

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 1 of 47

- 1- Hanlon Brothers Ad
- 1- Recycling Trailer
- 2- Groton Care & Rehab Supper Ad
- 2- Bulldogs slide past No. 18 Wolves in Dacotah Bank Classic opener
- 3- Women's Basketball's fourth quarter comeback fell short to East Central
- 4- EarthTalk Column
- 5- South Dakota not immune to nursing shortages
- 9- Today in Weather History
- 10- Today's Forecast
- 11- Yesterday's Weather
- 11- National Weather map
- 11- Today's Weather Almanac
- 12- Daily Devotional
- 13- 2018 Groton Community Events
- 14- News from the Associated Press

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling

New & Cleaning of
Stockdams with our
60' reach trackhoe

605/395-6531

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Monday, November 26, 2018

6:00pm: Wrestling: Boys JH Tournament vs. Faulkton Area @ Faulkton High School

Tuesday, November 27, 2018

3:30pm: Debate at Groton Area High School (Sippel Novice)

6:00pm: Basketball: Girls 7th/8th Game vs. Clark/Willow Lake @ Clark Junior-Senior High School (7th grade 6pm 8th grade 7pm)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 2 of 47

Bulldogs slide past No. 18 Wolves in Dacotah Bank Classic opener

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 18 Northern State University basketball team dropped their first game of the Dacotah Bank Thanksgiving Classic to 61-59 to Truman State. The Wolves drop to 3-2 overall this season.

Statistically the Wolves out-played the Bulldogs with a game high nine made 3-pointers, 36 rebounds, 16 assists, and two blocks. The out-shot TSU 40.9-to-34.8 from beyond the arc, while the Bulldogs were more efficient from the field shooting 44.2 percent to the Wolves 41.2 percent.

Northern recorded 22 points in the paint, 21 points off the bench, 11 second chance points, and ten points off turnovers. After scoring the first three points of the game, NSU grabbed the lead again with 4:28 left in regulation on a made 3-pointer by Andrew Kallman.

The Wolves trailed by six at the half, and stormed back in the second, however were unable to make things happen going scoreless in the final three minutes of play. Ian Smith made it a 1-point lead for NSU with 3:46 left to play, however Truman's Turner Scott went 1-for-2 from the free throw line and tied things at 59-all with 1:51 left on the clock. The two teams traded defensive stops through the next minute of play, with the Bulldogs hitting what became the game winning basket with 13 seconds left.

Justin Decker and Bo Fries led the team with 13 and 11 points respectively, shooting a combined 61.5 percent from the floor. Fries led the team and the game going a perfect 3-for-3 from the 3-point line. Decker, alongside Ian Smith led the team with seven rebounds apiece. Smith also added a team leading five assists, as well as six points and one steal.

Parker Fox led the team off the bench with eight points of his own, while Gabe King and Andrew Kallman rounded out the starting five with five and three points respectively. Mason Stark and Cole Dahl each recorded five points off the bench, with one made from beyond the arc. Jordan Belka tallied the final three points for the Wolves going 1-for-1 from the 3-point line.

King tallied six rebounds of his own, followed by Fox with five and Dahl with four. Both Fries and Kallman recorded a team second best four assists, while Fox led the team with two steals. Decker and Fries notched the two blocks for the Wolves.

Northern returns to Don Meyer court this evening for a 6 p.m. tip against Chadron State.



**Thursday,
Nov. 29
5:30 p.m.
to 6:30 p.m.**

Groton Care & Rehab

1106 N 2nd St, Groton

Free Will Donation

Women's Basketball's fourth quarter comeback fell short to East Central

Emporia, KS. – Women's Basketball out-scored East Central 20-14 in the fourth quarter but it was not enough to complete the comeback as they fell to the Tigers by a final score of 52-58. The Wolves dropped to 2-2 on the season.

With 6:44 left in the first quarter, Mekash drilled a three-pointer to tie the game up a seven. Wolves were down 16-14 point after one quarter of play. East Central took control in the second quarter out-scoring the Wolves 21-5 in the second quarter. In the first half, Wolves shot 26.9 percent from the field, tallied 18 rebounds, and recorded two steals.

NSU would cut the East Central lead to 12 heading into the fourth quarter down 32-44. NSU would cut the Tiger lead to seven with: 48 seconds left on a Wadsworth three. Wolves finished the game with shooting 40.0 percent from the field, 26.3 percent from behind the arc, and out-rebounded the Tigers 38-28.

Leading the charge for the Wolves was Lexi Wadsworth finishing the game with 13 points and one rebound. Brianna Kusler also finished in double figures with 10 points, five rebounds, two assists, and three steals. Anika Fredrick tallied six points and four rebounds in the loss.

Sara Tvedt also recorded six points for the Wolves with six rebounds, and two assists. Brook Luitjens was the last starter for the Wolves finishing with five points, two rebounds, and one assist. Leading NSU off the bench with eight points, three rebounds, and three assists was Tori Mekash. Rachel Guthmiller and Zoe Hardwick scored two points off the bench in the loss.

Wolves are back in action Saturday afternoon at the Emporia State Thanksgiving Classic as they will face #24 Emporia State. Tip-off is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. against the Hornets.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 4 of 47



From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: With the onset of global warming, how likely is it that ski resorts and skiing itself might soon become a thing of the past?
-- Mandy Billings, Provo, UT

Last winter's low snow year and unseasonably warm temperatures across much of the American West meant a bad year for business for ski resorts, and also left many of us wondering whether skiing would even be possible in the warmer world we're getting as we continue to pump out greenhouse gases.

"Our recent modeling suggests that under a high emissions scenario, skiing could be very limited to non-existent in parts of the country by the end of this century, particularly in lower elevations—such as the northeast, Midwest and lower mountains around the West," says Cameron Wobus, lead author on a 2017 study projecting climate change impacts on skiing across the U.S. "Things look better mid-century, so this dire future for skiing isn't imminent—and things also look much better under a more aggressive greenhouse gas mitigation scenario, so this future also isn't inevitable."

According to Wobus' research, ski resorts in the Pacific Northwest have the most to fear, with predicted losses of 80 percent or more of the ski season. Ski resorts in the Northeast also won't fare well as we warm. The relatively good news is that the ski resorts in the intermountain west should face "less severe losses" due to their higher elevations.

The ski resorts themselves are doing what they can to try to reduce and offset their own emissions. To wit, Vail Resorts will power its 15 U.S.-based ski resorts with 100 percent wind energy beginning in 2020, and is well on its way to achieving its ambitious 2030 goal of "zero net emissions, zero waste to landfill and zero operating impact on forests and habitat." Nearby, Aspen Skiing Company is big on solar, donates six figures annually to local non-profits working on climate mitigation and related issues, and lately has focused on firing up its customer base to encourage climate-friendly voting in Congress. Meanwhile, the list of ski resorts now deriving all of their power from on-site renewables (e.g., Berkshire East, Jiminy Peak, Squaw Valley, Wolf Peak, Arapahoe Basin, Breckenridge) is growing every year.

Coordinating and facilitating much of this activity is the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA), a trade group representing over 300 U.S.-based ski area owners and operators. NSAA's Sustainable Slopes initiative, launched in 2000, provides an overarching framework for ski areas on sustainability and enhanced environmental performance. Its Environmental Charter serves as a blueprint and inspiration for ski resorts looking to green their operations.

Another influential player is Protect Our Winters (POW), a non-profit founded in 2007 by professional snowboarder Jeremy Jones to mobilize the outdoor sports community against climate change. Its "Hot Planet/Cool Athletes" program, in which a professional skier or snowboarder leads an all-school assembly through a 45-minute multimedia presentation detailing the science behind climate change, how it's affecting snow levels and what we can each do to become part of the solution, has been an especially effective way to get young people fired up about solving the climate crisis. The program has reached some 60,000 students since its inception in 2011.

CONTACTS: "Projected climate change impacts on skiing and snowmobiling: A case study of the United States," www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378016305556; Protect Our Winters, www.protectourwinters.org; NSAA Sustainable Slopes, www.nsaa.org/environment/sustainable-slopes.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. To donate, visit www.earthtalk.org. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.

South Dakota not immune to nursing shortages State's workers rank 51st in average pay

By T.D. Griffith

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit news organization. Find more in-depth reporting at www.sdnewswatch.org.

The nursing industry is under pressure in South Dakota as an aging population, fewer nursing students and an older workforce are combining to create staffing shortages.

But the state has an added challenge in filling open nursing positions - pay. National nursing studies show RNs in South Dakota earn less than their counterparts across the nation.

According to the American Nurses Association, South Dakota's registered nurses have the lowest annual salary of any state and the District of Columbia, ranking 51st behind Mississippi, Alabama and Iowa.

The association reports that South Dakota's 12,530 registered nurses received an average annual salary of \$57,010, or \$27.41 per hour. California's RNs posted the highest compensation at \$102,700, \$49.37 per hour.

Health care officials say many factors contribute to South Dakota's comparatively poor compensation levels for nursing, including the rural nature of the state, as well as low reimbursement rates to hospitals from Medicare, Medicaid and Indian Health Services.

Still, they are at a loss to explain why those same factors are not at play to the same extent in surrounding states.

While the average RN salary in Iowa is comparable at \$57,930, Nebraska nurses receive an average of \$62,210 per year. North Dakota nurses make \$63,140 annually, and, in Minnesota, nurses earn \$77,540 per year, the association reports.

In South Dakota, the number of nurses joining the work force - either as recent graduates or transferring from another state - has not kept pace with the number leaving in recent years. In 2016, the net loss was 1,738. That was up substantially from the 930 net loss the year before, according to the South Dakota Department of Health's Board of Nursing.

Nurses leave the profession due to retirement, a change of career or a move out of state. Some simply choose not to renew their RN licenses.

Compounding the shortages, enrollment in South Dakota's eight nursing programs has declined in recent years.

According to the South Dakota Board of Nursing's 2017 report on nursing education programs, last year a total of 308 LPNs and 306 associate degree RNs were enrolled in colleges and universities, a decrease of 103 students from the previous year. A total of 710 students graduated from the LPN and RN programs in 2017, 67 less than in 2016, the report stated.

While reasonable tuition rates for South Dakota's nursing schools are attracting out-of-state students, Carrie Clausen-Hanson, a board member of the South Dakota Nurses Association, said low pay makes it difficult to draw faculty and accounts for some of the declining enrollment numbers in the state.

"Faculty pay, teacher's pay, nursing pay, there is not a lot of difference," she said. "Part of why we have trouble with enrollments in our nursing schools is they can't find faculty. And a lot of it is due to pay."

Clausen-Hanson, who worked as a registered nurse in South Dakota for 35 years and taught at Presentation College, said many of her students who graduated with associate's degrees in nursing were landing jobs that paid more than her faculty position.



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 6 of 47

Nationally, nursing school enrollments also are being limited by a lack of qualified faculty and budget restraints. Almost two-thirds of the nursing schools responding to an American Association of Colleges of Nursing survey cited a shortage of faculty and/or clinical preceptors as a limiting factor for increasing enrollment.

AACN reported a 3.6 percent enrollment increase in entry-level baccalaureate programs in nursing in 2016. This increase is not sufficient to meet the projected demand for nursing services, including the need for more nurse faculty, researchers, and primary care providers.

Nursing shortages will grow

As the chief nursing officer of Regional Health, Lori Wightman oversees 1,200 registered and licensed practical nurses at the organization's flagship hospital in Rapid City, as well as hospitals in Sturgis, Deadwood, Custer and Spearfish, and facilities in Newcastle and Upton, Wyo.

Regional Health faces the same challenge from the nursing shortage as hospitals in other parts of the country.

"I would be lying if I said we didn't," Wightman, who has worked as an RN for 28 years. "The last figure I saw was a 1.13 million shortfall in nurses by 2025."

She points to the increase in demand for nursing care from the large number of aging Baby Boomers as one contributor to the problem. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2050, the number of residents age 65 and over is projected to be 83.7 million, almost double the estimated population of 43.1 million in 2012.

With larger numbers of older adults, there will be an increased need for geriatric care, including care for individuals with chronic diseases.

"South Dakota is not immune to that national shortage," Wightman said.

In addition, more nurses are approaching retirement age. More than 1 million RNs will reach retirement age in the next 10-15 years, according to the Health Services Administration. Currently, the average age of nurses in the U.S. is 47.

Before she joined Regional Health three years ago, Wightman said the organization had a turnover of more than a third of its workforce in one year, leaving "a big gap to fill."

Through a variety of recruitment and retention efforts, Regional has been able to reduce what then were 200 vacancies in nursing positions to 186 open spots today.

"We currently are having a fairly successful time in recruiting nurses," she said. Over the last 11 months, Wightman said Regional Health had hired 356 nurses using three pipelines of candidates to address the shortage.

Among those efforts are local collaborations with high schools, colleges and universities to increase interest in the profession; a national recruitment campaign Wightman admits, "has not been very fruitful," due to the nationwide demand for nurse, and in recent years, an international recruitment program that has been more successful.

"We currently have 75 nurses who were recruited internationally and are working in our system," she noted. "In the Philippines alone, there are over 200,000 nurses looking for jobs in the United States. They are investing in their education. They are developing nurses, doctors and all kinds of professionals and they



Registered Nurse Kelly Weis attends to a patient at Spearfish Community Hospital. Photo: Courtesy of Regional Health

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 7 of 47

benefit with foreign dollars flowing back to their country. They are eager to come to work for us.”

Staying home

Clausen-Hanson said the state’s low pay rate for nurses is in part a reflection of how residents value the profession.

“It’s similar to our teachers. Many people don’t necessarily understand the work nurses do and so many of our nurses were born and raised in South Dakota and don’t want to work anywhere else,” she said.

When nursing graduates join the work force, particularly in more rural settings, many have family ties that keep them close to home and lead them to accept positions that may pay below industry norms, Clausen-Hanson said.

“Employers often look at the pay scale and the market and if they can pay you less, they will,” she said. “Some people have the approach that they will settle for that pay. Nurses get better pay than a lot of folks, so they settle. Everybody has their different reasons. But, part of it is just our environment, the way we are in South Dakota.”

Wightman contends that national statistics ranking South Dakota last in nursing pay may be misleading.

Regional Health offers other incentives that make pay scales more competitive for nurses, including financial assistance as nurses earn their bachelor’s degrees, loan forgiveness, with the employer helping pay off student debt in exchange for service, and bonus incentives.

“We will never compete with California, Florida or even Texas because we are a rural state and we don’t have the reimbursement structure that supports high pay,” Wightman said. “But we are trying to have a fair base pay and add bonuses and rewards. We want to promote growth, development and engagement in the community. We don’t want it to be solely about their base pay.”

Wightman said South Dakota ranks high in offering a safe and stable working environment and a lifestyle that attracts people to the medical profession.

“People are interested in coming to work in South Dakota and enjoying the lifestyle we have here,” she noted. “They might not make the money, but they have a quality work environment where they really enjoy the work.”

And, despite South Dakota’s low pay for nurses, Clausen-Hanson said, many are willing to take jobs here because they want to work in a safe environment.

“There are places where safety is an issue due to the environment and nursing shortages,” Clause-Hanson said. “You may be making 50 bucks an hour, but it’s really not worth it when you and your patients are at risk.”

In addition, the rural nature of the state presents challenges for medical professionals and opportunities to make a critical difference in patient’s lives, Wightman said.

“I think South Dakota has a vulnerable population with people spread out for hundreds of miles and many chronic illnesses,” she said. “There are many opportunities to make a difference in people’s lives, to meeting a personal mission of caring for other people.”

Changing the game

Universities, health care systems, social service agencies and communities have banded together to try to address the challenge of attracting nurses to the state.

