

Groton Daily Independent

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Hanson propels Groton Area past Sisseton with season high 16 points

Miranda Hanson had a season high 16 points Thursday night to help Groton Area past Sisseton in girls' basketball action, 42-35.

It was a struggle for Groton Area in the first half, shooting 13 percent from the field as Sisseton mounted a 21-5 lead midway in the second quarter. The Redmen led at half time, 22-9

Groton Area rallied in the second half when Hanson made 14 of her 16 points in the second half which included three three-pointers. Groton closed to within four at the end of the third quarter, 27-23. Early in the fourth quarter, Groton Area recaptured the lead, 28-27, the second time the Tigers led since it was 3-2 at the beginning of the game. Sisseton tried to keep up with Groton Area, but the Redmen only made two field goals in the second half and the Tigers pulled away for the win. The Redmen made six of eight free throws in the fourth quarter.

For the game, Groton Area made seven of 34 field goals for 21 percent, six of 20 three-pointers for 30 percent and was 10 of 18 from the line for 56 percent off of Sisseton's 12 team fouls. Sisseton made 10 of 43 field goals for 24 percent, and was 13 of 15 from the line for 87 percent off of Groton Area's 14 team fouls.

The Tigers had 38 rebounds with Jennie Doeden having 10 and Hanson seven, had 12 steals with Doeden and Eliza Wanner each having three, and eight assists with Payton Maine and Doeden each having three. Others adding to the Tiger tally were Maine with seven, Doeden with six, Gracie Traphagen five, Kaycie Hawkins and Allyssa Locke each had three and Wanner had two points. Groton Area had 17 turnovers compared to 21 for Sisseton.

Sisseton was led by Kellie Karst with 11 points, nine rebounds and four blocks followed by Kierra Silk with nine points, Libby Medenwald had six, Hailey Nelson five and Talia Estwick and Sheridan Swanson each had two points.

The game was played in Sisseton and was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by the Aberdeen Chrysler Center. Groton Area improves to 4-4 on the season while Sisseton goes to 0-9.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 28-21. Allyssa Locke and Gracie Traphagen each had seven points, Maddie Bjerke had six, Trista Keith four and Kenzie McInerney added two points.

Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Cheetahs 28 ½ Foxes 24, Chipmunks 19, Jackelopes 17 ½ Shih Tzus 17, Coyotes 14

Men's High Games: Rick Carlson 257, Brad Waage 225, Doug Jorgensen 203

Women's High Games: Angie Carlson 211, Nicole Kassube 168, Karen Spanier 162

Men's High Series: Rick Carlson 626, Brad Waage 566, Doug Jorgensen 544

Women's High Series: Sue Stanley 450, Angie Carlson 445, Nicole Kassube 439

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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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 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)

Saturday, January 12, 2019

Debate Silver Bowl at Sioux Falls

9:00am MT: Varsity Wrestling Tournament at Philip

10:00am: Basketball: Boys 7th/8th Jamboree vs. Leola-Frederick, Northwestern @ Groton Area School

1:00pm: Basketball: Boys Varsity Classic vs. Little Wound @ Redfield Jr-Sr High School



**81st Annual
Carnival of Silver Skates**
Sunday, January 27th—2:00 and 6:30
Groton Ice Rink—West Side of Groton, SD

Join us for a fun "Road Trip"!

Admission: 13 & older—\$3.00 / 6-12—\$2.00

Parking: Provided around the rink and on the ice or cozy up on the bleachers
(Ice parking begins at 10 am, then again at 4:30 pm)

**Check us out on Facebook at "Silver Skates"

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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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

January 14, 2019 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of December 10, 2018 school board meeting as drafted.
2. Approval of North Central Special Education Co-Op (NCSEC) agenda items...*as fiscal agent*.
3. Approval of December 2018 District bills for payment.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

4. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
5. Approval of December 2018 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
6. Approval of December 2018 School Transportation Report.
7. Approval of December 2018 School Lunch Report
8. School Board Committee Reports:
 - a. **Building, Grounds, & Transportation:** Clint Fjelstad, Merle Harder
 - b. **Personnel, Policy, & Curriculum:** Deb Gengerke, Kara Pharis
 - c. **Negotiations:** Grant Rix, Steve Smith, Marty Weismantel
9. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Set date and time for annual school board election – April 9, 2019 (7:00AM – 7:00PM), and authorize Business Manager Weber to designate officials, with voting precincts in Andover, Bristol, Columbia, and Groton. [3-year terms expiring: Mrs. Gengerke, Mr. Fjelstad, Mr. Harder]
2. Review and approval of FY2018 Audit Report
3. Review of 2018 School, District, State Report Cards
4. Review and possible adoption of 2019-2020 school calendar
5. Executive session pursuant to SDCL 1-25-2(2) student issue and SDCL 1-25-2(1) personnel
6. Act on Intent to Return to Resident District Notification #19-01

ADJOURN

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It's Boys' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Sisseton
Redmen**

VS



Groton Area Tigers

Friday, Jan. 11, 2019

8:00 p.m.

At the Groton Area Arena

Broadcast of this game is sponsored by

Allied Climate Professionals
Bahr Spray Foam
Blocker Construction
Doug Abeln Seed Company
James Valley Seed - Doug Jorgensen
John Sieh Agency
Locke Electric
Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.
Northeast Chiropractic Clinic
Professional Management Services, Inc.
Sanford Health
Weber Landscaping

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It's Boys' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Little Wound
Mustangs** VS



Groton Area Tigers

Saturday, Jan. 12, 2019

1:00 p.m.

At the Redfield Classic

Broadcast of this game is sponsored by the

Aberdeen
Chrysler Center

901 Auto Plaza Drive
Aberdeen, SD

800.874.9173

www.aberdeenchrysler.com

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Today in Weather History

January 10, 1911: The temperature at Rapid City, South Dakota plunged 47 degrees in just fifteen minutes.

January 10, 1975: An intense area of low pressure moved from eastern Iowa through eastern Minnesota. The storm center set many low pressure records as it moved across eastern Minnesota. New snow of 3 to 6 inches across much of Minnesota began to blow and drift on the morning of the 10th and then developed into a full blown blizzard with heavy snowfall developing. The blizzard continued over all of the state through the 11th with winds of 30 to 50 mph with gusts of 60 to 80 mph. Drifts up to 20 foot high developed in west central Minnesota paralyzing activity. Snowfall amounts from 1 to 2 feet occurred. Numerous roads were closed due to drifting and low visibility. Numerous sustained power outages occurred, particularly in rural sections. Thousands of people were stranded with 168 people trapped in a train in Willmar. Wind chills ranged from 50 below to 80 below behind the storm. Extensive losses to life and property occurred. There were 35 deaths during the storm and many injuries. Tens of thousands of livestock and poultry losses also occurred with 140 farm buildings damaged or destroyed. Losses to livestock and property were over 20 million. It took 11 days to clear some areas. Shelter was provided for nearly 17,000 people.

In South Dakota, snow began to fall on the 10th in the afternoon and then the winds increased and reached blizzard conditions by evening. These severe blizzard conditions continued on through the 11th and through the morning of the 12th. Wind chills fell to 50 below to 70 below zero. Many cars stalled on roads due to poor visibility, icy roads, and blowing and drifting snow. Eight people lost their lives. Thousands of livestock and poultry were lost. During the blizzard, a 2000 foot radio and TV antenna just east of Sioux Falls collapsed.

January 10, 2000: High winds gusting to over 60 mph caused some spotty damage across central and north central South Dakota. Near Mobridge, the high winds blew a semi-tractor-trailer off the road and tipped it over while it was heading westbound on Highway 12. The semi tractor-trailer sustained quite a bit of damage as a result. The high winds also damaged the windmill at the museum in Mobridge breaking off the tail and bending several of the blades. Some high wind reports include; 56 mph at McLaughlin, 58 mph at Onida and Mobridge, and 63 mph at Pierre.

1949: Snow was reported at San Diego, California for the first time since 1882. Snow was noted on some of the beaches in parts of the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

1982: Bitterly cold weather was found across Illinois. Of the 109 weather reporting stations in the state, 48 of those reported lows of 20 degrees below zero or colder. Some of the coldest temperatures included 27 below zero at Rockford, 26 below zero at Chicago, and 25 below zero at Kankakee and Peoria.

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Today



Mostly Cloudy

High: 23 °F

Tonight



Chance
Flurries

Low: 10 °F

Saturday



Mostly Cloudy

High: 20 °F

Saturday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 10 °F

Sunday



Partly Sunny

High: 27 °F

*Near to Above Normal
Temperatures*

Today
20 to 38°
☀️

Tonight
8 to 16°
❄️

Saturday
20s
❄️

Light Freezing Drizzle or Light Snow
possible tonight into Saturday morning.
Little to no accumulation expected.

