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**Card Shower
for
Dee Daly's
90th Birthday**
**Send to:
715 W. Willow
Groton, SD 57445
Her birthday is Dec. 21**

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

Harry Implement
"Family Owned & Operated Since 1935!"



(605) 395-6421
Ferney

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Friday, December 14, 2018

Debate at Brookings High School (Brookings Bell)
5:15pm: Basketball: Boys C Game vs. Redfield-Doland @ Redfield Jr-Sr High School followed by JV and varsity games.

Saturday, December 15, 2018

Debate at Brookings High School (Brookings Bell)
8:00am: Basketball: Boys C Tournament vs. Aberdeen Roncalli, Hamlin, Ipswich, Leola-Frederick, Redfield-Doland, Sioux Valley, Sisseton @ Groton Area High School Arena

9:00am: Wrestling: Boys Varsity Tournament TBA vs. Madison @ Madison High School

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ALL FOR HUNT



HUNTING FOR A BIGGER REASON

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.



This is a Fundraiser for Hunter Schaller and his family organized by Peyton Johnson and family. Designed by Peyton Johnson.

Orders are due by December 19th and will be ready the week of January 7th.

[Click here to place an order](#)



#allforHunt Fundraiser
- Keychains \$10

All proceeds to go to the family. You can order at the Groton High School office, Professional Management Services, Lori's Pharmacy or BK Custom T's

Fund set up at First State Bank

An account has been set up at First State Bank in Groton for Hunter Schaller. Anyone wanting to donate can make checks to "Hunter Schaller Benefit" and mail or drop off at the First State Bank in Groton. Hunter was involved in a motor vehicle accident on November 21st and is in ICU in Sioux Falls. Schaller is a junior at GHS and is the son of Steve Schaller and Julie Schaller.

A GoFundMe page has been established for the Schaller family, started by Peyton Johnson. Thus far, in nine days, \$11,880 has been raised of the \$15,000 goal. To donate, [click here](#).

HUNTER SCHALLER BENEFIT

ALL-U-CAN-EAT CHISLIC & SHRIMP



Friday, December 14

starting @5:30pm - Ferney Bar

Includes steak chislic & multiple types of shrimp for just \$30 per person

100% of proceeds to benefit the Schaller Family!

Jingle Bell Beach to be C&MA Church

There's a Christmas song that begins 'There's a song in the air; There's a star in the sky; There's a mother's sweet prayer, and a Baby's low cry; all to remind us of the meaning of this wondrous season. That doesn't mean, however, that everybody has that wondrous sense of awe in their heart as they set out to CELEBRATE the season at a seaside resort.

JINGLE BELL BEACH by Christy & Daniel Semsen is the musical that the Groton C&MA Church will be presenting on Sunday, December 16th at 5 pm. About thirty of the congregation are taking part, from age 4 to 70. The theme is about three teams that come for the annual Christmas competition that for some is anything but the competition. That will change however, as the Spirit of the season takes hold of the heart, and the reality of what God has brought to Earth transforms all the participants and they surrender their hearts as one to the ONE who is worthy of our 'Hallelujahs', Jesus.

Carrie Olson directs, and the congregation invites the community and area to enjoy this heartwarming musical and annual Christmas dinner beginning at 5 pm with the musical, and turkey/ham dinner with all the trimmings following as their gift to all who come. Come and Join the Groton C&MA Church on Sunday evening, at 5 pm, and join the fellowship in celebration and sense the reality of the 'song in the air' that stirs the hearts of those at Jingle Bell Beach.

Rounds Statement on Senate Passage of Five-Year Farm Bill **Bill includes a number of Rounds' priorities**

WASHINGTON—U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) today made the following statement on the Senate passage of the farm bill conference report, which includes a number of priorities he requested earlier this year. It passed with strong bipartisan support, 87-13.

"The farm bill is a vital piece of legislation for farmers and ranchers in South Dakota, where our economy depends on agriculture," said Rounds. "At a time when farm income is down 50 percent and our producers are at the tip of the spear with the ongoing trade disputes, passage of a five-year farm bill is a critical step toward providing our ag community with much needed certainty and stability. The farm bill includes tools that can help farmers and ranchers keep their operations viable even during tough times. I thank Senate and House Ag Committee leaders and members for their work on this important bill, and urge the president to sign it into law as soon as it passes the House."

The farm bill includes a number of priorities Rounds has pushed for in farm bill negotiations:

- Strengthens safety net programs such as crop insurance;
- Allows for re-enrollment for producers utilizing commodity programs under Title I, specifically Price-Loss Coverage (PLC) and Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC);
- Increases the cap for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres from 24 million acres to 27 million acres, with 2 million acres reserved for grasslands;
- Establishes an Animal Disease and Preparedness Program, which includes a vaccination bank to combat economic, food and national security concerns;
- Increases the total Farm Service Agency (FSA) Guaranteed Loan Program's individual cap on Ownership and Operating Loans from \$1.399 million to \$1.75 million. Rounds called for an increase to these individual loan caps in the FSA Loan Guarantee Enhancement Act that he introduced;
- Establishes a Rural Health Liaison position to work in coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services to improve rural health care delivery. This measure is based on legislation Rounds sponsored.

Full text of the farm bill can be found [here](#).

Help Wanted

Looking for full-time and part-time labor in Hecla area. Pressure washing livestock trailers and hog barns. Also working in hog barns as needed, training is provided. Must be able to lift at least 50 lbs. Would require some evenings. Must have good work ethic and references. Full-time benefits of health insurance and 401K, part-time has 401K. Contact Cole at 994-2201.

With Repeal of Obama-Era WOTUS Rule, Noem Urges Public to Comment on Replacement Proposal

Washington, D.C. – An outspoken critic of the Obama administration’s expanded “Waters of the U.S.” (WOTUS) definition, Rep. Kristi Noem today applauded a rollback of the Obama-era rule and urged the public to comment on the Trump administration’s replacement proposal.

“The Obama administration attempted to pull off one of the largest federal land grabs in U.S. history when it finalized the Waters of the U.S. rule,” said Noem. “There is no question that the Obama-era rule needed to be replaced. To help ensure today’s proposal will offer the clarity farmers, ranchers, and homeowners deserve without the massive government expansion that President Obama’s EPA had attempted, I encourage folks to review the proposed rule and weigh in through the public comment process.”

As finalized by the Obama administration, the WOTUS rule could greatly expand the federal government’s control over small and seasonal bodies of water throughout South Dakota and the country. Estimates show that if a landowner falls out of compliance, penalties could cost more than \$30,000 per violation, per day.

In May 2015, Noem helped the U.S. House of Representatives pass the bipartisan H.R. 1732, the Regulatory Integrity Protection Act of 2015, which would send the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers back to the drawing board on the WOTUS rule. Months later, a federal appellate court temporarily suspended the nationwide implementation of the WOTUS rule, a suspension that holds today.

In January 2016, Noem joined the House in passing legislation disapproving the rule. President Obama later vetoed the bill. In February 2017, Noem joined more than 35 Members of Congress in a letter to President Trump, urging the administration to take action to repeal WOTUS.

The Trump administration did so, and today proposed several changes to the 2015 WOTUS rules, including:

- Exclude ephemeral streams and related features;
- Cover only adjacent wetlands that are physically and meaningfully connected to other jurisdictional waters;
- Cut most ditches from unnecessary federal regulations; and
- Eliminate the use of subjective tests to determine jurisdiction over individual waters, among other things.

For more information, constituents can visit <https://www.epa.gov/wotus-rule>. Public comment will be accepted for 60 days after publication in the Federal Register. There will also be an information webcast on January 10, 2019, and a public hearing in Kansas City, KS, on January 23, 2019. Information on both events will be posted to <https://www.epa.gov/wotus-rule>

SDDA Seeks Dicamba Cutoff Date

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDA) has applied for Special Local Needs registration labels, also known as 24(c) labels, from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the following products: Engenia, Fexapan and Xtendimax with VaporGrip Technology. These labels would establish a June 30 cutoff for applications of these products in South Dakota for the 2019 growing season. If approved, applicators could use these products until soybeans reach the R1 growth stage, 45 days after planting or June 30, whichever comes first.

"After reviewing feedback from producers, applicators and retailers, as well as gathering information on drift complaints in the state over the last two years, a June 30 cutoff date will ensure that producers have access to this technology, while also decreasing the incidence of drift, involving these products," said interim Secretary of Agriculture, Dustin Oedekoven.

Anyone applying Engenia, Fexapan or Xtendimax with VaporGrip Technology must also abide by the restrictions included in the EPA labels for those products, including recordkeeping requirements. Additionally, applicators applying or purchasing these products will have to complete annual dicamba specific training. The SDDA is currently working with product companies to schedule dicamba training for the 2019 growing season.

Agriculture is a major contributor to South Dakota's economy, generating \$25.6 billion in annual economic activity and employing over 115,000 South Dakotans. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture's mission is to promote, protect and preserve South Dakota agriculture for today and tomorrow. Visit them online at sdda.sd.gov or find them on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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Today in Weather History

December 12, 1968: An intense blizzard visited most of South Dakota and Minnesota on the 12th and 13th of December. The storm began in the western part of South Dakota on the morning of the 12th then spread into the eastern part of the state and west central Minnesota by that afternoon, where it continued into the morning of the 13th. Freezing rain preceded snow, and in west central Minnesota, with thunder and lightning as well. Winds of over 50 mph caused blowing and drifting snow, which occasionally reduced visibilities to near zero. Gusts reached 70 mph in many places. Temperatures were falling to near zero during the day also resulted in dangerously low wind chills, particularly in Minnesota. The eastern half of South Dakota into west central Minnesota experienced the most severe blizzard conditions. Many schools were closed, and most other activities were greatly curtailed.

Automobile accidents were numerous across the area. Multiple utility lines were downed, and power and telephone outages were numerous due to the high winds. Power outages from less than an hour up to 12 hours were common across Minnesota. Snowfall ranged from around one inch in western South Dakota, to five inches in eastern South Dakota, to five to ten inches in west central Minnesota. One death in South Dakota was attributed to the storm when a man died of exposure to the cold near Allen in southwest South Dakota. In Minnesota, one man was found frozen to death near his car after it had run into the ditch several miles northwest of Boyd in Lac Qui Parle County. Another man was killed by a train when his vehicle became stalled on a railroad crossing at Hancock. 5 inches of snow fell at Watertown, Sisseton, and Webster with 6 inches at Clear Lake.

December 12, 1967: From December 12th through the 20th, Flagstaff, Arizona, a series of snowstorms buries Flagstaff with nearly 85 inches of snow

1882 - Portland, OR, was drenched with 7.66 inches of rain, a record 24 hour total for that location. (12th-13th) (The Weather Channel)

1960 - The first of three Middle Atlantic snowstorms produced a foot of snow at Baltimore MD. A pre-winter blizzard struck the northeastern U.S. producing wind gusts as high as 51 mph, along with 16 inches of snow at Nantucket MA, and 20 inches at Newark NJ. (David Ludlum)

1969 - The worst tornado of record for western Washington State tracked south of Seattle, traveling five miles, from Des Moines to Kent. The tornado, 50 to 200 yards in width, began as a waterspout over Puget Sound. One person was injured and the tornado caused half a million dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - While a developing winter storm began to spread snow across New Mexico into Colorado, high winds ushered unseasonably cold air into the southwestern states. Winds in California gusted to 60 mph in the Sacramento River Delta, and in the San Bernardino Valley. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Cold arctic air spread from the Great Lakes Region to the Appalachian Region. Twenty-five cities, mostly in the northeastern U.S., reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 12 degrees below zero at Albany NY was their coldest reading of record for so early in the season. Saranac Lake NY was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 28 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A winter storm produced snow from northern Mississippi to the Middle Atlantic Coast, with 10.5 inches reported at Powhatan VA. Heavy snow whitened the Black Hills of South Dakota, with 36 inches reported at Deer Mountain. Thirteen cities in the north central U.S., from Minnesota to Texas, reported record low temperatures for the date, including Duluth MN and Yankton SD with morning lows of 22 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995 - A severe coastal storm is blamed for five deaths and loss of power to over one million people in Oregon and Washington. Winds at Sea Lion Caves near Florence topped out at 119 mph before problems developed with the anemometer. In Newport, a gust of 107 mph occurred downtown, while Astoria and Cape Blanco also had gusts of over 100 mph. Astoria's air pressure dropped as low as 28.53 inches, an all-time record (and comparable to the central pressure of a Category 2 hurricane!). Gusts in the Willamette Valley exceeded 60 mph.

