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Death Notice: Betty Weihrauch

Betty Weihrauch, 94, of Groton passed away November 9, 2018 at Groton Care and Rehabilitation Center. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton

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



"From minor scratches to a complete rebuild . . . we can do it all!"

NOW OPEN

Harris
Auto Body ABDN

225 Brown County Hwy 19 South
Aberdeen: 605/725-4900

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Monday, November 12, 2018

2:00pm: Veteran's Day Program, Groton Area School District

4:15pm: Basketball: Girls 7th/8th Game vs. Webster MS @ GHS Arena (7th Grade 4:15pm 8th Grade 5:30pm)

7:00pm- 9:00pm: School Board Meeting, Groton Area High School

Tuesday, November 13, 2018

Debate at Watertown High School

Region Oral Interp at Aberdeen Central High School

Wednesday, November 14, 2018

8:30am- 11:35am: 6th Grade MathCounts at Aberdeen Holgate Middle School

Friday, November 16, 2018

Debate & Oral Interp, McGovern at Mitchell High School

LifeTouch Retake Pictures at Groton Area Schools

Saturday, November 17, 2018

Debate & Oral Interp, McGovern at Mitchell High School

Robotics at Harrisburg High School

Monday, November 19, 2018

5:00pm- 7:00pm: Family Night at GHS Gymnasium

7:00pm: City Council Meeting at Groton Community Center

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Groton Post No. 39 American Legion



Annual



Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 10, 2018

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away

FREE ADMISSION

**DOOR
PRIZE!**

Lunch served
by Auxiliary



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Thank You Veterans*

Enjoy a

FREE

Medium Blizzard® Treat
on Veterans Day

Sunday, Nov. 11, 2018

* Active duty and retired members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard or Reserves. This is a local store marketing offer and is only available at participating locations. Must either be in uniform or show valid proof of service (military ID, veterans designation on driver's license or DD214 paperwork). Limit one per customer, per visit. Not valid with other offers, promotions, or discounts. No cash value. Plus tax if applicable.

Groton DQ Grill & Chill Restaurant

11 E. Hwy 12, Groton, SD

This Amazing Lady is Turning 80



Happy Birthday Mom!

Love,
Anne, Arden, Dave, DeLynne,
Susie, Steve, Diane

Late set comebacks not enough in NSIC Semifinal loss to Southwest Minnesota State

Duluth, Minn. – The No. 5 Northern State University volleyball team dropped a 5-set heartbreaker to No. 9 Southwest Minnesota State in the semifinal round of the NSIC Tournament Friday evening. The Wolves battled back, after going down two sets to none, winning the third and fourth sets 25-23 and 28-26. The ultimately fell 15-9 in decisive game, dropping to 26-4 on the year.

The Wolves recorded 61 kills, 59 assists, ten blocks, and three aces, as well as a match high 88 digs in the match. The Northern offense hit .172, notching a match high 19 kills in the fourth set. The Mustangs hit .255, notching 74 kills on 200 swings, with 23 attack errors.

Hailey Busch led four Wolves in double figures with 16 kills, while also recording 16 digs for her 14th double-double of the season. Morgan Baufield followed with 14 kills of her own, hitting a team second best .273.

Jenna Reiff and Laura Snyder each recorded ten kills, with Reiff leading the team hitting .292. Regan Dennis and Sally Gaul rounded out the hitter with five and three kills respectively. Ashley Rozell notched two kills of her own, and dished out 54 total assists, averaging 10.80 per set.

Jaiden Langlie led the Northern State defense with 25 digs, averaging 5.00 per set, followed by Lexi Boesl with 19. Rozell and Alyssa Deobler each tallied right digs, while Baufield notched four and Dennis and Bry Goar recorded three each.

Baufield played strong defense at the net with a game high seven blocks. Snyder was close behind with five of her own, while Reiff tallied three and Rozell and Gaul each recorded two. Baufield, Langlie, and Goar recorded the three team service aces for NSU as well.

Northern will await their season fate per the NCAA Selection Show set for Sunday evening. The show will air at 9 p.m. (CT) on NCAA.com. NSU was ranked fifth in the last Central Region poll. The top-8 teams advance with the tournament winners from the NSIC, MIAA, and GAC receiving an automatic bid.

Beware of scammers pretending to be from Social Security

In the digital age, frauds and scams are an unfortunate part of doing business online. During the holiday season, Social Security has traditionally seen a spike in phishing scams, and we want to protect you as best we can.

We urge you to always be cautious and to avoid providing sensitive information such as your Social Security Number (SSN) or bank account information to unknown individuals over the phone or internet. If you receive a call and aren't expecting one, you must be extra careful. You can always get the caller's information, hang up, and — if you do need more clarification — contact the official phone number of the business or agency that the caller claims to represent. Never reveal personal data to a stranger who called you.

Please take note; there's a scam going around right now. You might receive a call from someone claiming to be from Social Security or another agency. Calls can even display the 1-800-772-1213, Social Security's national customer service number, as the incoming number on your caller ID. In some cases, the caller states that Social Security does not have all of your personal information, such as your Social Security number (SSN), on file. Other callers claim Social Security needs additional information so the agency can increase your benefit payment, or that Social Security will terminate your benefits if they do not confirm your information. This appears to be a widespread issue, as reports have come from people across the country. These calls are not from Social Security.

Callers sometimes state that your Social Security number is at risk of being deactivated or deleted. The caller then asks you to provide a phone number to resolve the issue. People should be aware the scheme's details may vary; however, you should avoid engaging with the caller or calling the number provided, as the caller might attempt to acquire personal information.

Social Security employees occasionally contact people by telephone for customer-service purposes. In only a few special situations, such as when you have business pending with us, a Social Security employee may request the person confirm personal information over the phone.

Social Security employees will never threaten you or promise a Social Security benefit approval or increase in exchange for information. In those cases, the call is fraudulent, and you should just hang up. If you receive these calls, please report the information to the Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-269-0271 or online at oig.ssa.gov/report.

Remember, only call official phone numbers and use secured websites of the agencies and businesses you know are correct. Protecting your information is an important part of Social Security's mission to secure today and tomorrow.

Thanks,

Regional Public Affairs Office
Community Outreach
Social Security Administration

Wolves drop season opener against Pittsburg State Friday morning

Kansas City, K.S. – The Northern State University women's basketball team fell to Pittsburg State in the season opener by a final score of 94-81.

Northern State started the game with a 6-1 lead before the Gorillas tied up the game at eight. The Wolves finished the first quarter with a 16-11 lead. NSU had a 28-21 lead with 6:31 left in the first half before Pittsburg State finished the first half with a 23-5 run. Northern finished the first half-shooting 50.0 percent from the field, 2-6 from the three-point line, and out-rebounded Pittsburg State 15-14.

The Wolves were out-scored in the third quarter 27-15, trailing by 23 heading into the final quarter. With 8:13 left in the fourth quarter, the Wolves cut the Pittsburg State lead to 14 forcing the Gorillas to call a timeout but could not complete the comeback as the Wolves fell by a score of 94-81.

NSU finished the game shooting 50.0 percent for the game, 46.7 percent from behind the arc, and making 22-29 free throws in the game. The Wolves added 32 points in the paint, 28 bench points, and 13 points off turnovers.

Leading the way for the Wolves was Brooke Luitjens in her first career game finishing with 18 points, five rebounds, five assists, and two steals. Senior Sara Tvedt finished the game with 15 points, five rebounds, and one assist. Lexi Wadsworth also in her first career game finished in double figures with 14 points, team leading seven rebounds, and four assists.

Anika Fredrick scored four points with two rebounds, one assist, and one steal. Rounding out the starting five is Tori Mekash, she recorded two points and three assists in the loss for the Wolves. Joie Spier and Zoe Hardwick led the bench in scoring with 11 points, Spier shot 3-for-3 from behind the arc with four rebounds and one steal. Alayna Jonson and Rachel Guthmiller each tallied two points off the bench in the loss. Kendall Kohler and Sarah Rozell each tallied one point.

The Wolves are back in action Saturday afternoon in the second day of the Central Region Challenge as they match-up with Arkansas Tech. Tip-off is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. against the Golden Suns from the Municipal Auditorium in Kansas City, Missouri.

Governor-elect Noem Announces Transition Team

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor-elect Kristi Noem and Lieutenant Governor-elect Larry Rhoden today announced the membership of their transition team.

The transition team will work with Governor-elect Noem and Lieutenant Governor-elect Rhoden to develop policy proposals for the upcoming legislative session, prepare Governor-elect Noem's budget proposal, and identify and screen candidates for the Governor's Cabinet and Staff. The team will work closely with Governor Dennis Daugaard to ensure an orderly transition to the new administration.

Matt McCaulley will chair the transition team. McCaulley is a partner with Redstone Law Firm in Sioux Falls, and has previously served as legal counsel to Governor-elect Noem for nearly a decade. He served in the State House of Representatives from 2001-2004, and also served as the chair of the House Judiciary Committee in 2003-2004.

Herb Jones was the deputy campaign manager of the Kristi for Governor campaign. Jones' extensive government experience includes work in the Janklow, Mickelson, and Miller administrations and as chief of staff to U.S. Senator John Thune. Jones previously chaired Noem's 2010 congressional transition team.

Steve Westra is the President of Hegg Hospitality Management, and COO of Hegg Companies Inc. Westra served in the State House of Representatives from 2013-2016, including two years as assistant majority leader. He currently serves on the State Tourism Advisory Board.

Liza Clark is commissioner of the Bureau of Finance and Management, the state's chief financial officer. Clark joined BFM in 2005, including six years as chief budget analyst. She spent three years in Governor Daugaard's office as a policy advisor, advising on issues relating to labor and regulation, workforce development, human resources, and higher education.

Kennedy Noem is a senior at South Dakota State University, where she is majoring in political science with a minor in economics. She is the daughter of Governor-elect Noem.

Lieutenant Governor-elect Larry Rhoden will also serve on the transition team.

The transition team is committed to the Four Pillars of Protection that Governor-elect Noem and Lieutenant Governor-elect Rhoden have promised to the State of South Dakota. The transition team will serve until January 5, 2019.

Tony Venhuizen has been designated by the Daugaard administration to serve as liaison to the Noem transition team. Venhuizen, who serves as Governor Daugaard's chief of staff, also worked in the 2002 Rounds transition and the 2010 Daugaard transition.

Governor-elect Kristi Noem and Lieutenant Governor-elect Larry Rhoden also announced the following staff appointments:

Beth Hollatz will serve as the transition team's inauguration coordinator. Hollatz worked on the Kristi for Congress campaign in 2010, the Kristi for Governor campaign this year, and also served as state director in Noem's congressional office.

Megan Goltz will serve as Governor-elect Noem's scheduler. Goltz served as the scheduler for Kristi during the Kristi for Governor campaign.

All members of the transition team will sign an acknowledgement that they have read, and will abide by, all ethics and conflict of interest laws and rules that apply to state officials, which are available in the State of South Dakota Employee Handbook.

Governor-elect Noem and Lieutenant Governor-elect Rhoden will be sworn in on January 5, 2019.

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Today in Weather History

November 10, 1998: Heavy snow fell across most of central, north central, and northeast South Dakota from the early morning hours of the 9th into the late afternoon hours of the 10th. Heavy snow also fell across west central Minnesota from late in the evening on the 9th to the early morning hours of the 10th. Snowfall amounts ranged from 6 to 14 inches. Early in the storm, much of the precipitation fell as rain, freezing rain, and heavy wet snow. During the early morning hours of the 10th, northwest winds increased to 20 to 50 mph and gusted at times to 60 mph. These high winds brought widespread blizzard conditions into the late evening hours of the 10th. On both the 10th and 11th, most area schools were closed, along with many highways, including Highways 12 and 83. Interstates 29 and 90 were also closed due to slick roads and near-zero visibilities. Hundreds of vehicles were stranded in this storm, with many people needing rescue, and many motorists also slid off the roads. There were also numerous accidents, with a few resulting in injuries. Due to the ice buildup from the rain, freezing rain, and wet snow early in the storm, along with the high winds, many tree limbs, some trees, and power lines and poles were brought down, which resulted in multiple power outages across the region. The area most affected by power outages was north of a line from Mobridge to Ipswich, along Highway 212, to the North Dakota border. Some 25 cities were affected by power outages. Hosmer was without power for over 40 hours. At South Shore, a family lost power for 120 hours. A lineman tried to get to the home twice, but could not because of the low visibility. A teenager was also lost overnight near South Shore while he was hunting with friends. He was found at 8 am the next morning. In Watertown, two people were injured in an accident. Several of the downed trees across parts of the area blocked traffic for a time. Numerous businesses were closed, and activities were canceled on the 9th and 10th. In Pierre, the strong winds ripped the canopy off the Amoco gas station. The blizzard brought the fifth lowest barometric pressure on record to Watertown. Some snowfall amounts from this horrible blizzard included; 15.4 inches near Bryant; 12.5 inches in Webster; 12.3 in Pierre; 10.8 in Sisseton; 10.5 inches near Summit; 10.0 inches in Pollock and near Onida; and 9.0 in Blunt and Conde.

2002: The second largest November tornado outbreak on record over the eastern United States occurred during the Veterans Day weekend of November 9-11, 2002. Seventy-six tornadoes were reported in seventeen states. Of the 76 tornadoes, almost one out of every six was a killer, resulting in 36 fatalities.

1915 - An unusually late season tornado struck the central Kansas town of Great Bend killing eleven persons along its 35 mile track. The tornado destroyed 160 homes in Great Bend killing 11 persons and causing a million dollars damage. Hundreds of dead ducks dropped from the sky northeast of the track's end. (The Weather Channel)

1975 - Another freshwater fury hit the Great Lakes. A large ore carrier on Lake Superior, the Edmund Fitzgerald, sank near Crisp Point with the loss of its crew of 29 men. Eastern Upper Michigan and coastal Lower Michigan were hardest hit by the storm, which produced wind gusts to 71 at Sault Ste Marie MI, and gusts to 78 mph at Grand Rapids MI. Severe land and road erosion occurred along the Lake Michigan shoreline. A popular hit song by Gordon Lightfoot was inspired by the storm. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A cold front brought snow to the Appalachian Region and freezing temperatures to the central U.S. Up to nine inches of snow blanketed Garrett County of extreme western Maryland. Freezing temperatures were reported as far south as El Paso TX and San Angelo TX. Gale force winds lashed the Middle Atlantic Coast and the coast of southern New England. Thunderstorms brought fire quenching rains to Alabama, and produced large hail and damaging winds to eastern North Carolina. Ahead of the cold front, seven cities in Florida and Georgia reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 80s. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Strong winds circulating around a deep low pressure system in southeastern Ontario buffeted the northeastern U.S., with the Lower Great Lakes Region hardest hit. Winds in western New York State gusted to 68 mph at Buffalo, to 69 mph at Niagra Falls, and to 78 mph at Brockport. Four persons were injured at Rome NY when a tree was blown onto their car. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today



Chance Snow
and Breezy

High: 27 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 25 °F

Veterans
Day



Partly Sunny

High: 26 °F

Sunday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

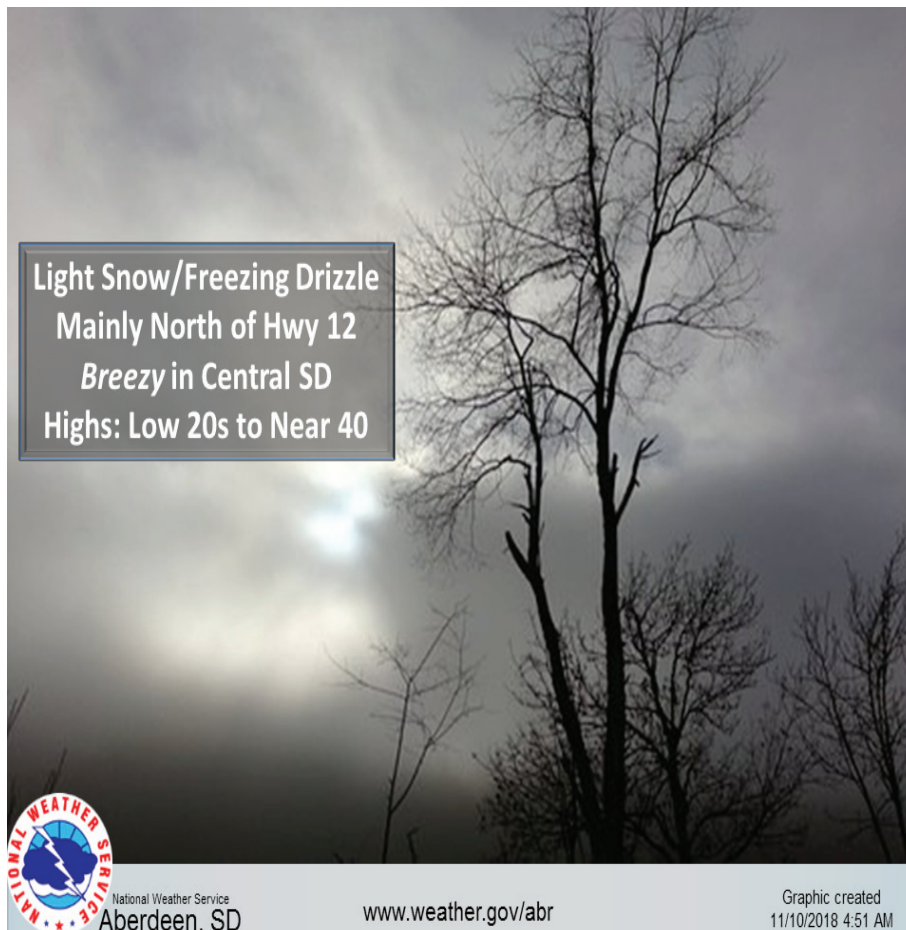
Low: 11 °F

Monday




Mostly Sunny

High: 19 °F



Light Snow/Freezing Drizzle
Mainly North of Hwy 12
Breezy in Central SD
Highs: Low 20s to Near 40

 National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic created
11/10/2018 4:51 AM

Published on: 11/10/2018 at 4:57AM

Low pressure will bring some light snow and freezing drizzle to northern parts of the region today. Little accumulation is expected. Breezy southerly winds will drag warmer air into central SD today with highs climbing into the 30s. Eastern areas will stay cooler, mainly in the lower 20s.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 17 °F at 1:28 PM

Low Outside Temp: 2 °F at 10:27 PM

High Gust: 24 mph at 11:55 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 69° in 1954

Record Low: -7 in 1896

Average High: 43°F

Average Low: 22°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.27

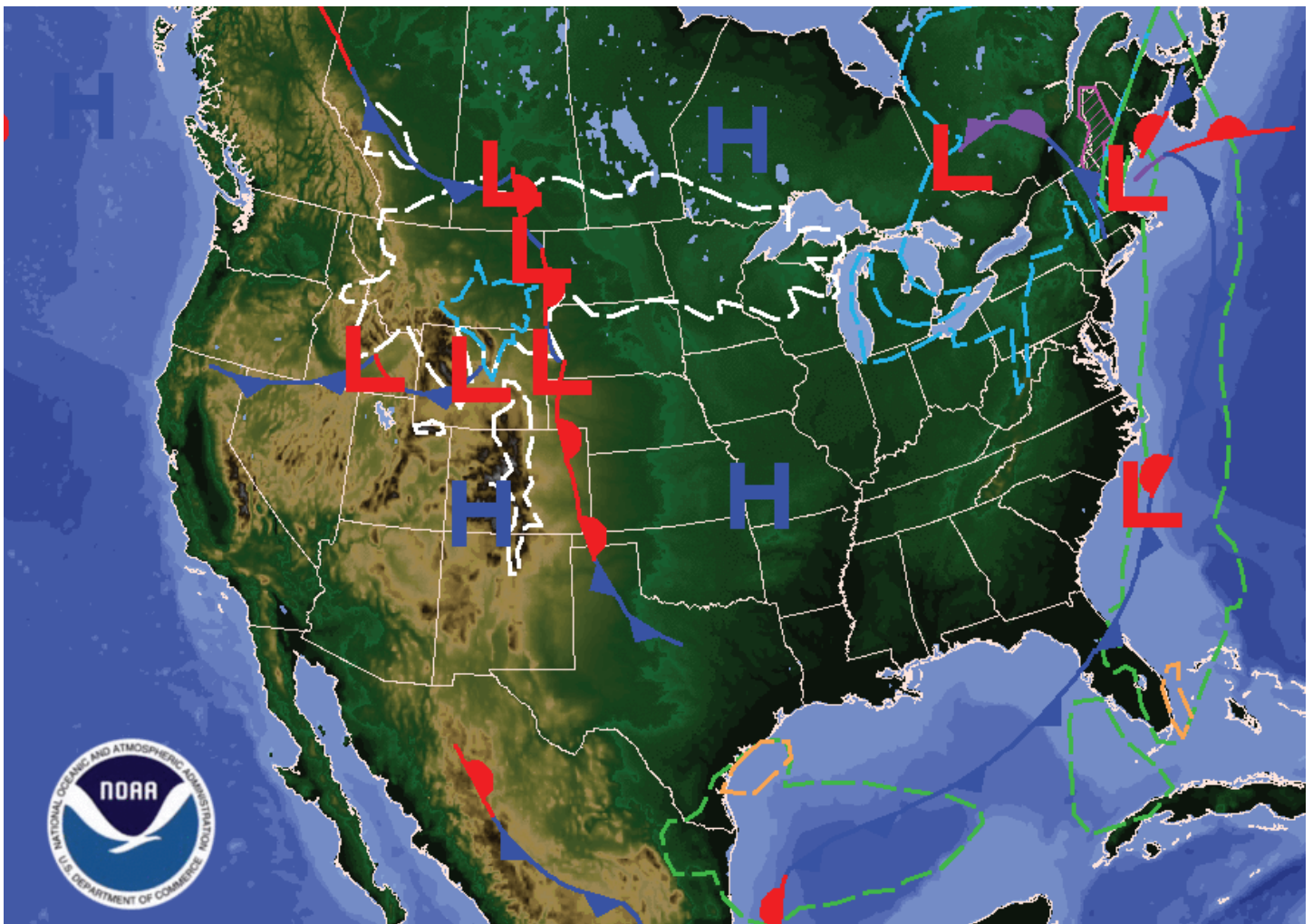
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.76

Average Precip to date: 20.74

Precip Year to Date: 15.81

Sunset Tonight: 5:09 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:27 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sat, Nov 10, 2018, issued 3:31 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Kebede 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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GIVE THANKS!