Average annual salary for Registered Nurses

South Dakota - \$57,010

Iowa - \$57,930

Nebraska - \$62,210

North Dakota - \$63,140

Wyoming - \$64,900

Minnesota - \$77,540

California - \$102,700

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017

Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 8 of 47

In July, the federal government provided a \$100,000 network planning grant to South Dakota State University, the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board and Catholic Social Services Rapid City to partner in a study of health care workforce shortages on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

The project, "Assessing Pine Ridge's Health Care Workforce Current and Future Needs," aims to conduct a health care workforce needs assessment of Pine Ridge's professional and nonprofessional health care (Indian Health Services and tribal) vacancies. The ban will also fund a health care workforce needs summit for tribes and provide tools to assist them in gauging and meeting their workforce needs.

And in mid-August, after 18 months of studies, the Huron Community Campus cut the ribbon on a new nursing program aimed at addressing a serious shortfall in qualified nurses in the Huron area.

"When our nursing task force came together, we came up with 46 open nursing positions in Huron and the surrounding area," said Doug Pietz, executive director of the Huron Community Campus. "One question was why are we not getting nurses? Was it a lack of interest in nursing? But students were interested in moving up the chain from LPNs to RNs. They couldn't travel to enroll in other nursing programs in the state. The best alternative was to bring the nursing program to them."

With a \$1.3 million investment, largely from the Huron University Foundation, the Huron Regional Medical Foundation and the City of Huron, Pietz said his institution partnered with Southeast Area Technical Institute in Sioux Falls, which has an accredited nursing program.

The 12-month program is offered to licensed practical nurses who have 750 hours of experience and are seeking to earn their associate's degree as a registered nurse. Seven individuals signed up for the inaugural class, he said.

"Nursing is critical to the Huron area," Pietz said. "Obviously, nursing is critical to all rural areas. This program represents a home-grown effort to provide educated nurses for all of the health care providers in town, as well as in the Huron area."

Tom Griffith, Deadwood, S.D., is a reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A fourth-generation South Dakotan, he has been a journalist, editor and photographer in Arizona, Montana and South Dakota. He also has written or co-authored more than 70 books and his travel features have appeared in more than 250 magazines and newspapers worldwide.



Health care officials say factors such as the rural nature of the state and low reimbursement rates to hospitals from Medicare, Medicaid and Indian Health Services contribute to a comparatively low compensation rate for registered nurses in the state.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 9 of 47

Today in Weather History

November 24, 1993: A major slow-moving storm system traveled across the upper Midwest during the Thanksgiving holiday, dumping heavy snow across most of South Dakota and Minnesota from November 24 through the 27th. The highest snowfall amounts of two to three feet occurred in northeast South Dakota. Over a foot of snow accumulated in west central Minnesota, and needless to say, travel became tough across the entire area. Storm total snowfall amounts included 31.8 inches at Westport, 29.5 inches at Leola, 28 inches at Britton, 25.3 inches at Aberdeen, 24.3 inches at Mellette, 24.0 inches at McLaughlin, and 22.0 inches near Victor. The snowfall of 25.3 inches at Aberdeen was a single storm record (that still stands today), and it made November 1993 one of the snowiest months on record in Aberdeen with a total of 30.1 inches of snowfall. Only three months have recorded more snow: November 1898, February 1915, and November 2000. The storm closed numerous schools and offices on November 24th across the area, resulting in an early start to the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Some freezing rain and freezing drizzle preceded the snowstorm in southeast South Dakota from late on the 23rd to the 24th, causing at least 60 vehicle accidents. The heavy snow also clogged roads, causing vehicles to become stuck and resulting in numerous accidents. As a consequence of the heavy snow, low wind chills, and low visibilities, a 23-year old man was stranded in his pickup truck in a snow bank north of Aberdeen for 18 hours on the 23rd and 24th. The weight of snow collapsed many structures in northeast South Dakota from the 25th to the 26th. The roof of a metal barn collapsed two miles northwest of Aberdeen, killing one dairy cow in the barn. In Castlewood, a 100-foot by 40-foot metal pole shed fell in, causing damage to a grain truck inside. A machine shed also caved in on a farm east of Bowdle. During the afternoon of the 26th, part of the roof and wall of the Roscoe Senior Center collapsed, causing a near-total loss to the building. Strong northwest winds followed the snowstorm in western and central South Dakota, causing considerable blowing and drifting snow and wind chills as low as 50 degrees below zero. In North Dakota, over two feet of snow fell over a large part of central and southeastern portions of the state. Most of North Dakota had over a foot of snow from this storm. The greatest snowfall amount was reported at Oakes, in Dickey County where 31 inches fell. At the National Weather Service office in Bismarck, 28.3 inches of snow were measured during the 108-hour snow event. This amount set a new single storm record for snow in Bismarck. The snow began the evening on the 22nd and did not end until the morning of the 27th. Except for about six hours during the day on the 26th, the snow was continuous through this period. Fortunately, the wind was only 10 to 25 mph during this storm, so it was well below blizzard conditions and blowing and drifting of snow was not a problem.

1812 - Southwesterly winds of hurricane force sank ships and unroofed buildings at Philadelphia and New York City. (David Ludlum)

1863: The "battle above the clouds" was fought on Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga. Pre-frontal clouds obscured the upper battlefield aiding a Union victory.

1950 - The temperature at Chicago, IL, dipped to 2 below zero to equal their record for the month established on the 29th in 1872. On the first of the month that year Chicago established a record high for November with a reading of 81 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - Hurricane Iwa lashed the Hawaiian Islands of Niihau, Kauai, and Oahu with high winds and surf. Winds gusting to 120 mph caused extensive shoreline damage. Damage totalled 150 million dollars on Kauai, and fifty million dollars on Oahu. The peak storm surge on the south shore was six to eight feet. It marked the first time in 25 years that Hawaii had been affected by a hurricane. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Showers and thunderstorms produced heavy rain in southern Missouri, southeast Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma. Flooding was reported in Greene County of southwestern Missouri. Springfield MO was drenched with more than six inches of rain. Thunderstorms over southern Texas produced more than eight inches of rain in Caldwell County and Hayes County, and thunderstorms over south central Oklahoma produced one inch hail at Temple twice within an hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure brought heavy snow and high winds to the Northern and Central Rockies. Snowfall totals in Colorado ranged up to 40 inches at Wolf Creek Pass, with 27 inches falling in 24 hours. Telluride CO received 32 inches of snow, and winds atop Mines Peak gusted to 95 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 10 of 47

Today



Cloudy

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Sunday



Mostly Sunny

Sunday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Monday



Partly Sunny

High: 29 °F

Low: 14 °F

High: 21 °F

Low: 8 °F

High: 20 °F

Snowfall Forecast

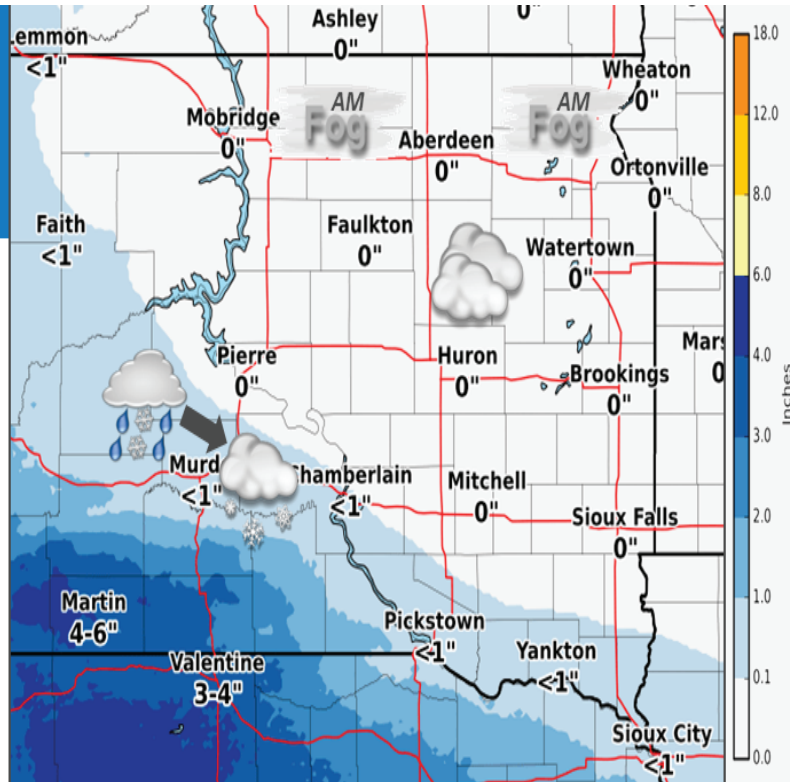
Saturday, Nov 24th 2018

Overview

- A mix of rain/snow this AM/afternoon will transition to all snow this evening across portions of Central SD
- Greatest snow accumulations south of I-90
- Breezy and colder tonight

Impacts

- Roadways may become slick, leading to hazardous travel



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 11/24/2018 6:08 AM Central

Published on: 11/24/2018 at 6:13AM

Expect cloudy skies and high temperatures in the upper 20s today across northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota, and a light wintry mix transitioning to snow throughout the day with highs in the 30s across central South Dakota. Lows tonight drop into the teens, and then the forecast turns dry and cold Sunday through Tuesday.

Groton Daily Independent

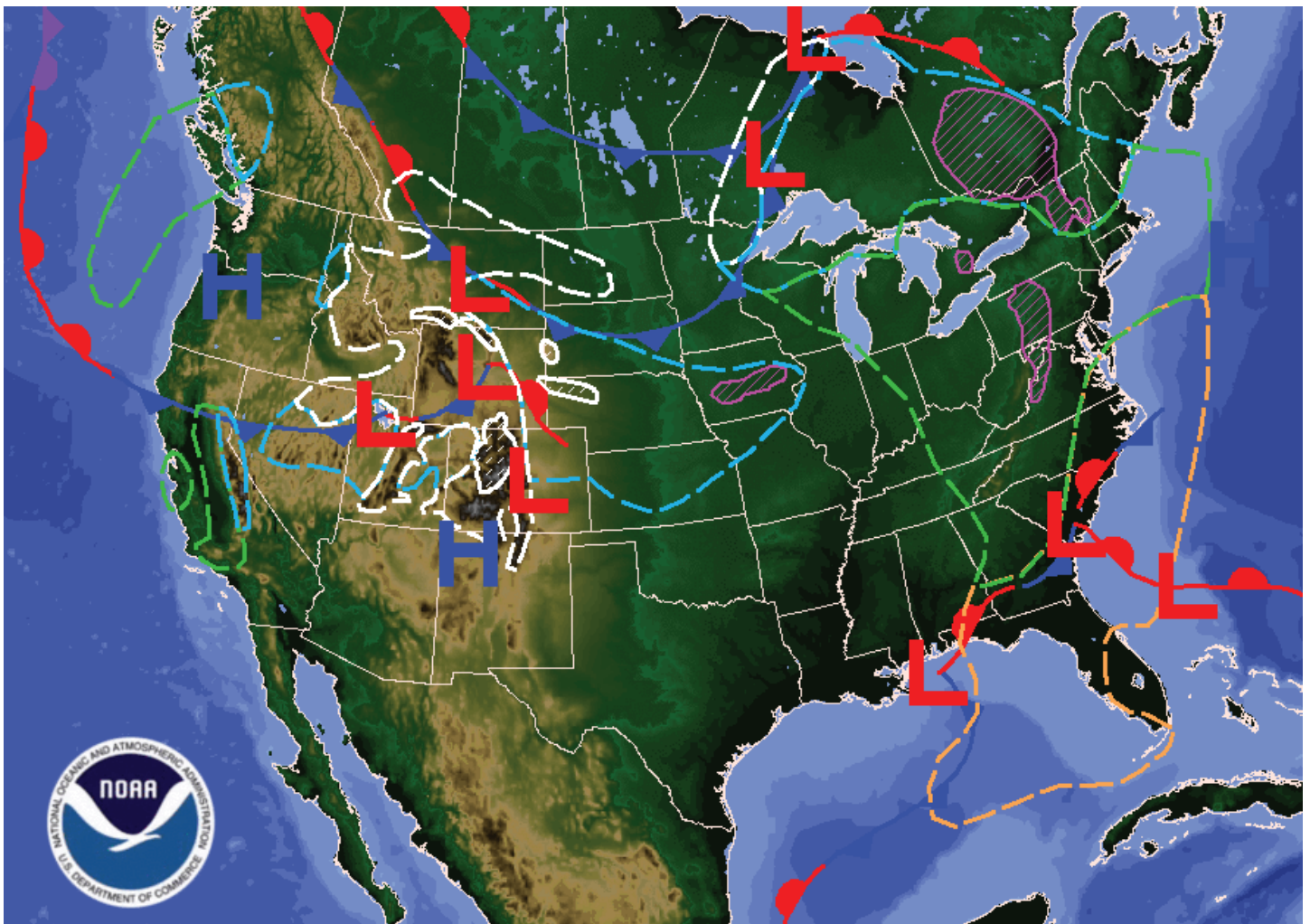
Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 11 of 47

Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 40 °F at 3:23 PM
Low Outside Temp: 25 °F at 5:05 AM
High Gust: 8 mph at 3:56 AM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 65° in 1932
Record Low: -17 in 1996
Average High: 34°F
Average Low: 15°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.59
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.76
Average Precip to date: 21.06
Precip Year to Date: 15.81
Sunset Tonight: 4:56 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:46 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sat, Nov 24, 2018, issued 4:49 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Hurley 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)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 12 of 47



AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Someone has rightly said that when someone speaks our name, we are called into existence. So, heres a question: If we go an entire day without someone mentioning our name, do we exist? Or, if no one has recognized us, does that mean we are not alive? Not at all! It means that we have not been recognized. We have been overlooked.

David began Psalm 18 by recognizing God and proclaiming his love for his Lord: I love you, Lord, you are my strength! This simple statement quickly describes Davids dependence on God, his intimate relationship with God, and his devotion to God. God, David said, is the source of my strength. Whatever he did was done through the strength that God gave him.

Often we think of strength as our ability to lift something or endure something as an athlete does in a contest. David was not thinking of that type of strength. But, he does go on to describe that strength: his Lord is a rock, a fortress, a deliverer, a shield, his strength and the horn of his salvation. All of these words that describe God come from a military setting and help us to see that David, in this Psalm, saw God as the One who protected him and made him the victor in all of his battles.

When David called on God, something happened: he was delivered or saved from all of his enemies. That also happens when we call on the Lord. Everyone, the Bible says, who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Call on Him now to be delivered and saved!

Prayer: Lord, we love You and thank You for being our Savior and shield, our protector and provider. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 18:1 I love you, Lord, you are my strength.

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

Hunting season lures strip clubs, trafficking to small towns

By JEREMY FUGLEBERG, Argus Leader

DALLAS, S.D. (AP) — Merry Whitney thought she would make bank.

Such is the life of a freelance exotic dancer. Word of a big earner ripples through your informal network. You hear of a good place to make some money, and you go.

That's how Whitney heard about a club in South Dakota, one open for only a few months a year: Frank Day's Bar in Dallas, population 123.

For about three months of the year, from September to November, the bar and restaurant transform into a completely different establishment. Frank Day's opens a short-term strip club, specifically catering to a rush of pheasant hunters who travel here from all over the country toting shotguns and cash to burn.

Pheasant hunting season was once a homespun South Dakota tradition. But increasingly it is a commercial enterprise, one that comes with a dark side: sex trafficking and pop-up strip clubs that cater to hunters here for a good time.

The hunting season's dark side stands in stark contrast to South Dakota's friendly, clean-cut image. It can be easy to overlook by small farm towns that increasingly rely on hosting a flood of rich pheasant hunters to offset losses from troubled agricultural markets.

Pop-up strip clubs, while legal, have their own place in the shadow. They can trap freelance dancers in a web of exorbitant fees, throwing them into debt and making them vulnerable to being illegally exploited by traffickers and hunters, the Argus Leader reported.

Frank Day's Bar is only one such short-term, fully nude strip club. But the bar has become legendary as a South Dakota destination for groups of hunters, mostly male, sometimes wealthy, looking for after-dark entertainment.

For dancers, that's an alluring jackpot. Whitney messaged and called Shelly Day, current owner of the bar founded by her father. She liked the bar owner. She planned a trip to Day's bar.

