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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

1- Recycling trailers 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul 1- Harry Implement Ad 1- Columbia City Notice 1- Henry Township Notice 1- Bates Township Notice 2- Larson earns "Spirit of Su" Award 3- Langford Area cheerleaders earn Spirit of Six Award 4- Noem's Weekly Column 4- BDM Rural Water Ad 4- Help Wanted at Groton Care & Rehab 6- Gov. Daugaard's Weekly Column 7- Rev. Snyder's Column 9- Today in Weather History 10- Today's Forecast 11- Yesterday's Weather

Columbia City Review Board Notice

11- Today's Weather Info 11- National Weather Map

12- Daily Devotional 13- 2018 Community Events 14- News from the Associated Press

The Columbia City Board of Equalization will meet on Wednesday, March 21, 7 p.m.

All persons disputing their assessments are requested to notify the finance officer prior to the meeting. Cara Dennert, Finance Officer

Bates Township Review Board Notice

Bates Township Equalization Meeting Notice:

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

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

Betty Geist

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

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

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **Open**

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Larson earns "Spirit of Su" Award
Mason Larson, Langford, received the "Spirit of Su" Award at the State B Basketball Tournament that was played in Aberdeen over the week. (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting. ©2018 SDPB - Craig Wollman)

Each year the "Spirit of Su' Award will be given to an outstanding senior player who exemplifies the life of SuAnne Big Crow, Pine Ridge. SuAnne was killed in a car accident on her way to the Miss Basketball Banquet in 1992.

The player will be judged in the categories of outstanding athletic ability, leadership, character, sportsmanship and grade point average.

The criteria is:

1. Athletic Ability:

All-State caliber. All-around ability team player. Offensive and defensive standout.

2. Sportsmanship:

Ability to act in a respectful manner with officials, opponents, teammates, and fans.

3. Leadership:

Handles one-self in a manner which has earned the respect of teammates, opponents and fans.

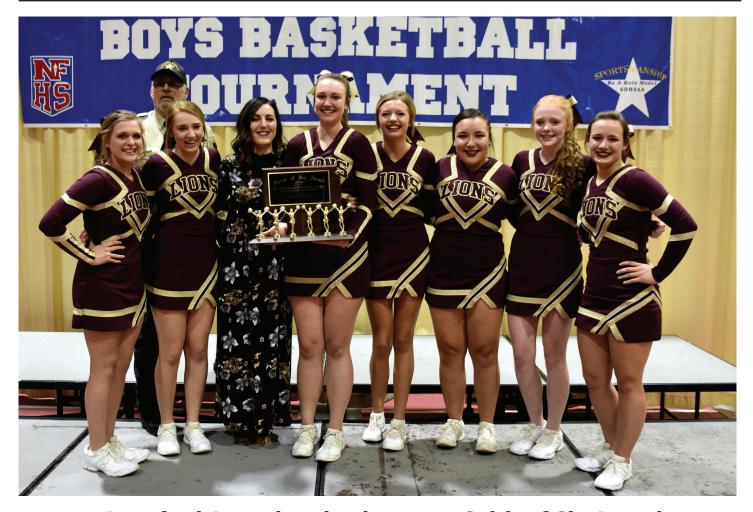
4. Character:

Able to interact in a positive fashion with students and adults, displaying self-discipline, high ethics, and respectful behavior. And is also a positive role model for young people.

5. Academic Ability:

Maintains a 3.0 or above on a 4.0 scale.

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Langford Area cheerleaders earn Spirit of Six Award

The "Spirit of Six Award" was created by the South Dakota Peace Officers' Association, as a memorial for the six cheerleaders from Rapid City who lost their lives in an airplane accident while returning to Rapid City from the 1968 Boy's State "A" Basketball Tournament.

As reported by the Rapid City Journal, the Spirit epitomized by the Rapid City Cheerleaders, was best expressed with an inscription on a picture from one of the Rapid City Cheerleaders to another member of the squad. The inscription said: "This year has been quite a challenge for everyone. You've got the qualities that a good cheerleader needs. I sure hope that we go to state basketball, because that is definitely one of the better sides of cheerleading...be happy and enjoy this year with all the memories."

The award is based upon the cheerleaders' abilities displayed in the areas of crowd control, sportsmanship, enthusiasm, behavior on the court and dress. (Photo courtesy of South Dakota Public Broadcasting. ©2018 SDPB - Craig Wollman)

Cheerleaders: Aaliyah Harty, Brandy Peterson, Brooklyn Rasmussen, Madeline Reints, Ashley Gustafson, Brooklin Kreger, Alyssa Keough

Brookiin Kreger, Alyssa Keough Cheer Coach: Fallon Deutsch

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Not Everyone Farms, But Everyone Eats

In 1963, almost half of Congress represented rural areas. Today, less than 10 percent does. But while not everyone farms anymore, we all still eat. It's a fact I have to remind federal lawmakers of often – and not only when we're debating food policy. Agriculture is critical to our national security too. The minute we don't grow our food, we become reliant on another country to feed us. That's when we are truly in peril. That's when they control us and our decision making.

The third week of March is set aside as National Agriculture Week, and as a lifelong farmer and rancher, I am incredibly proud to represent a state that celebrates our agricultural roots. That's something I've always fought to defend.

For instance, under the Obama administration, the Labor Department offered a proposal that could have banned kids from being hired to do certain farm work on their family's or relative's farms. I put pressure on the Department, and they rescinded the rule. When OSHA tried to regulate small family farms, I got the agency to reverse course. And when the EPA was looking to expand dust regulations, I authored legislation to stop them, and the rumored rules never advanced.

Maintenance Supervisor Wanted:

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

Day Shift C.N.A. Wanted

Sign-on Bonus

★ ★ ★ \$1,500 for CNAs ★ ★ ★

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

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



1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

BDM RURAL WATER SYSTEM, INC.

38th Annual Meeting



Monday, March 26, 2018 6:00 p.m.

BDM Building, Britton, SD

Lunch after the meeting • Door Prizes

- Board and Management Report
 - Election of Directors

Please attend your water system's annual meeting!

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During this time, we also fought an uphill battle to finish a five-year Farm Bill in 2014. In the end, we produced legislation that equipped farmers and ranchers with a strong safety net and a meaningful live-stock disaster program. I became the first South Dakotan in more than 20 years to serve on the House's Farm Bill negotiating team, and I was proud to sign my name to the final deal.

With the Farm Bill done, all attention turned toward tax cuts. Once again, I earned a spot on the negotiating team, filling one of just five House seats and serving as the only member with a background in production agriculture.

After years of work, President Trump signed our legislation, which included a number of wins for agriculture. More specifically, the package offers a 20 percent small business tax deduction, which will help many farms and ranches. It also expands interest deductibility, which is critical for a highly-leveraged industry like agriculture; allows for immediate expensing, helping farmers upgrade their operations; doubles Death Tax exemption levels; preserves options for like-kind exchanges; and expands Section 179, allowing farmers to better manage depreciation. On top of that, producers – like all Americans – will benefit from lower tax rates, the doubling of the Child Tax Credit, and retirement and education benefits. The Standard Deduction was also doubled, meaning the first \$24,000 a couple makes is tax free.

In the months ahead, we'll be working to pass the next Farm Bill. I've already introduced legislative language to improve commodity programs and reform the wetland determinations process. I've also introduced the Fair CRP Payments Act, which would ensure CRP rental payments accurately reflect the current cost of renting farm ground. And my DRY Act would permanently allow the hay harvested on certain CRP acres to be donated to farmers suffering from drought or fire.

Passing the next Farm Bill will likely be another uphill battle, given the declining number of rural representatives. Nonetheless, South Dakota farmers and ranchers continue to produce the food consumed in each of their states. I am incredibly proud to represent so many people who put in early mornings, take on tremendous financial risk, and live at the will of weather and market fluctuations – all to do what they love and keep our world fed. Happy National Agriculture Week!

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It has been three years since we reformed South Dakota's juvenile justice system. When the legislation was passed, South Dakota had the second highest juvenile incarceration rate in the country. It was nearly three times the national average. At the same time, our juvenile violent crime arrest rate was approximately one-third of the national average. We were locking up primarily non-violent juvenile offenders.

Since this law has been in effect, we are seeing fewer juveniles committed, fewer juveniles reoffending, and success among those who are sent to functional family therapy. Since Fiscal Year 2014, new commitments to the Department of Corrections have declined 56 percent and the number of recommitments has declined by two-thirds.

Additionally, functional family therapy, which offers treatment for the entire family to address juvenile issues, is available in every single community in South Dakota. To date, 346 families have successfully completed this therapy and 88 percent of these families have reported a positive change as a result.

These reforms still support institutionalization of children who pose a risk of harm to others. Our system has always allowed for that, and the juvenile reforms did not change that. A juvenile who commits a violent crime can be committed to the Department of Corrections, and a judge can also commit a child who is found to pose a serious risk of violence.

