

Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, Aug. 05, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 027 ~ 1 of 40

"It's a great thing when you realize you still have the ability to surprise yourself. Makes you wonder what else you can do that you've forgotten about."

-Alan Ball



Chicken Soup
for the Soul

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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.



Help Wanted

Dairy Queen in Groton has openings for part-time team members – day hours during the school year and can be year round, if desired. Flexible scheduling. Stop in to apply. 11 East Hwy 12, Groton, SD.

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Groton Jr. Legion plays for third today

It was a turn of events from the first game of the State Junior Legion Tournament. Groton had lost to Claremont-Britton; however, Claremont-Britton had used players that did not qualify to play Junior Legion and the tournament officials reversed the result and gave Groton the win.

That meant Groton played in the state championship semifinal game on Saturday. Groton played Redfield and Redfield pulled out a 3-1 win. Groton will play for third place on Sunday.

Wyatt Locke had a double to start the first inning, but was left stranded as the game was scoreless. Groton left runners on first and third. Later, Peyton Johnson would hit a double but again, was unable to score. Redfield had two strike-outs and a nice play and the game remained scoreless after two innings.

Redfield would score one run in the bottom of the third inning to take a 1-0 lead. Alex Morris would strike out all three batters in the bottom of the fourth and Redfield still led, 1-0.

Groton had bases loaded in the top of the fifth, but they were all stranded. Redfield got some hits in the bottom of the fifth to take a 3-0 lead. The score remained 3-0 after six innings. In the top of the seventh, Groton had the bases loaded with no one out. One scored on a fly ball but that was all Groton could get across home plate.



Alex Morris pitching

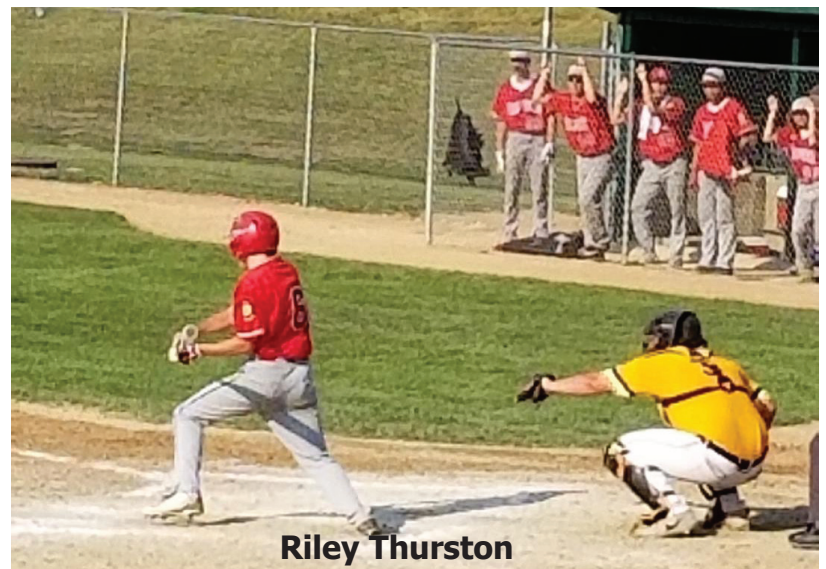


Hunter Schaller

**Photos by
Mindy
Jones**

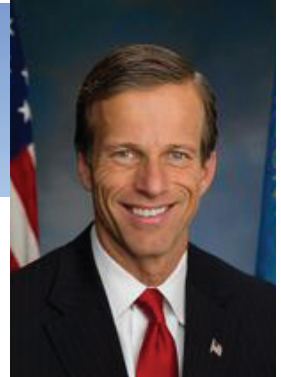


Peyton Johnson



Riley Thurston

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



The Senate Is Keeping Its Foot on the Gas

The Republican-led Senate has been hard at work. We passed the most comprehensive, pro-growth reforms to the U.S. tax code in a generation, which has already allowed South Dakota families and businesses to keep more of their hard-earned money. We gave our men and women in uniform the largest pay increase in nearly a decade. We reformed G.I. Bill benefits and ensured the VA is being held more accountable. We slashed burdensome government red tape, imposed sanctions on Iran, Russia, and North Korea, and passed the longest State Children's Health Insurance Program extension in history.

In addition to writing and passing bills, the Senate has a unique constitutional responsibility to confirm (or choose not to confirm) the president's nominees to serve in the executive and judicial branches. While these nomination votes don't always make the front page of the newspaper or lead the evening news, they are critical to our democracy and can have a lasting effect on our way of life for years down the road.

The Senate has already confirmed 51 of the president's federal judicial nominees. Among them, a record-setting 24 circuit court judges. Once these individuals are confirmed, not only do they serve a lifetime appointment, but circuit court judges, in particular, serve as the final stop before a case potentially heads to the U.S. Supreme Court. That's why the confirmation process, where senators vet and decide whether or not to provide their consent, is so important.

Whether someone has been nominated to serve on a district court, circuit court, or the Supreme Court, I have a similar standard that I use to determine whether or not the nominee will receive my vote: Is he or she well-qualified, and does he or she understand that the proper role of a judge is to call balls and strikes, not legislate from the bench? While those aren't the only things I take into consideration, I lean heavily on the need for those qualifications.

While we've already set records with the pace at which we've confirmed circuit court judges, we're determined to continue filling empty seats (or those that will soon be vacated). In order to achieve that goal, the Senate will spend most of August in Washington – time that's usually spent outside of the Capital Beltway – to confirm more judges and approve additional legislation. This process could be far more efficient if my Democrat colleagues weren't deliberately trying to slow things down, but we'll continue to fulfill our role and help put good judges on the bench nonetheless.

Speaking of supporting well-qualified, mainstream judges who are willing defend the Constitution and rule based on the law, not his own personal opinions, I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Judge Brett Kavanaugh, the president's nominee to serve on the Supreme Court.

Voting on Supreme Court nominees is one of the most important votes a senator can take. I've had that opportunity several times over the years, including most recently with Justice Neil Gorsuch. After meeting Judge Kavanaugh, who I believe is cut from the same cloth as Justice Gorsuch, and hearing more about his judicial philosophy, I'm looking forward to supporting his nomination this fall.



Not Done Yet

The U.S. economy is booming right now. After years of snail's-pace growth, it surged ahead 4.1 percent last quarter, which economists called a "blockbuster" and "rip-roaring" number. What's more, worker pay reached the highest level since 2008, with wages, salaries, and benefits all increasing by significant margins.

This economic resurgence didn't just happen, however. Over the last two years, we have dramatically reduced both taxes and regulations, giving families and businesses the freedom to grow they've been waiting for.

More specifically, since President Trump took office, we have dismantled 2,000+ regulations – one of the most significant government rollbacks in recent memory.

Additionally, the administration has dramatically slowed the creation of new regulations. According to the National Association of Manufacturers, "Compared to the Obama administration, during its first 18 months in office the Trump administration has approved 53.1 percent fewer new 'major' rules (i.e., those having an economic impact of \$100 million or more...) and 64.4 percent fewer new 'minor' ones."

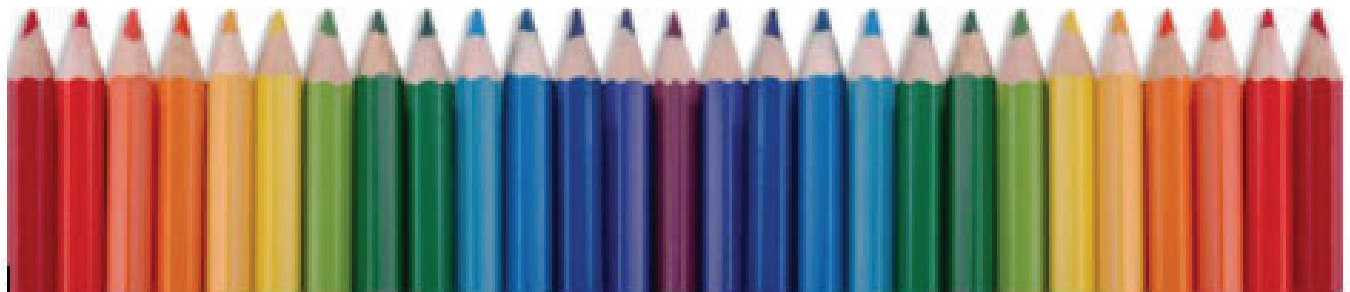
The regulatory reversal has created a newfound hopefulness for many job creators. In fact, small businesses report in a National Federation of Independent Businesses survey that they are more optimistic today than at any point in the last three decades, setting the stage for continued growth.

Beyond the regulatory changes, President Trump signed the historic tax cuts bill I helped negotiate. As a result of the legislation, the average South Dakota family of four will see their after-tax incomes rise by \$2,400. How? We made it so the first \$24,000 a couple makes is now tax free. We doubled the Child Tax Credit to \$2,000 per child. We eliminated the marriage penalty and built in pro-growth reforms that produced higher wages, lower utility bills, and a booming job market.

Just like Ronald Reagan did, we've proven the true value of tax cuts and deregulation. And we're ready to do more. Right now, as a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, I'm working on what we're calling Tax Cuts 2.0. This legislation would lock in the tax cuts for families, help incentivize entrepreneurship, and much more.

The bottom line is this: We know what works. When we reduce the size, scope, and cost of government, 'We the People' have room to grow. I'm proud of what's been accomplished so far, but we're not done yet.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES DRIVE



**GROTON CARE AND REHABILITATION CENTER
HAS BACK TO SCHOOL SPIRIT! STARTING
AUGUST 1ST THRU AUGUST 20TH WE WILL BE
COLLECTING SCHOOL SUPPLIES AT THE
FACILITY TO GIVE TO THE GROTON AREA
SCHOOL DISTRICT.**



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EPA Must Live up to its Promise to Provide Certainty to Farmers

I recently had the opportunity to question Acting Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler about a number of issues important to our farming community. Particularly, I am concerned about recent action the EPA has taken related to the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) and the impact those actions could have on our corn and ethanol producers.

Passed in 2005 and expanded in 2007, the RFS is one of the most significant actions the federal government has taken on behalf of rural America in more than 50 years. It requires transportation fuel in the United States to contain a minimum volume of renewable fuels such as corn ethanol. Administered by the EPA, compliance is tracked through a Renewable Identification Number (RIN) system and requires a minimum of 15 billion gallons of conventional biofuels, like ethanol, to be blended annually.

The RFS has provided the statutory certainty necessary for the corn industry to grow and thrive, and as a result corn ethanol has become a vital component of our nation's fuel supply. The explosion of corn ethanol production has directly helped our farmers, bolstered American energy independence and created thousands of jobs. However, it was recently reported that the EPA is providing RFS waivers to small refineries, thereby reducing the amount of ethanol required by the RFS and reducing the demand on corn and corn ethanol.

During a recent Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee hearing, I had the opportunity to ask Acting Administrator Wheeler about these waivers. The agency has not been transparent in their process for granting these waivers, and I was pleased to hear Mr. Wheeler agree to work toward greater transparency, stability and openness moving forward.

I also reiterated to Mr. Wheeler the importance of keeping the RFS in effect and honoring our commitment to our corn and ethanol producers. They have invested billions of dollars to create an ethanol industry and it has been a success. Not only has it promoted the production of significant volumes of corn ethanol, corn ethanol has its own unique qualities that are important to our energy marketplace. It is used as an oxygenate in gasoline that is even better than the oxygenates it replaced. It is the best and cheapest octane booster available to the oil industry today. Corn ethanol will also help auto manufacturers meet increasing CAFÉ standards, which are regulations in place to improve the average fuel economy.

Corn ethanol production is a vital component of the South Dakota economy. The corn ethanol industry supports thousands of jobs in South Dakota and contributes a significant amount of revenue to South Dakota communities. As we move closer to 2022, the year in which the corn ethanol component of the RFS is anticipated to expire, I will continue working with the administration, my colleagues and stakeholders to make certain the federal government continues to live up to its promise to producers and that corn ethanol continues to play an important role in our nation's fuel supply.

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South Dakota Governor
Dennis Daugaard



The 2018 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally

It's rally time in South Dakota. What started in 1938 as a single motorcycle race in a small town has grown into one of the largest and best-known motorcycle gatherings in the world. This year is the 78th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, and as always, the event is sure to bring a crowd.

Motorcycle enthusiasts aren't just visiting Sturgis. They are traveling all around the Black Hills – staying in our hotels and at our campgrounds, eating in our local restaurants, shopping in our stores and refueling at our gas stations. Each year the rally has a big economic impact on Sturgis and all of the Black Hills, and that creates benefits for our state too.

An event this size is not without its challenges. To help things go smoothly, the state has opened the Rally Operations Center and a Traffic Operations Center. Local law enforcement, the Highway Patrol and ambulance services will have additional personnel working during the rally.

Many state agencies will provide additional staff to support food safety, drinking water safety, fire safety, roadway safety, emergency communications, and vendor sales tax registrations and collections. National Guard soldiers will also be prepared in the event they are needed to respond to a large-scale disaster.

For the past 77 years, we've had no major emergency at the Sturgis Rally. Our goal is to get through the 78th rally with that record intact, but we need help.

We're asking South Dakotans to do their part to help make this a safe journey for our visitors. Drive carefully and be particularly mindful of the motorcycles on the road. Don't get distracted by electronic devices. It only takes one mistake to alter your life and someone else's forever. If you live in the Black Hills area, leave extra time to reach your destinations, and be patient with law enforcement and emergency responders. If something doesn't look right, let law enforcement know.

