

Groton Daily Independent

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“Every action
in our lives
touches on
some chord
that will
vibrate in
eternity.”

-Edwin Hubbell Chapin

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

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

 **HARR**
Motors

www.harrmotors.com

605-225-3078 ~ 1-800-658-3463

It's Volleyball Action on GDILIVE.COM



Roncalli Cavaliers

VS

Groton Area Tigers



Thursday, Sept. 20, 2018
at Groton, 7:15 pm

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Thursday, September 20, 2018

10:00am: Golf: Boys Varsity Meet vs. Sisseton @ Sisseton Golf Course

4:00pm: Football: Boys 7th Game vs. Aberdeen Central @ Aberdeen

4:00pm: Soccer: Boys Varsity Match vs. James Valley Christian @ Groton Area High School

4:30pm: Volleyball - Roncalli at Groton Area: 7th grade and C match at 4:30 p.m., 8th grade and JV match at 6 p.m. followed by varsity match.

Friday, September 21, 2018

7:00pm: Football: Boys Varsity Game @ Mo-bridge-Pollock High School

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BATES TOWNSHIP WEED NOTICE

OWNERS & TENANTS of Bates Township are hereby notified and required, according to law, to cut all weeds and grass in road ditches adjacent to their property or tenanted by them within Bates township on or before October 1, 2018 or same will be hired done by the township board and assessed property taxes at the rate of \$300 per half mile.

Bates Township Board of Supervisors reminds all landowners and tenants that the road right-of-way extends 33 feet from the center of the township road. This ditch is to be maintained and mowed. Any crops planted in the road right-of-way will be mowed and charged to the landowner. Landowner is responsible for spraying all noxious weeds.

Bates Township Board of Supervisors
Betty Geist
Township Clerk



GRANARY RURAL CULTURAL CENTER
LIVING HISTORY FALL FESTIVAL
The Past Comes Alive!

FREE ADMISSION

Saturday Sept 22, 2018
11 am - 5 pm
at the **GRANARY**
Physical Address: 40161 128th St
RURAL GROTON, SD

LUNCH CONCESSIONS BY:
THE BRASS KETTLE

Music by **JAMI LYNN**
SD Arts Council Touring Artist
Performances at 12:30 & 2:30 pm
Support is provided with funds from the State of South Dakota, through the Department of Tourism and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Stop Back in Time...
Historical Demonstrations & Re-enacting
Pioneer Home Life • One Room School • Music
Kid's Activities • Spelling Bee • Museum Gift Shop
Old Fashioned Entertainment & Much More!
COME DRESSED IN FRONTIER COSTUME - GET A PRIZE
An Event for All Ages!

The GRANARY is the Arts & Culture Campus of Dacotah Prairie Museum
Museum: www.dacotahprairiemuseum.com • Granary: granaryfinnarls.org
THE GRANARY is 5 mi. N of US Hwy 12 - Between Aberdeen & Groton - Driving Directions on Website

Custer State Park to Host Annual Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) will host the 53rd annual Buffalo Roundup and 25th annual Arts Festival in Custer State Park later this month. The Buffalo Roundup begins at 9:30 a.m. MDT on Friday, Sept. 28. The Arts Festival will run from Thursday, Sept. 27, through Saturday, Sept. 29.

"Each year, the Buffalo Roundup brings up to 20,000 spectators from around the world to Custer State Park to view the park's 1,300 buffalo and watch the Old West come alive," said Katie Ceroll, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation. "To have an arts festival with more than 125 arts and craft exhibitors means that there will be no shortage of entertainment for the entire family."

The parking areas for the Roundup, located near the corrals along the Wildlife Loop Road, open at 6:15 a.m. MDT and close at 9 a.m. MDT on Sept. 28. For safety reasons, spectators need to remain in the viewing areas until all the buffalo are corralled which typically occurs around noon.

The annual Arts Festival runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. MDT on Thursday and Friday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 29. The Arts Festival takes place near the State Game Lodge.

"While the Buffalo Roundup's primary purpose is herd management, it also provides our visitors an experience that is unique in the entire world," said Jim Hagen, Secretary of the Department of Tourism. "This event sets South Dakota apart from other states. We hear from visitors around the world about how incredible it is to watch the bison thunder over the rolling prairie. It's something they never forget and provides great storytelling about our state."

A state park entrance license is required on Thursday and Saturday, but there is no cost to attend the Buffalo Roundup or Arts Festival on Friday. Share the experience by using #SDintheField and #BuffaloRoundup when posting images to Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Next year's Buffalo Roundup will be held Friday, Sept. 27, 2019.

To learn more about the event, visit custerstatepark.com, call 605.255.4515 or email CusterStatePark@state.sd.us.

White Lake High School Receives \$10,000 In Highway Safety's "Lesson Learned SD" Program

PIERRE, S.D. - Because one of its students wanted to learn how to be a safe driver, White Lake High School is now \$10,000 richer.

Former White Lake student Audrie Lawrence is the winner of this year's "Lesson Learned SD" program. The South Dakota Office of Highway Safety designed the program to encourage young people to be safe drivers. This is the third year for the program.

Besides Audrie winning \$10,000, the school itself received \$10,000. As designated by Audrie and with some assistance from Superintendent Robert Schroeder, the money will go to the school's music program and school program about bullying. The cash prizes are sponsored by the South Dakota Broadcasters Association.

"Everyone benefits from this worthy program," says Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, who participated in the safe driving assembly Tuesday at the school. "Good driving habits are best learned at a young age, and this program reminds our students how important it is to buckle up, slow down and not look at electronic devices."

The "Lesson Learned SD" website featured safe driving videos on issues such as distracted driving, seatbelt use and driving under the influence. The contest requires its young entrants, South Dakota drivers between the ages of 14 and 19, to watch videos and answer the follow-up safety questions. With the correct answers, those young drivers are eligible for the cash prize.

Audrie was one of 3,479 eligible entries. In 2017, the number of entries was 2,465.

"Each year, the number of students participating in the program has increased," says Office of Highway Safety Director Lee Axdahl. "We have tailored many of our safe driving messages towards young people and it is good to see them striving to be safe drivers."

Steve Willard, executive director of the South Dakota Broadcasters Association, says broadcasters are pleased to be part of the safe driving effort. "It is real money and it goes to kids who have financial needs at that age and it goes to worthy programs at the schools," he says. "But the message and education are even more important. Long after the money is gone and even without the prize, participating students are learning how to be safe drivers. That is a life-long skill and may keep someone alive."

South Dakota's Office of Highway Safety is part of the state Department of Public Safety.

The Lesson Learned website can be found at: <http://www.lessonlearnedsd.com/student/> .

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Today in Weather History

September 20, 1970: During the late afternoon, golfball hail fell in and around Redfield with a tornado reported just north of Doland. No damage was reported with the hail or the tornado.

September 20, 1972: About 430 pm, in southeast South Dakota, a tornado caused an estimated \$95,000 damage to property and 50,000 damage to crops in Utica and nearby rural areas. Buildings were damaged; trees and power lines were downed.

1961: On September 10th, the Television Infrared Observation Satellite observed an area of thunderstorms west-southwest of the Cape Verde Islands, suggesting a possible tropical cyclone. This storm is the first large tropical cyclone to be discovered on satellite imagery and would eventually become Hurricane Esther. On September 20th, Hurricane Esther, a Category 4 storm off of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina began to slow down as it moved north-northeast well off the Jersey shore. The storm continued to weaken as it made a five-day loop south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, then moved to Cape Cod and into Maine on the 26th.

1845 - A tornado traveled 275 miles across Lake Ontario, New York and Lake Champlain. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1909: A large and deadly Category 3 hurricane made landfall near Grand Isle, Louisiana during the late evening hours. The states of Louisiana and Mississippi showed catastrophic damage resulting in 371 deaths and \$265 million in damage (2010 USD).

1926 - A hurricane which hit Miami, FL, on the 18th, pounded Pensacola with wind gusts to 152 mph. Winds raged in excess of 100 mph for four hours, and above 75 mph for 20 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1967 - Hurricane Beulah moved into South Texas, and torrential rains from the hurricane turned the rich agricultural areas of South Texas into a large lake. Hurricane Beulah also spawned a record 115 tornadoes. (David Ludlum)

1983 - The temperature at West Yellowstone MT plunged to six degrees below zero, while the temperature at San Francisco CA soared to 94 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma and west Texas. In Oklahoma, a thunderstorm at Seiling produced three inches of rain in one hour, golf ball size hail, and wind gusts to 60 mph which collapsed a tent at the state fair injuring nine persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Showers and thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in central Wyoming, and snow in some of the higher elevations. Casper WY reported 1.75 inches of rain in 24 hours, and a thunderstorm north of the Wild Horse Reservoir produced 1.90 inches of rain in just forty minutes.

1989 - Hugo jilted Iris. Hurricane Hugo churned toward the South Atlantic Coast, gradually regaining strength along the way. Tropical Storm Iris got too close to Hugo, and began to weaken. A cold front brought strong and gusty winds to the Great Basin and the Southern Plateau Region, with wind gusts to 44 mph reported at Kingman AZ. (The National Weather Summary)

2002: A glacial avalanche buries the village of Karmadon in Russia, killing more than 100 people.

2005 - Hurricane Rita tracked through the Florida Straits and just south of the Florida Keys. Winds were sustained at tropical storm force at Key West, where peak winds gusted to 76 mph.

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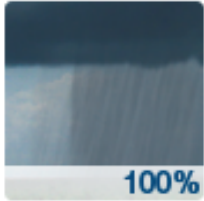
Today

Tonight

Friday

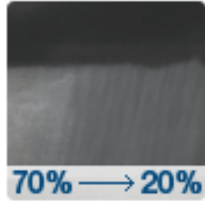
Friday
Night

Saturday



Showers

High: 57 °F



Showers
Likely then
Slight Chance
Showers and
Breezy

Low: 43 °F



Partly Sunny

High: 59 °F



Mostly Clear

Low: 39 °F



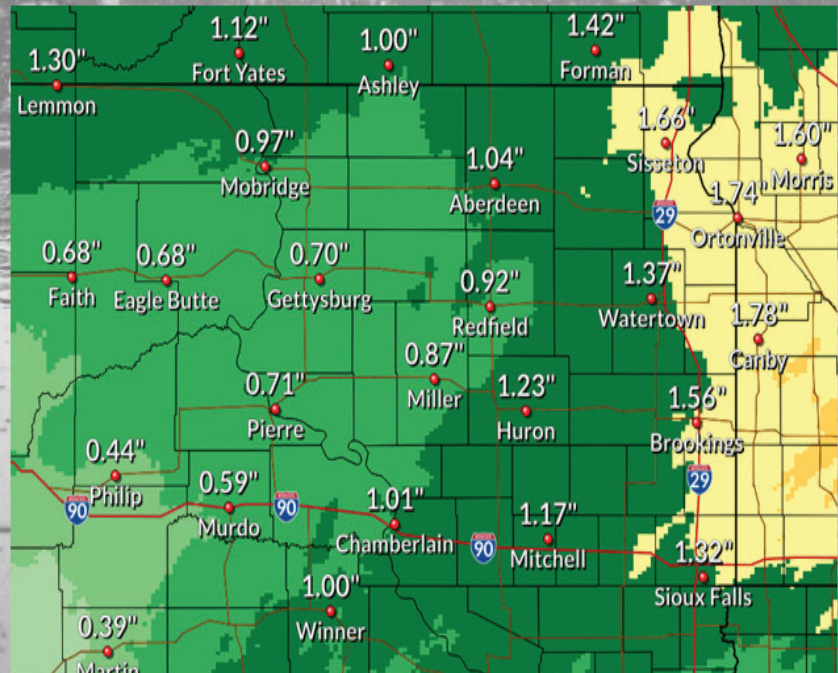
Sunny

High: 70 °F

Another Round
Of Rain Today

Temperatures - 50s & Low 60s

Dry &
Warmer
Friday &
Weekend



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 9/20/2018 3:43 AM Central

Published on: 09/20/2018 at 3:52AM

Another round of rain is expected to head up through South Dakota today, with generally an inch or so across the central part of the state into the James valley, and over an inch for the Coteau and far eastern SD/western MN. Dry conditions will follow for Friday and the weekend with milder temperatures.

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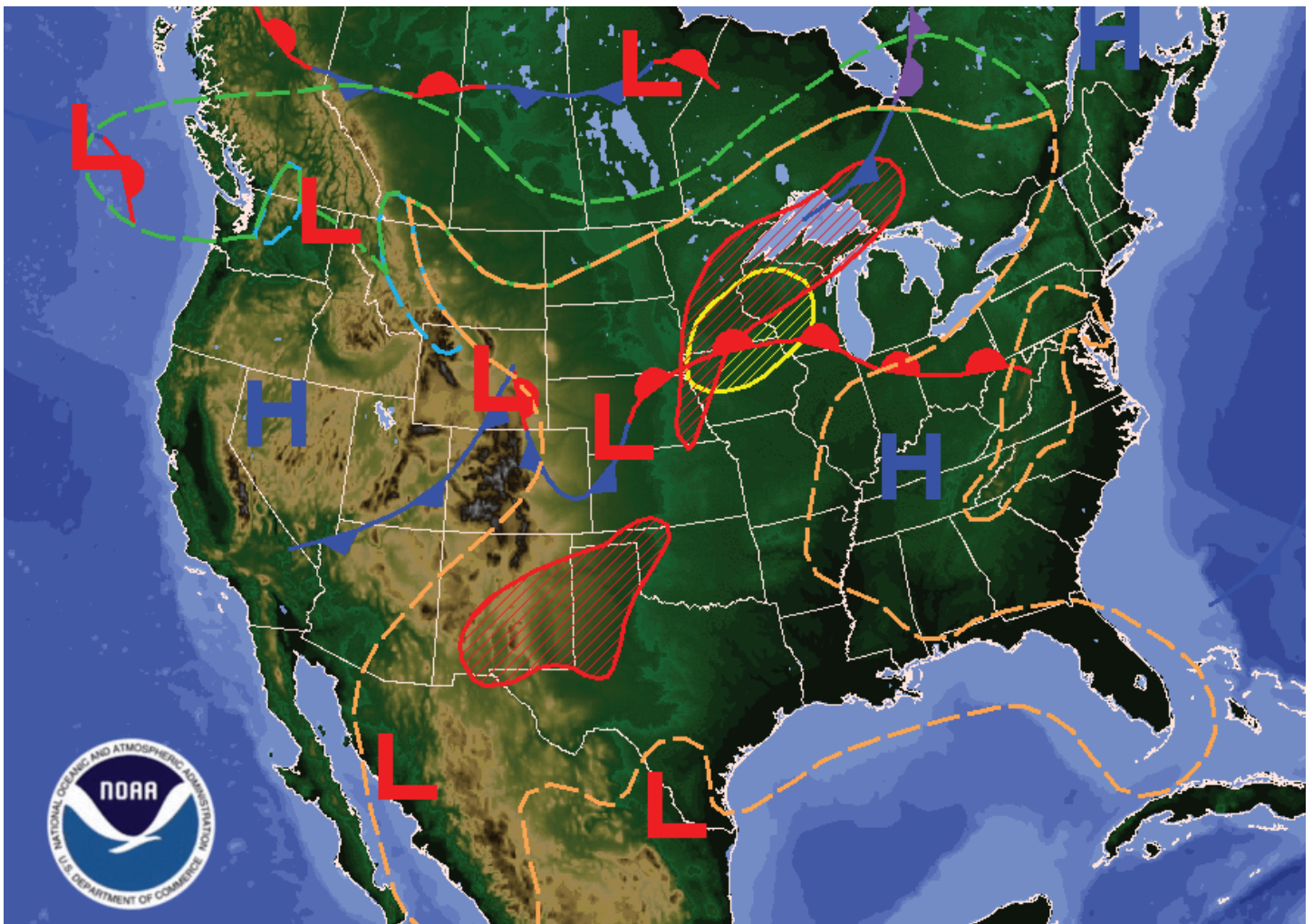
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 59.5 F at 3:31 PM
Low Outside Temp: 56.1 F at 6:11 AM
High Gust: 20.0 Mph at 11:48 AM
Precip: 0.37

Today's Info

Record High: 94° in 1937
Record Low: 20° in 1901
Average High: 70°F
Average Low: 44°F
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.41
Precip to date in Sept.: 1.19
Average Precip to date: 17.70
Precip Year to Date: 12.45
Sunset Tonight: 7:35 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:20 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Sep 20, 2018, issued 4:48 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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AN EVERLASTING KINGDOM

World events, at times, are overwhelming. The moral and spiritual decay, the expansion of religions that would eliminate Christianity, the rise of secularism and political correctness have dimmed the voice of believers. The increased number of martyrs has raised the question: Will Christianity survive?

