

Groton Daily Independent

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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**

Pothole Damage Costs U.S. Drivers \$3 Billion Annually

March 21, 2018 – Every year, AAA responds to more than four million calls for flat tire assistance, many the result of damage caused by potholes. Spare tires, an important feature missing from nearly one-third (28 percent) of 2017 model year vehicles do not come with a spare tire as standard equipment according to a new AAA study. Tire inflator kits have replaced the spare tire in millions of vehicles over the last 12 years but due to their limited functionality, cannot provide even a temporary fix for pothole damage creating an unnecessary hassle and expense for drivers. To avoid a roadside surprise, AAA South Dakota urges drivers to check their trunk for a spare tire before trouble strikes.

“Having a flat tire can be a nuisance for drivers, but not having a spare could put them in an even more aggravating situation,” said Marilyn Buskohl, AAA South Dakota spokesperson. “This can turn the relatively routine process of changing a tire at the roadside into an inconvenient and costly situation that requires a tow to a repair facility.”

Every year, AAA responds to more than four million calls for flat tire assistance, many the result of damage caused by potholes. On average, American drivers report paying \$300 to repair pothole-related vehicle damage but depending on the extent of the damage, the make of the vehicle and the make of the tires, repairs could easily exceed \$1000.

“Potholes don’t just leave you shaken – they’re a serious safety hazard and often lead to costly repair bills,” continued Buskohl. “You can easily lose control of your vehicle if you hit a pothole, possibly leading to a crash, and it’s just as dangerous to swerve to avoid it. Slow down and stay alert, especially as road crews continue to work to patch potholes throughout the region.”

Debris in the roads also presents driving challenges. One of the most common types of vehicle debris are parts becoming detached from a vehicle (tires, wheels, etc.) and falling onto the roadway. A study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, revealed that more than 200,000 crashes over a four year period – some of them deadly – were caused by flying furniture, car parts and other road debris. To minimize vehicle damage from potholes and debris, AAA offers the following tips:

Inspect Tires – Make sure tires are properly inflated and have a healthy tread.

Look ahead – Make a point of scanning the road ahead for potholes. An alert driver is more likely to have time to avoid a pothole so limit distractions.

Slow Down – If a pothole cannot be avoided, reduce speed safely without abrupt braking.

Leave Room – Always try to maintain open space on at least one side of your vehicle in case you need to steer around an object.

Beware of Puddles – puddles often disguise deep potholes.

Recognize Noises/Vibrations – A hard pothole impact can dislodge wheel weights, damage the tire or wheel and even break suspension components. Any unusual noises after a pothole hit should be inspected immediately.

Where’s the Spare – New car owners beware, a quick fix for a blown out tire may be no more, as many newer cars do not have spare tires.

Big Hole, Big Hit – Hitting a large pothole usually results in, not only replacing a tire, but also the need for wheel alignment and possible steering linkage damage, causing a big hit to motorists’ wallets.

POTHOLE DAMAGE
Common car repairs that can result from poor road quality.

Component	Cost Range
Tires	\$100-\$250*
Tie Rod	\$100-\$250
Shock/Strut	\$200-\$400
Wheels	\$75 (steel) \$500 (alloy)
Control Arm	\$200-\$400
Wheel Alignment	\$75-\$150
Ball Joint	\$150-\$300

*Includes mount and balance
These prices apply to most normal passenger cars, not high-performance models, European highline vehicles or limited-production exotics.
Suspension component replacement will typically require a wheel alignment.

AAA
May 2014

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No. 6 Wolves Advance to NCAA Final Four on Historic Night from Sioux Falls

Sioux Falls, S.D. – The No. 6 Northern State University men's basketball team made history on Tuesday evening from the Sanford Pentagon in a 79-71 victory over (RV) East Stroudsburg. The Wolves notched the first NCAA Elite Eight win in school history and broke the single season school record with their 35th win.

Despite a quick start by the Warriors of East Stroudsburg, Northern 38-32 at the half en route to the 8-point advancing victory. Heading into the final minutes of the first half, Northern went on a 14-0 run, holding East Stroudsburg scoreless for five minutes and 12 seconds. The Wolves tallied their largest lead of 17 points with 6:32 left in regulation, as nine student-athletes hit the floor for NSU.

Northern shot 57.4 percent from the floor, 41.7 percent from the 3-point line, and 74.1 percent from the foul line. As a team, the men combined for a game high five made 3-pointers, 14 assists, and five blocks. NSU tallied 36 points in the paint, 19 points off the bench, 11 points off turnovers, five second chance points, and four fast break points. The Wolves out-rebounded the Warriors 37-21, notching five offensive boards, and out-shot ESU from the floor and 3-point line.

Ian Smith led four Wolves in double figures with 21 points, hitting 9-of-12 from the floor, 1-of-1 from beyond the arc, and 2-of-4 from the foul line. The junior added four rebounds and a team leading five assists. DJ Pollard added a team second best 19 points, shooting 71.4 percent from the floor and a perfect 8-of-8 from the charity stripe. Pollard notched four rebounds two assists, two steals, and one block as well.

Logan Doyle led the Wolves off the bench with 13 points, and notched a team high seven rebounds. The senior shot 5-of-6 from the floor and recorded two assists and one block. Gabe King was the final Wolf in double figures with ten points, as well as four rebounds, and a team leading two blocks.

Darin Peterka and Carter Evans rounded out the starting five with six and four points respectively. The pair each tallied three rebounds and one assist. Bo Fries notched four points, as well as a team second best five rebounds and three assists. Justin Decker added two points as the final team scorer for NSU.

The Wolves will face No. 7 Queens (NC) in the NCAA Final Four on Thursday at 8:30 p.m. from the Sanford Pentagon. Queens advanced to the Final Four with a 100-94 victory over Cal Baptist. The meeting will be the first between the two teams.

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April 1 deadline for Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program

PIERRE, S.D. – Elderly and disabled South Dakotans have until April 1, 2018 to apply for property tax relief under South Dakota's Assessment Freeze for the Elderly and Disabled Program.

Under the program, a qualifying homeowner's property assessment is prevented from increasing for tax purposes. If the actual value of the home increases, the homeowner still pays property taxes on the lower value.

To be eligible for the Assessment Freeze for the Elderly and Disabled Program, individuals must meet the following qualifications:

- Have incomes of less than \$27,697.78 for a single-member household (only one individual in the household) or less than \$34,622.21 for a multiple-member household

- Have owned or retained a life estate in a single-family dwelling, in fee or by contract to purchase, for at least one year and have been a resident of South Dakota for at least one year

Have resided in the single-family dwelling for at least 200 days of the previous calendar year

Be 65 years of age or older or disabled (as defined by the Social Security Act)

Un-remarried widows/widowers of those who previously qualified for the program may still qualify in some circumstances. The valuation limit for the program is \$190,122.74 or more of full and true value, meaning that property valued above those limits is not eligible unless the applicant has previously qualified.

The deadline to apply for the program is April 1, and applications must be submitted to the applicant's local county treasurer's office. Applications are available at county treasurer's offices or online at http://dor.sd.gov/Taxes/Property_Taxes/Forms.aspx.

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!

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Northeast Conference All-Conference Girl's Team

First Team: Lexi Wadsworth, senior, Hamlin; Grace Imbery, senior, Roncalli; Janae Kolden, junior, Clark/Willow Lake; Olivia Breske, senior, Webster; Addison Rozell, freshman, Redfield/Doland.

Second Team: Brynn Alfson, sophomore, Hamlin; Alyssa Magnuson, senior, Sisseton; Jami Ewart, junior, Roncalli; Gabbi Cummins, junior, Milbank; Aubree Bearsheart, senior, Tiospa Zina.

Third Team: Britney Lovre, sophomore, Deuel; Maraiiah Winegar, sophomore, Roncalli; Jennie Doeden, junior, Groton Area; Taylor Hartley, junior, Clark/Willow Lake; Eve Millar, junior, Redfield/Doland.



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")**

Severe Weather Awareness Weeks & Spotter Training

Even though snowflakes are still flying, we are heading into the severe weather preparedness season!

Here are some important dates to remember:

MN Severe Weather Awareness Week: April 9-13, 2018

MN Tornado Drill: April 12, 2018

TEST Tornado Watch at 1 pm

TEST Tornado Warning at 1:45 pm and 6:45 pm

SD Severe Weather Awareness Week: April 23-27, 2018

SD Tornado Drill: April 25, 2018

TEST Tornado Watch at 10:00 am

TEST Tornado Warning at 10:15 am

Spotter Training Classes: <https://www.weather.gov/abr/spottercalendar>

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Today in Weather History

March 21, 1997: As temperatures began to warm up towards the end of March, the near-record to record winter snowpack over central, north central, and northeast South Dakota began melting. The resulting runoff filled up ditches, lakes, creeks, streams, and low-lying areas. The massive amount of water swamped hundreds of sections of county and township roads as well as several state and federal highways. The inundated parts of roads were either broken up or washed out. Tens of culverts were blown out or damaged, and several bridges were either destroyed or washed out by chunks of ice and the high water flow. Road closures were extensive, with rerouting taking place for school buses, mail carriers, farmers, and ranchers. Many spillways and dams received some damage or were washed out. In addition, thousands of acres of farmland and pastureland were underwater. Due to the high groundwater, a countless number of homes received water in their basements. A few towns were partially flooded, including Twin Brooks in Grant County, Corona in Roberts County, and Raymond in Clark County. The following week, in the early morning hours of March 27, water flowed into Raymond filling the basements of several homes. In rural areas, several farms were surrounded by water and were inaccessible, leaving some people stranded and livestock marooned. Many other residences and businesses, mainly across northeast South Dakota, received significant damage or were a total loss. As a result, several people had to be evacuated. At the time, many long-term residents said this was the most significant flooding they had seen in their lifetimes. The flooding continued into early to mid-April.

1801: The Jefferson Flood hit the Connecticut Valley. The flooding was the greatest since 1692. The Federalists named the flood for the new President, who they blamed for the disaster.

1876: More than 40 inches of snow stopped traffic at Montreal, Quebec Canada. Trains were delayed, and mail carriers resorted to snowshoes.

1932 - A tornado swarm occurred in the Deep South. Between late afternoon and early the next morning severe thunderstorms spawned 31 tornadoes in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Tennessee. The tornadoes killed 334 persons and injured 1784 others. Northern Alabama was hardest hit. Tornadoes in Alabama killed 286 persons and caused five million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1952 - Severe thunderstorms spawned thirty-one tornadoes across Arkansas, Tennessee, Missouri, Mississippi, Alabama and Kentucky. The tornadoes killed 343 persons and caused 15 million dollars damage. Arkansas and Tennessee each reported thirteen tornadoes. The towns of Judsonia AR and Henderson TN were nearly wiped off the map in what proved to be the worst tornado outbreak of record for Arkansas. A tornado, one and a half miles wide at times, left a church the only undamaged building at Judsonia. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm in the Northern High Plains Region produced blizzard conditions in western South Dakota. Winds gusted to 70 mph at Rapid City SD, and snowfall totals ranged up to 20 inches at Lead SD. The high winds produced snow drifts six feet high. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Bitterly cold weather prevailed across the northeastern U.S. Portland ME reported their coldest spring day of record with a morning low of 5 above, and an afternoon high of just 21 degrees. Marquette MI reported a record low of 15 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (The Weather Channel)

1989 - Snow blanketed the northeastern U.S. early in the day, with six inches reported at Rutland VT. Morning and afternoon thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds from southwestern Mississippi to southwest Georgia. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - The first full day of spring was a cold one for the eastern U.S. Freezing temperatures damaged 62 percent of the peach crop in upstate South Carolina, and 72 percent of the peach crop in the ridge area of South Carolina. Elkins WV, which a week earlier reported a record high of 82 degrees, was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 16 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Wed Mar 21	Thu Mar 22	Fri Mar 23	Sat Mar 24	Sun Mar 25	Mon Mar 26	Tue Mar 27
41°F	44°F	38°F	40°F	41°F	42°F	44°F
24°F	32°F	31°F	28°F	25°F	26°F	33°F
S 8 MPH	E 10 MPH	ESE 21 MPH	ESE 17 MPH	SSE 15 MPH	ESE 7 MPH	WSW 9 MPH
		Precip 90%	Precip 40%	Precip 40%	Precip 30%	Precip 20%



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
www.weather.gov/abr

Precipitation Friday

Starts early Friday from west to east

A mix possible

Some light snow accumulations also possible

Today



Upper 30s
to Around
50

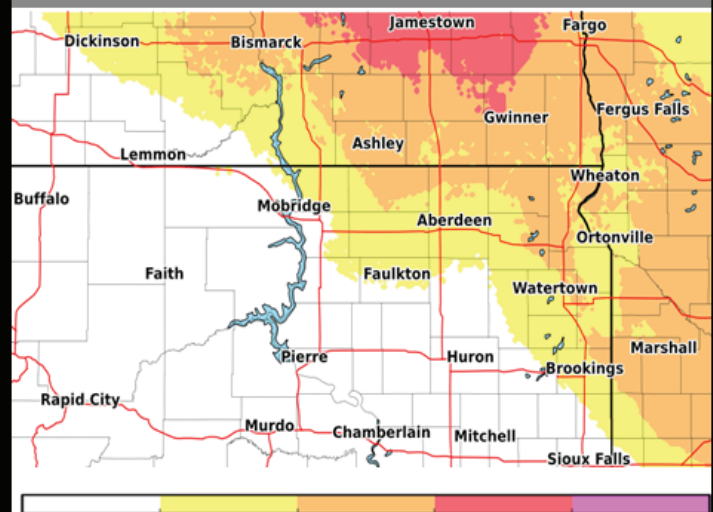
Clearing

Thursday



Around 40
to low 50s

Threat For Snow Accumulations



Greatest Impact Focus In North Dakota

3/21/2018 5:35 AM

Published on: 03/21/2018 at 5:40AM

Clearing skies today will result in more seasonal temperatures, with Thursday also seeing readings right around average. We do anticipate a system for Friday, which could bring a mix to the area, with some light snow accumulations as well.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 32.0 F at 5:40 PM