"I wanted to work for her," Whitney said. "I wanted to do well."

When Whitney arrived in Dallas, just before hunting season, she was already in the hole.

It was the fees.

To sleep in a trailer provided by Day: \$300 a week, up front. And then there were what Whitney saw as exorbitant house fees, money due each day out of each dancer's tip stash started at \$100 and went up as the hunting season hit. The fees blew Whitney away.

"It's just really easy to get in the hole and not be able to get yourself out," she said.

South Dakota's two largest tourist events, the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and pheasant hunting season, both have the ingredients that attract sex traffickers: lots of men a long way from home, looking for a good time, with money to spend.

South Dakota is dawning to the realization that human trafficking isn't just a big-city problem. It's essentially modern slavery that does happen in the state, as (usually) men, control and manipulate (usually) women and sell their bodies for sex.

It's a shocking practice, one that can be masked as simply providing entertainment for hunters in remote communities.

"These small towns allow this to happen because it's a social norm, right? 'Boys will be boys,' that's what we tell ourselves," said Tifanie Petro, co-chair of the South Dakota West River Human Trafficking Task Force. "There's this social acceptance because, 'that's just what happens here, that's just what goes on during the rally, or during the pheasant season.'"

Exotic dancing is legal. But in remote small towns, dark backrooms, and private lodges and trailers, the line to prostitution and trafficking can get blurry, then crossed. Dancers, trapped by fees or other debts, may feel no choice but to do whatever it takes to get paid.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 15 of 47

Whitney lasted four days at Frank Day's. She stayed in the owner's rental trailer, which she called run-down and dirty. And then there was Day's behavior.

"She was yelling a lot, and it was just unnecessary," Whitney said. "She kept reminding me about how easily I could be replaced, like I meant nothing to her."

Day's verbal abuse didn't stop, so Whitney did. She quit and left to work elsewhere. But not every dancer has that choice, she said.

Day's behavior fit a pattern all too familiar to women who have found themselves at the mercy of those more interested in selling bodies than respecting workers who strip and dance for money, Whitney said.

"A lot of women, I feel, definitely stick around and stand for being treated like that, because a lot of women have low self-esteem, and that's what pimps look for," she said. "I'm sure that's why Shelly thinks she can get away with it, because so many women are used to being treated so horribly."

The Argus Leader visited Frank Day's in September and spoke to Day for an article about the changes in pheasant season over the years. Day gave a tour of her establishment, but she chose not to walk through the back portion of the bar, saying the door to the back was locked.

The Argus Leader contacted Day for this article. Reached by phone, said she had no comment, said thank you, and hung up.

There shouldn't be a lot of money to make in Dallas, a blink-and-you'll-miss it town surrounded by rolling hills and farm fields.

But the community along U.S. Highway 18 in Gregory County claims valuable real estate. It sits amid pheasant country, home to a short-lived annual gold rush. Out-of-state hunters adding up to nearly half the county population drive and fly in this remote county.

No business exhibits the seasonal change in south-central South Dakota quite like Frank Day's Bar.

A bucking bronco statue rears above the front entrance of the establishment, a maze-like cluster of interconnected buildings, fronted by a large, dusty parking lot just off the highway.

Inside, a neon sign behind the bar declares this the "No Wives Club — Corporate Headquarters."

Dallas is the undisputed center of evening attraction for hunters at dozens of nearby hunting lodges.

"Hunt all day, play all night," says a poster in a nearby lodge, advertising Frank Day's, and small buses from lodges near and far pull into the bar's dirt parking lot, disgorging hunters.

Reportedly, one wealthy hunter once arrived via helicopter. His pilot landed in the field across the street from the bar. The pilot was sober. The hunter was not.

"Dallas tells it all. There are people sleeping in their cars in Dallas on opening weekend. You can't get in," said Gregory County Commissioner Jeff Johnson, describing the rush of hunters to the county during the season. "Frank Day's is the pulse of the people there, because you can't get in the parking lot."

Establishments like Frank Day's are well-known in the pheasant hunting community. Maybe they're not always spit-polished ("definitely a hole," one online reviewer wrote about Frank Day's in 2015), but word gets around: Here, it gets wild.

"Pheasant season brings young ladies from all over the states to this bar," said another online reviewer in a February 2018 comment on Frank Day's. "They are a lot of fun. Stage tipping can get wooly (sic) as the stages are full nude with two-way contact."

Contacted via email, Tatiana wouldn't answer the Argus Leader's questions. But, she wrote, said she would never go back because of what she says she experienced at the bar: Day's practice of requiring up-front money and not refunding it if a dancer decided to leave early.

"That place makes the business of dancing/stripping look bad," she wrote.

Sam is an exotic dancer at Frank Day's this pheasant season. This is her third year at the bar, and she said her experiences were much different than that of Whitney and Tatiana. Sam, from West Palm Beach, Florida, doesn't want to use her real name, a common move by dancers to protect themselves, she said.

There's lots of money to be made in Dallas, she said. And now that she's been at the bar for multiple seasons, she's getting to know some of the regulars, both nearby residents and out-of-town hunters.

"Instead of the big city, it's much homier. Everybody knows everybody," she said. "It's a big family instead of just co-workers. I enjoy that a lot."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 16 of 47

And the customers? Well, you have to be good about setting your own boundaries in terms of what you'll do for them, she said. Customers at Frank Day's are not as aggressive as clubs she's worked at in large cities, she said. And she described Day's fees as reasonable and comparable to clubs elsewhere.

"It's not for everybody," she said. "I think it's a great place. I know other girls that come back year after year, and they think it's a great place. But it's not for everyone."

Places like Frank Day's Bar set off alarm bells for anti-human trafficking advocates.

These legal, short-term strip clubs, set up in remote areas to serve a horde of rich visitors, tick off all the boxes for those who traffic people.

"People of South Dakota don't think it's happening in their backyard, but it is," said Lisa Heth, executive director of Wiconi Wawokiya, an organization in Fort Thompson on the Crow Creek Reservation that helps victims of domestic violence, sex assault and trafficking. She's also executive director of the Pathfinder Center, an underfunded 14-room long-term shelter for human trafficking survivors that opened last year in central South Dakota, its exact location kept private for safety.

"In these small communities, a lot of them don't think anything like that can happen," Heth said. "But it is happening, because a lot of these traffickers, they know that. So they're taking women to where the hunters are and trafficking them there."

Trafficking has garnered increased attention from state officials and law enforcement in recent years. A state DCI trafficking sting at the Sturgis rally earlier this year resulted in six arrests. Federal prosecutors are pursuing charges against two men recently arrested for allegedly trafficking a minor. Governor-elect Kristi Noem co-sponsored multiple anti-trafficking measures while serving as the state's lone representative in Congress.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline reports in 2017 it took in dozens of calls and identified 32 trafficked victims, 13 traffickers and nine businesses involved in trafficking in South Dakota, primarily sex trafficking. Its map of trafficking hotspots includes a dot that appears within Gregory County, home to Dallas.

Sex trafficking is extraordinarily hard to document and track because it is notoriously under-reported. Many aren't aware of what to look for. Survivors and victims often don't come forward, muzzled by a toxic brew of fear, shame, trauma and community indifference and shunning.

Kelly Patterson is a notable exception from the silence. She is a sex-trade survivor and wrote about her experiences and return to freedom in her book, "From Trafficked to Treasured," which delves into the unique nature of trafficking in rural areas such as South Dakota. She now works as an advocate and counselor, and regularly presents on trafficking and its warning signs.

"You're not going to see streetwalkers in rural America. Our cities are not big enough. They would be obviously recognized, turned in and stopped," Patterson said. "Because it's such a trafficking business, it has to look like something that blends in."

The disguise, in this case: hunting season entertainment.

Whitney, the dancer who left Frank Day's after her 2015 visit, said she's never seen what she would define as human trafficking. Neither had Sam, the dancer currently working at Frank Day's, who said she has witnessed it elsewhere.

"It's very 'come in, hang out at the bar, buy a few lap dances,' that kind of deal," she said, about the Dallas bar.

But Whitney said the economics of dancing at places like Frank Day's creates an environment where the pressure is to do whatever it takes.

"When there such high fees, girls are willing to do more there," she said, "Girls are going to do ... a lot, in the back, you know? It really doesn't surprise me, because fees are that high."

So where are the police? Not at Frank Day's in tiny Dallas, which has no police department — not unusual for a South Dakota town of its size.

In a September conversation with the Argus Leader about law enforcement during pheasant season, Lafe Gildemaster, police chief in the nearby town of Gregory, said he's seldom involved with the bar, which he said is monitored by Gregory County Sheriff's Office.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 17 of 47

Gildemaster spends more time during the season helping hunters track down missing — and very expensive — hunting dogs. Hunting season is less rowdy than it used to be, he said.

"Quiet is good," he said.

Local law enforcement did respond to multiple requests for comment over the past two weeks.

Follow-up attempts to contact Gildemaster on his office phone directed calls to his cellphone. All calls to his cellphone went unanswered and his voicemail inbox was full. Gregory County Sheriff Tim Drey didn't respond to multiple attempts to contact him, including messages left over the phone with county dispatchers and to the sheriff office's email.

Asked about a rumored prostitution sting at Frank Day's last year, a representative for the state Department of Criminal Investigation issued this statement: "The DCI does a number of operations, but we do not confirm any details. The only time operation details are released is if there are arrests."

For trafficking survivor advocates like Heth, of the Pathfinder Center, pheasant season isn't the tradition-tinged seasonal activity that harms only birds. Trafficking ensnares South Dakota women as well. Native American women are heavily targeted.

"When it comes to pheasant season, I cringe, because hunting season is open on our women, as well," she said.

And she's got a message for pheasant hunters.

"Your main purpose is to hunt for pheasant, so hunt for pheasants. Leave our women alone."

In small towns, explosive conversations are a mix of discretion and gossip.

It's a stew that can be hard to explain to someone not from tiny community such as Dallas, or nearby Gregory, population 1,255.

Everyone loves to talk about the good things. The bad things? When you talk about those, you abide by unwritten code of partial silence, one that incidentally provides cover for traffickers and others to exploit people in service of visitors looking for a good time.

Petro, co-chair of the West River Human Trafficking Task Force, knows the code. She grew up in Wall, population 766. The whispered conversations avoid the tough conversations: What's really happening? How can we stop it? What should be done? Who is responsible?

"Everybody knows everybody's business, but yet it's nobody's business," she said. "We're going to talk about it with the neighbor, but we're not going to call law enforcement, because 'it's none of my business.'"

Dallas, in Gregory County, isn't the only small town where this seems to be true. But it certainly fits the mold, said Tess Franzen, founder and executive director of Freedom's Journey, a Rapid City based nonprofit organization that helps victims and survivors of human trafficking.

"It's an old community. My family homesteaded just north of Dallas. That's where our family homestead is. I have uncles that still live there. And they know people they grew up with that my grandpa grew up with," she said. "It's people that are deeply embedded in their community, and if there's anything bad happening, they don't talk about it."

The Argus Leader visited Frank Day's Bar in September, weeks before pheasant hunting season opening day, and spoke to Shelly Day about her business, as part of an in-depth piece about the changes in hunting season over the years.

Day talked at length about how busy the bar gets, but she was tight-lipped about the back rooms of her business — the dancers. After the interview, she offered a tour. But first, she said, she had to go check on something.

Day was gone for over 15 minutes before returning and guiding the Argus Leader through Frank Day's kitchen and front bar and seating area, showing off historical photos, old cowboy boots and decades-worth of dusty memorabilia.

She ducked into a small room in the back, requesting no photos of the space. This was the original strip club set up by her father decades ago. Black painted walls. Mirrors. It was empty of people.

Down a back hallway stood a door. Behind the door was the back half of her business: an extensive space with stripper poles, couches for dances and more.

Behind that door was the nexus of late-night entertainment in south-central South Dakota's pheasant

hunting country.

Day tried the door. It was locked, she said. She acted surprised, then said there was no need to go through the door anyway.

Nothing to see here.

If you're a victim of sex trafficking or suspect you have information related to sex trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888, text 233733 or go online to www.humantrafficking-hotline.org.

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

South Dakota researcher shows benefits of regenerative ag

By DAN GUNDERSON, Minnesota Public Radio News

ARLINGTON, S.D. (AP) — Jesse Hall is sold on regenerative agriculture.

"It crumbles, and it looks like chocolate cake," Hall said. "Once it's got the consistency of chocolate cake, and it's spongy, that's what you want."

And it's got more life in it, too, from invisible bacteria to earthworms.

"I can't even dig up an inch without digging up an earthworm," Hall said. "I feel bad, because I don't want to hurt the poor guys. I always try to pack 'em back in the ground, try to cover them up — you know, like I'm tucking them in."

Hall has embraced regenerative agriculture, the approach to farming built around four basic rules: Never till the soil; use cover crops so soil is never bare; grow a more diverse mix of plants and graze livestock on fields after harvest or before planting.

The movement developed amid concerns that traditional farming is mining the soil, which leads to poor soil health, reduced biodiversity and overuse of insecticides on crops. It's an expansion of sustainable practices like reduced tilling of fields which many farmers have used for decades. Farmers trying the regenerative approach see it as a way to improve soil health, increase plant and insect diversity, protect water and make land more resilient to climate fluctuations: A more sustainable way of farming, with a smaller environmental footprint.

Jesse Hall is one of those farmers. Over the past several years, he has stopped digging his fields after harvest. He's started planting rye and other cover crops on those fields instead, and he's added oats to his corn and soybean crop rotation, Minnesota Public Radio News reported.

It took about two years for him to see the changes in the soil, but they've already led to better water management, he said.

The spongy soil absorbs more water, more quickly, which reduces runoff during heavy rains. That also keeps fertilizers and other nutrients on the field — and out of nearby lakes and streams. It makes the soil more stable, so equipment is less likely to sink into it — and get stuck — when the soil is wet.

Jonathan Lundgren preaches the benefits of regenerative ag whenever he gets a chance. Lundgren is a former USDA scientist who left the agency after he said supervisors tried to restrict his research on pesticides.

"Cover crops are sort of the gateway drug to get people in to regenerative agriculture," Lundgren said.

But regenerative farming is about more than cover crops and not tilling the soil. It's about increasing plant diversity, which Lundgren has found leads to increased insect diversity. Research has shown that can reduce pesticide use, because the "good" bugs eat the "bad" bugs, which helps keep plant pest populations down.

On Jesse Hall's farm, the simple act of adding oats to his rotation and cover crops to his fields has dramatically increased the populations of good insects.

For years, Hall — and his dad before him — had sprayed insecticide on his soybeans to control crop-damaging aphids. Now, he said, he rarely needs insecticide because he has more predator insects, like lady beetles, to help control the aphid population.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 19 of 47

"So all those years we wasted all that money," he said. "I think most of time now I might have to spray one or two fields. Worst-case scenario."

Lundgren is clear that the practice of regenerative agriculture is not anti-pesticide. He sometimes uses herbicides on his research farm. But he is convinced the science proves those pesticides are often unnecessary. His research found that pests were 10 times more abundant in insecticide-treated corn fields than on insecticide-free regenerative farms.

Using less insecticide saves farmers money, because they have to buy less of it. So does eliminating tillage, because farmers are driving tractors across the field fewer times, saving fuel. Lundgren also found that farmers practicing regenerative agriculture often earned extra income by raising other crops and selling cattle fattened by grazing on fields with cover crops.

"It made them twice as profitable," he said. "When we looked at their yields and their costs, the regenerative farms were twice as profitable. They had lower yields, but they had more profit. And farming is a business."

Lundgren's research found that conventional farms spent 32 percent of their gross income to grow the crop. Regenerative farms in the study spent only 12 percent. The biggest savings were from reduced fertilizer and buying seeds not treated with insecticide.

Lundgren has become an evangelist for the regenerative agriculture movement, but Hall said it wasn't the fervor that convinced him to switch methods on his own farm. It was the science. He'd worked for several plant breeding programs in South Dakota for years, so he understands research — and he believes the results of several studies are indisputable.