Absolutely! The Psalmist long ago assured us that: Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Your dominion endures through all generations!

Nearly two thousand years ago some tried to do away with Jesus. They nailed Him to a cross. Sealed Him in a tomb. Surrounded that tomb with guards and proudly said, This is the end of Him. They thought that they had rid the world of His presence. But they were fooled. He came back from the dead and became the Living Christ! He was victorious over sin and death and became our Savior.

Robert Ingersoll, the atheist, held up a Bible and declared, In fifteen years this book will be in a morgue. Fifteen years later it was he who would be in a morgue.

Islam swept across the Middle East in the 7th century determined to destroy Christianity. A Christian church in Damascus was turned into a mosque. Today, the words, Thy Kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting Kingdom and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations are inscribed over the entrance.

One day there will be no kingdoms but Gods Kingdom. It is not about endurance, but who will be its citizens!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us courage to speak Your truth to do all that we can to expand Your Kingdom! In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 145:13a Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Your dominion endures through all generations.

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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)
- 7/4/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/14/2019 Summer Fest
- 9/8/2018 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/6/2018 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/12/2018 Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/01/2018 Olive Grove Golf Course 2018 Holiday Party

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

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash
07-19-22-23-31
(seven, nineteen, twenty-two, twenty-three, thirty-one)
Estimated jackpot: \$306,000

Lotto America
12-13-25-33-40, Star Ball: 8, ASB: 5
(twelve, thirteen, twenty-five, thirty-three, forty; Star Ball: eight; ASB: five)
Estimated jackpot: \$8.04 million

Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$275 million

Powerball
04-39-48-50-51, Powerball: 11, Power Play: 3
(four, thirty-nine, forty-eight, fifty, fifty-one; Powerball: eleven; Power Play: three)
Estimated jackpot: \$163 million

A 'little sore,' Packers' Rodgers gets ready for Redskins

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Aaron Rodgers channeled a fictional prize fighter to describe how he felt after playing the Minnesota Vikings.

"If you've seen (the movie) 'Rocky III,' you know Clubber Lang has a prediction before the fight: 'Pain,'" Rodgers said with a smile on Wednesday. "That's kind of what it felt like."

Rodgers said that he remained a "little sore" following the 29-29 tie against Minnesota last week when he played with a brace to protect his injured left knee.

It's not the only pain that he felt.

With limited mobility, Rodgers was knocked around by the Vikings' top defense for four sacks and nine quarterback hits.

Rodgers played well, though, and completed 30 of 42 passes for 281 yards and one touchdown. He even rushed three times for 8 yards, including a 7-yard scramble to convert a third-and-7 on the Packers' first touchdown drive.

"The heat and the adrenaline definitely helped, but it's just going to be something you've got to deal with for a while," Rodgers said. "Take it week by week. It doesn't seem like there's a major setback at this point, so just being smart about it and trying to get ready to play Sunday."

Rodgers didn't practice on Wednesday.

Coming off a Sunday night victory over Chicago in Week 1 and playing 10 additional minutes against Minnesota in Week 2, coach Mike McCarthy scrapped practice in favor of a walk-through as his team began prep for the road game Sunday against the Washington Redskins.

"We're pretty beat up coming off a night and then 4 2/3 quarters on Sunday. Just trying to be smart about it," Rodgers said.

McCarthy wouldn't commit to Rodgers practicing on Thursday, which is typically the Packers' heaviest

practice day of the week.

"We're still in a day-by-day mode," McCarthy said.

Rodgers, who acknowledged the injury could get worse before it gets better, practiced on Saturday before facing Minnesota. He would like to practice at least once this week to get ready for Washington.

"I'm going to need to see certain looks in the walkthroughs to replace those reps I may or not get in practice and try and get out there at least one day this week and feel good about the stuff we have moving on into Sunday," Rodgers said.

MATTHEWS PENALTY

The NFL announced this week that it would use linebacker Clay Matthews' roughing-the-passer penalty on Minnesota's Kirk Cousins as part of its weekly teaching video provided to teams. A similar hit on Rodgers by Vikings linebacker Eric Kendricks would also be part of the video.

The flag on Matthews overturned an interception by cornerback Jaire Alexander that could have allowed the Packers to run out the clock for a win.

"We haven't changed anything with the way we're coaching our players," McCarthy said.

Rodgers, who suffered a broken collarbone following a hit by Minnesota's Anthony Barr last season, said the league has gone too far in protecting quarterbacks.

"I think we enjoy the protection below the knee and above the shoulders, but I don't know many quarterbacks who want those calls," he said. "The one on me, I don't think that's roughing the passer, either.

Added Rodgers: "There's a goal to limit these hits but they're pretty obvious when you see them — you know, a guy picking somebody up and full weight on them. What do you say to Clay? His head is out of it. His hand is on the ground. That's not roughing the passer. Same thing with Kendricks. What do you say to him on that?"

Rodgers said he did not get up from the turf after the hit from Kendricks looking for a penalty. He called himself a traditionalist.

"I've watched the game and loved the game for a long time, and some of the rules I think help," Rodgers said, "but some of the rules maybe are going the wrong direction."

Notes: RB Aaron Jones is back following a two-game suspension, but his "role will be secondary" to that of Jamaal Williams and Ty Montgomery, McCarthy said. ... The team released CB Deate Burton to make room on the roster to activate Jones. ... McCarthy did not expect CB Kevin King (groin) to play this week, though he did not think it would be a long-term issue.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/tag/NFLfootball> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

US doubles tribal funding to fight violence against women

By MARY HUDETZ, Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — The U.S. Justice Department will double the funding it gives tribes for public safety programs and crime victims as it tries to tackle the high rates of violence against Native American women, a top official said.

The department's third-highest ranking official said more than \$113 million in public safety funding will be doled out to 133 tribes and Alaska Native villages to try to address the issue.

An additional \$133 million will be awarded in the coming weeks to tribes to help Native American crime victims, Jesse Panuccio, principal deputy associate attorney general, announced Wednesday in Santa Fe.

The announcement comes after a series of stories by The Associated Press helped put an increased focus on the deaths and disappearances of Native American women and girls. Panuccio noted that tribal leaders have called for more robust investigations into those cases and human trafficking.

"We recognize the serious nature of the problem we're facing, and we are trying, through a variety of strategies — both through the funding and the use of our own prosecutors and building up awareness — to address these issues," Panuccio said.

For decades, tribes largely had been unable to directly access money in a U.S. program aimed at support-

ing crime victims nationwide — even as federal figures showed more than half of Native American women faced sexual or domestic violence at some point in their lives. On some reservations, Native American women are killed at a rate more than 10 times the national average.

Figures at the end of 2017 showed a disproportionate number of Native women listed as missing. Based on figures obtained from an FBI database, AP found this month 633 open missing person cases for Native American women, who make up 0.4 percent of the U.S. population but 0.7 percent of cases overall.

African-American women were the only other group to be overrepresented in the caseload compared with their proportion of the population.

The Justice Department funding increase follows years of congressional efforts to fix a system that many say has left Native American women especially vulnerable to violent crime.

Legal experts and victims' advocates blame underfunded police departments that lack the resources to investigate crimes and lingering jurisdictional gaps among federal, tribal and local law enforcement agencies that often result in cases going unprosecuted.

A series of congressional proposals are trying address how authorities' handle and track reports of missing women on reservations.

A law proposed by U.S. Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, a North Dakota Democrat, aims to establish protocols for handling cases of missing and murdered Native Americans. It also would require annual reports to Congress on the number of missing and murdered Native American women, saying accurate statistics could potentially help authorities detect patterns and solve more cases.

A measure to expand the Violence Against Women's Act calls for similar proposals and for amending laws to give tribes authority to prosecute non-Native Americans suspected of selling tribal members for sex or running human trafficking rings. The U.S. Senate voted Tuesday to extend the law in its current form for two more months, delaying proposals to expand it.

"There is still much work to do," Heitkamp said.

The Justice Department has not expressed support or opposition to further expanding tribal jurisdiction over non-Native Americans. Now, tribes are able to prosecute people who aren't tribal members only in assault cases where the victim is a woman and knows her assailant.

Panuccio said the department's approach to tackling violence against Native American women focuses on partnering with tribes to assign more special prosecutors capable of handling cases in federal and tribal courts and supporting tribal law enforcement and victims.

The special prosecutors are being tasked with handling sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and stalking cases — as well as sex trafficking cases where any of those other crimes are involved, he said.

Juana Majel-Dixon, co-chairwoman of a National Congress of American Indians' taskforce established to address violence against women, welcomes the increase in funding that she and others spent years advocating for, though she still questions whether the money will stretch far enough.

"When you think about the enormity of (the number of) victims we're talking about, the money being provided has been graciously received," she said. "But it's not enough."

Follow Hudetz on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/marymhudetz> .

Read AP's full coverage on missing Native American women: <https://apnews.com/tag/MissingInIndian-Country> .

Death of man found near Renner investigated as homicide

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sheriff's officials say the death of a Sioux Falls man whose body was found in a ditch in Minnehaha County is being investigated as a homicide.

Minnehaha County Sheriff's Capt. Jason Gearman said Wednesday the homicide is apparently drug related. No one is in custody.

Gearman says they've developed some leads in the case and are conducting interviews. The victim is

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identified as 40-year-old Lakendrick Thornton. Authorities say Thornton died of a single gunshot wound. The body was found by a resident Tuesday near Renner. The sheriff's office, the South Dakota Highway Patrol and Sioux Falls police are investigating.

Surgeon denies negligence in removing woman's healthy kidney

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota surgeon admitted to mistakenly removing an Iowa woman's healthy kidney but denied that he breached the standard of care, according to the surgeon's response to a lawsuit filed by the patient.

Dr. Scott Baker and The Surgical Institute of South Dakota acknowledged in an answer to Dena Knapp's lawsuit that Baker removed Knapp's right kidney instead of an adrenal gland and an associated mass, the Argus Leader reported. Knapp, of Milford, Iowa, filed the lawsuit last month alleging professional negligence. She developed stage-three kidney disease after her October 2016 surgery.

Baker and the Sioux Falls hospital "deny the nature, scope and extent of plaintiff's claimed injuries, losses and damages," their response stated.

Knapp alleged that she wasn't told about the mix-up until after she was released from the hospital. Baker had known on the day of the surgery that he hadn't removed the adrenal gland because he was notified by Avera McKennan Hospital's pathology department, according to the lawsuit.

But Baker denied the claim in his answer, claiming that Knapp was provided with the information on the day of her surgery.

Knapp's medical records also indicated "a very superiorly located right adrenal gland," which was near the large lobe of her liver, according to the defendant's answer.

Baker and The Surgical Institute said they did not breach the standard of care by removing the kidney, failing to remove the adrenal gland and failing to admit the mistake. They also deny that Knapp suffered damages.

Knapp chose to have her adrenal gland removed at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

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

Davison County approves 2 swine finishing operations

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — Davison County officials have approved two separate 2,400-head swine finishing barns in the county.

The Daily Republic reports that the county Board of Adjustments voted Tuesday in support of the swine finishing operations after more than 50 people showed up to discuss and debate the projects. Pipestone Systems would manage hogs at both operations.

One of the projects would be located in the northwest part of the county about 3,300 feet from the closest residence. The other would be southwest of Mitchell.

Concerns have focused on odor and potential runoff.

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

Sioux Falls voters approve \$190 million school bond issue

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls voters have overwhelmingly approved a \$190 million bond issue to build new schools and improve existing facilities.

The measure needed 60 percent approval in Tuesday's election to pass and got more than 80 percent. Superintendent Brian Maher says voters spoke "loud and clear."

The money will be used to build a new elementary school, middle school and high school by 2024. It also will fund renovations at 14 other campuses.

Rapid City woman pleads not guilty to charges in fatal crash

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City woman has pleaded not guilty to six charges related to a July motorcycle trike crash in Box Elder that killed her passenger.

The Rapid City Journal reports that 39-year-old Sophia Elbow Shield faces charges including felony vehicular homicide and misdemeanor driving under the influence in the death of 62-year-old Brian Manor of Rapid City.

Authorities also allege that Elbow Shield was driving too fast when the motorcycle trike went in a ditch and hit a barbed wire fence. Manor died at the scene. Elbow Shield suffered serious injuries.

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

Faulkton school district eyes \$8.2 million bond issue

FAULKTON, S.D. (AP) — The Faulkton school district hopes to have a January election on a bond issue for school improvements.

Superintendent Scott Lepke says architects estimate it would cost \$8.2 million to add a new middle school, high school and commons area at the Faulkton school. The American News reports that the estimate does not include the hiring of a construction manager.

Community meetings would be held before any vote on a bond issue that would allow the district to levy additional property taxes for the project.

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

GOP warns time running out for Kavanaugh's accuser to talk

By ALAN FRAM and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans are warning that time is running out for Brett Kavanaugh's accuser to tell Congress about her claim he sexually assaulted her when both were teenagers, even as President Donald Trump called the woman's allegation hard to believe in one of the GOP's sharpest attacks on her credibility.

With Kavanaugh's Supreme Court nomination dangling in the balance, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee said his panel still planned a Monday morning hearing that Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford were invited to attend.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, wrote Ford's attorneys Wednesday that the panel was giving the California psychology professor until 10 a.m. Friday to submit a biography and a prepared statement "if she intends to testify" Monday.

It remained unclear, though, whether Ford would attend or if the hearing would occur without her as a drama that has riveted Washington since emerging a week ago was injected with a fresh burst of election season suspense.

After initially saying through a lawyer Monday that she was willing to appear, Ford has since said she first wants a full FBI investigation of her accusation. Trump and Senate Republicans have been emphatic that an FBI renewal of its background checks on Kavanaugh won't happen, saying an investigation by committee staff — which Democrats are boycotting — is sufficient.

Ford's demand has been fully backed by Democrats.

Lisa Banks, a Ford attorney, wrote that Grassley's plan to call just two witnesses, Kavanaugh and Ford, "is not a fair or good faith investigation" and said "multiple witnesses" she did not name should be included.

"The rush to a hearing is unnecessary, and contrary to the Committee discovering the truth," Banks wrote.

The standoff left both parties gambling over which of their approaches would appeal to voters in November's elections, which will determine House and Senate control.

Republican leaders trying to keep GOP senators behind Kavanaugh are offering Ford a chance to describe

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her allegation, either in a hearing room before television cameras or in private. Republicans have largely stood by Kavanaugh's denials.

Democrats are casting Republicans as strong-arming a wronged woman, their eyes on a #MeToo movement that has caught fire and exploded the careers of dozens of male titans.

"Republicans are trying to bully her into a rigged hearing," No. 2 Senate Democratic leader Dick Durbin of Illinois tweeted about Ford.

Trump told reporters, "I can only say this: He is such an outstanding man. Very hard for me to imagine that anything happened."

That remark was noteworthy because most Republicans have handled the question of Ford's credibility more gingerly. They say they want to give Ford, now a professor at Palo Alto University, every chance to tell her story.

Ford has contended that at a house party in the 1980s, a drunken Kavanaugh tried undressing her and stifling her cries on a bed before she fled.

Republicans are resisting all Democratic efforts to slow and perhaps block what once seemed a smooth path to confirmation that would promote the conservative appeals court judge by the Oct. 1 opening of the Supreme Court's new term. A substantial delay could push confirmation past the November elections, when Democrats have a shot at winning Senate control, plus allow more time for unforeseen problems to pop up.

There were signs the GOP's strategy of planning a nationally televised hearing yet also offering Ford the option to testify privately was keeping possible Republican defections in check. The party controls the Senate 51-49 and the Judiciary panel by 11-10, so it cannot afford GOP "no" votes.

Moderate GOP Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, who's had her share of clashes with Trump, said she hoped Ford would reconsider a decision not to testify and "it's not fair to Judge Kavanaugh" if she refuses. "Otherwise, there are these very serious allegations hanging over the head of a nominee who has emphatically denied them," she said on radio WVOM in Bangor.