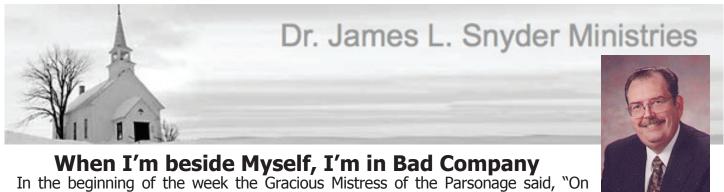
Reserving commitments to cases of violence is in line with the national trend. Juvenile commitments to state-run facilities have been falling in almost every state in the nation over the past 18 years. Nationwide, placements fell from 40,678 in 1997 to 13,970 in 2013. In South Dakota they fell from 315 to 102, even before the 2015 passage of juvenile justice reforms.

The statutory purpose of the juvenile justice system is rehabilitation, and we must never lose that focus. I spent 20 years working at Children's Home Society, which operates institutions for children who have suffered abuse and neglect. Often these children have behavioral problems. At Children's Home, our priority was always to do whatever we could to return children to their families, or if that was not possible, to a foster family or adoptive family.

I know that juvenile offenders can be difficult, but we need to remain focused on what is best for them. Locking up children because they are difficult to deal with is not acceptable. Putting a child in an institution, away from the community, is incredibly disruptive to the life of a child.

Beyond violent cases, we must continue to build our capacity to treat children in their communities – near their homes, families and schools – whenever possible. For most children, this offers the greatest chance of true rehabilitation.

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In the beginning of the week the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said, "On Thursday the girls and I will be going to St. Augustine for the day to visit thrift shops." It was spring break and so the girls did not have school. It was the perfect opportunifor an outing for them.

"Do you think," she asked, "you'll be able to handle the day without me?"

I laughed, but not too hard, and said, "I think so. Just go and have a wonderful time in St. Augustine." That was Monday and when Thursday came, I was drinking my morning coffee and my wife came in and said, "Well, it's time for us to go. Are you sure you'll be able to take care of yourself today?"

I looked at her and said, "Where are you going?"

"Don't you remember what I told you Monday?"

Actually, I really did not remember what she told me Monday. She tells me so much that it is very hard to remember everything.

"Don't you remember I said the girls and I will be spending the day in St. Augustine?"

I had been working so hard all week trying to catch up, I forgot about this Thursday trip.

I walked her to the door and kissed her goodbye. She turned and looked at me and said, "You're not smiling are you?"

Then she said, "I have your lunch prepared with instructions. Follow those instructions to the letter."

It is not often I have a free day all to myself. I do not need too many of them but occasionally it is good to have a free day where all you have to deal with is yourself. Of course, that can get a little tiring when I am dealing with myself.

I went to my office, sat down and started to catch up on some work I had gotten behind on. It's terrible when you get behind on your work and it takes twice as long to try to catch up. I often wonder if you ever really do catch up?

I was working so hard that I as I glanced at my watch I noticed it was noon. I love lunchtime. My wife makes such wonderful meals for lunch.

I arrived at the house, got out of my truck and walked through the front door and as I did I said, "Honey, I'm home. What's for lunch?"

As I walked through the door, I got a strange sense. Usually there is a wonderful aroma of lunch. This time, there was no aroma whatsoever.

It then dawned on me. The wife is away for the day and I am in charge of lunch.

That can be a good thing or it can be a very bad thing. One good thing was, my wife had prepared my lunch, all I had to do was put it in the little micro oven and it would be finished. It was pizza for the day. She had written instructions. She said, "Use the third button and set it for 15 minutes." Usually, she is quite precise in what she says. This time I was confused.

On the micro oven, there were four buttons. Now, when she said use the third button, was it the third button from the top or the third button from the bottom?

At the time I was tempted to text her and get a clarification on this instruction. However, I knew if I did that I would never hear the end of it for the rest of my life. She put the instructions there and I was supposed to interpret those instructions.

ty

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That is what it means to be a husband these days. Your wife tells you something and you have to interpret it and most of the time we husbands get it wrong. I know I do.

I did what any sane husband would do under the circumstances. I got a quarter out and did the "heads or tails" movement. Heads it was from the top down, tails it was from the bottom up. It turned out to be heads, which was the right way to go unbeknownst to me.

I did not quite know how to read that little button and so I turned it all the way and then put my pizza in to warm it up.

Only a few moments later I began to smell an aroma. It was not the aroma of pizza being warmed up, but rather the aroma of something on fire.

I ran to the kitchen and to the oven and there my pizza was sizzling and burning. I opened the door, pulled the pizza out and looked at it for a few moments. As much as I can remember, this is not the kind of pizza the wife does. What do I do with this burnt pizza?

When the wife came home later that afternoon, she asked me how the pizza was. I assured her that it was rather delicious.

"Why then," she said rather sternly, "is there burnt pizza in the garbage?"

My little slip reminded me of what Solomon said. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Sometimes, what my hand "findeth to do" is not the right thing to do and gets me into trouble.

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Today in Weather History

March 18, 1982: Northern Lawrence and Southwest Butte Counties experienced strong winds during the afternoon of March 18, 1982. Winds gusting to 70mph in Spearfish and Belle Fourche areas overturned a trailer house near Belle Fourche. No injuries were reported.

March 18, 2013: An area of low-pressure moving across the region brought widespread accumulating snowfall along with powerful northwest winds to northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts from 1 to 4 inches along with sustained winds of 25 to 35 mph with gusts up to near 60 mph caused widespread blizzard conditions. Travel was disrupted or halted. Some businesses and schools were also closed. Some snowfall amounts included; 1 inch at Sisseton; 2 inches south of Bristol and at Bowdle; 3 inches near Big Stone City; and 4 inches at Summit. The highest wind gust was 58 mph at Aberdeen and near Summit. The snowfall began between 5 and 7 pm on the 17th and ended between 5 and 9 pm on the 18th.

March 18, 2014: A low-pressure surface area moving off to the east brought some heavy snow into far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. A narrow band of heavy snow set up across this area bringing from 6 to 11 inches of snow.

1925: The great "Tri-State Tornado" occurred, the deadliest tornado in U.S. history. The storm claimed 695 lives (including 234 at Murphysboro, IL and 148 at West Frankfort, IL), and caused seventeen million dollars property damage. It cut a swath of destruction 219 miles long and as much as a mile wide from east-central Missouri to southern Indiana between 1 PM and 4 PM. The tornado leveled a school in West Frankfort, Illinois and picked up sixteen students setting them down unharmed 150 yards away. Seven other tornadoes claimed an additional 97 lives that day.

1952: 151.73 inches of rain fell at Cilaos, La Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean over a five day period (13th-18th) to set the world rainfall record. This record was broken on February 24th-28th, 2007 when Commerce La Reunion Island picked up 196.06 inches.

1971 - High winds accompanied a low pressure system from the Rocky Mountains to the Great Lakes. Winds gusted to 100 mph at Hastings NE, and reached 115 mph at Hays KS. High winds caused two million dollars damage in Kansas. Fire burned 50,000 forest acres in eastern Oklahoma. (17th-19th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm in the central U.S. produced up to 10 inches of snow in western Nebraska, and up to six inches of rain in eastern sections of the state. The heavy rains pushed the Elkhorn River out of its banks, submerging the streets of Inman under three feet of water. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) 1988 - Light rain and snow prevailed east of the Mississippi River. Fair weather prevailed west of the Mississippi. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy rain in California, with heavy snow in the Sierra Nevada Range. Venado CA was drenched with 5.40 inches of rain in 24 hours. A dozen cities in the eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Baltimore MD with a reading of 82 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

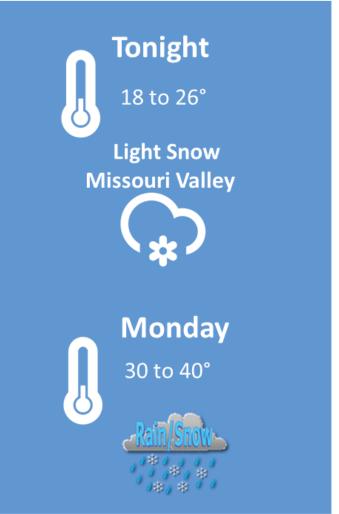
1990 - Heavy rain caused extensive flooding of rivers and streams in Georgia, with total damage running well into the millions. Flooding also claimed six lives. Nearly seven inches of rain caused 2.5 million dollars damage around Columbus, and up to nine inches of rain was reported over the northern Kinchafoonee Basin in Georgia. (Storm Data)

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| Sun Mar 18 | Mon Mar 19 | Tue Mar 20 | Wed Mar 21 | Thu Mar 22 | Fri Mar 23 | Sat Mar 24 |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Mai 10 | Mai 19 | Mai 20 | mai Zi | Mai ZZ | Mai 23 | Mai 24 |
| | H 341 | M 3H | | | H 33H | All SHI |
| 42°F | 35°F | 36°F | 40°F | 44°F | 42°F | 42°F |
| 28°F | 25°F | 22°F | 23°F | 30°F | 28°F | 33°F |
| S 8 MPH | NNE 8 MPH | NNE 5 MPH | ESE 6 MPH | SE 13 MPH | ESE 18 MPH | SE 14 MPH |
| | Precip 60% | Precip 20% | | | Precip 80% | Precip 40% |







3/18/2018 5:07 AM

Partly to mostly cloudy skies will continue today. High temperatures will reach the mid-30s, to the mid-40s. A storm system will begin impacting western South Dakota today. This system will gradually spread precipitation eastward tonight, possibly reaching the James Valley by Monday morning. Light precipitation will continue through Tuesday morning. Snowfall amounts of one to three inches are possible.

