

Groton Daily Independent

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First Day of Spring!

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Midwest Masonry & concrete Pumping

Greg Heilman, owner

405 E 1st Ave., Groton

Greg: 253/929-9137

Mike: 605/492-7041

midwestmasonry1@yahoo.com



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

Columbia City Review Board Notice

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

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

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

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Groton City Financial Report

February 2018

1st State Bank Checking Acct	\$ 515,453.36
1st State Bank Savings Acct	\$ 145,281.93
General Cash	\$ 300.00
Wells Fargo Savings Acct	\$ 102,704.90
SD FIT Acct	\$ 954,334.40
1st State Bank Water CD	\$ 81,200.00
SD FIT Water CD	\$ 100,000.00
BB Trust CD	\$ 1,500.00
SD FIT CD	\$ 200,000.00
Cemetery Perp Care CD	\$ 32,876.69
Total	\$ 2,133,651.28

Invested In		
Cash	\$ 300.00	0.01%
1st State Bank	\$ 776,311.98	36.38%
Wells Fargo Bank	\$ 102,704.90	4.81%
SD Fit	\$ 1,254,334.40	58.79%
Total	\$ 2,133,651.28	100.00%

	Beginning	Receipts	Expenditures	Transfers	Ending
	Cash Balance				Cash Balance
General	\$ 492,257.00	\$ 94,742.20	\$ 70,709.41		\$ 516,289.79
Bed, Board, Booze Tax	\$ 3,437.29	\$ 2,287.66			\$ 5,724.95
Baseball Uniforms	\$ 1,710.20				\$ 1,710.20
Airport	\$ 12,513.75		\$ -		\$ 12,513.75
**Debt Service	\$ 492,584.45	\$ 981.62	\$ -		\$ 493,566.07
Cemetery Perpetual Care	\$ 34,706.69				\$ 34,706.69
Water Tower	\$ 180,000.00				\$ 180,000.00
Water	\$ 59,734.56	\$ 18,794.01	\$ 13,295.44		\$ 65,233.13
Electric	\$ 517,453.61	\$ 164,676.43	\$ 134,928.47		\$ 547,201.57
Wastewater	\$ 148,812.70	\$ 14,102.31	\$ 5,838.34		\$ 157,076.67
Solid Waste	\$ 33,367.58	\$ 5,439.55	\$ 13,008.74		\$ 25,798.39
Family Crisis	\$ 4,447.96		\$ 300.00		\$ 4,147.96
Sales Tax	\$ 18,661.57	\$ 9,587.47	\$ 10,829.59		\$ 17,419.45
Employment	\$ (1,611.39)	\$ 752.33	\$ 7,630.18		\$ (8,489.24)
Utility Prepayments	\$ 5,127.34	\$ 3,145.12	\$ 152.52		\$ 8,272.46
Utility Deposits	\$ 72,644.83	\$ 810.00	\$ 1,330.00		\$ 72,124.83
Other	\$ 354.61				\$ 354.61
Totals	\$ 1,590,381.28	\$ 315,318.70	\$ 258,022.69	\$ -	\$ 2,133,651.28

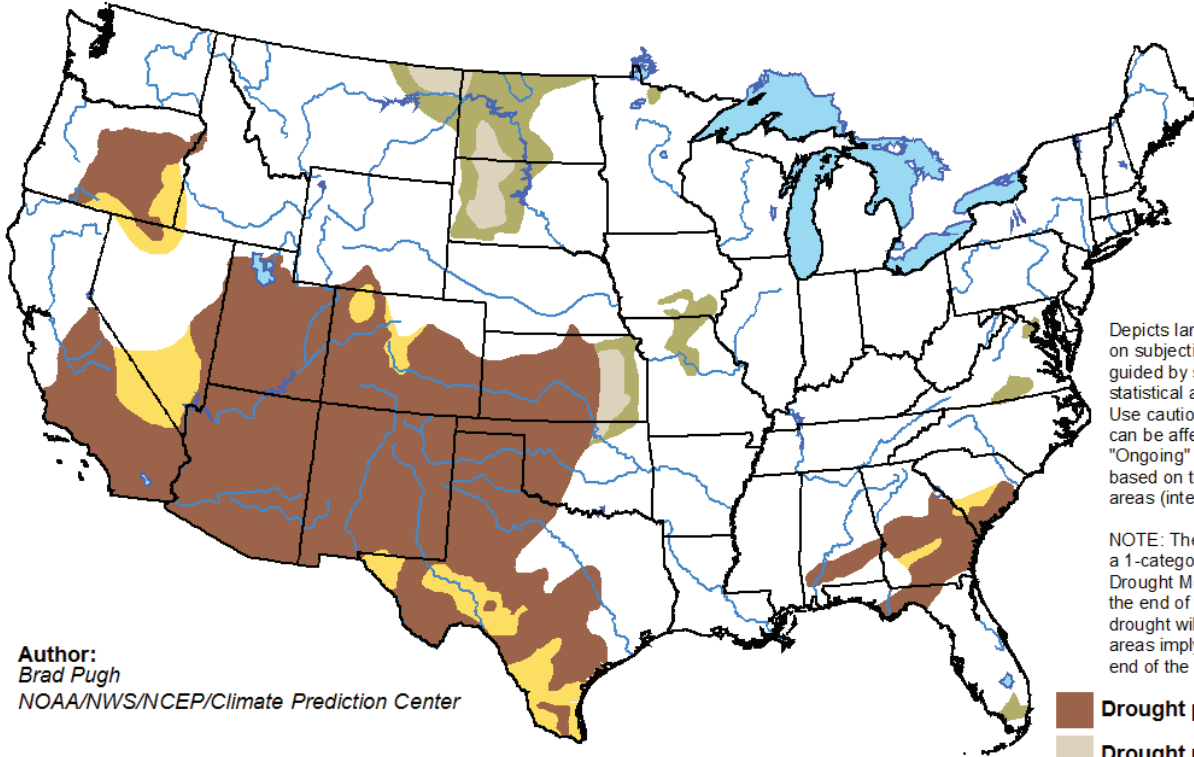
**Debt to be Paid		
**2015 Refinance	\$ 2,775,000.00	by 12/1/2035
**Sewer Lagoon	\$ 55,068.52	by 1/1/2019
**West Sewer	\$ 123,851.51	by 10/15/2022
**RR Sewer Crossing	\$ 73,277.83	by 7/15/22
Total Debt	\$ 3,027,197.86	

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U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook Drought Tendency During the Valid Period





Valid for March 15 - June 30, 2018
Released March 15, 2018



Depicts large-scale trends based on subjectively derived probabilities guided by short- and long-range statistical and dynamical forecasts. Use caution for applications that can be affected by short lived events. "Ongoing" drought areas are based on the U.S. Drought Monitor areas (intensities of D1 to D4).

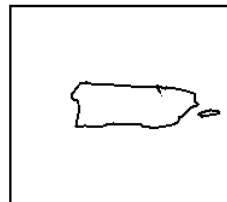
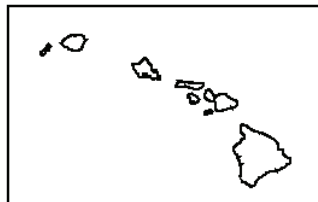
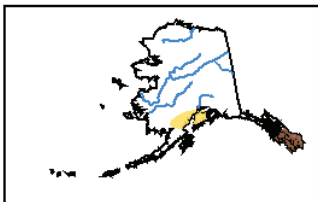
NOTE: The tan areas imply at least a 1-category improvement in the Drought Monitor intensity levels by the end of the period, although drought will remain. The green areas imply drought removal by the end of the period (D0 or none).

Author:
Brad Pugh
NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Climate Prediction Center

-  Drought persists
-  Drought remains but improves
-  Drought removal likely
-  Drought development likely



<http://go.usa.gov/3eZ73>

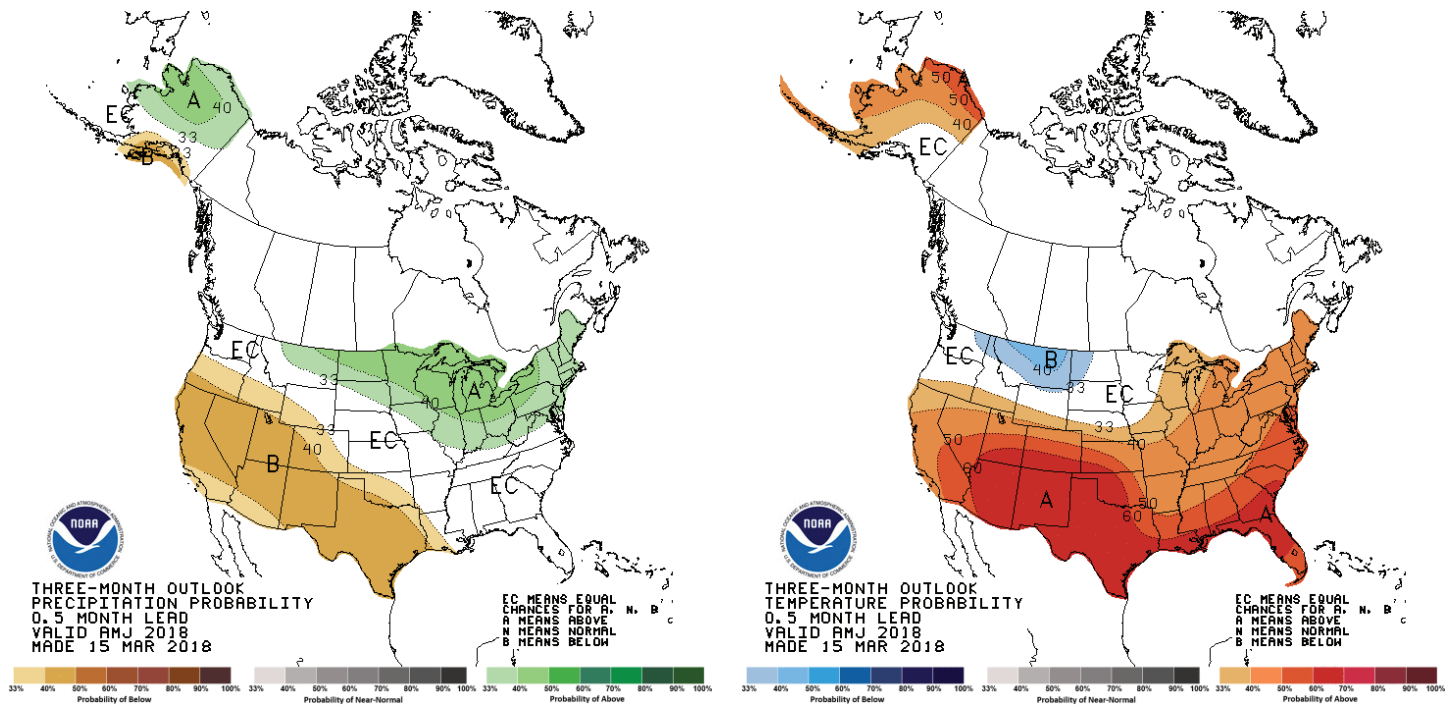


More than a quarter of the country is currently experiencing drought from Southern California into the Southwest, the northern and southern High Plains, and parts of the Southeast. Drought is likely to persist in most of these areas and potentially expand by late June. Drought improvement should occur in the northern Plains and lower Missouri Valley where above-average precipitation is expected during a normally wet time of year.

Temperature and precipitation

Through June, odds favor above-average temperatures for the southern two-thirds of the U.S., extending from California across the central Plains and into the Northeast. The greatest likelihood of above-average temperatures extends from the Southwest across Texas and the Gulf Coast. Hawaii and the northern half of Alaska are also favored to experience above-average temperatures during the April through June season. The Northern Rockies is the only region leaning towards below-average temperatures this spring.

Below-average precipitation is anticipated across much of the West and South, extending from California to the south-central Plains, including Texas and parts of Oklahoma where drought is currently affecting the region. Below-average precipitation is also favored for a small area across the south coast of Alaska. It is most likely to be wetter-than-average for much of the northern U.S., extending from the northern High Plains, across to the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, eastward to include the mid-Atlantic and Northeast as well as for northern Alaska and Hawaii.



Maintenance Supervisor Wanted:

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

Day Shift C.N.A. Wanted

Sign-on Bonus

*** \$1,500 for CNAs ***

Contact Brynn Pickrel or Nellie Hatfield at 605-397-2365 or apply in person.
EOE/AA/M/F/V/D-Drug Free Workplace

GROTON
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER
1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

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!

Groton C&MA to present Road to Calvary

ROAD TO CALVARY, the new Easter musical from Word Music & Church Resources, arranged by Daniel Semsen, walks us down the path leading to Calvary's road. We follow Jesus' footsteps as Jesus traveled from Nazareth, across the hills of Galilee, up through the Mount of Olives, walking a lifetime of steps towards Gethsemane, and from there ponder of the sacrificial love of our Lord for us . . . finally to respond to His invitation to come to the cross and meet Him at the altar.

The Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance 25 member Choir invites you to join them on this musical journey to Calvary at two very special performances they will be sharing in our area, one on Palm Sunday, March 25, evening at the Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance Church, 706 N. Main Street, and Maundy Thursday evening at the Mellette United Methodist Church, both concerts being presented at 7 pm, to be followed by a time of Fellowship after each presentation.

Carrie Olson is the director of the choir, Lowell Harms will be the narrator and Logan Harms is the technician. The choir consists of voices from the Groton, Houghton, Butler, and Mellette areas. They are Linda Bahr, Rick Buhler, Nancy Cutler, Amy Duncan, Pastor Bill Duncan, Pastor Doug Duncan, Zeke Duncan, Mike and JoAnne Ehresmann, Adam Franken, Dale and Joyce Grenz, Lowell Harms, Sophie Hughes, Deb Jacobs, Kara Jetto, Julianna Kosel, Scott Krueger, Jarod Poppens, Larry and Glenna Remington; Lars, Darinda, Krista and Sierra Tunby,

Rejoice this Easter season as you celebrate the Resurrection of the LORD in the glow of His love and forgiveness. Come to either or both of these stirring performances, and Respond to His invitation to come to the cross and meet Him at the altar of Grace and Love.



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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Today in Weather History

March 20, 1982: A winter storm dropped 10-20 inches of heavy wet snow across the northern two-thirds of South Dakota. Five persons were killed and eight others injured in indirect accidents. Downed power lines caused isolated power outages. A half dozen newborn calves died of exposure near Lemmon in Perkins County. Also, 5% of the pheasant population in Brown, Edmunds, and Faulk Counties were killed. The weight of the snow collapsed a canopy of a grocery store in McLaughlin, Corson County, tearing out part of the brick front and breaking windows in the store.

March 20, 2008: An upper-level disturbance coupled with an area of low pressure moving across the Central Plains brought widespread heavy snow from the late afternoon through the early morning hours to north-central and northeast South Dakota. Heavy snow of 6 to as much as 18 inches fell in this area resulting in school delays and cancelations along with treacherous travel conditions. Some snowfall amounts included: 6 inches at Bowdle, South Shore, and Bradley; 7 inches at Eureka, Chelsea, Bristol, and Pollock; 8 inches near Hosmer, Osaka, and Roscoe; 9 inches at Victor; 10 inches at Westport and Ipswich. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included: 12 inches at Columbia, Milbank, and Waubay; 13 inches at Sisseton and Webster; 14 inches at Big Stone City; 15 inches at Summit; 16 inches at Roy Lake; 18 inches at Wilmot and Pickerel Lake State Park.

1924 - A late winter storm in Oklahoma produced nearly a foot of snow at Oklahoma City and at Tulsa. (David Ludlum)

1948: The city of Juneau received 31 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for the Alaska Capitol. (20th - 21st)

Also on this day, an F3 tornado tracked through Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, OK just before 10 p.m. destroying 54 aircraft, including 17 transport planes valued at \$500,000 apiece. Total damage amounted to more than \$10 million, a record for the state that stood until the massive tornado outbreak of 5/3/1999. Major Ernest W. Fawbush and Captain Robert C. Miller were ordered to see if operationally forecasting tornadoes were possible. The tornado prompted the first attempt at tornado forecasting. Forecasters at Tinker believed conditions were again favorable for tornadoes and issued the first recorded tornado forecast. Five days later on 3/25 at 6 pm, a forecasted tornado occurred, crossing the prepared base and damage was minimized. The successful, albeit somewhat lucky forecast, paved the way for tornado forecasts to be issued by the U.S. Weather Bureau after a lengthy ban.

1984 - A severe three day winter storm came to an end over the Central Plains. The storm produced up to twenty inches of snow in Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas, and left a thick coat of ice from eastern Kansas across northwestern Missouri into Iowa. (Storm Data)

1986: Great Britain recorded their highest wind gust ever as the summit of Scotland's Cairngorm Mountains, at 4,085 feet had a gust of 172 mph.