Josh felt that things were not going the way he wanted them to go in his relationship with Janie. So, he decided to take her a beautiful bouquet of flowers and a large box of candy. When Janie saw the lovely gifts, she was so excited that she threw her arms around Josh and gave him a warm hug and kiss.

Suddenly, he turned and began running down the steps of her porch. Where are you going, Josh? Have I embarrassed you? Have I offended you?

Oh no, came the reply. Im going for some more flowers and candy!

God gives us one good gift after another. They come whether we expect them or not - even though we do not always deserve them!

Psalm 106 begins with a shout: PRAISE THE LORD! And following the shout, the Psalmist gives us a reason for us to shout: Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever!

His everlasting love and goodness are like rivers that flow through our lives, bringing us His blessings that we do not deserve nor could ever earn. His river never dries up in the summer or turns into ice in the winter. It flows freely bringing us Gods best every day of our lives!

Surely, it is good to give God thanks. But, it is even better to show Him our thanks for doing His work in His world. Now that Jesus has gone to be with His Father in Heaven, we are left here to do what He started. We are obligated to reach out to the lost and hurting with His love, mercy, and grace.

Prayer: Trouble our hearts, Heavenly Father, and give us no rest until we willingly do the things Your Son did. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 106:1 Praise the Lord! Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever.

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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

News from the Associated Press

Oglala Sioux Tribe's new police chief revamps department

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — The Oglala Sioux Tribe's new police chief has revamped the department six months into the position, bringing new ideas and programming to the law enforcement agency that was lacking leadership and manpower.

The tribe's police chief Robert Ecoffey tells the Rapid City Journal that the biggest impact the last six months has been the number of officers the department has spread throughout Pine Ridge Reservation. He says the Oglala Sioux Tribe's police department now has 54 police officers, compared to 24 officers in April.

Ecoffey says he's assigned three full-time officers to work on enforcing the tribe's drug and alcohol laws on the reservation.

Many people thought illegal alcohol sales would decrease after the border town of Whiteclay, Nebraska, shuttered its beer stores, but Ecoffey says he's seen more bootlegging.

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

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL

Class 11AA State Championship: Pierre 38, Huron 20

Class 11B State Championship: Sioux Falls Christian 43, Bridgewater-Emery 8

Class 9B State Championship: Colome 48, Sully Buttes 42, OT

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Pathology program shapes USD's medical school 60 years later

By SHELLY CONLON, Argus Leader

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — The University of South Dakota's first medical residency program started in 1958 with four open spots.

Without those four spots, Sioux Falls — and the state as a whole — likely wouldn't have the strong medical workforce it boasts today.

In a word, it's "poetic" celebrating the 60th anniversary of the pathology residency, said Nedd Brown, USD's associate dean of graduate medical education.

It's the program that kick-started decades of growth and made South Dakota a destination for medical students who come to learn and stick around to practice. And it started before USD offered a four-year medical school program.

Today, the USD Sanford School of Medicine is one of the top 10 schools in the nation for its local retention rates, and it all started with pathology, the Argus Leader reported.

"The unique thing about pathology? They see every patient in the hospital," Brown said. "If you're a child, you have blood drawn. If you're an elderly person, you have blood drawn and if you're a pregnant lady, you have blood drawn. Pathology is involved all along the way, so it's poetic that pathology was the first one and the rest have grown out of that."

The pathology residency program only had four spots a year available from 1958 to 2008, Department Chair Michael Koch said. He has been head of the department for the last 15 years, and the program since more than doubled in positions.

"I don't want to sound corny, but I feel kind of like a proud father," Koch said about his department's

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growth. "It's very unique and satisfying to see that development."

Today, the graduate school receives thousands of residency applications each year for eight different medical fields or about 150 spots scattered between Avera, Sanford and the Veterans Administration medical center, Brown said.

If a medical student completes a residency in South Dakota, they have an almost 80 percent chance of staying to practice, Brown said. That makes USD's medical school the sixth in the nation when it comes to local retention, he said.

And as of April, the medical school graduates a greater percentage of physicians practicing in rural areas than any of the other 145 medical schools across the nation.

"I know when I or my family have been in to see physicians in this community, invariably we'll bump into a resident," Brown said. "Whether it's at a clinic or at the hospitals, they're around, and they're providing care."

Pediatrics alone, one of the school's newest residency programs, brought in more than 400 applications for six spots this year, Brown said. The school interviews 10 potential students for every open spot it has, making the only medical school in the state highly competitive, Brown said.

But what sets the graduate school apart from other medical schools across the nation is how collaborative the school is with its medical partners, Brown said.

It helps that the school is located in the state's largest city and often makes for a great economic and educational environment for students' families to also work in the area, he said.

If USD was only a medical school without residency spots, the retention rate would drop to 40 percent, Brown said.

"It's a powerful factor, just based on the raw numbers, of keeping South Dakotans here in South Dakota to care," Brown said.

Neither Mark Huntington, the family medicine program director, or third-year resident Joseph Swedzinski are from South Dakota.

But both came because of the secret to the medical school's success — a collaborative, adaptive atmosphere not found elsewhere and a variety of opportunities.

Prior to Huntington joining USD's residency program in 2006, he practiced in a rural community on the border of Minnesota, he said. He's been the program's director for the last five years, and said it was difficult leaving what he loved doing.

But Huntington couldn't turn down the opportunity to help eager students become mature physicians, he said.

"Sometimes, we have residents who come in and struggle a little bit," Huntington said. "To help them achieve something they might not have otherwise, and getting to see their process of discovery and see it through their eyes. ... We learn as much from them as they do from us."

What tipped the balance for Huntington was the faculty's diversity, and how closely the school worked with local health care systems to give students the chance to explore beyond the basics, he said.

"The value placed on education here is second to none," Huntington said. "It's not a Sanford Health system or an Avera Health system. Both work together to offer education, while many other hospitals and institutions view education as a liability."

That educational investment is what drew residents like Swedzinski to the graduate school and what made him want to stay in the area, he said. He did his first years of medical school in Duluth, Minnesota before serving in the family medicine program, he said.

"No. 1 for me was the mission," he said. "This residency is all about training people for practicing in rural environments, and preparing them for that. It trains family docs to have a broad skill set and be able to do full-spectrum family medicine, whereas some programs will train people with a limited skill set."

But with his eyes on having a rural practice from the get-go, USD was exactly what he was looking for, he said. When he finishes his residency, he plans to practice in Pierre and eventually do obstetrics, something he said family medicine residency programs don't often provide a heavy focus in.

Adaptability will be the key for USD's graduate program to continue shaping South Dakota's medical

workforce another 60 years, said Jennifer Hsu, the internal medicine residency associate program director. "Nobody knows where exactly that medicine is going in another 60 years," Hsu said. "It could be completely different, and the approach to medical training could be totally different. Our main challenge is remaining adaptable as new data comes out about how better to train residents, and that we are appropriately adjusting to meet those needs."

And if Brown were to look back six decades at where it all began, all he can think about is how far USD's graduate program has come and how much potential it still has yet to embrace, he said.

"My vision would be to continue that philosophy of having physicians who love, love, love to teach, because that's how they got their skills, and they want to give those skills back to the next generation," Brown said. "In the state of South Dakota, we have that in spades."

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

Mellette family faces home fire, son's rare diagnosis

By KELDA J.L. PHARRIS, Aberdeen American News

MELLETTTE, S.D. (AP) — Cody Carey has been through quite a bit his seven months of life. He was born April 4 to Samantha Hommel and Kyle Carey. He will never remember his first home in Mellette.

Cody's baptism was May 27, and the family celebrated at the home. But shortly after the happy occasion, a fire broke out.

"It was probably 15 to 20 minutes after the last guest had gone home, and an hour later we had completely lost our house," Hommel said.

The fire gutted the interior. The family lost pretty much everything. A friend offered a home for rent in Mellette. And the community rallied around them to help, Hommel said by phone last month.

Tragedy wouldn't be a stranger. As they were busy getting their feet back under them after the fire, something gnawed at Hommel about Cody's development. He was about three months old. He wasn't hitting certain milestones at the same time his sister, Kenlee Hommel, now 5, had and he wasn't very active, Aberdeen American News reported.

"He wasn't eating well at all. He slept a majority of the time. He was spitting up a lot. We thought it was acid reflux. We took him into his doctor, gave him medication and that wasn't working," Samantha Hommel said.

In July, Cody was admitted to Avera St. Luke's Hospital, and after five days without a conclusion, he was transferred to Sanford Children's Hospital in Sioux Falls.

"He had OTC based on his ammonia levels," Hommel said.

Ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency is a metabolic disorder that affects liver enzymes.

Cody was flown to the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities. His case is rare because he's of the 25 percent with the already-rare disorder who don't have a genetic link to it, Hommel said. His liver doesn't make enough arginine and citrulline to remove proteins, so instead of them being released in urine, they get stored, Hommel explained.

It was determined Cody would need a liver transplant, and he was discharged Aug. 13 with directions for a protein-restricted diet until a donor can be found. He's shown some improvement already, and he's passed the 20-pound mark, which is where the doctors wanted him to be before an operation, his mother said.

"We are doing (physical therapy) and (occupational therapy) with him currently, helping him do exercises. He's doing really well now," Hommel said. "He rolls from back to tummy and tummy to back really well."

Cody has a status of 1B on the transplant list, which means it could take days or a few months — but not years — for a donor liver, she said. After the transplant he should lead a pretty normal life. With a liver — unlike with a heart or kidney transplant — Hommel said her son should only need the one operation.

"For the most part, he's going to live a pretty normal life. He might have to watch his protein intake a bit. He can play sports but not contact sports," Hommel said. "He'd just have his anti-rejection medica-

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tions for life. If everything goes the way it should and his body doesn't reject (the new liver), he should have it for life."

The community of Mellette pitched in again during the family's medical travels. Neighbors and friends helped in myriad ways, like mowing the lawn and watching the family dog, she said.

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

08-14-27-57-67, Mega Ball: 5, Megaplier: 4

(eight, fourteen, twenty-seven, fifty-seven, sixty-seven; Mega Ball: five; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$90 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$92 million

Another Keystone XL setback: environmental review ordered

By MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a setback for the Trump administration, a federal judge has blocked a permit for construction of the Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada and ordered officials to conduct a new environmental review.

Environmentalists and tribal groups cheered the ruling by a U.S. district judge in Montana, while President Donald Trump called it "a political decision" and "a disgrace."

The 1,184-mile (1,900 kilometer) pipeline would begin in Alberta and shuttle as much as 830,000 barrels a day of crude through a half dozen states to terminals on the Gulf Coast.

Trump has touted the \$8 billion pipeline as part of his pledge to achieve North American "energy dominance" and has contrasted his administration's quick approval of the project with years of delay under President Barack Obama.

The Trump administration has not said whether it would appeal the new ruling. The State Department said it was reviewing the decision, but declined further comment, citing ongoing litigation.

The pipeline was first proposed by Calgary-based TransCanada in 2008. It has become the focal point of a decade-long dispute that pits Democrats, environmental groups and Native American tribes who warn of pollution and increased greenhouse gas emissions against business groups and Republicans who cheer the project's jobs and potential energy production.

U.S. District Judge Brian Morris put a hold on the project late Thursday, ruling that the State Department had not fully considered potential oil spills and other impacts as required by federal law. He ordered the department to complete a new review that addresses issues that have emerged since the last environmental review was completed in 2014.

New topics include the cumulative effects of climate-changing greenhouse gas emissions of Keystone XL and a related pipeline that brings oil from Canada; the effects of current oil prices on the pipeline's viability; updated modeling of potential oil spills; and the project's effect on cultural resources of native tribes and other groups along the pipeline's route.

The review could take up to a year to complete.

Environmentalists and Native American groups had sued to stop the project, citing property rights and possible spills.

Becky Mitchell, chairwoman of the Northern Plains Resource Council, a plaintiff in the case, said her

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organization is thrilled with the ruling.

"This decision sends TransCanada back to the drawing board," Mitchell said, calling the ruling "the results of grassroots democracy in action, winning for water and people."

TransCanada said in a statement that it was reviewing the judge's 54-page decision. "We remain committed to building this important energy infrastructure project," TransCanada spokesman Terry Cunha said.

Environmental groups declared victory and predicted the long-delayed project will never be built.

The court ruling "makes it clear once and for all that it's time for TransCanada to give up on their Keystone XL pipe dream," said Doug Hayes, a senior attorney with the Sierra Club, the nation's largest environmental group.

The fight over the project has spanned several presidencies and involved standoffs between protesters and law enforcement.

After years of legal wrangling, Obama rejected a permit for the pipeline in 2015. The company responded by seeking \$15 billion in damages.

Trump signed executive actions to again advance construction of the project in 2017.

TransCanada had recently announced plans to start construction next year, after a State Department review ordered by Morris concluded that major environmental damage from a leak is unlikely and could quickly be mitigated. Morris said that review was inadequate.

TransCanada has promised continuous monitoring and says automatic shut-off valves would help officials quickly identify a leak or rupture.

Tom Goldtooth, executive director for the Indigenous Environmental Network, a Minnesota-based advocacy group that also is a plaintiff in the case, said the ruling was a win for tribes, water "and for the sacredness of Mother Earth."

He called the pipeline "the enemy of the people, the climate and life as we know it. It must be stopped."

Police: Woman caught shoplifting stabs store employee

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police say a 21-year-old woman stabbed a convenience store employee after he confronted her about shoplifting frozen chicken.

Authorities say the woman, who is a transient, tried to shoplift some frozen chicken around 8 a.m. Friday. The employee confronted her outside and took back the box of chicken.

Police say the woman then stabbed the employee in the shoulder with a knife. A South Dakota Highway Patrol trooper later found the woman. When a police officer arrived to help the trooper, authorities say the suspect threatened both of them with a knife.

The trooper used a stun gun on the suspect, who was arrested. The victim was taken to a hospital, where he was treated and released.

The woman is jailed facing charges of aggravated assault and shoplifting.

Feds: Vehicle theft ring exposes oversight weakness

By JIM MUSTIAN, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A ring of savvy car thieves in New York exploited a bureaucratic weakness by registering many of their ripped-off Lamborghinis and Range Rovers in South Dakota, a state that lets people register out-of-state vehicles by mail and wasn't thoroughly checking to see if they were stolen, the FBI said.

Federal prosecutors in New York brought federal conspiracy charges against seven people this week, blaming them for the thefts of 60 vehicles.

The ring registered many of the stolen cars in South Dakota, a state the FBI said conducted "fewer or no checks" to confirm lawful ownership of registered vehicles compared to other states.

The South Dakota Division of Motor Vehicles did not respond to an email request for comment Friday. A spokeswoman for Gov. Dennis Daugaard declined to comment.

The FBI and New York State Police said they dismantled the crew following a months-long investigation

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that involved wiretapping, undercover surveillance in several states and an analysis of cell tower data.

The defendants are charged with federal counts of conspiracy and possession, sale and transportation of stolen cars.

"They stole from rightful owners and used a criminal network of thieves, fraudsters and forgers to line their pockets, all while driving themselves around in stolen Lamborghinis, Range Rovers and other pilfered prizes," U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman said in a statement. "With our partners at the FBI and the State Police, we have slapped a boot onto these fast-paced heists and will now tow the defendants off to justice."

In all, the group stole about \$3.1 million worth of vehicles, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan. The heists included the theft of five 2017 Nissan Titan pickups taken from a dealership in Tallahassee, Florida, and a Lamborghini Huracan stolen in Miami, according to court documents.

The group sold one of the pickups for \$20,000 cash on Craigslist. The FBI says the vehicle was worth more than twice that.

The FBI intercepted several calls placed by the crew's alleged ringleader, Marvin Williams, who is accused of coordinating the transportation of the vehicles across several states and efforts to evade law enforcement.

According to the FBI, Williams registered 43 vehicles with the South Dakota Division of Motor Vehicles using false documentation. At least 10 of those vehicles had been reported stolen, authorities said.

Williams' defense attorney did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Pine Ridge Reservation getting street addresses, signs

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — The Oglala Sioux Tribe is assigning 911 system street addresses to homes and installing hundreds of street signs across the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

The project comes as tribes in North Dakota struggled to ensure they had identification with street addresses so they could vote in Tuesday's general election.

The purpose is different on Pine Ridge, though officials have an eye on what has happened in North Dakota, said Tory Ferguson, geographic information system specialist with the tribe's Department of Public Safety.

"Our main focus for this 911 addressing project is for 911 to have a system to get our police officers to calls for service in a quicker way. It cuts down on our response time," he said. "And, of course, it spins off into a lot of other things."

That includes easier mailing and a better system for conducting business, Ferguson told the Rapid City Journal.

Ferguson has installed 301 signs and has 224 more to go.

"I've done so many now, I'm a pro," he said.

In North Dakota, an October U.S. Supreme Court ruling allowed the state to continue requiring street addresses on voter IDs, as opposed to addresses such as post office boxes that many Native Americans rely on. Tribes with the help of advocacy groups scrambled to issue more than 2,300 free qualifying IDs in the run-up to Tuesday's election to ensure a strong Native American vote. The matter is the subject of two federal lawsuits against the state.

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

High school coach arrested for drunken driving, drugs

WOLSEY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities in eastern South Dakota say a long-time high school boys coach has been arrested for driving drunk and drug possession.

The Beadle County State's Attorney's Office says Gordon Hooks-William, an employee of the Wolsey-Wessington School District, was arrested for first-offense drunken driving, possession of 2 ounces or less of marijuana and obstructing an officer.

KELO-TV reports the South Dakota High School Athletic Association lists Hooks-Williams as the Warbirds'

football and boys' basketball head coach and a physical education teacher. He's been the team's football coach since 2007.

The school district declined comment, saying it's a personnel matter. A phone listing for Hooks-Williams could not be found.

Information from: KELO-TV, <http://www.keloland.com>

Trial for man accused of killing toddler could take 5 weeks

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Attorneys say jurors deciding the fate of a man accused of killing a toddler in Minnehaha County could spend more than a month on the case.

Andrew Cornett is expected to face a jury in September 2019, almost three years after he was taken into custody on charges including first- and second-degree murder. His 18-month-old stepson was found unresponsive in his Dell Rapids home. An autopsy found six blows to Hayden Wigton's head and bite marks.

The state plans to seek a jury recommendation of a death sentence if Cornett is found guilty at trial.

The Argus Leader reports attorneys estimated Cornett's jury trial could take up to five weeks: a trial to determine a conviction and, if convicted, a trial to decide whether the death penalty can be imposed.

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

Sioux Falls man sentenced for 26 lbs of marijuana in vehicle

LAKE ANDES, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man arrested last summer for driving through Charles Mix County with 26 pounds of marijuana has been sentenced to three years in the State Penitentiary.

The Daily Republic reports that 35-year-old Arthur Little was stopped July 29 by a Highway Patrol officer for not having a front license plate prominently displayed. Authorities found a bag containing the marijuana and also cocaine.

Little pleaded guilty in September to a drug charge, and other charges were dismissed.

A passenger in the car also faces drug charges. Thirty-two-year-old Brittany Fuller, of Sioux Falls, is scheduled for trial Dec. 3.

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

Yankton high school student arrested for alleged threat

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Yankton police have arrested a high school student who allegedly made a threat against the school.

The Daily Press & Dakotan reports that buildings in the school district were put on lockdown Thursday morning following the threat. Superintendent Wayne Kindle says it involved an online post about a shooting at school.

Police detained the student off campus and arrested the student for allegedly making a terroristic threat. It wasn't immediately clear how old the student was.

Information from: Yankton Press and Dakotan, <http://www.yankton.net/>

South Dakota soybean production expected to set record

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Agriculture Department is continuing to project a record soybean crop in South Dakota, but the corn crop estimate has been downsized below a record.