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

graphic created:
1/11/2019 5:38 AM

Published on: 01/11/2019 at 5:42AM

Plenty of clouds will move into the area, with additional lower clouds sinking in on north winds tonight into Saturday. This increase in moisture near the surface will bring the potential for a very light wintry mix of precipitation, including freezing drizzle, tonight into Saturday morning. At this point, the highest threat of freezing rain looks to be near the Sisseton Hills. Little to no accumulation is expected.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 27 °F at 3:37 PM

Low Outside Temp: 8 °F at 3:16 AM

High Gust: 20 mph at 12:43 PM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 55° in 1987

Record Low: -31° in 1912

Average High: 22°F

Average Low: 1°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.16

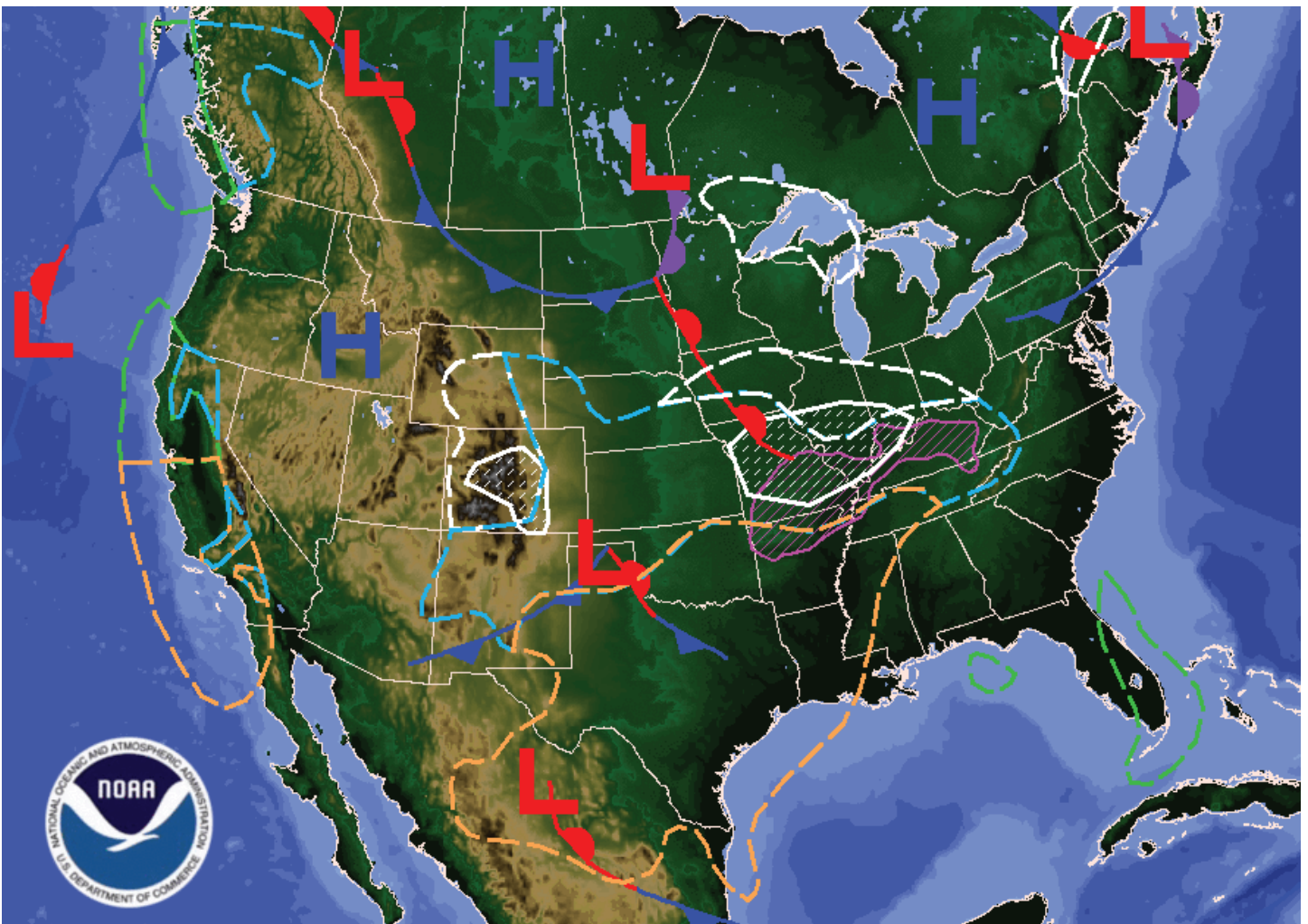
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.16

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:12 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:11 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Jan 11, 2019, issued 4:29 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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CAN YOU SEE HIM NOW?

God has planted evidence of His existence on the pages of history, in the handiwork of nature, and in the beauty of the skies above us. We read of His faithfulness to care for His people from the beginning of recorded history to this very moment. We find nourishment for our bodies tucked away in plants, animals, and minerals. Sailors find directions in the stars He hung in the heavens as they sail from one country to another. Wherever we look, we can find Gods fingerprint on the planet or a signpost that directs to His dwelling above us.

However, it takes a willingness to see Him, an open mind to search for Him, a sensitive heart to accept Him, and a selfless life to follow Him.

Even those who do not want to believe in Him, use the minds He gave them to try to deny His existence. The arguments they offer and the logic they use, in the final analysis, came from His grace. When we look at all the gods that have been created by man, not one of them has stood the test of time. They last only as long as their creator and then pass into the darkness of emptiness.

But the Creator, the God who is God, spoke through a Psalmist and said, The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day...and night after night...there is no language where their voice is not heard.

Men may speak and argue, lecture and labor, write and work to erase the existence of God, but there is no way they can reach into the heavens and hide the stars.

Prayer: Thank You, God, our Creator, for making Your existence visible to those who desire to know and love You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 19:1-3 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. There is no speech or language, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

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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)
- 6/14/2019 SDSU Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 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)
- 9/8/2019 Sunflower Classic at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 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 on Main
- 11/9/2019 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/07/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course 2019 Holiday Party
- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

News from the Associated Press

Avera Health acquiring more health facilities in Minnesota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota-based Avera Health is acquiring more health facilities in the Minnesota community of Marshall.

The Argus Leader reports that Carris Health Marshall has signed a letter of intent to integrate with Avera's Marshall-based operations. Avera Marshall will take over operations of Carris' clinic and surgery center.

About 150 workers will become Avera employees. The Sioux Falls-based health care provider says Carris patients will be able to see their same providers.

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

Man sentenced for stealing squad car, injuring trooper

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man who stole and crashed a South Dakota Highway Patrol squad car and injured a trooper in the process has been sentenced to serve seven years in prison.

Authorities say 41-year-old Joshua Two Bulls was drunk when he was pulled over in May 2017 by Trooper Jake Dowling and managed to flee in the squad car even though he was handcuffed. Dowling was dragged but not seriously hurt.

Dowling tried using a stun gun on Two Bulls before shooting at the car's tires. Two Bulls crashed into a creek and fled in another vehicle. He was later caught and pleaded no contest to aggravated assault.

The Rapid City Journal reports Two Bulls also was ordered to pay more than \$21,000 in restitution at his sentencing Thursday.

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

Regulators: Dakota Access company complied with settlement

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota regulators have concluded that the developer of the Dakota Access oil pipeline has complied with a settlement of allegations it violated state rules during construction.

Energy Transfer Partners was accused of removing too many trees and improperly handling a pipeline route change. To avoid fines, it was directed to plant tens of thousands of new trees and to develop an industry handbook and conduct training on properly handling route adjustments.

North Dakota's Public Service Commission late last year asked for more proof from the company that it had complied. ETP filed numerous documents including a letter in which attorney Lawrence Bender said he was "disappointed" that compliance had been questioned.

Commissioner Julie Fedorchak says regulators went through the documents this week and concluded the company is in compliance.

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 80, Potter County 74
Akron-Westfield, Iowa 68, Alcester-Hudson 58
Bison 57, McIntosh 33
Bon Homme 61, Freeman 40
Castlewood 57, Great Plains Lutheran 30
Chester 54, Baltic 48

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Clark/Willow Lake 63, Milbank 39
Flandreau 66, Madison 43
Hanson 53, Parker 45
Highmore-Harrold 77, Herreid/Selby Area 64
James Valley Christian 48, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 46
Lead-Deadwood 56, Hill City 54
Lemmon 65, Dupree 19
Lennox 68, Vermillion 47
Mitchell Christian 75, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 65
Northwestern 70, Ipswich 65
Parkston 68, Wagner 55
Rapid City Central 47, Sturgis Brown 45
Rapid City Christian 67, Harding County 49
Scotland 58, Avon 53
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 60, Sioux Falls Washington 43
St. Thomas More 59, Custer 20
Sully Buttes 71, Miller 32
Tiospa Zina Tribal 57, Aberdeen Roncalli 45
Todd County 59, Chamberlain 54
Viborg-Hurley 60, Gayville-Volin 42
Warner 45, Langford 31
West Central 51, Garretson 42
West Sioux, Iowa 73, Canton 37
Winner 54, Tri-Valley 40
Jones County Tournament(equals)
First Round(equals)
Colome 56, Bennett County 21
Jones County 75, Kadoka Area 49
Lyman 59, Stanley County 56
White River 109, Philip 44
West River Tournament(equals)
First Round(equals)
Faith 66, New Underwood 35
Hot Springs 60, Moorcroft, Wyo. 27
Upton, Wyo. 62, Newell 54
Wall 60, Edgemont 52

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 48, Tiospa Zina Tribal 19
Akron-Westfield, Iowa 66, Alcester-Hudson 41
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 45, Mitchell Christian 21
Avon 53, Scotland 41
Bridgewater-Emery 66, Menno 50
Chester 59, Baltic 42
Clark/Willow Lake 67, Milbank 65
Crow Creek 69, Mobridge-Pollock 39
DeSmet 62, Colman-Egan 26
Deubrook 57, Dell Rapids St. Mary 45
Elkton-Lake Benton 54, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 41
Estelline/Hendricks 39, Arlington 37
Faulkton 57, Edmunds Central 24

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Flandreau 66, Madison 43
Freeman 56, Bon Homme 25
Freeman Academy/Marion 51, Flandreau Indian 49
Groton Area 42, Sisseton 35
Hill City 53, Lead-Deadwood 42
Howard 61, Iroquois 25
Kimball/White Lake 45, Gregory 44
Lennox 63, Vermillion 55
Little Wound 78, Pine Ridge 67
McCook Central/Montrose 65, Sioux Valley 34
McIntosh 64, Bison 31
Miller 43, Sully Buttes 34
Mitchell 67, Pierre 46
Parker 54, Hanson 50
Red Cloud 69, Douglas 44
Sioux Falls Christian 58, Tea Area 36
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 53, Sioux Falls Washington 24
St. Francis Indian 63, Crazy Horse 56
Stanley County 45, Bennett County 44
Sturgis Brown 48, Rapid City Central 45
Sundance, Wyo. 42, Harding County 32
Viborg-Hurley 68, Gayville-Volin 29
Wagner 72, Parkston 69, OT
Waubay/Summit 47, Florence/Henry 35
Waverly-South Shore 67, Wilmot 19
West Central 49, Crofton, Neb. 40
West Sioux, Iowa 69, Canton 59
Winner 67, Chamberlain 40

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

Jenkins, Flatten lead South Dakota State past Denver 78-66

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — David Jenkins Jr. scored 21 points and Skyler Flatten 20 — each with five 3 pointers — as South Dakota State got past Denver 78-66 on Thursday night.

