

Hunter Schaller Update



Editor's Note: The family had a short video of Hunter walking yesterday. Here is the post on their Facebook page:

We wanted to show you some of the progress that Hunter has been doing in the 6 weeks that we have been here. The doctors tell us, Hunter, is doing better than they could have imagined for the short time (for a traumatic brain injury) that he's been here. He continues to make those baby steps, like I said the other day some days better than others and some days Hunter being more willing to do things than others. But we are always amazed, proud, and more than thankful to even see the slightest movement of a finger. God continues to help Hunter and with all your prayers/support defy the odds.

We will never be able to thank you all enough for the constant prayers and support to Hunter and all of us. Keep them coming. Hunter will soon be moving mountains

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

- 2- Skating Rink opens today
- 2- Groton Area Schedule of Events
- 2- GROW SD Supporting Homeless Count January 22, 2019
- 2- Help Wanted Ads
- 3- GDILIVE: Hamlin Games
- 4- GDILIVE: GBB Saturday
- 4- Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling
- 5- UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL SECURITY SURVIVORS BENEFITS
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Skating Rink Hours

Open Monday - Thursday: 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Friday: 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Sunday: 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Friday, January 4, 2019

4:00pm: Basketball: Girls Varsity Double Header vs. Hamlin @ Hamlin High School (JV Girls game at 4pm, Boys C game at 4pm, JV Boys game at 5:15pm, Varsity Girls game at 6:30pm, Varsity Boys game at 8pm)
5:00pm: Wrestling: Boys JH Tournament vs. Milbank @ Milbank High School

Saturday, January 5, 2019

Robotics at Canton High School

10:00am: Wrestling: Boys Varsity Tournament @ Miller High School

11:00am: Basketball: Girls Varsity Classic vs. Wolsey-Wessington @ Redfield Jr-Sr High School

3:30pm: Basketball: Boys Varsity Classic vs. Viborg-Hurley @ Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls

Sunday, January 6, 2019

2:00pm- 6:00pm: Open Gym at GHS Arena (Grades JK-8 2pm - 4pm; Grades 6-12 4pm - 6pm)

Monday, January 7, 2019

5:15pm: Boys Basketball at Webster Area High School (C game at 5:15 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity games)

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

7:00pm: City Council meeting at Groton Community Center

Tuesday, January 8, 2019

6:30pm: Girls Basketball vs. Waubay-Summit at Waubay.

Thursday, January 10, 2019

6:00pm: Girls Basketball at Sisseton

Friday, January 11, 2019

Debate Silver Bowl at Sioux Falls

5:15pm: Boys Basketball hosts Sisseton. (C game at 5:15 p.m. followed by junior varsity and varsity)

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@venture-comm.net. (1227.0111)

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It's Girls' & Boys' Basketball Action on
GDILIVE.COM



Hamlin
Chargers

VS



Groton Area Tigers

Friday, Jan. 4, 2019

Girls Varsity Game at 6:30 p.m. followed by Boys
Varsity Game at Hayti

Sponsored by

Aberdeen
Chrysler Center

901 Auto Plaza Drive
Aberdeen, SD

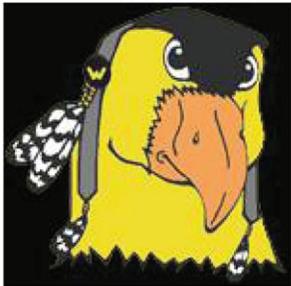
800.874.9173

www.aberdeenchrysler.com

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It's Girls' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



Wolsey-
Wessington
VS



Groton Area Tigers

Saturday, Jan. 5, 2019

11:00 a.m.

At Redfield Classic

Sponsored by

Aberdeen
Chrysler Center

901 Auto Plaza Drive
Aberdeen, SD

800.874.9173

www.aberdeenchrysler.com

Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Cheetahs 16, Jackelopes 13, Chipmunks 11 ½, Foxes 8 ½, Shih Tzus 7, coyotes 4

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 267, 246, 202, Brad Larson 182, 181, Tony Madsen 181

Women's High Games: Darci Spanier 202, Karen Spanier 166, Sue Stanley 164

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 715, Tony Madsen 507, Brad Larson 493

Women's High Series: Darci Spanier 501, Karen Spanier 442, Sue Stanley 432

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL SECURITY SURVIVORS BENEFITS



Unfortunately, tragedy can strike without any warning. The loss of the family wage earner can be devastating both emotionally and financially. Social Security helps by providing income for the families of workers who die.

Some of the Social Security taxes you pay go toward survivors benefits for workers and their families. The value of the survivors benefits you have under Social Security may even be more than the value of your individual life insurance. When you die, certain members of your family may be eligible for survivors benefits. These include widows and widowers (and divorced widows and widowers), children, and dependent parents.

Here are the people who can get survivors benefits based on your work:

Your widow or widower may be able to get full benefits at full retirement age. The full retirement age for survivors is age 66 for people born in 1945-1956, with the full retirement age gradually increasing to age 67 for people born in 1962 or later. Your widow or widower can get reduced benefits as early as age 60. If your surviving spouse is disabled, benefits can begin as early as age 50.

Your widow or widower can get benefits at any age if they take care of your child younger than age 16 or disabled, who is receiving Social Security benefits.

Your unmarried children, younger than age 18 (or up to age 19 if they're attending elementary or secondary school full time), can also get benefits. Your children can get benefits at any age if they were disabled before age 22. Under certain circumstances, we can also pay benefits to your stepchildren, grandchildren, stepgrandchildren, or adopted children.

Your dependent parents can get benefits if they're age 62 or older. (For your parents to qualify as dependents, you must have provided at least half of their support.)

You can read more about Survivors Benefits at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10084.pdf.

How much your family can get from Social Security depends on your average lifetime earnings. The more you earned, the more their benefits will be. For more information on widows, widowers, and other survivors, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/survivors.

Social Security is with you through life's journey. Be sure to tell friends and family about our Survivors Benefits and how we can help in times of need.



Representative Dusty Johnson signs his official oath of office.

Rep. Dusty Johnson Sworn In As a Member of Congress

Washington, D.C. – Today U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson (R-S.D.) was sworn in as a Member of the United States House of Representatives.

“I want to thank the people of South Dakota for trusting me to represent our great state in the 116th Congress,” said Johnson. “I look forward to working on moving our country forward, and I truly believe we can accomplish a great deal for the American people over the next two years.”

Representative Dusty Johnson with his wife Jacquelyn and three sons, Max, Ben, and Owen (left to right).



Governor Dennis Daugaard Announces Official Poem For Commissioning of USS South Dakota SSN-790

PIERRE, S.D. – In anticipation of the commissioning of the USS South Dakota submarine on Feb. 2 in Groton, Connecticut, Governor Dennis Daugaard is releasing the poem commissioned to honor the vessel and her crew.

“I’m proud of those who serve this nation and who will take the proud name of South Dakota across the seas representing and defending all Americans. This poem is a unique way to commemorate the submarine’s commissioning and honor the service of those aboard.”

The poem was written by Brian Hagg of Rapid City to commemorate the historic event. “My goal was to honor those who will serve on board the South Dakota. I also want to recognize the proud tradition of Naval service by men and women throughout our state’s history and those that will soon take this great warship to sea” said Hagg. The poem will be read by Mr. Hagg at the event and presented to the crew for display aboard the submarine. Few commissioned vessels have been so honored with an original composition.

The nation’s newest attack submarine, USS South Dakota (SSN-790) will be commissioned in the time-honored tradition of the U.S. Navy by “bringing the ship to life” on Feb. 2. In attendance will be past and present state and federal elected officials as well as representatives of Native American tribes, veterans and dignitaries. The USS South Dakota is expected to serve our nation for over 30 years.

For more information on the poem or the ship’s commissioning visit SSN790.ORG or contact Ron Hill at 605-381-0258 or ches242001@aol.com.

The poem is on the next page.

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On the Occasion of the Commissioning of the
USS South Dakota (SSN 790)
A Poetic Tribute

Amended draft
November 28, 2018

God speed, great warship of the deep,
entrusted by our Motherland
to protect its shores
while our children sleep.
For the odyssey ahead will
demand much from commander and crew,
gallant sailors chosen from the special few.
May you be inspired by those
who fought so honorably before
aboard the USS South Dakota,
feared Battleship X,
decorated for its heroic engagements
during the Second World War.

God speed, valiant sentry of the deep,
commissioned to protect our homeland
while our children sleep.
To your namesake's legacy
may you always be true,
with stealth and tenacity
bravely perform the missions
commanded of you.
Forthwith let the annals of naval history
chronicle your service with distinction,
for you must know, SSN 790,
that you have the trust of a grateful nation.

God speed, mighty vessel of the deep,
vanquish, if necessary,
dark forces that threaten America
while our children sleep.
From the Great State of South Dakota,
home of Mt. Rushmore,
with its iconic symbols of liberty
chiseled in stone,
accept this prayerful declaration.
If, in the service of our country,
perils of war put you in harm's way,
may you be inspired by Crazy Horse,
who fought bravely,
impervious to enemy fire,
and, guided by the spirit of Black Elk,
forget not that for which you stand,
rock solid in the service of our nation,
knowing you are in the thoughts and prayers
of a free homeland.

Brian D. Hagg
U.S. Army 1969 - 1982
Rapid City, South Dakota

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USS South Dakota to be Commissioned February 2

By Commander, Submarine Force Atlantic Public Affairs

NORFOLK – The Navy’s newest fast-attack submarine, USS South Dakota (SSN 790), will be commissioned at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn., Feb. 2, 2019, as the seventeenth Virginia-class submarine to join the fleet.

Mrs. Deanie Dempsey, wife of retired Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, who served as the 18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is the ship’s sponsor. After spending several decades of service in support of just the Army, Deanie became a champion for all of the Services in her role as the Chairman’s spouse. She remains actively engaged in countless activities in support of military families and participates in dozens of private and charitable organizations in support of military spouses and their families.

Designed to operate in both coastal and deep-ocean environments, South Dakota will present leadership with a broad and unique range of capabilities, including anti-submarine warfare; anti-surface ship warfare; strike warfare; special operation forces (SOF) support; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; irregular warfare; and mine warfare missions.

South Dakota is a part of the Virginia-class’ Block III contract, in which the Navy redesigned approximately 20 percent of the ship to reduce acquisition costs. South Dakota features a redesigned bow, which replaces 12 individual Vertical Launch System (VLS) tubes with two large-diameter Virginia Payload Tubes (VPTs) each capable of launching six Tomahawk cruise missiles, among other design changes that reduced the submarines’ acquisition cost while maintaining their outstanding warfighting capabilities.

South Dakota has special features to support SOF, including a reconfigurable torpedo room which can accommodate a large number of SOF and all their equipment for prolonged deployments and future off-board payloads. Also, in Virginia-class SSNs, traditional periscopes have been replaced by two photonics masts that host visible and infrared digital cameras atop telescoping arms. Through the extensive use of modular construction, open architecture, and commercial off-the-shelf components, the Virginia class is designed to remain at the cutting edge for its entire operational life through the rapid introduction of new systems and payloads.

South Dakota will be the third U.S. Navy ship, and first submarine, to be commissioned bearing the name “South Dakota.” The first USS South Dakota (ACR9/CA 9) was a Pennsylvania-class armored cruiser and launched in 1904. Assigned to the Armored Cruiser Squadron, Pacific Fleet, South Dakota cruised off the west coast of the United States through August 1908. She was then sent on a cruise to Samoa and later operated in Central and South American Waters. She returned home in 1912 and was placed in reserve at Puget Sound Navy Yard.

The second USS South Dakota (BB 57) was commissioned March 1942 and assigned to Task Force 16 centered on the aircraft carrier USS ENTERPRISE (CV 6). South Dakota conducted blockade operations against Japanese forces approaching Guadalcanal, where they engaged Japanese carrier forces in the Battle of Santa Cruz. She saw action in the Battle of Savo Island, Battle of Philippine Sea, Okinawa, Iwo Jima, and other Japanese strongholds earning 13 battle stars.

For more information on the future USS South Dakota (SSN 790), the Commissioning Ceremony, go to www.navy.mil/southdakotacommissioning.

Additional public information about the commissioning, and events leading up to it, is available at the USS South Dakota Commissioning Committee site at <https://ssn790.org/>.

SD Legislation Attracts Attention of White House

Fulton, SD (January 3rd, 2019) – Recent legislative filing in South Dakota, calling on Congress to fund the construction of the Southern border wall, and to ardently and equally enforce existing Federal immigration laws, has attracted the attention of the White House.

The primary sponsor and author of the bill, Senator Stace Nelson (R-Fulton), is reporting that he was contacted by telephone by Special Assistant to the President/Deputy Director William F. Crozer,

White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, on January 2nd. Sen. Nelson stated Mr. Crozer indicated appreciation for South Dakota Legislators' timely efforts and that their efforts would be monitored and relayed to numerous state and federal agencies. Mr. Crozer followed up the conversation with his personal emailed contact information.

On January 3rd, Senator Nelson followed up telephonically with Special Assistant to the President/Deputy Director Crozer who forwarded emails sent out from the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs touting SD's proposed legislation.

"As pointed out in the Founding Father's explicit comments in the Federalist papers, states were supposed to be actively involved with the federal government in keeping it in check and making it do its job. The reason why we have such a dysfunctional Federal government is because state legislators have dropped the ball and all but abdicated their voice on matters that directly affect their constituents." Said Nelson. "History is replete with examples of state government dramatically impacting the Federal government. It's time that we get back to state legislators asserting themselves on issues affecting their constituents."

Senator Nelson stated he forwarded on the legislation to at least one legislator in a Southern state who is researching bringing similar legislation based off SD's Senate Concurrent Resolution 4.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND AMERICA SAVES WEEK

Planning and saving are core elements to a successful retirement. For over 80 years, Social Security has helped Americans achieve that goal. And each year, the American Savings Education Council and America Saves coordinate America Saves Week. The week is an opportunity for organizations to promote good savings behavior; it is also a great time for people to assess their own saving status.

Social Security is collaborating with America Saves Week to promote our shared mission of helping millions of people prepare for their future. This year, we're celebrating the week from February 25 through March 2. Join the #ASW19 movement by using this hashtag when posting about your savings goals.



It's never too early to start planning for your retirement. Set a goal, make a plan, and save automatically. Savers with a plan are twice as likely to save successfully. Pledge to save for America Saves Week at www.americasaves.org.

Social Security has many tools for retirement planning. You can access our online information and resources at www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/retire.

Younger people know that the earlier they start saving, the more their money can grow. Our website for young workers at www.socialsecurity.gov/people/earlycareer has resources that can help you secure today and tomorrow.

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2019 Rings in Cheapest New Year Gas Prices Since 2016

January 3, 2019 - The New Year has ushered in the cheapest national gas price average in three years. To boot, at \$2.25 today's national average is even one cent cheaper than on January 1 and trends indicate that pump prices will likely remain cheap for at least the first half of the month.

Gas Price Averages: Jan 1-3			
2016	2017	2018	2019
\$1.99	\$2.35	\$2.49	\$2.25

Today, 29 state gas price averages are at or below the national average of \$2.25 with Missouri touting the cheapest at \$1.83. Hawaii (\$3.34) carries the most expensive average.

"With OPEC production cuts slated to take effect this week, analysts will closely be watching the price of oil," said Marilyn Buskohl, AAA spokesperson. "Significant movement toward higher market prices would mean cheaper gas prices could be in the rearview mirror. However, AAA expects to see minimal volatility at the start of the cartel's production cuts."

The end of 2018 drove WTI crude oil prices to as low as \$44/bbl, which is a steep \$31 drop from the high of \$77/bbl seen during June.

Quick Stats

The nation's top 10 least expensive markets are: Missouri (\$1.83), Oklahoma (\$1.92), Arkansas (\$1.92), Texas (\$1.93), South Carolina (\$1.93), Ohio (\$1.93), Alabama (\$1.93), Mississippi (\$1.93), Louisiana (\$1.94) and Kansas (\$1.95).

The nation's top 10 largest yearly decreases are: Michigan (-60 cents), Indiana (-53 cents), Ohio (-53 cents), Illinois (-49 cents), Iowa (-44 cents), Wisconsin (-44 cents), Kentucky (-43 cents), Nebraska (-39 cents), Missouri (-38 cents) and Delaware (-34 cents).

Great Lakes and Central

During the past 10 days, gas prices have dropped by at least a dime in four Great Lakes and Central states: Indiana (-15 cents), Ohio (-14 cents), Illinois (-11 cents) and Kentucky (-10 cents). With a nickel decline, North Dakota (\$2.23) has seen the smallest drop during the 10-day period.

As gas prices decline, gasoline inventories in the Midwest region jumped for the fifth straight week, according to the Energy Information Administration (EIA). Total stocks for the week ending on December 21 total 53 million bbl, the highest level of stocks for the region since early September.

Oil market dynamics

At the close of Wednesday's formal trading session on the NYMEX, WTI increased \$1.13 to settle at \$46.54. Oil prices mostly fell last week, as market observers continue to believe that the global crude market is over-supplied. Moreover, new concerns are growing of a potential economic slowdown in 2019 that could lead to a decline in global demand for crude. However, recent price gains in the market underscore how volatile the market is now, which could lead crude prices higher if global supply tightens amid robust demand for crude. For now, new reports indicate that the U.S., Russia and Iraq, the second largest producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), saw crude production and export increases in the final months of 2018, contributing to the falling price of crude.