Low Outside Temp: 26.7 F at 8:46 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 11.0 Mph at 4:44 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 76° in 1926

Record Low: -12° in 1965

Average High: 42°F

Average Low: 22°F

Average Precip in March: 0.71

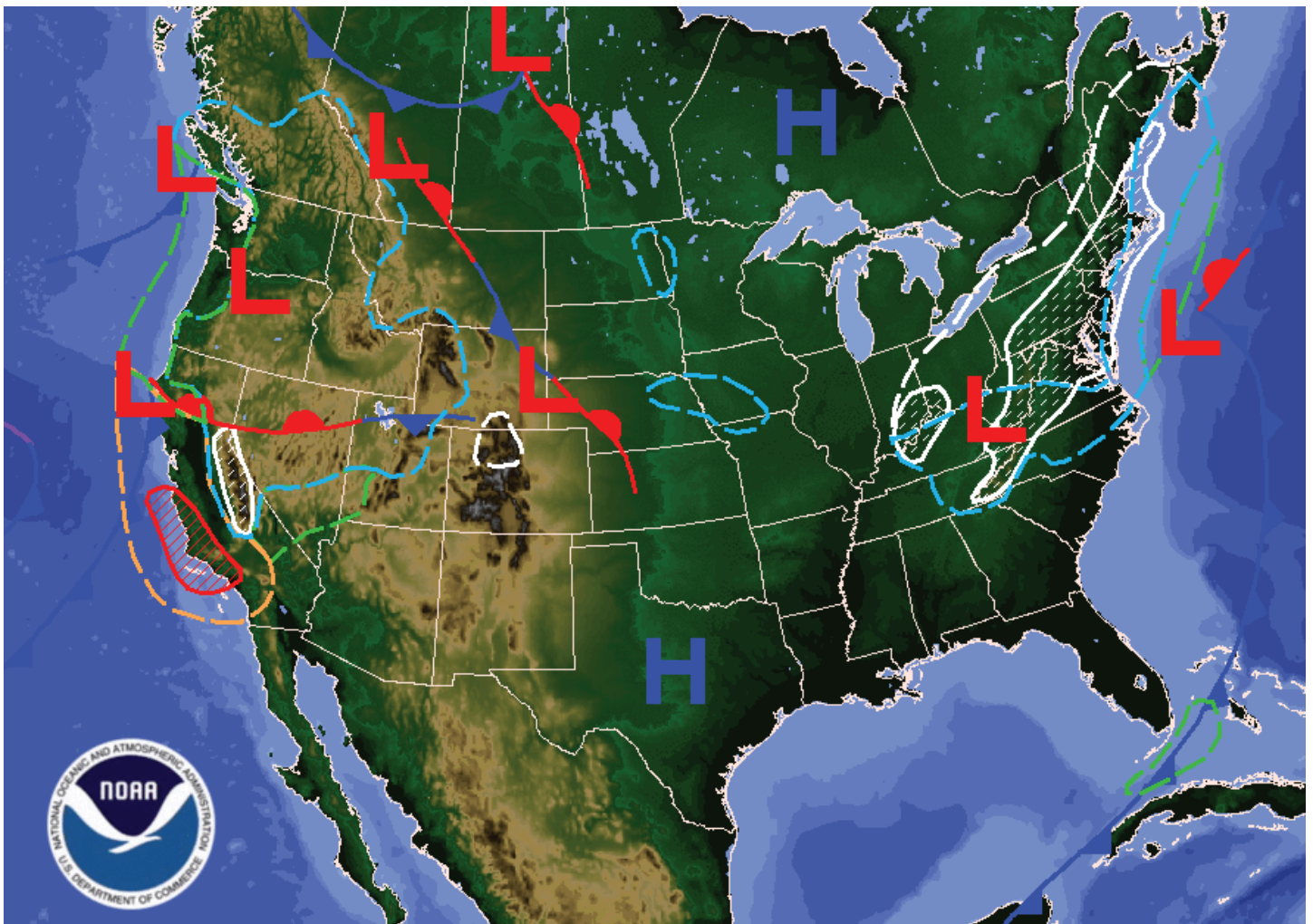
Precip to date in March: 1.14

Average Precip to date: 1.73

Precip Year to Date: 1.55

Sunset Tonight: 7:47 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:32 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Mar 21, 2018, issued 5:05 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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CELEBRATE!

It is a day I will always remember. It was hot and humid and the black gowns and colorful "hoods" provoked more sweat than satisfaction. It was a day that brought three long and difficult years of study to a conclusion and I was now going to be identified as "Doctor."

As I stood in a line with my classmates who had struggled with me we could not help but wonder what changes the degree would make in our lives. A new day had dawned. Things would be different for us from that day forward. We would have new opportunities and new status. People would look at us differently. It was time to celebrate. We believed that we had earned it!

Psalm 98 begins with a call to celebrate: "Sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things." This call to celebrate was not for anything that the people did or had accomplished. It was a call to celebrate what God had done for them. It was a call to celebrate the "marvelous things" that God had done for them. This phrase "marvelous things" refers to God's direct, supernatural interventions in the life of "His people." It refers to God's power and authority, His protection and care, His interest in the well-being of His people on this earth. And as important as those gifts of God are, they cannot compare to the gift of His salvation and deliverance!

There are many special events and days in our lives and the life of our nation that give us reasons to celebrate. But nothing provides a greater cause for us to celebrate than the hope we have in Christ our Lord!

Prayer: Lord, fill our hearts with this "New Song." May we sing a song of joy as we celebrate Your gift of salvation! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 98:1 Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.

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)
- 12/01/2018 Olive Grove Golf Course 2018 Holiday Party

- 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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

14-38-51-64-70, Mega Ball: 9, Megaplier: 3

(fourteen, thirty-eight, fifty-one, sixty-four, seventy; Mega Ball: nine; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$377 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$40 million

Idaho joins other red states with 'abortion reversal' law

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Idaho will become the latest conservative state to require women seeking abortions to be informed that the drug-induced procedures can be halted halfway, despite opposition from medical groups that say there is little evidence to support that claim.

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter quietly signed the proposal into law Tuesday along with nearly 50 other measures. The law, which will go into effect July 1, is the latest move by Republican-dominant states that are testing the government's legal ability to restrict a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy.

It comes just a day after Mississippi enacted the most restrictive abortion law in the United States, though a federal judge temporarily blocked it Tuesday.

Idaho's measure follows an anti-abortion trend first enacted in Arkansas in 2015. Arkansas' version requires women to be told "it may be possible to reverse the effects of the abortion if the pregnant woman changes her mind, but that time is of the essence." Idaho's measure reads similarly.

Laws have since passed in Utah and South Dakota requiring women to be informed that mifepristone — the drug that begins a medication abortion — does not always end a pregnancy if taken alone.

A version in Arizona was challenged in court, but the lawsuit was eventually dropped after the governor effectively repealed the requirement in 2016 by changing the language.

To date, there is no evidence the abortion reversal procedure works and little information about its safety.

Multiple medical groups across the country have cited potentially flawed science and ethical concerns. For example, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has said there is no medically accepted evidence that a drug-induced abortion can be interrupted.

"Claims regarding abortion 'reversal' treatment are not based on science and do not meet clinical standards," the group posted on their website. "Politicians should never mandate treatments or require that physicians tell patients inaccurate information."

Idaho state Sen. Lori Den Hartog, a Republican seeking re-election this year, has said she brought the measure forward to give women more information and options.

Jon Hanian, the governor's spokesman, said Otter did not immediately have a comment on his choice to sign the proposal into law.

Otter also signed a measure Tuesday that will provide legal protections for breastfeeding mothers. Idaho had previously been the only state in the country not to have such protections.

Idaho lawmakers killed a similar proposal 15 years ago over fears of women of exposing their breasts in public. This time around, lawmakers unanimously passed the measure that exempts breastfeeding mothers from Idaho's indecent exposure law.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard debating 'a few' potential bill vetoes

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard says there are "a few" bills that he's thinking about vetoing before the 2018 legislative session officially ends.

The Republican executive didn't specify Tuesday which bills he might reject. State lawmakers return next week for the session's final day to debate any vetoes that could come from the governor.

Daugaard says he plans to sign bills that lawmakers have passed over the next several days, with the last batch getting his signature on Friday. He hasn't yet vetoed any bills this year.

South Dakota ag nonprofit accepts fundraising challenge

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Agricultural Foundation has taken on a five-year challenge to fundraise \$4 million to help support the state's agriculture industry.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard said Tuesday money raised by the foundation will be matched with \$1 million from the state and the South Dakota Community Foundation.

Daugaard says the challenge will "ensure growth in the industry" while emphasizing the need for philanthropy in agriculture. The announcement came at biofuels producer POET's headquarters in Sioux Falls.

The company is committing \$250,000 to the matching challenge. POET CEO Jeff Broin says the effort to promote agriculture education, market development and research is crucial for the state's future.

The foundation is a nonprofit made up of South Dakota ag industry leaders. President Nate Franzén says the group looks forward to investing in the "future of our industry."

Public hearing to be held over South Dakota turkey barn

IPSWICH, S.D. (AP) — A public hearing will be held after residents expressed opposition to the site of a proposed 5,000-hen turkey barn.

The Edmunds County Commission approved permits for Farm Holdings S.D. 12's three turkey barns in February. County Commissioner Tim Thomas said only the barn located 2 miles (3 kilometers) southeast of Ipswich has been met with strong opposition.

Annette Jones, county planning and zoning officer, told Aberdeen American News that 61 residents have signed a petition calling for county commissioners to retract Farm Holdings' building permit. Farm Holdings S.D. 12 is a limited liability company owned by Hendrix Genetics.

Some opposing residents worry about odor and reduced property values.

Thomas hopes residents and the company can reach a compromise during Monday's public hearing.

Matt McCready, a spokesman for Hendrix Genetics, said the barn would house about 5,000 hens while the hens lay eggs.

"With this new design (of the barns) we are able to control the internal environment to minimize the odors that could have been produced," he said.

"We are building breeder facilities not commercial facilities. These facilities are shower-in, shower-out so they are operated at a very secure level of bio-security," McCready said.

He also said the barns will benefit the local economy through more business and employment opportunities.

The public hearing will be held at 9 a.m. Monday at the Edmunds County Courthouse in Ipswich.

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

Finalists named in search for La. higher education leader

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Four people have been named as finalists to be Louisiana's next higher education commissioner.

The Board of Regents announced the contenders Tuesday. They are:

—Robert Donley, former executive director and CEO of the Iowa Board of Regents.

—Kim Hunter Reed, executive director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education and a former deputy chief of staff for Gov. Kathleen Blanco.

—Cathy Sandeen, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin Colleges and University of Wisconsin-Extension.

—Paul Turman, system vice president for academic affairs at the South Dakota Board of Regents.

The Board of Regents intends to name the new commissioner at its April 18 meeting.

Joseph Rallo, commissioner since January 2015, plans to retire from the position that pays him \$364,000 a year. The commissioner oversees policy governing Louisiana's 38 public colleges.

Mandated study of Dakota Access line to miss completion goal

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — More time is needed to finish additional court-ordered environmental study of the Dakota Access oil pipeline due to difficulties in getting needed information from American Indian tribes fighting the project in court, according to federal officials.

The delay won't impact the \$3.8 billion pipeline, which has been operating since last June, moving North Dakota oil through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois. But it will delay resolution of a federal lawsuit that has lingered for nearly two years.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg last summer ordered the Army Corps of Engineers to further review the pipeline's impact on tribal interests, including how a spill under the Lake Oahe reservoir on the Missouri River in the Dakotas would impact the water supply of the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux. Those tribes are leading the lawsuit that was filed in July 2016.

The Corps last October told Boasberg it would finish the mandated work by April 2, but the agency late last week informed him that won't happen "as a result of difficulties in obtaining requested information from the plaintiff tribes in a timely manner." Justice Department Attorney Reuben Schifman did not provide a new date, saying it depended on cooperation from the tribes.

The tribes have accused the Corps and Texas-based developer Energy Transfer Partners of not giving them a meaningful role in the process. The tribes contend they also haven't been allowed adequate input in the completion of a Lake Oahe spill response plan or in the selection of an independent engineering company to review whether the project complies with federal laws and regulations, which Boasberg also ordered.

Standing Rock attorney Jan Hasselman in court documents filed in early March asked Boasberg to force the Corps and ETP to allow more tribal involvement, acknowledging such a move would require delaying the completion of the work.

Corps and company attorneys have objected to that request. Schifman said in court documents filed last week that "the tribes have refused to meaningfully engage," and ETP attorney William Scherman said the tribes are "inhabiting an alternate universe" with their views on how the work should be completed.

Boasberg hasn't ruled.

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

Alexandria man guilty of stealing from elderly mother

ALEXANDRIA, S.D. (AP) — An Alexandria man has been found guilty of stealing from his ailing mother. Kenneth Hauge will be sentenced in May after a jury found him guilty of theft by exploitation for stealing \$35,000 from his mother's bank accounts while she received care at Firesteel Healthcare Community in Mitchell.

The Daily Republic says Hauge was initially power of attorney for his 90-year-old mother, but those rights were revoked and another family member was named.

Court documents say Hauge admitted spending his mother's money on himself and others.

