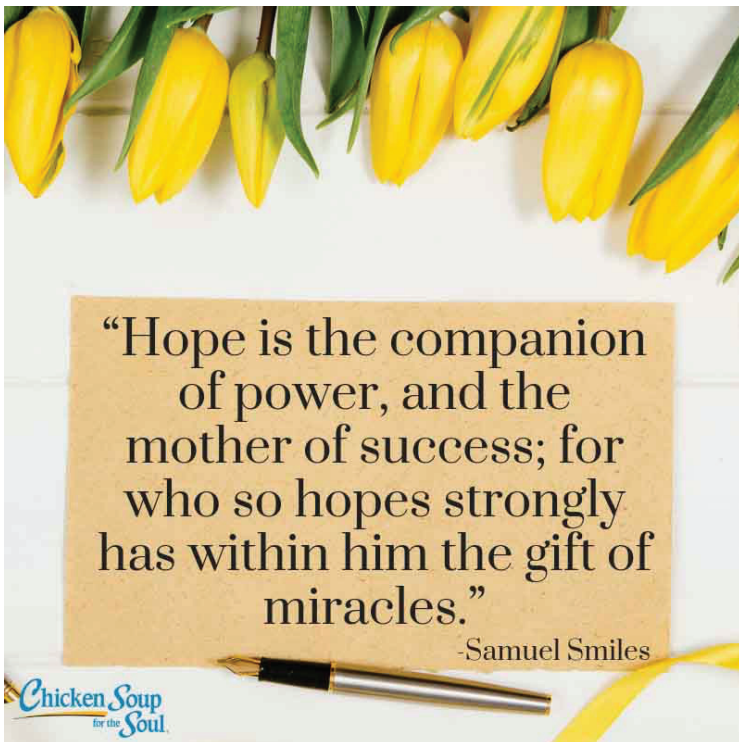


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- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Blocker Construction Ad
- 1- Service Notice: Steve Giedt
- 1- Recycling Trailer
- 2- Royalty at Groton Care & Rehab
- 2- State Minimum wage increases Jan. 1
- 3- Hawaiian Day Dress-up winner
- 4- Royalty at St. John's Preschool
- 5- Today in Weather History
- 6- Today's Forecast
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- 7- National Weather map
- 7- Today's Weather Almanac
- 8- Daily Devotional
- 9- 2018 Groton Community Events
- 10- News from the Associated Press

Service Notice: Steve Giedt

Services for Steve Giedt, 63, of Groton will be 10:00 a.m., Saturday, September 29th at St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton. Rev. Craig Grams and Pastor Andrew Wolfgram will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel.

Visitation will be held at the church on Friday from 4-6 with a 6 p.m. prayer service.

Steve passed away September 25, 2018 at his home.

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



Groton Area

Schedule of Events

Thursday, September 27th:

Senior football players to elementary for lunch @ 11:30-12:20 MUST check out of office and back into office- NO DRIVING (Wyatt Locke, Korbin Blackman, Lucas Hinman)

FCCLA Students to the Elementary School 11:30-12:30 (Payton Colestock, Sam Geffre)

Jungle Day activities in the arena grades 9-12 @ 1:15-3:30pm (classes will run by parent-teacher bell schedule)

MS Student in classrooms for games/movies @1:15-3:30 (classes will run by parent-teacher bell schedule)

4:00pm Cross Country Varsity @ Sisseton

4:30pm 7-8th Girls Volleyball @ Groton

5:00pm 7-8th Grade Football @ Roncalli

6:00pm JV/Varsity Volleyball @ Groton (Royalty will be announced during the Varsity Volleyball Game)

Thursday, Sept. 27



The 2018 Groton Area High School King Treyton Diegel and Queen Payton Maine crowned Richard Cozart and Marilyn Cutler as king and queen of the Groton Care and Rehabilitation Center during a small ceremony on Wednesday, September 26, 2018. (Courtesy Photo)

State Minimum Wage to Increase Jan. 1

PIERRE, S.D. – The state minimum wage will increase from \$8.85/hour to \$9.10/hour effective Jan. 1, 2019.

The minimum wage is annually adjusted by any increase in the cost of living, as measured in the Consumer Price Index published by the U.S. Department of Labor. This year's increase was 2.7 percent and is rounded up to the nearest five cents.

The hourly minimum wage for tipped employees will be \$4.55/hour effective Jan. 1, 2019, half the minimum wage for non-tipped employees. Wages and tips combined must equal at least the minimum wage.

These increases will apply to all South Dakota employers, with some limited exceptions. For more information, visit http://dlr.sd.gov/employment_laws/minimum_wage.aspx.

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Hawaiian Day Dress-up Winners

Left to right are Jillian Barton 12th grade , Nicole Marzahn 11th , Lane Tietz 7th grade, Ashtyn Bahr 8th grade, Emma Kutter 6th grade, Emilie Thurston 9th grade and Corbin Weismantel 6th grade. Missing is Kaden Carda 10th grade. (Photo by Tina Kosel)

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Homecoming Royalty Payton Maine and Treyton Diegel visited the pre-schoolers at St. John's Lutheran Church on Wednesday. (Photo from Tricia Keith's Facebook Page)

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Today in Weather History

September 1, 1990: Several severe thunderstorms in northwest South Dakota dropped from penny to softball size hail during the afternoon and early evening hours which caused a good deal of structural damage to houses and farm buildings. The largest hailstone of 4 inches in diameter was reported at Sorum in Perkins County. There was also a wind gust to 86 mph measured at Buffalo during a severe thunderstorm.

September 1, 2010: A couple of weak tornadoes touched down briefly in the late evening west of Tulare with no damage occurring.

1816 - A black frost over most of New England kills unripened corn in the north resulting in a year of famine. (David Ludlum)

1862: The Battle of Ox Hill (or Chantilly) is also known as the only major Civil War battle to have been fought during a storm. "A severe thunderstorm erupted, resulting in limited visibility and an increased dependence on the bayonet, as the rain soaked the ammunition of the infantry and made it useless." From Taylor, Paul. He Hath Loosed the Fateful Lightning: The Battle of Ox Hill (Chantilly), September 1, 1862.

1894: The Great Hinckley Fire, which burned an area of at least 200,000 acres or perhaps more than 250,000 acres including the town of Hinckley, Minnesota occurred on this day. The official death count was 418 though the actual number of fatalities was likely higher.

1959 - A tornado 440 yards in width traveled twenty miles from near Hollow, OK, to western Cherokee County KS. Although a strong tornado, it was very slow moving, and gave a tremendous warning roar, and as a result no one was killed. (The Weather Channel)

1970 - Afternoon highs of 103 degrees at Long Beach, CA, and 105 degrees at the Los Angeles Civic Center were the hottest since September records were established in 1963. Fierce Santa Ana winds accompanying the extreme heat resulted in destructive fires. (The Weather Channel)

1974: Lt. Judy Neuffer became the first female to fly a Hurricane Hunter aircraft through the eye of a hurricane.

1985 - A record early season snowstorm struck the Central High Plains Region. The storm left up to nineteen inches of snow along the Colorado Front Range, and as much as a foot of snow in the High Plains Region. (Storm Data)

1987 - While those at the base of Mount Washington, NH, enjoyed sunny skies and temperatures in the 70s, the top of the mountain was blanketed with 4.7 inches of snow, along with wind gusts to 99 mph, and a temperature of 13 degrees. Severe thunderstorms developed along a cold front in the south central U.S. A thunderstorm west of Noodle TX produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 70 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced large hail in southeastern Wyoming during the afternoon, with tennis ball size hail reported at Cheyenne. Strong winds ushering the cold air into the north central U.S. gusted to 59 mph at Lander WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Freezing temperatures were reported in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley. Houghton Lake MI reported a record low of 21 degrees. Thunderstorms in the western U.S. produced wind gusts to 50 mph at Salt Lake City UT, and gusts to 58 mph at Cody WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today



Mostly Cloudy

High: 58 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy
then Areas
Frost

Low: 32 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 52 °F

Friday
Night



Areas Frost
then Partly
Cloudy

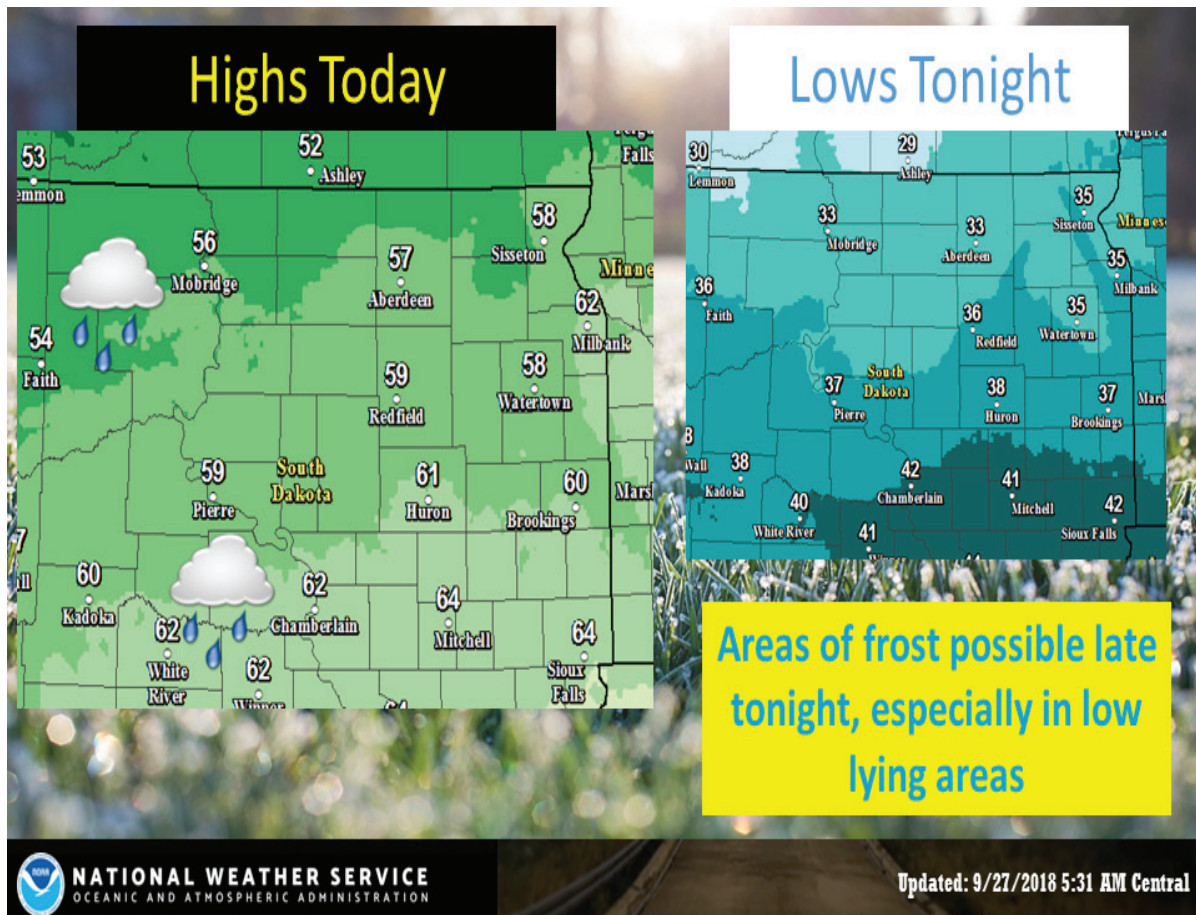
Low: 32 °F

Saturday



Chance
Showers

High: 51 °F



Published on: 09/27/2018 at 5:33AM

A frontal boundary will track across the area this afternoon into this evening, bringing a chance for rain showers to the western and southern part of the state. Much cooler air will filter in behind the front tonight, with area of frost possible, mainly in low lying areas.