South Dakota State (13-6, 3-1 Summit League) shot 53 percent from the floor and made 11 of 25 from beyond the arc. Tevin King had 17 points for his ninth straight game in double figures. Mike Daum added 10 points and eight rebounds.

Joe Rosga had 16 points for the Pioneers (5-14, 0-5), who have lost six games in a row. Ronnie Harrell Jr. added 13 points. Donovan Carlisle had 11 points.

Jenkins had 16 points and Flatten 12 to help the Jackrabbits build a 47-36 halftime advantage. They shot 65 percent (15 of 23) and made 10 of their 12 3-pointers before the break.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Elements of this story were generated by Automated Insights, <http://www.automatedinsights.com/ap>, using data from STATS LLC, <https://www.stats.com>

Rosebud president urges Medicaid expansion, collaboration

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The president of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe on Thursday urged South Dakota lawmakers to expand Medicaid and work with tribal officials to fight the opioid and methamphetamine epidemic.

President Rodney Bordeaux gave the fourth State of the Tribes message, asking legislators and Gov. Kristi Noem to promote higher education tuition waivers for Native American students and to make the availability of mental health services in rural areas and reservations a priority. He recommended a government-to-government summit on meth and opioids.

"The epidemic is depriving children of their parents, families of their relatives, communities of their neighbors," Bordeaux said in the speech.

Bordeaux also said the Keystone XL oil pipeline gives his people great anxiety, citing a responsibility to take care of "grandmother earth."

The project is being delayed by a federal court that found the Trump Administration didn't fully consider the environmental effects when it approved the permit for the 1,184-mile (1,900 kilometer) pipeline, intended to ship up to 830,000 barrels a day of crude oil from Alberta, Canada to the U.S. Gulf Coast.

"I submit to you that our natural resources are not for sale," Bordeaux said, adding that he watched with regret as South Dakota lawmakers passed a measure in 2017 to address potential oil pipeline protests.

Bordeaux said tribes believe the law was enacted with an eye for "limiting our people and our right to protest." The measure imposed new penalties for standing in the highway to stop traffic or trespassing in posted emergency areas.

It came after demonstrations over the Dakota Access pipeline in North Dakota; Bordeaux said after the speech that he would like to see the protest law repealed.

Bordeaux also discussed concerns about "man camp" workers having a negative impact on the community, raising the issue of the high number of missing and murdered Native American women. Noem said during her State of the State address this week that she wants the pipeline's construction to be "safe, clean and efficient."

During the address, Bordeaux also urged South Dakota's federal delegation to do what they can to end the partial government shutdown. He said federal funding makes up three-quarters of the tribe's budget, predicting after the speech that the tribe would have to start laying people off if the shutdown goes into mid-February.

"It's going to be hard on our families," he said.

Bordeaux said the federal government isn't living up to its treaty responsibility to provide health care through the Indian Health Service. In a meeting with Noem, "we all agreed the IHS is a failure," Bordeaux said.

He said broadening Medicaid eligibility would cover more people and bring jobs and other economic benefits to South Dakota. It would also provide more access to care and bring in more revenue for the Indian Health Service, he said.

At a State-Tribal Relations committee hearing after the speech, Republican Sen. Lance Russell pushed back against the idea, which had been raised under former Gov. Dennis Daugaard's administration but faces opposition from Noem and many GOP lawmakers.

"My concern with the Medicaid expansion is that you're again relying on a government that has failed in the IHS realm," Russell said.

On economic development, Bordeaux said "Rosebud is open for business." He used the speech to highlight positive developments within the boundaries of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, saying the tribe has created a food sovereignty initiative to help people eat healthier and that its economic development corporation has created roughly 50 jobs in recent years.

The tribe's headquarters is in Rosebud, and more than 21,000 enrolled members live on the Rosebud Reservation in southern South Dakota. Last legislative session, Chairman Boyd Gourneau of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe gave the address.

"There's just so many things we need to work together (on)," Gourneau told the State-Tribal Relations panel.

Montana lawmaker proposes to give \$8M to build border wall

By AMY BETH HANSON, Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — A Republican lawmaker in Montana is proposing to give more than \$8 million to help build President Donald Trump's proposed wall on the Mexican border, while South Dakota senators voted Thursday to endorse the president's plans.

As Trump traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border Thursday to make his case for \$5.7 billion to build the wall in the government shutdown's 20th day, state lawmakers in some parts of Trump Country are backing him up with their own legislation.

Their efforts are mostly symbolic. The resolution passed in the South Dakota Senate simply urges construction of a steel barrier. The separate \$8 million proposal in Montana would have little chance of getting past a Democratic governor who is exploring a run for president.

Scott Sales, a fiscally conservative Republican who leads the Montana Senate, says his proposal is a "small token" to show border security "is of vital interest to all citizens regardless of what state they live in."

Gov. Steve Bullock said he respects Sales, but "I don't know that he has ever strongly advocated for or supported infrastructure investments in Montana, so it's a little bit of a puzzle for me why he would even consider spending taxpayer dollars on construction projects in California."

Bullock, who said \$8 million would go a long way to fund health care or infrastructure work in Montana, declined to say whether he'd veto the bill if it landed on his desk.

"Congress is basically dragging their heels over \$5 billion, which is really trivial compared to what we spend on an annual basis," Sales said Wednesday in explaining his funding proposal.

Sales said he calculated Montana's "share" of the cost of the wall by dividing the state's gross domestic product by the national GDP and multiplying it by \$5.7 billion.

Montana's \$8 million wouldn't go very far, with Trump's \$5.7 billion request expected to build 234 miles (377 kilometers) of wall.

House Minority Leader Casey Schreiner, a Democrat, said the Legislature should focus its spending on Montana's roads, building, water and sewer projects.

"That's a lot of school roofs and boilers," added Democratic Rep. Laurie Bishop.

Montana, where Trump defeated Hillary Clinton by 20 points, shares a 545-mile (877-kilometer) border with Canada, where there is no wall.

Sales also has sponsored a resolution that would ask Congress to act on the funding.

If the stalemate in Washington continues, the president said he's willing to consider declaring a national emergency, which he says would allow him to direct the military to begin building the wall.

AP writer James Nord in Pierre, South Dakota, contributed to this report.

South Dakota senators vote in support of border barrier

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota senators have passed a resolution urging construction of a steel barrier at the southern border as the government shutdown drags on.

The Republican-dominated chamber voted 28-5 Thursday for the measure. Republican Sen. Stace Nelson, the main sponsor, says South Dakota has a chance to be part of the national discussion over President Donald Trump's border wall.

Democratic Sen. Craig Kennedy, an opponent, called the measure "pure politics." The measure is symbolic.

Trump and congressional Democrats have been at an impasse over funding for the proposed wall, which has led to a partial government shutdown now in its 20th day.

Noem to name Sioux Falls doctor as Social Services secretary

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem is naming a Sioux Falls physician to serve as Department of Social Services secretary.

The Republican governor said Thursday that she will appoint M. Gregory DeSautel to the cabinet post. DeSautel works at Sanford Hospital in Sioux Falls and is a professor at the University of South Dakota School of Medicine.

Noem says DeSautel is “full of new perspectives.” Noem says he will be valuable to her team as they seek to educate South Dakota about the need for foster and adoptive families and safe homes for all children.

DeSautel says he’s committed to working “relentlessly” to strengthen South Dakota families.

North Dakota State names Braun as defensive coordinator

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — New North Dakota State head coach Matt Entz has added a defensive coordinator and three other coaches to his staff.

David Braun is the team’s defensive coordinator and safeties coach. He comes to the Bison from Northern Iowa, where in two seasons he served as defensive line coach, run game coordinator, linebackers coach and special teams coordinator.

Braun is a graduate of Winona State, where he played defensive line for Entz from 2004-07 and was a graduate assistant for two years.

Entz also named Grant Olson as linebackers coach, Al Blazek as offensive line coach and Noah Pauley as wide receivers coach.

Entz, who was the team’s defensive coordinator, takes over for Chris Klieman, who left for Kansas State after leading the Bison to their seventh FCS title.

Hypothermia believed to be cause of death of Mobridge woman

MOBRIDGE, S.D. (AP) — A Mobridge woman is believed to have died of exposure to cold weather.

The American News reports a neighbor found the woman’s body on the ground near the woman’s mobile home Tuesday morning.

Walworth County State’s Attorney Jamie Hare says the cause of death is believed to be hypothermia. An autopsy is being conducted to rule out any other causes. No foul play is suspected.

The woman is believed to be in her late 50s. She was not immediately identified.

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

US official says withdrawal from Syria has started

By PHILIP ISSA and ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — After days of back and forth over U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to pullout American troops from Syria, a U.S. military official said Friday the process of withdrawal has begun, declining to comment on specific timetables or movements.

Col. Sean Ryan, spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group, said “the process of our deliberate withdrawal from Syria” has started.

“Out of concern for operational security, we will not discuss specific timelines, locations or troops movements,” the Baghdad-based official said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press.

There were no other details, and it was not immediately clear how many vehicles or whether any troop units had withdrawn.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the conflict in Syria through a network of activists on the ground, said the withdrawal began Thursday night. It said a convoy of about 10 armored vehicles, in addition to some trucks, pulled out from Syria’s northeastern town of Rmeilan into Iraq.

Confirmation of the first withdrawals comes amid confusion over plans to implement Trump’s pullout

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order and threats from Turkey to attack the Kurds, who have been America's partners on the ground in the war against the Islamic State group in Syria.

Badran Ciya Kurd, a Syrian Kurdish official reached by the AP, declined to comment about the withdrawal. Others were not immediately available.