The latest production report estimates the state's soybean crop at 275 million bushels, a slight drop from the October forecast but still up 14 percent from last year.

The corn crop is forecast at 822 million bushels. That's up 12 percent from last year, but a drop from

the October estimate of a record 851 million bushels.

South Dakota sorghum production is forecast at 14.3 million bushels, up 23 percent from last year.

Nationally, farmers are expected to produce a record soybean crop and the second-largest corn crop ever.

Tripp man sent to prison for police chases in 2 counties

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — A Tripp man who led police on chases in two counties earlier this year has been sentenced to spend two years in prison.

Authorities say 36-year-old Jeremy Daugherty led officers on chases in Charles Mix County in May and in Hutchinson County in August. He initially faced seven felony charges and nine misdemeanors.

The Daily Republic reports that Daugherty was sentenced on a drug charge in Charles Mix County in late October and for aggravated eluding in Hutchinson County on Monday.

The sentences in the two counties are to run at the same time, meaning he is to serve a total of two years with credit for about three months he's already spent behind bars.

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

Trump calls French president 'good friend' after testy tweet

By JILL COLVIN and DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron insisted they were good friends Saturday after a dustup over their comments about European security that threatened to divert attention from a weekend ceremony marking 100 years since the end of World War I.

The American and French leaders, who have had somewhat of an up-and-down relationship, worked to project unity on whether Europe should create an army as they addressed reporters before going behind closed doors for talks at the Elysee Palace.

Trump opened his latest French visit on a testy note after he unleashed an angry Twitter jab at his host as he arrived for the celebration. Just as Air Force One touched down in Paris Friday night, Trump tweeted that Macron "has just suggested that Europe build its own military in order to protect itself from the U.S., China and Russia. Very insulting, but perhaps Europe should first pay its fair share of NATO, which the U.S. subsidizes greatly!"

Macron's office said Trump misunderstood Macron's comments about sharing the defense burden, and the two men struck a more friendly tone as they opened their meeting at the grand presidential residence on a rainy day in Paris.

"We want to help Europe but it has to be fair. Right now, the burden-sharing has been largely on the United States," Trump said, adding that Macron "understands that and he understands the United States can only do so much, in fairness to the United States."

Trump added that the U.S. wants to "absolutely be there" to help defend Europe but that "different countries have to also help."

Macron defended his viewpoint, saying "I do share President Trump's views that we need a much better burden sharing with NATO and that's why I do believe that my proposal for a European defense" is "utterly consistent with that."

Macron said it's "unfair to have the European security today being assured just by the United States."

An official in Macron's office said Trump lumped together two different comments by the French president, and that the leaders would discuss the comments. By custom, the official was not authorized to be publicly named.

Macron said in an interview earlier this week that Europe needs to protect itself against "China, Russia and even the United States" in terms of cyberspace. Later, Macron reiterated that Europe needs to build up its own military because it can no longer depend on the U.S. for defense.

Trump has made similar arguments, particularly in urging NATO members to increase their defense spending.

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It was the latest instance of Trump introducing tension before meeting with a world leader, then playing nice when they are in his face.

Earlier this year, Trump insulted British Prime Minister Theresa May at an especially vulnerable time for her government in an interview with a British tabloid. He also threatened not to work toward a trade deal with Britain and said May's political nemesis would make a great prime minister. The interview was published as Trump attended a grand welcome dinner hosted by May hours after he arrived in London.

But Trump was far more cordial to May's face. He complimented her leadership and expressed his great respect for her.

Trump's tweet aside, Macron welcomed Trump in the courtyard of the Elysee Palace with a handshake and pats on the arm. Standing in a cool drizzle, the leaders flashed thumbs-up signs to reporters but ignored their shouted questions about Macron's remarks.

Inside a gilded meeting room, Macron referred to Trump as "my good friend" and tapped him on the thigh. Trump said they had become "very good friends over the last couple of years" and were "similar in our views" on many issues.

Besides European security, the presidents also discussed the U.S. decision to pull out of an arms control treaty with Russia, Iran, the slaying of a Saudi journalist inside the Saudi Consulate in Turkey and Saudi Arabia's role in the war in Yemen, according to French officials who briefed journalists afterward. The White House offered no comment on what the leaders discussed.

The tweet by Trump marked a fresh sign that the "America first" president was ready to go his own way yet again as world leaders gather to remember the coalition that brought an end to the first global war in which millions were killed.

Trump was joining scores of other world leaders for a Sunday ceremony in the shadow of the Arc de Triomphe to mark the WWI centennial.

The weekend visit comes on the heels of midterm elections in which Americans delivered a split referendum on his presidency, keeping the Senate in his Republican Party's control but giving control of the House to opposition Democrats.

Trump and first lady Melania Trump, who joined him at the palace later Saturday for a social lunch with Macron and his wife, Brigitte, had planned to visit the American cemetery in Belleau, France, to pay respects to U.S. soldiers who died on French soil. But the White House scrapped the visit because of rain. Trump is scheduled to visit a different American cemetery in France on Sunday.

Associated Press writers Angela Charlton in Paris and Jonathan Lemire and Deb Riechmann in Washington contributed to this report.

For more information on World War I, go to The Associated Press' WWI hub: <https://www.apnews.com/WorldWarI>

Follow Jill Colvin and Darlene Superville on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/colvinj> and <https://twitter.com/dsupervilleap>

Leaders laud fallen soldiers on eve of armistice centennial

By **RAF CASERT** and **ANGELA CHARLTON**, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Traveling from across the world to battlefields where their soldiers fell 100 years ago, victors and vanquished alike marked those sacrifices ahead of Sunday's Armistice Day and assessed alliances that have been dramatically redrawn since those dark days.

A century ago, the entry of U.S. troops into World War I tipped the momentum toward its allies, including France and Britain. On Saturday, even as he began two days of remembrance of the 1914-18 war, U.S. President Donald Trump said his nation bears far too much of the burden to defend the West.

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A flurry of Armistice-related diplomacy once again turned Paris, the jewel that Germany sought to take in 1914 but which the Allies fought to defend, into the center of global attention Saturday, with dozens of world leaders arriving for solemn commemorations planned Sunday.

After an awkward meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, Trump cancelled a visit to the defining battleground of Belleau Wood because of bad weather. Macron set off to meet with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

No separate meeting between Trump and Merkel was planned. Instead, Merkel was marking how her nation's bloodstained history with France has become a close alliance that is now the driving force behind the European Union. She and Macron were to visit the site where the armistice was signed in a railway carriage in Compiègne, north of Paris.

In four years of fighting, remembered for brutal trench warfare and the first use of gas, France, the British empire, Russia and the United States had the main armies opposing a German-led coalition that also included the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires.

Almost 10 million soldiers died. France lost 1.4 million and Germany 2 million.

Yet, despite a war that was supposed to end all wars, World War II pitted both sides against each other once again.

Across the line that once marked the Western Front, leaders lauded the courage of soldiers who were killed during the unprecedented slaughter, before converging on Paris for a dinner.

The armistice entered into force on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, and on Sunday 69 world leaders will mark the centennial of the event at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, underneath the Arc de Triomphe in central Paris.

At dawn Saturday, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau went to Vimy Ridge, the battlefield in northern France where Canada found its sense of self when it defeated German opposition against the odds.

Standing amid the white headstones against an ashen sky, Trudeau addressed the fallen, saying what Canada has achieved in the past century has been "a history built on your sacrifice. You stand for the values on which Canada was built."

In southern Belgium's Mons, Canadians were also lauding George Price, the last Commonwealth soldier to die in the war when he was shot by a German sniper two minutes before the armistice took effect.

Trump was looking beyond the tragedy of death and destruction, asking in a tweet: "Is there anything better to celebrate than the end of a war, in particular that one, which was one of the bloodiest and worst of all time?"

After his meeting with Macron, Trump had been scheduled to head to the battlefield of Belleau Wood, 90 kilometers (55 miles) northeast of the capital, where U.S. troops had their breakthrough battle by stopping a German push for Paris shortly after entering the war in 1917.

The battle of Belleau Wood proved America's mettle to allies and foes alike, and by the time the war ended U.S. forces were at least an equal to any of the other major armies, which were exhausted and depleted.

However, Trump canceled his visit because of bad weather.

For more information on World War I, go to The Associated Press' WWI hub: <https://www.apnews.com/WorldWarI>

World War I: An AP Centennial Commemorative Edition. Available now exclusively at Amazon: <https://amzn.to/2JGrx5U>

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's election fiction on GOP wins, economy

By HOPE YEN and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fresh off the GOP's loss of the House, President Donald Trump is fudging the success of a "booming" economy and overstating the impact of his campaigning on the midterm elections. He suggested that every Republican congressional candidate for whom he paid a visit to their state to

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rally voters prevailed on Election Day. That's not true. Several of his favorites in closely contested Senate and House races lost Tuesday, in some cases after Trump held multiple rallies on their behalf.

On the economy, Trump asserted that U.S. growth under his watch has been unprecedented. In fact, it was surpassed just four years ago during the Obama administration. He also minimized the trade threat from China and claims a U.S. steel industry renaissance that isn't really happening.

And speaking before Veterans Day, Trump claimed premature success in achieving "more for the vets than any president," citing an expanded health care program that has yet to be fully paid for or take effect.

A look at his claims and the reality:

MIDTERM ELECTIONS

TRUMP, on the message taken from Tuesday's elections: "I think the results that I've learned, and maybe confirm, I think people like me. I think people like the job I'm doing, frankly. Because if you look at every place I went to do a rally ... and it was very hard to do it with people in Congress because there are just too many ... but I did it with the Senate. I did it with (Kentucky Rep.) Andy Barr, as you know. And he won." — news conference Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Trump is wrong to suggest that congressional candidates won in every state where he held a rally on their behalf.

Two Republicans who closely embraced Trump in their Senate races — Montana's state auditor, Matt Rosendale, and West Virginia's attorney general, Patrick Morrisey — lost to Democratic Sens. Jon Tester and Joe Manchin, respectively. Trump had visited Montana four times and West Virginia three times to rally voters. Also losing Tuesday were Republican Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada, defeated by Democratic Rep. Jacky Rosen, and Leah Vukmir, a GOP state lawmaker in Wisconsin who lost her Senate race to Democratic Sen. Tammy Baldwin. Trump campaigned for Heller in Nevada on Oct. 20 and for Vukmir in Wisconsin on Oct. 24.

In the House, Republican Rep. Jason Lewis lost his race in Minnesota to Democrat Angie Craig, whom he had defeated by 2 percentage points in 2016. Trump campaigned in Minnesota on Oct. 4 after Lewis invited Trump to appear for him. .

TRUMP: "Fifty-five is the largest number of Republican senators in the last 100 years." — news conference Wednesday.

THE FACTS: His party didn't win 55 Senate seats Tuesday. Republicans held 55 seats in the Senate in 2005-2006, as well as 1997-2000, according to the Senate historian's office.

After Tuesday's elections, Republicans will hold a 51-46 edge, with races in Florida and Arizona too close to call. A special election in Mississippi has advanced to a runoff election on Nov. 27 between Republican Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith and Democrat Mike Espy. That means 54 Republican seats if those three races all break the GOP's way.

ECONOMY

TRUMP: "America is booming like never before. ... In terms of GDP, we're doing unbelievably." — news conference Wednesday.

TRUMP, on his telephone conversation Tuesday night with House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi: "We didn't talk about impeaching. We didn't talk about — what do you do? Do you impeach somebody because he created the greatest economic success in the history of our country?"

THE FACTS: The economy is healthy, but it's not unbelievable or unprecedented. It's also not clear what he means in claiming the nation's "greatest economic success" ever.

The economy expanded at a 4.2 percent annual rate in the April-June quarter, then by 3.5 percent in the July-September quarter. Those are the best two quarters in just four years. Growth reached 5.1 percent in the second quarter of 2014, followed by 4.9 percent in the third quarter.

The economy has boomed much more dramatically in the past. In the late 1990s, growth topped 4 percent for four straight years. It reached 7.2 percent in 1984. The unemployment rate is now at an impres-

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sive 50-year low of 3.7 percent. But it remained below 4 percent for nearly four years in the late 1960s.

TRUMP: "And our steel industry is back. Our aluminum industry is starting to do really well. These are industries that were dead. Our miners are working again." — news conference Wednesday.

THE FACTS: He's exaggerating.

The steel industry has added jobs at a faster rate than the economy as a whole since Trump's inauguration, though all the gains occurred before the administration imposed tariffs on steel imports in March. Still, the rebound has hardly restored steel to its former glory.

The United States has added 5,500 steel jobs since Trump entered the White House for a total of 86,500. Before the Great Recession, there were about 100,000 steel jobs. Aluminum factories have added 2,600 jobs since the inauguration for a total of 60,100. These are minor changes in an economy with almost 150 million jobs.

Meanwhile, not many miners are working again. Coal mining jobs have increased just 1,900 to 52,600 since Trump's inauguration. That's also a lot lower than the roughly 70,000 coal mining jobs that existed as recently as 2014.

TRUMP: "China got rid of their 'China '25' because I found it very insulting. I said that to them. I said, 'China '25' is very insulting, because 'China '25' means, in 2025, they're going to take over, economically, the world. I said, 'That's not happening.'" — news conference Wednesday.

THE FACTS: There's no evidence China has abandoned its economic plan. Trump is referring to China's "Made in China 2025" plan, under which that country's government aims to develop world-leading companies in robotics, semiconductors, electric vehicles and other advanced technologies. It's a sore point between the two nations because the United States and other countries argue that China is using unfair tactics to achieve those aims, such as forcing U.S. companies to share technology and providing government subsidies.

Chinese officials have played down the plan in recent months because of the international criticism. But there's little sign they have "gotten rid of" the plan. Because China sees the plan as a key step in the development of its economy, many observers worry they are unlikely to scale it back, which suggests U.S.-China trade fights aren't going away anytime soon.

VETERANS

TRUMP: "I've done more for the vets than any President has done, certainly in many, many decades, with Choice and with other things, as you know. ...If you look at Choice — Choice alone — I mean, just take a look at what we've done with Choice." — news conference Wednesday.

THE FACTS: He's taking premature credit for improvements that will take years to see full effect in regards to the Veterans Choice program.

Trump signed legislation in June to expand the private-sector Choice program, which was first approved in 2014 during the Obama administration in the wake of a scandal at the Phoenix VA medical center in which some veterans died while waiting months for appointments. The current Choice program allows veterans to see doctors outside the VA system if they must wait more than 30 days for an appointment or drive more than 40 miles to a VA facility.

How much Choice will be expanded, however, will depend on yet-to-be-completed regulations that will determine eligibility for veterans as well as available money for the program. The Department of Veterans Affairs has yet to resolve long-term financing due to congressional budget caps that could put funding for VA or other domestic programs at risk of shortfalls next year.

Also important to the program's success is an overhaul of the VA's electronic medical records to allow seamless sharing of medical records with private physicians, a process expected to take up to 10 years. VA Secretary Robert Wilkie has said full implementation of the expanded Choice program is "years" away.

HEALTH CARE

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TRUMP, on keeping health premiums down and covering people with preexisting medical conditions: "What we're doing, if you look at the Department of Labor also — (Health and Human Services) Secretary (Alex) Azar, what they've done. They've come up with some incredible health care plans, which is causing great competition and driving the prices right down." — news conference Wednesday.

THE FACTS: He's glossing over the limitations of his administration's new health care options, which offer lower premiums than comprehensive plans such as the Affordable Care Act but also cover less. The availability of Trump's short-term health plans also is not going to "drive down" prices of the Obama-era overhaul or comprehensive plans, but may increase premiums for robust coverage if fewer healthy people take it as a result.

Strictly speaking, the short-term and association health plans are not new. The Trump administration has broadened their potential reach, although some states may push back with restrictions.

Short-term plans don't have to take people with medical conditions or provide benefits such as coverage for maternity, mental health, prescription drugs and substance abuse treatment. Association health plans do have to accept people with pre-existing medical conditions, but they don't have to cover the full menu of 10 "essential" kinds of benefits required by Obamacare.

Gary Claxton of the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation says short-term plans may turn out to be more costly than Trump administration officials suggest. The plans now cover up to 90 days, but if insurers expand them to offer up to 36 months' coverage, the companies will be taking on more risk.

"You'll have to pay more up front because there's a longer time during which you could get sick," Claxton said.

Associated Press writers Cal Woodward, Alan Fram and Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed to this report.

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Unsung heroes, animals were vital part of WWI war machine

By **ELAINE GANLEY, Associated Press**

PARIS (AP) — They were messengers, spies and sentinels. They led cavalry charges, carried supplies to the front, and died by the millions during World War I.

Horses, mules, dogs, pigeons, even a baboon, all were a vital — and for decades overlooked — part of the Allied war machine.

Researchers have been hard-pressed to find official accounts of the services rendered by animals. Today, they are emerging as unsung heroes of the Great War. France recently decided to recognize their role in war. And in 2004, Britain installed a huge memorial to the vital contributions of animals on the edge of London's Hyde Park.

Here's a look at how four-legged and winged warriors contributed.

WHAT THEY DID

An estimated 10 million horses and mules, 100,000 dogs and 200,000 pigeons were enrolled in the war effort, according to Eric Baratay, a French historian specializing in the response of animals to the chaos, fear and smells of death in the mission that man thrust upon them.

World War I marked the start of industrial warfare, with tanks, trucks, aircraft and machine guns in action. But the growing sophistication of the instruments of death couldn't match the dog tasked with finding the wounded, the horses and mules hauling munitions and food or the pigeons serving as telecommunications operators or even eyes, carrying "pigeongrams" or tiny cameras to record German positions.

"They were quasi-combatants," said Serge Barcellini, comptroller general of the Armed Forces and head of Le Souvenir Francais — The French Memory — in a recent speech devoted to the role played by beasts of war.

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Indeed, gas masks were fitted to the muzzles of four-legged warriors braving noxious battlefield fumes. In France, as in Britain and elsewhere, horses and mules were requisitioned. One typical sign posted in southern Paris ordered citizens to present their steeds and mules to the Requisition Committee by Nov. 14, 1914, or risk "prosecution by the military authority." It was becoming clear there would be no quick end to the war that ground on for four more years.

FEATHERED HEROES

Cher Ami, or Dear Friend, the carrier pigeon who wouldn't quit, lived up to her name, saving the lives of 194 American troops of the "Lost Battalion" of the 77th Infantry Division, isolated behind enemy lines during the 1918 Meuse-Argonne offensive in eastern France.

About 550 men had held their ground against a far larger German force for days before coming under fire from American troops unaware the trapped soldiers weren't the enemy.

On Oct. 4, Maj. Charles Whittlesey sent Cher Ami into the skies with a final message giving the U.S. battalion's location, followed by a plea: "For heaven's sake stop it."

Cher Ami lost an eye and a leg from German gunfire, but kept flying, around 25 miles (40 kilometers) in about a half-hour, according to the United States World War One Centennial Commission. Survivors of the "Lost Battalion" returned to American lines four days later.

Another carrier pigeon named Vaillant, assigned to the French military, also performed extraordinary feats during the war.

On June 4, 1916, he was released into the sky with the desperate message, "He's my last pigeon."

French Commander Sylvain Eugene Raynal, encircled by Germans at the Fort de Vaux near Verdun, was counting on Vaillant to save his men.

The feisty bird flew through toxic gas and smoke, reaching the Verdun pigeon loft choked by fumes. With no help arriving despite Vaillant's courageous effort, Raynal and his men surrendered three days later. Both Cher Ami and Vaillant were awarded France's Croix de Guerre, or War Cross.

ROUND 'EM UP

Horses are ancient warriors, but most of those conscripted during World War I weren't war-ready. They died by the millions, from disease, exhaustion and enemy fire, forcing the French and British armies to turn to America to renew their supply. A veritable industry developed with more than half a million horses and mules shipped by boat to Europe by fall 1917, according to the American Battle Monuments Commission.

So important was the commerce that the Santa Fe Railroad named a station Drage, after British Lt. Col. F.B. Drage, the commander of the British Remount Commission in Lathrop, Missouri, a major stockyard for the future beasts of war.

"So the war business in horses and mules is good," read an article in the December 1915 issue of The Santa Fe Magazine, for employees of the railway system. Good for the farmer, contractor, supplier and railroads, it said, but "not good for the animals."

SERVICE BY EXOTICS

Among the more exotic animals called into service was a baboon named Jackie, who served with the 1st South African Infantry Brigade in then British-occupied Egypt and later in the trenches in France and Belgium. His acute hearing and keen eyesight helped warn soldiers of enemy movement or possible attacks when he would screech and tug on their clothing.

Jackie was wounded in Flanders Fields when the South African brigade came under heavy shelling in April 1918 and his leg had to be amputated.

Lt. Col. R.N. Woodsend, of Britain's Royal Medical Corps, described that procedure: "He lapped up the chloroform as if it had been whiskey, and was well under in a remarkably short time. It was a simple matter to amputate the leg with scissors."