But it hasn't been a simple transition. Hall has found that regenerative farming requires more time in order to manage the complex system of crop rotations and planting.

Lundgren agrees.

"Regenerative agriculture is knowledge-intensive. It's not technology-intensive," he said. "And there's a lot to learn." Lundgren is still experimenting on his small research farm, where the sheep and hogs help keep the weeds down and chickens have the run of the yard.

He lifts a shovelful of crumbly black dirt. "I've had farmers that come out here and they're like, that's what dirt used to smell like when I was a boy," he said. "You go up on the top of the field where they've tilled, and that dirt, it's like dust. This is life."

Lundgren acknowledges the number of farmers using regenerative practices is still small, and he understands that many farmers are skeptical of trying practices so different than what they've used for decades.

Jesse Hall is sometimes painfully aware of that skepticism.

"You don't want to be the oddball of the neighborhood," he said. "You don't want the neighbors talking about you at the elevator, saying, 'This crazy guy stopped digging his ground, now he's planting a third crop. Good grief now what? What's this guy doing?' And it isn't fun to be talked about. You know, you've just got to train yourself to not care."

But for Lundgren, the fact that farmers are talking about regenerative ag is a good thing. Even if they're skeptical, if they're talking, they're interested. He said he's hearing from a growing number of farmers who are questioning the current farming model of tilling and heavy fertilizer and pesticide use that drives traditional intensive production of corn and soybeans.

"Maybe this input-intensive industrialized model of agriculture, maybe it wasn't everything it was cracked up to be to begin with," Lundgren said. "Maybe it worked for a while, but we're at this cliff, this precipice, where the natural resource base that drove that system is almost gone and we better rethink it."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 20 of 47

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

07-10-30-33-59, Mega Ball: 23, Megaplier: 4

(seven, ten, thirty, thirty-three, fifty-nine; Mega Ball: twenty-three; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$155 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$155 million

No. 4 Baylor women pull away late, beat S. Dakota St. 72-66

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Lauren Cox had 28 points, 10 rebounds and four blocks to help No. 4 Baylor beat South Dakota State 72-66 on Friday night at the South Point Thanksgiving Shootout.

Cox shot 11 of 18 from the field, including 3 of 5 from 3-point range. Kalani Brown had 13 points, 10 rebounds and two blocks for Baylor (5-0), which outrebounded South Dakota State 48-35.

Cox hit a 3-pointer to give the Lady Bears a 10-point lead with 1:12 to play. Sydney Palmer missed a 3-point shot on the other end but Myah Selland grabbed the offensive rebound, was fouled on the putback and converted the 3-point play. DiDi Richards missed two free throws for Baylor and two foul shots by Macy Miller pulled the Jackrabbits within five with 31 seconds to go. After a turnover by Richards, SDSU missed two 3-point shots but grabbed the rebound both times before Miller converted a 3-point play to make it 68-66 with 20 seconds remaining. Juicy Landrum hit two free throws and, after a Jackrabbits miss, Brown made two foul shots to cap the scoring.

Madison Guebert led South Dakota State (3-2) with 22 points, including six 3-pointers. Miller added 14 points and six assists and Selland finished with 12 points, six rebounds, seven assists and four steals.

Tagyn Larson's 3-pointer gave South Dakota State a 12-10 lead — the fifth lead change in the first five minutes — before Baylor scored 13 points in a row. Lauren Cox made back-to-back layups, Juicy Landrum hit a jumper and Cox added a layup and a 3 to make it 21-12 at the end of the first quarter and DiDi Richards made a jumper to push the lead to into double figures 33 seconds into the second. The Jackrabbits missed nine consecutive field-goal attempts, including five 3-point shots, and went 0 for 2 from the free-throw line during that stretch.

Tylee Irwin answered with a 3-pointer that sparked a 14-4 run that trimmed SDSU's deficit to 27-26 when Madison Guebert hit a 3-pointer with 3:19 left in the first half. The Lady Bears took a 37-34 lead into the break.

BIG PICTURE

Baylor: The Lady Bears, who came in shooting just 55.8 percent from the free-throw line continued to struggle from the charity stripe. Baylor made just 12 of 23 on Friday — including 4 of 8 in the final three minutes — but hit their last four in the closing seconds. The Lady Bears prevailed against a pesky South Dakota State team in spite of what appears to be their Achilles heel but can they survive Big 12 play — or, more important, in the NCAA tournament — without better free-throw shooting? ... Baylor improved to 3-0 — all on neutral courts — against the Jackrabbits. The Lady Bears beat South Dakota State 60-58 in the second round of the 2009 NCAA tournament and 71-53 in the championship game of the 2006 Junkanoo Jam.

South Dakota State: The Jackrabbits received one vote in this week's poll and are ranked fourth in the CollegeInsider Mid-Major poll. ... Macy Miller and Myah Selland combined to make just 8 of 29 (27.6 percent) from the field, including 2 of 8 from 3-point range. ... Madison Guebert, a senior, moved into 14th on the program's career scoring list with 1,407 points.

UP NEXT

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 21 of 47

The Jackrabbits wrap up the shootout against Buffalo on Saturday.
Baylor plays Georgetown on Saturday before visiting No. 13 South Carolina on Dec. 2 in the SEC/Big 12 Challenge.

'Constitutional carry' supporters await Noem administration

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — After years of unsuccessful attempts, supporters of legislation that would allow people to carry concealed handguns without a permit in South Dakota anticipate revived prospects for the conservative prize once GOP Gov.-elect Kristi Noem takes office in January.

The legislation languished under retiring Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard, but Noem offered support for a so-called constitutional carry law during her campaign. Incoming GOP Sen. Lynne DiSanto, sponsor of a permitless concealed carry bill that Daugaard vetoed, said such legislation is likely in the upcoming session and she's optimistic about its prospects.

"There are a lot of Republicans that are very excited to have a conservative governor," said DiSanto, a state representative who is switching chambers. "I think under a new governor it's very likely to pass."

Daugaard has said the state's current gun laws are reasonable. Right now, it's a misdemeanor for someone to carry a concealed pistol or to have one concealed in a vehicle without a permit. At the end of October, there were nearly 108,000 pistol permits in South Dakota, according to the Secretary of State's office.

Daugaard vetoed DiSanto's proposal in 2017 and also rejected a similar measure in 2012; constitutional carry legislation failed during the 2018 session after he issued a veto threat. Bill supporters have argued that getting a concealed pistol permit can be burdensome.

Backers are likely to get a boost from Noem, who triumphed over Democratic state Sen. Billie Sutton in the November election. Noem in January urged passage of a permitless carry bill.

At the time Noem didn't endorse a specific plan, though her campaign said she supported the policy "in principle." Transition team spokeswoman Kristin Wileman said in a statement this week that Noem won't commit to legislation until she can review its text, but said she's a strong Second Amendment supporter and thinks provisions like constitutional carry can "protect and even strengthen this right for South Dakotans."

"The governor-elect will work to find a way that law enforcement and gun right proponents can come together around a solution," Wileman said.

Staci Ackerman, executive director of the South Dakota Sheriffs' Association, said the group hasn't discussed 2019 legislation yet. But Ackerman said the organization supported a bill in the 2018 session that allowed permitless carry for state residents with a South Dakota driver's license or identification card; the measure didn't advance out of the Senate.

The 2019 session is scheduled to run Jan. 8 to March 29. Republicans will control both chambers.

Packers, Vikings meet without promise of 1st place

By DAVE CAMPBELL, AP Pro Football Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The final weekend of November has arrived, with this Green Bay-Minnesota game predictably carrying plenty of weight toward the race for the NFC playoffs.

The twist, though, is the Packers and Vikings are stuck in the thick of the wild-card mix. The Bears, having beaten the Vikings last week, are the team with a healthy lead in the NFC North, which has been won only by Green Bay (five) or Minnesota (two) since Chicago's last division title in 2010.

"I definitely didn't expect to be sitting where we're sitting, but our record is what it is," Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers said. "Obviously, Minnesota has a strong team. They're probably surprised where they're sitting as well. So I don't think either of us is out of the division race."

Both the Packers (4-5-1) and Vikings (5-4-1) have one more game remaining against the Bears (8-3), but they're each lugging that 29-all tie in Green Bay on Sept. 16 down the stretch like a back tire that's low on air.

"Maybe it will help us, and maybe it'll hurt us, too," Vikings coach Mike Zimmer said. "I don't really know."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 22 of 47

The Packers will play three of their final five games at home, which is helpful because they've yet to win on the road this year. They'll have a more-mobile Rodgers than in their last matchup with the Vikings, when he was grinding through a knee injury.

"He looks like his old self, unfortunately," Zimmer said.

If the Vikings beat the Packers at home for the third straight time, they'll at least own a tiebreaker over their biggest rival. They'd still be 1½ games behind the Bears, though, with a difficult stretch of the schedule ahead.

"We'll definitely have to play four quarters," Packers coach Mike McCarthy said, "and maybe more than that."

Here are some other key angles to follow with the game:

NOT-SO-PRIME TIME

The Vikings are playing in the NFL's premier Sunday night slot for the second straight week, triggering a magnification of their struggles with the bright lights on this season. They've lost all three of their night games, in Los Angeles to the Rams on Sept. 27, at home against the New Orleans Saints on Oct. 28. and at Chicago last week. The Rams, Saints and Bears boast the top three records in the NFC, a combined 28-5.

"I guess we're just playing good teams," Zimmer said. "That might be the real factor."

Cousins has a 4-12 career record as a starter when kickoff is in the evening, though he has a 68 percent completion rate with 31 touchdowns and 16 interceptions and an average of 305 passing yards in those 16 games.

"It gets a little bit convoluted when you try to look at a stat and pair it with a player," Cousins said. "It becomes maybe a bigger, more complicated picture than just a win-loss record and trying to judge performance."

THIRD DOWNERS

The Packers are 19th in the NFL with a 38 percent conversion rate on third down. They're up against a Vikings defense that leads the league on third downs, allowing the chains to move only 28 percent of the time.

One problem for the Packers has been the absence of wide receiver Randall Cobb, long one of Rodgers' most reliable options. He has missed half of Green Bay's games with a hamstring injury, including the last two contests, but he could return to action Sunday.

SACKMASTER FACKRELL

Outside linebacker Nick Perry missed Green Bay's last game at Seattle, but third-year backup Kyler Fackrell made his absence moot with three sacks, his second such performance this season. Fackrell has eight sacks this year, more than starters Perry and Clay Matthews combined.

"The more you play, the more you get comfortable with it, the less encumbered you are with the thinking part," defensive coordinator Mike Pettine said.

JONESING FOR THE BALL

Packers running back Aaron Jones didn't play against the Vikings earlier this season because of a suspension for violating the NFL's substance abuse policy. Jones has 342 rushing yards and four touchdowns over the last four games, plus 12 receptions for 100 yards and a score. He's the league leader in yards per rush with an average of 6.4.

HELP FROM HARRIS

Vikings safety Andrew Sendejo will miss his sixth straight game because of a groin injury, but Anthony Harris has capably filled in as the starter in the previous two games. He had two interceptions against the Bears.

"I'm just coming in each day preparing like I'm going to be out there every snap and just trying to take advantage of any opportunities given," Harris said. "So each year, I've just been trying to take strides in getting better and increase my role and help this team win."

Harris signed with the Vikings in 2015 as undrafted rookie out of Virginia. Zimmer praised his progress with becoming more of a physical player as well as gaining a better understanding of the system.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 23 of 47

"I just think confidence," Zimmer said. "You know, he sees things and reacts. He's a good visual player, I think. He's very smart."

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

Person suffers life-threatening injuries in Rapid City fire

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A house fire in Rapid City has left one person with life-threatening injuries. Firefighters responded to the home about 4:30 a.m. Friday. The injured person was taken to a hospital. The home suffered significant damage. The cause of the fire wasn't immediately known.

Ipswich leaders won't let pet bobcat live in man's home

IPSWICH, S.D. (AP) — City officials in Ipswich have denied a new resident's request to allow his pet bobcat to live in his home.

Brian Palmer and his daughter recently moved from Washington state. Palmer wanted to bring his long-time pet, Pumpkin, a bobcat he rescued when the now-13-year-old animal was 2 weeks old.

Palmer's residence is near a school and a playground. The American News reports that City Council members debated whether the cat would be a danger to the public and if granting Palmer's request would set an unwanted precedent. The council ultimately rejected the request.

Palmer has set up alternative accommodations for the big cat with someone in Washington.

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

French protesters angry over fuel taxes clash with police

By THOMAS ADAMSON, Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French police fired tear gas and water cannons to disperse demonstrators in Paris on Saturday, as thousands gathered in the capital and staged road blockades across the nation to vent anger against rising fuel taxes and Emmanuel Macron's presidency.

Thousands of police were deployed nationwide to contain the demonstrations, including a tense protest at the foot of the Champs-Élysées where protesters burned barriers and large plywood sheets, wielded placards reading "Death to Taxes" and upturned a large vehicle.

There were no immediate reports of injuries in the clashes, but 18 were detained for various acts including for "throwing projectiles," Paris police told The Associated Press.

"It's going to trigger a civil war and me, like most other citizens, we're all ready," said Benjamin Vrignaud, a 21-year-old protester from Chartres.

The famed avenue was speckled with plumes of smoke and neon — owing to the color of the vests the myriad self-styled "yellow jacket" protesters don. French drivers are required to keep neon security vests in their vehicles.

Authorities said that 5,000 protesters flooded the Champs-Élysées alone, with 23,000 protesters in total nationwide.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner denounced protesters from the far-right whom he called "rebellious," as he accused the Marine Le Pen, party leader of the National Assembly, of encouraging them.

In a week of demonstrations that has dominated national news coverage, hundreds have been injured and two people were killed in accidents stemming from the protests.

The Interior Ministry played down the scale of Saturday's demonstrations by highlighting that last week's protest comprised more than 100,000 protesters across the country.

The unrest is proving a major challenge for embattled Macron, who's suffering in the polls and the focus of rage for the demonstrators, who accuse the pro-business centrist of indifference to the struggles of ordinary French.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 24 of 47

Macron has insisted the fuel tax rises are a necessary pain to reduce France's dependence on fossil fuels and fund renewable energy investments — a cornerstone of his reforms of the nation. He will defend fresh plans to make the "energy transition" easier on Tuesday.

On Saturday, Paris deployed some 3,000 security forces, notably around tourist-frequented areas, after an unauthorized attempt last week to march on the presidential Elysee Palace.

Authorities said protesters have so far not breached a no-go zone set up by authorities around key areas including the presidential palace and the National Assembly on the Left Bank of the Seine River.

But authorities are struggling because the movement has no clear leader and has attracted a motley group of people with broadly varying demands.

A man caused a dramatic standoff with police Friday when he donned a neon vest and brandished an apparent grenade at a supermarket in the western city of Angers. He was later arrested.

Taxes on diesel fuel have gone up seven euro cents (nearly eight U.S. cents) and are to keep climbing in the coming years, Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne has said. The tax on gasoline is to increase 4 euro cents. Gasoline currently costs about 1.64 euros a liter in Paris (\$7.06 a gallon), slightly more than diesel.

"When tax is no longer agreed to, it's the start of revolutions in France," far left leader Jean-Luc Melenchon told BFMTV.

Alex Turnbull, Chris Den Hond and Patrick Hermensen contributed to this report.

Taiwan ruling party suffers major defeat in local elections

By RALPH JENNINGS, Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan's ruling party suffered a major defeat Saturday in local elections seen as a referendum on the administration of the island's independence-leaning president amid growing economic and political pressure from China.

Soon after the results came in, President Tsai Ing-wen resigned as head of the Democratic Progressive Party. She will remain as president and her resignation will have no direct effect on the business of government.

The DPP lost the mayoral election to the Nationalist party in the southern port city of Kaohsiung, where it had held power for 20 years. The Nationalists also defeated the DPP in the central city of Taichung, while Ko Wen-je, the independent mayor of Taipei, the capital, appeared on track to win a second term.

