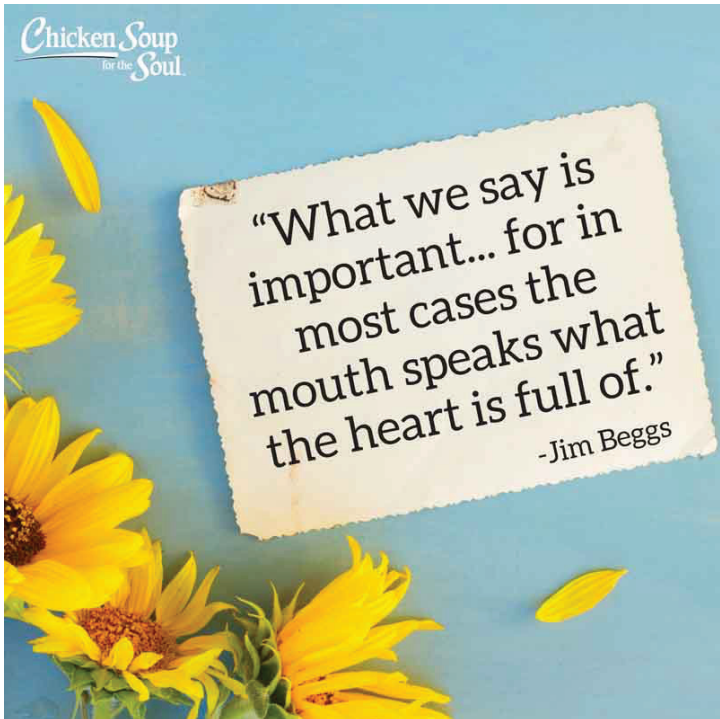


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Mail Highway Route Relief Driver

Position available for Highway Relief Driver

Must be over 21, have a good driving record

Able to lift 70 pounds.

Route is early mornings and late afternoons

Mainly Saturdays and some week days

Contact Dave Miller 605-397-8277 Leave Message

A promotional graphic for Dairy Queen. It features three images of food items: an oven-fresh sandwich, a hot dessert (a chocolate cake with white cream and chocolate drizzle), and a snack melt. To the right of these images are logos for 'New DQ BAKES! OVEN-HOT', the Dairy Queen 'DQ' logo, 'Grill & Chill', and 'Orange Julius'. Below the images and logos, the text reads: 'Oven Fresh Sandwiches', 'Hot Desserts', and 'Snack Melts'. At the bottom, the address and phone number are listed: '11 E Hwy 12, Groton ~ 397-8627'.

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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Friendly Fellows and Daisies

April Meeting

The Friendly Fellows and Daisies 4-H club met on April 15th. The meeting was called to order by Colin Frey.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Kella Tracy. The 4-H pledge was led by Walker Zoellner. Roll call topic was favorite song.

There was one communication; it was a thank you letter from the Dakota Prairie Museum.

In the Treasurer's report were no bills. Secretary's report was given with no additions or improvements approved by Hanna Miller and seconded by Ashlynn Warrington.

Old business was fundraisers. Closed old business by Kamryn Fliehs and seconded by Logan Warrington.

New Business topics were Newshound and 4-H insurance. New business closed by Dylan Frey and seconded by Mallory Miller.

Other business was watching a Video on Dairy farms.

The meeting was adjourned by Braeden Boe and seconded by Kamryn Fliehs.

There was two talks/demonstrations: Banana Roll demo by Natalia Warrington and finish/stain wood by Axel Warrington.

Lunch was served by the Fliehs Family.

Submitted by Kamryn Fliehs, club reporter

March Meeting

The Friendly Fellows and Daisies 4-H club met on March 3rd. The meeting was called to order by President Nicole Marzahn.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Clay Crawford. The 4-H Pledge was led by Logan Ringgenberg.

Roll call topic was Favorite color. There was no communications. The treasurer's report was approved by Clay Crawford and seconded by Madilyn Wright.

The secretary's report was read and no additions or improvements. The secretary's report was approved by Kamryn Fliehs and seconded by Ashlynn Warrington.

Old business was project day. Old business was closed by Madilyn Wright and seconded by Ashlynn Warrington.

New business was the Newshound. New business was closed by Kamryn Fliehs and seconded by Austin Crawford.

Other business was the Dakota Prairie Museum tour.

The meeting was adjourned by Braden Boe and seconded by Braeden Fliehs.

There was one talk/demonstration by Andrew Marzahn about Bow Archery.

Lunch was served by Marzahn Family.

Submitted by Kamryn Fliehs, club reporter

February Meeting

The Friendly Fellows and Daisies 4-H club met on February 11th. The meeting was called to order by President Nicole Marzahn.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Karsten Fliehs and the 4-H Pledge was led by Blake Pauli.

Roll call topic was favorite movie. There was no communications. The treasurer's and secretary's reports were approved as given.

Treasurer's report closed by Kamryn Fliehs and seconded by Braeden Fliehs. Secretary's report was closed by Hanna Miller and seconded by Ashlynn Warrington.

Old business was Bowling party next year. Old business was closed by Colin Frey and 2nd by Tucker Miller.

For new business, Leader Mike Frey read the Newshound and discussed the changes to livestock along with the Fruit sales that start March 4th.

New business was closed by Logan Warrington and 2nd by Logan Ringgenberg.

There was no other business. The meeting was adjourned by Braden Boe and seconded by Hanna Miller.

There was no talks/demonstrations given.

Lunch was served by Anderson Family

Submitted By Kamryn Fliehs, club reporter

Colestock places 11th at Redfield Golf Meet

Groton Area had its first girls golf meet of the season on Friday with the meet being held in Redfield. Peyton Colestock placed 11th with a 103, having a 50 in the first nine holes and a 53 in the back nine. Ashley Flihs finished 23rd with a 124, having a 64 in the front nine and a 60 in the back nine. Portia Kettering placed 24th with a 125, shooting a 69 in the first nine and a 56 in the second nine. Payton Maine placed 28th with a 135, having a 66 in the front nine and a 69 in the back nine.



Alexis Simon, Taylor Holm, Miss South Dakota Miranda Mack, Samantha Menzia, Kaitlyn Anderson, and Jodi Hinmann. Miranda spoke to all of the Girls State Delegates about responsibility, leadership, and patriotism. (Courtesy Photo)

Girls State Tea

Junior class girls Kaitlyn Anderson, Taylor Holm, Jodi Hinmann, Samantha Menzia, and Alexis Simon attended the American Legion Auxiliary's Girls State Tea in Cresbard on Sunday, April 29. These delegates will represent Claremont, Columbia, Conde, and Groton. Girls State is May 28 - June 2 at the University of South Dakota Vermillion campus.

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Pictured left to right are Kylie Kassube, Kayla Jensen, Kaitlyn Kassube, Taylor Holm, AnneMarie Smith, Micah Poor, Grace Wambach, Isaac Smith, Dragr Monson and Travis Townsend.

(Courtesy Photo)

Groton Takes First at NSU Mathematics Contest

Thirty-three students in grades eight through twelve from the Groton Area School District participated in the 65th Annual Northern State University Mathematics Contest held Wednesday, April 18, 2018, in the Barnett Center at NSU in Aberdeen, South Dakota. They were among 419 contestants representing 25 schools from North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota, who participated in the event and tested in four divisions: Elementary Algebra, Geometry, Advanced Algebra, and Senior Math.

Out of the 137 students taking the Elementary Algebra test, Dragr Monson and Travis Townsend received certificates of honorable mention. Of the 90 students taking the Geometry test, Isaac Smith and Grace Wambach received certificates of honorable mention. Of the 95 students taking the Advanced Algebra test, Kayla Jensen earned the second place trophy, Kaitlyn Kassube earned the fifth place trophy, and Kylie Kassube received a certificate of honorable mention. Out of the 97 students taking the Senior Math test, AnneMarie Smith earned the third place trophy and Micah Poor and Taylor Holm received certificates of honorable mention.

As a school, Groton received first place in the Class AA/A division. School rank was determined by the highest score in each of the four divisions.

Weekly Vikings Roundup By Jordan Wright

The 2018 NFL draft has come and gone, so now it's time to evaluate the players the Vikings selected. The Vikings made eight selections in the draft, starting with cornerback Mike Hughes in the first round and ending with linebacker Devante Downs in the seventh. Today we'll look at the Vikings first four picks, with a breakdown of the other four picks and any undrafted free agents coming next week.

With the 30th pick of the 2018 NFL draft, the Minnesota Vikings selected cornerback Mike Hughes from UCF. He is 5'10", 189 pounds and ran a 40-yard dash in 4.53 seconds (which is good but not great). Even though he is short for a cornerback, he has shown the skill required to play on the outside of the defense. He is also an explosive return man and can return kickoffs and punts. He only has one year of starting experience in college, and he has a little bit of a red flag from his past. Head coach Mike Zimmer has proven that he won't put young players on the field until they're ready, and I doubt Hughes will be an exception. Even though he may not get much playing time at cornerback right out of the gate, he has a chance to become the team's kickoff returner – an area the team wants to improve from last year.

With the Vikings selecting a defensive player in the first round, most fans expected the team to draft an offensive lineman with their second-round selection. Personally, I thought the Vikings would move up to get an immediate starter along the offensive line, but they decided to stand pat and let the chips fall where they may. They ended up drafting Brian O'Neill, an offensive tackle from Pitt (6'7", 297 pounds). O'Neill began his college career at tight end before moving to the offensive line his sophomore season. He is very athletic, but his lack of strength showed up in college and will only magnify in the NFL. The chances of him playing his rookie year are slim, but if he can put on some weight and muscle, he has a chance to be a solid tackle in a year or two.

After O'Neill, the Vikings' next draft pick was at the end of the third round. However, the team elected to move back to the beginning of the fourth round which is where they drafted Jayln Holmes, a defensive lineman from Ohio State (6'5", 283 pounds). Although Holmes mostly played defensive end in college, the Vikings will ask him to put on some weight so he can slide inside and play defensive tackle. Like their first two picks, Holmes will take awhile before he sees the field on a consistent basis. He isn't the best athlete, but he was playing out of position in college. His skills translate better to defensive tackle, where his lack of athleticism won't be a hinderance. Zimmer also likes to rotate his defensive linemen throughout the game, so while he may not be a starter, Holmes should get plenty of playing time.

In the fifth round, the Vikings selected Tyler Conklin, a tight end from Central Michigan (6'3", 254 pounds). Conklin suffered a foot injury the summer before his senior season which limited his production. However, when you go back and look at his 2016 tape, he has a handful of highlight reel catches on his resume. He never appeared fully healthy in 2017, so the Vikings will have to hope he can return to his junior season form. He is a former basketball player, but he doesn't have elite speed for a tight end. He will be asked to block just as much as he is asked to run routes. He likely won't see much playing time in his rookie season.

Make sure to check out next week's article which will cover the rest of the draft picks as well as the undrafted free agents the team signed. And as always, if you have any questions or comments, reach out to me on Twitter (@JordanWrightNFL). Skoll!

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Today in Weather History

April 30, 1942: A tornado hit three farms near the northeastern edge of Castlewood. One barn was blown apart, and debris was swept into the house, killing one person. Damage from the estimated F2 tornado was \$20,000.

April 30, 2011: An unyielding low-pressure system moving across North Dakota brought high winds to much of central into parts of northeast South Dakota. Northwest winds of 35 to 50 mph with gusts to over 60 mph occurred from the morning to the late evening of the 30th. The high winds did cause some property damage across the region. A semi was tipped over on Highway 50 in Buffalo County; a large sign was brought down in Highmore, with some damage to security lights and twisted traffic signals in Pierre. Some of the highest wind gusts included 59 mph at Eagle Butte, 61 mph at Oacoma, 66 mph in Corson County, and 69 mph at Hayes in Stanley County.

1852 - A tornado, following the same track as the famous "Tri-state Tornado" of 1925, struck the town of New Harmony IND. Just sixteen persons were killed by the twister, due to the sparse settlement. The "Tri-state Tornado" killed 695 persons. (David Ludlum)

1888: 246 people died in the world's deadliest hailstorm in India. Hailstones were reportedly the size of baseballs. 1600 domesticated animals at Moradabad perished. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.com.

1924: A significant tornado outbreak occurred from Alabama to Virginia on the 29 through the 30th. 26 tornadoes were of F2 intensity or greater. A total of 111 people were killed, and over 1,100 injured. An estimated F4 tornado tore through Steedman and Horrell Hill, SC. This tornado killed 55 people.

1953: An F4 tornado 300 yards in width leveled homes on the north side of Warner-Robins Georgia, and barracks on the south side of the Warner-Robins Air Force Base. 19 people were killed and were 300 injured. Estimated damage was \$15 million.

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and Montana. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 100 mph in Lincoln, Mineral and Sanders counties. Twenty-three cities in the central and southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Memphis TN was the hot spot in the nation with a record high of 94 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A cold front produced high winds in the southwestern U.S. Winds gusting to 90 mph in southwestern Utah downed power lines, and damaged trees and outbuildings. The high winds also downed power lines in Nevada, completely knocking out power in the town of Henderson. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in central and eastern Texas. Hail three inches in diameter was reported at Cool, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Hillsboro. For the first time of record Oklahoma City went through the entire month of April without a single thunderstorm. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1990 - Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in southern Virginia and the Carolinas, with tennis ball size hail reported southeast of Chesnee SC. Thunderstorms moving over the Chesapeake Bay flooded U.S. Highway 50 on Kent Island MD with several inches of water resulting in a seventeen-mile long traffic jam. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Mon Apr 30	Tue May 1	Wed May 2	Thu May 3	Fri May 4	Sat May 5	Sun May 6
82°F	59°F	65°F	69°F	68°F	69°F	69°F
43°F	38°F	41°F	42°F	42°F	43°F	51°F
S 17 MPH Precip 40%	NNW 15 MPH	NW 7 MPH	WSW 9 MPH	WNW 15 MPH	ESE 11 MPH	S 13 MPH Precip 20%

Severe Storms Possible Mainly Late This Afternoon and Evening

1 - MARGINAL 2 - SLIGHT 3 - ENHANCED 4 - MODERATE 5 - HIGH

Possible Threats



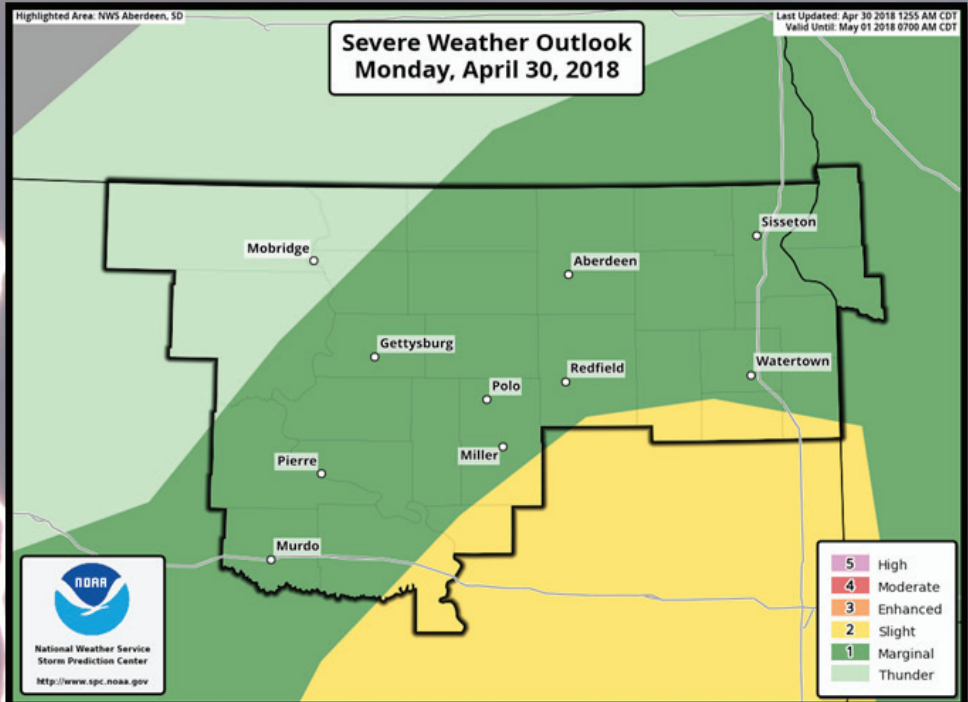
Large Hail
1" +



Damaging
Winds (60
mph)



Frequent
Lightning



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 4/30/2018 2:17 AM Central

Gusty south winds will usher in warmer temperatures to the region today through Monday. Fire danger will increase to very high region-wide this afternoon because of the gusty winds, and low relative humidities. A cold front could spark a few showers and thunderstorms by late Monday afternoon.

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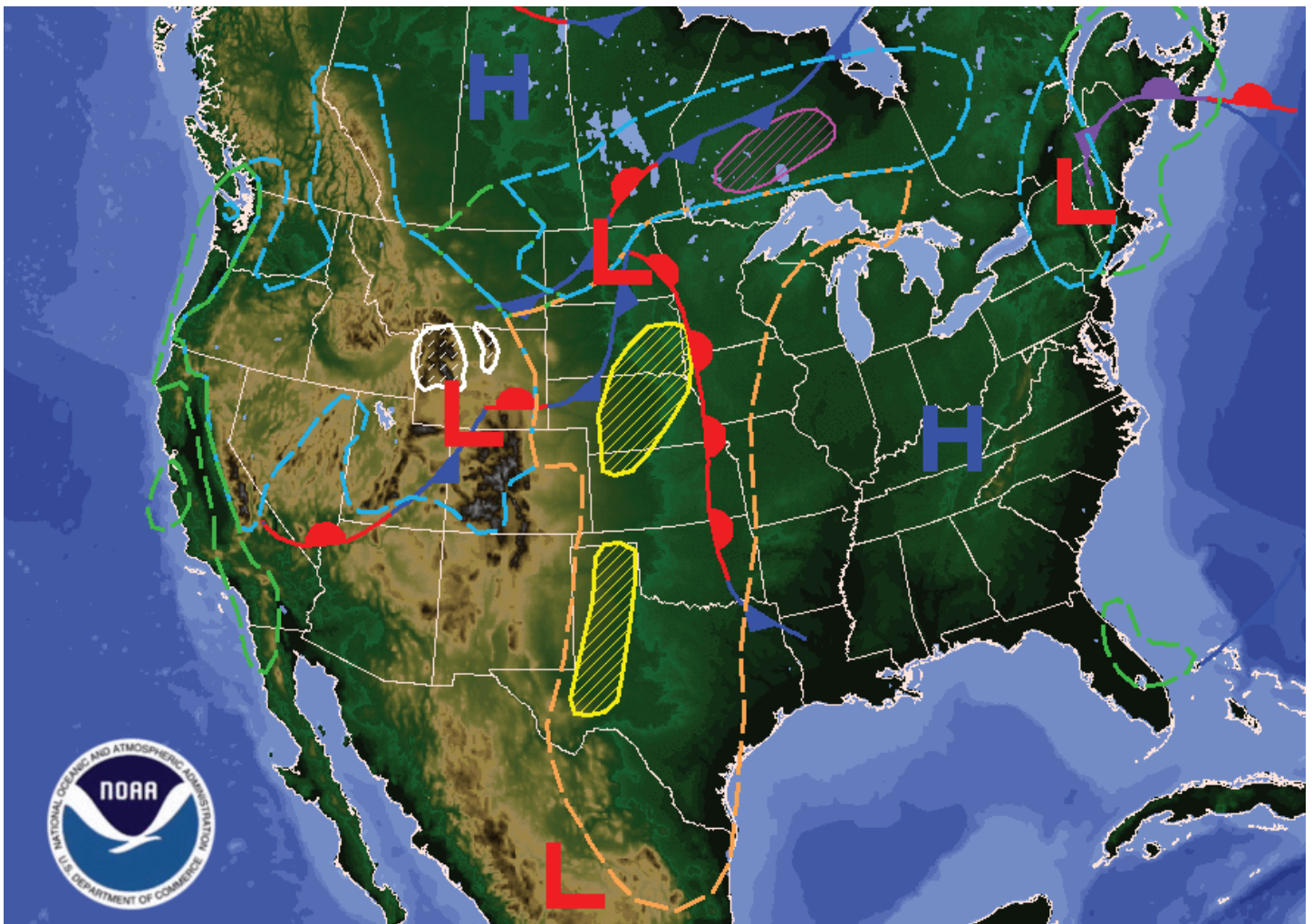
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 75.9 F at 4:56 PM
Low Outside Temp: 45.6 F at 12:23 AM
Wind Chill:
High Gust: 47.0 Mph at 5:16 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 98° in 1992
Record Low: 5° in 1966
Average High: 64°F
Average Low: 38°F
Average Precip in April: 1.85
Precip to date in April: 0.83
Average Precip to date: 4.03
Precip Year to Date: 2.68
Sunset Tonight: 8:39 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:21 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Mon, Apr 30, 2018, issued 4:40 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

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

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THE THOUGHT OF ETERNITY

There was no one to write about it, and actually, nothing to write about. There was no calendar to record the number of days or years or even centuries or ages. It was a beginning without a beginning and the only Person there was God. He needed no one and was in need of nothing.