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

Couple arrests on possible child abuse, drug charges

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls couple has been arrested on possible child abuse and drug charges.

Police say a parole officer went to visit the man at the home Monday afternoon and found six children living in filthy conditions. KELO-TV reports authorities also found a small amount of methamphetamine in the basement.

The man and woman could face abuse or cruelty to a minor as well as drug possession charges.

Information from: KELO-TV, <http://www.keloland.com>

Tom Berman named news director for US Central region

CHICAGO (AP) — The Associated Press has named Tom Berman as regional news director for the central United States, a new position overseeing AP's journalism and news operations across media formats in 14 states stretching from Texas to the upper Midwest.

The appointment was announced Tuesday by Managing Editor Brian Carovillano. Berman will be based in Chicago, AP's Central regional hub, where he has been regional editor since August 2014.

AP is in the process of merging the management of its text, photo, video and interactive journalism at regional desks around the world. The Central region will now be managed by a single management team in which every format is represented, and will include multimedia journalists and an integrated editing desk that emphasizes video, photos and social media.

"Tom Berman has long been a newsroom leader at AP and has helped lead coverage of defining stories on two continents," Carovillano said. "He's one of the smartest editors I know and has been a driver of innovations in how we cover news around the world. We will see more of the same from Tom in this new role."

As regional editor, leading a team of AP reporters and editors, Berman has managed stories such as Hurricane Harvey, the protests against the Dakota Access pipeline and the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. AP won the 2014 Sigma Delta Chi Award for deadline reporting on that shooting and the protests that followed.

Prior to becoming regional editor, Berman served as deputy Europe editor, based in London.

A native of New York City and a graduate of New York University, Berman joined AP in 1997 in Boston after working as a reporter at newspapers in New York and Massachusetts. In Boston, he worked as a supervising editor, helping direct coverage of the death of John F. Kennedy Jr.

He later served as Pennsylvania news editor, and from 2003 to 2012 was a director of state news, a role in which he worked to help strengthen the cooperative's state news reports and helped lead the restructuring of the AP in the United States along regional lines.

Community ideas sought for Deadwood's plan for the future

DEADWOOD, S.D. (AP) — City officials in Deadwood want ideas from the community as they set goals for the future of the Black Hills town.

The Black Hills Pioneer reports that public visioning meetings are scheduled March 27 and 29 as part of the effort to update the city's comprehensive plan.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Bob Nelson Jr. says the plan hasn't been updated since 2001. He says state law calls for it to be done every 10 years.

Community and visitor surveys have already been completed. The targeted date for completion of the plan is June 1.

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

Man sentenced for helping steal dog from ailing officer

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A Minnesota man who helped steal a puppy belonging to a South Dakota police officer who was recovering from brain surgery has been sentenced to a month in jail and fined \$854.

The American News reports 19-year-old Hassan Yusef, of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, pleaded guilty earlier this month to being an accessory to a felony.

Police say the 4-week old German shepherd and electronic devices were taken Sept. 30 from the home of Aberdeen Officer Briston Bruce, and the puppy was later let loose in Minnesota. It was found by a Minneapolis resident who placed an ad on social media, and police intervened to arrange for the dog's return.

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

Board approves new academic standards in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A state education board has approved new math and reading standards for South Dakota students.

The South Dakota Board of Education Standards approved the changes Monday for English language arts, math and several other areas. Each school district will choose their own curriculum to meet those standards.

Other new standards include social studies with an emphasis on Native American culture and history.

The Argus Leader says the revised standards were developed by educators as well as representatives from colleges and industry. They were approved following four public hearings.

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

Allegations from women in his past shadow Trump

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The chorus of women from President Donald Trump's past is getting louder.

Accusations about Trump's past sexual exploits bubbled up on three fronts Tuesday, with two women pressing court cases and a porn actress publicly needling the president. Trump has so far weathered the rising #MeToo movement, but the latest developments served as a fresh reminder about the shadow thrown by questions about the thrice-married businessman's past.

In short order on Tuesday:

—A former Playboy model who claims she had an affair with Trump in 2006 filed a lawsuit in California seeking to invalidate a confidentiality agreement so she can discuss her alleged relationship.

—A New York City judge ruled that a defamation lawsuit by a former contestant on "The Apprentice" can move forward while Trump is in office. She has accused Trump of unwanted sexual contact.

—Porn actress Stormy Daniels and her lawyer continued their media campaign against Trump as she seeks to invalidate a nondisclosure agreement she signed days before the 2016 presidential election so she can discuss their relationship.

"People DO care that he lied about it, had me bullied, broke laws to cover it up, etc.," Daniels tweeted.

Trump has consistently denied accusations from all three women. He has previously called his accusers "liars" and has deemed such reports "made up stuff." But it was another distraction for a White House already contending with a rash of high-level departures and a stalled legislative agenda.

Some longtime allies questioned whether the accusations would have much impact. More than a dozen women came forward during the 2016 campaign to say that Trump had harassed them or worse, many speaking out in the wake of the "Access Hollywood" tape in which he was heard bragging about groping women. Some of them spoke out again as the #MeToo movement took off.

"I think we learned through the campaign something we never thought was true. People were able to bifurcate the person from the policies," said former campaign adviser Barry Bennett. "They were willing to overlook the personal behavior or the words on tape."

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In the case of the Playboy model, Karen McDougal filed suit Tuesday in Los Angeles County Superior Court against American Media Inc., the company that owns the supermarket tabloid National Enquirer. It had paid her \$150,000 during the 2016 presidential election. The lawsuit alleges that McDougal was paid for the rights to her story of an affair, but the story never ran. It also alleges that Trump's attorney, Michael Cohen, was secretly involved in her discussions with American Media.

McDougal's lawsuit was filed on the same day a New York judge sided with Summer Zervos, a 2006 "Apprentice" contestant. She sued Trump after he dismissed as "fabricated" and "made-up" her claims of misconduct at a hotel in Beverly Hills, California, in 2007. Her lawsuit sought an apology and at least \$2,914.

In saying the suit can go forward, Judge Jennifer Schecter wrote, "No one is above the law."

Trump's lawyers had argued the Constitution immunized him from being sued in state court while he's president and had said the case should at least be delayed until he's out of office. They said their position was supported by a long line of Supreme Court cases requiring courts to show deference to the president and his schedule.

In 1997, the Supreme Court ruled that a sitting president was not immune from civil litigation on something that happened before taking office and was unrelated to the office. The ruling came after Paula Jones filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against President Bill Clinton. That case was dismissed by a judge, but was appealed. The appeal was still pending when Clinton agreed to pay \$850,000 to Jones to settle the case. He did not admit wrongdoing.

Also Tuesday, an attorney for Daniels — her real name is Stephanie Clifford — tweeted what he described as a 2011 photo of Clifford taking a lie detector test during which she addressed her relationship with Trump. Lawyer Michael Avenatti added the hash tags #searchforthetruth, #whosenext? and #buckle-up.

Daniels and McDougal have offered strikingly similar stories about their alleged relationships with Trump. Both women claim to have had sexual encounters with him in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, in 2006. McDougal, who was the 1998 Playboy Playmate of the Year, said Trump also brought her to his private bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

In a time of rising concern about the treatment of women, the president has repeatedly offered sympathy for men accused of misconduct.

After White House aide Rob Porter was pushed out over public reports that two ex-wives had accused him of abuse, Trump praised Porter and then appeared to cast doubt on the ex-wives' allegations. The president last year backed Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore, who was accused of pursuing romantic relationships with teenage girls when he was in his 30s, saying that Moore "totally denies it."

Porter's exit put White House leadership under a harsh spotlight, raising questions about the security clearance process, and prompting calls for the president to state his support for victims of domestic violence. A week later, Trump declared he was "totally opposed to domestic violence."

Associated Press writers Mike Balsamo in Los Angeles and Colleen Long in New York City contributed.

Police: Suspect in Austin bombing attacks blows himself up

By JIM VERTUNO, Associated Press

ROUND ROCK, Texas (AP) — The suspect in a series of bombing attacks in Austin blew himself up early Wednesday as authorities closed in, a dramatic end to a weeklong siege of the Texas capital, where two were killed and four injured in a series of blasts.

Authorities had zeroed in on the suspect in the last 24 to 36 hours and located his vehicle at a hotel on Interstate 35 in the Austin suburb of Round Rock, Austin Police Chief Brian Manley said at a news conference. They were waiting for ballistic vehicles to arrive to move in for an arrest when his vehicle began to drive away, Manley said. Authorities followed the vehicle, which ran into a ditch on the side of the road, the police chief said.

When members of the SWAT team approached, the suspect detonated an explosive device inside the vehicle, the police chief said. The blast knocked back one officer, while a second officer fired his weapon,

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Manley said.

Authorities identified the suspect only as a 24-year-old white man and wouldn't say if he was from Austin. Austin has been targeted by four package bombings since March 2 that killed two people and wounded four others. A fifth parcel bomb detonated at a FedEx distribution center near San Antonio early Tuesday.

Manley said the suspect is believed to be responsible for all the major Austin bombings, but authorities acknowledged it was too soon to say if the suspect had worked alone. Authorities also said they didn't know his motive.

FBI agent Chris Combs, head of the agency's San Antonio office, said, "We are concerned that there may be other packages that are still out there."

Isaac Figueroa, 26, said he and his brother heard sirens and helicopters early Wednesday and drove toward them, then cut through nearby woods on foot after they hit a police roadblock.

Figueroa said they saw a silver or gray Jeep Cherokee that was pinned between black and white vehicles and "looked like it had been rammed off the road." He said he saw police deploy a robot to go examine the Jeep.

President Donald Trump, who had earlier said whoever was responsible for the Austin bombings was "obviously a very sick individual or individuals," tweeted, "AUSTIN BOMBING SUSPECT IS DEAD. Great job by law enforcement and all concerned!"

The suspect's death followed a day of rapid-fire developments in the case.

On Tuesday, a bomb inside a package exploded around 1 a.m. as it passed along a conveyor belt at a FedEx shipping center in Schertz, northeast of San Antonio and about 60 miles (95 kilometers) southwest of Austin. One worker reported ringing in her ears and was treated at the scene.

Later in the morning, police sent a bomb squad to a FedEx facility outside the Austin airport to check on a suspicious package. Federal agencies and police later said that package had indeed contained an explosive that was successfully intercepted and that it, too, was tied to the other bombings.

Authorities also closed off an Austin-area FedEx store where they believe the bomb that exploded in Schertz was shipped. They roped off a large area around the shopping center in the enclave of Sunset Valley and were collecting evidence.

The Schertz blast came two days after a bombing wounded two men Sunday night in a quiet Austin neighborhood about 3 miles (5 kilometers) from the FedEx store. It was triggered by a nearly invisible tripwire, suggesting a "higher level of sophistication" than agents saw in three package bombs previously left on doorsteps, according to Fred Milanowski, the agent in charge of the Houston division of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Authorities have not identified the two men who were hurt Sunday, saying only that they are in their 20s. But William Grote told The Associated Press that his grandson was one of them and that he had what appeared to be nails embedded in his knees.

During an Oval Office meeting Tuesday, President Donald Trump said whoever is responsible for the bombings "is obviously a very sick individual or individuals" and that authorities are "working to get to the bottom of it."

Homeland officials to talk election security

By **MARY CLARE JALONICK, CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY and CHAD DAY, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators are expected to press Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen on the department's efforts to secure state election systems as the Senate Intelligence Committee launches an effort to safeguard against foreign meddling in this year's elections.

Nielsen will testify Wednesday along with Jeh Johnson, who was President Barack Obama's head of Homeland Security when Russian agents targeted election systems in 21 states ahead of the 2016 general election. Senators on the panel have criticized both administrations for not moving quickly enough to stem the Russian threat.

The hearing follows a Tuesday news conference in which committee members from both parties said

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government efforts to protect state and local elections from Russian cyberattacks haven't gone far enough. Federal warnings last time did not provide enough information or in some cases go to the right people, the senators said, though they reiterated that there was no evidence votes were changed.

Top U.S. intelligence officials have said they've seen indications Russian agents are preparing a new round of election interference this year.

The committee is recommending that states make sure voting machines have paper audit trails and aren't capable of being connected to the internet. Senators also are pushing for better communication among the various U.S. intelligence agencies and federal, state and local governments about cyber threats and vulnerabilities in computer systems.

The committee's recommendations preview an election security report expected to be released in full in the coming weeks. It is the first of four reports planned as part of the panel's wide-ranging investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., and Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the panel, released the recommendations ahead of Wednesday's hearing. They come as Congress is eyeing increased funding for election security in a wide-ranging spending bill that could make its way through the House and Senate this week.

Burr said the committee's investigation revealed that the Russian cyber effort exposed "some of the key gaps" in the security of the nation's election infrastructure. He said the committee wants to maintain state control of elections, but the federal government should be doing more to help.

"Clearly we've got to get some standards in place that assure every state that at the end of the day they can certify their vote totals," he said.

Senators are also urging state and local election officials to take advantage of resources provided by the Homeland Security Department, such as comprehensive risk assessments and remote cyberscanning of their networks to spot vulnerabilities. Overall, experts say far too little has been done to shore up those vulnerabilities in 10,000 U.S. voting jurisdictions that mostly run on obsolete and imperfectly secured technology.

As of last month, just 14 states had requested risk assessments and 30 had asked for remote cyberscans of their networks, according to Homeland Security officials. But even that was straining resources, since many of those risk assessments have not been completed.

Illinois, which held the second-in-the-nation primary on Tuesday, requested the assessment in late January but it was not completed in time for the primary.

The senators are also recommending that states consider implementing "more widespread, statistically sound audits of election results." Currently, 32 states and the District of Columbia require postelection audits, with three others conducting such audits under some circumstances.

