

# Groton Daily Independent

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**Another raging blizzard hit the area Monday with visibility in town reduced to less than two blocks.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## **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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From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: Is so-called eco-friendly dry cleaning a reality? – Jane Krause, Garden City, NJ

Although some greener alternatives exist, most dry cleaners still use perchloroethylene ("perc" for short), a petroleum-based solvent that can be hazardous to the human central nervous system, with exposure causing headaches, nausea, dizziness and memory problems for some people.

Perc's constituent components—phosgene, vinyl chloride, carbon tetrachloride and trichloroacetic acid (TCA)—have also been linked to a range of other health issues, including liver and kidney malfunction, reproductive abnormalities and even cancer. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates perc under the Toxic Substances Control Act, the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Luckily for consumers, safer alternatives to perc for dry cleaning are available. The most common comes from a company called GreenEarth Cleaning, whose products and process form the backbone of a large network of independent "green" dry cleaners across the United States. GreenEarth's process uses biodegradable liquid silicone—essentially liquified sand—in place of petrochemicals. Since liquid silicone is chemically inert, it doesn't chemically react with fabric fibers, and is safe to use on delicate garments—beads, lace, silk, cashmere—and won't cause shrinkage.

And perhaps best of all, it breaks down into natural elements (sand, water and carbon dioxide) that are safe for air, water, soil and people. In fact, liquid silicone is so safe that it is often a base ingredient in many everyday shampoos, conditioners and lotions that we put right onto our skin with no ill effects.

From its humble beginnings in a lab back in 1998, GreenEarth's system is now used by some 6,000 dry cleaners globally. You can find one near you via a zip code search on the company's website.

Another green alternative to dry cleaning is so-called professional wet cleaning, whereby fabric is laundered in a computer-controlled washer and dryer that uses water along with specialized soaps and conditioners instead of solvent—and spins its contents much more slowly than a typical home washing machine. The result is that it's much gentler on fragile clothing.

Yet another eco-friendly choice is liquid carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) cleaning, which uses pressurized CO<sub>2</sub> in combination with other gentle cleaning agents to dissolve dirt, fats and oils in clothing instead of perc.

One often-overlooked option is simply to hand-wash delicate clothes and fabrics in Woolite or some other non-toxic detergent, and then hang them to dry. If you need your hand-washed clothes to have a finished pressed look, you can take them to a standard cleaner for pressing only.

Despite the existence of greener alternatives, four out of five dry cleaners still use perc. Consumers should beware of dry cleaners that advertise their process as organic, given that perc can be considered organic because its petroleum-based chemicals do come out of the ground. If you aren't sure about that neighborhood dry cleaner, ask them a few questions to find out what makes them consider themselves green. Just because they might recycle hangers or plastic bags doesn't get them off the hook as polluters if they use perc or other hazardous substances or processes.

CONTACTS: GreenEarth, [www.greenearthcleaning.com](http://www.greenearthcleaning.com); EPA's "Outdoor Air - Industry, Business, and Home: Dry Cleaning Operations," [archive.epa.gov/airquality/community/web/html/drycleaning.html](http://archive.epa.gov/airquality/community/web/html/drycleaning.html).

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

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## Top prize Lucky For Life ticket sold in Aberdeen

The South Dakota Lottery's latest big winner will ring in the new year with the prize of \$1,000 a day for the rest of his or her life.

Monday's Lucky For Life drawing resulted in South Dakota's first top prize winner in the game. The ticket was sold at Ken's Fairway, located at 2105 6th Ave., SE in Aberdeen. The winning numbers were 4, 10, 15, 19 and 43 with a Lucky Ball of 8.

Monday's top prize winner will receive the option of \$1,000 a day for the rest of his or her life or a one-time payment of approximately \$5.7 million.

If you are Monday's winner, the South Dakota Lottery advises you to seek assistance from a financial advisor and sign the back of the ticket immediately. If you have questions, contact the South Dakota Lottery's Pierre office at 605-773-5770.

While Monday's drawing featured the South Dakota Lottery's first top prize winner in Lucky For Life, the Mount Rushmore State has also been home to a pair of second-prize winners since the game's sales began in South Dakota on June 5, 2017.

Lucky For Life is offered in 23 states plus the District of Columbia, and drawings take place each Monday and Thursday night. For more information on Lucky for Life, visit <https://lottery.sd.gov/games/lottogames/luckyforlife/>.

### 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)**

### 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](mailto:langfordfrontporch@venturecomm.net). (1227.0111)



### GOVERNOR'S COLUMN: THANK YOU AND BOODBYE

This is the last column I will write as Governor of South Dakota, and I want to say "thank you." **Read more...**

**A little humor from the Governor's page on the state website. I wonder what Boodye is?!**



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## Today in Weather History

January 1, 1960: The winter storm began on New Year's Eve as a low-pressure center moved from Colorado northeast to the Great Lakes. Snowfall ranged from 5 to 10 inches across central and northeast South Dakota. High winds on the 1st and 2nd caused low visibilities and drifted highways over affecting holiday travel. There were scattered power and telephone outages due to breakage from wind and ice. The storm wended down in the afternoon of the 2nd.

1864: A historic cold blast of air charged southeast from the northern Plains to Ohio Valley. Chicago had a high temperature 16 degrees below zero. A farmer near Hometown, Indiana, reported the same high temperature as Chicago, with a low of 21 degrees below zero. In his weather diary, he made the remark "rough day." Minneapolis had a temperature of 25 degrees below zero at 2 PM. St. Louis Missouri saw an overnight low of 24 degrees below zero. The Mississippi was frozen solid with people able to cross it.

1934 - Heavy rain which began on December 30th led to flooding in the Los Angeles Basin area of California. Flooding claimed the lives of at least 45 persons. Walls of water and debris up to ten feet high were noted in some canyon areas. Rainfall totals ranged up to 16.29 inches at Azusa, with 8.26 inches reported in Downtown Los Angeles. (The Weather Channel)

1935: The Associated Press Wire Photo Service made its debut, delivering the great weather maps, twice each day to newspapers across the country. The first photo transmitted was a plane crash in the Adirondack of New York on this day. The plane crashed during the evening hours on December 28, but the rescue did not occur until New Year's Day. [Click HERE for more information from the New York History Blog.](#)

1949 - A six day blizzard began over the Northern Rockies and the Great Plains. The storm produced the most adverse weather conditions in the history of the west. (David Ludlum)

1979 - The temperature at Maybell CO plunged to 60 degrees below zero to tie the state record set back in 1951 at Taylor Park. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm brought rain and snow and high winds to the Southern and Middle Atlantic Coast Region. The storm, which occurred in a period of unusually high astronomical tides, produced a tide of 9.4 feet at Myrtle Beach SC (their highest since Hurricane Hazel in 1954) which caused a total of 25 million dollars damage in South Carolina. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Arctic cold gripped the north central U.S. The morning low of 31 degrees below zero at Alamosa CO was a record for the date. Squalls in the Great Lakes Region produced 17 inches of snow at Elmira NY. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Those who woke up New Year's morning unable to see much farther than the end of their nose had a good excuse, at least in the central U.S., as dense fog prevailed from Texas to Wisconsin. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - The new year and decade began on a rather peaceful note. Snow was primarily confined to the Great Lakes Region, the Upper Ohio Valley, and the Sierra Nevada Range of California. Subzero temperature readings were confined to Minnesota and North Dakota. (National Weather Summary)

1994 - Strong winds along the eastern slopes of the Central Rockies gusted to 70 mph at Arlington WY, and gusted to 80 mph near Estes Park CO. Heavy snow in the northeast mountains of Oregon produced 14 inches at Tollgate. A series of storms the first three days of the year produced 20 inches of snow at Lowman, in the west central mountains of Idaho. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1997 - Heavy precipitation fell from December 26, 1996 to January 3, 1997 in much of the west. In the California Sierra Nevadas the Truckee River reached its highest level on record. Lake Tahoe reached its highest level since 1917. Sacramento was spared the worst of the flooding by a system of levees, although many nearby towns were not so fortunate. Numerous levee breaches and breaks occurred across the state. Approximately 16,000 residences were damaged or destroyed. State officials estimated at least \$1.6 billion in damages to private and public property.

1999 - A major blizzard struck portions of the Midwest on January 1-3, 1999. The storm produced 22 inches of snow in Chicago and was rated by the NWS as the second worst blizzard of the 20th century, ranking behind the blizzard in January 1967. Estimates of losses and recovery costs are between \$0.3 and \$0.4 billion with 73 dead as a result of the blizzard. (NCDC)

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Wind ...

New Year's Day



Cold

Tonight



Increasing Clouds

Low: -8 °F

Wednesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 23 °F

Wednesday Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 15 °F

Thursday



Sunny

High: 34 °F

High: -2 °F

## High Temperatures Today

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD  
1/1/2019 4:53 AM

Sisseton Hills  
Downslope  
Winds  
Blowing Snow  
Tonight &  
Wed Morning

- ❖ Mostly Cloudy This Morning
- ❖ Clear For This Afternoon
- ❖ Warmer Temperatures Later This Week!

### 3 Day Forecast Highs

| Wednesday  | Thursday | Friday   |
|------------|----------|----------|
| Teens East | 30s East | 30s East |
| 30s West   | 40s West | 40s West |

← Mostly Sunny →

Published on: 01/01/2019 at 4:56AM

Cold temperatures will continue into mid-week, with some blowing snow for the downslope areas of the northeast which will probably result in some blowing snow as well. Then we see another pattern shift, one that will bring mild air back into the region and this could persist for a week or more.

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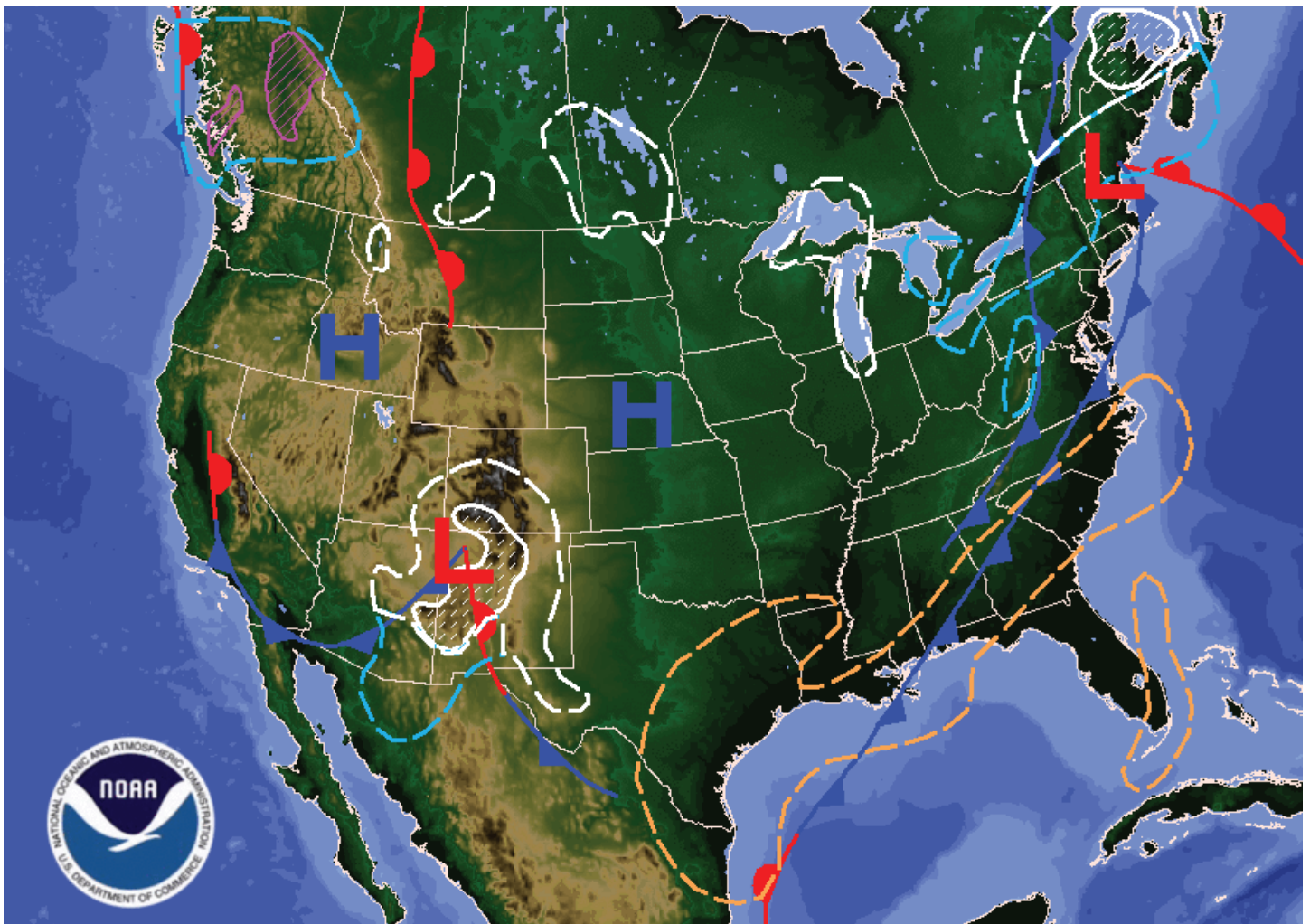
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## Yesterday's Weather

**High Outside Temp: 18 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Low Outside Temp: -10 °F at 10:23 PM**  
**High Gust: 36 mph at 7:12 AM**  
**Precip: 3-4 inches of new snow**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 53° in 1998**  
**Record Low: -32° in 2018**  
**Average High: 22°F**  
**Average Low: 2°F**  
**Average Precip in Dec.: 0.52**  
**Precip to date in Dec.: 0.85**  
**Average Precip to date: 21.72**  
**Precip Year to Date: 16.66**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:01 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:14 a.m.**



### Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Tue, Jan 01, 2019, issued 4:31 AM EST  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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## DOOMED!

Comparing the importance, significance or value of one nation above or below another is an ongoing process. Various criteria are used to measure the worth of nations: the size of the military, gross national product, education, population, employment, agriculture, productivity - and the list goes on and on. But, in the eyes of the Lord, none of these are as critical as the one He would place at the top of His list. In fact, number one on His list would never be included or considered in the nation evaluation list. Yet, nations rise and fall on what is most important to Him: righteousness.

Two of the most important nations of the ancient world were Sodom and Gomorrah. Their location was in the most fertile region of the then known world. So, they would certainly have been recognized as leaders for their agricultural products. But they weren't. They were recognized for their godlessness.

They were not ignorant of the Lord. Rather, they completely ignored Him. They refused to bring God into their lives and weave Him into the fabric of their culture.

As a result of their complete indifference to God, He rained down fire and brimstone on them and utterly destroyed them - along with the other cities and villages on the plain and eliminated all life - the people, the plants and even the animals. Nothing was left.

God has not changed. Nations are, have been and always will be graded by God on their righteousness: On the wicked He will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur.

Prayer: We pray for our nation, Father, that we will turn from our wicked ways and become a godly people. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 11:6 On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot.



## 2018 Groton SD Community Events

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



## News from the Associated Press

### **Dakota Access pipeline developer slow to replace some trees**

**By BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The developer of the Dakota Access oil pipeline missed a year-end deadline to plant thousands of trees along the pipeline corridor in North Dakota, but the company said it was still complying with a settlement of allegations it violated state rules during construction.

Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, which built the \$3.8 billion pipeline that's now moving North Dakota oil to Illinois, is falling back on a provision of the September 2017 agreement. The provision provides more time should the company run into problems providing 20,000 trees to county soil conservation districts along the pipeline's 359-mile (578-kilometer) route across North Dakota.

The deal with North Dakota's Public Service Commission settled allegations that ETP removed too many trees in some areas and that it improperly handled a pipeline route change after discovering Native American artifacts. The artifacts were not disturbed.

The agreement required the company to replant trees and shrubs at a higher ratio in the disputed areas, along with an additional 20,000 trees along the entire route. ETP filed documents in October detailing efforts by a contractor to plant 141,000 trees and shrubs, but the PSC asked the company a month later to provide more documentation that it had complied with all settlement terms.

Company attorney Lawrence Bender recently submitted a report from contractor KC Harvey Environmental further detailing the replanting efforts in the disputed areas. He noted that in some areas where landowners refused trees, the trees were reallocated to other landowners "who had the space and desire to accommodate more plantings."

Only about 8,800 of the required 20,000 additional trees were planted in 2018 through county soil conservation districts due to several factors, including equipment and staffing issues, difficulties finding willing landowners and poor planting conditions, according to Perennial Environmental Services, which ETP hired to handle the work.

A soil conservation district in one of the seven counties refused to participate at all because it didn't feel any of the 15 tree species identified in the settlement agreement were suitable for the county.

The agreement allows for the work to continue into 2019 if there are problems with the tree supply "or other market conditions." Soil conservation districts in six counties have committed to planting about 16,800 more trees in 2019, for a total of more than 25,500, according to Perennial Environmental Services.

PSC officials weren't available Monday for comment on whether the state thinks ETP is justified in prolonging the plantings into the new year.

Under the agreement, ETP also was directed to develop an industry handbook on properly handling pipeline route adjustments and to conduct training. In return, the PSC didn't require the company to admit wrongdoing and scrapped a proposed \$15,000 penalty. The agency has the power to levy up to \$200,000 in fines.

Bender in December detailed training that he said surpassed what was required during the Williston Basin Petroleum Conference in May, the North Dakota Petroleum Council annual meeting in September and the Colorado Oil and Gas Association annual meeting in November.

Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

## Rapid City Regional Airport reopens New Year's Day

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Rapid City Regional Airport has reopened a day after severe weather shut it down.

The airport said on its Facebook page Tuesday employees worked through the night to clean up after blowing and drifting snow caused Monday's closure. The airport reopened about 4 a.m. Officials urged travelers to check with their airline on possible flight changes.

Sunny skies are in the forecast for New Year's Day. But high temperatures Tuesday are expected to stay in the single digits with wind chills of 26 below.

## Departure of Trump's GOP critics in Senate leaves a void

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's most prominent GOP critics on Capitol Hill are days away from completing their Senate careers, raising the question of who — if anyone — will take their place as willing to publicly criticize a president who remains popular with nearly 9 in 10 Republican voters.

Sens. Jeff Flake of Arizona and Bob Corker of Tennessee engaged in a war of words with the president on myriad issues over the past 18 months, generating headlines and fiery tweets from a president who generally insists on getting the last word. Those battles put them on the outs with many in their own party, and they paid a price. Both decided to retire rather than take on a difficult re-election campaign.

Flake was far and away Trump's most consistent critic among Senate Republicans. Corker weighed in less often, but his description of the White House as an "adult day care center" rankled the president, who dubbed him "Liddle' Bob Corker." The feud continued as Corker headed for the exits, with Trump asserting that Corker's promise to serve only two terms was not the real reason he retired. Rather, Corker "wanted to run but poll numbers TANKED when I wouldn't endorse him," Trump tweeted.

Corker replied: "Yes, just like Mexico is paying for the wall... #AlertTheDaycareStaff."

For now, don't expect any Republican senator to take their place as chief agitator when the new Congress convenes Thursday, said Rory Cooper, a GOP strategist who helped lead the "Never Trump PAC" during the 2016 Republican primary. He said publicly criticizing the president makes Republican votes back home unhappy and earns the ire of the president. Meanwhile, Democratic voters and the media give them too little credit, he said.

"There is not an incentive structure for senators who disagree with or oppose the president to speak out right now, but that could change if the (Robert) Mueller investigation continues to move in the direction it has been or the economy churns negative," Cooper said.

Two other Republicans, Sen.-elect Mitt Romney of Utah and Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska, have both had their public run-ins with the president.

Throughout his Senate campaign, Romney insisted that he would agree with Trump on some issues and not be shy about disagreeing on others. Romney appears to have more room with GOP voters in Utah to take on the president. Most voters in Utah — 64 percent — would like to see the senator confront the president, according to data from AP VoteCast, a survey of midterm voters.

But Cooper said he doubts that's a mantle Romney wants to take on, at least not right away. After serving as governor of Massachusetts, Romney will be focused on proving that he's an advocate for Utah, Cooper said.

"I think that's where his head will be at the outset," Cooper said.

Sasse has frequently criticized Trump for what he considers the president's uncivil rhetoric. Sasse has also said he "regularly" considers leaving his party and becoming an independent. He is up for re-election in 2020 and has said he'll decide by the summer whether to seek a second term. It would be tricky terrain for Sasse to publicly battle with Trump, who won the state in 2016 by 25 percentage points.

Senate Republicans chafe at the notion they are unwilling to take on a president whose statements and policy positions often run counter to traditional conservative positions.

Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., said he raised his concerns about trade policy privately with the president.

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"I want results," Rounds said, "instead of hardening positions."

Rounds said he rode with Trump after meeting him at the airport when the president visited South Dakota during the midterm election season, telling him the state's soybean farmers were facing losses of some \$500 million because of retaliatory tariffs. He said Trump told him: "We're going to have a better deal for them. If they hang with me, we're going to make this better."

Rounds said his job is to make things better and "that doesn't mean I have to be out there in front fighting with someone."

Sen. David Perdue, R-Ga., said "there's all sorts of active disagreements that go on" with the White House behind the scenes.

"I support the president as well as anybody. Behind closed doors, there are things on tariffs and things like that where we've offered a differing opinion. But I support this president in terms of what he's trying to do. This agenda is working," Perdue said, citing strong economic growth and low unemployment.

Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said he suspects the 2020 elections will prompt more Republican senators to confront Trump when they disagree with him, and that may already be happening, citing recent actions on Saudi Arabia.

The Senate passed a measure that blamed Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and called on Riyadh to "ensure appropriate accountability." Senators also passed a separate measure calling for the end of U.S. support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen. The resolutions showed senators seeking to assert oversight of Trump administration foreign policy and the relationship with Saudi Arabia.

"Almost half of their caucus is up for re-election. They just saw what happened in 2018," Durbin said of Republicans, who lost the House majority to Democrats. "I think, once they do polling back home, not all of them, but many of them will find that independence is being rewarded."

## Blizzard causes travel troubles in Dakotas, Minnesota

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — Heavy snowfall and gusty winds created blizzard-like conditions in parts of the Dakotas and Minnesota the day before the new year, causing officials to close an airport and to urge caution while driving.

Some sheriff's deputies had reported that falling snow combined with wind gusts of 40 mph was creating near zero visibility, but those conditions were not as widespread Monday afternoon as they were earlier in the day. Snow had ended across southeastern North Dakota and west central Minnesota by early Monday afternoon, according to the National Weather Service in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

One person was killed in a crash Monday afternoon in North Dakota during whiteout conditions. Highway Patrol Capt. Bryan Niewind said the three-vehicle accident happened on Interstate 29 about 20 miles south of Fargo.

A truck and a van were traveling northbound in the right lane when another vehicle passed them, causing whiteout conditions. As the truck and van were slowing down, a semitrailer approached them from behind and struck the van, pushing it into the truck, the patrol said.

The van driver was killed, the patrol said.

Blizzard warnings for parts of North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota expired, but dangerously cold wind chills as low as 45 degrees below zero were expected, the weather service said.

The Rapid City Regional Airport in South Dakota closed early Monday because of deteriorating weather conditions and airport officials told travelers to contact their airline to reschedule their flight. The airport said it plans to reopen by Tuesday morning.

In North Dakota, the Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol lifted no-travel advisories for parts of northeastern and southeastern North Dakota, including Valley City, Wahpeton, Fargo, Hillsboro and Lisbon. But a travel alert remained in effect for those areas because of reduced visibility.

## South Dakota man arrested for wire fraud after fleeing US

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man accused of running a fraud scheme came under investigation at least a decade ago and allegedly fled to Guatemala, according to recently unsealed court records.

David Astin was apprehended in October in Houston after he arrived on a commercial flight from Guatemala, the Rapid City Journal reported. The 36-year-old Astin is being held at the Pennington County Jail in Rapid City and has pleaded not guilty to 21 counts of federal wire fraud.

IRS secretly filed search warrant applications for Astin in 2012 and 2014. The documents were unsealed in November during Astin's detention hearing. The 2012 warrant sought access to Astin's computer files while the 2014 warrant sought access to his email account.

Investigators allege Astin falsified returns on foreign-currency trades he made for a Rapid City doctor from 2012 to 2013. Astin allegedly lost more than \$430,000 of the doctor's money while collecting \$75,500 in compensation, according to the indictment.

Officials began investigating Astin's financial activities in 2008, after he and his parents, Ward and Debra Astin, were charged with 20 felony counts each for failing to get a state sales-tax license for a business.

Ward Astin pleaded no contest to failing to obtain the license in a deal that dismissed the charges against his wife and son. He was also ordered to pay about \$60,000 in restitution.

David Astin went to Guatemala, where his wife is from, with his family shortly after an FBI interview in 2014 that came after the IRS investigations, according to FBI agent Michael McRoden. Astin stretched his two-week stay into four years by using immigration laws to renew his tourist visa, McRoden said.

David Astin's time in Guatemala indicates that he could potentially flee again, said Ben Patterson, the assistant U.S. attorney who is prosecuting the case.

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

## Disciplinary panel to meet on teen hockey player beating

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — More punishments could be coming after a teenage hockey player allegedly assaulted another player in a locker room in Mitchell.

The disciplinary committee for the South Dakota Amateur Hockey Association plans to meet Thursday. The association's director, Dan French, tells the Argus Leader the incident was "disturbing" and that his organization takes it seriously.

The alleged assault happened in a hockey room at the Mitchell Activities Center on Dec. 21. Video shows two boys fighting while other boys cheer.

Police arrested a 17-year-old who is being prosecuted in juvenile court. A 15-year-old boy was hospitalized but has since been released.

French says the Mitchell Skating and Hockey Association already has handed down punishments. He confirms no adults were in the locker room, a violation of state and USA Hockey policies.

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

## Funeral service held for couple killed in plane crash

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Sioux Falls husband and wife killed in a Christmas Day plane crash are being eulogized at a funeral service.

The memorial for Vaughn and JoAnn Meyer is being held Monday at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls. The Meyers, both 68 years old, died when their small plane crashed in a residential neighborhood and caught fire Dec. 25. No one on the ground was injured. The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the crash.

The Meyers were known for their philanthropy. They met while attending the University of South Dakota and married in 1971. They are survived by three children.



## Aberdeen emergency shelter reopening

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — An emergency shelter that closed earlier this month due to lack of funding is reopening this week in Aberdeen.

Journey Church pastor Devin Hebeisen says new donations will reopen the Journey Home for six, maybe seven weeks.

American News reports the shelter has provided 107 nights of housing for people in need since it opened in May. It closed on Dec. 7 after it ran out of money.

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

## AP Exclusive: Vatican letter undermines US cardinal on abuse

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican blocked U.S. bishops from taking measures to address the clergy sex abuse scandal because U.S. church leaders failed to sufficiently consult with the Holy See beforehand about legally problematic proposals, according to a letter obtained by The Associated Press.

The Nov. 11 letter from the Vatican's Cardinal Marc Ouellet provides the primary reason that Rome balked at the measures that were to be voted on by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at its Nov. 12-14 assembly. The blocked vote stunned abuse survivors and other Catholics who were demanding action from U.S. bishops to address clergy sex abuse and cover-up.

Ouellet's letter undermines the version of events provided by the conference president, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo. It could also provide fodder for questions during a spiritual retreat of U.S. bishops, dedicated to the abuse crisis, that opens Wednesday in Chicago.

They may want to know why the draft proposals from the U.S. only arrived at the Vatican on Nov. 8, four days before the U.S. bishops' meeting began. While the Vatican is known for its slow pace, even the speediest bureaucracy would have found it difficult to review and approve sensitive legal documents over a long weekend.

"Considering the nature and scope of the documents being proposed by the (conference), I believe it would have been beneficial to have allowed for more time to consult with this and other congregations with competence over the ministry and discipline of bishops," Ouellet wrote to DiNardo.

The main goal of the U.S. bishops' fall meeting had been to approve a code of conduct for bishops and create a lay-led commission to receive complaints against them. The measures were a crisis response to the scandal over ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, once a senior American cleric who is now accused of molesting minors and adults, and new revelations of old sex abuse cases and their cover-up in Pennsylvania.

DiNardo stunned the bishops when he opened the assembly Nov. 12 by announcing that "at the insistence of the Holy See" the bishops would not be voting on the measures after all. He said the Vatican wanted them to delay a vote until after Francis hosts a global summit in February on preventing sex abuse by priests.

While DiNardo blamed the Vatican, the letter from Ouellet suggests that the Vatican felt that DiNardo had tried to pull a fast one by intentionally withholding legally problematic texts until the last minute.

That the Vatican would have wanted a say in crafting the texts is not surprising, given the Holy See alone has exclusive authority to investigate and discipline problem bishops.

"While fully aware that a bishops' conference enjoys a rightful autonomy ... to discuss and eventually approve measures that are within the conference's powers, the conference's work must always be integrated within the hierarchical structure and universal law of the church," Ouellet wrote.

In a statement Tuesday to The Associated Press, DiNardo characterized the disconnect as a misunderstanding. He said he assumed the Vatican would have had a chance to "review and offer adjustments" to the measures after the U.S. bishops approved them, not before. He insisted that U.S. bishops were not trying to appropriate Vatican powers for themselves.

"It is now clear there were different expectations on the bishops conference's part and Rome's part that may have affected the understanding of these proposals," DiNardo said in a statement. "From our

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perspective, they were designed to stop short of where the authority of the Holy See began.”

The U.S. strategy, it seems, was to avoid drawn-out negotiations before the vote so the U.S. bishops could present the Vatican with documents after the fact. The U.S. bishops presumably wanted to avoid the problematic back-and-forth that happened in 2002 when U.S. bishops approved a “one strike and you’re out” policy against abusive priests.

DiNardo, in his statement to the AP, said he had shared the “content and direction” of the proposals with multiple Vatican offices in October and went ahead and drafted the final version of the proposal on investigating bishops after encountering no opposition.

“We had not planned, nor had the Holy See made a request, to share the texts prior to the body of bishops having had an opportunity to amend them,” he said.

During a Nov. 12 press conference, DiNardo was asked when the Vatican was actually consulted about the measures. He replied the texts were finalized Oct. 30 and that the delay in finishing them might have been a problem.

“So it’s not surprising, on one level, that people would be catching their breath, perhaps even in Rome,” he told reporters. DiNardo also acknowledged, when pressed by a reporter, that the texts themselves had some legal problems, though he downplayed the severity of them.

“There were some points in one or two of the documents where the canon law needed further precision,” he said.

In his statement to AP, DiNardo said he had told Ouellet that failing to vote on the texts “would prove a great disappointment to the faithful, who were expecting their bishops to take just action. Though there were canonical precisions mentioned, the emphasis seemed to be on delaying votes and not wanting to get ahead of the February meeting of episcopal conference presidents,” he said.

Ouellet did indeed cite the February meeting in his letter, saying any document “should incorporate the input and fruits of the college of bishops’ work of common discernment.”

But the February summit was announced on Sept. 13. If that were the primary reason for Ouellet’s demand to scrap the vote, he could have communicated that to DiNardo sooner.

Instead, Ouellet’s demand came after he finally read what U.S. bishops were preparing to vote on.

## House Democrats have plan to fund government, but not a wall

By **ZEKE MILLER** and **LISA MASCARO**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A week and a half into a partial government shutdown, House Democrats released their plan to re-open the government without approving money for President Donald Trump’s border wall. At the same time, the president struggled to find leverage to break the stalemate before the GOP’s monopoly on Washington power ended.

Democrats in the House unveiled two bills Monday to fund shuttered government agencies and put hundreds of thousands of federal workers back on the job. They planned to pass them as soon as the new Congress convened Thursday, one of the first acts after Democrats took control, according to an aide who was not authorized to discuss the plan and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Whether the Republican-led Senate, under Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, would consider the bills — or if Trump would sign either into law — was unclear. McConnell spokesman Donald Stewart said Senate Republicans would not take action without Trump’s backing.

“It’s simple: The Senate is not going to send something to the president that he won’t sign,” Stewart said.

Even if only symbolic, the passage of the bills in the House would put fresh pressure on the president. At the same time, administration officials said Trump was in no rush for a resolution to the impasse.

After early threats to shut down government over the wall, Trump now believes he’s public opinion on his side and, at very least, his base of supporters behind him, the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Trump spent the weekend saying that Democrats should return to Washington to negotiate, firing off Twitter taunts. He then revised his aides’ comments to state that he really still wants to build a border wall.

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"An all concrete Wall was NEVER ABANDONED," Trump tweeted Monday. "Some areas will be all concrete but the experts at Border Patrol prefer a Wall that is see through (thereby making it possible to see what is happening on both sides)."

He told Fox News Channel in an interview Monday that he was "ready, willing and able" to negotiate. He added: "No, we are not giving up. We have to have border security and the wall is a big part of border security."

On Tuesday morning, after tweeting a New Year's message to "EVERYONE INCLUDING THE HATERS AND THE FAKE NEWS MEDIA," Trump tweeted, "The Democrats, much as I suspected, have allocated no money for a new Wall. So imaginative! The problem is, without a Wall there can be no real Border Security."

White House officials, including his departing chief of staff, had indicated that Trump's signature campaign pledge to build the wall would not be fulfilled as advertised. Chief of staff John Kelly told the Los Angeles Times in an interview published Sunday that Trump abandoned the notion of "a solid concrete wall early on in the administration."

The Democratic package to end the shutdown would include one bill to temporarily fund the Department of Homeland Security at current levels, with \$1.3 billion for border security — far less than \$5 billion Trump has said he wants for the wall — through Feb. 8 as talks continued.

It would also include another measure made up of six other bipartisan bills — some that have already passed the Senate — to fund the departments of Agriculture, Interior, Housing and Urban Development and others closed by the partial shutdown. It would provide money through the remainder of the fiscal year, to Sept. 30.

Democrats under House leader Nancy Pelosi were all but certain to swiftly approve the package in two separate votes Thursday. They would take place after the election of a new House speaker, a contest Pelosi was expected to win as leader of the new House majority.

The White House did not respond to multiple requests for comment on the House proposal. Republican senators left for the holidays refusing to vote on any bills until all sides, including Trump, were in agreement. The lawmakers were frustrated that Trump had dismissed their earlier legislation.

The president has not said he would veto the Democratic legislation, if the bills were to land on his desk. But the idea of clouding Pelosi's speakership only emboldened Trump, the officials said. A prolonged crisis could hobble House Democrats' ability to launch their agenda, which included investigations of the president and oversight of his administration, including Russian interference in the election.

At least one Republican, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, encouraged Trump to use the budget impasse as an opportunity to address issues beyond the border wall. But a previous attempt to reach a compromise that addressed the status of "Dreamers" — young immigrants brought to the U.S. as children — broke down last year as a result of escalating White House demands. Graham said Trump was "open minded" about his proposal.