But He chose to create the heavens and the earth. And with no pre-existing materials or anyone to help Him, it was the power of His words that brought everything into existence that is or ever will be.

When He said, "Let us make the man" we know what happened: He formed man's body from the "dust" of the ground. And we know that this "dust" is a combination of all of the various chemical elements that make up the physical body of a man.

Our bodies did not "evolve." Our bodies were "built" by God from the earth that He created. God also breathed the breath - or the spirit - of life into that body. At that moment, "man" became a living soul.

We do much to take care of our bodies. Each day we are reminded of the cost of "healthcare" and how very important it is for us to take proper care of our bodies. But we seem to have forgotten the words of Jesus: "What good," He asked, "will it be for someone to gain the whole world and forfeit their soul?" Why is this an important question?

Our Psalmist said: "When You take away their breath they die and return to the dust." But not the soul.

Prayer: We thank You Lord, for Jesus, Your Son and our Savior, who gave His life for us to live for You forever. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 104:29 When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 4/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 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

Spearfish woman completes Boston Marathon while pregnant

By MARK WATSON, Black Hills Pioneer

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — April 16 marked a milestone for a Spearfish woman — running and completing the Boston Marathon.

Kara Weigel's Boston race was her sixth marathon.

The Black Hills Pioneer reports that she was supposed to run the Boston Marathon in 2006, but her Army unit was getting deployed to Iraq, and her mandatory pre-deployment training fell during the time the marathon was held. Then, she said, life happened, and her focus turned elsewhere. But then Weigel entered this year's race.

"It was amazing," Weigel said. "I see why Boston is the pinnacle of marathons in the world."

The race is notoriously hard — weather and rolling hills challenge runners, most notably "Heartbreak Hill" a steep half-mile long hill at mile 20 of the 26.2-mile race.

Weigel had another reason the race was especially tough.

"It was made even a little more challenging because I'm pregnant," she said. "I just had to slow down and change my goals and just run to finish. It made it a little more enjoyable in a way."

Training for the race was also tough this year.

"It has been a rough training winter for sure," she said.

But thanks to the treadmill her husband Matthew Weigel bought her for Christmas, she has been able to log the miles inside, early, before she heads to work.

"Dark and ice don't mix very well," she said of early-morning outdoor runs.

Weigel is an avid runner and has run while pregnant with her two older children, but she never trained for a marathon while pregnant before.

"If it was any other race, I would probably have chosen not to do it. But I had already registered, and we had paid for our trip," she said.

She said she visited with her doctor to make sure she and her baby, who is 25 weeks along, were healthy.

Dressed in tights, a long-sleeved T-shirt, shorts and a singlet with an image of a baby peeking out of a slit on her belly, she said she crossed the starting line about an hour after the elite runners started. Nearly 27,000 people raced this year.

Conditions were miserable, she said.

"There was moderate rain the whole time, heavy rain at times. There was a head wind the whole time or a side wind," she said. "Temperatures were in the 40s. It definitely made for challenging conditions. It made it harder to not cramp up."

But she said the supportive crowd lining the course cheered the racers on.

Many racers stopped at medical tents along the route, including Weigel. She stopped at mile 23, took anti-cramping pills, donned a warming blanket and poncho and headed back out into the elements.

Many others did not. According to race statistics, 1,202 people who started did not finish the race.

After 4 hours, 20 minutes, and 45 seconds, she crossed the finish line, arms raised in triumph.

"My main goal, being pregnant, was just to finish," she said. "I thought I would finish closer to four hours, but with the weather, and how long I needed to make stops because I was pregnant, that probably added another 20 minutes."

She qualified for the Boston Marathon at Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minnesota, in June 2017 with a time of about 3 hours, 24 minutes.

"It was a great experience that I'll be able to share with my little guy when he is born," she said. "I definitely want to come back."

South Dakota Mines' Gas Cube project holds big potential

By SAMUEL BLACKSTONE, Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Humans create tons of waste. They demand a lot of energy too. That, in essence, is what makes a South Dakota School of Mines & Technology project to convert waste products like cardboard, discarded food and agricultural refuse into methane gas for energy generation so exciting.

The Rapid City Journal reports that the Gas Cube, as the Mines' students working on the project call it, currently rests in a portable, semitrailer-sized reactor. Funding for the program came in the form of a \$4.8 million grant from the U.S. Air Force, \$1.2 million of which is intended for the Gas Cube as the Air Force seeks ways to save money on waste handling and fuel costs at its remote bases across the world.

So, how does it work? Think of a cow's stomach, said Jorge Gonzalez-Estrella, a post-doctoral research associate in the Chemical and Biological Engineering Department at Mines, in a news release from the school.

"Our reactor is in some ways a two-stomach cow," he said. At the cube's "mouth," cardboard or food waste is grinded down and deposited into a chamber. In that chamber, microorganisms then break down the grinded waste into sugars followed by fermenting microbes that break down the sugars into smaller parts, called volatile fatty acids.

Next, in a vertical chamber or the cube's "second stomach," other microbes turn the volatile fatty acids into methane gas. Any leftover solids are then diverted into a third chamber for additional time for methane producing reactions. In the end, the methane produced from these processes can be piped out to run generators or other equipment needed to power a remote base.

The biggest challenge isn't creating the methane, researchers say. Rather, it's making the Gas Cube portable, user-friendly and scaling up its capabilities.

"Usually these things take up acres if they're industrial. We put it in a 20-by-8-foot space," said Jim Schultze, a chemical engineer who is helping construct the Gas Cube.

Though the Gas Cube is intended for use by the military, it has a large potential for application across other industries, Mines spokesman Charles Michael Ray notes, including being employed in disaster areas or refugee camps when waste-handling infrastructure is compromised or nonexistent.

It could even be used by local microbreweries, which often face restrictions on dumping their wastewater into municipal sewer systems.

But Dave Litzen, a chemical engineer and president of Litzen Process Consulting, Inc. — who is helping build and test the working prototype — was quick to add in the news release that for now, researchers' minds aren't muddled by the prospects of project development meetings over a free pint.

"I can't think of a better first customer," Litzen said, "than the Air Force."

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

Kayaker rescued from Big Sioux River near Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — First responders have rescued a kayaker from the Big Sioux River in eastern South Dakota.

The Minnehaha County emergency manager tells KELO-TV the kayaker became stuck in trees east of Sioux Falls on Sunday.

A second kayaker was able to make it to land. No one was hurt.

Officials are reminding people not to kayak on the river when it's in flood stage.

Cold weather could lead to delayed nesting in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A cold April could hurt South Dakota's pheasants and prairie grouse.

The weather has suppressed growth of cool-season grasses and appears to be delaying the start of nesting. Fresh, green plants are a key food source for birds trying to grow eggs before they nest, the

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Pierre Capital Journal reported .

The cold spring might limit the number of nesting attempts pheasants make this summer, said Travis Runia, a senior upland game biologist for the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department.

Prairie grouse could also delay nesting activity, though experts find it harder to gauge. Prairie chickens and sharptail grouse have a tougher time building up the energy and nutrient reserves to grow eggs when spring grass growth is delayed, said Dan Svingen, district ranger for the Fort Pierre National Grassland. Cooler springs with a later grass growth can lead to fewer eggs per nest, resulting in fewer chicks and eventually fewer birds to hunt in the fall, he said.

But the cool season isn't completely negative, according to experts. The extra snow means more moisture in the soil, giving this year's grasses more with which to work. Experts said the moist soil will also help bring bugs that young grouse and pheasants feed almost exclusively on for the first two months of their lives.

Information from: Pierre Capital Journal, <http://www.capjournal.com>

Group recommends \$2.4M upgrades to Sioux Falls Arena

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A consulting group recommends that Sioux Falls make at least \$2.4 million in renovations to its more than 50-year-old arena to attract more events.

Sioux Falls hired Conventions, Sports and Leisure International to study the city's publicly owned entertainment venues. The group told the City Council Tuesday that the Sioux Falls Arena is structurally sound, but nearing the end of its life expectancy, the Argus Leader reported .

CSL principal John Kaatz said the facility doesn't meet the needs of touring performances in a changing entertainment industry.

"There's back of house issues ... that are very problematic — space for performers and for the attendees," he said. "If the event producer were talking here, walking into the venue, they'd say, 'I don't think I can come here. You've got good bones but you don't have all the assets that we need.'"

The group's report recommends investing between \$2.4 million and \$5.2 million to make the arena fully functional for modern touring acts. The arena needs a ceiling grid system, new retractable seating and renovations to portions of the facility, said Kaatz.

Investing closer to the lower end of the suggested range will generate enough additional revenue to make the upgrades cost neutral by attracting more events, he said. Investing beyond that amount would improve quality of life in the city, but wouldn't directly be recouped with more shows, Kaatz said.

"Anything over that (\$2.4 million) is what we do for the residents of the community to create a greater quality of life. There's value in that as well," he said. "But I can commit to you that at a minimum, \$2.4 million is economically sound."

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

In Trump era, the death of the White House press conference

By JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The presidential news conference, a time-honored tradition going back generations, appears to be no longer.

More than a year has passed since President Donald Trump held the only solo news conference of his administration — a rollicking, hastily arranged, 77-minute free-for-all during which he railed against the media, defended his fired national security adviser and insisted nobody who advised his campaign had had contacts with Russia.

But there are no signs the White House press shop is interested in a second go-round. Instead, the president engages the press in more informal settings that aides say offer reporters far more access, more often, than past administrations.

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"President Trump is more accessible than most modern presidents and frequently takes questions from the press," says White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

The president often answers shouted questions at so-called pool sprays, in which a small group of rotating reporters is given access to events such as bill signings and Cabinet lunches. Trump has also taken to answering shouted questions on the White House lawn as he arrives at and departs the White House.

The frenzied exchanges — frequently taking place over the roar of Marine One's rotor — often produce news.

But the format also gives the president far more control than he would have during a traditional question-and-answer session. Trump can easily ignore questions he doesn't like and dodge follow-ups in a way that would be glaring in a traditional news conference.

On Friday, for instance, Trump answered several questions in the Oval Office about North Korea and Iran. But when a reporter asked about his threats regarding intervening in the Justice Department, Trump responded with a curt "thank you" that signaled to reporters that he was done with the Q&A session.

The president also holds joint news conferences with visiting world leaders, a format reporters call "two and two" because each leader selects two of its country's reporters to ask questions. While the format looks similar to a solo news conference, the president more often than not calls on friendly reporters from conservative outlets and limits the opportunity for follow-up questions.

On Friday, during a joint news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Trump called on reporters from Fox Business Network and the Christian Broadcasting Network. Fox News correspondent John Roberts has been called on so often that Trump once picked him and then changed his mind. "Actually, we'll go somebody else this time, John. You've been doing enough, John," he said to laughs.

Trump also submits to occasional one-on-one interviews with individual news outlets. Last week, he called in to "Fox & Friends," his favored format during the campaign. And several times he has held longer, impromptu question-and-answer sessions, including one in the Rose Garden with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell that, for reporters, had the feel of a mosh pit.

Margaret Talev, a longtime White House reporter and president of the White House Correspondents Association, said the association welcomes Trump's "openness to engage on a regular basis, in pool sprays in the Oval Office and less traditional settings such as South Lawn departures."

But, she said, "We have been disappointed at his reluctance to engage in regular full-format news conferences and we will continue to encourage him and his team to return to the practice. Such news conferences help the public to gain a deeper understanding of a president's thinking on an issue; show transparency and accountability; allow journalists to raise questions the public may be concerned about; and also allow a president to shape his message."

Indeed, during his campaign, Trump often criticized his rival, Democrat Hillary Clinton, for failing to engage more with the press.

"Crooked Hillary Clinton has not held a news conference in more than 7 months. Her record is so bad she is unable to answer tough questions!" he tweeted in June 2016.

The pattern marks a dramatic departure from historic precedent, according to records kept by The American Presidency Project and dating back to Calvin Coolidge. In their first years alone, President Barack Obama held 11 solo news conferences, George W. Bush held five, and Bill Clinton a dozen. Trump held just one.

It's part of a pattern reflecting Trump's extraordinarily hostile relationship with a press he loves to hate.

"The White House isn't legally mandated or required to hold press conferences, but it's a tradition that's been in place because it serves the public," said Katie Townsend, the litigation director at Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. "And I think the idea that the media is the enemy of the American people and an enemy of the president itself ... I think the unwillingness to talk to the members of the media is part of that."

But Ari Fleischer, who served as press secretary for George W. Bush, said there is little benefit for a White House to hold solo news conferences anymore since the president can communicate with the public in other ways.

"So long as the president is held accountable as a result of frequent pool sprays, as a result of frequent

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press conferences with heads of state, one-on-one interviews, the public gets its accountability through other tactics beyond formal long-winded news conferences," Fleischer said.

Bush, he noted, wasn't a fan of the prime-time news conference, complaining that reporters would "peacock" at those events, making them more about themselves than the president.

Trump, however, seems to like the format, which he credited last year for his election win.

"Tomorrow, they will say, 'Donald Trump rants and raves at the press.' I'm not ranting and raving. I'm just telling you. You know, you're dishonest people. But I'm not ranting and raving. I love this," he said during his press conference last year. "I'm having a good time doing it."

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Pompeo says Israel, Palestinian peace still a US priority

By MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Monday that a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a priority for the Trump administration, despite its recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and its planned move of the U.S. Embassy to the holy city over Palestinian protests.

Pompeo also said the U.S. is "fully supportive" of Israel's right to defend itself and declined to criticize the Israeli military for its use of live fire against Palestinian protesters along the Gaza border.

He spoke in the Jordanian capital of Amman as he wrapped up the Middle East leg of his first overseas trip as America's top diplomat.

Pompeo called on the Palestinians to return to long-stalled peace talks with Israel. He said the United States is open to a two-state solution to the conflict if both parties agree, calling it a "likely outcome."

But he would not agree with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi's characterization of the conflict as "the main cause of instability" in the region.

"The parties will ultimately make the decision as to what the correct resolution is," Pompeo told reporters at a joint news conference with Safadi. "We are certainly open to a two-party solution as a likely outcome."

But, he said, the Palestinians had to return to a political dialogue to get there.

"An important piece of achieving Middle East stability is to resolve this conflict," he added. "Precisely how to rank it among all the various challenges, I'll defer on that. Know that it is an incredible priority for the United States to provide whatever assistance we can to allow the two parties to come to a resolution."

Safadi had opened the news conference with an apparent appeal for the U.S. to boost efforts to end the conflict.

"This is the main cause of instability in the region and its resolution is the key to achieving the peace and stability we want," he said. "Yes, the two-state solution is being challenged. Yes, there are many obstacles. But what is the alternative? We cannot give up in our efforts and there is no viable alternative."

Pompeo's comments came at the end of a two-day visit to Israel and Jordan during which he did not meet Palestinian representatives.

The Palestinians have essentially boycotted contacts with the U.S. since Trump announced in December that the United States was recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem — captured by Israel in 1967 and then annexed — as the capital of a future state.

Pompeo's visit is also taking place just two weeks before the planned May 14 opening of the new U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem and expected massive Palestinian protests the following day.

Over the past month, 39 Palestinians have been killed and more than 1,600 wounded in weekly border protests along the Gaza border, prompting human rights groups to ask Israel's Supreme Court on Monday to restrict or ban the use of live ammunition. They say the military's use of lethal force against unarmed protesters is unlawful. Israel's military argues that the border protests are part of a long-running conflict with Gaza's ruling Hamas, which it considers a terror group, and that the rules of armed conflict apply.

Asked about the situation, Pompeo demurred, referring to "activities in Gaza over the past days and weeks."

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"We do believe the Israelis have the right to defend themselves and we are fully supportive of that," he said.

In addition to the Jerusalem decisions, the Trump administration has also angered the Palestinians in recent months by ordering their office in Washington closed, although it remains open for business related to negotiations, slashing funding for the U.N. agency that supports Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and elsewhere in the region, and putting on hold all bilateral assistance to the Palestinians.

Although the White House sponsored a conference on aid to Gaza last month, the Palestinians did not attend. And, a peace plan devised by Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner and his special envoy for international negotiations Jason Greenblatt appears to be on hold.

The deadliest drug in America at center of VA nominee withdrawal: Alcohol

Jamie Smolen, University of Florida

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Jamie Smolen, University of Florida

(THE CONVERSATION) For the first time in a while, pundits and politicians were talking about the drug that kills more people than any other each year in the U.S.

I'm talking about alcohol, which upstaged opioid abuse in news coverage recently, but only after Rear Adm. Ronny L. Jackson withdrew his name for consideration to head Veterans Affairs, in part because of allegations that he has abused alcohol. Jackson has denied any problem with alcohol.

This provides an opportune time to discuss the seriousness of alcohol abuse.

Alcohol contributes to 88,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, more than double the number of people, 42,000, killed by heroin and opioid prescription drug overdose in 2016. Excessive drinking accounted for one in 10 deaths among working-age adults.

In addition, more than 66.7 million Americans reported binge drinking in the past month in 2015, according to a report by the surgeon general.

As someone who has studied alcohol use disorder for over 15 years and who has treated thousands of patients who have it, I think it's a major, yet often poorly understood, public health problem.

A social lubricant Alcohol can be a quick and easy way to get into the spirit of a celebration. And it feels good. After two glasses of wine, the brain is activated through complex neurobiochemical processes that naturally release dopamine, a neurotransmitter of great importance.

When the dopamine molecule locks on to its receptor located on the surface of a neuron, or basic brain cell, a "buzz" occurs. It is often desirably anticipated before the second glass is empty.

There are those, however, who drink right past the buzz into intoxication and, often, into trouble. For them, the brain starts releasing the same enjoyable dopamine, no different than what happens in the casual drinker's, but it doesn't stop there. A compulsion to binge drink can result.

Binge drinking, defined as drinking five or more drinks for men and four for women on the same occasion on at least one day in the past 30 days, is a medical condition that victimizes the comparative malfunction of the pleasure circuits in the brain.

The three stages of addiction The alcohol addiction process involves a three-stage cycle: binge-intoxication, withdrawal-negative affect, and preoccupation-anticipation.

It begins in the neurons, the basic type of brain cell. The brain has an estimated 86 billion of these cells, which communicate through chemical messengers called neurotransmitters.

Neurons can organize in clusters and form networks in order to perform specific functions such as thinking, learning, emotions and memory. The addiction cycle disrupts the normal function of some of these networks in three areas of the brain – the basal ganglia, the extended amygdala and the prefrontal cortex.

The disruptions do several things that contribute to continued drinking. They enable drinking-associated triggers, or cues, which lead to seeking alcohol. They also reduce the sensitivity of the brain systems,

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causing a diminished experience of pleasure or reward, and heighten activation of brain stress systems. Last, they reduce function of brain executive control systems, the part of the brain that typically helps make decisions and regulate one's actions, emotions and impulses.

These networks are critical for human survival. Unfortunately for the binge drinker, they become "hijacked," and the bingeing continues even after the harmful effects have begun.

Because binge drinkers' brains feel intense pleasure from alcohol, there is a powerful motivation to binge drink again and again. What may begin as social binge drinking at parties for recreation can cause progressive neuro-adaptive changes in brain structure and function. The brain is no longer well enough to function normally. Continued partying can transition into a chronic and uncontrollable daily pattern of alcohol use. These maladaptive neurological changes can persist long after the alcohol use stops.

Your brain on alcohol During the binge-intoxication stage, the basal ganglia rewards the drinker with pleasurable effects, releasing dopamine, the neurotransmitter responsible for the rewarding effects of alcohol and creating the desire for more.

With continued bingeing, the "habit circuitry" is repeatedly activated in another part of the basal ganglia called the dorsal striatum. It contributes to the compulsive seeking of more alcohol. This explains the craving that is triggered when a binge drinker is driving by a favorite bar and can't resist pulling in, even after a promise to go directly home after work.

During the withdrawal-negative affect stage, there is a break from drinking. Because the reward circuit has a diminished ability to deliver a dopamine reward, there is far less pleasure with natural, safe experiences such as food and sex, compared to alcohol.