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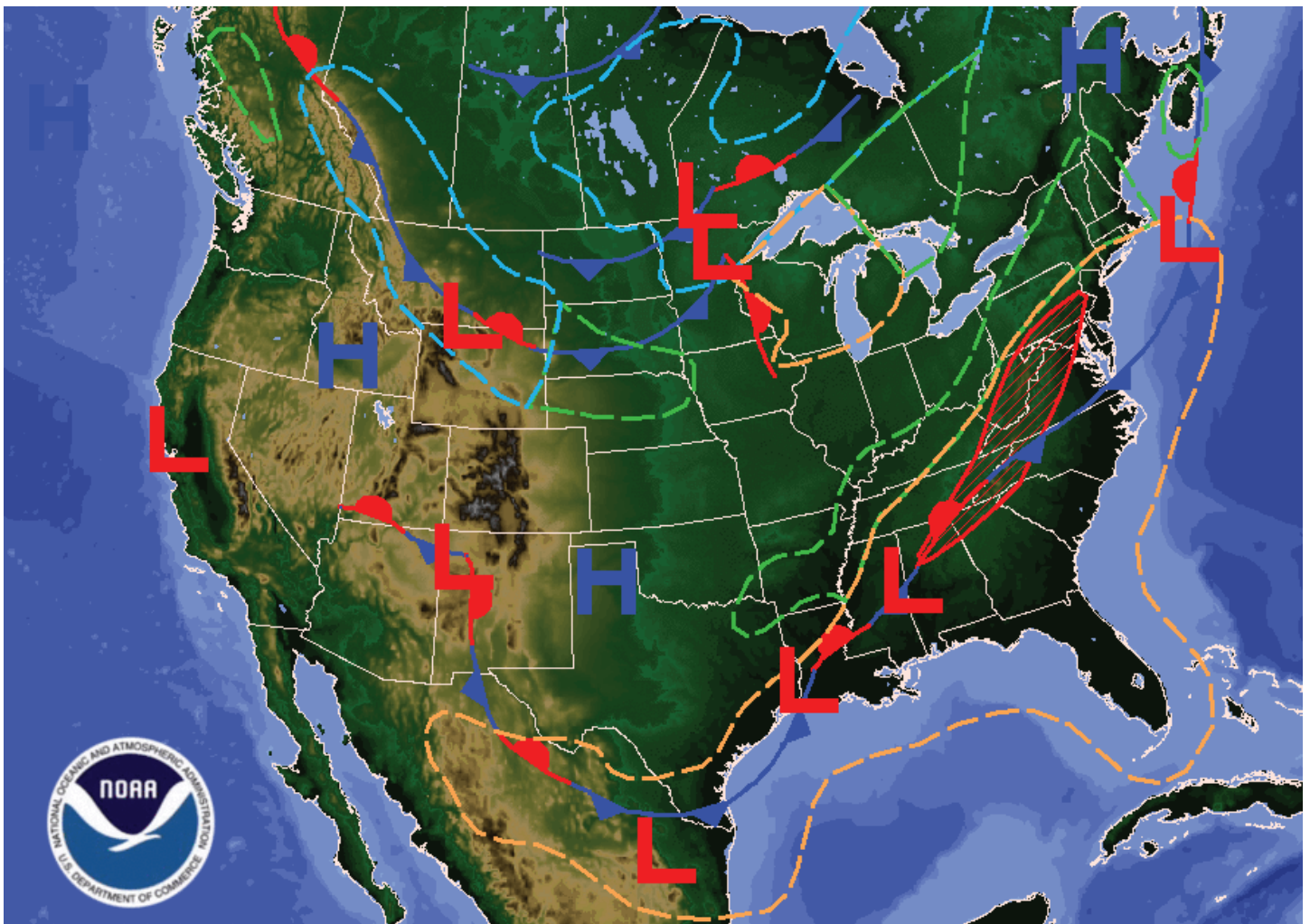
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 66.6 F at 4:40 PM
Low Outside Temp: 35.2 F at 7:35 AM
High Gust: 22.0 Mph at 4:54 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 95° in 1952
Record Low: 22° in 1900
Average High: 67°F
Average Low: 41°F
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.90
Precip to date in Sept.: 2.36
Average Precip to date: 18.19
Precip Year to Date: 13.57
Sunset Tonight: 7:22 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:28 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Sep 27, 2018, issued 4:17 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

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

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PRAISE, PRAISE AND MORE PRAISE

Years ago, two masked thieves quietly entered a church as the pastor offered the invocation. Immediately after he said, Amen, they shouted, Everyone keeps standing, raise your hands toward heaven and sing My Hope is Built on Christ Alone as though your life depended on it. Cause it does.

With the worshipers hands held high, the thieves were able to go through pockets and purses at a rapid pace. After they were finished and fled from the church, the minister of music said in a trembling voice, Im sure that God heard us sing that song of hope this morning as weve never sung it before!

The hope that we have in and from God must always be in our hearts and on our lips. Unfortunately, when our days are trouble free and uncontested, we seem to forget the importance of hope, and the blessings that come with it. However, the hope we have in Him and because of Him should fill our hearts with praise for His grace at all times. Hear the words of the Psalmist: Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life. I will sing praise to my God as long as I live! Praise was as natural as breathing, and he did not need special days or favors to praise God. Every day was a day to praise God.

In good times or hard times, the Psalmist joyfully expressed his gratitude to God for everything. All my life...as long as I live...I will praise Him!

Good days or bad days, joyous days or painful days, smiley face days or tear-filled days: Praise Him!

Prayer: Help us, Father, to constantly raise our voices in grateful praise to You, for Your never-ending blessings! In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 146:2 Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life. I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- Nov./Dec./Jan./Feb./Mar. 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)
- Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/15/2019 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/14/2019 Summer Fest
- 9/7/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/01/2018 Olive Grove Golf Course 2018 Holiday Party

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

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash
02-07-12-23-32
(two, seven, twelve, twenty-three, thirty-two)
Estimated jackpot: \$330,000

Lotto America
16-22-28-35-42, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 2
(sixteen, twenty-two, twenty-eight, thirty-five, forty-two; Star Ball: nine; ASB: two)
Estimated jackpot: \$8.45 million

Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$336 million

Powerball
01-02-07-30-50, Powerball: 8, Power Play: 5
(one, two, seven, thirty, fifty; Powerball: eight; Power Play: five)
Estimated jackpot: \$193 million

Boa constrictor captured after escaping Sioux Falls store

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — No one was injured when a boa constrictor somehow escaped from a Sioux Falls store and slithered into a nearby laundry business.

Officers responded to the laundry Tuesday night. Police spokesman Sam Clemens says the snake was captured and taken to the Sioux Falls Humane Society.

It wasn't clear how big the snake was, but police records indicate an officer tussled with it.

The snake's owner later called police after discovering it was missing, and reclaimed the reptile. No charges were filed.

Former diner manager sentenced for embezzlement

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A manager of a Sioux Falls diner has been sentenced to 90 days in jail for embezzling more than \$25,000 from her former employer.

A judge Tuesday also imposed a suspended sentence of six years in prison and 90 days in jail for Suzann Patenode which is contingent on paying about \$25,000 in restitution and remaining in good standing during her three years of probation. Patenode managed the Phillips Avenue diner.

The Argus Leader reports the judge allowed Patenode to choose electronic monitoring as an alternative to her jail time. An audit showed nearly 100 bank deposits were withheld between March and August of 2017.

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

Nearly \$13M in restitution ordered in medical fraud case

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A former Rapid City dentist and city councilman convicted of medical fraud has been ordered to pay \$12 million to victims, with his cohorts adding nearly another million.

Larry Lytle, 83, was sentenced in April to 12 years in prison for using bogus claims to mislead more than 3,000 people into buying laser devices he said could treat hundreds of medical conditions, including diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and AIDS.

A restitution order was filed Monday in federal court against Lytle and two co-conspirators who pleaded guilty earlier to conspiring with him, the Rapid City Journal reported. Ronald Weir, 39, of Rapid City, was ordered to pay about \$802,000 and Irina Kossovskaja, 63, a Canadian citizen, about \$92,000. Weir earlier was sentenced to two years in prison and Kossovskaja was sentenced to a year and three months behind bars.

Lytle admitted to selling the so-called QLasers for about \$4,000 each from 2005 through 2015. The case has been described by prosecutors as one of the largest fraud schemes ever handled in federal court in South Dakota.

Both Lytle and Weir have questioned the restitution amounts and have been given until Oct. 5 to produce documents supporting their requests for reductions.

Lytle's plea agreement required him to start making restitution earlier this year, and he has paid nearly \$673,000. Whether any more can be obtained from him is unknown. Prosecutors have alleged that he transferred many of his assets to family members as his legal situation deteriorated, and a judge earlier this summer said Lytle "appears to be nearly devoid of assets."

Victims will receive proportional shares of whatever restitution is collected.

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

Family accuses city of negligence after building collapse

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The family of a woman who was rescued from beneath the rubble of a collapsed Sioux Falls building has filed a lawsuit accusing the city of negligence for allowing a construction company to remove a load-bearing wall.

The Argus Leader reports that court documents allege the city didn't heed red flags and violations by the company overseeing the Copper Lounge's demolition.

Emily Fodness was sleeping in an apartment above the Copper Lounge in 2016 when Hultgren Construction removed a load-bearing wall and the building collapsed, trapping her and killing a construction worker.

The lawsuit filed by Emily, Michael and Christine Fodness alleges that the city knew of "repeated instances" that Hultgren didn't comply with city permits. The city attorney declined to comment to the newspaper, citing pending litigation.

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

Yankton man pleads not guilty in Box Elder standoff

BOX ELDER, S.D. (AP) — A Yankton man accused of shooting at a police officer and briefly taking hostages at gunpoint in Box Elder has pleaded not guilty to 22 felony charges including attempted murder and drug possession.

Thirty-one-year-old Justin Littrell was arrested Aug. 14 after a three-hour standoff. The Rapid City Journal reports he could spend the rest of his life in prison if convicted.

The incident began with police responding to a report of a suspicious person. Littrell allegedly shot at officers, fled into a nearby yard and took two people hostage, then fled again when police closed in and entered a home occupied by a 10-year-old girl. No one was hurt.

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

Student accused of making threat had no access to guns

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police say a 16-year-old Sioux Falls high school student who tweeted about “shooting up” a school did not have access to weapons.

The girl was arrested Monday and charged in juvenile court with making a terrorist threat. Police spokesman Sam Clemens says it will be up to prosecutors to decide whether the case is moved to adult court, where the girl could face up to five years in prison.

Clemens didn’t know which school the girl attended, and said the threat was not directed at a specific school. He said authorities did not immediately determine what prompted the girl to make the alleged threat.

Former grocery store owner sentenced for not paying taxes

OLIVET, S.D. (AP) — The former owner of several rural grocery stores in South Dakota has been sentenced to two years of probation and fined \$1,000 for failing to pay sales tax.

The Daily Republic reports Mark Mora of Tripp also has been ordered to perform about four months of community service and pay nearly \$49,000 in restitution. He also must complete a gambling addiction evaluation.

Mora was accused of not paying sales tax for Corner Grocery stores in Tyndall, Tripp and Scotland between September 2016 and March 2017. He and his wife ran the stores for less than a year and abruptly closed them in March 2017.

Mora pleaded guilty on Monday to a felony charge of failing to pay tax.