Going further, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said Democrats' demands for an FBI investigation were a ploy to delay a confirmation vote. "It is imperative the Judiciary Committee move forward on the Kavanaugh nomination and a committee vote be taken as soon as possible," the committee member said in a statement.

As for a possible FBI intervention, Grassley said in his letter to Ford's lawyers, "We have no power to commandeer an Executive Branch agency into conducting our due diligence."

In a separate letter to Democrats, Grassley wrote that committee aides were "even willing to fly to California, or anywhere else, to meet her." He also wrote that GOP aides tried to arrange interviews with two other "alleged witnesses." The letter mentioned no names and committee staff declined to identify them.

Kavanaugh did not return to the White House Wednesday after spending the two previous days there. He spoke by phone with officials working on strategy, said an aide familiar with the proceedings but not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

Kavanaugh spent hours Tuesday in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, part of the White House complex. He prepared for Monday's potential hearing with officials including White House counsel Don McGahn, Justice Department aides, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders and communications director Bill Shine.

Shine was ousted from his previous job at Fox News in part due to his handling of sexual harassment claims at the company.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville, Padmananda Rama, Jonathan Lemire, Kevin Freking and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Kim, Moon join hands on peak of sacred North Korean volcano

By ERIC TALMADGE and FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — The leaders of the rival Koreas took to the road for the final day of their summit Thursday, standing on the peak of a beautiful volcano considered sacred in the North and a centerpiece of propaganda used to legitimize the Kim family's rule, their hands clasped and raised in a pose of triumph. Their trip to the mountain on the North Korean-Chinese border, and the striking photo-op that will resonate in both Koreas, followed a day of wide-ranging agreements they trumpeted as a major step toward peace.

However, their premier accord on the issue that most worries the world — the North's pursuit of nuclear-tipped missiles that can accurately strike the U.S. mainland — contained a big condition: Kim Jong Un stated that he would permanently dismantle North Korea's main nuclear facility only if the United States takes unspecified corresponding measures.

Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in flew separately to an airport near Mount Paektu on Thursday morning where they then met up and drove to the mountain.

Photos showed the leaders smiling broadly as they posed at the summit, their wives grinning at their sides, a brilliant blue sky and the deep crater lake that tops the volcano in the background; they also toured the shores of the lake. Members of the Kim family are referred to as sharing the "Paektu Bloodline," and the volcano is emblazoned on the national emblem and lends its name to everything from rockets to power stations.

Many South Koreans also feel drawn to the volcano, which, according to Korean mythology was the birthplace of Dangun, the founder of the first ancient Korean kingdom, and has long been considered one of the most beautiful places on the peninsula. Not everyone was pleased, though. About 100 anti-North Korea protesters rallied in central Seoul to express anger about the summit and displayed slogans that read, "No to SK-NK summit that benefits Kim Jong Un."

Moon arrived in South Korea later Thursday and was expected to brief the media.

The leaders are basking in the glow of the joint statement they settled Wednesday. Compared to the vague language of their two earlier summits, Kim and Moon seem to have agreed on an ambitious program meant to tackle soaring tensions last year that had many fearing war as the North tested a string of increasingly powerful weapons.

Kim promised to accept international inspectors to monitor the closing of a key missile test site and launch pad and to visit Seoul soon, and both leaders vowed to work together to try to host the Summer Olympics in 2032.

But while containing several tantalizing offers, their joint statement appeared to fall short of the major steps many in Washington have been looking for — such as a commitment by Kim to provide a list of North Korea's nuclear facilities, a solid step-by-step timeline for closing them down, or an agreement to allow international inspectors to assess progress or discover violations.

It also was unclear what "corresponding steps" North Korea wants from the U.S. to dismantle its nuclear site.

The question is whether it will be enough for President Donald Trump to pick up where Moon has left off. Trump told reporters Wednesday that the outcome of the summit was "very good news" and that "we're making tremendous progress" with North Korea. He didn't indicate in his brief remarks whether the U.S. would be willing to take further steps to encourage North Korean action on denuclearization.

Declaring they had made a major step toward peace, Moon and Kim stood side by side Wednesday as they announced their agreement.

"We have agreed to make the Korean Peninsula a land of peace that is free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threat," Kim said. "The road to our future will not always be smooth and we may face challenges and trials we can't anticipate. But we aren't afraid of headwinds because our strength will grow as we overcome each trial based on the strength of our nation."

Moon urged unity for all Koreans in a speech he gave Wednesday night to the crowd gathered for North

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Korea's signature mass games. "We have lived together for 5,000 years and lived in separation for 70 years. I now propose that we completely eliminate the hostility of the past 70 years and take a big step forward in peace so that we can become one again."

Historians say the 5,000-year timeline of Korean history is a groundless claim that became part of South Korea's official narrative after being inserted in school textbooks during the rule of former dictator Chun Doo-hwan.

This week's summit comes as Moon is under increasing pressure from Washington to find a path forward in efforts to get Kim to completely — and unilaterally — abandon his nuclear arsenal.

Trump has maintained that he and Kim have a solid relationship, and both leaders have expressed interest in a follow-up summit to their meeting in June in Singapore. North Korea has been demanding a declaration formally ending the Korean War, which was stopped in 1953 by a cease-fire, but neither leader mentioned it Wednesday as they read the joint statement.

In the meantime, however, Moon and Kim made concrete moves of their own to reduce tensions on their border.

According to a statement signed by the countries' defense chiefs, the two Koreas agreed to establish buffer zones along their land and sea borders to reduce military tensions and prevent accidental clashes. They also agreed to withdraw 11 guard posts from the Demilitarized Zone by December and to establish a no-fly zone above the military demarcation line that bisects the two Koreas that will apply to planes, helicopters and drones.

Other agreements aimed at removing some longstanding irritants from their relations, such as allowing more contact between families divided by the Korean War. Moon also appeared to be making good on his proposals to help build up the North's infrastructure and open cross-border rail links.

Klug reported from Seoul. Associated Press writers Hyung-jin Kim and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul contributed to this report. Talmadge is the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief. Follow him on Instagram and Twitter: @EricTalmadge

Relatives: Texas victims more than the troubles they endured

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN and MATT SEDENSKY, Associated Press

LAREDO, Texas (AP) — Janelle Ortiz dreamed of becoming famous. Melissa Ramirez imagined a day when the street wasn't home and drugs not her preoccupation. Claudine Luera just ached to see her children do better than she had.

All of these women, bound by difficulties in life, met an eerily similar death: They were shot in the head and left on rural Texas roadsides, allegedly by a Border Patrol agent who has been described as a serial killer. Relatives of the dead are now grieving for loved ones who, they say, were more than the troubles they endured.

"They had families. They were loved. They were someone. They were human," said Colette Mireles, a sister of Luera.

The suspect's motive remains unknown. Authorities said the three women and a fourth woman, Guiselda Alicia Cantu, whose name was released Wednesday, were sex workers, and that Border Patrol supervisor Juan David Ortiz knew some of them.

Each lived a life littered with hardship. Gracie Perez remembered her sister-in-law, 29-year-old Ramirez, telling her she was raped when she was 13. She dropped out of high school, experienced depression and eventually began living on the streets. Her five children were left in the care of others. She struggled with a drug habit.

Despite all of that, her relatives remembered someone always trying to make others laugh. Ramirez liked pulling up funny videos on YouTube, devouring whatever food was before her and enjoying TV at full blast as she fell asleep on the couch.

Perez said her sister-in-law frequently returned home to her mother's house, where two of her children

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live, typically staying a few days, vowing to get off drugs and improve her life before returning to the streets. "She wanted to be a better mom, a better person," Perez said. "She didn't want to be running the streets anymore."

Janelle Ortiz, 28, envisioned a future where her personality and gift for talking with nearly anyone transformed her into someone famous. Rosenda Ortiz, her younger sister, remembered the difficult childhood they shared, with them constantly being thrust into new homes. She said her sister was strong and had a big heart, always asking what others needed.

Rosenda Ortiz hoped that one day she'd be able to get a home of her own and invite her sister to come live with her.

"He was not known as a prostitute or a sex worker," she said, using pronouns she knows her transgender sister would have chided her for. "He was just a human being like the other victims. He was just living his life."

Mireles last talked to her 42-year-old sister two days before her body was found. She was "over the moon" upon hearing that one of her sons was doing well in school and was already ironing out plans for prom with his girlfriend.

As children, the sisters were at each other's throats. But Mireles marveled at her sister's ability to smile through her pain, even as her life spiraled downward the past few years. She always knew she might get a call with news of Luera's death, but she figured it would be an overdose. To hear she was found shot, clinging to life on the side of the road, was harrowing.

The suspect told police that Luera questioned him about being the last person to have seen Ramirez before her death, authorities said. Mireles takes some comfort thinking of her sister's bravery in confronting him.

"My sister was feisty, so I'm sure she put up a hell of a fight," she said.

Joey Tellez, the attorney for the 35-year-old suspect, released a statement saying he would not be commenting on the case. Ortiz is a Navy veteran who had been in the Border Patrol about 10 years.

Back at the modest home Ramirez frequented, an American flag is tied to a front window of a faded green trailer, and toys are strewn across the yard. Her mother, Maria Cristina Benevidez, steps haltingly as she places a photo of her daughter beside the wooden box that holds her ashes, hanging rosary beads and a gold cross necklace from the frame.

Roosters are crowing, a Chihuahua named Mia is barking and Benevidez stands solemnly, her head bowed. Two weeks before Ramirez was found, she sat at the kitchen table in this home and shared a frightening premonition.

"I'm going to get killed. I'm going to be dead in less than a month," her brother Cesar Ramirez remembered his sister saying.

"Stop saying nonsense," he said his mother responded. "Stop saying those stupid things."

She persisted, insisting she would be shot in the head.

"They're going to kill me. They're going to kill me," she said.

Ramirez was drunk, her sister-in-law said, and she didn't offer any more details of her vision.

Later, Perez said, her sister-in-law pressed her to join her for a night of partying. Ramirez called her over and over, but she didn't answer. Now, she thinks she should have done something more, and she's haunted by Ramirez's parting words.

"This is the last time you're going to see me," she warned.

Sedensky reported from New York.

The longest week: Carolinas worn out by Florence

By **CLAIRE GALOFARO** and **JEFFREY COLLINS**, Associated Press

WILMINGTON, N.C. (AP) — Hurricane Florence is still wearing out the Carolinas, where residents have endured an agonizing week of violent winds, torrential rain, widespread flooding, power outages and death.

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Frustration and sheer exhaustion are building as thousands of people wait to go home seven days after the storm began battering the coast. Florence is blamed for at least 37 deaths, including those of two women who drowned when a sheriff's van taking them to a mental health facility was swept off a road.

"I'm just ready for this to be over, to be honest" said Evan Jones, a college student who evacuated from Wilmington and doesn't know when he will get back. "I'm trying to get it all out of my head."

With the remnants of Florence finally out to sea and skies bright over rivers still swelling with muddy water, President Donald Trump visited the disaster zone, riding through soggy neighborhoods and helping pass out warm meals at a church in the hard-hit coastal town of New Bern.

"How's the house?" Trump told one person. "You take care of yourself."

There wasn't any presidential fanfare 120 miles away in Fayetteville. There, Roberta and Joseph Keithley had been sleeping on cots set up in a school classroom since Friday. They still didn't know if their home was ruined.

"It's getting a little frustrating, but you have to deal with it and roll with the punches," said Roberta Keithley, 73. "It's just another hurdle to get over in life."

To the south, daybreak brought a return of floodwaters to Nichols, South Carolina, which also was inundated by Hurricane Matthew two years ago. The flooding from Florence had subsided, only to get worse again.

Mayor Lawson Battle said that as far as he knew, everyone in the town of about 360 people evacuated as the water first started to invade town Monday. But Battle just couldn't think about that anymore.

"I'm focusing on this disaster at hand," he said. "I don't have time to think. I'm just so tired."

Access improved to Wilmington, a North Carolina port city of 120,000 that was cut off for days by high water. But officials said they don't know when evacuees would be able to return home, and it may be next week before conditions improve drastically since the Cape Fear River isn't expected to crest at the city until Monday or Tuesday.

"Understand: There is a lot of water inland, and it is continuing to make its way downstream," county manager Chris Coudreit said.

Nearly 3 feet (0.9 meters) of rain fell in places, and dozens of cities had more than 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain. Roads remained dangerous, and some were still being closed as swollen rivers emptied toward the ocean.

North Carolina officials said some 7,800 people remained in shelters, down from about 10,000 on Monday despite Gov. Roy Cooper's plea to stay put.

In Lumberton, where the Lumber River still covered parts of town, water was deep enough that vehicles passing by on streets sent wakes into partially submerged homes, businesses and a church.

Some of those who left shelters may have been headed toward the coast on U.S. 421, where a long line of cars, utility crews and trucks loaded with generators sat in a jam.

About 161,000 homes and businesses were still without electricity in North Carolina, more than a quarter of them in the county where Wilmington is located.

The deaths, which have occurred in three states, include those of two women who were being taken to a mental health facility when the van they were riding in was engulfed by floodwaters from the Little Pee Dee River in South Carolina, authorities said.

Horry County Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Brooke Holden said two deputies in the van tried to get the victims out but couldn't. Rescue teams plucked the deputies from the top of the vehicle. They were placed on leave pending an investigation.

Sheriff Phillip Thompson said he does not believe the women were in restraints like those sometimes used on psychiatric patients.

It wasn't clear why the women were being moved in the aftermath of a killer hurricane, and Justin Bamberg, a lawyer who has represented the families of several people injured or killed by law officers, said he was perplexed by the decision.

"If that road is in an area where it is a flood risk, and waters were rising, why were they driving on that road anyway?" said Bamberg, a state lawmaker.

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At least 24 of the victims died in vehicles, and most were in accidents linked to flooding.

North Carolina's farmers, meanwhile, are beginning to count up their losses.

The Tobacco Growers Association of North Carolina estimated up to 125 million pounds (57 million kilograms) of tobacco leaf could be damaged by flooding, winds and power outages, an amount that could translate to as much as \$350 million in lost farm revenue.

Association CEO Graham Boyd said about 40 percent of the crop was still in the field when the storm hit. North Carolina is the nation's top producer of tobacco.

The flooding has killed an estimated 3.4 million chickens and 5,500 hogs, authorities said. Farmers are also concerned about cotton, sweet potatoes, peanuts and corn, but swamped roads and fields have made it difficult to assess the damage.

The risk of environmental damage from Florence mounted, too, as human and animal waste was washed into the floodwaters.

More than 5 million gallons (18 million liters) of partially treated sewage spilled into the Cape Fear River after power went out at a treatment plant, officials said, and the earthen dam at a pond holding hog waste was breached, spilling its contents.

Collins reported from Columbia, South Carolina. AP photographer Chuck Burton in Sampson County, North Carolina; and AP writers Skip Foreman in Charlotte, North Carolina; Alex Derosier in Fayetteville, North Carolina; and Jay Reeves in Atlanta contributed to this report.

For the latest on Hurricane Florence, visit <https://www.apnews.com/tag/Hurricanes>

Giant bong, huggable buds: Marijuana museum opens in Vegas

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A glass bong taller than a giraffe. Huggable faux marijuana buds. A pool full of foam weed nuggets.

Las Vegas' newest attraction — and Instagram backdrop — is a museum celebrating all things cannabis.

Nobody will be allowed to light up at Cannabition when it opens Thursday because of a Nevada ban on public consumption of marijuana, but visitors can learn about the drug as they snap photos.

It's a made-for-social-media museum where every exhibit has lights meant to ensure people take selfies worthy of the no-filter hashtag.

The facility — whose founder says has a goal of destigmatizing marijuana use — will likely land among the talking points officials and others use to try to draw gambling-resistant millennials to Sin City.

It will welcome its first visitors almost 15 months after adults in Nevada began buying recreational marijuana legally, with sales far exceeding state projections.

"Our goal when people come out of this is that they don't fear the cannabis industry if they are not believers in the industry," founder J.J. Walker told The Associated Press. "Cannabition is not about just serving people that like marijuana, it's about serving the masses that want to learn about cannabis and or just have fun and go do a cool art experience."

Guests will wander through 12 installations with rooms like "seed," where people can lie down in a bed shaped like a marijuana seed, and "grow," which features artificial plants in sizes ranging from inches to feet tall placed under bright lights to represent an indoor cannabis grow facility.

