

Groton Daily Independent

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“The consciousness of loving and being loved brings a warmth and richness to life that nothing else can bring.”

-Oscar Wilde



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

Westby Thank You

We are overwhelmed by all the greetings we received for our 30th anniversary. Thank you everyone for all the cards, gifts, hugs and phone messages. We are very grateful to be able to celebrate another year with one another. God is good.

With much appreciation,
Ron and Lori Westby

Midwest Masonry & concrete Pumping

Greg Heilman, owner

405 E 1st Ave., Groton

Greg: 253/929-9137

Mike: 605/492-7041

midwestmasonry1@yahoo.com



The Dangers of Sitting

by <http://unsugarize.com/>

Humans are little more than ten millennia separated from their hunter-gatherer roots. And yet what a difference those 10,000 years have made. We have modern antibiotics and are largely removed from dangers attending childbirth. At the same time, we have made acquiring food too easy, and worst of all have stopped moving.

I know I should walk more, but how much do I need?

Speaking of 10,000, have you had your 10,000 steps today? Some medical authorities suggest walking this much daily, and yet most people fall far short. The average for adults in the United States is less than 6,000 steps, and many walk less than half that much! If you have led a sedentary lifestyle for some time, start increasing exercise gradually. Even if you increase daily steps 500 or less each week, you'll eventually reach the goal.

Is sitting really all that bad?

Yes! One persuasive study followed 8,800 adults for seven years. Those who sat more than four hours daily had nearly 50% greater mortality than those sitting less than two hours! Other researchers have shown that sitting half the day doubles the risk of heart disease and diabetes. Americans average 13 total hours per day sitting at work and home!

Diabetes, cardiovascular disease, arthritis and other forms of inflammation — sitting lies at the root of all of them, because sitting disease causes obesity, which in turn spawns a plethora of other diseases. On average, obese people sit 135 minutes longer each day — over two hours more — than the lean do. They also have lower levels of what researchers call "non-exercise activity thermogenesis," or NEAT. Higher levels of NEAT are correlated with a lower incidence of disease.

Some studies have shown that even exercising vigorously one hour per day is not enough to counteract the damaging effects of sitting. If you follow that workout with eight hours of sitting, you have already undone all the good your sweat session might have conferred!

But some people stay slim no matter what; why's that?

The answer may surprise you. New studies track activity levels by outfitting test subjects with Spandex underwear that continuously monitors motion and posture with tiny sensors. The results of these studies suggest that lean subjects automatically adjust their activity levels — and consequently ramp up NEAT — when calories are increased, whereas obese ones do not.

Many mammals, including humans, possess complex, feedback-controlled, neural circuitry in the hypothalamus that establishes equilibrium between activity, body temperature and metabolic rate on the one hand, and activity on the other. Scientists have suggested that sitting may cause this circuitry to malfunction, resulting in obesity, disease, and increased mortality. Modern life, increasingly sedentary, has overridden the complex regulatory mechanism evolution provided. We've defeated nature, and in the process, ourselves.

What's the cure for sitting disease?

In a word...standing! We need more walking and more movement generally, spread throughout the day. Some forward-looking employers have replaced conventional desks and chairs with standing workstations — a high table (and computer) with a treadmill running slowly beneath it at less than two miles per hour. The new workstations have consistently resulted in better blood pressure and lower cholesterol, not to mention enhanced productivity. Until the world of work has been fully reformed, remember this — stand often, walk frequently, shun unnecessary conveniences, and sit as little as possible. Your life depends on it!

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The sunrise this morning before the fog rolled in.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

July 23, 2018 – 7:00pm
Groton Community Center

1. Minutes
2. Bills
3. June Finance Report
4. Shirley Wells Oath of Office
5. Second reading of Ordinance #719 Trimming Trees
6. Resolution to appoint newspapers
7. Pool paint
8. 2019 budget requests
9. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
10. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
11. Adjournment



**Sun Dial Manor in Bristol
is accepting applications for
full time and part time CNA's.
12 hr. shifts - days and nights
(SIGN ON BONUS OFFERED)
DIETARY OPENINGS
Full time cook, 8 hr. shifts
(WITH SIGN ON BONUS)**

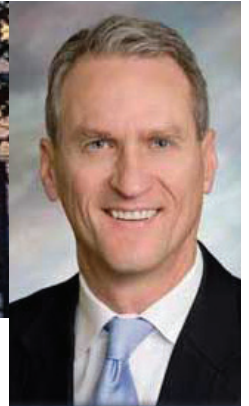
**For more information,
Call 605/492-3615**

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South Dakota Governor
Dennis Daugaard



Promises Kept

We had a lot of good news to share this week, all related to South Dakota's outstanding financial condition. On Monday, we announced the close of the fiscal year with a surplus. On Tuesday, we got word that S&P is maintaining our AAA status. Then we learned on Wednesday that our Bureau of Finance and Management is being nationally recognized for its annual financial report.

The state's finances have always been a top priority for me. When I campaigned for this job in 2010, it was the one thing I heard about wherever I went. We were coming out of the recession and, at the time, there was much attention on the federal deficit and the budget problems states faced nationwide. With stimulus dollars running out, South Dakota needed to get its financial house in order. As I visited communities throughout the state, I promised voters we would structurally balance our state budget.

Eight years later, I am proud to say we have kept that promise. South Dakota has achieved structural balance every single year, as well as a surplus for the last seven consecutive years. Most recently, on the last day of June, we closed Fiscal Year 2018 with a \$16.9 million surplus. We remained in the black with state agencies spending 0.67 percent less than appropriated and revenues exceeding estimates by 0.38 percent.

Achieving structural balance is not easy. We have had to adjust our revenue projections during the past few legislative sessions because of a sluggish ag economy. We have also faced some uncertainty on the spending side as well, particularly with our state employee health plan and Medicaid enrollment costs, which can vary greatly from year to year. And I'll never forget the difficult days of the 2011 Legislative Session when we had to make cuts.

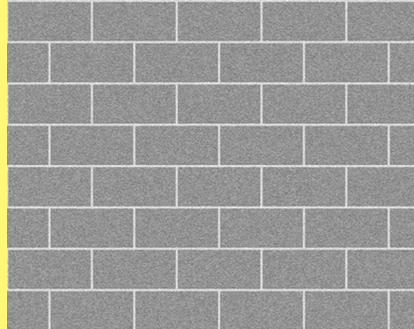
But by adhering to conservative budget practices, the Bureau of Finance and Management and the Legislature have responsibly managed our money each year. Instead of adopting rosy projections and employing budget gimmicks to justify overspending, South Dakota is acting responsibly. We don't spend money we don't have, we keep our budget structurally balanced and we seize opportunities to spend in the short-term where it can lead to savings.

Judging by this week's news alone, I'd say these practices are paying dividends.

MIDWEST MASONRY & CONCRETE PUMPING



**NEW OR REPLACED
SIDEWALK**



BLOCK WALLS



EGRESS WINDOWS



DRIVEWAY

BASEMENT FLOORS

STONE AND BRICK

WORK



GARAGE FLOORS

Call for a free quote

605/397-8383

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Today in Weather History

July 21, 1940: From near Miller, an estimated F2 tornado moved southeast, destroying a barn, garage, and two windmills.

July 21, 2000: 3.25-inch hail was reported near Okreek in northeastern Todd County.

1911 - The temperature at Painter, WY, dipped to 10 degrees to equal the record low for July for the continental U.S. (The Weather Channel)

1934 - The temperature reached 109 degrees at Cincinnati, OH, to cap their hottest summer of record. The state record for Ohio was established that day with a reading of 113 degrees near the town of Galipolis. (David Ludlum)

1975 - Six inches of rain fell across Mercer County, NJ, in just ten hours causing the worst flooding in twenty years. Assunpink Creek crested eleven feet above flood stage at Hamilton and Trenton, the highest level of record. Traffic was brought to a standstill, and railway service between New York City and Washington D.C. was cut off for two days. Flooding left 1000 persons homeless, and caused an estimated 25 million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1983: At Vostok Station in Antarctica, the temperature dropped to 128.6 degrees below zero. This reading is the coldest temperature ever recorded.

1987: An F4 tornado ravages the Teton Wilderness and Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. The tornado's violent winds destroy millions of trees on a 24.3-mile track that traverses the Continental Divide at an elevation of 10,170 feet.








1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Utah to North Dakota, spawning a dozen tornadoes in North Dakota. Thunderstorms in North Dakota also produced baseball size hail at Clifford which caused four million dollars damage, and high winds which toppled a couple of eighty foot towers cutting off power to the town of Blanchard. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - While cool air invaded the central U.S., unseasonably hot weather continued over the western states. The temperature at Spring Valley, NV, soared from a morning low of 35 degrees to an afternoon high of 95 degrees. Fallon, NV, reported an all-time record high of 108 degrees, and Death Valley, CA, reported their sixth straight day of 120 degree heat. (The Weather Channel) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon thunderstorms over Florida produced wind gusts to 92 mph at Jacksonville, damaging thirteen light planes at Herlong Field. Five cities in Texas reported record low temperatures for the date. Corpus Christi, TX, equalled their record low for the date with a reading of 71 degrees, and then tied their record high for the date that afternoon with a reading of 97 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

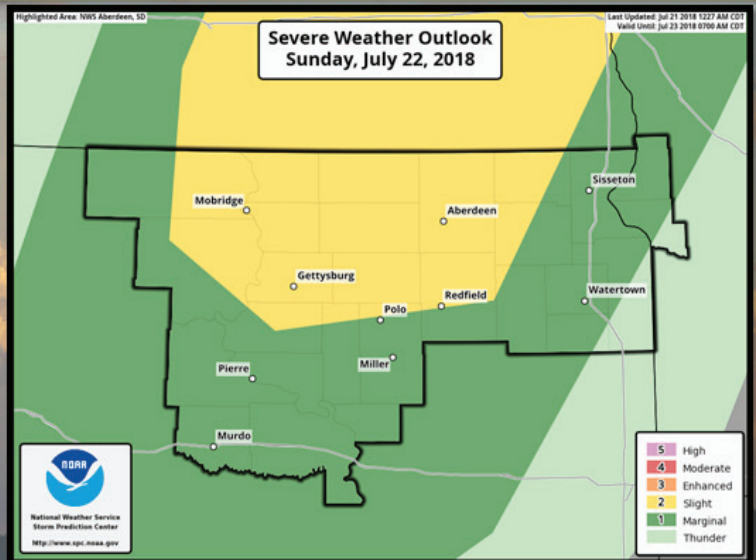
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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Patched Fog then Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny then Chance T-storms	T-storms Likely	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms
High: 83 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 83 °F	Low: 63 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 82 °F

Strong to Severe Storms Possible Sunday

The main threats being strong winds and large hail Sunday afternoon and evening.



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 7/21/2018 4:57 AM Central

Published on: 07/21/2018 at 5:00AM

A cold front will march eastward across the area Sunday afternoon and evening. Showers and thunderstorms are expected along this front, some of which may be strong to severe. The main threats are large hail and strong winds. Stay informed of the weather Sunday afternoon and evening.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 78.9 F at 4:59 PM

Heat Index:

Low Outside Temp: 56.4 F at 5:02 AM

High Gust: 16.0 Mph at 12:08 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 106° in 1899

Record Low: 41° in 1902

Average High: 84°F

Average Low: 60°F

Average Precip in July: 1.75

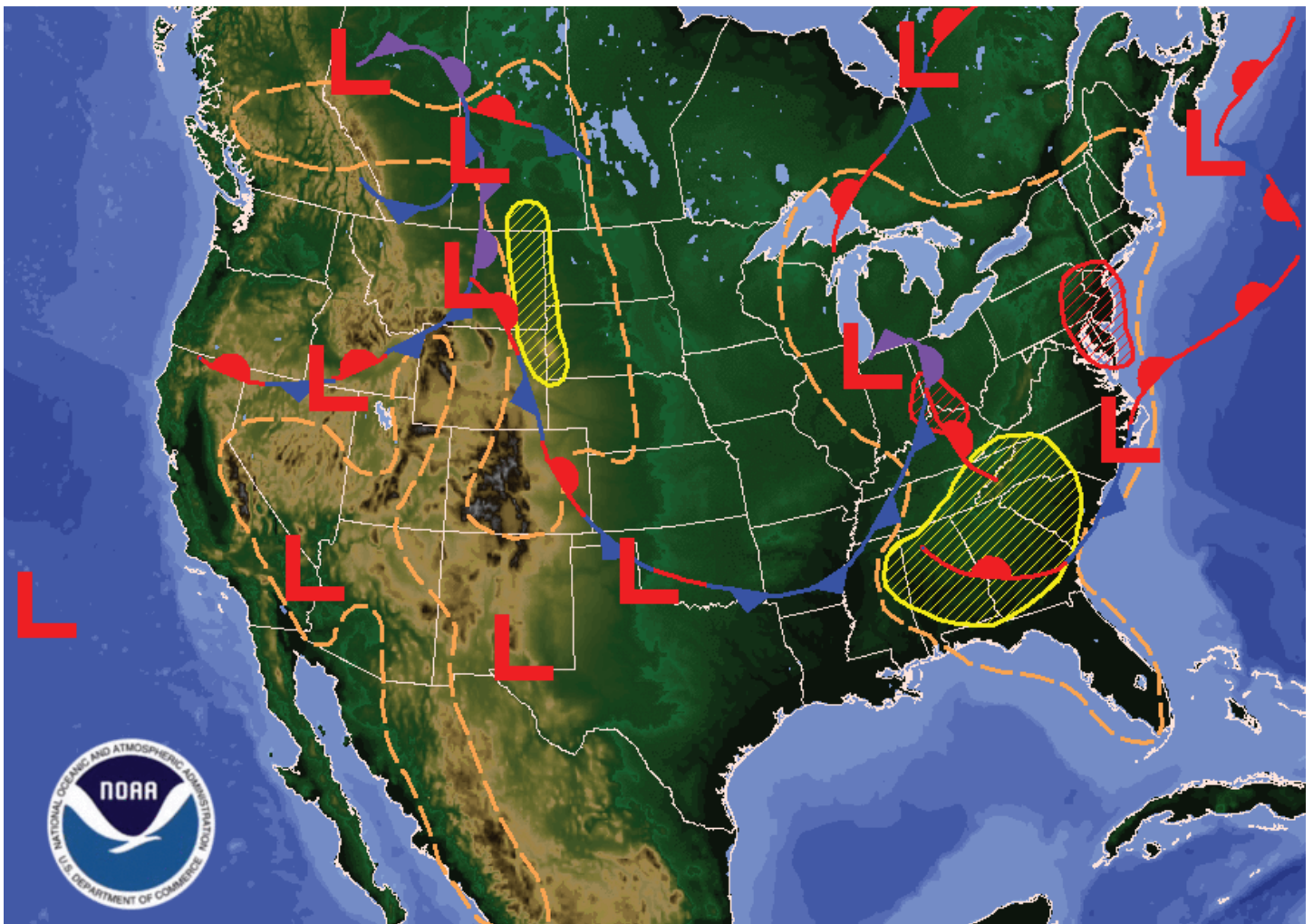
Precip to date in July: 3.82

Average Precip to date: 12.60

Precip Year to Date: 9.63

Sunset Tonight: 9:14 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:07 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sat, Jul 21, 2018, issued 4:48 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Hammond 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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MIND-FULL OR MIND-LESS

"You know," said the old farmer, "the mind is much like a garden. You can either plant something good in it and watch it grow or watch it fill up with weeds."