The partial government shutdown began Dec. 22 after Trump bowed to conservative demands that he fight to make good on his vow and secure funding for the wall before Republicans lose control of the House on Wednesday. Democrats have remained committed to blocking any funding for the wall.

With neither side engaging in substantive negotiation, the effect of the partial shutdown was set to spread and to extend into the new year.

Trump tweeted Monday to Democrats to "come back from vacation now and give us the votes necessary for Border Security, including the Wall."

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Associated Press writer Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

## Baby rescued from rubble 35 hours after apartment collapse

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian rescuers on Tuesday pulled an infant boy alive from the rubble of an apartment building, some 35 hours after a collapse that killed at least seven people and left dozens missing.

They found the baby after hearing cries amid the debris. A section of the 10-story building in the city of

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Magnitogorsk collapsed on Monday following an explosion believed to have been triggered by a natural gas leak.

The child, who officials initially said was a girl, was seriously injured and his recovery prospects were unclear.

The boy's mother survived the collapse and went to a local hospital to identify him, state news agency Tass reported, citing the regional emergencies ministry. The child will be evacuated to Moscow by airplane for further treatment, Tass said.

The regional emergency ministry said earlier Tuesday that 37 residents of the building had not been accounted for. Hopes of finding survivors were dimmed by the harsh cold: Temperatures overnight were around minus 18 Celsius (0 Fahrenheit).

"The child was saved because it was in a crib and wrapped warmly," regional governor Boris Dubrovsky was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

Rescue crews had temporarily halted their search while workers tried to remove or stabilize sections of the building in danger of collapse.

Five people were hospitalized with injuries from the collapse in the city about 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) southeast of Moscow, the emergency ministry said.

In a separate holiday period disaster, seven people including a couple and their three children died in a house fire in in the town of Orsk, about 1500 kilometers (900 miles) southeast of Moscow, the Interfax news agency said. The fire early Tuesday is believed to have been caused by an electrical short-circuit, the report said.

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This story has been corrected to give gender of the baby as male following new information from officials.

## Garbage, feces take toll on national parks amid shutdown

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and JOCELYN GECKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Human feces, overflowing garbage, illegal off-roading and other damaging behavior in fragile areas were beginning to overwhelm some of the West's iconic national parks, as a partial government shutdown left the areas open to visitors but with little staff on duty.

"It's a free-for-all," Dakota Snider, 24, who lives and works in Yosemite Valley, said by telephone Monday, as Yosemite National Park officials announced closings of some minimally supervised campgrounds and public areas within the park that are overwhelmed.

"It's so heartbreaking. There is more trash and human waste and disregard for the rules than I've seen in my four years living here," Snider said.

The partial federal government shutdown, now into its 11th day, has forced furloughs of hundreds of thousands of federal government employees. This has left many parks without most of the rangers and others who staff campgrounds and otherwise keep parks running.

Unlike shutdowns in some previous administrations, the Trump administration was leaving parks open to visitors despite the staff furloughs, said John Garder, senior budget director of the nonprofit National Parks Conservation Association.

"We're afraid that we're going to start seeing significant damage to the natural resources in parks and potentially to historic and other cultural artifacts," Garder said. "We're concerned there'll be impacts to visitors' safety."

"It's really a nightmare scenario," Garder said.

Under the park service's shutdown plan, authorities have to close any area where garbage or other problems become threats to health and safety or to wildlife, spokesman Jeremy Barnum said in an email Monday.

"At the superintendent's discretion, parks may close grounds/areas with sensitive natural, cultural, historic, or archaeological resources vulnerable to destruction, looting, or other damage that cannot be adequately protected by the excepted law enforcement staff that remain on duty," Barnum said.



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In the southern Sierra Nevada in Central California, some areas of the Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks were closed Monday evening. In Sequoia, home to immense and ancient giant sequoias, General Highway was closed because overflowing trash bins were spreading litter and posed a threat to wildlife and the icy, jammed roadway was seeing up to three-hour delays, according to the National Park Service.

Also closed was the Grant Tree Trail, a popular hiking spot, because the government shutdown halted maintenance and left the path dangerously slick from ice and snow, with at least one injury reported, the park service said.

Campers at Joshua Tree National Park in Southern California's deserts were reporting squabbles as different families laid claims to sites, with no rangers on hand to adjudicate, said Ethan Feltges, who operates the Coyote Corner gift shop outside Joshua Tree.

Feltges and other business owners around Joshua Tree had stepped into the gap as much as possible, hauling trailers into the park to empty overflowing trash bins and sweeping and stocking restrooms that were still open, Feltges said.

Feltges himself had set up a portable toilet at his store to help the visitors still streaming in and out of the park. He was spending his days standing outside his store, offering tips about the park in place of the rangers who normally would be present.

"The whole community has come together," Feltges said, also by phone. "Everyone loves the park. And there's a lot of businesses that actually need the park."

Some visitors have strung Christmas lights in the twisting Joshua trees, many of which are hundreds of years old, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Most visitors were being respectful of the desert wilderness and park facilities, Joshua Tree's superintendent, David Smith, said in a statement.

But some are seizing on the shortage of park staffers to off-road illegally and otherwise damage the park, as well as relieving themselves in the open, a park statement said. Joshua Tree said it would begin closing some campgrounds for all but day use.

At Yosemite, Snider, the local resident, said crowds of visitors were driving into the park to take advantage of free admission, with only a few park rangers working and a limited number of restrooms open.

Visitors were allowing their dogs to run off-leash in an area rich with bears and other wildlife, and scattering bags of garbage along the roads, Snider said.

"You're looking at Yosemite Falls and in front of you is plastic bottles and trash bags," he said.

Officials at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado said Monday they were closing restrooms and locking up trash bins in many locations.

In Yellowstone National Park, private companies have picked up some of the maintenance normally done by federal workers. The contractors that operate park tours by snowmobile, buses and vans are grooming trails, hauling trash and replacing toilet paper at pit toilets and restrooms along their routes.

Nearly all roads inside Yellowstone are normally closed for winter, meaning most visitors at this time of the year access park attractions like Old Faithful or the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone through guides. Those guides are splitting the cost of grooming the trails used by their vehicles to keep their operations going, said Travis Watt, general manager of See Yellowstone Alpen Guides based in West Yellowstone, Montana.

The tour companies can likely keep this system going through the entire winter season if they need to, Watt said.

"It's definitely not our preference — the park service does a good job doing their thing and we hate to see them out of work," Watt said. "But it's something we can handle."

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Gecker reported from San Francisco. Matt Volz contributed from Helena, Montana.

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## Hello, 2019: Revelry and reflection greet new year

By The Associated Press

Fireworks, concerts, spiritual services and political addresses abounded to mark the transition to 2019 as revelers around the globe bid farewell Monday to a year filled with challenges to many of the world's most basic institutions, including in the realms of politics, trade, alliances and religion.

A look at how the world is ushering in 2019:

### NEW YORK

A drenching rain couldn't keep crowds from packing Times Square for the traditional crystal ball drop and a string of star performances.

Christina Aguilera pumped up the crowd, performing in a snow-white dress and coat while partygoers danced in their rain ponchos.

Bebe Rexha sang John Lennon's "Imagine" just before the midnight ball drop.

The celebration took place under tight security. Partygoers were checked for weapons and then herded into pens, ringed by metal barricades, where they waited for the stroke of midnight.

But the weather forced police to scrap plans to fly a drone to help keep watch over the crowd.

Revelers paid up to \$10 for plastic ponchos trying to stay dry. Umbrellas were banned for security reasons.

### RIO DE JANEIRO

More than 2 million people celebrated the new year on Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro.

A 14-minute fireworks display ushered Brazil into 2019 only hours before far-right politician Jair Bolsonaro will be sworn in as president.

Many Brazilians were on the road to the capital of Brasilia on Monday night to watch the former army captain's inauguration Tuesday afternoon.

The last evening of 2018 in Rio was 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29 degrees Celsius), and many Brazilians took a dip in the water and made their offerings to Yemanja, a sea goddess in the Afro-Brazilian Candomble faith.

### LONDON

Britons ushered in the new year with the familiar chimes of Big Ben, even though the world famous clock has been disconnected for more than a year because of a conservation project.

Parliament announced last week that the clock's massive bell would sound to mark the new year with the help of a specially built electric mechanism to power the hammer, which weighs about 440 pounds (200 kilograms). The clock mechanism, which has kept time since 1859, has been dismantled as part of the renovation work.

New Year's Eve without Big Ben would be positively un-British. The comforting chimes are used by TV and radio stations throughout Britain to herald the moment of transition from the old to the new year.

### PARIS

Parisians and tourists gathered on the Champs-Elysees to celebrate New Year's Eve under heavy security.

Anti-government protesters from the yellow vest movement have issued calls on social media for "festive" demonstrations on the famous avenue.

Paris police set up a security perimeter in the area, with bag searches, a ban on alcohol and traffic restrictions. The Interior Ministry said Sunday that the heavy security measures are needed because of a "high terrorist threat" and concerns about "non-declared protests."

President Emmanuel Macron gave his traditional New Year address to briefly lay out his priorities for 2019, as some protesters angry over high taxes and his pro-business policies plan to continue their demonstrations in coming weeks.

Ahead of midnight, a light show with the theme of brotherhood took place on the Arc de Triomphe monument at the top of the Champs-Elysees.

### BERLIN

Tens of thousands of people celebrated the start of 2019 at Berlin's landmark Brandenburg Gate.

The annual New Year's celebrations took place amid tight security, with about 1,300 officers deployed throughout the heart of the German capital and revelers banned from taking fireworks, bottles or large bags into the fenced-off party zone.

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By midnight, Berlin police reported fewer incidents than in previous years.

## VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis has rounded out the most problematic year of his papacy by presiding over a vespers service and praying before the Vatican's giant sand sculpture Nativity scene.

During his homily Monday, Francis lamented how many people spent 2018 living on the edge of dignity, homeless or forced into modern forms of slavery.

Accompanied by his chief alms-giver, Francis then walked out into St. Peter's Square, where he greeted pilgrims and prayed before the Nativity scene, carved out of 720 tons of packed sand.

On Tuesday, Francis will celebrate Mass to mark the start of a new year and officially leave behind 2018, which saw a new eruption of the clergy sex abuse scandal.

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Fireworks crackled at Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, as hundreds of thousands of spectators gathered downtown to watch the spectacular display.

The fireworks replaced last year's somewhat anticlimactic LED lightshow that ran down the facade of the 828-meter-tall (2,716-foot-tall) tower.

Cafes and restaurants with a view of the Burj Khalifa charge a premium for their locale on New Year's Eve. Casual sandwich chain Pret a Manger, for example, charged \$817 for a table of four. That price gets you hot and cold drinks and some canapes. For burgers near the action, fast food chain Five Guys charged \$408 per person for unlimited burgers, hotdogs, fries, milkshakes and soda.

Elsewhere in the United Arab Emirates, the emirate of Ras al-Khaimah attempted to set a new Guinness World Record with the longest straight-line display of fireworks reaching 7.35 miles (11.83 kilometers).

## THAILAND

While many celebrate New Year's Eve with fireworks, hundreds of Thais traveled to Takien Temple in a suburb of Bangkok to lie inside coffins for traditional funeral rituals.

Participants believe the ceremony — symbolizing death and rebirth — helps rid them of bad luck and allows them to be born again for a fresh start in the new year.

They held flowers and incense in their hands as monks covered them with pink sheets and chanted prayers for the dead.

"It wasn't scary or anything. It is our belief that it will help us get rid of bad luck and bring good fortune to our life," said Busaba Yookong, who came to the temple with her family.

## PHILIPPINES

Dozens of people have been injured ahead of New Year's Eve, when many across the Philippines set off powerful firecrackers in one of Asia's most violent celebrations despite a government scare campaign and threats of arrests.

The Department of Health said it has recorded more than 50 firecracker injuries in the past 10 days. That is expected to increase as Filipinos usher in 2019.

Officials have urged centralized fireworks displays to discourage wild and sometimes fatal merrymaking.

The tradition stems from a Chinese-influenced belief that noise drives away evil and misfortune.

Earlier Monday, suspected Muslim militants remotely detonated a bomb near the entrance of a mall in Cotabato as people did last-minute shopping ahead of celebrations. Officials said at least two people were killed and nearly 30 wounded.

## CHINA

New Year's Eve isn't celebrated widely in mainland China, where the lunar New Year in February is a more important holiday. But countdown events were held in major cities, and some of the faithful headed to Buddhist temples for bell-ringing and prayers.

Beijing held a gala with VIP guests at the main site of the 2008 Summer Olympics. The event looked ahead to the 2022 Winter Games, which also will be held in the Chinese capital.

Outdoor revelers in Beijing had to brave temperatures well below freezing.

Additional police were deployed in parts of Shanghai, where a New Year's Eve stampede in 2014 killed

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36 people.

In Hong Kong, festive lights on skyscrapers provided the backdrop for a fireworks, music and light show over Victoria Harbor on a chilly evening.

## KIRIBATI

The Pacific island nation of Kiribati was the first in the world to welcome the new year, greeting 2019 with muted celebrations after spending 2018 on the front line of the battle against climate change.

Kiribati is made up of low-lying atolls along the equator which intersect three time zones, the first of which sees the new year 14 hours before midnight in London.

Much of the nation's land mass, occupied by 110,000 people, is endangered by rising seas that have inundated coastal villages. The rising oceans have turned fresh water sources brackish, imperiling communities and raising doubts the nation will exist at the next New Year.

Former President Anote Tong said the only future for Kiribati may be mass migration.

The new year was welcomed in the capital, Tarawa, with church services and mostly quiet private celebrations.

## AUSTRALIA

An estimated million people crowded Sydney Harbor as Australia's largest city rang in the new year with a spectacular, soul-tinged fireworks celebration.

One of the most complex displays in Australia's history included gold, purple and silver fireworks pulsating to the tune of "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman," made famous by Aretha Franklin, who died in August. The show used 8.5 tons of fireworks and featured more than 100,000 pyrotechnic effects.

Earlier, a thunderstorm drenched tens of thousands of people as they gathered for the traditional display, creating a show of its own with dozens of lightning strikes.

In Melbourne, 14 tons of fireworks deployed on the ground and on roofs of 22 buildings produced special effects including flying dragons. In Brisbane, people watched as fireworks exploded from five barges moored on the Brisbane River.

## SOUTH KOREA

After an eventful year that saw three inter-Korean summits and the easing of tensions over North Korea's nuclear program, South Koreans entered 2019 with hopes that the hard-won detente will expand into a stable peace.

Thousands of South Koreans filled the streets of the capital, Seoul, for a traditional bell-tolling ceremony near City Hall. Dignitaries picked to ring the old Bosingak bell at midnight included famous surgeon Lee Guk-jong, who successfully operated on a North Korean soldier who escaped to South Korea in 2017 in a hail of bullets fired by his comrades.

A "peace bell" was tolled at Imjingak, a pavilion near the border with North Korea.

## LAS VEGAS

No place does flashy like Las Vegas. It rang in 2019 with fireworks shot from casino-resorts and superstar performances from Lady Gaga, Celine Dion, Gwen Stefani and others.

Celebratory midnight toasts were anchored by an 8-minute firework show on the Las Vegas Strip. The pyrotechnics were choreographed to a soundtrack that includes Frank Sinatra's "Luck Be a Lady," Lionel Richie's "All Night Long" and Dion's version of "I Drove All Night".

New Year's Eve is worth more than \$400 million to Vegas.

Security is a high priority for police on the Las Vegas Strip, where a gunman in 2017 opened fire on a country music festival, killing 58 people and injuring hundreds of others.

Police, including rooftop snipers and plainclothes and uniformed officers, were out in full force along with federal agents. Authorities also restricted revelers from bringing backpacks, ice chests, strollers and glass items to the street celebrations.

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This story has been updated to correct a name spelling to Lionel Richie, instead of Ritchie.



## Texas officials have image of pickup involved in attack

HOUSTON (AP) — Investigators in Houston said Monday that they have a surveillance video image of a pickup truck from which a driver fired several shots into a car carrying a family, killing a 7-year-old girl and wounding the child's mother.

The image of the red, four-door pickup was captured shortly before the shooting occurred Sunday morning, Harris County sheriff's Lt. Christopher Sandoval told reporters.

Sheriff Ed Gonzalez declined to speculate on what prompted the driver of the pickup to pull alongside and fire into the car carrying Jazmine Barnes, three of her sisters and her mother.

Jazmine died at the scene, her mother suffered a gunshot wound to the arm and her 6-year-old sister was injured by shattered glass. The mother, 30-year-old LaPorsha Washington, remained in a hospital Monday.

Gonzalez described the shooting as "totally unprovoked."

"The family should be celebrating and spending time together anticipating the new year and instead they're making plans to bury this innocent, precious child," Gonzalez said.

A distraught Washington told KTRK-TV from her hospital bed that the gunman sped up after firing into her car, only to pull in front and slow down before firing again.

"He intentionally killed my child for no reason," she said. "He didn't even know her, he didn't know who she was."

Authorities initially said the shooting occurred as Washington was leaving a Walmart parking lot, but Gonzalez on Monday said it occurred on a nearby service road as the family was heading to a store.

The gunman was described as a bearded man in his 40s wearing a red hoodie.

"I hope with each passing moment his conscience is eating away at him," Gonzalez said, later adding, "Do the right thing and turn yourself in. There's no need for anyone else to be harmed."

Jazmine's father, Christopher Cevilla, who appeared with Gonzalez at Monday's news briefing, pleaded with the public to provide relevant tips to authorities so that an arrest can be made.

