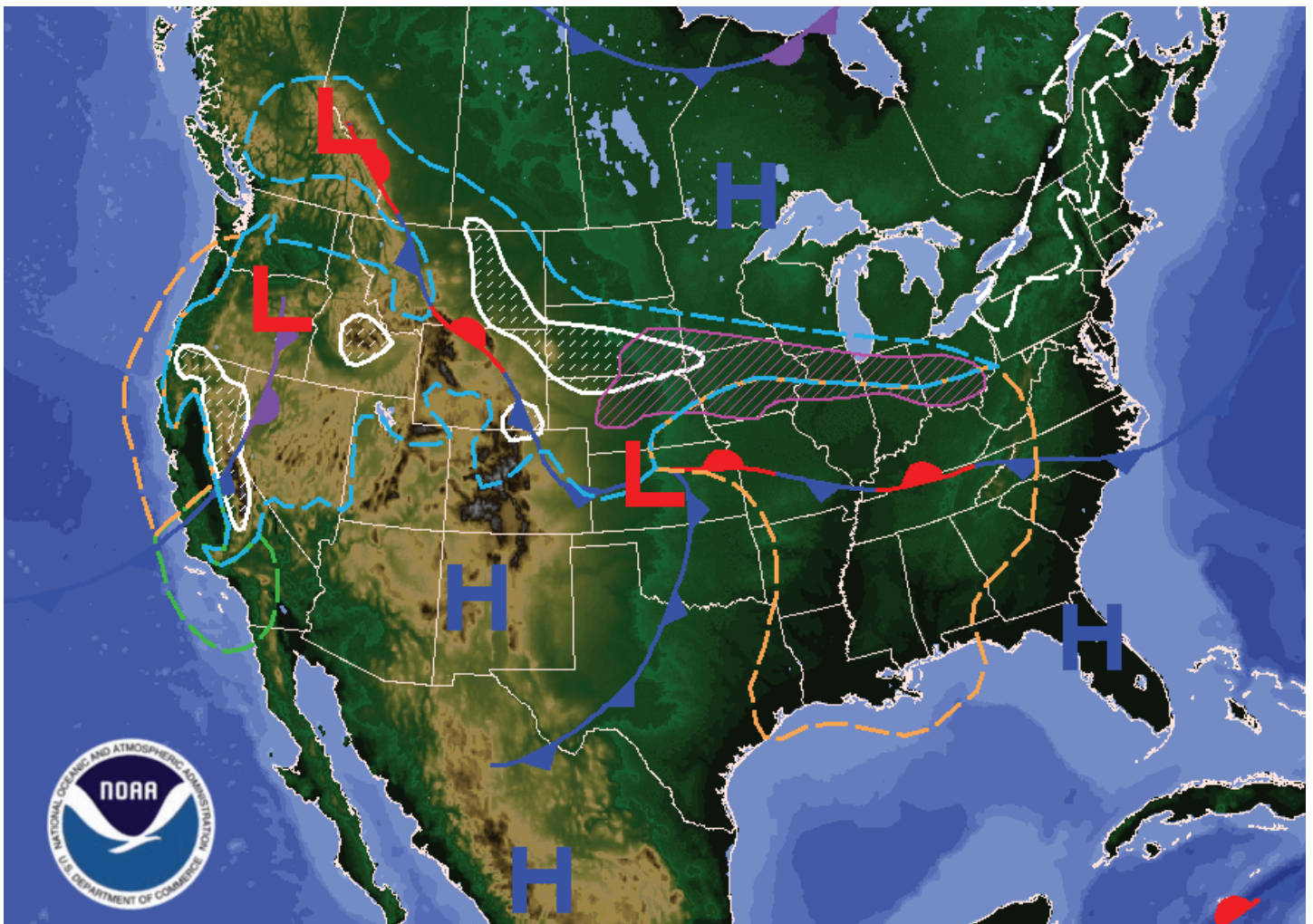
Precip to date in March: 0.94

Average Precip to date: 1.53

Precip Year to Date: 1.35

Sunset Tonight: 7:41 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:42 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Mar 16, 2018, issued 7:03 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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"I'M REALLY AFRAID OF HIM"

Little Johnny clutched his blanket tightly and pulled it up under his chin. His Dad was reading a bedtime story about God, Noah and the flood. When he finished, his Dad asked what he liked best about the story.

"Nothing! I'm afraid God will flood our house and all my toys will be gone!" he replied.

Many people see that one side of God. Whenever there is a disaster or a tragedy they point a finger and say, "What kind of a god would do that? See, that's why I can't believe in him. I can't trust him."

Psalm 97 seems to add to the confusion. It begins with a statement about the Lord reigning and that we ought to be glad and rejoice. Then the Psalmist writes, "Clouds and thick darkness surround Him, righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne." If that is the only picture of God that people have, no wonder they are frightened. Most people would be.

But what did the Psalmist mean when he wrote those words? He is reminding us that God exposes and expresses Himself on His terms. Our God is a Holy God - and He, in love and compassion, made Himself available through His Son. When we read that He is surrounded by "clouds and darkness" it does not mean that He is hiding from us and is unapproachable. Not at all. Only that we come to Him on His terms. And what are His terms?

Jesus defined them: "No one comes to the Father except through Me!" When we accept Christ as our Savior He enters our life and nothing can separate us from Him.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for Your Son our Savior - and for becoming available to us through His life and death. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 97:2 Clouds and darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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

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News from the Associated Press

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Class AA Quarterfinal

Harrisburg 64, Sioux Falls Washington 47

RC Central 66, Douglas 54

Rapid City Stevens 53, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 40

Yankton 59, Sioux Falls Lincoln 57

Class A Quarterfinal

Madison 82, Pine Ridge 59

Sioux Falls Christian 80, Red Cloud 46

Sioux Valley 75, Dakota Valley 55

Tea Area 76, Crow Creek 63

Class B Quarterfinal

Bridgewater-Emery 63, Lower Brule 53

Clark/Willow Lake 57, Canistota 47

Sully Buttes 62, Timber Lake 53

White River 52, Langford 43

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Class AA Quarterfinal

Aberdeen Central 54, RC Central 42

Brandon Valley 50, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 41

Harrisburg 45, Rapid City Stevens 34

Sioux Falls Lincoln 55, Sioux Falls Washington 43

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

Big Ten teams hope to shake off rust in NCAA Tournament

By LARRY LAGE, AP Sports Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Big Ten teams entered the NCAA Tournament with an unusually long layoff. Purdue, Michigan State, Michigan and Ohio State each tried to make the best of a break, which lasted about two weeks following their conference tournament.

Rusty or refreshed?

We'll find out soon.

Second-seeded Purdue will face 15th-seeded Cal State Fullerton and third-seeded Michigan State will play 14th-seeded Bucknell on Friday in Detroit.

Fifth-seeded Ohio State seemed to be ready, beating 12th-seeded South Dakota State 81-73 Thursday afternoon after a 12-day layoff. Third-seeded Michigan, which won the Big Ten Tournament title on March

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4, trailed 10-0 in the opening minutes against 14th-seeded Montana before pulling away for a 61-47 victory Thursday night.

"Not everything can be because of the 10-day stretch," Michigan's Moe Wagner said. "We came out sluggish, and that can't happen. We do that against a different team, show's over."

The Boilermakers and Spartans hit the road after the conference tournament was played in New York, hoping to refresh and recharge off the court.

Purdue players made a short trip to Indianapolis to play video games and eat dinner together at Dave & Buster's.

"We feel refreshed," Boilermakers center Isaac Haas said.

Michigan State, meanwhile, went to Chicago to watch the Bulls play and practice at their facility, and went to see "Hamilton."

"Most of them hadn't been to a Broadway-type show," Izzo said. "What I enjoyed most about it is nobody complained. Everybody was excited. When we were riding back on the bus and they started singing some of the songs from it I said, 'Wow.' We must've done something that hit home because they were all into it."

Big Ten coaches and players did not enjoy this season's condensed schedule, which was set up to finish the regular season earlier so the tournament could be played at Madison Square Garden. The conference has traditionally ended its conference tournament the same day the NCAA Tournament field is announced, finishing its title game just before the annual TV show, but made the exception to get into a coveted venue and market.

While they grumbled during the season about playing games with less time to prepare in between, the longer break may have been good in particular for Purdue and Michigan State.

Boilermakers forward Vince Edwards aggravated his ankle injury during the Big Ten Tournament, getting held to a total of 11 points in the last two games. The ailment kept him out of the lineup for two games in February. The break, it appears, served him well.

"It's been great to actually be able to see some of that explosiveness come back," Edwards said. "The last couple of practices have been really good."

The Spartans are trying to move forward after having their season stunted by off-court issues, including a crisis on campus related to how the school handled sexual assault allegations against disgraced doctor Larry Nassar. They were also faced with questions related to an ESPN report, questioning how the basketball and football program handled sexual assault allegations against their players. Miles Bridges was declared ineligible for about a day, just before the final regular season game, because the school discovered his family members had dinner with an agent last winter without his knowledge.

The turmoil may have made the team even closer, focusing it on a lofty goal.

"We're in our mindset where if it's not a national championship, then it's probably a bust for this team," Michigan State point guard Cassius Winston said.

AP Sports Writers Michael Marot and Mitch Stacy contributed to this report.

More AP college basketball: <https://collegebasketball.ap.org> ; https://twitter.com/AP_Top25 and <https://www.podcastone.com/ap-sports-special-events>

Ohio State outlasts South Dakota State 81-73 in West Region

By JOHN MARSHALL, AP Basketball Writer

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Ohio State is not a 3-point shooting team. The Buckeyes don't take a lot, don't make a lot.

Back in the NCAA Tournament for the first time in three years, the Buckeyes went all-in on the 3, casting it up 40 times. The last couple they tried, both by Kam Williams, helped push Ohio State into the round of 32.

Williams made a tiebreaking four-point play with 1:36 left, then added a trio of free throws after being

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fouled on another 3 attempt, lifting Ohio State to an 81-73 victory over South Dakota State in the West Region on Thursday.

"As soon as I let it go I felt like it was going to go in and it just went in," said Williams, who had 22 points. "It just felt great and everything just kind of got rolling from there."

Fifth-seeded Ohio State (25-8) traded 3-point attempts with South Dakota State — 71 combined in all — before reeling off 16 straight points to build a 13-point second-half lead.

The scrappy Jackrabbits fought back with a late run, scoring 10 straight points to tie it at 70-all.