Cybersecurity experts say the best approach would be for states to require risk-limiting audits, a type of an audit that uses statistical methods and is considered a more rigorous process. So far, three states — Colorado, Rhode Island and Virginia — have passed legislation to require them. Other states, including Georgia, are weighing legislation this year that would implement risk-limiting audits.

There's no evidence that any hack in the November 2016 election affected election results, but the attempts scared state election officials. DHS took nearly a year to inform the affected states of hacking attempts or suspicious cyberactivity, 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 any compromise of election systems needs to be more robust, especially since President Donald Trump has not addressed the matter as an urgent problem.

"Every one of Mr. Trump's appointees in law enforcement and national security acknowledge what an ongoing threat Russia is," Warner said Tuesday. "It's pretty amazing to me we've had the director of the FBI, the director of national intelligence and the head of the NSA say in public testimony within the last month that they've received no direction from the White House to make election security a priority."

Read the Senate Intelligence Committee recommendations: <http://apne.ws/VXRyJOc>

Zuckerberg asked to testify; data firm's CEO suspended

By **DANICA KIRKA** and **GREGORY KATZ**, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The head of Trump-affiliated data-mining firm Cambridge Analytica has been suspended, while government authorities are bearing down on both the firm and Facebook over allegations the firm stole data from 50 million Facebook users to manipulate elections.

Cambridge's board of directors suspended CEO Alexander Nix pending an investigation after Nix boasted of various unsavory services to an undercover reporter for Britain's Channel 4 News.

Channel 4 News broadcast clips Tuesday that also show Nix saying his data-mining firm played a major role in securing Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential elections.

Nix said the firm handled "all the data, all the analytics, all the targeting" and said Cambridge used emails with a "self-destruct timer" to make its role more difficult to trace.

"There's no evidence, there's no paper trail, there's nothing," he said.

In a statement, Cambridge's board said Nix's comments "do not represent the values or operations of the firm and his suspension reflects the seriousness with which we view this violation."

Cambridge has denied wrongdoing, and Trump's campaign has said it didn't use Cambridge's data.

Alexandr Kogan, the Cambridge University researcher who developed the app used by Cambridge Analytica to harvest data from millions of Facebook users, claimed Wednesday he has been made a scapegoat.

He told BBC he believed all the information he provided was obtained legitimately. He said it was Cambridge Analytica that came to him.

"They approached me. In terms of the usage of Facebook data they wrote the terms of service for the app, they provided the legal advice that this was all appropriate," he said.

Kogan admitted he did not ask enough questions about the data use and did not have a lawyer review the agreement.

Facebook also drew continued criticism for its alleged inaction to protect users' privacy. On Tuesday, the chairman of the U.K. parliamentary media committee, Damian Collins, said his group has repeatedly asked Facebook how it uses data. He said Facebook officials "have been misleading to the committee."

The committee summoned Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg to testify.

"It is now time to hear from a senior Facebook executive with the sufficient authority to give an accurate account of this catastrophic failure of process," Collins wrote Zuckerberg. "Given your commitment at the start of the New Year to 'fixing' Facebook, I hope that this representative will be you."

Meanwhile, Britain's information commissioner, Elizabeth Denham, said she is pursuing a warrant to search Cambridge Analytica's servers. She has also asked Facebook to cease its own audit of Cambridge Analytica's data use.

Cambridge Analytica said it is committed to helping the U.K. investigation. However, Denham's office said the firm failed to meet a deadline to produce the information requested.

Denham said the prime allegation against Cambridge Analytica is that it acquired personal data in an unauthorized way, adding that the data provisions act requires services like Facebook to have strong safeguards against misuse of data.

Leading Democrats in the U.S. Senate also called on Zuckerberg to testify. Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, called Facebook's latest privacy scandal a "danger signal." She wants Zuckerberg's assurances that Facebook is prepared to take the lead on security measures that protect people's privacy — or Congress may step in.

Facebook sidestepped questions on whether Zuckerberg would appear, saying instead that it's currently focused on conducting its own reviews.

Facebook has weathered many such blow-ups before and is used to apologizing and moving on. But the stakes are bigger this time. The latest scandal has some people reconsidering their relationship status with the social network, though there isn't much of anywhere else to go.

Chris Wylie, who once worked for Cambridge Analytica, was quoted as saying the company used the data to build psychological profiles so voters could be targeted with ads and stories.

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Wylie has agreed to be interviewed by Democrats on the U.S. House Intelligence Committee. A date has not been set, and it's unclear if Republicans on the panel will attend.

On Tuesday, Wylie said he found Facebook's reaction to the revelations bizarre. He told an audience at the Frontline Club in London that before the story broke, Facebook had agreed to work with him to improve its platform. But he said he was blindsided on Friday with a news release that identified him as a suspect in the case.

Cambridge Analytica found itself in further allegations of wrongdoing. Britain's Channel 4 used an undercover investigation to record Nix saying that the company could use unorthodox methods to wage successful political campaigns for clients.

In footage released Monday, Nix said the company could "send some girls" around to a rival candidate's house, suggesting that girls from Ukraine are beautiful and effective in this role.

He also said the company could "offer a large amount of money" to a rival candidate and have the whole exchange recorded so it could be posted on the internet to show that the candidate was corrupt.

Nix says in a statement that he deeply regrets his role in the meeting and has apologized to staff.

"I am aware how this looks, but it is simply not the case," he said. "I must emphatically state that Cambridge Analytica does not condone or engage in entrapment, bribes or so-called 'honeytraps', and nor does it use untrue material for any purposes."

Nix told the BBC that the Channel 4 sting was "intended to embarrass us".

"We see this as a coordinated attack by the media that's been going on for very, very many months in order to damage the company that had some involvement with the election of Donald Trump," he said.

The data harvesting used by Cambridge Analytica has also triggered calls for further investigation from the European Union, as well as federal and state officials in the United States.

On Tuesday, a dozen consumer-advocacy organizations pressed the Federal Trade Commission in the U.S. to investigate whether the release of data violated an agreement Facebook signed with the FTC in 2011 offering privacy assurances.

The move comes after Bloomberg News first reported the FTC could already be investigating. The FTC hasn't confirmed the investigation but said it takes "any allegations of violations of our consent decrees very seriously."

AP Technology Writers Mae Anderson and Anick Jesdanun in New York and AP writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Richard Lardner in Washington contributed to this story.

Israeli military confirms it hit Syrian nuclear site in 2007

By ARON HELLER, Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The Israeli military confirmed Wednesday it carried out the 2007 airstrike in Syria that destroyed what was believed to be a nuclear reactor, lifting the veil of secrecy over one of its most daring and mysterious operations in recent memory.

Although Israel was widely believed to have been behind the Sept. 6, 2007, airstrike, it has never before commented publicly on it.

In a lengthy release, the military revealed that eight F-15 fighter jets carried out the top-secret airstrikes against the facility in the Deir el-Zour region, 450 kilometers (about 300 miles) northeast of Damascus, destroying a site that had been in development for years and was scheduled to go into operation at the end of that year.

Israel's involvement has been one of its most closely held secrets, and it was not immediately clear why Israel decided to go public now. The military would not comment on its reasoning, but the move could be related to the upcoming memoir of former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who ordered the strike and has hinted about it for years, or it could be meant as a warning to archenemy Iran, which is active in Syria.

"The motivation of our enemies has grown in recent years, but so too the might of the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)," Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said Wednesday. "Everyone in the Middle East would

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do well to internalize this equation.”

Israel and Syria have always been bitter enemies. Throughout Syria’s seven-year civil war, Israel has carried out well over 100 airstrikes, most believed to have been aimed at suspected weapons shipments destined for the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group. Both Iran and Hezbollah are allied with Syrian President Bashar Assad.

At the time of the 2007 strike, Syria accused Israel of invading its airspace, but gave no further details about the target.

The pre-mission briefing, made public Wednesday, stated that the operation should not be attributed to Israel so as to minimize the potential for an all-out war.

The strike was reminiscent of an Israeli attack in 1981 against a reactor being built in Iraq. The strike was later credited with preventing Saddam Hussein from acquiring weapons of mass destruction that could have been used in the Gulf War a decade later.

“The message from the 2007 attack on the reactor is that Israel will not tolerate construction that can pose an existential threat,” military chief Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot said in Wednesday’s statement. “This was the message in 1981, this is the message in 2007 and this is the future message to our enemies.”

Eisenkot, who at the time commanded Israel’s northern front along the Lebanese and Syrian borders, said it marked Israel’s most comprehensive attack in Syria since the 1973 Mideast war, and that everyone involved knew it could spark a new one. He said only a handful of top commanders were aware of the plans for Operation “Outside The Box.”

The military said the F-15s took off from two bases in southern Israel at 10:30 p.m. on Sept. 5 and returned four hours later. Wednesday’s announcement also indicated the Syrian reactor was much closer to completion than previously reported.

From Israel’s perspective, the strike was an astounding success since it not only destroyed the site, but prevented further escalation and strengthened its deterrence in the region.

Air force commander Maj. Gen. Amikam Norkin said the current turmoil in Syria has further vindicated the strike, particularly since the reactor was in an area later captured by Islamic State militants.

“Imagine what situation we would be in today if there was a nuclear reactor in Syria,” Norkin said. “Israel’s decision to destroy the reactor is one of the most important decisions taken here in the last 70 years.”

Uzi Rabi, an expert on Iran at Tel Aviv University, said Israel’s surprising confirmation might be meant as a “warning sign” to Iran as it expands its military footprint in Syria. Israel has warned against the establishment of a permanent Iranian military presence in Syria, particularly in areas close to Israel.

Last month, Israel shot down an Iranian drone that entered its airspace, triggering a clash in which an Israeli warplane crashed after being struck by Syrian anti-aircraft fire. Israel responded by bombing Syrian anti-aircraft batteries.

The military said it began obtaining information regarding foreign experts helping Syria develop the Deir el-Zour site in late 2004. Later it discovered that North Korea was helping Syria build a reactor to manufacture plutonium.

In his memoir, “Decision Points,” former President George W. Bush said Israel first asked the U.S. to bomb the site and then carried out an attack itself when Washington declined.

The strike came about a year after Israel’s inconclusive war against Hezbollah, in which the Lebanese guerrillas battled Israel’s army to a stalemate. The poor performance raised questions about Israel’s deterrent capabilities.

“Prime Minister Olmert’s execution of the strike made up for the confidence I had lost in the Israelis during the Lebanon war,” Bush wrote, adding that the Israeli leader rejected a suggestion to go public with the operation.

“Olmert told me he wanted total secrecy. He wanted to avoid anything that might back Syria into a corner and force Assad to retaliate. This was his operation, and I felt an obligation to respect his wishes,” Bush wrote.

Olmert has skirted around the issue, and military censors, for years, repeatedly saying that according

to foreign sources Israel had been involved. After Bush's account was published in 2010, Olmert said: "I don't want (to), and I can't deny it."

Olmert, who was prime minister from 2006 until 2009 and was recently released from prison after serving time for corruption, is expected to delve more deeply into the issue in his upcoming book. The disclosure looks to help rehabilitate at least part of Olmert's tarnished image while damaging the legacy of his longtime rival, then-Defense Minister Ehud Barak, who was reportedly hesitant to strike in Syria.

Follow Aron Heller at www.twitter.com/aronhellerap

Rauner, Pritzker attacks started long before matchup was set

By SARA BURNETT and JOHN O'CONNOR, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Illinois Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner and billionaire Democratic businessman J.B. Pritzker spent millions attacking each other even before their 2018 matchup was set, providing a preview of just how brutal and astronomically expensive the race for the state's top job is expected to be.

Rauner is considered one of the nation's most vulnerable GOP incumbents up for re-election this fall, making the typically Democratic-leaning state a top target for Democrats looking to regain some of the governor's offices they lost four years ago.

Pritzker, an investor and heir to the Hyatt hotel fortune, already has spent more than \$70 million to bankroll his campaign, much of it on ads attacking Rauner for a more than two-year state budget stalemate. Rauner, a wealthy former private equity investor, has put roughly \$50 million into his bid for a second term, airing ads that featured wiretap audio of Pritzker talking with former Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Rauner's personal wealth is just shy of \$1 billion, but Pritzker is worth several times more. Combined they're expected to spend enough by November to top California in 2010 as the nation's most expensive governor's race.

Pritzker, 53, easily won Tuesday's Democratic primary over Chris Kennedy, the son of the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy; and Daniel Biss, 40, a state senator who campaigned as the "middle-class candidate."

Pritzker pledged to defeat Rauner but told supporters "we have a real fight ahead of us."

"Tonight, we've taken the next step of beating Bruce Rauner and putting Illinois back on the side of working families," he told a cheering crowd at his campaign party. "I will fight today, and tomorrow, and every day of this election and every day after to get our state back on track."

Rauner, 61, took advantage of a national GOP wave four years ago to pull off a surprising victory in a state otherwise dominated by Democrats and win his first political office. On Tuesday he defeated conservative state Rep. Jeanne Ives for the Republican nomination.

"We are in a critical time, a critical turning point in Illinois," Rauner told supporters. "I am humbled by this victory. You have given me a chance to win the battle against corruption that plagues Illinois."

Ives raised just \$4 million — less than any of the other prominent candidates. Once dismissed by Rauner as a "fringe" candidate, she gave him a tougher-than-expected race, attacking the governor's conservative credentials in edgy TV ads. One of them, which the chairman of the state GOP blasted as a "cowardly attempt to stoke political division," portrays actors mockingly thanking Rauner for not doing enough to restrict illegal immigration, abortion and transgender bathroom rights.