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Today

Tonight

Thursday

Thursday
Night

Friday



Patchy Fog
then Partly
Sunny

Chance Snow
and Patchy
Fog

Becoming
Sunny

Mostly Clear

Sunny

High: 34 °F

Low: 26 °F

High: 37 °F

Low: 20 °F

High: 40 °F

This Morning



Slippery Roadways from light precipitation
Tuesday, and morning Fog
mainly over eastern SD

Today & Tonight

Highs: 32-42°

Light Mix this evening, then Light Snow Tonight



Lows: mid to upper 20s



Published on: 12/12/2018 at 6:28AM

Another round of light mixed precipitation this evening will change to all snow overnight. Less than an inch of snow is expected, but slippery roadways will again be possible over eastern SD and western MN Thursday morning.

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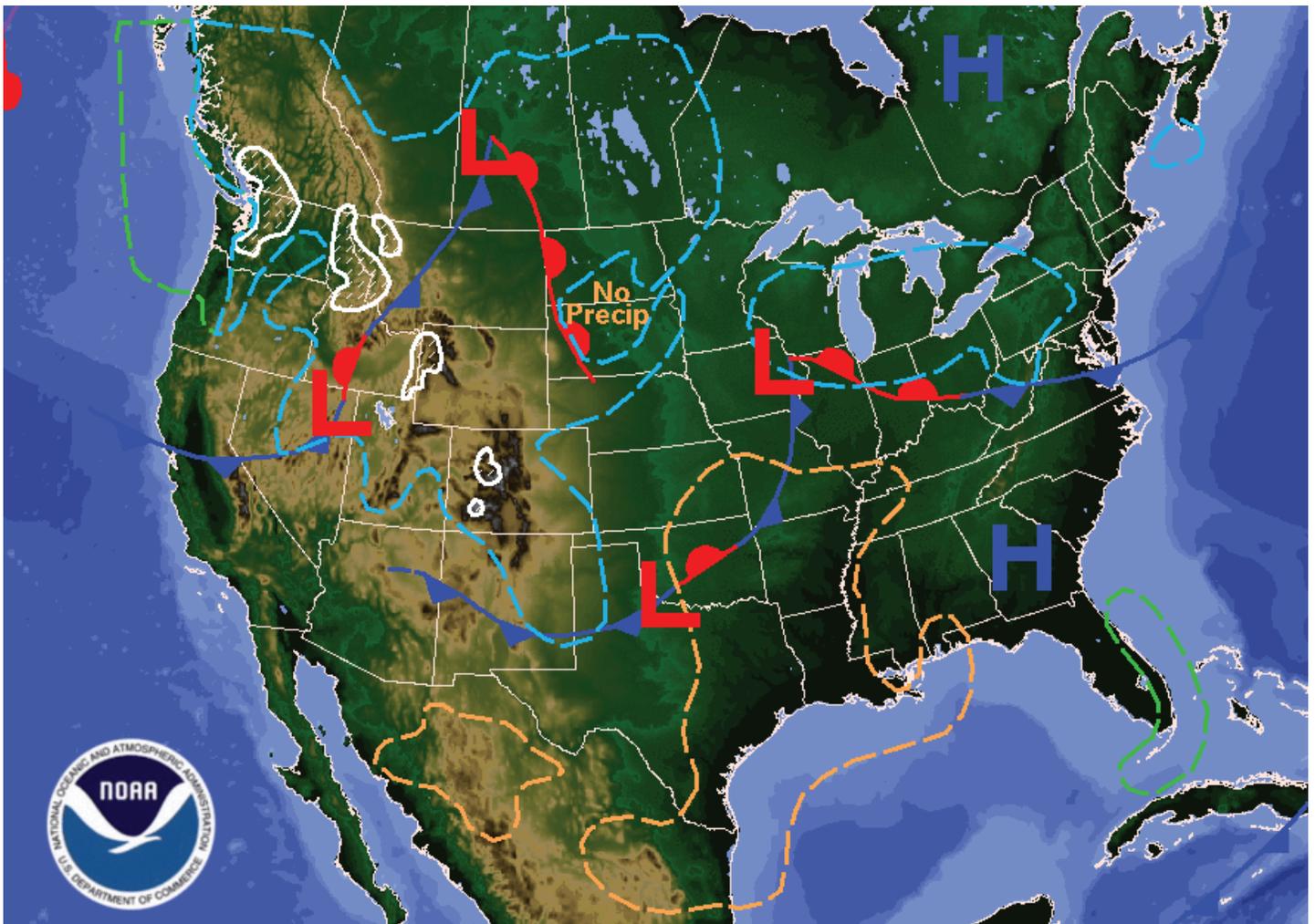
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 33 °F at 3:18 PM
Low Outside Temp: 12 °F at 7:29 AM
High Gust: 11 mph at 8:46 AM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 54° in 1924
Record Low: -28° in 1893
Average High: 26°F
Average Low: 7°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.19
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.39
Precip Year to Date: 15.81
Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:05 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Dec 12, 2018, issued 4:51 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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



WHERE'S JESUS PRESENT?

It was Christmas Eve. The tree was brightly decorated, the presents were wrapped with beautiful paper and bows, the meal was over and the family gathered together to read the Story of the Birth of Jesus.

"Now, said Dad, let each one of us say a prayer and I will end our prayer time before we go to bed.

After praying, Susie went to the tree and began to look at each present. She looked at the name on each of them very carefully. The family was curious but quiet.

Finally, Susie, looked at each member of the family and asked, Wheres the present for Jesus? What are we giving Him this year?

Stunned, the family sat in silence. No one had thought about a gift for Him.

Paul has a suggestion for the best gift we could give Christ this Christmas. Writing to the Romans he said, And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies your entire self to God...be a living and holy sacrifice to Him the kind He will accept.

When we think of giving gifts this Christmas each of us would do well to think first of the gift we will give God. We need to take Pauls words seriously, and give the most valuable gift the gift of ourselves to God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, trouble our hearts with the words of Paul this season, and carefully and prayerfully consider, first and foremost, the gift we will give You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- Nov./Dec./Jan./Feb./Mar. Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 4/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 5/4/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/27/2019 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/15/2019 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/14/2019 Summer Fest
- 9/7/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/01/2018 Olive Grove Golf Course 2018 Holiday Party
- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- SDSU Golf Tourney
- Sunflower Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Tour of Homes
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

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News from the Associated Press

Yankton residents vote to raise taxes to fund new pool

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Residents of Yankton have approved raising property taxes to help pay for a \$15 million aquatic center.

Unofficial results show that about two-thirds of the 3,747 voters in Tuesday's special election said yes to a \$12 million bond issue.

The City Commission recently voted unanimously to approve a 20-year opt-out of the state property tax freeze to help pay for the aquatic center to replace the 71-year-old Fantle Memorial Park pool. But opponents filed enough petitions to refer the matter to a public vote.

Sioux Falls Chinese restaurant damaged by fire; no injuries

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — No one was hurt in a fire that damaged a Chinese restaurant in Sioux Falls. Firefighters responded to the 1st Wok Chinese Restaurant about 1:30 p.m. Tuesday and had the blaze under control in about 15 minutes. But the building suffered moderate fire damage and heavy smoke damage.

The restaurant was closed at the time and there was no one inside. Investigators believe the fire was electrical in nature.

Tuesday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Andes Central/Dakota Christian 72, Ethan 57
Canton 80, Garretson 67
Chamberlain 57, Gregory 38
Chester 45, Howard 28
Clark/Willow Lake 67, DeSmet 45
Corsica/Stickney 94, Avon 46
Dakota Valley 79, Beresford 63
Dell Rapids St. Mary 61, Mitchell Christian 44
Faulkton 52, Sunshine Bible Academy 43
Freeman Academy/Marion 48, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 43
Gayville-Volin 56, Wausa, Neb. 52
Hanson 60, McCook Central/Montrose 53
Harding County 76, Tiospaye Topa 29
Harrisburg 61, Brookings 55
Irene-Wakonda 61, Wagner 30
Lead-Deadwood 46, Newell 33
Lennox 69, Milbank 48
Leola/Frederick 57, Langford 47
Madison 65, Tri-Valley 36
North Central, Neb. 61, Burke 50
Northwestern 73, Edmunds Central 44
Parker 64, Baltic 48
Parkston 63, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 45
Potter County 68, Miller 45
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 53, Hitchcock-Tulare 30

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St. Thomas More 78, Douglas 16
Sully Buttes 63, Lyman 52
Tea Area 78, Flandreau 48
Timber Lake 78, Herreid/Selby Area 61
Vermillion 80, Flandreau Indian 50

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 47, Mobridge-Pollock 26
Belle Fourche 51, Sturgis Brown 48
Canistota 59, Colman-Egan 49
Clark/Willow Lake 53, Waverly-South Shore 47
Corsica/Stickney 59, Avon 37
Dakota Valley 57, Beresford 52
Dell Rapids 53, Sioux Falls Christian 51
Dell Rapids St. Mary 52, Mitchell Christian 42
Deubrook 60, Deuel 37
Douglas 62, Rapid City Christian 51
Ethan 63, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 26
Faulkton 75, Sunshine Bible Academy 22
Flandreau 57, Tea Area 48
Freeman Academy/Marion 44, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 20
Gayville-Volin 40, Wausa, Neb. 39
Harding County 52, Tiospaye Topa 47
Harrisburg 45, Brookings 34
Herreid/Selby Area 54, Timber Lake 35
Howard 56, Chester 39
Huron 42, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 29
Irene-Wakonda 64, Wagner 50
Kadoka Area 48, Jones County 29
Kimball/White Lake 45, Platte-Geddes 35
Lead-Deadwood 49, Newell 43
Lemmon 50, Dupree 39
Lennox 52, Milbank 24
Lyman 61, Stanley County 23
Madison 59, Tri-Valley 41
McCook Central/Montrose 63, Freeman 48
Menno 53, Scotland 35
Miller 41, Potter County 18
North Central, Neb. 67, Burke 25
Ortonville, Minn. 60, Sisseton 52
Parker 52, Baltic 18
Sioux Falls Washington 59, Sioux Falls Lincoln 49
Viborg-Hurley 57, Bridgewater-Emery 55
Wessington Springs 57, Iroquois 30
West Central 63, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 42

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

04-38-39-54-59, Mega Ball: 12, Megaplier: 2

(four, thirty-eight, thirty-nine, fifty-four, fifty-nine; Mega Ball: twelve; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$245 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$230 million

South Dakota State has record-breaking night with 139-72 win

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Mike Daum scored 37 points and grabbed 17 rebounds, recording a double-double in the first half, and South Dakota State set multiple school records in a 139-72 win over Savannah State on Tuesday night.

SDSU set a school record with 90 points in the first half and posted another record for total points. The Jackrabbits drained 23 from beyond the arc for another school record, and the third-best in Summit League history. SDSU's 139 points tonight were one shy of the league record held by former member Troy in 1995.

Daum, averaging 25.2 points and 10.3 rebounds, had 26 points and 12 rebounds in the first half, and the Jackrabbits eased up in the second half after leading 90-33 at the break.

South Dakota State (9-3) maintained the nation's longest active home-winning streak, taking its 26th victory at Frost Arena. Skyler Flatten posted 18 points in the first half and finished with 29 and David Jenkins totaled 28 points after scoring 20 in the first half.

SDSU shot 76 percent (35-46) from the floor in the first period and finished making 53 of 87 (61 percent). Jaquan Dotson had 17 points for Savannah State (3-8).

Rapid City to consider writing off \$1.7M ambulance bills

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City officials will consider writing off more than \$1.7 million worth of unpaid ambulance bills accumulated over the past dozen years.

The city's Legal and Finance Committee will look over a resolution Wednesday to write off nearly 2,700 unpaid ambulance bills that Rapid City Fire Department officials said they've been unable to recover, the Rapid City Journal reported. The city's lone ambulance service provider hasn't collected almost 98 percent of these unpaid fees either because the state's six-year statute of limitations expired or a person who owed the money died without an estate.

The rest are difficult to collect because of bankruptcy, incarceration or mandatory write-offs from Medicare and Medicaid denials.

Rapid City funds its ambulance service through user fees, unlike other South Dakota towns that put part of residents' property taxes toward the service, said Rod Seals, the city's fire chief. But it's unclear whether the model is sustainable for the department.

"All we try to do is to break even," Seals said. "(But) the cost of providing the service is rising faster than the reimbursements are. We are certainly not the only ones in this situation. It's affecting all ambulance providers across the nation."

The department's bottom line is also affected by cuts in ambulance service reimbursements by the Indian Health Service last year, as well as the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services tightening regulations, said Jason Culberson, the department's emergency medical-services chief.

Many individuals using the city's ambulance service are Medicaid or Medicare patients, he said.