Williams answered — by being fouled on a pair of 3-pointers. He finished off the four-point play for a 74-70 lead and made all three free throws on the second, making it 77-70 with 64 seconds left.

Ohio State, which was tied for 287th nationally with 612 3-point attempts, went 12 for 40 from the arc. "It's not really who we are," Ohio State coach Chris Holtmann said. "It wasn't the game plan. It's really difficult because they're literally giving you tee-up 3s."

Keita Bates-Diop had 24 points and 12 rebounds for the Buckeyes, who will face Gonzaga in the round of 32 on Saturday. The Zags steamrolled Ohio State 86-59 at the PK80 Invitational in November.

"The whole team is excited for this one," Bates-Diop said. "We've been wanting this matchup ever since the bracket came out."

No. 12 South Dakota State (28-7) hit 13 of 31 from 3-point range and Mike Daum scored 27 points. The Jackrabbits had their first NCAA Tournament win within grasp, only to watch it slip through their fingers by fouling Williams on the late 3-point attempts.

"They're very well-schooled and disciplined, and those guys stepped up and made big plays throughout the second half," South Dakota State coach T.J. Otzelberger said. "But none stand out more in my mind than the ones Kam made that separated them to get the victory."

Ohio State was one of college basketball's biggest surprises in Holtmann's first season. He didn't take over the program until June and the Buckeyes were picked to finish 11th in the in Big Ten.

Yet behind Bates-Diop, the Big Ten player of the year, Ohio State finished second in the conference behind Michigan State to earn its first NCAA Tournament berth since 2015.

The Buckeyes were favorites in the NCAA opener, but also a popular pick to be upset in the No. 12-over-5 seed mold.

The Jackrabbits headed into the NCAA Tournament on an 11-game winning streak and had Daum, the two-time Summit League MVP.

The Dauminator was on his game against the Buckeyes, scoring 17 points in the first half. So was Bates-Diop, who had 17 points by halftime of a 43-all game.

After the run-trading second half, the Buckeyes found a way to make the plays down the stretch, leaving the Jackrabbits 0-5 all-time in the NCAA Tournament.

"It's always going to hurt that we could never get a W in this environment," said South Dakota State's Reed Tellinghuisen, who had 10 points and seven rebounds.

BIG PICTURE

Ohio State survived the upset to get a shot at another upset survivor, Gonzaga.

South Dakota State had itself in position for the upset, but wrecked its chances with the two late fouls on 3s. The Jackrabbits finish with a school-record 28 wins, but still none in the NCAA Tournament.

OHIO STATE ON THE O-GLASS

The Buckeyes had a size in advantage inside — outside of Daum — and used it to their advantage on the offensive glass. Ohio State grabbed 15 offensive rebounds, leading to 19 second-chance points.

JENKINS' NCAA DEBUT

South Dakota State freshman David Jenkins Jr. had 16 points in his NCAA Tournament debut, but had to work for it. He had success getting inside early before the Buckeyes closed down his driving lanes. Jenkins finished 4 for 17 from the floor and 2 for 3 from the 3-point arc.

UP NEXT

Ohio State faces Gonzaga on Saturday.

South Dakota State's season is over.

More AP college basketball: <https://collegebasketball.ap.org>; https://twitter.com/AP_Top25 and <https://www.podcastone.com/ap-sports-special-events>

Notre Dame's Jessica Shepard anxious for first NCAA game

By JOHN FINERAN, Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP) — If Jessica Shepard thinks about it, the ride the 6-foot-4 junior forward experienced in the preseason was a precursor for Notre Dame's roller-coaster season of injuries, emotions and ultimate success in capturing a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

"This is not an opportunity I take lightly," said Shepard, who will be playing in her first NCAA Tournament when Notre Dame (29-3) hosts Cal State Northridge (19-15) on Friday in a first-round game.

For reasons that still remain personal, Shepard left Nebraska, where she had averaged 18.5 points and 9.2 rebounds in two seasons, to transfer to Notre Dame, where Hall of Fame coach Muffet McGraw counted the 2001 national championship among seven Final Four appearances in 24 previous NCAA trips.

Notre Dame petitioned the NCAA to allow Shepard to play immediately and got the OK just before its preseason game Nov. 1 against Indiana (Penn.).

"We didn't know what they were going to decide," Shepard said, "(but) it has allowed me to play with these girls and for coach McGraw this season."

The 29-3 season that McGraw and the Irish have fashioned included several devastating injuries. Along the way, Shepard started all 32 games and finished with averages of 15.0 points and 7.9 rebounds to earn all-Atlantic Coast Conference first-team honors with junior All-America guard Arike Ogunbowale. The highlight of Shepard's season was a 39-point, 11-rebound performance in a 91-72 victory over DePaul on Dec. 17.

The highs have often been interrupted by lows. Notre Dame won a Thanksgiving weekend tournament title in Florida that included a victory over defending NCAA champion South Carolina before a heartbreaking loss at No. 1 Connecticut, its longtime rival. A 100-67 loss at No. 3 Louisville on Jan. 11 was followed by a 37-point turnaround in an 84-70 home victory over No. 6 Tennessee a week later.

Notre Dame, which shared a fifth straight ACC regular-season title with Louisville but lost to the Cardinals in the ACC tourney final, will now face Big West tourney champion CS Northridge, winners of six of its last eight.

"We respect them just like any other opponent we have," Matadors coach Jason Flowers said. "But we're not afraid of anybody."

The Matadors are led by two-time Big West Player of the Year Channon Fluker, a 6-foot-4 junior center averaging 18.8 points and 12.1 rebounds, and tourney MVP Tessa Boagni, a 6-2 senior forward who averages 13.6 points and 7.6 rebounds.

"Northridge is a very impressive team and their post play is phenomenal," McGraw said.

HARES VS. TORTOISE?

Friday's nightcap features No. 8-seed South Dakota State (26-6) against No. 9-seed Villanova (22-8). It's the third time in 11 NCAA appearances that Villanova has been a No. 9 seed.

Riding a four-game winning streak, including the Summit League tournament final victory over regular-season champ South Dakota, coach Aaron Johnston's Jackrabbits are averaging 78.3 points a game. Veteran coach Harry Perretta's 40th Villanova team averages 66.9.

"They like to get up and down the court," said Villanova senior Alex Louin, who leads four Wildcats in double figures with a 12.0 scoring average.

South Dakota State is in the tournament for the eighth time in the last 10 seasons and is 2-5 in first-round games under Johnston.

"They know how to play in the tournament because they have played in it a lot," Perretta said.

Junior guard Macy Miller leads the Jackrabbits with an 18.1 scoring average and South Dakota State's resume includes a four-point loss to then-No. 4 Louisville.

"I think they are hungry," Johnston said. "They've beaten some really good teams. Our losses are to really good teams."

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

Much has been written about Notre Dame's four season-ending ACL injuries that began almost a year ago when All-America forward Brianna Turner was hurt during an NCAA tourney victory over Purdue. The Irish then lost senior point guard Mychal Johnson in the preseason, promising freshman forward Mikayla Vaughn in November and Lili Thompson on Dec. 31.

Cal State Northridge can relate. Flowers lost expected starting guards Serafina Maulupe and Cheyenne Allen to injuries before midseason and guard Hayley Tanabe (7.8 points, 107 assists) dealt with a stress fracture in her foot at the start of the season.

"We obviously had a little adversity as Notre Dame did," Flowers said. "We felt we had the pieces but with those two out the margin of error because a lot smaller. Everything happens for a reason. Our young kids have continued to work, and last week was the culmination for them of the improvement they have made through the year."

Feral cats make Western Governor's list of invasive species

By DAN ELLIOTT, Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Weeds, feral cats, insects and other pests are invading the U.S. West, and state governors released a list of the worst offenders Thursday in hopes of helping people recognize and eradicate the invaders before they spread.

The Western Governors' Association cataloged the top 50 invasive species in their region, saying the pests have already caused billions of dollars in damage to agriculture and infrastructure.

"Western governors have said the spread of invasive species is one of the greatest risks to the Western environment," said Bill Whitacre, the association's policy adviser for public lands and agriculture.

Some of the species on the governors' list have been in the headlines before, including water-gulping salt cedar trees and quagga mussels. Others may be surprises, such as feral cats.

"They have huge impacts to native bird species," Whitacre said.

They're not pets on the loose, he said, but descendants in a long line of feral cats that have learned to live on their own.

Quagga mussels, which clog farm irrigation systems, requiring expensive cleanups. An aquatic weed called the Eurasian watermilfoil can alter the taste of municipal drinking water. Cheatgrass crowds out native grasses on rangeland, leaving less grazing for livestock.

Cheatgrass also competes with sage brush, reducing natural cover for a struggling native ground bird called the greater sage grouse, Whitacre said. It's also more prone to burn, worsening the West's wildfires.

Most states have their own lists of invasive species as well as workers tasked with getting rid of them, or at least controlling them, Whitacre said. But they tend to work only within their borders.

The West-wide invasive species list is a first, and the governors hope it will help state workers collaborate against the broader problem.

"A huge part of invasive species management is knowing what's there and what's not," Whitacre said.

"If there's early detection and rapid response, then there's eradication," he said.

At least two diseases made the list: white nose syndrome, which infects bats, and whirling disease, which attacks fish.

Most invasive species are an accidental consequence of international trade, said Leigh Greenwood, a manager for The Nature Conservancy and a member of Montana's state Invasive Species Council.

She cited two invaders that attack and kill elm and ash trees.

"When we look at the emerald ash borer coming in from China and Dutch elm disease coming from Europe, that's not a coincidence, because we used to get all of our goods from Europe and now we get them from China," she said.

Everyday residents can help the professionals limit the spread of invasive species, Greenwood said.

Two important steps are using only local firewood, to avoid transporting pests that may have killed the tree, and making sure boats aren't carrying invasive mussels or weeds, she said.

Follow Dan Elliott at <http://twitter.com/DanElliottAP>. His work can be found at <https://apnews.com/search/dan%20elliott>.

Minneapolis drops out of bidding for 2026 World Cup

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minneapolis has dropped out of the running to host the 2026 World Cup.

The Minneapolis Bid Committee said Thursday it has decided against submitting a formal bid to host the soccer tournament. The committee said it was unable to negotiate terms to protect the city from future liability or get a better estimate of expected costs.

One of those costs was the possibility of hosting six games and a fan fest that could last up to a month.

Minneapolis also says it wanted flexibility on the financial liability caps.