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

This boy’s calendar: a window to Kavanaugh’s summer of ‘82

By STEPHEN BRAUN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The letters are scrawled in blue ink across a calendar page from June 1982: BEACH WEEK. The big, bold font seems to indicate the importance of this nine-day stretch on the social calendar of a young Brett Kavanaugh, especially amid more mundane entries like “haircut” and “pick up pictures.”

The 36-year-old calendar was presented by Kavanaugh as an alibi against an allegation of sexual assault that will be the subject of an intensely watched hearing Thursday on Capitol Hill, which could decide whether he will be confirmed as a justice of the Supreme Court.

But look closer. You will also see a time capsule from a long-ago summer and a window into the hard-partying prep school culture in which acquaintances say the future federal judge was an enthusiastic participant. This included Beach Week, an annual rite of Washington-area high schoolers that is as anticipated by teens as it is feared by their parents.

Kavanaugh has flatly denied the allegations of three women who have come forward to accuse him of sexual misconduct amid drunken parties during high school in suburban Maryland and college at Yale.

In earlier public statements, he distanced himself from the boozy reputation of boys from Georgetown Prep, portraying his younger self as a church-going, high-performing scholar athlete. In prepared testimony released Wednesday, he changed his tune.

“I drank beer with my friends, usually on weekends,” he now says. “Sometimes I had too many. In retrospect, I said and did things in high school that make me cringe now.”

Senators are likely to key in on his shifting descriptions of his high school years as they investigate a claim by Christine Blasey Ford that Kavanaugh tried to rape her during a small house party that summer. Ford gave her account of an abusive encounter with Kavanaugh in an article in The Washington Post.

Since then, other women have gone public with allegations against Kavanaugh. In an article published Sunday by The New Yorker, a Yale University classmate, Deborah Ramirez, described Brett Kavanaugh placing his penis in front of her during a dormitory party. In a sworn declaration released Wednesday, Julie Swetnick of Washington, D.C., said she witnessed Kavanaugh “consistently engage in excessive drinking

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and inappropriate contact of a sexual nature with women in the early 1980s.”

In his prepared statement for Thursday’s hearing, Kavanaugh said: “Sexual assault is horrific. It is morally wrong. It is illegal. It is contrary to my religious faith.” Referring to Ford — the only accuser asked to testify at Thursday’s hearing — he said: “I have never done that to her or to anyone. I am innocent of this charge.”

Efforts to gauge Kavanaugh’s credibility have prompted a close examination in recent days of various pieces of evidence from his life more than three decades ago.

As he was trying to deflect questions about teenage drinking, new stories and tweets pointed to his senior yearbook page, which includes this description: “Keg City Club (Treasurer) — 100 Kegs or Bust.” One of his highlighted quotes is “Down the Hatch!”

Kavanaugh’s yearbook page describes him as a member of the “Beach Week Ralph Club,” an apparent reference to vomiting from drinking too much alcohol.

Then there are Kavanaugh’s notations from his calendar for the summer of 1982. Along with multiple listings for parties, he includes college interviews. He notes when he’s been grounded and writes, “Go to Connecticut with Grammy.” He scribbled girls’ names — “Nikki” and “Suzanne” — on various days.

One classmate of Kavanaugh’s in the Georgetown Prep Class of 1983 said the calendar also details just how much time and attention was spent on heavy drinking, from the estates of suburban Washington to the beaches of the Maryland shore. The classmate said he saw Kavanaugh repeatedly during Beach Week. Whenever they met, the man said, Kavanaugh was drinking. But then again, so was everyone else.

“You didn’t show up without a six-pack or a keg,” said the classmate, who spoke on condition of anonymity to protect his business and professional relationships within the Georgetown Prep community. “You consumed whatever was available, six-packs, kegs, gin, grain alcohol, you name it. You drank when you got up at 10 a.m. and you were drinking when you collapsed at 2 or 3 a.m.”

At one point, the classmate said, someone from Kavanaugh’s group heaved a keg from a landing of a high-rise for kicks.

Back home from the beach, there was, apparently, more drinking in July.

The first day of the month, Kavanaugh scribbled a plan to “go to Timmy’s for skis” with several football teammates. Skis was shorthand for “brew-skis,” the classmate recalled.

For more coverage of Brett Kavanaugh’s Supreme Court nomination, visit <https://apnews.com/tag/KavanaughNomination>

Ford, Kavanaugh and a Senate hearing: A viewer’s guide

By LAURIE KELLMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It’ll be a snapshot of the state of the union.

The Senate Judiciary Committee hearing Thursday turns on the credibility of its two star witnesses, Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford, the woman who says he sexually assaulted her.

But there is much more electrifying the atmosphere in the cramped hearing room and the nation beyond the cameras. Allegations by other women. Death threats against the witnesses’ families and lawmakers considering the testimony. President Donald Trump’s Twitter rants. The #MeToo movement and the looming Nov. 6 midterm elections.

And a critical question that can’t be immediately answered: Can Senate Republicans get a 51-49 majority in Kavanaugh’s favor? Even Trump, Kavanaugh’s patron, says he could be swayed by Ford’s testimony.

“We have lit a match,” said retiring Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., a frequent Trump critic. “Do we appreciate how close the powder keg is?”

A guide to viewing the spectacle:

WHEN TO WATCH

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Gavel-to-gavel coverage can be found on many news channels, with proceedings expected to begin at 10 a.m. EDT. The hearing room seats only a few dozen people not on the committee. A small pool of journalists will be allowed in, with a limited number of cameras. That's a change — at Ford's request — from Kavanaugh's first four days of hearings in the massive, lit-for-television hearing room often used for high-profile proceedings.

AT ISSUE

Whether Kavanaugh's nomination to a lifetime appointment on the Supreme Court is still viable. Ford says Kavanaugh pushed her into a room, groped her and covered her mouth when she tried to scream during a high school party. Kavanaugh has denied that he ever sexually assaulted anyone.

WHO ELSE IS WATCHING

Trump, in an unusually qualified way. On the eve of the hearing and for the first time, Trump acknowledged that accusations of sexual misconduct leveled against him affect his views on charges against other men. "It's happened to me many times," the president said at his news conference in New York, claiming he'd been falsely accused by "four or five women." In fact, more than a dozen women have accused Trump of sexual misconduct. But he also said Ford's testimony, and the accounts of other accusers could prompt him to change course. "It's possible that I'll hear that and I'll say I'm changing my mind," Trump said.

THE ORDER OF THINGS

There may not be much order, if Kavanaugh's first round of hearings is any clue. They erupted almost instantly into shouting and general bedlam — and that was before anyone was talking about sexual assault allegations. This time, because of more limited seating, any protesters would have limited ability to disrupt the proceedings. But here is the plan: Ford is to testify first. Kavanaugh responds. Each can talk for as long as he or she wants, according to Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa. At Ford's request, Kavanaugh will not be in the room when she testifies. Each of the 11 Republican senators and each of the 10 Democratic senators on the committee will have a chance to ask five minutes of questions, Grassley said. The questioning will alternate between Republicans and Democrats.

SOME REPUBLICANS MIGHT PASS

Republicans have no good choices when it comes to cross-examining Ford because every GOP member of the panel is a man. The optics of men challenging a woman who says she's been a victim of sexual assault are so bad that the committee has asked a female prosecutor from Arizona to help with the questioning. But, Grassley told reporters on Wednesday, "Any Republican that wants to claim their five minutes can claim their five minutes."

THE STAR QUESTIONER

Look for a new face in Washington to take a high profile at the proceedings at the behest of Senate Republicans. She is Rachel Mitchell, a Republican from Arizona with decades of experience prosecuting sex crimes. Mitchell works in the Maricopa County attorney's office in Phoenix as the chief of the special victims division. She supervises attorneys who handle cases involving child molestation, sexual assault and computer crimes against children in Arizona's most populous county.

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EVIDENCE

A green-and-white scribbled calendar, complete with doodles and capital letters marked "BEACH WEEK" is Kavanaugh's 1982 summer calendar, when he was a senior in high school. It's also part of his defense against Ford's accusation that he attended the party at which she says the assault happened.

Look also for four sworn affidavits from people who say Ford told them about the alleged assault before Trump nominated Kavanaugh.

Ford also provided the committee with the results of a polygraph test on her accusation. The documents indicate Ford took the test Aug. 7 at a Hilton Hotel in Maryland and seem to support her claim that she passed it, though there's no independent expert verification.

PRESSURE ON DEMOCRATS

Five minutes isn't much for a potential presidential candidate, but they're likely to take what they can get. Look for at least two Democratic senators on the panel, said to be considering challenging Trump in 2020, to make the most of their time: Kamala Harris of California and Cory Booker of New Jersey.

Both took turns aggressively questioning Kavanaugh during his first four days of confirmation hearings in what many saw as a prelude to presidential primary campaigns.

Trump scoffed that his would-be 2020 challengers looked "like fools."

SPEAKING OF TRUMP

He's said to be seething about the slow Republican-set pace of the Kavanaugh proceedings and suggested at the United Nations that he might have preferred to hold votes on the confirmation even without hearing from Ford. Confirming conservative justices to the Supreme Court is, in his view, central to his compact with his core supporters.

Not likely to improve Trump's mood is another bit of potential unpleasantness on his schedule Thursday: A meeting to decide the fate of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who oversees special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russian election meddling. Trump indicated Wednesday that he may delay the meeting so he can focus on the hearing instead.

OTHER ACCUSERS

Look for whether Democrats succeed in raising the two other women accusing Kavanaugh of misconduct.

One, Deborah Ramirez, told The New Yorker that Kavanaugh exposed himself to her while they were both students at Yale. She has acknowledged consuming alcohol at the time, which clouded some of her memories.

The other, Julie Swetnick, has accused Kavanaugh and his friend, Mark Judge, of excessive drinking and inappropriate treatment of women, among other things. The Associated Press hasn't been able to corroborate the claims.

Kavanaugh and Judge have denied the allegations. Kavanaugh said he doesn't know Swetnick and "this never happened."

YOU AGAIN?

They won't be in the hearing room. But it's worth noting that Swetnick's lawyer is Michael Avenatti, the lawyer for porn actress Stormy Daniels, who says Trump tried to hush up their 2006 sexual tryst.

Avenatti says he, too, is considering running for president in 2020.

Follow Kellman on Twitter at: <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman>

For more coverage of Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court nomination, visit <https://apnews.com/tag/Kavanaughnomination>

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. HIGH DRAMA ON CAPITOL HILL

Senators will hear from Christine Blasey Ford, a California psychology professor who has accused Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh of attempting to rape her when they were teens.

2. WHAT COULD BE A WHERE-WERE-YOU MOMENT

The Kennedy assassination. The Challenger explosion. The Sept. 11 attacks. Make room for another potentially historic moment, one that could shape the Supreme Court for decades.

3. TEENS MINDFUL OF INTERNET'S UNFORGIVING GLARE

With Kavanaugh's behavior in the 1980s facing scrutiny, today's tech-savvy high schoolers know what they say and do now will live well past graduation.

4. 6 NATIONS MAKE UNPRECEDENTED MOVE AT UN

Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Paraguay and Canada have asked the International Criminal Court to investigate Venezuela for alleged crimes against humanity.

5. VEGAS SHOOTING SURVIVORS LIVING WITH FEAR

In the year since Chris Gilman was nearly killed in the massacre that took 58 lives, she has to fight the urge daily that she will be shot at again.

6. WHERE THEY'RE GRAPPLING WITH A SUDDEN HOMELESS CAMP

With two deaths in recent weeks and fears about disease, crime and the coming winter, pressure is ratcheting up for a solution in Minneapolis.

