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



Power Outage Tomorrow Morning

The City of Groton will be experiencing a town-wide power outage tomorrow, Dec. 20, starting at 6:30 a.m. The outage is for Northwestern to switch from a temporary line feeding the city's substation to the newly erected line. The switch over should take less than an hour to complete.

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

Dakota Outdoors



Erik Dean
402 N Main St
Aberdeen, SD 57401
605.229.0123

dakoutdoors@midconetwork.com

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Thursday, December 20, 2018

4:00pm: Basketball: Girls 7th/8th Game vs. Ipswich @ Ipswich High School (7th Grade 4pm 8th Grade 5pm)

6:30pm: Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. Ipswich @ Ipswich

Friday, December 21, 2018

End of 2nd Quarter

1:00pm: Elementary Christmas Concert at Groton Area High School

2:00pm: Early Dismissal Groton Area School District

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Diegel, DeHoet team for 52 points in Groton's win over Britton-Hecla

Treyton Diegel and Brodyn DeHoet teamed for 52 points for Groton Area while Kyler Meyer and Cole Fosness teamed for 48 points for Britton-Hecla as the Tigers hung on to beat the Braves, 70-62. The boys' basketball game was played Tuesday in Groton.

Diegel made seven three-pointers while DeHoet made five and Jonathan Doeden one to led the Tigers. Kyler Meyer made four three-pointers in the fourth quarter and made seven for the game while Cole Fosness made three three-pointers to pace the Braves.

The first quarter seemed like a run and gun game as the game was tied three times at 5, 7 and 21 and there were five lead changes as the Tigers took a 26-24 lead at the end of the first quarter. Groton Area made 42 percent of its shots in the first quarter while the Braves made 37 percent. Ice cold shooting by Britton-Hecla in the second quarter allowed the Tigers to develop a 13-point lead as the Tigers led at half time, 39-29. Britton-Hecla made seven percent of its field goals in the second quarter while Groton Area made 31 percent. Groton Area opened up an 19-point lead with 52-33 midway in the third quarter and the Tigers took a 57-42 lead into the fourth quarter. In the third quarter. Groton Area made 42 percent of its shots while Britton-Hecla made 25 percent. The Braves started out hot in the fourth quarter as Kyler Meyer powered in four three-pointers and the Braves closed to within five, 67-62, with under two minutes to go in the game. The Tigers went on for the eight point win.

Brodyn DeHoet and Treyton Diegel each had 26 points, Jonathan Doeden had 10, Tristan Traphagen four and Cade Guthmiller and Kaden Kurtz each had two points.

Kyler Meyer led the Braves with 29 points followed by Cole Fosness with 16, Stanley Haskens was eight for eight from the line for eight points, Joel James and Trevor Zuehlke each had four points and Nick Nelson added a free throw.

For the game, Groton Area was 12 of 30 in two-pointers for 40 percent while Britton-Hecla was 12 of 33 for 36 percent. In three-pointers, Groton Area was 13 of 27 for 48 percent and Britton-Hecla was nine of 32 for 27 percent. The Tigers were seven of 14 from the line for 50 percent and the Braves were 11 of 15 for 73 percent.

Groton Area had the edge in rebounds, 35-32, with DeHoet having 11 for Groton area and Trevor Zuehlke having eight for the Braves. Groton Area had 16 assists with Diegel having five, DeHoet had the lone steal and Austin Jones and Traphagen each had one block. Groton Area had more turnovers, 16-10.

Britton-Hecla won the junior varsity game, 40-28. Scoring for Groton Area: Chandler Larson 8, Jayden Zak 7, Lane Tietz 3, Jordan Bjerke 3, Cyrus DeHoet 3, Tate Larson 2 and Isaac Smith 2. Tyson Morris led the Braves with 11 points and Noah Olson had 10.

Groton Area won the C game, 35-21. Scoring for Groton Area: Wyatt Hearnen 16, Jackson Cogley 6, Pierce Kettering 5, Tate Larson 4, Jordan Bjerke 2, Cole Simon 2, Kannon Coats 1. Dawson Wade led the Braves with 8 points.

Groton Area, now 2-1, will have the rest of the year off. Groton Area's first game of 2019 will be a double header at Hamlin on January 4.

- Paul Kosel

This Livestream was sponsored by:

Allied Climate Professionals ~ Bahr Spray Foam

Blocker Construction ~ Doug Abeln Seed Company

James Valley Seed - Doug Jorgensen ~ John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric ~ Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.

Northeast Chiropractic Clinic ~ Professional Management Services, Inc.

Sanford Health ~ Tyson DeHoet Trucking

Weber Landscaping

Make sure you tell these sponsors "Thank You" and patronize them as well!

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Varsity Stat Sheet - Groton Area 70, Britton-Hecla 62

Player	No.	2Pt	2PtA	2Pt%	3Pt	3PtA	3Pt%	FG	FGA	FG%	EFG%	FT	FTA	FT %	Pts
DeHoet	42	5	14	35.7%	5	10	50.0%	10	24	41.7%	52.1%	1	3	33.3%	26
Diegel	55	1	2	50.0%	7	11	63.6%	8	13	61.5%	88.5%	3	6	50.0%	26
Doeden	3	3	4	75.0%	1	2	50.0%	4	6	66.7%	75.0%	1	3	33.3%	10
Guthmiller	11	1	1	100.0%	0	2	0.0%	1	3	33.3%	33.3%	0	0	0.0%	2
Jones	34	0	0	0.0%	0	2	0.0%	0	2	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Kurtz	20	0	4	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	4	0.0%	0.0%	2	2	100.0%	2
Traphagen	50	2	5	40.0%	0	0	0.0%	2	5	40.0%	40.0%	0	0	0.0%	4
Unassigned		0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Groton Varsity Totals		12	30	40.0%	13	27	48.1%	25	57	43.9%	55.3%	7	14	50.0%	70
Britton Varsity Totals		12	33	36.4%	9	32	28.1%	21	65	32.3%	39.2%	11	15	73.3%	62
Fosness	2	5	10	50.0%	2	8	25.0%	7	18	38.9%	44.4%	0	0	0.0%	16
Haskins	0	0	5	0.0%	0	3	0.0%	0	8	0.0%	0.0%	8	8	100.0%	8
James	23	2	4	50.0%	0	1	0.0%	2	5	40.0%	40.0%	0	1	0.0%	4
Meyer	3	4	10	40.0%	7	18	38.9%	11	28	39.3%	51.8%	0	0	0.0%	29
Morris	25	0	0	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Nelson	45	0	1	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	1
Zuehlke	1	1	3	33.3%	0	1	0.0%	1	4	25.0%	25.0%	2	4	50.0%	4
Unassigned		0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0

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Junior Varsity Stat Sheet - Groton Area 28, Britton-Hecla 40

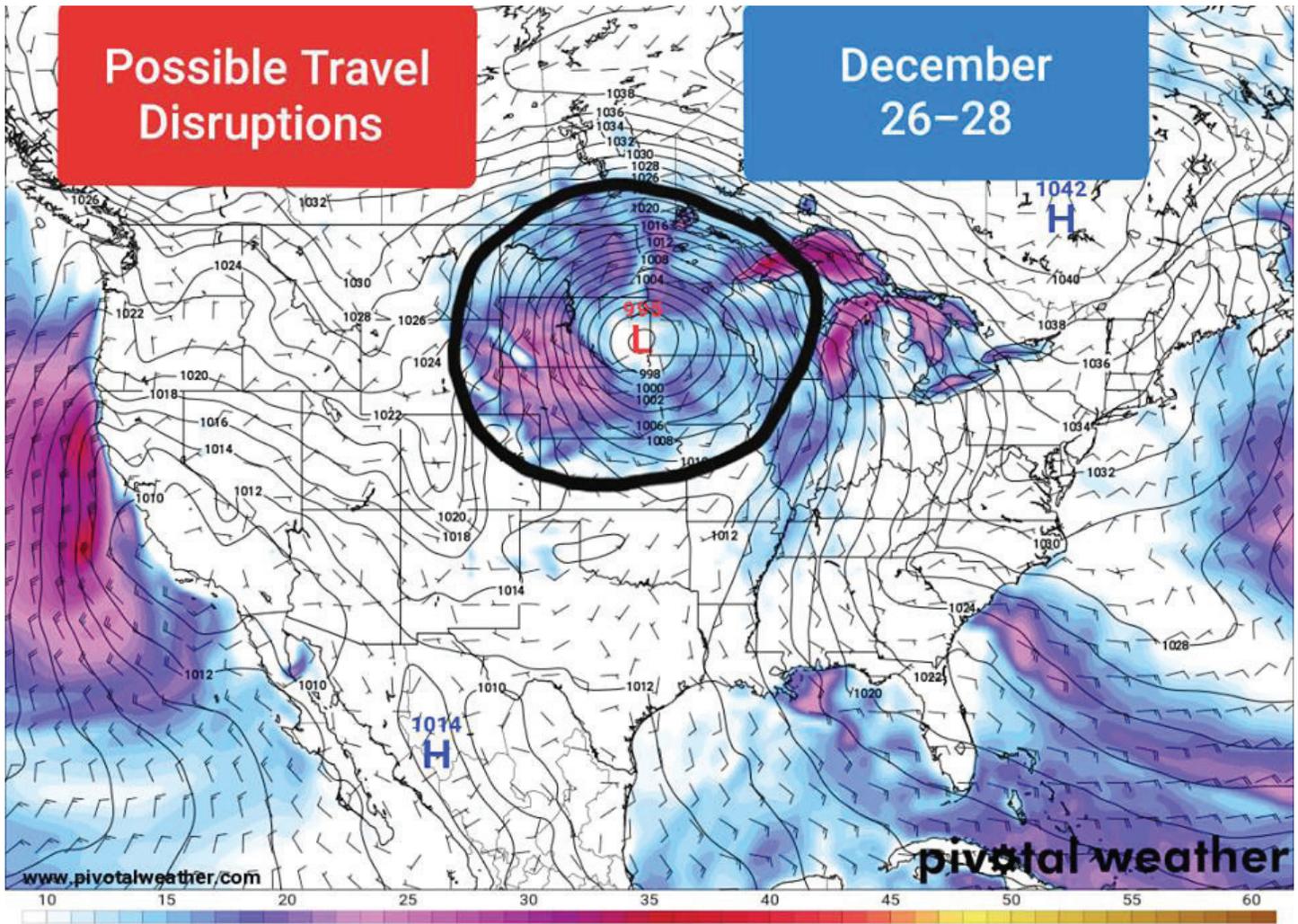
Player	No.	2Pt	2PtA	2Pt%	3Pt	3PtA	3Pt%	FG	FGA	FG%	EFG%	FT	FTA	FT %	Pts
Cole	5	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Jayden Zak	12	2	3	66.7%	1	3	33.3%	3	6	50.0%	58.3%	0	0	0.0%	7
Lane	10	0	0	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	1	2	50.0%	75.0%	0	0	0.0%	3
Bjerke	30	0	0	0.0%	1	1	100.0%	1	1	100.0%	150.0%	0	0	0.0%	3
Cogley	20	0	2	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	2	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
DeHoet	32	0	1	0.0%	1	3	33.3%	1	4	25.0%	37.5%	0	0	0.0%	3
Hearnen	40	0	1	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Kettering	3	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Kroll	4	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Larson	24	1	2	50.0%	2	2	100.0%	3	4	75.0%	100.0%	0	0	0.0%	8
Larson	25	1	2	50.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	50.0%	0	0	0.0%	2
Simon	14	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Smith	22	1	3	33.3%	0	2	0.0%	1	5	20.0%	20.0%	0	0	0.0%	2
Unassigned		0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Groton JV Totals		5	14	35.7%	6	13	46.2%	11	27	40.7%	51.9%	0	0	0.0%	28
Britton JV & C Totals		14	35	40.0%	3	18	16.7%	17	53	32.1%	34.9%	3	6	50.0%	40
Bray	34	1	4	25.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	4	25.0%	25.0%	0	0	0.0%	2
Frederickson	1	5	6	83.3%	0	3	0.0%	5	9	55.6%	55.6%	0	0	0.0%	10
James	5	2	5	40.0%	0	4	0.0%	2	9	22.2%	22.2%	1	2	50.0%	5
Jones	0	1	1	100.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	1	100.0%	100.0%	0	0	0.0%	2
Morris	25	2	3	66.7%	2	8	25.0%	4	11	36.4%	45.5%	0	0	0.0%	10
Nelson	45	0	4	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	4	0.0%	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	1
Olson	44	2	8	25.0%	0	2	0.0%	2	10	20.0%	20.0%	1	2	50.0%	5
Wade	22	1	4	25.0%	1	1	100.0%	2	5	40.0%	50.0%	0	0	0.0%	5
Unassigned		0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0

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C Game Stat Sheet - Groton Area 35, Britton-Hecla 21

Player	No.	2Pt	2PtA	2Pt%	3Pt	3PtA	3Pt%	FG	FGA	FG%	EFG%	FT	FTA	FT %	Pts
Bahr	0	0	1	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Bjerke	30	1	3	33.3%	0	3	0.0%	1	6	16.7%	16.7%	0	0	0.0%	2
Coats	34	0	2	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	2	0.0%	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	1
Cogley	20	3	7	42.9%	0	3	0.0%	3	10	30.0%	30.0%	0	0	0.0%	6
Hearnen	40	4	7	57.1%	2	4	50.0%	6	11	54.5%	63.6%	2	2	100.0%	16
Kettering	3	2	2	100.0%	0	0	0.0%	2	2	100.0%	100.0%	1	1	100.0%	5
Larson	25	2	2	100.0%	0	0	0.0%	2	2	100.0%	100.0%	0	0	0.0%	4
Simon	5	1	2	50.0%	0	1	0.0%	1	3	33.3%	33.3%	0	0	0.0%	2
Tietz	10	0	1	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Zak	23	0	1	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Unassigned		0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Groton C Totals		13	28	46.4%	2	11	18.2%	15	39	38.5%	41.0%	4	5	80.0%	36
Britton JV & C Totals		7	23	30.4%	1	7	14.3%	8	30	26.7%	28.3%	3	7	42.9%	20
Bray	34	1	3	33.3%	0	0	0.0%	1	3	33.3%	33.3%	0	0	0.0%	2
Carlstrom	2	1	7	14.3%	0	0	0.0%	1	7	14.3%	14.3%	1	3	33.3%	3
Feldhaus	23	0	2	0.0%	0	3	0.0%	0	5	0.0%	0.0%	1	1	100.0%	1
Jones	0	1	2	50.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	50.0%	0	0	0.0%	2
Kraft	10	1	3	33.3%	0	2	0.0%	1	5	20.0%	20.0%	0	0	0.0%	2
Nebrida	12	0	1	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0	2	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Schultz	3	1	2	50.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	50.0%	0	1	0.0%	2
Wade	22	2	3	66.7%	1	1	100.0%	3	4	75.0%	87.5%	1	2	50.0%	8
Unassigned		0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0



From Dakota Storm Stalkers

Possible travel disruptions immediately after Christmas over the Midwest and Northern Plains.

(**JUST SOMETHING TO CONSIDER. SPECIFIC IMPACTS ARE HIGHLY UNPREDICTABLE AT THIS TIME**)

I'm not confident on storm track, but I am on development.

Late last night, the GFS began to hint at a possible strong Colorado Low developing Christmas night and moving northeast the 26th and 27th. The GDPS and European followed that solution today.

This storm, (if it were to materialize) would cause major travel disruptions over much of the midwest.

A clipper system will still slide by on the 21st, as stated earlier, but limited snow amounts are expected.

If anyone remembers the 2016 Christmas Blizzard, this is eerily similar. In mid December, 2016, the long range models weren't picking up much of anything. Then on the 18th, many models suddenly suggested a strong Colorado Low to develop and move northeast over Christmas.

It's very important to understand that the track of this low is highly unpredictable at this time. However, I am confident the storm will develop. The question is where it will go. Those traveling after Christmas should just keep this in the back of their minds. This is under 10 days out, so if trends continue, expect to hear more official information from the various National Weather Service offices.

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*Groton Community Transit
invites you to their*

CHRISTMAS BAKE SALE

Thursday, December 20

9:00am - 4:00pm

Main Street Groton

Coffee, cider & goodies served
Door Prizes

*If you would like to donate baked
goods, please call the Transit at 397-8661. Thanks.*

Homecare Services Caregivers

Flexible, part time positions available in the Groton area. Home Care Services is looking for friendly dependable people to provide care and companionship for elderly and disabled people in their homes. You will be assisting our clients with personal care needs, meal preparations, light housekeeping, errands and other tasks. If you have a passion for helping others and need a flexible schedule, please call our office at (605) 225-1076 or 1-800-899-2578. (1218.0101)

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FACS Gingerbread House Contest

From left to right: Cassandra Townsend, Sam Menzia, Kaitlyn Anderson, Jodi Hinman, Portia Kettering, Jennie Doeden, Shannon Wiedrick, Shyla Larson, and Sam Geffre. (Photo from Lindsey Tietz's facebook page)

Thanks to everyone that voted in our Gingerbread House contest and supporting the Schaller Family! Congrats to our winner, Sam Geffre with the Grinch-themed house and to Joni Groeblichhoff, the winner of the Ken's gift card. Thanks Ken's Fairway for donating the gift card!

Groton Coffee Cup League

Dec. 18 Team Standing: Kens 8, James Valley 7, Biker Chix 5, Ten Pins 4.

High Games: Mary Jane Jark 222, LaVonne Raap 166, Nancy Radke 159.

High Series: Mary Jane Jark 517, Joyce Walter 434, Sam Bahr 432

Groton City Dec. 17 meeting minutes

December 17, 2018

The Groton City Council met on the above date at 7:00pm at the Community Center for their first monthly meeting with the following members present: McGannon, Peterson, Blackmun, Glover, Wells and Mayor Hanlon presiding. Also present were: Attorney Drew Johnson, Finance Officer Hope Block, Officer Damian Bahr, Ted Dickey, Ken Heir, Terry Herron and Kathy Sundermeyer.

Dickey discussed the application for drinking water facility funding for Groton's new water tower. The application was for \$2,078,000 total funding for a year 2021 water tower project. The City had pledged \$280,000, so the loan would ultimately be for \$1,798,000 at 2.75% for 30 years. Dickey proposed a \$13.50 increase in water rates to fund the project. This project would also provide opportunities for development South of Groton as well as fire protection.

Moved by Blackmun and seconded by Glover to pass the following resolution.

RESOLUTION NO. 2018-5

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND SUBMITTAL OF THE APPLICATION, AND DESIGNATING AN AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE TO CERTIFY AND SIGN PAYMENT REQUESTS.

WHEREAS, the City of Groton has determined it is necessary to proceed with improvements to its Water System, including but not limited to replacing the water tower, replacing the pump house, line looping and replacing Asphalt Concrete Pipe; and

WHEREAS, the City has determined that financial assistance will be necessary to undertake the Project and an application for financial assistance to the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources will be prepared; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to designate an authorized representative to execute and submit the Application on behalf of the City and to certify and sign payment requests in the event financial assistance is awarded for the Project,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City as follows:

1. The City hereby approves the submission of an Application for financial assistance in an amount not to exceed \$1,798,000 to the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources for the Project.

2. The Mayor is hereby authorized to execute the Application and submit it to the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources, and to execute and deliver such other documents and perform all acts necessary to effectuate the Application for financial assistance.

3. The Mayor is hereby designated as the authorized representative of the City to do all things on its behalf to certify and sign payment requests in the event financial assistance is awarded for the Project.

Adopted at Groton, South Dakota, this 17th day of December 2018.

All members present voted aye.

Ken Hier discussed the 2019 street project. The plans will be advertised in January and bids will be in February. The projected completion date is August 18th, 2019. Hier left an updated zoning map for review.

Hier and Dickey left the meeting at 8:16pm.

Hanlon left the meeting at 8:23pm due to a medical emergency, and Council president, Blackmun led the rest of the meeting.

Herron left the meeting at 8:24pm.

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The minutes from December 3rd and 4th were approved on a motion by McGannon and seconded by Peterson. All members present voted aye.

Moved by McGannon and seconded by Babcock to authorize the following bills for payment. All members present voted aye.

The November finance report was approved on a motion by McGannon and seconded by Glover. All members present voted aye.

Moved by Glover and seconded by Wells to have a Christmas light contest to be judged Friday, December 21st with prizes being 100, 75 and 50 dollar credits on utility bills. All members present voted aye.