During abstinence from alcohol, stress neurotransmitters such as corticotropin-releasing factor and dynorphin are released. These powerful neurochemicals cause negative emotional states associated with alcohol withdrawal. This drives the drinker back to alcohol to gain relief and attempt to reestablish the rewards of intoxication.

After a period of abstinence from alcohol, which may last only hours, the drinker enters the preoccupation-anticipation stage. This involves the prefrontal cortex, where executive decisions are made about whether or not to override the strong urges to drink. This part of the brain functions with a "go system" and "stop system."

When the go circuits stimulate the habit-response system of the dorsal striatum, the drinker becomes impulsive and seeks a drink, perhaps even subconsciously. The stop system can inhibit the activity of the go system and is important especially in preventing relapse.

Brain imaging studies show that binge drinking can disrupt the function in both the go and stop circuits. This interferes with proper decision-making and behavioral inhibition. The drinker is both impulsive and compulsive.

An illness that can be treated Scientific evidence shows that this disorder can be treated.

The FDA has approved three medications for treatment that should be offered whenever appropriate. There is well-supported scientific evidence that behavioral therapies can be effective treatment. This includes recovery support services, such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Most importantly, it is important to know that alcohol use disorder is a brain disorder causing a chronic illness. It is no different from diabetes, asthma or hypertension. When comprehensive, continuing care is provided, the recovery results improve, and the binge drinker has the hope of remaining sober as long as lifelong treatment and maintenance of sobriety become a dedicated lifestyle choice.

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Black employees in the service industry pay an emotional tax at work

Alicia Grandey, Pennsylvania State University

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Alicia Grandey, Pennsylvania State University

(THE CONVERSATION) The arrests of two black men who were waiting for a friend at a Starbucks in Philadelphia have raised questions about how race determines how customers are treated.

But does race also affect how the employees are treated within the service industry?

Prior research shows that black workers in people-oriented occupations – health care, service and sales – are rated lower by customers and supervisors than are white workers, even when their performance is objectively the same. Because of this, black workers have a harder time obtaining competitive raises or promotions. But it is unclear why or what workers can do about it.

In the U.S. workforce, blacks are disproportionately represented in low-paying service jobs like cashiers, call center employees and food service workers compared to higher-status jobs. So this issue has serious implications for the financial and professional lives of a large segment of black workers.

Race impacts perception of performance. Friendliness is key to performing well in the service industry. My colleagues Lawrence Houston III, Derek R. Avery and I found that negative stereotypes about blacks – that they are unfriendly, hostile or rude – explain lower performance evaluations of black service providers compared to white service providers.

We found that in order for the performance of black service providers to be rated equivalent to whites, blacks had to amplify and fake positive emotions to override those negative racial stereotypes. In other words, to be seen as good as white employees, black employees need to perform more “emotional labor,” a concept introduced by sociologist Arlie Hochschild.

Perhaps just like the two men at Starbucks, black service employees are assumed to have hostile intentions unless they put in extra effort to put forth a smile and show they are not a threat.

Across three studies We drew these conclusions from a series of studies we conducted over several years.

In our first study, we asked a representative sample of people for their impressions of an employee described as holding an emotional labor job, a hotel desk clerk. They saw a photo of either a black or white person with a neutral expression, but otherwise the same job qualifications. Regardless of the respondents’ own race, education or income, they saw the black employee as less friendly and more hostile than the white employee.

In the second study, people watched a video of either a black or a white sales clerk ringing up sales in a home goods shop. They saw the clerk acting either warm and friendly or just polite. In all videos the sales clerk was efficient and knowledgeable.

When viewers saw the employee performing less emotional labor – just being polite and efficient – the black employee was rated as less friendly and a worse performer than the white employee. In contrast, after watching the friendly condition, the viewers rated the black and white employees similarly.

In short, just being polite was not enough for the black employee; putting on a big smile was necessary to get the same performance ratings as the white employee.

Both of the above studies were experiments. In a third study, we surveyed actual service employees and their supervisors.

Again, we found that supervisors rated black grocery store clerks as worse performers than white clerks, which could not be explained by job experience or motivation. Yet, black clerks who reported amplifying and faking their positive emotions when interacting with customers – more emotional labor – saw the racial disparity in the performance evaluations disappear.

Notably, white clerks were rated highly regardless of the frequency of their emotional labor. For black clerks to be rated as highly as the white clerks, they had to more consistently exaggerate their smile in customer interactions.

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High cost of 'service with a smile' All service employees must sometimes put on a fake smile when having an off day, and sometimes they might let the mask slip. Our research shows that white employees who do less emotional labor can still be viewed positively, but black employees are not given the benefit of the doubt. Black employees constantly "fake it to make it" in service jobs.

Being a black service provider requires routinely putting forth more emotional effort – a bigger smile, a more enthusiastic tone of voice, maintained across time and customers – to be evaluated similarly to a white co-worker. If a black employee gets tired of faking that smile, there is a resulting decline in performance evaluation. This also means fewer opportunities for promotions, raises and career advancement.

Though putting on a smile might seem like a small price to pay to get ahead at work, research shows that keeping up a friendly façade is a path to job burnout, a state of complete exhaustion linked to a desire to quit and health issues. Recognizing this situation is a first step to improving conditions for black employees and customers alike.

This article was originally published on The Conversation. Read the original article here: <http://theconversation.com/black-employees-in-the-service-industry-pay-an-emotional-tax-at-work-94002>.

The goal in Korea should be peace and trade – not unification

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(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Alexis Dudden, University of Connecticut; Joan E. Cho, Wesleyan University, and Mary Alice Haddad, Wesleyan University

(THE CONVERSATION) Last week, the world witnessed a first tangible step toward a peaceful, prosperous Korean peninsula.

On April 27, 2018, Kim Jong-Un became the first North Korean leader to step foot in South Korea – where he was welcomed by South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

A few days later, the South Korean government reported that Kim had promised to give up his nuclear arsenal under certain conditions.

While some viewed the summit with skepticism and issued reminders about Kim's villainous past, others began talking of a unified Korea – a reasonable reaction considering that the leaders signed a document called the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula.

The intentions of these two leaders is key. For while Donald Trump and Xi Zinping and Vladimir Putin may tweet and hold meetings, it is the nearly 80 million Koreans who will determine the future of how they will share their peninsula.

As scholars who study Japan, Korea and East Asia – we know that the "Cold War" has always been "hot" in Asia. That's why we suggest the focus now should be on forging new ties with North Korea. The question of how South Korea and North Korea will merge can be left for the future.

To understand why, it's helpful to remember why Korea was split into two countries in the first place.

Creating two Koreas In August 1945, in the basement of the State Department in Washington, D.C., two American army officers traced a line across a National Geographic map and divided the Korean peninsula – at the time colonized by Japan – at the 38th parallel.

This division was part of an Allied vision of Japan's impending defeat.

Many – especially the Russians – had anticipated that Japan would be divided like Germany.

After all, it was Japan, not occupied Korea, who was the enemy combatant. Yet the Soviets acquiesced to the American idea.

Ideological camps among Koreans that had taken root under Japanese oppression challenged one another for expression in the following months. Eventually, the communists gained leadership in the north and their challengers in the south.

Five years later the Korean War erupted to claim the lives of one in eight Koreans. Tens of thousands

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of international participants would also die in what history books flatly name the first major conflict of the Cold War.

The 1953 armistice ending the fighting in Korea more or less followed the 1945 line. Under this agreement, Koreans who had collaborated, resisted, or simply endured Japanese rule prior to the Korean War (1950-1953) now found themselves assigned entirely new identities: "North Korean" and "South Korean." The meaning of these names has diverged and morphed into new realities on both sides since then.

The view from South KoreaIn South Korea, people often refer to the Korean War as yugio — literally 6.25 — referring to June 25, 1950 when the grandfather of today's North Korean leader ordered his troops to cross the border and attack the South. This state-sanctioned narrative reinforces an antagonistic relationship. The North is framed as the aggressor, the South as an innocent victim, and the U.S. and the West as the savior of South Korea. Not unimportantly, North Koreans call the same history, "The Fatherland Liberation War."

While the 2015 Asan Report finds that more than 80 percent of South Koreans "dutifully" answer that Korea should be reunified, fewer than 20 percent support immediate reunification. Their sense of an ethnic bond is decreasing and reunification is mostly seen as an economic burden.

In 2010, former president Lee Myung-bak proposed a "reunification tax" to support the costs of reunification, whenever it came. The tax proposal received little support from the public or among politicians, especially after the North's attack on a South Korean warship Cheonan and the shelling of South's Yeonpyeong Island later that year. Speaking in 2014, Former president Park Geun-hye also tried to promote a positive image of reunification calling it a "jackpot" (daebak).

She claimed that reunification — a combination of North Korean labor and South Korean technological advancements — would create jobs and strengthen the Korean economy.

Despite government's effort to reposition the reunification issue, public opinion data show that South Korean youth are only increasing their detachment from North Korea.

An easier pathSo, if an older generation's understanding of reunification is a hard sell, what is the path forward?

South Korea could instead seek a peaceful coexistence of two Koreas with free trade, free exchange of people, and no military threats. Perhaps public support for reunification may re-emerge and strengthen as ties are strengthened through increased exchanges at the civil level and greater economic independence in the North, thereby lowering the "costs of reunification."

One of the main reasons there has not yet been a resolution to the "North Korea problem" has been persistent, divergent dreams of reunification. For the U.S. and South Korea, a reunified Korea would be a liberal, capitalist democracy. For North Korea, China, and Russia, a reunified Korea would not be a close ally with the United States, and certainly would not host U.S. troops.

Over the last 30 years, the benefits of a divided Korea have only increased for those outside the peninsula. Initially, North Korea served as an important "buffer state" between the communist China and Russia to the north and the democratic and capitalist countries of South Korea, Japan — and their ally the United States. Even after the Cold War ended, ideological differences among these important geopolitical players has continued, reinforcing the benefits of North Korea's liminal status.

If we can follow public opinion in South Korea and temporarily abandon the dream of a single Korea, it is possible to see that everyone would benefit from a peaceful, prosperous, non-nuclear North Korea. China's economic success has demonstrated that a country can take advantage of markets without becoming a capitalist democracy. It can offer North Korea guidance on how to develop using the Chinese model.

If neighboring countries opened up their markets to trade and offered targeted foreign direct investment, North Korea can experience the kind of economic miracle that Japan, South Korea, and China have already enjoyed.

If the United States and its allies can offer security guarantees to North Korea, it should not need to hold onto its deadly nuclear weapons.

If North Korea can recognize that it is in everyone's interest that North Korea not only continues to exist but becomes more prosperous, perhaps Kim Jong-Un will make good on his promise to let go of his

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nuclear ambitions.

Once North Korea is more economically independent, maybe reunification can be conducted as a joyful reunion between equals. That day is far in the future, however. In the present, powerful negotiators must find the skill to chart a path towards peace and prosperity for North Korea. If they can manage it, they will have left a great legacy to the world.

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I did research at Rajneeshpuram, and here is what I learned

Marion Goldman, University of Oregon

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Marion Goldman, University of Oregon

(THE CONVERSATION) Netflix recently launched a six-part docuseries, "Wild Wild Country," about the controversial Rajneesh Movement that created a spiritual community on 64,000 acres of the former Big Muddy Ranch in Oregon. Back in the 1980s, as now, media focused on the group's outrageous acts, legal confrontations and alleged crimes.

The revelations that the community's guru, Rajneesh, made in 1985 were shocking. His personal secretary, Ma Anand Sheela, he said, had conspired with a small circle of about 24 people to kill state and federal officials, attempted to control a county election by busing in homeless people to vote and poisoning salad bars in the county seat, and deliberately escalated tensions with outsiders. Sheela and some of her cadre were later charged and sentenced for state and federal crimes. But many devotees told me and other researchers that they were unaware of the extent of her crimes and misdeeds until she left Rajneeshpuram. Neither was I.

As a scholar of gender and alternative spiritual movements, I visited Rajneeshpuram 10 times before it closed down completely early in 1986 and talked with almost 100 men and women who lived there. Although I was sometimes monitored, no one interfered with my research.

Away from the Netflix series' dramatic story, what devotees told me and what I observed adds another dimension to popular conceptions of the short-lived communal city.

Rajneeshpuram, Oregon In 1981, after running into problems with the Indian government, Rajneesh closed his ashram in the city of Pune in central India and invited devotees from all over the world to join him to create an extraordinary community in central Oregon. Some Rajneeshes bought houses in the closest town, Antelope. Most, however, journeyed for another 19 miles on the winding mountain roads that led to the the plateau where Rajneeshpuram rested. At its peak, the communal city housed about 2,000 devotees.

Women and men labored together around the clock, constructing a huge meditation hall and an open-air mall with restaurants, clothing boutiques and a shop that sold hundreds of books and videotapes by and about Rajneesh. They also created a private airport, a hotel, living quarters and a sparkling artificial lake.

The devotees belied popular stereotypes of passive, easily manipulated spiritual seekers. Two-thirds of Rajneeshpuram's residents had four-year college degrees and/or had previously pursued lucrative career paths.

These women and men talked with me about their experiences and life histories. Most men, for example, felt that they had personal relationships with their guru, even when they had never met him. They also emphasized how Rajneesh helped them access their hidden intellectual and emotional strengths.

This was interesting, but with each visit, my attention increasingly turned to women in their 30's and 40's whose incomes and educational attainments far exceeded the national average.

Accomplished women Fifty-four percent of Rajneesh's devotees were women. Many had abandoned relationships, successful careers and occasionally young children in order to create a utopia around their spiritual leader. In our conversations, they disclosed that they followed Rajneesh to Oregon because they

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felt that he had transformed their lives, and they wanted to continue to experience the love and affirmation that they received from their powerful protector.

Every woman that I interviewed at length had been influenced by the feminist movement of the 1970s and hoped for full economic, sexual and social equality. They wanted to live very differently from their housewife mothers. However, they were deeply disappointed when they still felt anxious and lonely despite the money and recognition that they received from their careers. They told me that they had felt forced to choose between successful careers and fulfilling marriages. They lost with either choice.

One devotee, who later made a fortune in currency trading, told me that she had to drop out of the university and her premedical studies when she married. She said, "It was sort of a Jewish ethic. Women were wives and mothers, they weren't doctors."

But Rajneesh asserted that women could succeed in every endeavor as well as or better than men. He applauded high levels of achievement and also emphasized the importance of traditionally feminine traits like intuition and emotional sensitivity for both women and men. He told women that they could and should integrate their personal and professional lives. He said,

"It is for the betterment of both man and woman that the woman should be given every freedom and equal opportunity for her individuality."

"At Rajneeshpuram, accomplished women were almost always assigned to jobs similar to their old ones. For example, psychologists led personal growth groups, attorneys staffed the legal department, city planners and architects designed roads and buildings, and writers and professors worked at the Rajneeshpuram newspaper, "Rajneesh Times." Devotees described laboring alongside people who shared their ideals and cared about feelings along with productivity.

An attorney with a degree from an elite university discussed the joy of working with supportive friends and playing together at the end of long shifts. She said:

"We all say around here that work is our meditation. I feel really good....We're sort of in this together."

Why women stayed. The guru himself may have retreated into private meditation, delegating all organizational decisions to Sheela, but devotees still believed that he watched over them. Every woman and man wore a locket with Rajneesh's picture and used the new Indian name that he had bestowed on them. They broke into joyful tears when they lined Rajneeshpuram's main road to bow and place roses on the guru's Rolls Royce as he drove by each afternoon.

In September of 1985, according to media reports, the guru privately confronted Sheela about some of her crimes. She decamped to Germany, and Rajneesh once again started his lectures. He informed devotees that his physician had told him about her autocratic leadership and the movement's mounting debts. He publicly condemned Sheela for masterminding scores of crimes and cooperated with state and federal authorities who wanted to apprehend Sheela and her cadre.

Devotees seemed to be thrilled to hear him speak once more, although most told me that they wondered about Rajneesh's claims of total ignorance about Sheela's activities. I saw people protest against Sheela and cheer when her official robes were tossed into a fire. They celebrated when new movement leaders burned thousands of copies of "The Book of Rajneeshism" that Sheela designed. However, for months after the stunning disclosures, devotees that I interviewed still believed in their guru.

For a time, almost all of the women who responded to my mailed questionnaires in 1985 and 1997 or whom I kept in touch with informally tried to sustain their faith.

Former fashion model Veena, for example, was victimized by Sheela because of her role as Rajneesh's personal seamstress and her room in his compound. Nevertheless, Veena continued to trust the guru throughout her ordeals. In 2008, when I talked with her at length in England, she was as enamored with Rajneesh and her old Oregon comrades as she had been in 1981, when she guided well-known journalist Frances FitzGerald around Rajneeshpuram.

No matter how shocked or damaged they were, devotees did not quickly abandon the close friends or spiritual practices that had transformed their lives. However, in response to the 1997 follow-up survey, very few said that they still believed in Rajneesh, or Osho, as he later came to be known. Nevertheless, they looked back on their Oregon experience fondly.

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One woman left the movement after a year because she grew increasingly disgusted by Rajneesh's revelations, but in 1997, she still remembered central Oregon fondly. She said:

"No regrets. Some understanding of the human condition."

Most of the accomplished women returned to their old professions or transitioned to new ones. Their years at Rajneeshpuram had affirmed the importance of both work and love, and they had learned that it was possible to enjoy both. As their survey responses showed, they were certain that they left the communal city with new abilities to function anywhere in the world.

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Local governments' cybersecurity crisis in 8 charts

Donald Norris, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Donald Norris, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Anupam Joshi, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Laura Mateczun, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and Tim Finin, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

(THE CONVERSATION) Within the past few weeks, two large American cities learned that their information systems were hacked. First, Atlanta revealed that it had been the victim of a ransomware attack that took many of the city's services offline for nearly a week, forcing police to revert to taking written case notes, hampering the Atlanta's court system and preventing residents from paying water bills online. Then, Baltimore's 311 and 911 dispatch systems were taken offline for more than 17 hours, forcing dispatchers to log and process requests manually. Both attacks could have been prevented. And they are more evidence of the poor, if not appalling, state of local government cybersecurity in the United States.

We know this because in 2016, in partnership with the International City/County Management Association, we conducted the first-ever nationwide survey of local government cybersecurity. Among other things, the survey data showed just how poorly local governments practice cybersecurity.

Under near-constant attack, but not fully aware Nearly half – 44 percent – of all the respondents told us they experience cyberattacks at least daily. Based on prior research, we are confident that rate is actually much higher.

The volume of attacks isn't dropping – and in some cases it's increasing.

But even so, many communities didn't know how frequently they are attacked, and most didn't count or catalog initial attacks – though more than half did track more serious incidents and breaches.

More than half weren't able to determine who was attacking their systems.

Unprepared to respond, and with not enough support Certainly, there are local governments that do a commendable job with cybersecurity. If previous research into government information technology systems and electronic government can be a guide, they are most likely larger, more well-funded and more well-managed governments. However, the data from our more recent survey strongly suggest that at least some, and perhaps even a large fraction of, local governments may be unable to respond to electronic intrusions.

In part this is because few local officials are aware of the need for cybersecurity. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents to the survey, who were nearly all information technology or cybersecurity officials, said that top managers understood the need. However, among other groups in local governments, awareness dropped considerably. Perhaps as a result, support for cybersecurity efforts was also not as strong as Atlanta's and Baltimore's experiences suggest it should be.

With most local government officials and staff unaware and unsupportive, it is not surprising that cybersecurity is so poor among American local governments. Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms admitted that cybersecurity was not a high priority, although "it certainly has gone to the front of the line."

And yet, crucial barriers remain, largely to do with how much money is allocated to cybersecurity efforts.

Getting more people in the know If local officials are going to do a better job protecting their information assets, they'll first need to know a lot more about what's actually happening. The numbers of survey respondents who answered "Don't know" to our questions was surprisingly high. No top local officials, whether elected or appointed, should be unaware of basic cybersecurity information, like whether their systems have been attacked or breached, or who's attacking their systems and why.

Knowing these answers will only become more critical as computing becomes more deeply embedded in systems running "smart" cities. If computers control traffic lights, sewage plants and electrical grids, then the consequence of attacks is more severe than just loss of information or computer services.

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Tariffs are the wrong weapon in fight against China's 'pirates' – here's the right one

Sean Pager, Michigan State University

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Sean Pager, Michigan State University and Eric Priest, University of Oregon

(THE CONVERSATION) The Trump administration's face-off against China over intellectual property rights is a battle worth fighting. Unfortunately, the White House has chosen the wrong weapon: tariffs.