Motorists can find current gas prices along their route with the free AAA Mobile app for iPhone, iPad and Android. The app can also be used to map a route, find discounts, book a hotel and access AAA roadside assistance. Learn more at AAA.com/mobile.

Rounds Secures Key Committee Assignments for 116th Congress

Will Continue Serving on the Senate Armed Services, Banking, Environment and Public Works and Veterans' Affairs Committees

WASHINGTON—U.S. Senator Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) today announced that he will maintain his membership on four key committee assignments in the 116th Congress:

- Senate Armed Services
- Veterans' Affairs
- Environment and Public Works (EPW)
- Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs

Rounds Statement:

"I look forward to working on these committees, each of which focuses on issues that are important to South Dakotans. We have many accomplishments to be proud of so far, and I look forward to building on those successes in the 116th Congress."

"Throughout my time serving on the Senate Armed Services Committee, we've strengthened Ellsworth's role as a vital component of our long-term national defense strategy, bolstered defense funding and improved our nation's cybersecurity."

"Our men and women in uniform have made incredible sacrifices to protect the homeland and keep us safe. We owe it to our veterans to keep the promises we've made them. As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, we will continue to hold the VA accountable and we are committed to getting our veterans the care they deserve."

"The Senate EPW Committee has important oversight jurisdiction over the EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers and surface transportation infrastructure. As a member of this committee, my priorities include holding the Corps accountable for the decisions it makes along the Missouri River, assuring the EPA lives up to its legal obligations under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) and rebuilding our nation's roads and bridges."

"Making certain that South Dakota families and business owners have access to credit when they need it has been a top priority of mine while working on the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee. Last year, we were able to enact the first major overhaul of our financial system since Dodd-Frank, providing much-needed regulatory relief to our smaller and midsized banks so they can focus on serving their customers. We'll continue to seek ways to roll back burdensome regulations in the 116th Congress."

Thune Announces Committee Assignments for 116th Congress

"I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and continue the hard work to ensure we have another successful two years."

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) issued the following statement after committee assignments for the 116th Congress were announced. Thune will again serve on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee; the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee; and the Finance Committee. The Senate Republican Conference and the full Senate must formally ratify the committee assignments, which they are expected to do next week.

"I'm excited and eager to continue to serve on these three important committees that will ensure South Dakotans' voices are heard in the U.S. Senate," said Thune. "Last Congress was a productive one, including a newly enacted farm bill, pro-growth tax reform, and multiple bipartisan wins in technology and transportation, and these committees assignments will help keep the momentum alive. I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and continue the hard work to ensure we have another successful two years."

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Today in Weather History

January 4, 2005: Heavy snow of up to 10 inches fell across much of Lyman and Jones counties from the 4th until mid-morning of the 5th.

January 4, 1986: Snowfall amounts of 1 to 3 inches along with winds gusting to around 40 mph produced ground blizzard conditions in western South Dakota. Visibility was near zero in many locations with blowing and drifting snow blocking some roads. Some roads were closed in western South Dakota. Several accidents occurred with many cars ended up in the ditch.

1641: According to historical records, Mount Parker, a stratovolcano on Mindanao Island in the Philippines erupted on this day. The eruption caused the formation of a crater lake called Lake Maughan.

1917: A tornado with estimated F3 damage cut a 15-mile path and struck a school at Vireton in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, killing 16 people. It ranks as the 4th worst school tornado disaster in U.S. history.

1888 - Sacramento, CA, received 3.5 inches of snow, an all-time record for that location. The heaviest snow in recent history was two inches on February 5th in 1976. (4th-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1971 - A blizzard raged from Kansas to Wisconsin, claiming 27 lives in Iowa. Winds reached 50 mph, and the storm produced up to 20 inches of snow. (David Ludlum)

1982 - Milwaukee, WI, was shut down completely as a storm buried the city under 16 inches of snow in 24 hours. It was the worst storm in thirty-five years. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm moving off the Pacific Ocean spread wintery weather across the southwestern U.S., with heavy snow extending from southern California to western Wyoming. Up to 15 inches of snow blanketed the mountains of southern California, and rainfall totals in California ranged up to 2.20 inches in the Chino area. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Frigid arctic air invading the central and eastern U.S. left Florida about the only safe refuge from the cold and snow. A storm in the western U.S. soaked Bodega Bay in central California with 3.12 inches of rain. (National Weather Summary)

1989 - Up to a foot of snow blanketed the mountains of West Virginia, and strong winds in the northeastern U.S. produced wind chill readings as cold as 60 degrees below zero in Maine. Mount Washington NH reported wind gusts to 136 mph along with a temperature of 30 below zero! (National Weather Summary)

1990 - A winter storm moving out of the southwestern U.S. spread heavy snow across Nebraska and Iowa into Wisconsin. Snowfall totals in Nebraska ranged up to 7 inches at Auburn and Tecumseh. Totals in Iowa ranged up to 11 inches at Carlisle. In Iowa, most of the snow fell between midnight and 4 AM. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1994 - A major winter storm blanketed much of the northeastern U.S. with heavy snow. More than two feet was reported in northwestern Pennsylvania, with 33 inches at Waynesburg. There were ten heart attacks, and 185 injuries, related to the heavy snow in northwest Pennsylvania. Whiteout conditions were reported in Vermont and northeastern New York State. A wind gusts to 75 mph was clocked at Shaftsbury VT. In the Adirondacks of eastern New York State, the town of Tupper reported five inches of snow between 1 PM and 2 PM. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today



Sunny

High: 40 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 20 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 34 °F

Saturday Night



Mostly Cloudy

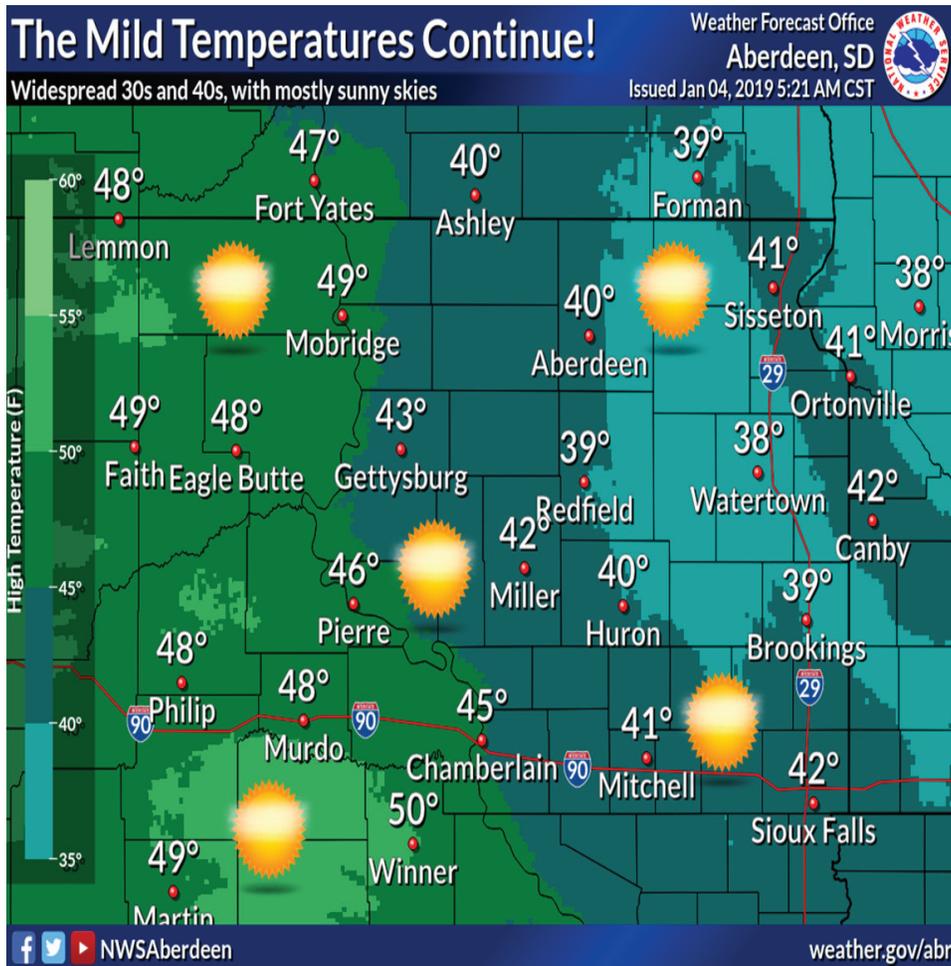
Low: 18 °F

Sunday



Cloudy

High: 33 °F



Published on: 01/04/2019 at 5:30AM

Another day of mild temperatures will be felt across the region today as skies remain mostly sunny. Highs will reach the 30s and 40s, with west to southwest breezes.

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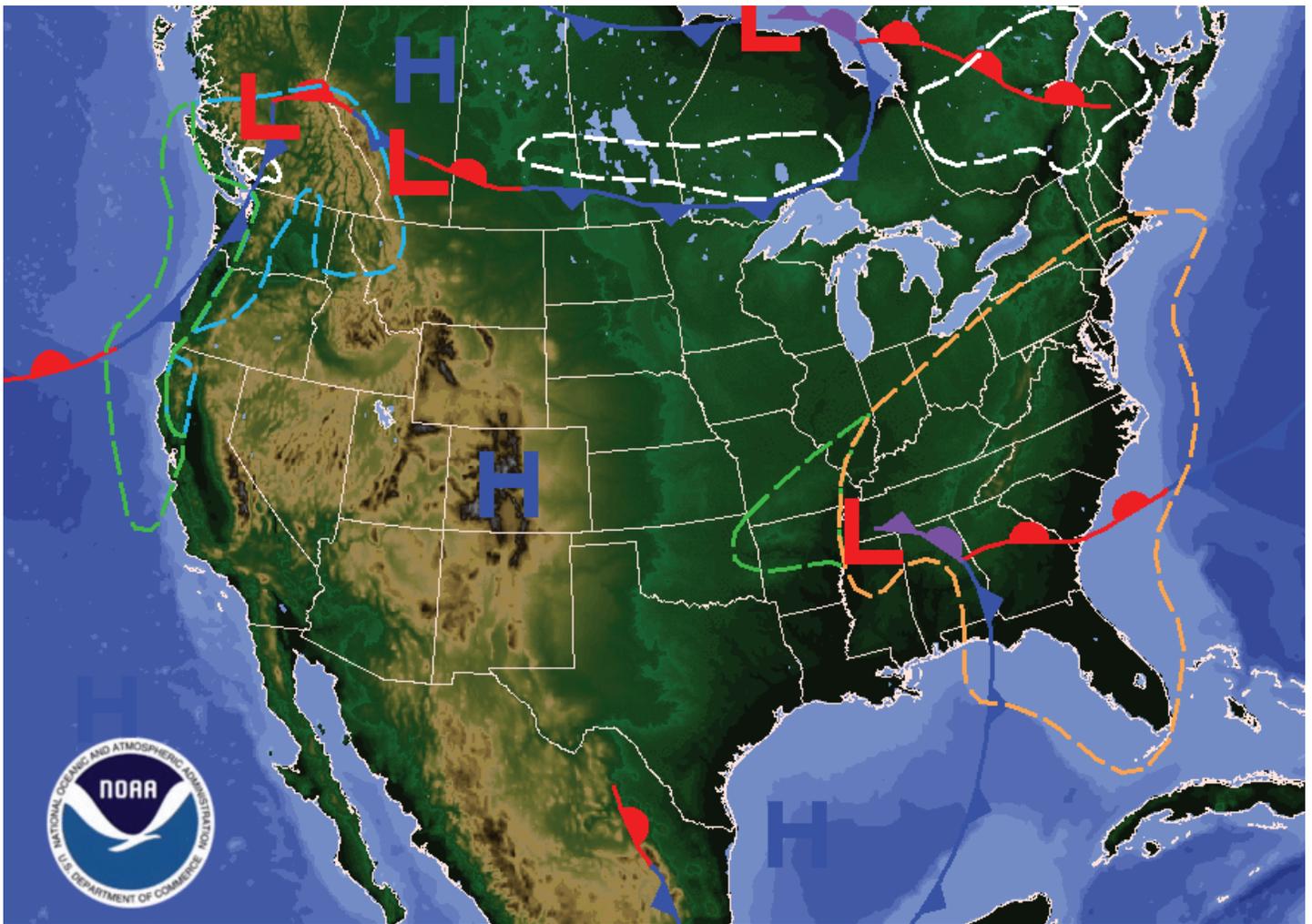
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 34 °F at 3:18 PM
Low Outside Temp: 18 °F at 12:08 AM
High Gust: 19 mph at 8:11 AM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 54° in 2012
Record Low: -34° in 1912
Average High: 22°F
Average Low: 2°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.06
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.06
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:04 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Jan 04, 2019, issued 4:43 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

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

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GOODNESS AND GOD

Why be good? he asked. Before I could respond, he answered his own question: I guess its because I cant have any fun if I'm good. Everything good people do is boring at best. Its like living in a cell in prison. The good times are beyond me.

Here are three basic reasons to be good.

The first comes from looking inside. Self-respect, for a Christian, comes from honoring the gift of life God has given us. Our life is a gift from God. However, what we do with our life is our gift to God. If we are careless or foolish with the habits we cultivate in the way we live, we put our entire lives at risk. This may result in our being unable to fulfill the plan that God has designed for us. Any self-imposed physical damage limits our usefulness to God. Care for our bodies, as reflected in a healthy lifestyle, is a priority for the Christian who sincerely wants to serve the Lord.

The second is looking at. Others are constantly watching everything we do for two reasons. First, they want to know if we are sincere about our faith. Do we live lives that reflect Gods teachings that are in His Word? And, second, does our faith work? Does God make a difference in the way we treat others? Do our lives reflect a sense of peace and satisfaction? Wheres my joy?

The third is looking down. Is God satisfied with our lives? Are we doing right? We are all accountable to Him. One day we will stand before Him in judgment and hear what He has to say about the way we have lived.

Prayer: Lord, its not about us, it is about You. May our lives be as You designed them to be - for Your sake. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 14:2 The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.

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2019 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)
- 10/31/2019 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/9/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/01/2018 Olive Grove Golf Course 2018 Holiday Party
- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- SDSU Golf Tourney
- Sunflower Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Tour of Homes
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

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News from the  Associated Press

4 year sentence in infant's death

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge in Rapid City has sentenced a father to four years in prison for the starvation death of his infant son.

Judge Jeffrey Viken acknowledged Thursday the sentence might upset some people because it was substantially lower than federal guidelines of 17 to 21 years in prison. Twenty-six-year-old Darwin Wade Red Cloud pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the 2014 of his two-month-old son.

The Rapid City Journal reports Red Cloud's lawyer, Betsey Harris, saying he accepted responsibility, was cooperative with investigators and didn't understand what it meant to care for a child, but now realized he should have asked for help.

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

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Bowman County, N.D. 72, Harding County 58
Burke 58, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 52
Corsica/Stickney 64, Platte-Geddes 44
Custer 65, Hill City 53
Edgemont 43, Crawford, Neb. 40
Ethan 68, Avon 38
Huron 66, Brookings 53
Milbank 47, Sisseton 42
Mitchell Christian 35, Menno 29
Red Cloud 68, Pine Ridge 65
Rock Valley, Iowa 66, Lennox 62
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 53, Howard 48
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 59, Watertown 29
St. Thomas More 67, Douglas 31
Sully Buttes 70, Highmore-Harrold 53
Tri-Valley 65, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 46
Warner 50, Ipswich 35
Webster 58, Deuel 45
Big East Conference Tournament
Quarterfinal
Beresford 75, McCook Central/Montrose 38
Flandreau 69, Garretson 61
Parker 53, Baltic 32
Sioux Valley 70, Chester 43

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 54, Redfield/Doland 26
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 53, Burke 49
Arlington 50, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 28
Bennett County 37, Hot Springs 30
Bison 61, Takini 54

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Bridgewater-Emery 67, Freeman 63
Brookings 67, Huron 44
Clark/Willow Lake 51, Castlewood 44
Colman-Egan 55, Elkton-Lake Benton 20
Crow Creek 61, Chamberlain 49
Dupree 53, Potter County 33
Estelline/Hendricks 66, Lake Preston 51
Ethan 53, Avon 31
Faulkton 52, Herreid/Selby Area 35
Florence/Henry 68, Wilmot 42
Gregory 54, Lyman 47
Harrisburg 65, Mitchell 37
Heart River, N.D. 56, Lemmon 42
Howard 56, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 51
Kimball/White Lake 44, Colome 28
Lennox 74, Rock Valley, Iowa 50
Little Wound 62, Kadoka Area 49
Menno 47, Mitchell Christian 35
Milbank 63, Sisseton 34
Miller 58, Mobridge-Pollock 26
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 38, Tri-Valley 35
New Underwood 55, Philip 32
Sioux Falls Christian 66, Canistota 36
Timber Lake 60, Harding County 19
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 60, Bon Homme 53
Viborg-Hurley 66, Canton 43
Warner 63, Ipswich 55
West Central 69, Tea Area 49
Winner 60, Todd County 58
Wolsey-Wessington 59, James Valley Christian 42
Yankton 58, Dakota Valley 38

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

Harrell, Konchar score 23 apiece to pace Purdue Fort Wayne

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP) — Kason Harrell and John Konchar scored 23 points apiece and Matt Holba added 20 points to lead Purdue Fort Wayne to a 104-88 victory over South Dakota State on Thursday night.