1987 - A storm produced blizzard conditions in Wyoming and eastern Nebraska, and severe thunderstorms in central Nebraska. Snowfall totals ranged up to 12 inches at Glenrock WY and Chadron NE. Thunderstorms in central Nebraska produced wind gusts to 69 mph at Valentine, and wind gusts to 76 mph at Bartley. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)








1988 - Squalls in the Great Lakes Region left up to eight inches of new snow on the ground in time for the official start of spring. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the western U.S. Seven cities reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Tucson AZ with a reading of 89 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Snow and high winds created blizzard conditions in western Kansas to usher in the official start of the spring season. Thunderstorms produced severe weather from east Texas to Alabama and north-west Florida, with nearly fifty reports of large hail and damaging winds during the afternoon and evening hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1998: A deadly tornado outbreak occurred over portions of the southeastern United States on this day. Particularly hard hit were rural areas outside of Gainesville, Georgia, where at least 12 people were killed during the early morning hours. The entire outbreak killed 14 people and produced 12 tornadoes across three states. The town of Stoneville, North Carolina hard hit by the storms.

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Tue Mar 20	Wed Mar 21	Thu Mar 22	Fri Mar 23	Sat Mar 24	Sun Mar 25	Mon Mar 26
						
35°F	41°F	46°F	41°F	40°F	39°F	41°F
25°F	27°F	32°F	30°F	26°F	23°F	33°F
NNW 6 MPH	S 6 MPH	ESE 10 MPH	ESE 19 MPH Precip 90%	E 15 MPH Precip 40%	SSE 16 MPH Precip 50%	SSW 10 MPH

Mostly Cloudy Today-Tonight

Highs: Low 30s to Low 40s

***Scattered Snow Showers This
Afternoon/Evening***

Fog Returns Overnight



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Published on: 03/20/2018 at 4:50AM

Graphic Created
3/20/2018 4:45 AM

Light snow continues to track east of the James valley early this morning, but in this systems wake we will retain quite a bit of clouds. Another system is also following close behind and will result in isolated to scattered snow showers this afternoon. Fog and low clouds return tonight.

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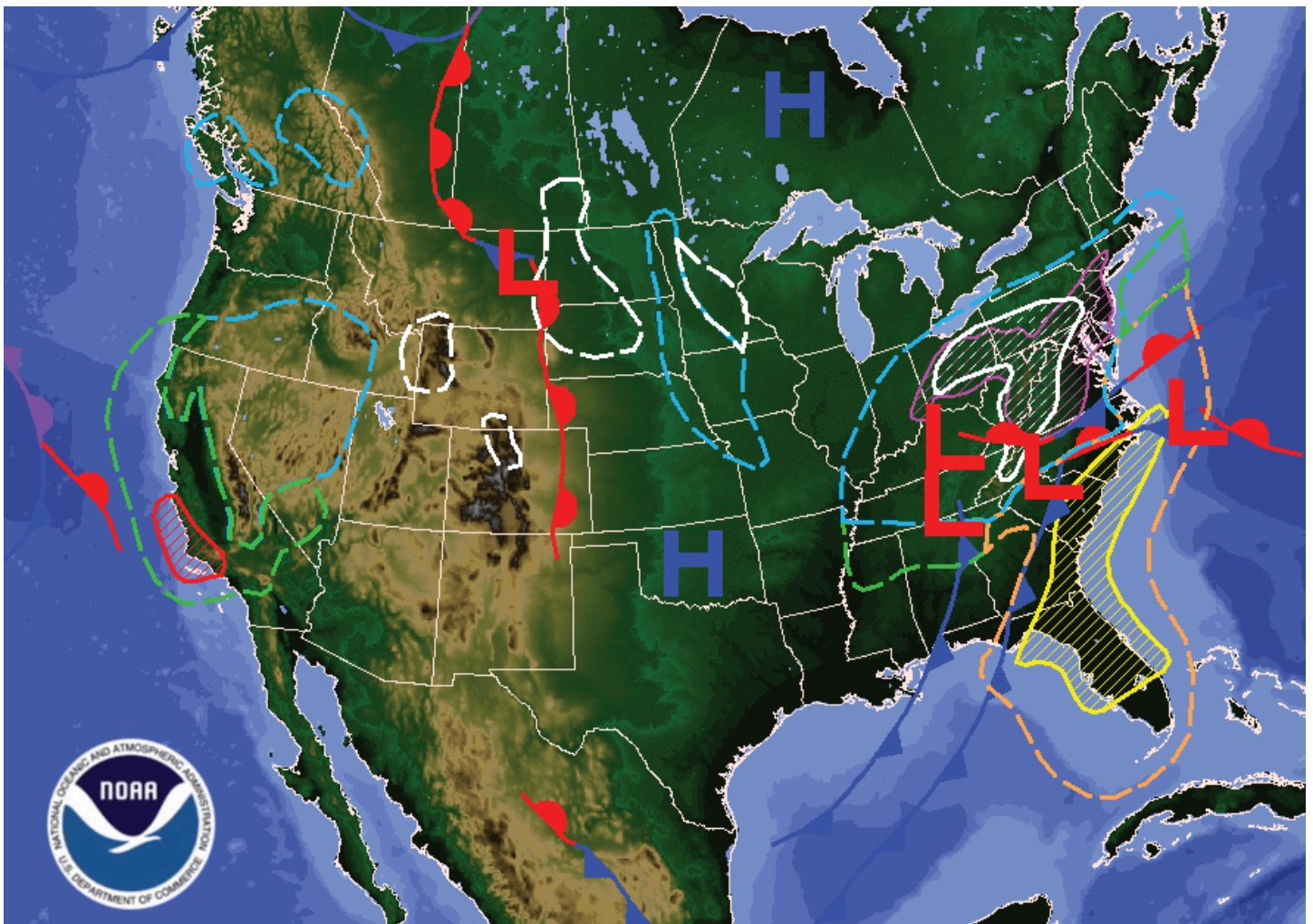
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 36.1 F at 1:01 PM
Low Outside Temp: 31.8 F at 11:11 PM
Wind Chill:
High Gust: 13.0 Mph at 6:53 AM
Precip: Snow 2" Moisture Content: .20

Today's Info

Record High: 75° in 1910
Record Low: -6° in 1965
Average High: 42°F
Average Low: 22°F
Average Precip in March: 0.67
Precip to date in March: 1.14
Average Precip to date: 1.69
Precip Year to Date: 1.55
Sunset Tonight: 7:46 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:34 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Tue, Mar 20, 2018, issued 4:57 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

Not long ago I was stopped by a police officer who motioned to me to pull to the side of the street. When I looked up to see what was going on I saw two large trucks coming toward me with a home that had been cut in half and placed on two trailers. The two halves were slowly being moved to a new location where they would be joined together and the home would look the same as it had in the past.

It was almost unnerving as I waited patiently for them to pass by. For years it rested comfortably on a corner across from an elementary school. Soon it would have a new address in a new neighborhood and perhaps new owners.

How things have changed. Years ago people rarely moved from one home to another. There was a certain permanence in life that brought a sense of security to families. Now, moving from one place to another is a routine part of life that seems to go with the turmoil in the world.

Everywhere we look, we see signs of instability. We awaken each morning wondering what devastating news awaits us. What once was a world that made sense is now a world that longs for the "good old days."

Psalm 93, however, gives comfort to the Christian. It begins with a burst of hope and assurance, a promise of peace and predictability. "The LORD reigns."

And it ends with a reminder of His faithfulness: "Your statues stand firm...for endless days!"

Prayer: Thank You, Heavenly Father, that we have Your Word to believe in and Your power to protect us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 93:1 The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure.

2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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

News from the Associated Press

South Dakota to intervene in case of town's incorporation

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota is challenging the incorporation of a town on the western part of the state.

The South Dakota Supreme Court said last week it will allow the state to intervene in the incorporation of Buffalo Chip, which is located outside Sturgis and used to be a campground mainly for motorcyclists, the Black Hills Pioneer reported .

Meade County Commissioners voted February 2015 to allow the campground to move forward in its bid to become a town. Several county residents and the city of Sturgis tried appealing the decision, but Buffalo Chip voters confirmed the incorporation in an election that May.

Legal challenges continued until the court ruled in January that any action challenging the incorporation of Buffalo Chip must be brought by the state. Since being allowed to intervene, the state has hired a private attorney to serve as a special assistant attorney general to oversee the case.

"This is great news," said Daniel Ainslie, Sturgis city manager. "We are not sure of the result of this action, but it is in line with the direction the city has pursued since the Supreme Court issued its original decision."

In its application for permission to challenge, the state said that a municipality can't legally be incorporated if it has fewer than 100 residents. Buffalo Chip had fewer than 100 residents at the time of incorporation, according to census information submitted to Meade County.

"We are glad that at least one of the issues we brought up is going to be reviewed by the court," Ainslie said. "We believe the county commission erred in their findings and that numerous state statutes were violated."

The Supreme Court can rule based on what has been submitted or ask for additional information, he said. The court has asked Buffalo Chip to provide a response by March 29.

Information from: Black Hills Pioneer, <http://www.bhpioneer.com>

Mother: Girl's drowning in Sioux Falls happened in seconds

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An Iowa woman said her 5-year-old daughter drowned in just seconds after falling into a river during a family visit to a popular park in Sioux Falls.

Maggie Jo Zaiger of Audubon, Iowa, had reached out to touch the foam near some waterfalls when she slipped into the Big Sioux River in Falls Park near a pedestrian bridge Sunday, police said.

The girl's mother, Courtney Jayne, said she did not know that her daughter would suddenly decide to lean over and touch the pile of foam.

"It wasn't that we weren't paying attention," Jayne told the Argus Leader on Monday. "There were seven of us. It literally happened in 30 seconds. ...There was nothing we could do, and it was horrible."

The family had come to South Dakota with a friend and had been in Sioux Falls for a few days. The park was a last-minute stop for the family before the trip home.

The drowning happened not far from where two other people drowned in 2013.

Sioux Falls parks and recreation director Don Kearney said after the 2013 deaths that the city upgraded its caution signs to warn adults to keep close watch on young children, among other things. Kearney said the foam is a naturally occurring phenomenon created by phosphorus and the agitated water.

The city considered installing barricades near the falls, but felt that would create a false sense of security, Kearney said.

"They felt like it would impede public safety's ability to respond quickly, to have to remove fence," Kearney told KELO.com . But he said fencing will be part of a safety review following the weekend drowning.

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Oglala Sioux latest SD tribe to sue opioid industry groups

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Oglala Sioux Tribe is the latest South Dakota American Indian tribe to sue opioid manufacturers and distributors.

The tribe sued 24 opioid industry groups in federal court Friday. The lawsuit alleges the companies marketed prescription opioids in a way that fraudulently concealed and minimized their addiction risk.

The tribe seeks damages for allegedly deceptive trade practices, fraudulent and negligent conduct and violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act.

The companies have denied wrongdoing in response to similar lawsuits filed around the country.

The tribe's attorneys also filed a similar lawsuit on behalf of the Rosebud Sioux, Flandreau Santee Sioux and the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate in January. Last month the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe filed a similar lawsuit in federal court in North Dakota.

94-year sentence possible in officers' assault

WAGNER, S.D. (AP) — A Wagner man is facing up to 94 years behind bars for nearly running over three police officers at the scene of a vehicle fire in 2016.

Jerrod Zephier has been found guilty of three counts of aggravated assault and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, as well as three misdemeanor charges. The officers were forced to dive out of the way to avoid being hit when Zephier drove drunk into the area where they were working.

The Daily Republic reports Zephier threatened harm to one of the officers as he was arrested. Police had to physically restrain Zephier at the hospital where his blood was drawn because he was so combative.

No sentencing date has been set.

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

Austin carnage now random; an arrest doesn't appear close

By PAUL J. WEBER and WILL WEISSERT, Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A package bomb exploded shortly after midnight Tuesday inside a FedEx distribution center in Schertz, Texas, and the FBI and ATF are at the scene, spokeswomen for both agencies told The Washington Post.

The explosion happened at a facility in Schertz, Tex., just northeast of San Antonio sometime around 1 a.m., said FBI Special Agent Michelle Lee. ATF spokeswoman Nicole Strong said that early indications are that no one was injured.

The Associated Press reported erroneously earlier Tuesday that the San Antonio Fire Department said one person had suffered a non-life-threatening "percussion-type" injury from the blast. That information came from SanAntonioFIRE, a local media website that reports on local police, fire and emergency service news, and could not immediately be independently confirmed.

The blast follows a Sunday night blast that was triggered along a street by a nearly invisible tripwire, suggesting a "higher level of sophistication" than agents saw in three early package bombs left on doorsteps. It means the carnage by a suspected serial bomber that has terrorized Austin for weeks is now random, rather than targeted at someone in particular.

William Grote says Sunday's attack the latest left what appeared to be nails embedded in his grandson's knees.

Two people are dead and four injured, and authorities don't appear closer to making any arrests in the five bombings.

Authorities haven't identified Sunday night's victims, but Grote told The Associated Press that his grandson was one of the two men wounded in southwest Austin's quiet Travis Country neighborhood. They suffered what police said were significant injuries and remained hospitalized in stable condition.

Grote said his grandson is cognizant but still in a lot of pain. He said the night of the bombing, one of the victims was riding a bike in the street and the other was on a sidewalk when they crossed a trapwire

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that he said knocked "them both off their feet."

"It was so dark they couldn't tell and they tripped," he said. "They didn't see it. It was a wire. And it blew up."

Grote said his son, who lives about 100 yards (91 meters) away from the blast, heard the explosion and raced outside. "Both of them were kind of bleeding profusely," Grote said.

That was a departure from the three earlier bombings, which involved parcels left on doorsteps that detonated when moved or opened.

The tripwire twist heightened the fear around Austin, a town famous for its cool, hipster attitude.

"It's creepy," said Erin Mays, 33. "I'm not a scared person, but this feels very next-door-neighbor kind of stuff."

Authorities repeated prior warnings about not touching unexpected packages and also issued new ones to be wary of any stray object left in public, especially one with wires protruding.

"We're very concerned that with tripwires, a child could be walking down a sidewalk and hit something," Christopher Combs, FBI agent in charge of the bureau's San Antonio division, said in an interview.

Police originally pointed to possible hate crimes, but the victims have now been black, Hispanic and white and from different parts of the increasingly diverse city. Domestic terrorism is among the variety of possible motives investigators are looking at.

Local and state police and hundreds of federal agents are investigating, and the reward for information leading to an arrest has climbed to \$115,000.

"We are clearly dealing with what we believe to be a serial bomber at this point," Austin police Chief Brian Manley said, citing similarities among the four bombs. He would not elaborate, though, saying he didn't want to undermine the investigation.

While the first three bombings all occurred east of Interstate 35, a section of town that tends to be more heavily minority and less affluent, Sunday's was west of the highway. The differences in where the blasts have occurred, the lack of a motive and other unknowns make it harder to draw conclusions about a possible pattern, further unnerving a city on edge.

Thad Holt, 76, said he is now watching his steps as he makes his way through a section of town near the latest attack. "I think everybody can now say, 'Oh, that's like my neighborhood,'" he said.

Fred Milanowski, agent in charge of the Houston division of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said the latest bomb was anchored to a metal yard sign near the head of a hiking trail.

"It was a thin wire or filament, kind of like fishing line," he said. "It would have been very difficult for someone to see."

Milanowski said authorities have checked more than 500 leads. Police asked anyone with surveillance cameras at their homes to come forward with the footage on the chance it captured suspicious vehicles or people.

Noel Holmes, whose house is about a mile away, was stunned by how loud Sunday's explosion was.

"It sounded like a very nearby cannon," Holmes said. "We went out and heard all the sirens, but it was eerie. You didn't feel like you should be outside at all."

Spring break ended Monday for the University of Texas and many area school districts. University police warned returning students to be alert and to tell their classmates about the danger, saying, "We must look out for one another." None of the four attacks happened close to the campus near the heart of Austin.

The PGA's Dell Technologies Match Play tournament is scheduled to begin in Austin on Wednesday, and dozens of the world's top golfers were to begin arriving.

"I'm pretty sure the tour has enough security to keep things safe in here. But this is scary what's happening," said golfer Jhonattan Vegas, already in town.

Andrew Zimmerman, a 44-year-old coffee shop worker, said the use of a tripwire adds a new level of suspected professionalism and makes it harder to guard against such attacks.

"This makes me sick," he said.

___ Associated Press writer Jim Vertuno contributed to this report.

Authorities hunting clues ask Austin bomber to talk to them

By MATT SEDENSKY, AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In the search for answers to a series of explosions in Texas, authorities have come ahead with a simple plea to whoever's behind the blasts: Talk to us.