There are 2,000 American troops in Syria. Trump's abrupt decision in December to pull them, declaring in a tweet the defeat of IS, sent shockwaves across the region and a flurry of criticism from some of his generals and national security advisers, and led to the resignation of U.S. Defense Minister James Mattis and the top U.S. envoy to the anti-IS coalition. It also led to major criticism that the U.S. was abandoning its local Kurdish allies amid Turkish threats of an imminent attack.

On Sunday, U.S. national security adviser John Bolton said American troops will not leave northeastern Syria until IS is defeated and American-allied Kurdish fighters are protected, signaling a slow-down in Trump's initial order for a rapid withdrawal. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who is on a tour of the region, has also sought to reassure the Kurds that they will be safe after U.S. troops withdraw from the country.

"These have been folks that have fought with us and it's important that we do everything we can to ensure that those folks that fought with us are protected," Pompeo said of the Kurds while visiting Irbil, the capital of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, after talks in Baghdad.

After initially tweeting about the decision to bring back U.S. troops "now," Trump this week said "we will be leaving at a proper pace while at the same time continuing to fight ISIS and doing all else that is prudent and necessary!"

Kurdish officials, meanwhile, have demanded clarifications from the U.S. over its intentions. A U.S. troop pullout leaves the Kurds exposed to Turkish attacks from one side, and Syrian government troops on the other. The withdrawal benefits Syrian President Bashar Assad and his international backers, Russia and Iran, who are primed to move into the region to fill a vacuum left behind by the Americans.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the Americans are not serious about withdrawing from Syria.

Speaking to reporters in Moscow Friday, she said it appears to Moscow that the U.S. "is looking for a reason to stay." She said Russia has not seen public statements laying out the U.S. strategy in Syria and so cannot be sure that the U.S. is serious about leaving.

U.S. troops have been involved in Syria's war since 2014 when the first elite force arrived in the country to advise Kurdish-led fighters who were involved in battles against the Islamic State group.

Karam reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Bassem Mroue in Beirut and Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow contributed.

Wisconsin girl missing since parents' October deaths found

By **TODD RICHMOND, Associated Press**

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A Wisconsin teenager missing for nearly three months after her parents were killed in the family home was found alive barely an hour's drive away, by a woman who stumbled across the 13-year-old girl and pounded on her neighbors' door shouting: "This is Jayme Closs! Call 911!"

Jayme was skinny and dirty, wearing shoes too big for her feet, but appeared outwardly OK when she was discovered Thursday afternoon near the small town of Gordon, the neighbors said.

"I honestly still think I'm dreaming right now. It was like I was seeing a ghost," Peter Kasinskas told the Minneapolis Star Tribune. "My jaw just went to the floor."

Authorities said a suspect was in custody, but otherwise didn't give any additional details ahead of a planned Friday news conference in Barron, in northwestern Wisconsin.

Jayme went missing on Oct. 15 after police discovered someone had broken into the family's home outside Barron and fatally shot her parents, James and Denise Closs. Jayme was nowhere to be found, with the Barron County Sheriff's Department describing her as likely abducted.

Detectives pursued thousands of tips, watched dozens of surveillance videos and conducted numerous

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searches in the effort to find Jayme. Some tips led officials to recruit 2,000 volunteers for a massive ground search on Oct. 23, but it yielded no clues.

Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald said in November that he kept similar cases in the back of his mind as he worked to find Jayme, including the abduction of Elizabeth Smart, who was 14 when she was taken from her Salt Lake City home in 2002. She was rescued nine months later with the help of two witnesses who recognized her abductors from an "America's Most Wanted" episode.

"I have a gut feeling she's (Jayme's) still alive," Fitzgerald said at the time.

He was right.

The Star Tribune reported that Town of Gordon resident Kristin Kasinskas heard a knock on her door Thursday afternoon. It was her neighbor, who had been out walking her dog when Jayme approached her asking for help. The woman, who declined to be identified, said she was pretty sure who the girl was, but any doubt was erased when Jayme gave her name.

During the 20 minutes Jayme was in their home, Kasinskas and her husband, Peter, tried to make her feel more comfortable, they said. They offered her water and food, but she declined both. Jayme was quiet, her emotions "pretty flat," Peter Kasinskas said.

Jayme told the couple she didn't know where she was or anything about Gordon. From what she told them, they believed she was there for most of her disappearance.

Gordon is about 40 miles (64.4 kilometers) south of Lake Superior and about 65 miles (104.6 kilometers) north of Barron, Jayme's hometown. Gordon is home to about 645 people in a heavily forested region where logging is the top industry.

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office confirmed on its website that Jayme was found in the town at 4:43 p.m. Thursday, and that a suspect was taken into custody 11 minutes later. The Associated Press couldn't confirm the Kasinskases' account; the sheriff's office's non-emergency line rang unanswered Thursday night, and Sheriff Thomas Dalbec didn't respond to an email.

Sue Allard, Jayme's aunt, told the Star Tribune that she could barely express her joy after learning the news Thursday night.

"Praise the Lord," Allard said between sobs. "It's the news we've been waiting on for three months. I can't wait to get my arms around her. I just can't wait."

Barron Mayor Ron Fladten said Thursday night he was overjoyed at learning Jayme was alive.

"There was a lot of discouragement because this took quite a while to play out," Fladten said. "A lot of people have been praying daily, as I have. It's just a great result we got tonight. It's unbelievable. It's like taking a big black cloud in the sky and getting rid of it and the sun comes out again."

He acknowledged that Jayme may not be the same person she was before she disappeared.

"I hope that she's in good shape," the mayor said. "She's no doubt been through just a terrible ordeal. I think everybody wishes her a good recovery and a happy life going into the future."

The notification that Jayme had been found came just four hours after Fitzgerald had taken to Twitter to debunk a report that she had been found alive near Walworth County. Douglas County, where Jayme was found, is hundreds of miles northwest of Walworth County.

Associated Press writer Amy Forliti in Minneapolis contributed to this report.

Trump closer to declaring emergency; 800,000 won't get paid

By CATHERINE LUCEY, LISA MASCARO and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is edging closer to declaring a national emergency to fund his long-promised border wall, as pressure mounts to find an escape hatch from the three-week impasse that has closed parts of the government, leaving hundreds of thousands of workers without pay.

Some 800,000 workers, more than half of them still on the job, were to miss their first paycheck on Friday under the stoppage, and Washington was close to setting a dubious record for the longest government shutdown in the nation's history. Those markers — along with growing effects to national parks, food

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inspections and the economy overall — left some Republicans on Capitol Hill increasingly uncomfortable with Trump's demands.

Asked about the plight of those going without pay, the president shifted the focus, saying he felt badly "for people that have family members that have been killed" by criminals who came over the border.

Trump visited McAllen, Texas, and the Rio Grande on Thursday to highlight what he calls a crisis of drugs and crime. He said that "if for any reason we don't get this going" — an agreement with House Democrats who have refused to approve the \$5.7 billion he demands for the wall — "I will declare a national emergency."

Trump was consulting with White House attorneys and allies about using presidential emergency powers to take unilateral action to construct the wall over the objections of Congress. He claimed his lawyers told him the action would withstand legal scrutiny "100 percent."

Such a move to bypass Congress' constitutional control of the nation's purse strings would spark certain legal challenges and bipartisan cries of executive overreach.

A congressional official said the White House has directed the Army Corps of Engineers to look for billions of dollars earmarked last year for disaster response for Puerto Rico and other areas that could be diverted to a border wall as part of the emergency declaration. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak publicly.

"We're either going to have a win, make a compromise — because I think a compromise is a win for everybody — or I will declare a national emergency," Trump said before departing the White House for his politically flavored visit to the border. He wore his campaign-slogan "Make America Great Again" cap throughout.

It was not clear what a compromise might entail, and there were no indications that one was in the offing. Trump says he won't reopen the government without money for the wall. Democrats say they favor measures to bolster border security but oppose the long, impregnable barrier that Trump envisions.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said at one point that he didn't "see a path in Congress" to end the shutdown, then stated later that enough was enough: "It is time for President Trump to use emergency powers to fund the construction of a border wall/barrier."

Visiting a border patrol station in McAllen, Trump viewed tables piled with weapons and narcotics. Like nearly all drugs trafficked across the border, they were intercepted by agents at official ports of entry, he was told, and not in the remote areas where he wants to extend tall barriers.

Still, he declared: "A wall works. ... Nothing like a wall."

He argued that the U.S. can't solve the problem without a "very substantial barrier" along the border, but offered exaggerations about the effectiveness of border walls and current apprehensions of those crossing illegally.

Sitting among border patrol officers, state and local officials and military representatives, Trump insisted he was "winning" the shutdown fight and criticized Democrats for asserting he was manufacturing a sense of crisis in order to declare an emergency. "What is manufactured is the use of the word 'manufactured,'" Trump said.

As he arrived in Texas, several hundred protesters near the airport in McAllen chanted and waved signs opposing a wall. Across the street, a smaller group chanted back: "Build that wall!"

In Washington, federal workers denounced Trump at a rally with congressional Democrats, demanding he reopen the government so they can get back to work.

On Capitol Hill, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi accused the president of engaging in political games to fire up his most loyal supporters, suggesting that a heated meeting Wednesday with legislators at the White House had been "a setup" so that Trump could walk out of it.

In an ominous sign for those seeking a swift end to the showdown, Trump announced he was canceling his trip to Davos, Switzerland, scheduled for later this month, citing Democrats' "intransigence" on border security. He was to leave Jan. 21 to attend the World Economic Forum.

The partial shutdown would set a record early Saturday, stretching beyond the 21-day closure that ended

Jan 6, 1996, during President Bill Clinton's administration.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Colleen Long, Alan Fram, Deb Riechmann and Zeke Miller in Washington and Nomaan Merchant in McAllen, Texas, contributed to this report.