Despite suspending its bid, Minneapolis says it remains a strong supporter of the joint Canada, Mexico and U.S. bid. Minneapolis is still being considered as a team base camp city if FIFA awards the 2026 games to the United Bid Committee.

Survivor of Sioux Falls building collapse files lawsuit

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A woman who survived beneath rubble for hours after a 2016 building collapse in Sioux Falls is suing the developer and construction company.

Emily Fodness was sleeping in an apartment above the Copper Lounge in December 2016 when Hultgren Construction removed a load-bearing wall on the first floor and the building collapsed, trapping her.

Fodness and her parents allege in their lawsuit filed Tuesday that Hultgren ignored warning signs that the structure was failing, the Argus Leader reported. They allege the construction company and the developer, Legacy Developments, "lacked the experience, training and competence" to oversee the project.

The lawsuit also names the construction company's president, Aaron Hultgren, and project engineer Rise Structural Associates, as well as three limited liability companies with ownership stakes in the project, Boomerang, CLP and Olympia.

The Fodness lawsuit follows another filed against the same entities this month by the family of Ethan McMahon, the construction worker who was killed in the building collapse.

Both lawsuits allege that Hultgren Construction and Legacy Development were closely related entities.

"Upon information and belief, Hultgren Construction was formed at the urging of Legacy's principals to act as the general contractor for projects in which Legacy was developer in an effort to cut costs," the Fodness lawsuit states.

Aaron Hultgren also served as the director of development for Legacy, though he later left the position. He was removed from his role as guarantor on Legacy's \$50 million hotel and parking ramp project with the city of Sioux Falls.

Hultgren declined the newspaper's request for comment Wednesday.

Legacy spokeswoman Stacy Jones said "Legacy Development and Consulting Company, LLC is aware of the filing, but it is our policy not to comment on pending litigation."

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

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Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

American News, Aberdeen, March 14

On refugees, lawmakers lead by fear

South Dakota is full of warm, welcoming people. That welcoming spirit is challenged by change.

And while we need to be safe, and cautious, and realistic, South Dakotans cannot stand by as elected officials try to write racism into our laws.

We cannot let fear or misunderstanding govern us.

Unfortunately, that seems to have been a theme at this year's legislative session in Pierre.

In February, state Sen. Neal Tapio, R-Watertown, introduced a concurrent resolution that would formally acknowledge Islamic terrorism "the root cause of the global war on terrorism."

Tapio upped the rhetoric in a news release issued Feb. 5 by his U.S. House campaign: ". anyone, any organization, business or political candidate who fails to support the resolution is by omission declaring themselves an apologist for radical Islam, an enemy of the state and de facto supporter of and accomplice to violent jihad on American soil."

Let that sink in. By not supporting his resolution, Tapio calls fellow lawmakers enemies of the state and accomplices to jihad.

The resolution failed on a 19-16 vote.

Tapio, who was the manager for President Donald Trump's campaign in South Dakota, seems to have taken a cue from his former boss; Trump had previously called Democrats "treasonous" for not applauding him at the State of the Union. Later, the president claimed to be joking.

The state senator from Watertown appears to be serious, and believes he serves in Pierre with men and women who support terrorism.

But one of his colleagues appears firmly on Tapio's side.

On Feb. 21, Sen. Al Novstrup, R-Aberdeen, spoke during the Senate State Affairs Committee's hearing of Senate Bill 200, a Tapio bill that would have suspended all direct or indirect refugee resettlement in South Dakota of citizens from countries on Trump's federal travel ban list.

"I believe we should be searching the people who look like the people who committed the crimes of 9/11," Novstrup was reported to say.

At a Feb. 24 cracker barrel meeting in Aberdeen, Novstrup doubled-down, saying more time should be spent "searching for people that look like a terrorist."

"My quote was they should be looking at people that look like the hijackers of 9/11," Novstrup said at the cracker barrel. "I pointed out that a group of multi-racial people are the people we should be looking at.

"Does that seem strange to you? That I'm a racist because I point out we should be looking at multi-racial people, meaning all the races?"

Given the benefit of the doubt, let's say those comments come from a place of fear, not hatred.

But as a state, we must do better than this.

Tapio and Novstrup have a big platform but are using it to frighten and intimidate. That's not right.

We agree that all laws on the books related to immigration and terrorism must be followed.

We agree that authorities must address serious gaps in reporting and sharing information to keep us safe.

We agree that all newcomers must live by our laws or face consequences — which may be stiffer, depending on residency status.

And we agree that South Dakota should ask a lot of questions about refugee resettlement.

But those questions aren't about race or religion or treating people differently because they don't look like the majority.

Questions we should ask might include: Do our cities have the capacity to bring in dozens or hundreds of refugees? Can our school systems support these families? Do we have jobs enough for these folks, and are they being trained? How about our police and sheriffs — do they have the right staffing, tools and outreach? How are we giving messages to folks just learning English? What options do we have to make

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people feel welcomed and part of the community?

These are questions Tapio and Novstrup do not seem to be asking.

Those are questions of curiosity and friendliness, not fear. And they are much more in keeping with the South Dakota we all know.

Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan, Yankton, March 13 **Clamping down on zebra mussels**

When it comes to zebra mussels, officials at the Lewis and Clark Recreation Area are determined to send a message this year.

Recently, the Press and Dakotan reported that park officials are going to ramp up their enforcement of rules to prevent the spread of the invasive mussels to other waters.

In short, after years of working to educate boaters about the need to clean their boats and drain away river/lake water when they leave the L&C area, officials are going to be issuing more tickets to drive the point home.

"The first year or so was kind of an education period, not writing a lot of citations on it," said Dan Altman, conservation officer at Lewis and Clark Recreation Area. "We're far enough into the process now where, if somebody is violating an (aquatic invasive species) regulation, they can pretty well expect a citation on it. We've been enforcing it but we're going to step it up even more."

Unfortunately, such steps are necessary, because it's the only way to help contain the shockingly rampant growth of these species in local water.

It wasn't so long ago — the fall of 2014 — when an adult zebra mussel was found in Lewis and Clark Lake, setting off the warning bells and efforts to contain the infestation.

But the arrival of the invasive species literally turned into an epic invasion, and officials have seemingly been surprised — if not flabbergasted — by the exponential growth of the numbers in the lake. The mussels are now everywhere. Last year, park officials began posting signs at the beach areas warning swimmers to wear aquatic footwear to protect their feet from cuts due to the presence of the mussels on the lake's bottom.

In other words, the trend has not been encouraging in the least.

Preventing the spread of the mussels to other bodies of water is not impossible, but it's going to take rigorous vigilance. Park officials are going to do their best to make sure that watercraft don't transport potentially infested water to other bodies. It would be like putting a match to a fuse. It's estimated, for instance, that a gallon of water from Lewis and Clark are could create infestation problems for the vast Lake Oahe. Picturing that ratio is discouraging and daunting.

But it's not impossible, or at least that's the message that park officials intend to send

So that's a fair warning to anyone planning on bringing watercraft to the lake area in the warm days to come: There are precautions to follow and rules in place, and you WILL be expected to follow them.

Capital Journal, Pierre, March 12 **Kudos to the Legislature**

On Friday, the South Dakota state Legislature passed a budget that included a 1.2 percent pay raise for state employees.

This is good for Pierre, Fort Pierre and the rest of the state. We already pay less than most other states and just about every time there's a revenue shortfall we ask our employees to bear some of the brunt. Every time that happens, our employees fall a little bit further behind their colleagues in other states.

For Pierre and Fort Pierre, the benefit of stable, if not rising, state employee pay is obvious. It means there'll be more money circulating in the local economy. About a third of the residents of Pierre, for example, either are or are related to a state employee.

The rest of the state doesn't see quite so much of that particular benefit, but they do benefit from having happier state employees. Our government, much like a lot of employers in South Dakota, is having a

tough time filling certain positions. Jobs that require accounting or law degrees have become particularly tough to fill of late, thanks in part to below-market pay.

Having well-trained, dedicated accountants in the, say, Department of Revenue can and does help keep better tabs on the state's tax revenue, which means less wasteful spending and fewer people cheating on their taxes at the expense of everyone else. By the same token, being able to hire quality lawyers to provide legal advice or prosecute criminals can save taxpayers from having to foot the bill for costly legal mistakes.

We pride ourselves on having a small government in this state, as well we should. Smaller government by its very nature is more accountable to its citizens. That does not mean we don't need at least some government. It is precisely because we need government to manage such things as criminal prosecution and road maintenance that we have to take care of the folks who do those things on our behalf.

Now, a 1.2 percent pay raise may not seem like much, and to be honest it isn't, but it does show our employees that we do care about them. So, kudos to the legislature for giving state employees a much-needed raise. Next year, let's maybe look at trying to make state employee pay a bit more competitive with our neighbors.

Survey suggests rural economy to keep improving in 10 states

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A monthly survey of bankers suggests the economy is likely to continue improving slowly in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss says crop prices have improved a bit, but remain relatively weak. That's hurting business.

The overall Rural Mainstreet index slipped slightly to 54.7 in March from February's 54.8. Any score above 50 suggests a growing economy in the months ahead.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

Father pleads guilty to leaving child outside overnight

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The father accused of leaving his infant outside overnight in Sioux Falls has pleaded guilty to child abuse.

Thirty-nine-year-old Ronald Harrison entered the plea Thursday to abuse or cruelty to a minor under 7. Harrison and the child's mother are accused of leaving the baby outside the Faith Family Church for 18 hours in October 2017.

The Argus Leader reports the couple initially told investigators they had argued and went separate ways, thinking the other would grab the baby. Police say the mother, Mary Jenness, later admitted the two were high on drugs when they left the 2-month-old child. Jenness was later charged with abuse or cruelty to a minor.

A church employee found the baby in the morning.

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

3 men plead guilty in sexual abuse case in Marshall County

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Five men facing charges in a Marshall County sexual abuse case involving a teenager have accepted plea agreements.

The American News reports that 20-year-old Michael Mejilla pleaded guilty to three charges Wednesday. The day before, 21-year-old Damon Koop and 28-year-old Dustin Purcell entered guilty pleas.

They were arrested in October along with 29-year-old Edgar Ramos and 26-year-old Luis Maaz, who have also entered guilty pleas. Court documents say the men were charged for illegal sexual interactions with a girl who was younger than 16.