The Austin police chief's direct appeal, complete with promises to listen to the bomber and try to understand the reasons, reflects the stubborn progress of the investigation in which there's no known motivation and the ties between the victims are opaque at best. It may also represent a ploy to coax a response that could give clues or help police prepare for what might come next.

"It puts law enforcement and police in a down power dynamic and instills power on the person," said Randall Rogan, a Wake Forest University professor who is an expert on forensic linguistic analysis and worked with the FBI on the Unabomber case. "It gives (perpetrators) a sense of satisfaction, of pride, of accomplishment, that they are in charge."

An explosion on Sunday night was the fourth in Austin this month, and represented a stepped-up level of sophistication in the attack. Unlike the previous bombings, which involved packages left on doorsteps, the latest one was placed near a hiking trail and had a thin translucent tripwire like fishing line. Two people have died in the explosions and four others have been injured.

Hundreds of officers from multiple law enforcement agencies are on the case.

Rogan said as time passes, it's likely the person or people behind the explosions will seek more than just the thrill of the crimes themselves and will desire more recognition, something that could drive them to make contact with police or release some sort of communiqué or manifesto. He said the new complexity of the fourth bombing might suggest it was a test for something even bigger.

"This is an increase and expansion of sophistication and most likely a trial run for something to come in the future," Rogan said.

Robert Taylor, a former police detective who is now a criminologist at the University of Texas at Dallas, said eventually there will be a break in the case, but how long it will take remains to be seen.

"Something will come up somewhere. It will be a fingerprint on an envelope or DNA from saliva or a unique kind of detonator, or someone will just blab in a bar," he said.

For now, though, the police chief's plea suggests they haven't reached that point.

"It's a sign there's probably not a lot of physical evidence in these kind of crimes that lead and point to a specific person," Taylor said.

Every tiny piece of the bombs' remnants, though, holds the potential to unlock the mystery.

Mary Ellen O'Toole, a retired FBI agent and profiler who worked on numerous bombing cases, including the Unabomber, and now heads the forensic science program at George Mason University, said because bombs require so many components, they increase the chance that whoever built it could leave a trace of themselves behind.

"They're looking to see if they can determine a signature for the bomber," she said of investigators.

Scouring the areas where the bombs went off could uncover something — a hair, a skin fragment, a part of a fingerprint — that might lead to the perpetrator. Police will analyze every part of the devices they can recover to see what clues come from wires, tape, the skill and neatness in which they were constructed, and any other detail that might help decode who the bomber is.

"Even the way they bend or roll the wire," said Michael Bussell, a former Army ordnance disposal technician who now teaches classes on the subject for the online American Military University.

The Unabomber case, which launched with its first blast in 1978, provides both reasons to be hopeful and concerned about the Texas explosions.

While the FBI was able to build a correct profile of the bomber as having been raised in Chicago with ties to Salt Lake City and San Francisco, the big break in the case didn't come for 17 years, when he sent a 35,000-word manifesto. Even then, Ted Kaczynski was identified as the Unabomber only after his brother came forward to help authorities.

O'Toole said it's impossible to build a nuanced profile of the killer without all the evidence, but that bomb-

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ers share some characteristics. They are willing to forsake some control in their mayhem since they are leaving a device that might not reach its intended target. They enjoy the risk of it — not just the danger of building a bomb, but also of transporting it to neighborhoods where people live and they could easily be caught. And because the bombings have continued, they likely feel no remorse and are prepared to do it again.

“If this bomber is being motivated, in part, by the sense of power and control that he has holding the city of Austin in a state of fear, and depending how addictive that feeling is,” she said, “that can be a strong contributor to his doing it again and not waiting a long period of time.”

Sedensky can be reached at msedensky@ap.org or <https://twitter.com/sedensky>

On marathon US tour, crown prince seeks Saudi image makeover

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Saudi Arabia’s young crown prince has an ambitious list of to-dos: modernize his conservative kingdom, weaken Iran’s hand across the Mideast and, this week, rehabilitate his country’s image in the eyes of Americans.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, son of King Salman and heir to the throne, is opening a marathon tour of the United States with a stop in Washington, where he plans to meet President Donald Trump on Tuesday. He’ll hold separate meetings with a long roster of influential U.S. officials, including the secretaries of defense, treasury and commerce, the CIA chief and congressional leaders from both parties.

The visit comes as the United States and much of the West are still trying to figure out Crown Prince Mohammed, better known by his initials MBS, whose sweeping program of social changes at home and increased Saudi assertiveness abroad has upended decades of traditional rule in Saudi Arabia. The 32-year-old crown prince also has big economic plans, and over three weeks in the U.S. he will meet businessmen in New York, tech mavens from Google and Apple Inc. in San Francisco, and entertainment bigwigs in Los Angeles. Other stops include Boston and Houston.

“This is not the real Saudi Arabia,” MBS said when asked by CBS News about the repressive version of Islam many outsiders associate with the kingdom. He said he was restoring the more tolerant, egalitarian society that existed before Saudi Arabia’s ultraconservatives were empowered in 1979. “We were victims, especially my generation that suffered from this a great deal.”

It’s a message that has earned MBS admirers in the United States, as he allowed women to drive and opened movie theaters shuttered since the 1980s. MBS is turning “Saudi Arabia into a normal country in which normal people lead normal lives,” Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told reporters Monday.

Yet Democrats and Republicans have approached some of the crown prince’s other bold steps with trepidation, particularly as they pertain to his anti-Iran efforts. One bill in Congress proposes scaling back U.S. military assistance to a Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen.

MBS, in particular, has been closely identified with the three-year-old war in the Arab world’s poorest country, which started while he was defense minister. The Saudis and their allies are fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels, but international organizations have harshly criticized the coalition’s airstrikes and blockading of Yemeni ports for contributing to thousands of civilian deaths and a humanitarian catastrophe.

It’s not the only regional mess the Saudis are in. In November, U.S. officials voiced unease when Lebanon’s prime minister unexpectedly resigned while in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia was accused of attempting to bring down Lebanon’s government, which is strongly influenced by Iranian proxy Hezbollah. Prime Minister Saad Hariri later reversed his resignation.

The Saudis are working aggressively to change perceptions. They’ve cast themselves as essential partners against Islamist extremist groups and, especially since Trump’s maiden overseas voyage last year, touted their lavish purchases of high-tech goods from job-creating American companies. In Yemen, the kingdom says it is improving military targeting, opening up ports and pledging \$1.5 billion in new aid.

“The concerns expressed there are reflective of deep concerns by the American public at large,” said

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Lori Plotkin Boghardt, a Gulf scholar at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "The Saudis are very sensitive to this. They're certainly communicating with elite circles to discuss the measures they're taking to try to get humanitarian assistance in to Yemen."

In MBS, Trump will find a sympathetic ear for his calls to crack down on Iran, Saudi Arabia's archenemy, and strengthen a 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran that former President Barack Obama and world powers brokered. Trump has threatened to pull out of the agreement unless there are changes by May. Last week, Trump fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, an advocate of staying in the accord, choosing Mike Pompeo, the current CIA director and nuclear deal critic, as a replacement.

MBS could dangle a huge carrot in front of Trump for his support. Stock exchanges in New York and elsewhere are vying for the international listing of Aramco, the Saudi oil behemoth expected to go public soon. Saudi concerns with New York include a post-9/11 law that could jeopardize assets in the United States if victims' families claim Saudi Arabia helped the al-Qaida attackers and sue for compensation.

Although the U.S. has welcomed MBS's determination to purge pervasive corruption in Saudi Arabia, including by royals, the Trump administration hasn't endorsed his tactics. Last year, more than 150 high-level princes, ministers, military officials and businessmen were abruptly rounded up and detained at the Ritz-Carlton hotel. They eventually paid settlements that Saudi Arabia says exceeded \$106 billion.

Al-Jubeir, the foreign minister, said the tough tactics were needed after past anti-corruption campaigns failed.

"It didn't work," he said. "So now you do something dramatic."

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

Senate committee launches effort to prevent election hacking

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the 2018 primary season already underway, leaders of the Senate intelligence committee are launching an effort to protect U.S. elections from a repeat episode of foreign interference.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., and Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the panel, will preview some of the committee's recommendations for improving the nation's election infrastructure at a news conference Tuesday. On Wednesday, the committee will hold a hearing examining attempted hacks on state elections systems in 2016 and the federal and state response to those efforts.

The committee has prepared a larger report on the issue, one of what could be several reports to come out of the committee's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election. Burr and Warner have said this report is the most urgent because of the threat that it could happen again in 2018. It's unclear when the full report will be released, but it is expected to include recommendations for elections officials around the country and also proposals for legislation to help ward off the hacking.

Overall, experts say far too little has been done to shore up vulnerabilities in 10,000 U.S. voting jurisdictions that mostly run on obsolete and imperfectly secured technology. Russian agents targeted election systems in 21 states ahead of the 2016 general election, the Homeland Security Department has said, and separately launched a social media blitz aimed at inflaming social tensions and sowing confusion. Top U.S. intelligence officials have said they've seen indications Russian agents are preparing a new round of election subterfuge this year.

There's no evidence that any hack in the November 2016 election affected election results, but the attempts scared state election officials who sought answers about how their systems had been potentially compromised. DHS took nearly a year to inform the affected states of hacking attempts, blaming it in part on a lack of security clearances. Lawmakers in both parties have pressed the department on why it took so long.

Warner has said he thinks the process to prevent such hacking needs to be more robust, especially since President Donald Trump has not addressed the matter as an urgent problem.

"We've got bipartisan agreement we have to do something on this," Warner said earlier this year.

At the hearing Wednesday, former Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson and current Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen will both testify.

The Senate intelligence panel has put off making any assessments about whether Trump's 2016 campaign in any way coordinated with Russia. Though that is one part of the panel's investigation, Burr and Warner have decided to focus on less controversial issues where all members agree.

Emboldened Xi lays out vision for China, warning for Taiwan

By GILLIAN WONG and CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — President Xi Jinping vowed Tuesday to protect "every inch" of China's territory, improve the lives of its people and promote the resurgence of Chinese culture and creativity as he kicked off his second term, poised to rule indefinitely.

Xi, China's most powerful leader in decades, sounded a stark warning clearly directed at the government of self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its territory, and advocates of independence in the southern Chinese city of Hong Kong.

"Every inch of our great motherland absolutely cannot and absolutely will not be separated from China," Xi declared in his speech before the nearly 3,000 members of the National People's Congress.

"All acts and tricks to split the motherland are doomed to failure and will be condemned by the people and punished by history!" he said.

Xi is set to shape the country's future for the coming decades after the historic legislative session that closed Tuesday abolished presidential term limits to allow him to rule for as long as he wants.

As an indication of what is to come, Xi stressed the absolute leadership of the ruling Communist Party — of which he is head — in all aspects of Chinese life. That authority is central to Xi's vision of a confident, rising China with him at the helm to tackle thorny challenges that include slowing growth, risky excessive borrowing, a possible trade war, tensions with rival Taiwan and other challenges.

Xi said the mainland would continue to promote "peaceful unification" with Taiwan. The island's 23 million residents are strongly in favor of maintaining their de-facto independent status but Xi has previously warned a Taiwanese envoy that the issue of unification cannot be put off indefinitely.

Now that he has made it possible to be president-for-life, Xi seems determined to bring Taiwan under Beijing's control during his time in office, something that would place him in the history books alongside Mao Zedong, said Willy Lam, an expert in Chinese politics at the Chinese University in Hong Kong.

That increases the potential for provocative, dangerous actions, he said, possibly drawing in the U.S. which is legally bound to respond to threats against Taiwan.

"Xi is consumed by hubris," he said. "Now that he's made himself emperor-for-life, he might be feeling impregnable on the foreign policy front and this is very dangerous."

Xi's hard line remarks might have been prompted by President Donald Trump's signing of a law on Friday that encourages expanded contacts between officials from Washington and Taiwan, Lam added. China has officially protested the law, saying it violates U.S. commitments not to restore direct official contacts with Taiwan that were severed when Washington switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979.

China's longer-than-usual, 16-day legislative session had earlier approved a range of new appointments, including that of key Xi ally Wang Qishan as vice president. New ministers were also appointed and a law passed establishing a powerful new anti-corruption body to oversee the party and civil service.

In his address, Xi said China would promote "high-quality" development that values innovation over the speed of growth.

Xi also invoked China's historical achievements in governance and culture and stressed the importance of national unity in working to reduce poverty.

Xi pledged to expand the Belt and Road, his signature foreign policy initiative of building ports, bridges and railways connecting Europe with Asia — but in an apparent response to the project's critics, said China wasn't seeking hegemony.

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"Only those who habitually threaten others will look at everyone else as threats," he added.

This year's session has been dominated by the rubber-stamp body's historic move on March 11 to scrap a constitutional two-term limit on the presidency dating from 1982, enabling Xi to rule indefinitely.

While delegates overwhelmingly supported the move, critics and some analysts say it raises concerns about a return to one-man-rule — and greater political repression.

"There is a distinct danger now that there may well be a return to the Maoist style of leadership symbolized by the dissolution of collective responsibility and the concentration of power under one person," said Joseph Cheng, a long-time observer of Chinese politics now retired from the City University of Hong Kong.

The broad strokes of what Xi plans to do with these expanded powers were laid down over the weekend as he moved to appoint his trusted allies into key positions that appear, in part, set to further sideline Li, officially China's No. 2 leader.

One of them is Wang, reportedly an early acquaintance of Xi's and former anti-corruption czar who is expected to play a key role in managing trade tensions with the United States. The vice presidency is normally a ceremonial post but Wang's real standing can be seen in official events in which he is seated in eighth place in hierarchical order after the seven-man, all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee.

Another is longtime Xi adviser Liu He, who was appointed as one of four vice premiers and is expected to oversee a broad range of economic and financial issues.

Premier Li Keqiang, in a briefing with reporters, promised to fully open manufacturing industries to foreign competitors and said China doesn't want to see a "trade war" with the United States. He made no mention of a possible Chinese response to any increase in U.S. import controls.

Beijing faces mounting pressure from Trump over complaints it hampers access to its markets, pressures foreign companies to hand over technology and is flooding foreign markets with unfairly low-priced steel and other goods.

Chief among Xi's priorities is controlling financial risk without derailing the economy. Regulators have been warning about ballooning debt that caused international ratings agencies to cut China's credit rating last year.

"He knows that if there's a financial crisis it will damage his credibility and legitimacy very much because he has no one else to blame," Cheng said. "People will blame him."

Associated Press reporter Joe McDonald contributed to this report.

Crash marks 1st death involving fully autonomous vehicle

By JACQUES BILLEAUD and TOM KRISHER, Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — A fatal pedestrian crash involving a self-driving Uber SUV in a Phoenix suburb could have far-reaching consequences for the new technology as automakers and other companies race to be the first with cars that operate on their own.

The crash Sunday night in Tempe was the first death involving a full autonomous test vehicle. The Volvo was in self-driving mode with a human backup driver at the wheel when it struck 49-year-old Elaine Herzberg as she was walking a bicycle outside the lines of a crosswalk in Tempe, police said.

Uber immediately suspended all road-testing of such autos in the Phoenix area, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Toronto. The ride-sharing company has been testing self-driving vehicles for months as it competes with other technology companies and automakers like Ford and General Motors.

Though many in the industries had been dreading a fatal crash they knew it was inevitable.

Tempe police Sgt. Ronald Elcock said local authorities haven't determined fault but urged people to use crosswalks. He told reporters at a news conference Monday the Uber vehicle was traveling around 40 mph when it hit Herzberg immediately as she stepped on to the street.

Neither she nor the backup driver showed signs of impairment, he said.

"The pedestrian was outside of the crosswalk, so it was midblock," Elcock said. "And as soon as she walked into the lane of traffic, she was struck by the vehicle."

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The National Transportation Safety Board, which makes recommendations for preventing crashes, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which can enact regulations, sent investigators.

Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi expressed condolences on his Twitter account and said the company is cooperating with investigators.

The public's image of the vehicles will be defined by stories like the crash in Tempe, said Bryant Walker Smith, a University of South Carolina law professor who studies self-driving vehicles. It may turn out that there was nothing either the vehicle or its human backup could have done to avoid the crash, he said.

Either way, the fatality could hurt the technology's image and lead to a push for more regulations at the state and federal levels, Smith said.

Autonomous vehicles with laser, radar and camera sensors and sophisticated computers have been billed as the way to reduce the more than 40,000 traffic deaths a year in the U.S. alone. Ninety-four percent of crashes are caused by human error, the government says.