7. TRUMP MAY, OR MAY NOT MEET WITH ROSENSTEIN

The president says he would "certainly prefer not" to fire the embattled deputy attorney general and that he may delay a highly anticipated meeting.

8. CORPORATE GIANTS WARN TARIFFS WILL MEAN PRICE HIKES

From Ford to Walmart to Procter & Gamble, a growing number of iconic U.S. companies are warning that Trump's tariffs on U.S. imports are raising their costs and prices.

9. WHO GAVE A SUPER AGENT THE BUSINESS

Saying he had "no chops," Bill Murray showed no mercy in teasing former Hollywood agent Michael Ovitz as the latter promoted a book in New York City.

10. WHIFF OF OFFENSE

The major league batting average is on track to drop below .250 for the first time since 1972 and strikeouts could top hits for the first time ever.

Trump says he prefers to keep Rosenstein, may delay meeting

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said he would "certainly prefer not" to fire Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and that he may delay a highly anticipated meeting with the Justice Department's No. 2 official.

Trump said Rosenstein denied making remarks first attributed to him in a New York Times report, including that he had discussed possibly secretly recording the president and using the Constitution's 25th Amendment to remove Trump from office.

"I would much prefer keeping Rod Rosenstein," Trump said at a news conference in New York. "He said he did not say it. He said he does not believe that. He said he has a lot of respect for me, and he was very nice and we'll see."

Trump added, "My preference would be to keep him and to let him finish up."

Rosenstein is overseeing special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election and his dismissal would put that probe in jeopardy and create a political storm.

In suggesting that he might postpone Thursday's meeting, Trump said he was focused on the extraordinary

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Senate Judiciary Committee hearing set for the same day with Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and a woman who has accused Kavanaugh of sexual assault when they were teenagers.

"I may call Rod tonight or tomorrow and ask for a little bit of a delay to the meeting, because I don't want to do anything that gets in the way of this very important Supreme Court pick," Trump said.

The Justice Department referred questions about the scheduling of the meeting to the White House.

Any delay in the meeting would prolong the uncertainty of Rosenstein's status. Rosenstein headed to the White House on Monday morning preparing to be fired and had discussed a possible resignation over the weekend with White House officials. But after meeting with chief of staff John Kelly and speaking by phone with Trump, he got a reprieve with the Trump meeting scheduled for Thursday.

Since then, the White House has sought to tamp down anxiety that Rosenstein would be fired.

White House officials called senators Monday to say Trump had said he wouldn't be firing Rosenstein at the meeting, according to two people familiar with the conversations who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private discussions. Aides have advised Trump against taking any extreme actions ahead of the midterm elections with his party's majorities in Congress already under threat.

"Not wanting to fire Rod Rosenstein is consistent with what I have understood for weeks, not just days," said Rep. Mark Meadows, a North Carolina Republican who talks to Trump often.

Friends and former colleagues of Rosenstein say they didn't expect him to step aside and give up oversight of Russia investigation and the enormous swath of Justice Department operations for which he is responsible.

Rosenstein, who has spent his entire career in government, "has tremendous loyalty to the department," said former Justice Department lawyer and longtime friend James Trusty.

"He's a very long-run, historical-minded guy in a lot of ways," Trusty said. "I think he may have some confidence that history will be kinder to him than politicians are."

Trump's remarks Wednesday followed a chaotic period that began Friday with reports that Rosenstein had last year discussed possibly secretly recording the president and invoking the Constitution to remove Trump from office. The Justice Department issued statements Friday aimed at denying the reports, including one that said the wiretap remark was meant sarcastically.

Rosenstein appointed Mueller in May 2017, oversees his work and has repeatedly defended the breadth and scope of the probe. Trump has been critical of Rosenstein's oversight of the probe, but the two have at times displayed a warm working relationship, and Rosenstein has been spared some of the more personal and antagonistic broadsides leveled against Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Even if Rosenstein survives the week, it's not clear how much longer he'll be around. Trump has signaled that he may fire Sessions after the midterms, and Rosenstein could go with him.

But it could be sooner: Some officials around Trump believe Rosenstein's reported musings about invoking the 25th Amendment could make it defensible for Trump to part with him, even during the final sprint to Election Day.

Rosenstein's friends and former colleagues describe him as exceptionally committed to the Justice Department — one said he "bleeds" for the agency — and unlikely to leave on his own, though they say he respects the chain of command enough to resign if asked.

He joined the department in 1990, serving as a public corruption prosecutor, a Tax Division supervisor and a member of independent counsel Ken Starr's Whitewater team. He was named U.S. attorney in Maryland by President George W. Bush and held the position throughout the Obama administration — remarkable longevity for a position that typically turns over with changes in political power.

Within weeks of being confirmed as deputy attorney general, he was engulfed in controversy by writing a memo critical of then-FBI Director James Comey, which the White House cited as justification for Comey's firing.

Associated Press writers Chad Day, Ken Thomas and Michael Balsamo in Washington and Zeke Miller in New York contributed to this report.

UN court asked to probe Venezuela; leader defiant in speech

By ANGELA CHARLTON, MATTHEW PENNINGTON and JENNIFER PELTZ, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Six nations made the unprecedented move Wednesday of asking the U.N.'s International Criminal Court to investigate Venezuela for possible crimes against humanity, even as President Nicolas Maduro made an unexpected trip to the world body's headquarters to deliver a nearly hourlong speech declaring his nation "will never give in."

Maduro's speech at the General Assembly gathering of world leaders came hours after Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Paraguay and Canada formally asked the ICC to investigate Venezuela on a range of possible charges, from murder to torture and crimes against humanity.

"To remain indifferent or speculative in front of this reality could be perceived as being complicit with the regime. We are not going to be complicit," said Paraguayan Foreign Minister Andres Rodriguez Pedotti.

The six countries hope the move puts new pressure on Maduro to end the violence and conflict that have sent more than 2 million people fleeing and made Venezuela's inflation and homicide rates among the highest in the world.

Venezuelan officials have widely rejected international criticism, saying they're driven by imperialist forces led by the U.S. to justify launching an invasion. And Maduro sounded a defiant tone Wednesday night, complaining that Washington was attacking his country through sanctions and other means and strong-arming other countries into going along in a "fierce diplomatic offensive."

"(The U.S.) wants to continue just giving orders to the world as though the world were its own property," Maduro said. "Venezuela will never give in."

But at the same time, he said he was willing to talk with Trump.

Wednesday marked the first time that member countries have referred another country to the Netherlands-based U.N. court.

Canada was among nations referring Venezuela to the ICC, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau seized the moment to defend the idea of global justice the court represents — the day after Trump attacked it in a stinging speech that challenged multilateral organizations.

Its chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, already has opened a preliminary investigation into allegations that Venezuelan government forces since April 2017 "frequently used excessive force to disperse and put down demonstrations," and abused some opposition members in detention.

It is now up to the prosecutor — who didn't immediately comment on the request — to decide what to do next. The six-country referral could broaden the scope of the ongoing preliminary probe to the more serious charges leveled at Venezuela on Wednesday and extend the time frame back to 2014.

Human Rights Watch was among those hailing the request, which was based on two reports: one by the U.N. High Commission for Human Rights that uncovered widespread extrajudicial executions and other violations, and another by an expert group designated by the Organization of American States that found reason to suspect 11 people, including Maduro, of crimes against humanity.

The request — announced on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly — also bolsters the idea that international bodies can hold corrupt or abusive leaders or governments responsible before their citizens.

In an address to the General Assembly on Tuesday, Trump criticized what he called the "ideology of globalism" and said that as far as America is concerned, "the ICC has no jurisdiction, no legitimacy, and no authority."

The ICC was created in 2002 to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in areas where perpetrators might not otherwise face justice. The court has 123 state parties that recognize its jurisdiction.

Trudeau steered clear of direct criticism of Trump and said Canada and the U.S. share concern about the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. But he also made clear Canada's support for international cooperation to help developing nations "to build a more peaceful, equal and stable world."

"Because that's what Canadians expect: That we stand up not just for ourselves but for everyone," Trudeau said.

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While more world leaders spoke at the General Assembly on Wednesday, most attention was still focused on Trump, whose brash behavior provoked laughter and headshakes from other leaders. He chaired a Security Council meeting on nonproliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

With Trump listening, Bolivia's President Evo Morales accused his administration of meddling in Iran and Venezuela. If the U.S. upheld democracy, Morales said, "it would not have financed coup d'états and supported dictators" or threatened democratically elected governments as it has in Venezuela with military intervention.

He also charged that the U.S. "could not care less about human rights or justice," citing its alleged promotion of the "use of torture" and separation of migrant parents and children who were put "in cages."

Trump used his Security Council podium to fire off tough words at Iran, saying that a government with Iran's track record "must never be allowed to obtain" a nuclear weapon.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani called the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal "a mistake," and said sooner or later that the United States will support it again — notably because so many other countries stand behind it.

Rouhani told a news conference that Iran doesn't want to go to war with U.S. forces anywhere in the Middle East, declaring: "We do not want to attack them. We do not wish to increase tensions."

Trump also made waves by accusing China of meddling in November elections in the United States. China denies any interference.

Other tension points included Russian interference abroad — with Britain's prime minister accusing Moscow of "blatantly" violating international norms, and Russia's foreign minister comparing British accusations to "kindergarten" nonsense.

The top diplomats of both Russia and the United States met Wednesday with North Korea's foreign minister — separately — amid mounting efforts to roll back North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

And Italy's populist leader struck at the heart of Europe's biggest problem, stressing the importance of "shared responsibility" among countries in dealing with migrants, days after Rome deepened its crackdown on those fleeing Africa, the Middle East and Asia for asylum or a better life.

Associated Press writers Edith M. Lederer and Claudia Torrens at the United Nations, Scott Smith in Caracas, Venezuela, and Mike Corder in The Hague contributed.

Trump says his past accusers influence thinking on Kavanaugh

By CATHERINE LUCEY and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — This is personal for President Donald Trump.

For 10 days, Trump has watched as allegations of sexual misconduct have swirled around Brett Kavanaugh, his nominee for the Supreme Court.

On Wednesday, Trump spoke aloud what he's been mulling in private, acknowledging publicly for the first time that past allegations of sexual misconduct leveled against him color his views on similar charges against other men, including Kavanaugh.

"It does impact my opinion and you know why?" Trump said. "Because I've had a lot of false charges against me."

What that, Trump cast his lot with the accused in what has become a national reckoning over gender and sexual consent, and not just in furtherance of a long-sought conservative makeover of the high court.

"It's happened to me many times," Trump said, claiming he'd been accused — falsely — by "four or five women."

In fact, more than a dozen women came forward during the 2016 campaign, claiming they were assaulted, groped or kissed without consent by Trump. Trump was also caught on tape in 2005 boasting of grabbing women by their genitals and kissing them without permission. Those comments revealed in the final days of his campaign for the White House, Trump apologized, calling it "locker room talk."

At a news conference in New York a day before Kavanaugh was set to testify before the Senate Judiciary

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Committee, Trump pledged to listen to the testimony of Kavanaugh's accuser and even said he was open to changing his mind about his nominee. But he made clear that he was deeply skeptical of these types of accusations.

"When you are guilty until proven innocent it's just not supposed to be that way," he said.

During the free-wheeling news conference, Trump continued to lash out at Democrats and label the allegations against Kavanaugh politically motivated. He also expressed frustrations with the delays in the process guided by Republicans and took a shot at attorney Michael Avenatti, who is representing the latest accuser.