The administration launched the first salvo in March, slapping steep tariffs on steel and aluminum, and more recently announced US\$50 billion in new duties on a range of Chinese goods. Such unilateral tariffs almost certainly violate the rules of the World Trade Organization. Furthermore, they risk sparking a trade war with China, which would ultimately harm U.S. companies.

There is a better way to respond to Chinese intellectual property theft: unfair competition law. Use of unfair competition law to sanction overseas piracy is a relatively new tool. However, our research has found that it has already proven effective in holding scofflaws accountable.

Targeting unfair behavior Trump's tariffs may be just a ploy to spur negotiations. Yet persuading China to respect intellectual property rights requires sustained pressure and commitment. Trade sanctions are too blunt an instrument for this task.

Unfair competition law, on the other hand, functions more like a scalpel. It targets specific companies that use stolen intellectual property in their manufacturing process. Since using stolen intellectual property as an input saves money, this confers an undeserved cost advantage versus law-abiding competitors – hence, such companies are competing unfairly.

Unfair competition laws exist at both the state and federal level and can be used by both private companies and public enforcers (typically state attorneys general) to target unfair behavior that harms competitors in the marketplace. Moreover, while the pain of a tariff is spread across a broad range of goods and companies, unfair competition suits target the actual wrongdoers: in this case, the Chinese companies that have unfairly benefited from Western intellectual property.

As narrowly targeted remedies, such actions are far less likely to provoke retaliation, thus minimizing the risk that U.S. companies would suffer as well. At the same time, such suits offer remedies with real teeth: fines, punitive damages as well as exclusion orders blocking access to the U.S. market. Settlements often result in ongoing monitoring to ensure future compliance.

A record of success Holding foreign manufacturers accountable for intellectual property theft overseas represents a novel use of unfair competition law. However, it has already amassed a proven track record.

The strategy began in 2009, with a case filed under federal trade law against TianRui, a Chinese manufacturer of steel railway wheels, alleging use of stolen trade secrets. Although the secrets were stolen in China, the U.S. International Trade Commission agreed that the action threatened to harm U.S. competitors in the domestic market and thus represented unfair competition – a decision upheld on appeal.

Since then, our research has documented at least 17 enforcement actions against foreign companies

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– from seafood distributors to BBQ makers – accused of stealing software or trade secrets from U.S. companies. Almost all resulted in favorable judgments or settlements.

For example, in 2013, the Washington State attorney general threatened to sue Embraer, the Brazilian manufacturer of regional jet aircraft, for unfair competition based on its use of unlicensed Microsoft software in its domestic factories. Although the software was not used on the aircraft that Embraer exported to the U.S. market, the cost savings realized from the stolen intellectual property were said to be substantial. Embraer reportedly paid \$10 million to settle the case.

While suits have been brought against businesses in several countries, Chinese companies have been by far the biggest target, making up half of the cases. Several have had their goods blocked from the U.S. market for 10 years or more. A Chinese maker of barbecue equipment was fined \$250,000 for failing to license its software. Moreover, the majority of the cases ended with the defendants entering commitments to license their intellectual property going forward, often subject to external monitoring.

Intellectual property is just the start. Beyond holding foreign companies liable for intellectual property theft, competition law could also be used more extensively as a remedy for many other types of misconduct.

The same underlying theory could be applied against labor abuses in foreign sweatshops or environmental harms and human rights violations if it can be shown that such practices give a company an unfair competitive advantage.

For example, using forced labor can significantly lower a textile factory's costs to make shirts, making it harder for a U.S.-based competitor to compete. Similarly, illegally dumping toxic waste can yield unfair costs savings vis-a-vis more scrupulous rivals.

In theory, any illegal manufacturing practice that yields an unfair cost advantage – from the rainforest devastation inflicted by Indonesian palm plantations to the illegal use of child labor by African chocolate growers – could potentially give rise to an unfair competition claim.

So long as the cost savings can be shown to yield an unfair competitive edge when finished goods are sold in the U.S. market, they fall within the jurisdiction of U.S. unfair competition law, allowing lawsuits to be filed in American courts.

Punishing overseas cheating levels the global playing field for U.S. companies. At the same time, it could offer a measure of justice to those powerless to seek relief in their home country, thus protecting some of the world's most vulnerable populations and environments.

Leading the charge. While the Trump administration has used intellectual property theft to justify its tariffs, the federal government has been conspicuously absent from the unfair competition bandwagon targeting such theft directly.

States filed half of the 18 lawsuits we counted, while private companies brought the rest. And the Federal Trade Commission has declined to get involved, despite a petition from 39 states and territories.

To be sure, unfair competition law is no panacea. Lawsuits cannot remedy every form of Chinese misconduct. Some of the practices that the U.S. government complains of are not technically illegal or might be difficult to prove resulted in competitive harms. To be effective, unfair competition actions should therefore be combined with other measures the Trump administration has outlined, including restricting Chinese investment in strategic industries and pursuing a WTO complaint.

Still, unfair competition's potential has yet to be fully explored. Rather than risking a trade war over tariffs, the Trump administration should lead the battle to hold foreign scofflaws accountable directly using U.S. competition law.

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3 vital ways to measure how much a university education is worth

Mark S. Schlissel, University of Michigan

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Mark S. Schlissel, University of Michigan; Michael H. Schill, University of Oregon, and Michael V. Drake, The Ohio State University

(THE CONVERSATION) Editor's note: Today we begin a new series in which we ask the leaders of our country's colleges and universities to address some of the most pressing issues in higher education.

The past several years have seen increased calls for colleges and universities to demonstrate their value to students, families and taxpayers. And the pressure has come from both sides of the political spectrum. Barack Obama, for example, didn't mince his words when he spoke a few years ago on the University of Michigan campus: "We are putting colleges on notice...you can't assume that you'll just jack up tuition every single year. If you can't stop tuition from going up, then the funding you get from taxpayers each year will go down. We should push colleges to do better."

So how is a would-be student or a tax-paying citizen to decide the value of a given university or degree? There is certainly no shortage of tools that have been developed to help in this regard.

The federal College Scorecard, for example, is meant to "help students choose a school that is well-suited to meet their needs, priced affordably, and is consistent with their educational and career goals."

Various magazines put together college rankings. There have been efforts at the state level to show what graduates of a given institution or program can expect to earn. And some colleges and universities are working to provide those data themselves.

So we asked our panel of presidents – from the University of Michigan, University of Oregon and The Ohio State University: If you had to devise just one tool or metric to help the general public assess the value of a particular college or degree, what would it be and why?

Greater life expectancy
Michael Drake, president of The Ohio State University

When I ask individuals if they want their own children to attend college, the answer is, overwhelmingly, yes. The evidence is clear. College graduates are more likely to be employed and more likely to earn more than those without degrees. Studies also indicate that people with college degrees have higher levels of happiness and engagement, better health and longer lives.

Wow.

If living a longer, healthier and happier life is a good thing, then, yes, college is worth it.

A four-year degree is not necessarily the best path for everyone, of course. Many people find their lives are enhanced by earning a two-year or technical degree. For others, none of these options is the perfect choice. But if there is one data point I want to highlight, it is the correlation between a college education and greater life expectancy. In fact, one study suggests that those who attend college live, on average, seven years longer.

Last year was the second year in a row that average life expectancy in the U.S. went down. But greater mortality didn't affect all Americans equally. Studies point to a growing gap in life expectancy between rich and poor. Higher education may, in other words, be part of the solution to this problem.

This is just one of the reasons that so many of our country's institutions of higher learning are focused on the question of how to make sure more Americans have access to a quality – and affordable – college education.

Since December 2016, the American Talent Initiative, a coalition of 100 (and counting) colleges and universities, has been working to educate 50,000 additional lower-income students by 2025. In another initiative, the 11 public universities in the University Innovation Alliance are committed to producing more U.S. graduates and have, over the past three years, increased their number of low-income graduates by 24.7 percent.

As educators, we must continue to increase pathways to the American Dream — a journey that includes health, happiness, long life and, very often, a college degree.

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Social mobility Michael Schill, president of the University of Oregon

While it is impossible to devise only one indicator to describe the value of a university, I would suggest that a good place to begin would be the number of first-generation students it admits and the rate at which they graduate.

As a first-generation college student myself, I may be somewhat biased, but I believe that our generation will be judged by how well we enhance the opportunities for social mobility among our citizens. And despite some skepticism about the value of higher education on the part of pundits and politicians, it is well-documented that there is no better way for young people to achieve the "American Dream" than by getting a college degree.

Note that my metric is really two – first-generation enrollment numbers and graduation rates. The simple fact is that students who go to college and don't receive a degree may well be in worse shape economically than those who don't go at all. They will have invested time and money, yet without a diploma will not achieve the economic returns from that investment. Moreover, many are hobbled by student loans without the economic wherewithal to repay them.

It is easy for universities, colleges and community colleges to admit large numbers of students from modest backgrounds. That happened in the for-profit sector. However, the graduation rate at for-profit institutions is only 23 percent, compared to the 59 percent rate overall. The hard part is to support students so that they can succeed.

First-generation students make up a third of college undergraduates in the United States. They are more likely to be minorities and to come from low-income households, and are far less likely to graduate than their peers who had one or more parent attend college. We can do better.

Part of the solution is for more universities to provide more adequate need-based financial assistance, but even that isn't enough. College can be a confusing experience for first-generation kids, both in terms of learning how to succeed academically and "fitting in" socially. Real value will accrue to students and American society only if we can provide them with appropriate advising and counseling so that they not only get in, but persist and flourish.

Freedom Mark Schlissel, president of the University of Michigan

To devise one metric to help the public assess our value, we need to challenge ourselves the same way we challenge students in our classrooms and labs. Let's first determine the right question to ask. What are our students looking for in life and how can a college degree change the quality and trajectory of their lives?

Higher education gives graduates the best opportunity to pursue their ambitions, change careers, define and solve complex problems, and persuade and lead others. College graduates enjoy higher salaries, qualify for further levels of education and are at a lower risk of ending up in jobs that become obsolete. Moreover, they lead richer and fuller lives – happier, healthier, wealthier and longer.

Each of these outcomes is a component of the value of a college education, yet none of them alone fairly captures its full value. In considering these metrics together, in the context of our question, I believe that one very important concept emerges.

That concept is freedom.

Freedom's link to education has long been a quintessential American value. As the educator and philosopher John Dewey wrote at the beginning of the 20th century, "We naturally associate democracy, to be sure, with freedom of action, but freedom of action without freed capacity of thought behind it is only chaos."

At its best, higher education gives us the freedom to make decisions based on our values, desires, human talents and willingness to work hard. We are free to choose our own path.

Education takes freedom beyond its status as a legal right and elevates it into a lifetime of choices. It's the trajectory of those lives, changed by the opportunities available through a college education, that I am most interested in measuring.

The American public rightfully expects higher education to serve as an enabler of prosperity and equality. I would devise a metric that captures higher education's greatest potential: to enhance the freedom of an individual graduate in a nation founded on constitutionally guaranteed rights of life, liberty and the

pursuit of happiness.

Editor's note: The Ohio State University is a member of the University Innovation Alliance and American Talent Initiative.

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Nitrogen from rock could fuel more plant growth around the world – but not enough to prevent climate change

Benjamin Z. Houlton, University of California, Davis

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Benjamin Z. Houlton, University of California, Davis

(THE CONVERSATION) Nitrogen is one of the most important resources for people, ecosystems and the planet. It's found in all sorts of essential molecules, including DNA, protein and cell walls. Life - and humanity - cannot exist without adequate access to this precious nutrient.

For many years, researchers believed that essentially all of the nitrogen in the world's natural plants and soils originated from the atmosphere, where it makes up about 78 percent of the air we breathe. But in a recent study, my colleagues Scott Morford, Randy Dahlgren and I discovered that up to a quarter of the planet's terrestrial nitrogen originates from weathering of bedrock.

As a global environmental scientist who has been studying nitrogen, climate and ecosystems for over a decade, I found this result surprising. And it has big implications for people and the planet. If there is more nitrogen available in Earth's system than scientists have thought, it could fuel extra photosynthesis by plants, increasing the rate at which they pull carbon pollution out of the atmosphere.

But this isn't a solution to climate change, contrary to what some prominent pundits have contended. Rock weathering is no magic answer: It simply does not supply nitrogen fast enough to radically slow warming over the next 100 years.

Calculating Earth's nitrogen budgetGeologists have long known that there's a lot of nitrogen in rocks, but our study was the first to show that this nitrogen is released quickly enough to influence plant and soil nutrient cycling on a global scale. Nitrogen inputs are critical to maintaining ecosystems because they lose a bit of nitrogen every year. Rain washes it out of soil, and bacteria convert it to gaseous forms that escape to the atmosphere. Without ongoing access to new nitrogen sources, plants eventually would stop growing and pulling carbon dioxide out of the air.

Our study used several different techniques to show that rocks are an important component of the planet's nitrogen cycle. In cases where weathering rates are high and sedimentary rocks contain a decent quantity of nitrogen, they actually provide more nitrogen than the atmosphere. We pulled together decades of data on where nitrogen exists - in the atmosphere, rocks, the ocean and Earth's mantle (the rock between its crust and its core), and used this information to build a picture of the planet's nitrogen budget.

This work revealed a critical role played by rock weathering. Many processes gradually break rocks down over time, including freezing and thawing, chemical reactions, and impacts of living organisms such as lichens and tree roots. Weathering releases nitrogen, replenishing nitrogen that continental erosion carries to the ocean over millions of years.

This initial finding was supported by a suite of classic geochemical models, evidence built from our global rock nitrogen inventory, and a new global computer model that we created for this study.

Until now researchers had assumed that the atmosphere was the main source of nitrogen for Earth's ecosystems. But they also had trouble explaining how so much nitrogen accumulated in ecosystems if it came solely from the atmosphere.

We identified bedrock as the source of this "missing nitrogen" by showing that rock weathering could help to meet nitrogen demand from plants and animals. In mountainous regions and areas with moist

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climates, where rocks are exposed and tend to weather quickly, we estimate that rock weathering doubles the amount of nitrogen that enters natural ecosystems.

Nourishing the carbon cycleWhat does this mean for the carbon cycle and global climate change? Several computer simulations have shown that nitrogen affects carbon storage in a way that could substantially alter the amount of global warming that occurs in this century. Our past work showed that ecosystems living on nitrogen-rich bedrock contained twice as much carbon in their soils and trees as those on nitrogen-poor bedrock. The nitrogen in the rock was feeding the ecosystem, allowing plants to accumulate more biomass than sites without much rock nitrogen weathering.

But rock nitrogen has always been a part of the planet, even if we weren't terribly mindful of it. Our study makes explicit a process that is already affecting the planet's carbon cycle. And it helps explain how plants and soils have absorbed roughly 30 percent of carbon emissions from human activities, even though nutrient constraints on plant growth are widespread.

Globally, ecosystems still derive more nitrogen from the air than from rocks. Nonetheless, our findings may help make global climate models more precise and resolve some puzzling observations at higher latitudes, which tend to hold more nitrogen in rocks. For example, boreal forest zones in northern Canada and Eurasia are storing carbon at a level higher than many scientists would have predicted, and are greening in response to climate change. We expect these regions may have high levels of nitrogen from rock weathering.

Rock nitrogen won't save us from climate changeSome pundits have argued that our work shows scientists don't have a firm grasp of such issues as global climate change. This view is wrong.

Our study highlights a role for rocks in supplying nitrogen to terrestrial ecosystems. It challenges a paradigm that was established as far back as the late 1800s, but this doesn't make us doubt the scientific process. Instead, we recognize that questions must always drive our thinking – for example, "I wonder whether rock nitrogen matters to the planet?"

Others have misinterpreted our work as evidence that the risk of extreme climate change has been overblown. For example, conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh opined, "It's a scientific report that carbon dioxide, CO₂, that which causes the greenhouse effect, is much, much, much less impactful than anybody knew."

Wrong again. Our study said no such thing, and it does not imply that curbing global climate change is less urgent. Rock nitrogen can help fertilize the carbon cycle, but there is not enough of it to stop the rapid pace of global climate change. That will require aggressively cutting greenhouse gas emissions and creating technologies that can remove carbon from the atmosphere at a large scale over the next few decades.

Climate models consistently show that nature will not save us. We have to save ourselves – although rocks may provide us with a bit more cushion than we previously knew.

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Your genome may have already been hacked

Norman A. Paradis, Dartmouth College

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Norman A. Paradis, Dartmouth College

(THE CONVERSATION) On April 25, California law enforcement announced the possible capture of a long-sought serial killer. Shortly after, it was reported that police had used public DNA databases to determine his identity.

This extraordinary event highlights that when you send off a cheek swab to one of the private genome companies, you may sacrifice not just your own privacy but that of your family and your ancestors.

In a time of widespread anxiety over the misuse of social media, Americans should also be concerned

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over who has access to their genetic information.

For-profit genome testing companies like 23andMe make money, in part, by selling anonymized genomic data. Many people may not realize that re-identifying genomes – that is, identifying an individual from their genetic profile – is a relatively straightforward process. In one study, researchers could re-identify five of 10 people, as well as their families.

Humans share about 99 percent of their DNA bases with one another. The few differences that exist are often sufficient to figure out who's related to whom.

The genome has been something of a disappointment medically. Physicians generally can't do much with the information that a given patient has, say, a 3 percent greater risk of dementia. But those data are potentially very useful to insurance companies and employers trying lower their risk.

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, a federal law passed in 2008, prevents insurance companies and employers from forcing people to undergo genetic testing. But it doesn't necessarily prevent bad actors from using dark-web databases and advanced analytics to give themselves a commercial edge.

There have been no reports yet of companies doing this. But we live in an age in which it seems the possible becomes probable on an almost daily basis.

Members of Congress have already tried to remove some of the little genetic privacy protection that already exists. And companies have begun to offer genome sequencing as an employee benefit.

The financial services industry offers a cautionary tale for the customers of the genome industry. Banks are highly regulated and supposed to provide state-of-the-art protection, yet they have been hacked.

Compared to financial institutions, genome companies are lightly regulated. Eventually one or more of them will be hacked or even caught selling "risk profiling" services to third parties.

With respect to police and prosecutors, the situation is somewhat different. In the end, they must submit their work to the courts. It's possible that setting up a fake account on an ancestor DNA website, as the California police reportedly did, constitutes unreasonable search and seizure.

Given the large financial rewards and the behavior of other industries, millions of American families should likely consider their genomic privacy as already compromised. If the genome of one of your relatives is in one of these databases, then essentially so is yours.

In the uncommon circumstance that a whole family has not one member who has yet to send off a cheek swab, that family might want to consider opting out of this whole thing until society sorts out risks, benefits and privacy protections.

Most people, however, will have to wait and hope they will not be harmed by a genomic revolution that has provided them with little benefit.

This article was originally published on The Conversation. Read the original article here: <http://theconversation.com/your-genome-may-have-already-been-hacked-95763>.

Syria monitor: Missile attack kills 26, mostly Iranians

By BASSEM MROUE, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A missile attack targeting government outposts in Syria's northern region killed 26 pro-government fighters, mostly Iranians, a Syria war monitoring group said Monday, amid soaring Mideast tensions between regional archenemies Israel and Iran.

Iranian media gave conflicting reports about the overnight incident amid speculation that it was carried out by neighboring Israel.

The attack came hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu talked to President Donald Trump on the phone. The White House said the two leaders discussed the continuing threats and challenges facing the Middle East, "especially the problems posed by the Iranian regime's destabilizing activities."

A day earlier, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo ratcheted up the Trump administration's rhetoric against Iran and offered warm support to Israel and Saudi Arabia in their standoff with Tehran.

"We remain deeply concerned about Iran's dangerous escalation of threats to Israel and the region and

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Iran's ambition to dominate the Middle East remains," Pompeo said after a nearly two-hour meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "The United States is with Israel in this fight," he added on his first trip abroad as America's top diplomat.

Israel has cited Iran's hostile rhetoric, support for anti-Israel militant groups and development of long-range missiles.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the late Sunday night attack appears to have been carried out by Israel and targeted an arms depot for surface-to-surface missiles at a base in northern Syria known as Brigade 47. The Observatory said four Syrians were also among the casualties.

It said the death toll could rise as the attack also wounded 60 fighters and there were several others still missing.

Iranian state television, citing Syrian media, reported the attack.

However, an Iranian semi-official news agency denied reports that Iranian fighters were killed or that Iranian-run bases were hit. The Tasnim news agency quoted an unnamed Iranian informed official in its report but did not elaborate on the denial.

Another semi-official news agency, ISNA, said the strike killed 18 Iranians, including a commander, in a suburb of the central city of Hama. It cited "local sources and activists" for its report.