Photo ops are also available under a glow-in-the-dark tree, next to a giant marijuana leaf meant to represent an edible gummy and by a 24-foot-tall (7-meter-tall) glass bong that's dubbed "Bongzilla" and billed as the world's largest.

There is a space with taller-than-you faux buds representing different strains and another room with gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson's famous "Red Shark" Chevrolet Caprice.

This museum in Las Vegas' downtown entertainment district is not the Smithsonian of marijuana, but it has some educational components. Guests get an introduction from museum guides and some graphics on

walls explain how concentrates are made and the differences between indica and sativa cannabis strains. Museums always evolve with the times to remain relevant, and audience engagement is an important goal for the facilities today, said Gwen Chanzit, director of museum studies in art history at the University of Denver. For those who remember very traditional, no-photography-allowed museums, she said, "that ship has sailed."

"Once cellphones became ubiquitous, the culture of museum visiting changed," Chanzit said.

Many of the facility's exhibits are sponsored by cannabis companies, with their logos prominently displayed. It is common for museums to receive the support of corporations and to place their logo on a wall.

Only adults 21 and older will be allowed at Cannabition. The tour is designed to last up to an hour.

Walker, the founder, has invited reality TV stars, models and other influencers to Las Vegas for the weekend with the charge of spreading the word about the facility.

As for those who buy a ticket but their Instagram followers are only in the dozens or hundreds, Walker said, "you're still an influencer to your friends."

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

Police kill gunman who shot 4 in Pennsylvania court lobby

By **CLAUDIA LAUER, Associated Press**

A gunman opened fire outside a crowded Pennsylvania courtroom Wednesday afternoon, shooting at police and others before an officer fired multiple shots at him, killing him.

Fayette County District Attorney Richard Bower said Wednesday evening that a German Township police officer shot and killed the gunman after he entered the lobby in Masontown with a handgun drawn and opened fire injuring four people. Bower declined to name the gunman, saying only that he was due in court on charges related to a recent domestic violence incident.

Bower said Masontown police Sgt. R. Scott Miller first encountered the gunman and was injured when he exchanged gunfire with the shooter. When Miller took cover, Bower said the gunman proceeded to fire shots injuring two men and one woman.

"In this case, as is so often the case, the German Township police officer ran toward the danger, not away. He protected over 30 to 40 people from injury or death," Bower said.

"These police officers and these emergency management people risk their lives every day ... and today they all were a shining light to our community," he added.

Bower declined to say whether any of the civilian victims were related to the domestic violence allegations. He said the gunman was facing charges of strangulation, aggravated assault, terroristic threats and simple assault. He said there was a protection of abuse order against the gunman in the strangulation case.

A Fayette County 911 center supervisor confirmed the three civilian victims were taken to the Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown, West Virginia, for treatment. Amy Johns, public affairs director at the hospital, said late Wednesday they had received a 47-year-old male, 35-year-old male and 39-year-old female from the shooting and all were in fair condition as of about 5:45 p.m.

Masontown Mayor Toni Petrus was at the hospital Wednesday afternoon checking on Sgt. Miller. She said he was in good condition and was being treated for non-life-threatening injuries.

State Police troop commander Lt. Steven C. Dowlin said that even though the shooting happened near the office of District Judge Daniel Shimshock, neither he nor his staff appeared to be the intended target of the shooter.

Dowlin said the judge, assistant district attorneys, lawyers, police officers and others were in the courtroom near the lobby when shots were fired.

Joyce Royster was in the courtroom at the building Wednesday. She told WTAE there were dozens of people inside the courtroom when the shooting started just outside. She said people fled the courtroom as the shooter started to move inside and took shelter in offices and other courtrooms.

Dowlin said this is the second mass shooting that state police have responded to in Fayette County this

year. He said troopers stopped a young individual at a Uniontown High School from carrying out a shooting. "It's becoming way too common," he said.

Associated Press writer Ron Todt in Philadelphia contributed to this report.

Trying to hold state Trump won, McCaskill feels pull to left

By SARA BURNETT, Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The college students and neighbors gathered at a St. Louis coffee shop seemed like one of the friendlier crowds Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill might face campaigning in heavily Republican Missouri. But the audience on a recent night came armed with tough questions and unafraid to push back — or cast a side eye — at any answer they didn't like.

Why did she support an immigration deal that increased funding for border security? (It was a compromise, McCaskill said, and "there's nothing wrong with having rules.") What did she think of NFL players kneeling during the national anthem? ("I don't think it's appropriate ... but I respect anybody's right to do it.")

Should Democrats run on impeaching President Donald Trump?

"I don't think so," McCaskill replied, acknowledging it wasn't what some wanted to hear. "I'm authentically a moderate. For those of you who are already irritated with me, now you're going to be more irritated."

The night summed up the double challenge facing McCaskill in a race that could decide whether Democrats take control of the Senate in November: The same liberal energy that's led to insurgent Democratic victories around the country is spurring voters she should be able to count on to demand that she move to the left, even as she has to attract some Trump voters to win in a state he carried by almost 20 percentage points.

The president has campaigned for her opponent, state Attorney General Josh Hawley, telling an audience this summer, "We need Josh badly." Trump is scheduled to return to Missouri for a rally Friday.

Hawley, a 38-year-old Yale and Stanford graduate elected to his first public office in 2016, says McCaskill supports a "radical left-wing agenda" that's at odds with what Missouri voters want. He's called on McCaskill to debate him across the state, holding campaign events alongside a trailer with two lecterns, bales of straw and a "Let's Debate" banner.

"It is no small thing that people of this state voted for this president by 20 points," Hawley said during a stop in Columbia. "Quite frankly I think she's forgotten where she's come from."

Republicans view the contest as one of their best chances of flipping a seat in the Senate, where the GOP has a slim 51-49 majority, and polls show it's a toss-up.

Democrats are hoping the enthusiasm that's put the GOP-led House in play will spill over to the Senate, though the map there is much tougher. McCaskill is among 10 Democratic incumbents seeking re-election in states Trump won — some by wider margins than Missouri.

But the 65-year-old former prosecutor and state auditor has won tough races before, running as a moderate in an increasingly conservative state. She is one of only two Democrats elected statewide in Missouri. She narrowly defeated GOP Sen. Jim Talent in 2006 as part of a Democratic wave that saw the party win control of the House and Senate. In 2012, she was considered one of the Senate's most vulnerable incumbents until the GOP nominee, Todd Akin, said women's bodies can prevent pregnancy in cases of "legitimate rape." The comment drew a national backlash, and McCaskill won easily.

Can she pull out another win this time around, in a political climate that's even more polarized?

Polls show Trump's approval rating has fallen since the 2016 election, including in Missouri, and McCaskill is pitching herself as a check on the president and some of his administration's "worst instincts." She's stressed her support of health care coverage, noting Hawley joined other GOP attorneys general in a lawsuit seeking to throw out the federal health law without providing for a way to continue coverage of pre-existing conditions.

Republicans expressed early concerns that Hawley, who was recruited by top GOP leaders including Vice President Mike Pence, wasn't living up to expectations. Hawley declared his candidacy less than a

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year after taking office and was slow to begin campaigning, prompting former GOP Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, one of his early backers, to warn that he needed to "gear it up and get with it." Bond didn't respond to several phone messages and emails seeking comment over the past week.

Hawley said he hasn't pulled away in the polls because McCaskill is benefiting from the advantages of incumbency and of running in the first midterm election under the opposing party's president, when historically the president's party loses seats.

"It's a feat to win," he said.

Meanwhile, McCaskill has received a small reprieve on Trump's nominee to the Supreme Court, an issue where she's felt pressure from both sides.

At her event at the St. Louis coffee shop, held before a woman publicly accused Brett Kavanaugh of sexual assault, longtime supporter Reese Forbes wanted to know why she hadn't yet come out as a "no" vote. It was important to people — particularly women who believe that Kavanaugh supports overturning the abortion decision *Roe v. Wade* — to hear her say she's voting no, he said.

"I understand how strongly you feel," McCaskill replied, saying she was still reviewing documents but hoped to have a decision soon. "But when I go to other parts of this state, guess what? They feel just as strongly the other way."

Days later, the allegation of an assault 36 years ago surfaced. And on Wednesday, McCaskill came out with her decision: She'll be a no vote on Kavanaugh, largely because of his opinion that anonymous "dark money" spending on issues ads in campaigns should not be curbed. The sexual assault allegations were troubling, she said, but not the basis for her decision.

Hawley quickly derided her decision, linking it to his theme of an out-of-touch senator and tying her to the Senate's decidedly liberal Democratic leader. "Claire McCaskill is now 0 for 6 on Supreme Court nominees since she started running for the Senate 12 long years ago. She has sided with Chuck Schumer every single time - for liberals and against Missouri," Hawley said in a statement.

In the St. Louis coffee shop, Alena Johnston, a sophomore political science major at St. Louis University, said after the event near campus it was wise of McCaskill to be out courting college students. While she plans to vote for her, "a lot of my friends think their vote doesn't matter."

That, McCaskill said, is part of why she's "frustrated and worried about this election."

"I know that I may not be perfect in your eyes in terms of where I stand on every issue," she told the roughly 100 people in the coffee shop courtyard, urging them to help her campaign. "But I hope you will take a look at what's at stake."

Associated Press writer Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this report.

Women supporting Kavanaugh find themselves in storm's center

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It started as a series of phone calls among old high-school friends and ended up embroiling 65 women in the firestorm over a sexual assault allegation that could shape the Supreme Court.

In a matter of hours, they all signed onto a letter rallying behind high court nominee and their high school friend Brett Kavanaugh as someone who "has always treated women with decency and respect." And they signed up, whether they anticipated it or not, for becoming a focus of scrutiny themselves.

The powerful strength-in-numbers statement, offered to bolster Kavanaugh's denial of a claim that he attacked a girl at a party during their high school years, has drawn questions from journalists, social media skeptics, even Hollywood figures.

How well did the women know him? How could a statement and 65 signatures come together so fast after outlines of the allegation first surfaced publicly? And after subsequently hearing the details and learning that his accuser was a woman some of them knew, do they stand by their declaration?

Yes, say more than a dozen signers who have since spoken to The Associated Press or other media outlets.

"Brett wouldn't do that in a million years. I'm totally confident. That would be completely out of charac-

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ter for him," said Paula Duke Ebel. She said she interacted with Kavanaugh hundreds of times while they were students in a close-knit constellation of single-sex Catholic schools around Washington in the 1980s.

Christine Blasey Ford, 51, now a psychology professor in California, said a very intoxicated Kavanaugh cornered her in a bedroom during a party in the early 1980s. She said he pinned her on a bed, tried to undress her and clamped his hand over her mouth when she tried to scream. She escaped only when a friend of his jumped on the bed and knocked them all over.

The letter was released the morning after the allegation first got wide public attention. The letter and its roster of supporters seemed to come at supersonic speed and out of the blue.

Women who organized and signed it say it was a rapid response by a social network that endures decades after they graduated. They say it was easy to mobilize: a chain of friends calling, texting and emailing friends from a Washington-area world where many still live and see each other.

Meanwhile, hundreds of alumnae of the secular private girls school that Kavanaugh's accuser attended have signed a letter supporting her and calling for an investigation of her allegations.

"We believe Dr. Blasey Ford," they wrote.

One of the signers, Cristina King Miranda, tweeted Wednesday that the alleged attack "was spoken about for days afterward in school" and that Kavanaugh "should stop lying." But in a Facebook post hours later, she said she had no firsthand knowledge of the matter and wouldn't comment further amid a media "circus" and a barrage of interview requests.

While that letter is signed by a mix of Ford's peers and students from before or after her time at her school, the letter backing Kavanaugh is from women who vouch that they knew Kavanaugh, now a federal appeals court judge, personally as a high school student.

Several said they interacted with him extensively through sporting events, dances, parties and other socializing or the phone calls that occupied teenage weeknights in the pre-texting era.

One worked with him at a summer camp. A second sought his help with homework. Two dated him. Some still see him at social functions.

At least one, though, hadn't spent time or talked one-on-one with him but still felt comfortable attaching her name based on the social situations they shared.

Others who signed declined to comment or didn't respond to inquiries. The AP left messages for all 65.

Some have been taken aback by the attention. Many have stayed mum to avoid "the media frenzy," signer Maura Kane told Fox News, the outlet of choice for several who have given interviews.

Julie DeVol told the AP she didn't really anticipate the letter would provoke such intense interest, though she sensed Kavanaugh's critics "would do anything" to delay his confirmation vote.

Kavanaugh, 53, seemed to be cruising toward that vote before the sexual misconduct allegation became public.

Kavanaugh has called Ford's allegation "completely false." The Senate Judiciary Committee has invited him and Ford to testify at a hearing Monday, although Ford's lawyers say she wants the FBI to investigate her allegation before she testifies.

The Kavanaugh friend who she said was in the room at the party, conservative writer Mark Judge, has said he doesn't remember any such incident.

When word of a high-school-era sexual misconduct allegation against Kavanaugh emerged last Thursday afternoon, Meghan McCaleb and her husband, Scott, thought they and other high school friends of the nominee needed to speak out. Meghan McCaleb said she launched the letter-writing effort after discussing it with some of Kavanaugh's former law clerks.

She said she contacted friends, who contacted more friends, and they had 65 signatures by the next morning.

The rapid-fire response sparked a flare of tweets, including from actresses and liberal activists Debra Messing and Patricia Arquette, questioning how anyone could line up so many high school pals so quickly to speak up for someone they didn't actually go to school with. McCaleb says the answer is simply "how strongly all of us believe in Judge Kavanaugh and his integrity."

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Some of the signers are conservative, such as podcaster and former Republican National Committee spokeswoman Virginia Hume. Others are Democrats.

"This has nothing to do with politics," said one of the signers, Megan Williams. "It's just about character."

But it is also, inescapably, about whether they credit another woman's account of sexual assault.

The question is sharpened by the #MeToo movement, which seeks to change what supporters see as a history of doubt and dismissal of women who speak up about sexual misconduct. The question also is all the more pointed for women who traveled a similar teenage social path as Ford, and in some cases met her along the way.

McCaleb said "I'm not certain" when asked on Fox News whether she believed Ford, a friend of a friend who went to the same local pool Ford did. "She alleges that she had this traumatic event, and I feel like it is not the Brett Kavanaugh that we know."

Sharon Crouch Clark didn't know Ford and feels fine about having signed the letter, notwithstanding the allegation.

"If it happened to her, that's horrible," Clark said. But she questions whether the incident occurred as Ford described it, noting that Ford said she was unable to recall certain details about the date, place and other aspects of the alleged attack.

"I feel like I would know all that," said Clark, who socialized with Kavanaugh amid groups of friends at parties.

Women who signed the letter said they didn't know about or recall the party Ford described, and they said her account of a "stumbling drunk" Kavanaugh didn't jibe with their memories of a boy who drank some beer alongside them but never lost control or crossed a line with girls.

"There were kids who did act kind of crazy. ... He just wasn't that guy," said Williams, who recalls hanging out with Kavanaugh mainly in groups but sometimes one-on-one. "He was the kid who always did the right thing."

That's why six dozen women were willing to put their names on that letter, said signer Missy Bigelow Carr, who worked at a summer camp with Kavanaugh and coached girls basketball against him as an adult.

"If there was any indication that he didn't treat even one of us with respect or acted in a manner that disrespected girls/women," she wrote in an email, "that would not be the case."

Kunzelman reported from Silver Spring, Maryland. Associated Press writers Dan Sewell in Cincinnati and Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston and researcher Rhonda Shafner contributed to this report.

Federal agency says it lost track of 1,488 migrant children

By GARANCE BURKE, Associated Press

Twice in less than a year, the federal government has lost track of nearly 1,500 migrant children after placing them in the homes of sponsors across the country, federal officials have acknowledged.

The Health and Human Services Department recently told Senate staffers that case managers could not find 1,488 children after they made follow-up calls to check on their safety from April through June. That number represents about 13 percent of all unaccompanied children the administration moved out of shelters and foster homes during that time.

The agency first disclosed that it had lost track of 1,475 children late last year, as it came under fire at a Senate hearing in April. Lawmakers had asked HHS officials how they had strengthened child protection policies since it came to light that the agency previously had rolled back safeguards meant to keep Central American children from ending up in the hands of human traffickers.