Trump's remarks underscored the complexity of the moment, as Republicans continue their efforts to install conservatives on the high court. While Republicans want to move forward, they are mindful of the fallout if they don't take the accusations seriously. Should the effort fail, the party would likely explode in finger-pointing that could have implications in the November elections.

"Republican senators have delayed this for weeks now," Trump said. "They are giving the women a major chance to speak."

He added: "It's possible that I'll hear that and I'll say I'm changing my mind."

Pushed to acknowledge the cultural moment, Trump repeatedly returned to the idea that qualified men would lose out on jobs because of allegations.

"I don't want to be in a position where people say, 'No, thanks. I spoke to somebody 38 years ago, and it may not be good,'" Trump said, adding, "The people that have complained to me about it the most about what's happening is women."

Asked to address the nation's young men, Trump said: "It's a very dangerous period in our country, and it's being perpetrated by some very evil people."

Trump's comments about his accusers drew swift reaction from an attorney for Summer Zervos, a former contestant on Trump's reality TV show "The Apprentice," who says Trump made unwanted advances toward her, then defamed her by saying she lied about it.

"It is offensive that in purporting to stand by a Supreme Court nominee who has been accused of sexual assault, Mr. Trump has chosen once again to defame and attack women, including our client, who had the courage to come forward to tell the truth about his own unwanted assaultive behavior," said Mariann Wang.

Kavanaugh and his chief accuser, Christine Blasey Ford, who says Kavanaugh assaulted her in high school, are both expected to testify Thursday. Ford has claimed that Kavanaugh tried to remove her clothes and clamped a hand over her mouth at a party when both were in high school.

Another woman came forward over the weekend, telling The New Yorker magazine that Kavanaugh exposed himself and caused her to touch his penis at a party when both were Yale freshmen. And on Wednesday, a woman represented by Avenatti — who shot to fame as the attorney taking on the president for porn actress Stormy Daniels — made another accusation of misconduct.

Kavanaugh has steadfastly denied all the allegations.

Trump, who initially supported giving Ford time to speak, showed his rising frustration Wednesday. Speaking to reporters at the United Nations earlier in the day, he said Senate Republicans "could have pushed it through 2½ weeks ago."

Trump said that if lawmakers had moved faster, "you wouldn't be talking about it right now, which is frankly what I would have preferred."

High drama in Senate as Kavanaugh-Ford hearing nears

By LISA MASCARO, ALAN FRAM and LAURIE KELLMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With high drama in the making, Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh emphatically fended off new accusations of sexual misconduct ahead of a charged public Senate hearing that could determine whether Republicans can salvage his nomination and enshrine a high court conservative majority.

The Senate Judiciary Committee — 11 Republicans, all men, and 10 Democrats — was to hear from

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just two witnesses on Thursday: Kavanaugh, a federal appeals court judge who has long been eyed for the Supreme Court, and Christine Blasey Ford, a California psychology professor who accuses him of attempting to rape her when they were teens.

Republicans have derided her allegation as part of a smear campaign and a Democratic plot to sink Kavanaugh's nomination. But after more allegations have emerged, some GOP senators have allowed that much is riding on Kavanaugh's performance. Even President Donald Trump, who nominated Kavanaugh and fiercely defends him, said he was "open to changing my mind."

"I want to watch, I want to see," he said at a news conference in New York.

Kavanaugh himself has repeatedly denied all the allegations, saying he'd never even heard of the latest accuser and calling her accusations "ridiculous and from the Twilight Zone."

The hearing will be the first time the country sees and hears from the 51-year-old Ford beyond the grainy photo that has been flashed on television in the 10 days since she came forward with her contention. In testimony released in advance of the hearing, she said she was appearing only because she felt it was her duty, was frankly "terrified" and has been the target of vile harassment and even death threats.

"It is not my responsibility to determine whether Mr. Kavanaugh deserves to sit on the Supreme Court," she was to tell the senators. "My responsibility is to tell the truth."

The stakes for both political parties — and the country — are high. Republicans are pushing to seat Kavanaugh before the November midterms, when Senate control could fall to the Democrats and a replacement Trump nominee could have even greater difficulty. Kavanaugh's ascendance to the high court could help lock in a conservative majority for a generation, shaping dozens of rulings on abortion, regulation, the environment and more.

But Republicans also risk rejection by female voters in November if they are seen as not fully respecting women and their allegations.

In the hours before the hearing, Republicans were rocked by the new accusation from a third woman, Julie Swetnick. In a sworn statement, she said she witnessed Kavanaugh "consistently engage in excessive drinking and inappropriate contact of a sexual nature with women in the early 1980s." Her attorney, Michael Avenatti, who also represents a porn actress who is suing Trump, provided her sworn declaration to the Judiciary Committee.

Meanwhile, the lawyer for Deborah Ramirez, who says Kavanaugh exposed himself to her at a party when they attended Yale University, raised her profile in a round of television interviews.

Republicans largely expressed confidence in Kavanaugh ahead of the hearing, emerging from a closed-door lunch with Vice President Mike Pence to say the nominee remains on track for confirmation.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell all week has said Republicans will turn to a committee vote on Kavanaugh after the hearing. They hope for a roll call by the full Senate — where they have a scant 51-49 majority — early next week with the aim of getting him on the court as its new term begins.

But at least a hint of doubt has crept in. Asked whether there were signs of Republicans wavering in their support of Kavanaugh in their lunch, Sen. John Thune, the third-ranking Republican, paused briefly before saying "no."

In the hearing, Democrats plan to ask Kavanaugh if he'd be willing to undergo FBI questioning about the various claims — a request Republicans oppose — and press him about his drinking and behavior as a teenager.

One goal is to emphasize inconsistencies in his statements so far and make him appear nervous, said a Democratic aide who described the plan on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss it publicly.

Questions for Ford will be aimed at giving her a chance to explain herself. That includes describing why it took her so long to publicly discuss the alleged incident and how it's affected her life, the aide said.

Ford will testify first at the hearing, which starts at 10 a.m. and at her request is being held in a small, wood-paneled hearing room that seats only a few dozen spectators.

Republicans have hired an outside attorney, Phoenix prosecutor Rachel Mitchell, to handle much of their questioning. Thus, they will avoid having their all-male contingent interrogating Ford about the details of

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what she describes as a harrowing assault.

Democratic questioners will include two senators widely seen as potential presidential candidates in 2020: Kamala Harris of California and Cory Booker of New Jersey, who aggressively challenged Kavanaugh during the judge's earlier confirmation hearing.

Ford plans to tell the committee that, one night in the summer of 1982, a drunken Kavanaugh forced her down on a bed, "groped me and tried to take off my clothes," then clamped his hand over her mouth when she tried to scream before she was able to escape.

"I believed he was going to rape me," she will say, according to her prepared testimony.

Kavanaugh is being challenged on multiple fronts by his accusers, former classmates and college friends. They say the good-guy image he projects in public bears little relation to the hard-partying behavior they witnessed when he was young.

In his prepared testimony, the 53-year-old appellate judge acknowledges drinking in high school with his friends, but says he's never done anything "remotely resembling" what Ford describes. He said he has never had a "sexual or physical encounter of any kind" with her.

He also provided the committee with detailed calendar pages listing in green-and-white squares the activities that filled his summer of 1982 when he was 17 years old — exams, movies, sports and plenty of parties. That's the year when Ford says she believes the assault occurred.

Nothing on the calendar appears to refer to her.

Ford released sworn statements from people who said she had told them about the assault in later years.

Late Wednesday, the committee released a flurry of other documents of unclear significance.

Transcripts of private interviews with committee investigators show they asked Kavanaugh about two previously undisclosed accusations received by Senate offices. One came in an anonymous letter sent to the office of Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Colo., describing an incident in a bar in 1998, when Kavanaugh was working for the independent counsel investigating President Bill Clinton. The other accused Kavanaugh of sexual misconduct in college. Kavanaugh denied them both.

The committee also released a summary of its work that noted its staff had spoken to two different men who believe they "had the encounter" with Ford, rather than Kavanaugh. The committee notes do not detail what came of those conversations.

Activity on Capitol Hill is likely to grind to a halt during the proceedings, with lawmakers glued to their televisions during what is widely seen as a sequel to the politically explosive hearings of 1991 with Anita Hill, who accused now-Justice Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment. Thomas denied Hill's accusation.

"I've cleared the calendar and I'm going to watch every word of the hearing," said Republican Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, who added that he has a positive view of Kavanaugh but has yet to decide how he'll vote.

Other Republicans also stressed that they are coming into the hearing with open minds.

John Kennedy of Louisiana, a member of the Judiciary panel, said he needs to hear from Ford before deciding whether her story is credible. Asked how he'll do that, he replied: "That's like asking me to explain the holy spirit. We all make credibility determinations, every minute of our day."

Sen. Jeff Flake, a Republican member of the Judiciary panel who could be a key vote, had his own take.

"We have lit a match," he said from the Senate floor. "Do we appreciate how close the powder keg is?"

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick, Padmananda Rama, Matthew Daly, Darlene Superville, Jonathan Lemire, Zeke Miller and Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

Kavanaugh testimony: <http://apne.ws/xkhv2Yv>

Ford testimony: <http://apne.ws/WpkIfy3>

Kavanaugh testimony from Sept. 17: <http://apne.ws/fmGaR3x>

Kavanaugh testimony from Sept. 25: <http://apne.ws/PBbVJpg>

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For more coverage of Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court nomination, visit <https://apnews.com/tag/KavanaughNomination>

Fed raises rates for 3rd time this year with 1 more expected

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve signaled its confidence Wednesday in the U.S. economy by raising a key interest rate for a third time this year, forecasting another rate hike before year's end and predicting that it will continue to tighten credit into 2020 to manage growth and inflation.

The Fed lifted its short-term rate — a benchmark for many consumer and business loans — by a modest quarter-point to a range of 2 percent to 2.25 percent. It was its eighth hike since late 2015. The central bank also stuck with a previous forecast for three more rate hikes in 2019.

In a statement after its latest policy meeting, the Fed dropped phrasing it had long used that characterized its policy as "accommodative" — that is, favoring low rates. The Fed had used variations of that pledge in the seven years that it kept its key rate at a record low near zero and over the past nearly three years in which it's gradually tightened credit.

By removing that language, the Fed may be signaling its resolve to keep raising rates. In a news conference after its meeting, though, Chairman Jerome Powell said the removal of the "accommodative" language did not amount to a policy change.

"Our economy is strong," Powell declared at the start of his news conference. "Growth is running at a healthy clip, unemployment is low. The number of people working is rising steadily, and wages are up. Inflation is low and stable, all of these are very good signs."

The chairman added, though: "That's not to say everything is perfect. The benefits of this strong economy have not reached all Americans. Many of our country's economic challenges are beyond the scope of the Fed."

The Fed's actions and its updated economic forecasts Wednesday had been widely anticipated. Initially, there was little reaction in the stock or bond markets. But later in the afternoon, stocks sold off, and major indexes closed modestly lower.

"The Fed stuck to script today, pushing ahead with another rate hike," said Michael Pearce, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics.

But Pearce added, "Our view is that officials are still underestimating just how quickly the economy is likely to lose momentum next year."

He said he expects the Fed to suspend its rate hikes by mid-2019 — and then feel compelled to cut rates by early 2020 to support the economy.

In its updated outlook Wednesday, the Fed foresees one final rate hike after 2019 — in 2020 — which would leave its benchmark at 3.4 percent. At that point, it would regard its policy as modestly restraining growth. The Fed seeks to slow the economy when it reaches full employment to prevent a tight job market from raising inflation too high.