If we are careful, we can have a mind filled with good thoughts and great ideas. We can plant "seeds" that come from well-cultivated "ancestors" and carefully bred crops or "seeds" of questionable origin and random sources. What goes into our mind can be carefully controlled and chosen or simply allowed to enter because there is no plan to nourish our hearts and souls. The source of the content is our choice and ours alone. The contents of our minds are not force-fed. Whatever is there is there by our choice.

The wisdom of our Psalmist is well worth heeding: "My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on Your promises." No random "seed-thoughts" were allowed to contaminate the garden of his mind. His mind had been filled "in advance" with God's promises. Now, when he was awake throughout the night he meditated on the gifts God had "waiting" for him.

Years ago, following cancer surgery, I was told that I would have to get up every three hours for the rest of my life. I cannot explain the intensity of my anger at God for these "gifts." First the cancer - now, sleepless nights. "OK God. What's going on here? Life really is unfair, God!"

Soon, however, I realized that while I was waiting to fall back to sleep I could pray or quote Bible verses or even meditate. My cancer, a "gift" from God? Indeed! We, God and I, now have much more time to share ideas.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for planting the "seeds" of Your Word in my mind that now provide food for my soul. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 119:148 My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.

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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)
- 5/4/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/27/2019 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- 6/14/2018 Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- 6/15/2018 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/16/2018 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2018 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/22/2018 Summer Fest (4th Sunday in July)
- 9/8/2018 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/6/2018 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/12/2018 Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/01/2018 Olive Grove Golf Course 2018 Holiday Party

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

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

01-14-30-44-62, Mega Ball: 1, Megaplier: 2

(one, fourteen, thirty, forty-four, sixty-two; Mega Ball: one; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$433 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$130 million

Aberdeen wrestler comes out as gay

By CUYLER MEADE, Aberdeen American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Justice Horn is living his truth.

Horn is a wrestler — a pretty good one, with a promising future after transferring to Northern State prior to last season. He struggled in his first season at the Division II level. He's a heavyweight. He's a child of athletes. He's a leader in the classroom and on campus.

And he's a gay man.

Horn, 20, has lived otherwise — that is to say, silent about what he knew to be true. But he's learned it's not worth it. He wants to be honest about who he is.

Horn, a confident man with a dazzling smile, has come out to the people in his life in different phases.

"I was battling with stuff and had to come to terms with who I am," Horn said in a June phone conversation. "I was getting closer to God with who I am, realizing I can't live this life a lie. I was opening up to myself that this is who I am, and I have so many things to be grateful for and blessings in my life."

Horn, who has a more youthful voice than his age or body would suggest, reached out to media from home in Missouri two days after his 20th birthday with the desire to share his story with the world at large. This is part of a young man's journey through periods of shadow and into the fullness of his light.

In 2014, the Blue Springs, Missouri, high-school football player and wrestler watched a fellow athlete — Michael Sam, the Missouri Tigers football player and soon-to-be NFL draftee — come out to the world as gay.

"I'm honest, that gave me the faith that there is representation, especially with me being in football," Horn told the Aberdeen American News. "I can do this."

He'd known for a few years that he was gay and, as much as they were able to be, his family had been supportive. But Horn wanted to live out loud.

He started with his high school football team. Coming out was about as easy as you'd expect — which is to say not very — but it was something the young athlete felt he needed to do for him.

"There were nerves obviously, but what really put me over the edge to where I needed to do it is I need to live a fearless life and stop hiding," Horn said. "I need to live life. Wherever things go, they go."

It might seem like coming out to the jocks is a rough place to start things, but these were Horn's brothers. He said he was met with nothing but support.

News traveled fast around the school and soon everybody knew, Horn remembers. His wrestling team — or whatever part of it wasn't on the football team as well — was quick to find out, too.

"I was a good athlete, and a lot of people knew my last name," he said. "It wasn't a problem. Really, I was close with my high school wrestling team. Those were my brothers, and they treated me like I was

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a brother.”

Then came college. Horn first attended West Virginia Tech before transferring to Northern in the fall of 2017.

Once again, Horn had to make a choice about how much he told people.

“I was contacted by a lot of teams, and (my sexuality) isn’t something I shared with anyone,” he said. “But having faith in the process, trusting and judging a coach by their character — when coach Rocky (Burkett at Northern State) reached out to me, it was a good two-and-a-half-hour talk, and I could tell this was a good character. It was a coach I wanted to play for. He had a love for the sport of wrestling like I did.”

Horn loved Burkett’s focus on academics as well as athletics. Like the wrestler, the coach is serious about helping in the community and to build the sport. That resonated with Horn, who called athletics, academics and community the three aspects he thinks college athletes should care about.

But secrecy, even born of quiet omission, leads to dishonesty, and that wasn’t something Horn wanted to be a part of his life.

“About a month in, we were training (at Northern State) and what really pushed me was I was going back on what I wanted,” Horn said. “I was now an NCAA college wrestler and I was like, ‘Hey, do I want to be my genuine self or hide this and focus on wrestling?’ I tried that for about two months, and it really did wear and tear on me.

“I felt so close to (the team) and wanted to be teammates. If I want these to be my brothers, I need to be my genuine self and tell them. They created that environment, and we’re really brothers at NSU.”

Horn had put himself in a situation where he had to come out again, this time to a new group of extreme alpha-males. He felt like he should start with his coach, but he wasn’t sure how to move forward.

“There was a lot of fear and, actually, it was a good thing that at NSU we have a good counseling service,” Horn said. “I was really struggling that day.”

As if preordained, the counselor with whom Horn met was a former wrestler himself.

“I told him, and he could tell I was struggling,” Horn said. “I told him, ‘Hey, I really want your advice, should I tell my coach? Is it a big deal? Should it be separate?’ But he helped me tell my coach.”

Horn called Burkett from the counselor’s office and set up a meeting. Then, as he recalled it, he walked straight from the counseling center to Burkett’s office in the Barnett Center.

“I told him this is who I am,” Horn said.

Horn had judged Burkett rightly as a man of character.

“To me it was, ‘OK, cool man,’” Burkett said. “He wanted to talk with the team, let them know, so that day after practice he addressed the team. It was cool. It was good. To me, it’s just Justice. He’s another guy in here doing whatever he’s supposed to do and working.

“Whatever a kid’s race, sexual preference, whatever — are you going to come in and be a good teammate? Do your job? That’s what we want. I don’t care about any of the other stuff.”

As Burkett said, next was the team. It’s one thing to open up to a single person, but something else entirely to do it in front of a big group.

The season hadn’t started yet, but practice and workouts were well underway that October day.

“We went through a regular practice, some drills, some good wrestling getting ready for the season,” Horn remembered of the day leading up to the moment. “(Burkett) brought everyone into the circle and said ‘Justice has something to tell you.’”

The wrestling room in the Barnett Center is a naturally and fluorescent-lit sanctuary located at ground level but with the feel of being perhaps underground by nature of the narrow, near-ceiling-height windows, which invoke a sort of cave-like feel to the uniquely aromatic facility. It was there that Horn would return to the fullness of light in which he wanted to live his life.

“I said, ‘I really want to be a part of this team,’” Horn remembered. “‘You guys, I just want you to know who I am.’ And I told them I was gay. I got met with support. Some of them patted me on the back. It was a really positive experience — head nods, pats on the back, ‘Good job, Justice.’ They made jokes about it — that’s why you weren’t talking to the girls that liked you, that sort of thing. I really do enjoy them. They were open.”

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For the team, Horn's honesty may have even been a strengthening moment.

"Overall we were all a little surprised," said Blake Perryman, a senior and leader on last season's wrestling team. "But I think at the same time, we were kind of relieved to know a guy on our team could come to us, being the family that we are, share that with us and let us be involved in his life that much. I think it was a cool experience knowing that he trusted us enough for us to know that about him."

There's been a little bit of awkwardness, perhaps. There's the locker room. Wrestling is a very physical sport. But a mature group of men doesn't concern itself with such things. As Horn said, it's the last thing on his mind when he's practicing, preparing for or wrestling in a match. It should be the same for anyone.

In truth, Horn, a powerful personality who emceed various events at Northern State including the Thunder Awards, knows it's much harder for some kids than it has been for him. He's been lucky. And he's aware that for some others in his situation, the experience isn't so positive.

But even he's struggled, and he understands much of what others go through. And that's why he wants to stand up and be counted and recognized for his experience. He wants to be a light to those who are living in darkness.

Horn knows that a story in the newspaper could open him up to more scrutiny or negative attention. It's worth it.

"To be honest, I think he's brave," Burkett said. "When he called me about (wanting to come out in the media), I was like, 'Hey man, I'm not trying to discourage you, but you know what you're opening yourself up to because you know there are people out there that aren't as accepting.'"

But Burkett is trusting the wrestling world will be able to mimic his own team.

"I look at Justice as what he brings to our team as a person," the coach said. "That's what I value. Who he is as a student-athlete. He does everything right. We're lucky to have him on the team."

Horn's message to those in his position is simple.

"I would honestly say that it truly does get better," Horn said. "When you are out about it, it is better. The fact is that I think college athletics is for people that love the sport, and I think that comes with anyone of any creed. If you want to play collegiately, if you have the hard work, talent, skill, it doesn't matter who you are. You can play on the college level."

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

North Dakota seeks federal money for pipeline protest costs

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota on Friday demanded \$38 million from the federal government to reimburse the state for costs associated with policing large-scale and prolonged protests against the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem filed an administrative claim against the Army Corps of Engineers, contending the federal agency allowed protesters to illegally camp without a permit between Aug. 10, 2016, and March 31, 2017, on federal land along the Missouri River in southern North Dakota and failed to maintain law and order.

The Corps inaction "required North Dakota to provide a sustained, large-scale public safety response to prevent deaths, and protect property and public safety, including that of the protesters," Stenehjem wrote.

If the claim isn't paid or settled in six months, the state can sue in federal court, the attorney general said in a statement. The federal Justice Department declined comment. Corps officials have said previously that the protesters weren't evicted due to free speech reasons.

North Dakota's case "is a long shot," according to University of St. Thomas law professor Gregory Sisk, an expert on civil litigation with the federal government. He said typical claims involve such things as a government employee causing damage or injury.

"When you get beyond those ordinary or garden-variety (claims) to alleging the government effectively failed to do a good job as the government, those types of suits don't succeed," he said.

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The \$3.8 billion pipeline was built by Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners to move North Dakota oil through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois. It began operating a year ago, though four American Indian tribes in the Dakotas are still fighting it in court.

During construction, opponents who feared environmental damage gathered in the thousands in southern North Dakota, setting up camps on federal land that morphed into small cities.

Protesters often clashed with law enforcement who established their own operations center a short distance away, resulting in 761 arrests from August 2016 to February 2017.

"The protesters' sprawling encampments, with virtually no sanitation facilities, and their contamination of the land and water during their 'occupation,' were all in violation of federal law," Stenehjem said.

The pipeline construction spanned two presidential administrations, with the protests beginning while Barack Obama was in the White House. President Donald Trump just days after taking office in January 2017 pushed through completion of the stalled project.

Gov. Doug Burgum last year asked Trump for a disaster declaration to cover the costs of the protest, but the request was denied. State pleas for the federal government to send law officers during the protests also were rejected.

"Federal support was extremely limited, and non-existent other than minimal technical and liaison work," Stenehjem said.

About 75 state and local officers were deployed on a typical day during the protests, though the number jumped to as many as 540 during one skirmish, according to the state Department of Emergency Services. Officers from several other states were brought in to help with the policing effort. Authorities eventually moved in and shut down the protest camps in February 2017 amid concerns about spring flooding.

Energy Transfer Partners has given North Dakota \$15 million to help with the bills, but Stenehjem said the money was "a gift to the people of North Dakota" and "not intended to offset the obligation of the Corps."

The state also has received a \$10 million grant from the U.S. Justice Department for policing-related costs.

"If the Corps thinks they are entitled to some sort of offset for the \$10 million grant from the Department of Justice, I look forward to their reasoning," Stenehjem said.

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

Body found near Mount Rushmore National Memorial

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A body has been found near a popular climbing area just northwest of the Mount Rushmore National Memorial.

Pennington County Search & Rescue was dispatched to the scene along Highway 244 at about 11:30 a.m. Friday to help recover the body. Authorities say it was discovered about 400 feet above the road in rocky, vertical terrain inside national park boundaries.

The Rapid City Journal reports the individuals who found the body said it appeared someone had fallen while climbing on the rocks in the area.

No other information was immediately available.

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

Citibank lays off more workers in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Citibank is cutting more Sioux Falls employees as it prepares to move to a smaller facility.

The national bank confirmed Thursday the layoffs of 23 call center staff, following the decision to let 57 workers go in April, the Argus Leader reported. Citibank is downsizing from its current 250,000-square-foot (23,225-sq. meter) two-building campus to a new 150,000-square-foot (13,935-sq. meter) facility on the other side of town.

"To align staffing with current business needs, Citi is eliminating some positions at its Sioux Falls opera-

tions center," said Citibank spokesman Drew Benson. "We encourage affected employees to explore other employment opportunities at Citi and will provide outplacement services and other benefits for those affected."

The bank is still a top employer in Sioux Falls, but it provides nowhere near the 3,000 jobs it once supported after opening the Sioux Falls location in 1981. South Dakota lawmakers rolled out a welcome mat for the bank by overhauling the state's usury laws.

The company currently employs about 1,600 workers.

Linda Nielson retired in April after transitioning from working at the bank's Sioux Falls office park to working from home, like many other Citibank customer service employees. She said she expected the layoffs after the company began discussing the prospect of a smaller facility.

"We definitely knew it would happen before the new building was finished," Nielson said.

Citibank officials announced the new facility in January. It's still under construction.

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

GOP leaders make new rules after 'conservative' caucus forms

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Republican legislative leaders have a message for some more conservative party members who formed their own caucus: you're either in or you're out.

The leaders sent a memo this month to Republican lawmakers and candidates saying they must sign an agreement to belong exclusively to the existing GOP caucus in each chamber if they want to join.

The move comes after some lawmakers formed a separate "conservative Republican caucus." House Majority Leader Lee Qualm says legislators who join that group won't be part of the House and Senate Republican caucuses.

The movement for the more conservative splinter caucus comes because some Republicans are unhappy with what they call the liberal direction GOP lawmakers are moving in.

Dentist accused of having sexual contact with jail inmates

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A dentist who did contract work at the Minnehaha County Jail has been charged with having sexual contact with at least five female inmates.

Dr. Andrew Heinisch, of Worthington, Minnesota, is facing eight felony or misdemeanor charges following his arrest this week. Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead says an investigation began after a jail inmate told staff on June 9 that she was inappropriately touched by Heinisch. Milstead says Heinisch's jail access was rescinded that day while the sheriff's department conducted an investigation.