DOGS OF WAR

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Man's best friend helped soldiers survive. Dogs served, firstly, as spotters of the wounded, learning to identify ally from enemy. They also served as sentinels, messengers, transporters and chasers of rats — the bane of the trenches along with lice and fleas. The French military created a service devoted to dogs of war in December 1915.

Less official, but crucial to soldiers' morale, was the role of dogs and other creatures in the trenches, and as mascots. Stray dogs running from fighting were adopted as companions along with other animals, including a Royal Air Force fox mascot adopted by British pilots.

These dogs and other mascots helped soldiers "think of life ... and the life they hoped to find again," said Baratay, the French historian, in a speech last month in Paris.

Future seems uncertain for Trump's acting attorney general

By ERIC TUCKER and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Matthew Whitaker's future at the helm of the Justice Department appears uncertain as President Donald Trump denies even knowing the man he's just named acting attorney general.

The Senate's top Republican is predicting a permanent replacement could be named soon for Whitaker, who's now overseeing special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into possible ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

The comments Friday from Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., came as Whitaker's past business ties and remarks on Mueller's probe and other topics drew scrutiny from Democrats and ethics groups.

"I don't know Matt Whitaker," Trump told reporters at the White House before leaving on a trip to France. That contradicted Trump's remarks on Fox News last month, when he called Whitaker "a great guy" and said, "I mean, I know Matt Whitaker."

McConnell, separately, said, "I think this will be a very interim AG." And Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said she was concerned by some of Whitaker's past comments and called for legislation that would place limits on his ability to fire Mueller. That would include specifying that only a Senate-confirmed Justice Department official, which Whitaker is not, could dismiss the special counsel.

Whitaker, a Republican Party loyalist and chief of staff to just-ousted Attorney General Jeff Sessions, was elevated Wednesday after Sessions was forced from his job by Trump.

Since Wednesday, Whitaker has faced pressure from Democrats to step aside from overseeing Mueller, based on critical comments Whitaker made about the investigation before joining the Justice Department last year.

Whitaker wrote an op-ed article saying Mueller would be straying outside his mandate if he investigated Trump family finances. Whitaker also gave a talk radio interview in which he maintained there was no evidence of collusion between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign. He also tweeted an ex-prosecutor's opinion piece that described a "Mueller lynch mob" and said it was "worth a read."

There have been reports about Whitaker's past comments questioning the power and reach of the federal judiciary, and about his ties to an invention-promotion company that was accused of misleading consumers.

The Wall Street Journal on Friday published an email revealing an FBI investigation into the company, World Patent Marketing Inc. The July 10, 2017, email was from an FBI victims' specialist to someone who, the newspaper said, was an alleged victim of the company. A Justice Department spokeswoman told the Journal that Whitaker was "not aware of any fraudulent activity."

Also Friday, The Associated Press reported that Whitaker repeatedly chided Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton in public statements during 2016 while he was speaking for a group that is barred by its tax-exempt status from supporting or opposing political candidates during a campaign.

Whitaker has tried to stay out of the public debate. He sent a department-wide note after his appointment in which he said, "As we move forward, I am committed to leading a fair Department with the highest ethical standards, that upholds the rule of law, and seeks justice for all Americans."

Legal scholars are debating the constitutionality of his appointment. Some lawyers say it is illegal because

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he has not been confirmed by the Senate.

Even as Trump seems to be distancing himself from Whitaker, two Republicans close to the president said Trump had enjoyed Whitaker's TV appearances and the two had struck a bond. Those TV appearances included one on CNN in which Whitaker suggested that the Mueller probe could be starved of resources.

Trump told associates that he felt Whitaker would be "loyal" and would not have withdrawn from the Russia probe, as Sessions had done, according to the Republicans. They were not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Trump said Friday he had not spoken with Whitaker about Mueller's investigation, which until now has been overseen by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. Later in the day, Trump tweeted that he did not personally know Whitaker, a former federal prosecutor in Iowa, but several Republican leaders in that state respected him. "I feel certain he will make an outstanding Acting Attorney General!"

Rosenstein told reporters Friday that based on his experiences with Whitaker, "I think he's a superb choice for attorney general."

Of the scrutiny Whitaker is facing, Trump said, "It's a shame that no matter who I put in they go after." "He was very, very highly thought of, and still is highly thought of, but this only comes up because anybody that works for me, they do a number on them," Trump said.

McConnell said he expects Trump to nominate a new permanent attorney general "pretty quickly." McConnell said he expects Whitaker to be "a very interim" appointee.

"The president has said repeatedly he's not going to dismiss the Mueller investigation," McConnell told reporters at Kentucky's Capitol. "He's said repeatedly it's going to be allowed to finish. That also happens to be my view."

Trump has not said whom he will nominate to permanently replace Sessions.

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is said to be a candidate, along with Labor Secretary Alex Acosta and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, among others.

Trump told reporters he has not discussed the post with Christie, who he said was "a friend of mine" and "a good man."

Associated Press writer Bruce Schreiner contributed to this report from Frankfort, Kentucky.

Tapping Trump's thigh, Macron seeks to defuse tensions

PARIS (AP) — First the never-ending handshake, then the dandruff brush — and now the thigh tap?

U.S. President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron have had an unusual relationship since their first white-knuckle handshake at a NATO meeting last year, as newly elected Macron appeared to be trying to match the American president on the world stage.

When Macron went to Washington in April, Trump was unusually affectionate, brushing flecks off the French leader's shoulder that he called dandruff and calling Macron "perfect."

Yet tensions between the men have grown in recent months. The globalist, progressive Macron and nationalist, protectionist Trump have clashed on climate change, world trade and how to deal with Iran. Trump shot off an angry tweet about Macron before their latest meeting on Saturday in Paris.

As they met, Macron stood firm but also seemed eager to keep up a show of camaraderie. He called Trump "my good friend" — and reached out to pat the American president on the thigh after a reporter asked them about the tweet.

Trump was cordial in the meeting. During the thigh tap, however, he sat stone-faced.

Official: Gunman apparently stopped shooting to post online

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP) — Authorities trying to make sense of why a gunman killed 12 people at a Southern California bar are not publicly discussing what they've learned, but at least one Instagram post he made after beginning the massacre has emerged as an early focus.

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Social media platforms have scrubbed that and any other posts following Wednesday night's massacre. But one law enforcement official said Ian David Long, a 28-year-old former Marine, posted about his mental state and whether people would believe he was sane.

Authorities also were investigating whether he believed his former girlfriend would be at the Borderline Bar and Grill, said the official, who was briefed on the investigation but not authorized to discuss it publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

A second law enforcement official, Ventura County Sheriff's Capt. Garo Kuredjian, said that — based on time stamps — the gunman apparently stopped shooting inside the bar and posted to Instagram. Kuredjian said he didn't know the content of any posts. Instagram and Facebook typically refuse to discuss individual accounts and did not respond to a request for comment.

Authorities described an attack of military efficiency. None of those injured was hurt by gunfire. When the gunman shot his .45-caliber pistol, he killed. As scores of police officers closed in, Long apparently shot and killed himself.

Several people who knew Long in the suburb of Thousand Oaks where the gunman went to high school and eventually moved back in with his mother described him in disturbing terms.

Long made others feel uncomfortable going back to his teens.

Dominique Colell, who coached girls' track and field at the high school where Long was a sprinter, remembers an angry young man who could be verbally and physically combative.

In one instance, Colell said Long used his fingers to mimic shooting her in the back of the head as she talked to another athlete. In another, he grabbed her rear and midsection after she refused to return a cellphone he said was his.

"I literally feared for myself around him," Colell said in an interview Friday. "He was the only athlete that I was scared of."

Colell said she wanted to kick Long off the team, but the boy's coach urged her to reconsider because that could compromise his goal of joining the Marines. She relented when, at the next track meet, Long apologized in front of several coaches and administrators.

Attempts to get comment by phone and in person from officials at Newbury Park High School and its school district were unsuccessful. Both were closed because of a destructive wildfire in the area.

As investigators worked to figure out what set him off, President Donald Trump blamed mental illness, describing the gunman as "a very sick puppy" who had "a lot of problems." At the White House on Friday, Trump touted his efforts to fund work on post-traumatic stress disorder among veterans and ignored questions about stricter gun control laws.

Investigators have not commented on whether mental illness played a role in the rampage. But a mental health specialist who assessed Long after sheriff's deputies responded to a call about his agitated behavior last spring worried he might be suffering from PTSD.

The incident happened in April, when yelling and loud banging noises coming from the home Long shared with his mother prompted a next-door neighbor to call authorities. The mental health specialist concluded there were no grounds to have him involuntarily committed.

Among the dead in the shooting rampage were a sheriff's sergeant gunned down as he entered the bar and a U.S. Navy veteran who survived last year's massacre in which a gunman in a high-rise Las Vegas hotel killed 58 people at an outdoor country music festival.

Balsamo reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Tami Abdollah in Washington; Krysta Fauria, Christopher Weber and Kathleen Ronayne in Thousand Oaks; Amanda Lee Myers and Justin Pritchard in Los Angeles; and Don Babwin in Chicago contributed to this report.

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Paradise lost after fire consumes Northern California town

By PAUL ELIAS and GILLIAN FLACCUS, Associated Press

PARADISE, Calif. (AP) — No one is left in Paradise. Abandoned, charred vehicles clutter the main thoroughfare, evidence of the panicked evacuation a day earlier as a wildfire tore through the Northern California community.

Nine people have been found dead. Entire neighborhoods are leveled. The business district is destroyed. In one day, this Sierra Nevada foothill town of 27,000 founded in the 1800s was largely incinerated by flames that moved so fast there was nothing firefighters could do.

The blaze that started Thursday outside the hilly town of Paradise has grown to 156 square miles (404 square kilometers) and destroyed more than 6,700 buildings, almost all of them homes, making it California's most destructive wildfire since record-keeping began. But crews have made gains and the fire is partially contained, officials said Saturday.

The dead were found inside their cars and outside vehicles or homes after a desperate evacuation that Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea called "the worst-case scenario." Their identities were not yet known.

"It is what we feared for a long time," Honea said, noting that there was no time to go door to door.

With fires also burning in Southern California, state officials put the total number of people forced from their homes at more than 200,000. Evacuation orders included the entire city of Malibu, which is home to 13,000, among them some of Hollywood's biggest stars.

President Donald Trump issued an emergency declaration providing federal funding for Butte, Ventura and Los Angeles counties. He later threatened to withhold federal payments to California, claiming its forest management is "so poor."

Trump tweeted Saturday that "there is no reason for these massive, deadly and costly fires in California." Trump said "billions of dollars are given each year, with so many lives lost, all because of gross mismanagement of the forests. Remedy now, or no more Fed payments!"

The fire in Paradise, about 180 miles (290 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco, was still burning out of control.

A thick, yellow haze hung in the air, giving the appearance of twilight in the middle of the day. Some of the "majestic oaks" the town touts on its website still have fires burning in their trunks. Thick wooden posts holding up guardrails continued to burn.

An evacuation order Thursday set off a desperate exodus, with frantic motorists getting stuck in gridlocked traffic. Many abandoned their vehicles to flee on foot as the flames bore down on all sides.

"The fire was so close I could feel it in my car through rolled-up windows," said Rita Miller, who fled Paradise with her mother, who is disabled.

The town, situated on a ridge between two valleys, was a popular retirement community, raising concerns about elderly and immobile residents who have been reported missing.

On the outskirts of town, Patrick Knuthson, a fourth-generation resident, said only two of the 22 homes that once stood on his street are still there — his and a neighbor's.

"The fire burned from one house, to the next house, to the next house until they were pretty much all gone," Knuthson said.

He and neighbors used a backhoe to create a fire line, determined not to lose his house again.

"I lost my home in 2008, and it's something you can't really describe until you go through it," said Knuthson, who battled flames 8 feet high or taller as strong winds whipped hot embers around him.

He worked so long in the flames and smoke that he needed to use oxygen Thursday night at his home, but he refused to leave. On Friday, Knuthson was covered from head to toe in black soot. His tiny town will never be the same, he said. The bucolic country landscape dotted with bay and oak trees will take years to recover.

In the town's central shopping area, there was little left but rubble.

St. Nicolas Church still stands, a rare exception. The nearby New Life church is gone. An unblemished Burger King sign rises above a pile of charred rubble. Only blackened debris remains behind the Happy

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Garden Chinese Restaurant sign touting its sushi. Seven burned out Mercedes chassis are all that's left of Ernst Mercedes Specialist lot. City Hall survived. But the Moose Lodge and Chamber of Commerce buildings didn't.

The town's 100-bed hospital is still standing, but two of its smaller buildings, including an outpatient clinic, are flattened. The Adventist Feather River Hospital evacuated its 60 patients, but some were forced back by clogged roads. All of them eventually made it out.

On the outskirts of Paradise, Krystin Harvey lost her mobile home. She described a town rich with historical charm, until a day ago.

"It was an old country town. It had the old buildings lined up along the walkway," she said. "Almost all businesses were locally owned and included an assortment of antique shops, thrift stores, small restaurants, two bars and lots of churches."

Harvey wondered if the town's traditions would survive. The town was famous for the discovery of a 54-pound gold nugget in the 1800s, which eventually prompted a festival known as Gold Nugget Days. The highlight of the festival is a parade that features a Gold Nugget Queen.

"My daughter's going out for the gold nugget queen this year," said Harvey, then she paused. "Well, it's been going for 100 years, but we don't know — there's no town now."

People in Paradise, like so many in California, have become accustomed to wildfires, and many said they were well-prepared. They kept their gutters clean, some kept pumps in their swimming pools and had fire hoses. But the ferocity and speed of this blaze overwhelmed those preparations.

Drought, warmer weather attributed to climate change and home construction deeper into forests have led to more destructive wildfire seasons that have been starting earlier and lasting longer.

Just 100 miles north of Paradise, the sixth most destructive wildfire in California history hit in July and August and was also one of the earliest. Called the Carr Fire, near Redding, it killed eight people, burned about 1,100 homes and consumed 358 square miles (927 square kilometers) before it was contained.

Paradise town council member Melissa Schuster lost her 16-acre Chapelle de L'Artiste retreat, a posh property with a chapel, pond and pool. But Friday she was clinging to two furry glimmers of hope: Shyann and Twinkle Star Heart.

"Our llamas," she said. "Somehow they made it through."

Schuster said they stopped trying to hook up a trailer for the animals and fled with just their three cats on Thursday as fire roared in.

"It's Paradise," she said. "It's always been Paradise, and we will bring it back."

Associated Press writers Don Thompson in Chico and Jocelyn Gecker, Janie Har, Martha Mendoza, Daisy Nguyen, Olga R. Rodriguez and Sudhin Thanawala in San Francisco contributed to this report. Darlene Superville contributed from Paris.

Civilian death toll in Yemen mounting despite US assurances

By LEE KEATH, Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Airstrikes by Saudi Arabia and its allies in Yemen are on a pace to kill more civilians than last year, according to a database tracking violence in the country, despite the United States' repeated claims that the coalition is taking precautions to prevent such bloodshed.

The database gives an indication of the scope of the disaster wreaked in Yemen by nearly four years of civil war. At least 57,538 people — civilians and combatants — have been killed since the beginning of 2016, according to the data assembled by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, or ACLED.

That doesn't include the first nine months of the war, in 2015, which the group is still analyzing. Those data are likely to raise the figure to 70,000 or 80,000, ACLED's Yemen researcher Andrea Carboni told The Associated Press. The organization's count is considered by many international agencies to be one of the most credible, although all caution it is likely an underestimate because of the difficulties in tracking deaths.

The numbers don't include those who have died in the humanitarian disaster caused by the war, particu-

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larly starvation. Though there are no firm figures, the aid group Save the Children estimated hunger may have killed 50,000 children in 2017. That was based on a calculation that around 30 percent of severely malnourished children who didn't receive proper treatment likely died.

Renewed uproar over the destruction has put Washington in a corner. The U.S. has sold billions of dollars in weaponry to Saudi Arabia, backing the fight to stop Shiite rebels known as Houthis, who Washington and the coalition consider a proxy for Iran.

That along with tensions over the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the country's consulate in Istanbul may be key factors why Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Oct. 30 made their biggest push yet for an end to the war, calling for a ceasefire within 30 days and resumed negotiations.

Only a month earlier, Pompeo gave a powerful show of support to the coalition by certifying to Congress that Saudi Arabia and its allies were taking measures to prevent civilian casualties. Certification was a required step in continuing U.S. aid, which includes providing intelligence used in targeting and mid-air refueling for coalition planes.

But deaths from the coalition campaign show no sign of slowing.

Coalition airstrikes and shelling killed at least 4,489 civilians since the beginning of 2016 — nearly three-quarters of all known civilian deaths, according to ACLED's figures.

As of Nov. 3, at least 1,254 civilians were killed by the coalition this year, a rate of four a day. In comparison, 1,386 civilians died in strikes the previous year, or 3.79 a day.

Asked about the finding, the U.S. State Department said in an emailed reply, "Throughout this conflict, the United States has urged all parties to abide by the Law of Armed Conflict, work to prevent harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure, and thoroughly investigate and ensure accountability for any violations."

Bloodshed has surged from fierce fighting at the Red Sea port city of Hodeida, which coalition forces have been trying to retake from the Houthis since June. Civilians have been killed in airstrikes as well as by Houthi shelling and land mines.

Since June, more than 4,500 people — including 515 confirmed civilians — have been killed in Hodeida, nearly triple the number from the first five months of the year.

Aid agencies fear worse is yet to come. The coalition appears to be accelerating its assault before any cease-fire. Its forces have nearly encircled the city, where tens of thousands of people are trapped along with thousands of Houthi fighters. The port is Yemen's main point of entry for food and humanitarian aid, so any cutoff could push millions into starvation.

The coalition launched its air campaign in March 2015 after the Houthis took over northern and central Yemen, driving out the internationally recognized government. The rebels were prevented from overrunning the south only by the coalition's bombardment and support for militia forces.

Tracking casualties is enormously difficult. The few independent monitors on the ground do not have wide access; officials on both sides have an interest in manipulating figures; deaths often take place in remote areas and even in populated areas, confusion of battle makes confirming numbers hard.

The most widely used estimate has been 10,000 dead, made in January 2017 by the United Nations.

In October, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator said at least 65,000 people have been killed or injured since 2016, including 16,000 civilians killed, based on data from health centers. U.N. officials did not reply to queries to elaborate on the figures.

ACLED builds its database on news reports from Yemeni and international media and international agencies. It covers everything from airstrikes, shelling and ground battles between the various forces to militant bombings and violence at protests. The group receives funding in part from the U.S. State Department and Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Because of its transparency, its figures are often cited by U.N. agencies and non-governmental organizations. But they caution that even ACLED's data cannot give the full picture — only "the least bad best guess" as an official at one agency put it.

Pinning down how many of the dead are civilians is even tougher.

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ACLED counted 6,242 civilians killed since 2016 by "remote violence" on civilian targets — meaning air strikes, artillery or shelling by either side. Of those, shelling by the Houthis or their allies killed 977.

The full toll is likely much higher. The vast majority of deaths — more than 34,000 — are categorized by ACLED as resulting from battles. But it is impossible to determine whether those are combatants or civilians, Carboni said.

"It's likely an underestimate," he said of the civilian toll. "The numbers caught in the crossfire are not known."

Associated Press writers Maggie Michael in Cairo and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.

Saudi coalition in Yemen, under pressure, ends US refueling

By JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen said early Saturday it had "requested cessation of inflight refueling" by the U.S. for its fighter jets after American officials said they would stop the operations amid growing anger over civilian casualties from the kingdom's airstrikes.

The decision by the U.S. to pull out also comes amid outrage by U.S. lawmakers from both political parties over the Oct. 2 killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul.

The Saudi acknowledgement, and later U.S. comments, appeared aimed at suggesting the kingdom was behind the decision. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who launched the Yemen war as the kingdom's defense minister in March 2015, faces widespread international criticism for the war and after members of his entourage allegedly took part in Khashoggi's slaying.

"We support the decision by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, after consultations with the U.S. government, to use the coalition's own military capabilities to conduct inflight refueling in support of its operations in Yemen," U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said in a statement. "The U.S. will also continue working with the coalition and Yemen to minimize civilian casualties and expand urgent humanitarian efforts throughout the country."

It wasn't immediately clear what impact the U.S. withdrawal from air refueling operations would have. American officials earlier said Saudi forces now handled some 80 percent of their refueling operations, which crucially allow aircraft to fly longer sorties over possible targets and can ease the pressure for quick strikes.

Yet even with that refueling support, Saudi Arabia has faced widespread international criticism over its campaign of airstrikes in the coalition's war in Yemen, targeting Shiite rebels known as Houthis who hold the capital, Sanaa.

Saudi strikes have hit public markets, hospitals and other nonmilitary targets, killing scores of civilians. One such Saudi-led airstrike in August in Yemen's Saada province hit a bus and killed dozens of people, including schoolchildren wearing backpacks. Human rights groups have found fragments of American-made munitions after several of these strikes.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity Friday to discuss the decision before its announcement, said the end to refueling wouldn't stop American training and military assistance. The Post first reported the Trump administration's desire to end the refueling.