Moved by Peterson and seconded by McGannon to approve the Joint Cooperative Agreement with NECOG. All members present voted aye.

Second reading of the 2018 Supplemental Appropriation Ordinance #723 was approved on a motion by Glover and seconded by McGannon. All members present voted aye.

Public comments were welcomed pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1, but none were received.

Moved by Glover and seconded by Peterson to adjourn into executive session for personnel and legal items 1-25-2 (1) & (3) at 8:35pm. All members present voted aye. Council reconvened into regular session at 9:35pm.

Moved by Peterson and seconded by McGannon to approve the second reading of the 2019 Salary Ordinance #722 to raise Planning and Zoning wages to \$35/meeting and \$70/special, and to implement a 75 cent per hour raise for the thirteen full-time employees. All members present voted aye.

Moved by Peterson and seconded by Glover to adjourn the meeting at 9:37pm. All members present voted aye.

Scott Hanlon, Mayor

Hope Block, Finance Officer

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Today in Weather History

December 19, 1968: Snow and near-blizzard conditions existed across west central Minnesota, with 5 to 7 inches of new snow reported. Heavier snows were reported further to the southeast in Minnesota. Six inches of snow was reported in Artichoke Lake in Big Stone County.

December 19, 1990: Snow began to fall over the northwest part of Minnesota by early afternoon on the 19th, and fell heavily during the night into the early afternoon of the 20th, spreading over the entire northern 2/3 of the state and into some of northeastern South Dakota overnight. By mid-morning, a swath of snow of 6 inches or more was deposited over much of the northern half of the state, or north of a line from Elbow Lake to Garrison to near Two Harbors. In west central Minnesota, Wheaton received 6 inches, Browns Valley received 4 inches, and Artichoke Lake received 3 inches. In South Dakota, Webster reported 8 inches, Britton reported 7 inches, Sisseton reported 5 inches, and Aberdeen reported 4 inches.

December 19, 1777: George Washington led his hungry and weary from long marches men to Valley Forge on this day. The winds greeted the 12,000 Continentals as they prepared for the winter. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

1924 - The Riverside Ranger Station in Yellowstone Park, WY, reported a low of 59 degrees below zero, a December record for the U.S. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1989 - High winds and heavy snow plagued the northern and central Rockies. Snowfall totals in Montana ranged up to 12 inches at Lincoln, and wind gusts in Colorado reached 97 mph at Squaw Mountain. Twelve cities in the north central U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Dickinson ND with a reading of 26 degrees below zero. Bismarck ND was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 35 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

December 19, 2009: Snowfall totals from 1 to 2 feet were commonplace in what will go down as one of the biggest snowstorms in history on the East Coast and the first of four snowstorms for the Mid-Atlantic during the winter of 2009-10. The 15 inches of snow measured at Reagan International Airport on Dec. 19th was the third highest daily snowfall on any calendar day at Washington, DC since snowfall records began in 1884. The total storm snowfall of 16.4 inches on Dec 18-19 2009 marks the 6th highest two-day snowfall record for Washington, DC putting it just below the second President's Day storm in 2003 and ahead of the Jan 1996 storm. Baltimore Washington Airport saw 20.5 inches of snow and went down as the fifth highest daily snowfall on any calendar day at Baltimore since snowfall records began in 1893. The total storm snowfall of 21.0 inches on Dec 18-19 2009 marks the 6th highest two-day snowfall record for Baltimore. The daily snowfall records for Dec 19 were smashed for the most snowfall for any calendar day during December at the following stations. Reagan National Airport's new record was 15.0 inches, old record 11.5 in 1932. Baltimore Washington Airport's new record was 20.5 inches, old record 11.5 in 1932. This was the biggest December snowstorm on record and setting a record for the snowiest December for Baltimore, MD. Dulles Airport's new record was 16.0 inches, old record 10.6 in 1982. Richmond International Airport had a total of 6.4 inches. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reported its second greatest daily snowfall total on record with 22.9 inches. It also was the single biggest December snowfall for the city of Philadelphia, PA. Roanoke, Virginia recorded 17.8 inches setting a record for the greatest 24-hour snowfall in December. Washington, DC reported 16.4 inches of snowmaking 2009 the snowiest December on record, all in one storm. In New York, Upton on Long Island recorded 26.3 inches, the biggest snowstorm on record.

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Today



Becoming Sunny

High: 48 °F

Tonight



Increasing Clouds

Low: 28 °F

Wednesday



Chance Freezing Rain then Partly Sunny

High: 47 °F

Wednesday Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 27 °F

Thursday



Mostly Sunny

High: 40 °F

An Icy Morning Commute

Becoming Warm and Windy

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 12/19/2018 4:10 AM Central

Published on: 12/19/2018 at 4:21AM

Rain and freezing rain will move from west to east across the region this morning. Freezing rain will be more likely in the valleys where temperatures will be slower to warm. This will create a slippery morning commute, especially around the Aberdeen area. Temperatures will rise into the 40s to lower 50s by afternoon as winds increase. Some late day mixed precipitation is possible as moisture wraps back around from the north and northeast this evening. Any overnight precip will be light.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 46 °F at 3:17 PM

Low Outside Temp: 21 °F at 4:35 AM

High Gust: 11 mph at 11:32 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 57° in 1893

Record Low: -29° in 1916

Average High: 24°F

Average Low: 5°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.30

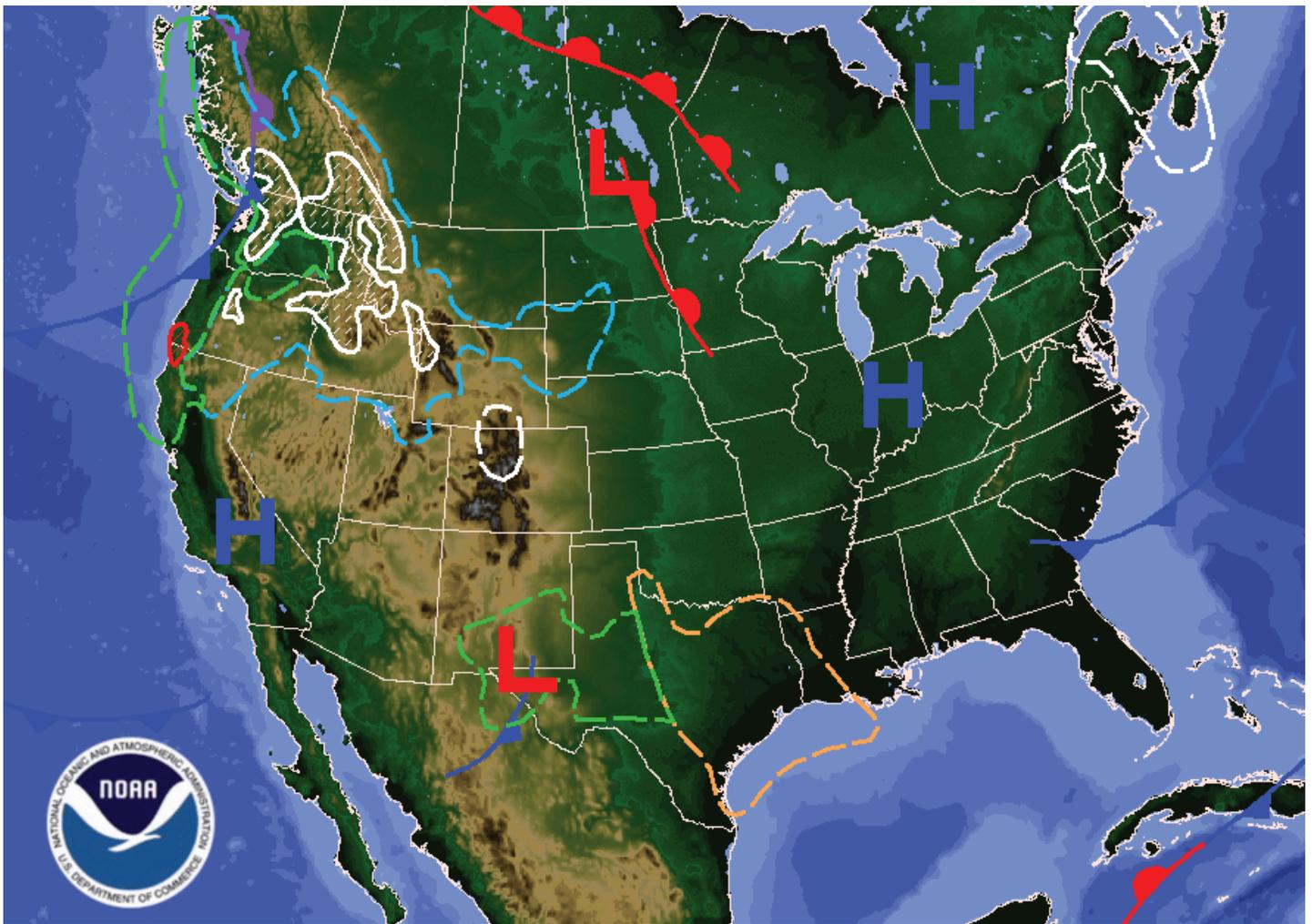
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.50

Precip Year to Date: 15.81

Sunset Tonight: 4:52 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Tue, Dec 18, 2018, issued 4:43 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)

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NO MISTAKE

Walter came home from Sunday school with a question all over his face. Mom, he asked, did the shepherds have washing machines where they kept their sheep?

Shepherds? Washers? After a moment she said, No, darling, they did not have washing machines. Why do you ask?

Well, Mrs. Mathis was reading the story of the birth of Jesus and she said, While shepherds washed their socks that night... and I didnt understand what was going on.

While we often think of the shepherds in the field that night, the glory that appeared with the angel and the fear that gripped them, we seldom connect the shepherds in that field with the Good Shepherd.

Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd twice in Johns Gospel. In those statements he summarizes all of the prophetic images of His role as prophesier in the Old Testament. This declaration is a claim to His divinity as revealed in the Old Testament and focuses on His love, protection and guidance of us His lambs.

But there is more. Not only is He our Shepherd but He chose to identify Himself as the good shepherd and good is a term that carries with it nobility. It stands in sharp contrast to shepherds who were hired hands who worked and cared only for their own self-interests.

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, for loving us, for being our Good Shepherd and for laying down Your life for us. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Luke 2:8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

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

Distracted driver crashes into Sioux Falls police squad car

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A driver who authorities say was distracted rear-ended an occupied Sioux Falls police squad car as it was at a stop light.

The crash happened late Tuesday.

Authorities say both the 24-year-old driver and the police officer were taken to the hospital for injuries that were not life threatening. The driver was cited for careless driving and other violations.

Tuesday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 67, Sunshine Bible Academy 31
Alcester-Hudson 66, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 45
Belle Fourche 56, New Underwood 27
Bison 53, Tiospaye Topa 49
Bridgewater-Emery 64, Canistota 45
Castlewood 51, Flandreau 50
Centerville 49, Avon 48
Corsica/Stickney 95, Wessington Springs 65
Dell Rapids 61, Baltic 40
Deuel 69, Deubrook 58
Freeman Academy/Marion 73, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 56
Gayville-Volin 56, Scotland 23
Groton Area 70, Britton-Hecla 62
Hanson 59, Parkston 57
Howard 64, Freeman 52
Huron 61, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 58
Ipswich 50, Hitchcock-Tulare 32
James Valley Christian 75, Ethan 50
Jones County 55, Stanley County 53
Kimball/White Lake 69, Highmore-Harrold 60
Langford 72, Eureka/Bowdle 33
Leola/Frederick 79, Oakes, N.D. 61
McCook Central/Montrose 57, Chester 38
North Central, Neb. 66, Gregory 64
Northwestern 79, Waverly-South Shore 52
Oelrichs 73, Hay Springs, Neb. 35
Rapid City Central 68, Douglas 29
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 69, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 43
Sergeant Bluff-Luton, Iowa 73, Dakota Valley 65
Sioux Falls Lincoln 69, Sioux Falls Washington 55
St. Francis Indian 53, Bennett County 49
Sturgis Brown 73, Spearfish 34
Tiospa Zina Tribal 65, Hamlin 53
Tri-Valley 67, Vermillion 60
Wakpala 57, Takini 51

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Warner 64, Florence/Henry 49

Watertown 59, Brookings 55

Wolsey-Wessington 53, Miller 35

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 39, Sunshine Bible Academy 33

Alcester-Hudson 51, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 18

Avon 66, Centerville 14

Brandon Valley 58, Sioux Falls Washington 38

Brookings 40, Watertown 21

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 62, McLaughlin 56

Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley, Minn. 59, Sisseton 47

Corsica/Stickney 65, Wessington Springs 30

DeSmet 58, Clark/Willow Lake 27

Dell Rapids 62, Baltic 13

Estelline/Hendricks 60, Iroquois 20

Ethan 69, James Valley Christian 32

Faith 64, Dupree 46

Flandreau 59, Castlewood 46

Freeman 54, Howard 41

Freeman Academy/Marion 49, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 23

Hamlin 63, Tiospa Zina Tribal 19

Hankinson, N.D. 39, Wilmot 25

Ipswich 52, Hitchcock-Tulare 47

Kimball/White Lake 78, Chamberlain 77, 3OT

Lyman 44, Burke 34

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 48, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 35

New Underwood 57, Rapid City Christian 45

North Central, Neb. 54, Gregory 39

Oakes, N.D. 81, Leola/Frederick 18

Oelrichs 53, Hay Springs, Neb. 34

Rapid City Central 75, Douglas 39

Redfield/Doland 58, Faulkton 56

Scotland 49, Gayville-Volin 34

Sergeant Bluff-Luton, Iowa 63, Dakota Valley 52

Sioux Falls Lincoln 55, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 37

Southwest Minnesota Christian, Minn. 74, Sioux Falls Christian 63

St. Francis Indian 67, Bennett County 33

Stanley County 39, Jones County 37, OT

Sturgis Brown 39, Spearfish 23

Tiospaye Topa 58, Bison 56

Vermillion 49, Tri-Valley 16

Wakpala 79, Takini 37

Wall 67, Newell 52

Waubay/Summit 67, Webster 41

Waverly-South Shore 62, Northwestern 56

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

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SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

13-22-32-60-69, Mega Ball: 9, Megaplier: 3

(thirteen, twenty-two, thirty-two, sixty, sixty-nine; Mega Ball: nine; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$284 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$262 million

Daum gets 1,000th board in S Dakota St 74-64 win over EWU

CHENEY, Wash. (AP) — Mike Daum rebounded the last shot of the game to complete his 27-point, 11-rebound double-double with the 1,000th rebound of his career and South Dakota State defeated Eastern Washington 74-64 on Tuesday night.

Daum, who is averaging more than 24 points and 10 rebounds, is only the third Summit League player to record 1,000 rebounds.

Skyler Flatten had 20 points for the Jackrabbits (10-4), David Jenkins added 12 and Tevin King had 11 points and 10 rebounds.

Daum had six points and Jenkins hit a 3-pointer as South Dakota State scored the first nine points of the game and never trailed. But the lead never hit double figures until King made two free throws with 30 seconds to play for the final score.

The Eagles (1-9) missed eight of their last 10 shots. Jacob Davison led the Eagles with 20 points and Jack Perry had 14, each hitting four 3-pointers.

Lawson, Moore carry No. 1 KU to 89-53 rout of South Dakota

By DAVE SKRETTA, AP Sports Writer

LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP) — Kansas coach Bill Self hoped from the moment Charlie Moore arrived as a transfer from Cal that the talented shooting guard would provide the Jayhawks a lift off the bench.

He finally did Tuesday night.

Moore knocked down six 3-pointers and finished with 18 points, Dedric Lawson added 16 points and 14 rebounds, and the top-ranked Jayhawks pulled away over the final 15 minutes for an 89-53 win over plucky but overmatched South Dakota on Tuesday night.

"That's what we thought all along, that he was going to be our marksman," Self said. "It hadn't happened yet but tonight it did."

Freshman forward David McCormack added a career-best 12 points off the bench for the Jayhawks (10-0), making big strides while Lawson was on the bench in foul trouble and helping soak up minutes with Udoka Azubuike sidelined with a sprained ankle.

The Jayhawks are hopeful Azubuike will be back by the start of conference play next month.

"It felt good that I could contribute to the team," said McCormack, a five-star prospect from venerable Oak Hill Academy in Virginia. "I got more minutes so I got more opportunities."

Stanley Umude scored a game-high 28 points to lead the Coyotes (6-6), who have never defeated a ranked team in seven tries. Tyler Peterson added 15 points, and leading scorer Trey Burch-Manning was held to two points on 1-for-5 shooting before fouling out.

"Their size obviously bothered us," South Dakota coach Todd Lee said. "I was disappointed at halftime, thought it could have been a game. And the second half we didn't compete."

In truth, neither team was particularly good in the first half.

The Jayhawks struggled to stop South Dakota's relentless backdoor cuts, and eventually Kansas coach Bill Self was so fed up with their defensive execution he started to burn timeouts.

"The two timeouts in the first half had no strategy to them," Self said, "except wanting to get someone out of the game. We didn't play well at all the first half."

Not that the Coyotes did much with all those easy looks. They committed 12 first-half turnovers, allowing the Jayhawks to slowly pull out to a 37-27 advantage at the break.

Most of the work was done without Lawson, who was forced to the bench with two fouls.

The Jayhawks' dominant point forward joined Moore in helping the Jayhawks pull away in the second half, though. Lawson scored in the paint, Moore hit a 3-pointer and Lawson added a pair of foul shots to turn a 49-40 lead into a 56-40 lead with about 12 minutes to go.

"Coach said at halftime that we only had three assists, that we had to get downhill more and get more people involved," Moore said. "We took his words and used them in the second half."

The undersized Coyotes answered with a run of their own, but Moore and Lawson provided one more answer. Moore curled in his fifth 3-pointer, this time from the wing, and then took a run-out to the rim before dropping a pass to Lawson for an easy layup and a 66-47 lead.

The advantage only grew from there as Moore, who once scored 38 points in a game his freshman year at Cal, and the massive McCormack continued to put together breakout games.

"The second half we pattered around," Self said, "and then Charlie and David helped us pull away. ... It was nice to see someone other than Lagerald (Vick) knock down shots. That was good. And it was really nice to see David have some success."

BIG PICTURE

South Dakota hung around long enough to keep Kansas on the edge, but the Jayhawks' superior athleticism was evident. They were quicker in transition, better on the boards and were able to pull away when the Coyotes went cold from beyond the arc.

Kansas finally got an easy win after surviving nail-biters against everyone from New Mexico State and Stanford to Villanova and Tennessee. It was the first time all season that the Jayhawks put away a game in time to empty the bench in the final minutes.

UP NEXT

South Dakota hosts Southern Miss on Friday night.

Kansas visits No. 18 Arizona State on Saturday night.

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_Top25

Universities tapping into Sioux Falls' medical tech industry

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two universities in South Dakota are teaming up to train biomedical engineers in an effort to help boost Sioux Falls' burgeoning medical technology industry.

The Argus Leader reported that the program involves the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City and the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. The partnership was recently approved by the South Dakota Board of Regents.

The collaboration is meant to expand the University of South Dakota's proficiency in biomedical fields and the School of Mines' engineering education. Both universities have offered graduate degrees in biomedical engineering for about a decade.

Dan Engebretson leads the University of South Dakota's biomedical engineering program. He said the school's program is "is poised to reshape South Dakota's economy." Biopharmaceutical companies SAB Biotherapeutics and Alumend plan to hire more than 45 scientists before moving to USD's Discovery District, Engebretson added.

Both universities expect to graduate 26 students a year after the program is fully implemented.

Jim Rankings, president of SD Mines, noted in a press release that the school is excited to meet a need in the health care industry and provide a high-quality "affordable education to students who want a successful career in the biomedical field."

Land for outdoor recreation donated to state of South Dakota

CLEAR LAKE, S.D. (AP) — A conservation organization has gifted 580 acres of land in northeast South Dakota to the state for outdoor recreation.

Minnesota residents John and Kimberly Puckett donated the property to the Nature Conservancy with the goal of it ending up in public ownership. The organization said Tuesday it had given the wildlife area along Bitter Lake in South Dakota's Day County to Game, Fish and Parks.

The conservancy says the land has been added to the Redetzke and Bitter Lake Game Production Areas. The organization says it has deer, ducks, turkey, pheasants and sharp-tailed grouse.

John Puckett, who co-owns Punch Pizza and founded Caribou Coffee, says the property is a "fantastic place." Game, Fish and Parks Secretary Kelly Hepler says the department is looking forward to taking care of the land for generations to come.