Purdue Fort Wayne's first six baskets of the second half were 3-pointers — three of them from Holba — and the Mastodons went up 65-51. The lead reached 26 points with 8:34 remaining. The Mastadons shot 61 percent in the second half, made nine 3-pointers and scored 57 points.

For the game, Purdue Fort Wayne (11-7, 3-0 Summit League) shot 57 percent from the field and made 17 3-pointers.

Mike Daum, sixth nationally in scoring at 24.6 points per game, scored 29 points to lead the Jackrabbits (11-6, 1-1). David Jenkins added 21 points and Owen King scored 15.

Konchar added eight assists and eight rebounds for the Mastodons and Harrell grabbed eight rebounds.

Roslyn man convicted in fatal 2015 shooting loses appeal

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Roslyn man convicted of fatally shooting another man while burglarizing his home has lost his appeal to the South Dakota Supreme Court.

The attorney general's office says justices on Thursday upheld the murder and burglary conviction of Jason Lewandowski in the late 2015 death of 33-year-old Jeremy Hendrickson.

Authorities say Lewandowski broke into Hendrickson's home at night and shot him in the head in front of Hendrickson's wife and child.

Lewandowski is serving life in prison.

South Dakota lawmakers getting first pay raise in 21 years

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota legislators will get their first pay raise in about two decades as they head to the state Capitol next week for the 2019 session.

State lawmakers will be paid \$11,378.80 in 2019, a roughly 90 percent jump from the \$6,000 per session they've received since 1998. Legislators also get a per diem allowance that's increased during that time.

House Majority Leader Lee Qualm, a Republican, said the raise will allow more people to get involved in state politics. The wage hike is part of a law approved last year that set legislator salaries at one-fifth of the South Dakota median household income.

Supporters said then that the measure aimed to fairly compensate future lawmakers in order to encourage a wider range of qualified candidates to run for office. They contended the change would tie lawmakers' salaries to the economic prospects of the people they represent.

"If our economy goes up and overall people are making more dollars, then that pay increases," Republican Rep. Chris Karr, a supporter, said this week. "We're trying to solve problems for South Dakota, come up with solutions, so messing around with compensation and then arguing over what it should be ... is probably not the best use of our time."

The move spares lawmakers from taking politically awkward votes on their own salaries in the future; the wage hike and link to the median household income comes after many unsuccessful attempts since 1998 to pass a legislative pay increase.

Senate President Pro Tempore Brock Greenfield, a Republican, said it was the first time he's voted for a pay increase since joining the Legislature in 2001. Greenfield, 43, said he's found jobs over the years that accommodate his legislative schedule since graduating from college in 1999.

Now, helping out with his family's bar-restaurant and small grocery store and substitute teaching and bus driving, Greenfield said the raise is welcome.

"I'm still not going to be cutting a fat hog by any means over the course of a year, but it will certainly bolster my end of the year ... tax returns," Greenfield said. "If you told anybody that you're going to get \$5,000 more next year than you did last year, I mean, that's wonderful."

The 2019 session starts Jan. 8 and will run into late March.

Rapid City-area police chase ends with crash, 5 injuries

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A police chase in the Rapid City area ended in a vehicle crash that injured five people.

The police department says Pennington County sheriff's deputies tried to stop a vehicle believed to have armed drug suspects inside shortly before 9:30 a.m. Thursday. The vehicle fled, ran a stop sign at an intersection on the eastern side of Rapid City and struck a pickup truck.

Authorities say four people in the suspect vehicle and one person in the pickup were taken to a hospital, some with critical injuries. They were not immediately identified.

Invasive insect makes its way to South Dakota

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Agriculture officials say an invasive insect found in evergreen decorations in Minnesota and Wisconsin has shown up in South Dakota.

The state Department of Agriculture is encouraging residents who bought wreaths and other evergreens from chain stores to bag the items and dispose of them in a landfill in order to stop the spread of the insect known as elongate hemlock scale, or EHS.

State forester Greg Josten says the insect has been found on greenery, but not on Christmas trees.

The principal host for the insect is the eastern hemlock, a rare tree in South Dakota. But, it can also attack spruce trees, which are a native, common tree in the Black Hills.

Homeless county in South Dakota set for Jan. 22

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota housing officials say volunteers across the state will help count the number of homeless people later this month.

The Housing for the Homeless Consortium conducts the count annually. This year it's scheduled to take place Jan. 22.

The state is divided into six count areas with a coordinator in each who will work with agencies and volunteers. Administrators say the information is used to measure homelessness on a local, state and national level. The data helps communities and policy makers measure progress and identify strengths and gaps in services.

Teen killed, 3 other hurt in interstate crash

WALL, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a teenager has died and three others have been injured in an interstate crash near Wall.

The South Dakota Department of Public Safety says the driver of a car trying to pass an SUV lost control on an icy I-90 and collided with the SUV and another vehicle Tuesday afternoon.

A 19-year-old woman who was a passenger in the car that was trying to pass died at the scene. The driver of that car and two people in the SUV were injured and taken to the hospital.

The Highway Patrol says all of the survivors were wearing seat belts. It's not known whether the teen who died was wearing a seat belt.

Leads pursued in fatal interstate shooting

HARTFORD, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say investigators are pursuing more than 90 leads in the mysterious death of a South Dakota woman who was shot in her car along an interstate in Missouri with her two children in the backseat.

Nearly three weeks after Melissa Peskey was killed on a rural stretch of I-70 near Boonville, the Missouri State Highway Patrol continues to investigate, but has publicly provided few details about the death of the Hartford real estate agent.

The Argus Leader reports Sgt. Scott White won't say whether the children, ages 5 and 11, have provided any clues about their mother's death. Authorities have not disclosed whether the vehicle was in motion at the time of the shooting, what type of weapon was involved or whether Peskey may have been targeted.

Authorities continue to solicit leads on social media.

A strong jobs report could provide reassurance on economy

By JOSH BOAK, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Even with fear of a global economic slump depressing stock markets, Friday's jobs report for December is expected to offer reassurance that the U.S. economy remains sturdy and on track to expand for a 10th straight year.

Economists have forecast that the Labor Department will report that employers added a solid 180,000 jobs last month and that the unemployment rate stayed at a five-decade low of 3.7 percent, according to the financial data firm FactSet.

The expectation of continued strength in hiring would contrast with the chaos of the stock market, a raging trade war, a partial shutdown of the government and the perception of growing risks for the economy.

Major companies such as Apple say their sales are being jeopardized by the tariff-fueled trade war between the United States and China. Factory activity in China and the United States have both weakened, with the Institute for Supply Management's U.S. manufacturing index on Thursday posting its steepest decline in a decade.

The government is about to enter its third week of a partial shutdown, with negotiations stalled over President Donald Trump's insistence that Democrats agree on funding for a wall along the border with Mexico. And attacks by Trump on the Federal Reserve over its rate increases have raised doubts about Chairman Jay Powell's status — a concern for both the markets and the economy.

But the expected continuation of steady job growth suggests that such risks might be — for the moment, anyway — overblown. Average hourly earnings are expected to have climbed 3 percent from a year ago, up from a year-over-year gain of 2.7 percent at the end of 2017.

Payroll processor ADP said Thursday that private businesses added a robust 271,000 jobs in December, a sign that companies expect decent growth to continue despite the overhang of risks.

And businesses are still searching for more workers. The employment site Glassdoor found that job postings have risen 17 percent in the past year to 6.7 million.

"We really don't see any slowdown yet," said Andrew Chamberlain, chief economist at Glassdoor.

Hiring has been unusually strong as the unemployment rate has fallen to 3.7 percent — a 49-year low — from 4.1 percent at the start of 2018. Economists estimate that it requires roughly 100,000 job gains each month to satisfy population growth and keep the unemployment rate at its current level.

But hiring has easily eclipsed that pace. During the first 11 months of 2018, employers added 2.27 million jobs, or an average of 206,182 a month, according to the Labor Department.

7 killed, 8 injured in crash, explosion on Florida highway

By KELLI KENNEDY, Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Two big rigs and two passenger vehicles collided and spilled diesel fuel across a Florida highway Thursday, sparking a massive fire that killed seven people and injured at least eight others, authorities said.

The wreck happened on southbound Interstate 75 about a mile (1.6 kilometers) south of Alachua, near Gainesville. The flames were fed by about 50 gallons (189 liters) of diesel, authorities said.

Authorities initially said six had died but late Thursday night revealed a seventh victim had perished. At least eight others were hospitalized, some with critical injuries, the Gainesville Sun reported. FHP Lt. Patrick Riordan said early Thursday evening that five of the accident victims who died were in a passenger van, and another person who died was in one of the tractor-trailers.

Vinnie DeVita said he was driving south at the time and narrowly escaped the crash -- he said it saw it happen in the rearview mirror, immediately behind him, according to a report by WKMG .

"If I had stepped on the brake when I heard the noise, undoubtedly, I would have been in that accident," DeVita said. "And then within probably 15 to 20 seconds of it all, it exploded. I mean, just a ball of flames."

Emergency crews extinguished the fire and authorities said they were treating the crash as a homicide

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investigation, but didn't say why. The fire was so intense that authorities said it damaged parts of the road.

A spokesman for the Florida Highway Patrol told The Associated Press in a phone interview that their top priorities were to conduct a thorough investigation and to identify the deceased victims.

"There's going to be families that need to be notified that their loves ones have perished," said Lieutenant Patrick Riordan.

It's unclear whether the victims were killed in the wreck or whether they burned in the fire, which would make identification more difficult, he said.

The aftermath closed part of the highway in both directions, causing massive delays. Authorities opened the northbound lanes around 8 p.m. but southbound lanes remained closed Friday morning. Debris including personal property and vehicle parts was scattered across the road, the Florida Highway Patrol said. A helicopter helped search for any victims who may have been in nearby woods.

Nicole Towarek was traveling northbound with her family when they came across the scene. She told the Sun that black smoke billowed, people were laid out near vehicles, there were long skid marks across the roadway and emergency workers were converging on the area.

"We kept seeing these little explosions and fire," she said. "The heat, it was insane."

It was the worst accident on I-75 in Alachua county since January 2012, when 11 people died in a chain reaction crash attributed to heavy fog and smoke on the roadway, which crosses Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. Officials were criticized then for not closing the road due to worsening conditions, and later installed cameras, sensors and large electronic signs to help prevent similar crashes.

China begins first surface exploration of moon's far side

By **KEN MORITSUGU, Associated Press**

BEIJING (AP) — A Chinese space rover explored the lunar terrain on Friday in the world's first mission on the surface of the far side of the moon.

Jade Rabbit 2 drove off a ramp the previous night and onto the soft, snow-like surface after a Chinese spacecraft made the first-ever soft landing on the moon's far side. A photo posted online by China's space agency showed tracks left by the rover as it headed away from the spacecraft.

"It's a small step for the rover, but one giant leap for the Chinese nation," Wu Weiren, the chief designer of the Lunar Exploration Project, told state broadcaster CCTV, in a twist of U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong's famous comment when he became the first human to walk on the moon in 1969. "This giant leap is a decisive move for our exploration of space and the conquering of the universe."

Previous moon landings, including America's six manned missions from 1969 to 1972, have been on the near side of the moon, which faces Earth. The far side has been observed many times from lunar orbits, but never explored on the surface.

China's space community is taking pride in the successful landing, which posed technical challenges because the moon blocks direct communication between the spacecraft and its controllers on Earth. China has been trying to catch up with the United States and other nations in space exploration.

"The landing on the far side shows China's technology is powerful," said He Qisong, a space expert at the East China University of Science and Law in Shanghai.

While China's space program still lags America's, He said "China has already positioned itself at least as good as Russia and the European Union."

The news cheered people on the streets of Beijing on Friday, many of whom said it showed that China can now achieve or even surpass what the United States has done.

"I think this is very good evidence that we are now able to compete with the Americans," said energy company employee Yao Dajun. "You can get on the moon and so can we — I think this is very good. It means our science and technology ability is getting stronger and the country is becoming more powerful."

The news inspired dreamier thoughts for advertising employee Shang Yuegang. "Probably after some years ordinary people like us can also travel up there to take a look," he said.

The Chinese rover has six powered wheels, allowing it to continue to operate even if one wheel fails. It

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has a maximum speed of 200 meters (220 yards) per hour and can climb a 20-degree hill or an obstacle up to 20 centimeters (8 inches) tall.

"The surface is soft and it is similar to that when you are walking on the snow," rover designer Shen Zhenrong of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation said on CCTV.

Exploring the cosmos from the far side of the moon could eventually help scientists learn more about the early days of the solar system and even the birth of the universe's first stars. The far side is popularly called the "dark side" because it can't be seen from Earth and is relatively unknown, not because it lacks sunlight.

Associated Press researchers Yu Bing, Shanshan Wang and Fu Ting contributed to this story.

Fragmentation helps Netanyahu re-election hopes

By ARON HELLER, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Barring a devastating legal ruling against him in a series of corruption allegations, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu looks to be cruising toward re-election and a historic fifth term in office after the upcoming April 9 vote.

Part of his longevity is due to Israel's splintered electoral system, which allows him to rule with just a quarter of the vote for his ruling Likud Party. The first week of the election campaign has already seen a dizzying series of maneuvers, with old parties splitting and new ones emerging, most seeming to work in Netanyahu's favor.

Here's a look at how the Israeli election works and the factors that decide how its government is formed.

THE SYSTEM

Israeli democracy operates on a parliamentary system in which the government needs a majority to rule. Since no party has ever earned more than 61 of the 120 seats in the Israeli Knesset, a coalition is required.

For Israel's first three decades, the founding socialist Labor Party ruled easily by adding a small party or two to its governments, with the hawkish Likud and its predecessor typically serving as the main opposition party.

Since Likud first rose to power in 1977, it has built coalitions with other right-wing parties or formed a so-called unity government with Labor.

Israel briefly experimented with direct elections for prime minister in the 1990s but quickly reverted back to voting for parties, rather than individuals.

After an election, Israel's president chooses the party leader he decides has the best chance of building a coalition. This job has become more complicated as smaller personality-driven parties gain ground. Recent coalitions have included numerous mid-sized parties, often at odds with each other. Power struggles continue long after the election.

THE BLOCS

In the absence of large parties, focus has shifted toward unofficial blocs of political parties with similar ideologies and interests.

Though most polls indicate Likud winning roughly 30 seats, it can usually build a majority with traditional nationalist and ultra-Orthodox allies.

The center-left bloc, traditionally in favor of negotiating a statehood deal with the Palestinians, has lost support. It has not been able to muster a majority. Parties representing Israel's Arab minority have not been asked to join coalitions.

This arithmetic allowed Netanyahu to rise to power in 2009, even when his party finished second.

"Netanyahu is a bloc player, not an individual player. All he cares about is getting 61," said political commentator Amit Segal.

Several centrist parties with more ambiguous platforms have muddled the math in recent years, with

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the potential to swing either right or left. But the various combinations have yet to produce a "blocking majority" to Likud.

The anti-Netanyahu forces in Israel have been yearning for years to unite into a single list that can give him a good fight. But so far there has been more splitting than uniting. Of the current 10 factions in Parliament, three have already fractured. Two former military chiefs have announced the formation of new parties as well.

There is a distinct possibility that as many as 15 parties will get in next time, tying an all-time high.

ELECTORAL THRESHOLD

A party has to garner at least 3.25 percent of the vote to get into parliament. Niche and single-issue parties often fail to break in, and their votes are lost.

Therefore, this week's news that a pair of nationalist Cabinet ministers, Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked, bolted their pro-settler Jewish Home party to form a new right-wing party could be bad news for Netanyahu. Without them, Jewish Home is in danger of falling short of the threshold. It is reportedly in talks to link up with other borderline factions on the right.

CURRENT PLAYERS

Regardless of the fragmentation on the right, Netanyahu remains its only viable candidate for prime minister. But on the center-left, several consider themselves worthy challengers and are busy competing with each other.

The freshest face is retired Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz, a former military chief who just entered the race and has been polling a distant second to Netanyahu. The fact that he is the public's most popular alternative even before saying a word about his worldview speaks to the Israeli voters' yearning for new options.

Gantz is merely the latest would-be savior. In 2013, former TV anchor Yair Lapid formed the centrist Yesh Atid party which became Israel's second-largest faction. In 2015, Moshe Kahlon's economy-focused Kulanu became the unlikely kingmaker.

Lagging far behind is Labor, which has sunk to its lowest point in history, polling in single figures. It has been mired in internal conflicts that came to a head this week when its leader, Avi Gabbay, dramatically dissolved his union with former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni on live TV. She is now looking for a new home.