The Argus Leader says Heinisch turned himself in and has posted a \$10,000 cash bond. He's expected in court Monday.

Heinisch, who has been a subcontractor with Armour Correctional Health Care, did not immediately return a call for comment.

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

Badlands Pawn back on the market for \$12.9 million

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Badlands Pawn complex is back on the market in Sioux Falls.

The asking price for the property owned by Dollar Loan Center mogul Chuck Brennann is \$12.9 million. Lead broker Dennis Breske, of NAI Sioux Falls, says selling the property is one of the most interesting challenges in his 27 years in commercial real estate.

The Argus Leader says the complex includes an entertainment venue, radio station, gun range, kitchen, offices, store and vault and includes a liquor license. When South Dakota voters approved a ban on payday and short-term, high-interest loans Brennan was forced to stop operating in the state.

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He closed his Dollar Loan Centers, put the Badlands Motor Speedway up for sale and closed the Rock-and-Roll academy and Badlands Pawn.

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

Suspect in custody in Sioux Falls delivery driver robbery

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police have a suspect in custody in the attempted armed robbery of a delivery driver.

Authorities say a male held up the driver at gunpoint while the driver sat in a vehicle downtown about 11 p.m. Thursday.

The suspect didn't get any money and fled. Officers caught him a short distance away.

The delivery driver wasn't hurt.

Farmland Co-op merging with new Agtegra Cooperative

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — North Dakota-based Farmland Co-op Inc. is merging with the new Agtegra Cooperative.

The American News reports that Farmland members voted overwhelmingly in favor of the move last week. The merger takes effect Sept. 1.

Farmland has about 100 members. Agtegra CEO Chris Pearson says adding that co-op enables Agtegra to enhance its offerings.

South Dakota-based Agtegra was formed by the merger of North Central Farmers Elevator and Wheat Growers. Members of the two co-ops voted last September to join, and Agtegra started operations in February with nearly 6,800 members.

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

Man gets 30 years for sexual abuse of teen in hotel room

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A man accused of sexually abusing a teenager in a Codington County hotel room in May 2015 has been sentenced to 30 years in federal prison.

The U.S. attorney's office says a jury convicted 42-year-old Ira Arias, of Sisseton and also Fort Worth, Texas, on three counts of sexual abuse of a child.

At the sentencing hearing, U.S. District Judge Roberto Lange said Arias not only abused but "dehumanized" the victim.

Arias will be on supervised release for six years following his prison term.

Astronaut drops in on Kraftwerk gig, plays duet from space

BERLIN (AP) — Kraftwerk fans are used to hearing otherworldly tunes, but the German electronic music pioneers took it to another level at a gig in Stuttgart.

Video posted Saturday by the European Space Agency shows German astronaut Alexander Gerst "dropping in" for a live performance from the International Space Station.

Using a tablet computer with a virtual synthesizer, Gerst played a duet of Kraftwerk's 1978 song "Spacelab" with the band Friday night to cheers from the audience.

He's not the first space musician. Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield recorded a cover of David Bowie's "Space Oddity" and played a duet with the Barenaked Ladies while 400 kilometers (250 miles) above the Earth in 2013.

American astronaut Ron McNair planned to play saxophone from orbit with Jean Michel Jarre in 1986 but died in the Challenger tragedy.

___ Video: <https://youtu.be/rCQEzgtWv-E>

Trump claims ex-lawyer's phone-taping is 'perhaps illegal'

By ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. (AP) — President Donald Trump is asserting that his former personal lawyer's taping of their private phone conversations is "totally unheard of & perhaps illegal."

Trump is responding to the revelation that attorney Michael Cohen made a secret recording of their discussion about a potential payment for a former Playboy model's account of having an affair with Trump. That conversation took place weeks before Trump's November 2016 election.

Trump tweets: "The good news is that your favorite President did nothing wrong!" His lawyer has said the payment was never made.

The recording was part of the documents and electronic records seized by authorities from the longtime Trump fixer earlier this year.

Since then, Cohen has publicly distanced himself from the president and remains under investigation by the government.

French investigators raid home of Macron's bodyguard

PARIS (AP) — Paris prosecutor's office says investigators have raided the house of one of French President Emmanuel Macron's top security aides, who was caught on camera beating a protester in May.

The presidential Elysee Palace fired Alexandre Benalla a day before police raided his home Saturday morning in the Parisian suburb of Issy-Les-Moulineaux.

Benalla was identified earlier this week by the Le Monde newspaper for beating a young protester during May Day protests while wearing a police helmet. He and a second man are facing potential charges and are in police custody until Sunday.

Benalla's involvement in the beating is turning into Macron's biggest political crisis since taking office last year.

French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb will face questions from parliament next week to see if there were failures in the government's handling of the affair.

Democratic socialism surging in the age of Trump

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Last Friday, Maine Democrat Zak Ringelstein wasn't ready to consider himself a formal member of the Democratic Socialists of America, even if he appreciated the organization's values and endorsement in his bid to become a United States senator.

Three days later, he told The Associated Press that was ready to become the only major-party Senate candidate in the nation to be a dues-paying democratic socialist.

The swift evolution is latest evidence of a nationwide surge in the strength and popularity of an organization that, until recently, operated on the fringes of the liberal movement's farthest left flank. But as Donald Trump's presidency stretches into its second year, democratic socialism has become a significant force in Democratic politics. Its rise comes as Democrats debate whether moving too far left will turn off voters.

"I stand with the democratic socialists, and I have decided to become a dues-paying member," Ringelstein told the AP. "It's time to do what's right, even if it's not easy."

There are 42 men and women running for offices at the federal, state and local levels this year with the formal endorsement of the Democratic Socialists of America, the organization says. They span 20 states, including Florida, Hawaii, Kansas and Michigan.

The most ambitious Democrats in Washington have been reluctant to embrace the label, even as they embrace the policies defining modern-day democratic socialism: Medicare for all, a \$15 minimum wage, free college tuition and the abolition of the federal department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, also known as ICE.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, Congress' only self-identified democratic socialist, campaigned Friday with

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the movement's newest star, New York City congressional candidate Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, a 28-year-old former bartender who defeated one of the most powerful House Democrats last month.

Her victory poured gasoline onto a fire that was already beginning to burn brighter. The DSA's paid membership has hovered around 6,000 in recent years, said Allie Cohn, a member of the group's national political team.

Last week, its paid membership hit 45,000 nationwide.

There is little distinction made between the terms "democratic socialism" and "socialism" in the group's literature. While Ringelstein and other DSA-backed candidates promote a "big-tent" philosophy, the DSA constitution describes their members as socialists who "reject an economic order based on private profit" and "share a vision of a humane social order based on popular control of resources and production, economic planning, equitable distribution, feminism, racial equality and non-oppressive relationships."

Members during public meetings often refer to each other "comrades," wear clothing featuring socialist symbols like the rose and promote authors such as Karl Marx.

The common association with the Soviet Union, the first state to adopt a form of socialism, has made it difficult for sympathetic liberals to explain their connection.

"I don't like the term socialist, because people do associate that with bad things in history," said Kansas congressional candidate James Thompson, who is endorsed by the DSA and campaigned alongside Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez, but is not a dues-paying democratic socialist. "There's definitely a lot of their policies that closely align with mine."

Thompson, an Army veteran turned civil rights attorney, is running again after narrowly losing a special election last year to fill the seat vacated by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Even in deep-red Kansas, he embraces policies like "Medicare for all" and is openly critical of capitalism.

In Hawaii, 29-year-old state Rep. Kaniela Ing isn't shy about promoting his status as a democratic socialist in his bid for Congress. He said he was encouraged to run for higher office by the same activist who recruited Ocasio-Cortez.

"We figured just lean in hard," Kaniela told the AP of the democratic socialist label. He acknowledged some baby boomers may be scared away, but said the policies democratic socialists promote — like free health care and economic equality — aren't extreme.

Republicans, meanwhile, are encouraged by the rise of democratic socialism — for a far different reason. They have seized on what they view as a leftward lurch by Democrats they predict will alienate voters this fall and in the 2020 presidential race.

The Republican National Committee eagerly notes that Sanders' plan to provide free government-sponsored health care for all Americans had no co-sponsors in 2013. Today, more than one-third of Senate Democrats and two-thirds of House Democrats have signed onto the proposal, which by one estimate could cost taxpayers as much as \$32 trillion.

The co-sponsors include 2020 presidential prospects such as Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and California Sen. Kamala Harris.

Spokesmen confirmed that none of the senators consider themselves democratic socialists, but made no effort to distance from the movement's priorities.

Most support the push to abolish ICE, which enforces immigration laws and led the Trump administration's recent push to separate immigrant families at U.S.-Mexico border.

Of the group, only Booker hasn't called for ICE to be abolished, replaced or rebuilt. Yet Booker's office notes that he's among the few senators backing a plan to guarantee government-backed jobs to unemployed adults in high-unemployment communities across America.

"Half of voters already think the Democratic Party is too extreme, so embracing socialist policies like government-run health care, a guaranteed jobs program and open borders will only make Democrats more out of touch," RNC Chair Ronna Romney McDaniel said.

Despite Ocasio-Cortez's recent success, most DSA-endorsed candidates have struggled.

Gayle McLaughlin finished eighth in last month's Democratic primary to become California's lieutenant governor, earning just 4 percent of the vote. All three endorsed candidates for Maryland's Montgomery

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County Council lost last month as well. And Ryan Fenwick was blown out by 58 points in his run to become mayor of Louisville, Kentucky.

Ringelstein, a 32-year-old political neophyte, is expected to struggle in his campaign to unseat Maine Sen. Angus King, an independent who caucuses with Democrats. He is refusing to accept donations from lobbyists or corporate political action committees, which has made fundraising a grind. At the end of June, King's campaign reported \$2.4 million cash on hand while Ringelstein had just \$23,000.

He has tapped into the party's national progressive movement and the southern Maine chapter of the DSA for the kind of grassroots support that fueled Ocasio-Cortez's victory. As he has almost every month this year, Ringelstein attended the group's monthly meeting at Portland's city hall last Monday.

More than 60 people packed into the room. The group's chairman, 25-year-old union organizer Meg Reilly, wore a t-shirt featuring three roses.

She cheered the "comrades" softball team's recent season before moving into an agenda that touched on climate change legislation, a book share program "to further your socialist education," and an exchange program that lets community members swap favors such as jewelry repair, pet sitting or cooking.

Near the end of the two-hour gathering, Ringelstein formally thanked the group for "standing shoulder to shoulder with us throughout this entire campaign."

"We could win a U.S. Senate seat!" he said. "I want to say that over and over. We could win a U.S. Senate seat! So, let's do this."

'Suffering' ends with Honduran baby back in parents' arms

By JULIE WATSON, Associated Press

SAN PEDRO SULA, Honduras (AP) — For months, a Honduran couple watched their only son grow up in videos while he was kept in U.S. government custody. That's where he took his first steps and spoke his first words.

The parents got to embrace the 15-month-old boy again Friday, five months after U.S. immigration officials forcibly separated the baby from his father at the Texas border.

Johan, who grabbed the world's attention when he appeared in a U.S. courtroom in diapers, at first didn't recognize his mom and dad after he was flown to San Pedro Sula.

"I kept saying Johan, Johan, and he started to cry," said his mother, Adalicia Montecinos.

She broke down in tears as she talked about how her son had become a poster child for outrage over the Trump administration's policy of separating immigrant children from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border.

"He suffered everything that we have been suffering," she said.

His father soon won him over by playing ball. Within an hour, the tiny boy in an orange tank top, blue shorts but no shoes laughed as both parents kissed him outside a center where they finished final legal paperwork before heading home.

"I feel so happy," Adalicia said.

And so ended the extraordinary journey of a baby whose short life has ranged from Honduran poverty to a desperate dash across the U.S. border to the front pages of the world's newspapers.

Captured by Border Patrol agents almost instantly upon arrival, Johan's father was deported — and the 10-month-old remained at an Arizona shelter, in the custody of the U.S. government. Over the next five months, he spoke and walked for the first time and had his first birthday; his parents, hundreds of miles away, would miss it all.

When his mother and father last saw him, he had two tiny teeth. Now he has a mouthful.

In early July, Johan went before an immigration judge. An Associated Press account of that court appearance — of the judge's befuddlement over how to deal with this tiny detainee in diapers, sucking on a bottle — set off an international furor.

"I never thought they could be so cruel," said his father, Rolando Antonio Bueso Castillo, 37.

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Rolando said he thought his plan was a beautiful one. He would escape his hard life in the tiny town of Libertad — Freedom, in Spanish. His children would not grow up in the same poverty that he had endured — he had dropped out of the fourth grade to sell burritos to help his single mom support him and his four siblings.

His younger brother left the coffee-growing mountains of central Honduras for the United States seven years ago and thrived in Maryland with his wife and children. His sister followed, and also did well. Their eldest brother was killed in a drive-by shooting in San Pedro Sula, one of Latin America's most dangerous cities.

Rolando was left behind with his wife, Adalicia Montecinos, and his 35-year-old disabled sister in their pink, two-bedroom cement home with a corrugated metal roof. He earned \$10 a day driving a bus; his brother in America sent back hundreds of dollars to help out.

Rolando, an easy-going and hard-working man, was well aware of the dangers of crossing Mexico. Scores of Central Americans have fallen to their deaths jumping on trains or been shaken down by Mexican police, murdered, kidnapped, robbed or raped on their way to the United States.

He paid a smuggler \$6,000, money his brother sent to him. Everything was supposed to be included — hotel stays, three meals daily and transport in an SUV with two other mothers and three children to the U.S. border. He packed five onesies, three jackets, a blue-and-white baby blanket, lotion, cream, 50 diapers, two bottles and cans of formula.

His wife, in her first trimester of pregnancy, would stay behind, working at her market stand selling Nike baseball hats, "California Dreaming" T-shirts and jewelry. In Maryland, their family would help mind Johan while Rolando worked. Adalicia would join them in a few months.

The father and son made it as far as Tampico, Mexico, 500 kilometers (300 miles) from the Texas border, when their beautiful plan started to unravel.

The smuggler drove them into a warehouse in the port city and told them to board a tractor trailer filled with scores of other parents and children from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Peru.

Rolando and his son would spend three days locked in the trailer, shivering from the cold breeze from a buzzing machine they were told provided air for them to breathe. Buckets served as bathrooms.

As other children cried, Rolando's son sat next to him quietly, Rolando recalled. They huddled together in the dark; he changed Johan's diapers by the glow of a flashlight.

"We were carried like meat, but we had no choice by then. We had to do what we were told," Rolando said.

In the Mexican border city of Reynosa, they boarded a makeshift raft and floated across the Rio Grande. They trudged through the Texas brush. They had made it.

But minutes later, a Border Patrol agent spotted them. "Where are you going?" the agent asked.

Rolando said his response was simple, and sincere: "We're going to search for the American dream."

The agent told him he was taking them to a detention center. Still, Rolando did not doubt his beautiful plan. He figured once he was processed he would be released with his son to fight his case in the courts. At worst, the two would be deported together back to Honduras.

