

Groton Daily Independent

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Snow Piles Everywhere!

We have gone from an open winter to lots of snow in a matter of hours. Snow piles are everywhere in Groton as this big one is located in the GHS Arena parking lot.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Gov. Dugaard Announces The Release Of The Fiscal Year 2018 CAFR

PIERRE, S.D. – The State's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for fiscal year 2018 is now available for the public to review. The South Dakota Bureau of Finance and Management (BFM) made the report public today, meeting its goal of a December release.

"The employees of BFM, the Department of Legislative Audit (DLA), and the accounting offices of all state departments have once again succeeded in the early completion of this year's CAFR. When I took office, we established a goal of completing the CAFR before December 31 of each year. Over time the CAFR has been issued earlier and earlier. This year's completion marks the third year in a row that the CAFR has been issued before December 31, and we have the hardworking employees of the State to thank for this accomplishment," Gov. Dennis Dugaard said.

The annual report includes the state government's complete financial statements for the primary government and its component units. DLA audits the basic financial statements and, for the 32nd consecutive year, has issued an unmodified "clean" opinion on the CAFR.

Also contained in the report is information about the State's economic conditions and outlook, the profile of the government, major initiatives, and a financial analysis of the State's funds. A discussion of those topics can be found in the "Letter of Transmittal" and "Management's Discussion and Analysis".

Highlights from the fiscal year 2018 CAFR include:

The State's total net position increased by \$293.3 million.

The combined ending balance of the General Fund Budget Reserve and the General Revenue Replacement Fund was \$176.4 million, an increase of \$11.1 million.

The State has maintained its AAA public issuer rating from Standard & Poor's, Fitch Ratings, and Moody's for the past two consecutive fiscal years. This represents the highest rating possible from all three bond rating agencies.

The CAFR can be viewed online at bfm.sd.gov/cafr, or for printed copies, contact the Bureau of Finance and Management at 605-773-3411.

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)



Holiday Trash Pick-Up

Garbage pick-up will NOT be on Christmas Day instead pick-up will be the following day, Wednesday, December 26!!

Garbage WILL be picked up on New Year's Day, January 1st!!

Front Porch Manager Wanted

Immediate opening for Restaurant General Manager at The Front Porch Bar & Grill in Langford SD. Hiring bonus available! Salary DOE. Must be 21 years old. Contact Suzie Easthouse at (605) 493-6570 or email resume by to langfordfrontporch@venturecomm.net. (1227.0111)

The Life of Olga Grandpre



Olga Hynes Grandpre made her final journey home on December 28, 2018, surrounded by her husband and children, at Mother Joseph Manor in Aberdeen SD. Services will be 10:30 a.m., January 4th at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton. Father Mike Kelly will officiate.

Visitation will be held at the church on Thursday from 5-7 p.m. with a rosary at 5:00 and wake service at 7:00 p.m.

Inurnment will be held at a later date in St. John's Catholic Cemetery, Conde.

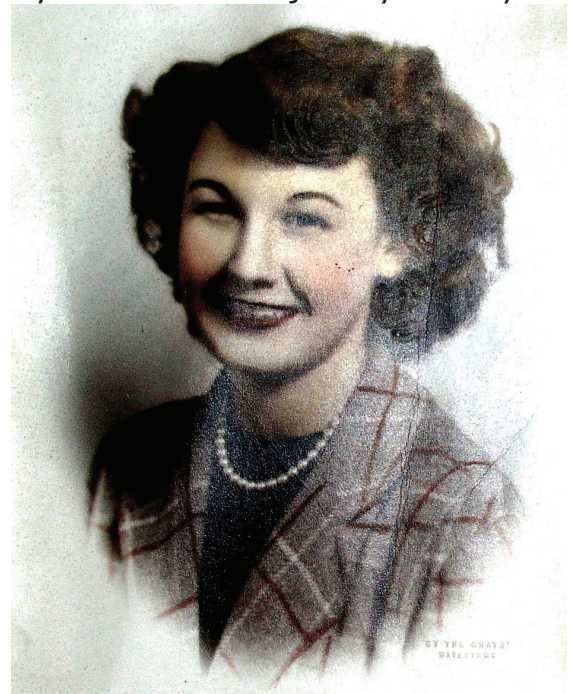
Olga Marie Hynes was born on August 9th, 1927, and was the beloved only child of Edward and Mary (Loftus) Hynes. She grew up on their farm near Conde where she developed her love for all animals, especially cats. She attended Conde School and drew all of the illustrations for the yearbook the year that she graduated. After graduation, she attended Northern State College in Aberdeen for the program that was dubbed the Six Week Wonder that served to get teachers quickly out to communities during and after World War II. She taught the one room school houses at the Righnier and Miles Schools. She loved teaching and her students. In later life, she would substitute teach at the Conde Schools.

About that time, she reconnected with a young veteran who had grown up down the road. Earl proposed on Christmas Eve 1949 and they were married September 6th, 1950. Together they built a life on the family farm and reared a family of six children. Olga was Earl's partner in all aspects of life and they most enjoyed visiting with each other and their children. Along with acting as best friend, confidant and counselor to her husband and children, Olga was active in Legion Auxiliary and Altar Society. She formed a lifelong bond with her group of friends in birthday club and they shared their life journey monthly for over 50 years.

Her family called her "the nicest person we know." She will always be remembered for her love of family and friends, her pride in her Irish heritage, and her furry friends.

Olga was preceded in death by her parents Edward and Mary Hynes, her Godmother Ada Hynes, her Godfather Leonard Gavin and her son-in-law James Thomas.

She is survived by her husband of 68 years Earl Grandpre, Aberdeen. Children: Paula Thomas, Fargo; Suzanne (Kim) Gross, Sioux Falls; Bob (Becky) Grandpre, Elkhorn, NE; Donn (Renee) Grandpre, Aberdeen; Brian Grandpre, Aberdeen; Joan (James) Monson, Aberdeen. Grandchildren: Michael, Nikki, Ramey, Jessica, Kelli, Patrick, Nathan, Jenny, Ryan, Lisa, Andrew, Brian and Parker. Great Granchildren: Diem & Wrenley; Evan and Ali; Gavin, Cory & Jordyn; Josiah, Maddie, Zeldia and Finley.



THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

District Court Ruling Against the ACA Would End Popular Benefits

By Trudy Lieberman, Rural Health News Service

Right before Christmas a U.S. District Court Judge in Texas ruled the Affordable Care Act, also called Obamacare, was unconstitutional. What's more the judge didn't just throw out the controversial provision that nearly every American is required to carry health insurance, he tossed out the entire law with its myriad provisions.

"Nearly everyone would be affected in some way if the Texas judge's ruling that the entire ACA is unconstitutional is upheld," says Larry Levitt, senior vice president of the Kaiser Family Foundation. "It would also be a big deal if only the ACA's preexisting conditions were thrown out as the Trump administration has argued."

Indeed, it would. Although I've argued there are many flaws in the Affordable Care Act, its greatest contribution may be that it opened the door for sick people to get insurance. Until the ACA came along, anyone who needed to buy coverage in the individual insurance market had to pass tough medical scrutiny by insurers. Even a seemingly minor condition like ear infections could disqualify someone from getting a policy.

There's no going back to the past on this one. The principle that everyone needs health insurance, whether sick or well, and has a right to get it is now becoming more firmly planted in American health insurance. As proof, we have to look no further than the public outcry that surfaced when Congress tried to repeal the law in 2017 and the importance it took on all over the country in the November midterm elections when candidates who were on record as opposing the ACA tried to convince voters they really were for letting sick people buy health insurance after all.

The law also established that people with lower incomes needed subsidies to help buy health insurance. Families and individuals with incomes below 400 percent of the federal poverty level get help that would disappear should the ACA be struck down.

Perhaps its most far-reaching and arguably most humane benefit was to expand Medicaid benefits to nearly 13 million Americans with very low incomes. The 2012 Supreme Court decision that allowed the ACA to take effect gave states the option of expanding Medicaid to cover exactly those people. Many did not, and that battle is still being fought in many states.

A lot of other provisions would go away, too. There are no lifetime limits on coverage meaning that a family with a catastrophic illness won't have to worry about their insurance disappearing if their spending exceeds a certain threshold as was the case in the bad old days. And it allowed young adults up to age 26 to stay on their parents' insurance. That has helped a lot of young people starting their careers.

The ACA also established required minimum benefits that included coverage for mental health, prescription drugs, and maternity care that were often missing from individual market policies before the ACA was passed. While some of those coverages were controversial because they added to the cost of a policy, they've provided needed help to many families.

Medicare beneficiaries, too, have benefited in ways that might not be obvious. The financing deal that the Obama administration made with the country's hospitals also has helped shore up the Medicare Part A trust fund, which pays for hospital charges, and prolong its solvency for more years. That arrangement

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could unravel if the law ultimately is struck down.

And, as part of the final deal, pharmaceutical companies agreed to pay part of the cost of brand name prescription drugs for seniors with high drug expenses when they reached the so-called donut hole of Medicare's drug benefit. Once they reach the donut hole amount, seniors must pay for their drugs until they reach the catastrophic limit of coverage. Provisions of the ACA allow them to pay a lower percentage of their drug expenses while in the donut hole.

We don't know how the courts will rule when the Texas judge's decision is appealed, although liberal and conservative legal experts predicted the decision will be overturned and law will ultimately be upheld. One thing is for sure. The Affordable Care Act has had nine lives. It's possible it will have a tenth. The law has proven to be more durable than many predicted. That speaks to the great need that the law, even with its many imperfections, has addressed.

Has the ACA helped you? Write to Trudy at trudy.lieberman@gmail.com.



Wrapping up 2018

As we wrap up the year, I'm pleased that we've been able to take steps to make Washington work a little better for all of us who live in South Dakota.

We used the Congressional Review Act to roll back a total of 16 heavy-handed, Obama-era regulations that were hindering small businesses, farms, ranches and banks from reaching their full potential. The Trump administration has taken actions to stop or dismantle approximately 2000 federal regulations, which has saved Americans at least \$50 billion in regulatory costs, or an average of \$150 per person in the United States.

We recently marked the one-year anniversary of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act being signed into law. Since then, America's economy continues to grow. It grew at 3.5 percent in the third quarter, putting the economy on track for its fastest annual growth in 13 years. Meanwhile, unemployment is at its lowest level in nearly 50 years. Just since this time last year, more than 2.2 million jobs have been created and hourly wages are up over three percent from last year. Federal revenue is rising due to increased economic activity. A strong economy is good for all Americans.

This year, the president signed into law the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief and Consumer Protection Act, which included seven of my provisions to undo unnecessary regulations and make sure families and businesses have access to credit from local banks and credit unions when they need it.

A five-year farm bill was signed into law this month, which will provide certainty and stability for South Dakota's farmers and ranchers. With more than 31,500 farms across the state, South Dakota ranks in the top 10 for ag production, providing a \$21 billion dollar impact on our economy annually. Passing a five-year farm bill was necessary to give South Dakota producers the certainty they need to help weather times of low commodity prices, such as the one we are experiencing now. Measures included in the farm bill can help them keep their operations viable during tough times.

We will continue urging the administration to finalize strong trade deals for South Dakota producers and manufacturers. Earlier this fall, the president agreed to a new U.S.-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) trade agreement to replace NAFTA. Maintaining strong relationships with Mexico and Canada—our top two trading

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partners—is vitally important for the overall health of our economy. Congress will begin reviewing the USMCA in the New Year, and I look forward to receiving input about the measure from South Dakotans. We still have work to do with our trading relationship with China, but it’s a positive sign that China purchased 1.13 million metric tons of U.S. soybeans this month.

One of the lasting accomplishments from the past year is the number of fair-minded, impartial judges we were able to confirm to the federal bench. Eighty-five judges have been confirmed by the Senate since President Trump took office, including two Supreme Court justices who received lifetime appointments. These men and women have the ability to shape our judiciary for generations. They will apply the law as it was written, not based on their personal political beliefs.

I serve on the Senate Armed Services Committee and in this year’s National Defense Authorization Act, we were able to secure the largest pay raise for our troops in nearly a decade. We increased military investment, but we still need to do more next year. Spending constraints from the Budget Control Act prevented the military from modernizing its weapons and equipment. If we want to continue to have the best military in the world, we must make sure our troops have the best equipment, vehicles and weapons available.

We were able to finalize a comprehensive, bipartisan opioid bill that will help put a stop to the heartbreaking issue of opioid abuse in our country. Work still remains to repair the damage caused by Obamacare. Over the past two years, we have been able to chip away at parts of Obamacare, including the elimination of the individual mandate and the removal of the Independent Payment Advisory Board. However, the program continues to crumble under its own weight. More work is needed.

Improving aging American infrastructure is another priority for 2019. We took steps to improve our nation’s water infrastructure this year by passing the America’s Water Infrastructure Act. This bill includes a number of my provisions including language that directs the Army Corps of Engineers to complete the snowpack and moisture monitoring program that was authorized in 2014. This system will help to make sure we don’t have another devastating Missouri River flood like in 2011.

2018 was a productive year in the Senate. We accomplished a number of major priorities, many of which were done on a bipartisan basis. I look forward to accomplishing even more in 2019.

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State Government This Week

Public Meetings:

Thursday, January 3 – Friday, January 4, Pierre – Beginning January 3 at 1 p.m. CST, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks' (GFP) Commission will meet at the RedRossa Convention Center in Pierre. The GFP Commission serves as the advocate and liaison between the department and its stakeholders - the people of South Dakota. The Commission meets monthly (except for February and August) and consists of eight members; which are appointed by the Governor for four-year terms. For more information, please contact wildinfo@state.sd.us or call 605-773-3718.

Thursday, January 3, 1 p.m. CST, Digital Dakota Network – DENR's Board of Water and Natural Resources will meet through Digital Dakota Network sites in Aberdeen, Brookings, Mitchell, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls and Watertown. Agenda items are available at <http://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/Meetings.aspx?Boardid=108>. For more information, contact Jon Peschong at 605-773-4216.

Friday, January 4, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. CST, Sioux Falls – The Department of Social Services' Psychologists Board of Examiners will hold a board meeting at 101 N. Main Ave, Suite 215. For more information and view the agenda, please visit <http://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/Meetings.aspx?BoardID=81>.

You Might Also Be Interested To Know:

Wednesday, January 2, to Thursday, January 3 – The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation will host Job Search Assistance Programs (JSAP). JSAP is a workshop for people recovering from job loss or enhancing their job search skills. Trained instructors speak on modern-day techniques used to successfully find employment. Topics covered include resume and cover letter writing, interviewing etiquette, networking effectively, using social media and much more. For more information, visit www.sdjobs.org. JSAP will be offered at the following locations:

Wednesday, January 2, 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. CST, Sioux Falls – At 811 E. 10th St. Registration required. For more information or to register, call 605-367-5300.

Thursday, January 3, 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. CST, Aberdeen – At 420 S. Roosevelt St. Parties interested in attending should register by calling 605-626-2340 prior to 5 p.m. Wednesday, January 2.

Wednesday, January 2 – The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation will hold itinerant office hours. Both job seekers and employers interested in receiving employment and career services at no cost may visit or call during these office hours. More information on programs and services is available at www.sdjobs.org. Itinerant office hours will be held at the following locations:

Wednesday, January 2, 12 – 3 p.m. CST, Mobridge – At the Mobridge Economic Development office, 205 2nd St. E., Suite 1, or call 605-380-8930 during these hours and 605-626-2340 at any other time.

Wednesday, January 2 – Benefits specialists from the Department of Social Services' Division of Economic Assistance will be available at the following itinerant office locations. For more information, contact Tia Kafka, 605-773-3165.

Wanblee, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. MST
Salem, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. CST
Dupree, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. MST
Faulkton, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. CST
Fort Thompson, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. CST
Flandreau, 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. CST
Desmet, 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. CST

Thursday, January 3 – Benefits specialists from the Department of Social Services' Division of Economic Assistance will be available at the following itinerant office locations. For more information, contact Tia Kafka, 605-773-3165.

Canton, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. CST
Kyle, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. MST
Flandreau, 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. CST
Lemmon, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. MST
Armour, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. CST
Plankinton, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. CST
Lower Brule, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. CST
Miller, 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. CST



Gear Heads earn Judge's Award at Regional Robotics

The Gear Heads team of Jackson Dinger, Kamryn Flihs, Ethan Clark and Axel Warrington won the Judge's Award at the Regional Robotics competition held at Rapid City. The G-Force team of Tannor McGannon, Travis Townsend, bottom Dan Feist and Corbin Reich was a Regional Tournament Finalist. (Laura Clark Facebook photos)



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Real Results

Eight years ago, I boarded a plane and walked into the United States Capitol as a freshman member of Congress. I had little idea of what the next years would hold, but I had a long to-do list of things I wanted to accomplish for our state.