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Yesterday's Weather High Outside Temp: 40.4 F at 2:31 PM

Low Outside Temp: 27.7 F at 8:19 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 11.0 Mph at 2:32 PM

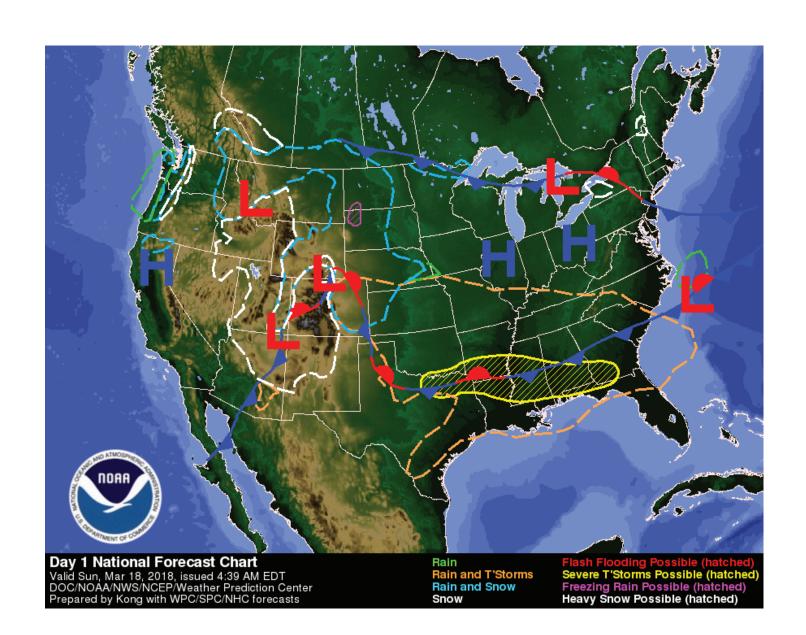
Precip:

Today's Info Record High: 85° in 2012

Record Low: -15° in 1923

Average High: 41°F Average Low: 21°F

Average Precip in March: 0.59 **Precip to date in March: 0.94 Average Precip to date: 1.61 Precip Year to Date: 1.35 Sunset Tonight:** 7:43 p.m. Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:38 a.m.



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SAFE IN GOD'S ARMS

Whenever we go to a physician for care we are normally greeted by someone who takes our "vital signs" and then asks us to describe our "symptoms" - our reason for wanting to talk with a physician. These symptoms or vital signs are indicators - early warning signs of a deeper or more serious condition that describe an illness that requires some sort of treatment.

One of the gifts that we have through the grace and mercy of God is His love that surrounds us and His arms that protect us. "He guards the lives of His faithful," wrote the Psalmist, "and delivers them from the hand of the wicked." Our God is there to prevent the "illnesses" caused by sin that could destroy us who are faithful to Him.

One of the most influential saints of God was C. I. Scofield. He is the author of Scofield Study Bible - no doubt one of the most widely used and perhaps more influential than any other study Bible ever published.

"Shortly after my conversion," he once wrote, "I saw a picture of Daniel in the den of lions. His hands were behind him and the lions were circling him. The one thing I was in fear of was that I might go back to my sins. But as I stood before that picture, a great hope and faith came into my heart. I said, 'Why these lions are all about me - my old habits and sins - the God that shut the mouths of the lions for Daniel can shut them for me.' And He did!"

God promises that He will guard us and guide us, protect us and defend us and deliver us from the "hand of the wicked." But only if we are faithful to Him!

Prayer: Thank You, Father, that we may look to You for protection from the sins that would so easily destroy us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 97:10b He preserves the souls of His saints;

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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 App Associated Press

Saturday's ScoresBy The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Class A

State Championship: Madison 72, Tea Area 59 Third Place: Sioux Falls Christian 77, Sioux Valley 60

Fifth Place: Red Cloud 63, Dakota Valley 58 Seventh Place: Crow Creek 68, Pine Ridge 64

Class AA

State Championship: Yankton 39, Harrisburg 37 Third Place: Rapid City Stevens 59, RC Central 49

Fifth Place: Douglas 67, O Gorman 57

Seventh Place: Sioux Falls Washington 77, Sioux Falls Lincoln 73

Class B

State Championship: Sully Buttes 58, Clark/Willow Lake 55 Third Place: Bridgewater-Emery 87, White River 79, OT

Fifth Place: Timber Lake 64, Canistota 52 Seventh Place: Lower Brule 45, Langford 32

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Class AA

Championship: Aberdeen Central 49, Harrisburg 32 Third Place: Sioux Falls Lincoln 50, Brandon Valley 45 Fifth Place: Sioux Falls Washington 63, O Gorman 49 Seventh Place: Rapid City Stevens 47, RC Central 30

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

SD Lottery By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash 21-25-30-31-32

(twenty-one, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$22,000

Lotto America

02-12-15-18-19, Star Ball: 6, ASB: 3

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(two, twelve, fifteen, eighteen, nineteen; Star Ball: six; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$2 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$377 million

Powerball

22-57-59-60-66, Powerball: 7, Power Play: 2

(twenty-two, fifty-seven, fifty-nine, sixty, sixty-six; Powerball: seven; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$455 million

South Dakota traffic deaths still among lowest in country

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Office of Highway Safety says the number of traffic fatalities in the state continues to be among the lowest in the nation despite a spike in accidents near the end of 2017. Highway Safety Director Lee Axdahl says South Dakota had 129 fatal crashes in 2017, up from 116 the year before. That figure was the second-lowest in state history.

KOTA-TV reports that Axdahl says the state was on pace to have fewer than 100 traffic fatalities in 2017 for the first time in state history but there were 42 deaths in the final three months of the year.

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

\$8M addiction treatment center to be built in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls health care system plans to open an \$8 million facility to provide care for people struggling with drug and alcohol addiction.

Avera Health officials announced earlier this month plans to build the two-building Avera Addiction Care Center, which they hope to open mid-2019, the Argus Leader reported. The center's main building will offer rooms for a day treatment program, meditation and group dining. A second building will include 32 rooms for patients undergoing residential treatment.

Avera is one of the few private providers of inpatient mental health care in South Dakota.

"I think this serves our mission very well," said Avera President and CEO David Flicek. "We want to make this disease a normal disease like cardiology and endocrinology. And yet we want to make sure we have a beautiful facility for these people to recover."

A community health survey coordinated by city officials found that more than one in five Sioux Falls residents acknowledged excessive drinking. Avera estimates that as many as 15 percent of community members live with a chemical dependency.

The center's inpatient program will be limited to voluntary participants, 18 years old or older. Dr. Matt Stanley, vice president of Avera Behavioral Health Service Line, said residential treatment residential treatment will allow Avera to provide the highest level of care.

"It does provide a safe and controlled environment, which also allows us to be a little more intense in terms of programming and support," Stanley said. "You're also with a cohort of others that are trying to recover."

Construction is anticipated to start this summer.

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

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Sioux Falls exotic pet ordinance to be revisited

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls animal control officials are working to update the city's exotic pet ordinance, saying the rule is broad and needs clarification.

Local reptile owners grew concerned earlier this month after Animal Control visited a Sioux Falls family to notify them their snakes weren't allowed in city limits, the Argus Leader reported.

The current ordinance says it's unlawful to own an animal that isn't native to the United States. It also limits pets per household to four, with exceptions for fish and fowl, but not small reptiles, hamsters, turtles or other small, caged animals.

Animal Control has started working with the city attorney's office to update the exotic pet ordinance.

Julie DeJong, the city's animal control supervisor, said her department plans to meet with reptile experts, veterinarians, city departments and the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks department over the next few weeks.

"The ordinance needs to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public, which are our primary concerns," DeJong said.

City councilors have said they're on board to discuss the issue.

Councilor Greg Neitzert said he's interested in seeing the city legalize commonly-kept reptiles and other animals that are technically barred under the ordinance.

"As our community evolves and we have different types of pets, we need to be mindful of our ordinances and making sure that they make sense and that we're safe," said Councilor Christine Erickson. "At first glance, based on those definitions, there are a lot of animals that are not allowed in our community."

Erickson said that venomous or potentially dangerous animals shouldn't be under the same category as docile lizards, such as bearded dragons.

"We need to bring in the experts and get the facts and making sure we aren't taking animals from people's homes," Erickson said.

The city hasn't scheduled a time to discuss an ordinance update yet.