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Three defendants originally faced child pornography charges for exchanging images with the teenager through social media. State law says it's illegal for someone under 16 to consent to sexual acts and illegal for those younger than 18 to send or receive sexual images.

Sentencing is expected in April or May.

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

No one hurt in crash of train, semitrailer near Aberdeen

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — No one was hurt when a freight train collided with a semitrailer west of Aberdeen. The American News reports that the Wednesday morning crash split one of the semi's trailers in half and covered the roadway with corn. Part of the road was shut down for more than three hours.

Brown County Sheriff's Deputy Brian Koens says the semi driver failed to notice the train. The driver was cited for failure to yield and for a safety violation.

BNSF Railway spokeswoman Amy McBeth says the track was returned to service about five hours after the crash.

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

Drug conspiracy defendant denied release to halfway house

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A federal judge has refused to release a man accused in an alleged drug conspiracy tied to an officer-involved shooting in North Dakota.

Thirty-two-year-old Juan Nunez faces federal charges allegedly linking him to drug trafficking with a California street gang. He was initially arrested on a charge of hindering law enforcement after a Bismarck police officer in January shot another man who allegedly tried to run the officer over with a vehicle.

Twenty-two-year-old Ulises Villalobos-Alvarado was shot in the arm and later turned himself in at a gas station in Brookings, South Dakota. He also is charged in the drug conspiracy.

The Bismarck Tribune reports Nunez sought to be placed in a halfway house pending his May trial. U.S. Magistrate Judge Charles Miller refused, citing the seriousness of the charges.

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

Russia will expel British diplomats in poisoning standoff

By ANGELA CHARLTON and DANICA KIRKA, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia said Friday that it will expel British diplomats and halt high-level meetings with the U.K. in an increasingly global standoff over the nerve agent attack on an ex-spy — but still isn't saying who will be kicked out or when.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman said to expect a Russian response "shortly" to Britain's expulsion of Russian diplomats and accused Britain of violating international law and "common sense." Russia's foreign minister said Britain's defense minister "lacks education."

Geopolitical tensions are mounting since the poisoning of ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury earlier this month, in what Western powers see as the latest sign of increasingly aggressive Russian meddling abroad. The tensions threaten to overshadow Putin's expected re-election Sunday for another six-year term.

"We have never encountered this level of discussion on the global stage," Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, saying he's been surprised by the British reaction.

Accusing the Russian state of the nerve agent attack, Britain is expelling 23 Russian diplomats and is trying to build a coalition of countries to punish Moscow as a result.

British Prime Minister Theresa May's office said that Australian leader Malcolm Turnbull joined her in

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condemnation of the attack. In an unusual joint move Wednesday, the U.S., France and Germany also pointed the finger at Russia.

The source of the nerve agent used — which Britain says is Soviet-made Novichok — is unclear. A report in the Telegraph says it was put in the suitcase of Skripal's daughter before she left Russia for Britain to see her father.

Russia denies being the source of the nerve agent, suggesting it could have been another country, and has demanded Britain share samples collected by investigators.

Russia's envoy at the international chemical weapons watchdog says the nerve agent used could have come from U.S. or British stockpiles. Alexander Shulgin, Russia's envoy at the Hague-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, said in televised remarks that Britain and the United States both had the nerve agent used.

An 83-year-old Russian whistleblower who helped develop Novichok said in an interview published Friday that a few countries in the world have laboratories powerful enough to develop the nerve agent thanks to a formula he published in 2008.

Vil Mirzayanov, who now lives in New Jersey, is quoted in Novaya Gazeta as saying it's unlikely the nerve agent came from another former Soviet country as Russians have suggested. Mirzayanov said he revealed the existence of Novichok because he thought it was necessary to deprive Russia of its "deadly secret."

He also said he thinks the Skripals, who are in critical condition, have little chance of surviving.

Lavrov said Friday that Russia will "of course" expel British diplomats and that he hopes the Skripals recover soon so light can be shed on what happened.

May severed high-level contacts with Moscow and vowed actions against Russian dirty money and "hostile state activity." Downing Street called the attack "an unlawful use of force" by the Russians against the U.K."

Russia's ambassador to Britain said Friday the 23 expulsions will reduce staff at the embassy by about 40 percent. Alexander Yakovenko said on Russia-24 television it will have a "serious impact" on the embassy's work.

The war of words between Moscow and London continued Friday, with Lavrov lashing back at British Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson for saying Russia "should go away and shut up."

"Perhaps he also wants to go down in history with some loud statements. ... I don't know, perhaps he lacks education," Lavrov told a news conference after talks on Syria's war with his Iranian and Turkish counterparts.

The leader of Britain's main opposition party says the government shouldn't rush to blame Moscow for the nerve agent poisoning of a former spy. Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said in a newspaper column that politicians must not "rush way ahead of the evidence being gathered by the police." Corbyn said in the Guardian that it's possible that "Russian mafia-like groups," rather than the Russian state, were responsible.

Danica Kirka reported from London. Jill Lawless in London, and Vladimir Isachenkov and Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow, contributed to this report.

Pentagon: No survivors in American helicopter crash in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP) — The Pentagon says all seven service members aboard a U.S. helicopter that crashed in Iraq were killed.

The Pentagon says in a statement Friday that the crash does not appear to be the result of enemy activity and is under investigation.

The U.S. military helicopter crashed in western Iraq, U.S. officials said Thursday.

The helicopter is used by the Air Force for combat search and rescue, and was in transit from one location to another when it went down Thursday afternoon near the town of Qaim in Anbar Province

The Pentagon said an accompanying U.S. helicopter immediately reported the crash and a quick-reaction force comprised of Iraqi security forces and Coalition members secured the scene.

Democrat's dilemma: An energized left v. moderation

By **BILL BARROW**, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Pennsylvania's Conor Lamb and Alabama Sen. Doug Jones, the new miracle men of the Democratic Party, offer a clear model for how to run in Republican territory: Focus on economics, not guns, immigration or President Donald Trump.

But that won't be easy when much of the party is whipped into a fervor over those topics.

As the party barrels into primary season, its biggest success stories star Democratic moderates who've run strong in Trump country. But much of the energy in the party is on the left, where an active base is calling for everything from single-payer health care and a \$15-an-hour minimum wage to bans on certain weapons and ammunition. Finding the balance between the base's demands and winning general elections is Democrats' new dilemma as they look toward the November midterms.

The challenge will greet Democratic candidates across 75 targeted GOP-held districts that Trump won in 2016, as well as the 10 Democratic senators facing re-election challenges in states Trump won.

To be sure, most of those districts are friendlier to Democrats than Jones' Alabama, which Trump won by nearly 30 percentage points, and Lamb's southwest Pennsylvania House district, where Trump won by nearly 20 percentage points and Lamb maintains a lead of fewer than 700 votes. That race has not been called.

The questions of tone, emphasis and policy nonetheless hang over Democrats' mission to flip the 24 GOP-held seats they need for a House majority and their path to reverse Republicans' 51-49 Senate advantage.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who is in line for a second stint as speaker if her party is victorious in November, says the dangers of competing — and sometimes unhappy — factions are overblown. "It's not a question of ideology. We all believe in working families, that's what unifies us," she told The Associated Press. She added, "In order to win, it has to be an economic message."

Republicans acknowledged Lamb's strong performance this week in Pennsylvania as a wakeup call. But they also insist Lamb and Jones, who won his Senate seat last year, were unusual candidates. They competed in special elections where turnout is unpredictable, ran against flawed Republican nominees and, importantly, emerged unscathed from primaries.

Some top Democratic recruits face serious primary battles.

In southern New Jersey's 2nd District, where Republican Frank LoBiando is retiring, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee touts state Sen. Jeff Van Drew as "a bipartisan consensus builder" who wins his majority Republican legislative district easily. Trump won the congressional district by almost 5 points in 2016; LoBiando got 59 percent of the vote.

Yet liberals hammer Van Drew for opposing abortion and voting with the National Rifle Association. They're backing retired teacher Tazie Youngblood, who supports gun restrictions and abortion rights.

"Progressive activists have to save the party from itself, otherwise we'll be represented by Republicans masquerading as Democrats," Youngblood said on her campaign Facebook account this week. Democratic leaders, she said, "are out of touch with the base of the party."

Lamb could be headed for a similar squeeze. Because of a new, court-ordered congressional map in Pennsylvania, he will need to start campaigning in a newly drawn district that is less Republican than his current one. There are already two declared candidates in that race, including a prominent local attorney who is to Lamb's left on guns and health care.

Alabama's Jones downplays those kinds of fights, insisting at a recent national party fundraiser that "it's time to find the common ground." Jones didn't hide his support for abortion rights, but emphasized "kitchen-table issues" at every opportunity and pledged to work with anyone, even Trump. Since joining the Senate, he's voted with Republicans to end a government shutdown that liberal activists wanted, but stuck with his party in voting against GOP-backed abortion restrictions.

A less strident approach, he said, "will lead us to the kinds of victories that I believe we're on the verge of having in November."

Democrats stress that may not be true in every race, dismissing concerns that some policy positions

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may be too liberal to sell in November.

Tom Perriello, who ran for Virginia governor as a liberal in 2017, said, "People are coming to realize that we have misunderstood how mainstream progressive thinking is." He lost a primary to Ralph Northam, but pulled Northam to the left on some issues, including minimum wage. Northam won the general election by 9 points anyway.

Perriello noted that "the Republican civil war" hasn't exactly abated.

Recent GOP history shows Democrats the very double-edged sword at issue. Republicans were fueled by the tea party rise in 2009 and 2010, winning a wave election that gave them the House and many statehouses around the country. But tea party nominees also cost them winnable Senate seats during Barack Obama's presidency — Christine O'Donnell in Delaware in 2010, Todd Akin in Missouri in 2012. And those tea party nominees who captured the House in 2010 have often upended the GOP's ability to get major legislation through.

Those dynamics now leave House Speaker Paul Ryan the target of aggressive attacks from two Democrats who want to oust him in his southern Wisconsin district, where Trump won 53 percent of the vote.

"Paul Ryan has shown no leadership," says Cathy Myers, a teacher and Ryan's local school board representative who is in a Democratic primary fight with union worker Randy Bryce.

Of course, Myers and Bryce both embrace a litany of liberal positions that leave national party leaders only cautiously watching the race, despite having identified Ryan's seat as a target.

"With all due respect to the national party, the first thing I have to do is look to my district and find out what they care about," Myers said, insisting her approach can defeat the speaker. "People want authentic candidates, and they want leadership."