"My daughter was 7 years old, loving, caring, very passionate with people, very sweet, just an innocent young girl," Cevilla said. "Very smart in school. There's just a lot of things that's being robbed of me and my family at this moment that we will never be able to get back."

## NASA spacecraft opens new year at tiny, icy world past Pluto

By **MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer**

LAUREL, Md. (AP) — The NASA spacecraft that yielded the first close-up views of Pluto opened the new year at an even more distant world, a billion miles beyond.

Flight controllers said everything looked good for New Horizons' flyby of the tiny, icy object at 12:33 a.m. Tuesday. Confirmation was not expected for hours, though, given the vast distance.

The mysterious, ancient target nicknamed Ultima Thule is 4 billion miles (6.4 billion kilometers) from Earth.

Scientists wanted New Horizons observing Ultima Thule during the encounter, not phoning home. So they had to wait until late morning before learning whether the spacecraft survived.

With New Horizons on autopilot, Mission Control was empty at Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland. Instead, hundreds of team members and their guests gathered nearby on campus for back-to-back countdowns.

The crowd ushered in 2019 at midnight, then cheered, blew party horns and jubilantly waved small U.S. flags again 33 minutes later, the appointed time for New Horizons' closest approach to Ultima Thule.

A few black-and-white pictures of Ultima Thule might be available following Tuesday's official confirmation, but the highly anticipated close-ups won't be ready until Wednesday or Thursday, in color, it is hoped.

"We set a record. Never before has a spacecraft explored anything so far away," said the project's lead scientist who led the countdown to the close encounter, Alan Stern of Southwest Research Institute. "Think of it. We're a billion miles farther than Pluto."

Stern called it an auspicious beginning to 2019, which will mark the 50th anniversary of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin's footsteps on the moon in July 1969.

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"Ultima Thule is 17,000 times as far away as the 'giant leap' of Apollo's lunar missions," Stern noted in an opinion piece in The New York Times.

New Horizons, which is the size of a baby grand piano and part of an \$800 million mission, was expected to hurtle to within 2,200 miles (3,500 kilometers) of Ultima Thule, considerably closer than the Pluto encounter of 2015.

Its seven science instruments were to continue collecting data for four hours after the flyby. Then the spacecraft was to turn briefly toward Earth to transmit word of its success. It takes over six hours for radio signals to reach Earth from that far away.

Scientists believe there should be no rings or moons around Ultima Thule that might endanger New Horizons. Traveling at 31,500 mph (50,700 kph), the spacecraft could easily be knocked out by a rice-size particle. It's a tougher encounter than at Pluto because of the distance and the considerable unknowns, and because the spacecraft is older now.

"I can't promise you success. We are straining the capabilities of this spacecraft," Stern said at a news conference Monday. "By tomorrow, we'll know how we did. So stay tuned. There are no second chances for New Horizons."

The risk added to the excitement.

Queen guitarist Brian May, who also happens to be an astrophysicist, joined the team at Johns Hopkins for a midnight premiere of the rock 'n' roll song he wrote for the big event.

"We will never forget this moment," said May who led the New Year's countdown. "This is completely unknown territory."

Despite the government shutdown, several NASA scientists and other employees showed up at Johns Hopkins as private citizens, unwilling to miss history in the making.

Ultima Thule was unknown until 2014, eight years after New Horizons departed Earth. It was discovered by the Hubble Space Telescope and added to New Horizons' itinerary.

Deep inside the so-called Kuiper Belt, a frigid expanse beyond Neptune that is also known as the Twilight Zone, Ultima Thule is believed to date back 4.5 billion years to the formation of our solar system. As such, it is "probably the best time capsule we've ever had for understanding the birth of our solar system and the planets in it," Stern said.

In classic and medieval literature, Thule was the most distant, northernmost place beyond the known world.

Scientists suspect Ultima Thule is a single object no more than 20 miles (32 kilometers) long, though there's a chance it could prove to be two smaller bodies orbiting each other or connected by a slender neck. It is thought to be potato-shaped and dark-colored with a touch of red, possibly from being zapped by cosmic rays for eons.

The exact shape and composition won't be known until Ultima Thule starts sending back data in a process expected to last almost two years.

"Who knows what we might find? ... Anything's possible out there in this very unknown region," said John Spencer, a deputy project scientist from Southwest Research Institute. "We'll find out soon enough."

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## 4 ideas from NKorean leader Kim Jong Un's New Year's speech

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Looking almost banker-like in a business suit and sitting in an upholstered leather armchair, Kim Jong Un gave his annual televised New Year's address on Tuesday.

The North Korean leader's big curtain-raiser for 2019 comes after a couple of very tumultuous years. In 2017, his rapid-fire missile tests brought him to the brink with President Donald Trump and 2018 saw his sudden rise on the world stage with hints of detente, summits with China and South Korea and an

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unprecedented meeting with Trump in Singapore.

What's ahead in 2019? Here are four big takeaways.

## 1. IT'S STILL ABOUT THE ECONOMY

About two-thirds of the entire speech was devoted to the economy.

Kim last year jettisoned his signature slogan of "simultaneous tracks" — developing nuclear weapons and the economy at the same time — in favor of claiming to focus everything on the economy, which is now the national buzz phrase.

Kim hasn't given up on his nuclear weapons, he just says he has perfected the arsenal enough to shift the focus of "socialist construction" elsewhere. Kim also didn't commit to anything in the speech like the kind of major, structural economic changes that might generate sustainable growth, but which could also undermine his own power.

Even so, he does appear to genuinely want to boost the standard of living of his nation and to grow the country's economy. He underscored that desire by calling for an increased electricity supply and pointed to the possibility of developing nuclear power, along with the need for modernization and innovation across the board.

Despite repeated mentions during the speech of the North's cherished principle of "Juche," or self-reliance, Kim understands his country's economic realities. He is openly seeking more foreign investment and trade.

And he's hoping to enlist Seoul's help in that endeavor.

## 1. KIM WANTS THE KOREAS TO BE TAKING THE LEAD

Though the attention was on his relationship with Trump, Kim's biggest moves in 2018 were toward South Korea.

Kim's pitch has been that it is high time Pyongyang and Seoul were leaders in determining their own fate, which is also a shot at the role of the United States on the peninsula.

Kim's speech was broadcast simultaneously in South Korea.

Addressing both nations at once, he called on all Koreans to — in his decidedly North Korean manner — to "uphold the slogan "Let's usher in a heyday of peace, prosperity and reunification of the Korean Peninsula by thoroughly implementing the historic North-South declarations!"

Those declarations include a good deal of joint efforts to help Kim with his economic goals, including the renovation and reconnection of the North's railways to the South. He said he would support the reopening of an industrial park that relies on South Korean capital investments and a tourism zone on the North's Mount Kumgang, or Diamond Mountain.

Such efforts can't go very far until sanctions are lifted. Seoul is a lot more willing to forge ahead than Washington.

Pyongyang is also seeking an end to joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises, while Washington is pushing the South to pay more of the cost of keeping its troops there.

The growing Washington-Seoul discord is an added bonus for Kim.

Expect him to keep pushing those buttons.

## 1. THE NUKES AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE ANYTIME SOON

In the most tantalizing sentence of the speech, Kim hinted at a possible cap on nuclear weapons production if the U.S. takes equivalent steps, whatever that might mean.

He also stood by his commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which, contrary to some wishful thinking in Washington and Seoul, does not mean the unilateral denuclearization of North Korea.

Both areas need to be further clarified in negotiations.

Kim's calculus has never been to throw away his nuclear arsenal and hope for the best from a newly friendly and supportive administration in Washington. It has from the start been an effort to play the nuclear hand to its greatest advantage.

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Kim sees nuclear weapons as a valuable deterrent to a U.S. military strike. Unless that threat is eliminated, he won't give them up. He also believes his weapons put him in a position of strength from which he can make demands and extract concessions.

The North has been pretty clear about these points. But Kim spelled them out once again.

His message to Trump: Start addressing his concerns about security and sanctions relief soon or he will have no choice but to try a different, less friendly approach. And he is warning that he will be able to make a case to China, Russia and possibly even Seoul that if things fall Washington will be the one to blame.

## 1. KIM WANTS TO BE SEEN AS HIS OWN MAN

This year's 30-minute speech was an exercise in making Kim look worldly, firmly in charge and comfortable in his own skin — as opposed to the caricatures of him that are so popular in the West.

Though not a stirring public speaker, Kim confidently delivered the pre-recorded address in a study with dark-wood paneling and the national and ruling party flags.

He was flanked by big portraits of his charismatic grandfather, national founder Kim Il Sung, and his father, the late leader Kim Jong Il, who was famously speech-averse and never spoke like this on New Year's.

That lineage is as important as ever.

But the images beamed to the nation and to the world Tuesday of Kim delivering the speech were engineered to have a freshness to them that is uniquely his — and to leave the impression that Kim Jong Un is his own man, a modern, respectable leader who belongs on the world stage.

He may very well be sharing that stage next with Trump, for their second summit.

Talmadge has been the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief since 2013. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram: @EricTalmadge

## Times Square crowd braves rain to bid wet welcome to 2019

By REBECCA GIBIAN and STEPHEN R. GROVES, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Rain drops fell along with confetti as revelers rang in 2019 in New York's Times Square, capping a soggy New Year's Eve celebration that included singer-songwriter Bebe Rexha's stirring rendition of John Lennon's "Imagine" just before midnight.

Crews used squeegees to try to remove water from the stages, but New Kids On The Block still splashed up puddles late Monday while performing their hit "Step by Step" on a giant set of steps.

At midnight, fireworks erupted over Times Square, couples kissed, families hugged and "Auld Lang Syne" played over loud speakers.

"It was so awesome, it's a once in a lifetime experience," said Colleen Giambrone, 55, of New Jersey. "Totally worth it, rain and all. It's incredible."

The Times Square party is always a marathon, with often cold temperatures, stringent security rules, hours-long waits and a lack of public toilets. But New Yorker Brie Dunn, 22, said being there "was like a true state of pure bliss and unity and love."

"It felt like there was no hate in the world," said Dunn. "That's what I hope for in 2019 and all the years to come."

Spectator areas in and around Times Square started filling up late Monday morning.

As always, the celebration took place under tight security, with partygoers searched at checkpoints and herded into pens ringed by metal barricades.

Thousands of police officers patrolled with the help of bomb-sniffing dogs, 1,225 security cameras and 235 "blocker vehicles" used to stop potential vehicle attacks. The event went off safely, with no major disruptions, though the rain forced police to cancel plans to deploy a drone to help monitor the crowd.

Some people in the crowd kneeled on the soaked ground, with ponchos over their heads as puddles formed and they waited for performers, including Christina Aguilera, Snoop Dogg, Dan + Shay and Bastille.

Veterans of the celebration said the rain wasn't all that bad, considering last year was one of the cold-



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est on record at 10 degrees Fahrenheit (-12 Celsius). This year, the temperature was about 47 degrees Fahrenheit (8 degrees Celsius) as midnight struck.

"We're troopers. We got this," said Nyia Williamson, 41, a self-described New Kids On The "Block Head" who was at the party for the 11th time.

The biggest cheers early on were for event workers handing out foam hats and blue gloves. For the unprepared, staying dry meant ponying up. Vendors charged up to \$10 for ponchos that ordinarily sell for \$2. As the soggy wait for midnight dragged on, some people in the crowd grew grim.

"It was a massive mistake," Peter Walsh, 24, said of his decision to attend, after hours spent in the gloom.

Justine Brenkel, 26, from Lyon, France, said being in Times Square on New Year's Eve was on her "bucket list," but the hours of waiting were turning it into a bit of a disappointment.

"When we watch it on TV, it looks so much fun, there's so much animation," said Brenkel. "But we're waiting for the show to start."

Moods lifted, though, as midnight approached.

The final 60-second countdown happened as a geodesic sphere — 12-feet (3.5-meters) in diameter, covered with 2,688 Waterford crystal triangles and lit by 32,256 LEDs — dropped down a pole. The numerals "2019" lit up at midnight accompanied by pyrotechnics and the release of 3,000 pounds of confetti.

Asked what they're looking forward to in 2019, revelers spoke of new jobs, getting married and spending more time with their families. One said he'd like to win the lottery.

Maryanne Clarke, 52, of Waterville, Ohio, said she was there to "celebrate the possibility of 2019," after a year in which she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent a round of chemotherapy. Clarke and her 14-year-old daughter, Shannon, joined the crowd in singing along as Rexha performed "Imagine" to close 2018.

"I bet we all want peace and harmony," Clarke said. "I thought that was a perfect way into the new year."

## Brazil's Bolsonaro to take power amid high hopes and fears

By MAURICIO SAVARESE, Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Once an outsider mocked by fellow lawmakers for his far-right positions, constant use of expletives and even casual dressing, former army captain Jair Bolsonaro is taking office as Brazil's president Tuesday.

A fan of U.S. President Donald Trump, the 63-year-old longtime congressman rose to power on an anti-corruption and pro-gun agenda that has energized Brazilian conservatives and hard-right supporters after four consecutive presidential election wins by the left-leaning Workers' Party.

Bolsonaro is the latest of several far-right leaders around the world who have come to power by riding waves of anger at the establishment and promises to ditch the status quo.

"I will cry" upon seeing Bolsonaro inaugurated, said Paulo de Sousa, a teacher from Rio de Janeiro who traveled to the capital of Brasilia for the ceremony. "It will be a wonderful year. We have to help our president to achieve that. There will be jobs, health and peace."

Brasilia will be under tight security, with 3,000 police patrolling the event. Military tanks, fighter jets and even anti-aircraft missiles will also be deployed.

The increased security came at Bolsonaro's request. His intestine was pierced when a knife-wielding man stabbed him at a campaign rally in September, and he has to wear a colostomy bag. His sons, politicians themselves, insist their father could be targeted by radicals, but security officials have not spoken of threats.

Bolsonaro has done little moderating since being elected in October, with progressives and liberals decrying stances that they say are anti-homosexual, sexist and racist.

The incoming president, who spent nearly three decades in Congress, has also drawn international criticism for his plans to roll back regulations in the Amazon and his disinterest in social programs in a country that is one of the world's most unequal in terms of income.

On the economic front, where Bolsonaro will ultimately lead Latin America's largest economy is unknown, as during the campaign he reversed course from previous statist stances with pledges to lead market-

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friendly reforms. He also promised to overhaul Brazil's pension system and privatize several state-owned companies, which has given him wide support among financial players.

Bolsonaro says he will prioritize the fight against crime in a nation that has long led the world in annual homicides. More than 63,000 people were killed last year. Human rights groups fear his defense of police violence could shield officers from investigations of misconduct and lead to more extrajudicial killings.

The most notable foreign leaders planning to attend the inauguration are also associated with far-right movements: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Leftist Presidents Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela and Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, deemed dictators by Bolsonaro, were uninvited by Bolsonaro's team after the foreign ministry sent them invitations. The United States will be represented by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Seven of Bolsonaro's 22 Cabinet ministers are former military personnel, more than in any administration during Brazil's 1964-1985 dictatorship. That has sparked fears among his adversaries of a return to autocratic rule, but Bolsonaro insists he will respect the country's constitution. Bolsonaro's vice president is a retired general, Hamilton Mourao.

Bolsonaro's Liberal and Social Party will have 52 seats in Brazil's 513-member lower house, the second largest bloc behind the Workers' Party.

Michael Shifter, president of the think tank Inter-American Dialogue, believes the president will have trouble achieving major changes.

"The obstacles are formidable, including in the business community. In some cases, necessary reform will clash with the business interests and incomes of large numbers of lawmakers," Shifter said.

Associated Press writer Stan Lehman and video journalist Diarlei Rodrigues in Brasilia contributed to this report.

## US stocks end dismal, volatile year on a bright note

By ALEX VEIGA, AP Business Writer

Wall Street closed out a dismal, turbulent year for stocks on a bright note Monday, but still finished 2018 with the worst showing in a decade.

After setting a series of records through the late summer and early fall, major U.S. indexes fell sharply after early October, leaving them all in the red for the year.

The S&P 500 index, the market's main benchmark, finished the year with a loss of 6.2 percent. The last time the index fell for the year was in 2008 during the financial crisis. The S&P 500 posted tiny losses in 2011 and 2015, but eked out small gains in both years once dividends were included.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average declined 5.6 percent. The Nasdaq composite slid 3.9 percent.

Major indexes in Europe also ended 2018 in the red. The CAC 40 of France finished the year down 11 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 12.5 percent. Germany's DAX ended the year in a bear market, down 22 percent from a high in January and 18 percent from the start of the year.

Most Asian markets likewise lost ground in 2018. The region's stock markets were closed Tuesday for New Year holidays.

"This has really been a challenging year for investors," said Jeff Kravetz, regional investment strategist at U.S. Bank Wealth Management. "This was really the year that market volatility returned with a vengeance."

Wall Street started 2018 strong, buoyed by a growing economy and corporate profits. Stocks climbed to new highs early, shook off a sudden, steep drop by spring and rode a wave of tax cut-juiced corporate earnings growth to another all-time high by September. Then the jitters set in.

Investors grew worried that the testy U.S.-China trade dispute and higher interest rates would slow the economy, hurting corporate profits. A slowing U.S. housing market and forecasts of weaker global growth in 2019 stoked traders' unease.

In October the market's gyrations grew more volatile.

The autumn sell-off knocked the benchmark S&P 500 index into a correction, or a drop of 10 percent

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from its all-time high, for the second time in nine months. A Christmas Eve plunge brought it briefly into bear market territory, or a drop of 20 percent from its peak, before closing just short of the threshold that would have meant the end of the market's nearly 10-year bull market run.