Noem names Veterans Affairs secretary for new administration

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov.-elect Kristi Noem has named a military and veterans official in her congressional office to serve as South Dakota's Veterans Affairs secretary.

Noem announced Tuesday that Greg Whitlock, of Watertown, will be appointed to the post. Noem will be sworn in Jan. 5.

Whitlock has served since 1975 in the South Dakota Army National Guard and now works as military and veterans service representative in Noem's congressional office.

Officials say Whitlock has been influential in pushing for a state veterans cemetery and has worked to keep open a Veterans Affairs health care campus in Hot Springs.

Noem says Whitlock is a "proven champion" for veterans. Whitlock says he's honored to join in Noem's vision of expanding job opportunities and improving customer service for those who have "selflessly defended freedom."

Former Sioux Falls fire chief to be sentenced in February

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sentencing is set early next year for a former Sioux Falls fire chief who admitted possessing child pornography.

Fifty-nine-year-old Jim Sideras pleaded guilty to one count last month in a deal with prosecutors in which nine other counts will be dismissed.

He's to be sentenced Feb. 28. He faces up to 10 years in prison and will be required to register as a sex offender.

Man gets 30 years for fatally shooting girl on reservation

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man convicted of fatally shooting a 13-year-old girl on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation has been sentenced to serve 30 years in prison.

A federal jury in May 2017 found James Dowty of Pine Ridge guilty of second-degree murder and a firearms count in the killing of Te'Ca Clifford, who was walking with three friends in July 2016 when she was shot.

A judge in July rejected Dowty's request for an acquittal or a new trial. He was sentenced Monday to 20 years on the murder charge and an additional 10 years on the weapons count.

100 days to Brexit: EU acts to cushion no-deal shock

By LORNE COOK and JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — With British politics gridlocked and just 100 days until Brexit, the European Union on Wednesday triggered contingency plans designed to cushion some of the shock of a “no-deal” U.K. exit from the bloc.

The EU measures, announced a day after Britain ramped up its own no-deal planning, are intended to alleviate “major disruption” to people and businesses in sectors including financial services, customs, air transport and climate policy.

European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis told reporters that the plan was “an exercise in limiting damage.”

He said the aim was “to turn an abrupt exit into a more soft landing.”

Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29, but it remains unclear whether lawmakers will approve the divorce agreement Prime Minister Theresa May’s government has negotiated with the bloc. Leaving without a deal risks plunging the British economy into recession and touching off chaos at the borders.

The 14 EU actions include temporary one- to two-year measures to allow U.K.-EU financial services to continue and a 12-month provision to keep planes flying between Britain and the bloc.

But Dombrovskis stressed that the measures “cannot replicate the benefits of the withdrawal agreement, and certainly it cannot replicate the benefits of EU membership.”

On Tuesday, the British government stepped up U.K. no-deal preparations, putting 3,500 soldiers on standby and warning thousands of businesses and millions of households to get ready for disruption.

The government said the plans — which include chartering boats and stockpiling medicines — are a sensible precaution.

But opposition politicians accuse the government of trying to scare lawmakers into supporting May’s Brexit deal.

Opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn on Wednesday accused May of “a cynical attempt to drive her deeply damaging deal through this House.”

“No-deal would be a disaster for our country and no responsible government would ever allow it,” Corbyn said.

Many businesses agree. Britain’s five leading business groups said in a rare joint statement that businesses “have been watching in horror” as political infighting made the prospect of a disorderly Brexit more likely.

Organizations including the British Chambers of Commerce and the Confederation of British Industry urged lawmakers to “return to their constituencies over Christmas and talk to their local business communities.”

“We hope that they will listen and remember that when they return to Parliament, the future course of our economy will be in their hands,” the groups said.

In a bid to regain some of its vanished political momentum, the British government was publishing long-awaited plans Wednesday for a post-Brexit immigration system that will end free movement of EU citizens to the U.K.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said the proposals — Britain’s biggest immigration changes in more than 40 years — would create a “skills-based immigration system built around the talent and expertise people can bring, rather than where they come from.”

At present, all EU nationals can live and work in Britain under the bloc’s free-movement rules, but that will end after the U.K. leaves in March.

The government is proposing no limit on the number of well-paid, skilled immigrants who can settle in Britain, but curbs on “low-skilled” workers.

The rules will not apply to more than 3 million EU citizens currently living in Britain. The government has said they can stay, even if the U.K. leaves the bloc without an agreement on future relations. The EU, in its no-deal plans, urged member states to extend the same right to more than 1 million resident British nationals.

Immigration was a major factor behind Britain’s 2016 vote to leave the EU, and May has made “taking back control of our borders” her key Brexit goal.

But that has put her at odds with many business leaders, and some members of her own Conservative government.

Big chunks of Britain's economy, from agriculture to health care, have come to depend on European workers — more than 1 million of whom have moved to Britain in the last 15 years. Businesses fear that choking off the flow of lower-skilled workers could lead to acute employee shortages.

Saffron Cordery, deputy chief executive of NHS Providers — an umbrella group for Britain's state-funded health care system — said the health sector was "deeply concerned" about the planned changes.

"High skills does not equal high pay," she told the BBC.

The government plans suggest setting a salary threshold that immigrants will have to meet in order to be given the right to settle in Britain. A figure of 30,000 pounds (\$38,000) a year, recommended by an independent report earlier this year, is more than the starting salary for nurses, paramedics, junior doctors and many other professions.

Javid said the "exact threshold" would be decided after public consultation.

He also said the plan would not commit to reducing net immigration below 100,000 people a year — a longstanding goal of the Conservative government that it has never come close to meeting. Net immigration in the year to June was 273,000.

Javid said the plans would seek to reduce migration to "more sustainable levels," but would not set a specific target.

Jill Lawless reported from London. Danica Kirka in London contributed to this story.

Follow AP's full coverage of Brexit at: <https://www.apnews.com/Brexit>

Trump says he's eager to sign sweeping criminal justice bill

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate passed a sweeping criminal justice bill Tuesday that addresses concerns that the nation's war on drugs had led to the imprisonment of too many Americans for non-violent crimes without adequately preparing them for their return to society.

Senate passage of the bill by a vote of 87-12 culminates years of negotiations and gives President Donald Trump a signature policy victory, with the outcome hailed by scores of conservative and liberal advocacy groups. The House is expected to pass the bill this week, sending it to the president's desk for his signature.

The bill gives judges more discretion when sentencing some drug offenders and boosts prisoner rehabilitation efforts. It also reduces the life sentence for some drug offenders with three convictions, or "three strikes," to 25 years. Another provision would allow about 2,600 federal prisoners sentenced for crack cocaine offenses before August 2010 the opportunity to petition for a reduced penalty.

"America is the greatest Country in the world and my job is to fight for ALL citizens, even those who have made mistakes," Trump tweeted moments after the vote.

"This will keep our communities safer, and provide hope and a second chance, to those who earn it. In addition to everything else, billions of dollars will be saved. I look forward to signing this into law!" Trump added.

The vote also thrilled Democrats. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., said the nation's prisons are full of Americans who are struggling with mental illness and addiction, and who are overwhelmingly poor. He said the nation's criminal justice system "feeds on certain communities and not on others," and said the bill represents a step toward "healing" for those communities.

"Let's make no mistake, this legislation, which is one small step, will affect thousands and thousands of lives," Booker said.

When the bill appeared to have stalled in recent weeks, Sen. Charles Grassley, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, pleaded with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to bring it up for a vote. With Trump's urging, McConnell eventually agreed, and voted for the bill as well.

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"The First Step Act takes lessons from history and from states — our laboratories of democracy — to reduce crime, save taxpayer dollars and strengthen faith and fairness in our criminal justice system," Grassley said.

The Senate turned back three amendments Tuesday from Republican senators Tom Cotton of Arkansas and John Kennedy of Louisiana, who said the bill endangered public safety. Supporters voiced concerns that passing any of the amendments would have sunk the bill.

One amendment would have excluded more prisoners from participating in educational and training programs that allow them to earn credits. Those credits can then be used to gain an earlier release to a halfway house or home confinement to finish out their sentence. Another amendment would have required that victims be notified before a prisoner gets that earlier release. The third would have required the Federal Bureau of Prisons to track and report the re-arrest rate for each prisoner who gets early release.

"While the bill has marginally improved from earlier versions, I'm disappointed my amendments to exclude child molesters from early release and to protect victims' rights were not adopted," Cotton said. "I also remain concerned that reducing sentences for drug traffickers and violent felons is a threat to public safety."

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said the bill already carves out some 60 different crimes that make prisoners ineligible for early release to a halfway house or home confinement. He said Cotton's amendment was too expansive and would prevent at least 30,000 prisoners from participation.

Durbin said the Federal Bureau of Prisons also gives victims the opportunity to be notified upon a change in the prisoner's status, but it's a choice. He said about 10 percent of victims choose not to be notified because of the trauma involved in revisiting the crime. Meanwhile, the amendment from Cotton and Kennedy would make it a requirement.

"Supporting the Cotton amendment is basically saying to these crime victims, 'We're going to force this information on you whether it's in the best interest of your family, whether you want it or not,'" Durbin said. "That is not respectful of crime victims."

The bill would affect only federal prisoners, who make up less than 10 percent of the country's prison population.

An array of liberal and conservative advocacy groups rallied in support of the bill. For example, the Koch brothers-backed group, Americans for Prosperity, applauded senators for putting "policy ahead of politics." The American Civil Liberties Union said the bill was "by no means perfect. But we are in the midst of a mass incarceration crisis, and the time to act is now."

Law enforcement groups were more split. It was backed by the Fraternal Order of Police and the International Association of Chiefs of Police but opposed by the National Sheriff's Association. The union representing federal prison guards also joined in supporting the measure.

Judge's rebuke of Flynn upends sentencing, prolongs case

By ERIC TUCKER and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge who described himself as disgusted by Michael Flynn's behavior upended a straightforward sentencing hearing, postponing punishment for President Donald Trump's first national security adviser and telling him in a stinging rebuke, "Arguably you sold your country out."

Lawyers for Flynn requested the delay Tuesday after a tongue-lashing from U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan raised the prospect that Flynn could spend time behind bars for lying to the FBI about his Russian contacts.

Prosecutors hadn't recommended prison, but the hearing that began with the defendant upbeat and smiling took an unexpected turn when the judge said his sentence would take into account not just Flynn's extensive cooperation with investigators but also the lies the Trump administration official told from the grounds of the White House.

"I can't make any guarantees, but I'm not hiding my disgust, my disdain for this criminal offense," Sullivan said.

The postponement gave Flynn a chance to continue cooperating with the government in hopes of stav-

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ing off prison and proving his value as a witness, including in a foreign-lobbying prosecution brought this week. The possibility of prison had seemed remote for Flynn since prosecutors had praised his cooperation, including 19 meetings with investigators.

But the judge's upbraiding suggested otherwise and made clear that even defendants like Flynn who have cooperated in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation may nonetheless be shadowed by the crimes that brought them into court in the first place. The hearing upset what had been a carefully crafted agreement and pushed months into the future a resolution of one of Mueller's signature prosecutions.

"This is a very serious offense. A high-ranking senior official of the government making false statements to the Federal Bureau of Investigation while on the physical premises of the White House," Sullivan said.

He later softened his tone, apologizing for suggesting that Flynn had worked as a foreign agent while in the White House when that other work had actually already ended. He also backpedaled on an earlier question on whether Flynn's transgressions amounted to treason, saying he didn't mean to suggest they did.

Flynn was to have been the first White House official sentenced in Mueller's investigation into possible coordination between the Trump presidential campaign and Russia.

The hearing, though incomplete, marked a remarkable fall after a three-decade military career that included tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and oversight of the Defense Intelligence Agency during the Obama administration. Though Flynn served only briefly in Trump's White House, he campaigned for him and attracted attention for leading a Republican National Convention crowd in a "Lock Her Up" chant about Hillary Clinton.

The hearing came amid escalating legal peril for Trump, who was implicated by federal prosecutors in New York this month in hush-money payments involving his former lawyer to cover up extramarital affairs. Nearly a half-dozen former aides and advisers have pleaded guilty, agreeing to cooperate with prosecutors. Some, like Flynn, were tripped up by concealing Russian contacts.

Flynn's help in the probes was especially notable. Yet he's nonetheless enjoyed Trump's continued sympathy, thanks in part to a sentencing memo last week that tapped into the president's suspicion of law enforcement and took aim at the FBI's conduct during the investigation.

Trump tweeted "good luck" to Flynn hours before the sentencing and said that, "despite tremendous pressure being put on him," there was "no Collusion!"

At the White House, press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Flynn's actions had nothing to do with Trump. "It's perfectly acceptable for the president to make a positive comment about somebody while we wait to see what the court's determination is," she said.

Sanders repeated her allegation that the FBI "ambushed" Flynn in an interview in which he lied. Of Trump's earlier FBI criticism, she said, "We don't have any reason to want to walk that back."

Flynn's legal woes stem from transition-period calls with then-Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak that raised intelligence community alarms even before Trump took office.

During those conversations, Flynn urged against a strong Russian response to Obama administration sanctions for Russian election interference and encouraged Russia's opposition to a U.N. resolution on Israeli settlements. But when FBI agents approached him in the White House on Jan. 24, 2017, Flynn lied about those conversations, prosecutors said.

Flynn has never said why he lied, but Sullivan nonetheless castigated him for a deception that was then parroted by other senior administration officials.

The tone of Tuesday's hearing startled Flynn supporters who hoped his lawyers' arguments about the FBI's conduct — they suggested he was discouraged from having a lawyer present during the interview and wasn't informed it was a crime to lie — to resonate more than it did with Sullivan, who a decade ago tossed out the prosecution of a U.S. senator over government misconduct.

But while Sullivan tested those arguments, he was ultimately unmoved and Flynn mostly walked them back. He acknowledged that he indeed knew that lying to the FBI was a crime. Neither he nor his lawyers disputed that he'd lied to agents.

Flynn attorney Robert Kelner asked Sullivan not to penalize Flynn for the sentencing memo arguments,

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saying they were mostly intended to differentiate Flynn from other defendants in Mueller's investigation who'd received prison sentences for lying. Though Sullivan said none of the other defendants was a White House official, Kelner suggested none had been as cooperative.

"He made the decision publicly and clearly and completely and utterly to cooperate with this investigation, knowing that because of his high rank, that was going to send a signal to every other potential cooperator and witness in this investigation," he added.

After a prosecutor raised the prospect of Flynn's continued cooperation with other investigations in the future, Sullivan warned Flynn that he might not get full credit for his assistance to the government if he were sentenced as scheduled.

Sullivan gave a visibly shaken Flynn a chance to discuss delaying the hearing with his lawyers. The court briefly recessed.

When they returned, Kelner requested a postponement so that Flynn could keep cooperating. Kelner said he expected Flynn would have to testify in a related trial in Virginia involving Flynn's former business associates, and the defense wanted to "eke out the last modicum of cooperation" so he could get credit.

Flynn's lawyers were instructed to submit a status report by March 13. ____

Read the Flynn FBI interview notes: <http://apne.ws/xfm8IsO>

Associated Press writer Michelle R. Smith in Providence contributed to this report.

AP investigation: Children fight on front lines of Yemen war

By MAGGIE MICHAEL, Associated Press

MARIB, Yemen (AP) — The number etched on the bracelet around Mohammed's wrist gave the 13-year-old soldier comfort as missiles fired from enemy warplanes shook the earth beneath him.

For two years Mohammed fought with Yemen's Houthi rebels against a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia and backed by the United States. He says he tortured and killed people and didn't care whether he lived or died.

But if he died, the bracelet would guarantee his body made it home.

"When I become a martyr, they enter my number in the computer, retrieve my picture and my name, then print them with the name 'Martyr' underneath," Mohammed said. It would be pasted to the lid of his coffin for return to his family.

Mohammed was among 18 former child soldiers interviewed by The Associated Press who described the Houthis' unrelenting efficiency when it comes to the recruitment, deployment and even battlefield deaths of boys as young as 10.

While both sides in the four-year civil war have sent children into combat in violation of international human rights conventions, the Houthis are believed to have recruited many more than the coalition — often forcibly.

The Houthis have inducted 18,000 child soldiers into their rebel army since the beginning of the war in 2014, a senior Houthi military official acknowledged to the AP. He spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the information.

That figure is higher than any number previously reported. The United Nations was able to verify 2,721 children recruited to fight for all sides in the conflict, the large majority for the Houthis, but officials say that count is likely low, because many families will not speak about the issue out of fear of reprisals from Houthi militiamen.

The Houthis say officially that they don't recruit children and send away those who try to enlist.

Some of the children told the AP they joined the rebels willingly, mainly because of promises of money or the chance to carry a weapon. But others described being forced into the service of the Houthis — abducted from schools or homes or coerced into joining in exchange for a family member's release from detention.

Many can be seen manning checkpoints along main roads across northern and western Yemen, AK-47s dangling from their narrow shoulders. Others are sent to the front lines as foot soldiers.

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A 13-year-old named Riyadh said half of the fighters he served with on the front lines in Yemen's mountainous Sirwah district were children. Rebel officers ordered them to push forward during battles, even as coalition jets zoomed overhead, he said.

He said he pleaded with his commander to let the young fighters take cover during airstrikes: "Sir, the planes are bombing."

The reply, he said, was always: "Followers of God, you must attack!"

An unknown number of child soldiers have been sent home in coffins.

More than 6,000 children have died or been maimed in Yemen since the beginning of the war, UNICEF reported in October. But the U.N. agency has not been able to determine how many of those minors were combatants and the Houthi-run Defense Ministry does not release its records for casualties.

A former teacher from the city of Dhamar said that at least 14 pupils from his school were recruited and then died in battle. Their pictures were placed on empty classroom seats in 2016 during the Week of the Martyr, which the Houthis celebrate each year in February. Most of them were fifth and sixth graders, he said. An education official from Dhamar confirmed his account. The two spoke on condition of anonymity because of fear of retribution.

The teacher said some of the dead children's parents were Houthi leaders who willingly sent their sons to the front lines. "It's painful because this is a child and they are all my children because I was their teacher," he said. "They were taken from the school and returned in coffins."

The Houthis and the coalition forces began peace talks in Sweden two weeks ago, but an end to the war appears far off. Many worry about what will become of the children who fought in the Middle East's poorest country once a peace treaty is signed.

Naguib al-Saadi, a Yemeni human rights activist who founded a Saudi-funded counseling center in Marib for child warriors, said "the real problem with Houthi recruitment of the children will be felt in 10 years — when a generation that has been brainwashed with hatred and enmity toward the West comes of age."

'FIREWOOD FOR THIS WAR'

The war began after Houthi rebels swept down from the northern highlands in late 2014, seizing the capital, Sanaa, and then pushing south. Yemen's internationally recognized government sought help from the Saudis and other oil-rich neighbors, which formed the military coalition opposing the Houthis.

The result has been a proxy war as much as a civil war, with forces backed by the Saudis fighting the Houthis, a Zaidi-Shiite religious and political group with ties to Iran.

A report released in August by a U.N. expert panel said both sides are using child soldiers. The panel said it had information that coalition forces had targeted "particularly vulnerable children" living in displacement camps and "offered significant payments for child recruits." The report said coalition units "frequently used children in support roles, although they have also been used in combat on the front lines."

The panel noted that nearly two-thirds of the child soldiers identified by the U.N. in 2017 were deployed by the Houthis and their allies.

The Houthis constantly recruit new fighters because their ranks are smaller and thinned by battlefield losses. The well-funded and well-equipped coalition units have nearly 140,000 troops in the field, experts who study the war say. The Houthi military official told the AP that rebel forces have 60,000 fighters on the front lines. Outside experts estimate the Houthis' troop strength at between 15,000 and 50,000.

Top Houthi officials heap praise on young soldiers who have died in a conflict they describe as a sacred war against America, Israel and other outside powers they believe are trying to take over the country.

Under the Houthi-controlled Defense Ministry, the rebels have pursued what they call a "national voluntary recruitment campaign."

Brig. Gen. Yahia Sarie, a spokesman for the Houthis' armed forces, told the AP "there is no general policy to use the children in the battles," but he acknowledged that some young people do volunteer to join the fight.

"It's personal initiative," the general said. "Some of the children are motivated by the desire to take re-

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venge, thinking it's better to take action and fight with honor instead of getting killed inside our homes." When they try to join, he said, Houthi leaders "send them back home."