In other races on the Illinois primary ballot, state Sen. Kwame Raoul defeated former Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn for the Democratic nomination for state attorney general. There also were numerous contested congressional primary races, including a Chicago-area district where seven-term Democratic Rep. Dan Lipinski held off a challenge from progressive candidate Marie Newman.

But none involved the kind of spending as seen in the governor's race. Personal wealth solidified Rauner and Pritzker's front-runner status but also made them frequent targets for opponent attacks. Even Kennedy spent \$2 million of his own money on the race.

Biss, a Harvard-educated mathematician who gave up teaching to enter politics, set up a website to track what he says is a \$171,000-a-day campaign by Pritzker. The Democratic front-runner has been advertising

on television from nearly the moment he announced his candidacy 11 months ago.

Pritzker's opponents also have attacked his connections with overseas trusts in low-tax countries, though he maintains they're focused on charitable giving and that he has no control over them. In response, Biss has called him a "fraud" while Kennedy labeled him a "liar."

But far more damaging were the ads Rauner ran with audio the FBI captured of him talking with the now-imprisoned Blagojevich. The ads included a 30-minute infomercial-style ad with the full FBI recordings.

Rauner took on Pritzker again when more tapes surfaced from the Chicago Tribune. They revealed Pritzker describing Secretary of State Jesse White — a Pritzker backer — as the "least offensive" black officeholder to be considered for the Senate seat vacated by then-President-elect Barack Obama. Pritzker has apologized, and White continues to back him.

Rauner also has repeatedly linked Pritzker to Michael Madigan, the longest-serving state House speaker in modern U.S. history and the leader of the Democratic Party of Illinois and a frequent target of the governor.

Rauner rolled to victory in 2014 with a promise to "shake up" Springfield with a pro-business, anti-union agenda including lower property taxes and term limits on officeholders. But his ongoing spat with Madigan and other legislative Democrats left the state without a budget for two years while billions of dollars of debt piled up.

O'Connor reported from Springfield, Illinois. Associated Press writers Don Babwin and Herbert McCann in Chicago and Sarah Zimmerman in Springfield contributed.

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"Snacks" Norvell fires up low-key Gonzaga

By JOHN MARSHALL, AP Basketball Writer

Zach Norvell Jr. earned the nickname "Snacks" for his affinity for candy and chocolate. Gonzaga's coaches picked up on it when Norvell's father used the moniker during a visit, so Snacks followed the shooting guard to Spokane.

Now Norvell is gobbling up opponents in the NCAA Tournament.

Gregarious and confident, Norvell has provided the fire the low-key Zags have needed and has them in position to make another Final Four run.

"He's got a persona that we really need in our program right now, quite frankly," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "We have an overabundance of introverts and that's one thing he's not. And so I call him our spiritual leader. He gets us going every practice, even the ones they don't want to be at."

Norvell has the Zags in a position few outside Spokane thought they would be: Two wins from a return trip to the Final Four.

Gonzaga reached the Final Four for the first time last season, losing to North Carolina in the title game. The Bulldogs lost key players from that team: Przemek Karnowski, Jordan Mathews, Zach Collins and Nigel Williams-Goss.

Gonzaga was picked to finish second in the West Coast Conference, but swept the regular-season and tournament titles to reach the NCAA Tournament for the 20th straight year.

Once the Zags reached the field of 68, Norvell took over.

The redshirt freshman averaged 12.3 points during the regular season, but has upped his game under college basketball's brightest spotlight.

Norvell overcome a rough shooting night to hit the tiebreaking 3-pointer with 20.8 seconds left in Gonzaga's opening-round, 68-64 win over UNC-Greensboro. He followed that up by scoring 28 points, hitting

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six 3-pointers and grabbing 12 rebounds in a second-round win over Ohio State.

The win over the Buckeyes sent Gonzaga to the Sweet 16 for the fourth straight season and a match-up with Florida State on Thursday in Los Angeles.

"I'm a really confident guy and the coaching staff and all the guys around me put the confidence in me," Norvell said.

Norvell was a spectator to history a year ago.

A 6-foot-5 shooting guard from Chicago, he was a top-100 recruit who once scored 53 points and hit 14 3-pointers in an AAU game. But when he arrived in Spokane, Norvell was dealing with a lingering knee injury and joined a roster stacked with guard talent, so he ended up redshirting.

Instead of pouting, Norvell took the time to learn from Williams-Goss, Jordan Mathews, Josh Perkins and Silas Melson. He observed how those veteran guards went about their business, how they played the game and led Gonzaga to the national title game.

"Sitting last year was big," Norvell said. "Behind great guards, I learned a lot from those guys."

Norvell had to use those lessons as a backup to start the 2017-18 season, playing behind Corey Kispert. When Kispert injured his ankle in November, Norvell slid into the starting lineup and shined, finishing third in scoring on a team full of scoring options while becoming the emotional leader and spark for the Bulldogs.

"He's got a winning spirit about him," Few said. "He has an effervescence and charisma. He not only provides that stuff on the floor, but off the floor is very important."

Snacks has them covered.

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

Authorities recover new clues after another Austin blast

By **PAUL J. WEBER** and **WILL WEISSERT**, Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Investigators pursuing a suspected serial bomber in the Texas capital faced new threats along with the promise of valuable new leads as their attention shifted to a FedEx shipping center near San Antonio where a package exploded and the discovery of another, unexploded bomb near Austin's airport.

Even as they pored through surveillance video footage and collected evidence hoping to get closer to tracking down whoever is behind the series of blasts that have killed two people and seriously wounded four others, a Tuesday night scare caused them to respond to a Goodwill store in southern Austin. It turned out to be an unrelated explosion: Someone dropped off a device sometimes used in military training and it went off, injuring a worker.

Police said they don't believe it was the work of the bomber, or a copycat. They said such military items are occasionally donated to Goodwill instead of being properly disposed of.

Gary Davis, president and CEO of Goodwill Texas, said the device known as an artillery simulator detonated when an employee tried to handle it.

"In this town, if an incendiary device goes off, everybody just scatters and panics," Davis said as he stood outside a police barrier huddling with other employees. "We're all on edge."

Even before the Goodwill scare, Tuesday had been a busy day. A bomb inside a package exploded around 1 a.m. as it passed along a conveyer belt at a FedEx shipping center in Schertz, northeast of San Antonio and about 60 miles (95 kilometers) southwest of Austin. One worker reported ringing in her ears and was treated at the scene.

Local and federal authorities confirmed that blast was related to four others since March 2.

Later in the morning, police sent a bomb squad to a FedEx facility outside the Austin airport to check on a suspicious package. Federal agencies and police later said that package had indeed contained an explosive that was successfully intercepted and that it, too, was tied to the other bombings.

Authorities also closed off an Austin-area FedEx store where they believe the bomb that exploded in

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Schertz was shipped. They roped off a large area around the shopping center in the enclave of Sunset Valley and were collecting evidence.

U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul, a Republican from Austin who is chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said that investigators have obtained surveillance videos that "could possibly" show a suspect.

"I hope his biggest mistake was going through FedEx," McCaul, who has spoken to federal investigators and Austin police Chief Brian Manley, said of the bomber in a phone interview.

He added that the person responsible for the bombings had previously been "very sophisticated in going around surveillance cameras."

"They've got a couple of videos that could possibly be the person but they're not sure at this point," McCaul said.

Before it exploded, the package had been sent from Austin and was addressed to a home in Austin, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said.

In a statement, FedEx officials said the same person responsible for sending the package also shipped a second parcel that has been secured and turned over to law enforcement. A company spokeswoman refused to say if that second package might have been linked to the one reported at the distribution center near the airport.

The Schertz blast came two days after a bombing wounded two men Sunday night in a quiet Austin neighborhood about 3 miles (5 kilometers) from the FedEx store. It was triggered by a nearly invisible tripwire, suggesting a "higher level of sophistication" than agents saw in three package bombs previously left on doorsteps, according to Fred Milanowski, the agent in charge of the Houston division of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

A criminologist at the University of Alabama said if a single perpetrator is behind the blasts, changing the means of delivery increases the bomber's chance of getting caught.

"I think it would suggest that the bomber is trying to stay unpredictable," Adam Lankford said. "But it also increases the likelihood that he would make a mistake."

Authorities have not identified the two men who were hurt Sunday, saying only that they are in their 20s. But William Grote told The Associated Press that his grandson was one of them and that he had what appeared to be nails embedded in his knees.

During an Oval Office meeting Tuesday, President Donald Trump said whoever is responsible for the bombings "is obviously a very sick individual or individuals" and that authorities are "working to get to the bottom of it."

Despite bombing tactics that have now shifted from doorstep packages to tripwires and mailed parcels, investigators have repeated prior warnings about not touching unexpected packages. Austin police say they have now responded to more than 1,200 reports of suspicious packages in a little more than a week — without finding anything dangerous.

The Goodwill blast reminded Shahla Mohnandshaw, who grew up in Afghanistan before moving to the U.S. in 2012, of home — and not in a good way. Mohnandshaw's husband works at the Goodwill where the scare occurred, and she was doing laundry at her apartment complex nearby when she heard helicopters and raced toward the store.

"I was raised on these bombings. I know the feeling of how it feels and how it hurts," she said, adding that she used to tell people "in America, there will never be these things."

AP videojournalist John Mone in Austin and AP writers Jim Vertuno in Austin and Matt Sedensky in New York contributed to this report.

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AP videojournalist John Mone in Austin and AP writers Jim Vertuno contributed to this report.

Complaint: 2 officers 'spooked' before 911 caller is shot

By AMY FORLITI, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minneapolis police officer was charged Tuesday with murder and manslaughter in the fatal shooting of an unarmed Australian woman in July minutes after she called 911 to report a possible sexual assault behind her home.

Officer Mohamed Noor turned himself in after a warrant was issued for his arrest. He shot Justine Ruszczyk Damond, a 40-year-old life coach, on July 15. Damond's death drew international attention, cost the police chief her job and forced major revisions to the department's policy on body cameras.

Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman said the law makes it difficult to charge police officers unless they are "unacceptably reckless." He said, "I agree with that."

But he added: "Clearly Officer Noor violated the rules and deserves to be charged."

Noor is charged with third-degree murder "for perpetrating an eminently dangerous act" and with second-degree manslaughter for "culpable negligence creating unreasonable risk." The murder charge is for a death caused without intent.

Conviction on the first charge carries a presumptive sentence of 12½ years; the second, four years. Bail was set at \$500,000.

Noor has not spoken publicly about the case and declined to answer questions from investigators. His attorney, Thomas Plunkett, said Noor shouldn't have been charged.

"The facts will show that Officer Noor acted as he has been trained and consistent with established departmental policy. Officer Noor should not have been charged with any crime," he said in a statement.

Noor, who had been on paid leave since the shooting, was fired from the police force Tuesday.

Damond's father, John Ruszczyk, and her fiance, Don Damond, issued a joint statement saying the decision to charge Noor was "one step toward justice for this iniquitous act."

"No charges can bring our Justine back. However, justice demands accountability for those responsible for recklessly killing the fellow citizens they are sworn to protect, and today's actions reflect that," the statement said.

Noor's partner the night of the shooting, Matthew Harrity, told investigators that he was startled by a thump on the back of the squad car, heard a voice and glimpsed a person's head and shoulders outside

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his window. He said he drew his gun and held it by his ribcage pointing downward.

The complaint said Harrity then heard a sound like a light bulb breaking, saw a flash and looked to his right to see Noor with his arm extended. He then looked out his window and saw Damond with a gunshot wound in her abdomen. Damond put her hands on the wound and said "I'm dying" or "I'm dead."

"We both got spooked," Harrity told his sergeant later, according to the complaint.

"There is no evidence that, in that short timeframe, Officer Noor encountered, appreciated, investigated, or confirmed a threat that justified the decision to use deadly force," the criminal complaint said. "Instead, Officer Noor recklessly and intentionally fired his handgun from the passenger seat, a location at which he would have been less able than Officer Harrity to see and hear events on the other side of the squad car."

The officers did not turn on their body cameras until after the shooting, and there was no squad camera video of the incident.

The shooting also prompted questions about the training of Noor, a two-year veteran and Somali-American whose arrival on the force had been celebrated by city leaders and Minnesota's large Somali community. Noor, 32, had trained in business and economics and worked in property management before becoming an officer.

Then-Chief Janee Harteau defended Noor's training and said he was suited to be on the street. But Harteau was forced out soon after by Mayor Betsy Hodges.

Chief Medaria Arradondo, Harteau's replacement, quickly announced a policy change requiring officers to turn on their body cameras in responding to any call or traffic stop. Recent reports show the department is not yet in full compliance.

Jaylani Hussein, executive director of the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said he supports the charges against Noor, but hopes they are based on the "heinousness of the crime" and not on Noor's ethnicity.

Police union president Bob Kroll said the union couldn't comment on specifics of the case but would review Noor's firing.

Freeman had originally pledged to make a charging decision by the end of last year, but was captured on video at a holiday reception in December, complaining that investigators hadn't brought him enough evidence to charge Noor.

Freeman apologized a few days later, saying he shouldn't have discussed the case in detail in public. He soon convened a grand jury to help him investigate the case because, he said, several officers weren't cooperating.

Freeman maintained Tuesday that the decision to charge Noor was his.

Associated Press writers Doug Glass, Jeff Baenen and Steve Karnowski contributed to this report from Minneapolis.

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Emails show FEMA silent amid chaos after Hurricane Maria

By TAMI ABDOLLAH, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As hundreds of people stood in line for food and many went hungry during the days and weeks after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, Walmart Inc. and local supermarkets threw out tons of spoiled meat, dairy and produce.

Emails and text messages made public Tuesday in a letter sent by the top Democrat on the House oversight committee describe frantic efforts by officials at Walmart and the Puerto Rican government to get fuel for generators to prevent food from going bad.