UK disarray: May to face no-confidence vote from her party

By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A no-confidence vote in British Prime Minister Theresa May Wednesday threw U.K. politics deeper into crisis and Brexit further into doubt.

May vowed to fight for leadership of her party and the country “with everything I’ve got” after opponents who have been circling for weeks finally got the numbers they needed to spark a vote among Conservative Party lawmakers.

The threat to May has been building as pro-Brexit lawmakers within the Conservative Party grew increasingly frustrated with May’s conduct of Brexit and the divorce deal she has agreed with the European Union.

The challenge throws Britain’s already rocky path out of the EU, which it is due to leave in March, into further chaos and comes days after May postponed a vote to approve the divorce deal to avoid all-but-certain defeat.

Many supporters of Brexit say May’s deal, a compromise that retains close economic ties with the EU, fails to deliver on the clean break with the bloc that they want.

Former Environment Secretary Owen Paterson accused May of acting like a “suppliant” in dealings with the EU.

“She’s not the person to see Brexit through,” he said.

Leading pro-Brexit legislators Jacob Rees-Mogg and Steve Baker said in a joint statement that “in the national interest, she must go.”

But in a defiant statement outside 10 Downing St., May said “a change of leadership in the Conservative Party now will put our country’s future at risk.”

She said ousting her and holding a leadership vote — a process that could take weeks — could result in Brexit being delayed or even stopped.

May, who spent Tuesday touring EU capitals to appeal for changes to sweeten the divorce deal for reluctant U.K. lawmakers, has until Jan. 21 to hold a vote on her deal in Parliament, a timetable that could be scuttled if she is ousted.

On Wednesday morning Graham Brady, who heads a committee overseeing Conservative leadership contests, said he had received letters from at least 48 lawmakers asking for a vote. That’s the 15 percent of Conservative legislators needed to spark a vote under party rules.

Brady said the vote would be held in Parliament between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. (1800GMT and 2000GMT) on Wednesday evening, with the results announced soon after.

If she loses the confidence vote, May must step down and there will be a contest to choose a new Conservative leader. She will remain leader, and prime minister, until the successor is picked. If she wins, she can’t be challenged again for a year.

Brady said that the party aimed to finish the first stage of any leadership contest — in which lawmakers vote to whittle down the field of contenders to two — before Parliament breaks for Christmas on Dec. 20. The final two contenders would then be put to the nationwide party membership in a postal ballot.

May canceled a Wednesday trip to Dublin to meet Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, to stay in London and battle for lawmakers’ support. She planned to address backbench lawmakers just before the leadership ballot opens.

If all Tory lawmakers cast ballots, May needs 158 votes to win, though a narrow victory could leave her weakened and under pressure to resign. But allies said May would stay in post even if she secured a wafer-thin win.

“I think she needs to win by one,” said International Trade Secretary Liam Fox.

Several leading Brexiteers, including former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and ex-Brexit Secretary Dominic Raab, have said loudly that they think they could get a better deal with the EU, and are likely to enter a race to replace her.

More conciliatory candidates including Home Secretary Sajid Javid and Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd, are also possible contenders.

Ahead of the vote, Cabinet colleagues rallied to May’s support. Javid tweeted that a leadership contest,

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with Brexit little more than three months away, "will be seen as self-indulgent and wrong. PM has my full support and is best person to ensure we leave EU on 29 March."

Justice Secretary David Gauke said: "I think it's vital for the country that she wins tonight."

He said that if May lost, "I don't think we will be leaving the European Union on the 29th of March."

Danica Kirka contributed to this story.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. MAY FACING NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE IN UK

British politics is thrown into chaos and Brexit into doubt as Conservative lawmakers trigger the ultimatum against the prime minister which could see her step down if she loses.

2. STRASBOURG SUSPECT HEARD SHOUTING 'GOD IS GREAT'

A French prosecutor says witnesses heard Cherif Chekatt make the exclamation in Arabic during the attack near a Christmas market that killed two people and left another brain dead.

3. TRUMP IN WILD OVAL OFFICE CONFRONTATION

The Republican president threatens to shut down the U.S. government as he and Democratic leaders bicker over funding for his promised border wall.

4. CHINESE WELCOME HUAWEI EXECUTIVE'S RELEASE

As Chinese citizens rejoice over a Canadian court's decision to release Meng Wanzhou on bail, officials in Beijing deny knowledge of the detention of a former Canadian diplomat.

5. MICHAEL COHEN TO LEARN FATE

Trump's former personal attorney faces sentencing in New York for dodging taxes, lying to Congress and violating campaign finance laws.

6. IVANKA, KUSHNER COULD PROFIT FROM 'OPPORTUNITY ZONE'

An AP investigation finds Trump's daughter and son-in-law could benefit from a program they pushed that offers massive tax breaks to developers who invest in downtrodden American areas.

7. WHAT THEY FELT IN ATLANTA

A magnitude 4.4 earthquake strikes in eastern Tennessee near Decatur and could be felt as far away as Georgia's capital.

8. DRAINING THE SWAMP, CLEARING THE BURROWS

Washington, D.C., is facing a spiraling rat infestation, fueled by mild winters and a human population boom.

9. NATIONAL FILM REGISTRY TURNS 30

And with that will bring in a new crop of films including "Jurassic Park", "Brokeback Mountain" and "The Shining."

10. 'LITTLE LEAGUE FOR ESPORTS'

Super League Gaming welcomes gamers as young as 6 to competitively play games like "Minecraft" and "League of Legends."

4 journalists and a newspaper are Time's Person of the Year

By DAVID BAUDER, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Time magazine on Tuesday recognized journalists, including the slain Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi, as its 2018 Person of the Year in what it said was an effort to emphasize the importance of reporters' work in an increasingly hostile world.

The designation wasn't intended as a specific message to the magazine's runner-up choice, President Donald Trump, who has denounced "fake news" and called some reporters enemies of the people, said Ben Goldberger, executive editor.

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Time cited four figures it called "the guardians." Besides Khashoggi, they are the staff of the Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland, where five people were shot to death in June; Philippine journalist Maria Ressa; and Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who have been jailed in Myanmar for a year.

It's the first time since the magazine began the end-of-year tradition in 1927 that Time has featured a journalist or recognized someone posthumously.

Time said that 2018 has been marked by manipulation and abuse of information, along with efforts by governments to foment mistrust of the facts.

Goldberger said the magazine hopes the choice reminds people outside of journalism about the importance of the work.

Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, said he sees this message already starting to get through — sadly, in part because of the attention paid to Khashoggi's killing. Khashoggi is one of at least 52 journalists murdered so far this year, the committee said.

"In some ways, I feel we're at a turning point," Simon said.

Khashoggi was killed two months ago when The Washington Post columnist, who had lived in the U.S., visited Saudi Arabia's consulate in Turkey for paperwork so he could get married. He had been critical of the Saudi regime.

The Washington Post applauded Time for its message of support for journalists.

"We hope this recognition will prompt our nation's leaders to stand up for America's values and hold accountable those who attempt to silence journalists who cover our communities or in Jamal's case, an oppressive authoritarian government," said Fred Ryan, the Post's publisher and CEO.

Ressa, a former CNN journalist, co-founded the online site Rappler, which has aggressively covered the government of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. She was recently charged with tax fraud, with many in the Philippines seeing that as a reaction to Rappler's reporting. Duterte had earlier banned a Rappler journalist from his news briefings, accusing her of biased reporting.

"I think it means the Philippines is in a battle for the life of our democracy and the people at the front lines of that are the journalists," Ressa said in an interview. "We are doing our jobs and our job is to hold power to account. Our job is to tell our people when the government crosses the line."

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were imprisoned in Myanmar after investigating a massacre of Rohingya Muslims.

Several dozen journalists and activists held a rally in Myanmar's main city, Yangon, on Wednesday marking the anniversary of their arrests and urging their release.

In a statement, Reuters said it hopes that Time magazine's recognition of the two reporters will draw "continued awareness to their unjust arrest and imprisonment in Myanmar, and reaffirm the essential role of a free press around the world."

Four journalists and a sales assistant were killed by a gunman at the Capital Gazette newspaper last spring.

Time is producing four different covers featuring "the guardians."

Last year Time recognized people who came forward to report on sexual misconduct. Trump, this year's runner-up, was Person of the Year in 2016.

The third-place finisher this year was special counsel Robert Mueller, who Time indicated could move up in next year's rankings depending on the findings of his investigation into the Trump campaign's contacts with Russia.

Associated Press writers Shawn Marsh in New York and Iya Forbes in Manila, Philippines, contributed to this report.

Flynn's lawyers say his lie to FBI 'uncharacteristic'

By ERIC TUCKER and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawyers for President Donald Trump's former national security adviser Michael Flynn asked a judge Tuesday to spare him prison time, saying he had devoted his career to his country

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and taken responsibility for an “uncharacteristic error in judgment.”

The arguments to the judge echoed those of special counsel Robert Mueller’s office, which last week said that Flynn’s cooperation — including 19 meetings with investigators — was so extensive that he was entitled to avoid prison when he is sentenced next week.

“Having made a serious error in judgment, for which he has shown true contrition, he recognized it was consistent with the values by which he has led his life simply to provide the facts to those charged with enforcing our laws,” his lawyers wrote in requesting probation and community service. “On the day he entered his guilty plea, he said he was ‘working to set things right.’ He has done so.”

Flynn, who pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about conversations during the presidential transition period with the then-Russian ambassador to the United States, will become the first White House official punished in the special counsel’s ongoing probe into whether the Trump campaign coordinated with Russia during the 2016 presidential election.

Flynn’s absence from the public eye, despite entreaties from supporters to take an aggressive stance against the Russia investigation, has made him a source of continuing public intrigue. His sentencing has the makings of a bookend moment for the investigation given that Flynn — a visible presence on the campaign trail, in high-level transition talks and in the chaotic early days of the administration — was an early, and pivotal, part of the case who appeared to enjoy the president’s sympathy even after his departure from the White House.

Central to the investigation are Flynn’s December 2016 phone discussions of Obama administration sanctions with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak, conversations that triggered intelligence community alarms and led to his ouster from the administration after officials maintained that he had lied to them about the communications.

They also prompted a Jan. 24, 2017 FBI interview at which Mueller says Flynn denied having discouraged Kislyak from an aggressive response to the sanctions, which had been imposed on the Kremlin for election interference that U.S. officials have said was aimed at helping Trump win office. He also told the FBI he had no recollection of a follow-up call with Kislyak in which the ambassador said Russia would moderate its response to the sanctions.

Tuesday’s defense filing did not contain new information about Flynn’s cooperation or provide a full explanation for why he made false statements to investigators. But it did provide additional details about the backstory of his FBI interview, including that unlike other defendants in the Russia probe, he wasn’t warned in advance that it was a crime to lie to the FBI.

Flynn’s attorneys also noted that two FBI officials involved in the interview have since been investigated for misconduct. FBI counterintelligence agent Peter Strzok, who interviewed Flynn, was fired a year later over anti-Trump text messages. Then-FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, who had arranged the interview but wasn’t present for it, was fired for what the Justice Department called a lack of candor involving a media leak.

Still, Flynn’s lawyers, Robert Kelner and Stephen Anthony, said their client never backed away from accepting responsibility for his crime, and he quickly began cooperating with federal investigators, ultimately sitting for 62 hours and 45 minutes of questioning.

The filing also focused on the retired Army lieutenant general’s three decades in the military, including five years in combat. It cited his numerous U.S. Army citations and included 50 letters of support from his family, friends and dozens of military officers and enlisted personnel who served with Flynn. And it described Flynn as a dedicated and fearless officer, noting that while deployed in Grenada, he once dove off a 40-foot cliff and saved two servicemen who had been swept out to sea.

The filing came as lawyers for former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort said they were still deciding whether to dispute allegations that he lied to investigators and breached a plea agreement. A judge gave Manafort until Jan. 7 to respond to prosecutors’ claims that he misled them about his interactions with an associate who they say has ties to Russian intelligence and with Trump administration officials.

The defendants, their fortunes sliding in opposite directions, represent starkly different paths in Mueller’s

investigation — a model cooperator on one end and, prosecutors say, a dishonest and resistant witness on the other. Even as prosecutors recommend no prison time for Flynn, they've left open the possibility they may seek additional charges against Manafort, who is already facing years in prison following separate convictions in Washington and Virginia.

Given both men's extensive conversations with prosecutors, and their involvement in key episodes under scrutiny, the pair could pose a threat to the president, who in addition to Mueller's investigation is entangled in a separate probe by prosecutors in New York into hush-money payments paid during the campaign to two women who say they had affairs with Trump.