"The fact that HHS, which placed these unaccompanied minors with sponsors, doesn't know the whereabouts of nearly 1,500 of them is very troubling," Republican Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, the panel's chair, said Wednesday. "Many of these kids are vulnerable to trafficking and abuse, and to not take responsibility for their safety is unacceptable."

HHS spokeswoman Caitlin Oakley disputed the notion that the children were "lost."

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"Their sponsors, who are usually parents or family members and in all cases have been vetted for criminality and ability to provide for them, simply did not respond or could not be reached when this voluntary call was made," she said in a statement.

Since October 2014, the federal government has placed more than 150,000 unaccompanied minors with parents or other adult sponsors who are expected to care for the children and help them attend school while they seek legal status in immigration court.

On Tuesday, members of a Senate subcommittee introduced bipartisan legislation aimed at requiring the agency to take responsibility for the care of migrant children, even when they are no longer in its custody.

An Associated Press investigation found in 2016 that more than two dozen unaccompanied children had been sent to homes where they were sexually assaulted, starved or forced to work for little or no pay. At the time, many adult sponsors didn't undergo thorough background checks, government officials rarely visited homes and in some cases had no idea that sponsors had taken in several unrelated children, a possible sign of human trafficking.

Since then, HHS has boosted outreach to at-risk children deemed to need extra protection, and last year offered post-placement services to about one-third of unaccompanied minors, according to the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

But advocates say it is hard to know how many minors may be in dangerous conditions, in part because some disappear before social workers can follow up with them and never show up in court.

From April to June, HHS called 11,254 children the agency had placed with sponsors, and found 25 of the children had run away, and 1,488 could not be located, according to the data provided to the subcommittee.

Portman began investigating after a case in his home state of Ohio in which eight Guatemalan teens were placed with human traffickers and forced to work on egg farms under threats of death. Six people have been convicted and sentenced to federal prison for their participation in the trafficking scheme that began in 2013.

The legislation comes as the Trump administration faces litigation over its family separation policy at the U.S.-Mexican border, which while it was in effect sent hundreds more children into the HHS system of shelters and foster care. Some of those children since have been reunited with their families, while others have been placed with sponsors.

Oakley did not respond to questions regarding whether any of the children who the agency lost track of had been separated from their families before they were sent to live with sponsors.

The legislation is aimed at ensuring HHS does more to prevent abuse, runs background checks before placing children with sponsors, and notifies state governments before sending children to those states, the bill's sponsors said.

"The already challenging reality migrant children face is being made even more difficult and, too often, more dangerous," said the panel's top Democrat, Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware. "This simply doesn't have to be the case and, as this legislation demonstrates, the solutions don't have to be partisan."

Women slain in Border Patrol case endured trying lives

By **SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN** and **MATT SEDENSKY**, Associated Press

LAREDO, Texas (AP) — Janelle Ortiz dreamed of becoming famous. Melissa Ramirez imagined a day when the street wasn't home and drugs not her preoccupation. Claudine Luera just ached to see her children do better than she had.

All of these women, bound by difficulties in life, met an eerily similar death: They were shot in the head and left on rural Texas roadsides, allegedly by a Border Patrol agent who has been described as a serial killer. Relatives of the dead are now grieving for loved ones who, they say, were more than the troubles they endured.

"They had families. They were loved. They were someone. They were human," said Colette Mireles, a sister of Luera.

The suspect's motive remains unknown. Authorities said the three women and a fourth woman, Guiselda

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Alicia Cantu, whose name was released Wednesday, were sex workers, and that Border Patrol supervisor Juan David Ortiz knew some of them.

Each lived a life littered with hardship. Gracie Perez remembered her sister-in-law, 29-year-old Ramirez, telling her she was raped when she was 13. She dropped out of high school, experienced depression and eventually began living on the streets. Her five children were left in the care of others. She struggled with a drug habit.

Despite all of that, her relatives remembered someone always trying to make others laugh. Ramirez liked pulling up funny videos on YouTube, devouring whatever food was before her and enjoying TV at full blast as she fell asleep on the couch.

Perez said her sister-in-law frequently returned home to her mother's house, where two of her children live, typically staying a few days, vowing to get off drugs and improve her life before returning to the streets.

"She wanted to be a better mom, a better person," Perez said. "She didn't want to be running the streets anymore."

Janelle Ortiz, 28, envisioned a future where her personality and gift for talking with nearly anyone transformed her into someone famous. Rosenda Ortiz, her younger sister, remembered the difficult childhood they shared, with them constantly being thrust into new homes. She said her sister was strong and had a big heart, always asking what others needed.

Rosenda Ortiz hoped that one day she'd be able to get a home of her own and invite her sister to come live with her.

"He was not known as a prostitute or a sex worker," she said, using pronouns she knows her transgender sister would have chided her for. "He was just a human being like the other victims. He was just living his life."

Mireles last talked to her 42-year-old sister two days before her body was found. She was "over the moon" upon hearing that one of her sons was doing well in school and was already ironing out plans for prom with his girlfriend.

As children, the sisters were at each other's throats. But Mireles marveled at her sister's ability to smile through her pain, even as her life spiraled downward the past few years. She always knew she might get a call with news of Luera's death, but she figured it would be an overdose. To hear she was found shot, clinging to life on the side of the road, was harrowing.

The suspect told police that Luera questioned him about being the last person to have seen Ramirez before her death, authorities said. Mireles takes some comfort thinking of her sister's bravery in confronting him.

"My sister was feisty, so I'm sure she put up a hell of a fight," she said.

Joey Tellez, the attorney for the 35-year-old suspect, released a statement saying he would not be commenting on the case. Ortiz is a Navy veteran who had been in the Border Patrol about 10 years.

Back at the modest home Ramirez frequented, an American flag is tied to a front window of a faded green trailer, and toys are strewn across the yard. Her mother, Maria Cristina Benevidez, steps haltingly as she places a photo of her daughter beside the wooden box that holds her ashes, hanging rosary beads and a gold cross necklace from the frame.

Roosters are crowing, a Chihuahua named Mia is barking and Benevidez stands solemnly, her head bowed. Two weeks before Ramirez was found, she sat at the kitchen table in this home and shared a frightening premonition.

"I'm going to get killed. I'm going to be dead in less than a month," her brother Cesar Ramirez remembered his sister saying.

"Stop saying nonsense," he said his mother responded. "Stop saying those stupid things."

She persisted, insisting she would be shot in the head.

"They're going to kill me. They're going to kill me," she said.

Ramirez was drunk, her sister-in-law said, and she didn't offer any more details of her vision.

Later, Perez said, her sister-in-law pressed her to join her for a night of partying. Ramirez called her over and over, but she didn't answer. Now, she thinks she should have done something more, and she's haunted by Ramirez's parting words.

"This is the last time you're going to see me," she warned.

Sedensky reported from New York.

Woman who helped kidnap Elizabeth Smart released from prison

By LINDSAY WHITETHURST, Associated Press

DRAPER, Utah (AP) — A woman who helped kidnap Elizabeth Smart and stood by as the Utah girl was sexually assaulted was released from prison Wednesday amid concerns that she remains a threat 15 years after the chilling crime.

Wanda Barzee, 72, quietly left the state prison in the Salt Lake City suburb of Draper, avoiding a throng of reporters gathered outside.

Court documents say she will stay in unspecified emergency housing chosen by her probation officer until another home is approved.

Barzee's release followed a surprise announcement last week that Utah authorities had miscalculated her sentence and she would be freed about six years earlier than expected.

Under the terms of her release, Barzee must undergo mental health treatment and not contact Smart and her family.

"I'm not going to let these people, this woman, stop me from living the life I want to live," Smart said in a speech Wednesday night at Lock Haven University, without mentioning Barzee by name.

She said it was "a statement in my moving forward" that she was able to come to the college to speak about sexual violence.

Smart, now a 30-year-old mother, speaker and activist, has said she was shocked and disappointed by the announcement of Barzee's release.

"The past few weeks have been an absolute roller coaster of emotion," Smart said Wednesday. "I so appreciate everyone's comments of love and support and outrage. It's made a really big difference to me personally."

During her speech, Smart recalled some of the horrors she experienced as a 14-year-old when she was snatched from her Salt Lake City home in 2002 by Barzee's then-husband, street preacher Brian David Mitchell.

Smart said last week that Barzee saw her as a slave during the nine months she was held by the couple and encouraged Mitchell to rape her.

"So do I believe she's dangerous? Yes," Smart said.

Barzee's attorney Scott Williams said there's no reliable evidence that his client remains a threat to anyone.

"It is unfair and counterproductive," Williams told reporters, adding that Barzee wants to be left alone and will comply with the conditions of her supervised release.

He said he's concerned about her safety but did not elaborate.

Ed Smart, the victim's father, said he's glad Barzee will be watched over closely by federal agents during her five years of supervised release, but he's concerned about reports that she still believes Mitchell's ideas.

Aiding Mitchell in following his so-called "divine revelations" prompted Barzee to help him kidnap Elizabeth Smart and even sit next to her as Mitchell raped her, Ed Smart said.

"My hope is that she won't be a problem," he said of Barzee. "I do know how she treated Elizabeth during that time, and I still feel like she's very capable of doing the same thing."

Smart was found in captivity while walking with Barzee and Mitchell on a street in suburban Sandy by people who recognized the abductors from media reports. Mitchell is serving a life sentence after being convicted of kidnapping and rape.

As another condition of her release, Barzee was placed on the Utah sex offender registry, but her address was still listed online Wednesday as the Utah prison. Her mug shot on the registry shows her with a wide smile, blue eyes and chin-length gray hair.

She's also voluntarily agreed to stay away from places frequented by the Smart family, Williams said.

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Barzee could be returned to prison if she violates the terms of her release.

Barzee's niece Tina Mace has said her aunt's testimony against Mitchell seemed like a turning point, but her mental state appears to have changed in prison. Mace said she's unaware of any family members who would give Barzee a place to live.

Barzee was treated at Utah State Hospital for about five years following her arrest. She testified in 2010 against Mitchell and was given a plea deal on state and federal charges. She was transferred to the Utah prison in 2016 after finishing a federal sentence in Texas.

The Utah Board of Pardons and Parole initially set a 2024 release date. Her attorney questioned whether the term included time Barzee had served in a federal prison. The board decided last week that she had served her sentence.

AP writers Russell Contreras in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Walter Berry in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Frustration builds as Carolina residents wait to go home

By CLAIRE GALOFARO and JEFFREY COLLINS, Associated Press

WILMINGTON, N.C. (AP) — Exhaustion and frustration are building in the Carolinas as thousands of people wait to go home days after Hurricane Florence unleashed epic floods blamed for at least 37 deaths, including those of two women who drowned when a sheriff's van taking them to a mental health facility was swept off a road.

With the remnants of Florence finally out to sea and skies bright over rivers still swelling with muddy water, President Donald Trump visited the disaster zone, riding through soggy neighborhoods and helping pass out warm meals at a church in the hard-hit coastal town of New Bern.

"How's the house?" Trump told one person. "You take care of yourself."

There wasn't any presidential fanfare 120 miles away in Fayetteville. There, Roberta and Joseph Keithley had been sleeping on cots set up in a school classroom since Friday. They still didn't know if their home was ruined.

"It's getting a little frustrating, but you have to deal with it and roll with the punches," said Roberta Keithley, 73. "It's just another hurdle to get over in life."

To the south, daybreak brought a return of floodwaters to Nichols, South Carolina, which also was inundated by Hurricane Matthew two years ago. The flooding from Florence had subsided, only to get worse again.

Mayor Lawson Battle said that as far as he knew, everyone in the town of about 360 people evacuated as the water first started to invade town Monday. But Battle just couldn't think about that anymore.

"I'm focusing on this disaster at hand," he said. "I don't have time to think. I'm just so tired."

Access improved to Wilmington, a North Carolina port city of 120,000 that was cut off for days by high water. But officials said they don't know when evacuees would be able to return home, and it may be next week before conditions improve drastically since the Cape Fear River isn't expected to crest at the city until Monday or Tuesday.

"Understand: There is a lot of water inland, and it is continuing to make its way downstream," county manager Chris Coudreit said.

Nearly 3 feet of rain fell in places, and dozens of cities had more than 10 inches of rain. Roads remained dangerous, and some were still being closed as swollen rivers emptied toward the ocean.

North Carolina officials said some 7,800 people remained in shelters, down from about 10,000 on Monday despite Gov. Roy Cooper's plea to stay put.

In Lumberton, where the Lumber River still covered parts of town, water was deep enough that vehicles passing by on streets sent wakes into partially submerged homes, businesses and a church.

Some of those who left shelters may have been headed toward the coast on U.S. 421, where a long line

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of cars, utility crews and trucks loaded with generators sat in a jam.

About 161,000 homes and businesses were still without electricity in North Carolina, around a quarter of them in the county where Wilmington is located. All told, an estimated 900,000 homes and businesses lost power in the Carolinas and Virginia.

At least 37 people have died in the three states, including two women who were being taken to a mental health facility when the van they were riding in was engulfed by floodwaters from the Little Pee Dee River in South Carolina, authorities said.

Horry County Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Brooke Holden said two deputies in the van tried to get the victims out but couldn't. Rescue teams plucked the deputies from the top of the vehicle. They were placed on leave pending an investigation.

Sheriff Phillip Thompson said he does not believe the women were in restraints like those sometimes used on psychiatric patients.

It wasn't clear why the women were being moved in the aftermath of a killer hurricane, and Justin Bamberg, a lawyer who has represented the families of several people injured or killed by law officers, said he was perplexed by the decision.

"If that road is in an area where it is a flood risk, and waters were rising, why were they driving on that road anyway?" said Bamberg, a state lawmaker.

At least 24 of the victims died in vehicles, and most were in accidents linked to flooding.

North Carolina's farmers, meanwhile, are beginning to count up their losses.

The Tobacco Growers Association of North Carolina estimated up to 125 million pounds of tobacco leaf could be damaged by flooding, winds and power outages, an amount that could translate to as much as \$350 million in lost farm revenue.

Association CEO Graham Boyd said about 40 percent of the crop was still in the field when the storm hit. North Carolina is the nation's top producer of tobacco.

The flooding has killed an estimated 3.4 million chickens and 5,500 hogs, authorities said. Farmers are also concerned about cotton, sweet potatoes, peanuts and corn, but swamped roads and fields have made it difficult to assess the damage.

The risk of environmental damage from Florence mounted, too, as human and animal waste was washed into the floodwaters.

More than 5 million gallons (18 million liters) of partially treated sewage spilled into the Cape Fear River after power went out at a treatment plant, officials said, and the earthen dam at a pond holding hog waste was breached, spilling its contents.

Collins reported from Columbia, South Carolina. AP photographer Chuck Burton in Sampson County, North Carolina, and AP writer Jay Reeves in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Follow Martha Waggoner on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/mjwaggonernc>

For the latest on Hurricane Florence, visit <https://www.apnews.com/tag/Hurricanes>

Man opens fire at his Wisconsin office, 3 seriously hurt

By TODD RICHMOND and SCOTT BAUER, Associated Press

MIDDLETON, Wis. (AP) — A heavily armed man opened fire on his co-workers at a Wisconsin software company Wednesday, seriously wounding three people before being fatally shot by police as employees ran from the building or hid inside, according to investigators.

Middleton Police Chief Chuck Foulke said officers shot the man within eight minutes of receiving calls about an active shooter at WTS Paradigm. Foulke said the man was armed with a semi-automatic pistol and extra ammunition, and fired at officers before he was shot.

Foulke said three people were seriously injured during the attack, while a fourth person was grazed by

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a bullet.

"I think a lot less people were injured or killed because police officers went in and neutralized the shooter," Foulke said.

The police chief said the motivation behind the attack was unclear and investigators didn't yet know whether the gunman targeted his victims. He didn't release the suspect's name but said he was an employee of WTS Paradigm and lived in nearby Madison.

Foulke said the investigation was ongoing but noted: "We have reason to believe the suspect was heavily armed with a lot of extra ammunition, a lot of extra magazines."

Judy Lahmers, a business analyst at WTS Paradigm, said she was working at her desk when she heard what sounded "like somebody was dropping boards on the ground, really loud." Lahmers said she ran out of the building and hid behind a car.

She said the building's glass entrance door was shattered.

"I'm not looking back, I'm running as fast as I can. You just wonder, 'Do you hide or do you run?'" she told The Associated Press.