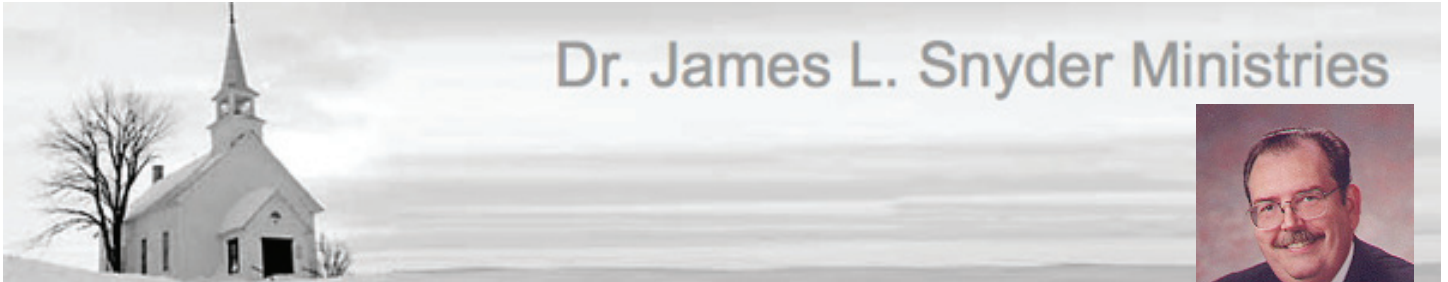
For those who are attending the rally, be careful and be prepared. Wear a helmet and proper riding attire. If you are driving a vehicle, wear your seatbelt. Most importantly, don't drink and drive.

Riders can visit SouthDakotaRides.com for real-time information and some helpful tips. On the website are links to weather updates, fire danger information, Twitter feeds from the departments of Transportation and Public Safety, and a map of hospital, urgent care and police station locations.

One of government's primary functions is to keep people safe. The state of South Dakota is ready to perform that responsibility and we welcome the opportunity to host so many visitors in our great state. If South Dakotans and our visitors do their part, it will go a long way toward helping make the 78th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally a safe and fun event.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



I Never Thought I Could

As a person gets older things change. By things, I am referring to my body.

When I was young, I never gave a thought to what it would be like when I got old.

I was too busy enjoying my being young. What young person wants to waste their time thinking about what they are going to be when they are old?

However, as a person gets older there is more time to think about things. To think about your health and strength and is it time to go to bed yet?

I can remember as a young person my parents had to wrestle me into my bed to go to sleep at night. I never wanted to go to bed; I wanted to stay up all night and watch TV.

I tried to think of many reasons not to go to bed when I was younger.

Now that I'm older, I'm trying to think of many reasons TO go to bed early.

The problem is it is not feasible to go to bed when the sun hasn't set yet.

"Is it time to go to bed?" I queried the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

Looking at me she simply said, "Has the sun set yet?"

I understood what she was saying and it is hard to say that the sun has set when it is still light outside. For this reason, I like a very cloudy afternoon when it hides the sun. It is so dark that I'm trying to convince my wife that it must be time to go to bed because it's dark outside.

I must not be a very good salesman because my wife never buys what I'm trying to sell.

So, sitting in my easy chair thinking about stuff like this, I often get a little bit discouraged. What I'm thinking about is the fact that I cannot do what I used to do when I was young.

"What are you," my wife said one afternoon, "so gloomy about today?"

"You know," I said very sadly, "I just can't do what I used to do when I was young."

I remember all the fun times I had when I was young. It seems I had more energy than I could waste in one day. Now, I don't seem to have that kind of energy.

My wife got us coffee and came, sat down in the living room with me, and was just quiet for a few moments.

Then she said, "Sure, there's a lot of things you can't do that you did when you were young." She snickered after she said that and then said, "Why

CONSIGNMENT AUCTION

Sat. Aug. 18, 2018 10:00 am

Location: Trucks-N-Tractors, 14069 434th Ave., Webster, SD 57274

Now taking Consignments – Watch Website & Next Week's Forum for Sale Bill. Tractors, Combines/Heads, Payloaders/Skidsteers, Semis/Trailers, Vehicles/ATVs, Planting/Haying/Spraying/Augers, Construction Equipment, Fencing.

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don't you think about the things you can do now that you couldn't do then?"

As far as I was concerned, there was nothing on that list. I know many people have what they call the "Bucket List" but I certainly don't have such a list. My list only contains things that I used to do that I can't do now. I cannot do them now because of the time element and my energy or lack thereof.

"Don't worry about what you can't do," she explained. "Focus on some of the things that you can do and that you enjoy doing."

That was a real challenge for me. I never thought of it that way before. I was willing to give it a try though.

"Remember how you acted when you were young?"

That got me thinking. I do remember when I was young I could not sit still for very long. I had to be up doing something all the time. I could not walk, I had to run. I would run so vigorously that when I got home, I would collapse in exhaustion.

I cannot do that now, but what I can do is pace myself out so that I do not collapse in exhaustion.

When I was young, I didn't have any excuses or didn't try to think of any. Now that I am older, I do have some good excuses.

"I can't do that, I don't have the energy, I'm too old."

"I'm sorry; my memory isn't quite like it used to be."

I now have a lot of excuses that I didn't have that can benefit me. When young, I was too proud to say I couldn't do something. Now that I am old, my pride has disappeared and it is easy for me to say that I cannot do something.

My wife and I discussed this and at the very end, she looked at me and said, "What's that smile all over your face?"

I had to explain to her that she got me to thinking in the right direction. I never thought I could do certain things, but now I have the time to do them. There are books that I have always wanted to read; now I have the time to read them.

I always wanted to just sit and relax in my chair and dream about the impossible dream. Now that I am older, I can do that and nobody objects, particularly me.

I am beginning to understand what Jesus said. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

I cannot relive my past, but I certainly can enjoy the work that is before me for the glory of God.

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Today in Weather History

August 5, 1987: Six tornadoes touched down in central South Dakota. Five of these tornadoes touched down in Lyman County, including three which did damage near Kennebec within 25 minutes of each other. One of the tornadoes destroyed three farms, downing outbuildings, power lines, granaries, and killing cattle.

August 5, 2000: A wet microburst with winds estimated at 120 mph caused heavy damage in and around Mitchell. Apartments and several mobile homes were destroyed, vehicles were overturned, and other damage occurred to buildings and vehicles. Widespread tree and power line damage also occurred. Ten people were injured, although the majority of the injuries were minor. The damage path was approximately a mile and a half long and a mile wide, extending over the southwest part of Mitchell.

1875: Several tornadoes moved across northern and central Illinois. One of the stronger tornadoes touched down in Warren and Knox County where it destroyed 25 homes and killed two people. Another in a series of tornadoes touched down near Knoxville and moved east into northern Peoria County. This estimated F4 tornado injured 40 people and was described by eyewitnesses as looking like a "monstrous haystack."

1843 - A spectacular cloudburst near Philadelphia turned the small creeks and streams entering the Delaware River into raging torrents. As much as sixteen inches of rain fell in just three hours. Flooding destroyed thirty-two county bridges, and caused nineteen deaths. It is believed that several small tornadoes accompanied the torrential rains, one of which upset and sank more than thirty barges on the Schuylkill River. (David Ludlum)

1961 - The temperature at Ice Harbor Dam, WA, soared to 118 degrees to equal the state record established at Wahluke on the 24th of July in 1928. The afternoon high of 111 degrees at Havre, MT, was an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)








1987 - Severe thunderstorms raked eastern South Dakota. The thunderstorms spawned half a dozen tornadoes, produced softball size hail at Bowdle, and produced wind gusts to 90 mph south of Watertown. Hot weather continued in eastern Texas. Afternoon highs of 100 degrees at Houston and 106 degrees at Waco equalled records for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)


1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Indiana and Lower Michigan to Pennsylvania and New York State during the day. Thunderstorms in Michigan produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Ashley, Hastings and Lennon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)


1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma, and from Iowa to the Upper Ohio Valley, with 216 reports of large hail or damaging winds between early Saturday morning and early Sunday morning. Thunderstorms moving across Iowa around sunrise produced extremely high winds which caused ten million dollars damage to crops in Carroll and Greene Counties. Thunderstorm winds at Jefferson IA reached 102 mph. Afternoon thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Bay Mills, WI. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Hot
High: 89 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 80 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 85 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 90 °F




National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
8/5/2018 5:34 AM




Tonight



Isolated Storms

Isolated – Scattered Storms Today, Mainly South of Highway 212.

3 Day Forecast

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
		
77-87°	80-91°	87-95°

Published on: 08/05/2018 at 5:37AM

Isolated to scattered showers and thunderstorms are possible today, mainly along and south of Highway 212. High temperatures today will warm into the 80s.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 90.1 F at 4:53 PM

Heat Index:

Low Outside Temp: 66.5 F at 6:44 AM

High Gust: 17.0 Mph at 1:47 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 107° in 1941

Record Low: 41° in 1994

Average High: 84°F

Average Low: 59°F

Average Precip in July: 3.33

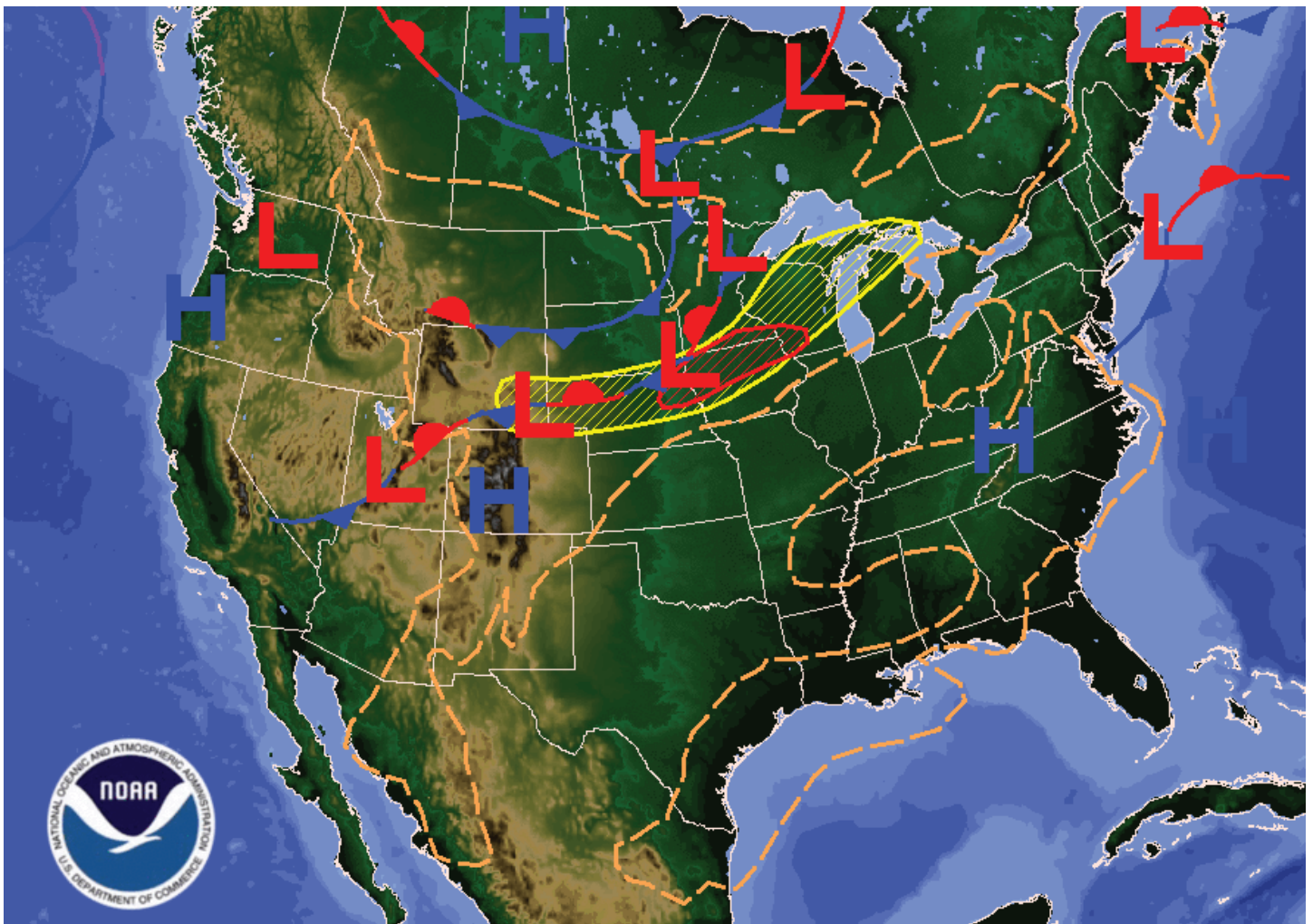
Precip to date in July: 3.99

Average Precip to date: 14.17

Precip Year to Date: 9.89

Sunset Tonight: 8:56 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:24 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sun, Aug 05, 2018, issued 4:34 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Kong 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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FREE FOR NOW

Two longtime friends were quail hunting - one was a Christian, the other was not a believer. Why, said the nonbeliever, is it that the devil always seems to find and tempt you to do the wrong thing and he never bothers me?

Oh, you dont understand it, replied his friend. You see the devil has you and now he spends his time trying to get me back. Its like hunting for quail. Were not after the dead ones. We want those that are still alive. You see, youre dead and the devil doesnt have to worry about you. But he wants me back!

All Christians face the dangers of temptation that come from the devil. Even Jesus was constantly being tempted and tested. And, we must always remember that being tempted is not a sin. Sin happens when we yield to the temptation.

We must also remember that when we are tempted, it is the devil who tempts us. The Lord does not tempt anyone, and it is through His power that we can resist any temptation that comes our way. It is the devil who is the source of the temptation.