Moshe Yaalon, a former defense minister and military chief, has also started a new party, as has Orly Levi-Abuksis, the daughter of former Likud stalwart David Levy, whose economic platform looks to appeal to some left-leaning working-class voters.

Also waiting in the wings is former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who has been advocating for a large merger between anti-Netanyahu forces.

The prime minister himself seems to be observing the unfolding drama with glee. From a state visit in Brazil, he mocked the opposition by retweeting a Likud meme depicting two cats fighting on a leather couch.

"I don't get involved in how the left divides its votes," he wrote. "What matters to me is that the right will form the next government and keep leading Israel."

Follow Heller at www.twitter.com/aronhellerap

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN ENTERS DAY 14

House Democrats pass a plan to re-open the government without funding President Donald Trump's promised border wall amid a veto threat from the White House.

2. WHAT PELOSI SAID AFTER RECLAIMING THE SPEAKER'S GAVEL

Pelosi, elected speaker 220-192, says U.S. voters "demanded a new dawn" in the November election that

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swept the Democrats to a House majority.

3. WHY NETANYAHU LOOKS TO BE CRUISING TOWARD RE-ELECTION

Part of the prime minister's longevity is due to Israel's splintered political and electoral system, which allows him to rule with no more than a quarter of the vote for his ruling Likud Party, though a legal ruling on corruption allegations against him loom.

4. THAILAND MAY BE HIT WITH WORST STORM SINCE 1989

Rain, winds and surging seawater buffeted coastal villages and world-famous tourist resorts as Tropical Storm Pabuk made landfall on southern Thailand's east coast.

5. WHY A RHODES SCHOLAR AND 'DREAMER' FEARS UNCERTAINTY

The Trump administration rescinded the option for overseas travel for those with DACA status, so recent Harvard University graduate Jin Park may not be allowed back in the U.S. if he enrolls at the University of Oxford in England.

6. NAVY SEAL TO PLEAD NOT GUILTY TO MURDER CHARGE OF ISIS TEEN

Special Operations Chief Gallagher is also accused of posing with the teen's corpse at his re-enlistment ceremony.

7. MANSON FOLLOWER RECOMMENDED FOR PAROLE

For the first time, a California parole panel says Robert Beausoleil should be freed after serving nearly a half-century in prison for murder, but California's incoming governor, Gavin Newsom, could block the decision.

8. 7 KILLED AFTER FIERY CRASH, FUEL SPILL ON FLORIDA HIGHWAY

Two big rigs and two passenger vehicles collided on Interstate 75, sparking a massive fire.

9. CHINA BEGINS FIRST SURFACE EXPLORATION OF MOON'S FAR SIDE

The Jade Rabbit 2 rover drove off its lander's ramp and onto the soft, snow-like surface.

10. WHO ENDED UCONN WOMEN'S 126-GAME WINNING STREAK

No. 8 Baylor topped UConn 68-57, handing the Huskies their first regular-season loss in more than four years.

Rhodes scholar and 'Dreamer' fears he can't return to US

By PHILIP MARCELO, Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — He became the first "Dreamer" to win the prestigious Rhodes scholarship, but for recent Harvard University graduate Jin Park, the joy of that achievement has given way to uncertainty.

The 22-year-old, who lives in New York City, risks not being allowed back in the country if he enrolls at the University of Oxford in England in the fall.

President Donald Trump's administration rescinded the option for overseas travel for those with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status, or DACA, when he moved to phase out the Obama-era program in 2017.

But travel abroad, which was allowed under limited circumstances such as academic study during the Obama administration, should still be permitted because the federal courts have upheld the program for now, argue Park and his supporters.

"If I leave, there's a very real possibility that I won't be able to come back. That's the biggest fear for sure," said Park, whose family came to the U.S. from South Korea when he was 7 years old. "I haven't really thought about what that's going to mean if I'm not allowed back."

U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, which administers DACA, didn't respond to emails seeking comment.

DACA recipients, commonly called "Dreamers" because of never-passed proposals in Congress called the DREAM Act, are protected from deportation because they were brought into the country illegally at a young age.

Discussing the risks has been a delicate topic to broach with his parents, who cried out of joy when he won the scholarship, Park said.

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"I've been avoiding that question," he said days after graduating from Harvard last month. "This was especially meaningful for them. It was like a validation of the sacrifices they've made for me."

Nearly 700,000 individuals are currently on DACA, which was created in 2012 and can be renewed every two years. To qualify, immigrants must have entered the country by 2007 and been under age 16 when they arrived.

The Trump administration issued an order winding down the program in 2017, but federal judges in New York, California and Washington, D.C., ruled against those efforts last year and have effectively kept the program running. The administration is now seeking a Supreme Court review.

Past Rhodes scholars and other Rhodes Trust supporters are volunteering their private counsel to Park in the meantime, but it's a "matter of American law and not anything the Rhodes Trust can resolve alone," said Elliot Gerson, the British organization's American secretary.

"Our hope is for federal action," he added.

"The government should enforce the law as it currently stands, to allow Jin to fulfil his scholarly work," said Kristian Ramos, a spokesman for Define American, an immigrant advocacy organization that supported Park in his Rhodes scholarship bid.

Park could turn down the scholarship but has decided against that route. He wants to continue to be a voice in the immigration debate and believes the benefits of going to Oxford outweigh the risks.

"I'm looking forward to having that unstructured time to think about these broader questions of who belongs in America and the value judgments we make about others," he said.

Park has been a vocal advocate for DACA recipients since he was in high school. In 2015, he founded Higher Dreams, a nonprofit organization that helps students without permanent immigration status navigate the college application process.

With the backing of Harvard, Park applied for the Rhodes scholarship last year as part of a broader effort to underscore how DACA recipients didn't qualify for the venerated award and others like it. The scholarship was created in 1902 by British businessmen and politician Cecil Rhodes and provides all expenses for at least two years of study at Oxford.

Park's application — like a number of others in recent years — was rejected, but the message was received. The Rhodes organization changed its policy effective this year. Park re-applied and was accepted.

Gerson said the change reflects the organization's efforts to expand eligibility. Legal permanent residents and residents of U.S. territories like Puerto Rico have also been allowed to apply in recent years.

At Oxford, Park hopes to study migration and political theory as he weighs his future.

The molecular and cell biology major has also applied to medical school, but he hasn't ruled out working in city government, where he believes he can make an impact on immigration policy "no matter who is in the White House."

And regardless what happens next, Park has the conviction of knowing where home is.

"For me, I think of Queens, New York," he said. "Whatever happens, I'm always going to know that fact. Even if I have to spend the rest of my life convincing the administration, or whoever comes next."

Follow Philip Marcelo at twitter.com/philmarcelo.

Newly empowered House Dems pass funding plan without wall

By **MATTHEW DALY, CATHERINE LUCEY and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — On their first day in the majority, House Democrats have passed a plan to re-open the government without funding President Donald Trump's promised border wall.

The largely party-line votes Thursday night came after Trump made a surprise appearance at the White House briefing room, pledging to keep up the fight for his signature campaign promise.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Trump and Senate Republicans should "take yes for an answer" and approve the border bill, which was virtually identical to a plan the Senate adopted on a voice vote last month.

"We're not doing a wall. Does anyone have any doubt that we're not doing a wall?" Pelosi told reporters

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at a news conference Thursday night.

Pelosi, who was elected speaker earlier Thursday, also took a shot at Trump, calling his proposal "a wall between reality and his constituents."

Trump strode into the White House briefing room Thursday — the 13th day of the partial government shutdown — and declared that "without a wall you cannot have border security." He then left without taking questions from reporters.

The appearance came hours after the new Congress convened, with Democrats taking majority control of the House and returning Pelosi to the speakership after eight years of GOP control. The Democratic legislation to re-open the government without funding the wall is going nowhere in the Senate, where Republicans want Trump's endorsement before voting on a funding package.

Trump is demanding billions of dollars to build his wall along the U.S. border with Mexico, which the Democrats have refused.

Asked if she would give Trump \$1 for a wall to reopen the government, Pelosi said: "One dollar? Yeah, one dollar. The fact is a wall is an immorality. It's not who we are as a nation."

Congressional leaders from both parties met with Trump at the White House Wednesday, but failed to make progress during their first sit-down in weeks. The White House has invited the leaders back Friday for another round of talks that officials have suggested might be more successful now that Pelosi has been sworn in.

Reporters were told Thursday that White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders would be holding a hastily called late afternoon briefing. Instead, out walked Trump, flanked by members of the unions that represent border patrol and immigration enforcement agents. It was his first time delivering remarks at the briefing room podium.

"You can call it a barrier, you can call it whatever you want," Trump said. "But essentially we need protection in our country. We're going to make it good. The people of our country want it."

Trump said his meeting with the union officials had long been planned and just happened to come at "a very opportune time." He also claimed his refusal to budge was winning praise, telling reporters, "I have never had so much support as I have in the last week over my stance for border security."

Polls show a majority of Americans oppose the border wall, although Republicans strongly support it.

White House and Department of Homeland Security officials have spent recent days trying to make a public and private case that the situation at the border has reached a "crisis" situation that demands more money than Democrats have offered.

Trump tweeted an ominous video Thursday with images of what appeared to be migrants trying to rush the border and clashing with law enforcement, beneath the words "crisis at the border," "drugs" and "crime." The video concludes with footage of Trump at the border along with audio from one of his rallies in which he vows to build his promised border wall and the crowd chants "Build the wall!"

The Democratic package to end the shutdown includes a bill to temporarily fund the Department of Homeland Security at current levels — with \$1.3 billion for border security, far less than Trump has said he wants— through Feb. 8 as bipartisan talks would continue. It was approved, 239-192.

Democrats also approved a separate measure to fund the departments of Agriculture, Interior, Housing and Urban Development and others closed by the partial shutdown, at levels Senate Republicans had largely agreed to last year. The bill, which would provide money through the end of the fiscal year Sept. 30, was approved, 241-190, with several House Republicans joining Democrats.

The White House has rejected the Democratic package.

"Why not fully fund the Department of Homeland Security? Why doesn't the Pelosi bill do that?" said White House counselor Kellyanne Conway.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer urged Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to put the House Democratic package on the Senate floor and send it to the president, saying it would show Trump "the sweet light of reason."

McConnell has dismissed the idea as a "total nonstarter" and a waste of time.

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But some Republican senators appeared open to at least part of the Democrats' proposal.

"I'm not saying their whole plan is a valid plan, but I see no reason why the bills that are ready to go and on which we've achieved an agreement should be held hostage to this debate over border security," said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine.

"Congress needs to take further action on border security, but that work should be done when the government is fully open," added Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Colo.

Vice President Mike Pence, who was on the Hill Thursday to swear in new senators, took a hard line, telling Fox News Channel's Tucker Carlson, "Bottom line, if there's no wall, there's no deal."

Trump has said the partial shutdown, which began Dec. 22, will last "as long as it takes" to get the funding he wants.

The White House said Trump made calls Thursday to the family of Cpl. Ronil Singh, the Newman, California, police officer shot to death during a Dec. 26 traffic stop. The suspected shooter is a Mexican man accused of living in the U.S. illegally. Republicans have seized on the case to call for tougher border security.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro, Laurie Kellman, Kevin Freking, Alan Fram and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Tropical storm's rain, surging seas strike Thai beaches

By SUMETH PANPETCH, Associated Press

LAEM TALUMPUK, Thailand (AP) — Rain, winds and surging seawater buffeted coastal villages and world-famous tourist resorts Friday, as Tropical Storm Pabuk made landfall on southern Thailand's east coast.

The storm, with maximum sustained winds of 70 kph (42 mph), hit the shore of Nakhon Si Thammarat province Friday afternoon and was roaring westward at 20 kph (12 mph), said Phuwieng Prakhammintara, director-general of the Thai Meteorological Department.

"We can expect heavy rain and downpours, flooding and flash floods in the area throughout the night," he warned at a news conference.

Earlier Friday, authorities in Nakhon Si Thammarat province, about 800 kilometers (480 miles) south of Bangkok, drove trucks through flooded streets with downed power lines, urging people to leave.

"Anyone still inside. Please make noise and officials will help you out. You cannot stay here. You cannot stay here. It's too dangerous," they said from truck-mounted loudspeakers.

While torrential rain and strong winds are expected to affect more than a dozen other provinces, Nakhon Si Thammarat and Surat Thani, home to the tourist islands of Koh Samui, Koh Tao and Koh Phangan, are expected to be the hardest hit.

The Meteorological Department said Friday morning that waves 3 to 5 meters (10 to 16 feet) high were possible in the Gulf of Thailand on the east coast, and 2 to 3 meters (6 to 10 feet) high in the Andaman Sea on the west coast. It warned of strong winds and storm surges on the gulf side and said all ships should stay berthed on land through Saturday.

In Nakhon Si Thammarat's Pak Phanang district, where the storm later made landfall, a father and a son rushed off with their belongings on their pickup truck, quickly telling reporters the roof of their house was already damaged.

Officials used trucks to help fishermen move boats off the beach, which was being beaten up by strong waves.

"You can't stay around here," local official Dahloh Bin Samah said in a beachfront interview aired on local TV. "These will be all razed down. Every monsoon, beachfront restaurants around here are damaged every year. But this time, we got a tropical storm coming. There won't be anything left. Nothing."

Thai authorities suspended ferry services in the Gulf of Thailand and flights to Nakhon Si Thammarat and Koh Samui were canceled.

On Koh Samui, beach guards hoisted red flags to warn people to stay out of the sea. Police patrolled beaches, although many were almost deserted.

There are fears that the storm will be the worst to hit Thailand since 1989, when Typhoon Gay left more than 400 people dead. A tropical storm in 1962 killed more than 900 people in the south.

Two natural gas production platforms in the Gulf of Thailand directly in the path of the storm suspended operations and had their personnel evacuated to shore, said the exploration and production arm of the Thai state oil company PTT. It said drilling rigs and vessels had been moved to unaffected areas, and gas production at a third platform remained operating to help meet energy needs.

Harden rallies Rockets in OT to edge Warriors 135-134

By JANIE McCAULEY, AP Sports Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — A defender on either side of him, James Harden let it fly one last time for an improbable game-winner in the waning seconds of overtime before falling backward and hitting the floor.

It took his second triple-double of the week, fifth straight 40-point performance and sheer will to rally the Houston Rockets past the Golden State Warriors 135-134 in a thriller between Western Conference powers Thursday night for their sixth straight victory.

Harden hit a contested 3-pointer with 2.7 seconds left in OT and finished with 44 points, 15 assists and 10 rebounds. The reigning MVP's team had trailed by 20.

"I take my shots, I drive to the basket," Harden said. "I shoot my step-backs with confidence and live with the results."

Kevin Durant's long 3-pointer missed as the buzzer sounded in what will go down as one of the best games this regular season — a rematch of the seven-game Western Conference finals won by two-time defending champion Golden State.

Stephen Curry put the Warriors ahead with 23.1 seconds remaining in OT on the way to 35 points, a basket that shouldn't have counted because Durant was clearly out of bounds when he flung the ball back in.

Durant said he knew it, too, and "I could believe it because the refs were missing a lot tonight."

Harden, however, had one more incredible, acrobatic moment still in him. He released the ball swarmed by two defenders — Klay Thompson to his left and Draymond Green in front of him.

Harden also hit 3-pointers at the 3:52 and 2:02 marks of OT in a game featuring dazzling displays on both ends by some of the game's biggest stars.

"I don't know where it ranks but I'm just happy to come away with the win," Harden said. "I just had to go out and do my part on the highest level."

Thompson made a go-ahead layup with 40.6 seconds left in the extra period, then Harden tied it at 132 on a pair of free throws with 33.5 seconds left.

"He just did what he does," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "He's the master of the isolation, the step-back 3 and drawing fouls."

Durant added 26 points and seven rebounds.

Harden also had a triple-double Monday against Memphis of 43 points, 10 rebounds and 13 assists, but he was disappointed with nine turnovers he thought gave the Grizzlies too many transition opportunities.

Including his 50-point game Dec. 13 against the Lakers, Harden has scored at least 30 in 11 straight.

Clint Capela contributed 29 points and 21 rebounds for Houston.

Kerr's simple message about defending Harden, who went to the line 27 times Monday: "Don't foul him!"

Harden shot five free throws in the first quarter Thursday and nine in all.

His jumper with 5:37 left in regulation cut Golden State's lead to 112-111. He also got the Rockets close by knocking down two 3-pointers and assisting on another basket in the final 1:26 of the third as Houston cut its deficit to 98-92 going into the final quarter.

"We had a 20-point lead and lost. It doesn't really matter what happened at that point," Green said.

Thompson scored 26 points and hit consecutive 3-pointers late in the first half. After struggling to find his stroke from deep, Thompson is 10 for 17 on 3-pointers the past three games.

With his first 3 at the 7-minute mark of the opening period, Durant became the 32nd player in NBA history to reach 22,000 points.

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Falling backward as he released the ball over Harden, Durant swished a 3 with 59.2 seconds left in the first half.

The cold-shooting Rockets fell behind 70-53 at halftime. Houston was just 6 of 23 from long range, 3 for 9 by Harden, while the Warriors shot 62.8 percent.

"I don't think we played with that killer instinct in the second half," Thompson said. "I think we relaxed up 17 points."