"For markets to move higher next year, we're going to have to resolve those issues," Kravetz said.

The risks confronting investors have market strategists along Wall Street forecasting another turbulent year for stocks in 2019, and potentially one of the most difficult years for investors since the bull market began.

On Monday, the S&P 500 index rose 21.11 points, or 0.9 percent, to 2,506.85. The Dow gained 265.06 points, or 1.2 percent, to 23,327.46. The Nasdaq added 50.76 points, or 0.8 percent, to 6,635.28. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks picked up 10.64 points, or 0.8 percent, to 1,348.56. It finished 12.2 percent lower for the year.

Bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.68 percent from 2.73 percent late Friday. The yield started off the year at 2.41 percent.

Health care stocks paved the way for Monday's modest gains. The sector ended the year with a 4.7 percent increase, to lead all other sectors in the S&P 500. Utilities were the only other sector to eke out an annual gain, adding 0.5 percent.

Technology companies, a big driver of the market's gains before things deteriorated in October, ended the year with a 1.6 percent loss. Three of the five so-called "FAANG" stocks — Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google parent Alphabet — ended 2018 lower. Amazon rose 28.4 percent, while Netflix jumped 39.4 percent.

Energy companies fared the worst, plunging 20.5 percent for the year, as the price of U.S. crude oil tumbled around 40 percent from a four-year peak of \$76 a barrel in October.

On Monday, benchmark U.S. crude oil inched up 0.2 percent to settle at \$45.41 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, the benchmark for international prices, gained 1.1 percent to \$53.80 a barrel in London.

Trading will be closed Tuesday for New Year's Day.

Investors drew encouragement from a tweet from President Donald Trump on Sunday, in which the president said he had a "long and very good call" with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Trump added: "Deal is moving along very well. If made, it will be very comprehensive, covering all subjects, areas and points of dispute. Big progress being made."

Meanwhile, the official Xinhua News Agency cited a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying that "China stands ready to work with the United States to move forward the China-U.S. ties which are underpinned by coordination, cooperation and stability."

Stocks also got a boost in early December when the U.S. and China agreed to a truce on trade, but then plunged when it was unclear what exactly both sides had agreed upon.

In other trading, the dollar fell to 109.63 yen from 110.41 yen on Friday. The euro strengthened to \$1.1474 from \$1.1442.

Gold slipped 0.1 percent to \$1,281.30 an ounce and silver gained 0.7 percent to \$15.54 an ounce. Copper lost 1.9 percent to \$2.63 a pound.

In other energy futures trading, wholesale gasoline slipped 0.2 percent to \$1.32 a gallon. Heating oil rose 1 percent to \$1.68 a gallon. Natural gas plunged 11 percent to \$2.94 per 1,000 cubic feet.

## Animal advocates: Fatal zoo mauling shows need for crackdown

By JONATHAN DREW and RICK CALLAHAN, Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The fatal mauling of a zoo intern by a lion that escaped from a locked pen illustrates the need for North Carolina regulators to crack down on unaccredited exhibitors of dangerous animals, animal welfare advocates said Monday.

Alexandra Black, 22, was attacked Sunday while cleaning an animal enclosure with other staff members. It was at least the 10th instance of an escape or attack by an animal at a privately run North Carolina wildlife facility since 1997, according to the Humane Society of the United States.

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Officials said the lion somehow escaped from a nearby pen and killed the recent college graduate just two weeks after she started working at the Conservators Center near Burlington, about 60 miles northwest of Raleigh. Sheriff's deputies shot and killed the animal before retrieving Black's body.

Black's "passion was the zoological industry. ... This person wanted to spend a lifetime around these animals, and I believe that the family was very supportive of that," said Mindy Stinner, executive director of the facility.

Before deputies fired on the lion, officials made several attempts to tranquilize it or hold it at bay with fire hoses, the Caswell County Sheriff's Office said.

Visitors at the center were hustled out of the park, Stinner said.

It was not immediately clear how the lion escaped or whether it got out of the enclosure that was being cleaned. Staff said the lion never made it beyond the park's perimeter fence. The park was closed indefinitely as part of an investigation.

Black, who was from New Palestine, Indiana, graduated from Indiana University in May with a degree in animal behavior. She had also recently worked at a research and education center in Battleground, Indiana, known as Wolf Park, which is home to wolves, bison and foxes.

As she tried to narrow down her interests to a specific field, she became intrigued with animal husbandry, said Wolf Park Managing Director Dana Drenzek.

"What made her a really good fit was her passion and intelligence," Drenzek said. Black would do research on her own and come back with questions, she said.

Cara Wellman, director of IU's Center for the Integrative Study of Animal Behavior, recalled that Black was an undergraduate teaching assistant for introductory biology.

"She was very energetic and committed to animal behavior and pursuing a career in animal husbandry," Wellman said. "This is silly, but what comes to my mind is that she was quiet and sweet. That was my impression of her."

In a statement Monday, the center said the lion named Matthai was a 14-year-old male born at the center shortly after his mother was placed there following a 2004 confiscation assisted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

No problems were found at the nonprofit nature center during inspections by the USDA in January 2017 or April 2018, according to government reports. A government inspector counted 16 lions, three tigers and two leopards among 85 total animals during the 2018 site visit.

A 2016 federal tax filing shows the center earned about \$711,000 from gifts, grants and contributions while spending about \$600,000 operating the center that year. An online public records search indicates the center faced state tax liens totaling thousands of dollars in 2017.

While the center is USDA-licensed, animal welfare advocates note that it's not accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, which requires facilities to meet strict animal safety and security standards.

The Humane Society has urged North Carolina to go beyond the USDA licensing standards, arguing that it's among four states with particularly lax laws on private ownership of dangerous wild animals.

The organization pushed for a 2015 bill to make it illegal to own lions, tigers and other wild carnivores unless a facility was accredited by AZA or met other strict standards. The bill passed the state House but not the Senate.

"The longer North Carolina does nothing as other states continue to pass stricter and stricter laws, North Carolina is going to see people coming into the state with their collections of dangerous wild animals, and the problem is simply going to grow," Lisa Wathne, the Humane Society's director of captive wildlife protection, said in an interview.

The center was founded in 1999 as an "educational nonprofit dedicated to providing a specialized home for select carnivore species," according to its website. The site says it houses 21 species and gets more than 16,000 visitors annually after starting public tours in 2007.

A center spokeswoman, Taylor Sharp, said the facility's leadership was not available to discuss safety and security Monday. The center acknowledges its lack of AZA accreditation on the site, noting that "facilities



with more limited income must carefully choose how to allocate their resources.”

Callahan reported from Indianapolis. Associated Press Writer Sarah Brumfield in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Drew at [www.twitter.com/JonathanLDrew](http://www.twitter.com/JonathanLDrew)

## House Democrats unveil measure to re-open government

By ZEKE MILLER and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats unveiled a package of bills Monday that would re-open the federal government without approving funding for President Donald Trump’s border wall with Mexico, establishing an early confrontation that will test the new power dynamic in Washington.

The House is preparing to vote as soon as the new Congress convenes Thursday, as one of the first acts after Democrats take control, according to an aide who was not authorized to discuss the plan and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Democrats under Nancy Pelosi are all but certain to swiftly approve the two bills, making good on their pledge to try to quickly resolve the partial government shutdown that’s now in its second week. What’s unclear is whether the Republican-led Senate, under Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., will consider either measure — or if Trump would sign them into law.

“It would be the height of irresponsibility and political cynicism for Senate Republicans to now reject the same legislation they have already supported,” Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement late Monday.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The package does not include the \$5 billion Trump wants for the wall on the southern border.

The president told Fox News Channel in an interview Monday that he was “ready, willing and able” to negotiate. He added: “No, we are not giving up. We have to have border security and the wall is a big part of border security.”

McConnell spokesman Donald Stewart made it clear Senate Republicans will not take action without Trump’s backing. “It’s simple: The Senate is not going to send something to the president that he won’t sign,” he said.

Republican senators are refusing to vote on any bills until all sides, including Trump, are in agreement. Senators were frustrated that Trump had dismissed their earlier legislation to avert the shutdown.

House Democrats did not confer with Senate Republicans on the package, but the bills are expected to have some bipartisan support because they reflect earlier spending measures already hashed out between the parties and chambers.

One bill will temporarily fund the Department of Homeland Security at current levels, with \$1.3 billion for border security, through Feb. 8, while talks continue.

The other will be on a measure made up of six other bipartisan bills — some that have already passed the Senate — to fund the departments of Agriculture, Interior, Housing and Urban Development and others closed by the partial shutdown. They would provide money through the remainder of the fiscal year, to Sept. 30.

The House is planning two separate votes for Thursday. If approved, the bills would go to the Senate.

Senate Democrats support the measures, according to a senior aide who was unauthorized to discuss the plan and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., the chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, tweeted that without funding for Trump’s wall, the package is a “nonstarter.” He said it “will not be a legitimate answer to this impasse.”

But as the shutdown drags on, pressure is expected to build on all sides for a resolution, as public parks and museums close, and some 800,000 federal workers are going without pay.

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Trump could accept or reject either bill, and it's unclear how he would respond. The president continued to insist Monday he wants to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, despite assertions otherwise of three confidants.

"An all concrete Wall was NEVER ABANDONED," Trump tweeted Monday. "Some areas will be all concrete but the experts at Border Patrol prefer a Wall that is see through (thereby making it possible to see what is happening on both sides)."

Later Monday, Trump tweeted, "The Democrats will probably submit a Bill, being cute as always, which gives everything away but gives NOTHING to Border Security, namely the Wall."

Trump's comments came after officials, including his departing chief of staff, indicated that the president's signature campaign pledge to build the wall would not be fulfilled as advertised. White House chief of staff John Kelly told the Los Angeles Times in an interview published Sunday that Trump abandoned the notion of "a solid concrete wall early on in the administration."

"To be honest, it's not a wall," Kelly said, adding that the mix of technological enhancements and "steel slat" barriers the president now wants along the border resulted from conversations with law enforcement professionals.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., emerged from a Sunday lunch at the White House to tell reporters that "the wall has become a metaphor for border security" and referred to "a physical barrier along the border."

Graham said Trump was "open-minded" about a broader immigration agreement, saying the budget impasse presented an opportunity to address issues beyond the border wall. But a previous attempt to reach a compromise that addressed the status of "Dreamers" — young immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children — broke down last year as a result of escalating White House demands.

Graham told CNN before his lunch with Trump that "there will never be a deal without wall funding."

The partial government shutdown began Dec. 22 after Trump bowed to conservative demands that he fight to make good on his vow and secure funding for the wall before Republicans lose control of the House on Wednesday. Democrats have remained committed to blocking any funding for the wall, and with neither side engaging in substantive negotiation, the effect of the partial shutdown was set to spread and to extend into the new year.

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Associated Press writer Kevin Freking in Washington contributed to this report.

## Elizabeth Warren takes big step toward 2020 presidential bid

By ELANA SCHOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Elizabeth Warren on Monday took the first major step toward launching a widely anticipated campaign for the presidency, hoping her reputation as a populist fighter can help her navigate a Democratic field that could include nearly two dozen candidates.

"No matter what our differences, most of us want the same thing," the 69-year-old Massachusetts Democrat said in a video that highlights her family's history in Oklahoma. "To be able to work hard, play by the same set of rules and take care of the people we love. That's what I'm fighting for and that's why today I'm launching an exploratory committee for president."

Warren burst onto the national scene a decade ago during the financial crisis with calls for greater consumer protections. She quickly became one of the party's more prominent liberals even as she sometimes fought with Obama administration officials over their response to the market turmoil.

Now, as a likely presidential contender, she is making an appeal to the party's base. Her video notes the economic challenges facing people of color along with images of a women's march and Warren's participation at an LGBT event.

In an email to supporters, Warren said she'd more formally announce a campaign plan early in 2019.

Warren is the most prominent Democrat yet to make a move toward a presidential bid and has long been a favorite target of President Donald Trump.

In mid-December, former Obama housing chief Julian Castro also announced a presidential exploratory

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committee, which legally allows potential candidates to begin raising money. Outgoing Maryland Rep. John Delaney is the only Democrat so far to have formally announced a presidential campaign.

But that's likely to change quickly in the new year as other leading Democrats take steps toward White House runs.

Warren enters a Democratic field that's shaping up as the most crowded in decades, with many of her Senate colleagues openly weighing their own campaigns, as well as governors, mayors and other prominent citizens. One of her most significant competitors could be Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent who is eyeing another presidential run harnessing the same populist rhetoric.

She must also move past a widely panned October release of a DNA test meant to bolster her claim to Native American heritage. The move was intended to rebut Trump's taunts of Warren as "Pocahontas." Instead, her use of a genetic test to prove ethnicity spurred controversy that seemed to blunt any argument she sought to make. There was no direct mention of it in the video released Monday.

Speaking to reporters Monday outside her Cambridge, Massachusetts, home, Warren largely danced around a question on whether she wishes she had handled the DNA test release any differently.

"I have put it all out there. It's there for anyone to see," Warren said. "But at the end of the day ... this election going forward is going to be about the tens of millions of families across this country who work hard, who play to the rules and who just time after time take one body blow after another."

Trump told Fox News Channel's "All-American New Year" in an interview to be broadcast Monday night that he hopes Warren does run for president.

"We'll see how she does," he said. "I wish her well. I hope she does well. I'd love to run against her."

Warren has the benefit of higher name recognition than many others in the Democratic mix for 2020, thanks to her years as a prominent critic of Wall Street who originally conceived of what became the government's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

She now faces an arduous battle to raise money and capture Democratic primary voters' attention before Iowa casts its first vote in more than a year. She has an advantage in the \$12.5 million left over from her 2018 re-election campaign that she could use for a presidential run.

Warren's campaign is likely to revolve around the same theme she's woven into speeches and policy proposals in recent years: battling special interests, paying mind to the nexus between racial and economic inequities.

"I run for office because I'm grateful down to my toes for the opportunities that were given to me, and I'm determined that we will give those same opportunities to not just some of our kids but to all of our kids," Warren said.

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Associated Press writers Juana Summers in Washington, Alanna Durkin Richer in Cambridge, Mass., and Steve LeBlanc in Boston contributed to this report.

## Russia: 4 die in building collapse; searchers race weather

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Hundreds of rescue workers raced bitterly cold weather in Russia's Ural Mountains region Monday as they searched for survivors in the hulking concrete blocks from a partially collapsed apartment building where at least four people died.

The nation's top investigative agency, the Investigative Committee, said an explosion triggered by a gas leak apparently caused the pre-dawn collapse in the industrial city of Magnitogorsk. The New Year's Eve accident shocked Russians and marred the mood on the nation's most beloved holiday.

Authorities said five people were hospitalized with injuries and 35 others remained unaccounted for. Russian officials acknowledged that the odds of finding anyone alive in the debris looked increasingly slim given the extreme weather.

Nearly 1,400 rescue workers searched in temperatures of -17 degrees Celsius (1.4 degrees Fahrenheit). The overnight forecast called for temperatures to plunge to -24 degrees Celsius (-17 F) overnight.

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"The chances are reducing with time," Health Minister Veronika Skvortsova responded curtly when pressed by reporters on the likelihood of finding trapped survivors. "But incredible stories do happen."

Emergency officials deployed powerful heaters to raise temperatures in the wreckage in case anyone trapped there was at risk of dying of hypothermia.

"We must work as quickly as we can as temperatures don't give us any time to linger," Deputy Emergency Minister Pavel Baryshev said during a conference call with local officials.

Officials said they had all the necessary equipment for a thorough search, but the work was proceeding slowly due to fear other sections of the 10-story building might collapse. Residents of some sections were evacuated as a precaution.

The structure was constructed from concrete panels. One that was left hanging in the collapsed section of the building came crashing down as television stations aired live broadcasts from the scene.

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the accident site about 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) southeast of Moscow and went to a local hospital where injured residents were taken.

At the hospital, Putin spoke to a 13-year old boy, who sustained head injuries and frostbite after spending an hour under the rubble before being rescued.

"You will get well soon, you are a fighter," Putin told the boy after hearing that he was practicing martial arts.

Another survivor, Yulia Gavrilova, recalled the harrowing moments of the collapse.

"We were sleeping and I woke up feeling I was falling down," she said. "I first thought I was dreaming it. Then I woke up for real and realized that I was standing outside, the wall was not there any longer. My mother was screaming that she couldn't breathe and my son was screaming from another corner."

Local authorities initially said 68 people registered as residents in the collapsed section of the building were missing, but later tracked down some of them.

The Russian Emergency Ministry later said that 35 people remained unaccounted for, and it wasn't clear if they were in the building when it collapsed.

The Local governor, Boris Dubrovsky, told Putin that authorities published the missing persons list in the hope they were somewhere else when the explosion happened and would report their whereabouts. He promised to quickly provide new apartments for those who were left homeless.

Gas explosions in Russian homes and businesses are common, and they are usually blamed on neglect of safety rules or poor maintenance.

## NFL head coaching positions a slippery ride

By **BARRY WILNER, AP Pro Football Writer**

Sean Payton despises the term "Black Monday." And he's one of the coaches who always survives it.

Six head coaches were fired as the NFL season concluded, four of them on Monday. Two, Mike McCarthy in Green Bay and Hue Jackson in Cleveland, didn't even make it that far.

Saints coach Payton, finishing his 13th season in New Orleans and now owning the second-longest tenure with a team after Cincinnati fired Marvin Lewis, had some strong words about how the coaching carousel gets derailed every year.