Thats his business, and he is very successful at what he does. It is a good thing to remember that mice do not like traps but are caught when the power of the bait overcomes them. He knows the bait that is most likely to tempt and trap us to sin and will use any friend or foe, picture or place to his advantage.

David put it this way: Praise be to the Lord...we have escaped like a bird from the fowlers snare...Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

We are always going to be tempted. We have years of experience to prove that fact. But, we also have the power of Gods Word to protect us. As Paul said, There is no temptation that you cannot bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. Escape is always possible.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for Your strength and power that enables us to escape the temptation to sin. Help us to rely on You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 124:7-8: We have escaped like a bird from the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

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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

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash
06-09-12-27-29
(six, nine, twelve, twenty-seven, twenty-nine)
Estimated jackpot: \$166,000

Lotto America
15-16-26-45-52, Star Ball: 1, ASB: 3
(fifteen, sixteen, twenty-six, forty-five, fifty-two; Star Ball: one; ASB: three)
Estimated jackpot: \$5.92 million

Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$55 million

Powerball
03-11-38-44-58, Powerball: 2, Power Play: 4
(three, eleven, thirty-eight, forty-four, fifty-eight; Powerball: two; Power Play: four)
Estimated jackpot: \$203 million

Caution on the road urged as Sturgis Motorcycle Rally begins

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — The annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is underway in the Black Hills of western South Dakota.

Several hundred thousand people are expected this year, and public safety officials are reminding bikers and other motorists to stay alert.

In recent years, the most deadly rally was the 75th anniversary event in 2015, which drew a record 739,000 bikers. During that rally, 14 people died in motorcycle wrecks throughout the state.

Officials say there were eight traffic fatalities last year.

The rally began its 10-day run Friday.

South Dakota rodeo to get new grandstands

BELLE FOURCHE, S.D. (AP) — A western South Dakota fair ground will soon sport new seating for the thousands of people who attend the annual rodeo event.

The century-old wooden grandstands at the Black Hills Roundup in Belle Fourche are being demolished and will be replaced with steel-and-aluminum grandstands with a roof, the Black Hills Pioneer reported. New VIP seating areas will also be added.

"So far we've removed all the tin and steel off the building," said Dirk Hoffman, public works director.

Some of the material will be salvaged, with Black Hills Roundup officials aiming to build a museum-type structure, Hoffman said. Tin, steel and other salvageable material will likely be sold at auction this fall, he said.

The goal is to finish demolition work by Sept. 1 and have all the concrete work complete before it freezes, Hoffman said. Construction will continue through the winter if the weather permits, he said.

Project officials hope to have the project complete in time for the Black Hills Roundup's 100th anniversary.

sary in July.

City Council approved the more than \$1.3 million project last year after growing safety concerns.

Mayor Gloria Landphere said \$200,000 will come from the city's general fund reserves and \$200,000 from third penny/hospitality tax revenue reserves. The city is working with local banks to finance the remainder, she said.

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

Campbell County considers zoning amid wind farm proposal

MOUND CITY, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota county commissioners are considering adopting temporary zoning rules amid a proposed wind farm expansion.

Campbell County Commissioners approved a \$5,000 contract last month with the Northeast Council of Governments to prepare zoning and ordinance regulations, Aberdeen American News reported. The move follows energy company ConEdison's proposal to expand its 55-turbine wind farm in the county, adding 39 more turbines.

Residents at a recent commission meeting voiced concerns about health issues, noise and setback distances associated with the expansion proposal.

"ConEdison is in the process of getting landowners to sign contracts for possible wind tower development," county commissioners wrote in the meeting's minutes. "At this time there is not a definite layout of the towers' locations due to not having all the land contracts completed, and studies will need to be conducted on the area of the tower sites to determine viable locations."

A ConEdison spokeswoman declined to comment on the expansion.

The county is considering a temporary zoning ordinance, which would allow commissioners to set zoning control for a year, said Commission Chairman Scott Rau.

"We want to have the ability to set our own boundaries," Rau said. "We have to start somewhere."

He clarified that the zoning ordinance isn't intended to be "just wind-oriented."

"We want to have zoning ordinances in place so they can't just put it wherever they want to," Rau said. "We have no regulations at all."

Republican Rep. Spencer Gosch of Glenham said commissioners aren't in support of or against the wind farm.

"They were trying to get the feel for what the community wanted and what the public thought," Gosch said. "There was a substantial amount of residents from Campbell County who were there because they were concerned about what little information they had about what was going on."

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

Trump passes on opportunity to criticize James at Ohio rally

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. (AP) — President Donald Trump insulted NBA star LeBron James from afar but passed up an opportunity to criticize him on his own turf, sticking to Democrats, the news media and other familiar targets during a campaign rally Saturday night in James' home state of Ohio.

When Trump took the stage in a sweltering high school gymnasium north of Columbus, his late-night tweet deriding James' intellect had already generated hours of online buzz in defense of the all-star from Akron who had just opened a school for at-risk children in his hometown.

Even first lady Melania Trump provided an assist to James, her spokeswoman saying it appeared to the president's wife that James was "working to do good things on behalf of our next generation" and that Mrs. Trump would be open to visiting his "I Promise" school. The statement didn't criticize Trump.

CNN's Don Lemon spoke to James at the school and the interview included a negative assessment of the president, whom James said has "kind of used sports to kind of divide us."

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Just before midnight Friday, Trump tweeted: "Lebron James was just interviewed by the dumbest man on television, Don Lemon. He made Lebron look smart, which isn't easy to do. I like Mike!"

Among the current and former professional athletes jumping to James' support in support of James on Saturday was "Mike," also known as NBA legend Michael Jordan, who said in a statement: "I support LeBron James. He's doing an amazing job for his community."

James' publicist declined to respond to Trump's tweet, but early Saturday afternoon, James retweeted a post from the "I Promise" school and said: "Let's get it kids!! Love you guys."

Trump rarely allows a slight to pass unanswered, but James appeared off limits by the time the president crossed the Ohio border to campaign for state Sen. Troy Balderson, the Republican in a special U.S. House election on Tuesday. His opponent, Democrat Danny O'Connor, tweeted, "I don't have to tell (asterisk) anyone (asterisk) what LeBron James means to Ohio."

In remarks lasting more than an hour, Trump assailed many other critics while arguing that Republicans needed to control Congress and casting the midterms as a referendum on himself.

He defiantly questioned the idea that, historically, the party that controls the White House suffers in the midterms, declaring "but I say why?"

"Why would there be a blue wave? I think it could be a red wave," Trump said of his party's prospects in November. "They want to take away what we've given. And we're doing a lot of things people don't even know about."

He blasted the media as "fake news," saying journalists "were terrible people," and went on a screed against illegal immigration. The crowd cheered and chanted the campaign staple rallying cry, "Build the wall, build the wall."

Trump touted Balderson's record on crime and immigration and claimed that O'Connor, if he won, would be a "puppet" of Nancy Pelosi, who stands to reclaim the title of speaker of the House if Democrats seize control of the body this fall.

He also gave an onstage hug to Rep. Jim Jordan, who is under siege after allegations that, as an assistant wrestling coach at Ohio State University, he knew of alleged sexual abuse by a team doctor but did not report it. Jordan, who has denied the charge, has announced his plan to run for speaker of the House.

"Jim Jordan, how great is he?" Trump said. "What a great defender he's been, what courage. He's a brave, tough cookie."

Trump brought up another regular target of scorn, calling Rep. Maxine Waters, a California Democrat who has lashed out at the president, "an extremely low IQ person." In calling three prominent African-Americans all but stupid, Trump once again left himself open to accusations of racism.

Trump also blamed the news media for incorrectly reporting that he was backing Rep. Steve Stivers in the special election — even though Trump himself in recent days had inadvertently tweeted his support for Stivers, who is in a different race, before correcting himself.

He defended his trade policies and, at one point, seemed to suggest that the markets would be up another 40 percent without his tariffs — but said the measures were needed or the nation would eventually have to "pay the piper."

The Ohio rally was Trump's third of the week and he has pledged to accelerate his pace further as the midterms approach. He traveled to the Columbus area from his golf course in Bedminster, New Jersey, where he is in the early stages of an 11-day vacation.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire>

Venezuela's Maduro: Drone attack was attempt to kill him

By SCOTT SMITH and CHRISTINE ARMARIO, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro dodged an apparent assassination attempt when drones armed with explosives detonated while he was delivering a speech to hundreds of soldiers being broadcast live on television, officials said.

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Caught by surprise mid-speech, Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, looked up at the sky and winced Saturday after hearing the sound of an explosion pierce the air.

"This was an attempt to kill me," he said later in an impassioned retelling of the events. "Today they attempted to assassinate me."

Information Minister Jorge Rodriguez said the incident took place shortly after 5:30 p.m. as Maduro was celebrating the National Guard's 81st anniversary. The visibly shaken head of state said he saw a "flying device" that exploded before his eyes. He thought it might be a pyrotechnics display in honor of the event.

Within seconds, Maduro said he heard a second explosion and pandemonium ensued. Bodyguards escorted Maduro out of the event and television footage showed uniformed soldiers standing in formation quickly scattering from the scene.

He said the "far right" working in coordination with detractors in Bogota and Miami, including Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, were responsible. Some of the "material authors" of the apparent attack have been detained.

"The investigation will get to the bottom of this," he said. "No matter who falls."

Venezuela's government routinely accuses opposition activists of plotting to attack and overthrow Maduro, a deeply unpopular leader who was recently elected to a new term in office in a vote decried by dozens of nations. Maduro has steadily moved to concentrate power as the nation reels from a crippling economic crisis.

In the midst of near-daily protests last year, a rogue police officer flew a stolen helicopter over the capital and launched grenades at several government buildings. Oscar Perez was later killed in a deadly gun battle after over six months on the lam.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab said the attempted assassination targeted not only Maduro, but rather the military's entire high command on stage with the president.

Prosecutors have already launched their investigation and obtained critical details from the suspects in custody, said Saab, adding that he would give more details Monday.

"We are in the midst of a wave of civil war in Venezuela," Saab said.

Firefighters at the scene of the blast disputed the government's version of events. Three local authorities said there had been a gas tank explosion inside an apartment near Maduro's speech where smoke could be seen streaming out of a window. They provided no further details on how they had reached that conclusion.

A Colombian official with the president's office described Maduro's claims that Santos was involved in the attack as baseless.

Adding to the confusion, a little known group calling itself Soldiers in T-shirts claimed responsibility, saying it planned to fly two drones loaded with explosives at the president, but government soldiers shot them down before reaching its target. The Associated Press could not independently verify the authenticity of the message.

"We showed that they are vulnerable," the group said in a tweet. "It was not successful today, but it is just a matter of time."

The organization did not respond to a message from The Associated Press.

David Smilde, a senior fellow at the Washington Office on Latin America who has spent decades researching Venezuela, said the incident did not appear to be a staged attack by Maduro's government for political gain.

The "amateurish" attack prompted embarrassing images of Maduro cut off mid-sentence with droves of soldiers running away in fear, making the president appear vulnerable, Smilde noted. Despite the optics, Smilde said he suspected that Maduro would nonetheless find a way to take advantage of it.

"He will use it to concentrate power," Smilde said. "Whoever did this, he'll use it to further restrict liberty and purge the government and armed forces."

The event had been just one more of many Maduro routinely holds with members of the military, a key faction of Venezuelan society whose loyalty he has clung to as the nation struggles with crippling hyperinflation and shortages of food and medicine.

"We are going to bet for the good of our country," Maduro declared triumphantly moments before the explosion. "The hour of the economy recovery has come."

Images being shared on social media showed officers surrounding Maduro with what appeared to be a black bullet-proof barrier as they escorted him from the site. Maduro said at no point did he panic, confident the military would protect him.

"That drone came after me," he said. "But there was a shield of love that always protects us. I'm sure I'll live for many more years."

Armario reported from Miami, Florida. Associated Press video journalist Clbyburn Saint John contributed to this report.

Lewis urges togetherness and love in Hall of Fame speech

By BARRY WILNER, AP Pro Football Writer

CANTON, Ohio (AP) — One of the great leaders football has seen, Ray Lewis used his Pro Football Hall of Fame induction speech to call for more enlightened leadership in the United States.

The last of the seven members of the class of 2018 on hand to be enshrined, Lewis eschewed notes and the lectern, instead strolling along the stage and passionately urging his listeners to come together.

"Are you living every day to make this world better?" Lewis asked Saturday night at the end of his 33-minute oratory, often invoking the teachings of Martin Luther King. "Think what we can do if we work together as a country ... teaching our nation to love each other again.

"It's how we react to the challenges in our life that shows our greatness. How do we execute that dream? Who will answer that knock on the door in the middle of the night? And it has to start right now. We need people willing to fight for what is good and what is right."

Turning to the 140 Hall of Famers on the stage, he told them: "We can go from being legends to building a legacy bigger than football, bigger than sports. Look at what unites us ... the answer is simple, love. Hope, faith and love, and the greatest is love."

Lewis was joined by Randy Moss, Brian Dawkins, Brian Urlacher, Jerry Kramer, Robert Brazile and Bobby Beathard as inductees at the hall ceremony.

One of the best linebackers in NFL history, Lewis won two Super Bowls with the Ravens; he often chanted "BALTIMORE!" during his speech.

"Tell me something can't be done is like pouring lighter fluid on an open flame," said Lewis, a two-time Defensive Player of the Year who won a second Super Bowl for the 2012 season — coming back from a torn triceps — then retired. He was the MVP of the 2001 title game.

"I came back, and boy did I come back," Lewis said. "When you walk off the last time with that thing, that Lombardi, it's a confirmation I am living proof of the impossible."