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

Turkey says its forces have seized the Syrian town of Afrin By ZEYNEP BILGINSOY and SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkey's president said Sunday the Turkish military and allied Syrian forces have taken "total" control of the town center of Afrin, the target of a nearly two-month-old offensive against a Syrian Kurdish militia, which said fighting was still underway.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the Turkish flag and the flag of the Syrian opposition fighters have been raised in the town, previously controlled by the Kurdish militia known as the People's Defense Units, or YPG.

"Many of the terrorists had turned tail and run away already," Erdogan said in a speech in western Turkey. Turkey views the Kurdish forces in the Afrin enclave along the border as terrorists linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged a decades-long insurgency within Turkey's borders.

Ankara launched the operation, codenamed Olive Branch, against the town and surrounding areas on Jan. 20, slowly squeezing the militia and hundreds of thousands of civilians into the town center. Forty six Turkish soldiers have been killed since then.

A Kurdish official, Hadia Yousef, said the YPG was still fighting inside the town, but had evacuated the remaining civilians because of "massacres." But Salih Muslim, a senior Kurdish official living in exile in Europe, tweeted that Kurdish fighters had withdrawn, saying "the struggle will continue and the Kurdish people will keep defending themselves."

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said nearly 200,000 people have fled the Afrin region in recent days amid heavy airstrikes, entering Syrian government-held territory nearby. Syrian State TV on Sunday broadcast footage of a long line of vehicles and civilians on foot leaving Afrin. Erdogan has

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said the people of Afrin will return.

Turkey's military meanwhile tweeted that its forces are now conducting combing operations to search for land mines and explosives. Government spokesman Bekir Bozdag tweeted that Turkey would take steps to restore daily life and ensure access to food and health care. "Our job is not done yet, we have a lot more work. But terror and terrorists in Afrin are over," he said.

The army posted a video on social media showing a soldier holding a Turkish flag and a man waving the Syrian opposition flag on the balcony of the district parliament building with a tank stationed on the street. The soldier called the capture a "gift" to the Turkish nation and to fallen soldiers on the anniversary of a famous World War I victory.

Turkey is marking the 103rd anniversary of the battle of Gallipoli, where the Ottoman Empire repelled an invasion by Allied forces after several months of heavy fighting.

Footage by Turkey's private Dogan news agency showed Syrian fighters shooting in the air in celebration. In another Dogan video, a Syrian fighter is seen shooting at a statue symbolizing the Kurdish new year celebrations that are also being held this week, before a bulldozer attempts to pull it down. The statue is of Kawa, a mythological hero in Iran's Zagros mountains who defeated a brutal ruler and lit fires to spread the news, ushering in spring.

The YPG has been a key U.S. ally in the fight against the Islamic State group, and seized large areas across northern and eastern Syria from the extremists with the help of coalition airstrikes. The U.S. has tried to ease the tensions between its two allies, to no avail.

Erdogan has repeatedly said that NATO-member Turkey will not allow a "terror corridor" along its border. Turkey launched an earlier cross-border operation in 2016 to clear an area in northern Syria of IS and the YPG, preventing the Kurdish group from linking Afrin with the much larger territories it holds to the east.

Turkey also fears the establishment of a Kurdish self-ruled zone in Syria that could inspire its own Kurdish minority to press for greater autonomy. A peace process with the PKK collapsed in 2015, reigniting a conflict that has killed tens of thousands over more than three decades.

The Kurds are the largest stateless ethnic group in the Middle East, with some 30 million living in an area split between Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria.

El Deeb reported from Beirut.

Russia votes but outcome is clear: 6 more years of Putin By NATALIYA VASILYEVA and ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's presidential election was tainted Sunday by unprecedented pressure on voters to turn out and incidents of suspected ballot box stuffing — a barely democratic exercise that will grant Vladimir Putin another six years of power.

His opponents have called the election a farce, but his millions of fans hail the 65-year-old former KGB officer for restoring Russian greatness and defending their proud nation from a hostile outside world.

Putin is facing seven challengers on the ballot but the outcome of the vote is pre-ordained, given his high popularity ratings. The major goal for Russian authorities is producing a big turnout that will hand Putin the legitimacy he craves and provide a convincing mandate for his fourth term. Sunday's election is expected to further embolden the Russian president both at home and in world affairs.

Casting his ballot in Moscow, Putin seemed confident of victory, saying he would consider any percentage of votes a success.

"The program that I propose for the country is the right one," he said.

Given the lack of competition, authorities are struggling against voter apathy — and have put many of Russia's 111 million voters under intense pressure to cast ballots.

Yevgeny, a 43-year-old mechanic voting in central Moscow, said he briefly wondered whether it was worth voting.

"But the answer was easy ... if I want to keep working, I vote," he said. He said his bosses haven't asked

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for proof of voting but he fears they will. He spoke on condition that his last name not be used out of concern that his employer — the Moscow city government — would find out.

Across the country in the city of Yekaterinburg, a doctor also said she was being coerced to vote.

When she hadn't voted by midday, "The chief of my unit called me and said I was the only one who hadn't voted," said the doctor, Yekaterina, who spoke on condition her last name not be used because she fears repercussions.

Yevgeny Roizman, the mayor of Yekaterinburg, told The Associated Press that local officials and state employees have all received orders "from higher up" to make sure the presidential vote turnout is over 60 percent.

In Moscow, first-time voters were being given free tickets for pop concerts, and health authorities were offering free cancer screenings at selected polling stations.

Voters appeared to be turning in out in larger numbers Sunday than in Russia's last presidential election in 2012, when Putin faced a serious opposition movement and electoral violations like multiple voting, ballot stuffing and coercion marred the voting. Voting fraud was widespread in Russia's 2011 parliamentary vote, triggering massive protests in Moscow against Putin's rule.

Voters cast ballots from the Pacific coast to Siberia and Moscow. Voting will conclude at 8 p.m. (1800 GMT; 2 p.m. EDT) in Kaliningrad, the Baltic exclave that is Russia's westernmost region, and initial results are expected soon afterward.

Election authorities said turnout nationwide Sunday was 34.7 percent at noon Moscow time.

But online groups set up to record voting violations reported hundreds of problems Sunday that cast a shadow over the official turnout figures.

Observers including opposition leader Alexei Navalny's representatives, the Golos monitoring group and ordinary Russians posted images online of apparent voting violations. Some examples: ballot boxes being stuffed with extra ballots in multiple regions; an election official assaulting an observer; CCTV cameras obscured by flags or nets from watching ballot boxes; discrepancies in ballot numbers; last-minute voter registration changes likely to boost turnout and a huge pro-Putin board inside a polling station.

Some 145,000 observers were monitoring the voting in the world's largest country, including 1,500 foreigners and representatives from Navalny's movement. Navalny himself is barred from running due to a conviction he calls politically motivated.

Russian authorities had appealed to patriotic feelings by holding Sunday's election on the anniversary of Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula — so tensions in Ukraine clouded the presidential vote.

Ukraine security forces blocked the Russian Embassy in Kiev and consulates elsewhere after the Ukrainian government refused to let ordinary Russians vote, drawing angry protests from Russian officials.

Ukraine said the move was to protest voting Sunday in Crimea, whose annexation is still not internationally recognized.

Ukrainian leaders are also angry over Russian support for separatists in eastern Ukraine, where fighting that has killed at least 10,000 people since 2014 continues.

Polls show that most Russians view the takeover of the Black Sea peninsula as a major achievement despite subsequent Western sanctions. Putin also revved up his popularity by taking on Islamic State extremists in Syria.

"Who am I voting for? Who else?" asked Putin supporter Andrei Borisov, 70, a retired engineer in Moscow. "The others, it's a circus."

He expressed hope that Putin will continue to stand up to the United States and the West and will work on improving living standards at home.

The eight presidential candidates were barred from campaigning Sunday, but much-loved entertainers appealed to voters in a televised message to fulfill their civic duty. Voters also faced billboards celebrating Russian greatness — a big theme of Putin's leadership.

Putin traveled across Russia pledging to raise wages, pour more funds into the country's crumbling health care and education and modernize dilapidated infrastructure.

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Presidential challenger Ksenia Sobchak, a 36-year-old TV host, urged Putin's critics to "come together" and vote instead of boycotting, as opposition leader Navalny has recommended.

The higher the support for Putin in Sunday's vote, "the tougher the system" Russians will face in his new term, Sobchak told reporters after voting.

Critics think Sobchak has the tacit support of the Kremlin so that the election appears more democratic, which she denies. She is the only candidate who has openly criticized Putin in the campaign.

As U.S. authorities investigate alleged Russian interference in President Donald Trump's 2016 election, Moscow has warned of possible U.S. meddling in the Russian vote.

And sure enough, the Central Election Commission claimed Sunday it had been the target of a hacking attempt early in the voting day. The commission said authorities deterred the denial of service attack but gave few details of how serious it was.

Vasilyeva reported from Yekaterinburg, Russia. Yuras Karmanau in Minsk, Belarus and Jim Heintz in Moscow contributed.