Working in Washington had its ups and downs. I was often frustrated by partisan bickering and political showboating, yet every day, I was reminded of the importance of embodying South Dakota values and working hard to represent everything our state stands for. I'm proud of the work I accomplished in DC, but I didn't go to make a career out of Washington. I went to work hard and produce real results for South Dakota. And we've done that.

During my time in Congress, I was honored to fight for South Dakota in two five-year Farm Bills and help negotiate the largest tax cut in U.S. history that increases an average South Dakota family's after-tax income by \$2,400. These bills have been life-changing for so many of our communities and have been instrumental in creating stronger families and stronger futures for many in our state.

I've also worked to be an advocate for South Dakota veterans. Earlier this year, I led Congress in passing legislation that added 200 acres to the Black Hills National Cemetery, securing a permanent peaceful resting place for the next generation of veterans. Additionally, I stood up to folks who tried to shut down the Hot Springs VA hospital, expanded the VA's internal capacity to provide timely care to veterans, pushed for increased transparency to combat incompetent or corrupt managers, and improved education benefits for veterans and their dependents. We must continue to show our gratitude to the men and women who've selflessly defended our freedoms with improved policies and benefits.

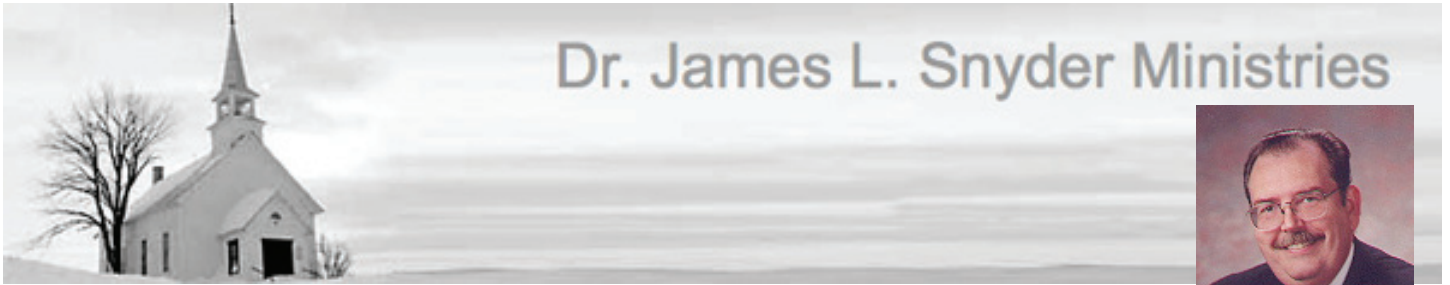
What's more, I was able to push bills that crack down on human trafficking and websites that facilitate sex sales. Work continues on legislation I designed to expand housing opportunities for trafficking survivors, especially those who require stronger security protocols and different support services. My legislation is aimed to extend not only transitional housing, but also healing and hope to more survivors. I look forward to continuing my work with this at the state level. Our kids are not for sale.

I've also made it my mission to bring into the national spotlight the mismanagement and poor care delivered by the failing Indian Health Service (IHS). Throughout my time in Congress, I introduced numerous bills to provide accountability and reformation to the IHS, and there is much more to be done in this arena. As governor, I will aggressively pursue solutions that fulfill treaty obligations when it comes to healthcare. We cannot sit back while tribal members lose their lives as a result of bureaucratic failings.

Thank you for your support and encouragement over the last eight years - it's meant the world to me and my family. It was one of the greatest honors of my life to represent South Dakota in our nation's capital, and I'm so grateful to bring that experience home. South Dakota has always been my heart, and I'll forever be thankful for the opportunity you've given me to make it an even stronger place for the next generation.

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Items not on my New Year's resolution list



It is typical this time of year to prepare a list of resolutions for the coming year. I believe this goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when Adam said to Eve, "I think I'll turn over a new leaf this year." And so the tradition has come down to us today.

Normally, people will make a list of all the things they will give up during the ensuing year. All kinds of bad habits find their way on the list like smoking, drinking and other nefarious activities. Of course, nobody actually plans to keep his New Year resolutions but the act of writing them down on a piece of paper seems to give a sense of accomplishment to people.

One of the big things on the resolution list has to do with diet and losing weight during the coming year. I have often wondered why this seems to be number one on most of those New Year resolution list. Even Yours Truly has succumbed in years past to attend this resolution on his list.

This year I discovered why that is so high on people's list. It begins with Halloween and all of the candy that is consumed. Now, there is a purpose behind all of this. And it is only recently that I have put it all together. And to my loyal reading fans (both of you) I would share with you the wisdom of my muse.

The reason it starts with Halloween candy is that candy is sweet. This sweet serves to prime the pump, so to speak, for the eating frenzy that is about to begin. Approximately 3 weeks following the Halloween candy blowout comes Thanksgiving.

When our forefathers did a Thanksgiving dinner, they had to chase the turkey down and kill it themselves. Following that, they had to pluck the feathers, clean the turkey, stuff it and get it ready for roasting. All of this activity burned up all the calories from the Halloween candy frenzy.

Now, all we do is pop it into an oven and the most activity we have is bending our elbows to see how fast we can get the turkey from the plate into our mouth. Even though this activity is quite strenuous it actually burns no calories whatsoever in the process.

If it was just the turkey it would not be so bad, but nobody can eat turkey without all the culinary accoutrements. Roast turkey without a generous slice of pumpkin pie is the closest thing to blasphemy that I know.

No sooner has the Thanksgiving dinner settled in our stomach, it is Christmas time, and all of the parties associated with Christmas. Nobody can refuse a Christmas party with all the delicacies that had been so meticulously prepared. When I go to a party, I think it rather rude not to indulge in the party snacks.

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I like to join organizations right around the October keeping a sharp eye out for the annual Christmas party. Soon after the New Year, I dropped out of that organization. Call me a slacker, if you wish, but in my book, the Christmas party is worth the subterfuge.

Then there is the marvelous family Christmas dinner. Need I say more?

So we come to New Year's Eve. By this time, everybody has eaten so much that hardly anybody can take another bite. Not only that, but many people feel guilty for eating so much during the holiday season. Others, like me, are made to feel guilty for eating so much during the holiday season.

To deal with this sense of guilt many people make a New Year's resolution to go on a diet during the coming year.

Many years ago around this time of the year, I made a drastic tactical error. It had been a particularly good holiday season with many parties and Christmas dinners. I was feeling rather expansive at the time and sighed deeply and said, "After all that eating I should go on a diet."

Quick as a wink the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage took that as a cue and responded, "I think that's an excellent idea. That will be your New Year's resolution for the coming year."

And thus it was.

I quickly learned that such resolutions come with a great deal of superfluous supervision. Every time I turned around my wife said, "How is your diet coming?" Of course, she knows exactly how it is coming because she is the one who was supervising this aspect of my life.

When going out to eat at a restaurant she was most helpful in supervising my ordering by observing, "You can't order that because it's not in your diet."

There are many things that will not show up on my New Year's resolution list and the number one item that will not be there is dieting. Gone from my vocabulary are such phrases as, "Boy, I've eaten too much tonight." Or, "After eating like this I should go on a diet."

I am not sure God is quite as concerned about my eating habits as other people are. I like what David writes in the 23rd Psalm. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Psalms 23:5).

When God sets the table, he expects me to feast, and I do not anticipate disappointing Him.

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Today in Weather History

December 30, 1985: Winds gusted to 40 to 50 mph over northern South Dakota through the day and into the southern part of the state by late afternoon. The high winds lowered visibilities to near zero at times between Lemmon in Perkins County and Faith in Meade County. The strongest wind gusts were to 63 mph at Mitchell. At 9:33 pm CST, the strong winds blew a semi-tractor trailer off the highway one mile east of Aberdeen.

December 30, 2010: A strong upper-level low-pressure trough and associated surface low-pressure area moved across the region bringing the first of two consecutive blizzards to central and northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts of 3 to 6 inches combined with bitter cold north winds of 25 to 40 mph caused widespread blizzard conditions across central and northeast South Dakota from the late morning until the evening hours. Near zero visibilities caused dangerous travel conditions resulting in the closing of Interstates 29 and 90 along with several highways across the region. Several hundred people were stranded in the aftermath of the storm. A group of fishermen had to be rescued in Day County when they became stranded on the ice. The snowfall began across the area anywhere from 7 to 11 am CST and ended between 10 pm and 1 am CST.

December 30, 1960: A massive accumulation of snow, 68.2 inches to be exact, buries the Japanese city of Tsukayama in 24 hours. Tsukayama is located in the coastal mountains inland from the Sea of Japan along Honshu's west coast and subject to significant sea-effect snowfalls.

December 30, 2003: For the first time in five years, sections of Las Vegas receive an inch or two of snow on cars, roads, sidewalks and trees, while snow flurries fell on downtown and the Strip.

1880 - The temperature at Charlotte, NC, plunged to an all-time record cold reading of 5 degrees below zero, a record which was equalled on the 21st of January in 1985. (The Weather Channel)

1917 - A great cold wave set many records in the northeastern U.S. The mercury plunged to 13 degrees below zero at New York City, and to 15 degrees below zero at Boston. Temperature readings dipped below zero at Boston five nights in a row. Berlin NH hit 44 degrees below zero in the "Great World War I Cold Wave," and Saint Johnsbury VT reached 43 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum)

1933 - The temperature reached 50 degrees below zero at Bloomfield, VT. It was the coldest reading in modern records for New England. The temperature at Pittsburgh NH reached 44 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum)

1955 - Anchorage, AK, reported an all-time record snow depth of 47 inches. (30th-1st) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy snow in Utah, with 28 inches reported in the Mount Holly and Elk Meadows area. Strong winds prevailed ahead of a cold front in the central U.S. Winds gusted to 46 mph at Dodge City KS, and reached 80 mph at Ruidoso NM. Strong northerly winds, ushering arctic cold into the north central U.S., created blizzard conditions in western Minnesota and central and eastern South Dakota. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)


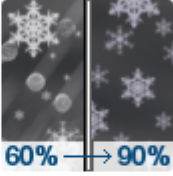



1988 - Unseasonably cold weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. A week of subfreezing temperatures in southern California claimed the lives of five people. Redding CA was blanketed with four inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Extreme cold continued across northern Maine. Milo ME was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 38 degrees below zero, and the low of 31 degrees below zero at Caribou ME was a December record for that location. Freezing rain spread across much of Lower Michigan, knocking out electrical power to 1.9 million customers in southeastern Lower Michigan. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)


2008 - Severe to extreme drought was observed across parts of the Hawaiian Islands, the western continental U.S., and parts of Georgia and South Carolina. Meanwhile, severe to exceptional drought conditions were present across southern Texas. (NCDC)

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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	New Year's Day
				
30%	60% → 90%	80% → 50%	10%	
Partly Sunny then Chance Wintry Mix	Snow/Sleet Likely then Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Snow and Blowing Snow then Chance Snow and Blowing Snow	Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery then Mostly Cloudy	Cold
High: 34 °F	Low: 5 °F	High: 6 °F ↓	Low: -15 °F	High: -2 °F

Clipper System Late Today Into Monday




Timing:

This Afternoon




Tonight



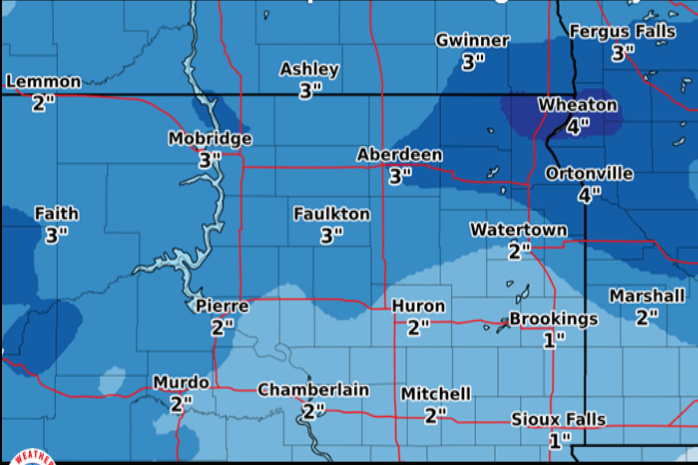
Mix – Becoming Snow


Monday Morning



Blowing Snow & Reduced Visibility & Difficult Travel

Snow Amounts Expected Through Monday





National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created:
12/30/2018 4:18 AM

Published on: 12/30/2018 at 4:25AM

It will be a cold start to the morning but warmer air is moving in. It might take a little time however, and temperatures today will struggle. Additionally, we get a favorable setup for some gustiness with blowing snow downwind of the Sisseton hills, so stay alert if you plan to travel up that way! A clipper system moves in to start the work week with a few inches of snow and gusty winds.

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Clipper System Late Today Into Monday

Timing:

This
Afternoon

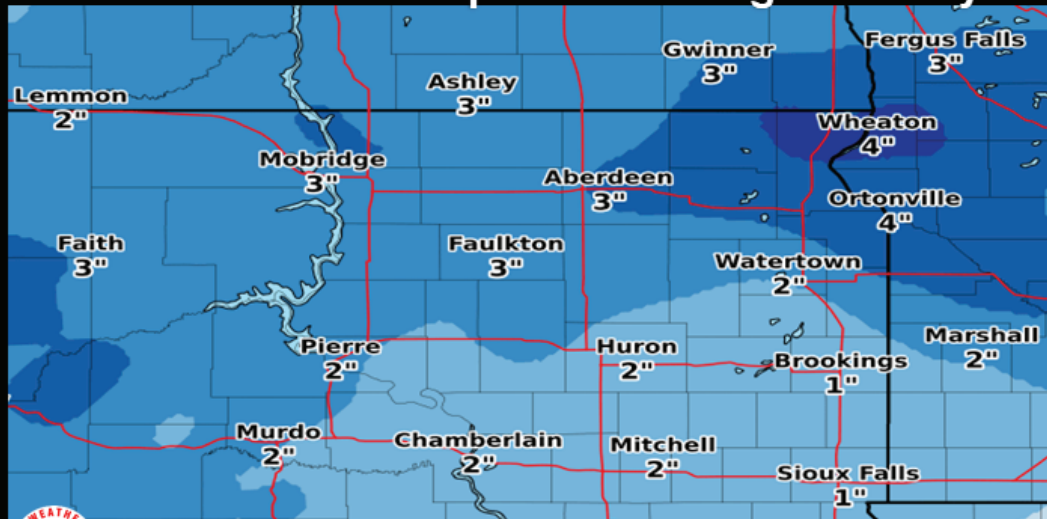
Tonight

Monday
Morning



Mix – Becoming Snow

Snow Amounts Expected Through Monday



Blowing
Snow
&
Reduced
Visibility
&
Difficult
Travel



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created:
12/30/2018 4:18 AM

Published on: 12/30/2018 at 4:25AM

A clipper system will cross the region overnight into Monday, bringing a few inches of snow and gusty winds. Initially winds will be quite strong, and blizzard conditions not out of the question - however winds will level off for the morning commute and visibility will be poor and travel difficult but probably not impossible. Another Arctic blast will follow, and temperatures will stay well below average through mid-week.