A first-year nominee, Lewis was selected 26th overall in the 1996 draft — what were other teams thinking? He wasn't even Baltimore's first choice: Jonathan Ogden was, and the big tackle made the Hall of Fame in 2013.

His impact was immediate, both on the field, in the locker room, and even in pregame introductions, when his "squirrel dance" fired up fans and teammates alike. He and Ogden even did a short version on the stage.

Lewis was the first player with 40 sacks and 30 interceptions in a career. An eight-time All-Pro and inside linebacker on the 2000s NFL All-Decade Team, he had a franchise-record 2,643 career tackles.

Dawkins also delivered a powerful speech and, as he promised, cried during it.

One of the hardest-hitting and most versatile safeties in NFL history, Dawkins stared at his bust and nodded his approval to the crowd.

"The majority of success I have had has come on the back end of pain," he said noting he had suicidal thoughts when he battled depression. "On the other side of it, all of a sudden I became better. There's a purpose for my pain."

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"I have grown leaps and bounds because of the things I went through. For those going through this now, there is hope on the other side. Keep moving, keep pushing through."

Dawkins was the leader of an Eagles defense that made four straight NFC championship games and one Super Bowl. Voted to the 2000s NFL All-Decade Team and a five-time All-Pro, Dawkins intercepted passes in 15 consecutive seasons and had 37 picks overall. He averaged nearly 100 tackles a year and spotlighted his versatility as the first player in NFL history to get a sack, interception, fumble recovery and touchdown catch (on a screen pass) in a game, against Houston in 2002.

Urlacher became a record-28th Chicago Bear inducted into the hall. A first-year nominee who filled the tradition of great middle linebackers in the Windy City so brilliantly, Urlacher actually was a safety at New Mexico. Chicago selected him ninth overall in the 2000 draft and immediately converted him to linebacker. He spent two weeks in training camp on the outside, then was moved inside — for 13 spectacular seasons.

"I love everything about football: the friendships, the coaches, the teachers, the challenges, the opportunity to excel. I loved going to work every day for 13 years," said the 2000 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year and 2005 Defensive Player of the Year, a season in which Urlacher had 171 tackles.

The five-time All-Pro and member of the 2000s NFL All-Decade Team even did some work on special teams.

But it was in the heart of the defense where he shone.

"The most coveted position for a defensive player to play is middle linebacker for the Chicago Bears," said Urlacher, who had to hold back tears several times. "Just think about it. I hope over my 13 seasons I made you Bears fans proud."

Another first-year nominee, the 6-foot-4, 210-pound Moss brought the perfect combination of height, speed, soft hands and agility to Minnesota as the 21st overall draft pick in 1998 after a rocky college career. His 69 receptions, 17 for touchdowns, and 1,313 yards helped the Vikings go 15-1 and earned him Offensive Rookie of the Year honors.

That was just the start for the eccentric but always dynamic Moss. When he finally hooked up with an elite quarterback, he caught a record 23 TD passes from Tom Brady in New England's perfect 2007 regular season.

Moss rubbed the face and top of his bust, then delivered a sermon worthy of any church or synagogue. He paid tribute to his family, to the fans of his five teams, and to his roots in West Virginia — he promised he would return to his hometown of Rand on Sunday to show off his gold jacket.

"To my gold jacket brothers, I vow I will wear it proudly," Moss said.

One of those Hall of Fame brothers, Terrell Owens, declined to attend. Instead, he held his own celebration at his college in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He was shown in a video and his photo was hanging in Tom Benson Stadium. Otherwise, T.O. was MIA.

In a lengthy and humorous speech, Kramer brought the crowd back to the Lombardi Era. A senior committee nominee, Kramer became eligible in 1974 after 11 seasons with the Packers in which he won five NFL championships and two Super Bowls.

"It was an incredible experience to be with him and have him bring you along," he said about Lombardi, who gave him "approval and belief: powerful, powerful tools."

Kramer also spent some time placekicking for Green Bay. He made five All-Pro squads, the NFL's 50th Anniversary Team, NFL All-Decade Team of the 1960s and the Super Bowl Silver Anniversary Team.

Brazile, known as Dr. Doom when he played in all 147 games for the Houston Oilers in his 10-year NFL career, kissed his bust when it was unveiled. He spoke of how he and Walter Payton made history by being selected in the first-round of the same draft from a historically black college.

Also a senior committee nominee, Brazile was drafted sixth overall out of Jackson State, two picks behind his teammate. He made such an immediate pro impact he was the 1975 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year, and went on to five All-Pro seasons as one of the game's most versatile linebackers. He was in on a stunning 185 tackles in 1978.

Presented by his father, also named Robert, Brazile made the 1970s NFL All-Decade Team. He retired in 1984 and became a special education teacher.

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"When they knocked on my door," he said of finding out in February he had finally made the hall, "all of my dreams came true. And after all these years, I'm at home."

Beathard won four Super Bowls as a team executive and drafted four Hall of Famers. His best hire might have been coach Joe Gibbs, who presented Beathard for induction.

A contributor's committee nominee, Beathard worked for the Chiefs, Falcons, Dolphins, Redskins and Chargers. He won two NFL titles each with Miami, including the perfect 1972 season, and Washington. He also helped Kansas City and San Diego make Super Bowls.

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

Trump rips LeBron James' smarts hours before rally in Ohio

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. (AP) — Ahead of campaigning in Ohio on Saturday, President Donald Trump unleashed a withering attack on the state's favorite son, savaging NBA star LeBron James in a late-night tweet that derided the intelligence of one of the nation's most prominent African-American men.

Melania Trump's spokeswoman quickly distanced the first lady from the criticism of James, saying in a statement Saturday afternoon that it appeared James was "working to do good things on behalf of our next generation" and that the first lady would be open to visiting his new school for at-risk children. The statement didn't criticize the president.

Trump blasted James late Friday after an interview aired with CNN anchor Don Lemon in which he deemed Trump divisive. Although James has long been a Trump critic, calling the president "U bum" in a 2017 tweet, the tweet was Trump's first attack on the player, who just opened up a school for underprivileged children in his hometown of Akron.

The tweet came hours before Trump traveled to Columbus, Ohio, for a rally north of town in support of the Republican in a special U.S. House election on Tuesday. Once in Ohio, however, Trump stayed away from the controversy and never mentioned James as he hammered away at Democrats and other favorite targets.

"Lebron James was just interviewed by the dumbest man on television, Don Lemon," Trump posted. "He made Lebron look smart, which isn't easy to do."

Trump then, unexpectedly, appeared to weigh in on the growing debate over who is the greatest NBA player of all time, James or Michael Jordan, by writing "I like Mike!"

Many former and current professional athletes, including Jordan, jumped to James' defense.

"I support LeBron James. He's doing an amazing job for his community," Jordan said in a statement to The Associated Press through his representative via text Saturday.

Trump has long denounced the media — CNN in particular — and rarely lets a slight go unnoticed. But the attack on James, who was being interviewed by another black man, to some resembled a racial dog whistle. He routinely deems Democratic Rep. Maxine Waters of California, who is also black, as "low IQ" — an insult he repeated during the Ohio rally Saturday night.

Ohio Gov. Josh Kasich, a Republican who at times criticizes Trump, tweeted: "Rather than criticizing @KingJames, we should be celebrating him for his charity work and efforts to help kids."

Trump has repeatedly been questioned about his views on race, from deeming many Mexican immigrants "rapists" during his campaign kickoff speech for the Republican presidential nomination to placing blame on "both sides" for the violent clash between white supremacists and counterprotesters in Charlottesville, Virginia, a year ago.

James, who campaigned for Trump's opponent, Democrat Hillary Clinton, and has not been shy about using his celebrity for social causes, did the interview from the public school he opened, called the "I Promise" school. Every student receives free tuition, as well as free food, a uniform and even a free bike.

In the interview, James said he "would never sit across" from Trump, though he would talk to former President Barack Obama. James' publicist declined to respond to Trump's tweet, but early Saturday after-

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noon, James retweeted a post from the "I Promise" school and said: "Let's get it kids!! Love you guys." Lemon responded to the president, invoking both the administration's forced-family-separations policy and Mrs. Trump's social media etiquette campaign.

"Who's the real dummy? A man who puts kids in classrooms or one who puts kids in cages? #BeBest" Lemon tweeted.

James played for over a decade — and in two stints — with the Cleveland Cavaliers and delivered a title to the championship-starved region in 2016. Although he departed for the Los Angeles Lakers earlier this summer, the superstar remains very popular in the Buckeye State, and Trump's attack could be a gift for the Democrat in Tuesday's special congressional race.

"I don't have to tell (asterisk)anyone(asterisk) what LeBron James means to Ohio," tweeted Democrat Danny O'Connor, who was running against state Sen. Troy Balderson.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request to clarify Trump's remarks. But even some Trump allies chided him.

Geraldo Rivera, the journalist and Trump confidant, broke with the president to say he wished Trump "turned other cheek re @KingJames & @donlemon While I disagree with their conclusion that @POTUS is using sports to divide America along racial lines, they're both sincere & intelligent men. LeBron just pledged millions for a school for underprivileged kids."

Along with Jordan, a number of other athletes spoke out in support of James.

Pro Football Hall of Famer Shannon Sharpe tweeted: "It should be beneath the dignity of a sitting POTUS to take racist shots at D. Lemon and LeBron James." NBA player Karl-Anthony Towns wrote: "So let me get this straight: Flint, MI has dirty water still, but you worried about an interview about a man doing good for education and generations of kids in his hometown?"

Before entering politics, Trump frequently praised James and his own family tried to recruit him to the New York Knicks in 2010. But commenting on someone's intelligence, including his own, has long been a Trump trope. He has been criticized for complimenting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ("smart cookie") and Russian President Vladimir Putin ("very smart") and has been known to praise himself as "a very stable genius."

But he also uses "stupid" — or variations thereof — as a favored insult. He has used it to describe the FBI, the NFL, Democrats, the filibuster, the nation's immigration laws, journalists, trade policies and how the nation's leaders have dealt with topics like Iraq, Muslims, Canada and China.

He also, after then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson reportedly called him a "moron," challenged his own Cabinet member to an IQ test.

Associated Press writer Steve Reed in Charlotte, N.C., contributed to this report.

Brown asks Trump for wildfire aid as state battles 17 blazes

By PAUL ELIAS, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Gov. Jerry Brown on Saturday called on President Donald Trump to help California fight and recover from another devastating wildfire season.

Brown, who inspected neighborhoods wiped out by a wildfire in the Northern California city of Redding, said he was confident the president he has clashed with over immigration and pollution policies would send aid, which Trump did last year when California's wine country was hit hard.

"The president has been pretty good on helping us in disasters, so I'm hopeful," said Brown, a Democrat. "Tragedies bring people together."

Brown's call for help came shortly before authorities called on residents in Glenn and Colusa counties in Northern California to evacuate as a wildfire there continues to grow.

Cal Fire issued the evacuation order Saturday night for people who live in several parts of the counties, including an area just east of the boundary of Mendocino National Forest. The blaze, known as the Mendocino Complex fire, has grown to 357 square miles and is 32 percent contained, according to Cal Fire.

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The National Weather Service forecasts hot and windy conditions to persist in Northern California.

There are 17 major fires burning throughout California, authorities said. In all, they have destroyed hundreds of homes, killed eight people — including four firefighters— and shut down Yosemite National Park.

Hundreds of colleagues, family and friends attended a memorial service Saturday in Fresno for National Forest Service Capt. Brian Hughes, the Fresno Bee reported. Hughes was killed July 29 by a falling tree while fighting the wildfire that has closed Yosemite National Park at the height of tourist season.

Firefighters have achieved 41 percent containment of that forest fire.

The fire had reached into remote areas of the country's third-oldest national park. Workers who live in Yosemite's popular Valley region were ordered to leave Friday because of inaccessible roads.

The biggest blazes continue to burn north of San Francisco, including twin wildfires fueled by dry vegetation and hot, windy weather. Those fires destroyed 55 homes and forced thousands of residents to flee their neighborhoods about 100 miles (161 kilometers) north of the city. They have grown to a combined 300 square miles (648 kilometers).

The two fires have charred an area of the forested, rural area five times the size of San Francisco and were only 27 percent contained. Thousands of people remain evacuated.

The National Weather Service issued red flag warnings of critical fire weather conditions through Saturday night, saying a series of dry low-pressure systems passing through the region could bring wind gusts of up to 35 mph (56 kph) that could turn small fires or even sparks into racing walls of flames.

"This is a particularly dangerous situation with extremely low humidity and high winds. New fires will grow rapidly out of control, in some cases people may not be able to evacuate safely in time should a fire approach," the weather service said in its bulletin for the Mendocino area north of San Francisco.

Meteorologist Steve Anderson said temperatures will remain in the 90s in the region throughout the week with wind gusts reaching 25 mph (40 kph) during the day Sunday.

"It's not good firefighting weather," Anderson said.

More evacuations were ordered Saturday afternoon for an area of Mendocino and Lake counties where the week-old twin fires are threatening about 9,000 homes. The largest of the two fires was 50 percent contained.

The fire remained several miles from the evacuated communities along the eastern shore of Clear Lake, but "it looks like there's dicey weather on the way," California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection spokeswoman Jane LaBoa said.

However, most evacuations were lifted by Saturday in and around Redding, where armies of firefighters and fleets of aircraft continue battling an immense blaze about 100 miles (160 kilometers) south of the Oregon line. Some areas on the fire's southeastern flank were reopened to residents.

The fire near Redding, which killed six people and incinerated 1,067 homes, started two weeks ago with sparks from the steel wheel of a towed-trailer's flat tire, Department of Agriculture and Fire Prevention officials said.

The blaze is currently 41 percent contained.