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

Shutdown suspends federal cleanups at US Superfund sites

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and KIM CHANDLER, Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — The government shutdown has suspended federal cleanups at Superfund sites around the nation and forced the cancellation of public hearings, deepening the mistrust and resentment of surrounding residents who feel people in power long ago abandoned them to live among the toxic residue of the country's factories and mines.

"We are already hurting, and it's just adding more fuel to the fire," says 40-year-old Keisha Brown, whose wood-frame home is in a community nestled among coking plants and other factories on Birmingham's north side.

The mostly African-American community has been forced to cope with high levels of arsenic, lead and other contaminants in the soil that the Environmental Protection Agency has been scraping up and carting away, house by house.

As President Donald Trump and Congress battle over Trump's demand for a wall on the southern U.S. border, the nearly 3-week-old partial government shutdown has stopped federal work on Superfund sites except for cases where the administration deems "there is an imminent threat to the safety of human life or to the protection of property."

EPA's shutdown plans said the agency would evaluate about 800 Superfund sites to see how many could pose an immediate threat. As an example of that kind of threat, it cited an acid leak from a mine that could threaten the public water supply. That's the hazard at Northern California's Iron Mountain mine, where EPA workers help prevent an unending flow of lethally acidic runoff off the Superfund site from spilling into rivers downstream.

Practically speaking, said Bonnie Bellow, a former EPA official who worked on Superfund public outreach at the agency, the impact of the stoppage of work at sites across the nation "wholly depends" on the length of the shutdown.

"Unless there is immediate risk like a storm, a flood, a week or two of slowdowns is not going to very likely affect the cleanup at the site," Bellow said.

In north Birmingham, Brown said it's been a couple of weeks since she's spotted any EPA crews at people's houses. It wasn't clear if state workers or contractors were continuing work.

But long before the shutdown began, Brown harbored doubts the cleanup was working anyway. "My main concern is the health of the people out here," said Brown, who has asthma. "All of us are sick, and we've got to function on medicine every day."

In terms of time, the federal government shutdown is a chronological blip in the long history of the site — which includes ethics charges in a local bribery scandal to block federal cleanup efforts — but adds to the uncertainty in an area where residents feel forgotten and betrayed.

At the EPA, the shutdown has furloughed the bulk of the agency's roughly 14,000 employees. It also means the EPA isn't getting most of the daily stream of environmental questions and tips from the public. Routine inspections aren't happening. State, local and private emails to EPA officials often get automated messages back promising a response when the shutdown ends.

In Montana, for instance, state officials this month found themselves fielding calls from a tribal member worried about drinking water with a funny look to it, said Kristi Ponozzo, public-policy director at that state's Department of Environmental Quality. The EPA normally provides tribes with technical assistance on water supplies.

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With most EPA colleagues idled, Ponozzo said, her agency also had to call off an environmental review meeting for a mining project, potentially delaying the project.

But it's the agency's work at Superfund sites — lessening the threat from old nuclear-weapons plants, chemical factories, mines and other entities — that gets much of the attention.

Absent imminent peril, it would be up to state governments or contractors to continue any cleanup during the shutdown "up to the point that additional EPA direction or funding is needed," the EPA said in a statement.

"Sites where cleanup activities have been stopped or shut down will be secured until cleanup activities are able to commence when the federal government reopens," the agency said.

For federal Superfund sites in Michigan, the shutdown means there are no EPA colleagues to consult, said Scott Dean, a spokesman for that state's Department of Environmental Quality.

At Michigan Superfund sites, day-to-day field operations were continuing since private contractors do most of the on-the-ground work, Dean said.

Bellow, the former EPA official, said the cancellation of hearings about Superfund sites posed immediate concerns.

In East Chicago, Indiana, for example, the EPA called off a planned public hearing set for last Wednesday to outline how the agency planned to clean up high levels of lead and arsenic in the soil.

The EPA has proposed a seven-month, \$26.5 million cleanup that includes treating and removing tainted soil from the area, where a lead smelter previously was located.

During a public meeting Nov. 29, some residents complained that the EPA's approach would leave too much pollution in place. But others didn't get a chance to speak and were hoping to do so at the meeting this week, said Debbie Chizewer, a Northwestern University environmental attorney who represents community groups in the low-income area.

The EPA announced the cancellation in an online notice and gave no indication that it would be rescheduled.

Leaders of the East Chicago Calumet Community Advisory Group asked for a new hearing date and an extension of a Jan. 14 public comment deadline in a letter to the EPA's regional Superfund division.

Calls by The Associated Press to the agency's regional office in Chicago this week were not answered.

Local critics fear the EPA will use the delay caused by the shutdown as justification for pushing ahead with a cleanup strategy they consider flawed, Chizewer said, even though the agency has designated the affected area as an "environmental justice community" — a low-income community of color that has been disproportionately harmed by pollution.

The EPA has a "special obligation" when dealing with such communities, Chizewer said. "This would be an example of shutting them out for no good reason."

In North Birmingham, former longtime neighborhood resident Charlie Powell said most of people living in and around the Superfund site had already "just got tired and fed up."

Powell left the area but started a group called PANIC, People Against Neighborhood Industrial Contamination. He believes money would be better spent helping residents move away from the pollution.

"Can I say hell?" Powell said when asked what residents have been through.

Knickmeyer reported from Washington. Associated Press writers John Flesher in Traverse City, Mich., and Matthew Brown in Helena, Mont., contributed to this report.

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

Pompeo takes US anti-Iran message to Gulf Arab states

By **MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer**

CAIRO (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo brought the Trump administration's anti-Iran message to Gulf Arab states on Friday, arriving in Bahrain to continue a nine-nation tour of the Middle East aimed at reassuring America's partners that withdrawing troops from Syria does not mean Washington is abandoning the region.

Pompeo was traveling to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates where he will call for increasing pressure on Iran and push for unity among Gulf neighbors still embroiled in a festering dispute with Qatar. He'll also be promoting a U.S.-backed initiative to form what some have termed an "Arab NATO" that would bring the region together in a military alliance to counter threats from Iran.

In Bahrain, the UAE and later Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait, Pompeo will also be making the case as he did on previous stops in Jordan, Iraq and Egypt that President Donald Trump's decision to pull U.S. troops from Syria is not a sign Washington is retreating from the fight against the Islamic State group. The trip came as a U.S. military official announced Friday that the withdrawal had begun, though he declined to comment on specific timetables or movements.

U.S. partnerships with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council "are critical to achieving shared regional objectives: defeating ISIS, countering radical Islamic terrorism, protecting global energy supplies, and rolling back Iranian aggression," the State Department said in a statement released as Pompeo departed Egypt for Bahrain, which is home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet.

But the now 2-year-old crisis between GCC members Saudi Arabia and UAE and Qatar has hampered U.S. attempts to forge a unified front against Iran. Washington's efforts to ease the dispute, begun by former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have thus far failed and took another hit this week when the former general tasked to broker a solution stepped down.

"A united GCC is the backbone for regional peace, prosperity, security, and stability, and is essential to countering the single greatest threat to regional stability: the Iranian regime," the State Department said.

At each of his stops in the Gulf, Pompeo will be urging progress on creating the Middle East Strategic Alliance, which would join GCC militaries with those of Egypt and Jordan to serve as a counter-balance to Iran, which they all accuse of fomenting unrest and rebellion throughout the region.

Pompeo told Fox News before departing from Cairo that there would be an international conference on Iran and the Middle East in Poland on Feb. 13-14.

Pompeo during his trip will also call for boosting efforts to end the conflict in Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition has been battling Iranian-backed rebels in what the U.N. says is now the world's worst humanitarian crisis, the department said.

U.N.-led peace efforts in Yemen, along with attempts to broker a political solution to the war in Syria that "expels every last Iranian boot from the country" and promoting reconciliation in Afghanistan will also be high on Pompeo's agenda, the State Department said.

Pompeo kicked off the Gulf portion of his tour after a stop in Cairo, where he delivered a scathing rebuke of former President Barack Obama's Middle East policies that Obama had outlined in a 2009 address to the Arab and broader Muslim world.

In a speech entitled "A Force for Good: America's Reinvigorated Role in the Middle East," Pompeo accused the former president of "misguided" thinking that diminished America's role in the region while harming its longtime friends and emboldening Iran.

He unloaded on the Obama administration for being naive and timid when confronted with challenges posed by the revolts that convulsed the Middle East, including Egypt, beginning in 2011. And, he said the Trump administration was taking action to repair the damage.

"The age of self-inflicted American shame is over, and so are the policies that produced so much needless suffering," Pompeo said in the speech, which was itself denounced by former Obama administration officials for pandering to autocrats, ignoring human rights concerns.

"That this administration feels the need, nearly a decade later, to take potshots at an effort to identify

common ground between the Arab world and the West speaks not only to the Trump administration's pettiness but also to its lack of a strategic vision for America's role in the region and its abdication of America's values," National Security Action group, a group of former officials, said in a statement.

Pompeo blamed the previous administration's approach to the Mideast for the ills that consume it now, particularly the rise of the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria and Iran's increasing assertiveness, which he said was a direct result of sanctions relief, since rescinded by the Trump administration, granted to it under the 2015 nuclear deal.

He said Obama ignored the growth of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement in Lebanon to the detriment of Israel's security and not doing enough to push back on Iran-supported rebels in Yemen.

Since withdrawing from the nuclear deal last year, the administration has steadily ratcheted up pressure on Tehran and routinely accuses the nation of being the most destabilizing influence in the region. It has vowed to increase the pressure until Iran halts what U.S. officials describe as its "malign activities" throughout the Mideast and elsewhere, including support for rebels in Yemen, anti-Israel groups, and Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Q&A: How the government shutdown might end

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Somehow, some day, the nasty deadlock between President Donald Trump and congressional Democrats that's shuttered federal agencies for a record-tying 21 days will end. The only real questions are when, how and who will be crowned the winner in public opinion polls and ultimately by voters.

Things got bleaker this week when House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told Trump at a fiery White House meeting that Democrats would not bow to his demand for \$5.7 billion to start building a wall along the border with Mexico. Trump slammed his hand on the negotiating table and stormed out, Democrats said. Trump said he calmly left the room, saying, "Bye-bye."