Read the filing: <http://apne.ws/JI6r0Gc>

Follow Eric Tucker and Chad Day on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/etuckerAP> and <https://twitter.com/ChadSDay>

Palestinians offer new details of Israel's botched Gaza raid

By FARES AKRAM and MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH, Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — The small town of Abassan in the Gaza Strip is a tough place to infiltrate: Everyone knows everyone and outsiders passing through quickly attract attention. So when strangers drove through town, suspicious Hamas security men stopped the van and questioned those inside.

The answers didn't add up.

With their covers about to be blown, the Israeli undercover forces in the vehicle opened fire, setting off a fierce battle that left eight people dead and triggered a brief but intense round of cross-border fighting.

A month after the exchange, the raid remains clouded in mystery. The Israeli army has kept mum, while Hamas officials have declined to comment publicly as they investigate. With each side protective of its secrets, and possibly keen to spread disinformation, the full story may never be known.

But based on interviews with Hamas officials, a picture is emerging of a carefully planned Israeli intelligence operation in which agents posing as Palestinian aid workers may have gone undetected for up to two weeks before it went awry. All spoke on condition of anonymity, citing a Hamas gag order.

In the meantime, Hamas has tightened security in Gaza, is questioning foreign visitors such as journalists and aid workers, and has sentenced six alleged collaborators to death.

"We take security measures after any security incident to ensure it doesn't happen again," said Iyad al-Bozum, spokesman for Hamas' Interior Ministry, which is leading the investigation.

Israel and Hamas are bitter enemies that have fought three wars since the Islamic militant group seized control of Gaza in 2007 from the rival Palestinian Authority. Israel and Egypt have blockaded Gaza by air, land and sea since the takeover.

Sending an undercover unit into Gaza would be complicated and risky. With Gaza fenced off, the border area is closely watched by Hamas. Only a handful of crossings operate. Parachuting in or bursting through the border would almost certainly be detected.

Hamas officials believe the Israeli team was disguised as aid workers and entered Gaza through the Israeli-controlled Erez crossing, a fortress-like facility through which all civilian traffic passes.

On the Gaza side of the crossing, the team passed through two checkpoints — one controlled by the Palestinian Authority and the second controlled by Hamas — using forged IDs with the names of well-known local Palestinian families. Hamas has released a number of images of people it says were squad members.

The Associated Press spoke to eight Hamas figures, including some security officials.

It remains unclear what the Israeli team did inside Gaza. One official said they posed as aid workers, pretending to move disabled people to hospitals in a van. The team had a wheelchair, along with a member disguised as a disabled woman. They visited many houses and even rented an apartment in Gaza City, he said.

There are differing accounts on how long the team operated, from several hours to two weeks. One

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official said it appeared to have been a reconnaissance mission to “breach the communications network of the resistance.”

According to some of the accounts, the scheme began to unravel when the team made its way to Abasan. Suspicious residents alerted Hamas security, which stopped their van.

One official said the leader of the Israeli group, reportedly a member of Israel’s Arab Druze minority, spoke the local dialect fluently and remained calm.

But several things did not appear right. He said a woman was sitting between two men, even though their IDs showed them to be members of different families. Under local customs, it is frowned upon for a woman to sit alongside men who are not her relatives.

“That was the major reason for the suspicions,” he said. Under further questioning, the team told Hamas that they were going to visit a woman who does not live in the area.

Hamas security men asked them to wait while their commander, Nour Baraka, was summoned. According to various accounts, the situation deteriorated when Baraka arrived and began asking more questions. When Baraka ordered their detention for further questioning, the Israeli team opened fire and killed him. As the team fled, Hamas security men fired back, apparently killing the Israeli commander.

Hamas officials say the team was over two kilometers (over a mile) from the Israeli border, and Israeli military aircraft, including two helicopters and a warplane, carried out over 40 airstrikes to give the men cover to flee. An airstrike destroyed the Israeli van, apparently to get rid of incriminating evidence. Six more militants died in the fighting.

Mohammed Abu Daqqa, a resident of the area, said he was at home about 8:45 p.m. on Nov. 11 when he heard the sound of breaking glass outside.

He opened his window and saw a Palestinian gunman firing a pistol at a vehicle whose occupants were shooting weapons equipped with silencers. After the shooting subsided, he went outside, where he saw a gunman frantically shouting: “They shot Sheikh Nour.” He said the body was lying on the ground.

Hamas and other militant groups retaliated with rocket and missile fire, leading to the heaviest fighting with Israel since a 2014 war. On the brink of war, the sides agreed to a cease-fire on Nov. 13.

Israeli undercover units have been operating in the Palestinian areas since the 1980s — and currently have gained renewed attention with the Netflix hit show “Fauda.”

Samuel M. Katz, author of “The Ghost Warriors,” a book about Israeli undercover units during the second Palestinian uprising, said he had no knowledge of this raid, but that it appears to have been an intelligence-gathering team, not a hit squad.

Katz said that if Israel wanted to assassinate a wanted militant, it has less risky alternatives like airstrikes. “One thing you can say at this point, it must have been a high-value target or a high-value mission,” he said.

The Israeli military has said little about the raid and has refused to confirm foreign and Palestinian reports that the officer who was killed was Druze. But a military official, speaking on condition of anonymity under military protocol, said it was neither the first nor the last mission behind enemy lines.

“The IDF will continue to conduct special operations wherever necessary to ensure the safety of Israeli civilians,” he said.

Associated Press writer Josef Federman contributed.

France: Suspected gunman named, had long police record

By LORI HINNANT, SYLVIE CORBET and JOHN LEICESTER, Associated Press

STRASBOURG, France (AP) — Hundreds of police and soldiers hunted Wednesday for a suspected extremist who sprayed gunfire near one of Europe’s most famous Christmas markets, killing three and wounding at least 13 in the eastern city of Strasbourg and putting the whole country on edge anew.

Police union officials identified the suspected assailant as Cherif Chekatt, a 29-year-old with a thick police record for crimes including armed robbery. The two officials spoke on condition of anonymity because

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they weren't authorized to publicly discuss details of the large and ongoing investigation.

Senior Interior Ministry official Laurent Nunez said the man had been radicalized in prison and had been monitored by French intelligence services since his release from jail in late 2015, because of his suspected religious extremism.

Nunez, secretary of state for the Interior Ministry, said on France-Inter radio that police sought to arrest the man on Tuesday morning, hours before the shooting, in relation to an attempted murder. He was not at home but five other people were detained, authorities said.

The government raised the security alert level and sent police reinforcements to Strasbourg, where more than 350 security forces were involved in the massive manhunt. Police officials said he was wounded in a gunfight with soldiers after the Tuesday night attack but escaped, and a top official said he might have fled to neighboring Germany.

A terrorism investigation was opened, but the motive of the attack is unclear. Nunez said eight of the injured are in serious condition, and the city mayor said some had head wounds.

Witnesses described shots and screams after the gunman opened fire around the Christmas market Tuesday evening in a city that's home to the European Parliament and considers itself a capital of Europe — and promotes itself as the "capital of Christmas." For several hours swaths of the city were under lockdown.

The suspected attacker also had a criminal record in Germany. He was convicted of robbery in Germany in 2016 and sentenced to two years and three months in prison for breaking into a dental practice and a pharmacy in two German towns.

The 2016 verdict from a district court in the southern German city of Singen, obtained by The Associated Press, also said he was sentenced to prison in France in 2008 and in Basel, Switzerland in 2013 for various robberies. News agency dpa reported that he was deported to France in 2017.

According to that verdict, the suspected attacker grew up with six siblings in Strasbourg, worked for local authorities after leaving school and had been unemployed since 2011. He said that he had been traveling a lot and had already spent four years of his life in prison. The German robberies took place in Mainz, near Frankfurt, in 2012 and in Engen, near the Swiss border, in 2016.

The attack is a new blow to France, which saw a wave of Islamic extremist killings in 2015 and 2016. It came amid a month of protests against President Emmanuel Macron that have blocked roads around the country, led to rioting in the capital and put heavy strain on police.

While authorities urged people in the area to stay inside after Tuesday's attack, Strasbourg Mayor Roland Ries told BFM television Wednesday that "life must go on" so that the city doesn't cede to a "terrorist who is trying to disrupt our way of life."

The assailant got inside a security zone around the venue and opened fire from there, Mayor Roland Ries said on BFM television.

Police were out in force in Strasbourg, a city about 500 kilometers (310 miles) east of Paris on France's border with Germany, on Wednesday morning. The Christmas market, a holiday tradition there, was closed. The market was the target of an al-Qaida-linked plot at the turn of the millennium.

Many of Europe's deadliest terror attacks in recent years have taken place in France. In response to Tuesday's shooting, the government decided to take the country's attack risk up a level on the official threat index and to send security reinforcements to Strasbourg, Interior Minister Christophe Castaner said in Strasbourg.

Some 350 officers and two helicopters were searching for the assailant after Tuesday's drama, which involved shooting in multiple neighborhoods of Strasbourg, authorities said. The assailant confronted law enforcement officers twice, exchanging fire, while he "sowed terror," Castaner said.

The shooter was shot and wounded by soldiers guarding the Christmas market, according to Stephane Morisse of police union FGP Police.

"I heard two or three shots at around 7:55 p.m., then I heard screams. I got close to the window. I saw people running. After that I closed the shutters. Then I heard more shots, closer this time," said Yoann Bazard, 27, who lives in central Strasbourg.

"I thought maybe it's firecrackers," he said, speaking by phone. "And then, as it got close, it was really

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shocking. There were a lot of screams. ... There were police or soldiers shouting 'Get inside!' and 'Put your hands on your head.'"

Another witness, Peter Fritz, told the BBC one of the three people killed was a Thai tourist who was shot in the head and didn't respond to lengthy attempts to revive him.

Angela Charlton in Paris and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed.

As May faces leadership vote, a look at what happens next

By The Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Theresa May is facing a no-confidence vote from Conservative lawmakers angry about the divorce deal she has struck with the European Union.

Here's a look at how the Conservative Party goes about challenging and changing leaders.

THE NO CONFIDENCE VOTE:

A confidence vote in the leader is triggered if 15 percent of Conservative lawmakers — currently 48 — write a letter to Graham Brady, head of the party's 1922 Committee of backbenchers. Brady said Wednesday that the threshold had been reached and the vote will be held later in the day.

All 315 Tory legislators can vote on the confidence motion. May needs 158 votes to win — and if she does, there can't be another challenge for a year.

If she loses, she must resign and a party leadership contest is held in which she is barred from running. All other Conservative lawmakers can run.

THE LEADERSHIP CONTEST IF MAY LOSES:

Conservative leadership contests have two parts. After candidates come forward, Conservative lawmakers vote first. The candidate with lowest number of votes drops out and voting continues until there are two contenders left.

The final two candidates are put to a vote of the full party membership across the country.

In the last leadership contest in 2016, members never got to vote because all the candidates dropped out but one: May.

May remains prime minister and party leader until a replacement is chosen. The winner of the vote becomes Conservative leader and prime minister, without the need for a national election.

THE CONTENDERS:

Former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and former Brexit Secretary Dominic Raab are the bookmakers' favorites for the top job if May loses the confidence vote.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove and Home Secretary Sajid Javid are also considered top contenders.

Pelosi gives Trump an earful, questions 'manhood' in private

By LAURIE KELLMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In public, Nancy Pelosi lectured Donald Trump on the Constitution and wagged a finger at him for characterizing her "strength." In private, she questioned his "manhood" — and her disdain for him became public, again, anyway.

"It's like a manhood thing for him. As if manhood could ever be associated with him. This wall thing," Pelosi privately told House Democrats after a combative, on-camera Oval Office meeting with Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer. The account was described on condition of anonymity by an aide who was in the room but not authorized to discuss Pelosi's remarks publicly.

In the space of a few hours Tuesday, the California Democrat nominated for her second stint as House speaker rolled out her approach to the Republican president as the two prepare for two years of divided government.

"It goes to show you: You get into a tickle contest with a skunk, you get tinkle all over you," she said after Tuesday's meeting, according to the aide.

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Pelosi is said to frown on truly blue language. But in public and private, she can be unsparing in her clapbacks, and never more so than during the Trump presidency. She questioned Trump's "manhood" publicly in October at Harvard University's Institute of Politics, for example. And yet, she's long counseled Democrats to not get into the muck, Trump-style, advising Democrats before the State of the Union address in January not to get in the way of his "slobbering self."

On Tuesday, outside the White House, Pelosi predicted Democrats would stay "dignified."