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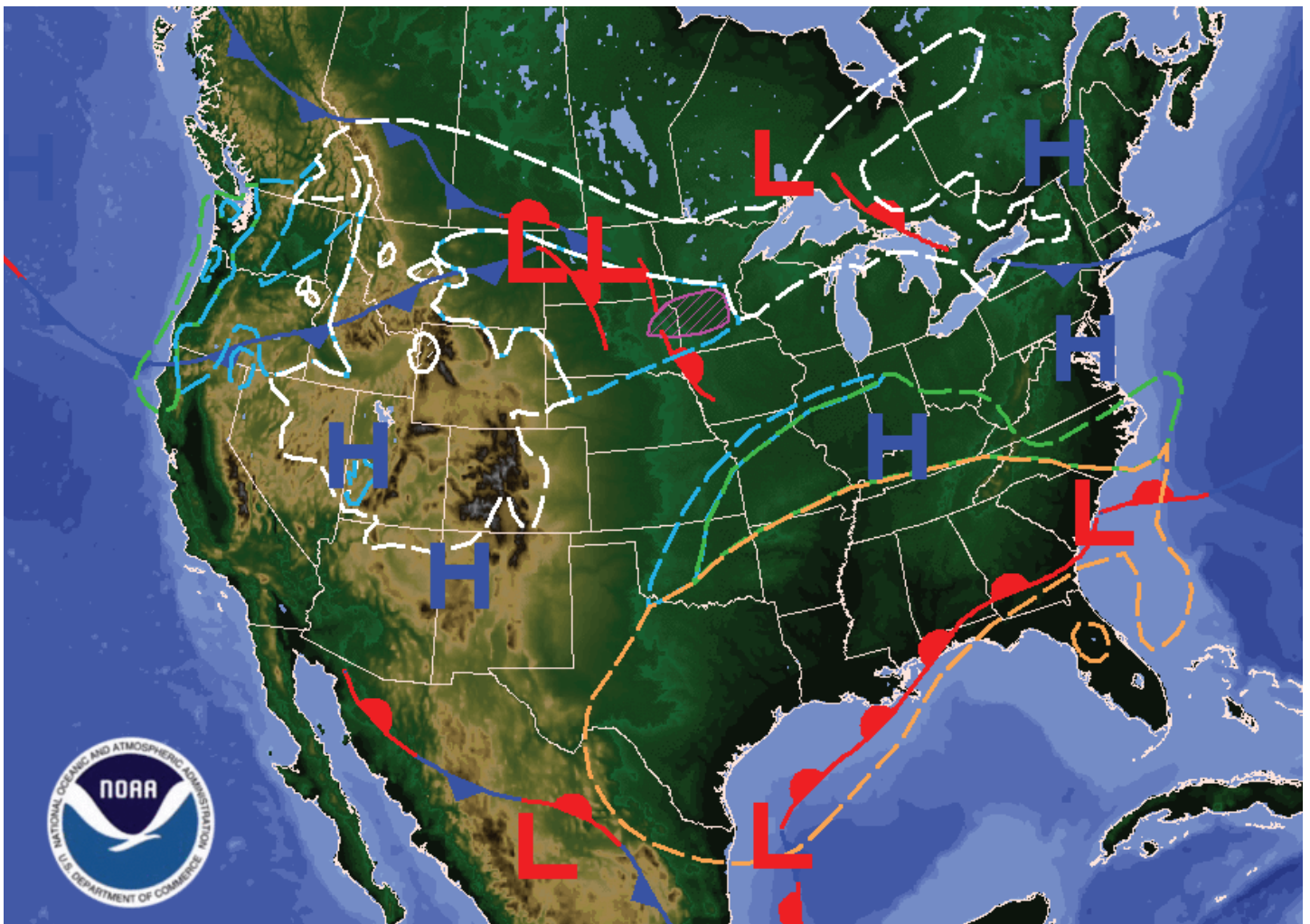
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 14 °F at 9:55 PM
Low Outside Temp: -16 °F at 1:30 AM
High Gust: 28 mph at 11:01 AM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 52° in 1980
Record Low: -34° in 1917
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 2°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.48
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.68
Precip Year to Date: 15.81
Sunset Tonight: 4:59 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:14 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sun, Dec 30, 2018, issued 4:38 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Hurley with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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SOME FINAL WORDS

Often what we find depends on what we look for. Here are a few things to look for in the days we will face together:

Look for Gods presence. When fear grips us or failure would defeat us, or if lifes challenges seem to be larger than we are or the nights are longer than usual, remember, we are never alone if Jesus rules and reigns in our lives. He promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. When life turns to shambles, He will wrap His loving arms around us and protect us because He is with us.

Look for Gods power. The psalmist said that God is our refuge and strength. Often we look to people for insights and advice when we are faced with difficult problems. But their solutions are never as good as the solutions that come from God. God is the greatest asset any Christian has but we must go to Him and draw from His strength and power.

Look for Gods provision. My God shall supply all your needs. Though we may fail Him, He will not fail us. Though we may fail to claim His promises, it does not mean they are not available. If we look to and trust in Him, He will not let us down.

Prayer: Father, we look to You in faith believing that You will meet our every need if we trust You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: 1 Kings 8:56-58; Psalm 46:1-3; Philippians 4:19

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

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

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News from the  Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 62, Irene-Wakonda 35
Alcester-Hudson 69, Avon 31
Arlington 59, Deuel 49
Baltic 59, Deubrook 39
Brandon Valley 74, Rochester John Marshall, Minn. 62
Bridgewater-Emery 66, Mitchell Christian 32
Clark/Willow Lake 66, Florence/Henry 25
Colman-Egan 52, Elkton-Lake Benton 43
DeSmet 68, Chester 55
Dell Rapids 72, Sioux Valley 60
Dell Rapids St. Mary 58, Castlewood 55
Flandreau 43, Hamlin, Texas 40
Garretson 66, Lake Preston 60
Highmore-Harrold 77, Stanley County 70
Madison 60, Belle Fourche 31
Mobridge-Pollock 62, Ellendale/Edgeley/Kulm, N.D. 58
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 39, Estelline/Hendricks 38
Parker 46, Beresford 34
Rapid City Central 63, Dickinson, N.D. 33
Rapid City Stevens 51, Watertown 48
Red Cloud 72, Spearfish 45
St. Thomas More 75, Aberdeen Roncalli 49
Viborg-Hurley 59, Langford 27
Chadron Rotary-George Watson Classic
3rd Place
Custer 81, Hemingford, Neb. 60
Hoop City Classic
Dominican, Wis. 61, Sioux Falls Washington 52
Sioux Falls Christian 77, Breckenridge, Minn. 48
Huron Holiday Classic
Faulkton 46, Ethan 26
Gayville-Volin 51, Iroquois 36
Leola/Frederick 88, James Valley Christian 83
Lyman 66, Howard 62
Miller 40, Hitchcock-Tulare 34
Rapid City Christian 58, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 53
Parkston Classic
Sully Buttes 57, Canistota 49
Southwest Minn. State Tournament
Sioux Falls Lincoln 70, Marshall, Minn. 52
Winner Snowball Classic
Gregory 58, Bennett County 45
Timber Lake 54, Winner 50

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Worthington Tournament

Alexandria, Minn. 66, Harrisburg 52

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Belle Fourche 51, Madison 40

Beresford 53, Parker 28

Clark/Willow Lake 49, Florence/Henry 44

Harrisburg 53, Pierre 37

Highmore-Harrold 65, Stanley County 42

Mobridge-Pollock 31, Ellendale, N.D. 28

Northwestern 71, Sisseton 60

Rapid City Central 56, Dickinson, N.D. 45

Rapid City Stevens 51, Watertown 48

Red Cloud 54, Spearfish 38

St. Thomas More 40, Aberdeen Roncalli 34

Viborg-Hurley 61, Langford 49

Wyndmere-Lidgerwood, N.D. 37, Britton-Hecla 24

Chadron Rotary-George Watson Classic

3rd Place(equals)

Custer 55, Hemingford, Neb. 32

Hoop City Classic

Sioux Falls Christian 53, Hutchinson, Minn. 50

Parkston Classic

Canistota 57, Kimball/White Lake 52

Corsica/Stickney 47, Warner 46

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 37, Menno 31

Parkston 49, Sully Buttes 40

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

DeLaSalle, Minn. vs. Aberdeen Central, ccd.

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

02-03-28-29-32

(two, three, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

25-26-33-49-50, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 2

(twenty-five, twenty-six, thirty-three, forty-nine, fifty; Star Ball: seven; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$12.93 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$415 million

Powerball

12-42-51-53-62, Powerball: 25, Power Play: 2

(twelve, forty-two, fifty-one, fifty-three, sixty-two; Powerball: twenty-five; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$40 million

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Pennington County gets \$300K grant for justice overhaul work

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Pennington County has been given a \$300,000 grant for a leadership circle to advise the county on criminal justice overhaul efforts.

The Rapid City Journal reports that Lis Hassett, coordinator for the county's overhaul efforts, says the funding will be used to compensate a very "diverse, well-rounded, supported group of individuals." The grant is from the MacArthur Foundation.

The goal is to tackle the issues of overburdened leaders and the lack of Native Americans and other minorities in decision-making roles. The new funding comes after the county received \$1.75 million in 2017 to start programs to cut the jail population.

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

Power outage in Sioux Falls affects nearly 5,000 people

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Almost 5,000 people lost power for nearly three hours overnight after a power line fell in Sioux Falls.

Steve Kolbeck, principal manager of Xcel Energy-South Dakota, tells the Argus Leader that the wire was down from about 11:30 p.m. Friday until about 2:10 a.m. Saturday as crews performed repairs.

Kolbeck says the outage affected about 4,800 people. Eric Pauli, community relations manager with Xcel Energy, says it's unclear what made the wire fall.

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

Geu, Ward lead NDSU past South Dakota 71-65

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Deng Geu scored 20 points and Tyson Ward added 17 points, seven rebounds and five assists to help North Dakota State rally in the second half on Saturday for a 71-65 victory over South Dakota in a Summit League opener.

Geu sank 9 of 13 shots for the Bison (6-8), who rallied from a 37-28 halftime deficit to win a game postponed Friday night because of hazardous conditions.

Trey Burch-Manning's layup gave the Coyotes (6-8) a 44-33 lead with 16:25 remaining in the game. The Bison battled back and took a 56-53 lead when Vinnie Shahid began an 8-0 run with a 3-point play and ended it with a 3-pointer. South Dakota took a 61-58 lead on Stanley Umude's jumper with 4:43 left, but Jordan Horn scored the final five points in a 7-0 spurt and NDSU never trailed again.

Umude topped South Dakota with 17 points and 11 rebounds for his first double-double of the season. Triston Simpson pitched in with 15 points, six assists and five rebounds and Burch-Manning scored 12.

Badlands speedway: Former owner plans to buy racetrack back

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Badlands Motor Speedway owner Chuck Brennan is extending the racetrack's sale deadline so a former owner can purchase it back.

Brennan, a payday loan mogul, is threatening to bulldoze the racetrack in Brandon if the \$6.3 million transaction doesn't go through, the Argus Leader reported. A statement on the speedway's website says no other offers are being accepted.

Badlands Motor Speedway ownership said it reached a deal with Steve Rubin, who owned and ran the racetrack with his family for nearly 30 years before its sale to Brennan in 2015. Rubin, his father and his brother bought the then-Huset's Speedway in 1987.

Rubin sought up to 60 days to put together financing and an investor group, and the statement says the speedway will be demolished if the fundraising falls through. Brennan had previously said it would be torn down without a deal by the end of December.

"We are thrilled to see the Rubin Family back at the helm in Brandon at Huset's Speedway," according to the statement. "We are confident that Brandon, Race Fans, Race Teams and millions of others will enjoy

the facility for another 28 years or more under the direction of Mr. Rubin and his family.”

Huset's had races for more than 60 years before Brennan bought and renamed it. After South Dakota voters capped payday loan interest rates in 2016, Brennan has worked to liquidate his properties.

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

16 dead in election violence as Bangladesh goes to the polls

By JULHAS ALAM and EMILY SCHMALL, Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — More than a dozen people reportedly died in election-related violence in Bangladesh on Sunday, as voters went to the polls to decide whether to give Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina a third consecutive term amid critics' claims that her leadership has become increasingly authoritarian.

In the run-up to the election, activists from both the ruling party and the opposition complained of attacks on supporters and candidates.

On Sunday, The Associated Press received more than 50 calls from people across the country who identified themselves as opposition supporters complaining of intimidation and threats, and being forced to vote in front of ruling party men inside polling booths.

“Some stray incidents have happened. We have asked our officials to deal with them,” K.M. Nurul Huda, Bangladesh's chief election commissioner, said as he cast his vote in Dhaka, the capital.

Bangladesh's leading English-language newspaper, the Daily Star, said 16 people were killed in 13 districts in election-related violence.

The election campaign was marred by the arrests and jailing of what the opposition says are thousands of Hasina opponents, including six candidates for Parliament. At least a dozen people were killed in campaign-related clashes.

“Hasina's use of the state machinery to subjugate the opposition virtually ensures her electoral victory,” said Sasha Riser-Kositsky, a South Asia analyst for the New York-based Eurasia Group.

Hasina has expressed great confidence in the outcome, already inviting foreign journalists and election observers to her official residence on Monday, by which time the results are expected to be known.

While rights groups have sounded the alarms about the erosion of Bangladesh's democracy, Hasina has promoted a different narrative, highlighting an ambitious economic agenda that has propelled Bangladesh past larger neighbors Pakistan and India by some development measures.

Voters “will give us another opportunity to serve them so that we can maintain our upward trend of development, and take Bangladesh forward as a developing country,” Hasina said after casting her ballot along with her daughter and sister in Dhaka.

Hasina's main rival is former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the leader of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, who a court deemed ineligible to run for office because she is in prison for corruption.

The two women have been in and out of power — and prison — for decades.

In Zia's absence, opposition parties formed a coalition led by Kamal Hossain, an 82-year-old Oxford-educated lawyer and former member of Hasina's Awami League party.

Both sides were hoping to avoid a repeat of 2014, when Zia and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party boycotted elections and voter turnout in the South Asian nation of 160 million was only 22 percent. More than half of the 300 parliamentary seats were uncontested. The Awami League's landslide victory was met with violence that left at least 22 people dead.

On Sunday, some 104 million people in the Muslim-majority country were eligible to vote, including many young, first-time voters.

Walking with a cane, Hossain cast his vote near his home in Dhaka, saying he was receiving complaints about vote-tampering and intimidation from various parts of the country.

The more than 40,000 polling stations nationwide closed at 4 p.m., as the Islamic call to prayer came over loudspeakers.

At a polling station in the ancient city of Panam Nagar, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) southeast of Dhaka, the counting of the roughly 1,600 votes cast began immediately after voting ended. Plastic bins

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full of paper ballots were dumped onto a sheet on the floor, where 10 people sat in a circle to organize and count the votes.

One of the voters there, Haji Abdul Malek Mia, a 74-year-old father of five sons, said he wanted to see someone in power who would offer development. "Whoever is doing development, he should be there," he said.

About 600,000 security officials, including army and paramilitary forces, were deployed across the country in a bid to contain violence in Bangladesh's 11th general election. The country's telecommunications regulator shut down mobile internet services nationwide to prevent possible protests from organizing.

The normally traffic-clogged streets of the capital were largely empty because of a ban on vehicles for everyone except election observers and journalists. Many Dhaka residents had left days earlier to vote in their hometowns.

At one polling station, Istiaq Ahmed, a doctor in Dhaka, said it was critical that people "select the right government to maintain the development and enrich our country further."

Another voter, Sultana Rajia Rotna, said she went out to cast her ballot after hearing that the streets of Dhaka were peaceful.

"I think the country has already developed much and it will be developed more," she said in Bengali. "That's why I'm here casting my vote."

N. Korean leader calls for more talks with South in new year

By **KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sent a letter to South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Sunday calling for more peace talks between the leaders in the new year following their active engagement in 2018, South Korea's presidential office said.

Moon's office said Kim also expressed regret that he couldn't make a planned visit to Seoul, South Korea's capital, by the end of December as pledged by the leaders during their last summit in September in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital. The Blue House didn't fully disclose Kim's letter.

Moon later thanked Kim for his "warm" letter in a tweeted message and said without elaborating that Kim expressed strong willingness to carry out the agreements he made this year during a series of inter-Korean summits and a historic June meeting with President Donald Trump.

"There will still be a lot of difficulties ahead," Moon said in his message. "However, our hearts will become more open if we put in that much effort. There's no change in our heart about welcoming Chairman Kim (to the South)."

The tweet also included a photo that showed a ruby-colored folder emblazoned with the seal of Pyongyang's powerful State Affairs Commission and the top part of Kim's letter, which started with: "Dear your excellency President Moon Jae-in. Our meeting in Pyongyang feels like yesterday but about 100 days have already passed and now we are at the close of an unforgettable 2018."

Through three summits between Moon and Kim this year, the Koreas agreed to a variety of goodwill gestures and vowed to resume economic cooperation when possible, voicing optimism that international sanctions could end to allow such activity.

The rivals have also taken steps to reduce their conventional military threat, such as removing mines and firearms from the border village of Panmunjom, destroying some front-line guard posts and creating buffer zones along their land and sea boundaries and a no-fly zone above the border.

"Chairman Kim said that the leaders by meeting three times in a single year and implementing bold measures to overcome the long period of conflict lifted our (Korean) nation from military tension and war fears," Kim Eui-kyeom, Moon's spokesman, said in a televised briefing.

"Chairman Kim said he will keep a close eye on the situation and expressed strong will to visit Seoul. ... Chairman Kim also expressed his intentions to meet President Moon frequently again in 2019 to advance discussions on the Korean Peninsula's peace and prosperity and discuss issues on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," the spokesman said.

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Moon's office did not reveal how Kim Jong Un's letter was delivered or whether he made any comments about his planned second summit with Trump in 2019.

The letter comes days before Kim is expected to address North Koreans in a New Year's speech that North Korean leaders traditionally use to announce major policy decisions and goals.