"Our owners' network that they own have created this," Payton said, referring to NFL Network that is owned by the league, "marketed this and sold this 'Black Monday,' and that's just disappointing."

In reference to Lewis, who was with the Bengals since 2003, but went an all-time worst 0-7 in the play-offs, Payton added: "He's been a fabulous coach, but I don't want to comment on anyone or all of them (who were fired)."

He added that the whole Black Monday scene, which some media outlets promote the way they do actual competition, is "ridiculous."

Payton and every other coach in pro sports recognize that change is understandable and at times necessary. As long as it is thought out and includes a plan for the future, revision can make sense.

When it's more on an owner's whim or due to some serious impatience, that's another story.



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Steve Wilks, fired after a 3-13 record in his first — and only — season in Arizona, might be a case in point. Had Bruce Arians not retired, he still would have been with the Cardinals, but Wilks was a hot candidate for several openings last offseason following his work as Carolina's defensive coordinator. Barring a full-out revolt by the players, as happened with Ben McAdoo and the Giants in 2017, how is one year enough to judge a head coach's capabilities?

Also fired on Monday were Vance Joseph in Denver and Adam Gase in Miami. On Sunday night, Todd Bowles with the Jets and Dirk Koetter with the Bucs were let go.

A year ago, Indianapolis, Tennessee, Oakland, Detroit, Chicago, Arizona and the New York Giants made changes. That's 14 franchises out of 32 with different head coaches since 2016. The Cardinals and Giants will have had three coaches from 2016-19.

Also taking a hit has been the NFL's initiative on diversity in coaching. The Rooney Rule is exemplary in purpose, though it sometimes gets criticized for how it is implemented.

Of the eight head men released, only Koetter, Gase and McCarthy are not minorities. Just three minority head coaches remain: Ron Rivera with the Panthers, Anthony Lynn with the Chargers, and Mike Tomlin with the Steelers.

Impatience by owners can't be blamed for the moves by the Bengals or Jets, both clearly on a downward spiral.

Otherwise, well, it normally takes at the very least three years for a coach's program to take root. Joseph got two, Gase got three injury-ravaged years, and Koetter also got three.

Jackson simply lost too often, particularly with a vastly improved roster early this season, to remain on the job.

McCarthy, a Super Bowl winner, had seen things go stale in Green Bay, and he often has been blamed for the Packers getting to just the one Super Bowl with a generational quarterback, Aaron Rodgers.

Still, the word stability seems to have been dropped from owners' dictionaries. They give lip service to wanting to be like the Patriots, Saints or Seahawks.

Then, if things turn sour for one season, they begin wondering if the right people are in place. Imagine if John Mara had done that with Tom Coughlin before the 2007 or 2011 seasons, when fans and media were calling for the coach's removal.

Yet, we hear things like this from Broncos boss John Elway:

— "Vance made a lot of strides and deserves credit for how hard and competitively the team played this season. There's always going to be a high standard here. The bottom line is we need to win more football games. We're excited about the foundation that's being built and look forward to putting in the work to get the Broncos back on the winning track."

In most places, that winning track has lots of potholes. Not many coaches get the opportunity to navigate around them.

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AP Sports Writer Brett Martel contributed to this report.

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## Vatican spokesman, deputy resign amid crisis period for pope

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican spokesman, Greg Burke, and his deputy resigned abruptly Monday amid an overhaul of the Vatican's communications operations and a crisis period in Pope Francis' papacy.

The departures of Burke and his deputy, Paloma Garcia Ovejero, signaled that the problems associated with Francis' reform of the Vatican bureaucracy had come to a head, and at a very bad time: The pope is struggling to address a global sex abuse and cover-up scandal that threatens his own legacy.

Francis nevertheless accepted the resignations, which take effect Tuesday, the Vatican said in a statement. He named a longtime member of the Vatican's communications operations, Alessandro Gisotti, as

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an interim replacement for Burke.

"At this time of transition in Vatican communications, we think it's best the Holy Father is completely free to assemble a new team," Burke tweeted. "New Year, New Adventures."

Burke stressed that he and Garcia prayed about the decision "for months and we're very much at peace with it." Both thanked the pope.

"One stage is ending. Thank you for these two and a half years," Garcia tweeted.

The pope recently overhauled the Vatican's media operations for the second time by ousting the longtime editor of the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, and naming a new director of editorial content for all Vatican media, Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli.

Burke's statement on Twitter that the immediate resignations were months in the making suggested they were not over the recent appointments but a reflection of more deep-seated institutional problems.

The resignations appeared to take the new team by surprise, though the job of Vatican spokesman is notoriously difficult given the feudal nature of the Vatican, its reflexive tendency toward secrecy and the occasional skepticism of journalists.

The head of Vatican communications, Paolo Ruffini, said he respected Burke and Garcia's decision. He praised their professionalism and said he had full confidence in Gisotti, who was a longtime journalist with Vatican Radio and more recently worked as the Vatican's head of social media.

"The year ahead is full of important appointments that will require maximum communications efforts," Ruffini said in a statement.

The comment might have referred to a high-stakes summit on preventing clergy sex abuse that Francis convened for February, as well as the pope's foreign trips planned for 2019: Panama, United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Bulgaria and Macedonia in the first half of the year, and rumored trips to Madagascar and Japan in the second half.

Francis still faces continued fallout from the clergy abuse scandal, in Chile, the United States and beyond. The next year will likely see the outcome of a canonical investigation of ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who has been accused of sexually abusing minors and adult seminarians in the United States, as well as the results of the Vatican's investigation of McCarrick's rise through church ranks.

Longtime Vatican watcher Rocco Palmo tweeted that the standard rule in crisis communications is "you don't leave in the middle of the storm but ride it out.

"To lose both the Vatican's top press hands (both quite devout) in mid-scandal appears to signal that something has become professionally untenable," Palmo tweeted.

Burke was a Fox TV correspondent in Rome when he was hired as a communications adviser for the Vatican's secretariat of state in 2012. At the time, the papacy of Pope Benedict XVI had suffered a series of communications blunders, and it was thought that Burke could provide guidance.

In 2015, Burke was named deputy spokesman under the Rev. Federico Lombardi, an Italian Jesuit.

When Lombardi retired in 2016, Burke became main spokesman and was joined by Garcia, the first woman to ever hold the position of deputy. Garcia had been the Vatican correspondent for the Cadena Cope, the Spanish broadcaster.

The two had internationalized the media operations, organizing unofficial briefings with visiting prelates, providing background information and streamlining communications with journalists during foreign trips.

## Timetable of Trump's pullout from Syria being questioned

By DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amid questions about the pace of his exit from Syria, President Donald Trump complained Monday that he's getting "bad press" for his decision to pull American troops out of the country and insisted he was simply making good on his campaign promise against U.S. involvement in "never ending wars."

Trump abruptly announced in mid-December that he was withdrawing 2,000 U.S. troops from Syria. The decision was roundly criticized by his national security advisers and Democratic and Republican lawmakers,

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several of whom asked him to reconsider. It prompted Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to step down, and the U.S. envoy to the coalition fighting Islamic State militants resigned in protest.

Trump fought back against the criticism.

"I am the only person in America who could say that, 'I'm bringing our great troops back home, with victory,' and get BAD press," Trump tweeted Monday. "It is Fake News and Pundits who have FAILED for years that are doing the complaining. If I stayed in Endless Wars forever, they would still be unhappy!"

Critics not only warn of a resurgence of IS, but worry that the American exit is a betrayal of U.S.-backed Kurdish forces in Syria and leaves them vulnerable to an attack from Turkish forces. Turkey considers the U.S.-backed Kurdish People's Protection Units, which now controls nearly 30 percent of Syria, a terrorist group linked to an insurgency within its own borders.

Critics also contend that the U.S. withdrawal would embolden Iran and Russia, which have supported the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, will be traveling to Israel and Turkey in early January to discuss what the White House says is the "deliberate and coordinated" withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria. Bolton also will be discussing increased cooperation with the Turkish military and other partners.

Bolton's spokesman, Garrett Marquis, said in a statement Monday that Bolton will be joined in Turkey by Gen. Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and James Jeffrey, the secretary of state's special representative for Syria engagement. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is expected to speak with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on New Year's Day at the inauguration of Brazil's new president in Brasilia.

Some critics also have expressed fear of a rapid withdrawal of U.S. troops.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a Trump backer and leading voice on national security and foreign affairs on Capitol Hill, had lunch with the president Sunday and emerged from the White House saying that Trump was slowing down the withdrawal from Syria.

"I think we're in a pause situation where we're re-evaluating what's the best way to achieve the president's objective of having people pay more and do more," Graham said. "The pause is to assess the effects of the conditions on the ground."

"I think we're slowing things down in a smart way," Graham said, adding that Trump was very aware of the plight of the Kurds.

Graham said his meeting with Trump was reassuring. "The president will make sure any withdrawal from Syria will be done in a fashion to ensure 1) ISIS is permanently destroyed, 2) Iran doesn't fill in the back end, and 3) our Kurdish allies are protected," Graham tweeted.

The National Security Council at the White House declined to answer questions about whether the president was re-evaluating or whether he was slowing his timetable for pulling troops out. The White House referred questions to the Pentagon.

When he announced he was pulling troops from Syria, Trump said the withdrawal would be rapid. On Monday, he said he was "slowly" pulling troops out. Initially, Trump said IS had been destroyed in Syria. Now he said the militant group is "mostly done," although the network, with its hard-line extremist ideology, continues to inspire sympathizers and has affiliated groups in other parts of the world.

"If anybody but Donald Trump did what I did in Syria, which was an ISIS loaded mess when I became President, they would be a national hero. ISIS is mostly gone, we're slowly sending our troops back home to be with their families, while at the same time fighting ISIS remnants," Trump tweeted.

"I campaigned on getting out of Syria and other places. Now when I start getting out the Fake News Media, or some failed Generals who were unable to do the job before I arrived, like to complain about me & my tactics, which are working. Just doing what I said I was going to do!"

That tweet seemed aimed at rebutting comments by Stanley McChrystal, a retired U.S. Army four-star general who commanded the Joint Special Operations Command in the mid-2000s and formerly commanded U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan.

"If you pull American influence out, you're likely to have greater instability, and of course it'll be much

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more difficult for the United States to try to push events in any direction. There is an argument that says we just pull up our stuff, go home, let the region run itself. That has not done well for the last 50 or 60 years," McChrystal said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

## Odd offerings in sports in 2018: weird science, camels, soup

By FRED LIEF, AP Sports Writer

There was a soup thrower in the locker room. There was a tickler on the hockey rink. There were science deniers swallowing their hot air. There was a hint of doomsday on a golf course.

Sports drifted into strange places in 2018. Sometimes everyone seemed lost.

The Scottish soccer team Brechin played an entire 36-game season without winning a game. That hadn't happened since the 19th century. The Washington Nationals brought three camels to spring training, a proclamation that this year they would finally get over the playoff hump. Well, the hump was big and there were no playoffs for the Nationals, just the lasting scent of camel's breath.

And be happy you weren't the person in charge of ordering food for Norway's team at the Pyeongchang Olympics. Instead of getting 1,500 eggs, as requested, 15,000 arrived. Hey, omelets for everyone!

**GET THIS MAN A PASSWORD:** Worried about safety at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics? This should make you feel better. The man in charge of cybersecurity says he's never used a computer. The most standard cable connection is a mystery to him. Suffice to say, Yoshitaka Sakurada did not come off well in his remarks, drawing laughs from Japanese lawmakers. Says Sakurada: "I give instructions to my aide, and so I don't plug into a computer myself. But I am confident our work is flawless."

**DEDICATED FOLLOWER OF FASHION:** Serena Williams knows her way around a tennis court as well as the world of couture. But French tennis authorities said her daring, full-length catsuit would no longer be welcome at the French Open. Rising to her defense were not so much the editors of Vogue but Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former president of Iran. He tweeted that the French were "disrespecting" Williams. He added, with no hint of his role in dictating fashion choice during his rule, that "some people . haven't realized the true meaning of freedom."

**DEER VIJAY:** It's over. Not often do lawyers get to draw up confidentiality agreements regarding deer antlers, but so it was with golfer Vijay Singh. The three-time major winner settled a lawsuit that had been going on for more than five years over his use of deer-antler spray. The spray contains an insulin-growth substance that had been banned by the PGA Tour. Singh contended he was subjected to "public humiliation and ridicule."

**SOUP'S ON:** Basketball fans — and short-order cooks everywhere — may ponder this for a long time: What kind of soup did J.R. Smith throw? Lentil? Good old chicken noodle? Perhaps a bisque. We simply don't know. But this much is clear: The then-Cleveland Cavaliers guard, as if squaring up from behind the arc, tossed a bowl of soup at assistant coach Damon Jones after a shootaround. When pressed on his soup choice, Smith insisted he could not remember, saying it's "just part of the game."

**RICE AND BEANS:** When you go 0-16 these things happen. The Cleveland Browns plunged to such depths after their winless 2017 season they were compelled to knock down a report they were considering former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to be their next coach. Rice, a lifelong Browns fan, knows her football but is probably on safer turf at a NATO conference. The Browns noted their "utmost respect" for Rice but said no thanks. Rice, on Facebook, expressed confidence in the team's next hire. However, if need be, she offered to "call a play or two next season."

**ICECAPADES:** Maybe Freud can explain this. Or maybe Gary Bettman. In the merry month of May, two NHL players got in touch with their inner 6-year-old. Vegas goalie Marc-Andre Fleury tickled the ear of a helmetless Blake Wheeler of the Winnipeg Jets. Fleury says he was simply "trying to have a little smile by myself." Then there's Brad Marchand of the Boston Bruins — no tickler he. He licks opponents. First, he went after Toronto's Leo Komarov, then Tampa Bay's Ryan Callahan. The league told Marchand to cut it out, threatening punishment. A couple of coaches were exasperated. A macho punch to the face is one thing, but this? "I don't get it, I don't understand it," the Lightning's Jon Cooper said. Added the Jets' Paul



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Maurice: "It gives me the willies."

SPACEBALLS: Two of the NBA's best briefly left the court for another galaxy. Kyrie Irving, during a 2017 podcast, wondered if the Earth might be flat. Social media were not kind to such musings. This year, the Celtics guard seemed to acknowledge at a Boston summit that his planet is indeed as round as a basketball and said he was sorry "to all the science teachers." Celestial backcourt mate Stephen Curry, meanwhile, wondered if it was a hoax that astronauts walked on the moon. The Golden State star told ESPN he was "obviously" joking and "silently protesting" how this story "took a life of its own." In any case, NASA says it has mounds of lunar rocks to show Curry, who happily agreed to accept the invitation to tour the space agency.

FAIRWAY TO HEAVEN: This was supposed to be a nice day of golf in Hawaii. Instead, it felt like Armageddon. Everyone's phone at the Sony Open started flashing: A missile is coming, and this is the real deal. One golfer, John Peterson, tweeted that he and his family were taking cover under mattresses in the bathtub and praying to the almighty. The alert was a false alarm, but until then there was panic in the lobby, with people running around, not knowing what to do. Golfer Colt Knost surveyed the mayhem and had this thought as the apocalypse possibly approached: "I texted one of the rules officials and asked if tee times were delayed."

AP Sports Writers Doug Ferguson, Tom Withers and Stephen Whyno contributed to this report.

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-sports> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Bangladesh prime minister denies accusations of rigged vote

By JULHAS ALAM and EMILY SCHMALL, Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — The day after winning a record fourth term in power, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina trumpeted her accomplishments and dismissed opposition claims that the vote was rigged.

Hasina's ruling alliance won virtually every parliamentary seat in the general election, according to official results released Monday, giving her a third consecutive term despite opposition allegations of intimidation. Hasina earlier served a single term.

The coalition led by Hasina's Awami League party won 288 out of 300 seats — 96 percent — in Sunday's polls, Election Commission Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed said. The opposition alliance led by prominent lawyer Kamal Hossain won only seven seats.

The opposition rejected the outcome, with Hossain calling the election "farcical" and demanding a new election be held under the authority of a "nonpartisan government."

But Chief Election Commissioner K.M. Nurul Huda ruled out any revote, saying there were no reports of large irregularities.

"There is no scope to hold the election again," Huda said. He said the turnout in Sunday's vote was 80 percent.

Hasina's main rival for decades has been former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the leader of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, whom a court deemed ineligible to run for office because she was sentenced to more than two years in prison after being convicted of corruption. Zia's supporters say the charges were politically motivated.

In Zia's absence, opposition parties formed a coalition led by Hossain, an 82-year-old former member of Hasina's Awami League who served as foreign minister under Hasina's father, Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's founding leader.

The political opposition and groups including Human Rights Watch say Hasina has become increasingly authoritarian. More than a dozen people were killed in election-related violence Sunday, and the election campaign was dogged by allegations of the arrest and jailing of thousands of Hasina's opponents.

In a wide-ranging discussion with foreign journalists and election observers at her official residence in

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Dhaka on Monday, Hasina refused a suggestion that she offer her political foes an olive branch.

"The opposition you see, who are they? The main party, BNP, it was established by a military dictator (Zia's husband, Ziaur Rahman) who introduced martial law in this country, there was no constitutional right of the people.

"This military dictator, first they captured power, then they become politicians and formed their own party. And the rigging system and everything, they introduced to this country," she said.

Hasina dismissed questions about the fairness of the vote.

"I feel that it was a very peaceful election, some incidents took place, some of our Awami League party workers were killed by the opposition. I'm very sorry for that, but I always appreciate our law enforcement agencies, also our people who were working hard to have this election in a peaceful manner," she said.