At a brief news conference at DPP headquarters late Saturday, Tsai announced she was stepping down as head of the party. She also said she had refused Premier William Lai's resignation, saying she wanted him to continue her reform agenda.

"Today, democracy taught us a lesson," Tsai said. "We must study and accept the higher expectations of the people."

The elections for mayors and thousands of local posts were seen as a key test for the 2-year-old administration of Tsai, whom Beijing has relentlessly attacked over her refusal to endorse its claim that Taiwan is a part of China.

Tsai and the DPP had won a landslide victory in 2016, but China swiftly responded by cutting all links with her government. Beijing has been ratcheting up pressure on the island it claims as its own territory by poaching away its diplomatic partners, cutting official contacts and staging threatening military exercises.

The Nationalists, known also as the KMT, had campaigned on their pro-business image and more accommodating line toward Beijing.

Since her election in 2016, Tsai has walked a fine line on relations with China, maintaining Taiwan's de facto independent status that the vast majority of Taiwanese support, while avoiding calls from the more radical elements of her party for moves to declare formal separation from the mainland.

Taiwanese officials had warned that Beijing was seeking to sway voters through the spread of disinformation online similar to how Russia was accused of interfering in U.S. elections.

Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists rebased their government to Taiwan in 1949 amid the civil war with Mao

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 25 of 47

Zedong's Communists. They ruled under martial law until the late 1980s when the native Taiwanese population began to take political office, mostly through the DPP.

Memos to Nobody: Inside the work of a neglected fed agency

By JULIET LINDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mark Robbins gets to work at 8:15 each morning and unlocks the door to his office suite. He switches on the lights and the TV news, brews a pot of coffee and pulls out the first files of the day to review.

For the next eight hours or so, he reads through federal workplace disputes, analyzes the cases, marks them with notes and logs his legal opinions. When he's finished, he slips the files into a cardboard box and carries them into an empty room where they will sit and wait. For nobody.

He's at 1,520 files and counting.

Such is the lot of the last man standing in this forgotten corner of Donald Trump's Washington. For nearly two years, while Congress has argued and the White House has delayed, Robbins has waited to be sent some colleagues to read his work and rule on the cases. No one has arrived. So he toils in vain, writing memos into the void.

Robbins is a one-man microcosm of a current strand of government dysfunction. His office isn't a high-profile political target. No politician has publicly pledged to slash his budget. But his agency's work has effectively been neutered through neglect. Promising to shrink the size of government, the president has been slow to fill posts and the Republican-led Congress has struggled to win approval for nominees. The combined effect isn't always dramatic, but it's strikingly clear when examined up close.

"It's a series of unfortunate events," says Robbins, who has had plenty of time to contemplate the absurdity of his situation. Still, he doesn't blame Trump or the government for his predicament. "There's no one thing that created this problem that could have been fixed. It was a series of things randomly thrown together to create where we are."

Robbins is a member of the Merit Systems Protection Board, a quasi-judicial federal body designed to determine whether civil servants have been mistreated by their employers. The three members are presidentially appointed and Senate-confirmed for staggered seven-year terms. After one member termed out in 2015 and a second did so in January 2017, both without replacements lined up, Robbins became the sole member and acting chairman. The board needs at least two members to decide cases.

That's a problem for the federal workers and whistleblowers whose 1,000-plus grievances hang in the balance, stalled by the board's inability to settle them. When Robbins' term ends on March 1, the board probably will sit empty for the first time in its 40-year history.

It's also a problem for Robbins. A new board, whenever it's appointed and approved, will start from scratch. That means while new members can read Robbins' notes, his thousand-plus decisions will simply vanish.

"There is zero chance, zero chance my votes will count," the 59-year-old lawyer says, running his fingers over the spines leather-bound volumes lined up neatly on a shelf. Inside are the board's published rulings. None of the opinions he's working on will make it into one of them.

"Imagine having the last year and half of your work just ... disappear," he said.

Despite the choke of files piled up everywhere else, Robbins' office is remarkably orderly. Three paperweights rest on stacks of papers on his desk: a stone from Babel province, a memento from his time working for the State Department in Iraq; a model of the White House, to commemorate his tenure under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush; and a medallion bearing the merit board's seal. This job, which pays about \$155,000 a year, "has been the honor of my life," he says.

In the corner, a potted plant he rescued from a trash can outside his condo six years ago is now so tall it's bumping up against the ceiling, growing in circles.

He swears it's not a metaphor.

Robbins, a Republican, was excited when Trump won the election. The president chooses two board

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 26 of 47

members of his or her own party, and the Senate minority leader picks a third. Robbins assumed he'd finally be in the majority after years of serving alongside Democrats, soon able to write opinions rather than just logging dissent.

No such luck.

Trump was in office a year before he nominated two board members, a pair of Republicans, including Robbins' replacement. A third nominee, a Democrat, was named three months later, in June.

Assuming they'd be swiftly confirmed, Robbins quickly began preparing for their arrival, leaving customized notes with comments and suggestions for the nominees based on their distinct personalities and experience on each case.

He'd at least impart a little wisdom, he thought.

But months went by and still no vote. Robbins said he was told the Democrats were refusing to confirm the two Republicans by unanimous consent, insisting instead on a full debate for each. In late September, the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs subcommittee that screens nominees told Robbins it probably would not be able to confirm the appointees before the end of the current Congress. That meant that the entire process, which typically takes several months when there are no complications, will begin again come January, with no guarantee the nominees will be the same.

Now his pile of personalized sticky notes is bound for the trash, too.

Tall, slim and bald, Robbins is an eternal optimist. He sees the futility of the piles of paper and empty offices. But he's determined to keep the trains running, even if he's the only one on the ride.

"It's not like I'm sitting around on the sofa watching soap operas and eating bonbons. I'm still doing my job," he said. "It's only when the agency stops working that people realize what we do and the value we bring."

"Maybe someday they'll say, 'Good old Robbins, he just kept plugging along.'"

Frustrating? Yes. But at least it makes for a good story at parties.

"When I say to people, 'And then my votes just disappear,' the crowd usually goes 'Oh, no!'" he said. "And there's empathy, there's real empathy."

The board, established in 1978, is responsible for protecting 2.1 million federal employees from bias and unfair treatment in the workplace. The board handles appeals from whistleblowers and other civil servants who say they were mistreated or wrongly fired, and want to challenge an initial ruling by an administrative judge. The board also conducts independent research and writes policy papers destined for the president's desk.

Or it used to.

Robbins is quick to point out the staffing crisis began under President Barack Obama, back when Robbins' first colleague termed out without a replacement.

Others say it's the Trump administration's fault.

Trump has lagged slightly behind his predecessors in nominating political appointees. As of Nov. 19, he had nominated people for 929 positions, compared with Obama's 984 and Bush's 1,128 at the same point in their presidencies. Congress has acted on just 69 percent of those nominations, according to data provided by the Partnership for Public Service, a nonpartisan organization promoting government efficiency.

Max Stier, the partnership's CEO, blames the administration, the Senate and a dysfunctional system of appointing and confirming political nominees.

"There are many different flavors of the same problem," he said. He cited several other vacancies, including assistant secretary for South Asian affairs at the State Department, deputy secretary and undersecretary for health at the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the deputy secretary at the Homeland Security Department, among others. "There is so much going on, but the underlying reality is that our basic government is suffering."

John Palguta, former director of policy and evaluation for the merit board, called the delay "outrageous."

"We're setting a new standard, and it's particularly severe and unfortunate at MSPB because of the structure of the agency. It just can't operate. And to let it go for this long, that's really unconscionable,"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 27 of 47

Palguta said. "The administration simply hasn't done its job."

Sen. James Lankford, who chairs the Senate Home Security and Government Affairs' Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management said in a statement he understands the urgency in filling these positions.

"There are over 1,500 individuals waiting for their cases to be heard, but there are not board members in place which means the backlog cannot be addressed," said Lankford, R-Okla.

Robbins keeps plugging away and the cases keep piling up.

"We are running out of space," he said, shimmying between towers of boxes in a storage closet close to 6 feet tall. More boxes are stacked against the hallway wall and piled up in the clerk's office.

"Any additional cases I work from now on are just, grains of sand on a beach."

AP FACT CHECK: On break, no break by Trump in twisting facts

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Displaying a thin grasp of science, President Donald Trump questioned the reality of global warming because it was cold outside. Then came a federal report laying out the severe consequences of climate change and rebutting the notion that a frigid snap means it isn't happening.

Sizing up the U.S.-Mexico border, Trump declared he had closed it this past week and mandated that "no one's coming in." Actually, one crossing from Mexico, among dozens that stayed open, was partially closed before rush hour and pedestrians still had access to the U.S. during that time.

Before and throughout his Thanksgiving vacation in Florida, Trump took no holiday from twisting facts across a broad front — on Saudi Arabia, the recent election and the 2001 terrorist attacks among the topics.

A look at some of his rhetoric:

CLIMATE

TRUMP: "This is the coldest weather in the history of the Thanksgiving Day Parade in NYC, and one of the coldest Thanksgivings on record!" — tweet Thursday.

TRUMP: "Brutal and Extended Cold Blast could shatter ALL RECORDS - Whatever happened to Global Warming?" — tweet Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Trump is conflating weather and climate. Weather is like mood, which changes daily. Climate is like personality, which is long term.

The climate is warming, which still allows for record cold spells.

On Friday, the White House produced the National Climate Assessment by scientists from 13 Trump administration agencies and outside scientists. It amounted to a slap in the face for those who doubt the climate is changing.

"Climate change is transforming where and how we live and presents growing challenges to human health and quality of life, the economy, and the natural systems that support us," the report says. It details how global warming from the burning of coal, oil and gas is hurting each region of U.S. and different sectors of the economy. The report also projects increased deaths and disease.

The White House report swept aside the idea, already discredited, that a particular plunge in temperatures can cast uncertainty on whether Earth is warming. It says more than 90 percent of current warming is caused by humans: "There are no credible alternative human or natural explanations supported by the observational evidence."

"Over shorter timescales and smaller geographic regions, the influence of natural variability can be larger than the influence of human activity," the report says. "Over climate timescales of multiple decades, however, global temperature continues to steadily increase."

In other words, there are cold days in a warming climate.

The federal climate assessment is mandated by law every few years.

IMMIGRATION

TRUMP: "Two days ago, we closed the border. We actually just closed it. We're saying, nobody is com-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 28 of 47

ing in, because it was out of control.” — remarks to reporters Thursday.

THE FACTS: By no means did he seal the border.

On Monday, the U.S. closed northbound traffic lanes for a few hours at the San Ysidro, California, crossing to install new barriers. It’s the busiest of more than 40 U.S.-Mexico crossings. That work was completed and the lanes reopened before the morning rush of commerce and commuters who work legally in the U.S. Officials also closed one pedestrian crossing facility at San Ysidro and left the other open, so it’s not true that everyone was blocked from coming in, even at that one crossing. U.S. authorities acted out of concern that migrants gathered on the Mexican side might bolt for the U.S.

Trump is threatening to seal the border if Mexico doesn’t properly “control” people trying to get into the U.S. He claimed “I’ve already shut it down, for short periods.” When pressed about whether he meant only that one border crossing, he said: “No, no. Yeah. I’ve already shut down parts of the border.”

THE COURTS

TRUMP: “Justice Roberts can say what he wants, but the 9th Circuit is a complete & total disaster. It is out of control, has a horrible reputation, is overturned more than any Circuit in the Country, 79%, & is used to get an almost guaranteed result.” — tweet Thursday.

TRUMP: “It would be great if the 9th Circuit was indeed an “independent judiciary,” but if it is why ... are so are so many opposing view (on Border and Safety) cases filed there, and why are a vast number of those cases overturned. Please study the numbers, they are shocking.” — tweets Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Trump is wrong in suggesting that rulings by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco are reversed by the Supreme Court more frequently than those of any other federal appeals court. His description of the “shocking” number of overturned cases in the 9th Circuit belies the nature of the appeals system.

When the Supreme Court hears a case, it is more likely to overturn it than not. It does so about two-thirds of the time.

In the last term, the Supreme Court overturned 100 percent of the decisions of the 1st Circuit in Boston, the 3rd Circuit in Philadelphia and the 6th Circuit in Cincinnati. For the 9th Circuit, 86 percent were overturned.

Over the past five years, the Supreme Court overturned a greater percentage of rulings from the 3rd Circuit (92.3 percent), the 6th Circuit (85.1 percent) and the Atlanta-based 11th Circuit (81.8 percent) than from the 9th (77.4 percent), according to The Associated Press’ analysis of statistics from the legal website Scotusblog.

The 9th is by far the largest of the 13 federal courts of appeals, covering Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington. That means that in raw numbers, more cases are heard and reversed from the 9th year in and year out. But that does not make it the most frequently overturned.

On Monday, U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar, who’d been nominated by Democratic President Barack Obama, temporarily barred the Trump administration from refusing asylum to immigrants who cross the southern border illegally. That set off Trump’s ire. Any appeal is likely to go to the 9th Circuit.

Trump’s tweets took issue with an unusual rebuke from the U.S. chief justice, John Roberts. Roberts spoke up for the independence of the judiciary after Trump branded Tigar an “Obama judge” and said “We do not have Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges.”

THE ELECTION

TRUMP, on his impact on the midterm elections: “Look at Florida. I went down to Florida. Rick Scott won and he won by a lot. I don’t know what happened to all those votes that disappeared at the very end. And if I didn’t put a spotlight on that election before it got down to the 12,500 votes, he would’ve lost that election, OK? ... They would have taken that election away from him.” — interview with “Fox News Sunday.”

THE FACTS: Trump is exaggerating the vote margin of Scott’s victory as being “a lot” and suggesting

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 29 of 47

without evidence that his own efforts prevented Democrats from engaging in voter fraud.

Scott, Florida's Republican governor, edged out Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson in the closest Senate race in the nation in the midterm elections — by a margin of 10,033 votes, or 0.12 percentage points. It also was the closest Senate race in Florida since at least 1978, according to the Florida's Division of Elections website. It required two recounts — by machine and by hand — as mandated by state law due to the razor-thin margins.

Trump asserts without evidence that the attention he brought to the Senate race prevented Democrats from "taking" that election from Scott, hinting at voter fraud by suggesting votes "disappeared at the very end."

Despite Trump's repeated claims after the Nov. 6 election of Florida races being potentially "stolen," the state agencies charged with investigating potential fraud have said no credible allegations exist. It's not uncommon for vote tallies to change in the days after Election Day as local officials process remaining mailed and provisional ballots. In Florida, Scott saw some of his lead dwindle after the Democratic strongholds of Palm Beach and Broward counties continued to count votes.

SYRIA

TRUMP: "The country of Iran, as an example, is responsible for a bloody proxy war against Saudi Arabia in Yemen, trying to destabilize Iraq's fragile attempt at democracy, supporting the terror group Hezbollah in Lebanon, propping up dictator Bashar Assad in Syria (who has killed millions of his own citizens), and much more." — statement Tuesday.

THE FACTS: He's inflating the already staggering number of Syrians killed in more than seven years of civil war. Syrian government forces, led by President Bashar Assad and backed by Russia and Iran, have retaken most of the territory rebels seized during a war that has killed nearly 500,000 people, according to estimates by United Nations and human rights groups.

SAUDI ARABIA

TRUMP: "After my heavily negotiated trip to Saudi Arabia last year, the Kingdom agreed to spend and invest \$450 billion in the United States. This is a record amount of money. It will create hundreds of thousands of jobs, tremendous economic development, and much additional wealth for the United States. Of the \$450 billion, \$110 billion will be spent on the purchase of military equipment from Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and many other great U.S. defense contractors. If we foolishly cancel these contracts, Russia and China would be the enormous beneficiaries — and very happy to acquire all of this newfound business." — statement Tuesday.

THE FACTS: He's greatly overstating the value of expected Saudi investments in the U.S.