Self-driving vehicles don't drive drunk, don't get sleepy and aren't easily distracted. But they do have faults. "We should be concerned about automated driving," Smith said. "We should be terrified about human driving."

In 2016, the latest year available, more than 6,000 U.S. pedestrians were killed by vehicles.

The federal government has voluntary guidelines for companies that want to test autonomous vehicles, leaving much of the regulation up to states.

Many states, including Michigan and Arizona, have taken a largely hands-off approach, hoping to gain jobs from the new technology, while California and others have taken a harder line.

California is among states that require manufacturers to report any incidents during the testing phase. As of early March, the state's motor vehicle agency had received 59 such reports.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey used light regulations to entice Uber to the state after the company had a shaky rollout of test cars in San Francisco. Arizona has no reporting requirements. Hundreds of vehicles with automated driving systems have been on Arizona's roads.

Ducey's office expressed sympathy for Herzberg's family and said safety is the top priority.

The crash in Arizona isn't the first involving an Uber autonomous test vehicle. In March 2017, an Uber SUV flipped onto its side, also in Tempe. No serious injuries were reported, and the driver of the other car was cited for a violation.

Herzberg's death is the first involving an autonomous test vehicle but not the first in a car with some self-driving features. The driver of a Tesla Model S was killed in 2016 when his car, operating on its Auto-pilot system, crashed into a tractor-trailer in Florida.

The NTSB said that driver inattention was to blame but that design limitations with the system played a major role in the crash.

The U.S. Transportation Department is considering further voluntary guidelines that it says would help foster innovation. Proposals also are pending in Congress, including one that would stop states from regulating autonomous vehicles, Smith said.

Peter Kurdock, director of regulatory affairs for Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety in Washington, said the group sent a letter Monday to Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao saying it is concerned about a lack of action and oversight by the department as autonomous vehicles are developed. That letter was planned before the crash.

Kurdock said the deadly accident should serve as a "startling reminder" to members of Congress that they need to "think through all the issues to put together the best bill they can to hopefully prevent more of these tragedies from occurring."

Krisher reported from Detroit. Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Felicia Fonseca in Flagstaff, Arizona, contributed to this story.

Scandal-hit Weinstein Co. files for bankruptcy protection

By ALEXANDRA OLSON, AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Weinstein Co. filed for bankruptcy protection on Monday with a buyout offer in hand from a private equity firm, the latest twist in its efforts to survive the sexual misconduct scandal that brought down co-founder Harvey Weinstein, shook Hollywood and triggered a movement that spread out to convulse other industries.

The company also announced it was releasing any victims of or witnesses to Weinstein's alleged misconduct from non-disclosure agreements preventing them from speaking out. That step had long been sought by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who filed a lawsuit against the company last month on behalf of its employees.

"Since October, it has been reported that Harvey Weinstein used non-disclosure agreements as a secret weapon to silence his accusers. Effective immediately, those 'agreements' end," the company said in a statement. "No one should be afraid to speak out or coerced to stay quiet."

In a statement, Schneiderman praised the decision as "a watershed moment for efforts to address the corrosive effects of sexual misconduct in the workplace."

The movie and TV studio becomes the first high-profile company to be forced into bankruptcy in the nationwide outcry over workplace sexual misconduct. Dozens of prominent men in entertainment, media, finance, politics and other realms have seen their careers derailed, but no other company has seen its very survival as tightly intertwined with the fate of one man as the Weinstein Co.

Some 80 women, including prominent actresses, have accused Harvey Weinstein of misconduct ranging from rape to harassment. Weinstein, who was fired as his company's CEO in October, has denied any allegations of non-consensual sex.

The Weinstein Co. said it has entered into a "stalking horse" agreement with an affiliate of Dallas-based Lantern Capital Partners, meaning the equity firm has agreed to buy the company, subject to approval by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Delaware.

Lantern was among a group of investors that had been in talks for months to buy the company outside of bankruptcy. That deal was complicated when Schneiderman filed his lawsuit, citing concerns that the sale would benefit executives accused of enabling Weinstein's alleged misconduct and provide insufficient guarantees of compensation for his accusers. Talks to revive the sale finally fell apart two weeks ago when the group of buyers said they had discovered undisclosed liabilities.

The Weinstein Co. said it chose Lantern as a potential buyer because the firm was committed to keeping on the studio's employees as a going concern.

"While we had hoped to reach a sale out of court, the Board is pleased to have a plan for maximizing the value of its assets, preserving as many jobs as possible and pursuing justice for any victims," said Bob Weinstein, who co-founded the company with his brother Harvey in 2005 and remains chairman of the board of directors.

Lantern co-founders Andy Mitchell and Milos Brajovic said they were committed to "following through on our promise to reposition the business as a pre-eminent content provider, while cultivating a positive presence in the industry."

Under bankruptcy protection, civil lawsuits filed by Weinstein's accusers will be halted and no new legal claims can be brought against the company. Secured creditors will get priority for payment over the women suing the company.

Schneiderman's lawsuit will not be halted by the bankruptcy filing because it was filed by a law enforcement agency. Schneiderman said his investigation would continue and that his office would engage with the Weinstein Co. and Lantern to ensure "that victims are compensated, employees are protected moving forward, and perpetrators and enablers of abuse are not unjustly enriched."

Other bidders also could emerge during the bankruptcy process, particularly those interested in the company's lucrative 277-film library, which includes award-winning films from big-name directors like Quentin Tarantino and horror releases from its Dimension label. Free of liabilities, the company's assets could increase in value in a bankruptcy.

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In more fallout over the scandal, New York's governor directed the state attorney general to review a decision by the Manhattan district attorney's office not to prosecute a 2015 case involving an Italian model who said Weinstein groped her.

The bankruptcy process will bring the company's finances into public view, including the extent of its debt. The buyers who pulled out of the sale earlier this month said they discovered up to \$64 million in undisclosed liabilities, including \$27 million in residuals and profit participation. Those liabilities came on top of \$225 million in debt, which the buyers had said they would be prepared to take on as part of a \$500 million acquisition deal.

The Weinstein Co. already had been struggling financially before the scandal erupted in October with a news stories in The New York Times and The New Yorker. Harvey and Bob Weinstein started the company after leaving Miramax, the company they founded in 1979 and which became a powerhouse in '90s indie film with hits like "Pulp Fiction." After finding success with Oscar winners "The Artist" and "The King's Speech," the Weinstein Co.'s output and relevance diminished in recent years. The company let go 50 employees in 2016 and continuously shuffled release dates while short of cash.

Last year, the studio sold distribution rights for the movie "Paddington 2" to Warner Bros. for more than \$30 million.

Leagues, casinos lobby states for cut of legal sports bets

By BEN NUCKOLS, AP Sports Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the Supreme Court poised to rule on a case that could end the federal ban on sports gambling, more than a third of U.S. states are considering legislation to get in on the action, and professional leagues and casino interests are lobbying against each other for the biggest cut of the winnings.

The push to legalize betting on sports has already led to fractures in an uneasy alliance that had developed between leagues and gambling legalization advocates before Supreme Court arguments last fall.

The NBA and Major League Baseball have been asking states to give them 1 percent of the total amount wagered on their games, calling it an "integrity fee" so they can protect their products and snuff out attempts at cheating and game-fixing.

"Now, let's be clear — that's just a euphemism for a cut of the action," Joe Asher, CEO of William Hill U.S., a sports book operator, told New York state lawmakers in January. "There will be plenty of financial benefits to the leagues."

Gambling proponents say kicking back that much to the leagues would make sports books unprofitable and prevent a legal, regulated betting market from developing. They're seeking an arrangement similar to what exists in Nevada, where the state takes 6.75 percent of winnings on top of a federal tax of 0.25 percent of the amount wagered.

Casinos have a built-in edge when it comes to battling in statehouses. Casinos are legal in 40 states; the commercial companies and American Indian tribes that run them are well-versed in dealing with regulators and state lawmakers. The NBA and MLB, on the other hand, are new to lobbying states on gambling and have sometimes relied upon the bully pulpit of their commissioners to get their point across.

"The leagues feel like they're out of their element, and that's making them uncomfortable," said Kevin Braig, a Columbus, Ohio-based attorney, gambling industry analyst and handicapper. "The gaming industry lobbies all the states. I think it goes even beyond that: They're almost partners in what they're doing. They have a very close relationship because they have very closely overlapping interests."

Before the Supreme Court heard New Jersey's challenge to the 1992 federal law limiting sports betting to the four states that already had laws on the books, casino interests — and their influential trade group, the American Gaming Association — were encouraged by the professional leagues' changing attitudes about gambling, even as leagues argued before the justices that the ban should remain. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver has said betting should be legalized and MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred has said it could enhance fan interest in the sport. Although the NFL remains publicly opposed to gambling, Commissioner

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Roger Goodell has said his position has "evolved."

The NFL and the NCAA have sat out the debate entirely in states considering legislation. That's despite the fact that 31 percent of sports gambling winnings in Nevada last year came from football bets, and more is wagered on college basketball's NCAA Tournament than on the Super Bowl.

The NBA and MLB argue their reputations are on the line because of the possibility of games being fixed. Sports fans are still familiar with the Black Sox scandal of 1919, Pete Rose's lifetime banishment from baseball for betting on games and a point-shaving scandal involving former NBA referee Tim Donaghy.

"The damage from even a hint of scandal will hurt the sports leagues far worse than anyone else," said Bryan Seeley, senior vice president and deputy general counsel at MLB.

"The NBA spends billions of dollars each year creating the games that would serve as the foundation for legalized sports betting, while bearing all of the risk and therefore incurring enormous additional expenses for compliance and enforcement," NBA spokesman Mike Bass said. "As a result, we believe it is reasonable for operators to compensate the NBA with a small percentage of the total amount bet on our games."

State regulators monitor wagering 24/7 in Nevada, and the leagues pay contractors to monitor overseas bets.

Casinos argue that sports books don't make much money and are really there to get gamblers in the door. Unlike blackjack or slots, where casinos have a house edge, sports books make money by encouraging individual gamblers to each side of a wager, and then charging a percentage for placing the bet. Casinos say leagues will benefit from enhanced fan interest and gambling-company sponsorships.

Bills to legalize sports betting have been introduced in 18 states. This month, West Virginia approved a bill that would legalize sports betting immediately if the Supreme Court allows it. A decision by the court is expected this spring.

Mississippi, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania have also already authorized sports gambling. New York is considering whether to expand a law already on the books to allow sports gambling at racetracks and betting parlors. In Iowa, a bill to authorize sports books has advanced out of committee.

The states that have only introduced bills or are not as far along in the process are California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and South Carolina.

The NBA and MLB haven't successfully sold lawmakers on a 1 percent cut so far, although the New York bill was amended to give 0.25 percent of the amount wagered to the leagues.

West Virginia's new law doesn't kick back anything to the leagues. Manfred said it has "serious problems" and benefits "only the gaming industry." He may have found a sympathetic ear in Republican Gov. Jim Justice, who allowed the bill to become law without his signature and urged lawmakers to consider partnering with the leagues.

While 1 percent may not sound like a lot, sports books generally hold onto only around 5 percent of what's wagered. That means a 1 percent tax on the handle can siphon away about 20 percent of gambling revenue. Add state and federal taxes, and casinos may find sports books to be a sucker bet.

Sara Slane, senior vice president of public affairs at the American Gaming Association, said the proposed fee runs counter to the leagues' and casinos' shared goal of curtailing illegal gambling.

"If you are trying to stamp out the illegal market and drive more traffic to the legal, regulated market," Slane said, "you're not going to be able to accomplish that with this type of business model."

Trump calls for death penalty to 'get tough' on drug pushers

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — Embracing the tough penalties favored by global strongmen, President Donald Trump on Monday brandished the death penalty as a fitting punishment for drug traffickers fueling the opioid epidemic.

The scourge has torn through the rural and working-class communities that in large numbers voted for Trump. And the president, though he has come under criticism for being slow to unveil his plan, has

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seized on harsh sentences as key to stopping the plague.

"Toughness is the thing that they most fear," Trump said.

The president made his announcement in New Hampshire, a state hit hard by opioids and an early marker for the re-election campaign he has already announced. Trump called for broadening education and awareness about drug addiction while expanding access to proven treatment and recovery efforts. But the backbone of his plan is to toughen punishments for those caught trafficking highly addictive drugs.

"This isn't about nice anymore," Trump said. "This is about winning a very, very tough problem and if we don't get very tough on these dealers it's not going to happen folks. ... I want to win this battle."

The president formalized what he had long mused about: that if a person in the U.S. can get the death penalty or life in prison for shooting one person, a similar punishment should be given to a drug dealer whose product potentially kills thousands.

Trump has long spoken approvingly about countries like Singapore that harshly punish dealers. During a trip to Asia last fall, he did not publicly rebuke Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, who authorized extrajudicial killings of drug dealers.

Outside a local firehouse that Trump visited before Monday's speech, someone compared the two leaders with a sign that said: "Donald J. Duterte."

"Drug traffickers kill so many thousands of our citizens every year," Trump said. "That's why my Department of Justice will be seeking so many tougher penalties than we've ever had and we'll be focusing on the penalties that I talked about previously for big pushers, the ones that are killing so many people, and that penalty is going to be the death penalty."

He added: "Other countries don't play games ... But the ultimate penalty has to be the death penalty."

The Justice Department said the federal death penalty is available for limited drug-related offenses, including violations of the "drug kingpin" provisions in federal law.

It is not clear if the death penalty, even for traffickers whose product causes multiple deaths, would be constitutional. Doug Berman, a law professor at Ohio State University, predicted the issue would go all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

John Blume, a professor and director of Cornell Law School's death penalty program, said the federal drug kingpin law has yielded few "kingpins" or major dealers, mostly ensnaring mid- to low-level minorities involved in the drug trade.

The president's plan drew criticism from some Democrats, including Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, who said "we can't arrest our way out of the opioid epidemic" and noted that "the war on drugs didn't work in the '80s."

Opioids, including prescription opioids, heroin and synthetic drugs such as fentanyl, killed more than 42,000 people in the U.S. in 2016, more than any other year on record, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Much of what Trump highlighted Monday was largely repackaged ideas he's already endorsed.

He called for a nationwide public awareness campaign, which he announced in the fall, including broadcasting "great commercials" to scare kids away from dabbling in drugs. He announced a new website, www.crisisnextdoor.gov, where members of the public can share stories about the dangers of opioid addiction.

Trump said the administration will work to cut the number of opioid prescriptions that are filled by one-third within three years.

The president also discussed how his policies, including building a U.S.-Mexico border wall and punishing "sanctuary" cities that refuse to comply with federal immigration authorities, will help reduce the flow of drugs.

Monday was Trump's first visit as president to New Hampshire, which has long occupied a special place in his political rise. He captured his first Republican presidential primary here in 2016, though he narrowly lost in the general election to Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Trump drew criticism last year after leaked transcripts of a telephone conversation with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto showed he had described New Hampshire as a "drug-infested den." The Washington

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Post published the transcripts.

Though the 2020 election is more than 30 months away, early jockeying already is happening in states that play an outsized early role in choosing a party's nominee. Retiring Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., a persistent Trump critic, visited New Hampshire, which holds the nation's first presidential primary, last week. He told Republicans someone needs to stop Trump — and it could be him if no one steps up.

Meanwhile, the president's daughter, White House senior adviser Ivanka Trump, spent Monday discussing infrastructure and workplace development in Iowa, which traditionally holds the first presidential nominating caucus.

Superville reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Mark Sherman and Sadie Gurman in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Darlene Superville and Jonathan Lemire on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap> and <http://www.twitter.com/JonLemire>

Supreme Court takes up challenge by crisis pregnancy centers

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is hearing arguments in a free speech fight over California's attempt to regulate anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers.

The case being argued Tuesday involves information required by a state law that the centers must provide clients about the availability of contraception, abortion and pre-natal care, at little or no cost. Centers that are unlicensed also must post a sign that says so.

The centers say that they are being forced to deliver a message with which they disagree because their aim is to steer women away from abortion.

California and abortions rights group that backed the law say its goal is to provide accurate information about the range of options facing a pregnant woman.

The outcome also could affect laws in other states that seek to regulate doctors' speech.

In Louisiana, Texas and Wisconsin, doctors must display a sonogram and describe the fetus to most pregnant women considering an abortion, according to the Guttmacher Institute, which supports abortion rights. Similar laws have been blocked in Kentucky, North Carolina and Oklahoma.

Doctors' speech has also been an issue in non-abortion cases. A federal appeals court struck down parts of a 2011 Florida law that sought to prohibit doctors from talking about gun safety with their patients. Under the law, doctors faced fines and the possible loss of their medical licenses for discussing guns with patients.

In another lawsuit over regulating crisis pregnancy centers, a federal appeals court in New York struck down parts of a New York City ordinance, although it upheld the requirement for unlicensed centers to say that they lack a license.