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

Loyola-Chicago lifted by 98-year-old nun, fan in Sister Jean

By SCHUYLER DIXON, AP Sports Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Loyola-Chicago's biggest fan is the team chaplain who prays with the players before games and gives them scouting reports the next day.

So 98-year-old Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt was more thankful than shocked when Donte Ingram hit a last-second 3-pointer to beat Miami in the Ramblers' first NCAA Tournament game in 33 years.

"After the game, she sends a general email to the team," Ingram said after the 64-62 first-round win Thursday. "And then at the end of the email, it'll be individualized. 'Hey, Donte, you did this, you rebounded well tonight. Even though they were out there to get you, you still came through for the team.'"

Schmidt will lead the pregame prayer again Saturday when 11th-seeded Loyola plays No. 3 seed Tennessee looking for a repeat of its last NCAA trip. The Ramblers reached the Sweet 16 in 1985 before losing to Patrick Ewing and Georgetown.

The team chaplain since the early 1990s, Schmidt is an institution at home games, wearing her personalized Nikes. After Ingram's winner, former President Barack Obama tweeted congratulations to the team — and its well-known nun.

"When we have home games, I say a prayer with all the fans, too, and pray for the opponents, too, that none of us get hurt and that the referees do a good job and all that kind of stuff," Schmidt said.

Schmidt, who played high school basketball in San Francisco in the 1930s, gets around in a wheelchair these days because of a broken hip that caused her to miss games this season — a rarity over nearly 25 years. She still found a way to follow the Ramblers.

"Where I was for rehab, I couldn't get the picture so I watched play-by-play for every game I missed," she said with her usual smile.

The postgame feedback in those emails isn't always positive. It's individualized "on how they did, and whether it was good or whether they have to improve in certain parts," Schmidt said.

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Loyola players certainly understand the spirit of the message.

"Her presence and her aura, when you see her, it's just like the world is just great because just her spirit and her faith in us and Loyola basketball and just her being around," said Marques Townes, who made the pass to set up Ingram's winning 3. "She's the biggest Loyola fan I've ever met in my entire life."

Ingram's shot wasn't exactly a Hail Mary, but it was from the March Madness logo several feet behind the 3-point line. The Ramblers will choose to believe Schmidt had something to do with it going in.

"For her to be doing what she's doing at her age, it's amazing, and it's inspiring," guard Clayton Custer said. "And I think, I mean, I think her prayers definitely mean a little bit extra when she prays for us."

The Ramblers get at least one more pregame prayer this season.

More AP college basketball: <https://collegebasketball.ap.org> , https://twitter.com/AP_Top25 and <https://www.podcastone.com/ap-sports-special-events>

Flake eyes 2020 primary challenge to stop Trump

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — Jeff Flake has a direct message for the Republicans of New Hampshire: Someone needs to stop Donald Trump. And Flake, a Republican senator from Arizona, may stand up against the Republican president in 2020 — either as a Republican or an independent — if no one else does.

"It's not in my plan to run for president, but I am not ruling it out. Somebody needs to stand up for traditional Republicanism," Flake told The Associated Press in an interview. "Somebody needs to raise that, for nothing else than to give people hope that that decent party will be back. We'll get through this."

Flake's comments came on the eve of his first solo political appearance in New Hampshire, the state expected to host the nation's first presidential primary election in less than two years. The 55-year-old Republican will deliver a speech Friday morning entitled "Country Over Party," as part of the esteemed "Politics and Eggs" speaker series at Saint Anselm College.

Flake is among a very small group of Republican elected officials speaking out against the Trump presidency with increasing alarm.

He has already written a book that slams Trump, condemned Trump on the Senate floor, and charged in a Thursday speech to the National Press Club that his party "might not deserve to lead" because of its blind loyalty to Trump. By visiting New Hampshire, Flake is now declaring the possibility of another tactic: a 2020 primary challenge.

On the ground in the Granite State, a full year before presidential candidates typically begin courting local voters, there is already an expectation among top Republicans that Trump will face a challenge from within his own party in the next presidential contest. Yet few think Trump could be defeated, even under the worst circumstances.

Steve Duprey, who represents New Hampshire at the Republican National Committee, said: "It's virtually impossible to beat an incumbent for the nomination. But that doesn't prevent people from trying with various degrees of seriousness."

"I think there will be some primary," he added. "Whether it's a serious contender or a protest candidate that the president's team would have to take seriously, it's too early to tell."

Despite Flake's fiery pronouncements, he would start out as an underwhelming presidential contender on paper.

He is not well-known, he has little money of his own and a disdain for fundraising, and because he is retiring from the Senate at year's end, he has no political organization to help fuel his ambitions.

Flake has powerful friends who could help, however, including the outspoken anti-Trump billionaire Mark Cuban.

"I'm a Jeff Flake fan," Cuban told The Associated Press.

The billionaire, who is considering a presidential bid of his own, acknowledged that he doesn't know much about Flake's political ambitions. "But as a citizen of this great country, the more candidates for the

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office of president the better," Cuban said.

Former New Hampshire GOP chair Jennifer Horn, a frequent Trump critic, said the GOP's struggles in recent special elections — in addition to Trump's near-daily struggles — make a primary challenge in 2020 more realistic than ever before.

"There is a path, there is a possibility, but it's such a narrow path that it's hard to see who the right person would be," she said, acknowledging she didn't know Flake very well yet.

In the interview, Flake acknowledged Trump was probably too popular among the Republican base to lose a Republican primary in the current political climate.

"Not today, but two years from now, possibly. Things can unravel pretty fast," Flake said, suggesting that a disastrous mid-term election season for the GOP could realign voter loyalty. "As soon as he's viewed as one who loses majorities in the House and the Senate, and there's no chance that someone in the 30s can win re-election, people might move on."

And if Trump's standing with the base doesn't fade, Flake would consider a presidential bid as an independent.

"I'm not ruling that out either," he said. "There are going to be a lot of other people in the party looking for something else."

He continued, "If you end up with Trump on one side, (Bernie) Sanders or (Elizabeth) Warren on the other, there's a huge swath of voters in the middle that make an independent run by somebody a lot more realistic."

Trump has a special relationship with New Hampshire.

The state gave him his first victory of the 2016 Republican primary season. He earned 35 percent of the vote compared with second-place finisher John Kasich, the Ohio governor who is also weighing a 2020 run.

And on Monday, just three days after Flake's visit, Trump is expected to make his first appearance in the state since winning the 2016 election.

Flake wants New Hampshire voters to know there's another option.

"This has been my party my entire life. I'm not willing to concede that this is permanent," he said.

Fallen bridge: 'Stress test' preceded collapse that killed 6

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON, Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — An innovative pedestrian bridge being built at Florida International University was put to a "stress test" before it collapsed over traffic, killing six people and sending 10 to a hospital, authorities said.

As state and federal investigators worked to determine how and why the five-day-old span failed on Thursday, one factor may have been the stress test that Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez said crews were conducting on the span.

Two workers were on the 950-ton bridge when it pancaked on top of vehicles waiting at a stoplight.

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio tweeted late Thursday that the cables that suspend the bridge had loosened and the engineering firm ordered that they be tightened. "They were being tightened when it collapsed," he said on Twitter.

First responders had been racing to find survivors in the rubble of the 175-foot span using high-tech listening devices, trained sniffing dogs and search cameras before turning the scene over to police.

"This has turned from a rescue to a recovery operation," Miami-Dade Police Det. Alvaro Zabaleta said.

The \$14.2 million pedestrian bridge was supposed to open in 2019 as a safe way to cross the busy six-lane road between the university campus and the community of Sweetwater, where many students live.

At the accident scene, Florida Gov. Rick Scott said investigators will get to the bottom of "why this happened and what happened," and if anyone did anything wrong, "we will hold them accountable."

National Transportation Safety Board chairman Robert Sumwalt III said a team of specialists would begin its investigation Friday morning.

Rubio, who is an adjunct professor at the school, noted the pedestrian bridge was intended to be an innovative and "one-of-a-kind engineering design."

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Renderings showed a tall, off-center tower with supporting cables attached to the walkway. When the bridge collapsed, the main tower had not yet been installed, and it was unclear what builders were using as temporary supports.

An accelerated construction method was supposed to reduce risks to workers and pedestrians and minimize traffic disruption, the university said. The school has long been interested in this kind of bridge design; in 2010, it opened an Accelerated Bridge Construction Center to "provide the transportation industry with the tools needed to effectively and economically utilize the principles of ABC to enhance mobility and safety, and produce safe, environmentally friendly, long-lasting bridges."

The project was a collaboration between MCM Construction, a Miami-based contractor, and Figg Bridge Design, based in Tallahassee. Figg is responsible for the iconic Sunshine Skyway Bridge across Tampa Bay.

Figg's statement Thursday said the company was "stunned" by the collapse and would cooperate with investigations.

"In our 40-year history, nothing like this has ever happened before," the statement said. "Our entire team mourns the loss of life and injuries associated with this devastating tragedy, and our prayers go out to all involved."

MCM Construction Management promised on its Facebook page to participate in "a full investigation to determine exactly what went wrong."

Robert Bea, a professor of engineering and construction management at the University of California, Berkeley, said it was too early to know exactly what happened, but the decision to use what the bridge builders called an "innovative installation" over a heavily traveled thoroughfare was risky.

"Innovations take a design firm into an area where they don't have applicable experience, and then we have another unexpected failure on our hands," Bea said after reviewing the bridge's design and photos of the collapse.

The FIU community, along with Sweetwater and county officials, held a "bridge watch party" on March 10 when the span was lifted from its temporary supports, rotated 90 degrees and lowered into what was supposed to be its permanent position.

FIU President Mark Rosenberg said the bridge was supposed to be about "goodness."

"Now we're feeling immense sadness, uncontrollable sadness," he said. "And our hearts go out to all those affected, their friends and their families. We're committed to assist in all efforts necessary, and our hope is that this sadness can galvanize the entire community to stay the course, a course of goodness, of hope, of opportunity."

Associated Press writers Jason Dearen in Gainesville, Kelli Kennedy in Fort Lauderdale, David Fischer and Curt Anderson in Miami and Tamara Lush in St. Petersburg contributed to this report.

Putin urges high voter turnout ahead of Russian election

MOSCOW (AP) — President Vladimir Putin is urging Russians to cast ballots in Sunday's election, which he's certain to win.

Putin said in Friday's televised address that "the will of the people, the will of each Russian citizen will determine the path the country will take."