The spokesman's office for U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called for restraint and encouraged both sides to address complaints peacefully and legally. Its statement Monday condemned violence against candidates and voters as unacceptable.

Dhaka University law professor Asif Nazrul said the election would cause people to "lose their belief in the electoral system in the future. Nobody will believe in the democratic system. This is a very bad signal."

Bangladesh's leading newspapers ran banner headlines, some in red, while television stations aired round-the-clock analysis. A headline in the country's leading English-language newspaper, the Daily Star, read, "Hat-trick for Hasina, BNP found missing in polling; atmosphere festive, tuned only to ruling party," referring to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

In an editorial, the newspaper said "this was a one-sided election."

"The blatant and starkest manifestation of an uneven state of affairs was the absence of polling agents of the opposition ... in most, if not almost all, of the polling centers in the country," it said.

The secretary general of Zia's party, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, won a seat in a twist victory. Alamgir is a fierce critic of Hasina and spearheaded the formation of the opposition alliance with Hossain at the helm. Alamgir said Sunday he was rejecting any outcome, but it was unknown after his win was declared what he would do now.

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

The Daily Star said 16 people were killed in 13 districts in election-related violence 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 of being forced to vote in front of ruling party men inside polling booths.

While rights groups have sounded alarms about an 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.

"It's a good opportunity for me to continue the development of the country because economic development is very, very important for our country. What we have done the last 10 years, now people are getting the fruit of this development, also they are getting better lives day by day. And we must be hopeful that in the next tenure, it will improve more," she said.

Some 104 million people in the Muslim-majority country were eligible to vote, including many young, first-time voters, in Bangladesh's 11th general election since independence from Pakistan.

Both sides were hoping to avoid a repeat of 2014, when Zia and the BNP boycotted and voter turnout 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.

About 600,000 security officials, including army and paramilitary forces, were deployed to counter violence. The telecommunications regulator shut down mobile internet services nationwide to prevent the organizing of protests.

## Paying for Medicaid, schools will be priority for lawmakers

By DAVID A. LIEB, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Big-dollar decisions about health care and education will top the agenda in many state capitols as lawmakers convene for their 2019 sessions with a closer balance between Republicans and Democrats.

Some states will be considering anew whether to expand government-funded health coverage to more people after Democrats put a sizable dent in Republican statehouse dominance during the November elections. Others will be wrestling with how to boost salaries for teachers and funding for their public schools.

State officials also will have to address some weighty issues that arose over the past year — how to recover from disastrous wildfires and floods, whether to legalize sports gambling and recreational marijuana for adults, and whether to make changes to their tax codes in response to recent federal laws and court rulings.

Many of the issues have a common denominator: money.

“The number one issue is always taxes or revenues and expenditures,” said Bill Pound, the longtime executive director of the National Conference of State Legislatures. “Given the nature of the economy, given the impact as it’s playing out of federal tax reform, that will take a good deal of attention.”

The tax overhaul signed one year ago by President Donald Trump will have a trickle-down effect on state income tax returns being filed this year, resulting in a windfall for some states. Lawmakers will have to decide what to do with the money and whether to make changes to their own income tax codes.

Sales tax changes also could be on the agenda in as many as 16 states that haven’t yet implemented them after a U.S. Supreme Court decision last summer. That ruling allows states to require online out-of-state retailers to collect taxes on sales made to their residents, a potential source of millions of additional dollars.

When the 2019 legislative sessions begin, Republicans will control 61 of the 99 state legislative chambers (down from 66 before the November election) and will control both chambers in 30 states. Democrats will have full control of 18 state legislatures. Minnesota will have the only legislature with split partisan control. Nebraska has a single chamber, which is officially nonpartisan.

Democratic gains mean there will be closer margins between Republicans and Democrats in most legislative chambers. Democrats also picked up about a half-dozen governor’s offices in the November elections. Republicans will have 27 governors while Democrats will have 23.

The Democratic surge has helped breathe new life into efforts to expand Medicaid coverage to low-income adults under the terms of the federal health care law signed by President Barack Obama in 2010. But a federal judge’s ruling in December that the Affordable Care Act is unconstitutional could bolster resistance among some state lawmakers while the case is appealed.

New Democratic governors in Kansas and Wisconsin will be joining incumbent Democratic chief executives in North Carolina and Montana in pushing for expanded Medicaid programs. But they still must contend with Republican-led Legislatures.

North Carolina has a 2013 law preventing the governor from expanding Medicaid without approval from the General Assembly.

Before Wisconsin Gov.-elect Tony Evers could take office, Republican lawmakers passed measures preventing him from withdrawing Wisconsin from the multistate lawsuit challenging the Affordable Care Act or from withdrawing a work requirement for Medicaid recipients.

Kansas Gov.-elect Laura Kelly told The Associated Press that expanding Medicaid is “a moral obligation that we have as a state.” Her election seemed to boost the chances of that happening, since a bipartisan coalition had passed a bill in 2017 that was vetoed by then-Republican Gov. Sam Brownback.

But conservative Republicans gained seats in the Kansas House at moderates’ expense, and GOP leaders could bottle up Medicaid expansion bills in legislative committees.

In Montana, the question is whether to continue a 2015 Medicaid expansion that provided health cov-

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erage to 95,000 adults but is scheduled to expire mid-year. Gov. Steve Bullock's budget proposal would reauthorize Medicaid expansion and raise an additional \$50 million annually through tax increases on such things as tobacco, liquor, hotel rooms and rental cars.

Republicans who control the Legislature have suggested the Medicaid expansion should be means-tested, include a work requirement and possibly drug testing.

If the governor's budget "comes down to 'we need to have those taxes to pay for Medicaid expansion,' then the answer is 'it's not gonna happen,'" said Montana Senate Majority Leader Fred Thomas, a Republican.

Public schools could be a top issue in at least a third of the states, including Arizona and Oklahoma — two places where teachers went on strike over funding for schools. Arizona lawmakers, who gave teachers a 9 percent raise last year, are on the hook for a pledge of an additional 10 percent raise over the next two years.

In Oklahoma, Republican Gov.-elect Kevin Stitt and lawmakers from both parties all have said additional school funding is a priority this year, even after teachers got an average annual pay hike of \$6,100 this past year.

"We have a bunch of members who were elected on two major things: on being supportive of education and reforming state government, so those are the things I think you'll be seeing," said Oklahoma House Floor Leader Jon Echols, a Republican.

Elsewhere, Democratic Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards is pushing the first statewide pay raise in a decade for teachers and other school personnel. Governors and lawmakers in Colorado, Kansas and New Mexico are among others considering a funding boost for schools. In Oregon, Democratic Senate President Peter Courtney said a value-added or a gross receipts tax are two possibilities to raise revenue for education.

Oregon lawmakers also could consider a tax on carbon emissions as part of an environmental agenda.

Washington voters in November rejected an initiative to impose the nation's first tax on carbon emissions. Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee is making a retooled bid at addressing climate change with a proposal that would require utilities to produce carbon-free electricity by 2045, forcing the elimination of power plants fueled by coal and natural gas. He also wants to reduce carbon emissions in fuel used for transportation.

"The people decided not to embrace plan A," Inslee said recently. But "this plan B is ready to go, and it can pass this year" in a Legislature that has expanded Democratic majorities.

Illinois Gov.-elect J.B. Pritzker and fellow Democrats in charge of the Legislature are considering legalizing and taxing recreational marijuana to bring in as much as \$1 billion annually to the state. Pritzker has promised marijuana tax revenue to both the operating budget and capital programs.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, also is pushing lawmakers to act quickly to legalize recreational marijuana for adults, a move he had opposed just a year ago. Cuomo hasn't said how much the state stands to gain in tax revenue.

Some states also are looking to raise more money by legalizing and taxing sports betting. That comes after the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way last year for the widespread expansion of sports gambling in states.

In some states, the 2019 legislative session marks the first opportunity to address the aftermath of deadly disasters.

Nevada's Democratic-controlled state government is expected to pass a ban on bump stocks on guns and tackle other firearm legislation as the Legislature meets for the first time since the October 2017 mass shooting on the Las Vegas Strip. The Trump administration earlier this month banned bump stocks, a regulation that will take effect in the new year but is likely to face a legal challenge from gun rights groups.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and the Republican-controlled Legislature will be wrestling with whether to tap as much as \$5 billion from the state's rainy-day fund to pay for the recovery from Hurricane Harvey, which swamped the southeast portion of the state in August 2017.

In California, state and federal authorities have estimated it will cost at least \$3 billion to clear debris



from 19,000 homes and businesses destroyed by three California wildfires last fall.

Fresh off its deadliest wildfire in history, the California Legislature also will have to decide how much responsibility utilities should bear and how to prevent future fires from becoming so deadly as the state grapples with the effects of climate change. One option could entail limitations on new construction.

"We need to think about things like zoning ... where we build and how we build," said Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon, a Democrat.

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## **AP Investigation: Food aid stolen as Yemen starves**

**By MAGGIE MICHAEL, Associated Press**

TAIZ, Yemen (AP) — Day after day Nabil al-Hakimi, a humanitarian official in Taiz, one of Yemen's largest cities, went to work feeling he had a "mountain" on his shoulders. Billions of dollars in food and other foreign aid was coming into his war-ravaged homeland, but millions of Yemenis were still living a step away from famine.

Reports of organizational disarray and out-and-out thievery streamed in to him this spring and summer from around Taiz — 5,000 sacks of rice doled out without record of where they'd gone . . . 705 food baskets looted from a welfare agency's warehouses . . . 110 sacks of grain pillaged from trucks trying to make their way through the craggy northern highlands overlooking the city.

Food donations, it was clear, were being snatched from the starving.

Documents reviewed by The Associated Press and interviews with al-Hakimi and other officials and aid workers show that thousands of families in Taiz are not getting international food aid intended for them — often because it has been seized by armed units that are allied with the Saudi-led, American-backed military coalition fighting in Yemen.

"The army that should protect the aid is looting the aid," al-Hakimi told the AP.

Across Yemen, factions and militias on all sides of the conflict have blocked food aid from going to groups suspected of disloyalty, diverted it to front-line combat units or sold it for profit on the black market, according to public records and confidential documents obtained by the AP and interviews with more than 70 aid workers, government officials and average citizens from six different provinces.

The problem of lost and stolen aid is common in Taiz and other areas controlled by Yemen's internationally recognized government, which is supported by the Saudi-led military coalition. It is even more widespread in territories controlled by the Houthi rebels, the struggling government's main enemy during the nearly four years of warfare that has spawned the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Some observers have attributed the near-famine conditions in much of the country to the coalition's blockade of ports that supply Houthi-controlled areas. AP's investigation found that large amounts of food are making it into the country, but once there, the food often isn't getting to people who need it most — raising questions about the ability of United Nations agencies and other big aid organizations to operate effectively in Yemen.

After the release of the AP's investigation on Monday, the United Nations' World Food Program for the first time directly accused the Houthi rebels of diverting aid. WFP director David Beasley said in a letter to the Houthis' leader that if the rebels did not investigate and put an end to theft, the organization would suspend some assistance, potentially effecting nearly 3 million people.

"These incidents of fraud amount to stealing food from the mouths of hungry Yemeni children," Beasley

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wrote.

The WFP said its own investigation had found "evidence of trucks illicitly removing food from designated food distribution centers" in Houthi-controlled areas as well as fraud by a local food aid distributor connected to the Houthis' Education Ministry. It said it learned many people in the Houthi-controlled capital, Sanaa, have not been getting food rations they're entitled to and that in other areas "hungry people have been denied full rations."

The World Food Program has 5,000 distribution sites across the country targeting 10 million people a month with food baskets but says it can monitor just 20 percent of the deliveries.

This year the U.N., the United States, Saudi Arabia and others have poured more than \$4 billion in food, shelter, medical and other aid into Yemen. That figure has been growing and is expected to keep climbing in 2019.

Despite the surge in help, hunger — and, in some pockets of the country, famine-level starvation — have continued to grow.

An analysis this month by a coalition of global relief groups found that even with the food aid that is coming in, more than half of the population is not getting enough to eat — 15.9 million of Yemen's 29 million people. They include 10.8 million who are in an "emergency" phase of food insecurity, roughly 5 million who are in a deeper "crisis" phase and 63,500 who are facing "catastrophe," a synonym for famine.

Counting the number of people who have starved to death in Yemen is difficult, because of the challenges of getting into areas shaken by violence and because starving people often officially die from diseases that prey on their weakened conditions. The nonprofit group Save the Children estimates that 85,000 children under the age of 5 have died from starvation or disease since the start of the war.

In some parts of the country, fighting, roadblocks and bureaucratic obstacles have reduced the amount of aid getting in. In other areas, aid gets in but still doesn't get to the hungriest families.

In the northern province of Saada, a Houthi stronghold, international aid groups estimate that 445,000 people need food assistance. Some months the U.N. has sent enough food to feed twice that many people. Yet the latest figures from the U.N. and other relief organizations show that 65 percent of residents are facing severe food shortages, including at least 7,000 people who are in pockets of outright famine.

Three officials with the coalition-backed government told the AP that they would provide replies to questions about the theft of food aid, but then didn't provide answers.

Officials at the agency that oversees aid work in Houthi territory — the National Authority for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — did not return repeated phone calls from the AP.

U.N. officials have generally been cautious in public statements about the Houthis, based in part on worries that the rebels might respond by blocking U.N. agencies from access to starving people. But in interviews with the AP, two top U.N. relief officials used strong language in reference to both the Houthis and their battlefield adversaries.

Geert Cappelaere, Middle East director for UNICEF, the U.N.'s emergency fund for children, said authorities on "all sides" of the conflict are impeding aid groups — and increasing the risk that the country will descend into widespread famine.

"This has nothing to do with nature," Cappelaere told the AP. "There is no drought here in Yemen. All of this is man-made. All of this has to do with poor political leadership which doesn't put the people's interest at the core of their actions."

David Beasley, executive director of the U.N.'s food program, said "certain elements of the Houthis" are denying the agency access to some parts of rebel territory — and appear to be diverting food aid.

"It's a disgrace, criminal, it's wrong, and it needs to end," Beasley said in an interview Sunday with the AP. "Innocent people are suffering."

The rebels and the coalition forces have begun peace talks in recent weeks, a process that has led to a reduction in fighting and eased the challenges of getting food aid into and out of Hodeida, the port city that is a gateway to the Houthi-controlled north. But even if donors are able to get more food in, the problem of what happens to food aid once it makes landfall remains.

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## 'THE POOR GET NOTHING'

The war in Yemen began in March 2015 after Houthi rebels swept out of the mountains and occupied northern Yemen, forcing the government of Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi into exile.

After the rebels began pushing farther south, Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states formed a coalition to take on the Houthis, describing their involvement as an effort to stop Iran, which has ties to the Houthis, from gaining sway over Yemen.

The coalition launched a rolling campaign of airstrikes and imposed an air, land and sea embargo on the rebel-held north. The Houthis, in turn, have blocked a key access route to Taiz, making it difficult for aid groups to get food and other supplies into the city.

The Houthis, a Zaidi-Shiite religious movement turned rebel militia, control an expanse of northern and western Yemen that is home to more than 70 percent of the country's population. In these areas, officials and relief workers say, Houthi rebels have moved aggressively to control the flow of food aid, putting pressure on international relief workers with threats of arrest or exile and setting up checkpoints that demand payments of "customs taxes" as trucks carrying aid try to move across rebel territory.

"Since the Houthis came to power, looting has been on a large scale," said Abdullah al-Hamidi, who served as acting education minister in the Houthi-run government in the north before defecting to the coalition side earlier this year. "This is why the poor get nothing. What really arrives to people is very little."

Each month in Sanaa, he said, at least 15,000 food baskets that the education ministry was supposed to provide to hungry families were instead diverted to the black market or used to feed Houthi militiamen serving on the front lines.

Half of the food baskets that the U.N. food program provides to Houthi-controlled areas are stored and distributed by the ministry, which is chaired by the brother of the rebels' top leader.

Moain al-Nagri, a managing editor at the Houthi-controlled daily newspaper, al-Thawra, told the AP that the paper learned last week that hundreds of its staffers had been falsely listed for more than a year as receiving food baskets from the education ministry. It's not clear where those food baskets went, he said, but it's clear that few of his employees received them.

Three other people with knowledge of relief programs in Houthi territory confirmed that they had knowledge of food baskets being improperly diverted from the education ministry. The three individuals and many others interviewed for this story spoke on condition of anonymity, because of the risks that the rebels might block aid programs or deny visas.

A senior U.N. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the issue, told the AP that enough aid is coming into the country to meet the demands of the hunger crisis, but much of it is stolen.

"If there is no corruption," he said, "there is no famine."

## BLACK MARKETS

Throughout Yemen, food that is supposed to be given for free to starving families ends up for sale in markets.

The Houthis' ministry of industry has documented hundreds of sacks of World Food Program flour being sold commercially after being repackaged by merchants, according to Abdu Bishr, who previously served as head of the ministry. Bishr, now a member of rebel-controlled parliament, says both sides in the war are to blame for failing to prevent the diversion of food aid.

Video shot in 2017 and obtained by the AP shows busy markets in the cities of Taiz and Aden not bothering to repackage pilfered food aid — selling cooking oil and flour displaying the U.N. food program's WFP logo. AP journalists reporting in Yemen this spring and summer spotted other examples of food with the logos of the WFP and other global relief groups being sold in markets in both Houthi and coalition areas.

"We have found entire stores packed with U.N. aid," said Fadl Moqbl, head of an independent advocacy group, the Yemeni Association for Consumers' Protection.