See complete Associated Press coverage of the Russian election: — https://www.apnews.com/tag/RussiaElection

Amid spy row, UK accuses Russia of stockpiling a nerve agent By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's foreign minister said Sunday that he has evidence Russia has been stockpiling a nerve agent in violation of international law, after a Russian envoy suggested the toxin used to poison a former spy in England could have come from a U.K. lab.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said the trail of blame for the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia "leads inexorably to the Kremlin."

Johnson told the BBC that "we actually have evidence within the last 10 years that Russia has not only been investigating the delivery of nerve agents for the purposes of assassination but has also been creating and stockpiling Novichok" — the type of nerve agent Britain says was used in the attack.

Johnson said he will brief European Union foreign ministers on the case Monday before meeting NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

The foreign secretary said officials from the Netherlands-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons would arrive in Britain on Monday to take samples of the nerve agent used to poison the Skripals.

Britain says it is Novichok, a class of powerful nerve agent developed in the Soviet Union toward the end of the Cold War. Tests to independently verify the British findings are expected to take at least two weeks, Britain's Foreign Office said.

Vladimir Chizhov, Moscow's EU ambassador, said Russia has no chemical weapons stockpiles and was not behind the poisoning.

"Russia had nothing to do with it," Chizhov told the BBC.

Chizhov pointed out that the U.K. chemical weapons research facility, Porton Down, is only eight miles (12 kilometers) from Salisbury, where Sergei Skripal — a former Russian intelligence officer convicted in his home country of spying for Britain— and his daughter were found March 4. They remain in critical condition.

Asked whether he was saying Porton Down was responsible, Chizhov replied: "I don't know."

The British government dismissed the ambassador's suggestion as "nonsense."

Johnson said it was "not the response of a country that really believed itself to be innocent."

Britain and Russia have each expelled 23 diplomats, broken off high-level contacts and taken other punitive steps in the escalating tit-for-tat dispute, which clouded the run-up to Sunday's presidential election in Russia. President Vladimir Putin is expected to win a fourth term, amid widespread voter apathy.

Western powers see the poisoning of the Skripals as the latest sign of increasingly aggressive Russian interference in foreign countries.

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Johnson said Britain's National Security Council will meet this week to discuss "what further measures if any" the country will take.

Opposition lawmakers are calling on the government to clamp down on the illicitly gained money of wealthy Russians in Britain. Critics say U.K. authorities have been slow to investigate the origins of the wealth invested in London's financial district and property market.

Russia's ambassador in London, Alexander Yakovenko, called for "cooler heads," telling the Mail on Sunday that the dispute is "escalating dangerously and out of proportion."

Associated Press writer Angela Charlton in Moscow contributed.

Nauert's meteoric rise takes State Department by surprise By MATTHEW LEE and JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the ax fell on Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, his spokeswoman was half a world away, a distance he and his inner circle preferred and enforced.

Now, it's Tillerson who's on his way out after his unceremonious firing by President Donald Trump, and Heather Nauert whose star is ascendant.

U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and Nauert are among the few women in the Trump administration with high-profile voices on foreign policy. Only three State Department officials — all men — now outrank Nauert, a former Fox News anchor who declined comment for this story.

Nauert's meteoric rise comes even though just a week ago she seemed not long for the job. Then Tillerson lost his.

She was denied the kind of close access to the boss that all recent successful State Department press secretaries enjoyed. So Nauert tried to defend Trump's top diplomat and explain his activities to reporters from around the world without being able to travel on any of Tillerson's international trips or attend most of his Washington meetings.

Frustrated at being sidelined, Nauert almost quit several times. She had been telling associates she was ready to move on.

The moment that Trump canned Tillerson by tweet, Nauert was in a Hamas-built tunnel on the border near the Gaza Strip, on a tour organized by the Israeli military to show U.S. officials the smuggling routes used by militants. Caught by surprise by the move back in Washington, Nauert and the rest of the delegation cut the tour short and returned to Jerusalem to deal with the crisis. Soon, Trump also fired the undersecretary of state who publicly defended Tillerson.

The president named Nauert to that suddenly vacant position, near the top of the hierarchy of American diplomacy.

Nauert told associates she was taken aback and recommended a colleague for the job. But when White House officials told her they wanted her, she accepted.

The new role gives Nauert responsibilities far beyond the regular news conferences she held in the briefing room. She is overseeing the public diplomacy in Washington and all of the roughly 275 overseas U.S. embassies, consulates and other posts. She is in charge of the Global Engagement Center that fights extremist messaging from the Islamic State group and others. She can take a seat, if she wants, on the Broadcasting Board of Governors that steers government broadcast networks such as Voice of America.

Less than a year ago, Nauert wasn't even in government.

Nauert, who was born in Illinois, was a breaking news anchor on Trump's favorite television show, "Fox & Friends," when she was tapped to be the face and voice of the administration's foreign policy. With a master's degree from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, she had come to Fox from ABC News, where she was a general assignment reporter. She hadn't specialized in foreign policy or international relations.

It was almost clear from the start that Nauert wasn't Tillerson's first choice.

She resisted the ex-oilman's efforts to limit press access, reduce briefings and limit journalists allowed

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to travel with him. Tillerson had preferred Genevieve Wood at the conservative Heritage Foundation, according to several individuals familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to publicly discuss Tillerson's personnel decisions.

When Nauert arrived at the State Department in April 2017, she found relations between Tillerson and the diplomatic press corps in crisis. No longer were there daily briefings that had been a State Department feature for decades. Journalists accustomed to traveling with Republican and Democratic secretaries for decades found they were blocked from Tillerson's plane. Department spokespeople had no regular access to Tillerson or his top advisers.

Shut out from the top, Nauert developed relationships with career diplomats. Barred from traveling with Tillerson, she embarked on her own overseas trips, visiting Bangladesh and Myanmar last year to see the plight of Rohingya Muslims, and then Israel after a planned stop in Syria was scrapped. Limited to two briefings a week, she began hosting a program called "The Readout" on State Department social media outlets in which she interviewed senior officials about topics of the day.

All the while, she stayed in the good graces of the White House, even as Tillerson was increasingly on the outs. White House press secretary Sarah Sanders described Nauert as "a team player" and "a strong asset for the administration."

And she didn't shy from taking on foreign foes.

"The idea that Russia is calling for a so-called humanitarian corridor, I want to be clear, is a joke," Nauert said at one recent briefing where she took Moscow to task for its actions in Syria, where it has used military power to support President Bashar Assad's government.

Such comments have earned her the wrath of Kremlin officials and state-run media. Faced with pointed questioning by reporters from Russian news outlets at her briefings, Nauert often has lashed out, accusing them of working for their government.

"You're from Russian TV, too. OK. So hey, enough said then. I'll move on," Nauert told a reporter last month after Russian President Vladimir Putin presented an animated film clip showing a missile headed toward the U.S.

The comment sparked an intercontinental war-of-spokeswomen.

"If the StateDept dares to shun our journalists alongside with calling them Russian journalists one more time, we will carry our promise. We will create special seats for so called 'US journalists," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova tweeted.

It didn't end there.

First, the Russian Embassy in Washington congratulated Nauert "and, of course, all female employees" of the State Department on International Women's Day. Nauert responded with gratitude and a dig, saying Moscow should use the day to "live up to its international commitments & stop bombing innocent men, women & children in #Syria."

Lawmakers quibble over details of \$1.3T US spending bill By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top-level congressional talks on a \$1.3 trillion catchall spending bill are reaching a critical stage as negotiators confront immigration, abortion-related issues and a battle over a massive rail project that pits President Donald Trump against his most powerful Democratic adversary.

The bipartisan measure is loaded with political and policy victories for both sides. Republicans and Trump are winning a long-sought budget increase for the Pentagon while Democrats obtain funding for infrastructure, the opioid crisis and a wide swath of domestic programs.

The bill would implement last month's big budget agreement, providing 10 percent increases for both the Pentagon and domestic agencies when compared with current levels. Coupled with last year's tax cut measure, it heralds the return of trillion-dollar budget deficits as soon as the budget year starting in October.

While most of the funding issues in the enormous measure have been sorted out, fights involving a number of policy "riders" — so named because they catch a ride on a difficult-to-stop spending bill —

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continued into the weekend. Among them are GOP-led efforts to add a plan to revive federal subsidies to help the poor cover out-of-pocket costs under President Barack Obama's health law and to fix a glitch in the recent tax bill that subsidizes grain sales to cooperatives at the expense of for-profit grain companies.

Trump has privately threatened to veto the whole package if a \$900 million payment is made on the Hudson River Gateway Project, a priority of top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer of New York. Trump's opposition is alarming northeastern Republicans such as Gateway supporter Peter King, R-N.Y., who lobbied Trump on the project at a St. Patrick's luncheon in the Capitol on Thursday.

The Gateway Project would add an \$11 billion rail tunnel under the Hudson River to complement deteriorating, century-old tunnels that are at risk of closing in a few years. It enjoys bipartisan support among key Appropriations panel negotiators on the omnibus measure who want to get the expensive project on track while their coffers are flush with money.

Most House Republicans voted to kill the funding in a tally last year, however, preferring to see the money spread to a greater number of districts.