The missiles targeted buildings and centers which likely include a weapons depot, ISNA reported.

The Syrian government-owned Tishrin newspaper quoted what it called "sources on the ground" as saying that the attack on military positions in Aleppo and Hama provinces consisted of nine ballistic missiles fired from American-British bases in north Jordan. The report could not be independently confirmed.

There was also no immediate comment from Israel, which rarely confirms or denies its attacks in Israel. Israeli media reported that the security cabinet will hold an unscheduled meeting later Monday on the subject of the nuclear deal with Iran.

President Donald Trump has set a May 12 deadline to decide whether to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal — something he appears likely to do despite heavy pressure to stay in from European and other parties.

Tehran has sent thousands of Iran-backed fighters to back Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces in the country's seven-year civil war.

The attack comes amid soaring tensions between Iran and Israel following an airstrike earlier this month on Syria's T4 air base in central province of Homs that killed seven Iranian military personnel. Tehran has vowed to retaliate for the T4 attack.

Syria, Iran and Russia blamed Israel for that T4 attack. Israel did not confirm or deny it.

On Monday, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the time when Iran's enemies can "hit and run" is over.

"They know if they enter military conflict with Iran, they will be hit multiple times," he said in comments during a meeting with workers, according to his website. He did not specifically refer to the latest attack in Syria.

Israel Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said in an interview published last Thursday that his country will strike Tehran if attacked by archenemy Iran, escalating an already tense war of words between the two adversaries.

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency on Monday quoted chief of Fatimayoun Brigade, an Iran-backed Afghan militia in Syria fighting alongside Iranian forces, as saying their base near Aleppo was not targeted during the strikes and they had no casualties. It did not elaborate.

Earlier on Monday, Syrian TV reported a "new aggression," with missiles targeting military outposts in northern Syria. The state-run television reported that the missiles targeted several military positions before midnight Sunday outposts in the Hama and Aleppo countryside.

Lebanon's Al-Akhbar daily, that is considered close to the militant Iranian-backed Hezbollah group and the Syrian government said the attack targeted "important arms depots used by the (Syrian) army and Iran's Revolutionary Guards." It said that missiles used in the attack appear to have been bunker buster.

Syria-based opposition media activist Mohamad Rasheed said that base that came under attack is about 10 kilometers (7 miles) outside the city of Hama, adding that the airstrike led to several explosions in the

arms depot. He added that the area is known as the Maarin Mountain or Mountain 47.

Rasheed said that some of the exploding missiles in the arms depot struck parts of Hama, adding that residents in areas near the base fled their homes. He said the base has been run by Iranian and Iran-backed fighters from Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

___ Associated Press writers Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, and Ilan Ben Zion in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

WW II veteran to graduate 68 years after leaving college

By JOHN SEEWER, Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — Like so many American soldiers returning home from World War II, Bob Barger started working a new job and going to college. Once he settled into his career and raising a family, finishing school was no longer a priority.

Now, 68 years since he last sat in a classroom, Barger is set to graduate from the University of Toledo this week after a review of his transcripts from the late 1940s showed he completed enough courses to qualify for an associate's degree — a two-year diploma not offered when he was still in school.

"It was something I never dreamed of," the 96-year-old Barger said. "I knew I couldn't go back to school now.

"I'm going to be proud to hang that diploma on the wall and think about the friends behind it," he said. "I found out without friends, this old world wouldn't be worth living in."

The university took a look at Barger's old school records because of a friendship he struck up with Haraz Ghanbari, the school's director of military and veteran affairs.

They met five years ago when Ghanbari, a Navy Reserve officer, asked Barger to officiate his promotion to lieutenant.

Ghanbari later found out that Barger never graduated from the university, even though he took a full load of classes from 1947 to 1950.

"We actually had to go into the archives to find his transcripts," said Barbara Kopp Miller, dean of University College at Toledo.

The records showed Barger completed 83 credit hours — about 20 more than what's required for the associate's degree that he'll receive on Saturday. University officials say they don't know of anyone older ever graduating from the school.

"It's the right thing to do. He deserved. He earned it," Kopp Miller said. "It's so cool to honor a member of our greatest generation."

Barger was a pilot in the Navy, enlisting after seeing an advertisement that said "join the Navy and get an education."

He flew seaplanes for scout observation over the Gulf of Mexico and was a flight instructor at a base in Corpus Christi, Texas. He later was stationed in Norman, Oklahoma, after the war and planned on a career in the Navy until an explosion in a bunk house. He wasn't hurt, but carrying out the bloodied men changed his mind about staying in the military.

Barger returned home with his wife and young daughter and studied business and advertising while working for a paper company. He remembers history was his favorite class at what was then called Toledo University.

He never gave much thought about not graduating until just recently. When he was told in January that he would finally get a degree, he let out a hearty laugh. "I can't believe this. I'm 96 years old," said Barger, whose wife died in 2011.

Members of the university's Student Veterans of America chapter bought him a cap and gown that he tried on last week. "I fit. I guess I look pretty good in it," he said.

The assisted living center where he lives is planning a big graduation party for over 100 people. Barger stocked up on a dozen bottles of vodka, whiskey and scotch.

He jokes that he now wants to find "a cushy job where I can play golf."

Double Kabul suicide bombing kills 25, including journalists

By RAHIM FAIEZ and AMIR SHAH, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A coordinated double suicide bombing by the Islamic State group hit central Kabul on Monday morning, killing at least 25 people, including eight journalists, officials said. An AFP photographer and a cameraman for a local TV station were among the fatalities, the police said.

At least 45 people were wounded in the twin attacks, according to Kabul police spokesman, Hashmat Stanekzai, who also said four policemen were among those killed.

The attack was the latest in a relentless string of deadly large-scale bombings and assaults that have struck Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan so far this year. And even as the Afghan capital reeled from Monday's assault, a suicide car bombing a few hours later in the southern province of Kandahar killed 11 children, a police spokesman said.

In a statement posted on an IS-affiliated website, the Islamic State group said two of its martyrdom seekers carried out the double Kabul bombings, targeting the headquarters of the "renegade" Afghan intelligence services.

The blasts took place in the central Shash Darak area, home to NATO headquarters and a number of embassies and foreign offices — as well as the Afghan intelligence service.

Stanekzai, the police spokesman, said the first suicide bomber was on a motor bike. The second explosion was meant to hit those scrambling to get to the scene to help the victims of the first blast, he added.

The second attacker was on foot, in a crowd of reporters rushing to the site of the first attack, pretending to be one of the media, the spokesman said. The bomber then detonated his explosives while still among the reporters, Stanekzai said, adding that the attacker obviously intentionally targeted journalists.

Agence France-Presse said the news agency's chief photographer in Kabul, Shah Marai, was among those killed. AFP said Marai died in a blast that struck journalists who had rushed to the scene of the earlier suicide attack.

A local media watchdog, the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee, said eight Afghan journalists were killed and six were wounded. The group strongly condemned all attacks against journalists.

Sediqullah Tawhidi, an official from the committee, said a cameraman from the local Tolo TV also was among those killed. Police officer Jan Agha said all the journalists died in the second blast, which also wounded two police officers.

Survivors and witnesses recounted scenes of mayhem.

Jawed Ghulam Sakhi, a 28-year-old taxi driver said "when the explosion happened, everywhere was covered with dust and fire, it was such a horrific scene" with bodies and body parts "thrown about on the street and the pavement."

"I saw journalists covered with blood, this time they targeted the media," Sakhi added.

Masouda, a young woman who was with her husband nearby, assailed the authorities. Her husband was wounded and was taken to the Wazir Akbar Khan hospital.

"I don't know who is responsible for all these attacks, every day we lose our loved ones and no one in this government is taking responsibility for the killing of these innocent people," she said.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani strongly condemned the attacks. The presidential palace released a statement saying that attacks targeting innocent civilians, worshippers inside the mosques, national and democratic processes, reporters and freedom of speech all are war crimes.

The U.S. Embassy also condemned the "savage bombings" in Kabul and reiterated its support for the Afghan people and Ghani's government in their fight against terrorism.

"We extend our deepest condolences to the families, friends, and colleagues of all the victims, including a number of brave journalists among the dead and injured," it said, adding that "where media are in danger, all other human rights are under greater threat."

Kabul chief of police Dawood Amin said the area that was hit was quickly sealed off and authorities were investigating. Mohammad Mousa Zahir, director of Wazir Akbarkhan Hospital, said several people suffering injuries from the blasts were being treated at the hospital.

In its claim of responsibility, the Afghan affiliate of IS, known as Khorasan Province, said the first martyrdom seeker in the attack detonated his explosive vest near the intelligence service in central Kabul, forcing its members to head to the area of the explosion. The statement said the second attacker detonated his explosive vest after that. The statement, which exaggerated the overall death toll as militant claims often do, did not say that journalists were specifically targeted but exaggerated the attacks' death toll.

In the Kandahar attack, an Afghan official said a suicide bomber targeted a NATO convoy in the district of Daman but killed 11 children from a religious school located by the roadside from where the explosion occurred.

Matiullah Helal, deputy spokesman for the provincial police chief, said 16 people were also wounded, including five NATO soldiers, nine civilians and two policemen. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the Kandahar bombing and no comment from NATO.

The children from the madrasa had gathered around the NATO convoy for fun when the bomber struck, said Abdul Rahim Ayubi, a lawmaker from Kandahar.

In other violence, an Afghan police officer was killed and four people were wounded in an explosion Monday in eastern Nangarhar province, said Attuhullah Khogynai, spokesman for the provincial governor. He said the slain officer was the chief of the criminal investigations unit for Behsud district.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but both Taliban and IS are active in eastern Afghanistan and especially in Nangarhar. The local IS affiliate first emerged in Nangarhar a few years ago, then expanded its footprint to elsewhere across the country.

IS and the more firmly established Taliban carry out regular attacks, with the Taliban usually targeting the Afghan government and security forces and IS targeting members of the country's the Shiite minority, whom the affiliate perceives as apostates.

The relentless assaults underscore the struggles that Afghan security forces have faced to reign in the militant groups since the United States and NATO concluded their combat mission at the end of 2014. Both groups want to establish strict Islamic rule in Afghanistan.

Last week, an Islamic State suicide bomber attacked a voter registration center in Kabul, killing 60 people and wounding at least 130 others. There were 22 women and eight children among the fatalities.

And the month before, an IS suicide bomber targeted a Shiite shrine in Kabul where people had gathered celebrating the Persian new year. That attack killed 31 people and wounded 65 others.

Associated Press writer Maamoun Youssef in Cairo contributed to this report.

US says border crossing didn't have room for asylum seekers

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) — After traveling through Mexico with great fanfare for a month under the Trump administration's watchful eye, nearly 200 Central American migrants attempting to seek asylum in the United States were stopped in their tracks when border inspectors said that a crossing facility didn't have enough space to accommodate them.

Trump vowed last week to "stop" the caravan while Cabinet members said they would deliver a swift response. The asylum seekers held firm, setting up a possible showdown.

In an anticlimactic twist, about 50 asylum seekers were allowed past a gate controlled by Mexican officials to walk across a long bridge but were stopped at the entrance to the U.S. inspection facility at the other end. They were allowed to wait outside the building, technically on Mexican soil, without word of when U.S. officials would let them claim asylum.

Another 50 or so camped on blankets and backpacks in Tijuana outside the Mexican side of the crossing, prohibited from even getting close to the U.S. inspection building.

The asylum-seekers began the day with anticipation, traveling in red-and-white school buses under police escort to a beachfront rally in Tijuana, where a steel fence juts out into the Pacific Ocean. They sang the Honduran national anthem, and supporters on the San Diego side of the fence waved a Honduran flag.

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After a final briefing from lawyers and minutes before they were to begin a short walk to the border crossing, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan announced that the San Ysidro border crossing, the nation's busiest, had "reached capacity" for people without legal documents and that asylum-seekers may need to wait in Mexico temporarily.

Trump has commented frequently on the caravan since it started in Mexico on March 25 near the Guatemala border and headed north to Tijuana. His broadsides came as his administration vowed to end what officials call "legal loopholes" and "catch-and-release" policies that allow people requesting asylum to be released from custody into the U.S. while their claims make their way through the courts, which can take years.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions has called the caravan "a deliberate attempt to undermine our laws and overwhelm our system." Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said asylum claims will be resolved "efficiently and expeditiously" and warned that anyone making false claims could be prosecuted.

The administration's stern warnings left organizers in disbelief that border inspectors were not ready for them.

"They have been well aware that a caravan is going to arrive at the border," Nicole Ramos, an attorney working on behalf of caravan members, said at a news conference. "The failure to prepare and failure to get sufficient agents and resources is not the fault of the most vulnerable among us. We can build a base in Iraq in under a week. We can't process 200 refugees. I don't believe it."

The San Ysidro border inspection facility can hold about 300 people, according to Pete Flores, Customs and Border Protection's San Diego field office director, suggesting the bottleneck may be short-lived. The agency processed about 8,000 asylum cases from October through February, or about 50 a day.

Asylum-seekers are typically held for up to three days at the border and then turned over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. If they pass an asylum officer's initial screening, they may be detained or released into the U.S. with ankle monitors.

Asylum seekers didn't appear to be thrown off the by the delay.

Wendi Yaneri Garcia said she was confident she will be released while her asylum case is pending because she is traveling alone with her 2-year-old son, who has been sick. She said that police in her hometown of Atlantida, Honduras, jailed her for protesting construction of a hydroelectric plant and that she received death threats after being released.

"All I want is a place where I can work and raise my son," the 36-year-old said.

Elin Orrellana, a 23-year-old pregnant woman from El Salvador, said she is fleeing the violent MS-13 street gang, a favorite target of both Sessions and Trump because of their brutal killings in communities in the United States. She said her older sister had been killed by the gang in El Salvador, so she is attempting to join other family members in the Kansas City area.

"Fighting on is worth it," she said as she camped out for chilly night outside the border crossing.

'Days of Our Lives' tops daytime Emmys with 5 trophies

By LYNN ELBER, AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — NBC's "Days of Our Lives" topped the Daytime Emmy Awards, capturing five trophies including best drama series and lead actor honors for veteran performer James Reynolds.

Reynolds, who began playing Abe Carver on the drama in 1981, is the third African-American to win in the category, with more than 30 years separating him from Darnell Williams' 1985 victory for "All My Children." Al Freeman Jr. was the groundbreaker, winning for "One Life to Live" in 1979.

In the scene that Reynolds submitted for awards consideration, his character confronts an off-duty law enforcement officer who shot Carver's son, wrongly believing he was armed, according to the Gold Derby awards website. "Days of Our Lives" also claimed trophies for its writing and directing teams and supporting actor Greg Vaughan at Sunday's ceremony.

ABC's "Good Morning America" won its second consecutive trophy for best morning program, amid rocky times for two other shows nominated in the category. Sexual misconduct allegations led to the 2017 exits

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of Matt Lauer from NBC's "Today" and Charlie Rose from "CBS This Morning."

"The Talk" was honored as best entertainment talk show, with the award for best entertainment talk host shared by "The Real" co-hosts Adrienne Houghton, Loni Love, Jeannie Mai and Tamera Mowry-Housley.

"The Dr. Oz Show" received the award for informative talk show, with Steve Harvey named best informative talk show host for "Steve."

ABC's "General Hospital" and CBS' "The Young and the Restless" each won two awards, including best actress Eileen Davidson and supporting actress Camryn Grimes for "Y&R."

Other winners at the 45th Daytime Emmy ceremony hosted by Mario Lopez and Sheryl Underwood included:

- "Entertainment Tonight," entertainment news program.
- Lili Estefan, daytime talent in a Spanish-language program, "El Gordo y la Flaca."
- "Destinos," entertainment program in Spanish.
- Wayne Brady, game show host for "Let's Make a Deal."
- Lidia Bastianich, culinary host for PBS' "Lidia's Kitchen."
- "The Price is Right," game show.

Forward step: LeBron, Cavs pushed to limit but not done yet

By TOM WITHERS, AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — LeBron James walked sluggishly down a corridor inside Quicken Loans Arena following Game 7 surrounded by the usual squadron of security personnel, some business associates and his publicist.

Each step seemed a challenge. His eyes were heavy. He ached from head to toe. He wanted to lie down.

James was moving on to the second round of the NBA playoffs — almost on his hands and knees.

"I don't think he's appreciated enough for just how much energy he puts into every single game to do what he does," Cavaliers forward Kyle Korver said of James. "It's just unbelievable."

Pushed to his physical limits by the Indiana Pacers, and barely helped by Cleveland teammates until they finally showed up when it mattered most Sunday in a 105-101 win, James willed the Cavs into the next round, where they'll face the top-seeded Toronto Raptors for the third straight postseason.

If the Indiana series was any indication, James might have to do it again.

James scored 45 points — his third game over 40 in the series — and the 33-year-old added nine rebounds and seven assists in 43 exhausting minutes as the Cavs closed out the Pacers, a team they swept in the first round a year ago. James, who improved to 13-0 in the first round, would have played all 48, but he succumbed to leg cramps in the third quarter and had to go to the locker room for treatment and fluids.

But while he was out at the start of the fourth quarter, something unexpected happened. The Cavs didn't collapse, and just maybe showed that they're going to be a much different team when they face the Raptors.

As James caught his breath, Cleveland went on a 10-2 run. Kevin Love, who may have nightmares about Indiana's big men for some time, hit a 3-pointer, and George Hill, in the rotation after missing three games with back spasms, attacked the rim. By the time James checked back in, the Cavs had pushed their lead to 10 and only had to withstand one more charge to silence the Pacers.

For Cavs coach Tyronn Lue, the 3:35 stretch was vital. Not only did the Cavs survive without James, they thrived and potentially gained some confidence.

"That was big," he said.

Even bigger was Lue's decision to change his starting lineup once again. For the fourth time in the series, and 34th time this season, Lue used a different starting five. But unlike all the other combinations, this was one he could trust as he played the steady Korver along with James, Love, J.R. Smith and Tristan Thompson, the four players left from the 2016 championship team.

Lue, who has had to mix and match for months because of injuries and a roster revamped by trades, returned to a proven group, and the move paid off.

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Thompson, who had played 24 total minutes in the first six games, made his first start since March 28 and scored 15 points with 10 rebounds in a season-high 35 minutes. His presence made the Cavs better at both ends, and he brought an interior toughness that had been missing against the Pacers. He picked up two early fouls on Indiana's Myles Turner, who fouled out.

"That's the Tristan that we know," James said. "Giving us extra possessions, catching the ball on the rolls and finishing. Just his energy, his effort. That's how he's made his name in this league, by just being high motor and being able to outwork who's ever across from him."

Thompson could have an even larger role against the Raptors and their massive front line anchored by 7-foot center Jonas Valanciunas.

Hill's return was critical for the Cavs, not only in Game 7 but going forward. With playoff first-timers Jordan Clarkson and Larry Nance struggling and Rodney Hood still not playing the way Cleveland needs, the 31-year-old Hill, who was on a minutes' restriction in the series finale, gives Lue another dependable veteran. He was sorely missed for three games against Indiana.

Fortunately for the Cavs, James has been indestructible.

He averaged 34.4 points on 55.3 percent shooting, 10.1 rebounds, 7.7 assists and 1.4 steals during a series in which he played 41.4 minutes per game. With speculation rampant about where he'll play next season, James made sure this one will continue.

Thompson said James inspires everyone around him.

"Whenever you've got the best player in the world or your leader on the team giving everything he's got, whether he's playing the point guard position, guarding, rebounding, blocking shots, assisting, for me and the younger guys, we've got to pick it up," he said. "We've got to give everything we've got. If he's giving 100 percent, we've got to give 120. We have to find that extra boost and go out there and fight with him.

"We're a team and he goes to war for us every night. We've got to do the same thing."

James could us the help.

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/tag/NBAbasketball>

Pompeo swaps no-profile espionage for overt diplomacy

By MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — Mike Pompeo has swapped the no-profile, cloak-and-dagger world of covert espionage for the life of a buttoned-down diplomat, representing the public face of the Trump administration's foreign policy.

Making his first overseas trip as secretary of state, the ex-CIA chief traded in a small, unmarked government jet, secret overseas voyages and hush-hush meetings with spy chiefs and the occasional rogue world leader for a decidedly conspicuous U.S. Air Force 757 with "United States of America" emblazoned across its fuselage, a traveling press corps and frequent public appearances.

Pompeo has told aides that he recognizes the importance of public diplomacy and interacting with journalists, something his predecessor, Rex Tillerson, appeared to have never fully accepted and largely shunned until his final months in office.