During a late-afternoon news conference in New York, President Donald Trump said he was "not happy" about the Fed's latest rate hike. In a highly unusual move for a president, Trump has publicly complained that the Fed's rate increases could blunt his efforts to boost growth through tax cuts and deregulation.

Earlier, Powell said during his news conference that such outside criticism would have no effect on the Fed's use of rates to try to maximize employment and stabilize prices.

"We've been given a really important job to do on behalf of the American people," Powell said. "My colleagues and I are focused, exclusively, on carrying out that mission."

The Fed's latest forecast predicts that the unemployment rate, now 3.9 percent, will reach 3.7 percent by the end of this year and then 3.5 percent next year. Not since the late 1960s has unemployment fallen that low.

The central bank expects unemployment to begin rising to 3.7 percent at the end of 2021. It foresees the economy growing 3.1 percent this year before slowing to 2.5 percent in 2019, 2 percent in 2020 and 1.8

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percent in 2021. The Fed sees the economy's long-run growth at a 1.8 percent annual rate — far below the Trump administration's projections for a sustained rate of 3 percent.

Many analysts think the economy could weaken next year, in part from the effects of the trade conflicts Trump has pursued with China, Canada, Europe and other trading partners. The tariffs Trump has imposed on imported steel and Chinese goods, in particular, complicate the Fed's decision-making.

That's because the tariffs — and the resulting retaliation from America's trading partners — could weaken the U.S. economy. The Fed would normally respond to weaker growth by cutting interest rates. But tariffs, which are an import tax, can inflate prices. And the Fed typically counters higher inflation by raising rates.

Megan Greene, global chief economist at Manulife Asset Management, said she thought the tariffs were more likely to slow the economy than to accelerate inflation.

"The real risk of trade wars," Greene wrote last week, "is a hit to growth, not a boost to inflation."

Indeed, the Fed's regional banks have reported that some businesses are delaying investments until they see some resolution to the trade hostilities. In his news conference, Powell said some companies have told Fed officials that the tariffs have raised fears that supply chains will be disrupted and raw materials will cost more.

Powell said he had yet to see evidence that the administration's tariffs have raised prices for many consumers. But he said rising inflation remains a threat resulting from Trump's trade policies.

"It's a concern," Powell said. "It's a risk. You could see prices moving up. You don't see it yet. But you could see retail prices moving up. The tariffs might provide a basis for companies to raise prices in a world where they've been very reluctant to and unable to raise prices."

AP Economics Writers Josh Boak, Paul Wiseman and Christopher Rugaber contributed to this report.

Will the Kavanaugh-Ford hearing be a where-were-you moment?

By CALVIN WOODWARD, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Could it be, years from now, that you will remember where you were and what you were doing when Brett Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford came to Washington to relive their conflicting high school memories?

Are we on the verge of one of those moments — like, for those old enough, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated? Or when the space shuttle Challenger exploded? Or the twin towers fell?

Do such indelible moments even happen anymore?

For more than two years American political life has been a rough and ugly storm of debate over gender, power, ego and truth. "#MeToo" swept through the culture. "Me," says President Donald Trump. "Me."

For a few hours on Thursday, all these crosscurrents will blow into a single, small hearing room on Capitol Hill where the fate of Trump's Supreme Court nominee — and much more — is at stake. The judge and the professor will endure the gaze of senators, the questions of a prosecutor, and the court of public opinion. Their performances may tilt the outcome of November elections that will determine control of Congress. They could affect the direction of the high court for a generation.

Agonizing history has passed through those hearing rooms. It's where Richard Nixon's corrupt manipulations were held up to the light by jowly senators in the unmaking of his presidency. It's where the trauma of President Lyndon Johnson's "bitch of a war" — Vietnam — gripped the capital and the nation.

It's where Sen. Joe McCarthy in 1954 hunted for communists and got his comeuppance from Army lawyer Joseph Nye Welch in a shocking challenge: "Have you no sense of decency?" "Sir."

And it's where, 27 years ago, Anita Hill accused Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment on his way to confirmation to the Supreme Court. The country was transfixed. Some people remember even the petty details of their life that day.

Salacious, deeply personal detail spilled into the public square in that episode. Again with President Bill Clinton and sexual encounters that were once quaintly called dalliances, involving women his allies described as bimbos. Again with Trump, years before his presidency, with his vulgar boasts about groping

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women against their wishes.

Now men fall from the pinnacles of entertainment, politics, the church and journalism. It's new yet not fully tested ground.

But while millions will watch the judge and his accuser, how many in this era of tribal politics will truly listen?

Democrats largely opposed Kavanaugh even before Ford's allegations emerged, to be followed by a late-breaking frenzy over the accusations of two more women and Kavanaugh's denials at every turn. Several Democrats have said flatly that they believe Ford's allegation that a teenage Kavanaugh pinned her down, tried to remove her clothes and put a hand on her mouth to quiet her at a party when both were in high school. Will Democrats listen?

Republicans, who have found rare unity and focus in their campaign to tilt the courts to the right, in the main support Kavanaugh and do not challenge his denials of doing anything more than boys-will-be-boys drinking. Trump, who has defied expectation by deflecting accusations of sexual misconduct against him, calls Kavanaugh an "absolute gem" in the face of the accusations. Will Republicans listen, or have they made up their minds?

Trump says he wants to listen to both witnesses and decide on the merits. Yet in his news conference Wednesday, he assailed a culture where "you are guilty until proven innocent," and added: "It's a very dangerous period in our country and it's being perpetrated by some very evil people."

Only a thin sliver in Washington is making the case for a truly open mind.

"I think we need to go into this hearing with the view that we will listen," said Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski. She may be among a select few willing to be swayed by what is heard. But it would only take a few to change the course that history is on.

Neither side owns up to the base political calculation behind it all: Republicans want to expedite, the Democrats to delay past the election.

Trump loves drama, though when the plot lines are of his own making, which this one isn't.

He has come up with counter-programming, however, as he brings his deputy attorney general to the White House on Thursday for what might or might not be his dismissal or even a stage-setter for the unraveling of the special counsel's Russia investigation. Unless he delays that meeting, as he said he might.

Can you keep up with all of this?

Bill Cosby, once the world's best father on TV, went to prison for sexual predation. His sentencing, a #MeToo watershed moment, was 2:10 p.m. Eastern time Tuesday.

Do you remember where you were and what you were doing?

Man with long immigration record is charged with killings

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A man with a violent criminal history who was deported six times had no outstanding warrants when questioned last month about the disappearance of his aunt and so he was released, Houston police said Wednesday, when the man was charged in Los Angeles with the beating deaths of three men.

Immigration records are generally not public, so it remained a mystery how Ramon Escobar, 47, won an appeal in immigration court in 2016 and why he remained free after a subsequent arrest for assault.

The Aug. 30 encounter by Escobar with Houston police came two days after his aunt vanished and marked his last brush with the law before his arrest in California this week.

Escobar was charged Wednesday in Los Angeles County with three counts of murder, five counts of attempted murder and four counts of second-degree robbery in attacks involving homeless men.

It could not be immediately determined if he had an attorney.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said Escobar was ordered removed from the country by an immigration judge in February 1988, and he was deported to El Salvador six times between 1997 and 2011. He had six felony convictions for burglary and illegal re-entry.

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The Board of Immigration Appeals granted his appeal in December 2016, and ICE released him a month later.

Last November, Escobar was arrested on the misdemeanor assault charge by Harris County, Texas, authorities, according to Texas Department of Public Safety records. He was convicted in May.

ICE spokeswoman Paige Hughes declined to comment on Escobar's case beyond a statement issued late Tuesday. The Executive Office for Immigration Review, which oversees the immigration courts, did not provide information.

Andrew Arthur, a retired immigration judge, said the Board of Immigration Appeals may have allowed Escobar to stay in the country and be released under ICE supervision by granting him asylum or some other form of relief, like "withholding of removal" or protection under the United Nations Convention Against Torture.

"Even people with horrendous criminal records are able to access humanitarian relief to remain in the United States," said Arthur, a fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for restrictions on immigration.

John Sandweg, a former acting director of ICE, said a serious criminal record can hurt an asylum claim but doesn't disqualify someone from withholding of removal. Unlike asylum, withholding of removal does not include a path to citizenship and is therefore considered less appealing.

Escobar was questioned by Houston police on Aug. 30 in his aunt's disappearance but police spokesman Kese Smith said he was not a suspect at the time. Investigators spoke with him because he was one of the last people to see Dina Escobar, 60, before she vanished in late August.

Her disappearance and that of her brother, Rogelio Escobar, 65, were considered missing-persons cases. "We had no probable cause to arrest or book him," Smith said Wednesday afternoon.

Immigration status is checked by Houston police only when a person is being booked into the city jail after being charged with a crime, Smith said.

Late Wednesday night, however, all that changed when Smith announced that foul play was now suspected in the disappearances.

Authorities say Escobar traveled to Los Angeles after the disappearances, of which he is now considered a person of interest.

Escobar likely targeted victims to rob them, according to Los Angeles police. He is being held without bail. He is believed to be the man captured on surveillance video ransacking the pockets and belongings of some downtown Los Angeles victims.

Detectives have seized a wooden baseball bat and bolt cutters that they believe were used to bludgeon men as they lay sleeping on the beach or on the street in Los Angeles and Santa Monica, police said. All but one of the men was homeless.

Two homeless men sleeping on the beach were bludgeoned in the head early on Sept. 8 and Sept. 10, leaving one in critical condition, officials said.

Another man who apparently was sleeping on the beach was found dead under the Santa Monica Pier on Sept. 20. Steven Ray Cruze Jr., 39, of San Gabriel, had been beaten to death.

Authorities at first described him as homeless, but family and friends said the father of two, who loved to fish at the pier, worked boats in neighboring Marina del Rey and sometimes camped out under the pier to avoid the long commute home.

Spagat reported from San Diego. Associated Press writer David Warren in Dallas contributed. Follow Weber at <https://twitter.com/WeberCM>.

Spoiler alert? Johnson Senate bid ups tension in New Mexico

By MORGAN LEE and BILL BARROW, Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Former presidential candidate Gary Johnson is setting his sights on a U.S. Senate seat from New Mexico as a Libertarian candidate, arguing that he can act as an influential swing vote and a

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voice of reason in bitterly divided Washington. The former governor wants to downsize federal spending to offset President Donald Trump's tax cuts and push let-live policies on cannabis and education. Democrats warn that he would work to torpedo social spending.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Johnson made a late entry as a Libertarian into the Senate race against first-term Democratic Sen. Martin Heinrich and Republican political newcomer Mick Rich.

Johnson says politicians in Washington have their "heads in the sand" over the dangers of ballooning federal debt that could lead to Venezuela-style inflation. He also believes that Trump has betrayed conservative free-market principals by waging trade wars while subsidizing farmers, though he applauds Trump's efforts to rein in federal regulation.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Associated Press reporters are on the ground around the country, covering political issues, people and races from places they live. The Ground Game series highlights that reporting, looking at politics from the ground up. Each week, in stories and a new podcast, AP reporters examine the political trends that will drive the national conversation tomorrow.

Johnson still has a political following in New Mexico from his two terms as governor starting more than 20 years ago, when he was elected as a Republican. And he says he has a natural constituency in the growing portion of voters who register without allegiance to major parties.

Pollsters say that may not be enough, and that independents tend to sit out nonpresidential election cycles. The state Republican Party is accusing Johnson of ensuring a Democratic victory by dividing fiscal conservatives.

Still an avid outdoor athlete at age 65, Johnson says he'd happily set aside his 100-day ski seasons and bicycle endurance races to serve in the Senate.