Kim used his New Year's speech a year ago to initiate diplomacy with Seoul and Washington, which led to his meetings with Moon and a historic June summit with Trump. In his meetings with Moon and Trump, Kim signed on to vague statements calling for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula without describing when or how it would occur.

Post-summit nuclear talks between Washington and Pyongyang quickly settled into a stalemate as the countries struggled between the sequencing of the North's disarmament and the removal of U.S.-led international sanctions against the North. There continue to be doubts about whether Kim will ever voluntarily relinquish his nukes, which he may see as his strongest guarantee of survival.

Kim and Trump are trying to arrange a second summit in early 2019.

Trump puts blame for child deaths at border on Democrats

By **NOMAAN MERCHANT, ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG, Associated Press**

President Donald Trump claims that two Guatemalan children who died in U.S. custody were already ill, yet both young migrants passed initial health screenings by border officials.

As Democrats criticized Trump for also tweeting Saturday that Democratic immigration policies were responsible for the deaths, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen visited medical officials and Border Patrol agents at the southern border in Arizona and Texas amid promises of additional wellness screenings for migrant children.

In Guatemala, the mother of 8-year-old Felipe Gomez Alonzo, who died Christmas Eve, told The Associated Press that her son was healthy when he left with his father on their journey hoping to migrate to the U.S.

"When he called me, he told me he was fine. He told me not to worry because he was fine," Catarina Alonzo said from the family's home in the remote Guatemalan village of Yalambojoch, her stepdaughter Catarina Gomez translating her indigenous language Chuj into Spanish.

Catarina Alonzo said the last time she spoke with Felipe he was in Mexico at the U.S. border and said he was eating chicken. Their village is in Nenton municipality in Huehuetenango province, about 250 miles (400 kilometers) west of Guatemala City.

Trump, whose administration has faced widespread criticism over the deaths, pointed on Twitter at Democrats "and their pathetic immigration policies that allow people to make the long trek thinking they can enter our country illegally." He also said that both children "were very sick before they were given over to Border Patrol."

The two tweets were his first comments on the death of Felipe and the death Dec. 8 of 7-year-old Jakelin Caal.

An initial screening of Jakelin "revealed no evidence of health issues," U.S. Customs and Border Protection said Dec. 14. It wasn't until several hours later that Jakelin's father, Nery Caal, told agents she was "sick and vomiting," CBP said. Attorneys for the Caal family have also denied claims that Nery "hadn't given her water in days," as Trump wrote.

And CBP said Tuesday that agents logged 23 welfare checks of Felipe and his father in the first several days the two were was detained. Felipe's father, Agustin Gomez, told a Guatemalan official that the boy first showed signs of illness Monday morning, the day he died.

Despite Trump's claim that Democrats were responsible for "pathetic" immigration policies, at least one of the laws his administration has blamed — legislation that prevents the immediate deportation of unaccompanied children from Central American countries — was signed in 2008 by President George W. Bush, a Republican.

Democrats criticized the president's tweets. In a tweet addressing the president, Sen. Mazie Hirono wrote: "Obviously nothing is too low or cruel for you. A collective New Year's wish: For the sake of our

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country, you can stop now.”

“You slander Jakelin’s memory and re-traumatize her family by spreading lies about why she died,” said U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro of Texas.

Nielsen was in Yuma, Arizona, on Saturday to meet with medical staff at the border. She said in a statement that “the system is clearly overwhelmed and we must work together to address this humanitarian crisis” and she called on Congress to “act with urgency.”

Her office said she was briefed in El Paso, Texas, on Friday on “recently instituted secondary medical screenings and the more thorough initial health screenings of migrants.”

El Paso Mayor Dee Margo said he met with Nielsen and told CNN on Saturday that he agreed with her that the immigration policy is “broken.”

“El Paso is dealing with the symptoms as a result of the lack of fortitude in Washington, on both sides of the aisle, to deal with our immigration policy,” the Republican said.

Felipe and Agustin Gomez were apprehended by border agents Dec. 18 near the Paso del Norte bridge connecting El Paso to Juarez, Mexico, according to border officials. The two were detained at the bridge’s processing center and then the Border Patrol station in El Paso, until being taken at about 1 a.m. Sunday to a facility in Alamogordo, New Mexico, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) away.

After an agent noticed Felipe coughing, father and son were taken to an Alamogordo hospital, where Felipe was diagnosed with a common cold and found to have a fever of 103 degrees Fahrenheit (39.4 degrees Celsius), officials have said.

Felipe was held for observation for 90 minutes, according to CBP, before being released with prescriptions for amoxicillin and ibuprofen.

But the boy fell sick hours later Monday and was re-admitted to the hospital. He died just before midnight.

New Mexico authorities said late Thursday that an autopsy showed Felipe had the flu, but more tests need to be done before a cause of death can be determined.

CBP Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said this week that prior to this month, no child had died in their custody in more than a decade.

Trump threatened via Twitter the previous day to cut off aid to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in Central America’s so-called Northern Triangle region. He has made similar threats in the past without following through.

The government of El Salvador is pushing back against Trump’s assertion it doesn’t do enough to stem migration north to the United States. The Central American nation says it has made strides in economic and social improvements to try to tamp down the root causes of the phenomenon.

A statement released Saturday said that the Salvadoran government has pushed a media campaign urging its citizens not to risk their lives making the dangerous journey, and especially not to expose children. It says migration from the country has fallen significantly this year.

___ Merchant reported from Houston and Miller and Long from Washington. Marcos Aleman in El Salvador and Sonia Perez D. in Guatemala contributed to this report.

No talk of solution to shutdown, president tweets blame

By ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump was firing Twitter barbs at Democrats this weekend as talks to end a weeklong partial government shutdown remained at a stalemate.

Trump was cooped up in the White House after canceling a vacation to his private Florida club.

As the disruption in federal services and public employees’ pay appeared set to continue into the new year, there were no signs of any substantive negotiation between the blame-trading parties. Trump held out for billions in federal funds for a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, which Democrats have said they were intent on blocking.

Trump tweeted Saturday that he was “in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come on over and make a deal on Border Security.” But there has been little direct contact between the sides during the

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stalemate, and Trump did not ask Republicans, who hold a monopoly on power in Washington for another five days, to keep Congress in session.

As he called for Democrats to negotiate on the wall, Trump brushed off criticism that his administration bore any responsibility for the recent deaths of two migrant children in Border Patrol custody. Trump claimed the deaths were "strictly the fault of the Democrats and their pathetic immigration policies that allow people to make the long trek thinking they can enter our country illegally." His comments on Twitter came as his Homeland Security secretary met with medical professionals and ordered policy changes meant to better protect children detained at the border.

Trump earlier had upped the brinkmanship by threatening anew to close the border with Mexico to press Congress to cave to his demand for money to pay for a wall. Democrats are vowing to pass legislation restoring the government as soon as they take control of the House on Thursday, but that won't accomplish anything unless Trump and the Republican-controlled Senate go along with it.

Talks have been at a stalemate for more than a week, after Democrats said the White House offered to accept \$2.5 billion for border security last Saturday. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer told Vice President Mike Pence that it wasn't acceptable, nor was it guaranteed that Trump, under intense pressure from his conservative base to fulfill his signature campaign promise, would settle for that amount.

Trump has remained out of the public eye since returning to the White House early Thursday from a 29-hour visit to U.S. troops in Iraq, instead taking to Twitter to attack Democrats. He also moved to defend himself from criticism that he couldn't deliver on the wall while the GOP controlled both the House and Senate.

"For those that naively ask why didn't the Republicans get approval to build the Wall over the last year, it is because IN THE SENATE WE NEED 10 DEMOCRAT VOTES, and they will give us "NONE" for Border Security!" he tweeted. "Now we have to do it the hard way, with a Shutdown."

Meanwhile, the effects to the public of the impasse grew as the Environmental Protection Agency, which had the money to function a week longer than some agencies, implemented its shutdown plan at midnight Friday night. EPA spokeswoman Molly Block said many of the agency's 14,000 employees were being furloughed, while disaster-response teams and certain other employees deemed essential would stay on the job. That includes workers needed for preventing immediate public health threats at more than 800 Superfund hazardous-waste sites.

Also running short on money: the Smithsonian Institution, which said its museums, art galleries and zoo in the capital will close starting midweek if the partial shutdown drags on.

But federal flood insurance policies will continue to be issued and renewed, in a reversal prompted by pressure from lawmakers, said Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida.

Trump appeared no closer to securing money for his signature border wall, which he vowed during the campaign that he would make Mexico pay for. He's failed to do so. Now Democratic leaders are adamant that they will not authorize money for the project, calling it wasteful and ineffective. They show no signs of bending, either.

The shutdown is forcing hundreds of thousands of federal workers and contractors to stay home or work without pay.

The White House has not directly engaged in weeks with the House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, who has all but locked up the support she needs to win the speaker's gavel after the new Congress convenes on Thursday.

Pelosi has vowed to pass legislation to reopen the nine shuttered departments and dozens of agencies now hit by the partial shutdown as soon as she takes the gavel.

Pelosi spokesman Drew Hammill added that Democrats are united against the wall and won't seriously consider any White House offer unless Trump backs it publicly because he "has changed his position so many times."

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Lisa Mascaro and Juliet Linderman in Washington contributed to this report.

Oregon hotel fires 2 employees who mistreated black guest

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — An Oregon hotel said it fired two of its employees for mistreatment of a black guest who was talking on his phone in the lobby when he was asked to leave a week ago.

DoubleTree by Hilton hotel in Portland tweeted Saturday they have “terminated the employment of the two men involved.” They said the men’s actions “were inconsistent with our standards & values.” The hotel didn’t identify the employees.

Jermaine Massey accused the hotel of racially profiling him after a security guard called police to remove him from the lobby Dec. 22. He was staying at the hotel, and his attorneys say they want a public explanation and intend to pursue legal action, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported .

On Friday, the hotel apologized to Massey on Twitter, saying the employees involved had been placed on leave and an investigation would be done. A day later, it said two workers were fired.

The security guard told Massey that if he could not provide a room number, he would be asked to leave. The Washington state resident left with an officer, according to a police report.

Massey posted a video on social media that shows part of the interaction with the guard.

General manager Paul Peralta said in a statement earlier this week that the hotel reached out to Massey to try to reach a resolution. Massey’s lawyers said the hotel should publicly answer why security approached and questioned Massey and explain how, as the guard said, Massey was a threat to security.

It’s the latest high-profile incident in which black people have been removed from businesses.

Last month, police in the Seattle suburb of Kirkland helped the owner of a frozen yogurt shop kick out a black man because employees said they felt uncomfortable.

Police in Philadelphia in April arrested two black men at a Starbucks coffee shop after a manager called police to say they refused to make a purchase or leave.

Police, other city officials and business owners in those incidents later apologized.

Information from: KOPB-, <http://www.opb.org>

No. 1 Alabama beats No. 4 Oklahoma 45-34 to reach title game

By STEVEN WINE, AP Sports Writer

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — This season’s Alabama juggernaut has yet to be stopped, and Oklahoma’s shaky defense sure wasn’t going to get in the way.

Maybe Clemson can.

Tua Tagovailoa threw for 318 yards and four touchdowns and No. 1-ranked Alabama beat No. 4 Oklahoma 45-34 on Saturday night in the College Football Playoff semifinal at the Orange Bowl .

The high-scoring Sooners reached the semifinal despite a porous defense that was no match for Alabama’s diverse attack, and the defending champion Crimson Tide led 28-0 after only 17 minutes.

Alabama (14-0) advanced to the national championship game for the fourth consecutive season and will play Jan. 7 in Santa Clara, California against familiar foe Clemson, which beat Notre Dame 30-3 in the Cotton Bowl. The Tigers, ranked No. 2, and Alabama will face off in the playoffs for the fourth year in a row, and have split two title games.

“They’ve got a great program and a great team,” Alabama coach Nick Saban said. “I’m sure it’ll be a great challenge for us, and I’m sure we’ll need to play better than we did today.”

Saban spiked his headset during one of his several sideline tirades. He lobbed oranges during the post-game celebration.

“It was more fun throwing the oranges,” he said.

Tagovailoa’s performance argued for a Florida recount in the Heisman Trophy vote. He finished as the runner-up to Oklahoma’s Kyler Murray but won sweet consolation by completing 24 of 27 passes, with scores to four receivers.

“It’s always good to see your hard work pay off,” said Tagovailoa, who played on a sore left ankle. His

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completion percentage was an Orange Bowl record.

While Tagovailoa connected on his first nine passes for 184 yards, Murray was sacked twice before he threw a pass, and his first completion came with his team already down 21-0.

"The slow start got us beat," Murray said. "It's tough to come back from that."

Murray had one brilliant moment, a perfect deep throw on the move to Charleston Rambo in the end zone for a 49-yard score. He passed for 308 yards and ran for 109 but took several jarring hits, including when All-America nose guard Quinnen Williams dislodged his helmet and forced him from the game for one play in the fourth quarter.

The Sooners (12-2) came up short in a bid for their first national title since the 2000 season.

"Agonizingly close," coach Lincoln Riley said.

His team was bowled over, on one play in particular. When Robert Barnes tried to stop Josh Jacobs in the open field, the Alabama running back lowered his head for the collision and continued to the end zone for a 27-yard score while the Sooners safety spun to the turf, dazed and briefly unable to get up.

"When I saw an opportunity to score, I just tried my best to score," Jacobs said with a chuckle.

Alabama had the ball for more than 36 minutes and totaled 528 yards.

"Our offense really controlled the tempo of the game," Saban said. "The only time we really got stopped in the game is when we stopped ourselves."

In a matchup between the two highest-scoring offenses in the country, Oklahoma fell too far behind early.

On the first snap, DeVonta Smith turned Tagovailoa's short pass into a 50-yard gain. The Crimson Tide went on to score an Orange Bowl-record 21 points in the opening quarter.

"It's not the result we wanted or expected," Riley said. "We had a hard time breaking their string of momentum. We dug ourselves too big a hole."

At one point the disparity in yards was 191-0. The most noise the Sooners mustered in the early going was when linebacker Kenneth Murray talked trash with the Alabama bench — with his team trailing by three touchdowns.

The Sooners rallied and closed to within 11 points three times in the final 18 minutes. But two onside kicks failed, and Alabama ran the final 4:23 off the clock after Oklahoma's last score.

QUICK START

Alabama took the opening kickoff and drove 75 yards for a touchdown. Oklahoma was awarded a fumble recovery at the 1, but officials overturned the ruling following a replay review, and Damien Harris scored on the next play.

The Sooners' first three plays lost 6 yards, forcing a punt, and eight plays later Tagovailoa hit Henry Ruggs III with a 10-yard touchdown pass.

Tagovailoa threw deep to Jerry Jeudy for 40 yards to set up the Crimson Tide's third score, and Jacobs' catch and run for a touchdown made it 28-0.

INJURY REPORT

Tide linebacker Christian Miller limped to the locker room in the third quarter with a left hamstring injury. An MRI was planned, and his availability for the title game was uncertain, Saban said.

TAKEAWAYS

The Crimson Tide need one more win for their sixth national title in the past decade. They have a chance to finish 15-0, which hasn't been done at the top level of college football since Penn went 15-0 in 1897.

Saban moved closer to his seventh national title, which would break the record he shares with the Crimson Tide's Bear Bryant.

UP NEXT

Alabama seeks its second consecutive title when it plays Clemson for the fourth postseason in a row. The Crimson Tide won 24-6 in the semifinal a year ago, and 45-40 in the title game for the 2016 season. Clemson beat Alabama for the championship 35-31 two years ago.

The Sooners will begin another bid for their first national title since 2000 when they open the 2019 season at home against Houston on Aug. 31.

_____ More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/Collegefootball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Lawrence lights up Notre Dame, No. 2 Clemson cruises 30-3

By RALPH D. RUSSO, AP College Football Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — When Clemson's Dabo Swinney entrusted a team with championship aspirations to freshman quarterback Trevor Lawrence in September, this is what the Tigers' coach had in mind.

Lawrence threw for 327 yards and three touchdowns and No. 2 Clemson beat No. 3 Notre Dame 30-3 on Saturday in the Cotton Bowl to reach the College Football Playoff title game. The Tigers (14-0) will play No. 1 Alabama — a 45-34 winner over No. 4 Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl — for a fourth straight season in the playoff on Jan. 7 in Santa Clara, California.

"He's just so poised. He just sees it. And he's got a gift of an arm," Swinney said. "But I just love his humility and how consistent he is with his preparation, day in and day out. Easy, easy guy to coach. Easy guy to get behind and support. His teammates love him."

Clemson's overpowering and experienced defensive line, led by ends Clelin Ferrell and Austin Bryant, smothered Ian Book and the Fighting Irish (12-1), holding them to 248 yards.