TIP-INS

Rockets: F James Ennis, who had been questionable with a strained right hamstring, returned after missing the previous 10 games. ... G Eric Gordon sat out a second straight game with a bruised right knee.

Warriors: C Kevon Looney scored in double figures for the ninth time this season. ... Durant is one of six active players in the 22,000-point club, joining LeBron James, Dirk Nowitzki, Carmelo Anthony, Vince Carter and Dwyane Wade. ... Durant has 12 straight games with 20 or more points. ... Golden State dropped to 10-3 when dishing out 30 or more assists.

RUN TMC

As part of the final season at Oracle Arena, the Warriors honored the "Run TMC" era featuring the trio of Tim Hardaway, Mitch Richmond and Chris Mullin.

They were recognized on the big screen during a first-quarter timeout and Hardaway was shown sitting courtside next to Warriors owner Joe Lacob.

UP NEXT

Rockets: At Portland on Saturday.

Warriors: At Sacramento on Saturday looking for a fourth straight road win vs. the Kings.

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/tag/NBA> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Pelosi wins speaker job, will lead House Democrats again

By LISA MASCARO, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nancy Pelosi knew this moment would come, even if others had their doubts — or worked to stop her.

Pelosi was elected Thursday as House speaker, the only woman who has held the office and now one of few elected officials who have returned to it. The last time a speaker regained the gavel was more than a half-century ago.

The California Democrat has spent her political career being underestimated, only to prove the naysayers wrong. In this case, it was by winning back the Democratic majority and amassing the votes for the speaker's job.

"None of us is indispensable," Pelosi told The Associated Press while campaigning last fall, "but I do know that I'm very good at what I do."

In accepting the gavel, Pelosi gave nod to the new era of divided government with a pledge to "reach across the aisle in this chamber and across the divisions across our nation."

She said, "The floor of this House must be America's Town Hall: where the people will see our debates and where their voices will be heard and affect our decisions."

In outlining Democratic priorities, she talked about lowering health care costs, investing in green infrastructure and restoring "integrity to government."

"We must be champions of the middle class and all those who aspire to it — because the middle class is the backbone of our democracy," she said.

Pelosi remains a highly polarizing figure, vilified by Republicans as a San Francisco liberal and a caricature of big government. But she is also a mother of five and a grandmother of nine who has shattered glass ceilings to become one of the most powerful politicians of the 21st century.

With President Donald Trump in the White House and Republicans still controlling the Senate, Pelosi's return to the speaker's office to lead a Democratic majority with its biggest freshmen class since Watergate

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shakes up the dynamic in Washington even beyond the new era of divided government.

Pelosi has faced pressure from some incoming Democrats who have been willing to talk about the possibility of impeachment proceedings against Trump. Pelosi has called impeachment a "divisive activity," and Democrats were cautious about mentioning the "I" word during the 2018 midterms for fear it would backfire politically.

She took a measured approach to it in an interview airing Thursday on NBC's "Today" show.

"We shouldn't be impeaching for a political reason, and we shouldn't avoid impeachment for a political reason," she said, adding that she would wait for the findings of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russia meddling in the 2016 election.

Only the House can begin impeachment proceedings. And while Justice Department guidelines suggest a sitting president can't be indicted, Pelosi called that "an open discussion."

"Everything indicates that a president can be indicted after he is no longer president," she said.

Trump himself has denied any wrongdoing.

Pelosi is one of the few congressional leaders who seem to understand Trump, both being children from famous families now primed for deal-making. Trump appreciates strong characters, and, in perhaps a sign of respect, she is one of the few congressional leaders in Washington he has not given a nickname — though he has made her a frequent target.

A core group of rank-and-file Democrats has hungered for new leadership, saying it's time for a new generation to take the helm. They tired of the Republican attack ads featuring Pelosi that are constantly run against them back home, and they worried she would be a drag on efforts to keep the majority in the next election. They enlisted some of the newcomers from the freshmen class to their ranks to try to stop her from regaining the gavel.

But one by one, Pelosi peeled away the skeptics, flipping "no" votes to the "yes" column, sometimes in a matter of days. Some were given lead positions on their legislative priorities, even a gavel of their own to chair special panels.

And Pelosi gave a little, too, promising, at 78, to serve no more than four years in leadership, making way for the next generation.

Pelosi won the speakership by a vote of 220 to Republican Kevin McCarthy's 192 votes.

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

Speaker again, Pelosi sees 'new dawn' for 116th Congress

By LISA MASCARO, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Cheering Democrats returned Nancy Pelosi to the House speaker's post Thursday as the 116th Congress ushered in a historically diverse freshman class eager to confront President Donald Trump in a new era of divided government.

Pelosi, elected speaker 220-192, took the gavel saying U.S. voters "demanded a new dawn" in the November election that swept the Democrats to a House majority and are looking to "the beauty of our Constitution" to provide checks and balances on power. She faced 15 dissenting votes from fellow Democrats.

For a few hours, the promise of a new era was the order of the day. The new speaker invited scores of lawmakers' kids to join her on the dais as she was sworn in, calling the House to order "on behalf of all of America's children."

Even Trump congratulated her during a rare appearance at the White House briefing room, saying her election by House colleagues was "a tremendous, tremendous achievement." The president has tangled often with Pelosi and is sure to do so again with Democrats controlling the House, but he said, "I think it'll be a little bit different than a lot of people are thinking."

As night fell, the House quickly got to work on the partial government shutdown, which was winding up Day 13 with Trump demanding billions in Mexican border wall funding to bring it to an end. Democrats approved legislation to re-open the government — but without the \$5.6 billion in wall money, which means

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it has no chance in the Republican Senate.

The new Congress is like none other. There are more women than ever before, and a new generation of Muslims, Latinos, Native Americans and African-Americans is creating a House more aligned with the population of the United States. However, the Republican side in the House is still made up mostly of white men, and in the Senate Republicans bolstered their ranks in the majority.

In a nod to the moment, Pelosi, the first female speaker who reclaimed the post she lost to the GOP in 2011, broadly pledged to make Congress work for all Americans — addressing kitchen table issues at a time of deep economic churn — even as her party readies to challenge Trump with investigations and subpoena powers that threaten the White House agenda.

Pelosi promised to “restore integrity to government” and outlined an agenda “to lower health costs and prescription drug prices and protect people with pre-existing medical conditions; to increase paychecks by rebuilding America with green and modern infrastructure from sea to shining sea.”

The day unfolded as one of both celebration and impatience. Newly elected lawmakers arrived, often with friends and families in tow, to take the oath of office and pose for ceremonial photos. Then they swiftly turned to the shutdown.

Vice President Mike Pence swore in newly elected senators, but Senate Republicans under Majority Leader Mitch McConnell had no plans to consider the House bills unless Trump agreed to sign them into law. That ensured the shutdown would continue, clouding the first days of the new session.

McConnell said that Republicans have shown the Senate is “fertile soil for big, bipartisan accomplishments,” but that the question is whether House Democrats will engage in “good governance or political performance art.”

It’s a time of stark national political division that some analysts say is on par with the Civil War era. Battle lines are drawn not just between Democrats and Republicans but within the parties themselves, splintered by their left and right flanks.

Pelosi defied history in returning to the speaker’s office after eight years in the minority, overcoming internal opposition from Democrats demanding a new generation of leaders. She will be the first to regain the gavel since Sam Rayburn of Texas in 1955.

Putting Pelosi’s name forward for nomination, Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, the incoming Democratic caucus chair, recounted her previous accomplishments — passing the Affordable Care Act, helping the country out of the Great Recession — as preludes to her next ones. He called her leadership “unparalleled in modern American history.”

One Democrat, Rep. Brenda Lawrence of Michigan, cast her vote for Pelosi “on the shoulders of women who marched 100 years ago” for women’s suffrage. Newly elected Rep. Lucy McBath of Georgia, an anti-gun violence advocate, dedicated hers to her slain teenage son, Jordan Davis.

As speaker, Pelosi will face challenges from the party’s robust wing of liberal newcomers, including 29-year-old New Yorker Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has risen to such prominence she is already known around the Capitol — and on her prolific social media accounts — by the nickname “AOC.” California Rep. Brad Sherman introduced articles of impeachment against Trump, though for now the measures are largely symbolic.

Republicans face their own internal battles as they decide how closely to tie their political fortunes to Trump. House GOP leader Kevin McCarthy’s name was put into nomination for speaker by his party’s caucus chair, Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, the daughter of the former vice president. He faced six “no” votes from his now-shrunken GOP minority.

As McCarthy passed the gavel to Pelosi he said voters wonder if Congress is “still capable” of solving problems, and said this period of divided government is “no excuse for gridlock.”

One office remains disputed as the House refused to seat Republican Mark Harris of North Carolina amid an investigation by state election officials of irregularities in absentee ballots from the November election.

Many GOP senators are up for re-election in 2020 in states where voters have mixed views of Trump’s performance in the White House.

Trump, whose own bid for 2020 already is underway, faces potential challenges from the ranks of Senate

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Democrats under Chuck Schumer.

The halls of the Capitol were bustling with arrivals, children in the arms of many new lawmakers. Visitor galleries included crooner Tony Bennett and rock legend Mickey Hart, both guests of Pelosi. Incoming White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, a former congressman, sat with Republican leaders.

Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo., opened the House prayer asking at "a time fraught with tribalism at home and turbulence abroad" that lawmakers "become the architects of a kindlier nation."

Overnight, Democratic Rep-elect Ilhan Omar of Minnesota tweeted a picture with her family at the airport. The House rules were being changed to allow Omar, who is Muslim, to wear a head scarf on the chamber floor. She wrote, "23 years ago, from a refugee camp in Kenya, my father and I arrived at an airport in Washington DC. Today, we return to that same airport on the eve of my swearing in as the first Somali-American in Congress."

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Matthew Daly, Alan Fram, Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick, Laurie Kellman and Zeke J. Miller contributed to this report.

Japanese shares skid, Shanghai surges after Wall St sell-off

By ANNABELLE LIANG, Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Japanese shares tumbled and Shanghai's benchmark surged Friday as Asian markets steadied following a technology-led sell-off on Wall Street.

The Nikkei 225 index started its first trading day of 2019 by falling more than 3 percent. By midday, it was trading 2.8 percent lower at 19,465.36 as technology and electronics makers slumped.

But Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 1.3 percent to 25,380.37. The Shanghai Composite rebounded 1.8 percent to 2,509.02.

Traders cheered a private survey released Friday showing that China's services sector expanded in December. China's Caixin Services PMI, a survey of service industry purchasing managers, had a reading of 53.9 in December, a six-month high. This was slightly higher than November's reading of 53.8. The survey comes on the back of weak manufacturing data earlier in the week.

Investors also were encouraged by news that the U.S. and China will hold trade talks in Beijing on Jan. 7 and 8. The U.S. delegation will be led by Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish, a Commerce Ministry statement said Friday.

U.S. shares fell after Apple CEO Tim Cook told shareholders after markets closed Wednesday that Chinese iPhone sales were slipping. Cook said the company expects revenue of \$84 billion in the last quarter of 2018, \$7 billion less than analysts had forecast.

Apple's report startled investors who fear a slowdown of the world's second largest economy amid pressure from a trade dispute between Washington and Beijing.

The broad S&P 500 index gave up 2.5 percent to 2,447.89 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 2.8 percent to 22,868.22. The Nasdaq composite, which has a high concentration of tech stocks, declined 3 percent to 6,463.50.

A report suggesting that U.S. manufacturing had slowed also weighed on sentiment. IHS Markit's U.S. manufacturing purchasing managers' index was 53.8 in December, the lowest reading in more than two years, and down from 55.3 in the previous month. The index is on a 100-point scale, with 50 separating contraction from growth.

"Concerns on global growth intensified," Zhu Huani of Mizuho Bank said in a commentary. "As growths in China and Eurozone have been clearly slowing, investor fears that moderating global demand will start to dampen U.S. growth momentum," she added.

On Friday, South Korea's Kospi, which has a high number of technology stocks, added 0.5 percent to 2,003.99. Australia's S&P-ASX 200 shed 0.6 percent to 5,600.10. Shares fell in Taiwan and Thailand, but rose in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

The rebound in equities suggests that "Asian investors shrugged off bearish news surrounding Apple,

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and took this as a buying opportunity as the valuation of (Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore) markets are close to four-year lows," Margaret Yang, market analyst at CMC Markets, said in an interview.

In other trading, U.S. crude oil added 17 cents to \$47.26 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose 55 cents to \$47.09 per barrel on Thursday.

Brent crude, used to price international oils, rose 11 cents to \$56.06 per barrel. It gained \$1.04 to \$55.95 per barrel in London.

The dollar strengthened to 108.37 yen from 107.67 yen. The euro slipped to \$1.1393 from \$1.1394.

AP Markets Writer Marley Jay in New York contributed.

Day 13: Dems pass funding plan without wall, Trump digs in

By **MATTHEW DALY, CATHERINE LUCEY and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — On their first day in the majority, House Democrats on Thursday night passed a plan to re-open the government without funding President Donald Trump's promised border wall.

The largely party-line votes came after Trump made a surprise appearance at the White House briefing room pledging to keep up the fight for his signature campaign promise.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Trump and Senate Republicans should "take yes for an answer" and approve the border bill, which was virtually identical to a plan the Senate adopted on a voice vote last month.

"We're not doing a wall. Does anyone have any doubt that we're not doing a wall?" Pelosi told reporters at a news conference Thursday night.

Pelosi, who was elected speaker earlier Thursday, also took a shot at Trump, calling his proposal "a wall between reality and his constituents."

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The appearance came hours after the new Congress convened, with Democrats taking majority control of the House and returning Pelosi to the speakership after eight years of GOP control. The Democratic legislation to re-open the government without funding the wall is going nowhere in the Senate, where Republicans want Trump's endorsement before voting on a funding package.

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"You can call it a barrier, you can call it whatever you want," Trump said. "But essentially we need protection in our country. We're going to make it good. The people of our country want it."

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Democrats also approved a separate measure to fund the departments of Agriculture, Interior, Housing and Urban Development and others closed by the partial shutdown, at levels Senate Republicans had largely agreed to last year. The bill, which would provide money through the end of the fiscal year Sept. 30, was approved, 241-190, with several House Republicans joining Democrats.

The White House has rejected the Democratic package.

"Why not fully fund the Department of Homeland Security? Why doesn't the Pelosi bill do that?" said White House counselor Kellyanne Conway.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer urged Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to put the House Democratic package on the Senate floor and send it to the president, saying it would show Trump "the sweet light of reason."

McConnell has dismissed the idea as a "total nonstarter" and a waste of time.

But some Republican senators appeared open to at least part of the Democrats' proposal.

"I'm not saying their whole plan is a valid plan, but I see no reason why the bills that are ready to go and on which we've achieved an agreement should be held hostage to this debate over border security," said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine.

"Congress needs to take further action on border security, but that work should be done when the government is fully open," added Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Colo.

Vice President Mike Pence, who was on the Hill Thursday to swear in new senators, took a hard line, telling Fox News Channel's Tucker Carlson, "Bottom line, if there's no wall, there's no deal."

Trump has said the partial shutdown, which began Dec. 22, will last "as long as it takes" to get the funding he wants.

The White House said Trump made calls Thursday to the family of Cpl. Ronil Singh, the Newman, California, police officer shot to death during a Dec. 26 traffic stop. The suspected shooter is a Mexican man accused of living in the U.S. illegally. Republicans have seized on the case to call for tougher border security.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro, Laurie Kellman, Kevin Freking, Alan Fram and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Powerful Chicago council member charged in federal probe

By MICHAEL TARM, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — One of the most powerful and longest-serving City Council members in Chicago history appeared in federal court Thursday on a charge that he tried to shake down a major fast-food restaurant chain seeking city remodeling permits.

Alderman Ed Burke, 75, is charged with one count of attempted extortion for conveying to company executives in 2017 that they'd get the permits only if they signed on as clients at Burke's private property-tax law firm in Chicago, a 37-page complaint unsealed on Thursday says.

For many Chicagoans suspicious of dealings behind closed doors at City Hall, Burke has personified the city's machine politics for decades. Dozens of aldermen have entered U.S. District court on corruption charges, but Burke seemed too powerful, too wealthy and too savvy to land himself in the kind of legal trouble he now faces.

He sat in a packed Chicago federal courtroom Thursday afternoon with his arms folded, wearing his trade-

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mark pinstriped suit with a pocket square. Minutes later, he stood before U.S. Magistrate Sheila Finnegan, who asked if he understood the charge and that a conviction could carry a lengthy prison sentence.

"Yes, your honor," he answered calmly.

Speaking briefly outside his home Thursday night, Burke said "I've done nothing wrong."

"I'm not guilty of anything, and I'm trusting that when I have my day in court that will be clear beyond a reasonable doubt," he said.

The complaint alleges that as part of the extortion scheme, Burke solicited a campaign contribution for an unnamed politician. The Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun-Times reported that Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, a candidate for Chicago mayor, was the intended recipient of the contribution.

Preckwinkle said in a statement that she learned Thursday that "an individual" attempted to contribute through her campaign website but the contribution wasn't accepted. Calling for Burke to step down, Preckwinkle said his "behavior of abusing his position for personal gain does not reflect my values, and I do not condone it."