The Saudi statement, carried early Saturday on the state-run Saudi Press Agency, did not acknowledge the Trump administration's discussions and pressure for its withdrawal.

"Recently the kingdom and the coalition has increased its capability to independently conduct inflight refueling in Yemen," the statement read. "As a result, in consultation with the United States, the coalition has requested cessation of inflight refueling support for its operations in Yemen."

It also said it hoped upcoming United Nations sponsored talks "in a third country" would help end the war. U.N. special envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths has said he is consultations with Yemen's warring parties to finalize details for a new round of peace talks. However, Griffiths' effort to revive peace talks in September

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fell through after the Houthis failed to attend, arguing they didn't have guarantees for their safe return. News of the halt to U.S. refueling operations was swiftly dismissed by the Houthis as a media ploy that came in response to international pressure on Washington and Riyadh over the Yemen war.

"We have one clear demand and that is a complete halt to Saudi airstrikes," said one Houthi official who spoke to The Associated Press on Saturday on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the media. "If there is a halt to the airstrikes, then we can proceed to political negotiations."

Meanwhile, intense fighting near the Red Sea port city of Hodeida continued over the weekend, with stepped up airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition pounding Houthi positions. On Saturday, the sound of large explosions east and north of Hodeida rocked the city as coalition forces tried to take the town of al-Saleh northeast of the city where they are meeting stiff resistance.

The Houthis maintain that their forces are holding their ground and deny losing territory to the coalition-led ground forces.

The pullout from refueling comes amid new American efforts to force an end to a conflict described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, has stood on the brink of famine and faced disease outbreaks in a conflict that has killed at least 10,000 people.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE view the war as a means to limit Iranian influence in the Arabian Peninsula. While Iran directly denies arming the rebels, the United Nations and Western powers have documented arms transfers to the Houthis by Tehran of everything from Kalashnikov assault rifles to the ballistic missile technology used to periodically target cities as far away as the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh. The Houthis also have imprisoned opponents and indiscriminately laid land mines.

Both Mattis and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have pushed for a cease-fire in recent days. Saudi and Emirati forces, as well as their allies on the ground, have made a renewed push for the Houthi-held Red Sea port city of Hodeida, through which most food and aid enters Yemen. International aid agencies warn any disruption to the port could sever that crucial lifeline.

"Hodeida is at risk of being obliterated," said Mohamed Abdi of the Norwegian Refugee Council. "We are now warning that by allowing this to go on, parties to the conflict and their international backers will be responsible for the death, injury and suffering of millions of people."

Associated Press writers Lolita Baldor and Matthew Lee in Washington and Ahmed al-Haj in Sanaa, Yemen contributed to this report.

Wind respite may help Southern California wildfire fight

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and BRIAN MELLEY, Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP) — Firefighters hoped a narrow window of calm on Saturday would give them a chance to block Southern California wildfires that have marched on an inexorable path of destruction toward the sea.

Winds that drove the flames through bone-dry hills and canyons north and west of downtown Los Angeles were expected to die down until Sunday, when they would build again to 35 mph with even higher gusts, forecasters predicted.

In less than two days, the Hill and Woolsey fires had destroyed more than 150 homes and prompted evacuation orders for more than 250,000 people, fire officials said.

The lull Saturday would give firefighters a chance to control the edges of the blaze and to swap fire crews, replacing firefighters who had worked for two days without rest, Los Angeles County Fire Chief Daryl Osby said.

But with the winds returning, it's likely more homes would be lost, Osby warned. "There's not going to be any relief in this firefight," he said.

By late Friday night, the smaller Hill fire's advance had halted, but the Woolsey fire continued to surge. In a matter of hours it doubled in size — turning well over 54 square miles (141 square kilometers) into ash and fields of glowing red embers.

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The two fires erupted on Thursday as much of the state found itself under red flag warnings of extreme fire danger because of dry weather and blowing winds.

In Northern California, a wildfire incinerated most of the town of Paradise, population 30,000. Nine people died — some in their cars as they tried to flee the racing flames. The state's most destructive fire in at least a century had grown Friday to nearly 140 square miles (362 square kilometers) and had destroyed more than 6,700 structures, almost all of them homes.

President Donald Trump issued an emergency declaration providing federal funds to help firefighters battling the blaze in Butte County northeast of San Francisco and the southern wildfires in Ventura and Los Angeles counties.

In the south, flames leapt and raged from Thousand Oaks south through the northwestern San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles and appeared headed inexorably toward the Pacific Ocean.

Thousand Oaks already was reeling from a gunman's slaughter of a dozen people at a local bar only days earlier when it found itself under siege from the fire, which raged on both sides of the city and shut down part of the main freeway into town.

"It's devastating. It's like 'welcome to hell,'" resident Cynthia Ball said about the dual disasters while she was outside the teen center serving as a shelter for evacuees. "I don't even know what to say. It's like we're all walking around kind of in a trance."

Three-quarters of the city of 130,000 was under evacuation orders — and that likely included people affected by the shooting, Thousand Oaks Mayor Andy Fox said.

The entire coastal enclave of Malibu also was under evacuation orders, with Lady Gaga, Kim Kardashian West and Guillermo del Toro among numerous celebrities forced to abandon their homes. The Woolsey blaze also destroyed the home of "Dr. Strange" director Scott Derrickson and the historic Paramount Ranch where HBO's "Westworld" and many other shows have been filmed.

But the flames didn't discriminate, burning everything from mobile homes to mansions. The fire spread so fast and so furiously that hard-pressed firefighters couldn't be everywhere at once.

Residents took matters into their own hands. Televised news reports showed people trying to save a mansion by hurling buckets of water from a swimming pool onto burning brush over a fence. In Westlake Village, two men with shovels struggled to dig a firebreak in front of a line of burning brush.

Firefighters pleaded with people to heed mandatory evacuation orders. Ventura County Fire Chief Mark Lorenzen said some firefighters were "literally pulling people out of burning homes."

"Even though the wind has died down, stay on guard," he urged. "We're in the seventh year of a drought. Our weather conditions out there, and our fuel conditions are absolutely right for fire ... when we ask you to leave, please leave early."

In West Hills, David Fink decided to stay and watch his house. He was caught by surprise when sparks and embers from the furiously burning foothills above him began igniting all around the San Fernando Valley neighborhood.

"It was 10 minutes, it was some little bit of embers, and things like that and then it just went wild and exploded, from ridge to ridge and then all the way around here...we were surrounded," Fink told KABC-TV.

"The wind came up and it was just raining (embers) and I was just burning on my arms," he said.

He used a garden hose to douse most of the embers. But by nightfall several homes had burned and authorities had ordered an evacuation.

At the Vallecito mobile home park for seniors in Newbury Park, the fire came so quickly that residents had no time to gather medications and documents. With flames bearing down, firefighters carried people from homes and put them in empty seats of their neighbors' cars, said Carol Napoli, 74.

Napoli left with her friend, the friend's son and her mother who is in her 90s and had to leave behind her oxygen tank.

"We drove through flames to get out. They had us in like a caravan," Napoli said. "My girlfriend was driving. She said, 'I don't know if I can do this ...' Her son said, 'Mom you have to, you have to drive through the flames.'"

Rich McMillen, 72, had put a few belongings in his car when he noticed smoke picking up and saw flames in the distance. By the time a cellphone alert told him to evacuate, the flames were nearly upon the trailer park, burning on a hillside.

"You could feel the heat from the flames," said McMillen, who returned Friday and found his home intact but stinking of smoke.

Melley reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Amanda Lee Myers and John Antczak in Los Angeles and Christopher Weber in Thousand Oaks contributed to this story.

Teacher: Bus drivers evacuated students amid California fire

By DON THOMPSON, Associated Press

CHICO, Calif. (AP) — Teachers, aides and bus drivers in Northern California loaded more than 100 school students into cars and school buses as a fast-moving wildfire approached, driving hours through smoke and flames to safely reunite the children with their families, according to one of the teachers who helped get people to safety.

Marc Kessler, a science teacher at a Paradise Unified School District middle school, said he arrived at work early Thursday and saw smoke plumes that soon grew uncomfortably near.

He and others quickly realized they would have to leave as the sound of propane tanks exploding in the heat got closer.

A sheriff's deputy arrived and told them to get to Chico, a nearby city.

"He said seat belt laws don't apply, and he said stuff as many kids as you can in the cars," Kessler told The Associated Press on Friday.

Kessler, 55, drove off after convincing three middle-school boys to go with him. The students didn't want to leave in case their parents showed up. He worried there were not enough cars for the students, but he later learned that a bus driver pulled up to the school.

"It was just what we needed," he said.

Kessler said that in all, six school buses — along with teachers, aides and administrators — ferried out the children from the district's schools to evacuation centers in Chico and Gridley. They plowed through smoke, burning debris and flames, driving hours on gridlocked country roads.

"There were trees burning on the side of the road. The smoke was so thick you couldn't see," he said. "We had very traumatized teachers who were certain they were going to die in the car with their students."

What should have been a 20-minute commute turned into a two-hour drive for him and a four-hour drive for another, he said. He drove through smoke but was spared active flames from the deadly wildfire, which grew into the state's most destructive fire in at least a century.

One student sat in the front, trying to call their parents on a cellphone. They reached one parent, a truck driver "who was just beside himself with joy" to hear that his son was safe. He could tell the boys were scared, but they kept it together.

They reunited 125 students from kindergarteners to high school seniors with their families, mostly by Thursday night with a few early Friday. Some parents had had no contact with their kids for eight hours. They arrived stressed out and panicked.

Kessler can't say enough good things about the bus drivers.

"I don't know if the bus drivers took it upon themselves or if they were asked to come by, but it was pretty awesome. They have family up there, homes — and they chose to come to the school and take those kids down."

Associated Press writer Janie Har in San Francisco contributed to this report.

Thin ice for new acting AG? Trump says 'I don't know' him

By ERIC TUCKER and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Matthew Whitaker's future at the helm of the Justice Department appeared uncertain at best Friday as President Donald Trump denied even knowing the man he had named acting attorney general just two days earlier. The Senate's top Republican predicted a permanent replacement could be named soon for Whitaker, who is now overseeing the Trump-Russia probe.

The comments from Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell came as Whitaker's past business ties and remarks on special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation and other topics were drawing scrutiny from Democrats and ethics groups.

Speaking to reporters Friday, Trump said, "I don't know Matt Whitaker." That contradicted Trump's remarks on Fox News last month, when he called Whitaker "a great guy" and said, "I mean, I know Matt Whitaker."

McConnell, meanwhile, said, "I think this will be a very interim AG." Another Republican senator, Susan Collins of Maine, said she was concerned by some of Whitaker's past comments and called for legislation that would place limits on his ability to fire special counsel Mueller. That would include specifying that only a Senate-confirmed Justice Department official — which Whitaker is not — could dismiss Mueller.

Whitaker, a Republican Party loyalist and chief of staff to just-ousted Attorney General Jeff Sessions, was elevated Wednesday after his boss was forced from his job by Trump. The new position handed him oversight of Mueller's investigation into possible ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

Since Wednesday, Whitaker has faced pressure from Democrats to recuse himself from overseeing Mueller based on critical comments he made about the investigation before joining the Justice Department last year.

Those included an op-ed article in which he said Mueller would be straying outside his mandate if he investigated Trump family finances and a talk radio interview in which he maintained there was no evidence of collusion between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign. He also tweeted an ex-prosecutor's opinion piece that described a "Mueller lynch mob," which he said was "worth a read."

There have also been reports about Whitaker's past comments questioning the power and reach of the federal judiciary, and about his ties to an invention-promotion company that was accused of misleading consumers. The Wall Street Journal on Friday published an email revealing an FBI investigation into the company, World Patent Marketing Inc. The July 10, 2017, email was from an FBI victims' specialist to someone who the newspaper said was an alleged victim of the company. A Justice Department spokeswoman told the Journal that Whitaker was "not aware of any fraudulent activity."

Also Friday, The Associated Press reported that Whitaker repeatedly chided presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in public statements during 2016 while he was speaking for a group that is barred by its tax-exempt status from supporting or opposing political candidates during a campaign.

Whitaker himself stayed out of the public debate Friday. He sent a department-wide note after his appointment in which he said, "As we move forward, I am committed to leading a fair Department with the highest ethical standards, that upholds the rule of law, and seeks justice for all Americans."

Legal scholars are debating the constitutionality of his appointment, with some lawyers saying it is illegal because he has not been confirmed by the Senate.

Despite Trump's current distancing himself from Whitaker, two Republicans close to the president said he had enjoyed Whitaker's TV appearances and the two had struck a bond. Those TV appearances included one on CNN in which Whitaker suggested that the Mueller probe could be starved of resources. Trump told associates that he felt Whitaker would be "loyal" and would not have recused himself from the Russia probe as Sessions had done, according to the Republicans, who were not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations and commented only on condition of anonymity.

On Friday, Trump said he had not spoken with Whitaker about Mueller's investigation, which until now has been overseen by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. Later in the day, Trump tweeted that he did not know Whitaker personally, but several Republican leaders in Iowa respected him. "I feel certain he will make an outstanding Acting Attorney General!"

Rosenstein told reporters Friday that based on his experiences with Whitaker, "I think he's a superb choice for attorney general."

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Of the scrutiny Whitaker is facing, Trump said, "It's a shame that no matter who I put in they go after." "He was very, very highly thought of, and still is highly thought of, but this only comes up because anybody that works for me, they do a number on them," Trump said.

In Kentucky, meanwhile, McConnell said he expects Trump to nominate a new permanent attorney general "pretty quickly." McConnell said he expects Whitaker to be "a very interim" appointee.

"The president has said repeatedly he's not going to dismiss the Mueller investigation," McConnell told reporters at Kentucky's Capitol. "He's said repeatedly it's going to be allowed to finish. That also happens to be my view."

Trump has not said whom he will nominate to permanently replace Sessions.

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is said to be a candidate, along with Labor Secretary Alex Acosta and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, among others.

Trump told reporters he has not discussed the post with Christie, who he said was "a friend of mine" and "a good man."

Associated Press writer Bruce Schreiner contributed to this report from Frankfort, Kentucky.

At least 9 dead as fire incinerates N. California town

By DON THOMPSON and GILLIAN FLACCUS, Associated Press

PARADISE, Calif. (AP) — A fierce wildfire in Northern California incinerated most of a town of about 30,000 people with flames that moved so fast there was nothing firefighters could do, authorities said Friday. Nine people died in what quickly grew into the state's most destructive fire in at least a century.

Only a day after it began, the blaze near the town of Paradise had grown to nearly 140 square miles (362 square kilometers), had destroyed more than 6,700 structures — almost all of them homes — and was burning completely out of control.

"There was really no firefight involved," Capt. Scott McLean of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said, explaining that crews gave up attacking the flames and instead helped people get out alive. "These firefighters were in the rescue mode all day yesterday."

With fires also burning in Southern California, state officials put the total number of people forced from their homes at about 250,000. Evacuation orders included the entire city of Malibu, which is home to 13,000, among them some of Hollywood's biggest stars.

President Donald Trump issued an emergency declaration providing federal funds for Butte, Ventura and Los Angeles counties.

When Paradise was evacuated, the order set off a desperate exodus in which many motorists got stuck in gridlocked traffic and abandoned their vehicles to flee on foot. People reported seeing much of the community go up in flames, including homes, supermarkets, businesses, restaurants, schools and a retirement center.

Rural areas fared little better. Many homes have propane tanks that were exploding amid the flames. "They were going off like bombs," said Karen Auday, who escaped to a nearby town.

McLean estimated that the lost buildings numbered in the thousands in Paradise, about 180 miles (290 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco.

"Pretty much the community of Paradise is destroyed. It's that kind of devastation," he said.

While the cause of the fire wasn't known, Pacific Gas & Electric Company told state regulators it experienced an outage on an electrical transmission line near Paradise about 15 minutes before the blaze broke out. The company said it later noticed damage to a transmission tower near the town. The utility's filing was first reported by KQED News.

The massive blaze spread north Friday, prompting officials to order the evacuation of Stirling City and Inskip, two communities north of Paradise along the Sierra Nevada foothills.

The wind-driven flames also spread to the west and reached Chico, a city of 90,000 people. Firefighters were able to stop the fire at the edge of the city, Cal Fire Cpt. Bill Murphy said.

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There were no signs of life Friday on the road to Paradise except for the occasional bird chirp. A thick, yellow haze from the fire hung in the air and gave the appearance of twilight in the middle of the day.

Strong winds had blown the blackened needles on some evergreens straight to one side. A scorched car with its doors open sat on the shoulder.

At one burned-out house, flames still smoldered inside what appeared to be a weight room. The rubble included a pair of dumbbells with the rubber melted off and the skeletons of a metal pullup bar and other exercise equipment. The grass and elaborate landscaping all around the brick and stucco home remained an emerald green. Red pool umbrellas were furled near lounge chairs and showed not a singe on them.

Evacuees from Paradise sat in stunned silence Friday outside a Chico church where they took refuge the night before. They all had harrowing tales of a slow-motion escape from a fire so close they could feel the heat inside their vehicles as they sat stuck in a terrifying traffic jam.

When the order came to evacuate, it was like the entire town of 27,000 residents decided to leave at once, they said. Fire surrounded the evacuation route, and drivers panicked. Some crashed and others left their vehicles by the roadside.

"It was just a wall of fire on each side of us, and we could hardly see the road in front of us," police officer Mark Bass said.

Officials said all the victims were found in Paradise, including four who died inside their vehicles.

A nurse called Rita Miller on Thursday morning, telling her she had to get her disabled mother, who lives a few blocks away, and flee Paradise immediately. Miller jumped in her boyfriend's rickety pickup truck, which was low on gas and equipped with a bad transmission. She instantly found herself stuck in gridlock.

"I was frantic," she said. After an hour of no movement, she abandoned the truck and decided to try her luck on foot. While walking, a stranger in the traffic jam rolled down her window and asked Miller if she needed help. Miller at first scoffed at the notion of getting back in a vehicle. Then she reconsidered, thinking: "I'm really scared. This is terrifying. I can't breathe. I can't see, and maybe I should humble myself and get in this woman's car."

The stranger helped Miller pack up her mother and took them to safety in Chico. It took three hours to travel the 14 miles.

Concerned friends and family posted anxious messages on Twitter and other sites, saying they were looking for loved ones, particularly seniors who lived at retirement homes or alone.

About 20 of the same deputies who were helping to find and rescue people lost their own homes, Sheriff Kory Honea said.

"There are times when you have such rapid-moving fires ... no amount of planning is going to result in a perfect scenario, and that's what we had to deal with here," Honea told the Action News Network.

Kelly Lee called shelters looking for her husband's 93-year-old grandmother, Dorothy Herrera, who was last heard from Thursday morning. Herrera, who lives in Paradise with her 88-year-old husband, Lou, left a frantic voicemail around 9:30 a.m. saying they needed to get out.

"We never heard from them again," Lee said. "We're worried sick. ... They do have a car, but they both are older and can be confused at times."

For one desperate day, Dawn Johnson anxiously waited for news of her father Richard Wayne Wilson and his wife, Suzanne, who lived in an RV park in Paradise that burned. The couple moved from Texas to the California foothill town about a year ago and was probably not prepared for wildfires.

They lived in an RV park in the California foothill town and were unlikely equipped to evacuate. He has late-stage cancer and she is mostly confined to her bed, she said.

Johnson, of Independence, Oregon, relied on fellow members of the couple's Jehovah's Witnesses congregation to check local shelters. By Friday afternoon, she learned they had been found in nearby Chico.

"They are fine," she said.

Associated Press writers Paul Elias in Paradise and Jocelyn Gecker, Janie Har, Daisy Nguyen, Olga R. Rodriguez, Sudhin Thanawala and Juliet Williams in San Francisco contributed to this report.

This story has been amended to correct the last name of missing couple.

Fires besiege California city reeling from mass shooting

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and BRIAN MELLEY, Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP) — A city reeling from the tragedy of a mass shooting was under a siege of a different sort Friday as raging wildfires on both sides of the city forced widespread evacuations and shut down part of the main freeway to town.

Flames driven by powerful winds torched at least 150 homes in Southern California, burning parts of tony Calabasas and mansions in Malibu and prompting orders for 250,000 people — including some celebrities — to flee as the fire marched across the Santa Monica Mountains toward the sea. The cause of the blazes was not known.

For Thousand Oaks, which had been considered one of the safest cities in the nation before a gunman massacred 12 people at a country music bar, the spasm of violence jolted the city's sense of security. Encroaching flames, despite the near-constant threat of fire in the bone-dry state, presented an entirely different hazard.

"It's devastating. It's like 'welcome to hell,'" resident Cynthia Ball, said about the dual disasters while she was outside the teen center serving as a shelter for evacuees. "I don't even know what to say. It's like we're all walking around kind of in a trance."

A day earlier, the facility had been the location where grieving family members had gathered and received the grim news on the fate of loved ones who had not returned from the Borderline Bar and Grill, where a Marine combat veteran went on a shooting rampage Wednesday before apparently killing himself.