Just a month ago, Pompeo in his previous job was on a highly classified mission to North Korea where he met with North Korea's reclusive leader Kim Jong Un to gauge prospects for what would be a historic summit between Kim and President Donald Trump.

But unlike that trip, which remained a mystery to much of the world until just last week, his maiden trip as secretary of state was replete with televised welcome ceremonies, live-streamed photo ops and well-attended media events.

Departing Washington less than three hours after he was confirmed by the Senate and sworn-in Thursday by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito, a fellow Italian-American, Pompeo rushed to Joint Base Andrews. There, he hopped on the plane and flew overnight to Brussels, arriving before dawn for a NATO foreign ministers meeting.

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"It's never good to be late on your first day of work, and so after being sworn in I hustled here," he joked at NATO headquarters.

From Belgium, Pompeo kept up a relentless pace, stopping in Saudi Arabia, Israel and Jordan.

"I haven't been to my office yet," he quipped on Sunday after meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv on only his third full day on the job — a day that began in Saudi Arabia and ended in Jordan to complete a rare one-day trifecta.

Pompeo won't make his first appearance at the State Department's Foggy Bottom headquarters in Washington, D.C., until Tuesday when he will speak to employees eager to hear his plans to lead the agency, which was badly demoralized during the brief tenure of Tillerson, unceremoniously fired by Trump last month.

Tillerson was highly unpopular at the department, where he had endorsed major budget and staffing cuts and was accused of driving experienced diplomats out of the foreign service and leaving dozens of top positions empty. The State Department's influence as a federal institution also suffered due to Tillerson's less-than-stellar relationship with Trump.

On his maiden trip, Pompeo made clear his intention was to reverse that trend, to quickly fill vacant posts and to use his close ties with the president to restore the department's relevance in Washington.

"The State Department will be at the front and center of every foreign policy decision in support of the president's agenda," he told embassy staffers in the Saudi capital on Sunday before heading to Israel.

In Brussels on Friday, he said after meeting embassy staffers that "they may have been demoralized, but they seemed in good spirits."

"They are hopeful that the State Department will get its swagger back, that we will be out doing the things that they came onboard at the State Department to do: to be professional, to deliver diplomacy, American diplomacy, around the world," he told reporters. "That's my mission set, to build that esprit and get the team on the field."

Pompeo said he planned to restore a full complement of reporters on his plane, which had been severely limited by Tillerson and his top aides, who had also refused to allow a State Department spokesperson to travel with him.

Spokeswoman Heather Nauert was aboard the plane for Pompeo's trip to Europe and the Middle East, as were eight journalists — the most in more than a year of secretary of state travel.

US pols seek to sway arrivals from Puerto Rico before vote

By GISELA SALOMON and CLAUDIA TORRENS, Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A small street festival outside Miami features booths adorned with Puerto Rican flags. A band plays salsa music as vendors offer specialties from the Caribbean island such as rice with pork and chickpeas. There's also a woman working her way through the crowd with a clipboard, her white T-shirt emblazoned with the words "Your vote, your voice, your future."

She's searching for people like Shaimir Berrios, a 28-year-old who recently relocated to South Florida from Puerto Rico but has not yet registered for the upcoming U.S. elections. That makes her a prized commodity in what is expected to be a midterm election season with many close races.

Berrios, selling natural soaps from one of the booths, moved to Florida in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and she's eager to vote for the first time in a mainland election to show her anger over what she views as a tepid response by the U.S. federal government to the Sept. 20 storm that devastated the island.

"People have to look for change because it affects us. We have to get involved," she said, filling out the paperwork to register on a recent Sunday.

The intensity of political attention is new for Puerto Ricans, who are accustomed to not having much political clout. While they are U.S. citizens, they cannot vote in the presidential election while on the island, which is a territory not a state. Their single representative in the House of Representatives has only limited voting power and they have no senators. But their votes have the same weight as other Americans when they move to the mainland, as hundreds of thousands have done over the past decade, first because of

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a deep economic recession and then because of Hurricane Maria.

Political operatives, pollsters and politicians in at least four states are working hard to find people like Berrios, Puerto Ricans who are eligible to vote and whose party affiliation may be up for grabs. The efforts are particularly aggressive in Florida, where tens of thousands of people from the island relocated after the hurricane, but political types are also busy in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Connecticut.

In Florida, where Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton by only about 1 percentage point and Hispanic turnout was lower than expected, the votes of Puerto Ricans are potentially valuable in upcoming congressional and statewide races, said Susan McManus, a political science professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

"The bottom line is that mobilizing and getting out the vote of the Puerto Ricans is going to be critical," she said.

At least 450,000 Puerto Ricans moved to the U.S. mainland over the past decade, causing the island's population to drop for the first time in modern history. It now has about 3.4 million people. How many have permanently relocated because of Hurricane Maria is not yet known, but estimates range from 115,000 to 200,000. There are now about 5.3 million Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland and they are concentrated in the Northeast and Florida.

The recent street festival in the Miami suburb of Kendall is just one of many get-out-the-vote efforts aimed at Puerto Ricans. Organizers of the event said they are not affiliated with any party and voter registration was conducted by volunteers with the non-partisan League of Women Voters.

"We are just working so the Puerto Rican community can have its voice heard," the volunteer, Marisol Zenteno, said as she took a break from working a line of people waiting to buy pork and rice. "They have the right when they come here to vote."

But others are overtly partisan efforts.

The Republican Party has hired three people to take charge of reaching out to displaced Puerto Ricans and to defend the Trump administration's response to the disaster and remind voters of the more than \$20 billion in aid.

"It's an important vote for us," said Yali Nunez, a Republican National Committee spokeswoman.

The Democratic Party is registering Puerto Ricans, especially in Florida, and has a "voter education program" aimed at helping people who fled Maria and at winning their vote, spokesman Francisco Pelayo said. The Latino Victory Fund, a nationwide Hispanic outreach effort co-founded by actress Eva Longoria, is also working to mobilize people who fled the island.

A conservative effort is combining education and politics. The LIBRE Institute, which is funded by the billionaire activist Koch brothers, offers "Welcome to Florida" classes aimed at newly arrived Puerto Ricans. They teach English and job-hunting skills, concluding with a pitch for what Cesar Grajales describes as "free-market" principles.

"We don't talk about candidates, but we do talk about public policies," said Grajales, who is director of coalitions at the LIBRE Initiative, a parent organization.

Around 80 people were attending three separate classes on a recent evening near Orlando, part of the Central Florida region where a majority of the Puerto Ricans in the state have settled.

Dinette Rivera, one of the students, came to the mainland days after the hurricane knocked out power and water to most of Puerto Rico but she says hasn't found full-time work as a nurse yet because her English isn't fluent. The 33-year-old, who came with her husband and two children from the southeastern coastal town of Maunabo, said she has already registered as an independent and is eager to vote.

"We can choose someone who can help us," she said outside the class in an office park.

The people in the classrooms are also being targeted by the main candidates for the U.S. Senate in Florida: Republican Gov. Rick Scott and Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson. Both have campaigned in the Orlando area and visited Puerto Rico. Scott has gone to the island five times since the storm.

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello, who held a campaign-style rally of his own outside Orlando, has urged people from the island who are on the mainland to get involved in local congressional races in states such

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as New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York and Florida to support candidates who have been responsive to the needs of the island and to punish those who have not.

"The call is to every Puerto Rican to be electorally active in the United States," Rossello said while announcing an initiative to mobilize Puerto Rican voters.

At the street festival in Kendall, one newly registered voter said she was preparing to do just that. Aida Merced Lopez, a 74-year-old retiree, said she was looking forward to being able to punish Trump, who angered many on the island by tossing paper towels to storm survivors in what some felt was a disrespectful way and quarreling publicly with the mayor of San Juan.

"It would be great if Puerto Rico could vote. If we could then maybe that guy wouldn't be here," Lopez said of the president.

Sprint, T-Mobile have to sell \$26.5B deal to antitrust cops

By STAN CHOE and TALI ARBEL, AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — To gain approval for their \$26.5 billion merger agreement, T-Mobile and Sprint aim to convince antitrust regulators that there is plenty of competition for wireless service beyond Verizon and AT&T.

The deal announced Sunday would combine the nation's third- and fourth-largest wireless companies and bulk them up to a similar size to Verizon and AT&T, the industry giants.

But the companies argued that the combination would allow them to better compete not only with those two rivals but also with Comcast and others as the wireless, broadband and video industries converge.

"This isn't a case of going from 4 to 3 wireless companies — there are now at least 7 or 8 big competitors in this converging market," T-Mobile chief executive John Legere said in a statement. He would be the CEO of the combined company.

T-Mobile and Sprint have been considering a combination for years. But a 2014 attempt fell apart amid resistance from the Obama administration.

The combined company, to be called T-Mobile, would have about 127 million customers. Consumers worry a less crowded telecom field could result in higher prices, while unions are concerned about potential job losses.

In a conference call with Wall Street analysts, Sprint CEO Marcelo Claure acknowledged that getting regulatory approval is "the elephant in the room," and one of the first things the companies did after sending out the deal's news release was to call Ajit Pai, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.

The companies stressed that they plan to have more employees following the combination, particularly in rural areas, than they do as stand-alone companies now.

They also emphasized that the deal would help accelerate their development of faster 5G wireless networks and ensure that the U.S. doesn't cede leadership on the technology to China.

And they said the combination would allow them to better compete with a growing number of competitors in a changing market.

Verizon and AT&T have been expanding their video-content businesses, while cable companies have been moving into wireless. That allows a single company to combine home and wireless internet and use content to support the communications businesses.

Comcast, the cable giant that finished buying NBCUniversal in 2013, offers customers wireless service by reselling access to Verizon's network. So does another dominant cable company, Charter.

The all-stock deal values each share of Sprint at slightly more than 0.10 T-Mobile shares. Deutsche Telekom, T-Mobile's parent, would own about 42 percent of the combined company. Japan's SoftBank, which controls Sprint, would own 27 percent, and the remainder would be held by the public.

The companies said they expect the deal to close by the first half of 2019 and would result in about \$6 billion in annual cost savings.

Investors have been anticipating a deal like this for some time. In addition to the thwarted attempt three years ago, the two companies were poised to combine in October, but the deal was called off after what

analysts said was a disagreement over control of the combined company.

The deal will have to be reviewed by the Justice Department and the FCC.

National carriers had not been able to get a deal through under President Barack Obama. But the FCC in September deemed the wireless market "competitive" for the first time since 2009, which some analysts say could make it easier to present a deal.

The 5G aspirations are at the heart of the agreement, and the new technology could allow companies to provide faster service to people's homes.

Sprint's Claire likened going from 4G to 5G to switching from black-and-white television to color. The combined company plans to invest up to \$40 billion in its network in the first three years, which executives said would drive more hiring and better service for customers.

Sprint has a lot of debt and has posted a string of annual losses. It has cut costs and made itself more attractive to customers, BTIG Research analyst Walter Piecyk said, but it hasn't invested enough in its network and doesn't have enough airwave rights for quality service in rural areas.

T-Mobile, meanwhile, has been on a yearslong streak of adding customers. After the government nixed AT&T's attempt to buy the company in 2011, T-Mobile led the way in many consumer-friendly changes, such as ditching two-year contracts and bringing back unlimited data plans.

Consumers are paying less for cellphone service thanks to T-Mobile's influence on the industry and the resulting price wars.

US says crossing is full before caravan tries to seek asylum

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) — A group of Central Americans who journeyed in a caravan to the U.S. border resolved to turn themselves in and ask for asylum Sunday in a direct challenge to the Trump administration — only to have U.S. immigration officials announce that the San Diego crossing was already at capacity.

Nearly 200 migrants, many traveling with children, had decided to apply for protection at the nation's busiest border crossing after many fled violence in their home countries, organizers said. The caravan got attention after President Donald Trump and members of his Cabinet called it a threat to the United States.

Shortly before the migrants were expected to arrive, U.S. Customs and Border Protection said San Diego's San Ysidro crossing would not immediately be able to handle more asylum seekers. It can hold about 300 people at a time, and officials had been warning that it might fill up.

"At this time, we have reached capacity at the San Ysidro port of entry for CBP officers to be able to bring additional persons traveling without appropriate entry documentation into the port of entry for processing," Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said in a statement. "Those individuals may need to wait in Mexico as CBP officers work to process those already within our facilities."

He said the crossing could take in additional people as space and resources become available.

Despite the announcement, about 50 people walked across a bridge and approached the port facility, but were not immediately accommodated by U.S. officials. They were being permitted to wait in passageways until room became available, and appeared prepared to wait overnight, according to Irineo Mujica, one of the organizers of Pueblos Sin Fronteras, an organization assisting the asylum speakers.

Another 50 prepared to camp outside a gate on the Mexican side of the border crossing with backpacks and blankets hoping to get their turn on Monday.

Nicole Ramos, an attorney working on behalf of caravan members, expressed disbelief that U.S. authorities cannot process more asylum seekers until its backlog eases.

"They have been well aware that a caravan is going to arrive at the border," she said at a news conference. "The failure to prepare and failure to get sufficient agents and resources is not the fault of the most vulnerable among us. We can build a base in Iraq in under a week. We can't process 200 refugees. I don't believe it."

The migrants had made their way north by foot, freight train and bus over the past month, many saying they feared for their lives in their home countries.

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The Trump administration has been tracking the caravan since it started in Mexico on March 25 near the Guatemala border. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has called the caravan "a deliberate attempt to undermine our laws and overwhelm our system."

Administration officials have railed against what they call America's "catch and release" policies that allow people requesting asylum to be released from custody into the U.S. while their claims make their way through the courts, a process that can last a year.

Wendi Yaneri Garcia said she is confident she will be released while her asylum case is pending because she is traveling alone with her 2-year-old son, who has been sick.

"All I want is a place where I can work and raise my son," the 36-year-old said.

She said that police in her hometown of Atlantida, Honduras, jailed her for protesting construction of a hydroelectric plant and that she received death threats after being released.

Nefi Hernandez, 24, said a gang in his hometown of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, threatened to kill him and his family if he did not sell drugs. He intended to seek asylum with his wife and baby daughter, who was born on the journey through Mexico.

Jose Cazares, 31, said he faced death threats in the Honduran city of Yoro because a gang member suspected of killing the mother of his children learned one of his sons reported the crime to police.

Earlier Sunday, the migrants boarded five old school buses to attend a rally at a Pacific Ocean beach, with supporters gathering on both sides of the border fence and some climbing the barrier to sit or to wave signs.

The travelers face an uncertain future if they ask for asylum. U.S. immigration lawyers warned them that they face possible separation from their children and detention for many months.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said asylum claims will be resolved "efficiently and expeditiously." But she warned that any asylum seekers making false claims could be prosecuted, as could anyone who assists the migrants in doing so.

Administration officials and their allies claim that asylum fraud is growing and that many who seek it are coached on how to do so.

Asylum seekers are typically held for up to three days at the border and then turned over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. If they pass an asylum officer's initial screening, they may be detained or released into the U.S. with ankle monitors.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump distorts claims on VA nominee, vet care

By HOPE YEN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is distorting some of the reasons why his pick to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs, White House physician Ronny Jackson, abruptly withdrew his nomination.

Trump casts late-surfacing allegations against Jackson as entirely partisan. He cites an investigation led by Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., even though the review involved interviews with military personnel and was conducted with the knowledge and support of Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., chairman of the committee considering Jackson's nomination.

Trump also ignores misgivings expressed by several Republicans over Jackson's lack of management experience after Trump suddenly selected the doctor last month to head the government's second-largest agency.

Meanwhile, Trump falsely claims he was the one who pulled a plan to expand the Veterans Choice private health care program because "it wasn't good enough." In fact, the White House fully supported the plan but couldn't push it through Congress last month.

A look at the misleading rhetoric:

TRUMP: "Allegations made by Senator Jon Tester against Admiral/Doctor Ron Jackson are proving false. The Secret Service is unable to confirm (in fact they deny) any of the phony Democrat charges which have absolutely devastated the wonderful Jackson family." — tweet Saturday afternoon.

TRUMP: "What Jon Tester did to this man is a disgrace. ... He's a great, great guy... and he started

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studying and then he started getting hit with vicious rumors — vicious. And the Secret Service told me just coming in, 'Sir, we checked out all of those things. Sir, they're not true.'" — rally Saturday night in Washington Township, Michigan.

THE FACTS: It's inaccurate for Trump to characterize the allegations against Jackson as "Democrat" or to suggest that Jackson's nomination failed entirely because of them. The allegations, which centered on a "pattern" of loosely prescribing drugs, drunken behavior on the job and a "toxic" work environment, were based on interviews with more than 20 military personnel, according to Tester. The time period covered Jackson's tenure as a White House physician dating to 2006 and involved colleagues who served in both Republican and Democratic administrations.

After pledging to address the allegations, Jackson abruptly withdrew his nomination Thursday, saying he "did not expect to have to dignify baseless and anonymous attacks on my character and integrity."

Tester's staff compiled a summary of the allegations and released it last Wednesday with the support of Isakson, the chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. Isakson earlier had called the allegations "serious" in his decision to postpone Jackson's Wednesday hearing.

Jackson had already faced tough questions from several committee Republicans about whether he had the experience to manage the massive VA.

Jackson has broadly denied the allegations of misbehavior. They included crashing a government vehicle while intoxicated at a Secret Service going-away party and doling out such a large supply of a prescription opioid that staffers panicked because they thought the drugs were missing.

As to Trump's claim that the Secret Service "checked out all of those things" and said they were untrue, it's not clear if he was referring to the full allegations or just the purported car crash.

On Friday, The Associated Press reviewed internal records from the White House, including police reports, that show Jackson had three minor incidents in government vehicles during the past five years, but none involved the use of alcohol, and he was not found to be at fault. In addition, the White House medical unit that Jackson ran successfully passed regular controlled-substance audits, according to the records for the last three years. The reviews did recommend improvements to the medical unit's handling of controlled substances but did not find misconduct.

TRUMP: "We've done a great job with our vets. We have accountability approved, we're getting Choice approved. And I pulled it because I didn't like the Choice. The Choice wasn't good enough ... I could've had it already. We could've had it in the last budget. But it wasn't good enough. We're getting Choice, which is a big deal. That's going to be game changing." — rally Saturday night.

THE FACTS: Trump says he pulled the Choice proposal from a spending bill because "it wasn't good enough." In fact, the White House supported the plan backed by key Republicans and Democrats to out-source more routine veterans' care to private providers, but House Democrats balked at moving too quickly.

In a statement this month, White House spokesman Hogan Gidley emphasized that Trump had nothing to do with Choice not being approved.

"Time and again, Democrats have attempted to blame President Trump for their own inaction, but it's their own leadership — Nancy Pelosi — who failed to include the VA Choice legislation in the 2000+ page omnibus bill," Gidley said. "The Trump administration looks forward to continuing to work with Congress to reform and strengthen the VA Choice program."

White House officials have indicated they still support that plan spearheaded in part by Tester, whom Trump is now attacking for releasing allegations against Jackson. Some conservatives such as Pete Hegseth, a "Fox & Friends" contributor, who has been previously considered for the VA secretary job, have suggested the plan may not go far enough to provide access to private doctors outside the government-run VA health system.

Lawmakers have said they will try again next month, but proposals have been stalled because of disagreements over cost and how much access veterans should have to private doctors.

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Syrian troops briefly take villages east of Euphrates river

By **BASSEM MROUE**, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian government forces on Sunday briefly captured four villages east of the Euphrates River in the eastern province of Deir el-Zour after rare clashes with U.S.-backed Kurdish-led fighters, then lost the area in a counteroffensive by the Kurdish-led force.

The area close to the border with Iraq has been the site of recent clashes between the two sides that had been focusing on fighting the Islamic State extremist group. The IS had declared its caliphate in parts of Syria and Iraq.

Crossings into the east bank of the Euphrates in eastern Syria by government forces have been rare.

Hours later, Syrian state television reported airstrikes it described as a "new aggression," with missiles targeting a number of military outposts in northern Syria.

Syrian TV reported early Monday that the missiles targeted outposts in the Hama and Aleppo countryside. It did not say who fired the missiles or whether there were any casualties or damage. The news comes less than two weeks after a similar report of airstrikes on government military installations in the central Homs region and the suburbs of Damascus. But the military later said a false alarm had set off air defense systems.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the war in Syria through activists on the ground, reported loud explosions in the Hama countryside and Aleppo province resulting from missiles targeting a base of the 47th Brigade in Hama that houses Syrian government and allied Iranian forces. It also reported missiles hitting positions near the Nairab air base and Aleppo airport. It said the source of the missiles was not immediately known, and had no information on casualties.