He dismissed the accounts from the children who spoke to the AP, saying their claims were coalition propaganda.

Children, parents, educators, social workers and other Yemenis interviewed by the AP described an aggressive campaign that targets children — and is not always completely voluntary. Houthi officials use their access to the Civil Registry Authority and other state records to gather data that allows them to narrow down their target list of the neediest families in villages and displacement camps — the ones most likely to accept offers of cash in return for recruits.

In Sanaa, the Yemeni capital under Houthi control, recruiters go door to door telling parents they must either turn over their sons or pay money for the war effort, according to residents.

The AP interviewed the 18 former child soldiers at displacement camps and a counseling center in the city of Marib, which is controlled by the Saudi-led, U.S.-backed coalition. They had come to Marib after slipping away from rebel forces or being captured by coalition units.

Because of their ages and because some of them acknowledge committing acts of brutality, the AP is only using their first names. Some children gave themselves a *nom du guerre* after they joined the fighting. One 10-year-old boy, for example, called himself Abu Nasr, Arabic for "Father of Victory."

A 13-year-old boy named Saleh told the AP that Houthi militiamen stormed his family's home in the northern district of Bani Matar on a Saturday morning and demanded he and his father come with them to the front lines. He said his father told them, "Not me and my son" and then tried to pull his rifle on them. "They dragged him away," the boy recalled. "I heard the bullets, then my father collapsing dead."

Saleh said the militiamen took him with them and forced him to do sentry duty at a checkpoint 12 hours a day.

International relief agencies working on child protection programs in northern Yemen are not allowed to discuss the use of child soldiers, out of fear their agencies will be barred from delivering aid to Houthi-controlled territories, according to four aid workers who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "This is a taboo," one said.

"They don't raise the issue," said Abdullah al-Hamadi, a former deputy education minister who defected earlier this year from the Houthi-controlled government in the north.

Al-Hamadi said that the children who are targeted for recruitment are not the sons of important Houthi families or top commanders. Instead, they are usually kids from poor tribes who are being used "as firewood for this war."

In villages and small towns, recruiters include teenagers whose brothers or fathers already work for the Houthis. They can be seen hanging around schools, handing out chewing tobacco and trying to persuade the boys to become fighters.

Several residents of Sanaa told the AP that Houthis divide the capital into security blocs, each overseen by a supervisor who must meet rolling quotas for bringing in new recruits. He collects information on the families living in his bloc by knocking on the doors of each house and asking for the number of male members, their names and ages.

"It looks random from the outside, but in reality it's not," a Yemeni journalist who worked in Houthi territory said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the risks of talking about the rebels. "There are teams with specific missions and clear structure."

He and his family fled to Marib, a coalition stronghold, because he feared that the rebels would try to recruit his children.

Houthi recruiters assure families their sons won't be assigned to battle zones, but instead will be sent to work behind the lines at roadside checkpoints. Once militiamen get hold of the children, they often instead send them to indoctrination and training camps, and then the front lines, according to two children interviewed by the AP and officials from two child protection groups. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of concerns that the Houthis might retaliate by blocking their groups from working in Yemen.

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Children interviewed by the AP said they were targeted by recruiters on soccer pitches, farms and, especially, schools.

A 12-year-old named Kahlan said Houthi militiamen drove him and 10 of his classmates away in a pickup truck, telling them they were being taken to a place where they would get new school bags.

It was a lie.

Instead, still in their school uniforms, they found themselves inside a training camp getting instructions on how to hide from airstrikes.

'KEY FOR HEAVEN'

New recruits are usually taken first to "culture centers" for religious courses lasting nearly a month. Instructors read aloud to the children from the lectures of the Houthi movement's founder, Hussein Badr Eddin al-Houthi, the late brother of the current leader, Abdul-Malek al-Houthi.

The lectures, dating back to 2002, are circulated in audio and video and transcribed into booklets known as "Malazem."

They are told they are joining a holy war against Jews and Christians and Arab countries that have succumbed to Western influence — and that if the boys die fighting, they will go to heaven. The instructors fuel the recruits' anger with accounts of coalition attacks that have killed civilians, including an airstrike in August that hit a bus full of schoolchildren.

"When you get out of the culture center, you don't want to go home anymore," said Mohammed, the boy who served with the Houthis from ages 13 to 15. "You want to go to jihad."

The recruits are then sent to military training camps in the mountains, according to several children who defected from the Houthis. By night, they sleep in tents or huts made of tree branches. By day, they learn how to fire weapons, plant explosives and avoid missiles fired by coalition jets.

From noon to sunset, the young soldiers get a daily share of the green leaves of qat, a mild stimulant that the vast majority of Yemenis chew every day. Coming from poor families, having qat is an incentive for the children, who might not be able to afford it at home.

After less than a month of boot camp, they are sent to war, wearing the bracelets that are supposed to ensure that, if they die, they are returned to their families and honored as martyrs.

The children call the inscription their "jihadi number." Critics of the Houthis sardonically call the bracelets the children's "key for heaven."

Once in the battle zones, some children said, their weapons and their beliefs made them feel powerful. Others just felt frightened.

Mohammed fought in and around the city of Taiz, the scene of the war's longest running battle.

One day, his comrades captured a coalition fighter and brought him to a bombed-out restaurant for interrogation. Mohammed, 14 at the time, said he fetched an electric generator and hooked it up to the prisoner. He sent electric shocks screaming through the man's body, he said, as his commander questioned the captive about coalition forces' positions.

When the questioning was over, he said, his commander gave this order: "Get rid of him." Mohammed said he took a heavy metal tool, heated it in a flame, then swung it, caving in the back of the man's head.

"He was my master," Mohammed recalled. "If he says kill, I would kill.... I would blow myself up for him."

Riyadh, the 13-year-old who fought in the Sirwah mountains, said he and his 11-year-old brother once shot and killed two enemy soldiers who had refused to lay down their weapons. But more often, he said, he closed his eyes tightly when he fired his rifle.

"Honestly, when I am afraid, I don't know where I am shooting — sometimes in the air and sometimes just randomly," he said.

The most frightening moment came when his brother disappeared during a firefight.

"I was crying," Riyadh recalled. "I told the commander that my brother had been martyred."

He began turning over corpses on the battlefield, searching bloodied faces for his lost brother when he and other fighters came under fire. They fired back. Then, after some yelling back and forth, he realized

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the shooter was not an enemy fighter but his brother, lost in the fog of battle.

A few weeks later, Riyadh and his brother escaped, paying a truck driver to smuggle them away from the Houthi forces.

Kahlan — the schoolboy who had been lured into combat with the promise of a new book bag — was first assigned to carry boxes of food and ammunition for soldiers. Then he was deployed to fight. He and the other boys had no clothes other than their school uniforms, he said. They were so filthy many sprouted skin rashes.

Coalition aircraft screeched overhead, dropping bombs and firing missiles at Houthi positions. Afterward, trucks rumbled in to collect the dead.

"The sight of the bodies was scary," Kahlan recalled, using his hands to pantomime how corpses were missing heads or limbs or had their intestines oozing out.

He slipped away from the Houthi camp early one morning, running from one village to another. "I was afraid to look back. I saw trees and rocks and I got more scared because they used to hide behind the trees."

'LISTENING SESSIONS'

Mohammed, Riyadh and Kahlan all ended up in Marib, at a rehabilitation center for children who served as Houthi soldiers. Since September 2017, nearly 200 boys have come through the center, which was founded by the Wethaq Foundation for Civil Orientation and funded with Saudi money.

Mayoub al-Makhlafi, the center's psychiatrist, said the common symptom among all the former child soldiers is extreme aggression. They suffer anxiety, panic attacks and attention deficits. Some describe being beaten by their own commanders, a staffer at the center said. She said she has also heard reports from children on both sides of the fighting about being sexually abused by officers. She spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of sexual abuse issues.

The center brings the children together for "listening sessions" that help them remember their lives before they were sent to war.

On his first day at the center, Mohammed said, he was terrified. He didn't know what they would do to him there. "But then I saw the teachers and they gave me a room to stay in. I felt good after that."

His mother lives in Taiz, in an area under Houthi control, so he can't live with her. He has other relatives and moves from one house to another. Sometimes, he said, he sleeps in the street.

He no longer has the bracelet with the serial number that the Houthis gave him as part of their promise that he'd get a martyr's funeral. When he defected, he said, his older brother sent him to be questioned by coalition authorities.

During the interrogation, a security officer took out a pair of scissors and cut the bracelet from Mohammed's wrist.

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. WHAT'S NEXT FOR SWEEPING CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL

After the Senate passes a sweeping criminal justice bill, it heads to the House for approval, then to President Donald Trump for his signature. It addresses concerns that the U.S. war on drugs has led to the imprisonment of too many Americans for non-violent crimes without adequately preparing them for their return to society.

2. WHY DAYS OF IMPASSE OVER FUNDING FOR U.S. BORDER WALL APPEAR TO HAVE ENDED

President Donald Trump appears to back off his demand for \$5 billion to build a border wall, signaling he might be open to a deal that would avoid a partial government shutdown.

3. WHERE CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS 10 FIGHT, KILL AND DIE

An AP investigation finds that thousands of children have been recruited by Yemen's Houthi rebels to

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fight in the country's civil war. Boys describe being thrown into the heat of battle, amid bombardment and airstrikes, watching friends die.

4. YEMENI MOM WINS FIGHT TO FLY TO US TO GIVE DYING SON KISS

After a yearlong legal battle, a Yemeni mother will get to come to the U.S. to give her dying son one last kiss. Citizens from Yemen are restricted from coming to the United States under the travel ban enacted under President Trump.

5. WHAT A FEDERAL JUDGE TOLD EX-TRUMP AIDE AT HIS SENTENCING

A federal judge who described himself as disgusted by Michael Flynn's behavior upended a straightforward sentencing hearing, postponing punishment for Trump's first national security adviser and telling him in a stinging rebuke, "Arguably you sold your country out."

6. HOW ELON MUSK UNVEILED UNDERGROUND TUNNEL

The tech entrepreneur allowed reporters and VIPs to take some of the first rides in the subterranean tube. They boarded a Tesla Model S, were driven to the test station in Los Angeles, lowered into the tunnel and zipped through.

7. US REVIEWS REPORT OF IMPORTS FROM FORCED LABOR IN CHINA CAMP

The U.S. government is reviewing an AP report of forced labor at a Chinese internment camp where ethnic minorities are sewing clothes that have been shipped to the U.S. market.

8. CONSUMER GROUPS ALLEGE GOOGLE MISLEADS KIDS IN FTC COMPLAINT

Nearly two dozen consumer, privacy and public health groups are urging U.S. regulators to investigate whether children are being endangered by deceptive apps in Google's app store for smartphones running on its Android software.

9. HOW MANY JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN KILLED WORLDWIDE SO FAR IN 2018

The number of journalists killed worldwide in retaliation for their work nearly doubled this year at least 53, according to an annual report by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

10. HOW 'LAVERNE' ROLE GAVE MARSHALL SPRINGBOARD TO HISTORIC CAREER

Actress-director Penny Marshall rose to fame as one of the stars of the television hit "Laverne & Shirley" and then broke into the male-dominated film business. She died at age 75.

Funding government without border wall appears back on table

By **LISA MASCARO, MATTHEW DALY** and **CATHERINE LUCEY**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump appeared to back off his demand for \$5 billion to build a border wall, signaling for the first time that he might be open to a deal that would avoid a partial government shutdown.

The White House set the tone Tuesday when press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders indicated that Trump doesn't want to shut down the government, though just last week he said he'd be "proud" to do so. The president would consider other options and the administration was looking at ways to find the money elsewhere, Sanders said.

It was a turnaround after days of impasse. Without a resolution, more than 800,000 government workers could be furloughed or sent to work without pay beginning at midnight Friday, disrupting government operations days before Christmas.

One option that has been circulating on Capitol Hill would be to simply approve government funding at existing levels, without a boost for the border, as a stopgap measure to kick the issue into the new Congress next month. The chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., confirmed late Tuesday his office was preparing legislation to keep government funded, likely into February. The White House preference was for a longer-term package, although the conversation remained fluid and Trump has been known to quickly change course, said a person familiar with the negotiations but not authorized to discuss them by name.

"We want to know what can pass," Sanders said at a press briefing. "Once they make a decision and they put something on the table, we'll make a determination on whether we'll move forward."

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She also said the president "has asked every agency to look and see if they have money that can be used."

The turn of events kick-started negotiations that had been almost nonexistent since last week's televised meeting at the White House, when Trump neither accepted nor rejected the Democrats' offer. They had proposed keeping funding at current levels of \$1.3 billion for border security fencing and other improvements, but not for the wall.

The Senate's top Republican and Democratic leaders began negotiating new proposals and talks were expected to continue.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he was confident there would not be a government shut-down. McConnell said a stopgap measure could be approved, though he suggested that House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who is poised to become House speaker when the Democrats take control Jan. 3, would not want to saddle the new year with a budget brawl.

"If I were in her shoes, I would rather not be dealing with this year's business next year," McConnell said.

Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer have made it clear they are not interested in funding Trump's border wall.

During a meeting earlier Tuesday on Capitol Hill, McConnell had proposed \$1.6 billion for border fencing, as outlined in a bipartisan Senate bill, plus an additional \$1 billion that Trump could use on the border, according to a senior Democratic aide unauthorized to speak about the private meeting.

Democratic leaders immediately spurned the proposal. Schumer called McConnell to reject it.

"We cannot accept the offer they made of a billion-dollar slush fund for the president to implement his very wrong immigration policies," Pelosi told reporters. "So that won't happen."

Democrats also rejected the administration's idea of shifting money from other accounts to pay for Trump's wall. Schumer said there will be no wall money, "plain and simple."

Pelosi will probably be able to quickly approve a longer-term measure to keep government running in the new year. She called it a "good sign" that the White House appeared to be backing off its demands.

The White House showed its willingness to budge as it became apparent the president does not have support in Congress for funding the wall at the \$5 billion level. Sanders said Tuesday there are "other ways" to secure the funding.

"At the end of the day, we don't want to shut down the government," Sanders said on Fox News Channel. "We want to shut down the border from illegal immigration."

Sanders pointed to the Senate's bipartisan appropriation measure for the Department of Homeland Security, which provides \$26 billion, including \$1.6 billion for fencing and other barriers. It was approved by the committee in summer on a bipartisan vote.

"That's something that we would be able to support," she said, as long as it's coupled with other funding.

But House Democrats largely reject the Senate's bill because it includes 65 miles of additional fencing along the Rio Grande Valley in Texas.

Trump had campaigned on the promise that Mexico would pay for the wall. Mexico has refused.

It's unclear how many House Republicans, with just a few weeks left in the majority before relinquishing power to House Democrats, will even show up midweek for possible votes. Many Republicans say it's up to Trump and Democrats to cut a deal.

The standoff dispute could affect nine of 15 Cabinet-level departments and dozens of agencies, including the departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, Interior, Agriculture, State and Justice, as well as national parks and forests.

Shelby expected the stopgap measure, which would cover the seven appropriation bills for those departments, would pass. "Who would want to shut the government down?" he said.

Congress did pass legislation to fund much of the government through the fiscal year, until Oct. 1. But a partial shutdown would occur at midnight Friday on the remaining one-fourth of the government.

About half the workers would be forced to continue working without immediate pay. Others would be sent home. Congress often approves their pay retroactively, even if they were ordered to stay home.

Many agencies, including the Pentagon and the departments of Veterans Affairs and Health and Human Services, are already funded for the year and will continue to operate as usual. The U.S. Postal Service,

busy delivering packages for the holiday season, wouldn't be affected by any government shutdown because it's an independent agency.

Associated Press writer Laurie Kellman in Washington contributed to this report.

Elon Musk unveils underground tunnel, offers rides to VIPs

By AMANDA LEE MYERS, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Elon Musk unveiled his underground transportation tunnel on Tuesday, allowing reporters and invited guests to take some of the first rides in the revolutionary albeit bumpy subterranean tube — the tech entrepreneur's answer to what he calls "soul-destroying traffic."

Guests boarded Musk's Tesla Model S and rode along Los Angeles-area surface streets about a mile away to what's known as O'Leary Station. The station, smack dab in the middle of a residential neighborhood — "basically in someone's backyard," Musk says — consists of a wall-less elevator that slowly took the car down a wide shaft, roughly 30 feet (9 meters) below the surface.

The sky slowly fell away and the surprisingly narrow tunnel emerged.

"We're clear," said the driver, who sped up and zipped into the tunnel when a red track light turned green, making the tube look like something from space or a dance club.

The car jostled significantly during the ride, which was bumpy enough to give one reporter motion sickness while another yelled, "Woo!"

Musk described his first ride as "epic."

"For me it was a eureka moment," he told a room full of reporters. "I was like, 'This thing is going to damn well work.'"

He said the rides are bumpy now because "we kind of ran out of time" and there were some problems with the speed of his paving machine.

"It'll be smooth as glass," he said of future systems. "This is just a prototype. That's why it's a little rough around the edges."

Later in the day, Musk emerged from the tunnel himself inside one of his cars. He high-fived guests and pumped his fists in the air before delivering a speech in the green glow of the tunnel about the technology and why it makes sense.

"Traffic is soul-destroying. It's like acid on the soul," he said to guests who snacked on marshmallow treats and hot dogs and hoped for a turn in the tunnel.

On Tuesday, he explained for the first time in detail how the system, which he simply calls "loop," could work on a larger scale beneath cities across the globe. Autonomous, electric vehicles could be lowered into the system on wall-less elevators, which could be placed almost anywhere cars can go. The cars would have to be fitted with specially designed side wheels that pop out perpendicular to the car's regular tires and run along the tunnel's track. The cost for such wheels would be about \$200 or \$300 a car, Musk said.

A number of autonomous cars would remain inside the tunnel system just for pedestrians and bicyclists. Once on the main arteries of the system, every car could run at top speed except when entering and exiting.

"It's much more like an underground highway than it is a subway," Musk said.

The cars would have to be autonomous to work in the system but not Teslas specifically, and they would have to be electric because of the fumes from gas, Musk said.

The demo rides were considerably slower — 40 mph (64 kph) — than what Musk says the future system will run at: 150 mph (241 kph). Still, it took only three minutes to go just over a mile from the beginning to the end of the tunnel, the same amount of time it took to accomplish a right-hand turn out of the parking lot and onto a surface street even before the height of Los Angeles' notorious rush-hour traffic.

Tuesday's reveal comes almost two years to the day since Musk announced on Twitter that "traffic is driving me nuts" and he was "going to build a tunnel boring machine and just start digging."

"I am actually going to do this," he added in response to initial skepticism. Soon after, he began The Boring Company, tongue in cheek intentional.

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For the privately funded test tunnel, Musk acquired a tunnel-boring machine that had been used in a San Francisco Bay Area project and put it down a shaft in a parking lot at the SpaceX headquarters.

Musk dismissed concerns such as the noise and disruption of building the tunnels, saying that when workers bored through the end of the test tunnel the people in the home 20 feet (6 meters) away "didn't even stop watching TV."

"The footsteps of someone walking past your house will be more noticeable than a tunnel being dug under your house," he said,

The Boring Company canceled its plans for another test tunnel on Los Angeles' west side last month after a neighborhood coalition filed a lawsuit expressing concerns about traffic and disruptions from trucks hauling out dirt during the boring process.

However, Steve Davis, head of The Boring Company, said the interest in the tunnel systems has been significant — anywhere from five to 20 calls a week from various municipalities and stakeholders.

One project Musk is planning on, known as the Dugout Loop, would take Los Angeles baseball fans to Dodger Stadium from one of three subway stations. Another would take travelers from downtown Chicago to O'Hare International Airport. Both projects are in the environmental review phase.

Musk said he thinks the Chicago project has the most potential to open soonest and that he's hoping an extensive network opens in Los Angeles before the city hosts the 2028 Olympics.

"Wouldn't it be incredible if you could travel around LA, New York, D.C., Chicago, Paris, London — anywhere — at 150 mph?" Musk said. "That'd be phenomenal."

Musk's representatives also unveiled on Tuesday a new tunnel-boring machine they say they hope to have online soon, one that can bore four times faster than the one they've been using.

Musk said it took about \$10 million to build the test tunnel, a far cry from the \$1 billion per mile his company says most tunnels take to build.

Cost-cutting measures included improving the speed of construction with smarter tools, eliminating middlemen, building more powerful boring machines, and turning the dirt being excavated into bricks and selling them, Musk said.