Pelosi hardly saved her disdain for Trump for the private audience, letting it rip in slightly more respectful tones a few hours earlier when the president invited journalists into the Oval Office for what were billed as talks over the national budget. What ensued was like a political cage match, with everyone except Pence jumping in with ripostes, setups, lectures and insults. The conflict between Trump and Pelosi dominated the scene, which was replete with gender politics.

The spectacle suggested a fierce, two-year struggle in which Democrats control one chamber of Congress for the first time in Trump's presidency. The new Congress is sworn in Jan. 3, and Pelosi is nominated for her second stint as speaker of the House and second in the line of presidential succession. That carries significant stakes for Trump, who faces oversight investigations into his presidential campaign and administration. Additionally, the House will include a record number of women elected in the #MeToo era — most of them Democrats — injecting gender into the discussion like never before.

In her opening comments in the Oval Office, Pelosi said failed budget talks would result in a "Trump shutdown" of government — a phrase that might have inflamed him. Instead, Trump said he'd take responsibility for any shuttering of government.

Trump alluded to the fact that Pelosi's election as speaker is not assured.

"Nancy's in a situation where it's not easy for her to talk right now, and I understand, and I fully understand that," Trump said.

Pelosi raised a hand, then wagged her index finger: "Mr. President, please don't characterize the strength that I bring to this meeting as the leader of the House Democrats, who just won a big victory."

She kept it clean through a post-Oval Office press conference, suggesting to reporters that she didn't want to embarrass Trump over his misstatement of facts in front of the cameras.

Behind the scenes is another story. Out came her gibe about Trump's masculinity.

On Tuesday, she told Democrats privately, "He said at the end of the meeting, he said, 'We can go two routes with this meeting: with a knife or a candy. I said, 'Exactly.'"

She went with the knife.

"I told him about Ronald Reagan," Pelosi told the Democrats. "I said you probably don't know who I spoke most about on the campaign trail — what president I spoke most about. He said, 'Donald Trump.' I said, 'I never mentioned your name.'"

Later in private, she told the Democrats: "I was trying to be the mom."

AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

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

Ex-Trump lawyer Michael Cohen faces possible jail sentence

By JIM MUSTIAN and LARRY NEUMEISTER, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Michael Cohen, a lawyer who made his career protecting President Donald Trump, is set to learn Wednesday whether his decision to cooperate with federal investigators will lessen his punishment for dodging taxes, lying to Congress and violating campaign finance laws.

Cohen, 52, is due to appear at 11 a.m. at a courthouse in Manhattan for a sentencing hearing before U.S. District Judge William Pauley III.

Under federal sentencing guidelines, he stands to get around four years in prison, but his lawyers have argued for leniency.

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Some of Cohen's crimes, they said, were motivated by overenthusiasm for Trump, rather than any nefarious intent.

He has pleaded guilty to misleading Congress about his work on a proposal to build a Trump skyscraper in Moscow, hiding the fact that he continued to speak with Russians about the proposal well into the presidential campaign.

Cohen also pleaded guilty in August to breaking campaign finance laws by helping orchestrate payments to silence two women — former Playboy model Karen McDougal and adult film actress Stormy Daniels — who said they had sexual encounters with Trump while he was married.

For weeks, Cohen's legal strategy appeared to revolve around persuading the court that he is a reformed man who abandoned longtime friendships and gave up his livelihood when he decided to cut ties with the president and speak with federal investigators. Cohen's lawyers have said in court filings that their client could have stayed on the president's side and angled himself for a presidential pardon.

New York prosecutors have urged a judge to sentence Cohen to a substantial prison term, saying he'd failed to fully cooperate and overstated his helpfulness.

They've asked for only a slight reduction to his sentence based on his work with the office of special counsel Robert Mueller and prosecutors looking into the campaign finance violations in New York.

A probation-only sentence, they said, is unbecoming of "a man who knowingly sought to undermine core institutions of our democracy."

"While many Americans who desired a particular outcome to the election knocked on doors, toiled at phone banks, or found any number of other legal ways to make their voices heard, Cohen sought to influence the election from the shadows. He did so by orchestrating secret and illegal payments to silence two women who otherwise would have made public their alleged extramarital affairs" with Trump, prosecutors wrote.

Prosecutors said Cohen orchestrated payments to McDougal and Daniels at Trump's direction.

Trump, who insists the affairs never happened, said Monday in a tweet that the payments to the women were "a simple private transaction," not a campaign contribution. And if it was campaign contribution, the president said, Cohen is the one who should be held responsible.

"Lawyer's liability if he made a mistake, not me," Trump wrote, adding, "Cohen just trying to get his sentence reduced. WITCH HUNT!"

A sentence of hard time would leave Cohen with little to show for his decision to plead guilty, though experts said Wednesday's hearing might not be the last word on his punishment.

Cohen could have his sentence revisited if he strikes a deal with prosecutors in which he provides additional cooperation within a year of his sentence, said Michael J. Stern, a former federal prosecutor in Detroit and Los Angeles.

"Few things spark a defendant's renewed interest in cooperating faster than trading in a pair of custom Italian trousers for an off-the-rack orange jump suit," he said.

Annemarie McAvoy, a former federal prosecutor in Brooklyn, said prosecutors appear to be angry at Cohen for limiting his cooperation.

"It could be a tactic to try to break him like they've tried to do with (Paul) Manafort," McAvoy said, referring to Trump's former campaign chairman. "It kind of shows they're putting the screws to him. If they're not mad at him, he didn't give them what they wanted."

Cohen's transition from Trump's fixer-in-chief to felon has been head-spinning.

He once told an interviewer he would "take a bullet" for Trump. But facing prosecution for evading \$1.4 million in taxes, Cohen pleaded guilty in August, pledged to cooperate with Mueller's investigation of Russian interference in the presidential election and changed his party registration from Republican to Democrat.

Judge Pauley, who was appointed to the federal bench by former President Bill Clinton, may allow Cohen to begin serving any prison term he receives at a later date. But legal experts said Cohen could also be taken into custody immediately.

"If I were advising him, I'd encourage him to bring his toothbrush to court," said Stern.

Cohen's lawyers have asked for no prison time, saying he has suffered enough already.

"The greatest punishment Michael has endured in the criminal process has been the shame and anxiety he feels daily from having subjected his family to the fallout from his case," his attorneys wrote in a court filing last month. "The media glare and intrusions on all of them, including his children, the regular hate correspondence and written and oral threats, the fact that he will lose his law license, the termination of business relationships by banks and insurers and the loss of friendships, are but some of this fallout."

5 detained as France hunts Christmas market terror suspect

STRASBOURG, France (AP) — French authorities detained five people as they hunted Wednesday for a suspected extremist who sprayed gunfire at one of Europe's most famous Christmas markets in the eastern city of Strasbourg, killing three and wounding at least 13 and putting the whole country on edge anew.

The government raised the security alert level and sent police reinforcements to Strasbourg, where some 350 security forces are searching for the assailant. Police officials said he was wounded in a gunfight with soldiers after the Tuesday night attack but escaped, and a top official said he might have escaped to neighboring Germany.

The attacker is a 29-year-old with a police record in France and Germany who had been flagged for extremism, police said. Police detained five people in overnight searches around the city, Laurent Nunez, secretary of state for the Interior Ministry, said on France-Inter radio.

A terrorism investigation was opened, but the motive of the attack is unclear. Nunez said eight of the injured are in serious condition, and the city mayor said some had head wounds.

Witnesses described shots and screams after the gunman opened fire at the Christmas market Tuesday evening in a city that's home to the European Parliament and considers itself a capital of Europe — and promotes itself as the "capital of Christmas." For several hours swaths of the city were under lockdown.

The attack is a new blow to France, after a wave of Islamic extremist killings in 2015 and 2016, and amid a month of protests against President Emmanuel Macron that have blocked roads around the country, led to rioting in the capital and put heavy strain on police.

While authorities urged people in the area to stay inside after Tuesday's attack, Strasbourg Mayor Roland Ries told BFM television Wednesday that "life must go on" so that the city doesn't cede to a "terrorist who is trying to disrupt our way of life."

The assailant got inside a security zone around the venue and opened fire from there, Mayor Roland Ries said on BFM television.

One possible reason for the attack: police tried and failed to arrest him earlier Tuesday for an attempted murder, Nunez said. The suspect had been identified as radicalized during past stays in prison, Nunez added. Authorities did not identify him publicly.

Police were out in force in Strasbourg on Wednesday morning, and the Christmas market was closed. Strasbourg, a city about 500 kilometers (310 miles) east of Paris on France's border with Germany, promotes itself as the "Capital of Christmas" and the market set up around the local cathedral is a holiday tradition. The market was the target of an al-Qaida-linked plot at the turn of the millennium.

Many of Europe's deadliest terror attacks in recent years have taken place in France. In response to Tuesday's shooting, the government decided to take the country's attack risk up a level on the official threat index and to send security reinforcements to Strasbourg, Interior Minister Christophe Castaner said in Strasbourg.

Some 350 officers and two helicopters were searching for the assailant after Tuesday's drama, which involved shooting in multiple neighborhoods of Strasbourg, authorities said. The assailant confronted law enforcement officers twice, exchanging fire, while he "sowed terror," Castaner said.

The shooter was shot and wounded by soldiers guarding the Christmas market, according to Stephane Morisse of police union FGP Police.

"I heard two or three shots at around 7:55 p.m., then I heard screams. I got close to the window. I saw people running. After that I closed the shutters. Then I heard more shots, closer this time," said Yoann

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Bazard, 27, who lives in central Strasbourg.

"I thought maybe it's firecrackers," he said, speaking by phone. "And then, as it got close, it was really shocking. There were a lot of screams. ... There were police or soldiers shouting 'Get inside!' and 'Put your hands on your head.'"

Another witness, Peter Fritz, told the BBC one of the three people killed was a Thai tourist who was shot in the head and didn't respond to lengthy attempts to revive him.

Google grilled in Congress: What's ahead for tech companies

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY, MICHAEL LIEDTKE and MARCY GORDON, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. lawmakers' grilling of Google CEO Sundar Pichai may have sounded like a broken record, but it amplified the prickly issues facing tech companies as Democrats prepare to take control of the House next month.

The 3 1/2-hour hearing Tuesday hit upon familiar themes — online privacy, data protection and the danger of digital monopolies — that are poised to come into even sharper focus next year.

Here are some of the hurdles that Google parent Alphabet Inc., Facebook, Amazon and other tech companies are likely to face when the 116th Congress convenes.

USER PRIVACY

Looming over the tech industry is the possibility of government regulation intended to protect people's data. One model for lawmakers may be Europe, where new rules governing data and privacy went into effect this year.

Rep. Ted Poe, R-Texas, tried to pin down Pichai on privacy during Tuesday's hearing. "I've got an iPhone," Poe said, waving his device. "Can Google track me when I move?" If he moved to the left toward his Democratic colleagues on the panel, would Google know?

"Not by default," Pichai answered. Poe demanded a yes or no answer, but Pichai indicated it was complicated.

Other lawmakers questioned whether regular people know how much data Google can collect about them and how to stop being tracked. Privacy, of course, is also a huge issue for Facebook, which has spent nearly a year trying to recover from the Cambridge Analytica data mining scandal.

SEARCHING FOR BIAS

Lawmakers from both parties seem determined to re-examine whether Google rigs its search results to promote its own services and its own political agenda, too. President Donald Trump also has complained about the issue (without evidence).

European regulators already have concluded Google manipulated its search engine to gain an unfair advantage over other online shopping sites in the lucrative e-commerce market, and fined the company \$2.8 billion. Google disputes those findings and is still appealing the decision reached in 2017.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission opened a similar investigation into Google's business practices in 2011. That probe concluded 19 months later without finding any serious misconduct and didn't require any meaningful changes to how the company operates. But internal documents later surfaced that indicated the FTC's board had brushed off some recommendations of staff lawyers who believed Google was tinkering with its search results in way that stifled competition.

U.S. Rep. David Cicilline, a Democrat from Rhode Island, told Pichai he intended to work with the FTC to draw up a regulatory framework to prevent Google from throttling its rivals through its search engine, which handles two out of every three queries in the U.S.

Numerous lawmakers also asserted that Google uses its search engine as a propaganda machine that highlights news and opinions supporting its own view of how the world should be. The prevailing consensus so far is that the alleged bias most frequently falls on the left-leaning side of most debates, although that pendulum could swing now that Democrats will be the majority party in the House.

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But drawing up regulations governing that area of search results would be more likely to raise First Amendment issues, making them even more difficult to impose.

CHINA

Lawmakers on both sides peppered Pichai with questions about the possibility that Google is considering offering a censored search engine in China after pulling out of that country in 2010 in a high-profile dispute with its communist government's policies.