Prosecutors told the judge that Burke, who has publicly opposed the National Rifle Association and proposed multiple gun-control ordinances over the years, had 23 guns at his offices alone. The judge said one condition of his continued release is that he gets rid of all his guns, including any at his home. He also was required to turn over his passport.

The Democrat's law firm, Klafter & Burke, represented the high-rise tower that bears President Donald Trump's name. There's no indication the case is at all tied to his firm's work for Trump.

He's been on the council for 50 years and for three decades has chaired its finance committee, which makes key decisions about how the city's budget is spent.

Burke said after FBI raids on his offices at City Hall and in his Southwest Side ward in November that he was sure agents wouldn't find anything "amiss."

Charges were filed in a complaint on Wednesday but only unsealed Thursday. A grand jury could still hand down a formal indictment, possibly adding new charges.

The complaint, which does not identify the fast-food company or the executives allegedly squeezed, includes excerpts from wiretaps of Burke's phone and emails seized in the raids.

One intermediary told Burke he would tell one of the executives "how important you are" when he met the person for dinner.

"You are good to do that," Burke responded. "But I'd also like to get some of his law business. ... I hear he has 300 (restaurants out here)."

When the executives didn't give Burke's law firm the business he wanted, Burke spoke with one of his ward employees about how they would "play hard" ball with the company, the complaint says.

Emails between the executives, who the complaint says are victims and not targets of the investigation, show how worried they were about the damage Burke could do to their enterprise.

"I know these guys are very powerful and they can make life very difficult for all of our Chicago stores and I do not want to take this risk," one email said after Burke forced them to halt the renovations.

Burke's attorney, Charles Sklarsky, told reporters as he left the courthouse with his client "the transaction described in the complaint does not make out extortion or an attempt to extort."

Burke joins a long list of Illinois lawmakers charged criminally, including former Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who is serving a 14-year prison term on multiple federal corruption convictions.

Klafter & Burke specialized in property-tax appeals, with former clients that included Trump's luxury tower in downtown Chicago. The Chicago Sun-Times reported in 2016 that the law firm saved the Trump building enterprise \$14 million by appealing property tax bills over seven years.

U.S. Rep.-elect Jesus "Chuy" Garcia and other Burke critics in Chicago's Hispanic community have drawn attention to that tax work in a bid to hurt Burke politically.

Burke's wife, Anne Burke, is an Illinois Supreme Court justice. Ed Burke's father was also influential in Democratic circles in Chicago until his death in the 1960s. Other Burke relatives also have been involved in Illinois politics.

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Since the 1970s, nearly three dozen aldermen have been convicted. A common joke in Chicago is that so many aldermen had gone to prison that when they saw each other behind bars they'd holler, "Quorum call!"

Burke is associated by Chicagoans with insider benefits long accorded aldermen. A city inspectors report in 2016 found snow removal crews plowed the street where he lived far more often than other streets after a 2015 snow storm. They worked his street 46 times in five days, the report said.

Burke was a central figure in the mid-1980s during what came to be known as the "Council Wars," a highly contentious time in Chicago politics when Burke and others opposed the city's first black mayor, Harold Washington.

Follow Michael Tarm on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/mtarm>

Associated Press reporter Sara Burnett contributed.

Thailand braces for powerful storm at southern beach towns

By **SUMETH PANPETCH, Associated Press**

NAKHON SI THAMMARAT, Thailand (AP) — Thai authorities suspended ferry services and evacuated locals and tourists ahead of a tropical storm expected to pound the Southeast Asian nation's famed southern beach resorts during a peak tourism season.

Rain was already falling around the Gulf of Thailand and officials warned that torrential downpours, strong winds and rough seas were expected when Tropical Storm Pabuk makes landfall Friday evening.

There are fears that the storm will be the worst to hit Thailand since 1989, when Typhoon Gay left more than 400 dead. A tropical storm in 1962 killed more than 900 people in the south.

In a death possibly related to the storm, a Russian tourist in Koh Samui died Wednesday as he tried to rescue his daughter, who was struggling in strong surf. Thai PBS television reported that the daughter survived but her father lost consciousness after being tossed against some rocks and couldn't be revived by rescuers.

Thailand's Meteorological Department said the storm will lash southern Thailand's east coast through Saturday, with the two provinces of Surat Thani and Nakhon Si Thammarat expected to be hardest hit. Surat Thani is home to the popular tourist islands of Koh Samui, Koh Tao and Koh Phangan.

Army trucks were driving around remote seaside areas in Nakhon Si Thammarat on Thursday evening, searching for stragglers who had not yet been evacuated.

"We have prepared three shelters and currently have about 1,000 people in them," said local official Kriangsak Raksrithong.

Along with tourism, fishing is another major industry in the south, and small boat owners were heeding the warning. Many dragged their vessels ashore, attaching ropes to the boats and having friends help tug them on to beaches.

The Meteorological Department said Friday morning the storm was southeast of Nakhon Si Thammarat province with maximum winds of 80 kilometers per hour (50 mph), and that waves 3 to 5 meters (10 to 16 feet) high were possible in the Gulf of Thailand, and 2 to 3 meters (6 to 10 feet) high in the Andaman Sea on the west coast. It warned of strong winds and storm surges on the gulf side and said all ships should stay berthed on land through Saturday.

"There will be heavy rainfall and we have to prepared for flooding or an impact on transportation," Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said. "We are ready ourselves, but if the rainfall is high we will need some time to resolve problems."

He later held a video conference with governors of provinces in the storm's path to discuss preparations for the emergency, including draining floodwaters, mobilizing rescue vehicles, and readying medical facilities.

Southern Thailand's tourist industry is a huge moneymaker, and authorities have become particularly sensitive to visitors' safety since last July, when 47 Chinese tourists drowned when the boat they were on sank in rough seas near the popular resort of Phuket in the Andaman Sea.

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On Samui island, beach guards hoisted red flags to warn people to stay out of the sea. Police patrolled beaches, although many were almost deserted.

Anne Britt Sodefjed, a tourist from Norway, said she wasn't worried.

"We have bought lights, yes, and some more water. And we know the hotel will look after us," she said.

Two natural gas production platforms in the Gulf of Thailand directly in the path of the storm suspended operations and had their personnel evacuated to shore, said the exploration and production arm of the Thai state oil company PTT. It said drilling rigs and vessels had been moved to unaffected areas, and gas production at a third platform remained operating to help meet energy needs.

Southern Vietnam also was expecting heavy rain and strong winds in the Mekong Delta, the country's major area for rice and aquaculture production.

According to Vietnamese state television VTV, authorities ordered people to take precautions and sent radio alerts to thousands of fishing boats to take shelter or return to shore. They had forbidden new boat departures in five southern coastal provinces since Tuesday.

Herb Kelleher, co-founder of Southwest Airlines, dies at 87

By DAVID KOENIG, AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Not many CEOs dress up as Elvis Presley, settle a business dispute with an arm-wrestling contest, or go on TV wearing a paper bag over their head.

Herb Kelleher did all those things. Along the way, the co-founder and longtime leader of Southwest Airlines also revolutionized air travel by practically inventing the low-cost, low-fare airline.

Kelleher died on Thursday. He was 87. Southwest confirmed his death but did not indicate the cause.

In the late 1960s, the nation's airlines were a clique of venerable companies that offered onboard dining, movies and other amenities to make flying pleasant but pricey. Fares approved by federal regulators made air travel a luxury that few could afford.

Kelleher was a lawyer in San Antonio in 1967 when a client, Rollin King, came to him with the idea for a low-fare airline that would fly between San Antonio, Dallas and Houston. Kelleher guided Southwest through a thicket of legal obstacles thrown up by other airlines, and the new carrier began flying in 1971.

Southwest kept costs low. It flew just one kind of plane, the Boeing 737, to make maintenance simpler and cheaper. It gave out peanuts instead of meals. There were no assigned seats. It operated from less-congested secondary airports to avoid money-burning delays.

Southwest turned a profit in 1973 and hasn't suffered a money-losing year since — a streak unmatched in the U.S. airline business.

Kelleher became Southwest's chairman in 1978 and CEO in 1982, as federal regulation of airline prices was disappearing. He led the company through its period of greatest growth. As Southwest entered new cities, it forced other airlines to match its lower prices. Federal officials dubbed this "the Southwest Effect."

Today, Southwest carries more passengers within the United States than any airline. While critics say Southwest has come to resemble the bigger carriers that it once fought against, it created a model of streamlined operations, low costs and lower fares that spawned similar airlines around the world.

If Southwest was different, so was its garrulous CEO — a wisecracking chain smoker who bragged about his fondness for Wild Turkey bourbon whiskey.

Kelleher was so outgoing that it would take him ages to walk through an airport — he seemed to stop every few feet to chat with employees and passengers. He had a booming laugh, a bottomless trove of anecdotes, and a lawyer's precise way with words.

Kelleher showed a flair for wacky marketing antics. When Braniff tried to drive Southwest out of business by undercutting its fares — prices that ensured both airlines would lose money — Kelleher offered a bottle of liquor to anyone who bought a full-fare Southwest ticket. Kelleher said that business travelers with expense accounts and a thirst for booze made Southwest the biggest liquor distributor in Texas for a time.

When Southwest and a smaller aviation company both claimed the same advertising slogan, Kelleher proposed to settle the dispute by holding an arm-wrestling contest with the other CEO. Kelleher, clenched-

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ing a lit cigarette between his teeth, lost the match, but the victor — impressed by the publicity the stunt generated — let Southwest keep using the tagline.

As Southwest added service to more cities, executives of other airlines — and some of their passengers — dismissed Southwest as a cattle-car operation for cheap travelers. Kelleher answered with a TV commercial in which he wore a paper bag over his head and promised to give the bag to any customer who was too embarrassed to be seen flying on his discount airline.

The TV ads and the Elvis costumes helped make Kelleher the public face of Southwest and probably the most recognized person in the airline industry.

In 1999, at age 68, Kelleher was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He kept working, commuting between Southwest's Dallas headquarters and a hospital in Houston, but the incident added urgency for a succession plan.

In 2001, Kelleher stepped down as CEO and president, and he retired as chairman in 2008. Even after leaving, he remained on the payroll and went to the office regularly.

In a 2011 interview with The Associated Press, Kelleher said his proudest achievement was that Southwest — in an industry that cut tens of thousands of jobs in the decade after 2001 — never laid off workers.

In a statement Thursday, Southwest said, "Herb was a pioneer, a maverick, and an innovator. His vision revolutionized commercial aviation and democratized the skies."

T. Boone Pickens, the oilman and fellow legendary Texas business figure, tweeted, "Herb Kelleher is arguably the most transformative figure and character in the history of modern aviation. He is the epitome of the can-do entrepreneurial spirit."

Herbert D. Kelleher was born in Haddon Heights, New Jersey, and got his first job — for \$2.50 a week — making sure that copies of the Philadelphia Bulletin newspaper were delivered. He graduated from Wesleyan University and earned a law degree from New York University in 1956.

Kelleher is survived by his wife, Joan, and three of their four children.

David Koenig can be reached at <http://twitter.com/airlinewriter>

North Korean envoy to Italy vanishes _ did he defect?

By **FRANCES D'EMILIO** and **KIM TONG-HYUNG**, Associated Press

ROME (AP) — North Korea's top diplomat in Italy has gone into hiding along with his wife, according to a South Korean lawmaker, raising the possibility of a defection of a senior North Korean official.

The news came from South Korea's spy agency, which briefed lawmakers in Seoul on Thursday on the status of North Korea's acting ambassador to Italy, Jo Song Gil. It said he went into hiding with his wife in November before his posting to Italy ended late that month.

A high-profile defection by one of North Korea's elite would be a huge embarrassment for leader Kim Jong Un as he pursues diplomacy with Seoul and Washington and seeks to portray himself as a geopolitical player.

South Korean lawmaker Kim Min-ki said an official from Seoul's National Intelligence Service shared the information during a closed-door briefing. Kim did not say whether the spy agency revealed anything about Jo's current whereabouts or whether he had plans to defect to South Korea.

Kim said the NIS said it has not been contacted by Jo.

According to Kim, the NIS official said Jo and his wife left the official residence in early November, weeks before his term was to end. Kim said he couldn't confirm if the NIS official revealed whether Jo and his wife were accompanied by any children. The NIS earlier said it couldn't confirm a South Korean media report that Jo was under Italian government protection as he seeks asylum in a Western nation.

North Korea has not yet commented on Jo's status.

An official with the Italian Foreign Ministry said Thursday that Jo hadn't requested asylum from Italy. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with standard practice, also said Jo no longer held diplomatic status in Italy, presumably since his assignment had ended.

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Without citing any sources, Italian daily La Repubblica raised the possibility that while the Foreign Ministry was saying Jo hadn't sought asylum from Italy, that didn't rule out that the North Korean might have turned to other offices, such as Italian intelligence agencies for "assistance from Italy in order not to return to his country."

North Korea, which touts itself as a socialist paradise, is extremely sensitive about defections, especially among its elite diplomatic corps, and has previously insisted that they are South Korean or U.S. plots to undermine its government.

About 30,000 North Koreans have defected to South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, according to South Korean government figures.

Many defectors have said they wanted to leave North Korea's harsh political system and widespread poverty. North Korea often accuses the South of deceiving or paying people to defect, or claims that they have been kidnapped.

North Korea may publicly ignore Jo's possible defection or hold back harsh criticism to avoid highlighting the vulnerability of its government as it tries to engage Washington and Seoul in negotiations, said Koh Yu-hwan, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Dongguk University.

Jo had been North Korea's acting ambassador to Rome after Italy expelled then-Ambassador Mun Jong Nam in October 2017 to protest a North Korean nuclear test and long-range missile launch.

Jo seemed comfortable moving around Italy. In March 2018, accompanied by another embassy official, Pak Myong Gil, he visited two factories in Italy's northeastern Veneto region with an eye on eventual trade, according to La Tribuna di Treviso, a local daily.

One factory produced bathroom furnishings and another made accessories from marble. The newspaper quoted the local businessmen as assuming at first the delegation consisted of South Koreans, not North Koreans, given the economic sanctions against North Korea.

Among the Italians accompanying the North Koreans was a former Italian senator for what is now the League party, which in general opposes economic embargoes as bad for business.

The politician, Valentino Perin, told AP he had spoken with Jo many times, including about preparations for the visit to the Veneto region. Perin said he last met with Jo on Sept. 5, at an official reception organized by the North Korean embassy in Rome.

Showing Jo's business card, Perin said the North Korean was "very proud of his people and of his country.

The last senior North Korean diplomat known to have defected is Thae Yong Ho, a former minister at the North Korean Embassy in London, who fled to South Korea in 2016.

In an interview on South Korean television, Thae said he worked with Jo for more than a decade in the North Korean Foreign Ministry's Europe bureau and that Jo had a child when Thae last saw him in 2013.

Thae said Jo comes from a family of diplomats, with his father and father-in-law both serving as ambassadors.

The embassy in Italy is critical for North Korea because it handles annual negotiations with the Rome-based World Food Program over aid to North Korea, Thae said. He also said Italy has been a hub for smuggling luxury items to the North Korean elite, and Jo would have been involved in those activities.

Thae said Jo would have been North Korea's main diplomat for the Vatican and would have also handled discussions involving a possible visit to the North by Pope Francis if such talks had taken place. South Korea said in October that North Korean leader Kim mentioned during a summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in that he would welcome a papal visit.

Thae said he believes Jo was to be replaced by incoming ambassador Kim Chon in November but did not reveal how he obtained such information.

While not identifying him by name, North Korea's state media described Thae as "human scum" after his defection in London, and claimed he was trying to escape punishment for serious crimes. Thae, who has been an outspoken critic of Kim while living in South Korea, denied the accusation and said he defected because he didn't want his children to live "miserable" lives in the North.

It's possible that Jo is trying to defect because of similar reasons, said Koh, a policy adviser for South Korea's president.

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"It could be difficult for some diplomats to accept being called back to the North after enjoying years living in the free West. They could want their children to live in a different system and receive better education," he told The Associated Press.

The highest-level North Korean to seek asylum in South Korea is Hwang Jang-yop, a senior ruling Workers' Party official who once tutored Kim Jong Un's late father, dictator Kim Jong Il.

Hwang's 1997 defection was hailed by many South Koreans as an intelligence bonanza. Hwang died in 2010.

Also in 1997, the North Korean ambassador to Egypt fled and resettled in the United States.

Kim Tong-Hyung reported from Seoul.

With slump in iPhone sales, are we post Peak Smartphone?

By MAE ANDERSON, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Behind Apple's disconcerting news of weak iPhone sales lies a more sobering truth: The tech industry has hit Peak Smartphone, a tipping point when everyone who can afford one already owns one and no breakthroughs are compelling them to upgrade as frequently as they once did.

Some manufacturers have boosted prices to keep up profit. But Apple's shortfall highlights the limits of that strategy. The company said demand for iPhones is waning and revenue for the last quarter of 2018 will fall well below projections, a decrease traced mainly to China.

Apple's shares dropped 10 percent Thursday on the news — its worst loss since 2013. The company shed \$74.6 billion in market value, amid a broader sell-off among technology companies, which suffered their worst loss in seven years.