She said she knew one co-worker had been grazed by a bullet but was OK. She didn't have any other information about the shooting but said it was "totally unexpected. We're all software people. We have a good group."

WTS Paradigm Marketing Manager Ryan Mayrand said in a statement Wednesday evening that the company was "shocked and heartbroken" and was working to set up counseling for workers. He asked the media to respect the privacy of the workers, particularly those who were among the victims.

University Hospital in Madison confirmed Wednesday afternoon that it was still treating three victims from the shooting, saying one was in critical condition and two were in serious condition.

Police conducted a secondary search of the office building after the shooting to ensure there were no more victims or suspects — and officers discovered some people still hiding in the building, which also houses Esker Software.

Gabe Geib, a customer advocate at Esker Software, said he was working at his desk when he heard what "sounded like claps." He said he then saw people running away from the building at "full sprint."

"We knew at that point that something was going down. A ton of people were running across the street right in front of us," he said.

Geib said he and his colleagues were still huddled in their cafeteria, away from windows, more than an hour after the shooting.

Jeff Greene, who also works at Esker, said police told those gathered in the cafeteria to go to a nearby hotel to make a statement about what they saw.

Three yellow school buses full of more than 100 people, including witnesses, were unloaded at a hotel about 5 miles (8 kilometers) from the office building. Some people hugged as they were reunited with loved ones. Others stopped to pet a dog that had been brought by someone picking up a worker.

WTS Paradigm makes software for the building products industry. A Wisconsin State Journal profile from 2014 listed company employment at about 145 employees and noted the company was looking to move to a larger location at the time.

The company's website was down Wednesday.

A shopping center next to the building was temporarily put on lockdown at the direction of police.

Middleton is about 90 miles (145 kilometers) west of Milwaukee.

Associated Press writers Gretchen Ehle in Milwaukee, and Amy Forliti and Jeff Baenen in Minneapolis contributed to this report.

Kim, Moon head to North Korea's sacred volcano on final day

By ERIC TALMADGE and FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — The two Korean leaders took to the road for the final day of their summit Thursday, heading to a beautiful volcano considered sacred in the North and used in its propaganda to legitimize the Kims' three generations of rule. Their trip followed a day of wide-ranging agreements they trumpeted as a major step toward peace on the Korean Peninsula.

However, their premier accord on the issue most fascinating and worrisome — the North's pursuit of nuclear-tipped missiles that can accurately strike the U.S. mainland — contained a big condition: Kim Jong Un stated he would permanently dismantle North Korea's main nuclear complex only if the United States takes unspecified corresponding measures.

Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in flew separately to an airport near Mount Paektu on Thursday morning where they met up and drove to the mountain on the North Korean-Chinese border. Members of the Kim family are referred to as sharing the "Paektu Bloodline." The volcano topped with a deep crater lake is also emblazoned on the national emblem and lends its name to everything from rockets to power stations.

Moon plans to return to South Korea later Thursday, but the leaders are still basking in the glow of the joint statement they settled Wednesday. Compared to the vague language of their two earlier summits, Kim and Moon seem to have agreed on an ambitious program meant to tackle soaring tensions last year that had many fearing war as the North tested a string of increasingly powerful weapons.

Kim promised to accept international inspectors to monitor the closing of a key missile test site and launch pad and to visit Seoul soon, and both leaders vowed to work together to try to host the Summer Olympics in 2032.

But while containing several tantalizing offers, their joint statement appeared to fall short of the major steps many in Washington have been looking for — such as a commitment by Kim to provide a list of North Korea's nuclear facilities, a solid step-by-step timeline for closing them down, or an agreement to allow international inspectors to assess progress or discover violations.

It also was unclear what "corresponding steps" North Korea wants from the U.S. to dismantle its nuclear site.

The question is whether it will be enough for President Donald Trump to pick up where Moon has left off. Trump told reporters Wednesday that the outcome of the summit was "very good news" and that "we're making tremendous progress" with North Korea. He didn't indicate in his brief remarks whether the U.S. would be willing to take further steps to encourage North Korean action on denuclearization.

Declaring they had made a major step toward peace, Moon and Kim stood side by side Wednesday as they announced their agreement.

"We have agreed to make the Korean Peninsula a land of peace that is free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threat," Kim said. "The road to our future will not always be smooth and we may face challenges and trials we can't anticipate. But we aren't afraid of headwinds because our strength will grow as we overcome each trial based on the strength of our nation."

Moon urged unity for all Koreans in a speech he gave Wednesday night to the crowd gathered for North Korea's signature mass games. "We have lived together for 5,000 years and lived in separation for 70 years. I now propose that we completely eliminate the hostility of the past 70 years and take a big step forward in peace so that we can become one again."

Historians say the 5,000-year timeline of Korean history is a groundless claim that became part of South Korea's official narrative after being inserted in school textbooks during the rule of former dictator Chun Doo-hwan.

This week's summit comes as Moon is under increasing pressure from Washington to find a path forward in efforts to get Kim to completely — and unilaterally — abandon his nuclear arsenal.

Trump has maintained that he and Kim have a solid relationship, and both leaders have expressed interest in a follow-up summit to their meeting in June in Singapore. North Korea has been demanding a

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declaration formally ending the Korean War, which was stopped in 1953 by a cease-fire, but neither leader mentioned it Wednesday as they read the joint statement.

In the meantime, however, Moon and Kim made concrete moves of their own to reduce tensions on their border.

According to a statement signed by the countries' defense chiefs, the two Koreas agreed to establish buffer zones along their land and sea borders to reduce military tensions and prevent accidental clashes. They also agreed to withdraw 11 guard posts from the Demilitarized Zone by December and to establish a no-fly zone above the military demarcation line that bisects the two Koreas that will apply to planes, helicopters and drones.

Though not directly linked to security, the leaders' announcement that they would seek a joint Summer Olympics was a significant move in terms of easing tensions and building trust. It also flows from the North's decision to participate in the Pyeongchang Winter Games in February, which was regarded as a success for both sides.

Other agreements aimed at removing some longstanding irritants from their relations, such as allowing more contact between families divided by the Korean War. Moon also appeared to be making good on his proposals to help build up the North's infrastructure and open cross-border rail links.

Unlike Trump's initial tweets praising the summit, the news brought a quick and negative response from Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, who tweeted that he was concerned the visit would undermine efforts by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley to impose "maximum pressure" on the North.

"While North Korea has stopped testing missiles and nuclear devices, they have NOT moved toward denuclearization," he tweeted.

Klug reported from Seoul. Associated Press writers Hyung-jin Kim and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul contributed to this report. Talmadge is the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief. Follow him on Instagram and Twitter: @EricTalmadge

How 65 women came to Kavanaugh's defense in matter of hours

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It started as a series of phone calls among old high-school friends and ended up embroiling 65 women in the firestorm over a sexual assault allegation that could shape the Supreme Court.

In a matter of hours, they all signed onto a letter rallying behind high court nominee and their high school friend Brett Kavanaugh as someone who "has always treated women with decency and respect." And they signed up, whether they anticipated it or not, for becoming a focus of scrutiny themselves.

The powerful strength-in-numbers statement, offered to bolster Kavanaugh's denial of a claim that he attacked a girl at a party during their high school years, has drawn questions from journalists, social media skeptics, even Hollywood figures.

How well did the women know him? How could a statement and 65 signatures come together so fast after outlines of the allegation first surfaced publicly? And after subsequently hearing the details and learning that his accuser was a woman some of them knew, do they stand by their declaration?

Yes, say more than a dozen signers who have since spoken to The Associated Press or other media outlets.

"Brett wouldn't do that in a million years. I'm totally confident. That would be completely out of character for him," said Paula Duke Ebel. She said she interacted with Kavanaugh hundreds of times while they were students in a close-knit constellation of single-sex Catholic schools around Washington in the 1980s.

Christine Blasey Ford, 51, now a psychology professor in California, said a very intoxicated Kavanaugh cornered her in a bedroom during a party in the early 1980s. She said he pinned her on a bed, tried to undress her and clamped his hand over her mouth when she tried to scream. She escaped only when a friend of his jumped on the bed and knocked them all over.

The letter was released the morning after the allegation first got wide public attention. The letter and

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its roster of supporters seemed to come at supersonic speed and out of the blue.

Women who organized and signed it say it was a rapid response by a social network that endures decades after they graduated. They say it was easy to mobilize: a chain of friends calling, texting and emailing friends from a Washington-area world where many still live and see each other.

Meanwhile, hundreds of alumnae of the secular private girls school that Kavanaugh's accuser attended have signed a letter supporting her and calling for an investigation of her allegations.

"We believe Dr. Blasey Ford," they wrote.

One of the signers, Cristina King Miranda, tweeted Wednesday that the alleged attack "was spoken about for days afterward in school" and that Kavanaugh "should stop lying." But in a Facebook post hours later, she said she had no firsthand knowledge of the matter and wouldn't comment further amid a media "circus" and a barrage of interview requests.

While that letter is signed by a mix of Ford's peers and students from before or after her time at her school, the letter backing Kavanaugh is from women who vouch that they knew Kavanaugh, now a federal appeals court judge, personally as a high school student.

Several said they interacted with him extensively through sporting events, dances, parties and other socializing or the phone calls that occupied teenage weeknights in the pre-texting era.

One worked with him at a summer camp. A second sought his help with homework. Two dated him. Some still see him at social functions.

At least one, though, hadn't spent time or talked one-on-one with him but still felt comfortable attaching her name based on the social situations they shared.

Others who signed declined to comment or didn't respond to inquiries. The AP left messages for all 65.

Some have been taken aback by the attention. Many have stayed mum to avoid "the media frenzy," signer Maura Kane told Fox News, the outlet of choice for several who have given interviews.

Julie DeVol told the AP she didn't really anticipate the letter would provoke such intense interest, though she sensed Kavanaugh's critics "would do anything" to delay his confirmation vote.

Kavanaugh, 53, seemed to be cruising toward that vote before the sexual misconduct allegation became public.

Kavanaugh has called Ford's allegation "completely false." The Senate Judiciary Committee has invited him and Ford to testify at a hearing Monday, although Ford's lawyers say she wants the FBI to investigate her allegation before she testifies.

The Kavanaugh friend who she said was in the room at the party, conservative writer Mark Judge, has said he doesn't remember any such incident.

When word of a high-school-era sexual misconduct allegation against Kavanaugh emerged last Thursday afternoon, Meghan McCaleb and her husband, Scott, thought they and other high school friends of the nominee needed to speak out. Meghan McCaleb said she launched the letter-writing effort after discussing it with some of Kavanaugh's former law clerks.

She said she contacted friends, who contacted more friends, and they had 65 signatures by the next morning.

The rapid-fire response sparked a flare of tweets, including from actresses and liberal activists Debra Messing and Patricia Arquette, questioning how anyone could line up so many high school pals so quickly to speak up for someone they didn't actually go to school with. McCaleb says the answer is simply "how strongly all of us believe in Judge Kavanaugh and his integrity."

Some of the signers are conservative, such as podcaster and former Republican National Committee spokeswoman Virginia Hume. Others are Democrats.

"This has nothing to do with politics," said one of the signers, Megan Williams. "It's just about character."

But it is also, inescapably, about whether they credit another woman's account of sexual assault.

The question is sharpened by the #MeToo movement, which seeks to change what supporters see as a history of doubt and dismissal of women who speak up about sexual misconduct. The question also is all the more pointed for women who traveled a similar teenage social path as Ford, and in some cases met her along the way.

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McCaleb said "I'm not certain" when asked on Fox News whether she believed Ford, a friend of a friend who went to the same local pool Ford did. "She alleges that she had this traumatic event, and I feel like it is not the Brett Kavanaugh that we know."

Sharon Crouch Clark didn't know Ford and feels fine about having signed the letter, notwithstanding the allegation.

"If it happened to her, that's horrible," Clark said. But she questions whether the incident occurred as Ford described it, noting that Ford said she was unable to recall certain details about the date, place and other aspects of the alleged attack.

"I feel like I would know all that," said Clark, who socialized with Kavanaugh amid groups of friends at parties.

Women who signed the letter said they didn't know about or recall the party Ford described, and they said her account of a "stumbling drunk" Kavanaugh didn't jibe with their memories of a boy who drank some beer alongside them but never lost control or crossed a line with girls.

"There were kids who did act kind of crazy. ... He just wasn't that guy," said Williams, who recalls hanging out with Kavanaugh mainly in groups but sometimes one-on-one. "He was the kid who always did the right thing."

That's why six dozen women were willing to put their names on that letter, said signer Missy Bigelow Carr, who worked at a summer camp with Kavanaugh and coached girls basketball against him as an adult.

"If there was any indication that he didn't treat even one of us with respect or acted in a manner that disrespected girls/women," she wrote in an email, "that would not be the case."

Kunzelman reported from Silver Spring, Maryland. Associated Press writers Dan Sewell in Cincinnati and Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston and researcher Rhonda Shafner contributed to this report.

Pakistan's ex-PM Sharif freed after court suspends sentence

By ZARAR KHAN, Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his daughter and son-in-law were released from prison Wednesday after a court suspended their sentences and granted them bail pending their appeals hearings.

The Islamabad High Court made the decision after the Sharifs petitioned to appeal their sentences, which were handed down by an anti-graft tribunal earlier this year in a corruption case against them. The three were released from a prison in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

The development is the latest twist in a series of scandals involving the former prime minister, beginning with his ouster from office last year, to several corruption cases and trials he still faces.

When the anti-graft tribunal first convicted and sentenced Sharif on July 6, he was in London with his daughter, visiting his critically ill wife. The father and daughter returned home a week later and were taken to prison to serve their sentences.

Sharif's party, the Pakistan Muslim League, meanwhile, lost in parliamentary elections later in July and has now taken on the mantle of opposition party to new Prime Minister Imran Khan's government.

In Wednesday's decision, the two-judge panel headed by Justice Athar Minallah ordered that Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz and son-in-law Mohammad Safdar, be released once they each post a bond of half a million rupees, or about \$4,000.

In the evening, the three were released from the prison, where many party leaders and a large crowd of supporters gathered to receive them, said Sen. Mushahidullah Khan, a close aide to Sharif. Khan said Sharif and relatives were escorted to the airport amid tight security. From there, they were to fly to the eastern city of Lahore.

Khan said Sharif and his daughter mourned the loss of Kulsoom Nawaz, Sharif's wife who died after a long battle with cancer while they were in prison.

"I thought I would go straight to mother but she is no more," Khan quoted Nawaz as saying.

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Television footage showed a security vehicle driving the Sharifs through a massive crowd of supporters, some showering rose petals on the vehicle while others waved party flags and chanted slogans. Later, they arrived at the family's estate in the Lahore suburbs to a warm reception by supporters.

Sharif was temporarily released earlier this month to attend his wife's funeral.

Prosecutors in the case, the National Accountability Bureau, said they would appeal Wednesday's ruling and take the case against Sharif to the country's Supreme Court.

Following the judges' decision on Sharif and his family, supporters rushed to the court in jubilation, chanting pro-Sharif slogans and waving banners and posters of the ex-premier.

"This is a triumph of justice," said Sharif ally and former foreign minister Khawaja Asif outside the court.

Another supporter in the crowd, Naveed Abbasi, said he is convinced Sharif was a victim of conspiracy but that, "God willing, the people will make Nawaz Sharif the prime minister again ... for a record fourth time."

Amjad Pervez, a defense lawyer, had said the required bonds had been posted and Sharif, his daughter and son-in-law would be released from Adiala prison, where they have been serving 10-year, seven-year and one-year prison sentences, respectively.

In July last year the Pakistani Supreme Court disqualified Sharif from office over corruption allegations. He faced several court cases at home and was later convicted of concealing assets abroad. The charges stemmed from leaked papers from a Panama law firm. Sharif faced two more cases before the anti-graft tribunal and has been banned for life from public office.

Reacting to Wednesday's decision, Sen. Javed Faisal, a close aide to Prime Minister Khan, pointed out that the court only suspended Sharif's sentence and those of his family members, and did not acquit them.

"Their supporters should not celebrate so much as they will likely have to go again to Adiala prison," Faisal said.

However, analysts saw the decision as a definite boost for Sharif's party and supporters.

"If the court finally quashes Sharif's conviction, that will be a cause of concern for the new government," said Tauseef Ahmed, adding that "Sharif is still a popular leader and has the capability to mobilize masses."