The fire burned slowly for days before winds suddenly whipped it up last week and drove it furiously through brush and timber.

It burned so furiously on July 26 that it created what is called a fire whirl. The twirling tower of flame reached speeds of 143 mph (230 kph), which rivaled some of the most destructive Midwest tornados, National Weather Service meteorologist Duane Dykema said. The whirl uprooted trees and tore roofs from homes, Dykema said.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said the blaze had blackened nearly 206 square miles (533 square kilometers).

"Fire season is really just beginning," Cal Fire chief Ken Pimlott said.

Follow AP's wildfire coverage here: <https://apnews.com/tag/Wildfires>

Fights break out between groups of demonstrators at rally

By MANUEL VALDES and GILLIAN FLACCUS, Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Small scuffles broke out Saturday as police in Portland, Oregon, deployed “flash bang” devices and other means to disperse hundreds of right-wing and self-described anti-fascist protesters.

Four people were arrested during the protests, the Portland Police Bureau said in a statement Saturday night. Officers also seized “multiple weapons throughout the day,” police said.

A reporter for The Oregonian/OregonLive was bloodied when he was struck by a projectile. Eder Camuzano said later on Twitter he was “okay.”

Demonstrators aligned with Patriot Prayer and an affiliated group, the Proud Boys, gathered around mid-day in a riverfront park.

Hundreds of demonstrators faced them from across the street, holding banners and signs with opposition messages such as “Alt right scum not welcome in Portland.” Some chanted “Nazis go home.”

Officers stood in the middle of the four-lane boulevard, essentially forming a wall to keep the two sides separated.

The counter-protesters were made up of a coalition of labor unions, immigrant rights advocates, democratic socialists and other groups. They included people dressed as clowns and a brass band blaring music.

The rally organized by Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson was the third to roil Portland this summer. Two previous events ended in bloody fistfights and riots, and one counter-protester was sent to the hospital with a skull fracture.

This time, Gibson changed the venue from a federal plaza outside U.S. District Court to a waterfront park so some of his Oregon supporters could carry concealed weapons as they demonstrate.

Gibson disputed the group’s classification by some as a hate group.

“We’re here to promote freedom and God. That’s it,” Gibson told Portland TV station KGW while walking with demonstrators. “Our country is getting soft.”

Protesters saw a significant police presence that included bomb-sniffing dogs and weapons screening checkpoints. In a statement, police said weapons may be seized if there is a violation of law and added that it is illegal in Portland to carry a loaded firearm in public unless a person has a valid Oregon concealed handgun license.

Among the things police confiscated were long sticks and homemade shields.

Just before 2 p.m., police in riot gear ordered people to leave an area downtown, saying demonstrators had thrown rocks and bottles at officers.

“Get out of the street,” police announced via loudspeaker.

Gibson’s insistence on bringing his supporters repeatedly to this liberal city has crystallized a debate about the limits of free speech in an era of stark political division. Patriot Prayer also has held rallies in many other cities around the U.S. West, including Berkeley, California, that have drawn violent reactions.

But the Portland events have taken on outsized significance after a Patriot Prayer sympathizer was charged with fatally stabbing two men who came to the defense of two young black women — one in a hijab — whom the attacker was accused of harassing on a light-rail train in May 2017.

A coalition of community organizations and a group representing more than 50 tribes warned of the potential for even greater violence than previous rallies if participants carry guns. It called on officials to denounce what it called “the racist and sexist violence of Patriot Prayer and Proud Boys” and protect the city.

Gibson, who is running a long-shot campaign to unseat Democratic U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington state, said in a live video on Facebook earlier this week that he won’t stop bringing his followers to Portland until they can express their right-wing views without interference.

Self-described anti-fascists — or “antifa” — have been organizing anonymously online to confront Patriot Prayer and the Proud Boys in the streets.

Organizers say that while Patriot Prayer denies being a white supremacist group, it affiliates itself with known white supremacists, white nationalists and neo-Nazi gangs.

“Patriot Prayer is continuing to commit violence in our city, and their events are becoming more and more violent,” said Effie Baum of Pop Mob, a coalition of community groups organizing the counter-dem-

onstration. "Leaving them a small group to attack in the streets is only going to allow them to perpetuate their violence."

Dueling protests a month ago ended with Portland police declaring a riot and arresting four people. A similar Patriot Prayer event on June 4 devolved into fistfights and assaults by both sides as police struggled to keep the groups apart.

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>

Venezuelan government: Drone strikes targeted Maduro

By SCOTT SMITH and CHRISTINE ARMARIO, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Drones armed with explosives detonated near Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro Saturday in an apparent assassination attempt that took place while he was delivering a speech to hundreds of soldiers being broadcast live on television, officials said.

Caught by surprise mid-speech, Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, looked up at the sky and winced after hearing the sound of an explosion pierce the air.

"This was an attempt to kill me," he said later in an impassioned retelling of the events. "Today they attempted to assassinate me."

Information Minister Jorge Rodriguez said the incident took place shortly after 5:30 p.m. as Maduro was celebrating the National Guard's 81st anniversary. The visibly shaken head of state said he saw a "flying device" that exploded before his eyes. He thought it might be a pyrotechnics display in honor of the event.

Within seconds, Maduro said he heard a second explosion and pandemonium ensued. Bodyguards escorted Maduro out of the event and television footage showed uniformed soldiers standing in formation quickly scattering from the scene.

He said the "far right" working in coordination with detractors in Bogota and Miami, including Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, were responsible. Some of the "material authors" of the apparent attack have been detained.

"The investigation will get to the bottom of this," he said. "No matter who falls."

Venezuela's government routinely accuses opposition activists of plotting to attack and overthrow Maduro, a deeply unpopular leader who was recently elected to a new term in office in a vote decried by dozens of nations. Maduro has steadily moved to concentrate power as the nation reels from a crippling economic crisis.

In the midst of near-daily protests last year, a rogue police officer flew a stolen helicopter over the capital and launched grenades at several government buildings. Oscar Perez was later killed in a deadly gun battle after over six months on the lam.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab said the attempted assassination targeted not only Maduro, but rather the military's entire high command on stage with the president.

Prosecutors have already launched their investigation and obtained critical details from the suspects in custody, said Saab, adding that he would give more details Monday.

"We are in the midst of a wave of civil war in Venezuela," Saab said.

Firefighters at the scene of the blast disputed the government's version of events. Three local authorities said there had been a gas tank explosion inside an apartment near Maduro's speech where smoke could be seen streaming out of a window. They provided no further details on how they had reached that conclusion.

A Colombian official with the president's office described Maduro's claims that Santos was involved in the attack as baseless.

Adding to the confusion, a little known group calling itself Soldiers in T-shirts claimed responsibility, saying it planned to fly two drones loaded with explosives at the president, but government soldiers shot them down before reaching its target. The Associated Press could not independently verify the authenticity of the message.

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"We showed that they are vulnerable," the group said in a tweet. "It was not successful today, but it is just a matter of time."

The organization did not respond to a message from The Associated Press.

David Smilde, a senior fellow at the Washington Office on Latin America who has spent decades researching Venezuela, said the incident did not appear to be a staged attack by Maduro's government for political gain.

The "amateurish" attack prompted embarrassing images of Maduro cut off mid-sentence with droves of soldiers running away in fear, making the president appear vulnerable, Smilde noted. Despite the optics, Smilde said he suspected that Maduro would nonetheless find a way to take advantage of it.

"He will use it to concentrate power," Smilde said. "Whoever did this, he'll use it to further restrict liberty and purge the government and armed forces."

The event had been just one more of many Maduro routinely holds with members of the military, a key faction of Venezuelan society whose loyalty he has clung to as the nation struggles with crippling hyperinflation and shortages of food and medicine.

"We are going to bet for the good of our country," Maduro declared triumphantly moments before the explosion. "The hour of the economy recovery has come."

Images being shared on social media showed officers surrounding Maduro with what appeared to be a black bullet-proof barrier as they escorted him from the site. Maduro said at no point did he panic, confident the military would protect him.

"That drone came after me," he said. "But there was a shield of love that always protects us. I'm sure I'll live for many more years."

Armario reported from Miami, Florida. Associated Press video journalist Clbyburn Saint John contributed to this report.

Trump casts midterm elections as a personal referendum

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

LEWIS CENTER, Ohio (AP) — Embracing his breakneck return to campaign politics, President Donald Trump on Saturday argued that Republicans needed to control Congress by casting the midterms as a referendum on himself.

In a raucous rally in a sweltering gymnasium north of Columbus, Ohio, Trump pitched for the GOP candidate up in a special election next week and defiantly questioned the idea that, historically, the party that controls the White House suffers in the midterms, declaring "but I say why?"

"Why would there be a blue wave? I think it could be a red wave," Trump said of his party's prospects in November. "They want to take away what we've given. And we're doing a lot of things people don't even know about."

Though boisterous and bellicose, Trump steered clear of the trouble he stirred up the night before when he blasted one of Ohio's favorite sons, LeBron James.

In a late-night tweet, Trump derided the intelligence of one of the nation's most prominent African-American men. The attack on James, who has been critical of Trump, came just as the NBA superstar opened up a school for underprivileged children. First lady Melania Trump, in a statement, distanced herself from the broadside, which resembled a racial dog whistle, and praised James' efforts.

But while he didn't mention the Akron native, he did invoke similar rhetoric while training fire on one of his new favorite targets, Democrat Rep. Maxine Waters of California. He tore into Waters, who is also black, and derided her as "an extremely low IQ person."

Flanked by signs that read "Promises Made" and "Promises Kept," Trump dished up plenty of red meat to the sweaty crowd.

He blasted the media as "fake news" and said journalists "were terrible people." He went on a screed against illegal immigration and exaggerated the threat of violent gangs like MS-13. And he basked in cheers

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as the crowd chanted the campaign staple rallying cry, "Build the wall, build the wall."

And Trump touted his supporters as "forgotten no more," saying that they, and he, were the nation's true "elite."

"The elite. They're more elite than me? I am better everything than they have, including this," Trump said, pointing at his own head. "And I became president and they didn't. Meaning you became president. And it's driving them crazy."

Trump relished playing the role of Republican kingmaker, bragging how the GOP candidates he's opposed, like Rep. Mark Sanford of South Carolina, have lost. With Sanford, he mocked the time Sanford vanished to hike "the Tallahassee Trail," which was likely meant to be "the Appalachian Trail."

He also gave an onstage hug to Rep. Jim Jordan, who is under siege after allegations that, as an assistant wrestling coach at Ohio State University, he knew of alleged sexual abuse by a team doctor but did not report it. Jordan, who has denied the charge, has announced his plan to run for speaker of the House.

"Jim Jordan, how great is he?" Trump said. "What a great defender he's been, what courage. He's a brave, tough cookie."

Trump gave a full-throated endorsement to state Sen. Troy Balderson, who is facing Democrat Danny O'Connor, the Franklin County recorder, in Tuesday's special election to fill a vacant U.S. House seat. He touted Balderson's record on crime and immigration and claimed that O'Connor, if he won, would be a "puppet" of Nancy Pelosi, who stands to reclaim the title of speaker of the House if Democrats seize control of the body this fall.

He again attacked the news media and blamed them for incorrectly reporting that he was backing Rep. Steve Stivers in the special election — even though Trump himself in recent days had inadvertently tweeted his support for Stivers, who is in a different race, before correcting himself.

He also defended his trade policies and, at one point, seemed to suggest that the markets would be up another 40 percent without his tariffs — but said the measures were needed or the nation would eventually have to "pay the piper."

The Ohio rally was Trump's third of the week and he has pledged to accelerate his pace further as the midterms approach. He traveled to the Columbus area from his golf course in Bedminster, New Jersey, where he is in the early stages of an 11-day vacation.

He was joined by a familiar face on Air Force One: Hope Hicks, his longtime campaign staffer and White House communications director, who departed the administration earlier this year.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire>

Amazin' frets: Free therapy for New York Mets fans

NEW YORK (AP) — New York Mets fans struggling with their team's lousy season now have somewhere to cope besides sports talk radio.

An online mental health marketplace is giving free, confidential therapy sessions to Flushing faithful who fill out a form asking for their most difficult moments as fans.

New York-based UMA Health made the offer this week after Tuesday's 25-4 loss to the Washington Nationals, the worst loss in Mets history.

UMA says the lighthearted promotion is meant to bring attention to the important role of therapy. The company says it wants to eliminate the stigma of going to a therapist.

The Mets, ravaged by injuries and boneheaded play, are the fifth worst team in Major League Baseball. They're tied for last in the NL East, 16 games behind the division-leading Phillies.

GOP grumbles as Donald Trump reshapes midterm campaigns

By LISA LERER and KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's strategy of becoming aggressively involved in the midterm elections is prompting concern among some Republicans who worry he's complicating the political calculus for GOP candidates trying to outrun his popularity.

Those Republicans worry their statewide candidates may rise or fall based on Trump's standing, muddling their path to maintain control of Congress.

But Trump has no plans to step out of the spotlight. He will hold a rally Saturday in Ohio and plans to host two fundraisers at the Trump National Golf Course in Bedminster, New Jersey, next week for House and Senate candidates, according to a campaign official with knowledge of the president's events. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss details about the fundraisers that haven't yet been publicly released.

The president is casting himself as the star of the midterms, eagerly inserting himself into hotly contested primaries, headlining rallies in pivotal swing states and increasing his fundraising efforts for Republicans. Last week, Trump agreed to donate a portion of his reelection fund to 100 GOP candidates running in competitive House and Senate races.

He's expected to be even more aggressive in the fall. White House officials say he's reserving time on his schedule for midterm travel and fundraising likely to surpass that of former presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

"This is now about Donald Trump," said Al Cardenas, a former Florida Republican chairman. "It's a high-risk, high-stakes proposition."