"Obviously, if we're doing a huge earmark ... it's troubling," said Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., a leader of House conservatives. "Why would we do that? Schumer's pet project and we pass that under a Republican-controlled Senate, House and White House?"

Schumer has kept a low profile, avoiding stoking a battle with the unpredictable Trump.

There's also a continuing battle over Trump's long-promised U.S.-Mexico border wall. While Trump traveled to California on Tuesday to inspect prototypes for the wall, what's pending now is \$1.6 billion for earlier designs involving sections in Texas that double as levees and 14 miles (23 kilometers) of replacement fencing in San Diego.

It appears Democrats may be willing to accept wall funding, but they are battling hard against Trump's demands for big increases for immigration agents and detention beds they fear would enable wide-scale roundups of immigrants illegally living in the U.S.

Meanwhile, a White House trial balloon to trade additional years of wall funding for a temporary reprieve for immigrants brought to the country illegally as children — commonly called "Dreamers" — landed with a thud last week.

Republicans are holding firm against a provision by Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., designed to make sure that Planned Parenthood, intensely disliked by anti-abortion Republicans, receives a lion's share of federal family planning grants.

But another abortion-related provision — backed by House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis. — that would strengthen "conscience protection" for health care providers that refuse to provide abortions remained unresolved heading into the final round of talks, though Democrats opposing it have prevailed in the past.

Chances for an effort to attach legislation to permit states to require out-of-state online retailers to collect sales taxes appear to be fading. And Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., faces strong opposition from Democrats on a change to campaign finance laws to give party committees like the National Republican Senate Committee the freedom to work more closely with their candidates and ease limits to permit them to funnel more money to the most competitive races.

One item that appears likely to catch a ride on the must-pass measure is a package of telecommunications bills, including a measure to free up airwaves for wireless users in anticipation of new 5G technology.

Bridge victim's grieving uncle lashes out at 'incompetence' By JENNIFER KAY and ALLEN G. BREED, Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — As crews removed bodies from beneath a collapsed pedestrian bridge Saturday, a victim's uncle raged against what he called the "complete incompetence" and "colossal failure" that allowed people to drive beneath the unfinished concrete span.

"Why they had to build this monstrosity in the first place to get children across the street?" said an anguished Joe Smitha, whose niece, Alexa Duran, was crushed in Thursday's collapse at Florida International

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University. "Then they decided to stress test this bridge while traffic was running underneath it?"

Authorities say six people were killed when the structure fell onto a busy six-lane road connecting the campus to the community of Sweetwater. Crews removed two cars Saturday morning and said they found three bodies, but officials said there were still at least two more victims beneath the rubble. Late in the day they recovered a third car, and Saturday night they said they believed all victims had been found.

The Miami-Dade Police Department confirmed the names of four victims Saturday.

Rolando Fraga Hernandez and his gold Jeep Cherokee were pulled from the wreckage Saturday. Later, the bodies of Oswald Gonzalez, 57, and Alberto Arias, 54, were found inside a white Chevy truck.

Navarro Brown was pulled from the rubble Thursday and later died at the hospital.

Authorities have not released Duran's name, but her family has said she died. The FIU freshman was studying political science.

The National Transportation Safety Board has confirmed that crews were applying what's known as "post-tensioning force" on the bridge before the failure. Authorities are investigating whether cracking that was reported just before the span fell contributed to the accident.

Experts interviewed by The Associated Press were mixed on the significance of those reported cracks. Amjad Aref, a professor with the University of Buffalo's Institute of Bridge Engineering, said they should have been "a big red flag."

"Bridges are really very vulnerable when they are under construction, when there are just pieces," he said. "It's like still a flimsy structure. And when you see cracks, somebody has to raise really a big flag and say, "We need to do something. We need to figure out what's happening quickly and do any mitigating actions to prevent further progression of damage and ultimately collapse," as we saw here."

But Ralph Verrastro, principle of Naples-based Bridging Solutions, was not surprised to hear about cracks, and said it was not necessarily a problem.

"Any bridge with concrete, that's made of concrete, there's always cracks," said Verrastro, who has been an engineer for 42 years. "If they had concerns that something was going on for that main span, then they would have called the sheriff or the police and closed the road. I would be very surprised if it's determined that they were taking a chance and trying to do something under traffic. It's just, as bridge engineers, that's just never done."

Two days before the collapse, an engineer with the design firm left a voicemail to say some cracking had been found at one end of the concrete span, but the voicemail wasn't picked up until after the collapse, Florida Department of Transportation officials said Friday. In a transcript released Friday night, Denney Pate with FIGG Bridge Group said the cracking would need repairs but the company didn't think it was a safety issue.

University officials, however, said Saturday that DOT officials had been aware of the cracking before the collapse. They said in a statement that representatives of FIU and DOT met with a FIGG engineer for two hours Thursday morning to discuss the cracking, and determined there wasn't a safety issue. The bridge fell soon afterward.

"The FIGG engineer of record delivered a technical presentation regarding the crack and concluded that there were no safety concerns and the crack did not compromise the structural integrity of the bridge," FIU said.

NTSB officials have said it's too early to say whether any cracking contributed to the collapse.

In a news release late Friday, FIGG Bridge Engineers said it "continues to work diligently" to determine the cause of the collapse, and is examining the steps its team has taken. It added, "The evaluation was based on the best available information at that time and indicated that there were no safety issues." It also asked for time to accurately determine what led to the accident.

Scheduled to open in 2019, the bridge was to provide safe passage over a canal and six lanes of traffic, a showpiece architectural feature connecting the campus with Sweetwater. The \$14.2 million project was supposed to take advantage of a faster, cheaper and safer method of bridge-building promoted by the university.

Early renderings online appeared to show what's called a "cable-stayed" structure supported by cables

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hanging from a central tower. However, a spokesman for FIGG said Saturday the bridge that was being built actually had built-in trusses.

"It is a truss bridge with above deck truss elements which, from an engineering perspective, is very different than a cable-stayed bridge," FIGG spokeswoman Cheryl Stopnick said in an email.

Verrastro said there may have been enough support in place at the time. He said these projects are constructed with "very specific sequencing" and phases.

"This was designed to support itself — that was the beauty of the design, I'm sure," he said. "You didn't need temporary supports. It saves money. It's safer, because if you put temporary supports, you have to block the road and the traffic would be a mess and it would be in the way. So I'm sure that was all thought through."

Smitha, Duran's uncle, can't help but believe that this tragedy could have been avoided.

"This was a colossal failure of the system," he said. "This was complete incompetence from the top ... I want someone to step up and say, 'The buck stops with me."

Associated Press writers Tim Reynolds, Josh Replogle, Freida Frisaro and Curt Anderson in Miami; Jason Dearen in Gainesville; Tamara Lush in St. Petersburg and Rodrique Ngowi in Boston contributed to this report.

Mueller now has memos McCabe kept on Trump dealings By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Andrew McCabe, the onetime FBI deputy director long scorned by President Donald Trump and just fired by the attorney general, kept personal memos detailing interactions with the president that have been provided to the special counsel's office and are similar to the notes compiled by dismissed FBI chief James Comey, The Associated Press has learned.

The memos could factor into special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation as his team examines Trump campaign ties to Russia and possible obstruction of justice.

McCabe's memos include details of his own interactions with the president, according to a person with direct knowledge of the situation who wasn't authorized to discuss the notes publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. They also recount different conversations he had with Comey, who kept notes on meetings with Trump that unnerved him.

Though the precise contents are unknown, the memos possibly could help substantiate McCabe's assertion that he was unfairly maligned by a White House he says had declared "war" on the FBI and Mueller's investigation. They almost certainly contain, as Comey's memos did, previously undisclosed details about encounters between the Trump administration and FBI that could be of interest to Mueller.

The disclosure Saturday came hours after Trump called McCabe's firing by Attorney General Jeff Sessions "a great day for Democracy" and asserted without elaboration that McCabe knew "all about the lies and corruption going on at the highest levels off the FBI!" In the last year, Trump has repeatedly condemned McCabe as emblematic of an FBI that he insists is biased against his administration.

That sent former CIA Director John Brennan, an outspoken Trump critic, into a Twitter tizzy: "When the full extent of your venality, moral turpitude, and political corruption becomes known, you will take your rightful place as a disgraced demagogue in the dustbin of history. You may scapegoat Andy McCabe, but you will not destroy America...America will triumph over you."

Sessions said he acted on the recommendation of FBI disciplinary officials who said McCabe had not been candid with a watchdog office investigation. McCabe was fired two days before his retirement date on Sunday. The dismissal likely jeopardizes his ability to collect his full pension benefits and, more broadly, could add to the turmoil that has enveloped the FBI since Comey's firing and as the bureau moves ahead with an investigation the White House has dismissed as a hoax.

An upcoming inspector general's report is expected to conclude that McCabe, who spent more than 20 years with the FBI, had authorized the release of information to the media and was not forthcoming

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with the watchdog office as it examined the bureau's handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation. McCabe has vigorously disputed the allegations and said his credibility had been attacked as "part of a larger effort not just to slander me personally" but also the FBI and law enforcement.