Inside a cell cordoned off by a chain-link fence, they slept on a mattress under a thin, reflective blanket issued to them.

Rolando said he had to ask for three days before being allowed to bathe Johan.

"He was covered with dirt," Rolando said.

On the fifth day, immigration officers told Rolando they needed to take him to an office for questioning. One agent removed Johan from his arms. As they walked away, Johan turned, reaching for his dad.

It would be the last time they would see each other for five months.

The agents told Rolando he was going to be separated from the boy and deported to Honduras because this was the fourth time he had attempted to enter the United States. Each time, he was caught almost immediately.

"That's criminal," one of the agents told Rolando.

"A criminal is someone who kills, robs, does things to harm people," Rolando said later. "I just want to

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work and give my children opportunities.”

Rolando spent 22 days locked up in various detention centers along the Texas border. He knew nothing of his son.

He had no money to call his wife and tell her what had happened. Instead a social worker from the Arizona shelter holding Johan contacted her and asked if she was Johan’s mother. She told her to send his birth certificate and other documents to prove it.

Adalicia could not believe it was true, and waited to hear from her husband. Five days later, another detainee lent him money so he could call her.

“Baby, it’s me,” he said.

“What happened to our son?” she asked, crying.

Rolando broke down. “I don’t know what happened,” he said. “They took him from me. But it’ll be OK.”

“How?” she cried. “When am I going to see my boy again?”

She felt so alone. She would wake up reaching for her baby and remember again what had happened. She watched videos of Johan over and over of him kicking and wiggling, laughing with his dad, staring into the camera.

When Rolando arrived in Honduras in April, he was shocked to see how thin she was — she said she lost 20 pounds and her doctor worried she could lose her baby. The first thing she said when she saw Rolando was “Where’s my boy?”

Rolando said he had first been told by immigration authorities that the two would be deported together, so he agreed to go. Then, they told him his son would follow in two weeks. But months passed.

Rolando called lawyers, the Honduran consulate and U.S. authorities to find out when his son was coming home.

The social worker in the United States started sending weekly videos and making video calls. At first Johan would reach for his mom, as if wanting to embrace her through the screen. But as time passed, he grew distracted.

He is forgetting me, Adalicia thought.

The boy’s parents learned he took his first steps from the social worker, who also sent a video of him on his first birthday, waking up and crying. From the AP’s news story on Johan’s appearance before a judge, they learned that he had started to talk.

“I will never see my son walk for the first time, or celebrate his first birthday,” Adalicia said, her voice shaking. “That’s what I lost — those memories every mom cherishes and tells their children years later.”

At the hearing, Johan repeatedly asked for “agua” — water. At one point, he kicked off his shoes and stood in his socks.

Judge John W. Richardson could hardly contain his unease at having to ask the boy’s lawyer whether his client understood the proceedings.

“I’m embarrassed to ask it, because I don’t know who you would explain it to, unless you think that a 1-year-old could learn immigration law,” he told the lawyer.

In the end, Johan was granted a voluntary departure order that would allow the government to fly him to Honduras — back to the pink house with seven chickens pecking in the dirt outside, with the outdoor wood stove and the cement sink filled with water used to flush the toilet.

The father who awaited him Friday was overwhelmed by guilt over the dismal failure of his beautiful plan. Someday, he knows, his son will ask what happened, and why he had left him in the United States.

“I’ll tell him the truth,” he said. “We thought we had a good plan to give him a better life.”

Will Rolando concoct yet another plan to reach America? He says only that he is a fighter and will work hard to survive, as he always has.

But he knows that his life and that of his family will never be the same.

“They broke something in me over there,” Rolando said. “This was never my son’s fault. Why did he have to be punished?”

___Associated Press writer Astrid Galvan in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Ticket mix-up put family on ill-fated Missouri tourist boat

By MARGARET STAFFORD, Associated Press

BRANSON, Mo. (AP) — More than half of the 17 people killed when a tourist boat sank on a Branson lake were members of the same Indiana family, and they likely wouldn't have been on the ill-fated trip but for a ticket mix-up.

Tracy Beck, of Kansas City, Missouri, said she recalled the family members waiting in line. After they stopped for a picture, she said, a ticket taker realized they should have boarded at a different location and reassigned them.

The grief-stricken community, known for its country shows and entertainment, hosted two vigils Friday night. About 300 people gathered in the parking lot of Ride the Ducks of Branson and others mourned at a church, singing "Amazing Grace" at both locations.

At the rally at the duck boat business, the Rev. Zachary Klein said he had no words of comfort to offer the families of victims "because there simply are no words to comfort them."

Divers found the final four bodies Friday in Table Rock Lake near Branson after the deadliest accident of its kind in nearly two decades. State and federal investigators were trying to determine what went sent the vessel known as a duck boat to its demise. An initial assessment blamed thunderstorms and winds that approached hurricane strength, but it wasn't clear why the amphibious vehicle even ventured out into the water.

Mayor Karen Best said Branson is typically a city "full of smiles ... But today we are grieving and crying."

Officials haven't released names of the victims, but the sad details emerged throughout the day. Among them: A popular duck boat driver, a father and son visiting from Arkansas, and the nine Indiana relatives, many of them children.

The risk of heavy weather was apparent hours before the boat left shore.

The National Weather Service in Springfield, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) north of Branson, issued a severe thunderstorm watch for its immediate area Thursday, saying conditions were ripe for winds of 70 mph. It followed up at 6:32 p.m. with a severe thunderstorm warning for three counties that included Branson and the lake. The warning mentioned both locations. The boat went down about 40 minutes later, shortly after 7 p.m.

"When we issue a warning, it means take action," meteorologist Kelsey Angle said.

A full investigation was underway, with help from the Coast Guard and the National Transportation Safety Board. Stone County Sheriff Doug Rader urged anyone with video or photos of the accident to contact authorities.

The agencies were briefing Missouri's two senators on the accident. Democrat Claire McCaskill said she would look into possible "legislative solutions," while Republican Roy Blunt called it a "tragedy that never should have happened."

Suzanne Smagala with Ripley Entertainment, which owns Ride the Ducks in Branson, said the company was assisting authorities. She said this was the company's only accident in more than 40 years of operation.

Twenty-nine passengers and two crew members were aboard for a pleasure cruise. Seven of the 14 survivors were hurt when the vessel went down. At least two children and two adults were still hospitalized Friday afternoon. The captain survived, authorities said.

Among the injured was 14-year-old Loren Smith of Osceola, Arkansas. Her father, 53-year-old retired math teacher Steve, Smith, and her 15-year-old brother, Lance, died in the accident. Loren suffered a concussion but survived.

"It's a hard thing," Steve Smith's father, Carroll Smith, said of losing his only child and his only grandson. "It's a very difficult day."

Brayden Malaske, of Harrah, Oklahoma, boarded a replica 19th-century paddle-wheeler known as the Branson Belle on the same lake just before the storm hit.

At the time, he said, the water seemed calm, and no one was worried about the weather.

"But it suddenly got very dark," he recalled.

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In a short video taken by Malaske from the deck of the Belle, the duck boat can be seen wallowing through the choppy, wind-whipped lake, with water only inches from its windows. Dark, rolling waves crash over its front end. The footage ends before the boat capsizes.

Later, people on Malaske's boat saw a duck boat passenger "hanging on for dear life" to the paddle wheel of the Belle, he said.

The mayor identified the crew member operating the boat as Bob Williams, known informally as "Captain Bob."

"He was a great ambassador for Branson," Best said. "He was at every event. He knew everyone. He was always promoting Branson."

A survivor from the family who lost nine relatives said the captain told passengers not to bother grabbing life jackets.

Tia Coleman told Indianapolis television station WXIN that she and a nephew were the only survivors among 11 relatives aboard the boat. She said she lost all her children, but she did not say how many.

Coleman said the captain told passengers that they would not need life jackets. By the time of the accident, "it was too late."

An email message seeking comment from Ripley Entertainment about Coleman's comment was not immediately returned.

Named for their ability to travel on land and in water, duck boats have been involved in other serious accidents in the past, including the deaths of more than 40 people since 1999.

Five college students were killed in 2015 in Seattle when a duck boat collided with a bus. Thirteen people died in 1999 when a boat sank near Hot Springs, Arkansas.

"Duck boats are death traps," said Andrew Duffy, an attorney whose Philadelphia law firm handled litigation related to two fatal duck boat accidents there. "They're not fit for water or land because they are half car and half boat."

Safety advocates have sought improvements and complained that too many agencies regulate the boats with varying safety requirements.

The boats were originally designed for the military, specifically to transport troops and supplies in World War II. They were later modified for use as sightseeing vehicles.

The sheriff said Thursday that two duck boats were on the water at the time of the storm. Both were headed back to land. One returned safely. The other did not.

Divers quickly located the sunken vessel, which came to rest on its wheels on the lakebed. Authorities planned to recover it at some point in the next few days.

The boat sank in 40 feet (12 meters) of water and then rolled on its wheels into a deeper area with 80 feet (25 meters) of water.

The Ride the Ducks tour begins in downtown Branson, where the vehicles take passengers on a tour while the captain cracks jokes and points out landmarks. Eventually, the boats pull up to the lake and slowly enter the water with a small splash.

After a few minutes on the water, the vehicles return to land and to their home base, which features a store selling candy and souvenirs.

Table Rock Lake, east of Branson, was created in the late 1950s when the Corps of Army Engineers built a dam across the White River to provide hydroelectric power to the Ozarks.

Associated Press writers Hannah Grabenstein in Branson; Jim Salter in St. Louis; Heather Hollingsworth in Kansas City, Missouri; and John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas; and AP researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

For the latest updates on this story: <https://bit.ly/2NwoQVz>.

Tornado stuns Iowa town but residents say they'll rebuild

By DAVID PITT, Associated Press

MARSHALLTOWN, Iowa (AP) — With the scope of the devastation still sinking in, business owners and residents of the central Iowa city of Marshalltown on Friday began picking up bricks from collapsed buildings, dragging away downed trees and trying to return to the lives they knew before a powerful tornado roared through their community.

Structures throughout Marshalltown were hit by the Thursday afternoon tornado but some of the worst damage was to the historic courthouse and brick buildings that line the city's quaint town square. For years, officials and property owners have slowly worked to spruce up the buildings, only to see them devastated in minutes.

"Since 2002 we've spent \$50 million in building renovations and now to see these, I'm just sick," said Jenny Etter, executive director of the Marshalltown Central Business District, a nonprofit group. "We were making giant strides in restoring the downtown so this is really devastating to us because we were on a roll. These buildings were beautiful."

At the 132-year-old courthouse, a blue tarp flapped over a gaping hole atop the clock tower after the cupola tumbled to the ground.

Local officials promised to rebuild, but some residents were too shocked to make plans.

Crystal Jensen, tears running down her face, said the storm passed in just three minutes, but it left her house in ruins and blew away photos and a bracelet from her father.

"I just lost my dad two months ago and this happened," she said. "I'm kind of at a loss."

Terri Shetler, owner of an embroidery shop on the town square, was digging out her 2017 Toyota Sienna, missing a front quarter panel, windows blown out and filled with mud, shingles and wood slivers.

"I'm pretty shaken. I came out and saw the courthouse and all this," she said. "But it can be replaced."

The tornado that hit Marshalltown was among a flurry of unexpected twisters that swept through central Iowa on Thursday, injuring at least 17 people and flattening buildings in three cities.

The National Weather Service said Friday that at least five tornadoes and likely more struck. Meteorologist Jeff Johnson said it will take days to determine their strength and total number.

Marshalltown, a city of 27,000, was hit hardest. Officials said 10 people were injured and at least 28 people were relocated to an emergency shelter.

About 200 workers from several states were scrambling to replace 500 utility poles and restore power to thousands of customers, said Alliant Energy spokesman Justin Foss. Natural gas service remains shut down in part of the city, he said.

The local hospital will be closed for an undetermined period after the building was damaged and 43 patients were taken to nearby communities. The hospital emergency and urgent care services were moved for now to another building in Marshalltown.

Tornadoes also ripped through the central Iowa cities of Pella and Bondurant, damaging homes and a factory.

Gov. Kim Reynolds toured the cities Friday and then said she'd signed proclamations that would immediately provide help from state agencies, including providing dump trucks to remove debris and asbestos removal.

"This is the widest area and the most destruction," she said in Marshalltown. "Multiple buildings and facilities. It's just unbelievable when you take a look at the devastation and destruction that we see."

In Pella, seven people suffered minor injuries when a tornado hit the agricultural machinery maker Vermeer Manufacturing, scattering huge sheets of metal through a parking lot and leaving one building with a gaping hole.

The National Weather Service confirmed it was an EF3 tornado, with winds about 144 mph.

Several homes were destroyed in Bondurant.

Associated Press writers Margery Beck and Nelson Lampe in Omaha, Nebraska, contributed to this report.

___ For the latest updates on this story: <https://apnews.com/3fa25b7a12774652917f3ca6214fd251>

Hundreds at vigils mourn victims of Branson boat accident

By MARGARET STAFFORD, Associated Press

BRANSON, Mo. (AP) — A Missouri town known for its country shows and entertainment mourned Friday after 17 people — including nine from one family — were killed when a tourist boat sank on churning water in a sudden storm.

The grief-stricken community hosted two separate vigils Friday night. In one, about 300 people gathered in the parking lot of Ride the Ducks of Branson and sang "Amazing Grace." Mourners at a church sang the same words.

"Even though we may not know any of them it doesn't matter," said Tammy Miesner, 54, of Branson. "It's a part of our lives to be there for each other."

Earlier, Mayor Karen Best said Branson is typically a city "full of smiles ... But today we are grieving and crying."

Divers found the final four bodies Friday in Table Rock Lake near Branson after the deadliest accident of its kind in nearly two decades. State and federal investigators were trying to determine what went sent the vessel known as a duck boat to its demise. An initial assessment blamed thunderstorms and winds that approached hurricane strength, but it wasn't clear why the amphibious vehicle even ventured out into the water.

Officials haven't released names of the victims, but the sad details emerged throughout the day. Among them: A popular duck boat driver, a father and son visiting from Arkansas, and nine relatives from Indiana, many of them children, who were on the ill-fated boat only because of a mix-up.

The risk of heavy weather was apparent hours before the boat left shore.

The National Weather Service in Springfield, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) north of Branson, issued a severe thunderstorm watch for its immediate area Thursday, saying conditions were ripe for winds of 70 mph. It followed up at 6:32 p.m. with a severe thunderstorm warning for three counties that included Branson and the lake. The warning mentioned both locations. The boat went down about 40 minutes later, shortly after 7 p.m.

"When we issue a warning, it means take action," meteorologist Kelsey Angle said.

A full investigation was underway, with help from the Coast Guard and the National Transportation Safety Board. Stone County Sheriff Doug Rader urged anyone with video or photos of the accident to contact authorities.

The agencies were briefing Missouri's two senators on the accident. Democrat Claire McCaskill said she would look into possible "legislative solutions," while Republican Roy Blunt called it a "tragedy that never should have happened."