From the Federal Emergency Management Agency came only silence.

Within a three-hour time span, Walmart officials were able to connect, through email and text messages,

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with a congressman's office and local Puerto Rican government officials. They passed on their urgent request for help, just two days after the hurricane made landfall.

Meanwhile, the letter states, FEMA remained unresponsive for days.

The fuel issue is another window into difficulties the agency has faced in responding to Hurricane Maria, along with providing Puerto Ricans with thousands of tarps for the homeless and millions of meals for the hungry.

Walmart ultimately disposed of an unclear amount of perishable foods, and local supermarkets reported that they lost tens of thousands of dollars in perishable foods, according to the letter sent by Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., ranking member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Stacey Plaskett, the delegate from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Their letter reiterates a request made to Oversight Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy, R-S.C., in October for documents from the Department of Homeland Security related to FEMA's preparation for and response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Gowdy's office did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

Maria, which made landfall in Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, shut down ports, destroyed crops, and disrupted the power grid, leaving supermarkets without electricity or the fuel to run their generators. Hundreds of thousands of people were also left without easy access to food.

Two days after the hurricane, a senior Walmart official emailed Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill., to ask for help keeping food refrigerated in the few stores they had been able to get up and running.

"The problem is we're running out of generator fuel and need help getting the Governor's approval for me," the Walmart official wrote. "Have you guys been in touch with anyone from FEMA that we can contact to help? We want to keep this food fresh for people."

Walmart had opened three facilities to support the public and had plans to bring more on line, but the key to doing this was having power to run the operation and re-establish its supply chain, the Walmart official wrote.

Roughly an hour after that first email, Gutierrez's office forwarded the email to a Puerto Rican government official. And 12 minutes later, the Puerto Rican government official responded: "FYI I'm sitting with FEMA rep right now so we are taking care of this."

Walmart officials sent over a priority list of a dozen of their top stores — they operated 46 on the island — needing fuel to keep food from spoiling, in addition to their distribution center and home office.

"Fuel at this point is becoming a key concern as we are less than 24 hours left in maintaining power in most facilities," the Walmart official wrote.

The message was forwarded by the Puerto Rican government official to a FEMA official 26 minutes later. But by Sunday, two days after initially reaching out, there was still no response from FEMA. The Puerto Rican government official texted Walmart that FEMA had not responded to numerous requests.

"Did the hospitals get fuel?" the Walmart official asked.

"I think so. But I can't be sure. Our communication with FEMA on the specifics of certain things has been less than desired," the Puerto Rican government official said.

The following morning, the two exchanged messages again. The Puerto Rican government official informed Walmart that he had reached out to the island's emergency management agency, which they hoped could help.

"Our chief concern right now is with our distribution center," the official text messaged back. "We might have two days worth of fuel left. It is critical that we keep that going in order to preserve our fresh inventory. If that goes down it could take weeks to replenish which would have a big negative impact on the island."

A week after the hurricane, still with no reply from FEMA, Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rossello personally reached out to FEMA to request emergency fuel for grocery stores to maintain perishable food supplies, the letter's timeline states.

A Puerto Rican government official informed FEMA officials in an email that "because of immediate threat to public health and safety, the Governor asked John Rabin (FEMA's Acting Regional Administrator for Region II) at 8:10 a.m. this morning to have FEMA deliver fuel to all grocery and large retail immediately."

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It's unclear exactly how much food was lost or whether FEMA ultimately provided the emergency fuel. Responding to a request for comment, FEMA spokesman Daniel Llargues said in an email Tuesday that the agency is aware of the letter and has consistently worked with the committee and will continue to do so.

"The protection of life and safety is our first priority in any response, including working closely with the government of Puerto Rico to support the fueling mission for critical infrastructure" such as hospitals and communications centers, Llargues said.

Llargues said that FEMA has distributed more than 13 million gallons of fuel to date. He did not provide any timeline nor did he confirm the details in the letter.

"It was tough at the beginning of that all the way through, it was tough, we didn't have power," Phillip Keene, a spokesman for Walmart, told The Associated Press. But he added, "We felt comfortable that people were acting in good faith."

Keene said he did not know how much food was thrown out and could not confirm details of the initial scramble for generator fuel. He said nearly all but a handful of stores were able to get back online within a matter of months, relatively quickly given the extent of the damage.

Manuel Reyes, the executive vice president of the Puerto Rico Chamber of Marketing, Industry, and Distribution of Food, told The Associated Press that the lack of fuel was a greater problem in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane due to logistics issues.

Reyes, whose organization represents grocers, food distributors and food manufacturers on the island, said large quantities of food spoiled because businesses ran out of fuel for their generators and there was no distribution system for delivering more. He said many businesses paid up to four times the real cost of fuel when buying on the black market, sometimes competing with large hotels, housing complexes or department stores.

"Since the beginning we made the local and federal governments aware of this, but as far as we know FEMA did not provide fuel or made trucks available to the private food distribution network," Reyes said. "We believe they did provide some fuel to hospitals. We were forced to establish our own distribution system for our members using retrofitted waste-water trucks in order to keep some stores opened and food from going bad."

Reyes said that after three to four weeks, gas stations began to normalize and businesses could get fuel easier.

"But by that time the emergency generators, which are not designed for continuous operation, began failing and we needed new ones or spare parts but few were available," Reyes said. "No help with that either."

Follow Tami Abdollah on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/latams>

Judge: Weinstein company can pay bills, work toward sale

By RANDALL CHASE, AP Business Writer

DOVER, Del. (AP) — A Delaware bankruptcy judge on Tuesday issued initial orders allowing the Weinstein Co. to continue paying its bills and working toward a sale of substantially all of its assets.

Judge Mary Walrath's rulings include interim approval for the company to borrow up to \$25 million to see it through bankruptcy, but only after she expressed concern about the loan terms in the face of a competing financing proposal.

After lengthy arguments by attorneys, Union Bank, the Weinstein Co.'s major existing lender and primary secured creditor, agreed to reduce the amount of upfront fees it was seeking to provide bankruptcy financing.

Robert Del Genio, a consultant serving as chief restructuring officer for the Weinstein Co., testified that the time constraints the company is facing and the loan certainty offered by Union Bank were key factors in accepting its financing offer, which includes an initial draw of \$7.5 million.

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"This company has been liquidity-constrained for quite some time," said Del Genio. "... As of last night, we had \$218,000 of cash."

Lantern Capital Partners, a Dallas-based private equity firm, has offered \$310 million in cash for the Weinstein Co.'s assets. It also has agreed to assume about \$125 million in project-related debt and to cover obligations related to the assumption of certain contracts and leases.

The company's primary assets are a lucrative 277-film library, a television production business, and an unreleased film portfolio that includes four distribution-ready films and other projects in various stages of development.

As the lead, or "stalking horse" bidder, Lantern is entitled to a breakup fee of \$9.3 million and expense reimbursement of up to \$6.2 million if the Weinstein Co. accepts another bid, which would have to be at least \$1 million more than the combined amount of Lantern's offer and bid protections.

Walrath scheduled an April 6 hearing on the proposed bid procedures, which propose a May 2 auction if there is more than one qualified bidder. Meanwhile, a March 28 meeting is scheduled regarding the appointment of an official committee of unsecured creditors.

Weinstein Company Holdings and 54 related entities sought bankruptcy protection Monday amid a sexual misconduct scandal that brought down co-founder Harvey Weinstein and triggered a nationwide movement to address predatory sexual behavior and harassment in the workplace.

Paul Zumbro, an attorney for the company, said the bankruptcy case is not about trying to protect Harvey Weinstein, but trying to do what is best for creditors and employees and to keep the company operating. It has 85 full-time staffers and 12 independent contractors.

"We are not here to talk today about Harvey Weinstein," said Zumbro, who gave Walrath a brief chronology of the events leading up to the bankruptcy filing. Media reports in October of "pervasive sexual misconduct" by Harvey Weinstein over more than 20 years had an "immediate and profound" effect on the company, he noted.

"The backlash against the company from all sides was immediate, it was intense and it was extraordinarily public, triggering a rapid downward spiral," Zumbro said.

The bankruptcy case does not affect anyone's ability to pursue civil or criminal claims against Harvey Weinstein in his individual capacity, Zumbro assured the judge. The company announced Monday that it was releasing any victims of or witnesses to Weinstein's alleged misconduct from nondisclosure agreements preventing them from speaking out. That move had long been sought by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who has filed a lawsuit against Weinstein and the company on behalf of its employees.

"We are trying to make the best out of a terrible situation," Zumbro said.

The movie and TV studio is the first high-profile company to be forced into bankruptcy amid the nationwide outcry over workplace sexual misconduct. Dozens of prominent men in entertainment, media, finance, politics and other fields have seen their careers derailed, and scores of 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 nonconsensual sex.

Officer's response praised as school shooting ends quickly

By **MATTHEW BARAKAT** and **JESSE J. HOLLAND**, Associated Press

GREAT MILLS, Md. (AP) — In the latest school shooting in America, the gunfire was over and done with in less than a minute."

This time, the shooter, a 17-year-old student, was killed. A 16-year-old girl, who authorities said had some type of relationship with the shooter, was critically injured and a 14-year-old boy was also wounded. And the school resource officer who responded inside of 60 seconds and fired off a shot at the attacker was praised as a hero.

Tuesday's shooting erupted at Great Mills High School in southern Maryland, about 60 miles south of the nation's capital. It came a month after 17 people were killed at a Florida high school, and intensified

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calls for Congress to act on gun violence at schools.

It wasn't immediately clear in Tuesday's attack whether the shooter — identified as Austin Rollins, a student at Great Mills — took his own life or was killed by the officer's bullet, St. Mary's County Sheriff Tim Cameron said. But Cameron credited the officer with preventing any more loss of life.

The officer, Deputy First Class Blaine Gaskill, a six-year veteran in his first year at the high school, responded quickly, Cameron said. Within a minute after Rollins fired his first shot, Gaskill had responded and fired a shot of his own. Cameron said Gaskill fired his weapon simultaneously with a final shot fired by Rollins. Cameron said he did not know whether Rollins was intending to shoot himself or Gaskins.

"He had to cover significant ground," Cameron said of Gaskill's response. "The premise is simple: You go to the sound of gunfire."

Authorities didn't release a motive, but said they believe the girl and Rollins previously had a relationship. It wasn't clear how the 14-year-old boy was wounded.

Gaskill, who doubles as a SWAT team member, was unharmed.

Police did not identify the victims, but the family of 16-year-old Jaelynn Willey, a sophomore at Great Mills, confirmed she had been shot.

Jaelynn is one of nine siblings, according to a statement from the family, and a member of the swim team.

"Jaelynn is an amazing young lady, whose peaceful presence and love of her fellow students and family is known throughout her Maryland-based school," the family statement said.

A fundraiser for the family on the youcaring.com website had already raised more than \$25,000 by Tuesday evening.

At a vigil Tuesday night in nearby Lexington Park, religious leaders from different denominations prayed together for the victims. On a "prayer wall" at The Church of the Ascension, people wrote prayers in chalk. One message said, "Lord, help the parents of the shooter to find hope and peace in you." Another said, "Please choose love."

Politicians responded swiftly to the shooting.

"We sympathize. We empathize. We have moments of silence. But we don't have action," said the No. 2 U.S. House Democrat, Steny Hoyer, who represents the area in Congress. "Wringing our hands is not enough."

In this case, it appeared Rollins possessed the gun illegally. In Maryland, a person must be 21 to possess a handgun, unless carrying one is required for employment. It's unclear how Rollins obtained the weapon.

Attempts to reach his family were unsuccessful.

One of the shooter's friends, 14-year-old Jordan Hutchinson, and his mother dropped off a condolence card at the Rollins home.

Jordan recalled meeting Austin five years ago during a snowstorm, and building snow forts together.

"Austin was a nice kid. We did sleepovers all the time," he said.

Students endured a lengthy lockdown, covering inside classrooms and a locker room while officers worked to make sure there were no more threats on campus.

Police eventually kicked in the locker room door, said Ziyanna Williams, a 14-year-old ninth-grader.

"They came in with guns, and they probably thought there might be another shooter, of course," she said. "About an hour or two later they came — more police came — and told us they would search us and search our bags and stuff."

Eventually, the students were escorted outside and taken to another school to be reunited with their parents.

Maryland's Senate joined the House on Monday night to ban bump stocks, which enable a semi-automatic rifle to mimic a fully automatic weapon. Teachers' union leaders issued statements Tuesday saying more policies must be changed nationwide to keep schools safe.

Republican Gov. Larry Hogan, meanwhile, accused the Democrat-led legislature of failing to take action on "one of the most aggressive school safety plans in the country." It commits \$125 million for capital improvements such as secure doors and windows, metal detectors and security cameras. It also includes another \$50 million annually to pay for school resource officers, counselors and technology.

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Hogan said "it's outrageous that we haven't taken action yet," with less than three weeks left in the session.

House Speaker Michael Busch, a Democrat, said legislators have "every intention" of passing legislation to make schools safer.

This weekend, students across the country plan an anti-gun violence march on the nation's capital. James Scott Smith, superintendent of schools in St. Mary's County, called Tuesday's shooting "our worst fear." He and other authorities said there were no obvious warning signs that Rollins posed a danger.

"If you don't think this can happen at your school, you are sadly mistaken," he said.

Associated Press contributors include Alex Brandon, Courtney Columbus, David McFadden, Sarah Rankin, Alan Suderman and Brian Witte.

Border wall, tunnel tussle hold up sweeping spending bill

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Talks over a \$1.3 trillion government spending bill dragged Tuesday as congressional negotiators found themselves tangled in side issues ahead of a Friday deadline.