The tunnel will not be open to the public for the foreseeable future, Musk said, adding that regulations wouldn't allow for it to open widely for demo rides just yet.

Musk's vision for the underground tunnels is not the same as another of his transportation concepts known as hyperloop. That would involve a network of nearly airless tubes that would speed special capsules over long distances at up to 750 mph (1,200 kph), using a thin cushion of air, magnetism and solar power.

Follow Amanda Lee Myers on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/AmandaLeeAP>

'Twas the Night before Christmas' is theme of Pence holiday

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Christmas at Vice President Mike Pence's official residence literally jumps out of the pages of "Twas the Night Before Christmas."

Every room on the main floor of the Naval Observatory represents a verse from the poem by Clement Clarke Moore, officially titled "A Visit from St. Nicholas." Pence has a family tradition of reading the holiday classic to his three children every Christmas Eve even though they're adults now and the gang includes a daughter-in-law.

Stockings hung by the chimney with care? Nine red ones hang from the fireplace mantle in the dining room: Six for the Pences and three for pets Hazel, Harley and Marlon.

Instead of visions of sugar plums dancing in their heads, kids can stop by a special candy station to fill up on them.

The library was transformed into a den for Santa's reindeer, with all nine names on the wall above a 125-pound gingerbread replica of the observatory. The library has reindeer decorations on the mantle and a tree decorated with reindeer ornaments, a reindeer topper and presents wrapped in reindeer-print

paper underneath it.

Wrapped gifts suspended from the foyer mimic presents tumbling down the staircase and straight into Santa's nearby sack.

"New fallen snow" covers the branches of a tree in the sunroom.

The main attraction shines in the living room: an 11½-foot (3.35-meter) North Carolina fir decorated with ornaments symbolizing the "bundle of toys" Santa "had flung on his back." A life-size Santa replica stands next to the tree, reviewing his naughty or nice list.

Guests arrive to an oversized copy of the poem opened beside a high-backed red velvet chair.

Pence's wife, Karen, recently gave The Associated Press an exclusive tour of their holiday decorations. Her family is spending Christmas in Washington.

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap>

In farewell, Ryan sees solutions if 'politics will allow it'

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Outgoing House Speaker Paul Ryan is bemoaning America's "broken politics" in a farewell speech in which he calls Washington's failure to overhaul costly federal benefit programs "our greatest unfinished business."

"Our complex problems are solvable," Ryan says in excerpts of remarks he plans to deliver Wednesday at the Library of Congress, across the street from a Capitol where he's served two decades in the House, the last three years as speaker. "That is to say, our problems are solvable if our politics will allow it."

The Wisconsin Republican's address, which touts achievements and admits shortcomings, comes as the window closes on a tumultuous two years of GOP control of government dominated by President Donald Trump. It also comes six weeks after an Election Day that saw Democrats capture House control, which begins Jan. 3.

Under Ryan, Congress approved the biggest tax cuts in decades, boosted defense spending and rolled back regulations protecting clean air and water adopted by former President Barack Obama. But annual federal deficits are surging, Medicare and other expensive entitlement programs are growing and a top GOP priority — scuttling Obama's health care law — has crashed.

Providing chaotic background music for Ryan's departure, Congress in its closing days was mired in a struggle to avoid a partial government shutdown as Trump clashes with Democrats over his demand for taxpayer money to build a border wall with Mexico.

In excerpts provided to The Associated Press, Ryan calls the House "the most productive we have had in a generation," citing passage of more than 1,000 bills, though most were minor. He predicts that the failed GOP effort to repeal and rewrite Obama's health care law will be the framework for an ultimate solution, and said the party's fruitless attempts to revamp immigration laws — both the House and Senate rejected bills — came closer than people realize.

"We have taken on some of the biggest challenges of our time, and made a great and lasting difference in the trajectory of this country," he said.

Yet his comments also underscore some of the GOP's recent failures.

Ryan, 48, acknowledges he never achieved two longtime policy dreams — reining spending by the government's huge entitlement programs and controlling the enormous and growing national debt. Thanks partly to the 10-year, \$1.5 trillion tax cut Republicans enacted last year, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates a record \$12.4 trillion accumulated federal deficits for the coming decade.

"I acknowledge plainly that my ambitions for entitlement reform have outpaced the political reality and I consider this our greatest unfinished business," he says.

While the House-passed health care bill would have culled savings from Medicaid and other programs, the effort died in the GOP-run Senate, killed by solid Democratic opposition and a handful of Republican opponents.

"Ultimately, solving this problem will require a greater degree of political will than exists today. I regret that," Ryan says.

Ryan was first elected to Congress in 1998 and became a leader of Republicans trying to shrink government. As chairman of the House Budget Committee, he wrote spending plans that envisioned squeezing savings from popular benefit programs like Medicare and eliminating deficits — proposals that Congress never actually enacted. He announced last April that he would not seek re-election to the House, citing a desire to spend more time with his family.

The excerpts never directly mention Trump. But Ryan describes the divisiveness that has been a hallmark of Trump's constant demonization of his political opponents, which has included racially tinged statements.

"All of this pulls on the threads of our common humanity, in what could be our unraveling," he warns.

He suggests that "rediscovering that human connection is one lane on the road back to aspiration and inclusion as the guiding influences in public life." He adds, "The drivers of our broken politics are more obvious than the solutions."

On immigration, Ryan says no matter how the border wall battle is resolved, "The system will still be in need of serious reform. And no less than our full potential as a nation is at stake."

He says resolving the problem is "an economic and moral imperative. And it would go a long way toward taking some of the venom out of our discourse." Ryan for years was a quiet force for broad immigration overhauls that conservatives opposed as going too far in offering citizenship to immigrants in the U.S. illegally, but he was unable to unify Republicans behind one approach in in this year's debacle.

The excerpts spend little time discussing last year's GOP tax cut bill, which Ryan has previously named as one of his most significant accomplishments. He cites that bill's tax breaks for investors in low-income communities and cautions Republicans to not let efforts to ease poverty "drift from your consciousness."

Dipping into foreign policy, Ryan says both parties must "devote more time and energy to the direct challenge China poses to the West." He says that his overseas travels tell him that "our allies wonder whether we are still in the game here."

Under Trump, the U.S. and China have been having a trade faceoff. Trump has postponed new tariffs on China while the two countries negotiate.

Criminal justice bill passes Senate; House approval expected

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate passed a sweeping criminal justice bill Tuesday that addresses concerns that the nation's war on drugs had led to the imprisonment of too many Americans for non-violent crimes without adequately preparing them for their return to society.

Senate passage of the bill by a vote of 87-12 culminates years of negotiations and gives President Donald Trump a signature policy victory, with the outcome hailed by scores of conservative and liberal advocacy groups. The House is expected to pass the bill this week, sending it to the president's desk for his signature.

The bill gives judges more discretion when sentencing some drug offenders and boosts prisoner rehabilitation efforts. It also reduces the life sentence for some drug offenders with three convictions, or "three strikes," to 25 years. Another provision would allow about 2,600 federal prisoners sentenced for crack cocaine offenses before August 2010 the opportunity to petition for a reduced penalty.

"America is the greatest Country in the world and my job is to fight for ALL citizens, even those who have made mistakes," Trump tweeted moments after the vote.

"This will keep our communities safer, and provide hope and a second chance, to those who earn it. In addition to everything else, billions of dollars will be saved. I look forward to signing this into law!" Trump added.

The vote also thrilled Democrats. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., said the nation's prisons are full of Americans who are struggling with mental illness and addiction, and who are overwhelmingly poor. He said the nation's criminal justice system "feeds on certain communities and not on others," and said the bill

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represents a step toward "healing" for those communities.

"Let's make no mistake, this legislation, which is one small step, will affect thousands and thousands of lives," Booker said.

When the bill appeared to have stalled in recent weeks, Sen. Charles Grassley, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, pleaded with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to bring it up for a vote. With Trump's urging, McConnell eventually agreed, and voted for the bill as well.

"The First Step Act takes lessons from history and from states — our laboratories of democracy — to reduce crime, save taxpayer dollars and strengthen faith and fairness in our criminal justice system," Grassley said.

The Senate turned back three amendments Tuesday from Republican senators Tom Cotton of Arkansas and John Kennedy of Louisiana, who said the bill endangered public safety. Supporters voiced concerns that passing any of the amendments would have sunk the bill.

One amendment would have excluded more prisoners from participating in educational and training programs that allow them to earn credits. Those credits can then be used to gain an earlier release to a halfway house or home confinement to finish out their sentence. Another amendment would have required that victims be notified before a prisoner gets that earlier release. The third would have required the Federal Bureau of Prisons to track and report the re-arrest rate for each prisoner who gets early release.

"While the bill has marginally improved from earlier versions, I'm disappointed my amendments to exclude child molesters from early release and to protect victims' rights were not adopted," Cotton said. "I also remain concerned that reducing sentences for drug traffickers and violent felons is a threat to public safety."

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said the bill already carves out some 60 different crimes that make prisoners ineligible for early release to a halfway house or home confinement. He said Cotton's amendment was too expansive and would prevent at least 30,000 prisoners from participation.

Durbin said the Federal Bureau of Prisons also gives victims the opportunity to be notified upon a change in the prisoner's status, but it's a choice. He said about 10 percent of victims choose not to be notified because of the trauma involved in revisiting the crime. Meanwhile, the amendment from Cotton and Kennedy would make it a requirement.

"Supporting the Cotton amendment is basically saying to these crime victims, 'We're going to force this information on you whether it's in the best interest of your family, whether you want it or not,'" Durbin said. "That is not respectful of crime victims."

The bill would affect only federal prisoners, who make up less than 10 percent of the country's prison population.

An array of liberal and conservative advocacy groups rallied in support of the bill. For example, the Koch brothers-backed group, Americans for Prosperity, applauded senators for putting "policy ahead of politics." The American Civil Liberties Union said the bill was "by no means perfect. But we are in the midst of a mass incarceration crisis, and the time to act is now."

Law enforcement groups were more split. It was backed by the Fraternal Order of Police and the International Association of Chiefs of Police but opposed by the National Sheriff's Association. The union representing federal prison guards also joined in supporting the measure.

Judge delays Flynn sentencing, 'not hiding disgust' at crime

By ERIC TUCKER and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge Tuesday abruptly postponed the sentencing of President Donald Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, declaring himself disgusted and disdainful of Flynn's crime of lying to the FBI and raising the unexpected prospect of sending the retired Army lieutenant general to prison.

Lawyers for Flynn, who admitted lying to the FBI about his Russian contacts, requested the delay during the stunning hearing in which U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan told the former Trump aide in a blistering

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rebuke that "arguably you sold your country out."

"I can't make any guarantees, but I'm not hiding my disgust, my disdain for this criminal offense," Sullivan said.

The postponement gives Flynn a chance to continue cooperating with the government in hopes of staying off prison and proving his value as a witness, including in a foreign lobbying prosecution unsealed this week. The possibility of prison had seemed remote for Flynn, who was smiling and upbeat as he entered the courtroom, since prosecutors had praised his extensive cooperation and didn't recommend any time behind bars.

But the judge's upbraiding suggested otherwise and made clear that even defendants like Flynn who have cooperated in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation may nonetheless be shadowed by the crimes that brought them into court in the first place. The hearing upset what had been a carefully crafted agreement and pushed months into the future a resolution of one of Mueller's signature prosecutions.

"This is a very serious offense. A high-ranking senior official of the government making false statements to the Federal Bureau of Investigation while on the physical premises of the White House," Sullivan said.

He later softened his tone, apologizing for suggesting that Flynn had worked as a foreign agent, "undermining everything this flag over here stands for" while in the White House when that other work had actually already ended. He also backpedaled on an earlier question on whether Flynn's transgressions amounted to treason, saying he didn't mean to suggest they did.

Flynn was to have been the first White House official sentenced in Mueller's ongoing investigation into possible coordination between the Trump presidential campaign and Russia.

The hearing, though incomplete, marked a remarkable fall after a three-decade military career that included Flynn's tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and oversight of the Defense Intelligence Agency during the Obama administration. Though he served only briefly in Trump's White House, he campaigned vigorously before the election and attracted attention for memorably leading a Republican National Convention crowd in a "Lock Her Up" chant about Hillary Clinton.

It all comes amid escalating legal peril for Trump, who was implicated by federal prosecutors in New York this month in hush-money payments involving his former lawyer to cover up extramarital affairs. Nearly a half-dozen former aides and advisers have pleaded guilty or agreed to cooperate with prosecutors. Some, like Flynn, have been tripped up by concealing Russian contacts.

Flynn's help in the probes, including 19 meetings with investigators, has been especially notable. Yet he's nonetheless enjoyed Trump's continued sympathy, thanks in part to a sentencing memo last week that tapped into the president's suspicion of law enforcement and took aim at the FBI's conduct during the investigation.

Trump tweeted "good luck" to his first national security adviser hours before the sentencing and said: "Will be interesting to see what he has to say, despite tremendous pressure being put on him, about Russian Collusion in our great and, obviously, highly successful political campaign. There was no Collusion!"

At the White House afterward, press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders was asked if the administration had changed its stance on Flynn or the FBI after his admissions and guilty plea.

"Maybe he did do those things, but it doesn't have anything to do with the president," she said. "It's perfectly acceptable for the president to make a positive comment about somebody while we wait to see what the court's determination is."

Sanders repeated her allegation that the FBI "ambushed" Flynn in an interview in which he lied. Of Trump's earlier FBI criticism, she said, "We don't have any reason to want to walk that back."

Flynn's legal woes stem from transition-period calls with then-Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak that raised intelligence community alarms even before Trump took office.

During those conversations, Flynn urged against a strong Russian response to Obama administration sanctions for Russian election interference and also encouraged Russia's opposition to a U.N. resolution on Israeli settlements. But when FBI agents approached him in the White House on Jan. 24, 2017, Flynn lied about those conversations, prosecutors said.

Flynn has never said why he lied, but Sullivan nonetheless castigated him for a deception that was then

parroted by other senior administration officials.

The tone of Tuesday's hearing startled Flynn supporters who hoped his lawyers' arguments about the FBI's conduct — they suggested he was discouraged from having a lawyer present during the interview and wasn't informed it was a crime to lie — to resonate more than it did with Sullivan, who a decade ago tossed out the prosecution of a U.S. senator over government misconduct.

But while Sullivan tested those arguments, he was ultimately unmoved and Flynn mostly walked them back. He acknowledged that he indeed knew that lying to the FBI was a crime. Neither he nor his lawyers disputed that he'd lied to agents.

Flynn attorney Robert Kelner asked Sullivan not to penalize Flynn for the sentencing memo arguments, saying they were mostly intended to differentiate Flynn from other defendants in Mueller's investigation who'd received prison sentences for lying. Though Sullivan said none of the other defendants was a White House official, Kelner suggested none had been as cooperative.

"He made the decision publicly and clearly and completely and utterly to cooperate with this investigation, knowing that because of his high rank, that was going to send a signal to every other potential cooperator and witness in this investigation," he added.

After a prosecutor raised the prospect of Flynn's continued cooperation with other investigations in the future, Sullivan warned Flynn that he might not get full credit for his assistance to the government if he were sentenced as scheduled.

Sullivan gave a visibly shaken Flynn a chance to discuss a delay of the hearing with his lawyers. The court briefly recessed.

When they returned, Kelner requested a postponement to allow for Flynn to keep cooperating. Kelner said he expected Flynn would have to testify in a related trial in Virginia involving Flynn's former business associates, and the defense wanted to "eke out the last modicum of cooperation" so he could get credit.

Flynn's lawyers were instructed to submit a status report by March 13. Flynn left the courthouse hand-in-hand with his wife, climbing into an SUV as protesters heckled and supporters chanted "USA!"

Read the Flynn FBI interview notes: <http://apne.ws/xfm8IsO>

Associated Press writer Michelle R. Smith in Providence contributed to this report.

Need some milk? Driverless cars start delivering groceries

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ, AP Business Writer

The nation's largest grocery chain stepped into the driverless delivery market Tuesday, bringing milk, eggs and other items to a customer's home in a vehicle with nobody at the wheel.

Although limited to delivering within about a mile (1.5 kilometers) of one Arizona supermarket owned by Kroger Co., it represents the latest step for industries trying to lower delivery costs of everyday items and those trying to launch self-driving cars on public roads.

Tuesday's delivery arrived at Shannon Baggett's house in the Phoenix suburb of Scottsdale. She was already receiving groceries weekly from larger, manned self-driving vehicles that the company Nuro developed and launched in August. She said it was surreal to see nobody in the car bringing her milk, eggs and strawberries.

"It was very cool to see it pull up. It was a lot smaller than I thought it would be," Baggett said. "I told my husband, 'We just got our groceries delivered by a robot.'"

But Tuesday's launch also highlighted some of the many challenges still ahead for autonomous vehicles: One of the compact cars didn't drive as planned at a media demonstration because of a dead battery and had to be pushed up a ramp and onto a truck by several men.

Kroger and Nuro, which is based in Mountain View, California, announced Tuesday that they would deliver groceries in the Scottsdale area, using an autonomous vehicle called the R1, which has no steering wheel and no seats for people.

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Nuro will be adding two of its completely unmanned R1 vehicles to its fleet of manned self-driving vehicles that deliver groceries, said Dave Ferguson, president and co-founder of Nuro.

When summoned, the R1 will travel within a 1-mile (1.5-kilometer) radius of the Fry's Food store just east of the Phoenix Zoo at speeds up to 25 miles per hour (40 kph) on residential roads but stay clear of main roads or highways, according to Pam Giannonatti, corporate affairs manager at Cincinnati-based Kroger's Fry's division.

Customers place an order on their smartphone or laptop and get a text message when the groceries are on their way. Another message will alert them when the delivery is curbside. Once the vehicle arrives, the customer will receive a code to punch in to open the doors, Giannonatti said.

Customers will pay a flat fee of \$5.95 and can request same-day or next-day delivery.

The unmanned delivery vehicles will be followed by a "shadow car," driven by a person with the ability to stop or control it. This car is being used in the early stages of the program out of caution and will be phased out, Ferguson said.

"This is not yet at the point where in any way it's economically better than just sending someone out in a car to deliver your groceries," said Bryant Walker Smith, a professor at the University of South Carolina, who teaches about emerging technologies. "It will probably cost much more, and the range is minimal, and there are lots of ways it would not be a true, commercial-scale, viable deployment, but it's an important step on that path."

Technological hurdles and apprehension have limited attempts to deploy fully autonomous vehicles on public streets.

Uber pulled its self-driving cars out of Arizona this year after one of the ride-hailing service's robotic vehicles hit and killed a woman as she crossed a darkened street in a Phoenix suburb in March. It was the first death involving a fully autonomous vehicle. A backup driver was at the wheel.

Waymo, a self-driving car spinoff from a Google project, has been offering free rides in robotic vehicles with no backup driver as part of a test program in the Phoenix area for the past year. Earlier this month, Waymo launched a ride-hailing service available to about 200 people that will have a person behind the wheel in case something goes awry.

Giannonatti of Kroger said safety is paramount in this next step of autonomous vehicle technology.

Because Nuro's R1 delivery vehicle is unmanned, it was designed to prioritize safety of other drivers and pedestrians without trading off the safety or comfort of a driver or passengers, Ferguson said.

The vehicle's size — half the width of a Toyota Corolla — also helps prevent collisions with pedestrians because there's more buffer room, he said.

Kroger has been working to boost online sales to keep up with Walmart and Amazon, which bought grocer Whole Foods last year.

Tuesday's announcement puts Kroger ahead of Walmart and Amazon in self-driving deliveries, says Jon Reily, vice president of commerce strategy at Publicis.Sapient.

"But ultimately," he says, "there are so many challenges with autonomous vehicles" to make it a reality nationwide.

Among them: state laws and weather. Arizona's laws have been friendlier to self-driving vehicles, and the weather in Scottsdale is more predictable than in other parts of the country.

Associated Press journalists Brian Skoloff in Scottsdale, Arizona, Terry Tang in Phoenix, Joseph Pisani in New York and Michael Liedtke in San Francisco contributed to this story.

Shutdown threat recedes as Trump softens stance on wall

By LISA MASCARO, MATTHEW DALY and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump appeared Tuesday to back off his demand for \$5 billion to build a border wall, signaling for the first time that he might be open to a deal that would avoid a partial government shutdown.

The White House set the tone when press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders indicated that Trump doesn't want to shut down the government, though just last week he said he'd be "proud" to do so. The president would consider other options and the administration was looking at ways to find the money elsewhere, Sanders said.