At the rally at the duck boat business, the Rev. Zachary Klein said he had no words of comfort to offer the families of victims "because there simply are no words to comfort them."

Suzanne Smagala with Ripley Entertainment, which owns Ride the Ducks in Branson, said the company was assisting authorities. She said this was the company's only accident in more than 40 years of operation.

Twenty-nine passengers and two crew members were aboard for a pleasure cruise. Seven of the 14 survivors were hurt when the vessel went down. At least two children and two adults were still hospitalized Friday afternoon. The captain survived, authorities said.

Among the injured was 14-year-old Loren Smith of Osceola, Arkansas. Her father, 53-year-old retired math teacher Steve, Smith, and her 15-year-old brother, Lance, died in the accident. Loren suffered a concussion but survived.

"It's a hard thing," Steve Smith's father, Carroll Smith, said of losing his only child and his only grandson. "It's a very difficult day."

Brayden Malaske, of Harrah, Oklahoma, boarded a replica 19th-century paddle-wheeler known as the Branson Belle on the same lake just before the storm hit.

At the time, he said, the water seemed calm, and no one was worried about the weather.

"But it suddenly got very dark," he recalled.

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In a short video taken by Malaske from the deck of the Belle, the duck boat can be seen wallowing through the choppy, wind-whipped lake, with water only inches from its windows. Dark, rolling waves crash over its front end. The footage ends before the boat capsizes.

Later, people on Malaske's boat saw a duck boat passenger "hanging on for dear life" to the paddle wheel of the Belle, he said.

The mayor identified the crew member operating the boat as Bob Williams, known informally as "Captain Bob."

"He was a great ambassador for Branson," Best said. "He was at every event. He knew everyone. He was always promoting Branson."

A survivor from the family who lost nine relatives said the captain told passengers not to bother grabbing life jackets.

Tia Coleman told Indianapolis television station WXIN that she and a nephew were the only survivors among 11 relatives aboard the boat. She said she lost all her children, but she did not say how many.

Coleman said the captain told passengers that they would not need life jackets. By the time of the accident, "it was too late."

An email message seeking comment from Ripley Entertainment about Coleman's comment was not immediately returned.

Tracy Beck, of Kansas City, Missouri, said she recalled the family members waiting in line and blamed a possible ticket mix-up for them ending up on the ill-fated boat. She said the ticket taker realized after they stopped for a photo that they should have boarded at a different location and assigned them new tickets.

Named for their ability to travel on land and in water, duck boats have been involved in other serious accidents in the past, including the deaths of more than 40 people since 1999.

Five college students were killed in 2015 in Seattle when a duck boat collided with a bus. Thirteen people died in 1999 when a boat sank near Hot Springs, Arkansas.

"Duck boats are death traps," said Andrew Duffy, an attorney whose Philadelphia law firm handled litigation related to two fatal duck boat accidents there. "They're not fit for water or land because they are half car and half boat."

Safety advocates have sought improvements and complained that too many agencies regulate the boats with varying safety requirements.

The boats were originally designed for the military, specifically to transport troops and supplies in World War II. They were later modified for use as sightseeing vehicles.

The sheriff said Thursday that two duck boats were on the water at the time of the storm. Both were headed back to land. One returned safely. The other did not.

Divers quickly located the sunken vessel, which came to rest on its wheels on the lakebed. Authorities planned to recover it at some point in the next few days.

The boat sank in 40 feet (12 meters) of water and then rolled on its wheels into a deeper area with 80 feet (25 meters) of water.

The Ride the Ducks tour begins in downtown Branson, where the vehicles take passengers on a tour while the captain cracks jokes and points out landmarks. Eventually, the boats pull up to the lake and slowly enter the water with a small splash.

After a few minutes on the water, the vehicles return to land and to their home base, which features a store selling candy and souvenirs.

Table Rock Lake, east of Branson, was created in the late 1950s when the Corps of Army Engineers built a dam across the White River to provide hydroelectric power to the Ozarks.

Associated Press writers Hannah Grabenstein in Branson; Jim Salter in St. Louis; Heather Hollingsworth in Kansas City, Missouri; and John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas; and AP researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

For the latest updates on this story: <https://bit.ly/2NwoQVz> .

Trump was taped talking of paying for Playboy model's story

By ERIC TUCKER and JENNIFER PELTZ, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer secretly recorded Trump discussing a potential payment for a former Playboy model's account of having an affair with him, people familiar with an investigation into the attorney said on Friday.

The recording by attorney Michael Cohen adds to questions about whether Trump tried to quash damaging stories in the run-up to his 2016 election. Trump's campaign had said it knew nothing about any payment to ex-centerfold Karen McDougal. It could also further entangle the president in a criminal investigation that for months has targeted Cohen, his onetime lawyer and close ally.

Current Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani said the payment was never made and the brief recording shows Trump did nothing wrong.

"The transaction that Michael is talking about on the tape never took place, but what's important is: If it did take place, the president said it has to be done correctly and it has to be done by check" to keep a proper record of it, Giuliani said.

One of Cohen's lawyers, Lanny Davis, said "any attempt at spin cannot change what is on the tape."

"When the recording is heard, it will not hurt Mr. Cohen," Davis said in a statement.

Cohen surreptitiously made the recording two months before the election, according to a person familiar with a federal investigation into Cohen. The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing inquiry.

The conversation between Trump and Cohen came weeks after the National Enquirer's parent company reached a \$150,000 deal to pay McDougal for her story of a 2006 affair, which it never published, a tabloid practice known as catch and kill. Trump denies the affair ever happened.

The company, American Media Inc., is run by Trump friend and supporter David Pecker.

The company's payment effectively silenced McDougal through the election, though days beforehand news of the deal emerged in The Wall Street Journal. At the time, a Trump spokeswoman said his campaign had "no knowledge of any of this."

But in the recorded conversation, Trump and Cohen appear to be discussing buying the rights to McDougal's story from the Enquirer's parent company, according to the person familiar with the investigation.

McDougal's lawyer and an American Media spokesman didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment on Friday.

The recording, first reported by The New York Times, likely will revive questions about what other recordings of Trump's conversations might exist. As a businessman, Trump occasionally recorded his phone calls, a former Trump Organization executive told the AP last year, although Trump once denied doing so.

The FBI raided Cohen's office, home and hotel room in April, searching in part for information about payments to McDougal and porn actress Stormy Daniels, who received a \$130,000 payment from Cohen before the election to keep quiet about a sexual relationship she says she had with Trump. Meanwhile, a government watchdog group has asked the Department of Justice and the Federal Election Commission to investigate whether American Media's payment to the former centerfold amounted to an unreported and illegal corporate campaign contribution.

The Cohen investigation, by federal prosecutors in New York, is separate from an ongoing inquiry by special counsel Robert Mueller into potential coordination between the Trump campaign and Russia.

Cohen hasn't been charged with any crime.

A self-described fixer for Trump for more than a decade, he said last year he would "take a bullet" for Trump. But he told an interviewer this month that he now puts "family and country first" and won't let anyone paint him as "a villain of this story." On Twitter, he scrubbed mentions and photos of Trump from a profile that previously identified him as "Personal attorney to President Donald J. Trump."

Cohen wouldn't say in the recent interview whether he would cooperate with prosecutors. If he decided to do so, it could be risky for the Republican president, given the pair's close relationship over the years.

McDougal's former attorney, Keith Davidson, has been cooperating with investigators in the Cohen probe,

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Davidson spokesman Dave Wedge has said. He declined to comment on Friday.

The Enquirer's payment to McDougal gave the tabloid the exclusive rights to any story she might ever wish to tell about having an affair with a married man.

She later publicly alleged that the Enquirer had tricked her into accepting the deal and had threatened to ruin her if she broke it. After she sued the tabloid seeking to invalidate the contract in March, the Enquirer agreed to allow her to tell her story.

Hours before the Times revealed the recorded conversation, Cohen met in New York with the Rev. Al Sharpton, a frequent critic of Trump.

Cohen and Sharpton said in tweets they have known each other for 20 years. Cohen contacted the civil rights activist in recent weeks, longtime Sharpton spokeswoman Rachel Noerdlinger said.

She said the two revisited conversations they'd had over the years when Cohen was Sharpton's conduit to Trump during clashes over race issues and over Trump's questioning of the authenticity of former President Barack Obama's birth certificate.

Cohen tweeted there's "no one better to talk to!" than Sharpton, who used his own Twitter account to advise readers, "Stay tuned."

Tucker reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Michael Balsamo in Los Angeles and Jake Pearson in New York contributed.

Liberal icon, new Democratic star wade into GOP-heavy Kansas

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and ROXANA HEGEMAN, Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kansas (AP) — The new face of an emerging democratic socialist movement joined its patriarch in the most unlikely place Friday, calling on Kansans unhappy with the direction of the country to get off the sidelines in a pivotal Republican-held congressional district.

"We know that people in Kansas, just like everywhere else in this country, just like families in the Bronx, just want a fair shake," Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the surprise winner in a New York House primary last month, told a frenetic crowd of more than 3,000 in a Kansas suburb of Kansas City.

Headlining a rally with Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez sought to infuse the final weeks of Democrat Brent Welder's congressional primary campaign with the enthusiasm that lifted her over 20-year Democratic incumbent Rep. Joe Crowley last month.

In an election year defined by energized Democratic voters seeking to send President Donald Trump a message, Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez were betting they could stir up liberals in places where the left rarely competes.

The 28-year-old Latina from New York and the 76-year-old Jewish senator from Vermont struck a stark contrast in the hotel ballroom, though they reflected the range of people in the racially and ethnically mixed crowd, weighted toward millennials but including gray-haired activists and parents with children.

Their combined messages sought to unite not just the diverse group in the hall, but restless liberals around the country.

"Whether you live in Kansas or Vermont or New York City, you want your children to have a decent life," Sanders said. "And yes, we have differences. But despite these huge differences, we have a hell of a lot more in common."

Kansas, where Trump won by more than 20 percentage points in 2016, would seem inhospitable for a duo championing strikingly progressive positions such as universal, single-payer health care and government-paid tuition to public college.

But Democrats see reasons for hope in a campaign year in which progressive candidates have won competitive primaries in GOP-leaning districts in suburban Philadelphia, metropolitan Omaha and Orange County, California, this year.

Thirty-two-year-old registered nurse Kristen Burroughs said she'd grown tired of feeling locked out of representation in Kansas.

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"I wasn't sure when I'd have the chance to vote for someone this liberal in Kansas," Burroughs said, referring to Welder, a Sanders campaign activist and labor lawyer.

Kansas' 3rd District, where Welder is competing, represented by four-term Republican Rep. Kevin Yoder, is on Democrats' target list as they aim to seize the GOP-controlled House in November. Nationally, the party must pick up at least 23 Republican-held seats to claim the House majority, and they are focusing on 25 districts where Clinton won, or Trump won narrowly.

Democrats have been shut out of statewide and congressional races in Kansas since 2010.

Earlier Friday, Ocasio-Cortez and Sanders headlined a rally in Wichita for Democrat James Thompson, a civil rights lawyer running in Kansas' 4th District. He also was an activist for Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign.

Sherri Lower, a 67-year-old retired emergency medical technician, showed up at the Wichita rally wearing a t-shirt that read: "We Care. We Vote. Do You?"

"This is the most important year we've ever had, and Thompson is one of our main guys," Lower said. "I want Democrats to go out and vote."

But Democrats have higher hopes in the 3rd District, one of only a handful Democrat Hillary Clinton won in the general election and Sanders won in the presidential nominating caucuses.

Republicans in the 3rd District outnumber their Democratic counterparts by more than 50,000, while unaffiliated voters also edge Democrats. Republicans outnumber Democrats by 2-to-1 in the 4th District.

Liberals argue that they are not just convincing moderate Democrats or disaffected Republicans but also engaging new primary voters, as Ocasio-Cortez did in New York this summer and as Sanders did in his insurgent 2016 presidential campaign.

While the Kansas campaign swing created a lot of buzz, Republicans were skeptical it would help Democrats make inroads in a conservative state.

State Rep. Tom Cox, a moderate Kansas City-area Republican, said there are pockets of liberal Democrats in the Kansas City suburbs but questioned whether Sanders' message will resonate more broadly. He said Democrats tend to be split between liberals and moderates, with some union members and supporters holding conservative views on social issues.

"Even our Democrats around here are not socialist democrats," he said. "If someone would describe the 3rd District, I would say center right."

Leading candidates in the Democratic primary for governor have said their party must rebuild its brand in rural, heavily GOP areas. And despite surging energy among leftist Democrats in the Trump era, it was unclear if there were enough votes in the 3rd District for a liberal Democrat to win.

Before Yoder won in 2010, it had been held for 12 years by centrist Democrat Dennis Moore, who relied on moderate Republicans during his tenure.

Yet Sanders and his brand of liberalism have proved popular. He won more than two-thirds of the votes in the state's 2016 presidential caucuses, surpassing Barack Obama's 2008 vote total.

And Ocasio-Cortez said it can be done in Kansas by broadening the electorate to include previously less active voters, rather than trying to convert moderates.

"It is going to take every single person in this room knocking on 10, 50, 100 doors apiece," she said. "So, if you have never knocked on a door before, I am talking to you."

Hegeman contributed reporting Wichita, Kansas. Correspondent John Hanna contributed from Topeka, Kansas.

Dolphins owner says he was keeping options open on anthem

By **ROB MAADDI**, AP Pro Football Writer

Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross said he hadn't decided whether to actually discipline players who protest during the national anthem when he formally told the team that the demonstrations could be punishable.

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"We were asked to submit a form to the NFL on our overall discipline policy prior to the start of the rookie report date," Ross said in a statement Friday, explaining why a one-sentence reference to "Proper Anthem Conduct" was included in the team's official discipline policy. "The one line sentence related to the national anthem was a placeholder as we haven't made a decision on what we would do, if anything, at that point."

President Donald Trump, a frequent critic of protesting players, said Friday that players should be suspended for a game for kneeling once, then suspended for the season with no pay if they kneel a second time.

"Isn't it in contract that players must stand at attention, hand on heart? The \$40,000,000 Commissioner must now make a stand," Trump tweeted, referring to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

Miami's policy was obtained Thursday by The Associated Press and listed anthem conduct under behavior that could be found "detrimental to the club." It was the final bullet point on Miami's list.

The list contains a wide range of potential violations, including criminal acts, breaking curfew, using or possessing drugs, riding a motorcycle, visiting public places declared off-limits by the club and inappropriate use of tablets and mobile devices. It also says players can be punished for criticizing teammates, officials or NFL executives.

All of the violations carry potential penalties of suspension with or without pay, or fines. The maximum penalty — rarely given by clubs themselves — is a four-game suspension and a fine of another week of pay.

A person familiar with league protocol told The Associated Press on Friday that NFL teams were not required to create any anthem policies when they submitted their annual discipline notices to the league and players. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because details of anthem discussions between the league and players union are private.

The NFL and NFL Players Association said in a joint statement Thursday night that they planned to pause enforcement on league anthem rules while working out a resolution acceptable to players, team owners and the league.

Officials for the league and union declined comment on Friday on how they would chart a path forward with the first preseason game less than two weeks away.