Earlier this month, seven Iranian military personnel were killed in an airstrike on Syria's T4 air base in the central Homs province. Syria, Iran and Russia blamed Israel for that attack. Israel, which has frequently targeted what it says are weapons shipments to the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah in Syria, did not confirm or deny it.

The U.S., Britain and France also carried out joint airstrikes on Syrian government facilities April 13, in retaliation for a suspected chemical weapons attack on a rebel-held town near Damascus they blamed on President Bashar Assad's government.

There was no immediate comment from Israel or the United States.

State news agency SANA said the villages briefly captured by government forces Sunday were held by the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, adding that they are close to the provincial capital, also called Deir el-Zour. The SDF said in a statement later that it regained control of the whole area it earlier lost.

Much of Deir el-Zour province was held by the Islamic State group but over the past year Syrian government forces captured most areas west of the Euphrates while SDF fighters took areas east of the river.

On Feb. 7, pro-Syrian government fighters attacked SDF positions east of the river and faced a ferocious U.S. counterattack that left dozens, including Russians, dead.

SDF spokesman Kino Gabriel said in a statement earlier Sunday that the Syrian army attack coincided with "our forces' preparations to complete the Island Storm campaign" to liberate the remaining areas east of the river from IS. Gabriel said the Syrian army and pro-government fighters began targeting SDF fighters to impede "the launching of our campaign against terrorism. Our forces are responding in self-defense."

"We affirm that we are determined to eradicate terrorism from its roots and to assert our right to self-defense," Gabriel said about IS. "We consider this aggression by regime forces to be a support for terrorism and falls within the attempts to impede the war on terrorism."

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, said Sunday's offensive left six SDF fighters dead and 22 wounded adding that there were also casualties on the government side.

Gabriel issued another statement later saying all the area lost earlier was regained by SDF fighters. He

said Syrian troops were backed by Russian fighters adding that after the SDF's counteroffensive, government forces "are now far away."

The Observatory's chief Rami Abdurrahman said SDF fighters took back most of the area except for one village.

The fighting in eastern Syria came as Syrian state media and the Observatory reported that an agreement was reached between the Syrian government and several rebel factions to evacuate the last three rebel-held suburbs of the capital Damascus.

SANA said the deal will let opposition fighters who want to evacuate the area head to rebel-held regions while those who decide to stay can hand over their weapons and benefit from an amnesty.

The Observatory said rebels who will leave will head to the northwestern province of Idlib, the northern town of Jarablus, and the southern province of Daraa that borders Jordan.

The three suburbs of Babila, Beit Sahem and Yalda have been held by rebels for years and their capture would bring all suburbs of the capital under government control.

The agreement came as government forces captured more areas from the IS in the nearby Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk and the neighborhood of Hajar al-Aswad.

SANA said troops captured most of the Qadam neighborhood as well as the Assali and Joura quarters in Hajar Aswad.

Associated Press writers Zeina Karam in Beirut and Maamoun Youssef in Cairo contributed to this report.

UN team, in Bangladesh, vows to work to end Rohingya crisis

By JULHAS ALAM, Associated Press

KUTUPALONG, Bangladesh (AP) — A U.N. Security Council team visiting Bangladesh promised Sunday to work hard to resolve a crisis involving hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims who have fled to the country to escape military-led violence in neighboring Myanmar.

The diplomats, who visited the sprawling camps and border points where about 700,000 Rohingya have taken shelter, said their visit was an opportunity to see the situation firsthand.

Russia's deputy ambassador to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyansky, said he and his fellow team members would not look away from the crisis after their visit, though he warned that there are no simple solutions.

"It's very necessary to come and see everything at place here in Bangladesh and Myanmar. But there is no magic solution, there is no magic stick to solve all these issues," he said at a news conference at the Kutupalong refugee camp in the coastal town of Cox's Bazar.

The diplomats will conclude their three-day visit to Bangladesh on Monday, when they leave for Myanmar.

The recent spasm of violence in Myanmar began when Rohingya insurgents staged a series of attacks on Aug. 25 on about 30 security outposts and other targets. In a subsequent crackdown described by U.N. and U.S. officials as "ethnic cleansing," Myanmar security forces have been accused of rape, killing, torture and the burning of Rohingya homes. Thousands are believed to have been killed.

The diplomats, comprising representatives from the five permanent Security Council members — China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States — and 10 non-permanent member states, talked to some 120 refugees, including rape victims.

Peru's ambassador to the U.N., Gustavo Adolfo Meza Cuadra Velasquez, said he and his fellow team members were ready to "work hard" and were "very concerned" about the crisis.

"I think we have witnessed the magnitude of the refugee crisis and very tragic situation of some of the families," he said.

The refugees are seeking U.N. protection to return home. The U.N. refugee agency and Bangladesh recently finalized a memorandum of understanding that said the repatriation process must be "safe, voluntary and dignified ... in line with international standards."

Karen Pierce, the U.K.'s ambassador to the United Nations, said the Security Council would continue to work on enabling the refugees to return to Myanmar, but that the Rohingya must be allowed to return

under safe conditions.

"The problem there lies in their expulsion, treatment and the fact that they had to flee to Bangladesh," she said.

Rohingya are denied citizenship in overwhelmingly Buddhist Myanmar, where they've faced persecution for decades. They're derided as "Bengalis," and many in Myanmar believe they are illegal migrants from Bangladesh. Most of them live in poverty in Myanmar's Rakhine state, next to Bangladesh.

Thousands of refugees gathered amid scorching heat at the Kutupalong camp to welcome the visiting delegation. They carried placards, some of which read "We want justice."

"We are not Bengali, we are Rohingya. They have killed my family members, they tortured us, they will kill us again," said one of the refugees, 29-year-old Mohammed Tayab, standing in front of a tent where he was waiting to meet the U.N. team.

Tayab, who was using crutches, said he was shot by Myanmar troops in his right leg.

He said he lost a brother, an uncle and a nephew after Myanmar soldiers shot them dead.

"I am here to talk to them, we want justice from them," he said of the diplomats. "I will tell them my stories. They should listen to us."

This story has been corrected to show Polyansky's title is Russia's deputy ambassador to U.N., not ambassador.

Convicting America's Dad: Inside the Bill Cosby prosecution

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, Associated Press

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (AP) — In the tense moments before a jury convicted Bill Cosby of sexual assault, the prosecutor who had branded him a "con man" and called him out for laughing during closing arguments started to worry about the global implications if the #MeToo era's first big trial went the other way.

Accuser Andrea Constand's allegations that Cosby had drugged and molested her at his suburban Philadelphia mansion in 2004, revived out of nearly a decade of dormancy by another comedian's viral joke, had coalesced into a movement of women who said he violated them, too.

Prosecutor Kristen Feden told The Associated Press she was "nervous for Andrea and for sex crime victims as a whole" at Cosby's retrial.

"I felt like this verdict could dictate something more," Feden said. "If they found him not guilty, I felt like they were feeding into every character assassination on sex crime victims."

Feden and prosecutor Stewart Ryan spoke to the AP on Saturday about the nearly three-year journey from reopening the Cosby case to last Thursday's verdict, how they restructured their approach after last year's hung jury and the sacrifices they faced along the way.

Cosby, 80, is now a prisoner in his own home and faces the prospect of spending the rest of his life behind bars as he awaits sentencing within the next three months on three counts of aggravated indecent assault. He has maintained his innocence. His publicist has declared his conviction a "public lynching," and his lawyers have vowed to appeal.

But Feden, Ryan and their boss, District Attorney Kevin Steele, said they are confident Cosby's conviction will stand.

Prosecutors started thinking about a retrial as last year's deliberations wore on for six days, Ryan said.

"We could kind of see the writing on the wall with the first jury," he said.

Two days after Cosby's conviction, law books and papers were still strewn on a long table in the war room where prosecutors plotted their strategy: leading off with an expert to educate the jury in victim behavior, successfully fighting to call five additional accusers and fending off the defense's allegations that Constand was a scammer framing Cosby for a big payday.

The additional accusers allowed prosecutors to uncloak the man once revered as America's Dad as a manipulative predator who used his built-in trust to trick women into taking powerful intoxicants so he could violate them. One woman pointedly called Cosby a "serial rapist," and another asked him through

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her tears, "You remember, don't you, Mr. Cosby?"

Feden said she felt "that needed to be exposed."

"That was the most sickening part of this all," she said. "When people in positions of power use that power to victimize people, I find that to be beyond disgusting."

Then-District Attorney Risa Vetri Ferman reopened the Cosby investigation in July 2015 after a federal judge, acting on a request from the AP, unsealed portions of Cosby's deposition testimony from a civil lawsuit he settled with Constand in 2006 for \$3.4 million. In the testimony, which was read to jurors at both trials, he described giving quaaludes to women before sex in the 1970s and his encounters with Constand, a Temple University women's basketball administrator.

Ryan likened Cosby's description of a purported sexual encounter with Constand to "reading some disgusting pornography novel." He said the testimony, far more explicit than what Cosby said in his lone police statement, showed "exactly what's going on" in his mind.

Feden questioned Constand. Ryan cross-examined star defense witness Marguerite Jackson. Together they delivered a closing argument that wrested the "con artist" label from the defense and pushed back at suggestions the case was outside the statute of limitations.

Feden, a point guard in her basketball days, said she pivoted immediately when she saw Cosby out of the corner of her eye, smirking as she spoke about the similarities in Cosby's conduct with Constand and the five other accusers.

"He's laughing at the cost of these women? And then Andrea Constand's in the courtroom? I'm furious," Feden said. "No one in this courtroom is laughing. I understand that you're a comedian, but this is not funny. This is not your stage. This is what you did wrong."

Judge Steven O'Neill's court crier called Ryan with the news that a verdict was in around lunchtime, about 14 hours after jurors started deliberating.

Ryan quickly relayed the news to Steele and Constand, who testified that she wanted justice. Then he called Feden, who had been so dedicated to seeing the case through that she worked out a deal to stay as a special prosecutor after leaving for the Philadelphia law firm Stradley Ronon.

Feden and Ryan spent months of long days working on the case away from their families: she, her husband and their two young sons; he, his wife and their 9-month-old son.

Ryan said the boy, born soon after the first trial, lifted him from hard days with a bright smile. Feden said she often thought of her late aunt, an OB-GYN, who had championed women and her career as a prosecutor.

Cosby's case drew worldwide attention. The courtroom gallery was filled with reporters, and cameras lined the railings outside the courthouse. But to Feden and Ryan, the man known for playing Dr. Cliff Huxtable on "The Cosby Show" was just another predator whose victims were finally being heard.

"There was someone who had been sexually assaulted, someone who deserved to hear 12 people say that not only do we believe you but we're going to hold the person who did it accountable," Ryan said.

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they are victims of sexual assault unless they grant permission, as Constand has done.

Follow Mike Sisak at <https://twitter.com/mikesisak>

For more coverage visit <https://www.apnews.com/tag/CosbyonTrial>

This story has been corrected to show the prosecutors spoke on Saturday, not Sunday.

Health care is new front for transgender rights under Trump

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Military service. Bathroom use. Job bias. And now, health care.

The Trump administration is coming under fire for rewriting a federal rule that bars discrimination in health care based on "gender identity." Critics say it's another attempt to undercut acceptance for transgender people.

The Health and Human Services Department rule dates to the Obama administration, a time when LGBT people gained political and social recognition. But a federal judge in Texas said the rule went too far by concluding that discrimination on the basis of gender identity is a form of sex discrimination, which is forbidden by civil rights laws.

Instead of appealing the judge's injunction, the Trump administration has opted to rewrite the rule, which applies to health care providers and insurers receiving federal funds.

Roger Severino, head of the department's Office for Civil Rights, said the rewrite will address the "reasonableness, necessity and efficacy" of the Obama-era requirement. He refused to discuss specifics, as the revision is under White House review before its official release.

Groups representing transgender people expect the Obama protections to be gutted and are preparing to take the administration to court.

"The proposed rollback does fit into a pattern of transphobia and anti-LGBT sentiment in this administration," said Omar Gonzalez-Pagan, a lawyer with Lambda Legal, a civil rights organization.

He ran through a checklist: President Donald Trump's call to bar military service by transgender people; Attorney General Jeff Sessions' memo concluding that civil rights laws don't protect transgender people from discrimination on the job; the override of Obama-era guidance that allowed transgender students to use school bathrooms that matched their gender identities.

Social and religious conservatives are one of the administration's most steadfast constituencies, and the White House has been out front championing their causes, including restrictions on abortion and legal protections for health care providers with moral and religious qualms about particular procedures.

Behind the latest health care dispute is a medically recognized condition called "gender dysphoria" — discomfort or distress caused by a discrepancy between the gender that a person identifies as and the gender at birth. Consequences can include severe depression. Treatment can range from sex-reassignment surgery and hormones to people changing their outward appearance by adopting a different hairstyle or clothing.

Under the Obama-era rule, a hospital could be required to perform gender-transition procedures such as hysterectomies if the facility provided that kind of treatment for other medical conditions. The rule was meant to carry out the anti-discrimination section of the Affordable Care Act, which bars sex discrimination in health care but does not use the term "gender identity."

In the Texas case, a Catholic hospital system, several states and a Christian medical association argued that the rule went beyond the law as written and would coerce providers to act against their medical judgment and religious beliefs.

That rule "would have forced doctors to perform gender transition procedures on children, even if that would be against their best medical judgment and they believed it would be harmful to the child," said Luke Goodrich, a lawyer with the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which is involved in the case.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says that for children who have yet to reach puberty, gender transition does not involve any medical interventions but instead focuses on social changes such as clothing and calling the child by another name.

The Becket Fund responded that the Obama administration did not limit the application of its nondiscrimination rule to adults.

UCLA legal scholar Jocelyn Samuels oversaw drafting of the anti-discrimination rule while in the Obama administration and says it reflected established legal precedent that transgender people are protected under federal sex discrimination laws. "The case law on whether sex discrimination includes gender identity

has been pretty clear for quite a while," said Samuels.

The original rule did not override either the medical judgment or religious beliefs of providers, said Samuels, arguing those are protected by other laws.

The timetable for the Trump administration's proposed changes is uncertain, but the rewrite isn't likely to settle the debate. The transgender controversy could follow the path of other Trump initiatives to the Supreme Court. ACLU attorney Joshua Block said five federal appeals courts have ruled that discrimination based on gender identity violates federal laws against sex discrimination.

In Congress, a GOP advocate for transgender rights is urging the administration to re-evaluate. Rep Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla., came to the U.S. from Cuba as a child.

"I fled from a communist regime to come to this land of opportunity and freedom, where if you work hard and are a responsible member of society, you have the ability to get ahead," said Ros-Lehtinen. "That principle should apply to anyone, including transgender Americans. I urge the administration to guide its policies under the premise of freedom, opportunity and equality."

One of Ros-Lehtinen's children is a transgender man.

UK interior minister quits over growing immigration scandal

By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's interior minister resigned Sunday amid a scandal over authorities' mistreatment of long-term U.K. residents wrongly caught up in a government drive to reduce illegal immigration.

Prime Minister Theresa May's office said late Sunday that May had accepted the resignation of Home Secretary Amber Rudd.

Rudd had been due to make a statement to Parliament on Monday over the "Windrush scandal," which has dominated headlines in Britain for days and has sparked intense criticism of the Conservative government's tough immigration policies.

The furor has grown since the Guardian newspaper reported that some people who came to the U.K. from the Caribbean in the decades after World War II had recently been refused medical care in Britain or threatened with deportation because they could not produce paperwork proving their right to reside in the country.

Those affected belong to the "Windrush generation," named for the ship Empire Windrush, which in 1948 brought hundreds of Caribbean immigrants to Britain, which was seeking nurses, railway workers and others to help it rebuild after the devastation of World War II.

They and subsequent Caribbean migrants came from British colonies or ex-colonies and had an automatic right to settle in the U.K. But some have been ensnared by tough new rules introduced since 2012 that were intended to make Britain a "hostile environment" for illegal immigrants.

Legal migrants have been denied housing, jobs or medical treatment because of requirements that landlords, employers and doctors check people's immigration status. Others have been told by the government that they are in Britain illegally and must leave.

"What has happened to the Windrush generation isn't an anomaly. It's not due to an administrative error. It's a consequence of the hostile environment created by this (Conservative) government," London Mayor Sadiq Khan, a member of the opposition Labour Party, said Sunday.

The policy was introduced at a time when May, now the prime minister, was home secretary.

The opposition Liberal Democrat party's home affairs spokesman, Ed Davey, said Rudd had become "the fall guy to protect the prime minister."

In recent weeks Rudd and May have apologized repeatedly to the Windrush generation, saying all pre-1973 Commonwealth immigrants who don't already have British citizenship will get it, and those affected will get compensation.

Rudd's position worsened after she told lawmakers last week that the government did not have targets for deporting people — only for a 2017 memo to emerge that mentioned specific targets for "enforced removals."

Rudd said she didn't see the memo, but The Guardian later published a leaked letter she wrote to the prime minister discussing an aim of increasing removals by 10 percent.

In a resignation letter to the prime minister, Rudd said she had "inadvertently" misled lawmakers. May said she accepted that Rudd had spoken "in good faith" and was sorry to see her resign.

Immigration is a divisive issue in Britain, with cutting the inflow of migrants a major factor for many voters who backed leaving the European Union. The government has an oft-stated but long-unmet goal of reducing net immigration below 100,000 people a year, less than half the current level.

Opponents say the government should drop that target in the wake of the Windrush debacle. The scandal is also causing anxiety for the 3 million European Union citizens living in Britain who are concerned about their immigration status after the country leaves the EU next March. The British government says they will be allowed to stay and has promised to set up a simple no-fuss registration process.

But Labour lawmaker David Lammy, a strong critic of the government's immigration policies, said the scandal would cause EU citizens to think, "My God, if this can happen to Windrush, of course it can happen to us."

In Michigan, Trump urges voters to support GOP for Congress

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — President Donald Trump, who ditched the annual White House Correspondents' Dinner for a campaign-style rally in Michigan, urged voters to support Republicans for Congress and repeatedly cited Sen. Debbie Stabenow as one of the Democrats who needed to be voted out of office.

Trump took aim at familiar political targets and added a few fresh ones Saturday night at the rally in Washington Township.

"Debbie Stabenow is one of the leaders for weak borders and letting people in. I don't know how she gets away with it," Trump said. "A vote for a Democrat in November is a vote for open borders and crime. It's very simple. It's also a vote for much higher taxes."

Stabenow, who is running for re-election to her fourth term, fired back Sunday that voters are sick of the partisanship.

"Michigan families are tired of political attacks," said her spokeswoman, Miranda Margowsky. "Instead they want results, and that's exactly what Senator Stabenow has done."

In Michigan, Trump also directed his ire at another Democratic senator, Jon Tester of Montana, over his role in the failed nomination of White House doctor Ronny Jackson to run the Department of Veterans Affairs. Tester, too, faces a competitive re-election race this year.

"I know things about Tester that I could say, too. And if I said 'em, he'd never be elected again," Trump said without elaborating.

Tester, the top Democrat on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, had his staff compile a list of allegations against Jackson based on interviews with more than 20 military personnel, and they released it with the support of the Republican committee chairman.

Jackson was a surprise pick by Trump for VA secretary. The White House was criticized for skipping crucial vetting of nominees and letting lawmakers to clean up the mess.

As he has at similar events, Trump promoted top agenda items that energize conservatives: appointing conservative judges, building a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border, ending sanctuary cities and protecting tax cuts approved by the Republican-led Congress. He also took credit for the warming relations between North and South Korea, telling his audience, "We'll see how it goes."

"Great evening last night," the president tweeted early Sunday. "The enthusiasm, knowledge and love in that room was unreal. To the many thousands of people who couldn't get in, I cherish you ... and will be back!"

Trump chose a friendly venue for his rally, which not coincidentally came the same night as the annual White House Correspondents' Dinner. He skipped the dinner last year.

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"While Washington, Michigan, was a big success, Washington, D.C., just didn't work. Everyone is talking about the fact that the White House Correspondents Dinner was a very big, boring bust...the so-called comedian really 'bombed,'" Trump tweeted.

That barb was directed at Michelle Wolf, who provided the after-dinner entertainment for the White House press corps and their guests, and whose performance was surprisingly racy. After one crass joke drew groans from the audience, Wolf laughed and said, "Yeah, shoulda done more research before you got me to do this."

Before the Michigan rally, Trump had said in a fundraising pitch that he had come up with something better than being stuck in a room "with a bunch of fake news liberals who hate me." He said he would rather spend the evening "with my favorite deplorables."