It's not clear what Congress might be able to do to prevent Google from returning to China, but it would certainly trigger more political fireworks.

Pichai acknowledged Google has been exploring a possible search engine in China with a team of engineers that at times has exceeded 100 people, but repeatedly emphasized the company has no plans to release it "right now." If that changes, Pichai promised let lawmakers know about it.

ELECTION INTERFERENCE

While Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee grilled Pichai on what they perceive as bias against conservatives, top committee Democrat Jerrold Nadler said lawmakers should instead examine issues such as the spread of misinformation online and Russian efforts to influence U.S. elections online.

Given Democrats are poised to take over the House, the use of fake news and misinformation by foreign actors — especially Russia — will likely to continue to be front and center in the coming months, if not years.

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Governments around the world are becoming increasingly unnerved by the power being amassed by major technology companies — with the dominance of Facebook in social networking, Google in search and Amazon in e-commerce raising the most concerns.

That has raised the specter that Trump and Congress might turn up the heat on antitrust regulators to get them to investigate whether consumers and the economy as a whole need to be protected from those companies.

In the most dramatic scenario, a case might be made for breaking the companies into smaller pieces. The premise would be that they have become modern-day trusts similar to what John Rockefeller built through Standard Oil, before the U.S. Supreme Court required it to be dismantled in a 1911 decision that reshaped the business landscape.

Ortutay reported from New York and Liedtke reported from San Francisco.

Huawei CFO gets bail; China detains ex-Canadian diplomat

By JIM MORRIS, ROB GILLIES and PAUL WISEMAN, The Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — A Canadian court granted bail Tuesday to a top Chinese executive arrested at the United States' request in a case that has set off a diplomatic furor among the three countries and complicated high-stakes U.S.-China trade talks.

Hours before the bail hearing in Vancouver, China detained a former Canadian diplomat in Beijing in apparent retaliation for the Dec. 1 arrest of Meng Wanzhou, chief financial officer of Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei and daughter of the company's founder.

After three days of hearings, a British Columbia justice granted bail of \$10 million Canadian (US\$7.5 million) to Meng, but required her to wear an ankle bracelet, surrender her passports, stay in Vancouver and its suburbs and confine herself to one of her two Vancouver homes from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.

The decision was met with applause in the packed courtroom, where members of Vancouver's Chinese community had turned out to show support for Meng. She left the courthouse late Tuesday surrounded by a security detail and was driven away in a black SUV without responding to questions from reporters.

Amid rising tension between China and Canada, Canadian Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale confirmed

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earlier that a former Canadian diplomat had been detained in Beijing. The detention came after China warned Canada of consequences for Meng's arrest.

"We're deeply concerned," Goodale said. "A Canadian is obviously in difficulty in China. ... We are sparing no effort to do everything we possibly can to look after his safety."

Michael Kovrig, who has worked as a diplomat in China and elsewhere, was detained by the Beijing Bureau of Chinese State Security on Monday night during one of his regular visits to Beijing, said the International Crisis Group, for which Kovrig works as North East Asia adviser.

Rob Malley, head of the Brussels-based non-governmental group, said Canadian consular officers had not been given access to Kovrig. He thinks Kovrig was in Beijing on a personal visit and definitely not there for any reason that would undermine Chinese national security.

Canada had been bracing for retaliation for Meng's arrest. The Canadian province of British Columbia canceled a trade mission to China amid fears China could detain Canadians to put pressure on Ottawa over Meng's detention.

"In China there is no coincidence," Guy Saint-Jacques, a former Canadian ambassador to China, said of Kovrig's detention. "Unfortunately Canada is caught in the middle of this dispute between the U.S and China. Because China cannot kick the U.S. they turn to the next target."

Earlier in the day, China vowed to "spare no effort" to protect against "any bullying that infringes the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi didn't mention Meng by name. But ministry spokesman Lu Kang said Wang was referring to cases of all Chinese abroad, including Meng's.

Washington accuses Huawei of using a Hong Kong shell company to sell equipment to Iran in violation of U.S. sanctions. It says Meng and Huawei misled banks about the company's business dealings in Iran.

On Tuesday, U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Palladino told reporters in Washington "the charges against Meng pertain to alleged lies to United States financial institutions" about Huawei's business dealings in Iran.

"It is clear from the filings that were unsealed in Canada, Meng and others are alleged to have put financial institutions at risk of criminal and civil liability in the United States by deceiving those institutions as to the nature and extent of Huawei's business in Iran," Palladino said.

Meng has denied the U.S. allegations through her lawyer in court, promising to fight them if she is extradited to face charges in the United States.

"We have every confidence that the Canadian and U.S. legal systems will reach a just conclusion in the following proceedings," Huawei said in a statement.

"As we have stressed all along, Huawei complies with all applicable laws and regulations in the countries and regions where we operate, including export control and sanction laws of the UN, US, and EU. We look forward to a timely resolution to this matter."

Huawei, the biggest global supplier of network gear for phone and internet companies, is a target of U.S. security concerns. Washington has pressured other countries to limit use of its technology, warning they could be opening themselves up to surveillance and theft of information.

The U.S. and China have tried to keep Meng's case separate from their wider trade dispute and suggested Tuesday that talks to resolve their differences may resume.

But President Donald Trump undercut that message in an interview Tuesday with Reuters, where he said he would consider intervening in the case against Meng if it would be in the interest of U.S. national security or help forge a trade deal with Beijing.

Roland Paris, a former foreign policy adviser to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, called Trump's comments troubling.

"Canada is fulfilling the terms of its treaty obligations and upholding the rule of law in good faith, and paying a price to do so. If the U.S. is not equally committed to the rule of law in this case, the extradition request should be withdrawn immediately," Paris tweeted.

News that China's economy czar had discussed with U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Trade Rep. Robert Lighthizer for talks aimed at settling the two countries' difference lifted share prices around

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the world on Tuesday.

The United States has slapped tariffs on \$250 billion in Chinese imports in response to complaints Beijing steals American technology and forces U.S. companies to turn over trade secrets.

Tariffs on \$200 billion of those imports were scheduled to rise from 10 percent to 25 percent on Jan. 1. But Trump agreed to postpone those by 90 days while the two sides negotiate.

Associated Press writer Jim Morris reported this story in Vancouver, AP writer Rob Gillies reported from Toronto and AP writer Paul Wiseman reported from Washington. AP writers Matthew Lee in Washington and Joe McDonald in Beijing contributed to this report.

Draining the swamp, clearing the burrows: DC's war on rats

By ASHRAF KHALIL, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Andre Pittman and Gregory Cornes are on a mission to rid Washington of opportunistic vermin.

But their target isn't corrupt officials or shady political fixers; it's *Rattus Norvegicus*, the common Norway Rat.

The nation's capital is facing a spiraling rat infestation, fueled by mild winters and a human population boom. Washington's government is struggling to keep pace, with the pest control department fielding a record number of calls.

On one recent day, Pittman and Cornes, both veteran Health Department employees, are working within sight of the Capitol, shoveling dry ice pellets into suspected rat burrow entrances. On another, they're summoned about six blocks north of the White House, at 16th Street and M, where residents have complained of an outbreak.

"Rats adapt to everything. They can be like geniuses," Pittman said.

On the grounds of a church, they poke around, expertly spotting telltale holes and matted dirt trails that signal rat burrows. Cornes uses an instrument like an extra-long Super Soaker to inject poison into the hole, while Pittman watches to see if the white powder puffs up from other holes and then shovels dirt to block those exits.

At the office building next door, the crew receives a hearty welcome from the security guard.

"The rats would scurry over employees' feet as they left the building after sunset," says the guard, who asked that his name not be published so as not to embarrass his employer. "We finally moved all garbage cans away from the door because that's where they would feed and party."

Cornes assures him, "We're winning."

The numbers don't exactly back up Cornes' confidence. The pest control company Orkin ranks Washington as America's fourth "Rattiest City," based on the number of new service calls per year. That's up one spot from the previous year and just behind Los Angeles and New York; Chicago has been ranked No. 1 for four consecutive years.

While D.C. doesn't boast the subway monsters famous in New York, anecdotal evidence is piling up that the rodents are on the march. In September, a viral video showed security camera footage of a rat pulling a fire alarm, forcing the evacuation of an apartment building.

Back on M Street, Cornes and Pittman discover a network of burrows in a large planter box in front of an office building. They inject poison, causing bushes to shake with fleeing rodents. A baby rat suddenly emerges from the ground and flees around the corner.

Gerard Brown, head of Washington's rodent control department, says a string of gentle winters has enabled the rodents to breed constantly. The harsh winters don't necessarily kill off the rats. Most Norway rats live only about eight months, and they stay warm by burrowing underground or chewing their way into basements. But an extended freeze would choke off their food supply, which limits the rodents' prodigious breeding. A mature female rat can give birth to one litter per month, with an average of 10 babies per litter.

Washington is also in the midst of a gentrification-fueled economic and population boom. The District's

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population just passed 700,000 — more than Vermont and Wyoming. Brown said the number of restaurants, bars and coffee shops has increased by 25 percent in two years.

“More people with more money means more restaurants, which means more garbage, which means more rat food,” Brown said.

In several ways, Washington is perfectly suited for the critters. It is filled with green space, from the National Mall to the many signature traffic circles; Dupont Circle is apparently a hot spot.

Rats also love waterfront areas, and part of Washington’s gentrification boom has focused on the Navy Yards or the new Wharf Marina — presenting the ultimate rodent attraction of a flourishing waterfront restaurant scene.

This isn’t even Washington’s first war on rats. Former Mayor Anthony Williams referenced rat problems in his inauguration speech in 1999. Back in 1967, a rat gnawing on power station wires knocked out electricity for nearly an hour in about a third of Washington.

This time, Mayor Muriel Bowser has allocated an extra \$900,000 to boost rodent control efforts and increase staffing. The government is also offering financial assistance and incentives for restaurants to buy mini-trash compactors that fit in urban alleyways and limit the rats’ access to food.

At the site near the White House, Pittman and Cornes find the real problem around the back of the office building: a collection of uncovered garbage and compost containers, plus a giant pile of discarded file cabinets — all surrounded by black pellets.

“See all these droppings? All this stuff has got to go,” Pittman tells the building manager.

He could write up a \$500 health code violation (\$1,000 for a repeat offender) but instead Pittman tells him: “I’ll give you two weeks to get this cleaned up. Then we’ll be back.”

As urban rodentologist Robert Corrigan puts it, “80 percent of any rat control campaign is actually refuse management.”

Corrigan has consulted with Washington and other cities on rodent problems and runs free “rat academies” in Washington for both city workers and residents.

Corrigan recommends a radical solution that would be logistically difficult for most major cities: doing most trash pickups at night.

“The usual early morning pickup plays right into the hands of the rats who are active all night long,” he said.

Multiple city officials said this would be almost impossible to implement due to staffing issues and late-night noise concerns.

Corrigan, not a fan of amateurs handling poisons, says the dry ice method (it suffocates them in their burrows) is safe for homeowners to use. He also recommends that residents spray trash bins with a mix of water and 10 percent bleach. Beyond that, the only real solution is the hardest part of the equation — controlling human behavior.

“You’re only as good as your neighbor,” he said. “You can have 10 beautiful houses in a row and if number 11 is a slob, everybody suffers.”

Follow Khalil on Twitter at: www.Twitter.com/Ashrafkhalil

Democrats focus on voting rights ahead of 2020 primary

By JUANA SUMMERS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats are trying to turn their most painful losses this year into a rallying cry they hope will electrify the 2020 presidential campaign: Every vote matters.

Multiple potential contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination are elevating the issue of voting rights as they prepare to launch campaigns. They’re vowing to oppose Republican-backed efforts to require identification to vote, reinstate protections eliminated by a 2013 Supreme Court ruling and frequently highlight the necessity of counting every vote.

The aim is to tap into the anger and frustration among Democrats who argue that Republicans win some

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elections by making it harder for their constituents, particularly minorities, to vote.

That sentiment has long existed among Democrats but intensified after the party lost closely watched races for governor in Georgia and Florida last month. Both contests featured heated racial rhetoric and charges of voter suppression. The party's suspicion of Republicans has also grown as a congressional race in North Carolina remains mired in allegations of absentee ballot fraud and GOP lawmakers in Wisconsin and Michigan seek to weaken the power of incoming Democratic governors.

Democrats ultimately hope to turn the issue of voting rights into an argument that's just as persuasive to voters in 2020 as health care proved to be in 2018. And there's already competition among potential presidential contenders to build a reputation as the most aggressive in advocating for the right to vote.

"This is not a new issue, and it is quite frankly the dark history of our country, which is specific populations being restricted from meaningful access to the right to vote," Sen. Kamala Harris of California told The Associated Press.