Ahsan Iqbal, Sharif party lawmaker and former interior minister, said the anti-graft tribunal had convicted Sharif, his daughter and son in-law without any legal grounds, but "based on a vendetta."

Sharif never completed any of his three terms as prime minister. His first government was dismissed by the then-President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in 1993 on corruption charges and his second government was toppled by Gen. Pervez Musharraf in a bloodless coup in October 1999.

Lawmaker: US Senate, staff targeted by state-backed hackers

By **FRANK BAJAK** and **RAPHAEL SATTER**, AP Cybersecurity Writers

Foreign government hackers continue to target the personal email accounts of U.S. senators and their aides — and the Senate's security office has refused to defend them, a lawmaker says.

Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, said in a Wednesday letter to Senate leaders that his office discovered that "at least one major technology company" has warned an unspecified number of senators and aides that their personal email accounts were "targeted by foreign government hackers." Similar methods were employed by Russian military agents who leaked the contents of private email inboxes to influence the 2016 elections.

Wyden did not specify the timing of the notifications, but a Senate staffer said they occurred "in the last few weeks or months." The aide spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the issue publicly.

But the senator said the Office of the Sergeant at Arms, which oversees Senate security, informed legislators and staffers that it has no authority to help secure personal, rather than official, accounts.

"This must change," Wyden wrote in the letter. "The November election grows ever closer, Russia continues its attacks on our democracy, and the Senate simply does not have the luxury of further delays." A spokeswoman for the security office said it would have no comment.

Wyden has proposed legislation that would allow the security office to offer digital protection for personal

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accounts and devices, the same way it does with official ones. His letter did not provide additional details of the attempts to pry into the lawmakers' digital lives, including whether lawmakers of both parties are still being targeted.

Google and Microsoft, which offer popular private email accounts, declined to comment.

The Wyden letter cites previous Associated Press reporting on the Russian hacking group known as Fancy Bear and how it targeted the personal accounts of congressional aides between 2015 and 2016. The group's prolific cyberspying targeted the Gmail accounts of current and former Senate staffers, including Robert Zarate, now national security adviser to Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, and Jason Thielman, chief of staff to Montana Sen. Steve Daines, the AP found.

The same group also spent the second half of 2017 laying digital traps intended to look like portals where Senate officials enter their work email credentials, the Tokyo-based cybersecurity firm TrendMicro has reported.

Microsoft seized some of those traps, and in September 2017 apparently thwarted an attempt to steal login credentials of a policy aide to Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill, the Daily Beast discovered in July. Last month, Microsoft made news again when it seized several internet domains linked to Fancy Bear, including two apparently aimed at conservative think tanks in Washington.

Such incidents "only scratch the surface" of advanced cyberthreats faced by U.S. officials in the administration and Congress, according to Thomas Rid, a cybersecurity expert at Johns Hopkins University. Rid made the statement in a letter to Wyden last week.

"The personal accounts of senators and their staff are high-value, low-hanging targets," Rid wrote. "No rules, no regulations, no funding streams, no mandatory training, no systematic security support is available to secure these resources."

Attempts to breach such accounts were a major feature of the yearlong AP investigation into Fancy Bear that identified hundreds of senior officials and politicians — including former secretaries of state, top generals and intelligence chiefs — whose Gmail accounts were targeted.

The Kremlin is by no means the only source of worry, said Matt Tait, a University of Texas cybersecurity fellow and former British intelligence official.

"There are lots of countries that are interested in what legislators are thinking, what they're doing, how to influence them, and it's not just for purposes of dumping their information online," Tait said.

In an April 12 letter released by Wyden's office, Adm. Michael Rogers — then director of the National Security Agency — acknowledged that personal accounts of senior government officials "remain prime targets for exploitation" and said that officials at the NSA and Department for Homeland Security were discussing ways to better protect them. The NSA and DHS declined to offer further details.

Guarding personal accounts is a complex, many-layered challenge.

Rid believes tech companies have a sudden responsibility to nudge high-profile political targets into better digital hygiene. He said he did not believe much as been done, although Facebook announced a pilot program Monday to help political campaigns protect their accounts, including monitoring for potential hacking threats for those that sign up.

Boosting protection in the Senate could begin with the distribution of small chip-based security devices such as the YubiKey, which are already used in many secure corporate and government environments, Tait said. Such keys supplement passwords to authenticate legitimate users, potentially frustrating distant hackers.

Cybersecurity experts also recommend them for high-value cyber-espionage targets including human rights workers and journalists.

"In an ideal world, the Sergeant at Arms could just have a pile of YubiKeys," said Tait. "When legislators or staff come in they can (get) a quick cybersecurity briefing and pick up a couple of these for their personal accounts and their official accounts."

Bajak reported from Boston. Satter reported from London.

Trump says 'hard to imagine' Kavanaugh guilty of allegation

By ALAN FRAM and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday bluntly questioned the allegation that Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted a fellow high school student over 30 years ago, and Republicans warned the accuser the window was closing to tell her story before a confirmation vote.

Trump's skepticism, the most explicit challenge top Republicans have so far mounted to Christine Blasey Ford's credibility, came as GOP Senate leaders tried to firm up support for Kavanaugh. A potentially climactic Judiciary Committee showdown is scheduled for next Monday with both Ford and Kavanaugh invited, but her attendance is uncertain, casting doubt on whether the hearing will be held at all.

Ford has said she wants the FBI to investigate her allegation before she will testify. Democrats support that, but Trump and Senate Republicans have been emphatic that it won't happen.

Leaving the White House to survey flood damage in North Carolina from Hurricane Florence, Trump conceded that "we'll have to make a decision" if Ford's account proves convincing. Despite that glimmer of hesitancy, which few other Republicans have shown publicly, the president stood firmly behind the 53-year-old Kavanaugh, who would fill the second high court vacancy of Trump's term.

"I can only say this: He is such an outstanding man. Very hard for me to imagine that anything happened," Trump said.

The Republicans are resisting all Democratic efforts to slow and perhaps block what once seemed a smooth path to confirmation that would promote the conservative appeals court judge by the Oct. 1 opening of the Supreme Court's new term. Kavanaugh's glide to approval was interrupted last weekend when word of Ford's allegation became public, but GOP senators are showing no signs of slowing their drive to confirm him as quickly as possible.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, wrote to Ford's attorneys that the hearing was still scheduled for Monday morning, and he pointedly said she must submit her written statement by 10 a.m. Friday "if she intends to testify" that day.

Lisa Banks, a lawyer for Ford, released a statement late Wednesday that cast no light on whether her client will appear.

She wrote that Ford wants "a full non-partisan investigation" and said Ford is willing to cooperate. But she said Grassley's plan to call just Kavanaugh and Ford "is not a fair or good faith investigation" and said "multiple witnesses" — whom she didn't name — should appear.

"The rush to a hearing is unnecessary, and contrary to the Committee discovering the truth," Banks wrote.

Ford has contended that at a house party in the 1980s, a drunken Kavanaugh tried undressing her and stifling her cries on a bed before she fled. Kavanaugh has repeatedly denied that claim.

Trump's remark was noteworthy because most Republicans have handled the question of Ford's credibility more gingerly. They say they want to give Ford, now a professor at Palo Alto University, every chance to tell her story.

"I'd really want to see her. I really would want to see what she has to say," Trump said. "If she shows up that would be wonderful. If she doesn't show up that would be unfortunate."

Seven weeks from elections in which congressional control is at stake, Democrats have been unhesitant about casting Republicans as trying to strong-arm a victim of abuse.

One key Democrat, Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill, announced Wednesday she will vote against Kavanaugh, depriving Trump's nominee of a possible swing vote.

McCaskill called the sexual assault allegations against Kavanaugh troubling, but said she based her decision on the judge's views on issues like presidential power and "dark money" in campaigns. She's the first of five undecided Senate Democrats in competitive re-election races to come out against Kavanaugh.

The struggle between the two parties over the Kavanaugh allegation illustrates how they are trying to navigate a political climate in which the #MeToo movement of outing sexual abusers has galvanized many female voters. A substantial delay could push confirmation past the November elections, when Democrats have a shot at winning Senate control, plus allow more time for unforeseen problems to pop up.

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"Dr. Blasey Ford is calling for an impartial FBI investigation of her serious and credible allegations. Meanwhile Republicans are trying to bully her into a rigged hearing before a neutral investigation and without the only identified eyewitness," No. 2 Senate Democratic leader Dick Durbin of Illinois tweeted.

Ford and her Democratic allies also want the committee to interview Mark Judge, a Kavanaugh friend who Ford has said was in the bedroom during the attack. Judge has said he doesn't remember the incident, never saw Kavanaugh act that way and has no desire to testify publicly.

There were signs the GOP's strategy of planning a nationally televised hearing while also offering Ford the chance to testify in private was keeping possible Republican defections in check. The party controls the Senate 51-49 and the Judiciary panel by 11-10, so it cannot afford GOP "no" votes.

Moderate GOP Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, who's had her share of clashes with Trump, said she hoped Ford would reconsider a decision not to testify and "it's not fair to Judge Kavanaugh" if she refuses. "Otherwise, there are these very serious allegations hanging over the head of a nominee who has emphatically denied them," she said on WVOM radio in Bangor.

Going further, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said Democrats' demands for an FBI investigation were a ploy to delay a confirmation vote. "It is imperative the Judiciary Committee move forward on the Kavanaugh nomination and a committee vote be taken as soon as possible," the committee member said in a statement.

As for a possible FBI intervention, Grassley said in his letter to Ford's lawyers, "We have no power to commandeer an Executive Branch agency into conducting our due diligence."

In a separate letter to Democrats, Grassley wrote that committee aides were "even willing to fly to California, or anywhere else, to meet her." He also wrote that GOP aides tried to arrange interviews with two other "alleged witnesses." The letter mentioned no names and committee staff declined to name them.

Only the White House can order the FBI to get involved, since Kavanaugh is not accused of a federal crime. The FBI could interview Ford, Kavanaugh and others about the allegation if Trump asked the bureau to reopen its background investigation, but the president has said the FBI has finished its work.

Kavanaugh did not return to the White House on Wednesday after spending the two previous days there. He spoke by phone with officials working on strategy, according to an aide familiar with the proceedings but not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

The White House war room largely was centered on shaping the public perception of the nominee, pushing back on reporters' inquiries while circulating positive talking points to allies about Kavanaugh.

Kavanaugh spent hours Tuesday in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, part of the White House complex. He prepared for Monday's potential hearing with officials including White House Counsel Don McGahn, press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders and communications director Bill Shine, as well as Justice Department aides.

Shine was ousted from his previous job at Fox News in part due to his handling of sexual harassment claims at the company.

Associated Press reporters Darlene Superville, Padmananda Rama, Jonathan Lemire, Kevin Freking and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed.

California district latest to modernize 'sexist' dress code

By JOCELYN GECKER, Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. (AP) — The relaxed new dress code at public schools in the small city of Alameda, across the bay from San Francisco, is intentionally specific: Midriff-baring shirts are acceptable attire, so are tank tops with spaghetti straps and other once-banned items like micro-mini skirts and short shorts.

As students settle into the new school term, gone are restrictions on ripped jeans and hoodies in class. If students want to come to school in pajamas, that's OK, too.

The new policy amounts to a sweeping reversal of the modern school dress code and makes Alameda the latest school district in the country to adopt a more permissive policy it says is less sexist.

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Students who initiated the change say many of the old rules that barred too much skin disproportionately targeted girls, while language calling such attire “distracting” sent the wrong message.

“If someone is wearing a short shirt and you can see her stomach, it’s not her fault that she’s distracting other people,” said Henry Mills, 14, an incoming freshman at Alameda High School who worked with a committee of middle school students and teacher advisers to revise the policy. “There was language that mainly affected girls, and that wasn’t OK.”

Dress codes have long been the territory of contention and rebellion, but the reversal in Alameda shows a generational shift that students and teachers say was partly influenced by broader conversations on gender stemming from the #MeToo movement against sexual misconduct and a national resurgence of student activism.

Approved by the school board on a trial basis over summer break, the new dress code is stirring back-to-school discussions about what role schools should have in socializing children.

There are sharply critical voices of the new dress code.

Math teacher Marie Hsu said she’s all for equity but that the new rules send an unintentional message that it’s fine, even appropriate, to “sex it up.”

“It’s good not to punish girls for being distractions. I fully, fully get that,” said Hsu, who teaches at Lincoln Middle School and is an Alameda resident with two young children. “But I think it’s extraordinarily misled.”

Alameda mother Paula Walker says she may be “old school,” but she didn’t mind the bans against revealing clothing.

“They say kids are starting everything younger, and I’m like, well, that’s because you’re throwing it in their faces,” Walker said.

Dress codes and their severity vary widely nationwide. Twenty-four states have policies that give local school districts the power to adopt their own dress codes or uniform policies, according to the Education Commission of the States, a nonprofit that tracks education policy.

Some have statewide policies, like Arkansas, which passed a 2011 law requiring school districts “to prohibit the wearing of clothing that exposes underwear, buttocks, or the breast of a female.”

A Texas high school was recently criticized for a back-to-school video on dress codes that only featured girls. The video shown at Marcus High School in a Dallas suburb showed girls in short shorts getting reprimanded as the song “Bad Girls” by M.I.A. played in the background. Students slammed it as sexist on social media, prompting the principal to apologize, saying the video “absolutely missed the mark.”

Alameda’s new dress code was modeled after a suggested policy by the Oregon chapter of the National Organization for Women, drafted in 2016 to “update and improve” dress codes, avoid rules that reinforce gender stereotypes and minimize unnecessary discipline or “body shaming.”

Portland, Oregon’s public school district adopted a new policy in 2016, followed by Evanston, Illinois, in 2017, both of which incorporated NOW’s suggestions.

Portland’s relaxed dress code is considered a success, said Carol Campbell, principal at Grant High School.

Campbell said students wear appropriate clothing most of the time and it was “a huge relief” that staff could now focus on teaching, rather than necklines and hemlines.

“It’s changed the culture of how students view each other,” she said. “When we have rules and dress codes that particularly target one group it sounds like we’re blaming that group, which always tended to be women.”

Students in Alameda, Portland and Evanston have freedom to wear mostly anything as long as it includes a bottom, top, shoes, covers private parts and does not contain violent images, hate speech, profanity or pornography.

Vague language in the old Alameda policy caused confusion, which led to arbitrary enforcement, students and teachers said. There was, for example, a “three-finger” rule on the width of tank top straps and a ban on shorts and skirts shorter than “mid-thigh” and a rule against “low-cut tank tops.”

Girls with more developed bodies often were singled out for discipline ranging from lunch detention, picking up trash on campus, a phone call home or having to change into baggy clothing.

Stella Bourgoin said she makes her sixth-grade daughter dress modestly but she supports the policy mainly for convenience.

"If you go to a store, every pair of jeans has a rip in it. It's easier this way," Bourgoin said.

Associated Press writer Gillian Flaccus in Portland, Oregon, contributed to this report

Trump comforts storm-ravaged Carolinas with hot dogs, hugs

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

NEW BERN, N.C. (AP) — Eager to show heart in a moment of crisis, President Donald Trump handed out hot dogs, hugs and comforting words in the Carolinas on Wednesday as he surveyed the wreckage left by Hurricane Florence.

With residents still recovering from torrential rains that left widespread destruction and injury, Trump sought to strike a balance between comforter and cheerleader, mindful that he has been criticized in the past for not showing sufficient empathy in the face of tragedy.

During a packed day, a wind-breaker-clad Trump visited both North and South Carolina, distributed meals at a church, walked amid piles of sodden furniture in damaged neighborhoods, offered hugs and handshakes to residents and discussed the response efforts with local and state officials.

"America grieves with you and our hearts break for you. God bless you," he said during a briefing at a marine base in Havelock, North Carolina. "We will never forget your loss. We will never leave your side. We're with you all the way."

The emotional words and comprehensive itinerary stood in contrast with Trump's trip to Puerto Rico last year after Hurricane Maria, when he drew criticism for tossing rolls of paper towels into the crowd. Or his initial visit to Houston after Hurricane Harvey, when he did not meet with any storm victims.

There were still flashes of Trump's outsized persona and unconventional style — he asked about the status of Lake Norman, where he owns a golf club, telling officials, "I can't tell you why, but I love that area."