The arms package, partly negotiated under the Obama administration, mixes old deals, some new business and prospective purchases that have not been worked out.

The Pentagon said last month that Saudi Arabia had signed "letters of offer and acceptance" for only \$14.5 billion in military purchases and confirmed Tuesday that nothing further has reached that stage.

Those letters, issued after the U.S. government approves a proposed arms sale, specify its terms. Much of that \$14.5 billion involves a missile defense system, a contract that appears to have advanced more than other significant investments but not been completed.

Moreover, the State Department estimated last year that if the full \$110 billion in prospective arms business is fulfilled, it could end up "potentially supporting tens of thousands of new jobs in the United States." That's a far cry from the 500,000 to 600,000 jobs that Trump has said the arms deal is worth.

Details of the package have been sketchy, with no public breakdown of exactly what was being offered for sale and for how much. The government's Congressional Research Service has described the package as a combination of sales that were proposed by President Barack Obama and discussed with Congress and new sales still being developed.

Meanwhile, there has been no verification from either country that "the Kingdom agreed to spend and invest \$450 billion in the United States," as Trump put it in his statement. White House spokeswoman

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 30 of 47

Lindsay Walters did not respond to a request to explain the figure.

TRUMP: "Oil prices getting lower. Great! Like a big Tax Cut for America and the World. Enjoy! \$54, was just \$82. Thank you to Saudi Arabia, but let's go lower!" — tweet Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Merely thanking Saudi Arabia for lower oil prices is a gross oversimplification. Oil prices, which peaked Oct. 3, have been falling on the realization that U.S. sanctions against Iran would not create a shortage and on fear that slower economic growth internationally will depress energy demand.

Although the U.S. is now the world's biggest oil producer, Saudi Arabia remains the biggest exporter, and as a so-called swing producer with the ability to adjust production up or down relatively quickly, it can indeed influence the price of crude. But the market is far more complex than Trump suggests. Canada is actually the leading source of U.S. oil imports, for example, with Saudi Arabia second.

TRUMP: "Saudi Arabia would gladly withdraw from Yemen if the Iranians would agree to leave. They would immediately provide desperately needed humanitarian assistance." — statement Tuesday.

THE FACTS: This seemingly benign view of Saudi intentions in Yemen does not square with reality on the ground. A Saudi-led blockade is at least partly responsible for widespread starvation in a country where three quarters of the population needs life-saving assistance. It's the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The U.S. has scaled back support for the Saudi-led coalition fighting Iranian-backed rebels and is pressing for a cease-fire.

The international aid group Save the Children estimated Wednesday that 85,000 Yemeni children younger than 5 have died of hunger and disease since civil war broke out in 2015. The United Nations says more than 1.3 million Yemeni children have suffered from severe acute malnutrition since the coalition went to war against Houthi rebels.

TERRORISM

TRUMP: "Of course we should have captured Osama Bin Laden long before we did. I pointed him out in my book just BEFORE the attack on the World Trade Center. President Clinton famously missed his shot. We paid Pakistan Billions of Dollars & they never told us he was living there. Fools!" — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: There was nothing original or clairvoyant in the reference to bin Laden in Trump's 2000 book. As part of his criticism of what he considered Bill Clinton's haphazard approach to U.S. security as president, his book stated: "One day we're told that a shadowy figure with no fixed address named Osama bin Laden is public enemy Number One, and U.S. jetfighters lay waste to his camp in Afghanistan. He escapes back under some rock, and a few news cycles later it's on to a new enemy and new crisis."

Trump's book did not call for further U.S. action against bin Laden or al-Qaida to follow up on attacks Clinton ordered in 1998 in Afghanistan and Sudan after al-Qaida bombed the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The U.S. attacks were meant to disrupt bin Laden's network and destroy some of al-Qaida's infrastructure, such as a factory in Sudan associated with the production of a nerve gas ingredient. They "missed" in the sense that bin Laden was not killed in them, and al-Qaida was able to pull off 9/11 three years later.

In passages on terrorism, Trump's book correctly predicted that the U.S. was at risk of a terrorist attack that would make the 1993 World Trade Center bombing pale by comparison. That was a widespread concern at the time, as Trump suggested in stating "no sensible analyst rejects this possibility." Trump did not explicitly tie that threat to al-Qaida and thought an attack might come through the use of a miniaturized weapon of mass destruction, like a nuclear device in a suitcase or anthrax.

Associated Press writers Seth Borenstein, Robert Burns and Josh Boak in Washington, Jill Colvin in Palm Beach, Florida, and David Koenig in Dallas contributed to this report.

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New lander will add to humans' long fascination with Mars

By **MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — In our solar system family, Mars is Earth's next-of-kin, the next-door relative that has captivated humans for millennia. The attraction is sure to grow with Monday's arrival of a NASA lander named InSight.

InSight should provide our best look yet at Mars' deep interior, using a mechanical mole to tunnel 16 feet (5 meters) deep to measure internal heat, and a seismometer to register quakes, meteorite strikes and anything else that might start the red planet shaking.

Scientists consider Mars a tantalizing time capsule. It is less geologically active than the twice-as-big Earth and so retains much of its early history. By studying the preserved heart of Mars, InSight can teach us how our solar system's rocky planets formed 4 1/2 billion years ago and why they turned out so different.

"Venus is hot enough to melt lead. Mercury has a sunbaked surface. Mars is pretty cold today. But Earth is a nice place to take a vacation, so we'd really like to know why one planet goes one way, another planet goes another way," said InSight's lead scientist Bruce Banerdt of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

Today's Earthlings are lured to Mars for a variety of reasons.

Mars — "an incredible natural laboratory" — is reasonably easy to get to, and the U.S., at least, has a proven track record there, noted Lori Glaze, NASA's acting director of planetary science.

The cherry on top is that Mars may have once been flush with water and could have harbored life.

"Trying to understand how life is — or was — distributed across our solar system is one of the major questions that we have," Glaze said Wednesday at a news conference.

"Are we alone? Were we alone sometime in the past?"

In two years, NASA will actually seek evidence of ancient microbial life on Mars — if, indeed, it's there.

On Monday, the space agency announced Jezero Crater as the landing site for the Mars 2020 rover, which will gather samples and stash them for return to Earth in the early 2030s. The crater's ancient lake and river system is brimming with diverse rocks, making it a potential hot spot for past life.

Repeat, past life. NOT present.

Michael Meyer, NASA's lead scientist for Mars exploration, said the Martian surface is too cold and dry, with too much radiation bombardment, for life to currently exist.

Recorded observations of Mars — about double the size of Earth's moon — date back to ancient Egypt. But it wasn't until the 19th century that Mars mania truly set in.

Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli began mapping Mars in the 1870s and described the observed channels as "canali" — Italian for channels. But with the recently completed Suez Canal on many minds, "canali" became understood as artificial, alien-made canals.

Adding to the commotion, the U.S. astronomer behind the Lowell Observatory near Flagstaff, Arizona, Percival Lowell, decided the channels were transporting water from the poles for intelligent civilizations living near the equator.

Lowell's musings influenced H.G. Wells, author of "The War of the Worlds" in 1898. The 1938 radio broadcast of the science-fiction novel terrified many Americans who thought Martians were actually invading.

Ray Bradbury's classic 1950 novel, "The Martian Chronicles," kept up the Mars momentum.

Fast-forward to the 21st century, and SpaceX founder and science fiction enthusiast Elon Musk is leading a real-life charge to Mars. He envisions hundreds of thousands of people streaming to Mars in giant SpaceX ships and colonizing the red planet in order to continue the species.

Just this past week, Musk revealed new names for the interplanetary ships and booster rockets: Starship and Super Heavy.

Musk is so passionate about Mars that he hopes to die there one day, although he stresses not on impact.

While NASA is holding out for its own Mars missions with crews, it has turned its more immediate attention back to the moon. An orbiting outpost near the moon could serve as an embarkation point for the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 32 of 47

lunar surface and even Mars, according to officials. It also would serve as a close-to-home proving ground before astronauts zoom 100 million miles to Mars.

All the observations and reports coming back from NASA's robotic explorers at Mars will help the human Mars pioneers, according to Thomas Zurbuchen, chief of science missions for NASA.

That's the charm of Mars, according to scientists.

Going to Mars is "a dream," said the French Space Agency's Philippe Laudet, project manager for InSight's seismometer. "Everything is captivating."

For AP's complete coverage of the Mars landing: <https://apnews.com/MarsLanding>

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AP Interview: Saudi royal says crown prince is here to stay

By AYA BATRAWY, Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A prominent Saudi royal said Saturday that whether or not heads of state gathered in Argentina next week for the Group of 20 summit warmly engage with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, he is someone "that they have to deal with."

Prince Turki al-Faisal told The Associated Press the killing of Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi in the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul last month is "an unacceptable incident that taints and mars the long record of Saudi Arabia's own standing in the world."

"We will have to bear that. It's not something that should not be faced. And we do face it," he said.

Intelligence officials and analysts say the operation to kill Khashoggi, who wrote critically of the crown prince for The Washington Post, could not have happened without Prince Mohammed's knowledge. The kingdom, which has offered several conflicting accounts of the killing, denies the crown prince had any involvement.

The crown prince embarked late Thursday on his first foreign tour since the Oct. 2 killing with a visit to the United Arab Emirates. He's expected to visit other Mideast countries before going to Buenos Aires Nov. 30 for the start of the two-day G-20 summit, where he'll come face to face with world leaders.

President Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has kept international pressure mounting on the kingdom, are among those expected to attend.

"Whether the leaders in that summit will warmly engage with the crown prince or not, I think all of them recognize that the kingdom as a country and King Salman and the crown prince are people that they have to deal with," the prince said.

He said Saudi Arabia will continue to play a role on the world stage and that Trump's statement of support for Saudi Arabia recognizes the importance of the kingdom.

Trump insists there's not enough evidence to blame the crown prince for Khashoggi's killing, despite a U.S. intelligence report's assessment to the contrary. Trump says the kingdom is an important ally that has helped to lower oil prices.

"I thought President Trump was expressing what he felt was in the interest of the United States. He emphasized the strategic relationship between the two countries in the same statement and how Saudi Arabia has been helpful in many instances — not just oil," said Prince Turki.

The prince also firmly dismissed the U.S. intelligence assessments that the crown prince had ordered Khashoggi's killing, saying these same intelligence bodies had a "remarkably flawed assessment" in 2003 in the lead up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

"So we don't take it as being, as I said, divine revelation," he said of the U.S. intelligence reports.

Prince Turki, who led Saudi intelligence for more than two decades and served as ambassador to the U.S. and Britain, worked closely for years with Khashoggi before the writer became an outspoken government critic. The prince said Khashoggi worked under him as a spokesman for the Saudi Embassy in London and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 33 of 47

later in Washington, and that he last spoke to him three years ago.

The prince's father is the late King Faisal and his brother is Prince Khalid al-Faisal, the governor of Mecca.

Prince Turki said that reports of discontent within the ruling Al Saud family over the crown prince's rapid rise to power do not reflect the "extraordinary support" that King Salman and his son, the crown prince, enjoy.

"I see no signs of such disquiet or uncertainty vis-a-vi the king and the crown prince," he said.

The prince spoke Saturday during a policy briefing by the Beirut Institute Summit. The summit is the brainchild of Arab writer and columnist Raghida Dergham. The prince is a board member and supporter of the summit, which draws upon recommendations of its participants to put forth policy ideas for the Middle East.

Among its recommendations is support for the Arab Peace Initiative, a Saudi initiative dating back to the early 2000s that calls for east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in exchange for Arab state recognition of Israel and normalized relations.

In the absence of peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis, Gulf Arab states have moved ahead with their own outreach to Israel.

The driving force appears to be shared concern over Iran's expansion in the region. Oman, which has often played the role of regional mediator, welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a surprise visit last month.

Prince Turki, who himself appeared on a panel last year alongside a former chief for Israel's Mossad spy agency, said such appearances do not represent a normalizing of relations with Israel.

"I don't think it's so much a rapprochement as, how can I put it, a shot by shot deal that rises as happened with the effort by the Sultan of Oman to push for a restart of the negotiations," he said.

Tijuana declares 'humanitarian crisis,' seeks help from UN

By JULIE WATSON, Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) — The mayor of Tijuana has declared a humanitarian crisis in his border city and said Friday he was asking the United Nations for aid to deal with the approximately 5,000 Central American migrants, most of whom were camped out inside a sports complex.

The comments by Mayor Juan Manuel Gastelum came as city officials and volunteers worked together to assist the 4,976 men, women and children who had arrived after more than a month on the road. The Trump administration has spent weeks lambasting the caravan, which it said was filled with criminals, gang members and even — it insinuated at one point without any proof — terrorists.

Manuel Figueroa, who leads the city's social services department, said Tijuana was bringing in portable toilets and showers, as well as shampoo and soap.

It wasn't enough.

"Because of the absence, the apathy and the abandonment of the federal government, we are having to turn to international institutions like the U.N.," Figueroa said.

Rene Vazquez, 60, a Tijuana resident who was volunteering at the stadium, said Mexico's federal government ignored the problem by allowing the caravan to cross the country without stopping. Now the city of 1.6 million is stuck with the fallout.

"I don't have anything against the migrants, they were the most deceived, but this is affecting us all," Vazquez said.

Gastelum vowed not to commit the city's public resources to dealing with the situation. On Thursday, his government issued a statement saying that it was requesting help from the U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Vazquez, who plays on a soccer team that uses the sports complex, said Mexico should step up now and process humanitarian visas for the group so they can start looking for work. Meanwhile, since his soccer team can no longer practice at the complex, he was spending time passing out donated pizzas

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 34 of 47

and roasted chicken to the migrants.

The migrant caravan that left Honduras in mid-October was mostly well received by the towns it passed through along the way to the border. Even cities with few resources made sure the migrants had food and a place to rest.

But in those places, the caravan stayed at most two nights — with the exception of Mexico City. In Tijuana, many of the migrants who are fleeing violence and poverty are seeking asylum in the United States and face the prospect of spending months in the border city before they have the opportunity to speak with a U.S. official.

Gastelum said Friday that the Mexican government has talked about sending 20 tons of resources to Tijuana to help but that three-fourths consisted of materials to reinforce the border and only 5 tons were for the migrants.

The mayor also criticized the federal government for not taking more seriously President Donald Trump's threat Thursday to shut down the border if his administration determined Mexico had lost "control" of the situation in Tijuana.

"That's serious," he said.

The migrants also were receiving support from local churches, private citizens who have been providing food, as well as various agencies of the Baja California state government, which says it identified 7,000 job openings for those who qualify.

Adelaida Gonzalez, 37, of Guatemala City arrived in Tijuana three days ago and was having a hard time adjusting. She was tired of sleeping on a blanket on a dirt field, of waiting 30 minutes to go to the bathroom and again to get food and didn't know how much more she could take.

"We would not have risked coming if we had known it was going to be this hard," said Gonzales, who left Guatemala with her 15-year-old son and her neighbor.

She said she was considering accepting Mexico's offer to stay and work in Chiapas as a refugee.

Some of the migrants staged a small demonstration at the city's Chaparral border crossing Thursday, and a few dozen spent the night there. Police cordoned off the streets around the crossing tangling traffic, but pedestrian traffic across the border continued uninterrupted Friday.

Alicia Ramirez, 65, a Tijuana businesswoman, said she had been worried she wouldn't be able to make her annual Black Friday crossing to do her Christmas shopping, but had no trouble walking into California. About a dozen Mexican police stood by the crossing carrying plastic shields.

Still, the threat of a border closure kept her daughters in Los Angeles from coming to see her for the holidays.

"My daughters were worried, so they decided not to come," she said.

AP writer Christopher Sherman in Mexico City contributed to this report.

In era of online retail, Black Friday still lures a crowd

By JOSEPH PISANI, ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and CLAIRE GALOFARO, AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It would have been easy to turn on their computers at home over plates of leftover turkey and take advantage of the Black Friday deals most retailers now offer online.