"There's no question that 2018 highlighted an issue that has maybe seemed to be dormant for some time, but it's very much alive and it should be the subject of dinner table conversations everywhere and it should be of real concern to everyone because, look, when people lose confidence in our democracy, when Americans lose confidence in our democracy, it will impair our strength. It will cause us to be weaker," she said.

Aides to Harris said that voting rights would be among her top priorities, and that she would likely frame it less as a civil rights issue and as more of a broader Democratic rallying point. She has argued that the entire Democratic agenda is weakened when Republicans restrict ballot access for unions, minorities and other groups.

New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, who is weighing his own presidential bid, has framed the issue of voting rights in the context of a traditional civil rights issue. During an October trip to Des Moines, Iowa, Booker sparked cheering standing ovations as he quoted from Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech from the 1965 voting rights march on Montgomery, Alabama.

"How long will it take? I'm going to tell you, not long now," Booker proclaimed, turning the moment into a call-and-response. "Because it's not long until November."

Harris, Booker and Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota are among the potential presidential candidates who will hold onto seats on the Senate Judiciary Committee heading into 2020, giving them an important post from which to address voting rights.

That's leaving some activists pleased that the issue appears to be moving into the mainstream of Democratic politics.

"This is the first time where I feel like there has been a broad conversation because the examples were so egregious," said Adrienne Shropshire, the executive director of BlackPAC, which works to mobilize black voters. "It was literally in every community that I went to, in every church that I stopped by, in every neighborhood when I was knocking on doors — that was almost one of the first things that people were talking about because everyone felt like their community was under assault."

Still, some caution that the focus on voting rights isn't a successful strategy to win a crucial election and could instead backfire on Democrats who are trying to appeal to broader swaths of voters. Peter Guzman, a Republican who is the president of the Latin Chamber of Commerce in Nevada, said that while he feels every candidate — Democrat and Republican — should talk about voting rights, he didn't see it as a singularly important issue to center a campaign on.

"I think the conversation should be encouraging everybody to vote, and if anybody feels like that's being suppressed, they certainly should call the authorities and make it known that they're not able to vote," Guzman said in an interview.

He added that he could see potential backlash for a candidate who campaigns on it. "I'm not quite sure everybody in the country believes the problem is that significant," he said.

"Here in Nevada, I believe that we have some of the best, safest voting in the United States," he added. "I think we're a model for the rest of the nation. I do not believe that there's voter suppression. Whenever

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I hear voter fraud, I believe those are buzzwords for other things.”

That’s not stopping Democrats for now. At a post-election gathering on Capitol Hill of the National Action Network, the civil rights organization founded by the Rev. Al Sharpton, multiple senators who appear to be moving toward jumping into the 2020 presidential race eagerly discussed the issue.

“When it comes to elections, there should be no hesitation: Every vote matters, period,” said Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. “If you can’t get more Americans to vote for you than the other guy or gal, then you lose. It’s that simple. Politicians are supposed to compete over how many voters they can persuade to come vote for them, not how many American citizens they can disqualify, discourage or demoralize.”

Klobuchar, who could stake out a more moderate position among Democrats should she choose to seek the White House, told the gathering, “I think No. 1 on the agenda has got to be our economy.”

“And then,” she continued, “you can’t have a fair economy for everyone if you don’t have fair voting rights.”

Klobuchar noted she has sponsored a bill calling for automatic voter registration and supports reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act.

Last week in Charleston, South Carolina, dozens of people attended a town hall led by Tom Steyer, the billionaire investor and Democratic activist, focused on the right to an equal vote.

“I do think we’ve seen more transparency into cheating, and more awareness that cheating actually flips elections,” Steyer, who is considering running for president, told the AP. “We saw it in Georgia this year, we’re seeing it in North Carolina real-time, but we also saw it in Wisconsin in 2016 — it’s not just south of the Mason-Dixon line.”

Even as he pushed his own message that every person deserves the right to an equal vote, Steyer said he wasn’t sure that this issue would become a defining issue of the cycle.

“Voting is a justice issue, but it doesn’t come up that much,” he said.

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

Analysis: A rancorous first glimpse of new Trump-Dem dynamic

By ZEKE MILLER and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump’s first encounter with newly empowered congressional Democrats produced a striking Oval Office display that revealed how ill-prepared he is for the biggest political challenge of his presidency.

There was Trump, sitting between two seasoned legislators, repeating his demands for border wall funds, while House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer first politely, then forcefully, told him no, with the force of their combined 60-plus years in Congress.

Tuesday’s televised bout offered a tantalizing preview of divided government in Trump’s Washington. The bravado and playground taunts that are the president’s signature weapons of choice ran squarely up against the Democratic resistance, subpoenas and gridlock of a soon-to-be empowered Congress. After two years of unified Republican control in Washington, Trump learned the hard way that as challenging as his first two years in office have been, the next will be even more trying.

It marked the beginning of what may be an early comeuppance after Trump’s post-election spin that Democratic control of the House would turn out to be smoother for him than having a slim GOP majority. When Trump invited reporters and cameras into his private meeting with Pelosi and Schumer, Democrats played on his turf: Taunting, goading and lecturing the president, Pelosi and Schumer made clear they intend to use their seats at the table to give the president a taste of what he’s been serving since taking office.

“Elections have consequences, Mr. President,” Schumer said pointedly after Trump was reminded that Democrats took control of the House.

It was a new reality that Trump, still smarting from his party’s losses on Nov. 6, appeared to be struggling to internalize as his demands for border wall funds fell flat with those he’ll need as partners to deliver on his priorities.

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Pelosi told reporters later at the Capitol that she "didn't want to contradict the president again and again in front of the public." But, she said, "If that's what he wants, then that's what we have to do."

The freewheeling meeting was hardly designed to score a deal on keeping key government agencies open past Dec. 21. The president admitted as much. For Trump, it was an opportunity to lay his case before the American people, as the Democrats first urged Trump to negotiate privately, and then treated him to a public needling.

From the start, the differences were clear. Pelosi told the president the American people expected the government to stay open, adding: "You should not have a Trump shutdown."

"Did you say 'Trump?'" the president asked.

That set the stage for what came next: Trump and Pelosi haggling over vote counts, along the way highlighting Trump's long-term disengagement from the legislative process. He and Schumer sparred over politics.

Rather than reach toward compromise, Trump tried to force Democrats to accept the border wall on his terms. But bolstered by their electoral wins, Democrats weren't having it.

The encounter only reinforced the fears of White House aides and some of Trump's congressional allies that he is not only unprepared for dealmaking in a divided Washington but also for handling the investigations of Trump and his administration that Democrats are sure to undertake.

When Trump said he'd be "proud" to shut down the government over border security, it became a soundbite for the ages.

Later, Pelosi said Trump talked so much about the border wall, "it's like a manhood thing for him." That comment was revealed on condition of anonymity by an aide who was in the room but was not authorized to speak publicly. Pelosi also said Trump insisted Mexico would pay for the wall.

Democrats have grown almost exasperated working with Trump who, after nearly two years in office, still doesn't seem to understand Congress and can't always stick to his decisions and close the deal.

"Dealmaker, negotiator, whatever. That wasn't my experience with him," said Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, who tried and failed to cut an immigration deal with Trump last year.

"We've got to bring him into the world of congressional reality," Durbin said. "And sometimes I wonder if he has anyone around him who does that."

White House officials offered little commentary on the remarkable Oval Office confrontation beyond admonishing Democrats for trying to move the proceedings out of public view. They privately questioned whether Trump understood the gravity of the new legislative era. But Trump, at least publicly, expressed confidence in the exchange.

Trump has long believed that his tough immigration rhetoric was responsible for his 2016 campaign victory, and he brandished it again for the 2018 midterms to more mixed success. According to AP VoteCast, more voters this year opposed the border wall than supported it.

"If we close the country, I will take it because we're closing it down for border security and I think I win that every single time," Trump said later. He insisted the meeting with Pelosi and Schumer was "very friendly."

Democrats, too, suggested the meeting ended well enough, noting that Trump neither accepted nor rejected their offer to fund the government with up to \$1.6 billion for border security, rather than the \$5 billion he's been demanding for the wall.

But Democrats showed they are comfortable, as Pelosi often says, standing their ground "like a rock" — even if the day of name-calling and rancor provided a curtain raiser for the new Congress. Democrats seemed to indicate they know what they're in for and may emerge tarnished.

As Pelosi said, according to the aide, "It goes to show you: You get into a tickle contest with a skunk, you get tinkle all over you."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Zeke Miller has covered the White House and politics in Washington since 2011. AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro has covered Congress since 2010.

Follow on Miller Twitter at <https://twitter.com/zekejmilller> and Mascaro at <https://twitter.com/lisamascaro>

AP: Ivanka, Kushner could profit from tax break they pushed

By STEPHEN BRAUN, JEFF HORWITZ and BERNARD CONDON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At an Oval Office gathering earlier this year, President Donald Trump began touting his administration's new real estate investment program, which offers massive tax breaks to developers who invest in downtrodden American communities. He then turned to one of the plan's strongest supporters.

"Ivanka, would you like to say something?" Trump asked his daughter. "You've been pushing this very hard."

The Opportunity Zone program promoted by Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner — both senior White House advisers — could also benefit them financially, an Associated Press investigation found.

Government watchdogs say the case underscores the ethical minefield they created two years ago when they became two of the closest advisers to the president without divesting from their extensive real estate investments.

Trump and Kushner jointly own a big stake in a real estate investment firm, Cadre, that recently announced it is launching a series of Opportunity Zone funds that seek to build major projects under the program from Miami to Los Angeles. Separately, the couple owns interests in at least 13 properties held by Kushner's family firm that could qualify for the tax breaks because they are in Opportunity Zones in New Jersey, New York and Maryland — all of which, a study found, were already coming back.

Six of the Kushner Cos. buildings are in New York City's Brooklyn Heights area, with views of the Brooklyn Bridge and Manhattan skyline, where a five-bedroom apartment recently listed for \$8 million. Two more are in the beach town of Long Branch, N.J., where some oceanfront condos within steps of a white-tablecloth Italian restaurant and a Lululemon yoga shop list for as much as \$2.7 million.

There's no evidence the couple had a hand in selecting any of the nation's 8,700 Opportunity Zones, and the company has not indicated it plans to seek tax breaks under the new program. But the Kushners could profit even if they don't do anything — by potentially benefiting from a recent surge in Opportunity Zone property values amid a gold rush of interest from developers and investors.

Ivanka Trump's advocacy for the Opportunity Zone program "creates a direct conflict of interest with her spouse's investment in Cadre," said Virginia Canter, chief ethics counsel for the nonprofit Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. "Jared Kushner's interests are Ivanka Trump's interests and vice versa."

The couple's financial disclosures show their jointly held financial empire is worth between \$200 million and \$800 million, with much of it in real estate, including a stake of between \$25 million and \$50 million in Cadre. Those documents state they must recuse themselves from dealing with policy matters that touch on real estate and "would have a direct and predictable effect on Cadre." Ivanka Trump also has interests in Trump Organization properties which are not located inside Opportunity Zones.

"Ms. Trump has divested assets, set up trusts, removed herself from businesses and decisions about her investments," Abbe Lowell, ethics counsel for the couple, said in a statement. "In addition, she adheres to the ethics advice she has received from counsel about what issues she can work on and those to which she is recused."

The Kushner Cos. did not respond to requests for comment.

President Trump was scheduled to attend an Opportunity Zone event in Washington on Wednesday that would depict the program as a boon to distressed communities. White House spokesman Hogan Gidley told the AP that individual state governors of both parties nominate communities for Opportunity Zone designation "based on what underserved areas would benefit most. ... The White House has nothing to do with those decisions."

The Investing in Opportunity Act, which became law last December as part of the Republican-sponsored tax overhaul, never gained traction when it was first proposed during the Obama administration, but it quickly found favor in a White House headed and dominated by real estate developers and investors.

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A significant moment came when the law's key GOP sponsor, South Carolina U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, met President Trump after the violence-plagued white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August of 2017.

Trump promised Scott his support for Opportunity Zones as a way to show his administration's outreach to minority communities. But Scott had already found a supporter weeks earlier in Trump's daughter, in conversations that grew out of previous meetings about passing a child care tax credit.

Political sponsors and lobbyists told the AP that Ivanka Trump played an important role in promoting the legislation, while Kushner was also quietly supportive behind the scenes.

"Ivanka was on board with it," said Sean Smith, Scott's communications director. After their first conversation, Smith said Scott and Ivanka Trump talked by phone and in person nearly a dozen times. He added that Scott also spoke to Kushner about the program, but noted, "It was much more Ivanka than Jared."