Discord over how players should protest social injustice has put the sport at a difficult crossroads, revealing deep divisions in football itself much like those throughout the United States.

In 2016, then-49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick began protesting police brutality, social injustice and racial inequality by kneeling during "The Star-Spangled Banner" and the demonstration spread to other players and teams. It became one of the most controversial and sensitive issues in sports.

Trump has led the critics, calling players unpatriotic and even saying NFL owners should fire any player who refused to stand during the anthem. Some players countered that their actions were being misconstrued and that they are seeking social change rather than protesting the anthem itself, the flag or the military.

Trump's criticism led more than 200 players to protest during one weekend, and some kept it up throughout the season.

The NFL rule that was passed in May forbids players from sitting or taking a knee if they are on the field or sidelines during the national anthem, but allowed them to stay in the locker room if they wish. The league left it up to teams on how to punish players. The new league rules were challenged this month in a grievance by the players union.

The league and a coalition of players have been working in tandem to support player initiatives for a variety of social issues. The NFL is committing \$90 million over the next seven years to social justice causes in a three-segment plan that involves league players.

Kaepernick didn't play at all last season and still hasn't been picked up by another team. He threw 16 touchdown passes and four interceptions in his final season in 2016. Safety Eric Reid, one of Kaepernick's former teammates and another protest leader, is also out of work.

Both have pending collusion grievances against the NFL.

Reid left The Players Coalition in November because he said founder Malcolm Jenkins excluded Kaepernick

from meetings and asked players if they would stop protesting the anthem if the NFL made a charitable donation to causes they support. Jenkins maintained that despite some disagreements, they were fighting for the same cause: changing systematic oppression.

For more AP NFL coverage: <http://pro32.ap.org> and http://twitter.com/AP_NFL

MGM turns to never-tested law to sue Vegas shooting victims

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The unprecedented move from MGM Resorts International to sue hundreds of victims of last year's mass shooting in Las Vegas using an obscure U.S. law never tested in court has been framed by the casino-operator as an effort to avoid years of costly litigation — but the legal maneuver may not play out that way.

The company is not seeking money in the lawsuits filed in at least seven states over the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history. Instead, it wants federal courts to declare that it has no liability to survivors or families of slain victims under a federal law enacted after the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

MGM argues that the Oct. 1 shooting met two conditions of the law: it qualifies as an act of terrorism and federally certified security services were used at the venue where 22,000 concertgoers were gathered as gunfire rained down from the company's Mandalay Bay casino-resort.

But experts believe legal resolutions won't come quickly because appeals are practically guaranteed and a U.S. court may not be the appropriate entity to determine whether the shooting is considered terrorism. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said Friday that the law authorizes its leader to make that declaration.

MGM's lawsuits target victims who have sued the company and voluntarily dismissed their claims or have threatened to sue after a gunman shattered the windows of his hotel suite and fired on a crowd of country music fans. Stephen Paddock killed 58 people and injured hundreds more before killing himself.

MGM is invoking the Support Anti-terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act of 2002, enacted to urge development and use of anti-terrorism technologies by providing companies a way to limit liability if their federally certified products or services fail to prevent a terrorist attack. After 9/11, manufacturers and others were concerned they could be sued out of business after an attack.

The law has never been used to avoid liability after mass violence, such as the shooting at a Colorado movie theater in 2012, because previous attacks haven't involved services or products certified by Homeland Security. The department has only approved about 1,000 services and technologies, including airport screening equipment and stadium security.

MGM said in the lawsuits filed in Nevada, California, Utah and other states that its security vendor for the outdoor concert venue, Contemporary Services Corp., was federally certified.

The Department of Homeland Security said in response to MGM's lawsuits that its secretary "possesses the authority to determine whether an act was an 'act of terrorism'" under the law in question, and it "has not made any such determination regarding the Route 91 Harvest Festival mass shooting incident."

The agency says it's reviewing the matter. The law broadly defines it as an unlawful act that harms a person in the U.S. and "uses or attempts to use" weapons or other methods that can cause mass destruction.

MGM says Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen is not the only one with authority to make the call and that her public statements "make clear" the attack meets the law's requirements.

The company's argument is "far too broad of an interpretation of the statute. It should be fairly clear that what MGM did is not what was intended in the statute," said Brian Finch, a partner at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman in Washington D.C. "It is (the secretary's) responsibility, not that of a judge."

CSC's general counsel, James Service, said the company doesn't comment on litigation.

MGM faced immediate backlash over the lawsuits this week, and it insisted in tweets and statements that it is trying to expedite resolutions for the victims. It stressed that it is "not asking for money or attorney's fees" and directed the complaints "only at people who have already sued us or have threatened to sue us."

"We are seeking justice through the federal court system in order to reach a timely resolution. We want to resolve these cases quickly, fairly and efficiently," spokeswoman Debra DeShong said on MGM's Twitter account.

Victims' attorneys and a legal scholar told The Associated Press that the company's strategy won't speed up anything.

Alfred Yen, associate faculty dean and professor at Boston College Law School, said the law is not perfectly clear, and unless the parties settle, the matter could reach the U.S. Supreme Court because whoever loses is likely to appeal.

"This is a high-stakes, controversial case. A court would be very careful not to rush to a judgment on this," Yen said. "It is going to take a long time for a court to decide the merits of this case."

Follow Regina Garcia Cano on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/reginagarciakNO>

Kavanaugh's lengthy paper trail becomes flashpoint

By LISA MASCARO, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Judge Brett Kavanaugh has a long record of judicial and executive branch service to recommend him as President Donald Trump's nominee to the Supreme Court. And that's part of the problem in getting him confirmed by the Senate.

Democrats are demanding to see the conservative appellate court judge's lengthy paper trail before they even start meeting with him, let alone casting their votes on a lifetime appointment that could shift the court rightward.

The documents extend far beyond the 53-year-old's nearly 300 rulings as a judge on the circuit court of appeals.

The Democrats are demanding access to paperwork from Kavanaugh's tenure as staff secretary in the George W. Bush White House, on the 2000 election presidential recount and on Special Counsel Kenneth Starr's probe of Bill Clinton. The tally could stretch at least 1 million pages. The paper chase has become a game of high-stakes political strategy.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell wants to have Kavanaugh confirmed for the start of the Supreme Court session Oct. 1 and to serve up a midterm election boost for Republicans in November. But the Democratic search for documents could complicate that timeline.

McConnell spent this week's closed-door GOP policy lunch outlining the schedule ahead, senators said. With Republicans holding just a slim 51-seat majority, they are under pressure from conservatives to confirm the nominee, who could tilt the court's decisions for a generation to come. He would take the place of retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy, often a swing vote.

"We've already begun to hear rumblings from our Democratic colleagues that they're going to want to see every scrap of paper that ever came across Brett Kavanaugh's desk," the No. 2 Republican, Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, told reporters.

But the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, said in light of this week's "disturbing events" — namely, Trump's Helsinki summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin — it's all the more important to thoroughly vet the president's nominee.

"It is, ultimately, the Supreme Court that will have the last word on whether a sitting president is above the law," she said. "We — the Senate — and the American public must know where Judge Kavanaugh stands. ... And this starts with having access to Judge Kavanaugh's documents from his time in the White House and as a political operative."

At particular issue in the document fight are the years the Yale-educated Kavanaugh spent at the White House as staff secretary for Bush — a job that touches almost every slip of paper that makes it to the president's desk — as well as his work during the Clinton probe and the Florida election recount.

Kavanaugh served in the White House Counsel's Office under Bush beginning in 2001. He told lawmakers in a May 2006 confirmation hearing for his current job that he provided advice on ethics and separation

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of power issues, the nomination of judges, and legislation dealing with tort reform and a federal backstop to limit insurers' losses in the event of a terror attack.

Kavanaugh described the staff secretary position as being "an honest broker for the president," someone who tried to ensure that the president received a range of policy views on issues of the day in an even-handed way. Democrats say his policy-making role was more substantial than that.

The Judiciary Committee is negotiating how much information will be pulled for the confirmation process. The task is daunting, involving a universe of paperwork that will need to be culled from the National Archives, the Bush library and others, and reviewed by stables of attorneys. Talks are still at the early stages.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, who said this will be his 15th Supreme Court confirmation hearing, promised the "most transparent and thorough process" of any of them.

But he also warned against dragging it out. "I will not allow taxpayers to be on the hook for a government-funded fishing expedition," Grassley said.

He cited the volume of records reviewed in recent Supreme Court confirmations: 173,000 pages of documents for the confirmation of Elena Kagan in 2010, and 182,000 pages for the confirmation of Neil Gorsuch last year. The citation no doubt was by design, showing what the Senate has considered appropriate in the past.

Republicans say dragging out the process might backfire on Democrats if they push the votes too close to the midterm election.

But Democrats appear willing to take that risk. They note that the more information that came out about one of Trump's nominees to the circuit court, Ryan Bounds, the less support he had. McConnell stunned senators this week when he withdrew Bounds from consideration.

Associated Press writer Kevin Freking in Washington contributed to this report.

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Ohio killer spared after extent of childhood abuse revealed

By **ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS, Associated Press**

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio Gov. John Kasich on Friday spared a condemned killer whose sentence was challenged after a juror came forward and said information about the extent of the inmate's tough childhood wasn't properly presented at trial.

The Republican governor commuted the sentence of death row inmate Raymond Tibbetts to life without the possibility of parole, citing "fundamental flaws" in the sentencing portion of Tibbetts' trial.

"Specifically, the defense's failure to present sufficient mitigating evidence, coupled with an inaccurate description of Tibbetts' childhood by the prosecution, essentially prevented the jury from making an informed decision about whether Tibbetts deserved the death sentence," Kasich said.

The guilt of Tibbetts, 61, has never been in doubt. He received the death sentence for stabbing Fred Hicks to death at Hicks' Cincinnati home in 1997. Tibbetts also received life imprisonment for fatally beating and stabbing his wife, 42-year-old Judith Crawford, during an argument that same day over Tibbetts' crack cocaine habit.

The 67-year-old Hicks had hired Crawford as a caretaker and allowed the couple to stay with him.

The case against Tibbetts seemed closed until a former juror, Ross Geiger, came across materials presented on Tibbetts' behalf to the Ohio Parole Board that documented horrific facts about Tibbetts' early years, which jurors never heard.

When Tibbetts was a boy, he and his brothers were tied to a single bed at night, were not fed properly, were thrown down stairs, had their fingers beaten with spatulas and were burned on heating registers, according to Tibbetts' application for mercy last year.

Geiger wrote Kasich in January citing his concerns and asking that Tibbetts be spared. He also testified before the parole board last month in a rare follow-up clemency hearing. The board had voted 11-1 against mercy for Tibbetts last year.

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Geiger told the board that Tibbetts' upbringing was presented as a debate between his attorneys, who said his background was terrible, and prosecutors, who said it wasn't that bad.

"I was just struck and frankly upset that information that was available was not even addressed, other than in very summary fashion," Geiger told the board.

Geiger's comments didn't sway the panel, which again recommended against mercy for Tibbetts with an 8-1 vote.

Kasich's decision Friday rejected that ruling.

Geiger said Friday he appreciated that the governor considered his concerns about what he saw as a failure of the system. "The truth is what matters the most so that you can avoid a circumstance like this," he told The Associated Press in a phone interview.

Geiger also expressed his "utmost respect" for the families of Tibbetts' victims, saying they've had to endure 20 years of uncertainty.

Erin Barnhart, a federal public defender representing Tibbetts, said Kasich performed the state a great service in sparing the inmate.

County prosecutors have previously argued that Tibbetts' background does not outweigh his crimes. That includes stabbing Crawford after he had already beaten her to death, and then repeatedly stabbing Hicks, a "sick, defenseless, hearing-impaired man in whose home Tibbetts lived," they told the parole board.

Hamilton County Prosecutor Joe Deters said Friday that Kasich, a fellow Republican, exercised his right as governor.

"We do not have to agree with it but he is the governor and it is over," Deters said.

Also Friday, Kasich delayed the September execution of condemned killer Cleveland Jackson until May 2019 after the inmate's former attorneys stopped working on the case, according to the governor.

Jackson was sentenced to die for the 2002 shooting of a 17-year-old girl in Lima during a robbery.

Andrew Welsh-Huggins can be reached on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/awhcolumbus>.

This story has been corrected to say the case against Tibbetts, not Hicks, seemed closed until a juror came across materials presented to the parole board.

White House rejects Putin idea for Ukraine referendum

By ZEKE MILLER and KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House rejected on Friday a Vladimir Putin-backed effort to hold a referendum in eastern Ukraine on the region's future, distancing itself from the idea in the aftermath of President Donald Trump's controversial summit with the Russian leader.

Russia's ambassador to the U.S., Anatoly Antonov, said the two leaders had discussed the possibility of a referendum in separatist-leaning eastern Ukraine during their Helsinki summit.

But Trump's National Security Council spokesman Garrett Marquis said agreements between Russia and the Ukrainian government for resolving the conflict in the Donbas region do not include any such option and any effort to organize a "so-called referendum" would have "no legitimacy."

The back-and-forth came as the White House outlined the agenda for a proposed second summit between Trump and Putin — in Washington this fall — that would focus on national security. Moscow signaled its openness to a second formal meeting between the two leaders as criticism of Trump over his first major session with his Russian counterpart kept up in the U.S.

Trump left the White House for his New Jersey golf club for the weekend. Once he got there, he returned to Twitter to complain about news coverage of Monday's meeting.

"I got severely criticized by the Fake News Media for being too nice to President Putin," he tweeted. "In the Old Days they would call it Diplomacy. If I was loud & vicious, I would have been criticized for being too tough."

A White House official said the next Trump-Putin meeting would address national security concerns

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they discussed in Helsinki, including Russian meddling. The official did not specify if that meant Russia's interference in U.S. elections. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss planning, said the talks would also cover nuclear proliferation, North Korea, Iran and Syria.

One stop Putin almost surely won't make is Capitol Hill.

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi urged House Speaker Paul Ryan to make clear that Putin wouldn't be invited to address Congress if he visits Washington.

She said Trump's "frightened fawning over Putin is an embarrassment and a grave threat to our democracy."

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had a sunnier view of the likely second get-together.

He said at the United Nations he was "happy that the two leaders of two very important countries are continuing to meet. If that meeting takes place in Washington, I think it is all to the good. Those conversations are incredibly important."

It was not clear whether such a meeting would take place before or after the November congressional elections in the U.S.

A White House meeting would be a dramatic extension of legitimacy to the Russian leader, who has long been isolated by the West for activities in Ukraine, Syria and beyond and is believed to have interfered in the 2016 presidential election that sent Trump to the presidency. No Russian leader has visited the White House in nearly a decade.

U.S. officials have been mum on what, if anything, the two leaders agreed to in Helsinki during a two-hour, one-on-one meeting. Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said Thursday he had yet to be briefed on the private session.

The Russian government has been somewhat more forthcoming.

"This issue (of a referendum) was discussed," Antonov said, adding that Putin made "concrete proposals" to Trump on solutions for the four-year, Russian-backed insurgency in eastern Ukraine, which has killed more than 10,000 people. He did not elaborate on what Putin's solutions would be.