The Russian leader, whose approval ratings top 80 percent, is set to easily win another six-year term against seven challengers, but the Kremlin has been concerned about voter apathy and has sought to boost turnout to make Putin's victory as impressive as possible.

Putin urged Russians to "use their right to choose the future for the great Russia that we all love." He warned that failure to cast a ballot would mean that "this decisive choice will be made without your opinion taken into account."

Abortion, free speech collide in Supreme Court dispute

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

GILROY, Calif. (AP) — Informed Choices is what its president describes as a “life-affirming” pregnancy center on the edge of downtown Gilroy in northern California.

Even as it advertises “free pregnancy services” and promises in signs on its door and inside to discuss all options with pregnant women, Informed Choices exists to steer women away from abortion.

The state of California, prompted by abortion rights groups, worried that vulnerable, uninsured women were going to Informed Choices and other anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers expecting they would get comprehensive care. That prompted passage of a new law requiring crisis pregnancy centers that are licensed by the state to let their clients know that abortions and other medical services are available elsewhere, for little or no cost. It also requires unlicensed facilities to post signs disclosing they are unlicensed.

That law has led to a Supreme Court fight at the intersection of abortion and free speech. Christine Vatuone, the president of Informed Choices, said that posting such a sign in her licensed center’s waiting room or handing information to a client would force Informed Choices to act as “a billboard for the abortion industry.”

The court is hearing the case Tuesday. While justices won’t be dealing with broader questions about the right to an abortion, the outcome could affect not only California’s law, but those in other states that have been shaped by anti-abortion groups. Some states, for example, require doctors to display a sonogram and describe the fetus to women considering an abortion.

California’s law was challenged by the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates, an organization with ties to 1,500 pregnancy centers nationwide and 140 in California, including Informed Choices.

Anne O’Connor, NIFLA’s vice president of legal affairs, said the centers exist to promote childbirth.

“The crux of this issue is, can the government force anybody ... to advertise for a message that they’re morally opposed to. We feel strongly that it violates our First Amendment rights,” O’Connor said in an interview in the Washington offices of Alliance Defending Freedom, the Christian law firm representing NIFLA at the Supreme Court.

The Trump administration agrees with NIFLA that the law violates the rights of licensed centers, but, unlike NIFLA, has no objection to the requirement for the unlicensed centers.

California argues that it is not stepping on speech rights by requiring the centers to provide what it calls a neutral statement of fact about health care options for pregnant women.

For the abortion rights organizations, the information is a matter of protecting vulnerable women who may not know that the state offers family planning, abortion care and pre-natal services. The groups have complained for years that the centers mislead women and pressure them not to have abortions.

Crisis pregnancy centers are “fake women’s health centers” that try to look like clinics that offer abortion and birth control, even choosing names like Informed Choices to muddy the waters, said Amy Everitt, the California director of NARAL Pro-Choice America.

“But they only have one option, to carry a pregnancy to term. And they have one agenda, to stop women from accessing abortion care and birth control,” Everitt said in her office in San Francisco.

Estimates of the number of crisis pregnancy centers run from 2,500 to more than 4,000, compared with fewer than 1,500 abortion providers, women’s rights groups said in a Supreme Court filing.

Crisis pregnancy centers were recently in the news as part of a lawsuit over abortion access for a pregnant immigrant teenager in federal custody. Emails disclosed as part of the lawsuit showed that the Trump administration official who oversees the shelters where immigrant teens are held instructed employees to direct pregnant teens to anti-abortion counseling at crisis pregnancy centers.

A pregnant woman who walked in off the street to the Informed Choices office might think she was entering a typical women’s health clinic. Inside, an examination room has a new ultrasound machine. Clients are given standard medical privacy forms.

Vatuone, the Informed Choices president and CEO, disputed that women can be misled by what her center offers. If anything, more often the women who come in think abortion is their only choice. The

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center has been seeing roughly 50 women a month recently, a significant increase since it was licensed by the state early in 2017 to do ultrasound exams, she said.

"We feel really proud of the fact that we can talk about all the options," Vatuone said.

Vatuone said it's a myth that "every girl we see is a 16-year-old in a crisis pregnancy. The average age is in the 20s. Some are very excited. Others are scared to death. These women are lacking some kind of support and that's why they end up here."

Informed Choices keeps a room stocked with donated baby clothing and supplies for new mothers.

Vatuone acknowledged that people who come to see her sometimes have abortions. Still, she said, "We've had great relationships with women who did choose an outcome we wouldn't necessarily want her to choose."

Women's groups in support of the law said that health care for women who first go to crisis pregnancy centers sometimes can be delayed. In some cases, they said, women have been unable to obtain less invasive medication abortions, which typically are available in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy. In others, crisis pregnancy centers missed serious health complications, including an ectopic pregnancy in which a fertilized egg attaches itself somewhere other than in a woman's uterus.

Congress demands Pentagon, DOJ investigate child sex assault

By JUSTIN PRITCHARD and REESE DUNKLIN, Associated Press

Congress reacted Thursday to an Associated Press investigation into sexual assault among children on U.S. military bases by demanding the Defense and Justice departments explain how they will solve the problem.

The House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, meanwhile, said it had begun its own examination of the issue. And a top Democrat on the committee said she would call a hearing within six months.

Four senators, including the veteran head of the Senate Armed Services Committee and two others who've made sexual assault a keynote issue, sent letters to the Pentagon and Justice Department with questions about sex assault among the military's children.

AP's investigation revealed that reports of sexual violence among kids on U.S. military bases at home and abroad often die on the desks of prosecutors, even when an attacker confesses. Other cases are shelved by criminal investigators despite requirements they be pursued. Many cases get lost in a dead zone of justice, AP found, with neither victim nor offender receiving help.

"The report reveals an inscrutable system that fails these children at every level," wrote Sen. Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat.

In a letter to U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis, Sen. John McCain of Arizona and Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee, asked that the Pentagon's inspector general begin a "comprehensive assessment" of department policies related to sexual assault among military children in schools and elsewhere on base.

"It disturbs us to learn that the department's policies and procedures may prevent efforts to help child victims of misconduct ... and to rehabilitate and hold child offenders accountable," they wrote.

Separately, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, a New York Democrat, wrote the Justice Department's inspector general requesting a "comprehensive investigation" into how many child sex assault cases have been prosecuted and why the majority have been declined.

Inspector general offices are independent entities within federal departments charged with investigating potential problems within agencies. They do not have to accept requests for action from Capitol Hill.

A Pentagon spokesman would not comment on the day's developments. "Alleged conversations between Secretary Mattis and other officials are private and will remain as such," Maj. Dave Eastburn said in an email.

The Pentagon and Justice Department's inspectors general also did not comment, nor did a spokesman for the Justice Department.

Rep. Jackie Speier, a California Democrat, called AP's finding of nearly 600 reports of sexual assault among children on bases since 2007 "a national disgrace and a military scandal."

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The top Democrat on a House Armed Services subcommittee that deals with military personnel said she was demanding information from the Pentagon in anticipation of holding a public hearing within six months.

"You cannot have an environment in which children aren't protected, regardless of whether they're on a base or in a public school classroom. So we've got to change the law," Speier said in an interview.

A spokesman for Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee said staff had already begun "an independent examination of cooperation between" the departments of Defense and Justice and how they handle military child-on-child sexual assault. Issues they would examine include support for victims and the Pentagon's data.

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

"This is clearly a serious matter," spokesman Claude Chafin said of AP's findings.

The tens of thousands of kids who live on U.S. bases are not covered by military law. The Justice Department, which handles civilian crimes on many bases, isn't equipped or inclined to take on juvenile cases, AP found.

This legal and bureaucratic netherworld also extends to the Pentagon's worldwide network of schools, which afford students fewer protections than public schools if they are sexually attacked by a classmate on campus. The federal law that offers help to victims of student-on-student sexual assault, known as Title IX, does not apply to federal education programs, such as those run by the military.

In a separate letter to Mattis on Thursday, Murray, the top Democrat on the Senate education committee, demanded answers by early April to a long list of questions about how the Department of Defense Education Activity handles assaults on its campuses.

The military school system that educates some 71,000 children has no specific policy to respond to student-on-student sexual violence and doesn't accurately track the incidents, AP found. More than 150 cases weren't disclosed by schools in reports that are meant to alert headquarters to serious incidents.

"As a mother and grandmother, I cannot tolerate the thought that our military children are not receiving the protection and support they deserve," Murray wrote. "I trust you share my outrage."

Responding to AP's findings prior to publication, the Pentagon said it "takes seriously any incident impacting the well-being of our service members and their families" and promised "appropriate actions" to help juveniles involved in sex assaults.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense also told AP it considered child-on-child sexual assault to be "an emerging issue" — a characterization that prompted an angry response from Murray.

"What is 'emerging' about 600 sexual assault cases in 10 years?" Murray said in her letter to Mattis, who was traveling back from the Middle East on Thursday. "We owe our military families — the children of the personnel who are fighting our wars — safety and support."

Pritchard reported from Los Angeles and Dunklin from Dallas.

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

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

Trophy hunters pack Trump wildlife protection board

By MICHAEL BIESECKER, JAKE PEARSON and JEFF HORWITZ, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trophy hunters are packed on a new U.S. advisory board created to help rewrite federal rules for importing the heads and hides of African elephants, lions and rhinos. That includes some members with direct ties to President Donald Trump and his family.

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A review by The Associated Press of the backgrounds and social media posts of the 16 board members appointed by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke indicates they will agree with his position that the best way to protect critically threatened or endangered species is by encouraging American hunters to shoot some of them.

The Trump administration has quietly moved to reverse Obama-era restrictions on bringing trophies from African lions and elephants into the United States, despite presidential tweets decrying the practice as a "horror show."

Trump owns up to making things up

By CALVIN WOODWARD, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has owned up to making things up.

For a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Trump was by his own admission unprepared — deficient in the fundamentals of the Canada-U.S. trade relationship that he'd been railing about since the campaign.

He insisted to Trudeau that the U.S. was running a trade deficit with Canada, a statement contradicted by U.S. government statistics. He was winging it, he confided to donors at a private Missouri political fundraiser Wednesday night.

"I didn't even know," he said. "I had no idea."

Others might be mortified at being caught short. Not this president.

For Trump the showman, the episode illustrated his skill at improvisation. Still, it was a rare admission that he will say things without knowing if they are true.

Trump's impulse to replace fact with fiction has defined him as a politician and as a businessman before that.