On offense, freshmen led the way. Lawrence, making his 10th career start, was 27 for 39 and did not throw an interception against a Notre Dame defense that had been one of the best on the country. Freshman receiver Justyn Ross had six catches for 148 yards and two long touchdowns.

"It makes it a lot easier on me when you just have guys all around you who are such great players and take that load off of you. There's not much pressure when you have guys this good playing around you," Lawrence said.

The Irish hung around for a quarter, with the teams exchanging field goals. But in the first quarter, Notre Dame All-America cornerback Julian Love went out with what coach Brian Kelly said after the game was a head injury and Lawrence started taking apart the Irish.

Lawrence hooked up with Ross deep down the sideline and the big receiver beat Love's backup, Donte Vaughn, for a tackle-breaking, 52-yard score early in the second quarter. The Irish looked as if they might keep it close to halftime, but they couldn't keep Clemson out of their backfield — even without suspended star tackle Dexter Lawrence.

In the final 2 minutes, Trevor Lawrence connected with Ross on a 42-yard score and with Tee Higgins for a one-handed, 19-yard touchdown reception — again over Vaughn — with 2 seconds left in the second quarter. Lawrence was 13 for 15 for 229 yards in the quarter.

"I wanted to help our team," said Love, who passed concussion protocol at halftime and returned to the game. "And in a sense, I let them down in that regard."

That made it 23-3 at half and once again the Fighting Irish looked outclassed against the best of the best. Not so different from the 42-14 loss to Alabama in the 2012 BCS championship game or the 44-28 loss to Ohio State in the 2016 Fiesta Bowl. In fact, Notre Dame is 0-8 in BCS and New Year's Six games since winning the Cotton Bowl in 1993.

Receiver Miles Boykin insisted this Notre Dame team was different.

"I thought we played just as athletic as them and just as fast as them and it came down to execution and we didn't execute today," he said.

Though to be fair, Clemson has been doing this to everyone since Lawrence settled in. The Tigers haven't had an opponent stay within 20 points since a close call against Syracuse on Sept. 29.

That was Lawrence's first game as a starter, one he didn't finish because of a head injury, and Clemson's first after quarterback Kelly Bryant left the team.

Bryant, a senior, led the Tigers to the playoff last season and a semifinal loss to Alabama. He was pivotal in an early victory this season at Texas A&M. But Lawrence is a rare talent, a potential first overall NFL draft pick. When Lawrence took over, the ceiling on Clemson's potential rose. Now it is being realized.

"I felt like he gave us the best chance to win and play at an explosive level," Swinney said.

With his flowing blond hair, Lawrence is positioned to become one of college football's biggest and most recognizable stars. It will help to have receivers such as Ross, Higgins and Amari Rogers, all underclassmen. And a runner like sophomore Travis Etienne, who broke a 62-yard touchdown run in the third quarter.

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But Lawrence is the leader. In his 11th start, he will try to become the first true freshman quarterback to lead his team to a national championship since Oklahoma's Jamelle Holieway in 1985.

"He doesn't just have a talented arm. That's just what you guys see," Clemson All-America defensive tackle Christian Wilkins said. "He's a cool customer. He's never rattled."

THE TAKEAWAY

Notre Dame: As 12-point underdogs, the Irish needed to play their best and catch a couple breaks. Neither happened. They nearly had a takeaway deep in Clemson territory in the first quarter, but a loose ball was ruled barely out of bounds by replay review. Love's injury left them exposed at corner. And an offensive line, which had been up and down and shifting around much of the season, was no match for Clemson.

Clemson: Dexter Lawrence, sidelined by a failed NCAA test for performance-enhancing drugs, was hardly missed. The 340-pound junior was on the sideline, wearing an orange sweat shirt with a white tiger paw logo. Clemson is working on an appeal for Lawrence and two other players, but it is unlikely the Tigers will have them back for the national title game.

Follow Ralph D. Russo at <https://twitter.com/ralphDrussoAP> and listen at <https://podcastone.com/AP-Top-25-College-Football-Podcast>

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/Collegefootball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Supreme Court's low-profile approach to be tested

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court began its term with the tumultuous confirmation of Justice Brett Kavanaugh, followed by a studied avoidance of drama on the high court bench — especially anything that would divide the five conservatives and four liberals.

The justices have been unusually solicitous of each other in the courtroom since Kavanaugh's confirmation, and several have voiced concern that the public perceives the court as merely a political institution. Chief Justice John Roberts seems determined to lead the one Washington institution that stays above the political fray. Even Roberts' rebuke of President Donald Trump, after the president criticized a federal judge, was in defense of an independent, apolitical judiciary.

The next few weeks will test whether the calm can last.

When they gather in private on Jan. 4 to consider new cases for arguments in April and into next term, the justices will confront a raft of high-profile appeals.

Abortion restrictions, workplace discrimination against LGBT people and partisan gerrymandering are on the agenda. Close behind are appeals from the Trump administration seeking to have the court allow it to end an Obama-era program that shields young immigrants from deportation and to put in place restrictive rules for transgender troops.

There already are signs that the conservative justices, apart from Roberts, are willing to take on controversial cases that are likely to produce the ideological and partisan divisions that their colleagues seem eager to avoid.

In recent weeks, three conservative justices accused the court of ducking its job of deciding important cases, especially when lower courts have disagreed on the outcome. Their criticism, written by Justice Clarence Thomas and joined by Justices Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch, came after a recent decision to avoid a case involving funding for Planned Parenthood.

Then, on the Friday before Christmas, the court divided 5-4 in refusing to allow the Trump administration to enforce new restrictions on asylum seekers. Roberts joined the four liberals. The three conservatives who were displeased by the Planned Parenthood case outcome again noted their disagreement, this time joined by Kavanaugh.

The two votes can't be used to draw any firm conclusions about what may be happening behind closed doors at the court, as the cases arrived in different circumstances. In the Planned Parenthood case, the

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justices were considering whether to grant full review, a process that takes only four votes. The asylum case was an emergency appeal from the administration. At least five of the nine justices would have had to vote in the administration's favor.

But Lawrence Solum, a professor of constitutional law at Georgetown University's law school, said Roberts seems to have two reasons to limit the court's involvement in hot-button cases: his preference for taking small steps in the law and his concern for the court's reputation.

"It's clear that 5-4 decisions will be perceived by many, many lawyers, many politicians and large numbers of the public at large as ideological decisions," Solum said. "So given Roberts' desire to preserve the legitimacy of the court, he could be highly motivated to avoid decisions like that in the next immediate period in the history of the court. Whether that's one year, or two years or five years, who knows?"

The court arrived at this point after an unusual chain of events that began with the death of Justice Antonin Scalia in February 2016. Senate Republicans refused to act on President Barack Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland, allowing Trump to put Gorsuch on the court in 2017. To this day, Democrats say the seat was stolen from them.

Then, over the summer, Justice Anthony Kennedy's retirement meant that Trump would also get to replace the court's swing vote with a more reliable conservative. Kavanaugh's track record as an appellate judge suggested he was that man, but his confirmation was nearly derailed by allegations of sexual assault, which Kavanaugh denied.

The accusations against Kavanaugh turned the confirmation process into a national spectacle that culminated in a hearing with Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford, who accused him of assault when they were in high school. Republicans said the allegation was unproven and confirmed Kavanaugh in a rare Saturday session. Spotlighting how emotional the debate had become, a crowd of demonstrators gathered at the Supreme Court building after the Kavanaugh vote, with some climbing the stone statues that line the steps.

One result of the Kavanaugh turmoil has been the most serious discussion in decades of limiting the court's powers, including possibly increasing the number of justices, Solum said. "It suggests that the legitimacy of the court is at issue now in perhaps a way it hasn't been until recently."

Roberts is not only the chief justice, but he has essentially taken Kennedy's place as the swing vote — the conservative justice nearest the court's center. The Supreme Court will go only as far as Roberts is willing in either direction.

He can try to keep the court entirely out of some cases, though that requires him to be able to persuade at least one other conservative justice to go along. That's what happened in the Planned Parenthood case, when Kavanaugh voted to deny review. "The difficult confirmation battle may lead to a bit of caution," said John McGinnis, a Northwestern University law school professor.

When the justices do plunge into controversy, Roberts will be able "to write or insist that decisions be narrowly drawn," McGinnis said.

Roberts has been chief justice for more than 13 years, but he is only 63 and could lead the court for an additional two decades or more. That allows Roberts, who began his legal career as a lawyer in the Reagan administration, to take a long view, McGinnis said, and await a time when political tensions and concerns about the court's reputation subside.

Trump tries to deflect blame for migrant children's deaths

By **NOMAAN MERCHANT, ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG, Associated Press**

President Donald Trump sought to deflect blame for the deaths of two Guatemalan children in U.S. custody by claiming they were "very sick" when they arrived, even though immigration authorities have said both children passed initial health checks.

The mother of the boy who died Christmas Eve told The Associated Press on Saturday that her son was healthy when he left with his father on their journey hoping to migrate to the U.S.

Meanwhile, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen visited Border Patrol agents and medical officials at the southern border amid promises of more thorough health screenings for migrant children.

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Trump, whose administration has faced widespread criticism over the deaths, pointed on Twitter at Democrats "and their pathetic immigration policies that allow people to make the long trek thinking they can enter our country illegally."

He also said that both children "were very sick before they were given over to Border Patrol."

The two tweets were his first comments on the Dec. 8 death of 7-year-old Jakelin Caal and the death on Christmas Eve of 8-year-old Felipe Gomez Alonzo.

Felipe's mother, Catarina Alonzo, told the AP that her son reported he was doing well every time that he and his father called home during their trek. She spoke with AP journalists at the family's home in the remote Guatemalan village of Yalambojoch, her stepdaughter Catarina Gomez translating her indigenous language Chuj into Spanish.

"When he called me, he told me he was fine. He told me not to worry because he was fine," Catarina Alonzo said.

The mother said the last time she spoke with Felipe he was in Mexico at the U.S. border and said he was eating chicken. Their village is in Nenton municipality in Huehuetenango province, about 250 miles (400 kilometers) west of Guatemala City.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection has issued detailed statements about both children's deaths.

An initial screening of Jakelin "revealed no evidence of health issues," CBP said on Dec. 14. It wasn't until several hours later that Jakelin's father, Nery Caal, told agents that she was "sick and vomiting," CBP said. Attorneys for the Caal family have also denied claims that Nery "hadn't given her water in days," as Trump wrote.

And CBP said Tuesday that agents logged 23 welfare checks of Felipe and his father in the first several days the two were detained. Felipe's father, Agustin Gomez, told a Guatemalan official that the boy first showed signs of illness Monday morning, the day he died.

Despite Trump's claim that Democrats were responsible for "pathetic" immigration policies, at least one of the laws his administration has blamed — legislation that prevents the immediate deportation of unaccompanied children from Central American countries — was signed in 2008 by President George W. Bush, a Republican.

Democrats criticized the president's tweets. In a tweet addressing the president, Sen. Mazie Hirono wrote: "Obviously nothing is too low or cruel for you. A collective New Year's wish: For the sake of our country, you can stop now."

"You slander Jakelin's memory and re-traumatize her family by spreading lies about why she died," said U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro of Texas.

The president's comments came Saturday afternoon, the same day Nielsen was in Yuma, Arizona, to meet with medical staff at the border. Nielsen said in a statement that "the system is clearly overwhelmed and we must work together to address this humanitarian crisis." She called on Congress to "act with urgency."

Her office said she was briefed in El Paso, Texas, on Friday on "recently instituted secondary medical screenings and the more thorough initial health screenings of migrants."

El Paso Mayor Dee Margo said he met with Nielsen and told CNN on Saturday that he agreed with her that the immigration policy is "broken."

"El Paso is dealing with the symptoms as a result of the lack of fortitude in Washington, on both sides of the aisle, to deal with our immigration policy," the Republican said.

Felipe and Agustin Gomez were apprehended by border agents Dec. 18 near the Paso del Norte bridge connecting El Paso to Juarez, Mexico, according to border officials. The two were detained at the bridge's processing center and then the Border Patrol station in El Paso, until being taken at about 1 a.m. Sunday to a facility in Alamogordo, New Mexico, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) away.

After an agent noticed Felipe coughing, father and son were taken to an Alamogordo hospital, where Felipe was diagnosed with a common cold and found to have a fever of 103 degrees Fahrenheit (39.4 degrees Celsius), officials have said.

Felipe was held for observation for 90 minutes, according to CBP, before being released with prescriptions for amoxicillin and ibuprofen.

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But the boy fell sick hours later Monday and was re-admitted to the hospital. He died just before midnight. New Mexico authorities said late Thursday that an autopsy showed Felipe had the flu, but more tests need to be done before a cause of death can be determined.

CBP Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said this week that prior to this month, no child had died in their custody in more than a decade.

Trump threatened via Twitter the previous day to cut off aid to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in Central America's so-called Northern Triangle region. He has made similar threats in the past without following through.

The government of El Salvador is pushing back against Trump's assertion it doesn't do enough to stem migration north to the United States. The Central American nation says it has made strides in economic and social improvements to try to tamp down the root causes of the phenomenon.

A statement released Saturday said that the Salvadoran government has pushed a media campaign urging its citizens not to risk their lives making the dangerous journey, and especially not to expose children. It says migration from the country has fallen significantly this year.

Merchant reported from Houston and Miller and Long from Washington. Marcos Aleman in El Salvador and Sonia Perez D. in Guatemala contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that 8-year-old Felipe Gomez Alonzo died in Alamogordo, New Mexico, not El Paso, Texas.

China's Disappeared: A look at who went missing in 2018

By YANAN WANG, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — It's not uncommon for individuals who speak out against the government to disappear in China, but the scope of the "disappeared" has expanded since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2013.

Not only dissidents and activists, but also high-level officials, Marxists, foreigners and even a movie star — people who never publicly opposed the ruling Communist Party — have been whisked away by police to unknown destinations.

The widening dragnet throws into stark relief the lengths to which Xi's administration is willing to go to maintain its control and authority.

A look at some of the people who went missing in 2018 at the hands of the Chinese state:

FOREIGN PAWNS

China threatened "grave consequences" if Canada did not release high-tech executive Meng Wanzhou, shortly after the Huawei chief financial officer was detained in Vancouver in December for possible extradition to the U.S.

The apparent consequences materialized within days, when two Canadian men went missing in China. Both turned up in the hands of state security on suspicion of endangering national security, a nebulous category of crimes that has been levied against foreigners in recent years.

Former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig was taken by authorities from a Beijing street late in the evening, a person familiar with his case said. He is allowed one consular visit a month and has not been granted access to a lawyer, as is standard for state security cases.

Also detained is Michael Spavor, who organizes tours to North Korea from the border city of Dandong. China has not said whether their detentions are related to Meng's, but a similar scenario unfolded in the past.

A Canadian couple was detained in 2014 on national security grounds shortly after Canada arrested Su Bin, a Chinese man wanted for industrial espionage in the U.S.

Like Spavor, Kevin and Julia Garratt lived in Dandong, where they ran a popular coffee shop for nearly a decade. They also worked with a Christian charity that provided food to North Korean refugees.

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While Julia Garratt was released on bail, her husband was held for more than two years before he was deported in September 2016 — about two months after Su pleaded guilty in the U.S.

TAX-EVADING ACTRESS

Fan Bingbing was living every starlet's dream. Since a breakthrough role at the age of 17, Fan has headlined dozens of movies and TV series, and parlayed her success into modeling, fashion design and other ventures that have made her one of the highest-paid celebrities in the world.

All this made her a potent icon of China's economic success, until authorities reminded Fan — and her legion of admirers — that even she was not untouchable.

For about four months, Fan vanished from public view. Her Weibo social media account, which has more than 63 million followers, fell silent. Her management office in Beijing was vacated. Her birthday on Sept. 16 came and went with only a handful of greetings from entertainment notables.

When she finally resurfaced, it was to apologize.

"I sincerely apologize to society, to the friends who love and care for me, to the people, and to the country's tax bureau," Fan said in a letter posted on Weibo on Oct. 3.

She admitted to tax evasion. State news agency Xinhua reported that Fan and the companies she represents had been ordered to pay taxes and penalties totaling 900 million yuan (\$130 million).

"Without the party and the country's great policies, without the people's loving care, there would be no Fan Bingbing," she wrote, a cautionary tale for other Chinese celebrities.

Xinhua concurred in a commentary on her case: "Everyone is equal before the law, there are no 'superstars' or 'big shots.' No one can despise the law and hope to be lucky."

SECURITY INSIDER

Unlike most swallowed up by China's opaque security apparatus, Meng Hongwei knew exactly what to expect.

Meng, no relation to the Huawei executive, is a vice minister of public security who was serving as head of Interpol, the France-based organization that facilitates police cooperation across borders.