"It is part of this administration's ongoing war on the FBI and the efforts of the special counsel investigation, which continue to this day," he added. "Their persistence in this campaign only highlights the importance of the special counsel's work."

The firing set off dueling tweets between Trump, who called the termination a "great day for the hard working men and women of the FBI," and Comey, the director he fired 10 months ago.

Trump called Comey "sanctimonious" and said Comey made McCabe "look like a choirboy." Comey, referencing his highly anticipated book that comes out next month, responded with his own tweet: "Mr. President, the American people will hear my story very soon. And they can judge for themselves who is honorable and who is not."

Also Saturday, Trump's personal lawyer, John Dowd, cited the "brilliant and courageous example" by Sessions and the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility and said Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein should "bring an end" to the Russia investigation "manufactured" by Comey.

Dowd told the AP that he neither was calling on Rosenstein, who oversees Mueller's inquiry, to fire the special counsel immediately nor had discussed with Rosenstein the idea of dismissing Mueller or ending the probe.

Mueller is investigating whether Trump's actions, including Comey's ouster, constitute obstruction of justice. McCabe could be an important witness, and his memos could be used by investigators as they look into whether Trump sought to thwart the FBI probe. Comey's own memos, including one in which he says Trump encouraged him to end an investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn, have been provided to Mueller and are part of his investigation.

McCabe, in a statement defending himself, asserted he was singled out by the administration because of the "role I played, the actions I took, and the events I witnessed in the aftermath" of Comey's firing last May.

He became acting director after that but clashed with the Trump administration, including when he publicly rejected White House assertions that Comey had lost the support of the rank-and-file. He abruptly left the deputy director position in January and went on leave.

The firing arises from an inspector general review into how the FBI handled the Clinton email investigation. That inquiry focused not only on specific decisions made by FBI leadership but also on news media leaks.

McCabe came under scrutiny over an October 2016 news report that revealed differing approaches within the FBI and Justice Department over how aggressively the Clinton Foundation should be investigated. The watchdog office has concluded that McCabe authorized FBI officials to speak to a Wall Street Journal reporter for that story and that McCabe had not been forthcoming with investigators. McCabe denies it.

McCabe became entangled in presidential politics in 2016 after it was revealed that his wife, during her unsuccessful run for state Senate in Virginia one year earlier, received campaign contributions from the political action committee of then-Gov. Terry McAuliffe, D-Va., a longtime Clinton friend. The FBI has said McCabe received the necessary ethics approval about his wife's candidacy and was not supervising the Clinton investigation at the time of the contributions.

Associated Press writer Chad Day contributed to this report.

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Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar joins St Patrick's Parade DAVID JEANS, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar joined along as Manhattan's Fifth Avenue came alive with the sound of bagpipes, trumpets and lots of green Saturday at the 257th running of New York City's St. Patrick's Day parade.

Several bagpipe bands led a parade made up of more than 100 marching bands after Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo spoke briefly, calling it a "day of inclusion" and adding: "We're all immigrants."

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, also a Democrat, marched with police Commissioner James O'Neill under sunny skies.

Varadkar, Ireland's first openly gay leader, watched the parade at St. Patrick's Cathedral before joining the march. In remarks, Cuomo said it was "my pleasure to march with him," especially in a parade that long tried to ban gays.

The parade, beginning at 11 a.m., lasted nearly six hours. An estimated 150,000 marchers made the 1.4-mile (2.2-kilometer) trek past Central Park, the Cathedral and Trump Tower.

Large since the mid-1800s, the parade has celebrated Irish culture and Irish immigrants, who once faced nativist calls for their exclusion from the workforce — and from the country — when they began arriving in the city in huge numbers during the Irish Famine.

In the 1990s, parade organizers were involved in annual court fights over whether to exclude openly gay groups from the march. This year, at least two groups in the parade had banners identifying marchers as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

For the 167th time, the lead group marching in the parade was 800 members of the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, of the New York Army National Guard. Cuomo joined them. The regiment, once predominantly made up of Irish immigrants, first led the parade in 1851 as a deterrent to anti-immigrant violence.

Judy Hughes, whose father used to march with the 69th Infantry Regiment, also known as the "Fighting Irish," said she's been attending the parade "since I was a little girl."

Her husband, Bill Hughes, a retired police officer who marched in the parade for 10 years, looked on as a band passed.

"It's better being on the other side," he said.

This year's grand marshal was Loretta Brennan Glucksman, chairwoman of The American Ireland Fund, a group that has raised millions of dollars for philanthropic projects in Ireland, including funding for integrated schools for Catholic and Protestant children in Northern Ireland.

She rode along the parade route in a Central Park horse carriage driven by a family friend.

The parade was a familiar occasion for Matthew McCrosson, 68, who has frequently marched in it during the past half-century.

"The parade truly signifies the Irish investment over 250 years in the greater New York area," McCrosson said. "The parade represents not only Irish, but people from all nationalities."

Danny and Carol Manley, an Irish New Jersey couple, watched the parade with their son, Dan Jr.

"We like to come back, get together, see the bagpipers and see how the generations have grown up," Danny Manley said.

Vatican bows to pressure, releases retired pope's letter By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Stung by accusations of spreading "fake news," the Vatican on Saturday released the complete letter by Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI about Pope Francis after coming under blistering criticism for selectively citing it in a press release and digitally manipulating a photograph of it.

The previously hidden part of the letter provides the full explanation why Benedict refused to write a commentary on a new Vatican-published compilation of books about Francis' theological and philosophical background that was released to mark his fifth anniversary as pope.

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In addition to saying he didn't have time, Benedict noted that one of the authors involved in the project had launched "virulent," "anti-papist" attacks against his teaching and that of St. John Paul II. He said he was "surprised" the Vatican had chosen the theologian to be included in the 11-volume "The Theology of Pope Francis."

"I'm certain you can understand why I'm declining," Benedict wrote.

The Vatican's Secretariat for Communications said Saturday it was releasing the full text of the letter due to the controversy over the "presumed manipulation" of information when the volume was launched Monday with great fanfare on the eve of Francis' anniversary.

It said its decision to withhold part of the letter at the time was based on its desire for reserve, "not because of any desire to censor."

The so-called "Lettergate" scandal has embarrassed the Vatican's communications operations and fueled the growing chasm between supporters of Francis' pastoral-focused papacy and conservatives who long for the doctrine-minded tenure of Benedict.

A Twitter hashtag #releasetheletter went viral among Catholic conservatives as the scandal widened.

The Secretariat for Communication, in particular, was accused of spreading "fake news" for having omitted key parts of Benedict's letter and — as The Associated Press reported — digitally blurring a photograph of the document where Benedict started to explain why he wouldn't comment on the book.

Photojournalism industry standards forbid such manipulation of a photo, especially if it alters the content and meaning of the image, as it did.

Many commentators noted the irony of accusations that the Vatican's communications office was spreading "fake news," since Francis dedicated his annual message for the church's social communications day to fighting "fake news" and the distortion of information. Francis has frequently criticized journalists for only giving half of the story.

The scandal began when the prefect of the communications office, Monsignor Dario Vigano, read part of Benedict's letter aloud at the book presentation Monday. Vigano explained that he had sent Benedict the 11-volume set months ago in hopes of eliciting a theological commentary from the retired pope.

In the parts of Benedict's letter that Vigano chose to read, Benedict confirmed that Francis has a solid theological and philosophical training and he praised the book initiative for showing the "interior continuity" between the two papacies. He wrote it was "foolish prejudice" to paint Francis as only a practical man devoid of theology and Benedict as a mere academic who knew nothing of the lives of ordinary faithful.

Vigano held up the letter as evidence of the theological continuity between the two papacies, an effort to blunt conservative critics of Francis' mercy-over-morals priorities and emphasis on "discernment" over hard and fast doctrine.

But Benedict's full caveat about his refusal to comment on the volume was never made public in Vigano's presentation, press release or accompanying photo. That omission left the impression that the 91-year-old retired pope had read the volume and fully endorsed it, when in fact he hadn't.

As a result, Vigano's effort to show papal continuity effectively backfired. Benedict's harsh criticism of German theologian Peter Huenermann, who penned one of the 11 books, laid bare the differences in theological approaches of the two popes.

The first hint there was more to the initial story came when a longtime Vatican reporter, Sandro Magister, published a transcript of what Vigano had read aloud at the presentation, which was more than what was included in the Vatican's press release. Magister's transcript of the letter contained Benedict's initial explanation that he couldn't read the 11 volumes due to his age and other commitments, and therefore couldn't comment on it.

Magister on Saturday reported that the omitted paragraph concerned Benedict's objection to Huenermann, who has joined leading European progressive theologians since the 1980s in penning open letters attacking the policies of John Paul and Benedict.

Left unsaid is who was responsible for selecting Huenermann to write one of the 11 books in Francis' anniversary anthology, given the author's past attacks on the retired pope, who lives just across the Vatican gardens from Francis.