It was a turnaround after days of impasse. Without a resolution, more than 800,000 government workers could be furloughed or sent to work without pay beginning at midnight Friday, disrupting government operations days before Christmas.

One option that has been circulating on Capitol Hill would be to simply approve government funding at existing levels, without a boost for the border, as a stopgap measure to kick the issue into the new Congress next month. The chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., confirmed late Tuesday his office was preparing legislation to keep government funded, likely into February. The White House preference was for a longer-term package, although the conversation remained fluid and Trump has been known to quickly change course, said a person familiar with the negotiations but not authorized to discuss them by name.

"We want to know what can pass," Sanders said at a press briefing. "Once they make a decision and they put something on the table, we'll make a determination on whether we'll move forward."

She also said the president "has asked every agency to look and see if they have money that can be used."

The turn of events kick-started negotiations that had been almost nonexistent since last week's televised meeting at the White House, when Trump neither accepted nor rejected the Democrats' offer. They had proposed keeping funding at current levels of \$1.3 billion for border security fencing and other improvements, but not for the wall.

The Senate's top Republican and Democratic leaders began negotiating new proposals and talks were expected to continue.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he was confident there would not be a government shutdown. McConnell said a stopgap measure could be approved, though he suggested that House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who is poised to become House speaker when the Democrats take control Jan. 3, would not want to saddle the new year with a budget brawl.

"If I were in her shoes, I would rather not be dealing with this year's business next year," McConnell said.

Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer have made it clear they are not interested in funding Trump's border wall.

During a meeting earlier Tuesday on Capitol Hill, McConnell had proposed \$1.6 billion for border fencing, as outlined in a bipartisan Senate bill, plus an additional \$1 billion that Trump could use on the border, according to a senior Democratic aide unauthorized to speak about the private meeting.

Democratic leaders immediately spurned the proposal. Schumer called McConnell to reject it.

"We cannot accept the offer they made of a billion-dollar slush fund for the president to implement his very wrong immigration policies," Pelosi told reporters. "So that won't happen."

Democrats also rejected the administration's idea of shifting money from other accounts to pay for Trump's wall. Schumer said there will be no wall money, "plain and simple."

Pelosi will probably be able to quickly approve a longer-term measure to keep government running in the new year. She called it a "good sign" that the White House appeared to be backing off its demands.

The White House showed its willingness to budge as it became apparent the president does not have support in Congress for funding the wall at the \$5 billion level. Sanders said Tuesday there are "other ways" to secure the funding.

"At the end of the day, we don't want to shut down the government," Sanders said on Fox News Chan-

nel. "We want to shut down the border from illegal immigration."

Sanders pointed to the Senate's bipartisan appropriation measure for the Department of Homeland Security, which provides \$26 billion, including \$1.6 billion for fencing and other barriers. It was approved by the committee in summer on a bipartisan vote.

"That's something that we would be able to support," she said, as long as it's coupled with other funding.

But House Democrats largely reject the Senate's bill because it includes 65 miles of additional fencing along the Rio Grande Valley in Texas.

Trump had campaigned on the promise that Mexico would pay for the wall. Mexico has refused.

It's unclear how many House Republicans, with just a few weeks left in the majority before relinquishing power to House Democrats, will even show up midweek for possible votes. Many Republicans say it's up to Trump and Democrats to cut a deal.

The standoff dispute could affect nine of 15 Cabinet-level departments and dozens of agencies, including the departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, Interior, Agriculture, State and Justice, as well as national parks and forests.

Shelby expected the stopgap measure, which would cover the seven appropriation bills for those departments, would pass. "Who would want to shut the government down?" he said.

Congress did pass legislation to fund much of the government through the fiscal year, until Oct. 1. But a partial shutdown would occur at midnight Friday on the remaining one-fourth of the government.

About half the workers would be forced to continue working without immediate pay. Others would be sent home. Congress often approves their pay retroactively, even if they were ordered to stay home.

Many agencies, including the Pentagon and the departments of Veterans Affairs and Health and Human Services, are already funded for the year and will continue to operate as usual. The U.S. Postal Service, busy delivering packages for the holiday season, wouldn't be affected by any government shutdown because it's an independent agency.

Associated Press writer Laurie Kellman in Washington contributed to this report.

US sportswear traced to factory in China's internment camps

By **DAKE KANG, MARTHA MENDOZA and YANAN WANG, Associated Press**

HOTAN, China (AP) — Barbed wire and hundreds of cameras ring a massive compound of more than 30 dormitories, schools, warehouses and workshops in China's far west. Dozens of armed officers and a growling Doberman stand guard outside.

Behind locked gates, men and women are sewing sportswear that can end up on U.S. college campuses and sports teams.

This is one of a growing number of internment camps in the Xinjiang region, where by some estimates 1 million Muslims are detained, forced to give up their language and their religion and subject to political indoctrination. Now, the Chinese government is also forcing some detainees to work in manufacturing and food industries. Some of them are within the internment camps; others are privately owned, state-subsidized factories where detainees are sent once they are released.

The Associated Press has tracked recent, ongoing shipments from one such factory inside an internment camp to Badger Sportswear, a leading supplier in Statesville, North Carolina. The shipments show how difficult it is to stop products made with forced labor from getting into the global supply chain, even though such imports are illegal in the U.S. Badger CEO John Anton said Sunday that the company would source sportswear elsewhere while it investigates.

Chinese authorities say the camps, which they call training centers, offer free vocational training for Uighurs, Kazakhs and others, mostly Muslims, as part of a plan to bring minorities into "a modern civilized" world and eliminate poverty in Xinjiang. They say that people in the centers have signed agreements to receive vocational training.

The Xinjiang Propaganda Department did not respond to a faxed request for comment. A Chinese For-

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eign Ministry spokeswoman accused the foreign media Monday of making “many untrue reports” about the training centers, but did not specify when asked for details.

“Those reports are completely based on hearsay evidence or made out of thin air,” the spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, said at a daily briefing.

However, a dozen people who either had been in a camp or had friends or family in one told the AP that detainees they knew were given no choice but to work at the factories. Most of the Uighurs and Kazakhs, who were interviewed in exile, also said that even people with professional jobs were retrained to do menial work.

Payment varied according to the factory. Some got paid nothing, while others earned up to several hundred dollars a month, they said — barely above minimum wage for the poorer parts of Xinjiang. A person with firsthand knowledge of the situation in one county estimated that more than 10,000 detainees — or 10 to 20 percent of the internment population there — are working in factories, with some earning just a tenth of what they used to earn before. The person declined to be named out of fear of retribution.

A former reporter for Xinjiang TV in exile said that during his monthlong detention last year, young people in his camp were taken away in the mornings to work without compensation in carpentry and a cement factory.

“The camp didn’t pay any money, not a single cent,” he said, asking to be identified only by his first name, Elyar, because he has relatives still in Xinjiang. “Even for necessities, such as things to shower with or sleep at night, they would call our families outside to get them to pay for it.”

Rushan Abbas, a Uighur in Washington, D.C., said her sister is among those detained. The sister, Dr. Gulshan Abbas, was taken to what the government calls a vocational center, although she has no specific information on whether her sister is being forced to work.

“American companies importing from those places should know those products are made by people being treated like slaves,” she said. “What are they going to do, train a doctor to be a seamstress?”

The predominantly Muslim Uighur and Kazakh ethnic minorities in China live mostly in the Xinjiang region bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan, with a legacy dating to ancient traders on the Silk Road. In recent decades, violent attacks by Uighur militants have killed hundreds and prompted the Chinese government to blanket Xinjiang with stifling security.

About two years ago, authorities launched a vast detention and re-education campaign. They also use checkpoints, GPS tracking and face-scanning cameras for surveillance of ethnic minorities in the region. The slightest perceived misstep can land someone in the internment camps.

Men and women in the complex that has shipped products to Badger Sportswear make clothes for privately-owned Hetian Taida Apparel in a cluster of 10 workshops within the compound walls. Hetian Taida says it is not affiliated with the internment camps, but its workforce includes detainees.

As China faced growing international pressure about the detention camps, its state broadcaster aired a 15-minute report in October that featured a “vocational skills education and training center” in the southern Xinjiang city of Hotan.

“Terrorism and extremism are the common enemy of human civilization,” the China Central Television program began. In response, the report said, the Xinjiang government was using vocational training to solve this “global issue.”

Wu Hongbo, the chairman of Hetian Taida, confirmed that the company has a factory inside the same compound as the training center featured in the China Central Television report. Hetian Taida provides employment to those trainees who were deemed by the government to be “unproblematic,” he said, adding that the center is government-operated.

“We’re making our contribution to eradicating poverty,” Wu told the AP over the phone.

The 20 to 30 trainees at the factory are treated like regular employees and make up a small fraction of the hundreds of people in its workforce, he said.

Trainees featured in the state television report praised the Communist Party for saving them from a

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criminal path.

"I don't dare to imagine what would have happened to me if I didn't come here," one Uighur student said. "The party and government found me in time and saved me. They gave me a chance to reinvent myself."

The segment said that in addition to law and Mandarin-language classes, the training center collaborated with companies to give trainees practical experience. Trainees were shown hunched over sewing machines in a factory whose interior matches that of Hetian Taida's main Hotan branch, as seen in prior Chinese media reports.

Police told the AP journalists who approached the compound earlier this month that they could not take photos or film in the area because it was part of a "military facility." Yet the entrance was marked only by a tall gate that said it was an "apparel employment training base."

Posters line the barbed-wire perimeter, bearing messages such as "Learn to be grateful, learn to be an upright person" and "No need to pay tuition, find a job easily."

Nathan Ruser, a cyber-policy researcher at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), analyzed satellite images for the AP and found that in Hetian Taida's case, the apparel factory and the government-run training camp are connected by a fenced path.

"There are watchtowers throughout," Ruser said. "There are clear fences between the buildings and walls that limit movement. Detainees can only access the factories area through walkways, and the entire facility is closed."

The AP could not independently determine if any workers were allowed to come and go, or how much if anything they were paid.

At least 10 times this year shipping containers filled with thousands of men's, women's and youth polyester knitted T-shirts and pants were sent to Badger Sportswear, a 47-year-old athletic gear seller. The company mostly manufactures in Nicaragua and the U.S., and there is no way to tell where the products from Xinjiang specifically end up. But experts say supply chains are considered tainted by forced labor and modern slavery if even one item was produced by someone forced to work.

Sprinkled on the internet are clues that repeatedly tie the company to the detention camp's sewing factory floor.

Shawn Zhang, a researcher at the University of British Columbia, noted an overlooked Hotan city social media post from February about the first batch of some 1.5 million pieces of clothing worth \$400,000 heading overseas from the Hetian Taida Factory. In the middle of a photo of young women flashing the peace sign is Badger Sportswear's marketing director Ginny Gasswint, who is quoted as saying she's surprised the workers are "friendly, beautiful, enthusiastic and hardworking."

Badger Sportswear goes to university bookstores and sports teams large and small around the country, places like Charlotte Country Day School squash team in Charlotte, North Carolina, Rhode Island's Coventry Little League and Hansberry College Prep in Chicago, according to its website and advertisements. Dozens of college bookstores advertise their gear printed on Badger Sportswear, including Texas A&M, University of Pennsylvania, Appalachian State University, University of Northern Iowa, University of Evansville and Bates College. However, it's impossible to say if any particular shirt is made with forced labor.

All the teams and schools that responded to the AP condemned forced labor.

Badger chief executive Anton said Sunday that his company has sourced products from an affiliate of Hetian Taida for many years. He said about a year ago, the affiliate opened a new factory in western China. Anton confirmed Badger Sportswear officials visited the factory and have a certificate that the factory is certified by social compliance experts.

"We will voluntarily halt sourcing and will move production elsewhere while we investigate the matters raised," he said.

Badger Sportswear was acquired by New York investment firm CCMP Capital Advisor in August 2016. Since then, CCMP has acquired three more team sportswear companies, which they are managing under the umbrella of Founder Sport Group.

In recent years, Badger imported sportswear — jerseys, T-shirts, workout pants and more — from Ni-

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caragua and Pakistan. But in April this year, it began importing 100 percent polyester T-shirts and pants from Hetian Taida Apparel, according to U.S. customs data provided by ImportGenius, which analyzes consumer shipments. The address on the shipping records is the same as for the detention camp.

The U.S. and United Nations say forced labor is a type of modern slavery, and that items made by people being exploited and coerced to work are banned from import to the U.S.

It's unclear whether other companies also export products made by forced labor in Xinjiang to the U.S., Europe and Asia. The AP found two companies exporting to the U.S. that share approximately the same coordinates as places experts have identified as internment camps, and Chinese media reports mention "training" there. But the AP could not confirm whether the companies use forced labor.

New Jersey Republican Congressman Chris Smith, a member of the House Foreign Relations Committee, called on the Trump administration Monday to ban imports from Chinese companies associated with detention camps.

"Not only is the Chinese government detaining over a million Uyghurs and other Muslims, forcing them to revoke their faith and profess loyalty to the Communist Party, they are now profiting from their labor," said Smith. "U.S. consumers should not be buying and U.S. businesses should not be importing goods made in modern-day concentration camps."

The detention camp system is part of China's increasingly stringent state security under President Xi Jinping. Some detainees told AP earlier this year about beating, solitary confinement and other punishments if they do not recite political songs, names and phrases. The AP has not been given access to these facilities despite repeated attempts to get permission to visit.

Not all the camps have forced labor. Many former detainees say they were held in facilities that didn't have any manufacturing equipment and focused solely on political indoctrination.

"They didn't teach me anything. They were brainwashing me, trying to make us believe how great China is, how powerful it is, how developed its economy is," said Kairat Samarkan, a Kazakh citizen who said he was tortured with a metal contraption that contorts your body before being released in February after he tried to kill himself.

Interviewees described a wave of factory openings earlier this year. Ex-detainee Orynbek Koksebek said that shortly before his release in April, the director strode into his class and announced that a factory would be built in the camp. Koksebek, who cannot speak Mandarin, listened to a policeman as he translated the director's words into Kazakh for the roughly 90 women and 15 men in the room.

"We're going to open a factory, you're going to work," Koksebek recalled him as saying. "We'll teach you how to cook, how to sew clothes, how to fix cars."

This fall, months after Koksebek's release, news began trickling into Kazakhstan that the Chinese government was starting forced labor in internment camps and would transfer some detainees out into gated, guarded factories. The workers must live in dormitories on factory grounds. Contact with family ranges from phone calls or in-person visits, to weekends at home under police surveillance.

In October, Chinese authorities acknowledged the existence of what they called vocational training centers. State media published an interview with Shohret Zahir, the governor of Xinjiang, saying that "some trainees" were nearly done with their "courses."

"We will try to achieve a seamless connection between school teaching and social employment, so that after finishing their courses, the trainees will be able to find jobs and earn a well-off life," Zahir said.

The forced labor program goes along with a massive government initiative to develop Xinjiang's economy by constructing enormous factory parks. Another internment camp the AP visited was inside a factory compound called Kunshan Industrial Park, opened under the national anti-poverty push. A local propaganda official, Chen Fang, said workers inside made food and clothes.

A hospital, a police station, smokestacks, dormitories and a building with a sign that read "House of Workers" could be seen from outside the surrounding barbed wire fencing. Another section resembled a prison, with guard towers and high walls. The AP did not track any exports from Kunshan to the U.S.

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Many of those with relatives in such camps said their loved ones were well-educated with high-paying jobs before their arrest, and did not need a poverty alleviation program. Nurbakyt Kaliaskar, a sheepherder's wife in Kazakhstan, said her daughter, Rezila Nulale, 25, was a college graduate with a well-paid advertising job in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, where she lived a typical urban lifestyle with a computer, a washing machine and an apartment in the city center.

Then last August, after returning from a visit to her family across the border in Kazakhstan, Nulale vanished. She didn't answer phone calls and stopped showing up to work.

Four months later a stranger contacted Kaliaskar online and confirmed her fear: her daughter had been detained for "political training." The next spring, she said she fainted when two cases of her daughter's clothes were delivered to her home in Kazakhstan.

Last month, Kaliaskar got word via a friend who knows the family that Nulale was working in a factory next to the camp where she had been detained. The friend had heard from Kaliaskar's brother, who had visited Nulale, bringing medicine for an injured hand.

Kaliaskar learned her daughter wasn't being paid and had to meet a daily quota of three articles of clothing. She couldn't leave. Her uncle thought she looked pale and thin.

"They say they're teaching her to weave clothes. But the thing is, she's well educated and had a job," said Kaliaskar. "What's the point of this training?"

A former detainee, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to protect himself and his family members, said other detainees from his camp also had been forced into jobs at factories far away. They were taken to a government office and handed labor contracts for six months to five years in a distant factory, which they were required to sign.

If they ran from the factories, they were warned, they'd be taken straight back to the camps for "further education."

Farmers, herders and manual laborers with little Mandarin and no higher education say they appreciated Beijing's past initiatives to help the poor, including subsidized housing and the installation of electricity and running water. But the camps, the forced education, and the factories, they say, go too far.

"I never asked the government to find work for my husband," said Mainur Medetbek, whose husband did odd repair jobs before vanishing into a camp in February during a visit to China from their home in Kazakhstan.

She has been able to glean a sense of his conditions from monitored exchanges with relatives and from the husband of a woman who is in the same camp. He works in an apparel factory and is allowed to leave and spend the night with relatives every other Saturday. Though she's not certain how much her husband makes, the woman in his camp earns 600 yuan (about \$87) a month, less than half the local minimum wage and far less than what Medetbek's husband used to earn.

Since her husband was detained, Medetbek and her children have had no reliable source of income and sometimes go hungry. The ordeal has driven her to occasionally contemplate suicide.

"They say it's a factory, but it's an excuse for detention. They don't have freedom, there's no time for him to talk with me," she said. "They say they found a job for him. I think it's a concentration camp."

Martha Mendoza reported from Santa Cruz, California.

Stock market woes raise a nagging fear: Is a recession near?

By JOSH BOAK, AP Economics Writer

BALTIMORE (AP) — Fears of a recession have been mounting with the U.S. stock market appearing to be headed for its worst December since 1931 — during the Great Depression.

Wall Street's sustained slump has been fueled by investor concerns about lower corporate profits, higher corporate debt, a festering trade war between the United States and China and a broader global slowdown.

So is a U.S. recession imminent?

Not necessarily.

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Plenty of economic gauges suggest that far from being derailed by a stock market that's set to suffer its first annual loss in a decade, the \$20 trillion U.S. economy is barreling forward. Employers are hiring, consumers are spending ahead of the holidays and economic growth has been brisk, thanks in part to President Donald Trump's deficit-financed tax cuts.

But the economy has been growing since mid-2009 and nothing — not even what's become the second-longest U.S. expansion on record — lasts forever. As the expansion has aged, economists and business leaders are increasingly predicting that it will end within the next two years.

The fact is that recessions are a regular part of the economic cycle. A downturn won't necessarily happen in 2019. But the free-fall in stock prices could hasten the day. Tuesday's slight gain — the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 82 points, or 0.4 percent, after having lost over 1,000 over the previous two days — was barely a respite.

"While we aren't explicitly forecasting a recession next year, we wouldn't rule out a mild one," said John Higgins, chief markets economist of Capital Economics. "At the least, we expect a significant economic slowdown."

Nearly half the chief financial officers surveyed by Duke University's Fuqua School of Business foresee a recession by the end of next year. And by the end of 2020, 82 percent do so.

Here's a look at how the movements of the stock market and the barometers of the economy might determine the risks of a recession.

DOES A SUSTAINED FALL IN STOCK PRICES HERALD A RECESSION?

Sometimes. Not always.

Both the previous two U.S. recessions overlapped with stock market sell-offs. The Dow plunged nearly 34 percent in 2008 after the housing bubble burst. And it shed about 7 percent in 2001 when the tech stock bubble burst. But stocks also declined in 2002 — a year when the U.S. economy expanded.

The fact is that the stock market captures just a piece of the broader U.S. economy. Less than half of U.S. households even own any stock, according to New York University economist Edward Wolff. And more than 80 percent of the stock market's value is controlled by the richest 10 percent of households, according to his calculations.

The bulk of most Americans' net worth is derived from a different asset: Their homes.

HOW BAD IS THE STOCK MARKET DECLINE?

It's painful. But Wall Street has endured far worse sell-offs.