He also joked with a family who had a large yacht they didn't own wash up against their house. "At least you got a nice boat out of the deal," he told them. "What's the law? Maybe it becomes theirs."

And he was caught on camera telling a person to whom he had just handed food to "have a good time."

Trump's made his whirlwind tour through the Carolinas five days after the storm, which was blamed for at least 37 deaths in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. North and South Carolina both backed Trump in the 2016 election, and the president largely saw people who were happy to greet him. One man told the president he'd named his dog after Trump.

After a briefing on the recovery effort in North Carolina, Trump helped hand out hot dogs and chips at a Baptist church in New Bern, a riverfront city that experienced severe flooding. The president leaned over and checked in with people as they drove through to pick up food.

"How's the house?" he asked one person. "You take care of yourself," he said.

Trump also praised the volunteers, at one point hugging a young helper and telling his parents, "You did a good job."

Trump walked through a storm-damaged neighborhood where waterlogged sofa cushions, mattresses and downed trees were piled up along streets.

"How's it doing?" the president asked after one woman pointed at a house. He chatted and shook people's hands as he walked along a street strewn with trash, branches and wet furniture. Some people applauded as he went by.

Trump later traveled to Conway, South Carolina, where more flooding is expected still. He toured a neighborhood where a street was already submerged under water.

"Is everybody OK?" he asked those gathered, assuring them it was "going to be OK."

"Lot of money coming from Washington," he promised.

At Horry County's emergency operations center, South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster said the storm had likely been the worst disaster in the state's history, but warned it wasn't over yet.

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"The rain and the water you see out there now is just the beginning," he said. "The worst is yet to come." Trump, too, warned that more water was on the way, but assured those gathered that both he and Washington are "with you."

"Now it looks nice, but it's really the calm before the storm," he said.

It was the same message at Trump's first stop in North Carolina, where Gov. Roy Cooper and federal and state officials briefed the president at a Marine Corps air station in Havelock, which sits among areas Florence hit hardest. The governor asked for help "cutting red tape" to get his state the federal assistance it will need to recover.

Cooper said Florence was an "epic" storm and noted that farmers suffered significant losses and scores of people lost their homes. Some 10,000 people remain in shelters.

"We will be there 100 percent," pledged Trump. "All of the folks from the federal government that are around the table are confirming it."

Cooper, a Democrat, said he'd told the president "over and over again" that the state was "going to need significant resources to recover."

"He promised 100 percent support and we're going to hold them to it," he said of Trump.

Trump spent the run-up to the storm focused on criticism of the federal response to a hurricane that battered Puerto Rico last year, rejecting the official death toll of nearly 3,000 and claiming Democrats manufactured the number to make him "look bad."

When Trump visited San Juan last October after Hurricane Maria, he pumped his fists in the air when he landed. The enduring image of the trip was of Trump at a church lobbing paper towels into the crowd as if shooting baskets. At the time, it seemed to reflect Trump's brand of playfulness. Many people in the crowd smiled and raised their phones to record the moment. But critics quickly dubbed it inappropriate for the grim crisis at hand.

Before that, Trump's trip to Texas after Hurricane Harvey generated blowback for his failure to meet with victims of the storm. Four days later, he returned — and urged people at a Houston shelter to "have a good time." He also cheered on volunteers and emergency workers and handed out hot dogs and potato chips to residents. Some critics said the president's trip took on the tone of a victory lap for successful disaster management.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Darlene Superville in Washington contributed to this report.

Trump's tariffs could sow trouble for GOP in farm districts

By KEVIN FREKING and NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS, Associated Press

SPANGLE, Wash. (AP) — In the aptly named Harvester Restaurant, wheat farmer Roy Dube makes clear he's no fan of President Donald Trump's trade policy.

"We get him elected into office and he pulls us out of trade agreements," Dube said last week as local farmers gathered to hear Democratic House candidate Lisa Brown.

Dube says China is buying less wheat from eastern Washington farmers and Trump's policies have opened the door for Australia and Canada to wrestle away business. His frustration extends to his congressional representative, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, who is the highest-ranking Republican woman in the House and running for an eighth term.

"I'm concerned that Cathy McMorris Rodgers didn't put up more resistance," Dube said.

The U.S. tariffs on agriculture products, sown by Trump, have grown into an election-year threat to Republicans in rural districts that are heavily reliant on exports for their economy. With the livelihoods of farmers at risk, opposition to the tariffs could make a difference in some races and help determine which party takes control of Congress.

McMorris Rodgers has made it clear she opposes the president's actions on tariffs, but so far, the Republican-controlled House has not taken up legislation to block them. Democrats characterize GOP lawmakers as unable or unwilling to check Trump, who has declared that "tariffs are the greatest."

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"My opponent, though she would say she's concerned and talking to the administration about these issues, she's still mostly a cheerleader for the president," said Brown, a former state legislator.

Facing what appears to be the tightest re-election race of her career, McMorris Rodgers is emphasizing that she has encouraged the president to "move from tariffs to agreement."

"I have made it very clear that I don't support the across-the-board tariffs, that we should take a more targeted approach," McMorris Rodgers told The Associated Press.

Clues that the president's trade policies will play a role in the November midterm elections can be seen in Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue's travel schedule. Over the past few months, he's been to Eastern Washington to join McMorris Rodgers in meeting with farmers. He's also been to California's Central Valley to meet with farmers in the districts of Republican Reps. Jeff Denham and David Valadao. He also went to Iowa, where Republican Reps. David Young and Rod Blum are both in close races.

The battle for the Senate could also be affected by the tariff issue, particularly in North Dakota, Indiana and Missouri, where Republicans hope to knock off three Democratic incumbents.

The president has tried to allay farmers' concerns with an aid package of up to \$12 billion to help them weather the trade war.

J. Read Smith, a rancher near St. John, Washington, said he shares Trump's goal of seeking a level playing field in trade.

"But antagonizing our trading partners is not the way to do it," said Smith, who emphasized that he is not a Democrat. "I'm an American."

Aaron Flansburg, who runs a diversified farm near Pullman, Washington, said he's skeptical the tariffs will change the way most farmers vote, though.

"Farmers often vote for Republicans," Flansburg said. "Whether that will change, I have my doubts."

McMorris Rodgers said it's her sense that voters are willing to give the president time to negotiate better agreements.

"Yes, there's a lot of uncertainty. There's a sense that we need to get these trade agreements into place as soon as possible, but there's also a recognition that for too long America has not taken action, especially against China," she said.

The United States is scheduled to slap tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese imports Monday, adding to the more than \$50 billion worth that already face U.S. import taxes.

China retaliated with its own tariffs on U.S. products. The world's two biggest economies are clashing over allegations that China steals technology from American companies.

The Trump administration also imposed a 25 percent tariff on imported steel and a 10 percent tariff on imported aluminum that included imports from the European Union, Canada and Mexico — and just about everyone else — in the name of national security.

Those tariffs also drew retaliation. For example, the EU targeted bourbon, a key industry in Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's home state of Kentucky, where Republican Rep. Andy Barr and Democratic challenger Amy McGrath are battling in a close election.

Overall, about 6 in 10 Americans disapprove of how the president is handling trade negotiations with other countries.

Farm groups have testified in congressional hearings that retaliatory tariffs increase the cost of their products for customers abroad, giving foreign competitors an edge.

"The current tariffs, continuing back-and-forth retaliatory actions and trade uncertainties are hitting American agriculture from all sides and are causing us to lose our markets. Once you lose a market, it is really tough to get it back," said Kevin Paap, president of the Minnesota Farm Bureau.

Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, who is overseeing Democratic efforts in House races, pointed to Iowa as a state where he believes the administration's tariffs could backfire. He said primary turnout was up, in part because small family farmers and the businesses they buy from are worried. "I really believe that in those districts, you'll see people come forward and hold everyone accountable not standing up for them," Lujan said.

GOP lawmakers from Iowa, including Young and Blum, signed onto a letter calling on the president to act quickly to save rural economies. Blum also wrote Trump separately urging him to "consider the con-

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sequences tariffs have on American manufacturers.”

When the president visited Blum’s district a few days later, he thanked him for his “political courage” on trade.

“You’ve taken some heat for it in the short term, but in the long run, the farmers, the manufacturers, the employers are all going to be better off,” Blum told the president.

His Democratic challenger, Abby Finkenauer, has seized on that thank you.

“There is no way he should stand there and thank the administration for throwing the livelihoods of Iowans in flux,” Finkenauer said.

Republicans are putting their faith in the economy.

Rep. Tom Cole of Oklahoma said that he personally views tariffs as damaging in the long term but that it’s not an issue that constituents bring up.

“As long as the economy overall is doing well, it’s hard to see losing on tariff issues,” Cole said.

Freking reported from Washington, D.C. Associated Press writer Juana Summers in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

Too soon? Fans find Red Sox division title banner in street

SOMERVILLE, Mass. (AP) — The Boston Red Sox have not clinched this year’s American League East division championship, but a banner marking the accomplishment has already been accidentally unveiled.

Boston-area friends Louie Iacuzzi, James Amaral and Randy Baldasari say they found the banner on a road Monday morning after it apparently fell off a delivery truck in Somerville, Massachusetts.

But the trio held onto the banner for two days, hoping they’d be rewarded with game tickets or a chance to meet their favorite players.

Instead, the Boston Globe reports, the men brought the banner to Fenway Park Wednesday afternoon and returned empty handed.

Iacuzzi said he always intended to return the banner and rejected accusations he stole it.

The team can clinch the division if they defeat the New York Yankees Wednesday night.

Asian shares track optimism on Wall Street over tariffs

By ANNABELLE LIANG, Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Asian markets were mostly higher on Thursday with narrow trading after news of a fresh round of tariffs by the U.S. on \$200 billion in Chinese goods received a muted reaction on Wall Street.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan’s Nikkei 225 was flat at 23,672.91, ahead of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party’s leadership vote. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is widely expected overcome a challenge and receive the go-ahead for his third three-year term. The Kospi in South Korea added 0.7 percent to 2,325.04. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng index gained 0.4 percent to 27,528.36. The Shanghai Composite index was almost flat at 2,730.32. Australia’s S&P/ASX 200 shed 0.2 percent to 6,180.10. Shares rose in Singapore but fell in Taiwan.

WALL STREET: Major U.S. indexes were mixed on Wednesday as gains by banks and other financial companies balanced out losses elsewhere in the market. Bond yields surged to the highest level in four months, driving demand for bank stocks and triggering a sell-off in utilities and real estate companies, among others. The S&P 500 index gained 0.1 percent to 2,907.95. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.6 percent to 26,405.76. The Nasdaq composite was 0.1 percent lower at 7,950.04. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks dropped 0.5 percent to 1,702.93.

US-CHINA TRADE: Starting Monday, the U.S. will place a 10 percent tariff on \$200 billion more in Chinese goods. The tariffs will rise to 25 percent on Jan 1. Beijing has said it would take “counter measures”, which includes hitting \$60 billion worth of U.S. imports, including coffee, honey and industrial chemicals with retaliatory taxes. There was no word on whether China would back out of trade talks it said it was invited to by the U.S., but a Chinese Commerce Ministry statement said the U.S. increase “brings new uncertainty

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to the consultations." The Trump administration has said it remains open to negotiations with China.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "Indeed, U.S investor and traders, in general, are showing little sensitivity to U.S tariff implementations, at least at current levels anyway," Stephen Innes of OANDA said in a commentary. "So, with investors in evaluation mode and with both the U.S and China likely to resume negotiations, expectations are still there for a resolution before the President Trumps deems it necessary to double down on tariffs," he added.

ENERGY: Oil prices rose on news that U.S. crude inventories fell last week and are now running at about 3 percent lower than the five-year average for this time of the year. Benchmark U.S. crude gained 46 cents to \$71.23 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract settled at \$70.77 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added 25 cents to \$79.65 a barrel. It added 0.5 percent to \$79.40 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar eased to 112.11 yen from 112.29 yen. The euro strengthened to \$1.1686 from \$1.1674.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Sept. 20, the 263rd day of 2018. There are 102 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 20, 1962, James Meredith, a black student, was blocked from enrolling at the University of Mississippi by Democratic Gov. Ross R. Barnett. (Meredith was later admitted.)

On this date:

In 1519, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew set out from Spain on five ships to find a western passage to the Spice Islands. (Magellan was killed enroute, but one of his ships eventually circled the world.)

In 1911, the British liner RMS Olympic collided with the Royal Navy cruiser HMS Hawke off the Isle of Wight; although seriously damaged, the Olympic was able to return to Southampton under its own power.

In 1958, Martin Luther King Jr. was seriously wounded during a book signing at a New York City department store when he was stabbed in the chest by Izola Curry. (Curry was later found mentally incompetent; she died at a Queens, New York, nursing home in 2015 at age 98.)

In 1963, President Kennedy proposed a joint U-S-Soviet expedition to the moon.

In 1967, the Cunard liner RMS Queen Elizabeth 2 was christened by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in Clydebank, Scotland.

In 1973, in their so-called "battle of the sexes," tennis star Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs in straight sets, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, at the Houston Astrodome. Singer-songwriter Jim Croce, 30, died in a plane crash near Natchitoches, Louisiana.

In 1976, Playboy magazine released an interview in which Democratic presidential nominee Jimmy Carter admitted he'd "looked on a lot of women with lust."

In 1984, a suicide car bomber attacked the U.S. Embassy annex in north Beirut, killing at least 14 people, including two Americans and 12 Lebanese. The family sitcoms "The Cosby Show" and "Who's the Boss?" premiered on NBC and ABC, respectively.

In 1995, in a move that stunned Wall Street, A-T-and-T Corporation announced it was splitting into three companies.

In 1999, Lawrence Russell Brewer became the second white supremacist to be convicted in the dragging death of James Byrd Jr. in Jasper, Texas. (Brewer was executed on September 21, 2011.) Raisa Gorbachev, wife of the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, died at a German hospital after a battle with leukemia; she was 67.

In 2000, Independent Counsel Robert Ray announced the end of the Whitewater investigation, saying there was insufficient evidence to warrant charges against President Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Clin-

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ton. Former Soviet cosmonaut Gherman Titov died at age 65.

In 2001, during an address to a joint session of Congress, President George W. Bush announced a new Cabinet-level office to fortify homeland security and named Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge its director.

Ten years ago: The Bush administration asked Congress for the power to buy \$700 billion in toxic assets clogging the financial system and threatening the economy as negotiations began on the largest bailout since the Great Depression. A suicide truck bombing at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan, killed 53 people, including the Czech ambassador.

Five years ago: Charting a collision course with the White House, the Republican-controlled House approved, 230-189, legislation to avoid a partial government shutdown while also defunding President Barack Obama's 3-year-old health care law. (The Democratic-led Senate rebuffed the House's attempts to roll back the health care law; the partial government shutdown began October 1 with the start of the fiscal new year).

One year ago: Hurricane Maria, the strongest hurricane to hit Puerto Rico in more than 80 years, struck the island, wiping out as much as 75 percent of the power distribution lines and causing an island-wide blackout. Rescuers worked furiously at a collapsed school in Mexico City where a girl was believed trapped under debris in the aftermath of a deadly earthquake; it was later determined that no children were still trapped in the debris.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Sophia Loren is 84. Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Taylor is 83. Rock musician Chuck Panozzo is 70. Actor Tony Denison is 69. Hockey Hall of Famer Guy LaFleur is 67. Actress Debbi Morgan is 67. Jazz musician Peter White is 64. Actress Betsy Brantley is 63. Actor Gary Cole is 62. TV news correspondent Deborah Roberts is 58. Country-rock musician Joseph Shreve (Flynnville Train) is 57. Rock musician Randy Bradbury (Pennywise) is 54. Actress Kristen Johnston is 51. Rock singers Gunnar and Matthew Nelson are 51. Rock musician Ben Shepherd is 50. Actress Erika Okuma is 46. Actress-model Moon Bloodgood is 43. Actor Jon Bernthal is 42. Singer The Dream is 41. Actor Charlie Weber is 40. Rock musician Rick Woolstenhulme (WOOL'-sten-hyoolm) (Lifhouse) is 39. Actress Crystle Stewart is 37. Rapper Yung Joc is 36. Actor Aldis Hodge is 32. Actor Malachi (MAL'-ah-ky) Kirby is 29.

Thought for Today: "Ninety-nine percent of the failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses." — George Washington Carver, American botanist (1864-1943).