A look at how the impasse might be resolved:

Q: What's the easiest solution?

A: None is easy. Trump's conservative base strongly backs his fight for wall money, even if it has meant a partial government shutdown. Democrats' liberal stalwarts just as ardently oppose giving in. Trump and Democratic leaders have been so insistent on not surrendering that each would risk rebellion by supporters if they agreed to something viewed as a capitulation.

Q: What's the likeliest way out?

A: Increasingly some people think that could be for Trump to declare a national emergency. By law, that could give him authority to use some money in the military's budget for construction projects for the wall.

It's a tactic that could let each side claim a partial victory and move on.

Trump could argue he did secure money for the wall, his most memorable campaign pledge, and overcame Democratic objections. Democrats could say they didn't give in and they could file suits to block the move, claiming Trump had exceeded his authority by stretching the meaning of emergency. Trump could decide to finally sign bills reopening the government.

Leaving the White House Thursday to visit the southwestern border, Trump strongly suggested he would take that route. "I have the absolute right to declare a national emergency," he told reporters. He added: "If I have to, I will. I have no doubt about it."

Q: Why not just do it?

A: Plenty of people on both sides hate the idea, and its legality in this instance is questionable.

Some Republicans, including Texas Rep. Mac Thornberry, the top Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, say strengthening border infrastructure is not the military's job and they oppose siphoning defense dollars for that purpose. Many Republicans worry that by stretching the definition of "emergency," Trump opens the door to a future Democratic president circumventing lawmakers in ways the GOP would oppose.

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Democrats would consider the move a fresh example of Trump abusing his authority as president. They say it would be a ploy to bypass Congress and that there's no emergency on the border, where the number of illegal crossings has fallen in recent years.

While the law doesn't clearly define a national emergency, some experts say a declaration here would be unwarranted.

"The idea was that the executive would have these powers on a limited basis for true emergencies," said Andrew Boyle, who studies presidential emergency powers at the Brennan Center for Justice, which is affiliated with New York University. He said declaring a national emergency at the border would be "clearly in bad faith."

Q: Polls show the public blames Trump more than Democrats for the shutdown. Will Republicans fold?

A: Some GOP lawmakers have had enough, especially in the Senate. Reflecting that, a group of GOP senators has talked to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and White House officials about forging a compromise, though that seems an uphill battle.

Ultimately McConnell, a tough partisan also renowned for ending previous battles by cutting bipartisan deals, will decide the GOP's path. It will take more than a few Republican defections for McConnell to abandon Trump.

Ever since Trump reversed himself and turned down an agreement to avoid the shutdown before Christmas, McConnell has stepped aside, saying Trump and Democrats should bargain.

Democrats have been trying to pressure McConnell, quoting his past ridicule of shutdowns and citing the damage the current one is inflicting on voters. With hundreds of thousands of federal workers due to miss their first paychecks Friday and constituents complaining about losing government services, pressure will only intensify.

"I think public sentiment weighing in on his members" will change his mind, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said in a brief interview. "He's a legislator."

"He's watching, he's waiting," said retired Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss.

Q: What about Democrats?

A: They've shown no outward signs of divisions. If anything, Trump's recent actions — leaving Wednesday's negotiating session, seeming to blame Democrats for the recent deaths of two Guatemalan children in U.S. custody — have united them more.

"Democrats' reaction ranges from angry to enraged," said Rep. Gerald Connolly, D-Va.

Q: Is there a deal to be had?

A: That seems increasingly unlikely. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and other Republicans have explored a compromise that might include border security money plus helping hundreds of thousands of young immigrants who arrived in the U.S. illegally as children stay in this country. But Vice President Mike Pence and Graham reported no progress after a meeting Thursday.

Democrats know a deal with Trump could alienate liberals, and are loath to show Trump that they would fold during future confrontations.

They also don't trust him. Pelosi said Trump has moved the goalposts so often that "pretty soon these goal posts won't even be in the stadium."

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

How's the US economy doing? Shutdown makes it harder to say

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The partial shutdown of the U.S. government has begun to make it harder to assess the health of the economy by delaying or distorting key reports on growth, spending and hiring.

Government data on home construction and retail sales, for example, won't be released next week because staffers who compile those reports have been furloughed. The retail sales report provides a snapshot of consumer spending, which fuels more than two-thirds of the economy. With Macy's and Kohl's having

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said Thursday that their holiday sales were weaker than expected, a broader gauge of retail spending would have provided important clarity.

In addition, the next report on the economy's overall growth, set for Jan. 30, won't be released if the shutdown remains in effect. Even if the government has fully reopened by then, federal workers won't likely have had enough time to produce the scheduled report on the nation's gross domestic product.

Not all agencies are closed. Congress approved funding last year for the Labor Department, so the government's next monthly jobs report will be released as scheduled on Feb. 1. But it's unclear how long the department will be able to issue jobs reports — the most closely watched barometer of the economy — after that.

Though the economy remains healthy in most respects, there are rising concerns that growth could slow or even stall in coming months. The trade war between the United States and China, which has helped depress global growth, is likely slowing business investment. The stimulus from the Trump administration's tax cuts is expected to fade.

And borrowing costs have risen since the Federal Reserve raised short-term interest rates four times last year. Before rebounding this week, stock markets had plummeted roughly 16 percent from their peak Oct. 2.

Fed officials are now stressing their flexibility on rate hikes, emphasizing that they will be patient and their policy "data dependent." By this, the Fed means that the government's latest readings on hiring, inflation and growth will factor heavily in its rate decisions. Yet much of that data will now be unavailable — to the Fed or anyone else.

"For us, one of the biggest effects of the shutdown has been around data," Raphael Bostic, president of the Fed's Atlanta regional bank, said Wednesday. "We're worrying about that."

Even some reports that are released on schedule are likely to be distorted by the shutdown. For example, the January jobs report may show an artificially high unemployment rate and low employment figure. That's because up to 380,000 federal employees who aren't working or being paid during the shutdown — but who will return to work afterward — could be counted as unemployed for January.

If so, that would raise the unemployment rate by 0.2 percentage point, estimated Ben Herzon, an economist at Macroeconomic Advisers, a forecasting firm. And the monthly job count could decline by 380,000 if the shutdown continues through the end of January, Herzon said. That could push the monthly job figure into negative territory.

If all the federal workers eventually receive back pay, as occurred after previous shutdowns, then the January jobs report would later be revised to restore those 380,000 jobs, according to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Future jobs reports could be jeopardized, too, if the government remains shut down. The Census Bureau conducts the monthly surveys that the BLS uses to calculate the unemployment rate. Census is part of the Commerce Department, which remains closed during the shutdown. As a result, it's unclear if future jobs reports will be released if the shutdown continues, the BLS said.

Other economic reports have already been missed. They include a monthly report on factory orders that was scheduled for Monday. That report typically provides insights into how much U.S. companies are spending on large equipment.

Inflation data will also be affected: The consumer price index will be released Friday morning as scheduled, because it is prepared by the Labor Department. But the Fed's preferred inflation gauge is published by Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis, which is closed.

And because the Agriculture Department is closed, future reports on wholesale prices and import prices won't include farm-related data, the BLS said Thursday.

A report on the number of people seeking unemployment benefits, considered a nearly real-time reflection of layoffs, is still being published. But it could be distorted by the shutdown: Nearly 5,000 federal employees sought benefits two weeks ago, according to the latest data available, roughly five times the usual figure.

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And only a portion of the government's report on productivity, or output per hour worked, will be released Feb. 6, the Labor Department said. That's because that report requires data on the growth of GDP, the broadest measure of the economy.

Even after the government fully reopens, weeks will likely be needed before all the postponed reports can be prepared and released.

"It may take some time to get a 'clean' read on the economy," economists at Bank of America Merrill Lynch said Thursday.

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. 'I WILL DECLARE A NATIONAL EMERGENCY'

The president is edging closer to that declaration in an extraordinary end run around Congress to fund his long-promised border wall.

2. A PAYDAY ABOUT TO BE MISSED

Families are making tough decisions as 800,000 federal employees miss their first paycheck because of the three-week government shutdown.

3. 'THIS IS JAYME CLOSS! CALL 911!'

A Wisconsin teenager missing for nearly three months after her parents were killed in the family home is found alive by neighbors in a town barely an hour's drive away.

4. US OFFICIAL: TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM SYRIA BEGINS

Confirmation of the first withdrawals comes amid confusion over plans to implement Trump's pullout order and threats from Turkey to attack the Kurds.

5. US APPROVED THOUSANDS OF CHILD BRIDE REQUESTS

Data obtained by the AP shows thousands of requests by men to bring in child and adolescent brides to live in the U.S. were approved over the past decade.

6. FORMER NISSAN CHAIR FACING MORE LEGAL WOES

Carlos Ghosn, earlier charged with falsifying financial reports, is indicted for breach of trust in the latest blow for the star executive.

7. REUTERS REPORTERS LOSE APPEAL

A court in Myanmar upholds the journalists' conviction for violating the country's Official Secrets Act during their reporting on the country's crackdown on Rohingya Muslims.

8. WHO WANTS TO TAKE IN SAUDI RUNAWAY TEEN

Canada and Australia are among several countries in talks with the U.N. refugee agency to accept asylum seeker Rahaf Mohammed Alqunun, who fled alleged abuse from her family.

9. KENYA'S UNIQUE WAY OF SEEKING JUSTICE

To combat frustration over alleged police killings and other abuses, Kenyans are forming social justice centers to investigate what they say the government doesn't.

10. NEW RULE NIXES NEVER-ENDING FINAL SETS

At the Australian Open, a first-to-10, win-by-two tiebreaker will be played at 6-all in the fifth set of a men's match or third set of a women's match.

The shutdown today: Shutdown ties for longest on record

By The Associated Press

Here's what's up with the partial government shutdown on Day 21.

WHAT'S NEW TODAY

The shutdown matches the longest stoppage yet: a 21-day closure that ended Jan. 6, 1996, during President Bill Clinton's administration.