North Korea offers to give up nukes if US vows not to attack

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told his South Korean counterpart at their historic summit that he would be willing to give up his nuclear weapons if the U.S. commits to a formal end to the Korean War and a pledge not to attack the North, Seoul officials said Sunday.

Kim also vowed during his meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Friday to shut down the North's nuclear test site in May and disclose the process to experts and journalists from South Korea and the United States, Seoul's presidential office said.

While there are lingering questions about whether North Korea will ever decide to fully relinquish its nukes as it heads into negotiations with the U.S., Kim's comments amount to the North's most specific acknowledgement yet that "denuclearization" would constitute surrendering its weapons.

U.S. national security adviser John Bolton reacted coolly to word that Kim would abandon his weapons if the United States pledged not to invade.

Asked on CBS' "Face the Nation" whether the U.S. would make such a promise, Bolton said: "Well, we've heard this before. This is — the North Korean propaganda playbook is an infinitely rich resource."

"What we want to see from them is evidence that it's real and not just rhetoric," he added.

Seoul officials, who have shuttled between Pyongyang and Washington to broker talks between Kim and President Donald Trump that are expected in May or June, said Kim has expressed genuine interest in dealing away his nuclear weapons.

But there has been skepticism because North Korea for decades has been pushing a concept of "denuclearization" that bears no resemblance to the American definition. The North has long vowed to pursue nuclear development unless Washington removes its 28,500 troops from South Korea and the nuclear umbrella defending South Korea and Japan.

During their summit at a truce village on the border, Moon and Kim promised to work toward the "complete denuclearization" of the Korean Peninsula but made no references to verification or timetables.

Kim also expressed optimism about his meeting with Trump, Moon's spokesman Yoon Young-chan said.

"Once we start talking, the United States will know that I am not a person to launch nuclear weapons at South Korea, the Pacific or the United States," Kim said, according to Yoon.

Yoon also quoted Kim as saying: "If we maintain frequent meetings and build trust with the United States and receive promises for an end to the war and a non-aggression treaty, then why would we need to live in difficulty by keeping our nuclear weapons?"

The Korean Peninsula technically remains in a state of war because the 1950-53 Korean War was halted with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

The closing of the nuclear test site would be a dramatic but likely symbolic event to set up Kim's summit with Trump. North Korea already announced this month that it has suspended all tests of nuclear devices and intercontinental ballistic missiles and plans to close its nuclear testing ground.

Still, Adam Mount, a senior defense analyst at the Federation of American Scientists, said Kim's comments were significant because they are his most explicit acknowledgement yet that denuclearization

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means surrendering his nuclear weapons.

"Questions remain about whether Kim will agree to discuss other nuclear technology, fissile material and missiles. However, they imply a phased process with reciprocal concessions," Mount said in an email. "It is not clear that the Trump administration will accept that kind of protracted program."

Analysts reacted with skepticism to Kim's previously announced plan to close down the test site at Punggye-ri, saying the northernmost tunnel had already become too unstable to use for underground detonations anyway following the country's sixth and most powerful test blast in September.

In his conversation with Moon, Kim denied that he would be merely clearing out damaged goods, saying the site also has two new tunnels that are larger than previous testing facilities, Yoon said.

Some analysts see Moon's agreement with Kim at the summit as a disappointment, citing the lack of references to verification and timeframes and also the absence of a definition on what would constitute a "complete" denuclearization of the peninsula.

But Patrick McEachern, a former State Department analyst now with the Washington-based Wilson Center, said it was still meaningful that Moon extracted a commitment from Kim to complete denuclearization, which marked a significant change from Kim's previous public demand to expand his arsenal of nuclear weapons in number and quality.

"The public conversation should now shift from speculation on whether North Korea would consider denuclearization to how South Korea and the United States can advance this denuclearization pledge in concrete steps in light of North Korea's reciprocal demands for concrete steps toward an eventual peace agreement," McEachern said in an email.

North Korea has invited the outside world to witness the dismantling of its nuclear facilities before. In June 2008, international broadcasters were allowed to air the demolition of a cooling tower at the Nyongbyon reactor site, a year after the North reached an agreement with the U.S. and four other nations to disable its nuclear facilities in return for an aid package worth about \$400 million.

But the deal eventually collapsed after North Korea refused to accept U.S.-proposed verification methods, and the country went on to conduct its second nuclear test detonation in May 2009.

Yoon said Kim also revealed plans to sync its time zone with South Korea's. The Koreas had used the same time zone for decades before the North created its own "Pyongyang Time" in 2015 by setting the clock 30 minutes behind South Korea and Japan.

Yoon said the North's decision to return to Seoul's time zone was aimed at facilitating communication with South Korea and the U.S.

'Infinity War' opens with record \$250M, passing 'Star Wars'

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A whole lot of superheroes added up to a whole lot of ticket sales. The superhero smorgasbord "Avengers: Infinity Wars" opened with predictable shock-and-awe, earning \$250 million in box office over the weekend and edging past "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" to set the highest opening weekend of all-time.

"Infinity War," which brings together some two dozen superheroes in the 10-year culmination of Marvel Studio's "cinematic universe," also set a new global opening record with \$630 million even though it's yet to open in China, the world's second-largest movie market. It opens there May 11.

According to the Walt Disney Co.'s estimates Sunday, "Infinity War" overwhelmed the previous global best ("The Fate of the Furious" with \$541.9 million) but narrowly topped "The Force Awakens" in North America. The "Star Wars" reboot debuted with \$248 million in 2015, which would translate to about \$260 million accounting for inflation.

But both intergalactic behemoths belong to Disney, which now owns nine of the top 10 opening weekends ever — six belonging to Marvel releases. That includes "Black Panther," which has grossed \$1.3 billion since opening in February and still managed to rank fifth at this weekend's box office, thanks partially to Marvel fans self-programming a double-feature.

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The track record for Marvel, along with the hyper, extravagant effort put into the long-planned "Infinity War," made the record-setting weekend something of a fait accompli. After ten years, 18 prior films and some \$15 billion in box office, the weekend was an assured and long-awaited coronation for Kevin Feige's Marvel, the most dominant force in a Hollywood with precious few sure things.

"To have now the biggest movie of domestic history as one of the Marvel cinematic universe films seems like a fitting tribute to the Marvel Studios team which has had just an astounding, unmatched run in the last decade," said Dave Hollis, head of distribution for Disney.

By any measure, the 2-hour-and-40 minute-long "Infinity War" is one of the largest films ever assembled. With a production budget reportedly almost \$300 million, Joe and Anthony Russo's film brings together the stars of Marvel's superhero stable, including Robert Downey Jr.'s Iron Man, Chris Hemsworth's Thor, Chadwick Boseman's Black Panther, Chris Evans' Captain America, Mark Ruffalo's Hulk, and many more.

It was shot over 18 months back-to-back with a sequel due out next summer. Marvel spent years laying the groundwork for the big showdown, teasing its villain (Josh Brolin's Thanos) since 2014. The result earned positive reviews (84 percent fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) and an A CinemaScore from audiences. All but one of Marvel's 19 cinematic universe releases has scored an A CinemaScore.

As if to further stamp its pronounced enormity, "Infinity War" was also the first film shot entirely with IMAX cameras. (Christopher Nolan's "Dunkirk" was mostly shot on IMAX.) IMAX screenings accounted for a record \$41 million of the weekend's global ticket sales. Greg Foster, head of entertainment for IMAX Corp, said the success of Marvel stands apart from Hollywood's other mega franchises.

"This isn't something that their parents saw. This isn't an old franchise that their parents saw when they were 20," said Foster. "This is theirs. The Marvel universe is the group of characters that this generation owns."

No new wide releases dared to compete with "Infinity War," which played at 4,474 theaters in North America. In a very distant second place was John Krasinski's "A Quiet Place" with \$10.7 million in its fourth week. With \$148.2 million in total ticket sales, the Paramount Pictures thriller had topped the box office three of the last four weekends.

Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for comScore, credited Marvel with the potent lead-up to "Infinity Wars" with "Spider-Man: Homecoming," "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2," "Thor: Ragnarok" and "Black Panther" — all successful and well-reviewed entries.

"This brought the world together this weekend," said Dergarabedian. "That's what these movies do: They remind us why we love going to the movie theater. A movie like this shows the singular and unique experience of going into a movie theater."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to comScore. Where available, the latest international numbers for Friday through Sunday are also included. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Avengers: Infinity War," \$250 million (\$380 million international).
2. "A Quiet Place," \$10.7 million (\$6.6 million international).
3. "I Feel Pretty," \$8.1 million (\$1.4 million international).
4. "Rampage," \$7.1 million (\$16.2 million international).
5. "Black Panther," \$4.4 million.
6. "Super Troopers 2," \$3.6 million.
7. "Truth or Dare," \$3.2 million (\$2.8 million international).
8. "Blockers," \$2.9 million (\$1.6 million international).
9. "Ready Player One," \$2.4 million (\$8.6 million international).
10. "Traffik," \$1.6 million.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at international theaters (excluding the U.S. and Canada), according to comScore:

1. "Avengers: Infinity War," \$380 million.

2. "Us and Them," \$88.8 million.
3. "Rampage," \$16.2 million.
4. "A or B," \$15.2 million.
5. "Ready Player One," \$8.6 million.
6. "A Quiet Place," \$6.6 million.
7. "Peter Rabbit," \$5.3 million.
8. "Taxi 5," \$3.8 million.
9. "Genghis Khan," \$3.4 million.
10. "The Trough," \$2.9 million.

Follow Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Trump's threats on trade unsettle farming, ranching backers

By **MATTHEW BROWN** and **MATT VOLZ**, Associated Press

SHEFFIELD, Mont. (AP) — Montana rancher Fred Wacker had thousands of head of cattle fattening up along the Yellowstone River for export to China when President Donald Trump picked a trade fight with the Asian nation.

The dispute threatens a \$200 million deal that Wacker helped secure last year to ship Montana beef to China, yet the potential setback to his business plans hasn't diminished his stalwart support for Trump.

"I'm not going to follow him over the cliff, but I'll take a pretty good jump," Wacker said as a small team of cowboys on his Cross Four Ranch herded hundreds of cattle onto trucks headed for summer pasture.

Deep in Montana's ag country, ranchers' and farmers' support of Trump is being put to the test as the president's bellicose threats of a trade war risk their livelihoods. It's a constituency that voted heavily for Trump and that has a lot to lose, both in existing trade and new deals like the one involving Wacker that could send tens of thousands of Montana cattle to China over the next several years.

The conflict faced by Trump's supporters in Montana, where some 28,000 farms and ranches make agriculture a top economic driver in the state, is reflective of the one facing the larger U.S. agriculture industry, which also largely backed Trump but now risks becoming a casualty if a trans-Pacific trade war erupts.

Wacker, his white cowboy hat pulled down tight atop his head as he weighed the outgoing cattle, remains firmly in Trump's camp. He views the Republican president's aggressive stance on China as unsettling but necessary, and hopes it will bring parity to what has long been a lopsided trading relationship between the two nations.

That situation was beginning to reverse itself when Trump reached an agreement with Chinese President Xi Jinping last year to lift a 13-year ban on U.S. beef exports to China. That opened the door to the deal between Montana ranchers and Chinese e-commerce leader JD.com, Wacker said.

Since Trump challenged China on trade, JD.com has "gone silent," Wacker said, but he remains confident in the president's approach.

"We would not even be talking about this if it weren't for the Trump administration," he said of the deal he helped broker during a trip to Beijing last year.

This largely rural state, once known for its independence in voting for candidates' individual qualities over political party, has grown a deeper shade of red over the past decade as voters increasingly break toward GOP candidates. That trend culminated in 2016 with Trump's 20-point trouncing of Democrat Hillary Clinton in Montana.

The GOP now hopes to use that momentum to oust the state's Democratic senator, Jon Tester, in this fall's election.

Trump on Saturday called for Tester to resign for what the president called false allegations that scuttled the nomination of Ronny Jackson to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs. Tester did not respond directly but said he would keep fighting for veterans.

Tester, who is seeking a third term, is himself a farmer from the little town of Big Sandy and has already

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used the tariff issue to scold Trump.

"If you put me and my neighbors out of business — not you personally, but the administration — we've got a major problem here," Tester told Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue earlier this month.

Trump's victory paid off for farmers and ranchers in the form of rollbacks of environmental regulations imposed during the Obama administration that farmers and ranchers considered burdensome, including ones that could affect irrigation ditches, biotechnology and pesticides.

Trump's tactics on trade have been more unsettling for the industry. First, he announced plans to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, which caused some Mexico importers to look to South America for crops like wheat. Then, he pulled out of a trans-Pacific trade deal that he viewed as unfavorable to the U.S.

After his threats to China elicited a proposal for a retaliatory tariff on U.S. beef, wheat and other products, Trump floated rejoining the trans-Pacific deal to get more leverage over Beijing. He abruptly dropped the idea days later.

The whipsaw changes roiled agriculture markets, and not everyone who makes a living off the land retained the same fealty to Trump as Wacker.

Wheat farmers in particular worry about how tariffs would affect their market, which has gone through a turbulent stretch in recent years. More than 70 percent of Montana wheat is exported, primarily to Asia, according to the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee. Although less than 10 percent of that grain ends up in China, farmers say the potential for growth in the nation of almost 1.4 billion people is huge.

Larry Johnson, a Montana farmer who grows wheat, barley, peas and mustard on nearly 16 square miles (41 square kilometers) near the small community of Kremlin, said he sells some wheat to China, but that's not his biggest concern. What he worries about is that North Dakota soybean farmers will switch to wheat because of Chinese tariffs on soybeans, putting them in competition with him.

"All of our crops are intertwined," he said. "That directly affects our bottom line. I could see a 10 percent loss of income easily."

Johnson described himself as a "progressive conservative" — conservative on financial matters and progressive on social issues. He wasn't in favor of either the Republican or Democratic presidential candidate in 2016, but said the agriculture industry's support of Trump is giving way to the realization that the president doesn't understand the industry.

Trump's public comments serve only to create uncertainty in the market at an already uncertain time for many farmers, he said.

"One day the president puts a tweet out, and the next day the price of soybeans is down 45 cents," Johnson said. "It makes you very nervous."

The ag industry is keenly aware that China's trade policies have kept U.S. products out of the market there, said Montana Grain Growers Association President Michelle Erickson Jones. She said she agrees with Trump that China must be held accountable, but she favors more conventional routes, such as going to the World Trade Organization.

About 280 miles (450 kilometers) east of Johnson's Kremlin farm, Buzz Mattelin grows durum wheat, barley, beets and lentils in Culbertson. He said he is unhappy that his commodities are being used as bargaining chips in a potential trade war, and worries farmers like him will end up as collateral damage.

"I'm patriotic, and I'm going to do my share. But I don't want to bear all the pain, either," Mattelin said.

Volz reported from Helena.

Armenia protest leader seeks president's backing to be PM

By YURAS KARMANAU, Associated Press

YEREVAN, Armenia (AP) — The leader of the wave of protests that created a surprise power vacuum in Armenia said Sunday that he met with the country's new president and hopes to secure his support to become prime minister.

Armenia's parliament plans to choose a replacement on Tuesday for Serzh Sargsyan, who resigned last

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week amid the street demonstrations over his selection as prime minister. Opposition lawmaker Nikol Pashinian, who led the protests, hopes to be the next premier.

Pashinian's supporters blocked traffic, marched through the capital and assembled in a central square Sunday for a rally, just like they did for more than a week over the political maneuvers that made Sargsyan prime minister after he was termed out as president.

Pashinian said Sunday that he hopes his bid to be the next prime minister receives backing from the current president, Armen Sarkisian, after their meeting. Former Prime Minister Karen Karapetian, who was appointed to the post in an acting capacity last week, is from Sargsyan's Republic party.

The party holds a majority in parliament. A spokesman said Saturday it would not nominate a Republican candidate for prime minister, but lawmakers who are party members would vote as a bloc.

Pashinian told thousands of people attending the evening rally that he has the support of the three other parties represented in the Armenian parliament.

"The revolution in our country has taken place," he declared to the crowd, which attracted a notably smaller crowd than rallies that drew tens of thousands last week.

Sargsyan was Armenia's president for a decade before term limits forced him to step down in March. Lawmakers elected him as prime minister this month after approving governance changes that diminished the presidency's power and bolstered the prime minister's.

Opponents said the new system would have allowed Sargsyan to remain Armenia's leader indefinitely.

The crisis has been closely watched by Russia, which has a sizable military base in the country.

Pashinian said Russia has nothing to fear if he becomes prime minister and "in the near future our relations will develop and deepen, which will be in the national and government interests of Armenia."

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, April 30, the 120th day of 2018. There are 245 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 30, 1945, as Soviet troops approached his Berlin bunker, Adolf Hitler committed suicide along with his wife of one day, Eva Braun.

On this date:

In 1789, George Washington took the oath of office in New York as the first president of the United States.

In 1803, the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France for 60 million francs, the equivalent of about \$15 million.

In 1812, Louisiana became the 18th state of the Union.

In 1900, engineer John Luther "Casey" Jones of the Illinois Central Railroad died in a train wreck near Vaughan, Mississippi, after staying at the controls in a successful effort to save the passengers.

In 1939, the New York World's Fair officially opened with a ceremony that included an address by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1948, the Organization of American States was founded with the signing of its charter in Bogota, Colombia.

In 1958, Britain's Life Peerages Act 1958 allowed women to become members of the House of Lords.

In 1968, New York City police forcibly removed student demonstrators occupying five buildings at Columbia University.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon announced the resignations of top aides H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst and White House counsel John Dean, who was actually fired.

In 1975, the Vietnam War ended as the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon fell to Communist forces.

In 1988, Gen. Manuel Noriega, brandishing a machete, vowed at a rally to keep fighting U.S. efforts to oust him as Panama's military ruler.

In 1993, top-ranked women's tennis player Monica Seles was stabbed in the back during a match in

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Hamburg, Germany, by a man who described himself as a fan of second-ranked German player Steffi Graf. (The man, convicted of causing grievous bodily harm, was given a suspended sentence.)

Ten years ago: The Federal Reserve cut interest rates for a seventh straight time, reducing the federal funds rate a quarter-point to 2 percent. An avalanche in Italy's northwestern Alps killed five French ski-mountaineers.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama said he wanted more information about chemical weapons use in the Syrian civil war before deciding on escalating U.S. military or diplomatic responses, despite earlier assertions that use of such weapons would be a "game-changer." The FDA lowered to 15 the age at which females could buy the Plan B emergency contraceptive without a prescription, and said it no longer had to be kept behind pharmacy counters. Willem-Alexander became the first Dutch king in more than a century as his mother, Beatrix, abdicated after 33 years as queen.

One year ago: President Donald Trump said after North Korea's latest failed rocket launch that communist leader Kim Jong Un would eventually develop better missiles, and that "we can't allow it to happen"; in a taped interview broadcast on CBS' "Face the Nation," the president would not discuss the possibility of military action. Police shot and killed a 49-year-old man suspected of shooting seven people, one fatally, during a birthday pool party at an apartment complex in San Diego. "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" won the Daytime Emmy Award for best entertainment talk show, 20 years to the day that her character came out as gay on the sitcom "Ellen."

Today's Birthdays: Actress Cloris Leachman is 92. Singer Willie Nelson is 85. Actor Burt Young is 78. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden is 72. Movie director Allan Arkush is 70. Actor Perry King is 70. Singer-musician Wayne Kramer is 70. Singer Merrill Osmond is 65. Movie director Jane Campion is 64. Movie director Lars von Trier is 62. Former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper is 59. Actor Paul Gross is 59. Basketball Hall of Famer Isiah Thomas is 57. Country musician Robert Reynolds is 56. Actor Adrian Pasdar is 53. Rock singer J.R. Richards (Dishwalla) is 51. Rapper Turbo B (Snap) is 51. Rock musician Clark Vogeler is 49. Rhythm-and-blues singer Chris "Choc" Dalyrimple (Soul For Real) is 47. Rock musician Chris Henderson (3 Doors Down) is 47. Country singer Carolyn Dawn Johnson is 47. Actress Lisa Dean Ryan is 46. Rhythm-and-blues singer Akon is 45. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jeff Timmons (98 Degrees) is 45. Actor Johnny Galecki is 43. Singer-musician Cole Deggs (Cole Deggs and the Lonesome) is 42. Actor Sam Heughan is 38. Actor Kunal Nayyar is 37. Rapper Lloyd Banks is 36. Actress Kirsten Dunst is 36. Country singer Tyler Wilkinson (The Wilkinsons) is 34. Actress Dianna Agron is 32.

Thought for Today: "In America, getting on in the world means getting out of the world we have known before." — Ellery Sedgwick, American editor (1872-1960).