The abortion-rights group NARAL Pro-Choice California was a prime sponsor of the California law. NARAL contends that the centers mislead women about their options and try to pressure them to forgo abortion. Estimates of the number of crisis pregnancy centers in the U.S. 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.

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.

Asian shares track US tech slump, focus on Fed meeting

By YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares skidded Tuesday following an overnight decline on Wall Street after Facebook reported its worst loss in four years. Investors are awaiting the first Federal Reserve meeting under the new chairman, Jerome Powell, and anticipating the first rate increase of the year.

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KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 0.7 percent in morning trading to 21,341.67. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 0.5 percent to 5,927.60, while South Korea's Kospi shed 0.3 percent to 2,468.35. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.5 percent to 31,340.22, while the Shanghai Composite edged 0.4 percent lower to 3,270.82.

FACEBOOK DROP: The technology rout on Wall Street on Monday was set off by Facebook's worst loss in four years. The social media giant's plunge followed reports that Cambridge Analytica, a data mining firm working for President Donald Trump's campaign, improperly obtained data on 50 million Facebook users without their permission. Legislators in the U.S. and Europe criticized Facebook, and investors are wondering if companies like Facebook and Alphabet will face tighter regulation.

WALL STREET: The S&P 500 index sank 1.4 percent to 2,712.92. The Dow Jones industrial average fell 1.3 percent to 24,610.91. The Nasdaq composite gave up 1.8 percent to 7,344.24 and the Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks declined 1 percent to 1,570.56.

FEDERAL RESERVE: The U.S. Federal Reserve's first meeting under Jerome Powell's leadership ends later this week, likely with an announcement that the Fed will resume modest interest rate hikes. A healthy U.S. job market and a relatively steady economy have given the Fed the confidence to think the economy can withstand further increases. And the financial markets have been edgy for weeks.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 23 cents to \$62.36 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 28 cents on Monday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 21 cents to \$62.26 per barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar recovered to 106.23 yen from 105.92 yen late Monday. The euro rose to \$1.2345 from \$1.2267.

AP Markets Writer Marley Jay, who contributed to this report, can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MarleyJayAP>

His work can be found at <https://apnews.com/search/marley%20jay>

Follow Yuri Kageyama on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama>

Her work can be found at <https://www.apnews.com/search/yuri%20kageyama>

Needs go unmet 6 months after Maria hit Puerto Rico

By **DANICA COTO**, Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Generators are still humming. Candles are still flickering. Homes are still being repaired.

Puerto Rico was hit by Hurricane Maria exactly six months ago, and the U.S. territory is still struggling to recover from the strongest storm to hit the island in nearly a century.

"There are a lot of people with needs," said Levid Ortiz, operating director of PR4PR, a local nonprofit that helps impoverished communities across the island. "It shouldn't be like this. We should already be back on our feet."

Some 250 Puerto Ricans formed a line around him on a recent weekday, standing for more than two hours to receive bottles of water and a box of food at a public basketball court in the mountain town of Corozal. Many of those waiting were still without power, including 23-year-old Keishla Quiles, a single mother with a 4-year-old son who still buys ice every day to fill a cooler to keep milk and other goods cold amid rising temperatures.

"Since we're a family of few resources, we have not been able to afford a generator," she said. "It's been hard living like this."

Crews already have restored water to 99 percent of clients and power to 93 percent of customers, but more than 100,000 of them still remain in the dark. Justo Gonzalez, interim director for Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority, said he expects the entire island to have power by May, eight months after the Category 4 storm destroyed two-thirds of the island's power distribution system — and just as the 2018 Atlantic hurricane season is about to start.

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Gonzalez also pledged to inspect dozens of wooden and cement poles still leaning haphazardly across the island after a wooden telephone pole fell on a car. It killed an elderly couple on Sunday as they returned from a town fair in the mountains of western Puerto Rico. The deaths of Luis Beltran, 62, and Rosa Bosque, 60, have angered Puerto Ricans and raised concerns about the safety of people as they recover from the hurricane.

"It worries me because ... it can happen anywhere," Mayor Edwin Soto told The Associated Press, adding that crews were going to inspect poles across the mountain town of Las Marias to ensure they are in good condition.

Beltran's youngest sister, Migdalia Beltran, said her brother was living in New Jersey when Hurricane Maria hit, but that he moved back three months ago to be with family.

"He was No. 1," she said as her voice cracked and she began to cry. "He was the one who gave me support to keep going."

The storm caused an estimated \$100 billion in damage, killed dozens of people and damaged or destroyed nearly 400,000 homes, according to Puerto Rico's government.

In the six months since the hurricane, more than 135,000 people have fled to the U.S. mainland, according to a recent estimate by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College in New York.

More than 40 percent of them settled in Florida, followed by Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania, the study found.

Meanwhile, those who stayed behind say they need more help.

The AP recently found that of the \$23 billion pledged for Puerto Rico, only \$1.27 billion for a nutritional assistance program has been disbursed, along with more than \$430 million to repair public infrastructure. The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration also has spent more than \$6 billion from its standing emergency fund.

Meanwhile, the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources issued a letter on Friday demanding that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers explain why it is reducing the number of crews helping restore power when there are still people who remain in the dark.

"While we recognize that much progress has been made in restoring power to the majority of customers, the job is not done," the letter stated.

Quick challenge for Mississippi's 15-week abortion ban

By JEFF AMY and SARAH MEARHOFF, Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The nation's most restrictive abortion law is headed for a showdown before a federal judge only hours after it was signed by Mississippi's governor.

U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves late Monday scheduled arguments Tuesday morning over whether he should immediately block the law after a request by the state's only abortion clinic and a physician who works there.

Republican Gov. Phil Bryant signed House Bill 1510 on Monday, immediately banning most abortions after 15 weeks of gestation. How quickly will the effects of the law be felt in Mississippi? Dr. Sacheen Carr-Ellis of the Jackson Women's Health Organization stated in court papers that a woman 15 weeks or more pregnant is scheduled for a Tuesday afternoon abortion.

The law and responding challenge set up a confrontation sought by abortion opponents, who are hoping federal courts will ultimately prohibit abortions before a fetus is viable. Current federal law does not.

Some legal experts have said a change in the law is unlikely unless the makeup of the U.S. Supreme Court changes in a way that favors abortion opponents.

"We are saving more of the unborn than any state in America, and what better thing can we do?" Bryant said in a video his office posted on social media.

The law's only exceptions are if a fetus has health problems making it "incompatible with life" outside of the womb at full term, or if a pregnant woman's life or a "major bodily function" is threatened by pregnancy. Pregnancies resulting from rape and incest aren't exempted.

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Mississippi previously tied with North Carolina for the nation's strictest abortion limits at 20 weeks. Both states count pregnancy as beginning on the first day of a woman's previous menstrual period. That means the restrictions kick in about two weeks before those of states whose 20-week bans begin at conception.

"We'll probably be sued in about half an hour," Bryant said to laughter from supporters as he signed the bill. "That'll be fine with me. It'll be worth fighting over."

Bryant's prediction was accurate. The state's only abortion clinic and one of the physicians who practices there sued in federal court within an hour, arguing the law violates other federal court rulings saying a state can't restrict abortion before a child can survive on its own outside the womb.

The Jackson Women's Health Organization, in a lawsuit handled by the Center of Reproductive Rights, argued the measure is unconstitutional and should immediately be struck down.

"Under decades of United States Supreme Court precedent, the state of Mississippi cannot ban abortion prior to viability, regardless of what exceptions are provided to the ban," the suit states.

The suit says the clinic performed 78 abortions in 2017 when the fetus was identified as being 15 weeks or older. That's out of about 2,500 abortions performed statewide, mostly at the clinic.

Carr-Ellis, in a sworn statement, says she'll have to stop providing abortions to women past the 15 week ban, or else lose her Mississippi medical license, as House Bill 1510 requires. She says women shouldn't be forced to carry their pregnancies to term against their wills or leave the state to obtain abortions.

"A woman who is pregnant should have the ability to make the decision that is best for her about the course of her pregnancy, based on her own values and goals for her life," Carr-Ellis said in the statement.

Republican legislative leaders Lt. Gov Tate Reeves and House Speaker Philip Gunn both attended Bryant's private signing ceremony

"The winners (today) are those babies that are in the womb, first and foremost," Gunn said. "Those are the ones we're trying to protect."

When asked if the state is prepared to bear the cost of a lawsuit, Gunn said, "Absolutely."

"I don't know if you can put any value on human life," Gunn said. "We are all about fighting to protect the unborn. Whatever challenges we have to take on to do that, is something we're willing to do."

Opponents, though, predicted the attempt to allow states to restrict abortion before viability would fail.

"We certainly think this bill is unconstitutional," said Katherine Klein, equality advocacy coordinator for the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi. "The 15-week marker has no bearing in science. It's just completely unfounded and a court has never upheld anything under the 20-week viability marker."

The bill was drafted with the assistance of conservative groups including the Mississippi Center for Public Policy and the Alliance Defending Freedom.

"We believe this law should be a model for the rest of the country," Jameson Taylor, acting president of the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, said in a statement.

Both Republican-controlled chambers passed the bill overwhelmingly in early March, by a vote of 35-14 in the Senate and 76-34 in the House.

The U.S. Senate failed to pass a 20-week abortion ban bill in January. With 60 "yes" votes required to advance, the bill failed on a 51-46 vote.

Follow Jeff Amy at: <http://twitter.com/jeffamy> . Read his work at https://www.apnews.com/search/Jeff_Amy .

Quick court fight as Mississippi sets 15-week abortion ban

By JEFF AMY and SARAH MEARHOFF, Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi moved quickly toward a legal confrontation over the nation's most restrictive abortion law Monday.

Within six hours, the governor signed a bill banning most abortions after 15 weeks of gestation, the state's lone abortion clinic sued, and a federal judge set a Tuesday morning hearing to consider blocking the restrictions.

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Abortion opponents sought the confrontation, hoping federal courts will ultimately prohibit abortions before a fetus is viable. Current federal law blocks such restrictions by states.

Some legal experts have said a change in the law is unlikely unless the makeup of the U.S. Supreme Court changes in a way that favors abortion opponents.

Republican Gov. Phil Bryant signed House Bill 1510 in a closed ceremony attended by legislative supporters and abortion opponents.

"We are saving more of the unborn than any state in America, and what better thing can we do?" Bryant said in a video his office posted on social media.

Mississippi's only abortion clinic, though, is asking an immediate halt to the law, telling a federal judge that a woman who is 15 weeks or more pregnant is scheduled to have an abortion Tuesday afternoon. Late Monday, U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves set a Tuesday morning hearing on the request by the Jackson Women's Health Organization that he impose a temporary restraining order.

The law's only exceptions are if a fetus has health problems making it "incompatible with life" outside of the womb at full term, or if a pregnant woman's life or a "major bodily function" is threatened by pregnancy. Pregnancies resulting from rape and incest aren't exempted.

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Fear mounts in Austin as serial bomber uses tripwire

By PAUL J. WEBER and WILL WEISSERT, Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The hunt for the serial bomber who has been leaving deadly explosives in packages on Austin doorsteps took a new, more sinister turn Monday when investigators said the fourth and latest blast was triggered along a street by a nearly invisible tripwire.

Police and federal agents said that suggests a "higher level of sophistication" than they have seen before, and means the carnage is now random, rather than targeted at someone in particular. Underscoring that point, a relative says the most-recent explosion left what appeared to be nails stuck in his grandson's knees.

"The game went up a little bit — well, it went up a lot yesterday with the tripwire," Christopher Combs, FBI agent in charge of the bureau's San Antonio division, said in an interview.

Two people have now been killed and four wounded in bombings over a span of less than three weeks.

The latest happened Sunday night in southwest Austin's quiet Travis Country neighborhood, wounding two men in their 20s who were walking in the dark. They suffered what police said were significant injuries and remained hospitalized in stable condition.

Police haven't identified the victims, but William Grote told The Associated Press that his grandson was one of them, saying he is cognizant but still in a lot of pain. Grote said one of them was riding a bike in the street and the other was on a sidewalk when they crossed a tripwire that he said knocked "them both off their feet."

"It was so dark they couldn't tell and they tripped," Grote said. "They didn't see it. It was a wire. And it blew up."

Grote said his son, who lives about 100 yards (91 meters) away from the blast, heard the explosion and raced outside.

"Both of them were kind of bleeding profusely," Grote said.

That was a departure from the three earlier bombings, which involved parcels left on doorsteps that detonated when moved or opened.

The tripwire twist heightened the fear around Austin, a town famous for its cool, hipster attitude.

"It's creepy," said Erin Mays, 33. "I'm not a scared person, but this feels very next-door-neighbor kind of stuff."

Authorities repeated prior warnings about not touching unexpected packages and also issued new ones to be wary of any stray object left in public, especially one with wires protruding.

"We're very concerned that with tripwires, a child could be walking down a sidewalk and hit something," Combs said.

Investigators are looking at a variety of possible motives, including domestic terrorism or a hate crime. Local and state police and hundreds of federal agents are investigating, and the reward for information leading to an arrest has climbed to \$115,000.

"We are clearly dealing with what we believe to be a serial bomber at this point," Austin police Chief Brian Manley said, citing similarities among the four bombs. He would not elaborate, though, saying he didn't want to undermine the investigation.

While the first three bombings all occurred east of Interstate 35, a section of town that tends to be more heavily minority and less affluent, Sunday's was west of the highway. Also, both victims this time are white, while those killed or wounded in the earlier attacks were black or Hispanic.

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Those differences made it harder to draw conclusions about a possible pattern, further unnerving a city on edge.

Thad Holt, 76, said he is now watching his steps as he makes his way through a section of town near the latest attack. "I think everybody can now say, 'Oh, that's like my neighborhood,'" he said.

Fred Milanowski, agent in charge of the Houston division of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said the latest bomb was anchored to a metal yard sign near the head of a hiking trail.

"It was a thin wire or filament, kind of like fishing line," he said. "It would have been very difficult for someone to see."

Milanowski said authorities have checked over 500 leads. Police asked anyone with surveillance cameras at their homes to come forward with the footage on the chance it captured suspicious vehicles or people.

Noel Holmes, whose house is about a mile away, was stunned by how loud Sunday's explosion was.

"It sounded like a very nearby cannon," Holmes said. "We went out and heard all the sirens, but it was eerie. You didn't feel like you should be outside at all."

Spring break ended Monday for the University of Texas and many area school districts. University police warned returning students to be alert and to tell their classmates about the danger, saying, "We must look out for one another." None of the four attacks happened close to the campus near the heart of Austin.

The PGA's Dell Technologies Match Play tournament is scheduled to begin in Austin on Wednesday, and dozens of the world's top golfers were to begin arriving.

"I'm pretty sure the tour has enough security to keep things safe in here. But this is scary what's happening," said golfer Jhonattan Vegas, already in town.

Andrew Zimmerman, a 44-year-old coffee shop worker, said the use of a tripwire adds a new level of suspected professionalism and makes it harder to guard against such attacks.

"This makes me sick," he said.

Associated Press writer Jim Vertuno contributed to this report.

How Facebook likes could profile voters for manipulation

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY** and **ANICK JESDANUN**, AP Technology Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook "likes" can tell a lot about a person. Maybe even enough to fuel a voter-manipulation effort like the one a Trump-affiliated data-mining firm stands accused of — and which Facebook may have enabled.

The social network is under fire after The New York Times and The Guardian newspaper reported that former Trump campaign consultant Cambridge Analytica used data, including user likes, inappropriately obtained from roughly 50 million Facebook users to try to influence elections.

Monday was a wild roller coaster ride for Facebook, whose shares plunged 7 percent in its worst one-day decline since 2014. Officials in the EU and the U.S. sought answers, while Britain's information commissioner said she will seek a warrant to access Cambridge Analytica's servers because the British firm had been "uncooperative" in her investigation. The first casualty of that investigation was an audit of Cambridge that Facebook had announced earlier in the day; the company said it "stood down" that effort at the request of British officials.

Adding to the turmoil, the New York Times reported that Facebook security chief Alex Stamos will step down by August following clashes over how aggressively Facebook should address its role in spreading disinformation. In a tweet, Stamos said he's still fully engaged at Facebook but that his role has changed.

It would have been quieter had Facebook likes not turned out to be so revealing. Researchers in a 2013 study found that likes on hobbies, interests and other attributes can predict personal attributes such as sexual orientation and political affiliation. Computers analyze such data to look for patterns that might not be obvious, such as a link between a preference for curly fries and higher intelligence.

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Chris Wylie, a Cambridge co-founder who left in 2014, said the firm used such techniques to learn about individuals and create an information cocoon to change their perceptions. In doing so, he said, the firm "took fake news to the next level."