Apple's news is a "wake-up call for the industry," said analyst Dan Ives of research firm Wedbush Securities.

And it's not just Apple. Demand has been lackluster across the board, Ives said. Samsung, long the leading seller of smartphones, has been hit even harder, as its phone shipments dropped 8 percent during the 12 months ending in September.

"The smartphone industry is going through significant headwinds," Ives said. "Smartphone makers used to be like teenagers, and the industry was on fire. Now it feels like they're more like senior citizens in terms of maturity."

Tech innovations in phones grew in leaps and bounds earlier in the 2010s, with dramatic improvements in screen size, screen resolution, battery life, cameras and processor speed every year.

But the industry is a victim of its own success. Innovation began to slow down around 2014, once Apple boosted the screen size with the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus models. While phones kept improving, new features tended to be incremental, such as a new flash technique to already excellent phone cameras. It's the stuff consumers won't typically notice — or want to shell out for.

"Since the iPhone 6 you've seen it has been tough to innovate to continue to raise the bar," Ives said.

Apple customers now upgrade every 33 months on average, longer than the 24 or 25 months three years ago, he said.

Apple's diminished growth projections, fueled by plummeting sales in China, have reinforced fears the world's second-largest economy is losing steam. Its \$1,000 iPhone is a tough sell to Chinese consumers unnerved by an economic slump and the trade war with the U.S. They also have a slew of cheaper smartphones from homegrown competitors such as Huawei, Xiaomi and Oppo to choose from.

The fact that even Apple's iPhone juggernaut is suffering cements a larger trend for all major smartphone makers. After a steady rise for a decade, worldwide smartphone shipments fell 3 percent to 1.42 billion in 2018, the first annual drop, according to International Data Corp., which tracks such movements. IDC estimates that shipments will rebound 3 percent in 2019 to 1.46 billion, but that still falls short of 2017 levels.

It doesn't help that top phones come with four-digit price tags — \$1,100 for the iPhone XS Max and \$1,000 for Samsung's Galaxy Note 9. The top-end Max model sells for \$1,450 in the U.S.

"They're getting more and more expensive while offering fewer and fewer new, innovative features that

I'll actually use," said Zachary Pardes, a tech-savvy 31-year-old in Fairfield, Connecticut. "I'll upgrade when the battery stops working. When I'm forced to buy a new phone, I'll buy a new phone."

Vivian Yang, a manager at a Beijing technology company, also balked at the price. "Nobody needs such a phone," she said.

IDC analyst Ramon Llamas said the cycle might bottom out and start growing again in 2021 or 2022, when people's current phones start reaching the end of their useful life. "People will still replace their phones. It's going to happen eventually," he said.

But there's no "silver bullet" that will spur growth to levels seen in the past when the industry was less mature.

Foldable smartphones, with screens that unfold like a wallet to increase display size, are one thing that could spur excitement, but they're expensive and not due out until at least the end of the year.

Another thing that might spur growth: 5G, the next-generation that telecom companies are currently in the process of building, expected to be faster and more reliable than the current 4G network. The first 5G compatible phones are due out this year.

"There's more pressure on 5G as the next-wave smartphone," since sales are so lackluster, said Ives. "There will be a battle royale for 5G phones."

But 5G will take years for broad, nationwide deployment, so the new 5G smartphones coming out this year are not likely to make much of a splash immediately either.

Analysts say smartphone makers need to push into under-saturated areas like Africa and elsewhere, and also sell more services like cloud storage, streaming music and phone software. But the glory days of untrammelled growth appear to be over.

"It's going to be a slow slog," Llamas said. "By no means is this the end of the smartphone market. But this is an indication that the smartphone market can be a victim of its own success."

Associated Press writers Tali Arbel in New York and Joe McDonald in Beijing contributed to this report.

AP Exclusive: Big jump in US Catholic dioceses naming names

By CLAUDIA LAUER, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Over the past four months, Roman Catholic dioceses across the U.S. have released the names of more than 1,000 priests and others accused of sexually abusing children in an unprecedented public reckoning spurred at least in part by a shocking grand jury investigation in Pennsylvania, an Associated Press review has found.

Nearly 50 dioceses and religious orders have publicly identified child-molesting priests in the wake of the Pennsylvania report issued in mid-August, and 55 more have announced plans to do the same over the next few months, the AP found. Together they account for more than half of the nation's 187 dioceses.

The review also found that nearly 20 local, state or federal investigations, either criminal or civil, have been launched since the release of the grand jury findings. Those investigations could lead to more names and more damning accusations, as well as fines against dioceses and court-ordered safety measures.

"People saw what happened in these parishes in Pennsylvania and said, 'That happened in my parish too.' They could see the immediate connection, and they are demanding the same accounting," said Tim Lennon, national president of the board of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, or SNAP.

The recently disclosed accusations date back six or seven decades in some cases, with the oldest from the 1910s in Louisiana. Most of the priests were long ago removed from ministry. An AP examination found that more than 60 percent are dead. In most cases, the statute of limitations for bringing criminal charges or suing has run out.

Nevertheless, advocates say exposing molesters nearly two decades after the scandal first erupted in Boston in 2002 is an encouraging step, in part because it gives some victims a sense of vindication after decades of official silence or denials. Also, it could increase pressure on dioceses to set up victims' compensation funds, as the church has done in Pennsylvania already. And it could result in the removal of

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molesters from positions outside the church that give them access to children.

"This is a milestone. We are getting closer and closer to what this ought to be, the true coming to terms that would have to be at a national level," said Joe McLean, who filed a lawsuit with other victims seeking to compel the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to release files on alleged abusers nationwide.

The Pennsylvania investigation, led by state Attorney General Josh Shapiro, identified nearly 300 "predator priests" dating back seven decades and accused church leaders of covering up for the abuses, in some cases by returning priests to duty after short stays in treatment centers or reassigning them. Advocates said the report had big impact because it was the largest to date in scope, encompassing most of the state.

Victims' advocates and others, including some church officials, said the report was largely responsible for the urgency now being shown by the church. Many bishops cited those findings and other scandals — including the resignation over the summer of Washington Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, accused of groping an altar boy in the 1970s — in their letters to their congregations.

The biggest list of names has come from the Jesuits West Province, a religious order that encompasses nine Western states. It identified 111 priests. The New Orleans Archdiocese and the Diocese of Syracuse, New York, named 61 and 57 respectively. The Great Falls-Billings, Montana, Diocese disclosed 47 names, including those of a few nuns, while the Los Angeles Archdiocese reported more than 50 from the past decade or so.

Some dioceses, like Peoria, Illinois, released only names with no information on the allegations or the church's response. Others detailed such things as parish assignments, numbers and dates of allegations — including an Omaha priest with 20 to 35 accusations against him — and attempts at treatment, restriction and punishment.

And more names could be coming in places where attorneys general have launched statewide investigations such as New Jersey, New York, Nebraska, Florida and Delaware, or in cities like Houston or Cheyenne, Wyoming, where local prosecutors are looking into individual priests.

In his Christmas address last month, Pope Francis made an unprecedented call for priests who had abused children to turn themselves in and vowed the church will "never again" hide their crimes. The world's bishops will hold a summit at the Vatican next month to forge a comprehensive response to the crisis.

The U.S. bishops adopted new reporting procedures and other reforms after the furor in Boston but held off on any further measures recently at the direction of the Vatican. The bishops are holding a retreat outside Chicago starting Wednesday for "prayer and reflection" upon the scandal. Messages left by the AP seeking comment from conference officials were not returned.

In the 16 years between the Boston scandal and the Pennsylvania investigation, only about 30 dioceses around the country had released lists of priests they deemed credibly accused of abuse. Most of those dioceses came clean because they were forced to do so by lawsuits or bankruptcy filings. Some dioceses declined to name any deceased priests, since they could not defend themselves, and some would not identify any clergy members at all.

Now, 13 dioceses have hired outside consultants including FBI agents and former judges to review their files, and dioceses that had previously been secretive are coordinating to release statewide lists in such places as Texas and New Jersey.

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor of the Little Rock Diocese in Arkansas disclosed the names of 12 priests in September and announced the hiring of a consultant to review diocesan files.

"The Pennsylvania grand jury report kind of helped us firm up our decision to move forward with what we were doing. It affected the timing rather than the decision," Taylor said.

In October, the pope accepted the resignation of Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington, D.C., after he was accused in the report of mishandling some allegations of abuse against priests and others while bishop of Pittsburgh from 1988 to 2006.

The report is also credited with spurring an uptick in victims contacting support networks or law enforcement. Pennsylvania's clergy abuse hotline has received more than 1,400 new allegations since August, and Lennon said there has been a dramatic increase in victims reaching out to SNAP.

While praising the release of names, many experts said the lists are often incomplete. Terence McKiernan, co-director of BishopAccountability.org, which has tracked abuse for more than a decade, said many dioceses have left off names of known abusers his group has published in its online database.

"It's not enough," agreed Pennsylvania's Shapiro. "I do not believe that the church is capable of policing itself though. They need outside forces, ideally law enforcement, to hold them accountable."

Shapiro said he has spoken to 45 other attorneys general since his report, and 14 have publicly acknowledged some form of investigation. Other investigations have become public because of dioceses acknowledging subpoenas, reporters documenting raids or state agencies advertising victim hotlines.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan printed a copy of the Pennsylvania report the day it came out. In mid-December, she issued a blistering preliminary report saying a review of church files showed dioceses in Illinois had withheld the names of at least 500 clergy accused of sexually abusing children.

"It was obvious that this type of concealment, this type of unresolved action in Pennsylvania, that we were going to find the same thing in Illinois," Madigan said.

Worries grow about impact of a prolonged government shutdown

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — With President Donald Trump warning that it "could be a long time" before the partial shutdown of the government ends, concerns are rising about potential economic damage given that the shutdown is coinciding with other threats.

Most analysts don't regard the shutdown alone as severe enough to imperil an economic expansion that has lasted nearly a decade. But should it drag into February, the slowdown in government activity could help shake confidence and cause businesses and consumers to stop spending.

"The shutdown is coming on top of lots of other problems — the trade war, the slump in the stock market, Brexit, Trump's political problems," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics. "By itself, the shutdown may not be a big deal, but if you add it up and mix it with all this other noxious stuff, it could become a real problem."

Though he still foresees only a minimal impact from the shutdown, Zandi said that "if the trade war isn't settled soon, that will be a real problem, and if it conflates with a prolonged shutdown, that could be fodder for a recession."

The shutdown has already suspended the government's release of some economic data, making it harder to fully assess the state of the economy. And the risk is growing that tax refunds could be delayed if furloughed IRS workers aren't around to process returns.

The shutdown, which began Dec. 22, will mark its two-week point on Friday, and Trump and Democrats in Congress remain far apart over Trump's demand for funding for a wall along the Mexican border.

Economists at Macroeconomic Advisors have lowered their forecast for economic growth by a scant 0.1 percentage point for both the fourth quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2019 — to a solid 2.7 percent annual rate for the October-December quarter and a tepid 1.5 percent rate for the January-March period.

Analysts had already expected the economy to slow this year as a boost from tax cuts and increased government spending last year begins to wane. But the longer the shutdown persists, the more it could erode consumer and business confidence, compounding troubles for an economy that was already slowing.

If the shutdown lasts into February, Zandi said he would lower his growth forecast for the current quarter from a solid 2.6 percent to just above 2 percent, with further downgrades for each week the shutdown lasts beyond that point.

The Trump administration has sounded a more optimistic note about the shutdown's impact while agreeing that the risks will grow the longer that 800,000 federal employees — roughly half of them working, for now, without pay — remain furloughed.

Kevin Hassett, chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisers, told reporters Thursday that he doesn't foresee "big economic effects" from the shutdown, assuming it ends relatively soon. Congress has already signaled that it plans to follow past practice and eventually restore lost pay for all furloughed

workers.

But some of the work that isn't getting done is already having an effect in the financial sector. Employees at the Commerce Department, who produce a range of economic reports — from home sales and durable goods orders to trade deficits and the gross domestic product — have been furloughed. That means those economic reports aren't coming out, making it harder for both private analysts and those at the Federal Reserve to evaluate the economy as it slows from last year's stellar growth to more modest gains.

Even when the shutdown eventually ends, key economic reports will be further delayed as government statisticians try to process a backlog of data.

"Government workers will work overtime to catch up, but I worry about the quality of the reports, and that means they could be subject to bigger revisions that will make accurate forecasting harder to do," said Sung Won Sohn, chief economist at SS Economics.

The effect of delayed government economic reports may not be as severe as during the previous prolonged shutdown in October 2013, when not only Commerce but also the Labor Department were shut down. This time, Labor, whose funding had already been approved by Congress, remains open and continues to produce such key reports as the monthly jobs numbers and inflation data.

Still, the concern is rising that the delay could last long enough to jeopardize the ability of the Internal Revenue Service to process tax refunds on a timely basis.

Some 52,000 IRS staffers — about 65 percent of the IRS workforce — have been furloughed just as the tax-filing season is getting underway. And this year, taxpayers and the IRS are facing the most sweeping overhaul of the U.S. tax code in three decades. The new tax law, which took effect a year ago, provides generous tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans and more modest reductions for middle- and low-income individuals and families.

To avoid lengthy delays in processing tax returns, the IRS may recall some employees to work, in accordance with its contingency plans. But refunds would still likely to be delayed if the shutdown persists because the funding for them wouldn't be available. That would hurt retailers that rely on consumers who file their taxes early and spend their refund money in February or March. And any such pullback in spending would weigh on the overall economy.

AP Business Writer Marcy Gordon contributed to this report.

Sanders contrite as 2016 aides face harassment allegations

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and his chief lieutenants are offering contrition as some of his 2016 campaign staffers face allegations of sexual harassment that threaten to derail a second White House bid before it begins.

Hours after a New York Times report detailed allegations of unwanted sexual advances and pay inequity on his first campaign, Sanders apologized late Wednesday "to any woman who felt that she was not treated appropriately."

"Of course, if I run again, we will do better next time," Sanders told CNN.

Yet there were immediate signs that the allegations, which did not directly involve Sanders, could hurt the self-described democratic socialist's 2020 ambitions in the midst of the #MeToo era. In the wake of the report, some Democratic activists and operatives complained about the aggressive culture during the first campaign when male staffers and supporters were sometimes labeled "Bernie bros."

"I'm not the least bit surprised," National Organization for Women President Toni Van Pelt told The Associated Press, noting she was forced to block Sanders' supporters from her social media feed in 2016. "To me, it was really clear this was the way they were running the campaign."

She blamed Hillary Clinton's loss to Donald Trump, at least in part, on Sanders and his supporters.

"It wasn't just Trump, it wasn't just the Russians, it was also the sexist people that ran his campaign," Van Pelt said.

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The timing could not be worse for Sanders, who is gearing up for a second presidential bid. His senior adviser told the AP last month that Sanders would run a "much bigger" operation and would start out as a front-runner if he ultimately decided to run.

Yet the 2020 Democratic field would have little in common with that of 2016, in which Sanders emerged as the anti-establishment alternative to Clinton.

Should he run again, the 77-year-old would enter a crowded field that features multiple prominent liberal women. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren has already launched a presidential exploratory committee. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, who has been a central figure in Washington's reckoning with the #MeToo era, is considering a presidential run. Sen. Kamala Harris of California could also be a leading contender.

Even before the Times' story was published, Politico reported that more than two dozen former campaign workers and volunteers had requested a meeting with Sanders to discuss sexual violence and harassment that occurred during the 2016 campaign.

The Times detailed one situation in which a campaign surrogate touched a strategist's hair in a "sexual way," among other unwanted advances. The Times also reported that in some cases, women were expected to sleep in the same quarters as men they didn't know. Others discovered examples of men who were paid significantly more for doing similar jobs.

Sanders' wife, Jane O'Meara Sanders, said the meeting with concerned former staff and volunteers would take place in a matter of days, although it had not yet been scheduled as of late Wednesday.

"The fact is if somebody didn't feel safe in any way, it was a failure. I, we apologize profusely. This is not acceptable," she told the AP. She continued: "I welcome hearing from the individuals that had such problems because we need to talk about this. And women need to feel and to be safe on campaigns, in their workplaces, on campuses and in their homes."

O'Meara Sanders said she and her husband became aware of the allegations only after the campaign was over. They subsequently implemented a series of safeguards on his 2018 Senate re-election campaign, which included mandatory staff training, strict guidelines and the creation of a complaint hotline run by a third party.

"We didn't hear specific things during the campaign. We heard some of them after the campaign. We've heard others just now that were never reported," O'Meara Sanders said. "We were, as you can imagine, out on the road and you do delegate. But we do think at the top level, people did the best they possibly could."

Sen. Sanders noted the 2016 campaign grew from just a handful of employees to roughly 1,200 workers in just a few months.

"I am not going to sit here and tell you we did everything right in terms of human resources," he told CNN.

There was no immediate indication that Sanders was backing away from another presidential run.

When asked about her husband's 2020 aspirations, O'Meara Sanders said the new situation would have no impact on their plans.

RoseAnn DeMoro, the former executive director of the National Nurses United and a chief Sanders ally, suggested the revelations might help his political future by forcing an important conversation and stronger anti-harassment policies.