When he was appointed to the top post, human rights groups expressed concern that China would use Interpol as a tool to rein in political enemies around the world.

Instead, he was captured by the same security forces he represented.

In September, Meng became the latest high-ranking official caught in Xi's banner anti-corruption campaign. The initiative is a major reason for the Chinese leader's broad popularity, but he has been accused of using it to eliminate political rivals.

Xi pledged to confront both high-level "tigers" and low-level "flies" in his crackdown on graft — a promise he has fulfilled by ensnaring prominent officials.

Meng was missing for weeks, before Chinese authorities said he was being investigated for taking bribes and other crimes. A Chinese delegation delivered a resignation letter from Meng to Interpol headquarters.

His wife Grace Meng told the AP that she does not believe the charges against her husband. The last message he sent her was an emoji of a knife.

DARING PHOTOGRAPHER

Lu Guang made his mark photographing the everyday lives of HIV patients in central China. They were poor villagers who had contracted the virus after selling their own blood to eke out a living — at a going rate of \$7 a pint, they told Lu.

A former factory worker, Lu traversed China's vast reaches to capture reality at its margins. He explored environmental degradation, industrial pollution and other gritty topics generally avoided by Chinese journalists, who risk punishment if they pursue stories considered to be sensitive or overly critical.

His work won him major accolades such as the World Press Photo prize, but his prominence likely also put him on the government's radar.

This November, Lu was travelling through Xinjiang, the far west region that has deployed a vast security

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network in the name of fighting terrorism. He was participating in an exchange with other photographers, after which he was to meet a friend in nearby Sichuan province. He never showed up.

More than a month after he disappeared, his family was notified that he had been arrested in Xinjiang, according to his wife Xu Xiaoli. She declined to elaborate on the nature of the charges.

STUDENT MARXIST

In the past, the political activists jailed in China were primarily those who fought for democracy and an end to one-party rule. They posed a direct ideological threat to the Communist Party.

This year, the party locked in on a surprising new target: young Marxists.

About 50 students and recent graduates of the country's most prestigious universities convened in August in Shenzhen, an electronics manufacturing hub, to rally for factory workers attempting to form a union.

Among them was Yue Xin, a 20-something fresh out of Peking University. Earlier this year, she made headlines by calling for the elite school to release the results of its investigation into a decades-old rape case.

This time, she was one of the most vocal leaders of the labor rights group, appearing in photographs with her fist up in a Marxist salute and wearing a T-shirt that said "Unity is strength" — the name of a patriotic Chinese communist song.

Yue, a passionate student of Marx and Mao Zedong, espoused the same values as the party. She wrote an open letter to Xi and the party's central leadership saying all the students wanted was justice for Jasic Technology laborers.

Her letter quoted Xi's own remarks: "We must adhere to the guiding position of Marxism." Yue called Marx "our mentor" and likened the ideas of him and Mao to spiritual sustenance.

Nonetheless, she ended up among those rounded up in a raid on the apartment the activists were staying at in Shenzhen. While most have been released, Yue remains unaccounted for. She has been missing for four months.

Associated Press writer Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

Boy whose Yemeni mom fought US travel ban to see him dies

By DAISY NGUYEN, Associated Press

LODI, Calif. (AP) — The father of a 2-year-old boy who was separated from his Yemeni mother until she successfully fought the Trump administration's travel ban to see him in the United States laid his body to rest Saturday, a day after the child was taken off life support at a hospital.

Under a cloudless winter day, Ali Hassan carried his son's small body to bury at an Islamic cemetery in California's Central Valley.

"I'm a U.S. citizen; my son is a U.S. citizen," the 22-year-old father told mourners at a service before burial. "The Muslim ban kept my wife from coming to the U.S. for over a year. It forced me to choose between my son's health and keeping our family together. We are angry, but we know our son did not die in vain."

The child's distraught mother mourned privately at home.

Abdullah Hassan died Friday at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in Oakland, where his father brought him in the fall to get treatment for a degenerative brain condition. He had been on life support when his 21-year-old mother, Shaima Swileh, arrived last week.

Hassan spent his youth in California's central valley after his family immigrated there from Yemen. During a trip to the war-torn country in 2016, he fell in love with Swileh and married her that same year.

Because she is Yemeni, Swileh was restricted from traveling to the United States under the White House travel ban that's keeping citizens from Yemen and four other mostly Muslim countries from entering the country.

The family stayed in Cairo, Egypt, while Swileh tried to obtain a waiver to that ban, which would allow her a visa to travel with her family to the United States to receive medical treatment for the boy. But she

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was repeatedly denied travel documents, Hassan said.

When Abdullah's health worsened, Hassan went ahead to California in October to get their son help. As the couple fought for a waiver, doctors put Abdullah on life support.

"My wife is calling me every day wanting to kiss and hold her son for the one last time," said Hassan, choking up at a news conference earlier this month.

He started losing hope and was considering pulling his son off life support to end his suffering. But then a hospital social worker reached out to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which sued on Dec. 16, said Basim Elkarra, executive director of the advocacy group in Sacramento.

The State Department granted Swileh a waiver the next day, and she has since received a visa to stay in the country.

She was pictured cradling her son in the hospital 10 days ago.

"With their courage, this family has inspired our nation to confront the realities of Donald Trump's Muslim Ban," said Saad Sweilem, a lawyer with the council who represents the family. "In his short life, Abdullah has been a guiding light for all of us in the fight against xenophobia and family separation."

Hassan said he hopes his family's struggle will lead to policy changes and families like his will not have to separate.

This story has been corrected to show that the boy's first name is spelled Abdullah, not Abdallah.

Amid 2018's tragedies were moments of compassion and duty

By The Associated Press

Deadliest shooting at an American high school: Parkland, Florida.

Deadliest U.S. wildfire in a century: Paradise, California.

Deadliest attack on Jews in American history: Pittsburgh.

The cities of Parkland, Paradise and Pittsburgh became synonymous with tragedy in 2018, a year when the nation seemed to careen from one deadly horror to another. Yet in every calamity, there were people who showed their humanity, their selfless strength and their sense of duty amid the suffering.

As the year draws to a close, Associated Press reporters on the front lines of some of the year's heart-breaking stories offer up accounts of compassion and decency.

'I CHOSE TO ACT'

Rabbi Jeffrey Myers said no class in any seminary could have prepared anyone for the role he was thrust into.

Myers was leading Shabbat services when gunfire erupted inside his Pittsburgh synagogue on Oct. 27. After helping others to safety, Myers turned back and raced up the stairs to a choir loft, where he called 911. Seven members of his Tree of Life congregation and four others in the building were killed.

As the Jewish community grieved, Myers took a leading role during public memorials and presided over seven funerals in the space of less than a week.

"I really had two choices when it came down to how to respond," Myers said. "One of them was ... curl up with a bottle of scotch. The second choice was to act upon it. I chose to act upon it."

His response inspired Tree of Life congregants, including retired psychiatrist Joe Charny, 90.

"There's no question that he's been super, and it's hard to imagine that anybody could have done a better job," Charny said. "He has the right touch. He has maintained through all this a sense of humor. I don't know how he's done that."

Myers has vowed to no longer use the word "hate."

"To me, that's the mission that has come out of this, that for 11 beautiful people to have not died in vain," the rabbi said. "The conversation about hate speech in America must be elevated and it must gain attention, because that type of speech leads to action such as what happened at my synagogue."

— AP writer Mark Scoloro in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

A MORBID BUT CRITICAL TASK

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It was the week before Thanksgiving when Craig Covey got the call for what would be his most difficult mission as a search-and-rescue team leader: picking through the ashes of Paradise for human remains.

It was a morbid but critical task.

A wildfire that swept through on Nov. 8 all but obliterated Paradise, once home to 27,000 people. To find and identify the 86 dead, authorities had to call on searchers like Covey to gather up what amounted in some cases to little more than teeth, bone fragments or artificial hips. Then they had to rely on the expertise of rapid-testing DNA labs, forensic anthropologists and other specialists.

"It was apocalyptic up there," Covey said several weeks after returning home to Costa Mesa, California.

Covey's team is deployed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to disasters across the country and beyond. Earlier this year, his team helped rescue an exhausted 82-year-old man who had been flushed out of his car by floodwaters and pinned in some trees amid Hurricane Florence in North Carolina.

Paradise was different, but brought rewards of its own.

"We weren't shaking hands with people," Covey said. "But we were making a difference for folks, for closure, who are missing their families."

— AP writer Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California

DOGS IN TUNE WITH HUMANS

When classes resumed in late February following the massacre of 17 students and staff at Parkland's Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School, a therapy dog by the name of Fergie was brought in.

Fergie, an 8-year-old cross between a golden retriever and a poodle, zeroed in on one young man and sat on his feet the entire class, barely moving, said Aneysi Fernandez, volunteer coordinator of the non-profit group Canine Assisted Therapy.

"It turned out that was one of the students who lost most of his friends in the shooting," said Fernandez. "Some of our dogs like Fergie are very in tune with human emotions."

Several therapy animal groups helped out in those dark days after the Feb. 14 mass shooting. The dogs — and in some cases, donkeys and horses — went into the cafeteria and classrooms. They were also at vigils and marches.

Fernandez's organization sent 35 therapy dogs and their handlers into the school. All of the animals were trained and selected for their calm, happy demeanor.

Some Parkland students specifically asked for a dog to shadow them during classes, saying that the animals' presence eased the stress of returning to a place where such a horrible thing happened.

"It's nice not to be asked any questions, to not have to relive the event," Fernandez said. "Everyone grieves differently. Students who didn't want to talk could pet a dog."

Ten months after the tragedy, a dozen dogs still show up at the school every day, mostly to sit by the side of those teens who need a calming presence.

— AP writer Tamara Lush in St. Petersburg, Florida

'IT'S IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD'

It was known as the Wall of Forgotten Natives, a sprawling homeless encampment that sprouted along a Minneapolis freeway sound barrier over the summer.

Most of those living there were American Indians, who make up an outsized portion of the homeless population in the city, and the tents stood on what was once Dakota land.

University of Minnesota medical and law student Kristina Tester grew up nearby and began helping at the camp as part of an elective rotation for her degree. She began doing clean-needle exchanges and continued on as a volunteer for months after her assignment ended.

"There's really not much of a difference between myself and any of the residents who are here at the homeless camp, other than sort of luck of the draw and geographic-political lottery," she said.

The 26-year-old Tester said she organized groups of university students to do laundry for camp residents. She also served meals about once a week with neighbors. Recently she delivered cookies and blankets made by high school students.

Tester, who is non-Indian, said she did it because "it's in my neighborhood."

At its peak, the encampment had 300 people, but they began moving into a temporary shelter across

the highway as winter approached.

Maggie Thunder Hawk, 56, an Oglala Lakota from Wanblee, South Dakota, picked up two blankets that Tester delivered.

"If it wasn't for her, we'd be cold, because she brings us warm blankets," Thunder Hawk said.

"I love her."

— AP writer Jeff Baenen in Minneapolis

AP writer Jocelyn Gecker in San Francisco contributed to this story.

California officer's killing reignites sanctuary law fight

By **OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ** and **JOCELYN GECKER**, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The shooting death of a California police officer has reignited the debate over sanctuary laws, with a sheriff all but blaming the statewide immigration policy for the killing as he announced the arrest of a man living in the U.S. illegally.

A two-day statewide manhunt ended Friday with the arrest of Gustavo Perez Arriaga, who came out with his hands up as a SWAT team prepared to raid a home in Bakersfield, about 200 miles (320 kilometers) southeast of where Cpl. Ronil Singh was shot in the small town of Newman before dawn Wednesday.

Perez Arriaga was captured while planning to flee to his native Mexico, authorities said.

Sheriff Adam Christianson, who led the investigation, blamed California's sanctuary law for preventing local authorities from reporting Perez Arriaga to U.S. immigration officials for deportation after two previous drunken driving arrests.

"We can't ignore the fact that this could have been preventable," Christianson told reporters, asking why the state was "providing sanctuary for criminals (and) gang members. It's a conversation we need to have."

The laws are a flashpoint between jurisdictions that say they allow immigrant communities to report crimes without fear of deportation and the Trump administration, which has vowed to crack down on such cities and states.

President Donald Trump tweeted about Singh's killing Thursday by saying it was "time to get tough on Border Security. Build the Wall!"

The immigration fight has intensified as Trump pushes for funding for a border wall that congressional Democrats oppose, forcing a partial government shutdown.

Perez Arriaga crossed the border in Arizona several years ago and had worked a variety of jobs as a laborer, including at several dairies. The 33-year-old had gang affiliations and multiple Facebook pages with different names, Christianson said.

An email to a sheriff's spokesman asking whether Perez Arriaga had a lawyer who could speak on his behalf wasn't returned and a phone call rang to a voicemail that was full.

California's sanctuary law includes more than 800 exceptions for violent crimes and felonies and bars police from asking people about their citizenship status.

Gov. Jerry Brown has said the law strikes a balance between protecting families and ensuring consequences for serious criminals. His spokesman said Friday that if the suspect was a known gang member, police could have informed federal authorities.

"California law fully permits the sharing of information on dangerous gang members," spokesman Evan Westrup said.

Former state Sen. Kevin de Leon, the Democrat who wrote the legislation, said it's "highly irresponsible" to blame the law for the officer's death.

"The type of tone and attitude that Sheriff Christianson has taken instills fear and panic in all immigrant communities" that could make people afraid to report crimes, de Leon told KNX-AM radio in Los Angeles.

Cpl. Singh had pulled over a suspected drunken driver in Newman when he was fatally wounded, and he managed to fire back but didn't hit the attacker, authorities have said.

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A resident who saw the driver get behind the wheel flagged down Singh and heard the gunshots minutes later, Stanislaus County sheriff's Sgt. Tom Letras told the Modesto Bee newspaper.

Authorities have arrested seven other people, including Perez Arriaga's brothers, 25-year-old Adrian Virgen and 34-year-old Conrado Virgen Mendoza; his girlfriend, 30-year-old Ana Leyde Cervantes; and a co-worker, 27-year-old Erik Razo Quiroz, authorities said. Three people were arrested at the home near Bakersfield.

All are accused of helping Perez Arriaga, who's expected to be arraigned on charges Wednesday, authorities said.

Singh, 33, was also an immigrant, coming legally from his native Fiji to fulfill his dream of becoming an officer, authorities said. Singh had a newborn son and joined the 12-officer Newman police force in 2011.

Newman Police Chief Randy Richardson called him a patriot.

"This is a man that loved his country. This is a man that worked hard for what he believed in. He believed in this community," the chief said at a candlelight vigil that hundreds attended Friday night to honor Singh.

"Ronil loved his job," Reggie Singh told the crowd, holding his brother's 5-month-old son.

Associated Press writers Daisy Nguyen in San Francisco, Amanda Lee Myers in Los Angeles and Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento contributed to this report.

Short on solutions, long on blame in 2nd shutdown weekend

By ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Cooped up in the White House after canceling a vacation to his private Florida club, President Donald Trump fired Twitter barbs at Democrats on Saturday as talks to end a weeklong partial government shutdown remained at a stalemate.

As the disruption in federal services and public employees' pay appeared set to continue into the new year, there were no signs of any substantive negotiation between the blame-trading parties. Trump held out for billions in federal funds for a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, which Democrats have said they were intent on blocking.

Trump tweeted Saturday that he was "in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come on over and make a deal on Border Security." But there has been little direct contact between the sides during the stalemate, and Trump did not ask Republicans, who hold a monopoly on power in Washington for another five days, to keep Congress in session.

As he called for Democrats to negotiate on the wall, Trump brushed off criticism that his administration bore any responsibility for the recent deaths of two migrant children in Border Patrol custody. Trump claimed the deaths were "strictly the fault of the Democrats and their pathetic immigration policies that allow people to make the long trek thinking they can enter our country illegally." His comments on Twitter came as his Homeland Security secretary met with medical professionals and ordered policy changes meant to better protect children detained at the border.

Trump earlier had upped the brinkmanship by threatening anew to close the border with Mexico to press Congress to cave to his demand for money to pay for a wall. Democrats are vowing to pass legislation restoring the government as soon as they take control of the House on Thursday, but that won't accomplish anything unless Trump and the Republican-controlled Senate go along with it.

Talks have been at a stalemate for more than a week, after Democrats said the White House offered to accept \$2.5 billion for border security last Saturday. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer told Vice President Mike Pence that it wasn't acceptable, nor was it guaranteed that Trump, under intense pressure from his conservative base to fulfill his signature campaign promise, would settle for that amount.

Trump has remained out of the public eye since returning to the White House early Thursday from a 29-hour visit to U.S. troops in Iraq, instead taking to Twitter to attack Democrats. He also moved to defend himself from criticism that he couldn't deliver on the wall while the GOP controlled both the House and Senate.