The investigation into what drove Ian David Long, 28, to kill was continuing even as the city about 40 miles (64 kilometers) from Los Angeles was under threat from one of three major wildfires burning in the state.

Three-quarters of the city of 130,000 was under evacuation orders — and that likely included people affected by the shooting, Thousand Oaks Mayor Andy Fox said.

"Here we are just a few hours later talking now about another crisis right here in Thousand Oaks," Fox said, making the distinction that the shooting victims and their families had experienced a permanent loss. "Those lives will never be recovered. Tonight we're talking about a serious fire situation, but thankfully we have not lost a single life. And as difficult as it may be, homes can be rebuilt, property can be reacquired."

Throughout the day, air tankers swooped through the skies, making low passes to dump water and flame retardant as firefighters tried to protect homes amid gusts topping 60 mph (96 kph). The winds and smoky conditions made for difficult firefighting and at times grounded firefighting aircraft.

In addition to the large hillside homes that ignited and blazed brightly in the middle of the day, the "Western Town" at Paramount Ranch, a popular filming location that included an old West jail, hotel and saloon, burned to the ground.

The entire city of Malibu — home to Hollywood stars and entertainment moguls — was under a mandatory evacuation order and had lost power in places. Fleeing residents jammed Pacific Coast Highway in a procession that crept along as smoke billowed overhead and mansions on the hills went up in flames.

In Thousand Oaks, flames creeping down a hillside were visible from the teen center on Janss Road — named for the family that originally developed the hilly terrain covered with majestic California oaks into what has become a large bedroom community.

Evacuees described harrowing escapes from flames that picked up unexpectedly Thursday afternoon.

At the Vallecito mobile home park for seniors, the fire came so quickly that residents had no time to gather medications and documents. With flames bearing down, firefighters carried people from homes and put them in empty seats of their neighbors' cars, said Carol Napoli, 74.

Napoli left with her friend, the friend's son and her mother who is in her 90s and had to leave behind her oxygen tank.

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"We drove through flames to get out. They had us in like a caravan," Napoli said. "My girlfriend was driving. She said, 'I don't know if I can do this ...' Her son said, 'Mom you have to, you have to drive through the flames.'"

Rich McMillen, 72, had put a few belongings in his car when he noticed smoke picking up and saw flames in the distance. By the time a cellphone alert told him to evacuate, the flames were nearly upon the trailer park, burning on a hillside.

"You could feel the heat from the flames," said McMillen, who returned Friday and found his home intact but stinking of smoke.

While evacuees arrived at the teen center, firetrucks staged across the street at a command post.

Ventura County Supervisor Peter Foy made a plea at a fire news conference to residents to help their neighbors during this difficult time.

"We appreciate everybody's efforts and kind prayers for all the people from our victims that lost their lives in the shooting to now what's happening with people losing their homes," Foy said.

A section of U.S. Highway 101, the main link between Los Angeles and Ventura and Santa Barbara, was closed because of fire.

The day before under clear skies and no smoke, thousands gathered along the freeway to watch a motorcade carrying the body of a sheriff's deputy who was killed when he rushed in to confront the shooter.

Melley reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Amanda Lee Myers and John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed to this story.

This story has been corrected to show that the street name is spelled East Janss Road.

Official: Shooter debated sanity online during bar massacre

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP) — The gunman who killed 12 people at a country music bar in Southern California went on social media during the attack and posted about his mental state and whether people would believe he was sane, a law enforcement official said Friday.

Also, one of the possibilities investigators are looking into is whether gunman Ian David Long believed his former girlfriend would be at the bar, the official said.

Authorities have not determined a motive for Wednesday night's rampage at the Borderline Bar and Grill.

The official was briefed on the investigation but not authorized to discuss it publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. The official would not give additional details on what the 28-year-old former Marine posted on his Facebook and Instagram accounts.

A second law enforcement official said that when Long was inside the bar, he apparently stopped shooting and posted to Instagram, based on the time stamps of the posts. Ventura County Sheriff's Capt. Garo Kuredjian also said he didn't know the content of the posts.

Neither Facebook nor Instagram responded to a request for comment Friday. Long's social media accounts have been taken down.

Long, a former machine gunner who served in Afghanistan, opened fire with a handgun during college night at the bar, then apparently killed himself as scores of police officers closed in.

As investigators worked to figure out what set him off, President Donald Trump blamed mental illness, describing the gunman as "a very sick puppy" who had "a lot of problems."

Investigators have not commented on whether mental illness played a role in the rampage. But a mental health specialist who assessed Long after sheriff's deputies responded to a call about his agitated behavior last spring worried he might be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

The incident happened in April, when yelling and loud banging noises coming from the home Long shared with his mother prompted a next-door neighbor to call authorities. The mental health specialist concluded there were no grounds to have him involuntarily committed.

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Several people who knew Long a decade ago as a high-schooler in the suburb of Thousand Oaks said in interviews that he made them uncomfortable, sometimes through aggressive behavior.

At the White House, Trump touted his efforts to fund work on PTSD among veterans. He declined to engage on questions on whether the nation needs stricter gun control laws.

The dead in the shooting rampage included sheriff's Sgt. Ron Helus, a 29-year veteran gunned down as he entered the bar, and Telemachus Orfanos, 27, who survived last year's massacre in Las Vegas, where a gunman in a high-rise hotel opened killed 58 people at an outdoor country music festival.

Authorities in Thousand Oaks described an attack of military efficiency. None of those injured was hurt by gunfire, authorities said. Instead, when Long shot, he killed.

"Every Marine is trained in urban warfare and indoor gun fighting," said Marc Bender, an instructor for emergency responders in Riverside County, California. "Every Marine is a marksman."

Julie Hanson, who lives next door to the Longs' ranch-style home, described him as "odd" and "disrespectful" well before he left home a decade ago, got married and enlisted in the Marines. She could often hear him yelling and cursing, but several months ago, unusually loud banging and shouting prompted her husband to call authorities.

"I was concerned because I knew he had been in the military," Tom Hanson said.

About 18 months ago, Don and Effie MacLeod heard "an awful argument" and what he believes was a gunshot from the Longs' property. Don MacLeod said he did not call police but avoided speaking with Ian Long.

"I told my wife, 'Just be polite to him. If he talks, just acknowledge him, don't go into conversation with him,'" Don MacLeod said.

Long made others feel uncomfortable going back to his teens.

Dominique Colell, who coached girls' track and field at the high school where Long was a sprinter, remembers an angry young man who could be verbally and physically combative.

In one instance, Colell said Long used his fingers to mimic shooting her in the back of the head as she talked to another athlete. In another, he grabbed her rear and midsection after she refused to return a cellphone he said was his.

"I literally feared for myself around him," Colell said in an interview. "He was the only athlete that I was scared of."

Colell said she wanted to kick Long off the team but the boy's coach urged her to reconsider because that could compromise his goal of joining the Marines. She relented when, at the next track meet, Long apologized in front of several coaches and administrators.

Attempts to get comment by phone and in person from officials at Newbury Park High School and its school district were unsuccessful. Both were closed because of a destructive wildfire in the area.

Balsamo reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Tami Abdollah in Washington; Krysta Fauria, Christopher Weber and Kathleen Ronayne in Thousand Oaks; Amanda Lee Myers and Justin Pritchard in Los Angeles; and Don Babwin in Chicago contributed to this report.

Trump moves to limit asylum; new rules challenged in court

By COLLEEN LONG, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump issued a proclamation Friday to deny asylum to migrants who enter the country illegally, tightening the border as caravans of Central Americans slowly approach the United States. The plan was immediately challenged in court.

Trump invoked the same powers he used last year to impose a travel ban that was upheld by the Supreme Court. The new regulations are intended to circumvent laws stating that anyone is eligible for asylum no matter how he or she enters the country. About 70,000 people per year who enter the country illegally claim asylum, officials said.

"We need people in our country, but they have to come in legally," Trump said Friday as he departed

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for Paris.

The American Civil Liberties Union and other legal groups swiftly sued in federal court in Northern California to block the regulations, arguing the measures were illegal.

"The president is simply trying to run roughshod over Congress's decision to provide asylum to those in danger regardless of the manner of one's entry," said ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt.

The litigation also seeks to put the new rules on hold while the case progresses.

The regulations go into effect Saturday. They would be in place for at least three months but could be extended, and don't affect people already in the country. The Justice Department said in a statement the regulations were lawful.

Trump's announcement was the latest push to enforce a hard-line stance on immigration through regulatory changes and presidential orders, bypassing Congress, which has not passed any immigration law reform. But those efforts have been largely thwarted by legal challenges and, in the case of family separations this year, stymied by a global outcry that prompted Trump to retreat.

Officials said the asylum law changes are meant to funnel migrants through official border crossings for speedy rulings instead of having them try to circumvent such crossings on the nearly 2,000-mile (3,200-kilometer) border. The U.S. Border Patrol says it apprehended more than 50,000 people crossing illegally in October, setting a new high this year, though illegal crossings are well below historical highs from previous decades.

But the busy ports of entry already have long lines and waits, forcing immigration officials to tell some migrants to turn around and come back to make their claims. Backlogs have become especially bad in recent months at crossings in California, Arizona and Texas, with some people waiting five weeks to try to claim asylum at San Diego's main crossing.

"The arrival of large numbers ... will contribute to the overloading of our immigration and asylum system and to the release of thousands ... into the interior of the United States," Trump said in the proclamation, calling it a crisis.

Administration officials said those denied asylum under the proclamation may be eligible for similar forms of protection if they fear returning to their countries, though they would be subject to a tougher threshold. Those forms of protection include "withholding of removal" — which is similar to asylum, but doesn't allow for green cards or bringing families — or protection under the United Nations Convention Against Torture.

Homeland Security officials said they were adding staffing at the border crossings to manage the expected crush, but it's not clear how migrants, specifically families, would be held as their cases are adjudicated. Family detention centers are largely at capacity. Trump has said he wanted to erect "tent cities," but nothing has been funded.

The U.S. is also working with Mexico in an effort to send some migrants back across the border. Right now, laws allow only Mexican nationals to be swiftly returned and increasingly those claiming asylum are from Central America.

Trump pushed immigration issues hard in the days leading up to Tuesday's midterm elections, railing against the caravans that are still hundreds of miles from the border.

He has made little mention of the issue since the election, but has sent troops to the border in response. As of Thursday, there were more than 5,600 U.S. troops deployed to the border mission, with about 550 actually working on the border in Texas.

Trump also suggested he'd revoke the right to citizenship for babies born to non-U.S. citizens on American soil and erect massive "tent cities" to detain migrants. Those issues were not addressed by the regulations. But Trump insisted the citizenship issue would be pushed through.

"We're signing it. We're doing it," he said.

The administration has long said immigration officials are drowning in asylum cases partly because people falsely claim asylum and then live in the U.S. with work permits. In 2017, the U.S. fielded more than 330,000 asylum claims, nearly double the number two years earlier and surpassing Germany as highest in the world.

Migrants who cross illegally are generally arrested and often seek asylum or some other form of protection. Claims have spiked in recent years and the immigration court backlog has more than doubled to 1.1 million cases in about two years, Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse reported this week. Generally, only about 20 percent of applicants are approved.

It's unclear how many people en route to the U.S. will even make it to the border. Roughly 5,000 migrants — more than 1,700 under the age of 18 — sheltered in a Mexico City sports complex decided to depart Friday for the northern city of Tijuana, opting for the longer but likely safer route to the U.S. border.

Similar caravans have gathered regularly over the years and have generally dwindled by the time they reach the southern border, particularly to Tijuana. Most have passed largely unnoticed.

Associated Press writers Elliot Spagat in San Diego, Nomaan Merchant in Houston and Jill Colvin and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

Hundreds of migrants leave Mexico City headed for border

By **MARK STEVENSON** and **CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN**, Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — About 900 Central American migrants headed out of Mexico City on Friday to embark on the longest and most dangerous leg of their journey to the U.S. border, while thousands more were waiting one more day at a massive improvised shelter.

The group that got a head start bundled their few possessions and started off, taking a subway to the north part of the city and then hiking down an expressway with a police escort.

For many, it was the first time they had ever been in a metro system, and they had little knowledge of the city or the 1,740 mile (2,800 kilometer) route to Tijuana that lay ahead of them.

Carlos Castanaza, a 29-year-old plumber from Guatemala City, wrapped himself from head to toe in a blanket against the cold and asked bystanders where the first toll booth was. When told it was in a town about 20 miles (30 kilometers) away, he carefully wrote the name of the town on his hand with a pen to remember where he was going.

Deported for driving without a license after a decade working in Connecticut, Castanaza was desperate to get back to his two U.S.-born children. "I've been wanting to get back for more than a year, but I couldn't until the caravan came through," said Castanaza. "That's why I joined the caravan."

The advanced group hoped to reach the north-central city of Queretaro, about 105 miles (170 kilometers) to the northwest, by nightfall.

Meanwhile, at least 4,000 migrants milled around the massive shelter improvised at a Mexico City sports complex, impatient to leave.

Ninety percent of the remaining migrants will depart the stadium early Saturday on their long trek to Tijuana, first taking the subway to the northern exit from Mexico's capital, according to Nashieli Ramirez, director of Mexico's Human Rights Commission.

From there, they will pass through the Mexican cities of Queretaro, Guadalajara, Culiacan and Hermosillo on their way to the U.S. border, Ramirez said, adding that 400 Mexicans had chosen to stay in Mexico City.

The governor of Queretaro state, Francisco Dominguez, said the migrants would stay at Corregidora stadium in the state's capital and that authorities were ready to host 4,000 people.

Meanwhile, migrants in the stadium in southern Mexico City were getting impatient.

"Let's go, let's go!" shouted Eddy Rivera, 37, a rail-thin migrant from Honduras who said he couldn't take staying in the camp any longer. "We are all sick, from the humidity and the cold," said Rivera, who left behind four children and a wife in Honduras. "We have to get going, we have to get to Tijuana."

Though he was unsure how an unskilled farmworker like himself would be allowed in the United States, he had a simple dream: earn enough money to build a little house for his family back in Puerto Cortes, Honduras.

Thousands of migrants have spent the past few days resting, receiving medical attention and debating how to proceed with their arduous trek through Central America and Mexico which began in mid-October.

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On Thursday, caravan representatives met with officials from the local United Nations office and demanded buses to take them to the border, saying the trek would be too hard and dangerous for walking and hitch-hiking.

Caravan coordinator Milton Benitez said officials had offered them buses for women and children but organizers demanded that they be for everyone. By Friday, the migrants said they were so angry at the U.N.'s lack of help that they no longer wanted U.N. observers with the caravan.

The United Nations on Friday denied the offer, releasing a statement saying its agencies "are unable to provide the transportation demanded by some members of the caravan."

The migrants made a big point of sticking together, their only form of self-protection.

Felix Rodriguez, 35, of Choluteca, Honduras had been at the Mexico City sports complex for more than a week.

"We all want to get moving," he said. But he was waiting for the main group to leave Saturday, noting "it is better to leave in a group, because leaving in small bunches is dangerous."

Mexico City is more than 600 miles from the nearest U.S. border crossing at McAllen, Texas, but the area around the Mexican border cities of Reynosa, Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo is so rife with drug gangs that the migrants consider it too dangerous to risk.

A previous caravan in the spring opted for the longer route to Tijuana in the far northwest, across from San Diego. That caravan steadily dwindled to only about 200 people by the time it reached the border.

"California is the longest route but is the best border, while Texas is the closest but the worst" border, said Jose Luis Fuentes of the National Lawyers Guild.

Mexico has offered refuge, asylum or work visas to the migrants, and its government said 2,697 temporary visas had been issued to individuals and families to cover them while they wait for the 45-day application process for a more permanent status. On Wednesday, a bus left from Mexico City to return 37 people to their countries of origin.

But many want to continue on toward the United States.

Authorities say most have refused offers to stay in Mexico, and only a small number have agreed to return to their home countries. About 85 percent of the migrants are from Honduras, while others are from the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Volunteers track down Georgia voters by phone and on foot

By **BILL BARROW** and **JEFF MARTIN**, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Volunteers spread out Friday trying to find any ballots that could help Democrat Stacey Abrams close the gap against Republican Brian Kemp in their unsettled, too-close-to-call race for Georgia governor.

Unofficial returns show Kemp with an advantage, and he's already resigned as secretary of state to start a transition with the blessing of the outgoing GOP governor, Nathan Deal. President Donald Trump weighed in with a tweet that said Kemp "ran a great race in Georgia — he won. It is time to move on!"

Yet Abrams, who hopes to become the nation's first black woman governor, sent out volunteers and campaign staff in search of votes that she hopes could still tilt the margin toward her.

In a frantic effort to make sure every possible vote is counted, dozens of volunteers converged on a warehouse-turned-phone bank near downtown. The goal: reach voters who used a provisional ballot to make sure they take steps to ensure their vote — for Abrams or Kemp — is counted by Friday evening, the deadline.

Helen Brosnan of the National Domestic Workers Alliance shouted, "How many calls do you think we can make? Can we make hundreds of calls? Let's do this!"

A majority-black county with more than 750,000 residents in metro Atlanta, DeKalb, said it would remain open past normal hours Friday to accommodate provisional voters who needed to provide identification so their votes could be counted.

But two groups supporting Abrams' call to count all votes, ProGeorgia and Care in Action, said at least

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12 other counties had certified election results before Friday, a move that could leave provisional ballots uncounted. The secretary of state's office did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Abrams' lawyers are exploring options to ensure all votes are counted. Her campaign leaders say they believe she needs to pick up about 25,000 votes to force a runoff.

At least 2,000 people across the nation are involved in that effort, said state Sen. Nikema Williams, the Georgia director for Care In Action, which advocates for more than 2 million domestic workers and care workers nationwide.

"We're in the cradle of the civil rights movement, the home of Congressman John Lewis who literally bled on the bridge at Selma to make sure that everybody had the right to vote," she said.

Marisa Franco, 27, saw a friend's Facebook post about the effort, then showed up at the warehouse to volunteer Friday morning.

"I think that it's really central to democracy that everybody who is eligible to vote can vote and has the least amount of barriers possible, so I'm just here to make sure that every vote counts," she said.

On Friday night, a judge ordered Dougherty County to accept absentee ballots postmarked by Election Day and received by Friday.

The Abrams campaign filed a complaint in federal court asking for an injunction to direct the board of elections to count any absentee ballots received between 7 p.m. on Election Day and close of business Friday, which is consistent with the way that counting overseas military and overseas citizens' ballots is handled.

Races for governor and U.S. Senate also are tight in Florida, which Trump referred to in a tweet that said: "You mean they are just now finding votes in Florida and Georgia — but the Election was on Tuesday? Let's blame the Russians and demand an immediate apology from President Putin!"

Trump's message refers to allegations that Russian interference helped him win in 2016, but it wasn't clear exactly what the president meant about votes being found.

Returns show Kemp with 50.3 percent of almost 4 million votes, a roughly 63,000-vote lead over Abrams. That's a narrow sum, considering the near-presidential election year turnout, though sufficient for the majority required for outright victory.

The Associated Press has not declared a winner in the race for Georgia governor. The AP will reassess the race Tuesday, the deadline for counties to certify election results to the state.

With legal wrangles opening and Abrams showing no signs of conceding, the dispute is prolonging a bitter contest with historical significance and national political repercussions.

Abrams' campaign manager, Lauren Groh-Wargo, said Kemp was to blame for problems because he was the secretary of state, Georgia's top election official, and tried to tamp down minority votes.

"These suppressive tactics are reminiscent of the Old South, tactics that have been resurrected by Brian Kemp, who forced the state to allow him to oversee his own election, and had him be the decider on who was the winner," she said at a news conference.

Kemp contends he did his job properly and has argued that Abrams wants to help noncitizens vote illegally. Kemp, who has echoed Trump's immigration rhetoric, cited a speech in which Abrams said "undocumented" people were part of her coalition.

Abrams would become the first black woman elected governor of any U.S. state. Kemp seeks to maintain Republican dominance in a growing, diversifying Deep South state positioned to become a presidential battleground.

The key question is how many uncounted ballots actually remain.

Kemp said Thursday that it's fewer than 21,000 — almost certainly not enough to force a runoff. Abrams' campaign argues the total could be higher, and the secretary of state's office has shared scant details as officials in Georgia's 159 counties keep counting.

Abrams' campaign has reserved television advertising time and started sending vote-by-mail information to supporters in case she forces a Dec. 4 runoff with Kemp.

AP writer Errin Haines Whack contributed to this report.

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For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. midterm elections: <http://apne.ws/APPolitics>

Florida finds itself again at center of election controversy

By TERRY SPENCER, Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Florida is once again at the center of election controversy, but this year there are no hanging chads or butterfly ballots, like in 2000. And no angry mobs in suits — at least not yet.

The deeply purple state will learn Saturday whether recounts will be held in the bitter, tight U.S. Senate race between Republican Gov. Rick Scott and incumbent Democrat Bill Nelson; and in the governor's race between former Republican U.S. Rep. Ron DeSantis and the Democratic mayor of Tallahassee, Andrew Gillum.