But across the country, thousands of shoppers flocked to stores on Thanksgiving or woke up before dawn the next day to take part in this most famous ritual of American consumerism.

Shoppers spent their holiday lined up outside the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, by 4 p.m. Thursday, and the crowd had swelled to 3,000 people by the time doors opened at 5 a.m. Friday morning. In Ohio, a group of women was so determined, they booked a hotel room Thursday night to be closer to the stores. In New York City, one woman went straight from a dance club to a department store in the middle of the night.

Many shoppers said Black Friday is as much about the spectacle as it is about doorbuster deals.

Kati Anderson said she stopped at Cumberland Mall in Atlanta Friday morning for discounted clothes as

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 35 of 47

well as "the people watching." Her friend, Katie Nasworthy, said she went to the mall instead of shopping online because she likes to see the Christmas decorations.

"It doesn't really feel like Christmas until now," said Kim Bryant, shopping in suburban Denver with her daughter and her daughter's friend, who had lined up at 5:40 a.m., then sprinted inside when the doors opened at 6 a.m.

Brick-and-mortar stores have worked hard to prove they can counter the competition from online behemoth Amazon. From Macy's to Target and Walmart, retailers are blending their online and store shopping experience with new tools like digital maps on smart phones and more options for shoppers to buy online and pick up at stores. And customers, frustrated with long checkout lines, can check out at Walmart and other stores with a salesperson in store aisles.

Consumers nearly doubled their online orders that they picked up at stores from Wednesday to Thanksgiving, according to Adobe Analytics, which tracks online spending.

Priscilla Page, 28, punched her order number into a kiosk near the entrance of a Walmart in Louisville, Kentucky. She found a good deal online for a gift for her boyfriend, then arrived at the store to retrieve it.

"I've never Black Friday-shopped before," she said, as employees delivered her bag minutes later. "I'm not the most patient person ever. Crowds, lines, waiting, it's not really my thing. This was a lot easier."

The holiday shopping season presents a big test for a U.S. economy, whose overall growth so far this year has relied on a burst of consumer spending. Americans upped their spending during the first half of 2018 at the strongest pace in four years, yet retail sales gains have tapered off recently. The sales totals over the next month will be a good indicator as to whether consumers simply paused to catch their breath or feel less optimistic about the economy in 2019.

The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, is expecting holiday retail sales to increase as much as 4.8 percent over 2017 for a total of \$720.89 billion. The sales growth marks a slowdown from last year's 5.3 percent, but remains healthy.

The retail economy is also tilting steeply toward online shopping. Over the past 12 months, purchases at non-store retailers such as Amazon have jumped 12.1 percent as sales at traditional department stores have slumped 0.3 percent. Adobe Analytics reported Thursday that Thanksgiving reached a record \$3.7 billion in online retail sales, up 28 percent from the same year ago period. For Black Friday, online spending was on track to hit more than \$6.4 billion, according to Adobe.

Target reported that shoppers bought big ticket items like TVs, iPads, and Apple Watches. Among the most popular toy deals were Lego, L.O.L. Surprise from MGA Entertainment and Mattel's Barbie. It said gamers picked up video game consoles like Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4 and the Xbox One.

Others reported stumbling onto more obscure savings. At a Cincinnati mall, Bethany Carrington scored a \$29 all-in-one trimmer for her husband's nose hair needs and, for \$17, "the biggest Mr. Potato Head I've ever seen."

Black Friday itself has morphed from a single day when people got up early to score doorbusters into a whole month of deals. Plenty of major stores including Macy's, Walmart and Target started their deals on Thanksgiving evening. But some families are sticking by their Black Friday traditions.

"We boycotted Thursday shopping; that's the day for family. But the experience on Friday is just for fun," said Michelle Wise, shopping at Park Meadows Mall in Denver with her daughters, 16-year-old Ashleigh and 14-year-old Avery.

By mid-day Friday, there had not been widespread reports of the deal-inspired chaos that has become central to Black Friday lore — fist fights over discounted televisions or stampedes toward coveted sale items.

Two men at an Alabama mall got into a fight, and one of the men opened fire, shooting the other man and a 12-year-old bystander, both of whom were taken to the hospital with injuries. Police shot and killed the gunman. Authorities have not said whether the incident was related to Black Friday shopping or if it stemmed from an unrelated dispute.

Candice Clark arrived at the Walmart in Louisville with her 19-year-old daughter Desiree Douthitt, looked around and remarked at how calm it all seemed. They have long been devotees of Black Friday deals and for years braved the crowds and chaos. Clark's son, about 10 years ago, got hit in the head with a griddle

as shoppers wrestled over it. They saw one woman flash a Taser and threaten to use it on anyone who came between her and her desired fondue pot.

They've watched over the years as the traditional madness of the day has dissipated as shopping transitioned to online and stores stretched their sales from a one-day sprint to a days-long marathon.

"It seems pretty normal in here," said Roy Heller, as he arrived at the Louisville Walmart, a little leery of Black Friday shopping, but pleasantly surprised to find that he didn't even have to stand in line.

He had tried to buy his son a toy robot on Amazon, but it was sold out. Friday morning, he frantically searched the internet and found one single robot left, at a Walmart 25 miles from his home. He bought it online and arrived an hour later to pick it up.

Employees delivered his bag, he held it up and declared: "I got the last one in Louisville!"

Galofaro is based in Louisville, Kentucky. Associated Press writers Jeff Martin in Atlanta, Ryan Tarinelli in Dallas, Katie Foody in Denver, Angie Wang in Cincinnati, Amy Taxin from Costa Mesa, California also contributed to this report.

Associate of Trump confidant says he's mulling a plea deal

By CHAD DAY, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — A conservative writer and associate of Trump confidant Roger Stone said he is in plea talks with special counsel Robert Mueller's team.

Jerome Corsi told The Associated Press on Friday that he has been negotiating a potential plea but declined to comment further. He said on a YouTube show earlier this month that he expected to be charged with lying to federal investigators, though he said at the time that he was innocent of wrongdoing.

Mueller's team questioned Corsi as part of an investigation into Stone's connections with WikiLeaks. American intelligence agencies have assessed that Russia was the source of hacked material released by WikiLeaks during the 2016 election that damaged Hillary Clinton's campaign. Mueller's office is trying to determine whether Stone and other associates of President Donald Trump had advance knowledge of WikiLeaks' plans.

The confirmation of plea talks — first reported by The Washington Post — comes as Mueller's team has just received fresh information from Trump personally and as federal prosecutors in Virginia recently inadvertently disclosed the existence of sealed charges against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

It's unclear if the charges against Assange are related to Mueller's investigation, but WikiLeaks was singled out in an indictment last summer against a group of Russian intelligence officers accused of carrying out the wide-ranging hack of Clinton's campaign and other Democratic organizations.

It's also not known if any plea by Corsi signals a new raft of charges by the special counsel or just that investigators are aggressively pursuing cases against people they believe made false statements to investigators. Mueller has brought such cases against four others, including former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

In a brief phone call with the AP, Corsi declined to elaborate on the details of any plea deal or say if a court hearing had been set.

Corsi, the former Washington bureau chief of the conspiracy theory outlet InfoWars, has said he cooperated with the probe for about two months after he received a subpoena in August. As part of that cooperation, he turned over two computers and a cell phone and provided the FBI access to his email accounts and tweets.

But he said earlier this month that talks with investigators recently had "blown up."

"I fully anticipate that in the next few days, I will be indicted by Mueller," he said.

The spokesman for the special counsel, Peter Carr, declined comment on Friday.

Shortly after his YouTube show appearance, Corsi broke off a scheduled interview with NBC News and declined any other media interviews. His comments Friday were the first since then.

Stone has denied being a conduit for WikiLeaks, which published thousands of emails stolen from Clinton

campaign chairman John Podesta in the weeks before the election.

Stone, who also has said he is prepared to be indicted, said earlier this month that he "had no advanced notice of the source or content or the exact timing of the release of the WikiLeaks disclosures."

He told AP in a separate statement Friday: "It is clear from his recent videos and his recent interviews that my friend Dr. Corsi has been under a tremendous amount of pressure and it is beginning to affect him profoundly. He has stated publicly that he is being asked over and over to say things he simply does not believe occurred."

Follow Chad Day on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ChadSDay>

Government seeks quick ruling on transgender troops case

By JESSICA GRESKO and MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration asked the Supreme Court to issue an unusually quick ruling on the Pentagon's policy of restricting military service by transgender people. It's the fourth time in recent months the administration has sought to bypass lower courts that have blocked some of its more controversial proposals and push the high court, with a conservative majority, to weigh in quickly on a divisive issue.

Earlier this month, the administration asked the high court to fast-track cases on the president's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which shields young immigrants from deportation. Administration officials also recently asked the high court to intervene to stop a trial in a climate change lawsuit and in a lawsuit over the administration's decision to add a question on citizenship to the 2020 census.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, a frequent target of criticism by President Donald Trump, is involved in three of the cases. Trump's recent salvo against the "Obama judge" who ruled against his asylum policy — not one of the issues currently before the Supreme Court — prompted Chief Justice John Roberts to fire back at the president for the first time for feeding perceptions of a biased judiciary.

Joshua Matz, publisher of the liberal Take Care blog, said the timing of the administration's effort to get the Supreme Court involved in the issues at an early stage could hardly be worse for Roberts and other justices who have sought to dispel perceptions that the court is merely a political institution, especially since the confirmation of Justice Brett Kavanaugh. At an especially sensitive moment for the Supreme Court, the Trump administration is "forcing it into a minefield that many justices would almost surely prefer to avoid," Matz said.

The Supreme Court almost always waits to get involved in a case until both a trial and appeals court have ruled in it. Often, the justices wait until courts in different areas of the country have weighed in and come to different conclusions about the same legal question.

So it's rare for the justices to intervene early as the Trump administration has been pressing them to do. One famous past example is when the Nixon administration went to court to try to prohibit the publication of the Pentagon Papers, the secret history of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

In the immigration case, the administration told the high court that it should step in and decide the fate of DACA ahead of an appeals court's ruling because the policy otherwise could be in place until the middle of 2020 before the justices might otherwise rule. The appeals court has since ruled, but the administration's request that the court hear the case stands.

In the military case, the administration argued that the Supreme Court should step in before an appeals court rules because the case "involves an issue of imperative public importance: the authority of the U.S. military to determine who may serve in the Nation's armed forces."

In a statement, Peter Renn, an attorney for Lambda Legal, which brought one of the challenges to the transgender military policy, called the Trump administration's action Friday a "highly unusual step" that is "wildly premature and inappropriate."

The Pentagon initially lifted its ban on transgender troops serving openly in the military in 2016, under

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 38 of 47

President Barack Obama's administration. But the Trump administration revisited that policy, with Trump ultimately issuing an order banning most transgender troops from serving in the military except under limited circumstances. Several lawsuits were filed over the administration's policy change, with lower courts all ruling against the Trump administration.

Still ongoing in lower courts are the census and climate change cases. The Supreme Court for now has refused to block the climate change trial. In the census question case, the court has agreed to decide what kind of evidence a trial judge can consider and indefinitely put off questioning of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. But it rejected an administration request to delay the trial and allowed other depositions to take place.

The court will hear arguments in the census question case in February. It's unclear when it will act on the administration's other requests.

Government climate report warns of worsening US disasters

By **SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — As California's catastrophic wildfires recede and people rebuild after two hurricanes, a massive new federal report warns that these types of disasters are worsening in the United States because of global warming. The White House report quietly issued Friday also frequently contradicts President Donald Trump.

The National Climate Assessment was written long before the deadly fires in California this month and before Hurricanes Florence and Michael raked the East Coast and Florida. It says warming-charged extremes "have already become more frequent, intense, widespread or of long duration." The report notes the last few years have smashed U.S. records for damaging weather, costing nearly \$400 billion since 2015.

The recent Northern California wildfires can be attributed to climate change, but there was less of a connection to those in Southern California, said co-author William Hohenstein of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"A warm, dry climate has increased the areas burned over the last 20 years," he said at a press conference Friday.

The report is mandated by law every few years and is based on more than 1,000 previous research studies. It details how global warming from the burning of coal, oil and gas is hurting each region of the United States and how it impacts different sectors of the economy, including energy and agriculture.

"Climate change is transforming where and how we live and presents growing challenges to human health and quality of life, the economy, and the natural systems that support us," the report says.

That includes worsening air pollution causing heart and lung problems, more diseases from insects, the potential for a jump in deaths during heat waves, and nastier allergies.

"Annual losses in some economic sectors are projected to reach hundreds of billions of dollars by the end of the century — more than the current gross domestic product (GDP) of many U.S. states," the report says. It'll be especially costly on the nation's coasts because of rising seas and severe storm surges, which will lower property values. And in some areas, such as parts of Alaska and Louisiana, coastal flooding will likely force people to relocate.

"We are seeing the things we said would be happening, happen now in real life," said another co-author Katharine Hayhoe of Texas Tech University. "As a climate scientist it is almost surreal."

And Donald Wuebbles, a co-author from University of Illinois climate scientist, said, "We're going to continue to see severe weather events get stronger and more intense."

What makes the report different from others is that it focuses on the United States, then goes more local and granular.

"All climate change is local," said Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Richard Alley, who wasn't part of the report but praised it.

While scientists talk of average global temperatures, people feel extremes more, he said.

"We live in our drought, our floods and our heat waves. That means we have to focus on us," he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 39 of 47

The Lower 48 states have warmed 1.8 degrees (1 degree Celsius) since 1900 with 1.2 degrees in the last few decades, according to the report. By the end of the century, the U.S. will be 3 to 12 degrees (1.6 to 6.6 degrees Celsius) hotter depending on how much greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere, the report warns.

Outside scientists and officials from 13 federal agencies wrote the report, which was released on the afternoon following Thanksgiving. It was originally scheduled for December. The report often clashes with the president's past statements and tweets on the legitimacy of climate change science, how much of it is caused by humans, how cyclical it is and what's causing increases in recent wildfires.

Trump tweeted this week about the cold weather hitting the East including: "Brutal and Extended Cold Blast could shatter ALL RECORDS - Whatever happened to Global Warming?"

Friday's report seemed to anticipate such comments, saying: "Over shorter timescales and smaller geographic regions, the influence of natural variability can be larger than the influence of human activity ... Over climate timescales of multiple decades, however, global temperature continues to steadily increase."

Releasing the report on Black Friday "is a transparent attempt by the Trump Administration to bury this report and continue the campaign of not only denying but suppressing the best of climate science," said study co-author Andrew Light, an international policy expert at the World Resources Institute.

During a press conference Friday, officials behind the report repeatedly declined to answer questions about the timing of its release and why it contradicts public statements from Trump. Report director David Reidmiller said questions about the timing were "relevant," but said what was in the report was more important.

Trump, administration officials and elected Republicans frequently say they can't tell how much of climate change is caused by humans and how much is natural.

Citing numerous studies, the report says more than 90 percent of the current warming is caused by humans. Without greenhouse gases, natural forces — such as changes in energy from the sun — would be slightly cooling Earth.

"There are no credible alternative human or natural explanations supported by the observational evidence," the report says.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter: @borenbears .

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Koreas gain UN sanctions exemption for joint rail survey

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea said Saturday that the United Nations Security Council granted an exemption to sanctions that will allow surveys on North Korean railroad sections the Koreans want to connect with the South.

The surveys would require the South to bring to the North fuel and a variety of goods, including possibly cars to test on northern tracks.

The Koreans plan to hold a groundbreaking ceremony by the end of the year on an ambitious project to connect their railways and roads as agreed by their leaders. But beyond surveys and tape-cuttings, they cannot move much further along without the lifting of U.S.-led sanctions against North Korea, which isn't likely before Pyongyang takes firmer steps toward relinquishing its nuclear weapons and missiles.