"For those that naively ask why didn't the Republicans get approval to build the Wall over the last year,

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it is because IN THE SENATE WE NEED 10 DEMOCRAT VOTES, and they will gives us "NONE" for Border Security!," he tweeted. "Now we have to do it the hard way, with a Shutdown."

Meanwhile, the effects to the public of the impasse grew as the Environmental Protection Agency, which had the money to function a week longer than some agencies, implemented its shutdown plan at midnight Friday night. EPA spokeswoman Molly Block said many of the agency's 14,000 employees were being furloughed, while disaster-response teams and certain other employees deemed essential would stay on the job. That includes workers needed for preventing immediate public health threats at more than 800 Superfund hazardous-waste sites.

Also running short on money: the Smithsonian Institution, which said its museums, art galleries and zoo in the capital will close starting midweek if the partial shutdown drags on.

But federal flood insurance policies will continue to be issued and renewed, in a reversal prompted by pressure from lawmakers, said Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida.

Trump appeared no closer to securing money for his signature border wall, which he vowed during the campaign that he would make Mexico pay for. He's failed to do so. Now Democratic leaders are adamant that they will not authorize money for the project, calling it wasteful and ineffective. They show no signs of bending, either.

The shutdown is forcing hundreds of thousands of federal workers and contractors to stay home or work without pay.

The White House has not directly engaged in weeks with the House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, who has all but locked up the support she needs to win the speaker's gavel after the new Congress convenes on Thursday.

Pelosi has vowed to pass legislation to reopen the nine shuttered departments and dozens of agencies now hit by the partial shutdown as soon as she takes the gavel.

Pelosi spokesman Drew Hammill added that Democrats are united against the wall and won't seriously consider any White House offer unless Trump backs it publicly because he "has changed his position so many times."

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Lisa Mascaro and Juliet Linderman in Washington contributed to this report.

Military women, female veterans are shifting away from GOP

By HOPE YEN and JENNIFER McDERMOTT, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It had been months since retired Lt. Cmdr. Michele Fitzpatrick paid attention to news coverage. She was turned off by President Donald Trump's tweetstorms and attacks on critics such as the late Republican Sen. John McCain, a war hero. But as the November midterm elections approached, she fired up her laptop.

A member of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy's Class of 1980, the first to include women, Fitzpatrick began researching candidates and poring over issues. On Election Day, she voted without hesitation: all Democrat.

"I just don't think what's happening now is helpful," Fitzpatrick, of Groton, Connecticut, said in a telephone interview, pointing to the negative discourse in Washington. "It's almost like watching kids and bullies on the playground instead of people actually doing something about helping this country to survive and to thrive."

That's hardly a startling view from a Democrat these days. But from a military vet?

Long seen as a bastion of support for Republicans, the face of the U.S. military and its veterans is changing — and perhaps too is their political bent.

Veterans by and large did vote for GOP candidates on Nov. 6, affirming Trump's frequent claim that they stand among his strongest backers. But more women are joining the military, and they are bucking the pattern, according to data from AP VoteCast.

The 60-year-old Fitzpatrick recalls suppressing her opinions as a young "hardcore Democrat" in an

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overwhelmingly Republican military but finding other ways to promote change, such as supporting other female cadets.

Now, women in the military are helping elect new Democratic lawmakers and spur discussion on once little-mentioned topics such as sexual harassment and women in combat roles. As political candidates, female veterans also had a breakout performance in the midterms, sometimes campaigning as a foil to Trump: empathetic and competent on issues such as health care while also trustworthy on military and defense, typically a GOP strength.

"I see this as a beginning edge of a larger movement," said Jeremy Teigen, professor of political science at Ramapo College and author of "Why Veterans Run: Military Service in American Presidential Elections, 1789-2016."

Both current and former female service members were more likely to vote in the 2018 midterm elections for Democrats than Republicans, 60 percent to 36 percent, according to the data from VoteCast. Men with military backgrounds voted Republican by roughly the same margin, 58 percent to 39 percent.

A record number of female veterans — four — were elected to the House, all Democrats. Three won in political swing districts, helping give the party control of the chamber next year.

Democratic Rep.-elect Chrissy Houlahan, a former Air Force captain, said she was motivated to run after organizing a bus trip last year to the Women's March in Washington. She felt her election would serve as a repudiation of Trump, but she avoided sharp rhetoric in favor of a message of service to country and getting things done.

She recalled Pennsylvania voters telling her they were exhausted by gridlock and partisan attacks and "would like our nation and our democracy and our values to stabilize to what we can recognize."

All told, 55 percent of voters who had served in the military backed Republican candidates in the elections, compared to 42 percent who supported Democrats, according to VoteCast data.

Trump frequently embraces the U.S. military and veterans in speeches, referring to "my military," though he has also insulted war heroes such as McCain and military families who criticize him. "I think the vets, maybe more than anybody else, appreciate what we are doing for them," Trump said last month.

Not the female veterans, though. Their margin of support for Democrats was comparable to that of women overall, according to VoteCast data.

AP VoteCast is a nationwide survey of more than 115,000 midterm voters — including more than 4,000 current and former service members — conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago.

Laura Cavallaro, 35, who served on active duty in the Marine Corps from 2001 to 2005 and on inactive duty until 2009, says she's never voted but thinks she will in 2020. A recent graduate of Rhode Island College, she said she believes Trump has kept his promises about helping the economy and creating jobs. At the same time, "Who knows if he's going to say something to the wrong person and start another war?" she said. That's particularly concerning for military veterans who know what's at stake in combat.

When Cavallaro joined the military, she considered herself a Republican because her parents were. Now, she sees herself more as an independent, saying she's pro-gun rights and pro-gay rights.

"I think being in the military kind of opened my eyes to a lot more things," she said. "If I had stayed in Rhode Island, I wouldn't have met so many different personalities and people with other political views."

In 2016, the Defense Department lifted all restrictions on the roles women can perform in the military, spurring broader debate about combat missions and even whether women should be eligible for the draft.

Currently, there are more than 20 million veterans of the U.S. armed forces, about 10 percent of them female, the fastest growing subgroup. In the U.S. military forces, 16.6 percent of those enlisted are women, up from about 2 percent in 1973.

Women now make up 20 percent of the Air Force, 19 percent of the Navy, 15 percent of the Army and 8.6 percent of the Marines, according to Defense Department figures. In the Coast Guard, a division of the Department of Homeland Security, women make up 22 percent of the officers and 13 percent of those enlisted. The Coast Guard Academy, where Fitzpatrick was among the first women to attend in 1976,

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enrolled a class this year that is 40 percent female, a new high.

Teigen, who studies military voting, said that in the context of the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment, female veterans running for office provided a contrast for voters, "someone who was willing to volunteer to take time out of their youth to serve their country and stand up for others," compared to Trump, a New York billionaire with five wartime draft deferments and a fraught history with women. Of the military veterans who ran for the House, 12 were women, the highest number ever.

Houlahan will serve her first House term starting in January, along with former Navy pilot Mikie Sherrill, D-N.J., and Navy veteran Elaine Luria, D-Va., who defeated another veteran, Republican Rep. Scott Taylor, a former Navy SEAL. The women prevailed in tight races by tying their opponents to Trump and the GOP congressional majority while pledging to work on both sides of the aisle. All had stories about being among the only women working among men and used their platforms to speak out about abuses in the military.

Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii, a frequent Trump critic, also won re-election. She is a member of her state's National Guard.

In all, seven female veterans will serve in the next Congress, up from four. The veterans in the House will join Sens. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., a former U.S. Army helicopter pilot, and Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, a combat veteran in the Iowa Army National Guard. Rep. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., a retired Air Force colonel, lost her Senate bid but was later appointed by Arizona's governor to replace Sen. Jon Kyl in the seat that belonged to McCain.

"I sure hope I get to make history," Houlahan said cautiously, when asked about her candidacy and the influence female veterans could have on Washington. "That would be amazing. And I would be happy to serve everybody, not just the women and the Democrats."

McDermott reported from Providence, Rhode Island. AP writers Lolita C. Baldor, Emily Swanson and Hannah Fingerhut in Washington contributed to this report.

Congo on Sunday faces a troubled, long-delayed election

By MATHILDE BOUSSION, Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — Congo's presidential election takes place on Sunday after more than two years of delays. Protests, an opposition outcry and the surprise barring of 1 million voters from the polls over an Ebola outbreak marked the final days of preparations.

The country faces what could be its first peaceful, democratic transfer of power as President Joseph Kabila, who took office in 2001, steps aside. Some observers, however, fear further unrest. The election commission chief has worried openly about rebels shooting voters waiting at the polls.

With political activities banned in the capital, Kinshasa, in the final days, residents instead gathered at newsstands to fiercely debate the fate of a country wealthy in minerals crucial for the world's smartphones and electric cars and yet desperately underdeveloped.

With the top candidates largely unknown until months ago, there is much to discuss.

Kinshasa's governor banned political activities in the vibrant opposition stronghold as leading candidate Martin Fayulu arrived to campaign. Fayulu, a businessman and Kinshasa lawmaker who emerged to lead an opposition coalition, has blamed Kabila's supporters for attempts to impede his campaign, including blocked flights and deadly assaults on supporters. Kabila has dismissed such accusations.

"The international community has to ask why only one candidate was disturbed," Fayulu told The Associated Press this week.

The opposition is fractured after Felix Tshisekedi, son of late opposition icon Etienne Tshisekedi, dropped out of the coalition to run on his own. Two other opposition heavyweights, former vice president Jean-Pierre Bemba and former governor Moise Katumbi, were blocked from running.

Even if the opposition were unified, some Congolese said it would have no chance against Kabila's preferred successor, ruling party loyalist Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary. His campaign billboards far outnumber those of other candidates in Kinshasa, but he is largely unpopular there.

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Shadary is under European Union sanctions for obstructing Congo's electoral process as interior minister and for a crackdown on people protesting the election delay. The international pressure has annoyed Congo's government, and EU and other Western election observers have not been invited to watch Sunday's vote.

"No one loves the ruling party candidate but we already know what is going to happen. Sunday's vote is not credible and we will contest the results," said Ange Mvouessa, a civil servant who said he has not been paid in 18 months. He is backing Fayulu.

More than anything, he and others said they want peace in a country that has seen little of it.

Millions of people have died over two decades of fighting that began with the ouster of longtime leader Mobutu Sese Seko by a rebel coalition led by Kabila's father. Dozens of rebel groups remain active in the mineral-rich east and elsewhere.

Meanwhile, corruption is widespread. "Congo is a blessed country, we have everything but we are starving because of bad management," another Kinshasa resident, Thomas Basele, said. "We don't want corruption anymore, we are suffocating but Kabila doesn't want the population to speak," added Sylvie Imela.

The frustration flared into sometimes deadly protests as the election, once set for late 2016, was repeatedly delayed. Now the electoral commission's last-minute decision to bar some 1 million people from voting on Sunday because of an Ebola outbreak has brought more unrest.

Voters in the Ebola-hit cities of Beni and Butembo, where Fayulu campaigned to enthusiastic crowds, have protested. Health officials have said precautions were in place to allow the vote. The World Health Organization on Friday warned that "prolonged insecurity" could hurt what has become the second-deadliest Ebola outbreak in history.

The electoral commission is "manipulating the population to spark an uprising," Mvouessa, the civil servant, said. "But we know better than those manipulations. Congolese people don't want violence anymore."

Fayulu's opposition coalition has called for calm. Beni's civil society has urged residents to turn out again on Sunday and demand to vote with the rest of the country.

Congo's 40 million voters now face an unprecedented test. Voting machines are being used for the first time, bringing opposition concerns that they could be used to manipulate election results.

Critics say many in rural Congo have little or no computer experience, while officials project that each person should take under a minute to vote. Lack of electricity in large parts of the country could turn a malfunction into a mess. Some machines have to be carried on the heads of porters through the bush to reach remote polling stations.

Some Congolese election observers in the past week alleged that voting materials were not yet in place. In Kinshasa, a fire several days ago destroyed thousands of the machines and officials replaced most of them. Now people must use a limited number of polling stations.

The electoral commission says everything is ready, to shouts of disbelief.

"One thing is for sure, (the commission) is not playing transparency at all," said Luc Lutala, spokesman for one observer group, SYMOCEL. "We see trucks coming in and out from voting centers, but there is no way to know what is in it, or not."

Less than 48 hours before the vote, police in Kinshasa guarded newly delivered equipment at polling stations. But several people trained to be electoral agents told the AP they had yet to see a voting machine.

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US retailers hope higher pay will buy more efficient workers

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO, AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's retailers, struggling to fill jobs, have been raising pay to try to keep and attract enough employees. Now, some stores want something in return: A more efficient worker.

To that end, retailers, fast food restaurants and other lower-wage employers are boosting investment in technology and redesigning stores. Walmart is automating its truck unloading to require fewer workers on loading docks. Kohl's is using more hand-held devices to speed check-outs and restock shelves.

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McDonald's is increasingly replacing cashiers with self-service kiosks to free up workers for table service.

Retail workers, though comparatively low-paid, have enjoyed some of the best wage gains in the past year. Their hourly pay rose 4.3 percent in November from a year earlier — much faster than such higher-wage industries as manufacturing, where pay rose 1.8 percent.

Walmart raised its starting pay to \$11 an hour this year. Target's minimum is \$12, with plans to make it \$15 by 2020. Amazon's starting wage leapt to \$15 in November. And more than 20 states have raised minimum wages above the federal \$7.25 an hour. California and Washington state's wage floors will reach \$12 on Jan. 1. New York's will be \$11.80.

Even as they've absorbed higher labor costs, most retailers remain reluctant to pass them on to customers in the form of price increases. American consumers have grown increasingly insistent on bargain prices — in part a hangover from the Great Recession, in part a function of online price-comparison tools. Retailers are loath to alienate them and send them looking for alternative sellers.

"It's extraordinarily hard for retailers to systematically raise prices," said Jason Goldberg, chief commerce strategy officer at Publicis Communications NA, a digital consulting agency. "These days, everyone's prices are way more transparent. It's just one click away from your super computer in your pocket."

So unless companies are willing to eat all or part of their higher labor costs, they need to increase their workers' efficiency. A company's wage increase of 10 percent can be offset if its employees produce 10 percent more.

"We need ...meaningful improvements" in productivity, said Greg Foran, CEO of Walmart's US division. "Pricing generally isn't going up. It's going to come down as competition intensifies."

Though higher wages are driving retailers to make workers more efficient, cost isn't the only factor. The companies are also under intensifying pressure to speed delivery times of online orders to compete with Amazon and please customers who expect fast delivery.

Walmart employees can now use mobile devices to check whether an item is in stock and avoid trekking to distant storerooms. The phones also send alerts when an item needs a price change and directs workers to those items.

And in a cluster of stores, Walmart has deployed robots that monitor stockpiles and can send photos of empty shelves to employees' phones. The information is sent to a conveyer system that scans boxes being unloaded from trucks. Workers then organize the boxes for delivery to the sales floor. The system has slashed the number of people needed to unload trucks.

"When I first started working for Walmart, we would unload the truck and you would have associates running all over the backroom trying to find out where to put things," said Ty Ford, who has worked at Walmart in Houston for eight years. "It wasn't organized in any way."

One technology being tested is "smart glasses," which display information on the lenses so workers can identify items from online orders for curbside pickup. The glasses can identify which items to pick, thereby saving time that would be spent looking at phones.

To try to raise productivity, retailers are turning mainly to technology rather than hounding employees to work harder. But pressure does creep in: At Target, workers who carry online orders to shoppers' cars now hear a honking horn on their devices, instead of a generic bell, to signify that customers are waiting.

Jaana Remes, an economist at McKinsey Global Institute, noted that after the Great Recession, stagnant pay reduced the incentive for employers to invest in labor-saving technology. Now, that's starting to reverse. Remes pointed out that labor-saving technology is more common in countries where pay is higher. Self-serve restaurants, for example, are more prevalent in Scandinavia and Japan than in the United States.

"When have you seen grocery baggers in Europe?" Remes said. "We still have them in the U.S."

But perhaps not for long. For this year's holiday shopping season, some Target employees began using mobile devices to check out shoppers. Under pressure from online retailers, Target is also investing in technology to transform its stores into shipping hubs to cut costs and speed deliveries.

CEO Brian Cornell said in November that the company wants to achieve efficiencies to help offset the cost of higher pay and other investments. So Target has redesigned the back rooms of most of its 1,800

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stores to shave seconds off picking and packing and to accelerate online shipments.