The state's recount procedures have been revised since Florida held the country hostage for a month 18 years ago, when George W. Bush edged Al Gore for the presidency. Among other things, the infamous punch-card ballots are no longer.

Yet, Scott and President Donald Trump on Friday alleged fraud without evidence, even as the often-laborious process of reviewing ballots in a close race continued ahead of the Saturday noon deadline. Both Scott and Nelson sought to get the courts to intervene.

Scott said "unethical liberals" were trying to steal the election in Democratic strongholds of Broward and Palm Beach counties. He suggested something was awry because vote-counters were taking longer there than in other jurisdictions, and his thin lead has kept narrowing since election night. Late Friday, he led by 0.18 percentage points, low enough to require a recount.

A recount is mandatory if the winning candidate's margin is less than 0.5 percentage points when the first unofficial count is verified Saturday by Florida's secretary of state. If the margin is less than 0.25 percent, the recount must be done by hand.

In Washington, Trump took Scott's side, telling reporters that the federal government could get involved and adding: "All of the sudden, they are finding votes out of nowhere."

"What's going on in Florida is a disgrace," he said.

Scott asked the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to investigate the counties' election departments. However, a spokeswoman for the agency said there were no credible allegations of fraud; therefore, no active investigation.

The governor, meanwhile, filed lawsuits in both counties seeking more information on how their ballots were being tallied. Nelson filed his own federal lawsuit Friday, seeking to postpone the Saturday deadline to submit unofficial election results.

A judge Friday sided with Scott and ordered Broward County's election supervisor to release the voter information sought by the governor.

The ruling came as the Broward Canvassing Board met to review ballots that had been initially deemed ineligible. Lawyers from the campaigns, journalists and citizens crowded into a room to observe.

The county has not answered questions about its process and how many votes it has left to count.

Republican U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio suggested that Brenda Snipes, the Broward supervisor of elections, should be removed from office once the dust settles on the race. Rubio said Snipes' failure to count all ballots in a more timely manner violates state law.

"She's certainly a candidate for removal. ... This is not one bad cycle, this is a pattern," Rubio said in a conference call with reporters.

Nelson issued barbs of his own.

"No one should stand in the way of the people of our state exercising their right to vote and to have their voice heard," the senator said in a statement. "Clearly, Rick Scott is trying to stop all the votes from being counted and he's impeding the democratic process."

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In the undecided race for governor, DeSantis was leading by 0.43 percentage points late Friday. That margin, if it holds, would require a recount, but DeSantis has mostly stayed out of the fray, saying he was working on plans for taking office in January.

Gillum conceded on election night, but as the vote margin began to narrow, he said he wanted to see every vote counted, strongly indicating he would not stand in the way of a recount.

A third statewide race that could go to a recount — the agriculture commissioner race between Democrat Nikki Fried and Republican Matt Caldwell — is the tightest of all, with Fried holding a 3,120-vote lead — a margin of 0.039 percent.

In 2000, Broward and Palm Beach each played central roles in the Bush-Gore race.

At the time, both counties used punch card ballots — voters poked out chads, leaving tiny holes in their ballots representing their candidates. Some didn't press hard enough, leaving hanging or dimpled chads that had to be examined by hand, a long and tiresome process.

Palm Beach also was home to the infamous "butterfly ballot" that many Democrats believe cost Gore the election. An election official's attempt to make the candidate's names bigger and easier to read for senior citizens resulted in them being listed in two columns instead of one. Analysts later said the new redesign may have confused voters and probably cost Gore votes.

As for the angry mobs in suits: In late November 2000, Republican operatives in suits stormed the Miami-Dade canvassing board's meeting, causing the members to permanently stop their recount, even after police officers restored order. The melee became known as "The Brooks Brothers Riot."

Brendan Farrington in Tallahassee, Josh Replogle in Riviera Beach and Curt Anderson in Miami contributed.

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. midterm elections: <http://apne.ws/APPolitics>

With loved ones missing after fire, pleas flood social media

By PHUONG LE, DAISY NGUYEN and DON THOMPSON, Associated Press

CHICO, Calif. (AP) — People have scoured evacuation centers, called hospitals and posted desperate online pleas for help finding relatives they haven't heard from since a fast-moving wildfire devastated a Northern California town.

A day after tens of thousands evacuated the town of Paradise and the nearby community of Magalia, dozens of people, many of them elderly, remained unaccounted for. Anguished relatives flooded social media asking for help locating their loved ones. Some were reunited with family hours later.

Diane Forsman, who lives in New Hampshire, said her 83-year-old mother, Jean Forsman, can't walk on her own and relies on oxygen. Her caretaker wasn't able to reach her Thursday when the fire swept through Magalia.

"It's terrifying," Diane Forsman said by telephone. "We're trying to remain hopeful until we get word. We don't know what the outcome will be."

She and her brother posted on social media to see if anyone had seen their mother. They tried calling 911 and other numbers. They were told officials had a list of 300 to 400 welfare checks to do.

Finally, they got word through Facebook on Friday that someone in her neighborhood had picked up a woman with disabilities. But the Forsmans haven't been able to confirm yet whether it's their mom.

Many of the missing are seniors without cellphones or social media accounts who had moved to the Northern California area known as a refuge for retirees. About one-fourth of Paradise's 27,000 residents are 65 or older.

When it was time to evacuate, Suzanne Drews couldn't get to her 84-year-old mother, Helen Pace, who lives by herself in a mobile home park with other seniors. She doesn't have a cellphone.

Drews registered on several websites set up for the missing and went to evacuation shelters searching for her mother.

"I'm trying not to worry. We'll keep looking and praying," Drews said by phone Friday. "I'm praying that

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she's at peace, that she's comfortable enough and not panicking."

Cherri Rolla's family has not heard from her 83-year-old aunt, Sylvia Johnson, who lives in Paradise with at least six dogs and three horses. Rolla said a grandson living nearby tried to get Johnson to leave, but she refused.

"When he went back, they wouldn't let him in," said Rolla, who lives of North Dakota. "The hardest part is to be so far away and not figure out what we're going to try to do to find her."

They got a call Friday that a woman at a church in Oroville, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) south, may be Johnson.

"We don't have 100 percent confirmation that it's her," Rolla said. "I'm trying not to get too terribly excited."

Families got help on Twitter from actor James Woods, who posted and retweeted messages from those looking for loved ones. The hashtag he started became a central hub for those trying to reunite with relatives.

Steve Christensen drove up more than 130 miles (210 kilometers) from Sutter Creek to Chico and spent Friday trying to find his wife's sister, Debbie McCrea, and her boyfriend.

McCrea lives on a quarter-acre lot in Paradise and has evacuated from wildfires several times. Usually, she calls her sister and others to let them know she's getting out. Not this time.

"She's evacuated before, so she should know the routine. So that's why I'm concerned that she hasn't called us," Christensen said. "We haven't heard from her at all since the fire began, and that's not like her."

For one desperate day, Dawn Johnson searched for her father, Richard Wayne Wilson, and his wife, Suzanne Wilson. She posted on Twitter and made numerous calls.

The couple live in an RV park in the California foothill town, and her father has late-stage cancer and his wife is mostly confined to her bed.

Johnson, of Independence, Oregon, relied on fellow members of the couple's Jehovah's Witnesses congregation in Paradise to check local shelters. By Friday, she learned they were in nearby Chico.

"They are fine," she said.

The waiting was overwhelming for Sarah Slate, who frantically searched for more than a day for her 39-year-old brother, Richard Slate, who has special needs and lives alone in Paradise.

"All you want to do is cry because you don't have an answer either way," said Slate, who lives in central California. "You're hoping for the best but in this situation, you're left wondering: 'Is he alive?'"

By Friday afternoon, Slate said a service agency had found him, though she didn't know all the details.

"Praise Jesus," she said in a text message.

Le reported from Seattle. Associated Press writer Jennifer Sinco Kelleher in Honolulu contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that Richard Wayne Wilson and his wife, Suzanne Wilson, were listed with incorrect last names.

Whitaker led group that may have violated tax-exempt status

By JEFF DONN, AP National Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Matthew G. Whitaker, the nation's new acting attorney general, repeatedly chided presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in public statements during 2016 while he was speaking for a group that is barred by its tax-exempt status from supporting or opposing political candidates during a campaign.

Before coming to the Justice Department in 2017, Whitaker was president and executive director of the Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust, a charitable organization that styles itself as nonpartisan government watchdog promoting ethics and transparency. The tax-exempt group — known by its initials, FACT — is supposed to serve the public interest under Section 501c3 of the U.S. tax code, without directly or even indirectly supporting or opposing specific candidates for office.

Yet the group has engaged in one partisan pronouncement after another, mostly directed at Democrats.

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During the last presidential race, Whitaker argued in July 2016 newspaper opinion pieces that Clinton should be prosecuted for her handling of her private email server — a favorite talking point of Donald Trump. The opinion pieces identified Whitaker as FACT's leader.

In September 2016, Whitaker argued that Clinton had acted shamelessly by appointing her charity's donors to boards of the State Department when she was secretary of state.

"I don't think anybody in the history of our country that served in the administration has been this bold in their private fundraising and their sort of giving favors," he said in a radio interview posted on YouTube by his group.

Daniel Borochoff, president of CharityWatch, a Chicago-based group that monitors the nonprofit world, said that statement appears to violate the IRS ban on engagement for or against a particular political candidate. "It's highly critical of a candidate, and he ought not to be doing that, because it's a political partisan comment," he said.

Whitaker, a former U.S. attorney in Iowa, left FACT in October 2017 to become Attorney General Jeff Sessions' chief of staff. He was named this week by President Trump to take over at least temporarily for Sessions, who resigned at Trump's request.

FACT was founded in 2015, tax filings show. Whitaker drew a sizable portion of its budget as his salary as president and executive director — in 2016 he earned more than twice what leaders of similar groups were paid on average that year, according to data from another watchdog group, Charity Navigator.

In 2015 and 2016, Whitaker earned a total of \$654,000 from FACT — 30 percent of its entire spending of \$2.2 million over that two-year span. His 2016 salary was \$402,000; the average CEO or executive director at 380 advocacy or education charities in that year made a salary of \$173,099, according to Matthew J. Viola, a vice president at Charity Navigator.

Borochoff suggested that Whitaker's board of directors at FACT didn't appear to be independent enough to apply the brakes on his campaign partisanship. Whitaker appeared to exert tight control over a three-person board of directors that included just one unsalaried member, according to the group's IRS filings in 2015-16.

Whitaker's foundation was initially formed and then primarily supported with funds from another organization called Donor's Trust. That group is a nonprofit built to give conservative and libertarian philanthropists "any level of privacy they want," according to its marketing materials.

A FACT spokesman declined to provide any details on donors or any on-the-record response to other questions. There was no immediate reply to a request for comment from Whitaker made through the Justice Department.

Though 501c3 groups can legally withhold the identity of their contributors and generally do so, there may be a distinct irony when a group dedicated to transparency keeps its funding sources in the shadows.

In 2014, FACT's only source of funds was Donor's Trust, according to IRS filings. In 2015, funds from Donor's Trust accounted for all but \$191 of FACT's \$500,191 in revenue. In 2016, Donor's Trust provided \$800,000 of FACT's revenues of \$1,350,265.

It is clear from IRS filings that FACT has paid outside Republican firms to perform some of its work. One such firm is America Rising LLC, which was given \$144,000 for research in 2015.

America Rising LLC formed in Delaware in 2002 and was first registered to do business in Virginia in 2016, but its registration was canceled in May 2018 for failing to pay its annual registration fee, according to Katha Treanor, a spokeswoman for the State Corporation Commission. America Rising LLC did not respond to queries from The Associated Press.

AP writer Jeff Horwitz reported from Washington.

France seizes jet at takeoff after Ryanair doesn't pay bill

By ANGELA CHARLTON and CARLO PIOVANO, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Storms, strikes, computer failures — you can now add “your plane has been seized by the government” to the list of things that can delay your flight.

In France, 149 passengers were preparing to take off for London late Thursday when French authorities ordered their Ryanair Boeing 737 impounded.

The budget carrier owed money and it was “regrettable that the state was forced” to evacuate the plane, the civil aviation authority said.

The passengers had gone through passport control and security and were about to walk on the tarmac to board the plane when airport authorities told them to turn around, passenger Boris Hejblum said.

“The airport staff told us there was an issue with the plane,” he told The Associated Press in an email.

No Ryanair staff members were available, and the only communication from the airline was two text messages saying simply that the departure was delayed, and a 5-euro (\$5.75) voucher for food — “less than what a sandwich cost at the airport café,” the 30-year-old Frenchman said.

“I found it strange that the police were the only ones giving us information,” he said.

The passengers were put on another flight that finally brought them to London's Stansted airport — five hours late.

The multi-million dollar jet, meanwhile, was released only Friday after Ryanair paid a bill of 525,000 euros (\$610,000).

The scene unfolded at the Bordeaux-Merignac airport in western France, where authorities say the airline was ordered to pay back funds that the European Union had declared to be illegal subsidies. Ryanair did not publicly comment on the seizure.

French aviation agency spokesman Eric Heraud said regional authorities who originally gave the subsidies had been trying since 2014 to recover the money, and sent its final legal warning in May. After six months without a response from Ryanair, it decided to act Friday.

The standoff with French authorities will not help Ryanair, which more than most carriers, has come to symbolize budget airlines' relentless focus on the bottom line at the cost of customer service.

Ryanair has become Europe's largest airline by number of passengers by persistently offering some of the cheapest fares available. That ensures its planes are packed.

It then makes extra money with add-on fares. Besides charging for seating choice and food — now standard practice on budget flights the world over — it also has travelers pay for any carry-on bag that's larger than a purse.

It manages to keep its costs down by flying to out of the way airports at odd hours to get cheaper airport slots.

Its CEO, Michael O'Leary, personifies the airline's brash approach, sparring with unions and EU authorities. And despite conceding in 2013 that “we should try to eliminate things that unnecessarily piss people off,” the airline retains its reputation as something to be endured for the sake of flying cheaply around Europe.

“I would say we just took it as another Ryanair problem, having no information from them,” Hejblum said of Thursday's incident. “When we found out about the seizure, I would say the general sentiment was to blame Ryanair for not complying with the law.”

Piovano reported from London.

Wildfire torches famed movie site, sends celebrities fleeing

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr., AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A fast-moving wildfire in Southern California has scorched a historic movie site recently used by the HBO series “Westworld” and forced numerous celebrities to join the thousands fleeing flames that have claimed homes and prompted the total evacuation of the celebrity enclave Malibu.

Lady Gaga, Kim Kardashian West, Scott Baio, Rainn Wilson and Guillermo del Toro are among numerous

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celebrities forced to evacuate their homes, in some cases hurriedly trying to arrange transport for their horses. Some, like del Toro and Caitlyn Jenner, did not know the fate of their homes, but the wind-driven wildfire has destroyed the home of "Dr. Strange" director Scott Derrickson and the historic Paramount Ranch where shows like HBO's "Westworld" and "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman" were filmed.

The blaze started Thursday night and by Friday had pushed toward Malibu and the Pacific Ocean, prompting evacuations in Malibu, Calabasas, Agoura Hills and other nearby areas.

Alyssa Milano said her home was "in jeopardy" amid her attempts to safely evacuate her five horses. The actress ultimately got the help she needed and tweeted that her horses were safe. "My children are safe. ... Everything with a heartbeat is safe."

The celebrity website TMZ reported that Jenner's home was burned, but the Olympic gold medalist said in an Instagram video that she didn't know "whether the house made it or not." She confirmed she was safe.

Kardashian West posted video on Instagram of an area on fire with a message "Pray for Calabasas." She said she landed back home, spent one hour packing and evacuated shortly afterward.

Gaga also took to social media letting her followers know she evacuated Friday morning as she shared a few videos focused on the smoke-filled skies. The singer said she is "sending my prayers" to everyone impacted by the fire.

Derrickson said he is safe despite losing his home.

Cher is concerned about her house in Malibu, an area where the actress-singer has lived for more than 45 years.

"I'm worried about my house, but there is nothing I can do," she tweeted. "Friends houses have burned. I can't bear the thought of there being no Malibu I've had a house in Malibu since 1972."

In addition to dozens of homes destroyed, Paramount Ranch's "Western Town," a landmark film location that included a jail, hotel and saloon, had burned to the ground.

The ranch served as a location for productions ranging from 1938's "The Adventures of Marco Polo" to TV shows "The Mentalist" and "Weeds." The set in the mountains west of Los Angeles dates to 1927 when Paramount Pictures leased the ranch and began making films there.

Western Town specifically was built for TV productions in the 1950s and was used for such westerns as "The Cisco Kid" and "Dick Powell's Zane Grey Theatre."

Filming continued for decades even as the ranch changed hands. It was acquired by the National Park Service in 1980 but has continued to function as a filming location, serving as a location for the first two seasons of the sci-fi series "Westworld." HBO said it did not know the extent of the damage and expressed concern for "all those affected by these horrible fires."

When not in use for filming, visitors could stroll through Western Town while hiking or riding through on horseback.

Actor James Woods asked nearly 2 million of his Twitter followers to use the hashtag #CampFireJamesWoods to help share names of those who are missing in a separate wildfire in Northern California that has claimed five lives.

He also tweeted resources for horse owners to have their animals evacuated from the Southern California blaze, and called Milano's report that her family and horses had been evacuated "good news."

Woods was not among those displaced — he tweeted that he was on the East Coast.

Associated Press Writer John Antczak contributed to the report in Los Angeles.

Military veterans, 2 friends, bar workers killed in shooting

By JONATHAN J. COOPER, TERRY TANG and REBECCA BOONE, Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP) — One was a veteran police officer who didn't hesitate to run toward danger. Another had survived the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history. Others were an "extremely nice" busboy, two friends who loved off-roading and a Marine veteran who dedicated his life to service.

They were among a dozen people killed in a shooting at a country music bar in suburban Los Angeles

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on Wednesday night. Authorities believe the gunman, Ian David Long, ultimately killed himself.

RON HELUS: 'COP'S COP'

Ventura County sheriff's Sgt. Ron Helus was talking to his wife when calls started coming in about a shooting at the Borderline Bar and Grill.

"Hey, I got to go handle a call. I love you. I'll talk to you later," he told her, according to Sheriff Geoff Dean.

It was the last time she would talk to her husband.

Helus rushed toward the shooting and immediately exchanged fire with the gunman, Dean said. Helus was hit multiple times.

Sgt. Eric Buschow, who said Helus was a friend, described him as a "cop's cop."

"The fact that he was the first in the door doesn't surprise me at all," he said. "He's just one of those guys that wouldn't hesitate in a situation."

Helus took up fly fishing a few years ago and loved pursuing the hobby in the Sierra Nevada mountains with his grown son, Buschow said.

"He was just a great guy, a gentle soul," Buschow said. "Patient. Calm no matter what. When you call 911, he's one of the guys you want showing up."

Helus was on the SWAT team for much of his career and worked in narcotics and investigations, he said.

"If you were a victim of a crime, you want him investigating the case," Buschow said. "He would go to the ends of the Earth to find a suspect."

Dean choked back tears talking about Helus and called him a hero.

"He went in there to save people and paid the ultimate price," he said.

CODY COFFMAN: 'THE BIG BROTHER THAT MY KIDS NEED'

Cody Coffman, who had just turned 22, was talking with Army recruiters and preparing to fulfill his dream of serving his country, father Jason Coffman said, weeping.

Cody adored his siblings — three brothers between ages 6 and 9 — and he couldn't wait for the birth of a sister, due on Nov. 29, his father said.

"Cody was the big brother that my kids need," he said. "He was so excited to have his first sister and now she'll never know ..."

He trailed off, sobbing, then said, "Oh, Cody, I love you, son."

Jason Coffman said his son was passionate about baseball, serving as an umpire for a little league, and they fished together.

"That poor boy would come with me whether he liked it or not," he said. "That's the kind of stuff I am truly going to miss."

Jason Coffman said he last spoke to his son Wednesday night before Cody headed to the bar.

"The first thing I said was, 'Please don't drink and drive,'" he said. "The last thing I said was, 'Son, I love you.'"

JUSTIN MEEK: 'FULL OF LIGHT AND HAPPINESS'

Newly graduated from California Lutheran University, Justin Meek performed as a singer and worked at the Borderline.

Meek, 23, also worked for Channel Island Social Services as a respite caregiver, supporting families with children with special needs, mostly developmental disabilities, chief executive Sharon Francis said.

"Parents just adored him. He was able to bond with their kids," she said. "He was just an all-around guy."

Danielle Gallo, who also works at the family-run organization, said he was dedicated to the kids he worked with.

"You could tell he really had a heart for what he did," she said, sobbing.

Meek also toured professionally as an a cappella singer, said family friend Patrick Ellis, who called Meek

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a talented musician, singer and athlete and a "fantastic human being."

"He was a hero every day of his life," Ellis said. "It was just always positive energy. ... Anything he could do for you, he was just there."

Meek worked at the bar with his sister and fellow Cal Lutheran student, Victoria Rose Meek, who survived, Ellis said.

Meek played water polo for Cal Lutheran. He also lent his full, velvety voice to the school choir, where "every time he sang, you could just feel it in your soul," recalled choir member Rachel Counihan, 20.