The move may be seen as an effort to sidestep European peace efforts for Ukraine and increase the pressure on the Ukrainian government in its protracted conflict with pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas region.

In a sign of support for the Ukraine government, the Pentagon said Friday it would provide \$200 million in additional training, equipment and advisory assistance to Ukraine's military.

Trump tweeted Thursday that he looked forward a "second meeting" with Putin and defended his performance at Monday's summit, in which the two leaders conferred on a range of issues including terrorism, Israeli security, nuclear proliferation and North Korea.

"There are many answers, some easy and some hard, to these problems ... but they can ALL be solved!" Trump tweeted.

In Moscow, Antonov said it is important to "deal with the results" of the first summit before jumping too fast into a new one. But he said, "Russia was always open to such proposals."

The White House is still trying to clean up post-summit Trump statements on Russian interference in the 2016 election. Trump's public doubting of Russia's responsibility in a joint news conference with Putin on Monday provoked withering criticism from Republicans as well as Democrats and forced the president to make a rare public admission of error.

Then on Thursday, the White House said Trump "disagrees" with Putin's offer to allow U.S. questioning of 12 Russians who have been indicted for election interference in exchange for Russian interviews with the former U.S. ambassador to Russia and other Americans the Kremlin accuses of unspecified crimes. Trump initially had described the idea as an "incredible offer."

The White House backtrack came just before the Senate voted overwhelmingly against the idea.

___Associated Press writers Angela Charlton in Moscow, Deb Riechmann in Aspen, Colorado, and Lisa Mascaro, Matthew Daly, Darlene Superville and Susannah George in Washington contributed to this report.

___Follow Miller on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@ZekeJMiller> and Thomas at <http://twitter.com/@KThomasDC>

Fox News says Guilfoyle leaving; may join Trump super PAC

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fox News says host Kimberly Guilfoyle is leaving the network, amid reports that she's about to take on a new role with a super PAC supporting President Donald Trump's agenda.

A Fox spokeswoman confirmed her departure Friday. Guilfoyle has been one of the co-hosts of the network's afternoon show "The Five" and has been dating Trump's son Donald Jr. She was considered for White House press secretary last year after Sean Spicer departed the administration.

A person familiar with the plans who was not authorized to speak publicly about them said Guilfoyle will be joining America First PAC, which has been promoting Trump's record.

Guilfoyle, a former prosecutor, was married for four years to California Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Ken Thomas in Washington contributed to this report.

Trump heightens China tariff threat with no deal in sight

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and PAUL WISEMAN, AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — With President Donald Trump intensifying his rift with U.S. trading partners, economists are growing more doubtful that any deal that might benefit American workers and companies is in sight.

Instead, many analysts say they expect the Trump administration to impose more tariffs on China and potentially other key U.S. trading partners. With those nations almost certain to retaliate, the result could be higher prices for Americans, diminished export sales and a weaker U.S. economy by next year.

In an interview with CNBC that aired Friday morning, Trump renewed his threat to ultimately slap tariffs on a total of \$500 billion of imports from China — roughly equal to all the goods Beijing ships annually to the United States. The president has already imposed tariffs on \$34 billion in Chinese goods, and Beijing has retaliated with tariffs on an equal amount of American exports. The White House has also itemized \$200 billion of additional Chinese imports that it said may be subject to tariffs.

In addition, Trump has told the Commerce Department to investigate whether imported autos and auto parts threaten America's national security — the same justification the president has invoked for other tariffs he has imposed or threatened, including on imported steel and aluminum. If the answer is yes, the administration says it could slap 20 percent to 25 percent tariffs on \$335 billion of auto imports. Higher car prices for American consumers would inevitably follow.

On Friday morning, Trump for a second day also criticized the Federal Reserve, breaking with a long-standing tradition at the White House of avoiding any influence, real or perceived, on the independence of the U.S. central bank. Simultaneously, he accused China of allowing its tightly controlled currency to drift lower against the dollar, a move that could help Chinese exporters by making their goods more affordable overseas.

In a tweet, the president said:

"China, the European Union and others have been manipulating their currencies and interest rates lower, while the U.S. is raising rates while the dollar gets stronger and stronger with each passing day — taking away our big competitive edge."

Last month, the Fed raised its benchmark rate for a second time this year and projected two more increases in 2018. Its rate hikes are meant to prevent the economy from overheating and igniting high inflation. But rate increases also make borrowing costlier for households and companies and can weaken growth.

Analysts say they're becoming more convinced that Trump's multi-front trade fights aren't merely a short-term negotiating ploy. Rather, he may be prepared to wait as long as he feels it necessary to force other countries to adopt trade rules more favorable to the United States.

"People are underestimating what we're headed for," said Rod Hunter, a lawyer who served as a White

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House economic adviser under President George W. Bush. "He's been saying since the '80s that trade deals are bad and we should have more tariffs, and that's what we're getting."

Moody's Analytics estimates that if the tariffs were imposed on autos and most Chinese imports and other countries retaliate as expected, annual U.S. growth would slow by 0.5 percentage point by mid-2019. It expects that 700,000 jobs would be lost.

Global markets have remained generally calm despite the eruption of a full-blown U.S.-China trade war and the other conflicts Trump has ignited. On Friday, the Dow Jones industrial closed down slightly.

"I've been surprised that up until now, markets seem overly sanguine about the risks" of a trade war between the world's two biggest economies, said David Dollar, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a former official at the World Bank and U.S. Treasury Department.

Investors as a whole appear to accept the argument of Trump economic advisers, notably Larry Kudlow and Kevin Hassett, that the president's threats will likely force China, the European Union, Canada, and Mexico to eventually negotiate better trade deals.

But many analysts are skeptical that Trump's tactics will produce such an outcome. Rufus Yerxa, president of the National Foreign Trade Council and formerly deputy director general of the World Trade Organization, said Trump appears to think that America's trading partners will yield to pressure without securing any concessions in return.

"That isn't how trade negotiations work," Yerxa said.

China will likely retaliate if additional tariffs are imposed, economists note, rather than simply knuckle under. President Xi Jinping "cannot lose face with his own people by giving in to the United States," Dollar said.

Philip Levy, a trade expert at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and a former White House trade adviser, suggested that Chinese officials have been frustrated and confused by their previous failed efforts to reach an agreement.

After Beijing offered this spring to buy more natural gas and farm goods from the U.S. to narrow the trade deficit, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the trade war was "on hold." China also said it would reduce its auto tariffs from 25 percent to 15 percent.

Yet Trump soon intensified his tariff threats anyway.

"The Chinese are not clear what the United States wants," said Scott Kennedy, who studies the Chinese economy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "They've received conflicting messages depending on who they speak with."

The administration says it wants China to end the theft of intellectual property from U.S. companies and curb policies that require American and other foreign businesses to hand over technology in exchange for access to the Chinese market. Yet any such agreement would require extensive talks over how it would be implemented and verified.

"There's no negotiating going on that I can see," Dollar said.

In the CNBC interview that aired Friday, Trump reiterated his complaints about America's gaping trade gap with China, even though reforming China's technology policies wouldn't likely narrow the trade deficit.

"We are being taken advantage of, and I don't like it," Trump said.

Economists note that Trump's hard-nosed stance on trade runs deep. He has been denouncing other countries' trade practices and urging retaliation for decades, dating to the 1980s, when Japan was regarded as America's main global economic threat.

"You have to take seriously that (imposing tariffs) is what he really wants to do," said Adam Posen, president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

In his CNBC interview Friday, Trump shrugged off the prospect that a trade war with China could cause the stock market to tumble.

"If it does, it does," he said.

Putin, Trump talked about a referendum for eastern Ukraine

By ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump discussed the possibility of a referendum in separatist-leaning eastern Ukraine during their Helsinki summit, Russia's ambassador to the U.S. said Friday.

However, the White House said later that it is not considering supporting the idea.

Ambassador Anatoly Antonov revealed the discussions amid confusion and concern in the U.S. about what the two world leaders actually agreed upon behind closed doors.

"This issue (of a referendum) was discussed," he said, adding that Putin made "concrete proposals" to Trump on solutions for the four-year, Russian-backed insurgency in eastern Ukraine, which has killed more than 10,000 people.

He did not elaborate on what Putin's solutions would be.

The discussion could be seen as an effort to sidestep European peace efforts for Ukraine and increase the pressure on the Ukrainian government in its protracted conflict with pro-Russian separatists in the Donbass region.

Later Friday, U.S. National Security Council spokesman Garrett Marquis said "The administration is not considering supporting a referendum in eastern Ukraine."

"To organize a so-called referendum in a part of Ukraine which is not under government control would have no legitimacy," he said.

Trump tweeted that the two leaders had discussed Ukraine, but had not mentioned a referendum or revealed specifics of the talks with Putin.

The U.S. and Russia have been on opposing sides of the conflict in Ukraine, which was unleashed after a popular uprising in 2014 against Ukraine's pro-Russian president and Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula a month later.

Ukraine's government didn't immediately respond to the developments but former Foreign Minister Konstantin Grishchenko said, "Kiev will never agree to a referendum in the Donbass initiated by Russia."

"The Kremlin already used a referendum as justification for annexing Crimea. And Moscow is trying to use this theory and spread it to the Donbass," he said on the 112.ua television network.

International powers did not recognize the Crimean referendum that preceded Russia's annexation. Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions also held referendums in 2014 that were not recognized by Ukraine's government.

European powers are also expected to oppose a referendum in the Donbass, where pro-Russian separatists hold sway. They have been committed to a 2015 peace deal signed in the Belarusian capital of Minsk that has helped reduce the fighting but failed to find a lasting political solution for the region.

Putin has sought to become a Trump ally at a time when U.S. ties to Europe are fraying, and both presidents are critical of the EU and NATO. German Chancellor Angela Merkel pushed back Friday at Trump's questioning of NATO's central tenet of collective defense.

Ambassador Antonov called Monday's summit in Helsinki a "key event" in international politics and laughed off suggestions the two leaders made any "secret deals."

Antonov insisted that diplomatic discussions should remain discreet in order to be effective, but gave a few details of their discussions on arms control and said the summit notably made progress on U.S.-Russian cooperation on Syria's future.

He also said Moscow is ready to discuss a possible visit by Putin to Washington after a surprise invitation from Trump.

Antonov said it's important to "deal with the results" of the leaders' first summit before jumping too fast into a new one.

"(But) Russia was always open to such proposals. We are ready for discussions on this subject," he said.

The Kremlin hasn't responded yet to the proposal Trump made Thursday.

The Russian ambassador to Washington also denounced what he saw as "anti-Russian anger" in the United States and the "severity" of the U.S. criticism of Trump's performance at the summit.

He reiterated denials of Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election — interrupting a questioner to say “We didn’t interfere!” He also reiterated denials of Russian involvement in the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Britain.

Antonov also pushed for the release of a Russian gun rights activist who has been accused of being a covert agent in the U.S., calling her arrest a “farce.”

U.S. federal prosecutors accused Maria Butina this week of being a covert Russian agent and working to infiltrate U.S. political organizations, including the National Rifle Association, before and after Trump’s election as president.

Butina, 29, denies wrongdoing. The Russian Foreign Ministry started an online campaign for her release.

Yuras Karmanau in Minsk, Dmitry Kozlov in Moscow and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed.

Suspect confesses in killing of Olympic figure skater

By JAMES ELLINGWORTH, AP Sports Writer

MOSCOW (AP) — One of two men detained in Kazakhstan on suspicion of killing Olympic figure skating medalist Denis Ten has confessed, authorities said Friday.

Prosecutor Berik Zhuyrektayev said in a televised statement that Nuraly Kiyasov “confessed his guilt in the presence of an attorney” while being questioned over the 25-year-old skater’s death Thursday in the Kazakh city of Almaty.

The prosecutor didn’t give further details of what exactly Kiyasov had said.

Police have also detained 23-year-old Arman Kudaibergenov in connection with Ten’s death, which has prompted national mourning. Authorities released a picture of the disheveled-looking man being held by masked men wearing body armor and camouflage uniforms.

Ten was stabbed after a dispute with people who allegedly tried to steal a mirror from his car in his home city of Almaty. He died in hospital of massive blood loss from multiple wounds, the Kazinform news agency said.

Prosecutors are treating his death as murder.

Kazinform reported that Kiyasov was taken to the scene of the crime under heavy security Friday as part of the investigation.

Ten’s bronze in Sochi in 2014 made him Kazakhstan’s first Olympic medalist in figure skating. He also won the Four Continents championships in 2015, and was a world championship silver medalist in 2013.

He struggled with injuries in recent years and could only finish 27th at the Pyeongchang Olympics in February.

Ten had been working on a script in recent months which the Kazakh-Russian director Timur Bekmambetov said Friday would now be turned into a movie.

“We’re definitely going to try to realize his idea and shoot a film dedicated to this multi-talented person,” Bekmambetov said in comments released by Kazakhstan’s embassy to Russia. “In his 25 years, Ten managed to do very much and had grand plans which he would surely have put into practice because he was a real hard worker.”

Merkel: German govt is solid despite fight over migration

By GEIR MOULSON, Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Chancellor Angela Merkel acknowledged Friday that a bitter fight over migrant policy hurt Germans’ confidence in her government, but said she never thought of quitting and insisted that her administration is doing solid work.

Merkel’s fourth-term government took office in March after a six-month effort to put together a new governing coalition. So far, it has been remarkable chiefly for the spat within Merkel’s own two-party conservative bloc that threatened to bring down the administration earlier this month.

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Leaders eventually agreed to turn back migrants who have already sought asylum in another European nation under yet-to-be-reached bilateral deals.

Interior Minister Horst Seehofer had previously threatened to turn back migrants unilaterally at Germany's border in defiance of Merkel, who insisted that Berlin must not take action that would further undermine the unity of the European Union.

Merkel said at her annual summer news conference that the issue raises a "fundamental question" that was worth arguing over, even though migration to Germany is far lower now than at the height of the influx of refugees and migrants in 2015 and 2016.

She acknowledged that "the tone (of the debate) was often very harsh," adding that politicians should be more cautious in their choice of words.

"I think that some have already tried to take that to heart," she said.

Although she didn't elaborate, Bavarian governor Markus Soeder — a leading member of Seehofer's party — has recently backed off talk of the need to end "asylum tourism."

Merkel emphasized her government's actions in other policy areas, such as efforts to help the long-term unemployed, secure pensions and boost the nursing profession.

"We have achieved a great deal more than has perhaps been perceived externally, but we have ourselves to blame for that," she said. "So we will see that we conduct conflicts — and I say again that there will be more — in such a way that the results do not fade into the background."

Asked whether she considered resigning during the recent crisis, Merkel replied: "No, no, no, no."

As for her future, the 64-year-old who has led Germany for 12 ½ years, reiterated that she has told voters she is prepared to serve out this parliamentary term, which ends in 2021.

She brushed aside a question as to whether she would rule out running for a fifth term, which few people expect her to seek.

"There is a right time for everything," Merkel said.