The question facing Republicans is whether turning out those Trump loyalists is enough to win in toss-up congressional districts or if their path to victory depends more on capturing a share of independents and suburban women turned off by Trump's tumultuous first term. It's a dilemma they will confront in 2018 and beyond.

"If we lose the governor's race for the first time in 20 years, all of a sudden President Trump's chances of winning in 2020 diminish with a Democratic governor," said Cardenas. "You can't win a presidential election if you're a Republican without winning Florida."

Trump aides argue no one energizes Republicans like the president, pointing to the throngs of thousands who wait in long lines to attend his rallies — he's held 17 since taking office. The aides say the White House is taking a two-pronged approach, sending Trump to mobilize the base while other officials, such as his daughter Ivanka, can generate local headlines and help with voters who may not like the president's aggressive style. The goal is to ensure that the occasional voters who turned out for Trump in 2016 cast ballots in the midterms.

But there are some signs that Trump's unpopularity with the general electorate may hamper more than help individual Republican candidates.

While Republicans have won a series of special elections since Trump took office, they've captured smaller margins than in previous years. Democrats also had two high-profile upsets, nabbing victories in an Alabama Senate race and a Pennsylvania House race.

The GOP is worried about a special congressional election Tuesday in a central Ohio district that Trump won by 11 percentage points in 2016. A Monmouth University poll released this past week showed the race tightening, leaving Republican Troy Balderson with just a 1-point edge, well within the error margin. The survey found 46 percent of likely voters approved of Trump, while 49 percent disapproved.

Hoping to shore up GOP support, Trump plans to host a rally in the district Saturday. His visit follows a Monday stop by Vice President Mike Pence.

The president's team keeps a close eye on data assessing whether Americans believe the country is headed in the right direction under Trump. And they point to Trump's strength among Republican voters and an upbeat attitude about the nation's economic climate as evidence Republicans will avoid the rough midterm elections that have afflicted previous administrations.

But some Republicans warn Trump's outsized media presence drowns out the messages of congressional

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candidates, who believe the path to victory lies with a focus on local issues, the Republican tax cuts and the prospect of Nancy Pelosi becoming House speaker again. In Ohio, Balderson and his GOP allies have tried to tie Democrat Danny O'Connor to Pelosi. O'Connor has repeatedly said he would like to see a new generation of leadership in the House.

"Part of the reason why the Nancy Pelosi attacks are so important is that they're a way to motivate the Republicans who might not love Trump," said Ohio GOP strategist Terry Casey.

Still, Republicans are often forced to fend off questions about Trump-sparked controversies. In recent days, Trump publicly mused about a government shutdown sometime in the fall — a possibility that Republican congressional leaders fear would significantly hamper their electoral prospects.

In Pennsylvania on Thursday, Trump said he was a "little bit torn" about whether it would be better to shut down the government before or after the midterm elections to secure funding for his border wall. "Whether it's before or after, we are getting it or we are closing down government," he told thousands of supporters at a rally in Wilkes-Barre.

That kind of uncertainty only serves to further embolden Trump's opposition, say Democrats.

"Clearly he lights the fire when it comes to energized Democrats," said Ohio Democratic Party chairman David Pepper. "He's going to come and give a rambling, over-the-top speech that has nothing to do with this district or Troy Balderson. It may hurt more than it helps."

The president's decision to intervene in recent GOP primaries is also raising concerns among some state party officials and politicians, who fear he's siding with candidates who could prove weaker in general elections. Trump has relished doling out endorsements, sometimes blasting out several a day — even for those who don't need his backing right now.

On Thursday, he tweeted support for Rep. Steve Stivers, an Ohio congressman who chairs the campaign committee for the House GOP, urging people to back him in a primary contest next week. Stivers' primary was held in May and he ran unopposed. The tweet was quickly deleted.

The president has compiled a winning streak in recent primaries in which he has made an endorsement, helping favored candidates in South Carolina, Alabama and Georgia.

His rally this week in Tampa, Florida, represented his most ambitious attempt to nationalize two races crucial to Republicans' midterm hopes.

Trump stood onstage with Rep. Ron DeSantis, a 39-year-old three-term congressman, imploring his supporters to back his campaign for governor. DeSantis was little-known to Republican voters until Trump first tweeted support for him in December. Since then, he's made his ties to Trump a centerpiece of his primary race, focused on Fox News appearances and ads. In recent weeks, he's opened up a double-digit lead over state Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam, a longtime fixture in Florida politics.

DeSantis said he was grateful for Trump's support but added, "I appreciate more the leadership you're showing for our great country."

The president also repeatedly praised Gov. Rick Scott, a Trump ally running for Senate, and attacked his opponent, Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson. Trump, who spends winter weekends at his estate in Palm Beach, claimed the only time he sees the senator is "five months before every election."

"After a while, you forget who's the senator," Trump said.

Unlike Trump, first lady has kind words for LeBron James

WASHINGTON (AP) — First lady Melania Trump stepped away from her husband's criticism of NBA star LeBron James to compliment his work on behalf of children and even offer to visit his school for at-risk children.

"It looks like LeBron James is working to do good things on behalf of our next generation and just as she always has, the First Lady encourages everyone to have an open dialogue about issues facing children today." Mrs. Trump's spokeswoman, Stephanie Grisham, said in a statement Saturday.

The statement's tone was in stark contrast to President Donald Trump's tweet Friday night following James' appearance on CNN in which he told journalist Don Lemon that he "would never sit across" from

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Trump, whom James has criticized in the past. The interview took place at James' "I Promise" school in his hometown of Akron, Ohio.

"Lebron James was just interviewed by the dumbest man on television, Don Lemon," Trump tweeted in a swipe at a news network he often derides. "He made Lebron look smart, which isn't easy to do."

While many former and current professional athletes jumped to James' defense, Mrs. Trump's spokeswoman noted that the first lady's Be Best initiative for children promoted "the importance of responsible online behavior" as well as their well-being and healthy living.

"Her platform centers around visiting organizations, hospitals and schools, and she would be open to visiting the I Promise School in Akron," Grisham said.

Mrs. Trump has stood apart from her husband's views before. In June, when migrant families entering the U.S. illegally were being separated at the U.S.-Mexico border under Trump administration policies, she said through her spokeswoman that she "hated" to see the separations and that she believed the U.S. needed to be a country that "follows all laws, but also a country that governs with heart."

Influence of organized labor gets big test in Missouri vote

By DAVID A. LIEB, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — On the heels of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling weakening public-sector unions, labor's clout is being put to a new test by a voter referendum in Missouri over whether the state should ban compulsory union fees in all private-sector workplaces.

The statewide vote in Tuesday's primary on a so-called right-to-work law could be a watershed moment for unions, if they can halt what has been a steady erosion of strength in states with historically deep-rooted support.

"The timing of this is essential. I think everyone wants to write the labor movement's obituary," national AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Liz Shuler said. But "it's going to energize and activate us and show that we fight back."

If they lose that fight, Missouri will become the 28th state with a law that prohibits labor groups and employers from forcing workers to pay mandatory union fees.

The so-called "fair share fees," which are less than full dues, are intended to cover unions' nonpolitical costs such as collective bargaining because federal law requires unions to represent even employees who don't join. Eliminating those fees is expected to reduce unions' overall finances and potentially their influence.

That's one reason why unions from across the country are engaged in Tuesday's vote. Heading into the final week of campaigning, a labor-led group already had spent over \$15 million against Proposition A, outspending supporters by a more than 3-to-1 margin.

The issue has become highly partisan in recent years.

Most state right-to-work laws were enacted shortly after they were permitted by the 1947 federal Taft-Hartley Act. But there's been a recent surge of such laws as Republicans have strengthened their hold on state governments, starting with an Indiana law in 2012 and followed by ones in Michigan, Wisconsin, West Virginia and Kentucky.

Labor unions typically support Democratic candidates. In states where they remain strong, such as California, they sometimes are seen as having undue influence over Democratic lawmakers and governors.

Missouri's Republican-led legislature and governor enacted a right-to-work law in 2017, but it never took effect because unions gathered enough petition signatures to force a referendum — essentially giving voters a chance to veto it.

The vote originally was planned for November but was switched by GOP lawmakers to the August primary in a maneuver that prevented an anticipated heavy union turnout from coinciding with Republican efforts to unseat Democratic U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill.

Tuesday's vote comes amid uncertainty about the future of organized labor in the U.S. In late June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that an Illinois state government worker could not be forced to pay collective bargaining fees to a union, essentially establishing a right-to-work policy for public-sector workers in all

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states.

That decision turned the spotlight to Missouri as the first place where voters subsequently will decide whether to enact a similar ban for private-sector unions.

"It's the next battle, if you will, in this ongoing fight to end compulsory unionism in America," said Mark Mix, president of the National Right to Work Committee, which backed the Illinois lawsuit.

As of late July, the National Right to Work Committee had spent about \$2.2 million on behalf of Missouri's ballot measure, nearly half the total amount spent by supporters.

Proponents and opponents have combined to spend more than \$20 million on Proposition A, even though union members comprised just 8.7 percent of Missouri's workforce last year and 10.7 percent nationally. Missouri's private-sector unionization rate of 7.5 percent was a percentage point higher than the national average.

Many of Missouri's top unionized employers — including The Boeing Co. and Ford Motor Co. — have taken no position on Proposition A. But unions that represent their employees have helped canvass neighborhoods, put up yard signs and make phone calls in opposition to it.

"Prop A is nothing but a tool for the large corporations to be able to take away the power of the unions to negotiate fair, respectful wages," said Stephen McDerman, president of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers District 837, which represents many Boeing employees.

K&S Wire Products Inc., a non-union manufacturer that employs about 110 people in Neosho, in the state's southwest corner, is one of the few businesses to directly contribute to the campaign for the ballot measure.

"If you treat your employees right, just like if you treat your children right, they don't need to go find somebody else to represent them as mommy and daddy," said K&S President Gene Schwartz, whose company gave \$7,500 to Missourians for Freedom to Work.

The advertising campaigns for and against the referendum have generally focused on economics, with supporters claiming that right-to-work policies lead to more jobs and opponents claiming they drive down wages.

Studies have found mixed and sometimes conflicting results.

The Washington-based Economic Policy Institute, which opposes right-to-work, found that wages in right-to-work states average 3.1 percent less than elsewhere after accounting for other workforce differences such as educational backgrounds, racial composition, the industrial makeup of employers and the cost of living. For someone earning \$40,000 annually, that would mean \$1,240 less per year.

"By deliberately creating a 'free-rider' problem for unions, right-to-work starves unions and thus starves their ability to boost wages for workers," said Heidi Shierholz, the institute's senior economist and policy director.

A study by economists Ozkan Eren of Louisiana State University and Serkan Ozbeklik of Claremont McKenna College in California used data from states with similar characteristics to analyze the effect of right-to-work in Oklahoma. It was the last state to adopt such a law by a statewide ballot measure, in 2001.

The researchers found the law resulted in a significant reduction in private-sector unionization rates but had no short-term effect on either the total unemployment rate or average private-sector wages.

The study noted that Oklahoma had comparatively low unionization rates even before right-to-work.

Nationwide union membership rates have been steadily falling for decades and are now less than half what they were in 1978, when Missouri voters last defeated a right-to-work proposal.

If unions help defeat it again, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Dan Mehan said supporters simply would "come back and reload on it when the time is right."

But labor leaders hope Missouri will become "like a wall" that reverses the direction of the right-to-work movement. Shuler, the AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer, said unions have been discussing the potential of launching ballot initiatives in other states to repeal existing right-to-work laws.

"We should use that opportunity to actually get out of this crouch — or the defensive posture — and go on offense," she said.

-----Follow David A. Lieb at: <http://twitter.com/DavidALieb>

Crackdown on 'bots' sweeps up people who tweet often

By SARA BURNETT, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Nina Tomasieski logs on to Twitter before the sun rises. Seated at her dining room table with a nearby TV constantly tuned to Fox News, the 70-year-old grandmother spends up to 14 hours a day tweeting the praises of President Trump and his political allies, particularly those on the ballot this fall, and deriding their opponents.

She's part of a dedicated band of Trump supporters who tweet and retweet Keep America Great messages thousands of times a day.

"Time to walk away Dems and vote RED in the primaries," she declared in one of her voluminous tweets, adding, "Say NO to socialism & hate."

While her goal is simply to advance the agenda of a president she adores, she and her friends have been swept up in an expanded effort by Twitter and other social media companies to crack down on nefarious tactics used to meddle in the 2016 election.

And without meaning to, the tweeters have demonstrated the difficulty such crackdowns face — particularly when it comes to telling a political die-hard from a surreptitious computer robot.

Last week, Facebook said it had removed 32 fake accounts apparently created to manipulate U.S. politics — efforts that may be linked to Russia.

Twitter and other sites also have targeted automated or robot-like accounts known as bots, which authorities say were used to cloak efforts by foreign governments and political bad actors in the 2016 elections.

But the screening has repeatedly and erroneously flagged Tomasieski and users like her.

Their accounts have been suspended or frozen for "suspicious" behavior — apparently because of the frequency and relentlessness of their messages. When they started tweeting support for a conservative lawmaker in the GOP primary for Illinois governor this spring, news stories warned that right-wing "propaganda bots" were trying to influence the election.

"Almost all of us are considered a bot," says Tomasieski, who lives in Tennessee but is tweeting for GOP candidates across the U.S.

Cynthia Smith has been locked out of her account and "shadow banned," meaning tweets aren't as visible to others, because of suspected "automated behavior."

"I'm a gal in Southern California," Smith said. "I am no bot."