Depositions reviewed by AP from his litigious years in real estate show a history of dodgy statements about his property and wealth. Asked once about overstating the number of units sold in a Las Vegas tower, he said he didn't intend his answer to be taken literally.

Trump's years of questioning President Barack Obama's citizenship showed a willingness to perpetuate myth that was seen again early in his presidential campaign, when he insisted against all evidence that Muslims took to the streets in New Jersey to celebrate the 2001 terrorist attack across the river in Manhattan.

In office, he routinely misuses numbers — trade statistics among them — and recounts events to suit his agenda even if the facts don't fit.

Of the Pulse nightclub massacre in Florida, he said, "If you had one person in that room that could carry a gun and knew how to use it, it wouldn't have happened, or certainly not to the extent it did," a statement belied by the fact that the club had an armed guard on duty who immediately exchanged fire with the gunman.

In leaked audio of the Missouri fundraiser, first reported by The Washington Post, Trump says that in his meeting with Trudeau, he thought the U.S. must be running a trade deficit with Canada because the Canadians have been smart about trade and "we're so stupid."

"Nice guy, good-looking guy, comes in — 'Donald, we have no trade deficit.'" Trump recounted. "He's very proud because everybody else, you know, we're getting killed."

"I said, 'Wrong, Justin, you do.' I didn't even know. ... I had no idea. I just said, 'You're wrong.' You know why? Because we're so stupid. . . And I thought they were smart."

Trump went on to say that his position was ultimately vindicated when he had U.S. and Canadian aides take a closer look at trade between the two countries. That conclusion is not supported by the numbers.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders on Thursday insisted Trump was right, saying: "Well the president was accurate, because there is a trade deficit and that was the point he was making, is that he didn't have to look at the specific figures, because he knew that there was a trade deficit."

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Canadian Foreign Affairs spokesman Adam Austin offered this counter: "According to their own statistics, the U.S. runs a trade surplus with Canada."

Trump mischaracterizes the trade balance by considering only trade in goods and ignoring services. On goods, the U.S. ran a deficit of \$17.6 billion with Canada last year. That was offset by a surplus in trade in services.

Overall, the U.S. Census Bureau reports a U.S. trade surplus of \$2.8 billion last year with Canada.

End of an era: Toys R Us is going the way of stickball

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO, AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For decades, children ran down the sprawling aisles of Toys R Us in awe of the Barbies, the bikes and other toys laid out in front of them. Parents lined up for the latest Christmas fad, even if it meant standing in the rain. And, of course, there was that jingle that bored into your brain: "I don't wanna grow up, I'm a Toys R Us kid ..."

But all of that looks as if it's coming to an end.

Toys R Us is going out of business in the U.S., announcing plans Wednesday to close or sell its 735 stores across the country, including its Babies R Us stores, in a move that jeopardizes more than 30,000 jobs.

The superstore chain could no longer bear the weight of its heavy debt load and relentless trends that hurt its business, namely competition from the likes of Amazon, discounters like Walmart, and mobile games.

At shopping centers around the country, the news was met with sadness and nostalgia.

"My first toy came from Toys R Us when I was young, and I had a Barbie Corvette that you could drive," recalled Raven Cornell, 29, at a Toys R Us in Fayetteville, Georgia.

Sidney Corum, 4, was with his grandfather at the same store when he heard the news.

"Mad. I go so angry. I fight. I will fight them," he said.

Plenty of other toy chains have gone out of business over the past few years, among them KB Toys and Zany Brainy. But with the likely demise of Toys R Us, a piece of Americana is going away. (Toys R Us still has more than 700 stores outside the U.S., but those, too, are contracting fast.)

Toys R Us traces its roots to 1948, when its founder, Charles Lazarus, opened Children's Bargain Town, a baby furniture store in Washington. Lazarus opened the first Toys R Us in 1957, and in 1965 Geoffrey the giraffe became the company's mascot. He appeared in his first TV commercial in 1973.

Toys R Us dominated the toy store business in the 1980s and early '90s, when it was one of the first of the category killers — big stores that are so totally devoted to one thing and have such impressive selection that they drive smaller competitors out of business. Lazarus, who remained at the helm until 1994, stacked the merchandise high to give shoppers the feeling it had an infinite number of toys.

But it wasn't just the stuff that Toys R Us sold; it was the feeling parents and children would get when they roamed the aisles.

"You weren't just buying a toy. You were going into a magical experience. It was like going into Santa's workshop," said Jim Silver, a longtime New York-based toy expert.

Over the decades, children used Toys R Us as a playground where they would meet others they wouldn't see in the schoolyard. In the 1990s, when Pokemon was hot, children would bring shoeboxes filled with the cards, and they would trade them in the store.

Toys R Us was also the launch pad for what became some of the industry's hottest toys, such as Zhu Zhu pets in 2008. Other retailers like Walmart wouldn't take such risks on new toys from little-known brands.

"It will be a little sad," said Serone Francis, a mother of two who was loading her car at the Toys R Us in Fayetteville. She said her kids "like to just come and look around even if I don't buy anything. They're going to miss it. I'm going to miss it."

Erin Finney of Langhorne, Pennsylvania, was at her local Toys R Us with her two of her three sons, ages 2 and 4.

"This is the toy store," she said, noting she comes with her boys because they love to play with and actually touch all the toys. "The look in their eyes is ooooh," she said.

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But over the past decade, Toys R Us had been losing ground. Shoppers were increasingly using the stores as showrooms: They would check out the toys and then buy them cheaper online at places like Amazon.

"I grew up at Toys R Us," said Bryan Mann, a father of two who was at the Fayetteville store. "Things came out new. You go to the stores and grab them. Fight in line to get things. Kind of glad I won't have to do that anymore. It's nostalgic, but I understand why they struggle."

Associated Press writers Joseph Pisani in New York; Marina Hutchinson in Fayetteville, Georgia; and Michael Catalini in Langhorne Pennsylvania, contributed to this report.

Sweden hosts North Korean foreign minister amid speculation

By DAVID KEYTON, Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — North Korea's foreign minister met with his Swedish counterpart Thursday after making a surprise trip to Stockholm that has fueled speculation about a meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho landed at Stockholm Arlanda Airport on a direct flight from Beijing and spent several hours at the Swedish Foreign Ministry before returning to the North Korean Embassy.

Ri's talks with Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom are expected to resume on Friday.

Sweden has had diplomatic relations with North Korea since 1973 and is one of the few Western countries with an embassy in Pyongyang. It provides consular services for the United States in North Korea.

"If the key actors want Sweden to play a role, facilitate (talks), be a forum or a link or whatever it may be, then we are prepared to do that," Prime Minister Stefan Lofven told Sweden's TT news agency earlier Thursday.

"We shouldn't be naive and believe it is Sweden that solves these problems," Lofven added.

Sweden's foreign ministry said the talks between Wallstrom and Ri "will focus on Sweden's consular responsibilities as a protecting power for the United States, Canada and Australia," but also will address the security situation on the Korean Peninsula.

The ministry referred to the U.N. Security Council's condemnation of North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs, saying the U.N. "emphasized the need for intensified diplomatic efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict."

The Swedish ministry said a statement summarizing the talks will be made available Friday.

Ri, a former diplomat in Stockholm and London and an ex-nuclear envoy with experience negotiating with rivals South Korea and the United States, was tapped as Pyongyang's foreign minister in 2016.

In a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last month, he urged the United Nations not to remain silent about what he called "the U.S. dangerous game of aggravating (the) situation in and around the Korean peninsula and driving the whole world into a possible disaster of nuclear war."

The trip by Ri is being closely watched because there remains a huge amount of preparation that needs to be done and relatively little time before Kim is supposedly planning to sit down for summits with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Trump.

Trump has agreed to meet Kim by May. So far, North Korea has yet to publicly comment on what it hopes to gain from the summits, adding an extra element of mystery and skepticism.

Sweden has been rumored as a possible site for the summit between Kim and Trump, though a truce village on the South Korean side of the Demilitarized Zone between the Koreas is seen as more likely.

Senior South Korean officials who traveled to Pyongyang earlier this month and met with Kim say he is willing to discuss the North's nuclear weapons program.

It could suggest a potential breakthrough, or a fallback to the North's longstanding position that it's willing to get rid of its nuclear weapons if the United States guarantees its safety.

In the past, that has meant Washington would have to withdraw all of its troops from South Korea, a condition no U.S. president has been willing to consider.

Niklas Swanstrom of the Stockholm-based Institute for Security and Development Policy said the meet-

ing between the two foreign ministers would only be preliminary to higher-level talks but they could give an indication of North Korea's interests and demands.

"The assumption is of course that (they) will speak a bit about the proposed talks between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un," Swanstrom told The Associated Press.

He said he did not expect the announcement of a date or location for a Trump-Kim meeting.

Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Eric Talmadge in Tokyo contributed to this report.

Trump jokes 'who's next?' as tumult engulfs his White House

By **ZEKE MILLER, JONATHAN LEMIRE and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump consumed Thursday morning's TV headlines with amusement. Reports of tumult in the administration were at a feverish pitch — even on his beloved Fox News — as the president reflected on the latest staff departures during an Oval Office conversation with Vice President Mike Pence and Chief of Staff John Kelly.

With a laugh, Trump said: "Who's next?"

It's the very question that has the whole White House on edge.

In recent weeks, the president's top economic adviser has resigned over a policy dispute, the secretary of state he long clashed with was fired and a slew of top aides headed for the exits. An increasingly confident Trump is privately weighing still more changes, expressing frustration with certain advisers and sifting through possible replacements.

Many close to Trump think more upheaval is coming soon. The president is moving toward replacing national security adviser H.R. McMaster, but has not settled on exact timing or a successor, said four people with knowledge of White House deliberations. Kelly has also worn on the president, confidants of the president said. And Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, under fire for ethics violations, appears to be grasping to keep his job.

So intense was the swirl of speculation about McMaster that White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders tried to tamp things down late Thursday by tweeting: "Just spoke to @POTUS and Gen. H.R. McMaster - contrary to reports they have a good working relationship and there are no changes at the NSC."

This account of the tensions in the White House is based on conversations with 10 officials inside the White House and familiar with West Wing deliberations, all of whom spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss internal matters.

After more than 14 months in office, Trump is reshaping his administration, seeking people more likely to fall in line with his policies and tolerate his moods. The factionalism that defined the early days of his tenure has faded and he has lost some of the close aides who could manage his volatile impulses. To some, the White House is increasing taking on the feel of a team of cheerleaders more than a team of rivals.