"This is Bernie Sanders. This is someone who believes from the bottom of his heart in equality. He does. I think he'll be the best president in the history of America on equality," DeMoro said. "I'm hopefully going to be part of organizing every woman in this country for Bernie in 2020."

Nina Turner, who leads the Sanders' political arm, Our Revolution, noted that none of the women who alleged misconduct said Sanders had any direct knowledge.

"This is hurtful, this moment is heavy — as well it should be when people are coming out saying they were mistreated in the campaign based on their gender," Turner said in an interview. "But hopefully if he does run again, this will give him the opportunity to change that."

"The vast majority of the people who supported him will continue to support him," she added.

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But on the ground in South Carolina, a key state on the presidential primary calendar where Clinton beat Sanders in 2016, Democratic state Sen. Marlon Kimpson said people were already decidedly “less enthusiastic” about Sanders heading into 2020.

Kimpson said the state’s Democratic primary voters — most are women — would want to hear directly from Sanders about what he knew about the allegations and when.

“In this day and age, the allegations of sexual harassment have to be taken very seriously and action must be taken swiftly to send a message to your campaign that this behavior will not be tolerated,” Kimpson said. “This will be a material issue in people making up their minds if he’s talking the talk and walking the walk.”

Van Pelt, of the National Organization for Women, cast the blame on Sanders whether he had direct knowledge of misconduct or not.

“If he didn’t know,” she said, “he has no business being in office.”

Associated Press writers Meg Kinnard in Columbia, South Carolina, and Juana Summers in Washington contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to reflect that RoseAnn DeMoro is the former executive director of National Nurses United, not the current executive director.

Women navigate toxicity, other barriers in esports

By JAKE SEINER, AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Susie Kim thinks the women gamers are out there. As general manager for a championship esports team, she would know.

She’s not surprised none of them are on her roster.

The Entertainment Software Association reported this year that 45 percent of U.S. gamers are female, yet women make up a scant portion of the professional esports player pool. Executives for games like “League of Legends” and “Overwatch” say they are eager to add women to pro rosters, where players can make hundreds of thousands of dollars. Yet LoL’s Championship Series hasn’t had a female gamer since 2016, and the Overwatch League’s inaugural season featured just one.

The industry has grappled with harassment and toxic behavior since the Gamergate scandal of 2014, when a group of male gamers organized to target women throughout the industry. Women say they feel marginalized within the community and are routinely subject to nasty comments about their ability or appearance. For elite gamers, much of it comes from fans, but opponents and teammates are sometimes just as challenging. At the lower levels, women are often bombarded by hyper masculinity in a space where most everyone is anonymous.

Kim’s London Spitfire won the first Overwatch League championship in June. Speaking to The Associated Press before the grand finals, she said there are “absolutely” women talented enough to be playing in the Overwatch League.

“But they’re just like, ‘It’s a headache. I don’t want to be part of this at all,’” Kim said. “I don’t blame them.”

AT THE TOP

Maria “Remilia” Creveling is the only woman — and only transgender woman — to compete in the LoL Championship Series (LCS), the top pro league for the world’s most popular esports. Her stay in the LCS was short-lived and not the inspiring breakthrough some fans had hoped.

Creveling was a standout support player and qualified for the LCS with team Renegades in 2015. She made her debut the next year under intense scrutiny. Many celebrated her, but the comment sections accompanying live streams of Renegades matches were flooded with sexist and transphobic harassment. Fans disputed her gender identity, wrote critically about her appearance and bashed her abilities.

A few weeks into the season, Creveling removed herself from the Renegades’ roster, citing anxiety and

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self-esteem issues. She hasn't returned to the LCS since.

Creveling declined to be interviewed by the AP, but did say she has resumed competing and will be looking for a new team soon.

Other major esports have similarly thin histories of women at the highest levels. The NBA 2K League said it had one woman in a pool of 250 finalists for roster spots in its inaugural season. She did not land one of the 102 available slots. The Overwatch League had one woman for its inaugural season, Kim "Geguri" Se-Yeon with the Shanghai Dragons. Sasha "Scarlett" Hostyn, a transgender woman, won a major "Starcraft II" tournament in February and is the only woman to win such an event in that game.

Se-Yeon and Hostyn have been reluctant to embrace the spotlight as female role models. Both have said they simply want to be seen as talented gamers.

"Being the icon or being looked up to because I'm female — I'm grateful," Se-Yeon said via translator at a press conference in March. "But I don't really have any thoughts about it. That's not how I want to be known."

AT THE LOWER LEVELS

Tiffany Chang is a fan of Se-Yeon's. The amateur player doesn't blame the "Overwatch" pro for shying away from attention as a woman. Chang sometimes gets the urge to do the same.

Chang hosts Twitch streams of herself playing "Overwatch" and other games to collect donations for charity, and routinely plays online against strangers. Women like Chang encounter a lot of toxic behavior, much of it the same sort of trolling women see elsewhere on the internet. They'll get remarks about their appearance, the tone of their voice, and more than anything, a dismissal of their ability and knowledge in the game.

Even if Chang can tune out the harassment, it can still affect her performance. Esports like LoL and "Overwatch" are heavily teamwork and strategy dependent. Each player chooses a character, and those characters are designed for specific roles, like attacking, holding territory or healing. A good "Overwatch" team needs tanks and healers, just like a football team needs quarterbacks and left tackles.

Women are often pressured to play as female characters, and female healers in particular. In "Overwatch," that character is usually Mercy, a fairy-like flying doctor who can heal and resurrect teammates. Chang has been harassed for playing as other characters, but also gets snide comments when she plays as Mercy. In certain games, it becomes impossible for her to assume any role, even if she's simply trying to help the team.

"You want me to do this, and you're going to harass me for it?" she said. "It's definitely something that we face."

Briah Luther gets the same treatment in LoL. Sometimes when the 35-year-old school teacher shouts out a key bit of information, like the location of an attacking opponent, men simply ignore her, leading to a huge tactical advantage for opponents. It's a common complaint from female gamers, and that lack of trust can sink a team and affect players' rankings in the competitive sphere.

"The second they realize I'm a woman, I no longer have power," Luther said.

Ella Lasky has pro gaming aspirations, and the 12-year-old is on a promising path. She is one of the top players in the "Minecraft" City Champs circuit operated by Super League Gaming. Most importantly to her parents, video games have played a key role in her social development.

"It's given her a sense of pride," said Ella's mother, Johanna.

Ella was featured on a Nickelodeon TV show about the league, and that exposed her to a different side of esports. Internet commenters did not respond well to a woman taking center stage on a video game broadcast.

"Why is the girl so loud? Why is the girl shouting? The girl needs to shut up. She's annoying me with her voice," Johanna recalled reading. "I explained to her, 'I think part of it is that because you're a girl, you're being targeted.'"

Ella wasn't fazed and plans to keep gaming. But she's already keenly aware of the assumptions made by many in the esports community based on her gender.

"I don't think girl gamers get as much respect as boy gamers," she said.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

Publishers have made progress responding to harassment complaints since the Gamergate scandal, but video games are still not a space known for gender equality. Riot Games, which publishes LoL and operates the LCS, was criticized just this summer for its treatment of female employees in a story by Kotaku. Riot apologized publicly to fans and employees, and it has outlined a plan of action to address the issues.

More in-person gaming might help. Women say men and boys tend to be better behaved without the anonymity of online play. The Laskys think that's one benefit of the Super League competitions, where teams gather at movie theaters to compete face-to-face.

Some fans also are disappointed by the number of women promoted by the streaming service Twitch, as well as game publishers.

One issue at the pro level is the housing situations for elite teams. Esports athletes are often placed in swanky team housing, but sharing a living space with a group of college-aged men isn't ideal for many women.

Then there's the anxiety of the spotlight. Fans have eagerly dismissed barrier-breaking female gamers as mere PR stunts, and the weight is even greater on women when they find themselves alone on that platform.

"It ultimately comes down to the community and the fan base," Kim said. "(Women) don't want to deal with the toxicity. They don't want to deal with the media going crazy over them. They don't want to deal with living with the boys or getting preferential treatment. They don't want to deal with all of that. They just kind of want to play."

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More AP esports: <https://apnews.com/Esports> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Saudi Arabia says 5 face death penalty in Khashoggi killing

By JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia announced on Thursday it will seek the death penalty against five suspects in the slaying of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, a killing that has seen members of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's entourage implicated in the writer's assassination.

Prosecutors announced that 11 suspects in the slaying attended their first court hearing with lawyers, but the statement did not name those in court. It also did not explain why seven other suspects arrested over the Oct. 2 killing at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul did not immediately face formal charges. The kingdom previously announced 18 people had been arrested.

Saudi officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The killing of Khashoggi, who wrote columns critical of Prince Mohammed, has strained the decades-long ties the kingdom enjoys with the United States. It also has added to a renewed international push to end the Saudi-led war in Yemen.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency and state television gave few details about the hearing.

"The Public Prosecutor demanded imposing proper punishments against the defendants and is seeking capital punishment for five of the defendants for their direct involvement in the murder," a statement from prosecutors said, without elaborating.

The suspects requested copies of the indictments they faced, as well as asked for more time to prepare for their case, prosecutors said.

While vague on details about the case, prosecutors made a point to express concerns about Turkey. They alleged that Turkish officials did not answer two formal requests made for evidence in the case.

"To date, the Saudi Public Prosecutor has not received any response, and the Public Prosecution is still awaiting their response," the statement said.

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Officials in Ankara could not be immediately reached for comment. Turkish officials have previously said they shared evidence with Saudi Arabia and other nations over Khashoggi's killing.

Turkey also has demanded Saudi Arabia extradite those 18 suspects to be tried there for Khashoggi's killing. Turkish security officials have kept up a slow leak of videos, photographs and morbid details surrounding Khashoggi's slaying to pressure the kingdom, as the two U.S.-allied countries vie for influence over the wider Mideast.

Turkish media have published photographs of members of the crown prince's entourage at the consulate in Istanbul ahead of the slaying. Khashoggi's body, believed to have been dismembered after his killing, has yet to be found.

Khashoggi, 59, entered the consulate Oct. 2 as his fiancée waited outside. But unbeknownst to him, a team of Saudi officials had flown in before his arrival and laid in wait for him.

Saudi Arabia denied for weeks that Khashoggi had been killed but later changed its story and ultimately acknowledged the brutal slaying. King Salman ordered the restructuring of the country's intelligence service, but has so far shielded Prince Mohammed, his 33-year-old son who is next in line to the throne in the oil giant kingdom.

All that has not has not stopped widespread international criticism against the kingdom. Under Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia has seen the arrest of business leaders, royals and activists while also recently granting women the right to drive.

U.S. senators in December passed the measure that blamed the prince for Khashoggi's killing and called on Riyadh to "ensure appropriate accountability." Senators also passed a separate measure calling for the end of U.S. aid to the Saudi-led war in Yemen. Both measures drew angry responses from the kingdom, but a renewed international effort has begun to end the Yemen war.

It is no surprise that the kingdom would seek to execute those accused in Khashoggi's slaying. Saudi Arabia was the world's third top executioner in 2017, behind China and Iran, according to Amnesty International's most recent figures available.

The kingdom executed at least 146 people, according to the group. It regularly beheads those condemned to death and last year said it "crucified" a Myanmar man, an execution in which the condemned is usually beheaded and then the body put on display, arms outstretched as if crucified.

Associated Press writer Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed to this report.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellap .

Bristol-Myers Squibb buying Celgene in \$74B deal

SUMMIT, N.J. (AP) — Bristol-Myers Squibb is spending \$74 billion on fellow drugmaker Celgene in a deal aimed at stocking the combined company's development pipeline with cancer, immunology and cardiovascular treatments.

Bristol would gain the cancer treatment Revlimid in the cash-and-stock deal announced Thursday, as well as inflammatory disease treatments and several products close to launching.

The combined company will have nine products with more than \$1 billion in annual sales. Bristol's product portfolio already includes Orencia, an injected drug for rheumatoid arthritis, and the cancer treatment Opdivo.

Bristol Chairman and CEO Giovanni Caforio said in a prepared statement that the combination will create a deep product portfolio that drives growth.

It was a hard sell, however, on Wall Street. Shares of Bristol ended Thursday down \$6.90, or 13.3 percent, at \$45.12, on a day when the Standard & Poor's 500 lost 2.5 percent. Celgene shares, however, soared \$13.79, or 20.7 percent, to \$80.43.

Under terms of the deal, shareholders of Celgene Corp., based in Summit, New Jersey, will receive one share of Bristol-Myers Squibb plus \$50 in cash for each share they own. They'll also receive one tradeable

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contingent value right for each Celgene share, allowing the holder to receive a \$9 payment when future regulatory milestones are hit.

The cash-and-stock portion of the deal totals \$102.43, based on Wednesday's closing price of \$52.43 for Bristol shares. That represents a premium of nearly 54 percent to Celgene's closing price of \$66.64.

Shareholders of Bristol-Myers Squibb Co., based in New York, would own about 69 percent of the company, with Celgene shareholders owning about 31 percent.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 4, the fourth day of 2019. There are 361 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 4, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his State of the Union address in which he outlined the goals of his "Great Society."

On this date:

In 1896, Utah was admitted as the 45th state.

In 1904, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Gonzalez v. Williams*, ruled that Puerto Ricans were not aliens and could enter the United States freely; however, the court stopped short of declaring them citizens. (Puerto Ricans received U.S. citizenship in March 1917.)

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his State of the Union address, called for legislation to provide assistance for the jobless, elderly, impoverished children and the handicapped.

In 1943, for the second time, Soviet dictator Josef Stalin made the cover of *TIME* as the magazine's 1942 "Man of the Year."

In 1951, during the Korean War, North Korean and Communist Chinese forces recaptured the city of Seoul (sohl).

In 1960, author and philosopher Albert Camus (al-BEHR' kah-MOO') died in an automobile accident in Villeblevin, France, at age 46.

In 1964, Pope Paul VI began a visit to the Holy Land, the first papal pilgrimage of its kind.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon refused to hand over tape recordings and documents subpoenaed by the Senate Watergate Committee.

In 1987, 16 people were killed when an Amtrak train bound from Washington, D.C., to Boston collided with Conrail locomotives that had crossed into its path from a side track in Chase, Maryland.

In 1995, the 104th Congress convened, the first entirely under Republican control since the Eisenhower era.

In 2002, Sgt. 1st Class Nathan Ross Chapman, a U.S. Army Special Forces soldier, was killed by small-arms fire during an ambush in eastern Afghanistan; he was the first American military death from enemy fire in the war against terrorism.

In 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed that Jose Padilla (hoh-ZAY' puh-DIL'-uh), held for 3 1/2 years as an "enemy combatant," could be transferred to civilian authorities in Miami.

Ten years ago: New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson announced he was withdrawing his nomination to be President-elect Barack Obama's commerce secretary amid a grand jury investigation into how some of his political donors had won a lucrative state contract. (Prosecutors later declined to bring charges against Richardson.) A female suicide bomber struck Shiite pilgrims in Baghdad, killing 38.

Five years ago: The city center of Iraq's Fallujah fell completely into the hands of fighters from the al-Qaida-linked Islamic State in Iraq and Levant. Thirty-one workers were killed in the collapse of a building under construction in Canacona, Goa, in southern India.

One year ago: The Trump administration moved to vastly expand offshore drilling from the Atlantic to the Arctic oceans with a five-year plan that would open up federal waters off of California for the first

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time in decades and possibly open new areas of oil and gas exploration along the East Coast. A massive winter storm roared into the East Coast, dumping as much as 17 inches of snow in some areas. The Dow Jones Industrial Average burst through the 25,000 mark, closing at 25,075.13 just five weeks after its first close above 24,000. Ray Thomas, a founding member of the British rock group the Moody Blues, died at his home south of London at the age of 76, months before the band would be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Barbara Rush is 92. Football Hall of Fame coach Don Shula is 89. Opera singer Grace Bumbry is 82. Actress Dyan Cannon is 80. Author-historian Doris Kearns Goodwin is 76. Country singer Kathy Forester (The Forester Sisters) is 64. Actress Ann Magnuson is 63. Rock musician Bernard Sumner (New Order, Joy Division) is 63. Country singer Patty Loveless is 62. Actor Julian Sands is 61. Rock singer Michael Stipe is 59. Actor Patrick Cassidy is 57. Actor Dave Foley is 56. Actress Dot Jones is 55. Actor Rick Hearst is 54. Singer-musician Cait O'Riordan is 54. Actress Julia Ormond is 54. Tennis player Guy Forget (ghee fohr-ZHAY') is 54. Country singer Deana Carter is 53. Rock musician Benjamin Darvill (Crash Test Dummies) is 52. Actor Josh Stamberg is 49. Actor Jeremy Licht is 48. Actor Damon Gupton is 46. Actress-singer Jill Marie Jones is 44. Actress D'Arcy Carden is 39. Alt-country singer Justin Townes Earle is 37. Christian rock singer Spencer Chamberlain (Underoath) is 36. Actress Lenora Crichlow is 34. Comedian-actress Charlyne Yi is 33. Actress-singer Coco Jones is 21.

Thought for Today: "What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from." — T.S. Eliot (1888-1965).