Financial pain hits some 800,000 federal workers who will not receive paychecks they were due on Friday.

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President Donald Trump holds a White House round-table on "border security and safe communities" with state, local and community leaders as he continues to highlight his rationale for insisting that a wall be built on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Cities with economies tied to federal spending are showing signs of strain. One is Huntsville, Alabama, where about 70 federal agencies are located at the Army's Redstone Arsenal: Hotel rooms are vacant because out-of-town government workers and contractors aren't coming, restaurants frequented by federal workers are struggling, parking lots are empty and offices at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center are dark. Federal cleanups at Superfund sites around the nation have been suspended.

QUOTES OF THE DAY

Trump: "They say this is a manufactured crisis. But it's not. What is manufactured is the use of the word manufactured."

Justice Department trial attorney Theodore Atkinson of Baltimore: "It's all uncertain and I don't know how it ends or resolves itself. This isn't a matter of me not going to the movies or out to eat as much. I can't cut off my power or my cellphone or move out of my house."

WHAT'S COMING NEXT?

The shutdown sets the all-time record on Saturday, Day 22, when it officially becomes the longest partial government shutdown in U.S. history.

Trump's administration is considering using billions of dollars in unspent disaster relief funds to pay for the border wall as Trump weighs signing a national emergency declaration to get it built without Congress.

WHAT REMAINS CLOSED

Nine of the 15 Cabinet-level departments have not been funded, including Agriculture, Homeland Security, State, Transportation, Interior and Justice. Some iconic National Park facilities are shuttered as are the Smithsonian museums and the National Zoo in Washington. Nearly everyone at NASA is being told to stay home, as are most at the Internal Revenue Service, which processes tax returns and issues refunds, though the administration says tax refunds will be issued during the shutdown.

WHO IS AT WORK BUT NOT GETTING PAID

Some 420,000 federal employees whose work is declared essential are working without pay, including the FBI, TSA and other federal law enforcement officers. Some staff at the State and Homeland Security departments are also working without compensation. The Senate has approved a bill to provide back pay to federal workers. The House must vote on it. Trump said this week that federal workers will "get their money."

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

Thai police: Canada, Australia willing to accept Saudi woman

BANGKOK (AP) — Several countries including Canada and Australia are in talks with the U.N. refugee agency to accept a Saudi asylum seeker who fled alleged abuse from her family, Thai police said Friday.

Thailand's immigration police chief, Surachate Hakparn, told reporters the U.N. was accelerating the case, though he gave no indication of when the process would be complete.

Rahaf Mohammed Alqunun was stopped at a Bangkok airport on Saturday by Thai immigration police who denied her entry and seized her passport.

While barricading herself in an airport hotel room, the 18-year-old launched a social media campaign via her Twitter account that drew global attention to her case. It garnered enough public and diplomatic support to convince Thai officials to admit her temporarily under the protection of U.N. officials.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees eventually granted her refugee status on Wednesday.

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Alqunun's case has highlighted the cause of women's rights in Saudi Arabia. Several female Saudis fleeing abuse by their families have been caught trying to seek asylum abroad in recent years and returned home. Human rights activists say many similar cases have gone unreported.

By Friday, Alqunun had closed down her Twitter account. Sophie McNeill, a reporter with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation who has had exclusive access to Alqunun, said Friday in a Twitter posting that Alqunun "is safe and fine."

"She's just been receiving a lot of death threats," McNeill wrote, adding that Alqunun would be back on Twitter after a "short break."

Alqunun had previously said on Twitter that she wishes to seek refuge in Australia.

Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne met with senior Thai officials in Bangkok on Thursday. She later told reporters that Australia assessing Alqunun's request for resettlement, but there was no specific timeframe.

Payne said she also raised Australia's concerns with Thai officials about Hakeem Al-araibi, a 25-year-old former member of Bahrain's national soccer team, who was granted refugee status in Australia in 2017 after fleeing his homeland, where he said he was persecuted and tortured.

Hakeem's case is being considered by Thailand's justice system, she said.

Ex-Nissan chair Ghosn indicted for alleged breach of trust

By YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Nissan's ex-chairman Carlos Ghosn was charged Friday with breach of trust, according to the Tokyo District Court, making the star executive's release unlikely for months to come.

Ghosn, arrested Nov. 19, was earlier charged with falsifying financial reports in underreporting his income by about 5 billion yen (\$44 million) over five years through 2015.

Ghosn; Greg Kelly, another Nissan executive; and Nissan as a legal entity also were charged Friday with additional underreporting of income, from 2015 through mid-2018.

Ghosn's lawyer Motonari Ohtsuru filed a request that Ghosn be granted release on bail. His detention period for the breach of trust allegations had been due to expire Friday.

Kelly and Nissan were not charged with breach of trust. Those allegations center on Ghosn's handling of investment losses and payments made to a Saudi businessman.

Ghosn, 64, says he's innocent.

Suspects in Japan are routinely held for months until trials start, and Tokyo prosecutors maintain that Ghosn, a Brazilian-born Frenchman of Lebanese ancestry, is a flight risk.

Earlier this week Ghosn told a Tokyo court he was innocent, in his first public appearance since his arrest, and appealed for his detention to end. But the court rejected that request.

"I have a genuine love and appreciation for Nissan," Ghosn told the court. "In all of my efforts on behalf of the company, I have acted honorably, legally and with the knowledge and approval of the appropriate executives inside the company."

He said the compensation was never decided on, the investment deal never resulted in any losses to Nissan, and the payments to the Saudi businessman were for legitimate services related to dealers and investments in the Gulf.

Ghosn remains CEO of Nissan's alliance partner Renault, though he was dismissed as chairman of Nissan and fellow alliance company Mitsubishi Motor Co.

Renault has stuck by Ghosn since his arrest but faces pressure to find a successor as his jail time drags on and questions mount about executive payment schemes used by the carmaker and related companies.

The Renault board of directors held a special meeting Thursday night to discuss internal reviews of executive pay prompted by Ghosn's arrest. It declared that no fraud was found in 2017-2018 but it is still examining previous years. Its shares fell slightly Friday morning after those announcements.

Ghosn, who appeared much thinner than before his arrest, came down with a fever the day after his court appearance, but has since recovered, Ohtsuru, the lawyer, said.

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His wife Carole Ghosn issued a statement overnight out of Paris, expressing concern over his sickness. "I am pleading with the Japanese authorities to provide us with any information at all about my husband's health. We are fearful and very worried his recovery will be complicated while he continues to endure such harsh conditions and unfair treatment," she said.

Apart from prosecutors, only embassy officials and Ghosn's lawyers are allowed to visit him. Such visits were canceled Thursday but resumed Friday.

While declining to comment on specifics, Deputy Chief Prosecutor Shin Kukimoto told reporters that suspects who get indicted usually will be detained for several months.

"We believe that there was enough to charge and go to trial," he said of Ghosn's case, "and he will be guilty."

Ghosn has been interrogated daily but now will only be questioned with his consent, Kukimoto said.

The maximum penalty for the falsifying financial reports and breach of trust is 15 years in prison, 10 million yen (\$89,000) fine, or both.

The breach of trust charge alleges that 1.8 billion yen (\$16.7 million) in damage was caused to Nissan through transactions made by Ghosn, and that \$14.7 million was paid to the Saudi businessman.

The other new charge says Ghosn reported 2.9 billion yen (\$26.9 million) in compensation, when he earned more than 7.1 billion yen (\$65.7 million) in the three years ending in June 2018.

Before his sudden downfall, Ghosn was a respected figure in the global auto industry, having rescued the Japanese automaker from near-bankruptcy, building its sales operations and profits and pioneering ecological vehicles.

Nissan says an internal investigation began in mid-2018 after whistleblowers came forward. Nissan Chief Executive Hiroto Saikawa has denounced Ghosn, accusing him of using the company's money and assets for personal gain.

The company said in a statement that it took the latest charge seriously and was strengthening governance. It reiterated harsh words against Ghosn.

"Nissan filed the criminal complaint on the basis of Ghosn's misuse of a significant amount of the company's funds. Nissan does not in any way tolerate such misconduct and calls for strict penalties," it said.

Yuri Kageyama is on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama>

On Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/yurikageyama/?hl=en>

Myanmar court rejects appeal of jailed Reuters reporters

By AUNG NAING SOE, Associated Press

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — A court in Myanmar on Friday rejected the appeal of two Reuters journalists convicted of violating the country's Official Secrets Act during their reporting on the country's crackdown on Rohingya Muslims, maintaining the seven-year prison terms they were sentenced to last year.

Judge Aung Naing of the Yangon High Court said in his ruling that lawyers for Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo failed to submit enough evidence to prove they were innocent. Neither man was in court for the ruling.

The conviction of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo has drawn condemnation from rights groups, Western governments and global press associations and has raised questions about press freedom in Myanmar as it transitions from decades of military rule.

Although the military has kept control of several key ministries, Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's rise to heading the government had raised hopes for more democratic freedoms.

"Today's ruling is yet another injustice among many inflicted upon Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo," Reuters Editor-In-Chief Stephen J. Adler said in a statement Friday. "They remain behind bars for one reason: Those in power sought to silence the truth. Reporting is not a crime, and until Myanmar rights this terrible wrong, the press in Myanmar is not free, and Myanmar's commitment to rule of law and democracy remains in doubt."

The two journalists were convicted of violating the colonial era Official Secrets Act after they were found

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with government documents in their possession. They were arrested on Dec. 12, 2017, in the country's main city, Yangon, immediately after having a meal to which police officers had invited them.

One police officer, despite being called as a prosecution witness, testified that his superiors had ordered the men to be entrapped with documents planted on them. The officer, Capt. Moe Yan Naing was dropped from the force after his testimony and jailed for a year for breaking police regulations.

Supporters of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo contend they were framed because of official displeasure over their reporting on the brutal crackdown by security forces on minority Rohingya in Rakhine state.