Year-to-date, the Dow has lost about 5 percent — just a small fraction of its 2008 plunge. And the recent losses follow an extraordinary winning streak: From its bottom in March 2009, the Dow has rocketed 250 percent. This means that investors who have held on have earned a rich profit — even including the losses since October.

That said, the sell-off of the past two months has been severe — about 12 percent. This means the market has entered "correction" territory, commonly defined as a decline of at least 10 percent.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE ECONOMY'S STRENGTH?

Look to the job market. The 3.7 percent unemployment rate is near a half-century low. Average hourly wages have climbed 3.1 percent in the past 12 months, the strongest such increase since 2009.

The solid employment picture has helped fuel consumer spending. Retail sales have grown 5.3 percent so far this year as more Americans have eaten out and shopped online, according to the Census Bureau.

The jobs market is also where to watch for signs of a recession. Ahead of the 2008 financial crisis, the monthly hiring levels swung from gains to losses and unemployment shot up. The Labor Department issues a weekly report on people applying for unemployment benefits. A sustained increase in such applications would signal that employers are shedding workers in anticipation of a downturn.

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DOES THE HOUSING MARKET POINT TO A RECESSION?

This is tricky. By some measures, like the Census Bureau's report on home construction, the housing market never really recovered from the meltdown of a decade ago. As a result, housing has contributed relatively little to the economic recovery, which makes it less likely to be a major force that tips it into a recession.

What has generally recovered are average home prices. Home sales prices have been steadily rising faster than Americans' average wages for the past few years, according to the National Association of Realtors. This made some homeowners wealthier. But it also reduced affordability of homes for many would-be buyers.

Until this past year, homebuyers had been helped by historically low mortgage rates. But mortgage rates began to creep up last year as it became clear that Trump's tax cuts would swell the federal budget deficit. Mortgage rates generally move in sync with 10-year Treasury notes. As the average 30-year mortgage rate has risen 4.63 percent from 3.93 percent a year ago, sales of homes have fallen.

ARE THE FED'S RATE HIKES A RISK FOR RECESSION?

The Federal Reserve has become a punching bag for Trump as the stock market has tumbled. The Fed is widely expected to raise its key short-term rate for the fourth time this year on Wednesday, which would likely further raise borrowing costs for consumers and businesses over time.

The Fed is raising rates to try to keep inflation at its 2 percent annual target while maximizing employment. But if it miscalculates and raises rates too high or too fast, history suggests it could trigger a recession.

Compounding the risk is that the Fed is also paring the huge bond purchases on its books, which resulted from the trillions in Treasury and mortgage bonds it bought to help the financial system recover from the 2008 financial crisis. Doing so magnifies the upward pressure on borrowing rates for consumers and businesses.

COULD RESOLVING A TRADE WAR WITH CHINA STOP A RECESSION?

Trump caused stocks to buckle when he ratcheted up taxes on Chinese imports in hopes of forcing Beijing to strike a deal that would protect U.S. technology from theft and reduce the trade deficit with China. Stocks recovered somewhat when further tariff increases were suspended after Trump met with President Xi Jinping earlier this month at an international gathering in Argentina.

A prolonged trade war could surely depress growth. But it's unclear whether any new deal would speed growth to the point where a recession could be avoided.

The fact is that economic growth around the world is slowing, including in the United States as the benefits from the tax cuts wane. Britain is struggling to leave the European Union. France faces economic unrest. Italy appears to be in recession. China is trying to engineer slower growth after a multi-decade boom that would be destabilizing if it had maintained its once-sizzling pace.

And as the Fed has raised rates, the resulting higher yields available in the United States have drawn investment money out of the developing world, thereby tightening pressure on those economies.

Social media and misinformation: It's a game of whack-a-mole

By BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It's a high-stakes game of whack-a-mole with no end in sight.

Social media companies are fighting an expensive and increasingly complex battle against Russian trolls who are using catchy memes, bots and fake accounts to influence elections and sow discord in the U.S. and beyond.

This week, two reports released by the Senate Intelligence Committee gave strong evidence that Moscow's sweeping online disinformation campaign was more far-reaching than originally thought, with agents working to divide Americans by race, religion and ideology and erode trust in U.S. institutions.

It is also clear that the culprits are learning from one another and quickly adapting to sophisticated

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countermeasures taken against them.

Here are some questions and answers about the efforts to combat misinformation.

WHAT ARE THE TROLLS DOING?

When it comes to election meddling, much of the focus for the past two years has been on the biggest internet platforms, especially Facebook, where agents in Russia (as well as Iran and elsewhere) have used phony accounts to spread fake news and divisive messages.

But the latest reports offer more proof that the Russians went beyond the social media giant, taking advantage of smaller services like Pinterest, Reddit, music apps and even the mobile game Pokemon Go. Instagram, Facebook's photo-sharing app, was also found to have played a far bigger role than previously understood.

In many ways, the Russian operation works like a corporate branding campaign, except in this case, the goal is not to sell running shoes but to sway elections. On Facebook, agents might post links to fake news articles, or slogans pitting immigrants against veterans or liberals against conservatives.

One image showed a ragged, bearded man in a U.S. Navy cap. It urged people to like and share "if you think our veterans must get benefits before refugees." Another post had a photograph of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and the words "Enough dreaming, wake your ass up."

On Instagram, the post with the most interactions was a photo showing a row of women's bare legs, ranging from pale white to dark brown, with the caption "All the tones are nude! Get over it!" The image had over a quarter-million likes.

Many of the posts and memes were not incendiary and didn't contain anything that could get them promptly banned from social networks for violating their standards against hate speech or nudity, for example. Instead, they looked like the ordinary sorts of things regular people might share on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

WHAT ARE THE COMPANIES DOING?

Caught off guard by Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. elections, giants like Facebook, Google and Twitter have thrown millions of dollars, tens of thousands of people and what they say are their best technical efforts into fighting fake news, propaganda and hate.

They are using artificial intelligence to root out fake accounts or to identify bots that post divisive content. For example, while a human might post at random moments and needs sleep, a bot may give itself away by tweeting at all hours of the day, at fixed times, such as on the hour.

Of course, malicious actors are learning to sidestep these countermeasures. Bots are being designed to act more like humans and stop sending tweets out at fixed intervals. Or users who are operating fake accounts change their identities rapidly and delete their tweets to cover their tracks.

Some companies have made progress. Facebook's efforts, for example, appear to have reduced trafficking in fake news on its platform since the 2016 election.

But some of these efforts go against these companies' business interests, at least in the short term. In July, for example, Facebook announced that heavy spending on security and content control, coupled with other business shifts, would hold down growth and profits. Investors reacted by knocking \$119 billion off the company's market value.

Smaller platforms have fewer resources to throw at the problem, and that is one reason the trolls have moved on to them.

WHY AREN'T THE COMPANIES DOING MORE?

Created to sign up as many users as possible and have them posting, liking and commenting as often as possible, social networks are, by design, easy to flood with information. And bad information, if it's catchy, can spread faster than a boring but true news story.

Companies like Facebook and its competitors have also built their business on letting advertisers target users based on their interests, where they live and a multitude of other categories. Trolls sponsored by malicious governments can do the same thing, buying ads that automatically target people according to their political leanings, ethnicity or whether they live in a swing state, for example.

Some companies have taken countermeasures against that. But critics say that unless companies like Facebook change their ad-supported business models, the exploitation is not going to stop.

Filippo Menczer, a professor of informatics and computer science at Indiana University, said the problem is a very difficult one to solve.

Facebook, for example, has focused a lot of its efforts on working with outside fact-checkers to root out fake news and suppress the spread of information that has been deemed false. But those items are only a part of the problem. Fact-checking doesn't necessarily screen out memes and other more subtle means of shaping people's opinions.

"A lot of the stuff is not necessarily false, but misleading or opinion," Menczer said.

WHEN WILL THIS END?

According to one of the Senate-released reports, 2016 and 2017 saw "significant efforts" to disrupt elections around the world.

"We cannot wait for national courts to address the technicalities of infractions after running an election or referendum," the Oxford researchers warned. "Protecting our democracies now means setting the rules of fair play before voting day, not after."

There are also new threats, already seen in countries such as Myanmar and Sri Lanka, where messaging apps like Facebook's WhatsApp have been instrumental in spreading misinformation and leading to violence. With these apps, the messages are private, and even the platforms themselves can't get access to them as they try to combat those trying to spread havoc, Menczer said.

Menczer said the cost of getting into the misinformation game is low. The entire campaign by Russia, he said, might have involved a few dozen employees and an advertising budget in the tens of thousands of dollars.

"Clearly, they will continue," he said. "There is no reason why they wouldn't."

Trump Foundation reaches deal to dissolve amid lawsuit

By MICHAEL R. SISA, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's charitable foundation reached a deal Tuesday to go out of business, even as Trump continues to fight allegations he misused its assets to resolve business disputes and boost his run for the White House.

New York's attorney general and lawyers for the Trump Foundation agreed on a court-supervised process for shutting down the charity and distributing about \$1.7 million in remaining funds to other nonprofit groups.

The agreement resolved one part of the legal drama surrounding Trump, whose campaign, transition, inauguration and real estate empire are all under investigation.

Attorney General Barbara Underwood's lawsuit alleging Trump and his family illegally operated the foundation as an extension of his businesses and his presidential campaign will continue.

The lawsuit, filed last spring, seeks \$2.8 million in restitution and a 10-year ban on Trump and his three eldest children — Donald Jr., Eric and Ivanka — from running any charities in New York.

In a statement Tuesday, Underwood cited "a shocking pattern of illegality involving the Trump Foundation — including unlawful coordination with the Trump presidential campaign, repeated and willful self-dealing, and much more."

The foundation operated as "little more than a checkbook to serve Mr. Trump's business and political interests," she said.

Lawyers for the foundation have said any infractions were minor.

Trump pledged to dissolve the three-decade-old foundation and donate its funds to charity after his 2016 election, but that was only after it found itself under investigation in New York state. The attorney general's office said it would have been "unacceptable" to let the foundation fold without close supervision from a judge.

Trump Foundation lawyer Alan Futerfas said the nonprofit has distributed approximately \$19 million over the past decade, including \$8.25 million of the president's own money, to hundreds of charitable

organizations.

The agreement was reached after a New York judge last month rejected arguments from the foundation's lawyers that the lawsuit was politically motivated and should be thrown out.

Once the judge approves the deal to dissolve the charity, the two sides will have 30 days to provide her with a list of nonprofit organizations that should get the remaining funds. Each charity will get the same amount, and the attorney general's office will have the right to reject ones it deems unfit to receive funds.

In her lawsuit, Underwood alleged that Trump used the foundation to help bolster his campaign by giving out big grants of other's people money to veterans organizations during the run-up to the Iowa caucuses, the first presidential nominating contest of 2016.

Trump was also accused of directing that \$100,000 in foundation money be used to settle legal claims over an 80-foot flagpole he had built at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, instead of paying the expense out of his own pocket.

In addition, the foundation paid \$158,000 to resolve a lawsuit over a prize for a hole-in-one contest at a Trump-owned golf course; \$10,000 to buy a 6-foot (1.8-meter) portrait of Trump at a charity auction; and \$5,000 for ads promoting Trump's hotels in the programs for charitable events.

Underwood sued the Trump Foundation after taking over for fellow Democrat Eric Schneiderman, who resigned in May amid allegations he abused women. Schneiderman started investigating the foundation in 2016 and ordered it to stop fundraising in New York after The Washington Post reported that some of its spending personally benefited the presidential candidate.

Underwood has referred her office's findings to the IRS and the Federal Election Commission. Those agencies have not commented on the matter.

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'Laverne & Shirley' star, 'Big' director Penny Marshall dies

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Penny Marshall, who indelibly starred in the top-rated sitcom "Laverne & Shirley" before becoming the trailblazing director of smash-hit big-screen comedies such as "Big" and "A League of Their Own," has died. She was 75.

Michelle Bega, a spokeswoman for the Marshall family, said Tuesday that Marshall died in her Los Angeles home on Monday night due to complications from diabetes. Marshall earlier fought lung cancer, which went into remission in 2013. "Our family is heartbroken," the Marshall family said in a statement.

In "Laverne & Shirley," among television's biggest hits for much of its eight-season run between 1976-1983, the nasal-voiced, Bronx-born Marshall starred as Laverne DeFazio alongside Cindy Williams as a pair of blue-collar roommates toiling on the assembly line of a Milwaukee brewery. A spinoff of "Happy Days," the series was the rare network hit about working-class characters, and its self-empowering opening song ("Give us any chance, we'll take it/ Read us any rule, we'll break it") foreshadowed Marshall's own path as a pioneering female filmmaker in the male-dominated movie business.

"Almost everyone had a theory about why 'Laverne & Shirley' took off," Marshall wrote in her 2012 memoir "My Mother Was Nuts." "I thought it was simply because Laverne and Shirley were poor and there were no poor people on TV, but there were plenty of them sitting at home and watching TV."

Marshall directed several episodes of "Laverne & Shirley," which her older brother, the late filmmaker-producer Garry Marshall, created. Those episodes helped launch Marshall as a filmmaker. When Whoopi Goldberg clashed with director Howard Zieff, she brought in Marshall to direct "Jumpin' Jack Flash," the 1986 comedy starring Goldberg.

"Jumpin' Jack Flash" did fair business, but Marshall's next film, "Big," was a major success, making her the first woman to direct a film that grossed more than \$100 million. The 1988 comedy, starring Tom Hanks, is about a 12-year-old boy who wakes up in the body of a 30-year-old New York City man. The film, which earned Hanks an Oscar nomination, grossed \$151 million worldwide, or about \$320 million

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accounting for inflation.

The honor meant only so much to the typically self-deprecating Marshall. "They didn't give ME the money," Marshall later joked to *The New Yorker*.

Marshall reteamed with Hanks for "A League of Their Own," the 1992 comedy about the women's professional baseball league begun during World War II, starring Geena Davis, Madonna and Rosie O'Donnell. That, too, crossed \$100 million, making \$107.5 million domestically.

More than any other films, "A League of Their Own" and "Big" ensured Marshall's stamp on the late '80s, early '90s. The piano dance scene in *FAO Schwartz* in "Big" became iconic. Hanks' reprimand from "A League of Their Own" — "There's no crying in baseball!" — remains quoted on baseball diamonds everywhere.

On Tuesday, Marshall's passing was felt across film, television and comedy. "Big" producer James L. Brooks praised her for making "films which celebrated humans" and for her helping hand to young comedians and writers. "To many of us lost ones she was, at the time, the world's greatest den mother."

"She had a heart of gold. Tough as nails," recalled Danny DeVito, who starred in Marshall's 1994 comedy "Renaissance Man." "She could play round ball with the best of them."

Marshall's early success in a field where few women rose so high made her an inspiration to other aspiring female filmmakers. Ava DuVernay, whose "A Wrinkle in Time" was the first \$100 million-budgeted film directed by a woman of color, said Tuesday: "Thank you, Penny Marshall. For the trails you blazed. The laughs you gave. The hearts you warmed."

In between "Big" and "A League of Their Own," Marshall made the Oliver Sacks adaptation "Awakenings," with Robin Williams and Robert De Niro. The medical drama, while not as successful at the box office, became only the second film directed by a woman nominated for best picture.

Carole Penny Marshall was born Oct. 15, 1943, in the Bronx. Her mother, Marjorie Marshall, was a dance teacher, and her father, Anthony, made industrial films. Their marriage was strained. Her mother's caustic wit — a major source of material and of pain in Marshall's memoir — was formative. (One remembered line: "You were a miscarriage, but you were stubborn and held on.")

"Those words are implanted in your soul, unfortunately. It's just the way it was," Marshall once recalled. "You had to learn at a certain age what sarcasm is, you know? When she says it about somebody else, you laughed, but when it was you, you didn't laugh so much."

During college at the University of New Mexico, Marshall met Michael Henry, whom she married briefly for two years and with whom she had a daughter, Tracy. Marshall would later wed the director Rob Reiner, a marriage that lasted from 1971 to 1981. Tracy, who took the name Reiner, became an actress; one of her first roles was a brief appearance in her mother's "Jumpin' Jack Flash." Marshall is also survived by her older sister, Ronny, and three grandchildren.

Marshall's brother Garry, already established as a writer, coaxed her to move out to Los Angeles in 1967. She studied acting while supporting herself as a secretary — a role she would later play on "Happy Days." Her first commercial was for Head & Shoulders opposite a then-unknown Farrah Fawcett.

"I just cannot bring myself to accept that the homely person on the screen is me," Marshall told *TV Guide* in 1976. "I grew up believing an actress is supposed to be beautiful. After I saw myself in a 'Love American Style' segment, I cried for three days. I've had braces put on my teeth twice, but they did no good."

Marshall never again matched the run of "Big," "Awakenings" and "A League of Their Own." Her next film, the Army recruit comedy "Renaissance Man," flopped. She directed "The Preacher's Wife" (1996) with Denzel Washington and Whitney Houston. Her last film as director was 2001's "Riding in Cars With Boys," with Drew Barrymore. Marshall also helmed episodes of ABC's "According to Jim" in 2009 and Showtime's "United States of Tara" in 2010 and 2011, and directed the 2010 TV movie "Women Without Men."

Marshall, a courtside regular at Los Angeles Lakers games, left behind a long-in-the-making documentary about former NBA star Dennis Rodman. When the project was announced in 2012, Marshall said Rodman asked her to do it.

"I have a little radar to the insane," explained Marshall. "They seek me out."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Trump's safety panel seeks to revoke school discipline rules

By COLLIN BINKLEY, Associated Press

The Trump administration on Tuesday moved to roll back an Obama-era policy that was meant to curb racial disparities in school discipline but that critics say left schools afraid to take action against potentially dangerous students.

The recommendation was among dozens issued in a new report by Trump's federal school safety commission, which was formed in response to a Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, that killed 17 students and staff members, and sparked a national debate over gun control.

The panel was asked to study a range of options to bolster security at America's schools, from the regulation of guns to the regulation of violent video games. Yet rather than suggest a series of sweeping changes, the commission issued 100 smaller suggestions that largely avoid strong stances on topics like gun control and whether schools should arm teachers.

"Our conclusions in this report do not impose one-size-fits-all solutions for everyone, everywhere," said Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who led the commission. "The primary responsibility for the physical security of schools and the safety of their students naturally rests with states and local communities."

Trump praised the report at a White House event Tuesday, saying "nothing is more important than protecting our nation's children."

On the question of whether schools should arm staff members, the panel said it should be left to states and schools to decide, but DeVos said schools should "seriously consider" the option. The report highlights districts that have armed staff members, and it steers schools to federal funding that can be used for firearm training.

Among the biggest proposals is a rollback of 2014 guidance that urges schools not to suspend, expel or report students to police except in the most extreme cases. Instead, the guidance calls for a variety of "restorative justice" remedies that don't remove students from the classroom.

President Barack Obama's administration issued the guidance after finding that black students were more than three times as likely as their white peers to be suspended or expelled. The directive warns that schools suspected of discrimination — even if it is unintentional — can face investigations and risk losing federal funding.

But the policy came under scrutiny following the Parkland shooting, with some conservatives suggesting it discouraged school officials from reporting the shooter's past behavioral problems to police. Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio, one of the most vocal critics, urged DeVos to find a better balance between discipline and school safety.

In its report, the commission says the policy was well-intentioned but "may have paradoxically contributed to making schools less safe." It calls for a rollback, saying disciplinary decisions should be left to school officials. It said the Justice Department should continue investigating intentional discrimination but not the unintentional cases that are barred under the 2014 policy.

The proposed rollback was praised by some conservative groups but drew sharp criticism from Democrats and advocacy groups.

"Despite overwhelming evidence and basic common sense, Secretary DeVos is trying to make the case that it's not weapons of war in schools that make students unsafe, but rather the true danger is schools' attempts to fight racism and inappropriate discipline," said Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Senate's committee overseeing education.

Along with DeVos, the safety commission includes leaders of the departments of Justice, Health and Human Services and Homeland Security. They issued their findings after more than a dozen meetings with teachers, parents, students, mental health experts, police and survivors of school shootings.

At a White House event following the release of the report, families of some shooting victims applauded the commission's work. Andy Pollack, whose daughter, Meadow, was killed in the Parkland shooting, said the Trump administration listened to his concerns about school safety.

"This is the most comprehensive report done after a school shooting ever done by an administration,

that is going to affect the quality of life of all students and teachers throughout this country," Pollack said.

But some critics said the report will do little to improve school safety. The National Association of School Psychologists said the report "largely reiterates already well-known and evidence-based efforts." The group said the report is short on specifics and fails to provide federal funding for its proposals, which many schools can't afford.