"He cared so much about his craft and just cared so much about other people," she said. "He was just full of light and happiness."

Scott Roberts, 20, a junior at the school and friend of Victoria Rose Meek's, recalled Meek being "just the nicest dude."

ALAINA HOUSLEY: 'AN INCREDIBLE YOUNG WOMAN'

Alaina Housley was just 18, a promising student at Pepperdine University with plans to study law, her family said.

Adam Housley, a former Fox News correspondent, and Tamera Mowry-Housley, an actress known for the 1990s TV series "Sister Sister," said their niece was killed at the bar where she had gone line dancing with friends.

"Alaina was an incredible young woman with so much life ahead of her, and we are devastated that her life was cut short in this manner," the couple said in a statement.

Alaina was bright, popular and well-loved, a student who had a 4.5 grade-point average since junior high school and earned college scholarships, said her grandfather, Art Housley.

She played soccer and tennis all through high school, studied piano and violin, and sang, he said.

"She's a really good kid," he said, fighting tears. "Everybody loves her."

NOEL SPARKS: 'ALL-AROUND GOOD GIRL'

Noel Sparks, a 21-year-old college student, loved going to the Borderline Bar and Grill, so friends and family were not surprised when she posted a photo of herself dancing there Wednesday night.

Her aunt Patricia Sparks of Morristown, Tennessee, told The Associated Press that the family was "in shock."

She described her niece as an "all-around good girl. She was the kind of girl that if you had friends, you'd want them to marry her."

Sparks, who was majoring in art at nearby Moorpark College, often went to Borderline with friends and her mom, going there for Halloween and her 21st birthday in August.

When friend Jackie Jones heard about the shooting, she jumped into her car and headed to the bar, determined to find Sparks.

"She would do that for me," Jones said.

The two met through church two years ago and became fast friends. Sparks worked part time at Calvary Community Church in Westlake Village, helping with children's programs, the Rev. Shawn Thornton said.

"She loved kids. We had a lot of parents show up today to say, 'She made my child feel important and that they mattered,'" Thornton said.

SEAN ADLER: 'A VERY, VERY BIG PERSONALITY'

Sean Adler, 48, was a security guard at Borderline who would stay late to ensure people could get home safely, said Debbie Allen, a longtime friend.

The married father of two boys died doing what he was passionate about — protecting people, Allen said.

"He was a very, very big personality and had a very, very gorgeous smile," she said, adding that he had once considered becoming a police officer.

His other passion, she said, was coffee. Adler recently opened his own coffee shop, Rivalry Roasters, in Simi Valley, said Phil Englander, another longtime friend.

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"He was just the most passionate person about coffee you would ever want to meet," Englander said. Adler joked about being a "coffee dealer" and spoke energetically, using his hands.

"He always had that energetic personality," he said. "He's just such a warm and friendly and passionate person about everything in his life."

Englander said he stopped by the coffee shop Wednesday to visit Adler.

"We talked about family, and we reminisced about an old friend of ours we haven't seen in years," he said.

TELEMACHUS ORFANOS: VEGAS SURVIVOR KILLED

Telemachus Orfanos, 27, lived through the mass shooting in Las Vegas last year only to die inside Borderline, less than 10 minutes from his home, according to his mother.

"Here are my words: I want gun control," Susan Schmidt-Orfanos said, her voice shaking with grief and rage. "I don't want prayers. I don't want thoughts."

She said she wants Congress to "pass gun control so no one else has a child that doesn't come home."

Orfanos was a U.S. Navy veteran with a thick beard, an easy smile and a gladiator helmet tattoo. His friends called him "Tel."

Photos on Orfanos' Facebook page show the Eagle Scout with friends at ballgames or at work. Some photos are embellished with patriotic graphics and another marks the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

MARKY MEZA JR.: 'LOVING AND WONDERFUL YOUNG MAN'

Marky Meza Jr., who was less than two weeks from his 21st birthday, was working as a busboy and food runner at the bar when he was killed.

"Marky was a loving and wonderful young man who was full of life and ambition," the Meza family said in a statement provided to Santa Barbara TV station KEYT. "His family is devastated by his loss."

Meza grew up in the Santa Barbara area and had worked in the service industry since he was a teen.

He was one of the few teenagers who got hired at Sandpiper Lodge in Santa Barbara, manager Shawn Boteju said. Meza worked full time at the Sandpiper in housekeeping and would come to work on a hoverboard.

"He was extremely nice," Boteju told The Associated Press. "He obviously worked well with the rest of the staff."

DANIEL MANRIQUE: 'A SAINT'

Daniel Manrique, 33, dedicated his life to service — as a hospital volunteer, U.S. Marine and manager of an organization that helps veterans adjust after leaving the military.

He was a radio operator with the 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, 2nd Marine Division based at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and he deployed to Afghanistan in 2007 with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, the Orange County Register reported.

After the military, Manrique began volunteering with Team Red White and Blue, an organization that works to help veterans avoid isolation by connecting them to their community. He was named a regional program manager last month.

"The best way I can describe him is as a saint. He truly believed in service," friend and business partner Tim O'Brien told the newspaper. "Dan was the guy you could rely on if you ran out of gas in the middle of the night. He would help you out if something bad happened. He was there, dedicated, loyal."

The two high school friends were preparing to open a veteran-oriented brewery called "O'brique" — a combination of their last names.

Manrique also volunteered at a hospital helping the homeless and at a local church.

"Dan's life was dedicated to serving others, during his military career and beyond," Team Red White and Blue executive director John Pinter said on the organization's website. "We offer our deepest condolences to the Manrique family."

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BLAKE DINGMAN: 'AMAZING BROTHER'

Blake Dingman's Facebook page shows a giant truck with its front-end flying up in the air. The 21-year-old was a fixture in the Ventura County off-roading community and enjoyed life to the fullest, according to a friend.

Michael Moses told the Los Angeles Times that Dingman always made people laugh.

"I don't think I ever saw him sad about anything," Moses said.

Dingman was at the Borderline with his friend Jake Dunham, who also was killed.

On Instagram, brother Aidan Dingman wrote that "my amazing brother was taken down by the shooter" and that his life has been forever changed.

"Words cannot describe the pain I am feeling," he wrote, adding: "Blake I love you so much and I miss you more than you can imagine."

JAKE DUNHAM: GUTSY OFF-ROADER

Jake Dunham, 21, was known for driving his truck hard. He was a regular at rides in the desert and at group bonfires made from igniting vehicles and old dirt bikes, according to a friend.

"He always tried to convince people to (let him) drive their car. Everyone knew it was a bad idea, but sometimes they'd do it," Michael Moses told the Los Angeles Times, laughing.

Dunham was at the Borderline with his friend and fellow off-roader, Blake Dingman, who also was killed.

Dunham's sister, Alexis Dunham, asked on her Facebook page for privacy to let the family grieve, saying "these last days have completely shattered us."

KRISTINA MORISSETTE: ENERGETIC AND THOUGHTFUL

Kristina Morissette worked at the front desk of Borderline and had just bought her first car — a 2017 Jeep Renegade — with the money she had saved, her father said.

Michael Morissette told the Los Angeles Times that his energetic and talkative 20-year-old daughter had just returned from a trip to Austin, Texas, and he hugged her, relieved she was back home safe in Simi Valley.

Kristina gave her mother a coin purse she bought for her on the trip before heading to work Wednesday.

"We'd rather just curl up in a ball and turn off the lights, but there are other people out there that are hurting, too," Michael Morissette told the newspaper as he held his wife's hand. "We could either retreat and draw our curtains, or we could talk about the beauty of the things that were."

He said Kristina, the youngest of three children, was a thoughtful friend who always helped others. She enjoyed hiking and drawing and was considering applying for an animal training program in Austin.

"We didn't want her life to end, but we don't want her memories now to end, either," mother Martha Morissette told the newspaper. "We'll probably always have a hard time dealing with it."

Tang reported from Phoenix and Boone from Boise, Idaho. Associated Press writers Amanda Lee Myers in Los Angeles, Amy Taxin in Santa Ana, Alina Hartounian in Phoenix, Christopher Weber in Thousand Oaks, Julie Watson in San Diego and Jennifer Peltz in New York contributed.

Settlement reached in tight Arizona Senate vote count

By **BOB CHRISTIE** and **NICHOLAS RICCARDI**, Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona Republicans who had alleged the state's two biggest counties were illegally counting some ballots changed course Friday and agreed to settle their lawsuit if rural voters also get an extra chance to fix problems with ballots cast in the state's tight U.S. Senate race.

The settlement was technically between Republicans and the state's county recorders, but Democrats and civil rights groups who had jumped into the fray agreed to it as it was announced in a Phoenix courtroom Friday afternoon. Arizona's 15 counties now have until Nov. 14 to address the issue, which state Elections Director Eric Spencer said likely affects less than 10,000 votes out of more than 2.3 million cast statewide.

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The Republican lawsuit said the state's county recorders don't follow a uniform standard for allowing voters to address problems with the signatures on their mail-in ballots, and that Maricopa and Pima counties improperly allow the fixes for up to five days after Election Day.

The lawsuit settlement in a courtroom packed with more than a dozen lawyers and a host of reporters came a day after Democrat Kyrsten Sinema jumped into a slight lead over Republican Martha McSally in the midst of the slow vote count. On Friday night, she padded her lead to about 1 percentage point of the 2 million ballots tallied. More than 350,000 remain accounted.

Even as the Republican attorneys pursued a deal that would let conservative-leaning counties match signatures like the two urban ones, President Donald Trump seemed to attack the way Maricopa and Pima operated on twitter. "In Arizona, SIGNATURES DON'T MATCH," Trump tweeted. "Electoral corruption - Call for a new Election?"

Four local Republican parties filed the lawsuit Wednesday night challenging the two large counties' practice of reaching out to voters after Election Day. If the signature on the voter registration doesn't match that on the sealed envelope, both Maricopa and Pima County allow voters to help them fix, or "cure" it, up to five days after Election Day.

Many other counties only allow voters to cure until polls close on Election Day. Now, all will follow the standard set by Maricopa, Pima and two other rural counties that allow for post-Election Day cures.

A Maricopa County official said Thursday that only about 5,600 ballots were affected in her county and the rate is similar in the 14 smaller counties. Spencer said that means less than 10,000 in all.

The bottom line for Republicans was to ensure that counties with high GOP registration had a change to balance those with high or close Democratic support.

"This is a really great day for us," state GOP attorney Kory Langhofer said. "The rural counties who were not going to be counting Republican votes on the same terms as the Democratic counties, they got caught with their pants down. When they've got to show up in court and explain to the judge what they're doing they gave us everything we were asking for."

Grant Woods, a former Republican state attorney general who now backs Sinema, criticized the Republicans for "monkeying with the process" now that their candidate is behind in the vote.

"If they lose the race they should just take their lumps and field a better candidate next time," he said.

The political overtones of the lawsuit were unmistakable. On Thursday, Sinema jumped into a minuscule lead of about 9,000 out of 1.9 million votes counted after trailing since Tuesday. Her lead came from the two counties singled out by Republicans in their lawsuit, Maricopa and Pima Counties.

On Friday, Republicans escalated their attacks on Democrats, claiming they were trying to disenfranchise rural voters - even though Democrats had little to do with how the rural counties chose to count ballots. Those counties are predominantly run by Republicans. Democrats, in turn, said the GOP was trying to nullify cast ballots.

The race remained too close to call Friday with more than 400,000 ballots still uncounted. Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes said counting may continue until Nov. 15. "We know there's urgency out there, but we want to get it right, not quick," he said.

Arizona is notoriously slow at tallying ballots even though about 75 percent of votes are cast by mail. Each of those ballots must go through a laborious verification process.

This story has been corrected to show there at 15 Arizona counties, not 14.

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. midterm elections: <http://apne.ws/APPolitics>

Stocks skid as tech companies fall; oil plunge continues

By MARLEY JAY, AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks fell Friday as a combination of weak economic data from China and disappointing earnings hurt technology and internet companies. Crude oil prices fell for the 10th day in a row. Auto sales in China fell in October for the fourth month in a row and are down 13 percent from a year

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ago, the latest sign its economy is under pressure. Concerns about China's economy and its trade dispute with the U.S. contributed to the global stock market skid in October. The stocks that fared the worst during that time included tech and internet companies and retailers, which all took sharp losses Friday.

"China has played such a critical role in driving global growth," said Kristina Hooper, chief global market strategist for Invesco. "(Investors) are having concerns that these tariff wars are essentially going to kick China when it's down."

U.S. crude oil slipped 0.8 percent to extend its losing streak. It's fallen for five weeks in a row and tumbled 21 percent since Oct. 3. Energy companies have suffered steep losses during that time.

Weak forecasts from companies including video game company Activision Blizzard and chipmaker Skyworks Solutions also contributed to Friday's decline.

The S&P 500 index dropped 25.82 points, or 0.9 percent, to 2,781.01. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 201.92 points, or 0.8 percent, to 25,989.30.

The Nasdaq composite sank 123.98 points, or 1.6 percent, to 7,406.90. The Russell 2000 index of smaller companies gave up 28.72 points, or 1.8 percent, to 1,549.49.

The Labor Department said wholesale prices in the U.S. jumped, and Hooper said that could be linked to the tariff dispute as well. Wholesale prices rose by the most in six years in October as gas, food, and chemical prices increased. The Labor Department's wholesale price index has climbed 2.9 percent over the last year.

Video game maker Activision Blizzard tumbled after its forecast for the critical holiday season fell short of analysts' projections. The stock fell 12.4 percent to \$55.01, and Electronic Arts lost 5.3 percent to \$88.89.

Major technology and internet companies also turned lower. Apple fell 1.9 percent to \$204.47 and Facebook shed 2 percent to \$144.96. Amazon lost 2.4 percent to \$1,712.43.

Benchmark U.S. crude fell to \$60.19 a barrel in New York, its lowest in almost eight months. Brent crude, used to price international oils, has fared almost as badly as U.S. crude, and it declined 0.7 percent to \$70.20 a barrel in London.

West Coast utility companies tumbled as wildfires worsened in South California, with tens of thousands of people forced to flee in Los Angeles and Ventura counties. PG&E plunged 16.5 percent to \$39.92 and Edison International skidded 12.1 percent to \$61.

General Electric sank another 5.7 percent to \$8.58 after a JPMorgan Chase analyst cut his price target on the stock to \$6 a share from \$10. Stephen Tusa said six of GE's eight divisions might be unprofitable in 2020.

Bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 3.18 percent from 3.23 percent.

Despite the losses Friday, the S&P 500 still gained 2.1 percent this week. It climbed 2.4 percent last week but would need to rise another 5.4 percent to reach the all-time high it set on Sept. 20.

Walt Disney's net earnings were better than expected, as the entertainment giant raked in revenue from movies including "Avengers: Infinity War," "Incredibles 2" and "Ant-Man and the Wasp." The stock gained 1.7 percent to \$118.

A federal judge blocked a permit from the Trump administration for the construction of TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline, pending an environmental review. The long-delayed \$8 billion project pipeline would begin in Alberta and run through a half dozen states to terminals on the Gulf Coast. U.S. District Judge Brian Morris ruled that the potential impact had not been considered as required by federal law after environmentalists and Native American groups sued to stop the project, citing property rights and potential oil spills.

In Toronto, shares of TransCanada lost 1.7 percent.

Online reviews company Yelp nosedived after it posted weak third-quarter revenue and its forecast for the fourth quarter also fell short of Wall Street's estimates. The company said part of the problem is an advertising model that is intended to encourage advertisers to try the site without signing a long-term contract. Yelp said that has made its results more sensitive to short-term problems. Its stock fell 26.6 percent to \$31.93.

In other commodities trading, natural gas prices jumped 5 percent to \$3.72 per 1,000 cubic feet. That

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helped gas companies stem their losses. Heating oil was little changed at \$2.17 a gallon and wholesale gasoline fell 1.4 percent to \$1.62 a gallon.

Gold fell 0.3 percent to \$1,208.60 an ounce. Silver lost 2 percent to \$14.14 an ounce. Copper slid 1.9 percent to \$2.68 a pound.

The dollar slipped to 113.76 yen from 113.99 yen. The euro fell to \$1.1333 from \$1.1356.

The French CAC 40 and the FTSE 100 in Britain both fell 0.5 percent. Germany's DAX was little changed.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 retreated 1 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 2.4 percent. Seoul's Kospi gave up 0.3 percent.

AP Markets Writer Marley Jay can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MarleyJayAP>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 10, the 314th day of 2018. There are 51 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Nov. 10, 1775, the U.S. Marines were organized under authority of the Continental Congress.

On this date:

In 1871, journalist-explorer Henry M. Stanley found Scottish missionary David Livingstone, who had not been heard from for years, near Lake Tanganyika in central Africa.

In 1917, 41 suffragists were arrested for picketing in front of the White House.

In 1928, Hirohito (hee-roh-hee-toh) was enthroned as Emperor of Japan.

In 1938, Kate Smith first sang Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" on her CBS radio program. Turkish statesman Mustafa Kemal Ataturk died in Istanbul at age 57.

In 1942, Winston Churchill delivered a speech in London in which he said, "I have not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."

In 1954, the U.S. Marine Corps Memorial, depicting the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima in 1945, was dedicated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in Arlington, Virginia.

In 1969, the children's educational program "Sesame Street" made its debut on National Educational Television (later PBS).

In 1972, three armed men hijacked Southern Airways Flight 49, a DC-9 with 24 other passengers on board during a stopover in Birmingham, Ala., and demanded \$10 million in ransom. (The 30-hour ordeal, which involved landings in nine U.S. cities and Toronto, finally ended with a second landing in Cuba, where the hijackers were taken into custody by Cuban authorities.)

In 1975, the U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution equating Zionism with racism (the world body repealed the resolution in Dec. 1991). The ore-hauling ship SS Edmund Fitzgerald mysteriously sank during a storm in Lake Superior with the loss of all 29 crew members.

In 1982, the newly finished Vietnam Veterans Memorial was opened to its first visitors in Washington, D.C., three days before its dedication. Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev died at age 75.

In 1997, a judge in Cambridge, Massachusetts, reduced Louise Woodward's murder conviction to involuntary manslaughter and sentenced the English au pair to the 279 days she'd already served in the death of 8-month-old Matthew Eappen.

In 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a former finance minister of Liberia, claimed victory in the country's presidential election.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, welcomed Barack and Michelle Obama to the White House for a nearly two-hour visit; the president and president-elect conferred in the Oval Office, while the current and future first ladies talked in the White House residence. Miriam Makeba, the South African folk singer and anti-apartheid activist, died at age 76 after performing at a concert in Castel Volturno, Italy.

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Five years ago: Talks in Geneva on curbing Iran's nuclear program ended with no deal after France objected that the proposed measures did not go far enough.

One year ago: Facing allegations of sexual misconduct, comedian Louis C.K. said the harassment claims by five women that were detailed in a New York Times report "are true," and he expressed remorse for using his influence "irresponsibly." The National Republican Senatorial committee ended its fundraising agreement with Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore in light of allegations of sexual contact with a teenager decades ago. President Donald Trump arrived in Vietnam to attend an international economic summit, telling CEOs on the sidelines of the summit, "We are not going to let the United States be taken advantage of anymore."

Today's Birthdays: Film composer Ennio Morricone (EHN'-yoh mohr-ee-KOHN'-eh) is 90. Blues singer Bobby Rush is 84. Actor Albert Hall is 81. Country singer Donna Fargo is 77. Former Sen. Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., is 75. Lyricist Tim Rice is 74. Actress-dancer Ann Reinking is 69. Actor Jack Scalia is 68. Movie director Roland Emmerich is 63. Actor Matt Craven is 62. Actor-comedian Sinbad is 62. Actress Mackenzie Phillips is 59. Author Neil Gaiman (GAY'-mihn) is 58. Actress Vanessa Angel is 55. Actor Hugh Bonneville is 55. Actor-comedian Tommy Davidson is 55. Actor Michael Jai (jy) White is 54. Country singer Chris Cagle is 50. Actor-comedian Tracy Morgan is 50. Actress Ellen Pompeo (pahm-PAY'-oh) is 49. Actor-comedian Orny Adams is 48. Rapper-producer Warren G is 48. Actor Walton Goggins is 47. Comedian-actor Chris Lilley is 44. Contemporary Christian singer Matt Maher is 44. Rock singer-musician Jim Adkins (Jimmy Eat World) is 43. Rapper Eve is 40. Rock musician Chris Joannou (joh-AN'-yoo) (Silverchair) is 39. Actor Bryan Neal is 38. Actress Heather Matarazzo is 36. Country singer Miranda Lambert is 35. Actor Josh Peck is 32. Pop singer Vinz Dery (Nico & Vinz) is 28. Actress Genevieve Beuchner is 27. Actress Zoey Deutch (DOYCH) is 24. Actress Kiernan Shipka is 19. Actress Mackenzie Foy is 18.

Thought for Today: "Hypocrisy is a fashionable vice, and all fashionable vices pass for virtues." — Moliere, French dramatist (1622-1673).