The actions have drawn criticism from conservatives, who have accused Twitter, Facebook and other companies of having a liberal bias and censorship. It also raises a question: Can the companies outsmart the ever-evolving tactics of U.S. adversaries if they can't be sure who's a robot and who's Nina?

"It's going to take a really long time, I think years, before Twitter and Facebook and other platforms are able to deal with a lot of these issues," said Timothy Carone, who teaches technology at Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business.

The core problem is that people are coming up with new ways to use the platforms faster than the companies can manage them, he said.

Twitter did not respond to a request for comment. But the company has said it identified and challenged close to 10 million suspected bot or spam accounts in May, up from 3.2 million last September. It's also trying to weed out "trolls," or accounts that harass other users, pick fights or tweet material that's considered inflammatory.

Twitter acknowledges that there will be some "false positives."

"Our goal is to learn fast and make our processes and tools smarter," Twitter executives said in a blog post earlier this year.

Tomasieski and her conservative friends use so-called Twitter "rooms" — which operate using the group messaging function — to amplify their voices.

She participates in about 10 rooms, each with 50 members who are invited in once they hit a certain number of followers. That number varies, but "newbies" might have around 3,000, Tomasieski says. Some have far more.

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Everyone in the room tweets their own material and also retweets everyone else's. So a tweet that Tomaszewski sends may be seen by her roughly 51,000 followers, but then be retweeted by dozens more people, each of whom may have 50,000 or more followers.

She says she's learned some tricks to avoid trouble with Twitter. She's careful not to exceed limits of roughly 100 tweets or retweets an hour. She doesn't use profanity and she tries to mix up her subjects to appear more human and less bot-like.

During a recent afternoon, Tomaszewski retweeted messages criticizing immigrants in the U.S. illegally, Democratic socialists and the media. One noted an Associated Press story about an increase in the number of Muslims running for public office — news the user described as "alarming."

Tomaszewski says she loves to write. But most important is helping "my guy."

"There is as much enthusiasm today as there was when Trump was elected. It's very quiet, but it's there. My job is to get them to the polls," she said. "That's rewarding. I go to bed feeling like I have accomplished something."

Follow Sara Burnett on Twitter: https://twitter.com/sara_burnett

'Hazardous' smoky air shuts Yosemite in peak tourist season

By JOCELYN GECKER, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Yosemite National Park's iconic cliffs are shrouded in so much smoke from nearby wildfires that the air quality is worse than anywhere in America and is rivaling Beijing.

The unhealthy haze prompted officials to close the scenic Yosemite Valley and other areas on July 25 along with hundreds of campsites and hotels in what has become the park's longest closure in more than two decades. Officials say they tentatively plan to reopen Monday after a 12-day closure but will reassess this weekend.

"We are hoping to get back open on Monday but conditions have to be safe," said park spokesman Scott Gediman, who said the decision will be based on air quality, visibility, weather patterns and safety for firefighters who are performing protective measures known as back burning near the park's southwestern border.

Coming at the height of the summer season, the closure has dealt a financial blow to Yosemite, a crown jewel of the National Park System, and caused upheaval for thousands of tourists whose summer trips have been abruptly canceled.

"I'm totally gutted we can't visit Yosemite," said British tourist Caroline Lansell, on a summer holiday to California with her husband and two children.

Like many, they booked nearly a year ahead of time to secure a coveted hotel room inside the park, where hotels and campsites fill up months in advance and are typically booked through October. They fly back to England on Sunday and don't know if or when they'll get back to Yosemite.

"It was going to be our first and probably only time because it's such a long, long way to come," said Lansell. "I fancied doing the meadows, the lakes and the massive cliffs. It's really sad. But at least we're alive. There are people who have lost their lives and homes."

The 115-square mile (300-square kilometer) fire near Yosemite started on July 13 and is now 41 percent contained. It is one of several large wildfires that fire crews are battling in California, where record-breaking heat and years of drought have turned immense tracts of forests and parched grasslands into tinder boxes. Overall, six people have died in the blazes and thousands have had to evacuate their homes.

In recent days, the fire reached into remote areas of Yosemite, which is about 250 miles (400 kilometers) from San Francisco. The park ordered about 200 workers who live in Yosemite's popular Valley region to leave Friday because of inaccessible roads.

Not all of the park is closed; roughly the northern third of Yosemite has remained open. But officials say it is Yosemite's longest and most extensive closure since 1997, when floods shut the park for two months.

With Yosemite's highlights off-limits, other nearby National Parks are getting a surge of visitors.

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"We've definitely seen an influx, and visitors say they had to change plans last-minute because they can't go to Yosemite," said Sintia Kawasaki-Yee, a spokeswoman for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Last weekend, Kings Canyon had to shut one of its campgrounds after a rush of visitors depleted its water supply, she said.

Gediman, the park spokesman, estimates a financial loss of several million dollars for the park, its hotels and gateway communities that rely on summer tourists for business. The precise figure will be calculated after the park reopens.

"It's a huge impact," Gediman said. On a typical summer day, anywhere from 15,000 to 20,000 visitors enter the park, which charges \$20 for an individual pass, \$35 for a vehicle pass and up to \$300 for a commercial coach.

"This time of year the campgrounds would be full and the lodging would be full," he said. Since the closure, at least 1,000 campground and hotel bookings have been canceled each day, he said, describing the 7.5-mile-long (12-kilometer-long) Yosemite Valley as "empty" except for smoke.

Yosemite Valley is the centerpiece of the visitor experience, offering sweeping views of its majestic landmarks such as Half Dome, Bridal Veil Fall, El Capitan and Yosemite Falls.

Most of those have been obscured by a choking haze for days, although shifting winds means the pollution levels and visual clarity changes throughout the day, said Pete Lahm, air resource specialist for the U.S. Forest Service, which is running the Wildland Fire Air Quality Response Program. Yosemite officials are referring visitors to the program's website to check pollution levels.

"The whole park at this juncture has been hammered in smoke," said Lahm. "This area definitely has the highest levels (of air pollution) in the U.S. right now," he said, adding that other parts of Northern California and southern Oregon were also at unhealthy levels due to wildfires.

The Environmental Protection Agency's "Air Now" website on Friday recorded the Air Quality Index in Yosemite at a staggering 386, or "hazardous" — higher than China's typically smog-choked capital which had an "unhealthy" AQI of 119 at the same time. Officials note that the AQI changes throughout the day and that the pollution from industrial dust, cars and emissions is different than wildfires burning through trees and grass but still unhealthy.

In addition to shutting down the valley and 350 campsites located there, the park has declared a half-dozen other sites off-limits including the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias, which recently reopened after a three-year renovation, Wawona Road, or Highway 41, from the South Entrance to Tunnel View, and Glacier Point Road.

Hotels, restaurants and other businesses in gateway communities like Oakhurst and Mariposa want tourists to know that they are open for business.

"Normally this time of year we would be super busy. But it's been non-stop cancelations," said Bryan Imrie, owner of Yosemite Ziplines and Adventure Ranch in Mariposa, about an hour's drive from the park. "Where we are, I'm looking at clear blue skies. It's a beautiful day."

Follow AP's wildfire coverage here: <https://apnews.com/tag/Wildfires>

Russia: 18 killed in Siberian oil worker helicopter crash

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian helicopter crashed shortly after takeoff Saturday in Siberia, killing all 18 people aboard, mostly oil workers, authorities said.

The Interstate Aviation Committee, which oversees civil aviation in much of the former Soviet Union, said the Mi-8 helicopter collided with the load being carried by another helicopter. Both had taken off from the same pad in Vankor, above the Arctic Circle, some 2,600 kilometers (1,600 miles) northeast of Moscow.

The second helicopter was undamaged and landed safely, the committee said.

Helicopters frequently carry loads in slings that hang below the craft.

The crashed helicopter was carrying 15 passengers and three crew, according to its operator, UTair airlines. State oil company Rosneft said the passengers were employees of its subsidiary RN Vankor, and

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contract workers.

UTair, one of Russia's largest airlines, operates an extensive fleet of helicopters serving Siberian oil fields as well as fixed-wing flights within Russia and to international destinations, mostly in the former Soviet republics.

The helicopter that crashed was manufactured in 2010 and the pilot had nearly 6,000 hours of experience, including 2,300 as a captain, the UTair statement said.

Russian air safety has improved since the 1990s, when poor aircraft maintenance, pilot training and official oversight in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in a high number of crashes.

In February, a Saratov Airlines An-148 regional jet crashed about six minutes after takeoff from Moscow's Domodedovo Airport, killing all 71 people aboard. Investigators said the crew had failed to turn on a heating unit, resulting in flawed airspeed readings.

A UTair ATR 72 crashed in Siberia in 2012, killing 33 of the 43 people aboard, after failing to be de-iced before takeoff.

Ohio State's Meyer defends self, ex-assistant denies abuse

By RALPH D. RUSSO, AP College Football Writer

Urban Meyer is insisting that he properly handled 2015 allegations of domestic violence against one of his assistant coaches at the time, though he acknowledged he was not forthright with reporters when questioned last week about the claims.

The assistant Meyer fired, Zach Smith, also spoke up on Friday, denying that he abused his ex-wife, backing his former boss and placing Ohio State's athletic director into the middle of the picture.

Two days after Ohio State sidelined Meyer and opened an investigation into what its superstar coach knew and did about accusations of abuse made against Smith by his ex-wife, two central figures in this college football drama answered some questions — and left much to be explained.

Meyer posted a statement addressed to Buckeyes fans on Twitter not long after his team, expected to be one of the best in the nation, opened practice for the upcoming season without him. Meyer was put on paid administrative leave Wednesday.

While Meyer's statement was still being digested, Smith went on Columbus radio station 105.7 The Zone. In the interview, Smith said Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith questioned him during the 2015 football season about the allegations made by Courtney Smith that fall. Police reports were made about two separate incidents, but Zach Smith has never been criminally charged.

Zach Smith was fired last week by Meyer, a few days after his wife obtained a protective order against him.

Smith also did an interview with ESPN. He said he never assaulted his wife and any physical injuries she might have suffered were the result of him defending himself.

He said Gene Smith was alerted by police about the 2015 allegations. Zach Smith said that after speaking to Gene Smith about them, he spoke to Meyer. He said Meyer told him then that he would fire Smith if the head coach found out Smith hit his wife.

"I don't know what else Urban Meyer could have done," Zach Smith told ESPN.

The crisis at one of the most storied programs in college football history comes as the school is reeling from a sexual abuse scandal involving a now-dead sports doctor, Richard Strauss.

The Buckeyes open the season at home Sept. 1 against Oregon State. Co-offensive coordinator Ryan Day is acting head coach and there is no timetable for the Meyer inquiry to conclude.

"Over the past several days I have been portrayed as being indifferent to domestic violence and as someone who did not take appropriate action when warranted," Meyer said.

"Here is the truth: While at the University of Florida and now at the Ohio State University I have always followed proper reporting protocols and procedures when I have learned of an incident involving a student-athlete, coach or member of our staff by elevating the issues to the proper channels. And I did so regarding the Zach Smith incident in 2015. I take that responsibility very seriously and any suggestion

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to the contrary is simply false.”

At Big Ten media days last week, Meyer said he knew of an incident involving the Smiths in 2009 and that he and his wife, Shelley Meyer, addressed it with the Smiths. He was also asked about a 2015 incident alleged by Courtney Smith, who said she told Meyer’s wife about those incidents.

“I can’t say it didn’t happen because I wasn’t there,” Meyer said at the time. “I was never told about anything and nothing ever came to light. I’ve never had a conversation about it. I know nothing about it. First I heard about that was last night. No, and I asked some people back at the office to call and say what happened and they came back and said they know nothing about it.”

Meyer said his intention at media day was not to say anything inaccurate.

“However, I was not adequately prepared to discuss these sensitive personnel issues with the media, and I apologize for the way I handled those questions,” he said.

Meyer said he will fully cooperate with investigators. Ohio State did not respond Friday to a request seeking comment on the comments by Meyer or Smith, who told the radio station his marriage was volatile and that he made mistakes. The Smiths divorced in 2016.

“I don’t believe I have ever threatened her or anyone,” Zach Smith, who had been an assistant at Ohio State since Meyer was hired in 2012, said in the radio interview.

Smith, the grandson of late Buckeyes coach Earle Bruce, a mentor to Meyer, played for Meyer when he was coach at Bowling Green in 2001-02. Smith also was a graduate assistant for Meyer at Florida for five seasons.

In 2009, Zach Smith was accused by his wife of assault, but charges were not filed. Meyer has said he and his wife, Shelley, counseled the couple at the time. Courtney Smith has also said she told Shelley Meyer about the 2015 incidents and shared pictures of injuries through text messages that she shared with college football reporter Brett McMurphy .

In one text to Courtney Smith, Shelley Meyer said of Zach Smith: “He scares me.”

Meyer has been at Ohio State for six seasons, going 73-8 with a national championship in 2014 and two Big Ten conference titles. He earlier won two national titles at Florida.

Ohio State’s policy on sexual misconduct says anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students or volunteers has a duty to report “when they receive a disclosure of sexual misconduct or become aware of information that would lead a reasonable person to believe that sexual misconduct may have occurred involving anyone covered under this policy.”

A clause in Meyer’s new contract, which raised his salary to \$7.6 million this year and runs through 2022, also requires him to “report to Ohio State’s Title IX athletics any known violations” of the sexual misconduct policy involving students, faculty or staff at the risk of being fired with cause.

Firing Meyer without cause would cost Ohio State a nearly \$40 million buyout.