While the report doesn't explicitly encourage schools to arm staff members, it says they "may consider" the option if their states allow it. And while DeVos has previously said she has no plans to let schools use federal education funding to arm their employees, the panel noted that certain Justice Department grants can be used on firearm training.

The nation's two major teachers unions attacked the report, saying it should have focused on gun control rather than arming teachers, which both unions oppose.

"We do not need more guns in schools," said Lily Eskelsen Garcia, president of the National Education Association. "It is shameful that the Trump administration is using the real risk of gun violence in our schools to strip vulnerable students of their civil rights, while doing nothing to keep all our students safe."

On gun regulation, the commission's only suggested change was a call for more states to adopt laws allowing "extreme risk protection orders," or court orders that temporarily restrict access to firearms for people who are found to pose risks to themselves or others.

The group studied whether states should raise the minimum age to buy guns, which is often 18 for rifles and 21 for handguns. Some states have increased the minimum age to 21 for all guns, including Florida, which made the move following the Parkland shooting. It joined others including Hawaii and Illinois.

But the panel argues the change doesn't make schools safer. It said there's no research showing that age restrictions reduce killings, and it noted that most school shooters get their guns from family members, not through purchases.

Among other proposals, the commission called for more training to help school officials identify mental health problems when students are younger, and it urges schools to hire more military veterans or retired police officers with the training to respond in an emergency.

It also suggested measures schools should take to "harden" their buildings, including installing windows with laminated or bulletproof glass, and making sure all classroom doors can be locked from the inside.

"Sadly, incidents of school violence are too common, and too many families and communities have faced these horrible challenges," DeVos said. "But Americans have never shied away from challenges, nor have we cowered when evil manifests itself."

Associated Press writer Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

Follow Collin Binkley on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/cbinkley>

Trump administration moves to ban bump stocks

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration Tuesday banned bump stocks, the firearm attachments that allow semi-automatic weapons to fire like machine guns and were used during the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

The regulation gives gun owners until late March to turn in or destroy the devices. After that, it will be illegal to possess them under the same federal laws that prohibit machine guns.

Bump stocks became a focal point of the gun control debate after they were used in October 2017 when a man opened fire from his Las Vegas hotel suite into a crowd at a country music concert, killing 58 people and injuring hundreds more.

The regulation was signed Tuesday by Acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker. It will take effect 90 days after it is published in the Federal Register, which is expected to happen Friday.

Bump stock owners will be required to either destroy them or surrender them to the Bureau of Alcohol,

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Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, a senior Justice Department official said. It is impossible to know just how many bump stocks Americans own because the devices aren't traceable, but ATF has estimated that between 280,000 and about 520,000 have been sold since 2010.

Investigators expect most owners will comply with the new rule and ATF will take action against those who don't, the official said. But there's no surefire way to know whether owners are complying. The official briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said President Donald Trump was "once again fulfilling a promise he made to the American people." Trump had promised the ban in March, saying the devices "turn legal weapons into illegal machines."

Shortly afterward, the Justice Department started the process of amending firearms regulations to define bump stocks as machine guns. ATF received about 186,000 comments on the proposal.

The amended regulations reverse a 2010 ATF decision that found bump stocks did not amount to machine guns and could not be regulated unless Congress changed existing firearms law or passed a new one. In the aftermath of the Las Vegas shooting, some members of Congress sought to ban bump stocks, but no legislation was passed. At least 10 states have sought their own restrictions.

The amended rule was met almost immediately with resistance from gun rights advocates, including Gun Owners of America, which said it would file a lawsuit against the Justice Department and ATF to protect gun owners from "unconstitutional regulations."

"These regulations implicate Second Amendment rights, and courts should be highly suspect when an agency changes its 'interpretation' of a statute in order to impair the exercise of enumerated constitutional rights," the organization's executive director, Erich Pratt, said.

The Justice Department official said the government will fight any legal challenge that may be brought. The National Rifle Association called on the Justice Department to provide amnesty for gun owners who already have bump stocks.

"We are disappointed that this final rule fails to address the thousands of law-abiding Americans who relied on prior ATF determinations when lawfully acquiring these devices," said spokeswoman Jennifer Baker.

Police said the gunman in the Las Vegas massacre, Stephen Paddock, fired for more than 10 minutes using multiple weapons outfitted with target scopes and bump stocks. Paddock fatally shot himself after the shooting. There were 23 assault-style weapons, including 14 fitted with rapid-fire "bump stock" devices, strewn about his 32nd-floor hotel suite at the Mandalay Bay casino-hotel.

The largest manufacturer of bump stocks, Slide Fire Solutions, announced in April that it would stop taking orders and shut down its website. The remaining stock of the devices is now being sold by another company, RW Arms, based in Fort Worth, Texas.

Associated Press writer Lisa Marie Pane in Boise, Idaho, contributed to this report.

Follow Michael Balsamo on Twitter at www.twitter.com/MikeBalsamo1 .

Victims, accountability on agenda at pope's sex abuse summit

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican on Tuesday released the first details of Pope Francis' upcoming high-stakes sex abuse prevention summit, making clear that bishops attending the gathering must reach out to victims before they get to Rome and that accountability is very much on the agenda.

Organizers of the Feb. 21-24 summit warned participants in a letter that failure to address the scandal now threatens the very credibility of the Catholic Church around the world.

As a first step, they urged the estimated 130 presidents of national bishops' conferences attending the summit to meet with survivors in their home countries "to learn firsthand the suffering that they have endured."

Francis invited the church leaders to the meeting to develop a comprehensive response to what has

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become the gravest threat to his papacy, as the abuse and cover-up scandal erupted anew in the U.S., Chile and elsewhere this year.

Survivors have been dubious about what the meeting can accomplish, given the limited time, the varied experiences and needs of national churches and the fact that the problem has already been known for years.

"They're just now getting around to this? Good Lord, where've you been?" marveled Barbara Dorris, a survivor of abuse who has been a longtime outspoken advocate for victims.

Noting that the U.S. scandal first emerged in 2001, she said: "It's been 17 years. If you haven't met with survivors in 17 years, I think that says a lot right there."

In revealing the first details of the meeting, the Vatican said it would focus on three main areas: responsibility, accountability and transparency. The reference to accountability suggests that church leaders will confront not only the crimes of priests who rape and molest minors, but the cover-up by their superiors as well.

Abuse victims and their advocates have long blasted the Vatican for failing to discipline and remove bishops who fail to protect their flocks, and until recently Francis appeared unwilling to significantly change course.

He appointed four key clerics to prepare the meeting: Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich, a Francis-appointee and staunch supporter, Mumbai Cardinal Oswald Gracias, a member of the pope's informal cabinet, as well as the Vatican's leading abuse experts, Maltese Archbishop Charles Scicluna and the Rev. Hans Zollner.

Their letter to the global church hierarchy laid out the stakes.

"Absent a comprehensive and communal response, not only will we fail to bring healing to victim survivors, but the very credibility of the church to carry on the mission of Christ will be in jeopardy throughout the world," they wrote.

"Each of us needs to own this challenge, coming together in solidarity, humility and penitence to repair the damage done, sharing a common commitment to transparency and holding everyone in the church accountable," they said.

Their appeal for bishops to meet with victims was an indication that many in the church hierarchy continue to deny the scope of the problem and have never met with a victim. Some bishops' conferences in Africa, for example, have yet to respond to a 2011 Vatican request to develop guidelines to deal with cases.

Vatican spokesman Greg Burke said that meeting with victims "is a concrete way of putting victims first and acknowledging the horror of what happened."

Francis announced in September that he was convening the summit, signaling awareness at the top of the church that clergy abuse is a global problem and not restricted to some parts of the world or a few Western countries.

He did so as he worked to recover from his botched handling of the scandal in Chile, sparked earlier this year when he repeatedly discredited victims of a notorious Chilean predator priest and defended a bishop who had protected him.

Francis eventually admitted he was wrong, apologized to the victims and secured offers of resignation from every accused bishop in the country. Francis took action after The Associated Press challenged him on the case and produced evidence that he had received victims' complaints.

Francis' papacy was later jolted by accusations from a retired Vatican ambassador that the pope himself rehabilitated now-disgraced American ex-cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was accused of molesting and harassing adult seminarians. Francis hasn't responded to the allegations, though he has ordered a limited investigation into them.

Expectations for the February summit, already high after a year of crisis, took on greater import last month after the Vatican blocked U.S. bishops from taking action to impose new accountability measures on themselves.

The Vatican never fully explained why it halted the U.S. measures, part of the communications breakdowns that occasionally bedevil the Vatican.

The details of the summit were announced on the same day the Vatican announced a shakeup in its

communications operation.

Francis named veteran Vatican correspondent Andrea Tornielli as editorial director coordinating Vatican media.

And he tapped Italian writer and professor Andrea Monda to head the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano. Monda replaces Giovanni Maria Vian, a church historian and journalist who has headed the daily since 2007 and now becomes its emeritus editor.

Chicago officers likely didn't see train that killed them

By **DON BABWIN, Associated Press**

CHICAGO (AP) — Two Chicago police officers may not have seen or heard the commuter train that fatally struck them because they were focused on another train coming from the opposite direction, a department spokesman said Tuesday.

Spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said "very limited" video from a body camera one of the officers was wearing helped investigators piece together how the tragedy might have happened.

The officers had run onto an elevated area of the tracks Monday night on the city's far South Side to investigate gunfire. On the video, they "clearly acknowledge" a northbound train just before the southbound train hit them, Guglielmi said.

"They must have thought the sound they heard was the northbound train," he said. "They must have missed the sound of the train right behind them."

Officers Eduardo Marmolejo and Conrad Gary were doing surveillance after Shotspotter technology that detects the sound of gunfire alerted police about shots fired in the area.

Between the sound of the first train and the fact that they were focused on finding a gunman, they were unable to move off the tracks.

The man Marmolejo and Gary were pursuing was taken into custody by other officers a short time later, and a gun was recovered near where the officers were struck. Guglielmi said the man was being questioned and had not yet been charged with any crime.

"These brave young men were consumed with identifying a potential threat," Superintendent Eddie Johnson explained to reporters at a news conference late Monday night.

Later, Guglielmi said, Johnson led a delegation of the department's command staff to search the area along the tracks to recover the remains of the two officers. Guglielmi said Johnson has met with the families of the two officers.

The officers were assigned to the Calumet police district. Marmolejo, 36, had been a member of the department for 2 ½ years; Gary, 31, had been on the force for 18 months. Both were married with children. Marmolejo was the father of three children, one in high school and two younger children; Gary had a 6-month-old daughter.

Four Chicago police officers now have been killed in the line of duty this year.

The tragedy bore similarities to the 2002 death of Chicago Police Officer Benjamin Perez, who was fatally struck by a commuter train while conducting surveillance on narcotics activity on the city's West Side.

Officer Samuel Jimenez was killed in a shootout last month after he chased a gunman inside a hospital on Chicago's South Side. That shooter also killed two other people before taking his own life.

And in February, Cmdr. Paul Bauer was fatally shot while pursuing a suspect in the Loop business district.

The total is the highest number of Chicago officers killed in the line of duty in one year since five were killed in 2010. Their deaths mark the first time two officers died in the same incident since 1990, according to Dave Bayless, spokesman for the Chicago Police Memorial Foundation.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel mourned the officers on Monday night, telling reporters, "I think it's really important that we put our arms around the Chicago Police Department and hold them up and support them at this critical juncture, because we are so dependent on their professionalism and their sense of duty."

Consumer groups allege Google misleads kids in FTC complaint

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE, AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Nearly two dozen consumer, privacy and public health groups are urging U.S. regulators to investigate whether children are being endangered by deceptive apps in Google's app store for smartphones running on its Android software.

The 102-page complaint filed Wednesday with the Federal Trade Commission alleges Google's Play store is harming kids by allowing apps that break privacy laws, contain adult content or include manipulative advertising in a section of its Play store designed for children.

The call for FTC action is being led by two groups, the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and the Center for Digital Democracy, that have previously attacked Google's approach to kids. In April, they asked the FTC to crack down on Google's YouTube video site for alleged violations of children's online privacy.

Twenty other groups, including Consumer Action, Public Citizen and the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, joined in the latest complaint.

Google issued a statement emphasizing its commitment to protecting children while they are online — one of the reasons the company says it prohibits targeted advertising at children under 13.

"We take these issues very seriously and continue to work hard to remove any content that is inappropriately aimed at children from our platform," Google said.

More than 2 billion devices worldwide are powered by Google software, with a significant number of those being used by minors. The complaint focuses on alleged misconduct under U.S. laws and regulations.

The attempt to pressure the FTC to open an investigation comes amid an intensifying backlash against Google, Facebook and other companies that make most of their money by using their free services to track people's interests and whereabouts and then mining that information to sell ads targeted at them.

The angst has raised the specter of Congress drawing up tougher regulations to curb the tech industry's power and restrict its ability to compile digital dossiers about the people who have become increasingly dependent on its services.

Rep. David Cicilline, a Democrat from Rhode Island who has been critical of Google, issued a statement supporting the groups seeking an FTC investigation as did Sen. Tom Udall, a Democrat from New Mexico.

"It is past time for the Federal Trade Commission to crack down to protect children's privacy," Udall said in a statement.

Although the FTC doesn't typically comment on whether it will investigate issues raised in complaints, it has punished both Google and Apple for what it deemed to be child exploitation in the past.

In 2014, it reached a settlement requiring Google to refund \$19 million for allowing apps distributed through its store to charge children for purchases made without parents' consent. That came after a similar agreement required Apple to refund \$32.5 million for in-app purchases made on iPhones, iPads and other devices without parents' permission.

Stocks mixed in Asia on Fed rate decision, Japanese data

By ANNABELLE LIANG, Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Asian stocks were mixed on Wednesday, as traders mulled over the Federal Reserve's interest rate decision and weaker-than-expected Japanese trade data.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 index fell 0.4 percent to 21,025.10 while South Korea's Kospi rose 0.6 percent to 2,074.38. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was 0.1 percent higher at 25,835.66. The Shanghai Composite index shed 0.3 percent to 2,567.93. Australia's S&P ASX 200 gave up 0.5 percent to 5,560.30. Shares were higher in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

WALL STREET: Most U.S. indexes broke a two-day losing streak as technology and consumer-focused companies climbed. Energy stocks plummeted along with crude oil, which reached its lowest price since August 2017. The broad S&P 500 index added 0.22 points to 2,546.16. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.4 percent to 23,675.64 and the Nasdaq composite was up 0.4 percent at 6,783.91. The Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks lost 0.1 percent to 1,377.18. The index is 21 percent off its peak

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set in August, past a level the Wall Street terms a "bear market."

FED DECISION: The Fed is widely expected to raise its short-term interest rate after a meeting ends Wednesday. It is expected to raise the rate — used as a benchmark for many consumer and business loans — by a modest quarter point to a range of 2.25 percent to 2.5 percent. The central bank has forecast three more hikes in 2019, but investors doubt it would go as planned. Higher rates can slow economic growth and the U.S. economy is expected to cool off in 2019. China and Europe have also suggested that growth is slowing.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "While U.S. economic signals are not flashing red ... many market participants believe the Fed should provide investors with some breathing room after higher interest rates coupled with tighter liquidity conditions have sent equity markets on a downward spiral since October," Stephen Innes of OANDA said in a commentary. "What is sure from my chair is the Fed will deliver a fourth rate hike for the year on cue, but what is entirely up in the air is which key cardinal point the meeting will shift too," he added.

JAPANESE TRADE: On Wednesday, Japan reported that its trade balance in November was a deficit of 737.3 billion yen, from 450.1 billion yen in the previous month. This is its fourth deficit in last five months. The country's exports broadly slowed, partly due to weakening demand from China. Japanese exports rose 0.1 percent from a year earlier, as compared to October's 8.2 percent gain. This fueled concerns about the impact of the US-China trade dispute on the world's third-largest economy.

ENERGY: Oil prices bounced back slightly after plunging on worries about rising supplies and weakening global growth, which could weigh on demand. Benchmark U.S. crude gained 12 cents to \$46.72 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract, which has fallen almost 40 percent since October, gave up \$3.60 to \$46.60 on Tuesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added 34 cents to \$56.60 a barrel. It lost \$3.35 to \$56.26 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar weakened to 112.39 yen from 112.52 yen in late trading Tuesday. The euro rose to \$1.1387 from \$1.1366.

AP Markets Writers Marley Jay and Stan Choe contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 19, the 353rd day of 2018. There are 12 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 19, 1998, President Bill Clinton was impeached by the Republican-controlled House for perjury and obstruction of justice (he was subsequently acquitted by the Senate).

On this date:

In 1777, during the American Revolutionary War, Gen. George Washington led his army of about 11,000 men to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, to camp for the winter.

In 1813, British forces captured Fort Niagara during the War of 1812.

In 1907, 239 workers died in a coal mine explosion in Jacobs Creek, Pennsylvania.

In 1946, war broke out in Indochina as troops under Ho Chi Minh launched widespread attacks against the French.

In 1950, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower was named commander of the military forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In 1957, Meredith Willson's musical play "The Music Man" opened on Broadway.

In 1972, Apollo 17 splashed down in the Pacific, winding up the Apollo program of manned lunar landings.

In 1974, Nelson A. Rockefeller was sworn in as the 41st vice president of the United States in the U.S. Senate chamber by Chief Justice Warren Burger with President Gerald R. Ford looking on.

In 1975, John Paul Stevens was sworn in as an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1986, the Soviet Union announced it had freed dissident Andrei Sakharov from internal exile, and

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pardoned his wife, Yelena Bonner. Lawrence E. Walsh was appointed independent counsel to investigate the Iran-Contra affair.

In 2001, the fires that had burned beneath the ruins of the World Trade Center in New York City for the previous three months were declared extinguished except for a few scattered hot spots.

In 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell declared Iraq in "material breach" of a U.N. disarmament resolution.

Ten years ago: Citing imminent danger to the national economy, President George W. Bush ordered an emergency bailout of the U.S. auto industry. An unwavering Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich (blah-GOY'-uh-vich) served notice he had no intention of quitting over his corruption arrest, declaring: "I have done nothing wrong." Militants in Gaza fired rockets into Israel as Hamas ended a six-month truce.

Five years ago: Discount retailer Target announced that data connected to about 40 million credit and debit card accounts had been stolen as part of a breach that began over the Thanksgiving weekend. The ceiling partially collapsed onto a packed audience at the Apollo Theatre in London, injuring almost 80 people, seven of them seriously. Al Goldstein, 77, the publisher of Screw magazine who smashed down legal barriers against pornography, died in New York.

One year ago: A bus carrying cruise ship passengers on an excursion to Mayan ruins in southeastern Mexico flipped over on a narrow highway, killing 11 travelers and their guide and injuring about 20 others; eight Americans were among those killed. U.S. health officials approved the nation's first gene therapy for an inherited disease, a treatment that improves the sight of patients with a rare form of blindness. David Wright, a Massachusetts man who was convicted of leading a plot inspired by the Islamic State to behead conservative blogger Pamela Geller, was sentenced in Boston to 28 years in prison.

Today's Birthdays: Former game show contestant Herb Stempel is 92. Actress Elaine Joyce is 75. Actor Tim Reid is 74. Paleontologist Richard E. Leakey is 74. Musician John McEuen is 73. Singer Janie Fricke is 71. Jazz musician Lenny White is 69. Actor Mike Lookinland is 58. Actress Jennifer Beals is 55. Actor Scott Cohen is 54. Actor Robert MacNaughton is 52. Magician Criss Angel is 51. Rock musician Klaus Eichstadt (Ugly Kid Joe) is 51. Actor Ken Marino is 50. Actor Elvis Nolasco is 50. Rock musician Kevin Shepard is 50. Actor Derek Webster is 50. Actress Kristy Swanson is 49. Model Tyson Beckford is 48. Actress Amy Locane is 47. Pro Football Hall of Famer Warren Sapp is 46. Actress Rosa Blasi is 46. Actress Alyssa Milano is 46. Actress Tara Summers is 39. Actor Jake Gyllenhaal (JIH'-lihn-hahl) is 38. Actress Marla Sokoloff is 38. Rapper Lady Sovereign is 33. Journalist Ronan Farrow is 31. Actor Nik Dodani is 25.

Thought for Today: "Worse than not realizing the dreams of your youth, would be to have been young and never dreamed at all." — Jean Genet (1910-1986).