The plan to modernize North Korea's outdated railways and roads and reconnect them with the South was among many agreements reached between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who met three times this year amid a diplomatic push that eased tensions over the North's nuclear program. Kim also met with President Donald Trump in Singapore in June, when they issued a statement about a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula without describing how or when it would occur.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 40 of 47

North Korea insists that sanctions should be removed first before any progress in nuclear negotiations. There's also unease between the United States and South Korea over the pace of inter-Korean engagement, which Washington says should move in tandem with U.S.-led efforts to denuclearize the North.

South Korea initially said that the joint surveys of North Korean railroads wouldn't violate U.N. sanctions and had hoped to start them in October. Seoul later said that Washington had different views and the two sides had discussed the matter in a newly launched working group.

Even if the North takes concrete steps toward denuclearization and gains sanctions relief, experts say updating North Korean rail networks and trains, which creak slowly along the rails that were first built in the early 20th century, would require a massive effort that could take decades and tens of billions of dollars.

Moon's office released a statement saying it was meaningful that the plan to jointly examine North Korean railroads gained "recognition and support from the United States and international community" and that the project would allow inter-Korean cooperation "enter a new level."

U.N. sanctions against North Korea have strengthened significantly since 2016 as Pyongyang stepped up its weapons tests. The measures now include trade bans on "dual-use" technology that could potentially be used for weapons development, transport vehicles and machinery and import caps on fuel. Washington's own sanctions against Pyongyang restrict an even broader range of economic activities and target a larger list of companies and individuals.

Alabama mall shooting leaves 1 dead, 2 wounded

HOOVER, Ala. (AP) — A man killed by a police officer after a Thanksgiving night shooting at an Alabama shopping mall, was "likely" not the gunman who shot a teenager earlier that evening, police clarified Friday.

The incident began with a fight and shooting Thanksgiving night in the glitzy mall crowded with Black Friday bargain hunters. An 18-year-old was shot twice and a 12-year-old bystander was shot in the back.

An officer responding to the scene then shot and killed 21-year-old Emantic Fitzgerald Bradford, Jr. of Hueytown who police said was fleeing the scene and brandishing a weapon. Police initially told reporters they thought Bradford had shot the teen after a fight but retracted that statement Friday night.

"New evidence now suggests that while Mr. Bradford may have been involved in some aspect of the altercation, he likely did not fire the rounds that injured the 18-year-old victim," Hoover Police Captain Gregg Rector said in a statement.

Police said they "regret that our initial media release was not totally accurate."

Rector said investigators now believe that more than two people were involved in the initial fight ahead of the shooting, and "this information indicates that there is at least one gunman still at-large, who could be responsible for the shooting of the 18-year-old male and 12-year-old female."

Video posted on social media by shoppers showed a chaotic scene as shoppers fled the mall, which closed for the remainder of Thursday night.

The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency has taken the lead role in the investigation since it is an officer-involved shooting.

Hoover police asked for anyone with information, photos or video evidence of this crime scene to please contact investigators.

A witness, Lexi Joiner, told Al.com she was shopping with her mother when the gunfire started. Joiner said she heard six or seven shots and was ordered, along with some other shoppers, into a supply closet for cover.

"It was terrifying," Joiner said.

A woman who described herself as the mother of the injured 12-year-old posted on social media that the girl was on a Black Friday shopping trip with other family members when the shooting happened, and didn't immediately realize that the pain in her back was from a bullet.

"She was hurting a lot, but very brave and positive as always," the mother wrote after seeing the girl when she arrived at a hospital.

Hoover police said Friday morning that the girl was in stable condition.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 41 of 47

The officer who shot the gunman was placed on administrative leave while the authorities investigate the shooting. The officer's name was not released. The officers were not hurt.

The mall, located in the Birmingham suburb of Hoover, reopened at 6 a.m. Friday, a Riverchase Galleria mall security officer said. It bills itself as the largest enclosed shopping center in Alabama, with more than 150 stores.

Hoover police had asked the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office to investigate the shooting, but the sheriff's office turned it over to the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency because a witness is closely related to a member of the sheriff's office.

Rain slows search for remains but helps ease California fire

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE, Associated Press

PARADISE, Calif. (AP) — Rain helped extinguish a deadly wildfire in Northern California's Gold Rush country, but the moisture also turned ash into thick paste and hindered the hunt for telltale fragments of bone that could indicate a body.

Searchers resumed their grim task Friday afternoon after a downpour eased up in Paradise, California. They fanned out across the ruins of a mobile home park shrouded in heavy fog, some combing debris with rakes while others lifted up twisted metal to peer underneath or led dogs through the ash.

This particular park had already been searched by humans and dogs, as evidenced by orange spray-paint markings left by search teams to indicate they have canvassed an area. But Craig Covey, who leads a search team from Southern California's Orange County, said they were searching it again because it was the last known address of people who remained missing, many of them elderly.

The searchers wore yellow rain slickers and hard hats to protect against falling branches as they quietly looked for clues that may indicate someone couldn't get out, such as a car in the driveway or a wheelchair ramp. They looked not only for bone, but anything that could be a pile of cremated ashes.

The nation's deadliest wildfire in the past century has killed at least 84 people, and more than 560 are still unaccounted for. Despite the inclement weather, more than 800 volunteers searched for remains on Thanksgiving and again Friday, two weeks after flames swept through the Sierra Nevada foothills, authorities said.

Prior to searching the mobile home park, Covey's team of about 30 worked for several hours Friday morning before stopping and returning to a staging area with hot coffee, food and a small electric heater for warmth. Covey decided the heavy winds and rain had made the conditions too dangerous to keep searching.

Just as the rain saturated the ground, it added weight to towering pine trees that threatened to topple over, known by firefighters as "widow makers." It was Brian Abney's job to watch in case one fell.

"If you start hearing cracking, you better start looking up," he said.

While the rain made everybody colder and wetter, they kept the mission in mind, said Chris Stevens, who wore five layers of clothing to keep warm.

"It doesn't change the spirits of the guys working," he said. "Everyone here is super committed to helping the folks here."

While rain complicated the search, it also helped nearly extinguish the blaze, said Josh Bischof, operations chief for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Once the rain clears, state officials will be able to determine if the blaze is fully out, he said.

The Camp Fire ignited Nov. 8 and has destroyed nearly 19,000 buildings, most of them homes. That's more than the worst eight fires in California's history combined, the agency said, with thousands of people displaced.

The volunteers interrupted by rain Friday found other ways to help.

Covey and several team members took two big brown bags full of lunch to 64-year-old Stewart Nugent, who stayed in his home and fought off flames with a garden hose, a sprinkler and a shovel. He has been there for two weeks with his cat, Larry.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 42 of 47

The first winter storm to hit California has dropped 2 to 4 inches of rain over the burn area since it began Wednesday, said Craig Shoemaker with the National Weather Service in Sacramento.

The weather service issued a warning for possible flash flooding and debris flows from areas scarred by major fires in Northern California, including the areas burned in Paradise.

Shoemaker said Friday afternoon that about a quarter-inch of rain was falling per hour, not enough to cause serious problems. An inch of rain per hour would be more difficult, he said.

The rain was expected to subside by midnight, followed by light showers Saturday, he said.

In Southern California, more residents were allowed to return to areas that were evacuated because of the 151-square-mile (391-square-kilometer) Woolsey Fire as crews worked to repair power, telephone and gas utilities.

About 1,100 residents were still under evacuation orders in Malibu and unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, down from 250,000 at the height of the fire.

The fire erupted just west of Los Angeles amid strong winds on Nov. 8 and burned through suburban communities and wilderness parklands to the ocean, leaving vast areas of blackened earth and many homes in ashes. Officials say three people were found dead and 1,643 structures, most of them homes, were destroyed.

In Northern California, the workers on the ground tried to keep their minds on the task at hand rather than the tragedy of the situation.

"The guys will never say it's hard," said David Kang, a member of the search team from Orange County. "But it is."

Associated Press journalists Olga Rodriguez and Daisy Nguyen in San Francisco and John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed.

Associate of Roger Stone in plea talks with Mueller

By CHAD DAY, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — A conservative writer and associate of Trump confidant Roger Stone said Friday that he is in plea talks with special counsel Robert Mueller's team.

Jerome Corsi told The Associated Press he has been negotiating a potential plea but declined to comment further. He said on a YouTube show earlier this month that he expected to be charged with lying to federal investigators, though he said at the time that he was innocent of wrongdoing.

Mueller's team questioned Corsi as part of an investigation into Stone's connections with WikiLeaks. American intelligence agencies have assessed that Russia was the source of hacked material released by WikiLeaks during the 2016 election that damaged Hillary Clinton's campaign. Mueller's office is trying to determine whether Stone and other associates of President Donald Trump had advance knowledge of WikiLeaks' plans.

The confirmation of plea talks — first reported by The Washington Post — comes as Mueller's team has just received fresh information from Trump personally and as federal prosecutors in Virginia recently inadvertently disclosed the existence of sealed charges against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

It's unclear if the charges against Assange are related to Mueller's investigation, but WikiLeaks was singled out in an indictment last summer against a group of Russian intelligence officers accused of carrying out the wide-ranging hack of Clinton's campaign and other Democratic organizations.

It's also not known if any plea by Corsi signals a new raft of charges by the special counsel or just that investigators are aggressively pursuing cases against people they believe made false statements to investigators. Mueller has brought such cases against four others, including former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

In a brief phone call with the AP, Corsi declined to elaborate on the details of any plea deal or say if a court hearing had been set.

Corsi, the former Washington bureau chief of the conspiracy theory outlet InfoWars, has said he co-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 43 of 47

operated with the probe for about two months after he received a subpoena in August. As part of that cooperation, he turned over two computers and a cell phone and provided the FBI access to his email accounts and tweets.

But he said earlier this month that talks with investigators recently had "blown up."

"I fully anticipate that in the next few days, I will be indicted by Mueller," he said.

The spokesman for the special counsel, Peter Carr, declined comment on Friday.

Shortly after his YouTube show appearance, Corsi broke off a scheduled interview with NBC News and declined any other media interviews. His comments Friday were the first since then.

Stone has denied being a conduit for WikiLeaks, which published thousands of emails stolen from Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta in the weeks before the election.

Stone, who also has said he is prepared to be indicted, said earlier this month that he "had no advanced notice of the source or content or the exact timing of the release of the WikiLeaks disclosures."

He told AP in a separate statement Friday, "It is clear from his recent videos and his recent interviews that my friend Dr. Corsi has been under a tremendous amount of pressure and it is beginning to affect him profoundly. He has stated publicly that he is being asked over and over to say things he simply does not believe occurred."

Follow Chad Day on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ChadSDay>

S&P 500 slides into 'correction' for second time this year

By ALEX VEIGA, AP Business Writer

U.S. stocks closed lower after a shortened session Friday, bumping the benchmark S&P 500 index into a correction, or drop of 10 percent below its most recent all-time high in September.

Energy companies led the market slide as the price of U.S. crude oil tumbled to its lowest level in more than a year, reflecting worries among traders that a slowing global economy could hurt demand for oil.

"Oil is really falling sharply, continuing its downward descent, and that appears to be giving investors a lot of concern that there's slowing global growth," said Jeff Kravetz, regional investment director at U.S. Bank Private Wealth Management. "You have that, and then you have the recent sell-off in tech and in retail, and then throw on there trade tensions and rising rates."

Losses in technology and internet companies and banks outweighed gains in health care and household goods stocks. Several big retailers declined as investors monitored Black Friday for signs of a strong holiday shopping season.

Trading volume was lighter than usual with the markets open for only a half day after the Thanksgiving holiday.

The S&P 500 index fell 17.37 points, or 0.7 percent, to 2,632.56. The index is now down 10.2 percent from its last all-time high set Sept. 20. The last time the index entered a correction was in February.

The latest correction comes as investors worry that corporate profits, a key driver of stock market gains, could weaken next year.

"The market is re-pricing and trying to assess where we're going to be in the early part of 2019," said Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 178.74 points, or 0.7 percent, to 24,285.95. The Nasdaq composite dropped 33.27 points, or 0.5 percent, to 6,938.98. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks picked up 0.40 points, or 0.03 percent, to 1,488.68.

Crude oil prices fell for the seventh straight week on worries that a slowing global economy could hurt demand even as oil production has been increasing.

The benchmark U.S. crude contract slid 7.7 percent to settle at \$50.42 per barrel in New York. That is the lowest since October 2017. Brent crude, the international standard, lost 6.1 percent to close at \$58.80 per barrel in London.

Saudi Arabia and other OPEC members have recently signaled a willingness to consider production cuts

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 24, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 138 ~ 44 of 47

at the oil cartel's meeting next month. The U.S. has been increasing pressure on Saudi Arabia and OPEC to not cut production, however, a move which could push prices down further.

The slide in oil prices weighed on energy stocks. Concho Resources, a developer and explorer of oil and natural gas properties, slumped 6.3 percent to \$126.96.

Tesla fell 3.7 percent to \$325.83 after the electric auto maker said it intends to cut prices for its Model X and Model S cars in China to make them more affordable.

Traders had their eye on retailers as Black Friday, the traditional start to the crucial holiday shopping season, began. Shares in L Brands, operator of Victoria's Secret and Bath & Body Works, added 2 percent to \$29.97. Other retailers put investors in a selling mood. Kohl's fell 3.7 percent to \$63.83, while Target lost 2.8 percent to \$67.35. Macy's dropped 1.8 percent to \$32.01.

Rockwell Collins climbed 9.2 percent to \$141.63 after Chinese regulators conditionally approved the sale of the maker of communications and aviation electronics systems to United Technologies Corp.

Investors will be watching next week when Presidents Xi Jinping and Trump meet at the Group of 20 summit in Argentina for signs that the two leaders can find common ground to begin unwinding the spiraling trade dispute.

The dispute between the U.S. and China has weighed on the market, stoking traders' worries that billions in escalating tariffs imposed by both countries on each other's goods will hurt corporate earnings at a time when the global economy appears to be slowing.

"If you can get President Trump and President Xi to even just come closer with their rhetoric and make a bit of progress on the trade front that could be the catalyst for markets to move higher," Kravetz said.

It may take more than a meeting to work out deep-seated issues between Washington and Beijing, which resumed talks over their trade dispute earlier this month. According to The Wall Street Journal, the U.S. has asked its allies to stop using telecommunications equipment from Huawei, which is Chinese-owned. The report cited people familiar with the matter.

Bond prices fell Friday. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose to 3.05 percent from 3.04 percent late Wednesday.

The dollar fell to 112.88 yen from 112.97 yen late Thursday. The euro weakened to \$1.1330 from \$1.1406. The pound eased to \$1.2810 from \$1.2876.

Gold declined 0.4 percent to \$1,223.20 an ounce. Silver dropped 1.8 percent to \$14.24 an ounce. Copper slid 1 percent to \$2.77 a pound.

In other commodities trading, wholesale gasoline plunged 7.9 percent to \$1.39 a gallon. Heating oil lost 4.8 percent to \$1.88 a gallon. Natural gas fell 3.2 percent to \$4.31 per 1,000 cubic feet.

Major indexes in Europe finished mostly higher after shaking off an early slide.

Traders were weighing the latest developments in the negotiations for Britain's exit from the European Union. Both sides were finalizing the terms of the divorce Friday and expected to sign off on the deal Sunday, though it's unclear whether the British parliament will pass the deal.

The FTSE 100 index of leading British shares slipped 0.1 percent. Germany's DAX index rose 0.5 percent, while France's CAC 40 gained 0.2 percent.

Earlier in Asia, South Korea's Kospi shed 0.6 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index dropped 0.4 percent. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 bucked the trend, gaining 0.4 percent. Shares fell in Taiwan and rose in Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia. Japanese markets were closed for a holiday.

US man wrote 'God sheltered me' before trip turned deadly

By ASHOK SHARMA, Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — The young American, paddling his kayak toward a remote Indian island whose people have resisted the outside world for thousands of years, believed God was helping him dodge the authorities.

"God sheltered me and camouflaged me against the coast guard and the navy," John Allen Chau wrote before he was killed last week on North Sentinel Island.

Indian ships monitor the waters around the island, trying to ensure outsiders do not go near the Senti-