A team from Economic Innovation Group, or EIG, a Washington think tank that pioneered the Opportunity Zones concept, met with top Kushner aides Reed Cordish and Chris Liddell two weeks before the tax reform bill was passed.

Funded by Napster founder and early Facebook investor Sean Parker, EIG spent more than \$1.4 million on lobbying over the past two years, both before and after the Investing in Opportunity Act passed. The group met with White House officials every quarter since the start of the Trump administration, and also met with frequently with officials from Treasury and other White House agencies, records show.

"Creating the incentive to bring capital into communities that are currently being overlooked is just a tremendous opportunity," Ivanka Trump said as her father and a crowd of supporters nodded during the White House session February 14.

Last month, at a dinner in Washington put on by the conservative Kemp Foundation, Scott singled out Ivanka Trump as his point person on the initiative. "When we were looking for help to get the tax bill across the finish line," he said, "I kept looking to the same person for help in the White House."

There is no indication the couple directly intervened in the shaping of the Opportunity Zone program specifically to advance their financial interests. And public officials say there is no evidence that any actions were taken to influence the selection of Opportunity Zone boundaries.

But backers of the program acknowledge that Ivanka Trump's out-front role drummed up interest from public officials and financial stakeholders.

Along with the Kushner-tied Cadre Opportunity Zone funds, more than 50 real estate and private equity interests have made plans in recent weeks to create investment funds under the program, including several with ties to the couple and the Trump administration.

Last month, former White House Communications Director Anthony Scaramucci launched an opportunity zone fund tied to his Skybridge Capital investment firm, aiming to build projects worth more than \$3 billion. Opportunity Zone funds have also been set up recently by New York-based Normandy Real Estate Partners and Heritage Equity Partners, two firms that have worked with Kushner Cos. on real estate ventures.

They are flocking to what financial analysts say are some of the most generous tax benefits they have ever seen. Investors who plow capital gains from previous investments into Opportunity Zone projects can defer taxes on those gains up to 2026. If they decide not to cash out their investment for seven years, they get to exclude up to 15 percent of those gains from taxes. And they can permanently avoid paying taxes on any new gains from investment in the zones if they hold onto the investment for a decade. With capital gains taxes as high as 23.8 percent, the savings can easily add up.

Government officials have estimated the program would cost \$1.5 billion in lost tax revenue over 10 years, but Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin has estimated the zones would attract up to \$100 billion in renewal efforts.

While the Opportunity Zone program mostly targets census tracts of high poverty and unemployment, it also allows "contiguous" tracts that might not be low-income, but are close enough to deprived communities to be eligible.

Critics say that could allow developers to cash in by targeting zones already teeming with investment and gentrified neighborhoods. Amazon's recent decision to locate a new headquarters in the bustling

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New York City neighborhood of Long Island City, for example, drew rebukes following reports it was in an Opportunity Zone.

A study by the Urban Institute in Washington found that nearly a third of the more than 8,700 Opportunity Zones nationwide — and all 13 of the ones containing Kushner properties — were showing signs of heavy investment and gentrification, based on such factors as rent increases and the percentage of college-educated residents.

The Kushners' most immediate advantage could come from their investment in Cadre. CEO Ryan Williams announced late last month that Cadre was starting up an Opportunity Zone fund that would aim to build major development projects in designated areas of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Phoenix, Houston, Atlanta, Philadelphia and Miami.

The company said the program "fits with Cadre's commitment to identifying opportunities in less-advantaged areas that are primed for growth."

Official: California must mull home ban in fire-prone areas

By DON THOMPSON, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California's increasingly deadly and destructive wildfires have become so unpredictable that government officials should consider banning home construction in vulnerable areas, the state's top firefighter says.

Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Director Ken Pimlott will leave his job Friday after 30 years with the agency. In an interview with The Associated Press, he said government and citizens must act differently to protect lives and property from fires that now routinely threaten large populations.

That may mean rethinking subdivisions in thickly forested mountainous areas or homes along Southern California canyons lined with tinder-dry chaparral. Yet Los Angeles County supervisors stung by California's housing shortage approved a massive rural housing development Tuesday despite the fire danger.

Developers said the 19,000-home community in rugged mountains 65 miles (105 kilometers) north of downtown Los Angeles would be built to minimize fire hazards with anti-ember construction and buffers around homes. It would include four new fire stations and roads wide enough to help people evacuate from an area the state has designated as a "high" and "very high" fire hazard zone.

Faced with such dangers, California residents should train themselves to respond more quickly to warnings and make preparations to shelter in place if they can't outrun the flames, Pimlott said.

Communities in fire zones need to harden key buildings with fireproof construction similar to the way cities prepare for earthquakes, hurricanes or tornadoes, and should prepare commercial or public buildings to withstand fires with the expectation hundreds may shelter there as they did in makeshift fashion when flames last month largely destroyed the Sierra Nevada foothills city of Paradise in Northern California.

California already has the nation's most robust building requirement programs for new homes in fire-prone areas, but recent fire seasons underscore more is needed. Officials must consider prohibiting construction in particularly vulnerable areas, said Pimlott, who has led the agency through the last eight years under termed-out Gov. Jerry Brown.

He said it's uncertain if those decisions should be made by local land managers or at the state level as legislative leaders have suggested. But Pimlott said "we owe it" to homeowners, firefighters and communities "so that they don't have to keep going through what we're going through."

"We've got to continue to raise the bar on what we're doing and local land-use planning decisions have to be part of that discussion," he said.

California's population has doubled since 1970 to nearly 40 million, pushing urban sprawl into mountain subdivisions, areas home to fast-burning grasslands and along scenic canyons and ridgetops that are susceptible to fires. After a crippling drought, the last two years have seen the worst fires in state history. November's fire in the northern California town of Paradise was the deadliest U.S. wildfire in a century, killing at least 85 people and destroying nearly 14,000 homes.

A year earlier, a fire that ripped through the San Francisco Bay Area city of Santa Rosa killed 22 people

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and destroyed more than 5,000 homes and other structures.

Every year since at least 2013, firefighters did not anticipate California's wildfires could get worse, Pimlott said. But each year the fires have increased in intensity — driven by dry fuels, an estimated 129 million drought- and bark beetle-killed trees, and climate change.

In response, the state is doing more planned burning to eliminate brush and dead trees that serve as fuels for wildfires. The state will also add seven large firefighting aircraft, replace a dozen aging helicopters, provide firefighter counseling and ensure that firefighters have enough time off for medical checkups to help them manage the mental and physical stress from a fire season that now never ends.

He said California leads the nation in clearing away dead trees and thinning forested areas that are crowded with trees that can fuel fires, contrary to criticism by President Donald Trump who has blamed forest mismanagement for the fires.

"No other state, or even the federal government, are putting the amount of investment into this space as California," Pimlott said.

The department's philosophy for many years has been to stamp out fires quickly to protect people and property. Prescribed burns were previously used sparingly out of concern they could get out of control, but he said the department is making "a sea change" by recognizing that starting fires under optimum conditions is a good way to reduce dangerous fuels.

Recent fires that have burned into cities have made clear that those protections need to be centered around vulnerable communities, he said. Paradise, for example, was built on a ridge atop steep canyons that helped channel the wind-driven fire, while wildfires have repeatedly blown into Northern and Southern California subdivisions from neighboring wildlands thick with tinder-dry fuel.

Pimlott rose through the ranks from seasonal firefighter to deputy director of fire protection before his appointment as chief of the agency. In that role he doubles as the state's chief forester and oversees a department that includes nearly 8,000 firefighters, forest managers and support staff.

He said he has seen fire conditions worsen each passing year during his three decades with the agency, taking its toll on residents and firefighters alike.

"Folks can say what they want to say, but firefighters are living climate change. It's staring them in the face every day," he said.

To adapt, he advocates wildfire warning systems that not only use new technology like automated phone calling systems, but maybe restoring civil defense-style emergency sirens in some areas. City planners must prepare communities "unlike we ever have before" with easy evacuation routes and new evacuation centers.

And he said Californians must treat "red flag" extreme fire danger warnings the way Midwesterners treat tornado warnings — as imminent threats.

"The reality of it is, California has a fire-prone climate and it will continue to burn," he said. "Fire is a way of life in California and we have to learn how to live with it, we have to learn how to have more resilient communities."

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 12, the 346th day of 2018. There are 19 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Dec. 12, 2000, George W. Bush became president-elect as a divided U.S. Supreme Court reversed a state court decision for recounts in Florida's contested election.

On this date:

In 1787, Pennsylvania became the second state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt nominated Oscar Straus to be Secretary of Commerce and Labor; Straus became the first Jewish Cabinet member.

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In 1913, authorities in Florence, Italy, announced that the "Mona Lisa," stolen from the Louvre Museum in Paris in 1911, had been recovered.

In 1917, during World War I, a train carrying some 1,000 French troops from the Italian front derailed while descending a steep hill in Modane (moh-DAN'); at least half of the soldiers were killed in France's greatest rail disaster. Father Edward Flanagan founded Boys Town outside Omaha, Nebraska.

In 1937, Japanese aircraft sank the U.S. gunboat Panay on China's Yangtze River. (Japan apologized, and paid \$2.2 million in reparations.)

In 1946, a United Nations committee voted to accept a six-block tract of Manhattan real estate offered as a gift by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to be the site of the U.N.'s headquarters.

In 1963, Kenya became independent of Britain.

In 1977, the dance movie "Saturday Night Fever," starring John Travolta, premiered in New York.

In 1985, 248 American soldiers and eight crew members were killed when an Arrow Air charter crashed after takeoff from Gander, Newfoundland.

In 1995, by three votes, the Senate killed a constitutional amendment giving Congress authority to outlaw flag burning and other forms of desecration against Old Glory.

In 1997, Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, the international terrorist known as "Carlos the Jackal," went on trial in Paris on charges of killing two French investigators and a Lebanese national. (Ramirez was convicted, and is serving a life prison sentence.)

In 2003, Paul Martin succeeded Jean Chretien (zhahn kreh-TYEN') as Canada's prime minister. Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger was knighted by Britain. Keiko, the killer whale made famous by the "Free Willy" movies, died in the Norwegian fjord that he'd made his home.

Ten years ago: A bomb exploded inside the West Coast Bank in Woodburn, Ore., killing Woodburn Police Capt. Thomas Tennant and Oregon State Police Senior Trooper William Hakim. Actor Van Johnson died in Nyack, N.Y. at age 92.

Five years ago: The House voted to ease across-the-board federal spending cuts and head off future government shutdowns, acting after Speaker John Boehner unleashed a stinging attack on tea party-aligned conservative groups campaigning for the measure's defeat. Actor-writer-producer Tom O'Laughlin, 82, creator of "Billy Jack," died in Thousand Oaks, California.

One year ago: Democrat Doug Jones won Alabama's special Senate election over Republican Roy Moore, who had denied accusations of sexual misconduct with teenage girls that allegedly took place when he was in his 30s; it was the first Democratic Senate victory in Alabama in a quarter-century, and came despite an endorsement of Moore by President Donald Trump. San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee, the city's first Asian-American mayor, died at the age of 65 after collapsing while grocery shopping.

Today's Birthdays: Former TV host Bob Barker is 95. Basketball Hall of Famer Bob Pettit is 86. Singer Connie Francis is 81. Singer Dionne Warwick is 78. Rock singer-musician Dickey Betts is 75. Hall of Fame race car driver Emerson Fittipaldi is 72. Actor Wings Hauser is 71. Actor Bill Nighy (ny) is 69. Actor Duane Chase (Film: "The Sound of Music") is 68. Country singer LaCosta is 68. Gymnast-turned-actress Cathy Rigby is 66. Author Lorna Landvik is 64. Singer-musician Sheila E. is 61. Actress Sheree J. Wilson is 60. Pop singer Daniel O'Donnell is 57. International Tennis Hall of Famer Tracy Austin is 56. Rock musician Eric Schenkman (Spin Doctors) is 55. Rock musician Nicholas Dimichino (Nine Days) is 51. Author Sophie Kinsella is 49. News anchor Maggie Rodriguez is 49. Actress Jennifer Connelly is 48. Actress Madchen Amick is 48. Actress Regina Hall is 48. Country singer Hank Williams III is 46. Actress Mayim Bialik is 43. Model Bridget Hall is 41. Actor Lucas Hedges (Film: "Manchester by the Sea") is 22. Actress Sky Katz (TV: "Raven's Home") is 14.

Thought for Today: "To escape criticism — do nothing, say nothing, be nothing." — Elbert Hubbard, American author and publisher (1856-1915).