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Trump-linked data analysis firm taps 50M Facebook profiles

WASHINGTON (AP) — A data analysis firm employed by President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign tapped the Facebook profiles of more than 50 million users without their permission, allowing it to capitalize on the private social media activity of a large portion of the U.S. electorate, newspapers reported Saturday.

One of the largest data leaks in Facebook history allowed Cambridge Analytica, which had ties to Trump campaign strategist Steve Bannon, to develop techniques that formed the basis of its work on the Trump campaign, The New York Times and The Guardian reported.

Facebook said it suspended Cambridge Analytica over allegations that it kept the improperly obtained user data after telling Facebook it had been deleted.

In a blog post, Facebook explained that Cambridge Analytica had years ago received user data from a Facebook app that purported to be a psychological research tool, though the firm was not authorized to have the information. Roughly 270,000 people downloaded and shared personal details with the app.

Cambridge Analytica later certified in 2015 that it had destroyed the information it had received, according to Facebook, although the social network said it received reports "several days ago" that not all the data was deleted. Facebook says it is investigating.

Facebook has also suspended the access of Cambridge Analytica's parent company, Strategic Communication Laboratories; University of Cambridge psychology professor Aleksandr Kogan, the academic who created the app in question; and another individual, Christopher Wylie of Eunoia Technologies, who also allegedly received user data from the app. Wylie is a former Cambridge Analytics employee who has emerged as a primary source for the Times report.

Cambridge Analytica denied wrongdoing in a statement. It said the parent company's SCL Elections unit hired Kogan to undertake "a large scale research project in the U.S.," but subsequently deleted all data it received from Kogan's company after learning that Kogan had obtained data in violation of Facebook policies. The firm said none of Kogan's data was used in its 2016 election work for the "avoidance of doubt."

Kogan did not immediately reply to an emailed request for comment. Wylie could not immediately be located.

The Facebook blog post, written by deputy general counsel Paul Grewal, cited the "public prominence" of Cambridge Analytica, called the alleged data retention an "unacceptable violation of trust" and said the social network will take legal action if necessary to hold all parties "responsible and accountable for any unlawful behavior."

Cambridge Analytica is probably best known for its political work during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. The company claims to build psychological profiles based on personal details from millions of Americans that can categorize individual voters. It worked for both the primary campaign of Texas Republican Sen. Ted Cruz, and Trump's general-election campaign.

Trump's campaign Saturday denied using the firm's data, saying it relied on the Republican National Committee for its data.

"The campaign used the RNC for its voter data and not Cambridge Analytica," the campaign said in a statement. "Using the RNC data was one of the best choices the campaign made. Any claims that voter data were used from another source to support the victory in 2016 are false."

Cambridge Analytica is backed by the family of billionaire donor Robert Mercer, a hedge fund manager who also supported the Trump campaign and other conservative candidates and causes, including Bannon, the Trump campaign strategist. Trump campaign officials have downplayed Cambridge Analytica's role, saying they briefly used the company for television advertising and paid some of its most skilled data employees.

The firm had secured a \$15 million investment from Mercer and wooed Bannon with the promise of tools that could identify the personalities of American voters and influence their behavior. But Cambridge Analytica did not have the data to make its new products work. So the firm harvested private information from the Facebook profiles of more than 50 million users without their permission.

A representative for Bannon did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

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The company has surfaced in the U.S. probes into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. British officials are also investigating the firm in connection with the June 2016 EU referendum.

Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, disclosed an advisory role with Cambridge Analytica last August. SCL later said that position never materialized. Flynn is cooperating with special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian election interference after pleading guilty to a felony charge.

Cambridge Analytica CEO Alexander Nix also disclosed last November that the company reached out to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange during the campaign to request emails related to the campaign of Democrat Hillary Clinton. Nix said Assange denied the request, which came after Assange had said publicly that he had the emails. Clinton campaign emails stolen by Russian agents are one focus of the election-interference probes.

Nix has denied any involvement in Russian election meddling.

Revelations that Cambridge Analytica misused social media data could also be of interest to Mueller's investigation. While much of the thrust of special counsel's investigation has been tightly held, Mueller has requested that the firm turn over the emails of any employees who worked on the campaign, according to a report in The Wall Street Journal last year.

Mueller is also looking at the role Wikileaks played in acquiring and making public the stolen Clinton campaign emails.

Today in HistoryBy The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, March 18, the 77th day of 2018. There are 288 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 18, 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Gideon v. Wainwright, ruled unanimously that state courts were required to provide legal counsel to criminal defendants who could not afford to hire an attorney on their own.

On this date:

In 1766, Britain repealed the Stamp Act of 1765.

In 1837, the 22nd and 24th president of the United States, Grover Cleveland, was born in Caldwell, New Jersey.

In 1925, the Tri-State Tornado struck southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois and southwestern Indiana, resulting in some 700 deaths.

In 1937, in America's worst school disaster, nearly 300 people, most of them children, were killed in a natural gas explosion at the New London Consolidated School in Rusk County, Texas.

In 1938, Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas nationalized his country's petroleum reserves and took control of foreign-owned oil facilities.

In 1940, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass, where the Italian dictator agreed to join Germany's war against France and Britain.

In 1959, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Hawaii statehood bill. (Hawaii became a state on Aug. 21, 1959.)

In 1962, France and Algerian rebels signed the Evian Accords, a cease-fire agreement which took effect the next day, ending the Algerian War.

In 1965, the first spacewalk took place as Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov went outside his Voskhod 2 capsule, secured by a tether.

In 1974, most of the Arab oil-producing nations ended their 5-month-old embargo against the United States that had been sparked by American support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War.

In 1980, Frank Gotti, the 12-year-old youngest son of mobster John Gotti, was struck and killed by a car driven by John Favara, a neighbor in Queens, New York. (The following July, Favara vanished, the apparent victim of a gang hit.)

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In 1990, thieves made off with 13 works of art from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (the crime remains unsolved).

Ten years ago: Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama confronted America's racial divide headon with a speech in Philadelphia in which he urged the nation to break "a racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years." German Chancellor Angela Merkel (AHN'-geh-lah MEHR'-kuhl) earned a standing ovation from Israel's parliament with a speech that included a tribute to the victims of the Holocaust. Oscar-winning filmmaker Anthony Minghella ("The English Patient") died in London at age 54.

Five years ago: Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton announced her support for gay marriage in an online video released by the gay rights advocacy group Human Rights Campaign. A mortar shell explosion killed seven Marines from Camp Lejeune and injured eight other people during mountain warfare training at Hawthorne Army Depot in Nevada.

One year ago: Chuck Berry, rock 'n' roll's founding guitar hero and storyteller who defined the music's joy and rebellion in such classics as "Johnny B. Goode," "Sweet Little Sixteen" and "Roll Over Beethoven," died at his home west of St. Louis at age 90. Yelling that he wanted to kill and die for Allah, a man attacked a French soldier at Paris' Orly Airport, wrestling away her assault rifle before two other soldiers shot him dead. Top-seeded Villanova was bounced from the NCAA Tournament by eighth-seeded Wisconsin 65-62 in the East region.

Today's Birthdays: Composer John Kander is 91. Country singer Charley Pride is 84. Nobel peace laureate and former South African president F.W. de Klerk is 82. Country singer

Margie Bowes is 77. Actor Kevin Dobson is 75. Actor Brad Dourif is 68. Jazz musician Bill Frisell is 67. Singer Irene Cara is 59. Alt-country musician Karen Grotberg (The Jayhawks) is 59. Movie writer-director Luc Besson is 59. Actor Geoffrey Owens is 57. Actor Thomas Ian Griffith is 56. Singer-songwriter James McMurtry is 56. TV personality Mike Rowe is 56. Singer-actress Vanessa L. Williams is 55. Olympic gold medal speedskater Bonnie Blair is 54. Country musician Scott Saunders (Sons of the Desert) is 54. Actor David Cubitt is 53. Rock musician Jerry Cantrell (Alice in Chains) is 52. Rock singer-musician Miki Berenyi (ber-EN'-ee) is 51. Actor Michael Bergin is 49. Rapper-actress-talk show host Queen Latifah is 48. Former White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus (ryns PREE'-bus) is 46. Actor-comedian Dane Cook is 46. Country singer Philip Sweet (Little Big Town) is 44. Rock musician Stuart Zender is 44. Singers Evan and Jaron Lowenstein are 44. Actress-singer-dancer Sutton Foster is 43. Singer Devin Lima (LFO) is 41. Rock singer Adam Levine (Maroon 5) is 39. Rock musician Daren Taylor (Airborne Toxic Event) is 38. Olympic gold medal figure skater Alexei Yagudin is 38. Actor Adam Pally is 36. Actor Cornelius Smith Jr. is 36. Actor Duane Henry (TV: "NCIS") is 33. Actress Lily Collins is 29. Actress-dancer Julia Goldani Telles is 23. Actress Ciara Bravo is 21. Actor Blake Garrett Rosenthal is 14.

Thought for Today: "I take a simple view of living. It is keep your eyes open and get on with it." — Laurence Olivier, British actor (1907-1989).