WHY IT MATTERS

Johnson's quirky policies and unpredictable allure among voters is forcing Democrats to defend what had seemed like a secure seat. And Republicans are calling him a spoiler outright, saying he will draw votes from their candidate. With the Republicans holding a super slim majority, every seat is crucial to both sides.

To cement support among progressives, Heinrich has cast himself as a defender of federal Medicare and Social Security benefits and a proponent of the new outdoor-recreation and renewable-energy economies — a tenuous hedge in an oil-based state economy. His newfound support for legalizing marijuana defuses one of Johnson's signature issues.

A Libertarian has never served in Congress and Johnson wants to prove that a third-party politician can make the Senate more productive.

Political opponents say the stakes are high for the nation if Johnson were to succeed in tipping the Senate's partisan balance.

They also say a pledge by Johnson to trim the federal budget doesn't necessarily help a deeply impoverished state that heavily depends on federal military and Medicaid spending.

Johnson says current federal retirement and health care benefits are unsustainable, and that he can make a compelling case to maintain military assets and weapons research in New Mexico.

Johnson wants a say in what comes next if the federal government decriminalizes marijuana, envisioning a system of pardons for prior convictions and changes to workplace drug testing.

WHAT TO WATCH

Johnson could steal the show in October televised debates, and unscripted campaign moments are a given.

Johnson said he takes pride in his honesty and open thought process — even if after infamous campaign gaffes as he ran for president. And he was known for offbeat behavior as governor, twirling a plastic pig

in the air once to signal he would never sign a budget bill.

Johnson says he would be a fair and impartial judge in the event of an impeachment trial against Trump, and sees no impeachable offense so far.

DON'T MISS

If elected, Johnson is promising to keep open office hours for whistleblowers and call out examples of government fraud, waste and abuse with theatrical flair.

Johnson also says he won't quit his recreational marijuana use, which he describes as the equivalent to an evening cocktail, though he mostly uses cannabis in private. To do so is legal in parts of the District of Columbia.

More US corporate giants warn tariffs will mean price hikes

By TOM KRISHER and JOSH BOAK, AP Business Writers

DETROIT (AP) — From Ford to Walmart to Procter & Gamble, a growing number of iconic American companies are warning that President Donald Trump's tariffs on U.S. imports are raising their costs and prices.

Jim Hackett, CEO of Ford, the second-largest U.S.-based automaker, said Wednesday that Trump's taxes on imported steel and aluminum are costing Ford \$1 billion and threatening to ignite price increases across the auto industry.

Likewise, Walmart, America's largest retailer, has told the administration that Trump's latest round of taxes — on \$200 billion of Chinese imports — could increase prices for its shoppers. Walmart specifically mentioned items ranging from car seats, cribs and backpacks to hats, pet products and bicycles.

Procter & Gamble, the consumer products giant, has warned of both potential price increases and job losses as a result of the tariffs.

In the meantime, drinking Coca-Cola is costing more because of Trump's tariffs. Macy's, too, has warned of likely price increases. So has Gap.

On Wednesday, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell took on the issue at a news conference after the Fed announced its latest interest rate hike. Asked about the Trump tariffs forcing up prices for America's consumers, Powell agreed that Fed officials are hearing from businesses about forthcoming higher costs.

"You don't see it yet," the chairman said, referring to the data the Fed studies.

But, Powell acknowledged, "the tariffs might provide a basis for companies to raise prices in a world where they've been very reluctant to and unable to raise prices."

At his own news conference Wednesday in New York, Trump rejected any notion that his tariffs posed an economic risk, echoing assertions by his administration that consumers would barely notice the new taxes.

"It's had no impact ... on our economy," the president said after meetings with foreign leaders at the United Nations General Assembly.

Hackett, in a television interview Wednesday, revealed the \$1 billion estimate that he said Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs are costing Ford. He said the figure is a year-over-year increase from March through 2019.

Ford buys most of its metals from U.S. producers, which have raised prices this year as a result of the tariffs on foreign competitors, the company has said.

Other automakers that produce vehicles in the U.S. are experiencing the same price increases, said IHS Markit Senior Analyst Peter Nagle. While they may be absorbing the increased costs at present, eventually they'll have to pass at least some of the costs on to customers, he said.

"They're maintaining pricing discipline now just because the consumer can't support those higher prices," Nagle said. But if the tariffs stay in place for the remainder of Trump's term, "obviously some of those costs would have to start being passed along to the consumer here."

Ford wouldn't comment specifically on price increases but said it will "continue to make the necessary decisions to remain competitive."

The Trump administration imposed a 25 percent tariff on imported steel and 10 percent tariff on alumi-

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num from some countries, including China, in March. It added Canada, Mexico and the European Union in June. The administration justified the tariffs by calling foreign steel and aluminum a threat to U.S. national security.

Ahead of the tariffs, U.S. metals producers raised prices as companies tried to buy before the tariffs went into effect, Nagle said. He said steel prices are up 25 percent since the tariffs began, and he expects that to rise to near 30 percent next year.

Automakers would either raise sticker prices or cut discounts on new cars, trucks and SUVs, Nagle said. The administration also is studying 25 percent tariffs on imported vehicles, also based on national security concerns. Those tariffs would raise prices, slow auto sales and could cut U.S. economic growth in half by 2020, Nagle said. Other countries also are likely to retaliate on imports from the U.S.

"You can't have a trade war without automotive," he said.

Boak contributed from Washington. AP Economics Writer Paul Wiseman also contributed from Washington.

Some black Americans see racial comeuppance in Cosby saga

By ERRIN HAINES WHACK, AP National Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — After spending years building his persona as a model husband and father, Bill Cosby took an abrupt turn nearly 15 years ago with a now-infamous speech to an NAACP convention.

He used his celebrity status to condemn poor African-Americans, chiding them to pull up their sagging pants, deriding them for having children out of wedlock and blaming them for their impoverished circumstances.

"Are you not paying attention? People with their hat on backwards, pants down around the crack . with names like Shaniqua, Shaligua, Mohammed and all that crap, and all of them are in jail."

Cosby himself is now in a Pennsylvania prison cell, and many black Americans see his sentence as a moment of racial comeuppance.

As they learned of Cosby's three- to 10-year prison term for sexual assault, the same people who were his targets in the 2004 speech regarded his fate as a convergence of karma, hubris and hypocrisy. Some quoted Cosby's own words in tweets announcing the sentence.

Cosby "made the decision to focus his attention on beating up on the black poor, on telling the world that black people were dysfunctional, pathological and undeserving of equal protection under the law," said Temple University professor Marc Lamont Hill. "When somebody like that, who positions themselves as the moral authority of black America, gets called onto the carpet, you ain't getting no breaks here. People are going to be frustrated."

Writer Michael Arceneaux said Cosby's contempt for people who grew up in low-income communities, as Arceneaux did in Houston, left him with little sympathy for Cosby, who also hailed from humble beginnings.

"I found it enraging," Arceneaux said of the "Poundcake" speech, so called because Cosby make a remark about blacks supposedly getting shot in disputes over dessert cake.

"I knew he was a hypocrite. To learn how much pain he has caused to women over decades . I find it ironic. Those speeches proved to be his undoing. I'm glad he got what he deserved," he added.

Cosby's own words were a catalyst for his downfall. In a July 2015 memo outlining the decision to unseal a 2005 deposition in the case, a federal judge cited the speech: "This case . is not about defendant's status as a public person by virtue of the exercise of his trade as a televised or comedic personality. Rather, defendant has donned the mantle of public moralist and mounted the proverbial electronic or print soap box to volunteer his views on, among other things, child rearing, family life, education and crime."

"The stark contrast between Bill Cosby, the public moralist, and Bill Cosby, the subject of serious allegations concerning improper (and perhaps criminal) conduct, is a matter as to which . the public has a significant interest," he continued.

Cosby pointed to systemic irresponsibility, not racism, as the root cause of what was wrong with black

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culture. But after his sentencing, spokesman Andrew Wyatt called Cosby's trial "the most racist and sexist" in American history. He referred to the entertainer as "one of the greatest civil rights leaders" and accused the media, judge and prosecution team of prejudice against a black man.

Cosby, who is 81 and legally blind, was the first celebrity of the #MeToo era to be sent to prison. The movement, which began a year ago, has centered around men in Hollywood, the media and politics. While several powerful men have lost their livelihoods and reputations, no one else has lost their freedom.

Tuesday's sentencing came amid a firestorm surrounding the Supreme Court nomination of Brett Kavanaugh, who is accused by three women of sexual misconduct as a high school and college student. Kavanaugh has denied all of the allegations and is expected to testify Thursday before the Senate Judiciary Committee, along with one of his accusers, Christine Blasey Ford.

Rather than reveling in revenge for Cosby, the focus now should be on justice for all credible accusers, Columbia University political science professor Keith Boykin said.

"He disappointed me. He didn't put anything in my drink," Hill said. "As awful as he has been to the world, my commitment is not to punishing Bill Cosby. It's getting justice for his victims."

Whack is the Associated Press' national writer for race and ethnicity. Follow her work on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/emarvelous>.

Via arms and trade, Russia plots long-term Syrian future

By ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The same day that Russian diplomats struck a deal with Turkey over a demilitarized zone in Syria's last rebel-run region, dozens of Russian businessmen were flying home from Damascus, contracts in hand for trade with a postwar Syria.

Whatever happens to the rebels in Idlib province, Russia is determined to keep Syria solidly anchored in its sphere of influence over the long term — both as a foothold in the Middle East and as a warning to the U.S. and its allies against future interference.

"Russia wants ... a new Mideast security order," said Emile Hokayem, Middle East security expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

While Russia is blamed for widespread death and destruction as it supports Syrian President Bashar Assad, its forces have proven decisive in the international struggle against the Islamic State group, giving Moscow a credibility that Western powers lack. "Their intervention yielded much better returns than anyone expected," Hokayem said.

Now the central challenge facing U.S. and other Western diplomats huddling about Syria this week at the United Nations is how to stay relevant.

U.S. President Donald Trump claimed credit Wednesday for saving Idlib from a Russian-backed offensive — yet nearly everyone else says the credit goes to the presidents of Russia and Turkey for the accord they reached last week staving off a big battle.

One by one, diplomats at U.N. meetings on Syria hailed the agreement, and expressed hope it holds despite persistent uncertainty over Idlib's fate.

Russia basked in the praise. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dashed from one meeting to the next in the U.N. headquarters, stressing Russia's concerns about Syria with the top diplomats of Iran and Turkey, and with U.N. Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura.

The EU hosted its own Syria gathering at the U.N., and France is hosting a meeting Thursday of the "Small Group" that's trying to weigh in on Syria's future, despite years of failed efforts to back the Syrian opposition.

Even as Russia flaunts its diplomatic success, it's also securing a military future with Syria. Russia announced Monday it's selling S-300 missile systems to Syria.

A longtime client of Russian weapons manufacturers since well before the war, Syria also was a reliable trading partner. And Moscow is furthering that relationship by rebuilding roads, pipes and skyscrapers

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wiped out by seven years of war — including destruction wrought by Russia's own weapons.

A group of 38 Russian companies took part in the Damascus International Fair earlier this month. It was at least the fourth event in the past year aimed at reviving Russian trade with Syria — and Russian companies are heading back to Syria in early October for a conference on rebuilding the country.

Syria's neighbors are similarly active, notably close ally Iran. But in Russia's case, analysts say, the economic activity is closely linked to its influence strategy.

Russia, for example, wants to rebuild Syria's train network. "Russia built it in the first place, and wants to rebuild this and strategic economic ties," said independent Russian analyst Vyacheslav Matuzov.