North Korea puts reunion of war-separated families in doubt

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea said Friday that an August reunion of Korean families separated by war may not happen if South Korea doesn't immediately return some of its citizens who arrived in the South in recent years.

The 2016 arrival of a group of 12 female employees from a North Korean-run restaurant in China has been a source of contention between the rival Koreas. North Korea has accused South Korea of kidnapping them, while South Korea says they decided to resettle on their own will.

North Korea has often used the women as a reason to rebuff South Korea's repeated request to allow elderly citizens split during the 1950-53 Korean War to reunite with each other temporarily. But Friday's statement is the North's first attempt to link the fate of the women to the August reunion and comes amid worries that a global diplomacy to push the North to give up its nuclear weapons is making little headway after months of detente.

The North's state-run Uriminzokkiri website said that the reunion and overall inter-Korean ties could face "obstacles" if Seoul doesn't send back the women.

Seoul's Unification Ministry said it has no comment on the Uriminzokkiri dispatch.

There has been mounting speculation that some of the 12 North Korean women might have been truly duped into coming to South Korea.

After meeting some of the women earlier this month, Tomas Ojea Quintana, the United Nations' independent investigator on human rights in North Korea, told reporters in Seoul that they told him they did not know they were heading to South Korea when they departed China.

"Some of them, they were taken to the Republic of Korea without knowing that they were coming here," Quintana said, referring to South Korea by its formal name. "If they were taken against their will, that may (be) considered a crime. It is the duty and responsibility of the government of the Republic of Korea

to investigate.”

South Korean media had earlier carried a similar report, citing interviews with some of the women and their North Korean male manager who came to South Korea with them.

The women’s arrival happened when South Korea was governed by a conservative government, which took a tough stance on the North’s nuclear program. South Korea’s current liberal President Moon Jae-in wants to expand ties with North Korea, but repatriating any of the women would be a delicate matter as many experts say relatives of those who decide to stay in the South will likely face reprisals by the North Korean government.

Since the end of the Korean War, more than 31,000 North Koreans fled to South Korea for political, economic and other reasons, according to South Korean government records. Seoul has never repatriated any North Korean defector, though a handful of them reportedly returned home after failing to adapting to new lives in the South.

The Koreans ban ordinary citizens from visiting relatives on the other side of the border or contacting them without special government permission. Since 2000, however, nearly 20,000 Koreans have been allowed to reunite with their loved ones for several days under on-and-off reunion programs. The last reunion was held in 2015.

While the South wants more reunions, North Korea prefers infrequent meetings because it doesn’t want to waste what it sees as an important diplomatic bargaining chip and worries about increasing its people’s awareness of the outside world, according to experts.

Associated Press writer Kim Tong-hyung contributed to this report.

US, allies set to evacuate Syrian aid workers from southwest

By MATTHEW LEE and SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. officials say the United States is finalizing plans to evacuate several hundred Syrian civil defense workers and their families from southwest Syria as Russian-backed government forces close in on the area.

Two officials familiar with the plans said Thursday that the U.S., Britain and Canada are spearheading the evacuation that would transport members of the White Helmets group to transit camps in neighboring countries. From there, they will be sent to third countries, including Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and possibly Canada, according to the officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the matter.

The officials, and a member of the White Helmets who is due to be evacuated from Quneitra province, said the operation appears to be imminent as the Syrian army continues to gain ground in its latest offensive. The White Helmets, who have enjoyed backing from the U.S. and other Western nations for years, are likely to be targeted by Syrian forces as they retake control of the southwest, according to the officials.

The officials said planning for the evacuation has been underway for some time but accelerated after last week’s NATO summit in Brussels.

“These are hard hours and minutes,” the White Helmets volunteer in Quneitra said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear for his life. “This is the worst day of my life. I hope they rescue us before it is too late.”

The evacuation is expected to take place from Quneitra, which straddles the frontier with the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and where the civil defense team is trapped. It is the last sliver of land still outside government control in the region.

Since the government offensive began in June, the area along the frontier with the Golan Heights has been the safest in the southwestern region, attracting hundreds of displaced people because is along the disengagement line with Israel demarcated in 1974 after a war. The Syrian government is unlikely to fire there or carry out airstrikes.

Negotiations are also ongoing to evacuate armed rebels and their families who don’t want to accept the

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return of the rule of Bashar Assad's government to Quneitra, which the rebels have controlled for years. The fighters will be evacuated to the northern part of Syria, where the opposition still holds sway.

Except for that sliver of land, the southern tip of the southwestern region lies along the border with Jordan and the Golan Heights and is occupied by an Islamic State-affiliated group. The area is expected to be the target of the next government advances and the civil defense teams don't operate there.

The White Helmets are not without controversy. They only operate in opposition-held areas, where government services are almost non-existent and aerial bombings are recurrent. Syrian government supporters accuse them of being politically affiliated with the rebel groups. Russia and the Syrian government have repeatedly accused them of staging chemical attacks in opposition areas, a charge that has never been proven.

They have continued to receive U.S. support even as President Donald Trump presses ahead with his plans to withdraw all American forces from Syria as soon as Islamic State forces are routed.

In June, the State Department freed up a small portion — \$6.6 million out of some \$200 million — in frozen funding for Syria stabilization programs to keep the White Helmets operating through the end of this year.

In other parts of Syria, where government control has been restored, civil defense volunteers have almost always evacuated to other opposition-controlled areas. It is not clear why this time they will be evacuated out of the country.

El Deeb reported from Beirut.

Stocks end slightly lower as traders shrug off trade talk

By MARLEY JAY, AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks inched lower Friday as bond yields jumped, a shift that helped banks but hurt companies that pay big dividends. The dollar fell after President Donald Trump said China is manipulating its currency.

Companies including Microsoft and Honeywell rose as investors were pleased with their quarterly reports, but General Electric stumbled. Stocks wobbled all week as investors reacted to solid company results as well as heightened trade tensions. The S&P 500 index was virtually flat for the week while the Russell 2000 index, which is made up of smaller companies that do more business inside the U.S., rose 0.6 percent.

In the last two days Trump criticized the Federal Reserve for raising interest rates and said China, said he's willing to put tariffs on all U.S. imports from China, and said China, the European Union and others are harming the U.S. by weakening their currencies and reducing interest rates. Stocks weren't affected, but the dollar declined and short-term bond yields slipped, suggesting investors wondered if the Fed might raise interest rates more slowly.

"If there's a toss-up between raising and not raising (rates), you wonder what role these types of comments might possibly play," said Sameer Samana, a strategist for the Wells Fargo Investment Institute.

Samana said he doesn't think the Fed will make big changes to its policies based on Trump's comments, even if the president starts advocating more forcefully for lower rates. But it's something investors will have to think about.

"We think the Fed has independence and they'll continue to do the right thing," he said. "This is one more item that just creates noise in markets."

The S&P 500 index dipped 2.66 points, or 0.1 percent, to 2,801.83. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 6.38 points to 25,058.12. The Nasdaq composite gave up 5.10 points, or 0.1 percent, to 7,820.20. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks fell 4.50 points, or 0.3 percent, to 1,696.81.

Short-term bond yields inched higher. The yield on the 2-year Treasury note rose to 2.60 percent from 2.59 percent.

Long-term bond prices dropped. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose to 2.90 percent from 2.85 percent. That helped banks because bond yields are used to set interest rates on many kinds of loans

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including mortgages. JPMorgan Chase gained 1.3 percent to \$111.28 and Bank of America picked up 1.6 percent to \$30.13.

The dollar dropped sharply, to 111.52 yen from 112.46 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1726 from \$1.1644.

Microsoft continued to set records after its fiscal fourth-quarter results topped Wall Street forecasts and its cloud computing division continued to grow. The company said it's being helped by its rivalry with Amazon, because some retailers are reluctant to team up with Amazon on cloud computing services while they compete with Amazon in sales. The stock climbed 1.8 percent to \$106.27.

General Electric lost 4.4 percent to \$13.12 after it said its power business continued to struggle as revenue and orders decreased. GE, which has been selling and splitting off businesses, also cut its forecast for how much cash its businesses will generate.

In a taped interview with CNBC, Trump said "I'm willing to go to 500," referring roughly to the \$505.5 billion in goods the U.S. imported last year from China. Earlier this month the U.S. placed import taxes on \$34 billion in goods imported from China and Beijing responded in kind. The Trump administration is considering tariffs on another \$200 billion in goods.

The dispute between the world's two largest economies stems from accusations that China steals technology from U.S. companies or forces them to hand over technology to Chinese companies as well as differences over the U.S. trade deficit with China. Investors have worried that the trade war and other disputes involving the U.S. could slow down the global economy.

The People's Bank of China weakened the country's currency against the dollar on Friday. If the yuan continues to depreciate, goods exported to China will become more expensive to consumers there and Chinese exports would also be relatively cheaper. That could balance out suggested increases in tariffs by the Trump Administration.

The yuan has been skidding since February, mostly because of slower economic growth in China and rising interest rates in the U.S.

Benchmark U.S. crude added 1.4 percent to \$70.46 a barrel in New York and Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 0.7 percent to \$73.07 a barrel in London.

Wholesale gasoline rose 1.2 percent to \$2.07 a gallon. Heating oil edged up 0.7 percent to \$2.10 a gallon. Natural gas lost 0.4 percent to \$2.76 per 1,000 cubic feet.

Gold rose 0.6 percent to \$1,231.10 an ounce. Silver gained 1 percent to \$15.55 an ounce. Copper jumped 2.2 percent to \$2.76 a pound.

Germany's DAX lost 1 percent and France's CAC 40 slid 0.3 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 gave up 0.1 percent. South Korea's Kospi added 0.3 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 0.8 percent. Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 0.3 percent.

Annabelle Liang contributed from Singapore.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 21, the 202nd day of 2018. There are 163 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 21, 1925, the so-called "Monkey Trial" ended in Dayton, Tennessee, with John T. Scopes found guilty of violating state law for teaching Darwin's Theory of Evolution. (The conviction was later overturned on a technicality.)

On this date:

In 1861, during the Civil War, the first Battle of Bull Run was fought at Manassas, Virginia, resulting in a Confederate victory.

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In 1930, President Herbert Hoover signed an executive order establishing the Veterans Administration (later the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs).

In 1944, American forces landed on Guam during World War II, capturing it from the Japanese some three weeks later. The Democratic national convention in Chicago nominated Sen. Harry S. Truman to be vice president.

In 1949, the U.S. Senate ratified the North Atlantic Treaty.

In 1955, during a summit in Geneva, President Dwight D. Eisenhower presented his "open skies" proposal under which the U.S. and the Soviet Union would trade information on each other's military facilities and allow aerial reconnaissance. (The Soviets rejected the proposal.)

In 1961, Capt. Virgil "Gus" Grissom became the second American to rocket into a sub-orbital pattern around the Earth, flying aboard the Liberty Bell 7.

In 1969, Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin blasted off from the moon aboard the ascent stage of the lunar module for docking with the command module.

In 1973, Israeli agents in Lillehammer, Norway, killed Ahmed Bouchikhi, a Moroccan waiter, in a case of mistaken identity, apparently thinking he was an official with Black September, the group that attacked Israel's delegation at the 1972 Munich Olympics and killed 11 athletes.

In 1980, draft registration began in the United States for 19- and 20-year-old men.

In 1997, the USS Constitution, which defended the U.S. during the War of 1812, set sail under its own power for first time in 116 years, leaving its temporary anchorage at Marblehead, Massachusetts, for a one-hour voyage marking its 200th anniversary.

In 1999, Navy divers found and recovered the bodies of John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife, Carolyn, and sister-in-law, Lauren Bessette, in the wreckage of Kennedy's plane in the Atlantic Ocean off Martha's Vineyard.

In 2000, Special Counsel John C. Danforth concluded "with 100 percent certainty" that the federal government was innocent of wrongdoing in the siege that killed 80 members of the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas, in 1993.

In 2011, the 30-year-old space shuttle program ended as Atlantis landed at Cape Canaveral, Florida, after the 135th shuttle flight.

Ten years ago: In a face-to-face meeting with Iraq's leaders, Democratic presidential contender Barack Obama gained fresh support for the idea of pulling all U.S. combat forces out of the war zone by 2010. Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic (RA'-doh-van KA'-ra-jich), one of the world's top war crimes fugitives, was arrested in a Belgrade suburb by Serbian security forces. Eric Dowling, who helped excavate tunnels used in the breakout from a World War II German prison camp that became known as the "Great Escape," died in Bristol, England, a day before his 93rd birthday.

Five years ago: Belgium's King Albert abdicated after a 20-year reign; his son Philippe took over as the fractured nation's seventh king. Phil Mickelson won the British Open, shooting a 5-under 66 to match the best round of the tournament and win his first claret jug. Britain's Chris Froome won the 100th Tour de France.

One year ago: White House press secretary Sean Spicer abruptly quit over President Donald Trump's decision to name financier Anthony Scaramucci as the new White House communications director. Scaramucci announced from the White House briefing room that Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who had been Spicer's deputy, would take over for Spicer. (Scaramucci was fired on July 31 after 11 days on the job; he had used vulgar language to insult White House aides during a phone call to a reporter.) Escalating Israeli-Palestinian tensions over the Holy Land's most contested shrine boiled over into violence that killed six people — three Palestinians in street clashes in Jerusalem and three Israelis in a stabbing attack at a West Bank settlement.

Today's Birthdays: Movie director Norman Jewison is 92. Actor David Downing is 75. Actor Leigh Lawson is 75. Singer Yusuf Islam (also known as Cat Stevens) is 70. Cartoonist Garry Trudeau is 70. Actor Jamey Sheridan is 67. Rock singer-musician Eric Bazilian (The Hooters) is 65. Comedian Jon Lovitz is 61. Actor Lance Guest is 58. Actor Matt Mulhern is 58. Comedian Greg Behrendt is 55. Rock musician Koen Lieckens (K's Choice) is 52. White House budget director Mick Mulvaney is 51. Soccer player Brandi Chastain is 50.

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Rock singer Emerson Hart is 49. Rock-soul singer Michael Fitzpatrick (Fitz and the Tantrums) is 48. Actress Alysia Reiner is 48. Country singer Paul Brandt is 46. Christian rock musician Korey Cooper (Skillet) is 46. Actress Ali Landry is 45. Actor-comedian Steve Byrne is 44. Rock musician Tato Melgar (Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real) is 41. Actor Justin Bartha is 40. Actor Josh Hartnett is 40. Contemporary Christian singer Brandon Heath is 40. Actress Sprague Grayden is 40. Reggae singer Damian Marley is 40. Country singer Brad Mates (Emerson Drive) is 40. MLB All-Star pitcher CC Sabathia is 38. Singer Blake Lewis ("American Idol") is 37. Rock musician Will Berman (MGMT) is 36. Rock musician Johan Carlsson (Carolina Liar) is 34. Actress Vanessa Lengies (LEHN'-jeez) is 33. Actor Rory Culkin is 29. Actor Jamie Waylett ("Harry Potter" films) is 29. Figure skater Rachael Flatt is 26.

Thought for Today: "We have too many high-sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them." — Abigail Adams, American first lady (1744-1818).