If lawmakers can agree on the bill, President Donald Trump will reap a huge budget increase for the military while Democrats will cement wins on infrastructure and other domestic programs that they failed to get under President Barack Obama.

First, though, Congress needs to vote. Leaders already missed Monday's deadline to file legislation and progress slowed as negotiators struggled to resolve several sticking points.

Most battles over budget priorities in the huge bill were essentially settled, but a scaled-back plan for Trump's border wall and a fight over a tunnel under the Hudson River still held up a final agreement.

Republican leaders had been hopeful a deal could be announced Tuesday evening, allowing for votes in the House and Senate this week. If a bill — or at least a stopgap measure to keep operations running — doesn't pass Congress by midnight Friday, the government will shut down for a third time this year.

The measure on the table would provide major funding increases for the Pentagon — \$80 billion over current limits — bringing the military budget to \$700 billion and giving GOP defense hawks a long-sought victory.

"We made a promise to the country that we would rebuild our military. Aging equipment, personnel shortages, training lapses, maintenance lapses — all of this has cost us," said House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis. "With this week's critical funding bill we will begin to reverse that damage."

Domestic accounts would get a generous 10 percent increase on average as well, awarding Democrats the sort of spending increases they sought but never secured during the Obama administration.

Democrats touted billions to fight the nation's opioid addiction epidemic. More than \$2 billion would go to strengthen school safety through grants for training, security measures and treatment for the mentally ill. Medical research at the National Institutes of Health, a longstanding bipartisan priority, would receive a record \$3 billion increase to \$37 billion.

"We have worked to restore and in many cases increase investments in education, health care, opioids, NIH, child care, college affordability and other domestic and military priorities," said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., a key negotiator of the measure.

Agencies historically unpopular with Republicans, such as the IRS, appear likely to get increases too, in part to prepare for implementation of the Republicans' recently passed tax measure. The Environmental Protection Agency, always a GOP target, may get a reprieve this year.

Lawmakers agreed on the broad outlines of the budget plan last month, after a standoff forced an overnight shutdown. The legislation implementing that deal is viewed as possibly one of few bills moving through Congress this year, making it a target for lawmakers and lobbyists seeking to attach their top priorities.

But efforts to add on unrelated legislation to tackle politically charged issues, such as immigration and rapidly rising health insurance premiums, appeared to be faltering.

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An effort to extend protections for so-called Dreamer immigrants brought to the country as children appears to have failed. Democrats seemed likely to yield on \$1.6 billion in wall funding, as outlined in Trump's official request for the 2018 budget year, but they were digging in against Trump's plans to hire hundreds of new Border Patrol and immigration enforcement agents.

A dispute over abortion seemed likely to scuttle a Senate GOP plan to provide billions in federal subsidies to insurers to help curb health insurance premium increases.

Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., was working on Trump's behalf against funding for a Hudson River tunnel and rail project that's important to Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Republicans from New York and New Jersey.

The bill would add \$143 billion over limits set under a 2011 budget and debt pact that forced automatic budget cuts on annual agency appropriations. Coupled with last year's tax cuts, it heralds the return of trillion-dollar budget deficits as soon as the budget year starting in October.

Republican conservatives are dismayed by the free-spending measure, meaning Democratic votes are required to pass it. That gave Democrats leverage to force GOP negotiators to drop numerous policy riders that Democrats considered poison pills.

Ryan said negotiations are ongoing about adding a widely backed measure that aims to strengthen federal background checks by prodding states to provide all records that disqualify people with severe mental health problems and other issues from buying firearms.

Republicans continued to press to fix a glitch in the recent tax bill that subsidizes grain sales to cooperatives at the expense of for-profit grain companies, lawmakers said.

"We need to fix that problem," said House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. Schumer was demanding a provision of his own, tax subsidies to construct low-income housing, in exchange, lawmakers said.

The president, meanwhile, has privately threatened to veto the whole package if a \$900 million payment is made on the Hudson River Gateway Project, a priority for Schumer. Trump's opposition is alarming Northeastern Republicans such as Rep. Peter King of New York, who lobbied Trump on the project at a St. Patrick's luncheon in the Capitol last week.

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

"I think we ought to get it done and it has good bipartisan support," Schumer said. "I'm not going to get into a back and forth with the president. This is a needed project, and I hope Congress rises to the occasion."

Teen shoots girl in Maryland school, killed in confrontation

By **MATTHEW BARAKAT** and **JESSE J. HOLLAND**, Associated Press

GREAT MILLS, Md. (AP) — A teenager armed with a handgun shot and critically wounded a girl inside a Maryland school on Tuesday and the shooter was killed when a school resource officer confronted him moments after the gunfire erupted. A third student was in good condition after he was shot.

The shooting at Great Mills High School, a month after 17 people were killed at a Florida high school, intensified calls for Congress to act on gun violence at schools. This weekend, students across the country plan an anti-gun violence march on the nation's capital.

In Maryland, it wasn't immediately clear whether the shooter took his own life or was killed by the officer's bullet, St. Mary's County Sheriff Tim Cameron said, though the officer was credited with preventing any more loss of life.

Authorities didn't release a motive, but said they believe the girl and the shooter — 17-year-old Austin Rollins — previously had a relationship. It wasn't clear how the 14-year-old boy was wounded.

The officer, who doubles as a SWAT team member, was unharmed.

Police did not identify the victims, but the family of 16-year-old Jaelynn Willey, a sophomore at Great

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Mills, confirmed that she had been shot.

Jaelynn is one of nine siblings, according to a statement from the family, and a member of the swim team. "Jaelynn is an amazing young lady, whose peaceful presence and love of her fellow students and family is known throughout her Maryland-based school," the family statement said.

A fundraiser for the family on the youcaring.com website had already raised more than \$25,000 by Tuesday evening.

Politicians responded swiftly to the shooting about 65 miles (105 kilometers) southeast of Washington.

"We sympathize. We empathize. We have moments of silence. But we don't have action," said the No. 2 U.S. House Democrat, Steny Hoyer, who represents the area in Congress. "Wringing our hands is not enough."

In this case, it appeared the shooter illegally possessed the gun. In Maryland, a person must be 21 to possess a handgun, unless carrying one is required for employment. It's unclear how Rollins obtained the weapon.

Attempts to reach his family were unsuccessful.

One of the shooter's friends, 14-year-old Jordan Hutchinson, and his mother dropped off a condolence card at the Rollins home.

Jordan recalled meeting Austin five years ago during a snowstorm, and building snow forts together.

"Austin was a nice kid. We did sleepovers all the time," he said.

The sheriff praised the school resource officer, Deputy First Class Blaine Gaskill, a six-year veteran in his first year at the high school, for containing the situation in less than a minute.

"He had to cover significant ground," Cameron said. "The premise is simple: You go to the sound of gunfire."

Students endured a lengthy lockdown, cowering inside classrooms and a locker room while officers worked to make sure there were no more threats on campus.

Police eventually kicked in the locker room door, said Ziyanna Williams, a 14-year-old ninth-grader.

"They came in with guns, and they probably thought there might be another shooter, of course," she said. "About an hour or two later they came — more police came — and told us they would search us and search our bags and stuff."

Eventually, the students were escorted outside and taken to another school to be reunited with their parents.

Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Md., said at a minimum, universal background checks and a ban on assault-style weapons are needed. He said he believes momentum is building for reform, fueled by student activism.

"I can tell you that Americans are listening to our students," he said. "I think our political system will respond."

Maryland's Senate joined the House on Monday night to ban bump stocks, which enable a semi-automatic rifle to mimic a fully automatic weapon. Teachers' union leaders issued statements Tuesday saying more policies must be changed nationwide to keep schools safe.

Republican Gov. Larry Hogan, meanwhile, accused the Democrat-led legislature of failing to take action on "one of the most aggressive school safety plans in the country." It commits \$125 million for capital improvements such as secure doors and windows, metal detectors and security cameras. It also includes another \$50 million annually to pay for school resource officers, counselors and technology.

Hogan said "it's outrageous that we haven't taken action yet," with less than three weeks left in the session.

House Speaker Michael Busch, a Democrat, said legislators have "every intention" of passing legislation to make schools safer.

Just last month, the St. Mary's County sheriff's office said it arrested two teenage boys for "threats of mass violence" and a 39-year-old man on related charges after the teens made threats about a potential school shooting at Leonardtown High School. Police said they obtained a search warrant that led to them finding semi-automatic rifles, handguns and other weapons, along with ammunition.

"This is what we prepare for and this is what we pray we will never have to do," the sheriff said Tuesday.

"The notion that it can't happen here is no longer a notion."

Associated Press contributors include Alex Brandon, Courtney Columbus, David McFadden, Sarah Rankin, Alan Suderman and Brian Witte.

APNewsBreak: Key design change stymied bridge cost, schedule

By JASON DEAREN and JENNIFER KAY, Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Construction of the pedestrian bridge that collapsed and killed six people in the Miami area was behind schedule and millions over budget, in part because of a key change in the design and placement of one of its support towers.

Documents obtained by The Associated Press through a public-records request show that the Florida Department of Transportation in October 2016 advised Florida International University and its contractors to move one of the bridge's main support structures 11 feet (3 meters) north to the edge of a canal, widening the gap between the crossing's end supports and requiring some new structural design.

The span's signature, 109-foot-tall (33-meter-tall) pylon was to be built atop a base at the span's northern end. It was designed for basic support and to contribute to the aesthetics of the bridge, which was touted as an architectural marvel that would connect the rapidly growing university to the nearby community of Sweetwater. In their winning 2015 proposal, designers said the bridge provided "spectacular views" for both pedestrians using the bridge and drivers passing beneath it. They added that the tower could serve as a safety feature because it would have an "eagle-eyed location" for additional lighting and security cameras.

Videos of Thursday's collapse show that the concrete, prefabricated segment of the bridge started crumbling on the same end of the span where the tower redesign occurred, two days after an engineer on the project reported cracks in the same location. The segment that failed had been placed atop the pylon's footing, and the taller tower section was to be installed later.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao has ordered her department's inspector general to conduct an audit of the bridge, according to a news release Tuesday from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The agency awarded millions of dollars to the project.

It is still unclear if the design change contributed to the failure. But emails between the school, contractors, Sweetwater city officials and permitting agencies show a project that was behind schedule, which had officials worried that further delays could jeopardize the federal funding.

When the bridge collapsed, the project was already running about \$2.6 million over its \$9.4 million initial budget, cost-tracking documents from February show. Originally scheduled to be completed in July, the finish date had been pushed back to January 2019.

Difficulties began in late 2016, when the Florida Department of Transportation emailed project officials saying they wanted more room to allow for future widening of the U.S. highway under the bridge, according to the documents. The new position of the tower would be on the north side between the road and the canal.

"This ... places the current location of the pylon in conflict with the extra travel lane and would require bridge design modifications," Alfred Reyna, a transportation department employee working on the bridge project, wrote in an email.

After weeks of back and forth, it was decided to move the pylon 11 feet to the north, sitting near the edge of the canal. According to documents, initial costs for the new design were \$204,540, with another \$402,723 for construction changes. The final cost was not divulged.

"The city attorney is advising us not to speak about anything to do with the bridge," said Sandra Antonio, a spokeswoman for the city of Sweetwater, which was working with FIU. The tower was to be located on the Sweetwater side.

Don Silver, a spokesman for Munilla Construction Management, or MCM, the Miami-based construction management firm that won the bridge contract, said the National Transportation Safety Board forbade engineers or contractors from talking about the project pending its investigation. MCM collaborated with

Tallahassee-based FIGG Bridge Design on the bridge project, which also declined comment.

A spokeswoman for FIU, Maydel Santana, declined comment on the pylon redesign, but did confirm Tuesday that the bridge was expected to be completed early in 2019 and the grant ran out on Sept. 30, 2019. She also said the school was cooperating with the NTSB's investigation.

While the NTSB probe has just begun, multiple engineers who reviewed the documents obtained by the AP said moving the tower after the bridge's initial design invited errors.

Henry Petroski, a Duke University civil engineering professor, said even seemingly minor changes in a bridge's design can lead to failures.

"Once a design is completed, subsequent modifications tend to be suggested and approved without the full care that went into the original design. This has happened time and again in bridges and other engineering structures," he said.

The documents show that further time pressures were put on the tower redesign due to a bottleneck at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps was in charge of permitting certain aspects of the new tower's footing and other elements but had stopped due to federal budget cuts. Documents show the contractors wouldn't begin work until the Corp's permits were finished, and FIU worried delays could jeopardize federal funding.

Kenneth Jessell, FIU's senior vice president for financial affairs, in 2017 worried the delays would jeopardize federal TIGER funds for the university's massive transportation redesign, of which the bridge was a key part.

In the news release announcing the audit, Transportation Secretary Chao said she wants to know whether the parties involved in the design, construction and testing of the bridge complied with standards required of projects that receive federal funding.

Bridge engineers who reviewed photographs of the collapse said it was ill-advised to move the pylon after completing the initial design, but that more analysis was warranted before it could be known whether this played a role in the collapse.

Robert Bea, a University of California, Berkeley engineering professor, said the tower base may have been more flexible after it was moved closer to the canal. This could have created more stress on the section that collapsed when crews removed temporary supports so traffic could resume, he said.

"At this time, I do not think the movement of the footing for the pylon to the north was a primary factor in the failure. However, the movement of the footing led to the requirement for one of the temporary steel supports to be relocated to be able to travel on the highway," he said.

Associated Press writer Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami contributed to this report.

Ax throwing gains in popularity as pastime, sport

By ROBERT BUMSTED, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Leave it to the hipsters of Brooklyn to combine craft beer and sharp objects.