"This is based on an idea called 'informational dominance,' which is the idea that if you can capture every channel of information around a person and then inject content around them, you can change their perception of what's actually happening," Wylie said Monday on NBC's "Today." It's not yet clear exactly how the firm might have attempted to do that.

Late Friday, Facebook said Cambridge improperly obtained information from 270,000 people who downloaded an app described as a personality test. Those people agreed to share data with the app for research — not for political targeting. And the data included who their Facebook friends were and what they liked — even though those friends hadn't downloaded the app or given explicit consent.

Cambridge got limited information on the friends, but machines can use detailed answers from smaller groups to make good inferences on the rest, said Kenneth Sanford of the data science company Dataiku.

Cambridge was backed by the conservative billionaire Richard Mercer, and at one point employed Stephen Bannon — later President Donald Trump's campaign chairman and White House adviser — as a vice president. The Trump campaign paid Cambridge roughly \$6 million according to federal election records, although officials have more recently played down that work.

The type of data mining reportedly used by Cambridge Analytica is fairly common, but is typically used to sell diapers and other products. Netflix, for instance, provides individualized recommendations based on how a person's viewing behaviors fit with what other customers watch.

But that common technique can take on an ominous cast if it's connected to possible elections meddling, said Robert Ricci, a marketing director at Blue Fountain Media.

Wylie said Cambridge Analytica aimed to "explore mental vulnerabilities of people." He said the firm "works on creating a web of disinformation online so people start going down the rabbit hole of clicking on blogs, websites etc. that make them think things are happening that may not be."

Wylie told "Today" that while political ads are also targeted at specific voters, the Cambridge effort aimed to make sure people wouldn't know they were getting messages aimed at influencing their views.

The Trump campaign has denied using Cambridge's data. The firm itself denies wrongdoing, and says it didn't retain any of the data pulled from Facebook and didn't use it in its 2016 campaign work.

Yet Cambridge boasted of its work after another client, Texas Republican Sen. Ted Cruz, won the Iowa caucus in 2016.

Cambridge helped differentiate Cruz from similarly minded Republican rivals by identifying automated red light cameras as an issue of importance to residents upset with government intrusion. Potential voters living near the red light cameras were sent direct messages saying Cruz was against their use.

Even on mainstay issues such as gun rights, Cambridge CEO Alexander Nix said at the time, the firm used personality types to tailor its messages. For voters who care about tradition, it could push the importance of making sure grandfathers can offer family shooting lessons. For someone identified as introverted, a pitch might have described keeping guns for protection against crime.

It's possible that Cambridge tapped other data sources, including what Cruz's campaign app collected. Nix said during the Cruz campaign that it had five or six sources of data on each voter.

Facebook declined to provide officials for interview and didn't immediately respond to requests for information beyond its statements Friday and Monday. Cambridge also didn't immediately respond to emailed questions.

Facebook makes it easy for advertisers to target users based on nuanced information about them. Facebook's mapping of the "social graph" — essentially the web of people's real-life connections — is also invaluable for marketers.

For example, researchers can look at people's clusters of friends and get good insight as to who is important and influential, said Jonathan Albright, research director at the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University. People who bridge different friend networks, for example, can have more influence when they post something, making them prime for targeting.

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Two-thirds of Americans get at least some of their news on social media, according on Pew Research Center. While people don't exist in a Facebook-only vacuum, it is possible that bogus information users saw on the site could later be reinforced by the "rabbit hole" of clicks and conspiracy sites on the broader internet, as Wylie described.

An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated the sum paid by the 2016 Trump campaign to Cambridge Analytica. It was \$5.9 million according to federal election records.

AP technology reporter Ryan Nakashima contributed to this report from Menlo Park, California.

Republicans tell Trump: Lay off Mueller _ but they don't act

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, ZEKE MILLER and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More Republicans are telling President Donald Trump in ever blunter terms to lay off his escalating criticism of special counsel Robert Mueller and the Russia probe. But party leaders are taking no action to protect Mueller, embracing a familiar strategy with the president — simply waiting out the storm.

Trump blistered Mueller and his investigation all weekend on Twitter and started in again Monday, questioning the probe's legitimacy with language no recent president has used for a federal inquiry. "A total WITCH HUNT with massive conflicts of interest!" Trump tweeted.

Mueller is leading a criminal probe into whether Trump's 2016 presidential campaign had ties to Russia and whether there has been obstruction of justice since then.

Trump was told to cut it out on Sunday by such notable Republicans as Trey Gowdy, chairman of the House Oversight Committee, and Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Then on Monday he was told that firing Mueller would be "the stupidest thing the president could do" by Orrin Hatch, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

But Hatch, on CNN, also said he didn't see any need for legislation to protect Mueller. And that sentiment was widely echoed by GOP leaders.

In recent months, bills to protect the special counsel have stalled, and Republican leaders have stuck to muted statements endorsing Mueller or denying he is in trouble. So far, that tactic has worked for them as Trump has lambasted the Russia investigation on Twitter but allowed Mueller to continue his work.

Democrats say legislation is needed.

"Immediately," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut. And Arizona Republican Jeff Flake, a frequent Trump critic, said, "If you don't pick this fight, then we might as well not be here."

But GOP leaders saw no reason to leap to stop a firing they don't think is in sight.

"I don't think that's going to happen so I just think it's not necessary, and obviously legislation requires a presidential signature," said Texas Sen. John Cornyn, the No. 2 Republican in the Senate. "I don't see the necessity of picking that fight right now."

Still, Cornyn said there would be "a number of unintended consequences" if Mueller were to be removed, and lawmakers had communicated that message to Trump "informally and formally."

White House lawyer Ty Cobb issued a statement Sunday tamping down the speculation, saying Trump is not "considering or discussing" Mueller's removal. White House spokesman Hogan Gidley said Trump has "some well-established frustration" about the probe but insisted there is no internal discussion about removing Mueller.

Separately, Trump's legal team has provided documents to Mueller summarizing their views on key matters being investigated, according to a person familiar with the situation. That person insisted on anonymity to discuss the ongoing investigation.

The records were given as Trump's lawyers negotiate with Mueller's team about the scope and terms of a possible interview with the president.

Also, Trump added a new lawyer. Joseph diGenova, a former U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, will join his team later this week.

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DiGenova has been outspoken in his defense of Trump, talking of a "brazen plot" to exonerate Hillary Clinton in an email investigation and to "frame" Trump with a "falsely created crime."

Multiple White House officials said Monday that they believe Trump is now acutely aware of the political — and even legal — consequences of taking action against Mueller. For now, they predicted, Trump will snipe at Mueller from the outside.

His sniping is getting more pointed.

Trump challenged the probe's existence over the weekend and strongly suggested political bias on the part of Mueller's investigators.

The tweets ruffled some GOP lawmakers. South Carolina's Gowdy admonished the president's lawyers, saying that if Trump is innocent, "act like it."

But House and Senate leaders remained quiet, and decidedly unruffled.

"As the speaker has always said, Mr. Mueller and his team should be able to do their job," said AshLee Strong, spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul Ryan.

A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell referred to comments that McConnell made in January saying he wasn't worried that Mueller would be ousted.

Two bipartisan Senate bills introduced last summer, when Trump first started criticizing Mueller's probe, would make it harder to fire a special counsel by requiring a judicial review. But Republicans backing the bills have not been able to agree on the details, and Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley has shown little interest in moving them. McConnell has said he thinks they are unnecessary.

Still, some of the White House officials acknowledged that Trump did once flirt with removing Mueller.

That came last summer, when Trump's legal team — then led by New York attorney Marc Kasowitz — was looking into potential conflicts of interest with Mueller and his team and planning to make a case to have him removed, according to people familiar with the strategy. Those people spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

As that strategy was being formulated, Trump directed White House counsel Don McGahn in June to call Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to raise the perceived conflicts and push for Mueller's removal, according to one of the people familiar with the matter.

McGahn put off making the call because he disagreed with the strategy, the person said. When Trump persisted in pressing the issue, McGahn told other senior White House officials he would resign if Trump didn't back off. Trump let the matter drop, the person said.

Trump cannot directly fire Mueller. Any dismissal, for cause, would have to be carried out by Rosenstein, who appointed the counsel and has continued to express support.

Trump has fumed to confidants that the Mueller probe is "going to choke the life out of" his presidency if allowed to continue indefinitely, according to an outside adviser who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations with the president.

Likely contributing to Trump's sense of frustration, The New York Times reported last week that Mueller had subpoenaed the Trump Organization for Russia-related documents. Trump had said Mueller would cross a red line with such a step.

"Why does the Mueller team have 13 hardened Democrats, some big Crooked Hillary supporters, and Zero Republicans?" he tweeted Sunday.

Some of Mueller's investigators indeed have contributed to Democratic political candidates including Hillary Clinton, but Justice Department policy and federal service law bar discrimination in the hiring of career positions on the basis of political affiliation. Mueller is a Republican.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaró, Darlene Superville and Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

Turkish leader vows wider offensive against Kurdish militia

By SARAH EL DEEB and SUZAN FRASER, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Turkey's president vowed Monday to keep up the pressure against a U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish militia after his troops captured the Syrian town of Afrin, threatening to expand the military offensive into other Kurdish-held areas across northern Syria and even into neighboring Iraq.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan appeared set on forcing Washington to reconsider its partnership with the Syrian Kurdish fighters, the main U.S. ally in the fight against the Islamic State group.

Turkey first launched its military operation in Syria in 2016, and Erdogan has repeatedly said it will not allow a "terror corridor" along its border — a reference to territories controlled by the Kurdish forces, which Turkey views as terrorists because of their links to Kurdish insurgents fighting inside Turkey.

Emboldened by Sunday's capture of Afrin, Erdogan went even further on Monday, asserting that Turkish troops and allied Syrian forces would press eastward, targeting territory that includes Kobani, a town that has become a symbol of the fight against the Islamic State militants, as well as Qamishli, where the Syrian government controls an airport and a security zone.

Also in the cross hairs is Manbij, a town jointly patrolled by U.S- and Kurdish forces and where U.S. bases are housed, triggering concerns over potential friction with U.S. troops. Erdogan even threatened to target Iraq's Sinjar mountains, used by Kurdish fighters to move between Iraq and Syria, and which Turkey claims is a stronghold for the outlawed Kurdish rebels fighting an insurgency in its southeast.

"We'll continue this process until we completely abolish this corridor," Erdogan said. "One night, we could suddenly enter Sinjar."

Nicholas Heras, a Middle East Security fellow at the Washington-based Center for a New American Security, said the capture of Afrin was a "milestone" for Turkey in Syria but was not the end of its campaign against the Kurdish militia, known as the Syrian Kurdish People's Defense Units, or YPG.

"The final destination is a Turkish war on the Kurds throughout northern and eastern Syria that destroys the YPG and forces the Americans to work by, with and through Turkey" in the fight against IS and in Syria, he said.

U.S. support of Syria's Kurdish militia, which Turkey views as a threat to its national security, has soured relations between the two NATO allies. Ankara has accused the U.S. of not fulfilling a promise to move Syrian Kurdish fighters out of Manbij. Seeking to ease tensions, U.S. and Turkish officials held talks about Manbij earlier this month following a visit by outgoing U.S. State Secretary Rex Tillerson. But with Tillerson's firing, the next round of talks has been postponed.

Ozgur 'Unluhisarcikli', the Ankara director of the German Marshall Fund of the United States think tank, said the capture of Afrin had fulfilled Turkey's aim of preventing the Kurdish militia from linking up its territories in eastern and western Syria, and Erdogan's threat to expand the military operation was a bargaining chip aimed at Washington.

"Politically, though, it would be very difficult to accomplish," he said.

Formidable guerrilla fighters, the YPG withdrew from Afrin on Sunday after a Turkish thrust into the town center. They have vowed to continue the fight, using hit-and-run attacks against Turkish troops in Afrin.

Such an insurgency could prove to be "a big thorn" for the U.S. military operation in Syria, Heras said. "A YPG insurgency in Afrin would prompt Turkey to escalate against the Kurds throughout northern Syria, jeopardizing the U.S.-led mission to stabilize the areas captured" from IS militants, he said.

Already, thousands of Kurdish fighters have been redeployed away from front lines with IS to take part in the Afrin battle, threatening to distract from the fight against the extremists.

Turkey's state-run news agency said 11 people — seven civilians and four Turkish-backed Syrian fighters — were killed on Monday in an explosion as a building in the town center was being cleared of booby traps. Anadolu News agency said the bomb was reportedly left by the Syrian Kurdish fighters.

The Turkish takeover of Afrin has triggered a humanitarian crisis as thousands of residents fled the town to government-held areas. Once a safe area for tens of thousands of displaced Syrians from other parts of the conflict, Afrin residents have become Syria's new homeless.

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The U.S. State Department said it was "deeply concerned" over the humanitarian situation following Turkey's capture of Afrin. The European Union's top diplomat also criticized the Turkish military offensive in Afrin, calling on Ankara to work to halt the fighting in Syria. Federica Mogherini told reporters in Brussels that international efforts in Syria should be aimed at "de-escalating the military activities and not escalating them."

A senior Kurdish official, Aldar Khalil, called the Turkish offensive an "occupation" that endangers "the whole of northern Syria."

Erdogan insisted Turkey had no intention of "occupying" Syria, saying it was merely clearing the border area of terrorists.

But panic has already set in among Afrin's residents, most of them Kurds, who fear Turkey will bring in loyalists and some of the 3 million Syrian refugees living inside its borders to repopulate the town. Some 200,000 people fled Afrin in recent days as the Turkish offensive escalated, and whether they will be permitted to return remains an open question.

Many feared revenge attacks, amid reports of looting and abuse of residents in the town.

Images emerged of torched stores and men, some in uniform and others in civilian clothes, walking out of homes with household goods. Others were seen driving away with tractors and agriculture supplies. A commander with the Turkey-backed Syrian forces blamed the looting on "thieves," and said a unit had been created to prevent further theft.

Azad Mohamed, an Afrin resident who fled, said looting was underway in nearby villages even before the Turkish forces entered the town.

"If they have not yet stolen my things, they will in an hour," he said.

He said fear of people taking over their homes has also fueled violent sentiments among Kurds. "Some are saying those who come settle in our homes must be killed to prevent others from even thinking about it," he said.

Fraser reported from Ankara, Turkey. Associated Press writer Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed to this report.

Want to avoid the flu while flying? Try a window seat

By MIKE STOBBE, AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Worried about catching a cold or the flu on an airplane? Get a window seat, and don't leave it until the flight is over.

That's what some experts have been saying for years, and it's perhaps the best advice coming out of a new attempt to determine the risks of catching germs on an airplane.

It turns out there's been little research on the risks of catching a cold or flu during air travel. Some experts believed that sitting in a window seat would keep a passenger away from infectious people who may be on the aisle or moving around.

The new study, published Monday, came to the same conclusion.

For somebody who doesn't want to get sick, "get in that window seat and don't move," the study's lead researcher, Vicki Stover Hertzberg of Emory University in Atlanta.

The study was ambitious: Squads of researchers jetted around the U.S. to test cabin surfaces and air for viruses and to observe how people came into contact with each other.

But it also had shortcomings. In a total of 10 flights, they observed only one person coughing. And though the experiment was done during a flu season five years ago, they didn't find even one of 18 cold and flu viruses they tested for.

It's possible that the researchers were unlucky, in that they were on planes that happened to not have sick people on them, Hertzberg said.

The new study was initiated and funded by Boeing Co. The Chicago-based jet manufacturer also recruited one of the researchers, Georgia Tech's Howard Weiss, and had input in the writing of the results.

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"But there was no particular pressure to change stuff or orient it one way or the other," Hertzberg said.

The article was released by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The researchers did some mathematical modeling and computer simulations to determine how likely people were to come close to a hypothetical infectious passenger sitting in an aisle seat on the 14th row of a single-aisle airplane. They concluded that on average, only one person on a flight of about 150 passengers would be infected.

Researchers who were not involved said it would be difficult to use the relatively small study to make any general conclusions about the risks of an airline passenger getting a cold or flu, let alone other diseases like measles or tuberculosis.

But it's a novel study about a subject that hasn't been well researched, they said. Studies have looked at how respiratory viruses spread in labs and in homes, but "this is the first time I've seen it done for airplanes," said Seema Lakdawala, a University of Pittsburgh biologist who studies how flu spreads.

She and others not involved in the research were intrigued by the study's findings about how people moved about the cabin and came in contact with each other.

It found:

—About 38 percent of passengers never left their seat, 38 percent left once, 13 percent left twice, and 11 percent left more than twice.