Follow Ralph D. Russo at www.Twitter.com/ralphDrussoAP and listen on <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/ap-top-25-college-football-podcast/id1138957862?mt=2>

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All eyes on ‘right-hand man’ in Manafort trial

By CHAD DAY and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — The bookkeeper said Paul Manafort submitted fake financial documents. The accountant testified he hid foreign bank accounts. And a series of businessmen said he used international wire transfers to pay for millions of dollars in luxury items.

On Friday, a tax preparer even admitted that she helped disguise \$900,000 in foreign income as a sham loan to lower Manafort’s tax bill.

But the most critical moment in the former Trump campaign chairman’s financial fraud trial will likely arrive next week with the testimony of his longtime associate Rick Gates, whom witnesses have described

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as Manafort's "right-hand man" and defense attorneys are looking to blame for any crimes.

Gates, who also served in a senior role in President Donald Trump's campaign, has been a key cooperator for special counsel Robert Mueller's team after he cut a plea deal earlier this year. During that process, he admitted to two felony charges, but when he testifies it will be the first time he'll detail those crimes face-to-face with his former boss and mentor.

The trial, in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, is the first of Mueller's prosecutions to reach a jury. But lawyers have made no mention of Trump or possible campaign coordination with the Kremlin, the central question behind the special counsel's investigation. Still, Trump has made clear his interest in the case, suggesting in a tweet that Manafort was being treated worse than gangster Al Capone. And Manafort's decision to stand trial instead of cooperate has raised speculation that he may be looking for a pardon.

The trial opened with a display of Manafort's opulent lifestyle, then progressed into testimony about what prosecutors say were years of financial deception. In calling Gates, the government will present jurors with the first-hand account of a co-conspirator expected to say Manafort was knee-deep in an alleged scheme to hide millions of dollars from the IRS and defraud several banks.

Manafort's defense team has already signaled that it will paint Gates as an embezzler and liar who took advantage of Manafort and flouted the law without his boss's knowledge. Gates is expected to face bruising cross-examination, and his credibility is likely to be an important test of the prosecution's case.

During the questioning, U.S. District Judge T.S. Ellis III will be both referee and wild card. He has played those roles throughout the trial, repeatedly scolding prosecutors to rein in their depictions of Manafort's lavish lifestyle and demanding that they "move it along." It is not a crime, he has said several times, to be rich and to spend ostentatiously.

Nonetheless, jurors were told of more than \$900,000 in expensive suits, a \$15,000 ostrich jacket and lavish properties replete with expensive audio and video systems, a tennis court encircled by hundreds of flowers and, as one witness put it, "one of the bigger ponds in the Hamptons."

One-by-one, a retired carpenter, a natty clothier and a high-end landscaper detailed how Manafort paid them in international wire transfers from offshore companies.

Prosecutors say Manafort used those companies to stash millions of dollars from his Ukrainian consulting work, proceeds he omitted year-after-year from his income tax returns. Later, they say, when that income dwindled, Manafort launched a different scheme, shoring up his struggling finances by using doctored documents to obtain millions more in bank loans.

On Friday, one of Manafort's tax preparers admitted that she helped disguise \$900,000 in foreign income as a loan in order to reduce his tax burden. Cindy Laporta, who testified under an immunity deal with the government, acknowledged that she agreed under pressure from Gates to alter a tax document for one of Manafort's businesses.

All told, prosecutors allege that Manafort failed to report a "significant percentage" of the more than \$60 million they say he received from Ukrainian oligarchs. They sought to show jurors how that money flowed from more than a dozen shell companies used to stash the income in Cyprus.

Though the names of those companies appeared on wire transfers and at times on his bookkeeper's ledger, both Manafort's accountants and his bookkeeper say they never knew the companies — and corresponding offshore bank accounts — were controlled by Manafort.

When they appeared, the bookkeeper and accountants said, they thought the companies were clients or, in some cases, lenders.

But defense lawyers are trying to convince the jury that Manafort was consumed by his consulting business and left the particulars of his finances to professionals and, in particular, to Gates.

"Money's coming in fast," Manafort's lawyer, Thomas Zehnle, told jurors at the trial's beginning. "It's a lot, and Paul Manafort trusted that Rick Gates was keeping track of it."

Associated Press writers Matthew Barakat and Stephen Braun contributed to this report.

US, North Korean top diplomats exchange pleasantries, barbs

By MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer

SINGAPORE (AP) — Roller-coaster nuclear diplomacy between the United States and North Korea hit highs and lows on Saturday as the countries' top diplomats traded polite words and barbs, leaving efforts to rid the North of its atomic weapons at an uncertain juncture.

At a security conference in Singapore, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accused North Korea and countries including Russia of continuing to violate U.N. sanctions aimed at pressing Pyongyang to give up its nuclear arsenal. But at the same time, he oversaw the handover of a letter to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un from President Donald Trump and exchanged pleasantries with the North's top diplomat.

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, meanwhile, greeted Pompeo with a smile, but then delivered a scathing attack on the Trump administration for approaching the negotiation poorly by insisting on sanctions enforcement. Ri said North Korea would not be forced into acting unilaterally and demanded that the U.S. undertake "confidence building" measures if the negotiation was to be successful.

After Pompeo warned anew that no sanctions would be lifted until North Korea fully and finally denuclearizes, Ri told the annual ASEAN Regional Forum that the North would not be bullied into concessions.

"Confidence is not a sentiment to be cultivated overnight," he said. "In order to build full confidence between the DPRK and the U.S., it is essential for both sides to take simultaneous actions and phased steps to do what is possible one after another." North Korea's official name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"Only when the U.S. ensures that we feel comfortable with and come close to it, will we be able to open our minds to the U.S. and show it in action," Ri said.

The U.S. has previously dismissed calls for a phased approach, insisting that sanctions be maintained until the North delivers on its commitments but suggesting that some other steps may be possible.

Ri, though, appeared unmoved and accused elements of the U.S. government of going against Trump's wishes by taking a hard line on sanctions.

"What is alarming, however, is the insistent moves manifested within the U.S. to go back to the old, far from its leader's intention," he said.

Instead of responding reciprocally to North Korea's suspension of nuclear tests and missile launches and other goodwill gestures such as the return of suspected remains of American troops killed in the Korean War, the U.S. has maintained hostility, Ri said.

"The United States, instead of responding to these measures, is raising its voice louder for maintaining the sanctions against the DPRK and showing the attitude to retreat even from declaring the end of war, a very basic and primary step for providing peace on the Korean Peninsula," he said. He also accused Washington of taking "extremely inappropriate moves" by discouraging third countries from sending high-level delegations to the North's 70th anniversary celebrations in September.

Pompeo had already left the meeting when Ri delivered his remarks in order to travel to Jakarta for talks with senior Indonesian officials. As he arrived in Jakarta, the State Department said that a written reply to Kim from Trump had been delivered to Ri in Singapore.

"We had a quick, polite exchange," Pompeo tweeted. "Our US delegation also had the opportunity to deliver (Trump's) reply to Chairman Kim's letter."

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said Trump's reply to Kim was given to Ri by Sung Kim, the U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines who has been leading logistical negotiations with the North on its pledge to denuclearize. Nauert would not address the content of Trump's letter to Kim.

The White House said earlier in the week that Kim had sent a new letter to Trump and that the president had written a response.

Earlier Saturday, Pompeo warned Russia, China and other countries against any violation of international sanctions on North Korea that could reduce pressure on the North to abandon its nuclear weapons. Pompeo's comments came on the heels of a new United Nations report that found North Korea has not stopped its nuclear and missile programs and is violating U.N. sanctions, including through illicit ship-to-ship transfers of oil.

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Speaking on the sidelines of the Singapore forum, Pompeo told reporters that the U.S. has new, credible reports that Russia is violating U.N. sanctions by allowing joint ventures with North Korean companies and issuing new permits for North Korean guest workers. He said Washington would take "very seriously" any violations, and called for them to be roundly condemned and reversed.

"If these reports prove accurate, and we have every reason to believe that they are, that would be in violation," Pompeo said, noting that the U.N. Security Council had voted unanimously in favor of the sanctions. "I want to remind every nation that has supported these resolutions that this is a serious issue and something we will discuss with Moscow."

"We expect the Russians and all countries to abide to the U.N. Security Council resolutions and enforce sanctions on North Korea," he said. "Any violation that detracts from the world's goal of finally, fully denuclearizing North Korea would be something that America would take very seriously."

At the United Nations, a summary of a report by experts monitoring U.N. sanctions against North Korea was sent to the Security Council on Friday that said North Korea is continuing with both its nuclear and missile programs. And, in addition to the oil transfers, it said the North was violating sanctions by transferring coal at sea and flouting an arms embargo and financial sanctions.

Late Friday, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley raised the alarm, saying that "talk is cheap." "Russia cannot support sanctions with their words in the Security Council only to violate them with their actions," she said in a statement. She made the remarks as the U.S. asked the Security Council to add a North Korean bank executive, a North Korean company, a Chinese company and a Russian bank to the U.N. sanctions blacklist.

In his discussions with Southeast Asian officials in Singapore, Pompeo said he had implored them all to "strictly enforce all sanctions," including an end to ship-to-ship transfers of oil for North Korea, and had been encouraged by the response.

Despite the warning to Russia, Pompeo said he remained optimistic that Kim will follow through on his pledge to Trump to denuclearize. But he said the timeline for the North's full and final denuclearization remains a work in progress.

Associated Press writer Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Aug. 5, the 217th day of 2018. There are 148 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 5, 1962, South African anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela was arrested on charges of leaving the country without a passport and inciting workers to strike; it was the beginning of 27 years of imprisonment.

On this date:

In 1864, during the Civil War, Union Adm. David G. Farragut led his fleet to victory in the Battle of Mobile Bay, Alabama.

In 1884, the cornerstone for the Statue of Liberty's pedestal was laid on Bedloe's Island in New York Harbor.

In 1921, a baseball game was broadcast for the first time as KDKA radio announcer Harold Arlin described the action between the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Philadelphia Phillies from Forbes Field. (The Pirates won, 8-5.)

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the National Labor Board, which was later replaced with the National Labor Relations Board.

In 1936, Jesse Owens of the United States won the 200-meter dash at the Berlin Olympics, collecting the third of his four gold medals.

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In 1953, Operation Big Switch began as remaining prisoners taken during the Korean War were exchanged at Panmunjom.

In 1957, the teenage dance show "American Bandstand," hosted by Dick Clark, made its network debut on ABC-TV.

In 1962, actress Marilyn Monroe, 36, was found dead in her Los Angeles home; her death was ruled a probable suicide from "acute barbiturate poisoning."

In 1967, the U.S. space probe Mariner 7 flew by Mars, sending back photographs and scientific data.

In 1974, the White House released transcripts of subpoenaed tape recordings showing that President Richard Nixon and his chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, had discussed a plan in June 1972 to use the CIA to thwart the FBI's Watergate investigation; revelation of the tape sparked Nixon's resignation.

In 1981, the federal government began firing air traffic controllers who had gone out on strike.

In 1984, actor Richard Burton died in Geneva, Switzerland, at age 58.

In 1991, Democratic congressional leaders formally launched an investigation into whether the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign had secretly conspired with Iran to delay release of American hostages until after the presidential election, thereby preventing an "October surprise" that supposedly would have benefited President Jimmy Carter. (A task force later concluded there was "no credible evidence" of such a deal.)

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush arrived in South Korea to begin a three-country Asia tour. Seven firefighters and two pilots were killed when their helicopter crashed on takeoff while ferrying the crew members from fire lines in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in Northern California. Jose Medellin, a Mexican-born condemned killer, was executed by the state of Texas for his part in the gang rape and murder of two teenage girls, Elizabeth Pena and Jennifer Ertman, in 1993.

Five years ago: A gunman opened fire at a municipal meeting in Ross Township, Pennsylvania, killing three people before he was tackled and shot with his own gun; authorities say the shooting stemmed from a dispute over living conditions at his ramshackle, trash-filled property. (Rockne Newell pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison.) Alex Rodriguez was suspended through 2014 and All-Stars Nelson Cruz, Jhonny Peralta and Everth Cabrera were banned 50 games apiece as Major League Baseball disciplined 13 players in a drug case.

One year ago: The U.N. Security Council unanimously approved tough new sanctions against North Korea for its escalating nuclear and missile programs. Eight-time Olympic gold medalist Usain Bolt finished third in the 100-meter dash at the world track championships in London, which marked his farewell from the sport; the winner was American Justin Gatlin.

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Saxon is 82. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Roman Gabriel is 78. Country songwriter Bobby Braddock is 78. Actress Loni Anderson is 73. Actress Erika Slezak is 72. Rock singer Rick Derringer is 71. Actress Holly Palance is 68. Rock musician Eddie Ojeda (Twisted Sister) is 63. Actress-singer Maureen McCormick is 62. Rock musician Pat Smear is 59. Author David Baldacci is 58. Actress Tawney Kitaen is 57. Actress Janet McTeer is 57. Country musician Mark O'Connor is 57. Basketball Hall of Famer Patrick Ewing is 56. Actor Mark Strong is 55. Director-screenwriter James Gunn is 52. Actor Jonathan Silverman is 52. Country singer Terri Clark is 50. Retired MLB All-Star John Olerud is 50. Rock musician Eicca Toppinen (EYE'-kah TAH'-pihn-nehn) (Apocalyptica) is 43. Country musician Will Sellers (Old Dominion) is 40. Actor Jesse Williams is 38. Actor Brendon Ryan Barrett is 32. Actress Meegan Warner (TV: "TURN: Washington's Spies") is 27. Actress/singer Olivia Holt is 21. Actor Albert Tsai is 14.

Thought for Today: "If everyone is thinking alike, then somebody isn't thinking." — Gen. George S. Patton (1885-1945).