Kick Axe Throwing is the first bar in New York City to pick up on a nationwide trend of ax throwing, a growing sport that some enthusiasts hope will take off the way bowling did in the last century.

"People are like, 'Sharp objects and beer? What a great idea that is.' But truthfully, after you have a couple drinks you start to actually throw a little bit better," said Alexander Stine, an "axepert" at Kick Axe. He honed his own skills growing up in Colorado throwing knives at carnivals and now trains newcomers on proper technique. "It's about believing in your ability to do something you didn't think you could do before."

Scoring is similar to darts. Players aim at a wooden board painted with a bull's-eye and rings corresponding to different point values.

Playing to the sport's origins at Canadian logging competitions, Kick Axe's decor is reminiscent of a ski lodge, complete with flannel chairs and calfskin carpeting.

The perimeter of the venue is lined with cages for throwing. There's a bar serving wine and beer, but no hard liquor. Guests can take a break from throwing axes to play board games like "Candy Land" at tables

in the center of the room.

While Kick Axe mainly caters to casual players, there are locations across the country where enthusiasts play the sport competitively.

There was no alcohol in sight during recent tournament play at Chicago's Bad Axe Throwing, a Canada-based chain of 18 venues.

Bad Axe's CEO, Mario Zelaya, founded the World Axe Throwing League a year ago. He said it now has 2,500 members worldwide who compete at his own locations and other independent venues.

"It's bowling 2.0," said Zelaya. "What bowling maybe used to be in the 80's and 90's and this is what ax throwing is right now. It's fun. It's new. It's addictive. It's active entertainment."

The World Axe Throwing League held its first world championship tournament in December. Competitors played in their home courts and the games were broadcast remotely on Facebook Live. The winner took home a \$3,500 prize.

Zelaya says his ultimate goal is to make ax throwing an Olympic sport.

Facebook: A community like no other. Should you leave it?

By TED ANTHONY, AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Sure. Take that quiz about which hair-metal band is your spirit animal. Share a few snaps of your toddler at the beach and watch the likes pile up. Comment on that pointed political opinion from the classmate you haven't seen since the Reagan administration.

Just remember that your familiar, comforting online neighborhood — the people you care about most and those you only kinda like — exists entirely on a corporate planet that's endlessly ravenous to know more about you and yours.

On a day when our virtual friends wrung their virtual hands about whether to leave Facebook, a thoroughly 21st-century conundrum was hammered home: When your community is a big business, and when a company's biggest business is your community, things can get very messy.

You saw that all day Tuesday as users watched the saga of Cambridge Analytica unfold and contemplated whether the chance that they had been manipulated again — that their data might have been used to influence an election — was, finally, reason enough to bid Facebook goodbye.

Not an easy choice. After all, how would Mom see photos of the kids?

"Part of me wants Facebook to go down over the Cambridge Analytica scandal but the other part of me has no other way to know when any of my friends or family have a birthday," Chicago Tribune humorist Rex Huppke tweeted Tuesday — and cross-posted on Facebook.

Facebook, which began as a social network for college students and the academic community, has experienced exodus before, albeit usually more gradually.

Young people have edged away from it in favor of other platforms such as Snapchat, WhatsApp and Instagram (the latter two are owned by Facebook now), and many maintain a presence but use it rarely. Internationally, while Facebook remains widespread, insurgent social networks built around messaging, such as Line in Japan and Thailand, WeChat in China and KakaoTalk in South Korea, have supplanted it.

But as the granddaddy of the major social networks, Facebook boasts more than 2.2 billion users — nearly 30 percent of the world's population, a community vastly larger than any nation. That's an irresistible target for advertisers and, it turns out, for people who want to do some sketchy things with data and even influence elections.

And for users, anyplace brimming with lots and lots of interesting people is often — just by virtue of that fact — the place to be.

But when you really think about it, what, precisely, IS that place?

Most of us, as end users, interact with Facebook as the global equivalent of a neighborhood or a town square — Mayberry meets Bedford Falls from "It's A Wonderful Life," but with the miles that separate so many of us compressed to mere inches.

Friends stop by to chat and catch up. They show us some photos, catch up with our lives and move on.

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Sometimes you'll overhear neighbors talking about something and you'll wander over to chime in. You know some people better than others, some barely at all. Some are looking for approval. Some want to pick a fight. Some just want to play a game on the green and move on.

Trouble is, what in the real world is legit social interaction with few strings attached becomes, in the virtual one, an intricate and heavily mediated transaction.

Or, put another way, the community itself is authentic, but the town square is rigged with booby traps and there's no mayor or police patrolling on our behalf.

"When we go to, say, a party, the analog parameters that define the social space in which we're celebrating the community are visible. You know who's there and what the outcomes of your interactions are," says John Drew, who teaches digital media at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York.

Facebook, he says, "created a system that's inherently social — your friends are there posting — but while you're doing that posting and looking at other people's posts, they have been building an advertising empire," he says. "The people who are throwing the party — that's Facebook. And they're controlling the rules."

On Tuesday, angst was popping up all over as people discussed the virtues and drawbacks of leaving Facebooktown forever.

One common response to people who said they might go: Don't — how will I see your kids growing up? Other would-be exiters wondered how they'd keep track of THEIR kids if they quit. Still others expressed the perennial wish of Facebook users when confronted with contentious debate: Can't we all just post nice things and stay away from politics?

And finally, the payoff question: Will Facebook even LET me quit? (Yes, but they don't make it particularly easy.)

The doubt is entirely understandable.

This is — in America, at least — an era where the pillars of community have crumbled. Polls show Americans trust institutions less and less. Membership in unions and civic organizations — longtime community glue — is also sharply down, and job transfers and increased mobility can cleave in-person friendships like never before.

Is it any wonder, then, that so many people covet the bonds of community — even virtual community — and the reinforcement that accompanies them? Is it a surprise that people struggle about whether to give up this fixture of their lives that, yes, features some unpleasantly aggressive tentacles but also serves up the miniature dopamine rushes of approval from those we care about? Isn't that, in essence, one of community's key functions?

"One of the reasons Facebook is so popular is that it feels to people like it's free. They have no sense that they're giving anything up, or what they're giving up," says George Loewenstein, a behavioral economist and the Herbert A. Simon professor of economics and psychology at Carnegie Mellon University.

"Generally, people detest the feeling of being a sucker. They detest the idea that someone else has taken advantage of them. But so far, it's too intangible to people," he says. "If we had a beer and someone took it away from us, we'd be very upset. But if it's information, people get a whole lot less upset."

We're only a quarter century into the internet, really. We may not yet be wired for the conditional communities that something like Facebook offers — a community like no other in history.

The notion of being handed a multimedia pass to all your friends, wherever they might be, for free, holds immense appeal — even if "free" turns out to mean "we're watching you and making money and maybe pulling some of your psychological chains to our own ends."

The question that faces all of us who contemplate our Facebook departures comes down to this in the end: Is rejecting this particular corporation important enough to you to reject the community that it serves up? How much are your "friends" worth?

Also: Def Leppard is your spirit animal. Carry on.

___ Ted Anthony writes about American culture for The Associated Press. Follow him on Twitter at @anthonyted.

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Asian stocks advance ahead of Fed meeting, Tokyo closed

By **YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Asian stock markets advanced Wednesday ahead of the Federal Reserve's first meeting since the appointment of its new chair, Jerome Powell.

KEEPING SCORE: Hong Kong's Hang Seng index outperformed the region, up 1.2 percent to 31,941.52. China's Shanghai Composite Index gained 0.5 percent to 3,306.09 and South Korea's Kospi added 0.1 percent to 2,487.60. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 advanced 0.2 percent to 5,949.50. Stocks in Taiwan and Southeast Asia were mostly higher. Japan was closed for a holiday.

FED WATCH: The Federal Reserve's leaders have begun a two-day policy meeting that is expected to result in another interest rate increase on Wednesday. The Fed has said it expects to raise interest rates a total of three times this year, and one of the key debates on Wall Street is whether it will wind up increasing rates three times or four. The current meeting is the Fed's first since Jerome Powell became chairman, and investors will be watching his comments at a press conference Wednesday afternoon.

ANALYST'S TAKE: No one knows what to expect from the Fed meeting, Stephen Innes of OANDA Trading said in a commentary, "What we do know, however, is this meeting has lots of eyes on it and not just because it's Jerome Powell's first post FOMC press conference, but there's likely to be some nuanced changes in the Fed statement."

FACEBOOK EFFECT: Facebook stocks dropped another 2.6 percent on Tuesday following reports that the Federal Trade Commission will open investigations on its handling of user data following the revelations that Cambridge Analytica harvested private data of its 50 million users. Its shares have fallen 9 percent this week, its worst performance in two years. Other social media companies in the U.S. also finished the day lower on concerns that the government might enact new laws affecting their businesses. In Asia, reactions were relatively muted. Tencent Holdings, which operates China's largest social media app WeChat and is expected to announce earnings later in the day, jumped 1.6 percent. South Korea's Naver Corp., parent of Line messenger app, added 0.1 percent.

WALL STREET: U.S. stock indexes finished mostly higher on Tuesday. The S&P 500 index rose 0.1 percent to 2,716.94. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 0.5 percent to 24,727.27. The Nasdaq composite rose 0.3 percent to 7,364.30. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks dipped 0.16 points to 1,570.41.

OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 16 cents to \$63.70 per in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. On Tuesday, it finished at \$63.54 per barrel, up \$1.42 from the previous session. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added 21 cents to \$67.63 per barrel in London. It rose \$1.37, or 2.1 percent, to finish at \$67.42 per barrel on Tuesday.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 106.47 yen from 106.53 yen. The euro gained to \$1.2265 from \$1.2241.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, March 21, the 80th day of 2018. There are 285 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 21, 1918, during World War I, Germany launched its Spring Offensive on the Western Front, hoping to break through the Allied lines before American reinforcements could arrive. (Although successful at first, the Spring Offensive ultimately failed.)

On this date:

In 1556, Thomas Cranmer, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, was burned at the stake for heresy.

In 1788, fire broke out in New Orleans on Good Friday, destroying 856 out of more than 1,100 structures; one death was reported.

In 1804, the French civil code, or the "Code Napoleon" as it was later called, was adopted.

In 1925, Tennessee Gov. Austin Peay (pee) signed the Butler Act, which prohibited the teaching of the Theory of Evolution in public schools. (Tennessee repealed the law in 1967.)

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In 1935, Persia officially changed its name to Iran.

In 1946, the recently created United Nations Security Council set up temporary headquarters at Hunter College in the Bronx, New York.

In 1952, the Moondog Coronation Ball, considered the first rock and roll concert, took place at Cleveland Arena.

In 1963, the Alcatraz federal prison island in San Francisco Bay was emptied of its last inmates and closed at the order of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

In 1972, the Supreme Court, in *Dunn v. Blumstein*, ruled that states may not require at least a year's residency for voting eligibility.

In 1981, Michael Donald, a black teenager in Mobile, Alabama, was abducted, tortured and killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan. (A lawsuit brought by Donald's mother, Beulah Mae Donald, later resulted in a landmark judgment that bankrupted one Klan organization.)

In 1990, Namibia became an independent nation as the former colony marked the end of 75 years of South African rule.

In 2006, the social media website Twitter was established with the sending of the first "tweet" by co-founder Jack Dorsey, who wrote: "just setting up my twttr."

Ten years ago: Officials admitted that at least four State Department workers had pried into the supposedly secure passport files of Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barack Obama and John McCain, prompting Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to personally apologize to the presidential contenders.

Five years ago: On his second day in the Middle East, President Barack Obama insisted "peace is possible" as he prodded both Israelis and Palestinians to return to long-stalled negotiations with few, if any, pre-conditions, softening his earlier demands that Israel stop building settlements in disputed territory.

One year ago: U.S. and British officials announced they were barring laptops and tablets from the cabins of some international flights because of longstanding concerns about terrorists targeting jetliners. Martin McGuinness, the Irish Republican Army commander who led his underground, paramilitary movement toward reconciliation with Britain, and was Northern Ireland's deputy first minister for a decade in a power-sharing government, died in Londonderry at age 66. Chuck Barris, whose game show empire included "The Dating Game," "The Newlywed Game" and "The Gong Show," died at his home in Palisades, New York, at age 87.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Kathleen Widdoes is 79. Songwriter Chip Taylor ("Wild Thing") is 78. Folk-pop singer-musician Keith Potger (The Seekers) is 77. Actress Marie-Christine Barrault is 74. Singer-musician Rose Stone (Sly and the Family Stone) is 73. Actor Timothy Dalton is 72. Singer Ray Dorset (Mungo Jerry) is 72. Singer Eddie Money is 69. Rock singer-musician Roger Hodgson (Supertramp) is 68. Rock musician Conrad Lozano (Los Lobos) is 67. Rhythm-and-blues singer Russell Thompkins Jr. is 67. Comedy writer-performer Brad Hall is 60. Actress Sabrina LeBeauf is 60. Actor Gary Oldman is 60. Actress Kassie Depaiva is 57. Actor Matthew Broderick is 56. Comedian-actress Rosie O'Donnell is 56. Rock musician Jonas "Joker" Berggren (Ace of Base) is 51. Rock MC Maxim (Prodigy) is 51. Rock musician Andrew Copeland (Sister Hazel) is 50. Hip-hop DJ Premier (Gang Starr) is 49. Actress Laura Allen is 44. Rapper-TV personality Kevin Federline is 40. Actress Sonequa Martin-Green (TV: "The Walking Dead") is 33. Actor Scott Eastwood is 32. Actor Forrest Wheeler is 14.

Thought for Today: "Among individuals, as among nations, peace is the respect of others' rights." — Benito Juarez, Mexican statesman (born this date in 1806, died 1872).