While dismissing news reports of looming departures, Trump also appeared to signal more changes to come on Thursday, telling reporters: "There will always be change."

Trump's administration has set records for turnover among senior administration aides. Top economic adviser Gary Cohn and communications director Hope Hicks are leaving the White House in coming weeks. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was just unceremoniously ousted. And junior-level aides were particularly troubled by the abrupt exit of Trump personal assistant John McEntee this week, who was removed from his job and escorted off White House grounds — then quickly handed a job on Trump's re-election campaign.

In private conversations in recent weeks with aides and friends, Trump has reflected on his desire to reshape the administration. Though the drumbeat of the ongoing Russia probe has only grown louder, the president believes that his recent decisions on tariffs and North Korea have breathed new life into his administration, and he is eager to take more "bold steps" that make his own mark. He has told confidants he wants to rid himself of staffers who hold him back.

Trump chafes at McMaster's demeanor, complaining that his aide lectures him, according to three current and former administration officials. Officials said McMaster has been sidelined in some internal discussions,

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with Kelly taking on a more active role in foreign policy decisions, because of the personal tensions.

The president and McMaster have disagreed on a number of issues — including the Iran deal and the U.S. approach to North Korea — and the national security adviser has also clashed with Kelly and Defense Secretary James Mattis, according to the officials.

McMaster, in turn, is not a natural fit for the scattershot policy-making process in the White House and dislikes the internal rivalries that so often divide the West Wing. He was the target of online attacks from the fringes of the right wing last summer, including for his alleged insufficient support of Israel.

During an earlier round of Trump discontent with his national security adviser, there was White House talk of providing McMaster, a three-star general, with a soft landing by giving him a fourth star along with a command in a priority area such as Afghanistan or Korea, according to a former senior administration official.

Kelly has been credited with imposing order on the chaotic West Wing, but his relationship with Trump has come under strain too.

Trump was said to be deeply irritated and to have considered firing Kelly over the negative publicity surrounding his handling of the controversy over ousted White House aide Rob Porter, who was accused of domestic abuse. The president also recently told an ally that he was still frustrated by an interview that Kelly gave to Fox News nearly two months ago in which he suggested that Trump had “evolved” in his thinking about the need for a wall on the Mexican border.

At least one of Trump’s “generals” — the collection of military advisers he used to boast about — remains largely in good standing. The president is said to remain pleased with Mattis, as the defense secretary rarely publicly disagrees with Trump and has succeeded in quietly working through any differences, according to three White House officials and outside advisers.

Trump has expressed frustration with aides whom he believes try to “manage” him according to several current and former White House officials — and has grown tired of efforts by his staff to stall controversial actions they disagree with. Trump, the officials said, wants a lively discussion — he often talks about enjoying conflict among his aides — but has grown irritated that some try to undermine his decisions.

As Trump reshapes his administration, those who are taking over some of the vacated administration jobs tend to have closer ties to the president and signal more willingness to buy into his ways.

Trump’s nominee to be the next secretary of state —CIA director Mike Pompeo — is a longtime favorite of the president who has demonstrated rare ability to navigate the West Wing. A campaign supporter of Trump’s, Pompeo developed a strong personal relationship with the president by regularly attending his daily intelligence briefing.

And Trump has known his pick to replace Cohn for decades. He’s CNBC contributor Larry Kudlow, who opposes taxing foreign imports, yet still says he’s “in accord” with Trump’s agenda.

Lemire contributed from New York. Associated Press writer Ken Thomas contributed to this report.

Asian stocks decline, with trade, US politics in focus

By YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Asian stock markets fell Friday as investors remained cautious about U.S. plans to raise tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum. Uncertainty over White House politics also cast a shadow.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan’s Nikkei 225 fell 0.7 percent to 21,662.99 and South Korea’s Kospi slid 0.3 percent to 2,483.52. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng index dipped 0.3 percent to 31,442.49. China’s Shanghai Composite Index inched down 0.1 percent to 3,287.37. But Australia’s S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.5 percent to 5,951.60. Stocks in Taiwan and Southeast Asia were mostly lower.

ANALYST’S TAKE: “Caution lingers amid risk factors from heightened trade tensions between U.S. and China, U.S. politics and geopolitical tensions in Europe,” Mizuho Bank said in a daily commentary.

U.S. POLITICS: The Trump Organization said the company has fully cooperated with Robert Mueller’s

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investigation in response to the report that it received a subpoena from Mueller that included a request for documents related to Russia.

U.S. TRADE: Trade remained in the spotlight after President Trump said CNBC contributor Larry Kudlow is replacing Gary Cohn as his top economic adviser after Cohn disagreed with Trump's decision to hike tariffs on steel and aluminum. Trade issues will likely top the agenda at a financial meeting of the Group of 20 industrial nations in Buenos Aires on Monday to Tuesday.

WALL STREET: U.S. stocks finished mostly lower Thursday. The S&P 500 fell 0.1 percent to 2,747.33. The Dow Jones industrial average added 0.5 percent to 24,873.66. The Nasdaq composite lost 0.2 percent to 7,481.74. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks slid 0.5 percent to 1,576.62.

OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude lost 2 cents to \$61.17 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract added 23 cents to \$61.19 a barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, fell 5 cents to \$65.07 per barrel in London. It rose 23 cents to \$65.12 per barrel on Thursday.

CURRENCIES: The dollar dipped to 105.89 Japanese yen from 106.33 yen. The euro rose to \$1.2309 from \$1.2305.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 16, the 75th day of 2018. There are 290 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On March 16, 1968, the My Lai (mee ly) massacre took place during the Vietnam War as U.S. Army soldiers hunting for Viet Cong fighters and sympathizers killed unarmed villagers in two hamlets of Son My (son mee) village; estimates of the death toll vary from 347 to 504. Senator Robert F. Kennedy of New York announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

On this date:

In A.D. 37, Roman emperor Tiberius died; he was succeeded by Caligula.

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew reached the Philippines, where Magellan was killed during a battle with natives the following month.

In 1751, James Madison, fourth president of the United States, was born in Port Conway, Virginia.

In 1802, President Thomas Jefferson signed a measure authorizing the establishment of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

In 1926, rocket science pioneer Robert H. Goddard successfully tested the first liquid-fueled rocket at his Aunt Effie's farm in Auburn, Massachusetts.

In 1945, during World War II, American forces declared they had secured Iwo Jima, although pockets of Japanese resistance remained.

In 1966, NASA launched Gemini 8 on a mission to rendezvous and dock with Agena, a target vehicle in orbit; although the docking was successful, the joined vehicles began spinning, forcing Gemini to disconnect and abort the flight.

In 1978, Italian politician Aldo Moro was kidnapped by the left-wing Red Brigades, who later murdered him.

In 1988, a Protestant extremist launched a one-man gun-and-grenade attack on an Irish Republican Army funeral at Milltown Cemetery in Belfast, Northern Ireland, killing three of the mourners.

In 1991, a plane carrying seven members of country singer Reba McEntire's band and her tour manager crashed into Otay Mountain in southern California, killing all on board. U.S. skaters Kristi Yamaguchi, Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan swept the World Figure Skating Championships in Munich, Germany.

In 1994, figure skater Tonya Harding pleaded guilty in Portland, Oregon, to conspiracy to hinder prosecution for covering up an attack on rival Nancy Kerrigan, avoiding jail but drawing a \$100,000 fine.

In 2003, American activist Rachel Corrie, 23, was crushed to death by an Israeli military bulldozer while trying to block demolition of a Palestinian home in the Gaza Strip.

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Ten years ago: Protests spread from Tibet into three neighboring provinces as Tibetans defied a Chinese government crackdown; the Dalai Lama decried what he called the "cultural genocide" taking place in his homeland and called for an international investigation into China's crackdown on demonstrators. Actor Ivan Dixon (TV: "Hogan's Heroes") died in Charlotte, North Carolina, at age 76.

Five years ago: Thousands of activists gathered for the Conservative Political Action Conference outside Washington gave Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul a narrow victory over Florida Sen. Marco Rubio in their unscientific presidential preference poll (Paul had 25 percent of the vote and Rubio 23 percent; former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum was third with 8 percent). South Korea's Yuna Kim, back at the World Figure Skating Championships after a two-year absence, won the women's title in London, Ontario, Canada. British actor Frank Thornton, 92, best known as Captain Peacock in the long-running television comedy "Are You Being Served?," died in London.

One year ago: President Donald Trump submitted his \$1.15 trillion budget to Congress; it proposed generous increases for the military while slashing domestic programs and riling both fellow Republicans and Democrats by going after favored programs. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, visiting Japan, called on North Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, saying the isolated nation "need not fear" the United States. Steve Penny resigned as president of USA Gymnastics following intensified pressure on the organization for its handling of sex abuse cases. Grammy Award-winning blues harmonica master James Cotton, 81, died in Austin, Texas.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Ray Walker (The Jordanaires) is 84. Movie director Bernardo Bertolucci is 77. Game show host Chuck Woolery is 77. Singer-songwriter Jerry Jeff Walker is 76. Country singer Robin Williams is 71. Actor Erik Estrada is 69. Actor Victor Garber is 69. Country singer Ray Benson (Asleep at the Wheel) is 67. Bluegrass musician Tim O'Brien (Hot Rize; Earls of Leicester) is 64. Rock singer-musician Nancy Wilson (Heart) is 64. World Golf Hall of Famer Hollis Stacy is 64. Actor Clifton Powell is 62. Rapper-actor Flavor Flav (Public Enemy) is 59. Rock musician Jimmy DeGrasso is 55. Actor Jerome Flynn is 55. Folk singer Patty Griffin is 54. Movie director Gore Verbinski is 54. Country singer Tracy Bonham is 51. Actress Lauren Graham is 51. Actor Judah Friedlander (FREED'-lan-duhr) is 49. Actor Alan Tudyk (TOO'-dihk) is 47. Actor Tim Kang is 45. Rhythm-and-blues singer Blu Cantrell is 42. Actress Brooke Burns is 40. Actor Brett Davern is 35. Actress Alexandra Daddario is 32. Rhythm and blues singer Jhene Aiko is 30. Rock musician Wolfgang Van Halen is 27.

Thought for Today: "Nearly all our disasters come from a few fools having the 'courage of their convictions.'" — Coventry Patmore, English poet (1823-1896).