—Not surprisingly, a lot of the people getting up had an aisle seat. About 80 percent of people sitting on the aisle moved at least once during their flights, compared with 62 percent in middle seats and 43 percent in window seats.

—The 11 people sitting closest to a person with a cold or flu are at the highest risk. That included two people sitting to their left, the two to their right, and people in the row immediately in front of them and those in the row behind.

A lot of frequent fliers will be interested in the study's results, said Edward Pizzarello, an investor in a Washington-area venture-capital firm who also writes a travel blog .

"It's absolutely a fear I hear from people all the time. They just believe that they're going to get sick from going on an airplane, or they got sick from being on an airplane," he said.

Pizzarello said he's an aisle person, because he doesn't want to feel trapped in the window seat if he needs to get up.

Will he now go for the window?

Maybe, he said, if a sick person sits next to him.

The Associated Press Health & Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Norfolk Southern moving derailed freight cars off tracks

By ADAM BEAM, Associated Press

GEORGETOWN, Ky. (AP) — Norfolk Southern is moving derailed freight cars off the tracks after two trains collided in Georgetown, Kentucky, and sent four people to the hospital, the company said Monday in a statement.

Four train crew members were taken to the hospital after the crash as a precaution and have been released with no injuries, though one employee is still being evaluated, the statement said.

Officials say the trains collided head-on late Sunday, derailing both locomotives and 13 cars and igniting a fire that forced nearby residents to evacuate. Lexington Fire Department spokeswoman Lt. Jessica Bowman said residents were allowed to return home once officials determined there was no safety risk. Bowman couldn't confirm what substance had spilled and was burning, but Norfolk Southern later said a non-hazardous nut oil had spilled and was being cleaned.

The company said it is working to clear and repair the track and have it back in service Tuesday.

Shortly after the crash, police told the Scott County School superintendent, Kevin Hub, to open schools

as emergency shelters, and buses were sent to the neighborhood to collect people without transportation. Hub said he could see smoke billowing from the scene and they were prepared to receive hundreds of people. The Red Cross even arrived with snacks. Shortly after many residents arrived, they were able to return home.

The crash remains under investigation.

At Lemons Hill Elementary, Christina Griffin said she was asleep when neighbors called her around 11:30 p.m. to say they needed to evacuate. As she and her son were leaving, an officer warned them to get out of the neighborhood, she said.

Betty Boyer had just laid down when she heard what she thought was something exploding.

"We thought, what the hell was that? Was it a train? Was it a trailer? We didn't see any smoke," she said. Then she then got a call from her son in Missouri asking if they were being evacuated. He'd apparently received a message from a friend who saw the accident on Facebook, she said.

She grabbed her purse and a pillow and headed over to the elementary school.

"I'm supposed to be up at 6 a.m. in the morning to go to work," she said. "That ain't happening."

This story has been changed. The surnames of Griffin and Boyer have been corrected.

AP Explains: What's next after Turkey seizes Syria's Afrin

By ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Turkey's seizure of the town of Afrin in northern Syria is a significant military achievement for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that gives him control over a large chunk of Syrian territory but also entrenches his troops as an occupying force in a crowded terrain packed with adversaries.

Ignoring criticism by the United States and Europe of his eight-week military offensive, Turkish forces and allied Syrian militiamen swept into Afrin on Sunday, marching victoriously into the town's center and shooting in the air in celebration.

And it doesn't stop there, Erdogan says.

Emboldened, he vowed on Monday to expand military operations into other Kurdish-held areas in Syria and even into neighboring Iraq — a move that would potentially put his troops in direct confrontation with U.S. troops stationed nearby.

The main Kurdish militia, acknowledging defeat in Afrin, has vowed to turn to guerrilla warfare to confront Turkish troops.

Here's a look at Turkey's seizure of Afrin, and what lies ahead:

WHAT DOES ERDOGAN REALLY WANT?

At this point, that question is anyone's guess. Turkey has long backed rebels fighting to oust President Bashar Assad from power, opening its borders to foreign fighters to join the war in Syria.

But the war has greatly empowered Erdogan's No. 1 enemy, the Kurds, whose rag-tag fighters Turkey considers to be "terrorists" and an extension of its own Kurdish insurgency. In the chaos of war, the Kurdish fighters have partnered with the United States to fight the Islamic State group and carved out a huge autonomous region along the border with Turkey, amounting to a quarter of Syria's entire territory.

That has led Ankara to recalibrate its focus toward halting Kurdish expansionism.

Erdogan, who first launched military operations in Syria in 2016, has repeatedly said Turkey will not allow a "terror corridor" along its border and has vowed to push eastward in Syria after Afrin, to prevent the Kurdish militia from linking up territories it controls in eastern and western Syria. Turkey is home to some 3 million Syrian refugees, and Turkey has also said Afrin could be a place where those refugees would return to.

Afrin, a separate Kurdish-run canton cut off from the rest of Kurdish-held territory by a Turkish-held enclave, was an easy target.

But by pushing eastward as he is threatening to do, Erdogan risks overplaying his hand and getting

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bogged down in a fight bigger than Turkey can handle.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE KURDS?

It's a huge setback. Until a few months ago, Syria's long-marginalized Kurds were described as the biggest winners in Syria's civil war. They bragged of being the main ground force that ousted the Islamic State group out of its strongholds in Syria, including Raqqa, the extremist group's de facto capital.

But the Kurds' dream of self-rule is looking increasingly fragile. They have been historically used and cast aside, and may once again become the losers in the big powers' play over influence in Syria.

The Turkish offensive on Afrin, which began Jan. 20, has put the U.S. in a tough spot, juggling between the interests of the Kurds, its only ally in war-torn Syria, and its relations with Turkey, a key NATO ally. It did not move a finger to help the Kurds fight for Afrin.

The Kurds vowed to defend the enclave until the end, describing it as an existential fight to preserve their territory. They relocated hundreds of fighters from front lines with the Islamic State group to bolster the defense of Afrin.

In the end, they were no match for Turkey's NATO army's overwhelming firepower.

The Kurds lost more than 800 fighters in the 58 days of fighting for Afrin. An estimated 500 civilians were killed, and tens of thousands of Afrin residents streamed out of the town before the Turkish troops entered.

The Kurdish fighters also withdrew, ostensibly, to spare the remaining civilians.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A lot hinges on whether Erdogan goes ahead with his threat to expand military operations eastward, toward the town of Manbij and other areas east of the Euphrates River controlled by U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces, and where U.S. bases are also housed.

While the U.S. was able to distance itself from the fighting in Afrin, it can't sit by silently if Turkey expands the fight to Manbij. Kurdish guerrilla-type attacks against Turkey and its Syrian allies could also jeopardize the U.S.-led mission to stabilize areas that have been captured from IS.

President Bashar Assad's response is also an open question. His forces are now preoccupied with recapturing eastern Ghouta, near Damascus, and other areas deemed more essential. But he has condemned Turkish "occupation" of parts of northern Syria and vowed to eventually recapture the region.

Another major question is whether the takeover would lead to ethnic cleansing of the Kurdish majority there. Images that emerged Sunday following Afrin's takeover bode ill for the future of the ethnically-mixed region. Afrin residents reported widespread looting and pillaging soon after Turkish troops and allied Syrian fighters marched into the town center Sunday.

Turkey, along with its Syrian allies, already controls large chunks of territory east of Afrin. But its presence there was more accepted than in Afrin because it chased IS militants from those areas.

Some 200,000 people fled Afrin over the past few days, and whether they will be permitted to return remains an open question.

With security measures, urban schools avoid mass shootings

By COREY WILLIAMS, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Alondra Alvarez lives about five minutes from her high school on Detroit's southwest side but she drives there instead of walking because her mother fears for her safety. Once the 18-year-old enters the building, her surroundings take on a more secure feel almost immediately as she passes through a bank of closely monitored metal detectors.

"My mom has never been comfortable with me walking to school. My mom is really scared of street thugs," said Alvarez, who attends Western International.

As schools around the U.S. look for ways to impose tougher security measures in the wake of last month's school shooting in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 people dead, they don't have to look further than urban districts such as Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York that installed metal detectors and other

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security in the 1980s and 1990s to combat gang and drug violence.

Security experts believe these measures have made urban districts less prone to mass shootings, which have mostly occurred in suburban and rural districts.

Officials in some suburban and rural school districts are now considering detectors as they rethink their security plans after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where 19-year-old former student Nikolas Cruz allegedly brought in a duffel bag containing an assault rifle and opened fire. He's charged with 17 counts of first-degree murder and 17 counts of attempted murder.

The massacre has galvanized thousands of students around the country who walked out of their classrooms for 17 minutes — one for each Parkland victim — on March 14 to protest gun violence.

"I think urban schools are eons ahead. They've been dealing with violence a lot longer than suburban schools," said Philip Smith, president of the National African American Gun Association.

During the mid-1980s, Detroit was one of the first districts in the nation to put permanent, walk-through metal detectors in high schools and middle schools. New York schools also had them in some buildings.

By 1992, metal detectors had been installed in a few dozen Chicago high schools. And in 1993, under pressure to make schools safer, Los Angeles' district announced that it would randomly search students with metal detectors.

Such measures "are designed to identify and hopefully deter anybody from bringing a weapon to school, but metal detectors alone portray an illusion of being safe," said Nikolai Vitti, superintendent of the 50,000-student Detroit Public Schools Community District.

"Our schools need to be safer than they are," Vitti said. "As a nation, we need to fully fund and make sure all districts can adequately staff school resource officers and also offer mental health and first-aid training to all educators."

Security measures don't always keep guns off school grounds. A 17-year-old high school senior was killed and another student wounded March 7 in a Birmingham, Alabama, classroom shooting. Metal detectors at the school were not in use that day. A 17-year-old student has been charged with manslaughter.

Two students were shot and three people suffered other injuries in February when a gun in a backpack accidentally fired inside a Los Angeles Unified School District middle school. The district does random metal-detector wand searches daily in middle schools and high schools. A 12-year-old girl has been charged with being a minor in possession of a firearm and having a weapon on school grounds.

In response to the Parkland shooting, Florida's governor has said he wants to spend \$500 million to increase law enforcement and mental health counselors at schools, to make buildings more secure with metal detectors and to create an anonymous tip line.

A package of legislation passed by the New York state Senate includes provisions for metal detectors and improved security technology in schools. A parent in Knox County, Kentucky, has said his law office would donate \$25,000 for metal detectors in schools there.

Alvarez, the student at Detroit's Western International, said she and others who attend the school go through metal detectors every morning. Her elementary and middle schools also had metal detectors.

"I've always seen it as something that made me feel safe," she said, adding that all schools should have them and not just inner-city ones "so students don't feel discriminated against."

Metal detectors are seen as a symptom of a "stigma that already exists," said Mark Fancher, staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan's Racial Justice Project.

"There is a presumption that urban schools — particularly those with students of color — are violent places and security demands you have procedures in place that are intended to protect the safety of the students," Fancher said.

But metal detectors, property searches, security guards and police in schools create conditions similar to those found in prisons, he said.

"Students, themselves, internalize these things," Fancher said. "If you create a school that looks like a prison, the people who go there will pretty much decide that's what is expected of them."

Many urban districts have a greater awareness and sensitivity when it comes to students' needs, said

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Kenneth Trump, president of the Cleveland-based National School Safety and Security Services, a K-12 security consulting firm.

"I think in urban schools, the approach of most of the educators, administrators and security personnel is, 'We realize there are issues kids bring to school,'" said Trump, who has been in the school safety field for more than 30 years. "The people will tell you, 'We are not in denial ... we acknowledge our problems. We just don't have enough resources to deal with it.'"

Suburban and rural administrators, parents and students often view themselves as different from their big-city counterparts, and that may impact how they treat school security, he said.

"There's very often that divide of 'There's us and there's them. We're not the urban district. We are the alternative. We're the place people go to get away from the urban district,'" he said.

Associated Press writer Jesse Holland in Washington contributed to this report.

Putin's dilemma: Scrap term limits or choose a successor

By ANGELA CHARLTON and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — With his best election showing ever, President Vladimir Putin is shifting comfortably into his next six-year term, but the gnawing question of what comes next already looms on Russia's horizon.

At his first appearance after Sunday's victory, Putin was immediately asked about his plans beyond 2024, reflecting Russia's nervousness about the succession issue that will dominate the political landscape for the near future.

Putin piled up nearly 77 percent of the vote, burnishing his credentials as a leader who enjoys overwhelming public support. That will give him more room to ponder his choice: groom a reliable successor, scrap term limits or create a new position of power so he can continue pulling the strings after his fourth term ends.

All those options will remain on the table, and Putin probably will wait a few more years before making his choice.

Asked if he could initiate changes to the constitution, he answered with a characteristic reticence, saying he has no such plans "yet." He also laughed off a suggestion that he could take a six-year break before moving to reclaim the presidency in 2030.

"It's a bit ridiculous, let's do the math. Shall I sit here until I turn 100? No!" he said.

Alexander Baunov, an analyst with the Carnegie Moscow Center, said it would be good for Putin "to leave the presidential post with a record high result," since this is theoretically his final presidential term.

"His final term in this chair ... will be a period of transition of power. It's much easier to enter this transition of power when you have this especially high result," Baunov said.

In the last few years, Putin has methodically reshuffled Cabinet members and provincial governors. Some of them, such as Tula Gov. Alexei Dyumin, 45, and Economics Minister Maxim Oreshkin, 35, have been named among potential successors.

Skeptics note, however, that the Kremlin might deliberately encourage succession rumors to see how the elites and broader public react, even though Putin might intend to stay on the job.

The 65-year-old Russian leader remains in good physical shape, continuing to play ice hockey and engaging in other vigorous outdoor activities, and he could be strong enough to carry on beyond 2024.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's action to scrap term limits could offer a tempting example for the Russian leader. Xi was one of the first foreign leaders to congratulate Putin on his victory.

Putin observed the two-term limit in 2008, shifting into the prime minister's seat and allowing longtime associate Dmitry Medvedev to serve as a placeholder president for four years. Putin, however, was unhappy with Medvedev's performance, particularly his decision to allow the West launch a military action in Libya that led to the ouster and death of its longtime leader, Moammar Gadhafi.

After reclaiming the presidency in 2012, Putin focused on reasserting Russia's global clout and acted

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boldly to defy the West. That policy culminated in Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and support for a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine — actions that drew Western sanctions and sparked tensions unseen since Cold War times.

Putin has cast himself as a protector against U.S.-led plots to sideline and weaken Russia, and with those bitter strains with the West showing no signs of abating, it could be hard to imagine him leaving the job in 2024.

While those showdowns have exacerbated Russia's economic woes, they also raised patriotic feelings and bolstered Putin's support.

"If a Russian leader is very welcomed and received as ... a personal friend, smiling together from morning to evening with different Western leaders, it raises suspicions here at home," Baunov said. "But if a Russian leader is heavily criticized by the West, by media and politicians, it means most probably he is defending Russia's national interest as much as he can."

Tatyana Orlova, a 67-year-old St. Petersburg pensioner who voted for Putin, praised him as "the defender of our Motherland, who revived the army, brought Crimea back to Russia, raised up Russia from its knees."

"I pray to God for him," she added.

While such defiance of the West resonates well with Russians, there has been a plunge in living standards triggered by the combined blow of sanctions and lower oil prices. Many are unhappy with his performance at home and expect him to raise wages, improve ailing education and health care systems and modernize crumbling infrastructure.

"Six years ago, everyone was well-off, people were buying cars, apartments," said Irina Korovina, 34, who voted for Putin in Yekaterinburg. "Now things are more difficult. People are economizing on food, on clothes. I'd like things to go back to where they were."

Earlier this month, Putin had set a target of a 50 percent increase in Russian GDP per capita by the middle of the next decade, but he offered little detail of how that could be achieved. His state-of-the-nation speech reflected concern about Russia being left behind other countries if it doesn't innovate more.

"We've already had two economic crises caused by the overreliance on oil and gas, in 2008-09 the oil price collapsed and in 2014-15 the oil price collapsed," said Chris Weafer of Macro Advisory.

"It's a bit like the Oscar Wilde quote, 'One is unfortunate, two looks like carelessness,' but in the case of Russia, two were unfortunate but the third would look like carelessness," Weafer said. "I think the government is desperate not to again become overreliant on oil and gas."

Putin's promises to wean Russia off its overwhelming dependence on exports of oil, gas and other raw materials are unlikely to materialize soon, and plans to encourage economic growth could be hard to implement. Yet, economic problems probably will not pose any significant challenge to his rule.

Russia does occasionally see local protests over economic issues like wage cuts, but there's no national movement and many labor unions are under the control of employers.

Sunday's election further marginalized the divided the opposition. Even widespread reports of ballot-stuffing and complaints by observers and opposition activists of coercion of voters to boost turnout won't blemish Putin's victory for most Russians.