Because the war has wrecked the country's economy, many Yemenis don't have jobs or enough money to buy food in stores. Al-Hakimi, who worked for much of this year as the executive manager of the

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coalition-backed government's local relief committee in Taiz, said Yemenis will need more than short-term handouts. They need help to rebuild the country's economy and create jobs that will allow families to buy their own food.

When officials in Taiz asked al-Hakimi to take over as the relief committee's manager, he hoped he could help turn around the hunger crisis that has been building in the city since the war began. He soon discovered the scale of challenges facing him.

Political power in Taiz is divided among militias that have been folded into Yemen's national armed forces but continue to compete with each other to maintain their grips on the sectors of the city they control.

"Here the only means to achieve anyone's goals is through weapons," he said. "Who gets on the beneficiaries' lists? Those who have weapons. The poor, the most miserable, and the weak can't get their names on the lists of beneficiaries, so the aid goes to the powerful."

## LION'S SHARE

Coalition bombing campaigns and guerrilla fighting on the ground have demolished homes, factories, water works and power plants and killed more than 60,000 combatants and civilians. More than 3 million people have been displaced, increasing the demand for food and other help from outside the country.

In a 2017 survey funded by the European Union, two-thirds of displaced Yemenis who responded said they hadn't received any humanitarian aid, even though people forced from their homes are supposed to be key targets of U.N. relief efforts.

In displacement camps in the Houthi-controlled northern district of Aslam, barefoot children and mothers whose bodies have been reduced to skin and bone live in tents and huts made of sticks and sackcloth. The camps are not far from villages where the AP reported in September that families were trying to stave off famine by eating boiled tree leaves.

The U.N. and other global aid organizations estimate that 1.5 million Yemeni children are malnourished, including 400,000 to 500,000 who suffer life-threatening "severe acute malnutrition."

One-year-old Nasser Hafez, who lived with his family in a camp called al-Motayhara, died Dec. 12 from malnutrition and other complications at a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders. He was in a coma for five days before his tiny body gave up.

His father and 16 members of his family have moved at least six times since the start of the war. Before, the father said, he had been a tailor, earning enough to feed his family meat, chicken and vegetables. He said he hasn't received a single food basket from the U.N.'s World Food Program.

"They register us every month, maybe up to five times, but we never get food," he said.

He said the family has gotten cash transfers every few months equal to \$50 from the relief group Oxfam. It costs almost half that amount, he said, to buy 50 kilograms of World Food Program wheat from a market, which lasts his family only a week or two.

The Houthi rebels maintain tight control on how much food goes to which districts and who gets it. They manipulate the official lists of beneficiaries by giving preferential treatment to Houthi supporters and families of slain and wounded soldiers, according to relief workers and officials.

"Some areas in Yemen take the lion's share and other areas receive a trickle," said Bishr, the member of the Houthi-controlled parliament.

Five relief workers told the AP that they believe the U.N. and other international groups have been forced to sacrifice their independence in order to maintain access as they try to deliver aid to as many people as possible.

The Houthis "threaten decision-makers and international employees through permits and visa renewals," a senior aid official told the AP. "Those who don't comply will have their visas rejected."

He said that he discovered his employees were tipping off the Houthis about the contents of his conversations and emails. When he complained about the spying, he said, the rebels pulled his visa and forced him to leave the country.

Beasley, the top official at the U.N. food program, said he believes some of the rebels in key positions do care about the welfare of struggling families and have worked well with his agency, but there are others



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"who don't care about the people."

"Anytime you are in a war zone, it's a difficult situation and obviously when it comes to the United Nations we are neutral," he said. But when it comes to making sure that food aid gets to the people who need it, "we can't be neutral. We need to speak out in strongest voice, condemn it in every way."

## STRUGGLE IN TAIZ

Even before al-Hakimi took over as manager of Taiz's relief committee, officials and activists complained about intrigues and outrages relating to donated food.

In September 2017, the relief committee sent a warning to the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, a charity run by the Saudi government and one of the key donors in Yemen. The letter said many of the 871,000 food baskets that the King Salman Center claims it has provided to Taiz and surrounding areas had been "lost and unaccounted for." It said local groups that were supposed distribute the food were refusing to answer questions from the committee, apparently because they wanted to make sure "the truth never comes out" about where the food goes.

In the spring of 2018, the government in Taiz turned to al-Hakimi, who holds a doctorate in strategic development planning and has years of experience in training aid workers. Three relief workers in Taiz told the AP that al-Hakimi is known for being a principled person who won't go along with corrupt deals.

He took the job after providing the committee a list of 14 conditions aimed at addressing the flaws in the aid distribution system, including a requirement that the committee approve and coordinate all aid deliveries in Taiz.

One problem al-Hakimi and other relief workers faced was the Houthis' partial blockade of the city. The Houthis — who had taken over Taiz in the spring of 2015 but were pushed out by coalition forces in late 2016 — still control a key highway leading into the city. This slows the transport of aid into the city and limits how much can get in.

Despite the challenges, he won some victories after he started his new job. In one instance, he reached out to a military commander and secured the return of 110 sacks of flour that had been snatched from trucks in the highlands north of the city.

But in most cases, once the aid was gone, it was gone for good.

In early June, al-Hakimi and a local official demanded, to no avail, that an army unit known as Brigade 17 return 705 food baskets that had been lifted from a warehouse — as well as the "personal weapon" of the guard who had been trying to protect the goods.

"I talked to everyone but there was no action," al-Hakimi said. "The commander acted as if he wasn't in charge."

Brig. Gen. Abdel-Rahman al-Shamsani, the commander of Brigade 17, denies that his unit took the food baskets. He told the AP that recipients who had grown tired of waiting had "raided" the warehouse and taken food that was intended for them anyway.

As problems piled up, al-Hakimi aimed a flurry of complaints at bureaucrats and military officers. In a letter to a top army commander and an internal security chief, he wrote: "This is about your negligence in failing to take the necessary measures to bring back looted World Food Program aid."

If they did not quickly arrest the culprits and bring back the stolen items within 24 hours, he said, he would hold them "fully responsible for depriving Taiz of aid" and for "any humanitarian disaster in Taiz" that followed.

There was no response, al-Hakimi said.

By September he'd had enough.

"It's very important to do this work — but also important to have the power and authority to do it," al-Hakimi told the AP.

He tried to resign, but a top city leader talked him out of it, promising that officials would address the problems.

Nothing changed, al-Hakimi said. So in October he quit for good.

Two months later, an analysis from the U.N. and its aid partners estimated that 57 percent of Taiz's

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residents face emergency- or crisis-level food insecurity. The group's year-end breakdown says as many as 10,500 people in and around Taiz are living and dying in areas overtaken by full-blown famine.

The AP's reporting on the war in Yemen is supported by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

## China factory activity shrinks for the first time in 2 years

By **JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — China's factory activity shrank in December for the first time in more than two years, an official survey showed Monday, intensifying pressure on Beijing to reverse an economic slowdown as it enters trade talks with the Trump administration.

The purchasing managers' index of the National Bureau of Statistics and an industry group, the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing, fell to 49.4 from November's 50.0 on a 100-point scale. Any reading below 50 shows that activity is contracting. The December figure was the lowest since February 2016 and the first drop since July 2016.

In the quarter that ended in September, China's economic growth sank to a post-global crisis low of 6.5 percent compared with a year earlier. The slowdown occurred despite government efforts to stem the downturn by ordering banks to lend more and by boosting spending on public works construction.

Forecasters expect annual growth of about 6.5 percent, down slightly from 2017's 6.7 percent. But some industry segments, including auto and real estate sales, have suffered more serious declines.

"Downward pressure on the economy is still large," economist Zhang Liqun said in a statement issued with the PMI.

Overall orders and exports both contracted, indicating that Chinese factories are suffering from weak demand at home and abroad. Exports to the United States kept growing at double-digit monthly rates through late 2018 despite President Donald Trump's punitive tariffs. But growth in exports to the rest of the world fell sharply in November and forecasters expect American demand to weaken in early 2019.

That adds to complications for Chinese leaders who are trying to reverse a broad economic slowdown and avert politically dangerous job losses.

Chinese and U.S. envoys are due to meet in early January for negotiations that are intended to resolve their economically threatening trade war. Over the weekend, Trump sounded an optimistic note, tweeting that he had spoken with President Xi Jinping by phone.

"Deal is moving along very well," Trump tweeted. "If made, it will be very comprehensive, covering all subjects, areas and points of dispute. Big progress being made!"

But economists say the 90-day moratorium on new penalties that was agreed to by Trump and Xi on Dec. 1 is likely too little time to resolve their sprawling dispute.

Chinese economic activity already was weakening after Beijing tightened controls on bank lending in late 2017 to cool a debt boom. The downturn was more abrupt than expected, which prompted regulators to shift course and ease credit controls. But they moved gradually to avoid reigniting a rise in debt. Their measures have yet to put a floor under declining growth.

Chinese leaders promised at an annual economic planning meeting in mid-December to shore up growth with tax cuts, easier lending for entrepreneurs and other steps.

## US stocks end dismal, volatile year on a bright note

By **ALEX VEIGA, AP Business Writer**

Wall Street closed out a dismal, turbulent year for stocks on a bright note Monday, but still finished 2018 with the worst showing in a decade.

After setting a series of records through the late summer and early fall, major U.S. indexes fell sharply after early October, leaving them all in the red for the year.

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The S&P 500 index, the market's main benchmark, finished the year with a loss of 6.2 percent. The last time the index fell for the year was in 2008 during the financial crisis. The S&P 500 posted tiny losses in 2011 and 2015, but eked out small gains in both years once dividends were included.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average declined 5.6 percent. The Nasdaq composite slid 3.9 percent.

Major indexes in Europe also ended 2018 in the red. The CAC 40 of France finished the year down 11 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 12.5 percent. Germany's DAX ended the year in a bear market, down 22 percent from a high in January and 18 percent from the start of the year.

Most Asian markets likewise lost ground in 2018. The region's stock markets were closed Tuesday for New Year holidays.

"This has really been a challenging year for investors," said Jeff Kravetz, regional investment strategist at U.S. Bank Wealth Management. "This was really the year that market volatility returned with a vengeance."

Wall Street started 2018 strong, buoyed by a growing economy and corporate profits. Stocks climbed to new highs early, shook off a sudden, steep drop by spring and rode a wave of tax cut-juiced corporate earnings growth to another all-time high by September. Then the jitters set in.

Investors grew worried that the testy U.S.-China trade dispute and higher interest rates would slow the economy, hurting corporate profits. A slowing U.S. housing market and forecasts of weaker global growth in 2019 stoked traders' unease.

In October the market's gyrations grew more volatile.

The autumn sell-off knocked the benchmark S&P 500 index into a correction, or a drop of 10 percent from its all-time high, for the second time in nine months. A Christmas Eve plunge brought it briefly into bear market territory, or a drop of 20 percent from its peak, before closing just short of the threshold that would have meant the end of the market's nearly 10-year bull market run.

"For markets to move higher next year, we're going to have to resolve those issues," Kravetz said.

The risks confronting investors have market strategists along Wall Street forecasting another turbulent year for stocks in 2019, and potentially one of the most difficult years for investors since the bull market began.

On Monday, the S&P 500 index rose 21.11 points, or 0.9 percent, to 2,506.85. The Dow gained 265.06 points, or 1.2 percent, to 23,327.46. The Nasdaq added 50.76 points, or 0.8 percent, to 6,635.28. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks picked up 10.64 points, or 0.8 percent, to 1,348.56. It finished 12.2 percent lower for the year.

Bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.68 percent from 2.73 percent late Friday. The yield started off the year at 2.41 percent.

Health care stocks paved the way for Monday's modest gains. The sector ended the year with a 4.7 percent increase, to lead all other sectors in the S&P 500. Utilities were the only other sector to eke out an annual gain, adding 0.5 percent.

Technology companies, a big driver of the market's gains before things deteriorated in October, ended the year with a 1.6 percent loss. Three of the five so-called "FAANG" stocks — Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google parent Alphabet — ended 2018 lower. Amazon rose 28.4 percent, while Netflix jumped 39.4 percent.

Energy companies fared the worst, plunging 20.5 percent for the year, as the price of U.S. crude oil tumbled around 40 percent from a four-year peak of \$76 a barrel in October.

On Monday, benchmark U.S. crude oil inched up 0.2 percent to settle at \$45.41 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, the benchmark for international prices, gained 1.1 percent to \$53.80 a barrel in London.

Trading will be closed Tuesday for New Year's Day.

Investors drew encouragement from a tweet from President Donald Trump on Sunday, in which the president said he had a "long and very good call" with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Trump added: "Deal is moving along very well. If made, it will be very comprehensive, covering all subjects, areas and points of dispute. Big progress being made."

Meanwhile, the official Xinhua News Agency cited a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying that "China stands ready to work with the United States to move forward the China-U.S. ties which are under-

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pinned by coordination, cooperation and stability.”

Stocks also got a boost in early December when the U.S. and China agreed to a truce on trade, but then plunged when it was unclear what exactly both sides had agreed upon.

In other trading, the dollar fell to 109.63 yen from 110.41 yen on Friday. The euro strengthened to \$1.1474 from \$1.1442.

Gold slipped 0.1 percent to \$1,281.30 an ounce and silver gained 0.7 percent to \$15.54 an ounce. Copper lost 1.9 percent to \$2.63 a pound.

In other energy futures trading, wholesale gasoline slipped 0.2 percent to \$1.32 a gallon. Heating oil rose 1 percent to \$1.68 a gallon. Natural gas plunged 11 percent to \$2.94 per 1,000 cubic feet.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 1, the first day of 2019. There are 364 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 1, 1959, Fidel Castro and his revolutionaries overthrew Cuban leader Fulgencio Batista, who fled to the Dominican Republic.

On this date:

In 1818, the first edition of the Gothic novel "Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus" by English author Mary Shelley, 20, was published anonymously in London.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that slaves in rebel states shall be "forever free."

In 1892, the Ellis Island Immigrant Station in New York formally opened.

In 1953, country singer Hank Williams Sr., 29, was discovered dead in the back seat of his car during a stop in Oak Hill, West Virginia, while he was being driven to a concert date in Canton, Ohio.

In 1954, NBC broadcast the first coast-to-coast color TV program as it presented live coverage of the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California.

In 1975, a jury in Washington found Nixon administration officials John N. Mitchell, H.R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and Robert C. Mardian guilty of charges related to the Watergate cover-up (Mardian's conviction for conspiracy was later overturned on appeal).

In 1979, the United States and China held celebrations in Washington and Beijing to mark the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In 1984, the breakup of AT&T took place as the telecommunications giant was divested of its 22 Bell System companies under terms of an antitrust agreement.

In 1985, the music cable channel VH-1 made its debut with a video of Marvin Gaye performing "The Star-Spangled Banner."

In 1993, Czechoslovakia peacefully split into two new countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect.

In 2014, the nation's first legal recreational pot shops opened in Colorado at 8 a.m. Mountain time.

Ten years ago: An Israeli warplane dropped a 2,000-pound bomb on the home of one of Hamas' top five decision-makers, instantly killing him and 18 others. The U.S. formally transferred control of the Green Zone to Iraqi authorities in a pair of ceremonies that also handed back Saddam Hussein's former palace. Russia made good on its threat to cut off all natural gas supplies to Ukraine. Six-term Rhode Island Sen. Claiborne Pell died at age 90. The Detroit Red Wings beat the Chicago Blackhawks 6-4 in the Winter Classic at chilly Wrigley Field. No. 5 Southern California defeated No. 6 Penn State 38-24 in the 95th Rose Bowl.

Five years ago: The nation's first legal recreational pot shops opened in Colorado at 8 a.m. Mountain Standard Time. Actress Juanita Moore, 99, died in Los Angeles. No. 4 Michigan State romped to a 24-20 victory over No. 5 Stanford in the 100th Rose Bowl. No. 15 Central Florida pulled off one of the biggest upsets of the bowl season by outlasting No. 6 Baylor 52-42 in the Fiesta Bowl.



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One year ago: Former Fox News Channel anchor and 1989 Miss America Gretchen Carlson was named chairwoman of the Miss America Organization's board of directors, with three other past pageant winners joining her on the board. In the first Rose Bowl to go into overtime, Georgia advanced to college football's national championship game with a 54-48 win over Oklahoma. Alabama advanced by beating top-ranked Clemson, 24-6, in the Sugar Bowl. Peter Martins, the longtime leader of the New York City Ballet, announced his retirement in the midst of an investigation into accusations of sexual misconduct. California launched legal sales of recreational marijuana, with customers lining up early for ribbon cuttings and promotions.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Ernest Hollings, D-S.C., is 97. Documentary maker Frederick Wiseman is 89. Actor Frank Langella is 81. Rock singer-musician Country Joe McDonald is 77. Writer-comedian Don Novello is 76. Actor Rick Hurst is 73. Country singer Steve Ripley (The Tractors) is 69. Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., is 65. The head of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, is 63. Rapper Grandmaster Flash is 61. Actress Renn Woods is 61. Actress Dedee Pfeiffer is 55. Country singer Brian Flynn (Flynnville Train) is 53. Actor Morris Chestnut is 50. Rhythm and blues singer Tank is 43. Model Elin Nordegren is 39. Actor Jonas Armstrong is 38. Actress Eden Riegel is 38. Olympic gold medal ice dancer Meryl Davis is 32. Rock musician Noah Sierota (Echosmith) is 23.

Thought for Today: "A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one Year and out the other." — Author unknown.