Russian companies are seeking a diverse trade base, with food, farming and energy deals, according to the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Among the most vocal proponents of renewed trade with Syria is Georgy Muradov of Crimea.

Chamber Vice President Vladimir Padalko described "the firm intention of Russian business not just to restore past trade cooperation between our countries, but also actively move forward."

But Russia doesn't want to foot the bill for the huge cost of reconstruction, so it is seeking Western help, notably in Lavrov's meetings at the U.N.

"Russia wants to rebuild Syria not just for egotistical reasons, but sees it as the responsibility of the international community," Matuzov said.

Hokayem said prospects of that are low, but Russia is still "in the driver's seat" in Syria.

"Russia is always a step ahead, and has a higher tolerance level" for ups and downs in the Syria war because Putin doesn't face serious domestic opposition.

Russia's so-called Astana peace process with Iran and Turkey has been so much more successful than previous U.N. or Western-led efforts, Hokayem said, that "the U.N. envoy has adopted (it) as his own."

The next few weeks will be critical for Syria — and for Russia's footprint. U.N. envoy de Mistura told The Associated Press that October is going to be "a very important month" both for Idlib and for his efforts to move toward peace.

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

Networks plan wall-to-wall Kavanaugh hearing coverage

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The biggest broadcasters and cable news networks are clearing their daytime schedules Thursday for coverage of the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing involving Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford, the woman who has accused him of sexual assault when they were high school students in the 1980s.

With the wall-to-wall coverage starting at 10 a.m. EDT, the hearing promises to be a national drama along the lines of Clarence Thomas' confirmation hearing in 1991, when Anita Hill testified that he had sexually harassed her.

Kavanaugh has forcefully denied Ford's accusations.

"The stakes are very high," said Christopher Isham, vice president and Washington bureau chief at CBS News. Not only are the political implications huge, with a lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court at stake, the hearing is likely to continue the national conversation over treatment of women that has been taking place since the beginning of the #MeToo movement.

Since it wasn't certain when or even if the hearing would take place until a couple of days ago, it has meant for some furious last-minute planning to organize the television coverage.

It will be the first time Ford has been seen in public since making her accusations. Kavanaugh appeared Monday on a Fox News Channel interview, itself an extremely unusual event for a Supreme Court nominee. That interview was seen by 3.6 million people, a fraction of the people who are likely to see him Thursday.

Here are individual network plans:

—ABC will follow the testimony live starting at 10 a.m., anchored by George Stephanopoulos in New York

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and David Muir from Capitol Hill, with analysts including Dan Abrams, Cokie Roberts and Sunny Hostin of "The View."

—CBS' morning and evening newscasts will both originate from Washington. Gayle King, Norah O'Donnell, John Dickerson and Jeff Glor will lead the network's hearing coverage.

—NBC's coverage will be led by Lester Holt, Savannah Guthrie, Chuck Todd, Megyn Kelly and Andrea Mitchell. The network's coverage starts at 9:30 a.m.

—PBS will offer coverage anchored by Judy Woodruff to its 355 member stations across the country. It's up to each local station to decide whether it will air the hearing live.

—CNN will have Wolf Blitzer and Jake Tapper anchoring coverage, with Dana Bash, John King, Gloria Borger, Nia-Malika Henderson, Joan Biskupic and Jeffrey Toobin.

—Fox News Channel's Bret Baier and Martha MacCallum will anchor, with Chris Wallace, Shannon Bream, Brit Hume and Andrew Napolitano contributing.

—MSNBC's coverage will be anchored by Brian Williams, with contributions from Stephanie Ruhle, Andrea Mitchell, Hallie Jackson, Ali Velshi and Katy Tur.

—C-SPAN will offer no-frills coverage on its C-SPAN3 channel.

What's happened with bump stocks since the Las Vegas attack?

By LISA MARIE PANE, Associated Press

The gunman in the Las Vegas mass shooting was armed with 23 AR-style weapons, 14 of them fitted with "bump stocks" that allowed them to mimic fully automatic fire.

The devices were little-known before they were used in the Oct. 1 rampage, the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history. And in the immediate aftermath, there were calls from a wide spectrum of lawmakers and advocates on firearms issues to have them banned.

Here's what has happened with the devices since the attack that left 58 dead:

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

In the shooting's immediate aftermath, there appeared to be a growing desire to ban the sale and possession of bump stocks, which federal authorities previously deemed legal and not subject to the same tighter restrictions reserved for fully automatic firearms.

Most notably, President Donald Trump vowed to ban the devices, which attach to the stock end of an AR-style firearm, greatly increasing the rate of fire so it mimics a fully automatic long gun.

Trump in March tweeted: "Obama Administration legalized bump stocks. BAD IDEA. As I promised, today the Department of Justice will issue the rule banning BUMP STOCKS with a mandated comment period."

The government determined in 2010 that bump stocks couldn't be regulated unless Congress changed the law.

But as with many restrictions on firearms in recent years, more action has taken place at the state level than by the federal government.

Ten states and three cities have enacted bans on the devices. California made bump stock-style devices illegal there decades ago.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL?

Trump expressed support for banning the devices and directed the Justice Department to rewrite the federal regulations.

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives this spring sought public comment on a proposal to reclassify bump stocks, but no action has been taken.

The proposed rules drew more than 35,000 comments.

THE COMPANY

Slide Fire Solutions, America's largest bump stock manufacturer, closed its website in June and stopped taking orders. However, its remaining stock of the devices is now being sold by another company, RW Arms, based in Fort Worth, Texas.

The devices were originally intended to help people with disabilities and were little-known until the Las

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Vegas shooting.

Gun owners and enthusiasts frequently call bump stocks a novelty item. Gun dealers said very few of the devices were sold before the Las Vegas shooting, but demand soared afterward amid concern they might be banned.

Find complete AP coverage of the Las Vegas mass shooting here: <https://apnews.com/tag/LasVegasmassshooting>

Asian shares mixed after US Fed lifts interest rate

By ANNABELLE LIANG, Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Asian markets were mixed on Thursday after the U.S. Federal Reserve lifted its key interest rate as expected for the third time this year.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 dropped 0.3 percent to 23,952.30. South Korea's Kospi, which reopened after a national holiday, added 0.5 percent to 2,349.99. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index slipped 0.4 percent to 27,713.83. The Shanghai Composite Index lost 0.2 percent to 2,802.18. Australia's S&P ASX 200 was less than 0.1 percent lower at 6,189.70. Shares fell in the Philippines but rose in Taiwan, Singapore and Indonesia.

WALL STREET: Major U.S. indexes fell after the Fed pushed interest rates higher as expected. Stocks initially climbed after the announcement, but the gains faded as a drop in Treasury yields hurt financial stocks. The S&P 500 index dropped 0.3 percent to 2,905.97 after being as much as 0.5 percent higher earlier in the day. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.4 percent to 26,385.28. The Nasdaq composite was 0.2 percent lower at 7,990.37.

U.S. RAISES INTEREST RATE: On Wednesday, the Fed signaled its confidence in the U.S. economy by raising a key interest rate for a third time this year. It lifted its short-term rate — a benchmark for many consumer and business loans — by a modest quarter-point to a range of 2 percent to 2.25 percent. Hong Kong has adjusted its base interest rate to match the move, and other Asian economies which have their currencies pegged to the dollar may soon follow suit. Chairman Jerome Powell said this did not amount to a policy change. The Fed also forecasted another rate hike by end 2018 and predicted that it will continue to tighten credit into 2020 to manage growth and inflation.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "The Fed raised rates as expected but stopped referring to its policy as 'accommodative,' which could signal that it is nearing the end of its tightening cycle," said Song Seng Wun, an economist at CIMB Private Banking. "While there are risks from trade fights, there is a sense of reassurance that growth remains resilient for now," he added.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 88 cents to \$72.45 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract dropped 1 percent on Wednesday to close at \$71.57. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added 87 cents to \$81.66 per barrel. It settled at \$80.79 per barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar eased to 112.52 yen from 112.73 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1752 from \$1.1739.

Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Sept. 27, the 270th day of 2018. There are 95 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On September 27, 1939, Warsaw, Poland, surrendered after weeks of resistance to invading forces from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II.

On this date:

In 1825, the first locomotive to haul a passenger train was operated by George Stephenson in England.

In 1854, the first great disaster involving an Atlantic Ocean passenger vessel occurred when the steamship SS Arctic sank off Newfoundland; of the more than 400 people on board, only 86 survived.

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In 1917, French sculptor and painter Edgar Degas died in Paris at age 83.

In 1928, the United States said it was recognizing the Nationalist Chinese government.

In 1942, Glenn Miller and his Orchestra performed together for the last time, at the Central Theater in Passaic, New Jersey, prior to Miller's entry into the Army.

In 1962, "Silent Spring," Rachel Carson's study on the effects of pesticides on the environment, was published in book form by Houghton Mifflin.

In 1964, the government publicly released the report of the Warren Commission, which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone in assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

In 1979, Congress gave its final approval to forming the U.S. Department of Education.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced in a nationally broadcast address that he was eliminating all U.S. battlefield nuclear weapons, and called on the Soviet Union to match the gesture. The Senate Judiciary Committee deadlocked, 7-7, on the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1994, more than 350 Republican congressional candidates gathered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol to sign the "Contract with America," a 10-point platform they pledged to enact if voters sent a GOP majority to the House.

In 1996, in Afghanistan, the Taliban, a band of former seminary students, drove the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani out of Kabul, captured the capital and executed former leader Najibullah.

In 2004, NBC announced that "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno would be succeeded by "Late Night" host Conan O'Brien in 2009. (O'Brien's stint on "The Tonight Show" lasted just over seven months.)

Ten years ago: China marked its first spacewalk as astronaut Zhai Zhigang (zheyeye zhu-dawng) floated outside the Shenzhou 7 for 13 minutes.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani spoke by telephone, the first conversation between American and Iranian leaders in more than 30 years. The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to secure and destroy Syria's chemical weapons stockpile.

One year ago: President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans unveiled the first major revamp of the nation's tax code in a generation, a plan that included deep tax cuts for corporations, simplified tax brackets and a near-doubling of the standard deduction. Maria regained strength and became a hurricane again, pushing water over both sides of North Carolina's Outer Banks. Playboy founder Hugh Hefner died at the age of 91.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Kathleen Nolan is 85. Actor Wilford Brimley is 84. Actor Claude Jarman Jr. is 84. Author Barbara Howar is 84. World Golf Hall of Famer Kathy Whitworth is 79. Singer-musician Randy Bachman (Bachman-Turner Overdrive) is 75. Rock singer Meat Loaf is 71. Actress Liz Torres is 71. Actor A Martinez is 70. Baseball Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt is 69. Actor Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa is 68. Singer Shaun Cassidy is 60. Comedian Marc Maron is 55. Rock singer Stephan (STEE'-fan) Jenkins (Third Eye Blind) is 54. Former Democratic National Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz is 52. Actor Patrick Muldoon is 50. Singer Mark Calderon is 48. Actress Amanda Detmer is 47. Actress Gwyneth Paltrow is 46. Rock singer Brad Arnold (3 Doors Down) is 40. Christian rock musician Grant Brandell (Underoath) is 37. Actress Anna Camp is 36. Rapper Lil' Wayne is 36. Singer Avril Lavigne (AV'-rihl la-VEEN') is 34. Bluegrass singer/musician Sierra Hull is 27. Actor Ames McNamara is 11.

Thought for Today: "God loved the birds and invented trees. Man loved the birds and invented cages."
— Jacques Deval, French writer, director and actor (1895-1972).