"At least we'll have stability — that's already something," said 20-year-old university student Yekaterina Korniltseva in Yekaterinburg, who said she voted for Putin.

Yelena Solovyova of St. Petersburg, a 43-year-old manager, said she voted for others in past elections, but went for Putin this time because "I don't want any collapse that could make my life and the life of my children worse."

In the short term, Putin may shake up his government and security structures and test some new names to see if they are worthy successors.

They probably will be young technocrats "who have no political past and no ideological passions," said Paris-based analyst Tatyana Stanovaya.

If he hasn't found a serious candidate by the middle of his term and is facing "fear and nervousness ... then Putin will have a greater temptation to stay in power," she added.

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Associated Press writers Nataliya Vasilyeva in Yekaterinburg, James Ellingsworth in Moscow and Irina Titova in St. Petersburg contributed.

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

Winning \$457 million Powerball ticket sold in Pennsylvania

MANHEIM, Pa. (AP) — Pennsylvania Lottery officials say the winning Powerball ticket worth almost \$457 million was sold at a convenience store in Lancaster County.

Officials said the ticket was sold at Speedway in Manheim. The store earns a \$100,000 bonus for selling the winning ticket. It was the only winner of the huge March 17 jackpot, the eighth largest ever.

The ticket matched all of the winning numbers: 22-57-59-60-66 and Powerball 7.

Powerball is played in 44 states plus Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The largest jackpot in Powerball history was \$1.6 billion. Three winning tickets were sold in that Jan. 13, 2016, drawing.

Snow, high winds hit Europe; Croatia faces swollen river

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Emergency crews in Croatia struggled to contain a swollen river that reached record levels southeast of Zagreb Monday, while soldiers distributed food and drinking water to a section of Albania that has been flooded for two weeks.

Croatian authorities said the Sava River by the town of Jasenovac exceeded the highest level previously recorded by some 10 centimeters (4 inches.) About a dozen houses in a nearby village were cut off.

Residents have refused to evacuate so emergency crews are delivering food and water by boat, Croatian state TV channel HRT said. The Sava is expected to rise more in the coming days, experts said.

To the east, snow and freezing rain delayed dozens of flights and some trains in Romania amid a late cold snap. Snow also hit Germany, Hungary and Britain, among other European nations.

Valentin Iordache, the spokesman for airports in the Romanian capital of Bucharest, reported 30 flight delays Monday morning due to the wintry weather.

Temperatures were around minus 5 Celsius (23 Fahrenheit.) Trains running from Bucharest to the Black Sea port of Constanta and the southern city of Craiova were also delayed.

In Albania, the defense ministry and local authorities reported that about 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) of land in the country's northwest were flooded and 225 houses in the countryside were surrounded by water.

Continuous rain and the release of excess water from hydropower stations have inundated the area for two weeks.

The defense ministry said soldiers were evacuating cattle in endangered areas. They also delivered food and drinking water for residents and livestock.

Firefighters rescued students at an elementary school where the water inside had reached one meter (yard) high.

What. Just. Happened?! NCAAs amp up the March Madness

By GENARO C. ARMAS, AP Sports Writer

One word succinctly describes what's transpired so far in the NCAA Tournament:

Madness.

But even that's probably underselling it.

A comeback for the ages by Nevada. An entire region left without a Top 4 seed in the Sweet 16 for the first time in tourney history. The 16-seed winner UMBC, falling short in its attempt to extend its historic run as underdog darlings. Oh, and defending national champion North Carolina is out, routed in its own

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state by Texas A&M.

And that was just on Sunday. When No. 1 seed Xavier was bounced, too.

A memorable, zany first two rounds — even by March Madness standards — set up what could be another wild two weekends in a tournament where anything can become reality.

“It’s what makes March Madness special and it kills the coaches because it’s so hard and you think you have a great team,” Kansas State coach Bruce Weber said. “It’s March Madness and you never know what’s going to happen.”

Before the first tipoff on Thursday, many prognosticators had deemed this tournament one of the most wide-open in recent history.

It’s turned into a nutty, once-in-a-generation kind of ride.

Loyola-Chicago won two thrillers to get to the Sweet 16, making a social media star out of their 98-year-old chaplain, Sister Jean. And then the telegenic nun who provides her own scouting reports to players got overshadowed by the ultimate Cinderella team.

The UMBC Retrievers became the first No. 16 seed in the history of the men’s tournament to beat a No. 1 seed, defeating Virginia in the first round Friday night.

By 20 points. Over the top overall seed and the unanimous No. 1 team in the AP poll.

The Retrievers’ run came to an end on Sunday night in a 50-43 loss to ninth-seeded Kansas State, but not before tattooing a lasting imprint on American sports, drawing attention from stars of the NFL, NBA and Twitch — and love from underdogs everywhere.

“We put our name on the map. We (gave) hope to teams that come to the tournament with lower seeds,” guard K.J. Maura said.

UMBC’s success story contributed to the messy, unprecedentedly jumbled bracket in the South Region, where the highest-remaining seed is No. 5 Kentucky. It’s the first time in tourney history that a regional semifinal will be held without a top 4 seed, according to the NCAA.

Seventh-seeded Nevada added to that by matching the second-biggest comeback in tournament history to beat No. 2 seed Cincinnati 75-73 after trailing by 22 points in the second half.

“That locker room right now, I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. It’s the happiest I’ve ever seen. It’s the happiest I’ve ever been in my life,” Wolf Pack coach Eric Musselman said.

The way reigning champion North Carolina got bounced from the tournament in an 86-65 loss to Texas A&M might have been the top storyline on any other tournament day. It left coach Roy Williams with the most lopsided tournament loss of his Hall of Fame career.

It was also the second straight year the titleholder lost before the Sweet 16. And it happened in UNC-friendly territory in Charlotte, North Carolina, where the Tar Heels hadn’t lost a tourney game since 1979.

“I didn’t picture it ending it like this,” said Williams with his players sitting nearby. “I pictured it ending with these guys having a huge smile on their face, but that’s not college basketball.”

WHO’S LEFT: A look at the teams and matchups for the Sweet 16 by region.

South: No. 5 Kentucky vs. No. 9 Kansas State; No. 7 Nevada vs. No. 11 Loyola-Chicago.

West: No. 4 Gonzaga vs. No. 9 Florida State; No. 3 Michigan vs. No. 7 Texas A&M

Midwest: No. 1 Kansas vs. No. 5 Clemson; No. 2 Duke vs. No. 11 Syracuse

East: No. 1 Villanova vs. No. 5 West Virginia; No. 2 Purdue vs. No. 3 Texas Tech.

CALL IT A COMEBACK: Nevada’s comeback from a 22-point deficit matched Duke’s rally after beating Maryland in the 2001 Final Four. The biggest comeback belongs to BYU, which trailed by 25 points before beating Iona in the 2012 First Four.

GLASS SLIPPERS IN SOUTH: What a mess in the underdog-laden South.

The top four seeds — No. 1 Virginia, No. 2 Cincinnati, No. 3 Tennessee and No. 4 Arizona are all done.

“You know, just obviously we didn’t think 16 was going to ... beat a 1,” Weber said. “You thought it would be a little different situation, but we just said we could write history tonight. No 9 has ever beaten a 16 to go to the Sweet 16, so we wrote our own history tonight.”

SPOILED HOME COOKIN’: Don’t invite Texas A&M and Syracuse to homecoming parties.

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The Aggies manhandled North Carolina in Charlotte in surprisingly easy fashion to get to the round of 16 for the second time in three seasons. After holding a 47-36 edge on the glass, Texas A&M should scare a Michigan team that has had to slog through two victories and deliver a buzzer-beater 3 to get to the Sweet 16.

In Detroit, Syracuse tuned out the noise from a Michigan State-partisan crowd for a 55-53 win . The Orange's trademark 2-3 zone gave another unfamiliar opponent fits after holding the more talented Spartans to 26 percent shooting.

An NCAA tourney run that started with the First Four in Dayton for Syracuse will continue against Duke in the Sweet 16 in Omaha, Nebraska.

TWO ONES ARE DONE: Two No. 1 seeds didn't make it out of the tournament's opening weekend for the first time since 2004, when Stanford and Kentucky both lost in the second round.

This time around, Virginia and Xavier were the top seeds that were bounced.

The Cavaliers went home on Friday after the historic loss to No. 16 seed UMBC. The Musketeers gave up a 12-point lead on Sunday and fell to Florida State, 75-70. It was a disappointing ending for a program that returned four starters from a team that lost in the Elite Eight last year to Gonzaga.

The only other years when two top seeds lost in the first weekend were 1981 and 2000.

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

First lady to hold first public event on cyberbullying

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Melania Trump is hosting executives from major online and social media companies to discuss cyberbullying and internet safety, more than a year after saying that would be her issue as first lady.

The meeting Tuesday marks her first public event on the topic, a choice some observers have questioned given that her husband often berates people on Twitter.

Amazon, Snap, Facebook, Google and Twitter are among the companies that are expected to attend the meeting. The Internet Association said it will also be represented.

All the major technology companies have strict policies prohibiting harassment and other bullying behavior on their services, but primarily rely on users to report abuses and weed them out. They try to clearly spell out the kinds of remarks and other posts that won't be tolerated in special sections such as one Facebook, the largest online social network, has set up. Instagram, a popular service among kids and young adults for sharing photos and videos, provides links to the U.S. government's anti-bullying site and tips from a cyberbullying research center on one of its help pages.

But the efforts so far have fallen short, leading to rampant abuses that even some of the companies acknowledge have driven away or tormented portions of their audience.

It got so bad on Twitter, which has 68 million U.S. users, that the San Francisco company vowed last fall to crack down on hateful tweets. Among other things, Twitter adopted new policies aimed at protecting women who unknowingly or unwillingly had nude pictures of themselves distributed online — a common bullying tactic.

Yik Yak, another messaging app once popular among high school and college students, shut down last year partly because schools banned it following complaints about bullying and harassment.

Online bullying takes many shapes, but some of the most common tactics include posting embarrassing or salacious photos, making demeaning or cruel remarks under a photo or in a general post about someone, and sharing screenshots of what at least one person thought was a private text.

Harassment is widespread and extends beyond teenagers. A Pew Research Center poll last year found 41 percent of U.S. adults believed they had been harassed online.

The popularity of and volume of content on major social media sites presents a huge challenge in polic-

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ing what is being shared. Facebook, for instance, has 2.1 billion worldwide users who collectively share billions of posts on their pages daily. More than 300 hours of video is uploaded to Google's YouTube site every minute.

The companies are also constantly struggling to balance the desire to prevent harassment and other abuses and maintain a commitment to freedom of expression.

In some cases, they see harassment and still look the other way. For instance, some of President Trump's more vitriolic tweets have openly mocked and denigrated people, prompting calls for Twitter to shut down his account and ban him from its service. But Twitter has declined, maintaining the news value of the president's tweets eclipse complaints about him being a bully.

There is no federal law that applies to bullying. State laws vary, ranging from requiring public schools to have a bullying policy to requiring anonymous reporting systems, said Sameer Hinduja, co-director of the Cyberbullying Research Center and professor of criminology at Florida Atlantic University. The federal government can best help by giving schools more tools and money to provide programs, Hinduja said.

Mrs. Trump announced in a speech near the end of the 2016 presidential campaign that her priority as first lady would be to fight cyberbullying. A native of Slovenia, she at the time lamented a U.S. culture that she said had grown "too mean and too rough." It was a curious speech for a woman whose husband uses Twitter to dismiss people as losers and taunt them with unflattering nicknames.

The mother of a 12-year-old son, the first lady has made child well-being her focus in the White House, including an unexpected interest in how the opioid crisis is affecting youngsters.

She has visited hospitals and care centers to see the effects first hand, and has embraced parents whose children died from drug overdoses. She accompanied the president to New Hampshire on Monday as he discussed a three-pronged effort to combat drug addiction, including applying the death penalty against those caught trafficking highly addictive substances.

Mrs. Trump recently asked the spouses of U.S. governors to help promote values such as encouragement, kindness, compassion and respect in children. She has also spoken about limiting the amount of time children spend online, and helping them understand the content they are exposed to.

AP Business Writer Michael Liedtke in San Francisco contributed to this report.

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, March 20, the 79th day of 2018. There are 286 days left in the year. Spring arrives at 12:15 p.m. Eastern time.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 20, 1854, the Republican Party of the United States was founded by slavery opponents at a schoolhouse in Ripon (RIH'-puhn), Wisconsin.

On this date:

In 1413, England's King Henry IV died; he was succeeded by Henry V.

In 1760, a 10-hour fire erupted in Boston, destroying 349 buildings and burning 10 ships, but claiming no lives.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte returned to Paris after escaping his exile on Elba, beginning his "Hundred Days" rule.

In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe's influential novel about slavery, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," was first published in book form after being serialized.

In 1922, the decommissioned USS Jupiter, converted into the first U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, was re-commissioned as the USS Langley.

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In 1942, U.S. Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur, having evacuated the Philippines at the order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, told reporters in Terowie, Australia: "I came out of Bataan, and I shall return."

In 1948, "Gentleman's Agreement" won the Academy Award for best picture of 1947; Ronald Colman was named best actor for "A Double Life," while Loretta Young won best actress for "The Farmer's Daughter."

In 1952, the U.S. Senate ratified, 66-10, a Security Treaty with Japan.

In 1969, John Lennon married Yoko Ono in Gibraltar.

In 1977, voters in Paris chose former French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac to be the French capital's first mayor in more than a century.

In 1985, Libby Riddles of Teller, Alaska, became the first woman to win the Iditarod Trail Dog Sled Race.

In 1995, in Tokyo, 12 people were killed, more than 5,500 others sickened when packages containing the deadly chemical sarin were leaked on five separate subway trains by Aum Shinrikyo (ohm shin-ree-kyoh) cult members.

Ten years ago: In a setback for Democrat candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton, a drive for a second Michigan presidential primary collapsed as the state Senate adjourned without taking up a measure calling for a do-over contest. (Michigan had held an early primary in January 2008 in violation of Democratic Party rules, and was stripped of its delegates as a result.) Mao Asada of Japan won the women's title at the World Figure Skating Championships in Goteborg, Sweden.

Five years ago: Making his first visit to Israel since taking office, President Barack Obama affirmed Israel's sovereign right to defend itself from any threat and vowed to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Five former elected officials of Bell, California, were convicted of misappropriating public funds by paying themselves huge salaries while raising taxes on residents; one defendant was acquitted. Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper signed bills that put sweeping new restrictions on sales of firearms and ammunition. Opera singer Rise (REE'-suh) Stevens, 99, died in New York.

One year ago: U.S. Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch pledged to be independent or "hang up the robe" as the Senate began confirmation hearings on President Donald Trump's conservative pick for the nation's highest bench. President Trump met for the first time with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi at the White House. David Rockefeller, guardian of the Rockefeller fortune and billionaire philanthropist, died at his home in Pocantico (poh-KAN'-tih-koh) Hills, New York, at age 101.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Dame Vera Lynn is 101. Producer-director-comedian Carl Reiner is 96. Actor Hal Linden is 87. Former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney (muhl-ROO'-nee) is 79. Country singer Don Edwards is 79. TV producer Paul Junger Witt is 77. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Pat Riley is 73. Country singer-musician Ranger Doug (Riders in the Sky) is 72. Hockey Hall of Famer Bobby Orr is 70. Blues singer-musician Marcia Ball is 69. Actor William Hurt is 68. Rock musician Carl Palmer (Emerson, Lake and Palmer) is 68. Rock musician Jimmie Vaughan is 67. Country musician Jimmy Seales (Shenandoah) is 64. Actress Amy Aquino (ah-KEE'-noh) is 61. Movie director Spike Lee is 61. Actress Theresa Russell is 61. Actress Vanessa Bell Calloway is 61. Actress Holly Hunter is 60. Rock musician Slim Jim Phantom (The Stray Cats) is 57. Actress-model-designer Kathy Ireland is 55. Actor David Thewlis is 55. Rock musician Adrian Oxaal (James) is 53. Actress Jessica Lundy is 52. Actress Liza Snyder is 50. Actor Michael Rapaport is 48. Actor Alexander Chaplin is 47. Actor Cedric Yarbrough is 45. Actress Paula Garces is 44. Actor Michael Genadry is 40. Actress Bianca Lawson is 39. Comedian-actor Mikey Day is 38. Actor Nick Blood (TV: "Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.") is 36. Rock musician Nick Wheeler (The All-American Rejects) is 36. Actor Michael Cassidy is 35. Actress-singer Christy Carlson Romano is 34. Actress Ruby Rose is 32.

Thought for Today: "Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'" — Robin Williams, American comedian (1951-2014).