During a recent tour of a Target in Edison, New Jersey, workers undertook specialized tasks in assembly line operations in a space the size of about 12 of its parking spaces. Once filled, carts are placed on marked spots within arm's reach of workers who pack shipments. Apps reveal how much tape to use for each box. Packers use foot pedals to dispense inflated air pillows to cushion items when boxed.

It's unclear whether retailers' efforts will be enough to boost the overall productivity of America's workforce, which has been mired in anemic growth since the Great Recession. Productivity — output per hour worked — is critical to rising living standards. An economy can expand only as fast as its working age population and the growth in worker productivity.

Though U.S. productivity has picked up a bit this year, it grew just 1.3 percent in the July-September quarter from a year earlier. That's only about half the pace of the 1990s and early 2000s.

Economists have suggested several theories to explain chronically weak productivity growth. Some say the U.S. is just less innovative than in the past. Others think the government has trouble measuring the impact of free or low-cost inventions, like search engines and music streaming services, and that workers are actually more productive than we think.

Many economists also note that it can take time for businesses to determine how best to capitalize on new technologies. Retailers are still experimenting, for example, with mobile devices, which have been in use for at least a decade. Personal computers began appearing in offices in the 1980s but didn't accelerate productivity until much later.

Kohl's is just now stepping up its use of mobile technology to help employees restock shelves more efficiently and equipping some with iPad devices for faster checkouts.

"We know that there will be continued headwinds from wage pressures," Bruce Besanko, Kohl's chief financial officer, told industry analysts last month. "And so we know that we needed to find more ways" to cut costs.

To save on labor costs, McDonald's has installed self-service kiosks in 4,000 of its U.S. restaurants this year. All told, about half its roughly 14,000 U.S. restaurants now include them.

"When you've got your two major lines — food and labor — both with inflationary increases, that puts pressure on the bottom line," McDonald's CEO Stephen Easterbrook said in October.

Mooyah, a hamburger chain with 80 restaurants mostly in the South, is responding to higher wages by reconfiguring its new restaurants to enable cooks to function like basketball players — pivoting on one foot when necessary but mostly remaining in place. During peak hours, this system is intended to enable five employees to do work that now requires up to nine. (Mooyah is owned by the private equity firm Balmoral Funds.)

"They need to do everything without steps," said Michael Mabry, Mooyah's chief operating officer.

Mabry said that because the store has had to raise pay in recent years, "we've got to offset that somewhere, and it can't all flow through to the guest, because they'll push back on pricing."

How all this affects most workers isn't quite clear.

Eric Hoffman, who worked at Walmart distribution centers for 13 years, is all too familiar with a darker side of companies seeking to boost productivity. Hoffman, 33, used to enjoy his job loading cases onto a shipping dock for Walmart, most recently in Winter Haven, Florida. He earned \$21.90 an hour and received bonuses for exceeding production quotas.

But over the past year, he said, managers raised quotas and shortened the time available to do tasks. And there was an added pressure, too: Management, Hoffman said, told workers they had to "beat Amazon."

"You guys don't want to become like Kmart," his bosses would say.

Hoffman quit his job five months ago to take an apprenticeship at an electrical company, installing equipment that pays about \$10.50 per hour.

"The stress is gone," Hoffman said.

In response, Walmart said it's been testing ways to increase production in light of rising competition, online demand and higher labor costs.

"We are focused on making our operations more effective and efficient while innovating to make work easier and more engaging for our associates," said Michelle Malashock, a spokeswoman, who declined to address Hoffman's specific complaints.

Transitions to new technologies and business processes, Remes noted, can be difficult and disruptive for employees.

"The good news is that tech-enabled productivity gains help make workers' time more valuable and could lead to wage gains," she said. "They also incentivize companies to invest on worker skills, opening up better opportunities in the future."

D'Innocenzio reported from New York.

Bankruptcy leaves Detroit police abuse claims unpaid

By ED WHITE, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Detroit could have been on the hook for millions of dollars in a lawsuit alleging police abuse. Lawyers, however, are closing the case after eight years, acknowledging that the claims of possibly 200,000 people are practically worthless.

The reason? Detroit's 2013 bankruptcy.

The 2010 lawsuit, which described poor conditions in holding cells and excessive detentions, was in progress when Detroit became the largest U.S. city to seek protection from creditors. The city eventually emerged with a clean balance sheet, a robust downtown and a national buzz among millennials .

But a new, flush Detroit doesn't mean a windfall for people who won the class-action case.

Instead, they would need to get in line like other creditors because the lawsuit was pending during the bankruptcy. Attorneys worked on a settlement with the city but concluded it wasn't practical: A \$1,000 recovery per person could be worth as little as \$40 — and paid over many years.

"The costs involved in issuing and mailing these checks will be greater than the value of the checks themselves," attorney Cindy Tsai said in a court filing.

A federal judge got an update on Nov. 28 and told both sides to draft an order for him to decertify the class, which is still pending.

"It has nothing to do with the merits of their case," explained Anthony Sabino, who followed Detroit's bankruptcy and teaches business law at St. John's University in New York. "This is an unfortunate but unavoidable outcome when a party files for bankruptcy. They're in this huge ocean of general creditors and there's really nothing to be had for them. ... They're only eligible to share in the pennies left over."

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Johnathan Brown and thousands of people who had been arrested by police years earlier. The Detroit Police Department was accused of keeping crime suspects in cold, bare holding cells with no bedding and little food. The lawsuit said people were routinely held for more than 48 hours without review by a judge.

Brown was detained for 55 hours during a homicide investigation and eventually "succumbed to the DPD detectives' tactics and gave a coerced statement," according to the lawsuit.

The city did a poor job defending itself against the allegations. Indeed, U.S. District Judge Thomas Ludington entered a default on the question of whether Detroit was liable. He said there was "neglect and inattention" by city attorneys who repeatedly missed deadlines to produce documents about the holding cells. He turned the case into a class-action in 2012, potentially affecting 200,000 people.

But then Detroit filed for bankruptcy in 2013, freezing any litigation and drastically affecting efforts to collect money when the bankruptcy was over.

As part of a deal to close the case, the city has agreed to pay \$100,000 to attorneys who represented Brown and the potential class. Tsai also told the judge that Detroit has fixed problems that led to the lawsuit.

Tsai, a lawyer at Loevy & Loevy in Chicago, didn't respond to phone calls and emails from The Associated Press seeking comment. Brown, who is in prison for second-degree murder, declined to comment. He will get \$5,000 as the lead plaintiff.

"What the attorneys are getting is a drop in the bucket," said Sabino, referring to the \$100,000. "It's basically expenses. The attorneys are taking a bath. They're sharing the pain."

A lawyer for Detroit, Chuck Raimi, said the lawsuit was caught in "two very difficult areas of law" — bankruptcy and class-action lawsuits. He acknowledged the case could have cost millions of dollars without the protection of bankruptcy. But he also noted that the city might have pursued appeals, too.

"As painful as it is, what folks have to recognize is this is why Detroit's on the mend, by resolving past claims that ended the financial catastrophe the city had labored under for years," Sabino said.

Follow Ed White at <http://twitter.com/edwhiteap>

Trump EPA orders rollback of Obama mercury regulations

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has targeted an Obama-era regulation credited with helping dramatically reduce toxic mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants, saying the benefits to human health and the environment may not be worth the cost of the regulation.

The 2011 Obama administration rule, called the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards, led to what electric utilities say was an \$18 billion clean-up of mercury and other toxins from the smokestacks of coal-fired power plants.

Overall, environmental groups say, federal and state efforts have cut mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants by 85 percent in roughly the last decade.

Mercury causes brain damage, learning disabilities and other birth defects in children, among other harm. Coal power plants in this country are the largest single manmade source of mercury pollutants, which enters the food chain through fish and other items that people consume.

The proposal Friday from the Environmental Protection Agency challenges the basis for the Obama regulation. It calculates that the crackdown on mercury and other toxins from coal plants produced only a few million dollars a year in measurable health benefits and was not "appropriate and necessary" — a legal benchmark under the country's landmark Clean Air Act.

The proposal, which now goes up for public comment before any final administration approval, would leave the current mercury regulation in place.

However, the EPA said it will seek comment during a 60-day public-review period on whether "we would be obligated to rescind" the Obama-era rule if the agency adopts Friday's finding that the regulation was not appropriate and necessary. Any such change would trigger new rounds in what have already been years of court battles over regulating mercury pollution from coal plants.

This move is the latest by the Trump administration that changes estimates of the costs and payoffs of regulations as part of an overhaul of Obama-era environmental protections.

It's also the administration's latest proposed move on behalf of the U.S. coal industry, which has been struggling in the face of competition from natural gas and other cheaper, cleaner forms of energy. The Trump administration in August proposed an overhaul for another Obama-era regulation that would have prodded electricity providers to get less of their energy from dirtier-burning coal plants.

In a statement, the EPA said Friday the administration was "providing regulatory certainty" by more accurately estimating the costs and benefits of the Obama administration crackdown on mercury and other toxic emissions from smokestacks.

Hal Quinn, head of the National Mining Association, charged in a statement Friday that the Obama administration had carried out "perhaps the largest regulatory accounting fraud perpetrated on American consumers" when it calculated that the broad health benefits to Americans would outweigh the cost of equipment upgrades by power providers.

Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware, the top Democrat on the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee, condemned the Trump administration's move.

The EPA has "decided to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory" after the successful clean-up of toxins

from the country's coal-plant smokestacks, Carper said.

He and other opponents of the move said the Trump administration was playing with numbers, ignoring what Carper said were clear health, environmental and economic benefits to come up with a bottom line that suited the administration's deregulatory aims.

Janet McCabe, a former air-quality official in the Obama administration's EPA, called the proposal part of "the quiet dismantling of the regulatory framework" for the federal government's environmental protections.

Coming one week into a government shutdown, and in the lull between Christmas and New Year, "this low-key announcement shouldn't fool anyone — it is a big deal, with significant implications," McCabe said.

Farmers risk loss of federal payments, loans, from shutdown

By JULIET LINDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The end of 2018 seemed to signal good things to come for America's farmers. Fresh off the passage of the farm bill, which reauthorized agriculture, conservation and safety net programs, the Agriculture Department last week announced a second round of direct payments to growers hardest hit by President Donald Trump's trade war with China.

Then parts of the government shut down.

The USDA in a statement issued last week assured farmers that checks would continue to go out during the first week of the shutdown. But direct payments for farmers who haven't certified production, as well as farm loans and disaster assistance programs, will be put on hold beginning next week, and won't start up again until the government reopens.

There is little chance of the government shutdown ending soon. Trump and Congress are no closer to reaching a deal over his demand for border wall money, and both sides say the impasse could drag well into January.

Although certain vital USDA programs will remain operational in the short term, that could change if the shutdown lasts for more than a few weeks.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or food stamps, helps feed roughly 40 million Americans. According to the USDA, eligible recipients are guaranteed benefits through January. Other feeding programs, including WIC, which provides food aid and nutrition counseling for pregnant women, new mothers and children, and food distribution programs on Indian reservations, will continue on a local level, but additional federal funding won't be provided. School lunch programs will continue through February.

USDA has earmarked about \$9.5 billion in direct payments for growers of soybeans, corn, wheat, sorghum and other commodities most affected by tariffs. The first round of payments went out in September. The deadline to sign up for the second round of payments is January 15.

The impact of the shutdown, which began shortly before most federal workers were scheduled for a holiday break, started coming into focus by midweek.

About 420,000 employees are working without pay, while 380,000 are being forced to stay home. In the past, federal employees have been paid retroactively. But government contractors won't get paid for hours they'll lose staying home, causing problems for those who rely on hourly wages.

In anticipation of the financial bind many federal workers and contractors may soon find themselves in, the Office of Personnel Management offered some advice: haggle with landlords, creditors and mortgage companies for lower payments until the shutdown is over.

The shutdown also is affecting national parks, although unevenly: Some remain accessible with bare-bones staffing levels, some are operating with money from states or charitable groups, while others are locked off.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 30, the 364th day of 2018. There is one day left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 30, 1853, the United States and Mexico signed a treaty under which the U.S. agreed to buy some 45,000 square miles of land from Mexico for \$10 million in a deal known as the Gadsden Purchase.

On this date:

In 1813, British troops burned Buffalo, New York, during the War of 1812.

In 1860, 10 days after South Carolina seceded from the Union, the state militia seized the United States Arsenal in Charleston.

In 1916, Grigory Rasputin, the so-called "Mad Monk" who wielded considerable influence with Czar Nicholas II, was killed by a group of Russian noblemen in St. Petersburg.

In 1922, Vladimir Lenin proclaimed the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which lasted nearly seven decades before dissolving in December 1991.

In 1936, the United Auto Workers union staged its first "sit-down" strike at the General Motors Fisher Body Plant No. 1 in Flint, Michigan. (The strike lasted until Feb. 11, 1937.)

In 1940, California's first freeway, the Arroyo Seco Parkway connecting Los Angeles and Pasadena, was officially opened by Gov. Culbert L. Olson.

In 1942, a near-riot of bobby-soxers greeted the opening of Frank Sinatra's singing engagement at the Paramount Theater in New York's Times Square.

In 1965, Ferdinand Marcos was inaugurated for his first term as president of the Philippines.

In 1979, Broadway composer Richard Rodgers died in New York at age 77.

In 1989, a Northwest Airlines DC-10, which had been the target of a telephoned threat, flew safely from Paris to Detroit with 22 passengers amid extra-tight security.

In 1997, a deadly massacre in Algeria's insurgency began in four mountain villages as armed men killed women and children in an attack that lasted from dusk until dawn the following morning; up to 412 deaths were reported.

In 1999, former Beatle George Harrison fought off a knife-wielding intruder who'd broken into his mansion west of London and stabbed him in the chest. (The attacker was later acquitted of attempted murder by reason of insanity.)

Ten years ago: A defiant Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich (blah-GOY'-uh-vich) named former state Attorney General Roland Burris to Barack Obama's Senate seat, a surprise move that put the governor's opponents in the uncomfortable position of trying to block his choice from becoming the Senate's only black member. (Burris was sworn in as a U.S. senator the following month.) Israeli aircraft kept up a relentless string of attacks on Hamas-ruled Gaza, smashing a government complex, security installations and the home of a top militant commander. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a law extending presidential terms from four years to six.

Five years ago: Six states were named by federal officials to develop test sites for drones: Alaska, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Texas and Virginia. Barely 12 hours after the NFL's regular season ended, four more head coaches were fired: Washington's Mike Shanahan, Detroit's Jim Schwartz, Minnesota's Leslie Frazier and Tampa Bay's Greg Schiano. (Cleveland's Rob Chudzinski had been fired the night before).

One year ago: A wave of spontaneous protests over Iran's weak economy swept into Tehran, with college students and others chanting against the government. Forecasters issued winter weather advisories across much of the Deep South ahead of plunging temperatures expected as the new year arrived.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Russ Tamblyn is 84. Baseball Hall of Famer Sandy Koufax is 83. Folk singer Noel Paul Stookey is 81. TV director James Burrows is 78. Actor Fred Ward is 76. Singer-musician Michael Nesmith is 76. Actress Concetta Tomei (toh-MAY') is 73. Singer Patti Smith is 72. Rock singer-musician Jeff Lynne is 71. TV personality Meredith Vieira is 65. Actress Sheryl Lee Ralph is 63. Actress Patricia

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Kalember is 62. Country singer Suzy Bogguss is 62. Former "Today" show co-host Matt Lauer is 61. Actress-comedian Tracey Ullman is 59. Rock musician Rob Hotchkiss is 58. Radio-TV commentator Sean Hannity is 57. Sprinter Ben Johnson is 57. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is 55. Actor George Newbern is 55. Movie director Bennett Miller is 52. Singer Jay Kay (Jamiroquai) is 49. Rock musician Byron McMackin (Pennywise) is 49. Actress Meredith Monroe is 49. Actor Daniel Sunjata is 47. Actress Maureen Flannigan is 46. Actor Jason Behr is 45. Golfer Tiger Woods is 43. TV personality-boxer Laila Ali is 41. Actress Lucy Punch is 41. Singer-actor Tyrese Gibson is 40. Actress Eliza Dushku is 38. Rock musician Tim Lopez (Plain White T's) is 38. Actress Kristin Kreuk is 36. Folk-rock singer-musician Wesley Schultz (The Lumineers) is 36. NBA player LeBron James is 34. Rhythm-and-blues singer Andra Day is 34. Actress Anna Wood is 33. Pop-rock singer Ellie Goulding (GOL'-ding) is 32. Actress Caity Lotz is 32. Country musician Eric Steedly is 28. Pop-rock musician Jamie Follese (FAHL'-es-ay) (Hot Chelle (shel) Rae) is 27.

Thought for Today: "I respect faith, but doubt is what gives you an education." — Wilson Mizner, American playwright (1876-1933).