More than 700,000 Rohingya have fled to neighboring Bangladesh following a crackdown that began in August 2017. Critics have described the campaign as ethnic cleansing, or even genocide, on the part of Myanmar security forces.

Wa Lone, 32, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 28, had worked on one of the most detailed accounts of official abuses, an investigation of the killing of 10 Rohingya villagers in Inn Din village, for which seven soldiers were eventually sentenced to up to 10 years in prison with hard labor.

European Union ambassador to Myanmar Kristian Schmidt, who also was at court, described the ruling as "a great disappointment and a missed opportunity to correct a wrong that has been committed against the two journalists."

"It casts serious doubts on the independence of the judiciary of Myanmar and for people's right to information and learning the truth," he said.

He called for Myanmar's president to have the journalists released immediately and unconditionally.

Kyaw Soe Oo's wife, Chit Su, said the ruling came as a surprise.

"We thought that they would be free today," she said. "We were expecting to welcome them in front of Insein Prison."

"I still believe that they will be free," she added.

Lawyers for the men had previously said that if their appeal failed, they would have to hope for a pardon or general amnesty to obtain an early release.

One of them, Than Zaw Aung, told reporters Friday there were still two or three more steps they could take in the courts, involving appeals, and they have 60 days to make a submission to the country's Supreme Court.

The reporters' work and stand for freedom of the press have earned them awards and plaudits. Most notably, they were among a group of journalists honored by Time magazine as "Person of the Year." The cover of some editions of the magazine showed their wives holding photos of the two.

Expert: Comatose woman may not have shown signs of pregnancy

By TERRY TANG, Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A doctor examined an Arizona woman in a vegetative state nearly nine months before she gave birth but did not find that she was pregnant, and medical experts said Thursday that it's possible she displayed no outward signs that workers who cared for her every day would have noticed either.

Police are looking for her rapist and say it appears none of the staff members at a Phoenix long-term care facility knew about the pregnancy until the baby was born Dec. 29, a notion that has drawn skepticism. But the 29-year-old woman, who is described in a medical report as having tubes to feed her and help her breathe, may not have had a swollen belly, according to a doctor of fetal medicine.

While factors remain unknown, such as how far along she was, someone who is fed the same amount from a tube every day might not show any dramatic changes that would be noticed, especially by staffers who don't work with pregnant patients, said Dr. C. Kevin Huls, a clinical assistant professor and maternal-fetal medicine fellowship director at the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix.

The mother could actually lose weight in other places like her face or arms if a fetus is consuming nutrients, Huls added.

"A good way to understand it is that really, the baby's going to continue to grow even at the expense

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of the mom's nutrition," Huls said. "So, her weight may not change because she's not taking in additional calories. There may be changes to her body that are going to go undetected in a chronic care condition or at a facility like this."

The revelation that an incapacitated woman was sexually assaulted inside a care facility has horrified advocates for people with disabilities and the community at large. The provider's CEO resigned this week, and the state said the center has made safety changes.

A doctor examined the woman on April 16 and found "no change" in her health, writing that the exam was external only, according to Maricopa County Superior Court documents. Her mother submitted the results of the physical as part of an annual report that state law requires of legal guardians.

Phoenix police learned of the situation when they received a call on Dec. 29 about a newborn in distress at the Hacienda HealthCare facility. Officers launched a sex crime investigation when it was determined the mother was in a vegetative state, police spokesman Tommy Thompson said.

"She was not in a position to give consent to any of this," Thompson said.

The baby and the woman are recovering at an area hospital, and their conditions were not released.

It's possible the woman won't have any additional long-term complications from giving birth. Women in a vegetative state after accidents or strokes have successfully delivered babies, Huls said.

Her family, who are members of the San Carlos Apache tribe in southeastern Arizona, said in a statement through their attorney that they will care for the baby boy.

Phoenix police, meanwhile, have not ruled out any suspects in the sexual assault. They are gathering DNA samples from the facility's male staffers and have appealed to the public for any information.

It remains unclear to investigators if the woman was raped more than once.

"I know at least once she was sexually assaulted, which is way too many times," Thompson said.

The Hacienda intermediate care facility specializes in providing around-the-clock care for infants, children and young adults with developmental disabilities or who are "medically fragile."

Since the birth came to light, Hacienda HealthCare has implemented increased safety measures, including more than one staff member being present during patient interactions and more scrutiny of visitors.

The company has said it welcomes DNA testing of its male staffers and is cooperating in the investigation.

Follow Terry Tang on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ttangAP .

Shutdown squeezing Alabama city built on federal spending

By JAY REEVES, Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP) — Once known for its cotton trade and watercress farms, Huntsville, Alabama, is now the ultimate government town: About 70 federal agencies are located at the Army's 38,000-acre Redstone Arsenal. More than half of the area's economy is tied to Washington spending.

As the government shutdown drags into a third week, people and businesses that rely on that federal largesse for their livelihood are showing the strain.

Empty parking lots and darkened offices at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center on Redstone have translated into vacant hotel rooms because out-of-town government workers and contractors aren't coming. Restaurants frequented by federal workers who travel on government spending accounts are struggling, too.

Transportation Security Administration employees working without pay at the city's airport say they are spending their own money to bring in quiches and breakfast rolls as a morale booster. Moms are sharing tips online about free entertainment and buying food in bulk to save a few bucks. The largest credit union has already provided hundreds of bridge loans for struggling families.

"It's a fog with no end in sight," said Michael Northern, an executive with a small company that runs three restaurants outside a main arsenal gate. The lunch crowd is still OK, he said, but dinner dollars have dried up, and business is off at least 35 percent.

"People are just going home and nesting, trying to conserve resources," said Northern, vice president of WJP Restaurant Group. "Imagine being in that posture and hearing Donald Trump say, 'It could be a year.'"

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The closure persists because the president and congressional Democrats can't agree on \$5.7 billion in funding for a border wall, which Trump touts as vital to U.S. security and critics see as pointless and immoral.

The jobs of some 800,000 workers hang in the balance. A little more than half are still working without pay, and hundreds of thousands will miss paychecks Friday.

Economic statistics lag real-time events, so it's hard to gauge the effects of a shutdown that's been going on less than a month. But in Huntsville, a city of about 195,000 people where more than 5,000 workers are affected, frustration and worry are building.

Located at the base of a mountain in the lush Tennessee Valley, Huntsville was just another Alabama city until the government decided to build rockets at Redstone Arsenal at the dawn of the space race. The influx of people and federal dollars that arrived with NASA transformed the city into a technical and engineering hub that only grew as Army missile and materiel programs expanded on the base.

That heavy reliance on federal spending has Huntsville residents wondering what will come next.

Jack Lyons, a lifelong space geek who thought he'd hit the jackpot when he got a job as a contractor working on massive rocket test stands for NASA, is spending the furlough on his small side business making props for marching bands. A solid Republican voter until 2016, when he couldn't bring himself to vote for Trump, he's frustrated and saddened by what's going on in Washington.

"They're trying to use people as bargaining chips, and it just isn't right," Lyons said. Unlike civil service workers who expect to eventually get back pay, Lyons doesn't know if he'll ever see a dollar from the shutdown period.

Just back from maternity leave following the birth of her second child, Katie Barron works at home for a private company not connected to the government, but her husband is a National Weather Service meteorologist forced to work without pay because his job is classified as essential.

They're canceling this Saturday's date night to save a couple of hundred dollars, and the purchase of a new refrigerator is on hold. They've also put off home and car maintenance, but the \$450-a-week bill for day care still has to be paid, as do the mortgage and utility bills.

"We're a little bit buffered, but our lives are basically based off dual incomes," Barron said.

While Barron frets over the loss of dental and optical insurance because of the shutdown, she said her family has some savings and will be fine for a while. Others are struggling.

Redstone Federal Credit Union already has provided hundreds of low-interest loans of as much as \$5,000 each to families affected by the shutdown, with no payments due for 60 days, and it's also letting members skip payments on existing loans for a \$35 fee, chief marketing officer Fred Trusty said.

"As the days go on, we are seeing more and more traffic head to our branches," he said. The timing of the shutdown couldn't be worse since many families already were stretched thin by holiday spending or starting payments for upcoming summer travel, Trusty said.

Jeff and Sabine Cool, who own a German-style food truck that operates in the heart of the NASA complex, say their income is down about \$600 a week since the beginning of the shutdown.

"It kind of hurt a little bit. We're just rolling with the punches," Jeff Cool said Wednesday as he set up tables outside Hildegard's German Wurst Wagon on a bright, windy morning. "I'm glad I'm retired Army and have an additional income, but I feel for the other people."

Cool's sympathy extends to people like Sandra Snell, a TSA officer working without pay at Huntsville International Airport. She hasn't gotten a paycheck since December and wonders what will happen once her savings run out.

The bright spots of the shutdown, she said, are the co-workers who share food and airline passengers who realize that the people checking their identification cards and staffing the X-ray machines are working for free.

"They'll say, 'Thanks for being here.' It helps. It's nice when they realize your value," she said.

Bernie Sanders faces questions about political future

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Allies of Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders are rallying behind the embattled presidential prospect, even as they reluctantly begin to ponder a painful possibility: a 2020 presidential field without him.

The 77-year-old self-described democratic socialist is the most prominent presidential contender to face a serious setback in the nascent 2020 campaign season. He's been forced to confront a series of reports detailing allegations of sexual harassment of women by male staffers when he ran for president in 2016.

Sanders' loyalists fully expect him to launch a second campaign in the coming weeks. And his broad network of die-hard supporters is hosting hundreds of events across the nation this weekend encouraging him to run.

But the persistent allegations put Sanders in an unenviable political position in the early days of a presidential contest playing out in a #MeToo era that's offered little mercy for those associated with allegations of sexual harassment. While his Democratic competitors tour crucial states and scope out potential campaign headquarters, Sanders spent Thursday apologizing for the behavior of a handful of his 2016 staffers and looking for a new ones to run his 2020 operation should he enter the race.

Some Sanders allies expressed shaken confidence in the political future of the man who has reshaped Democratic politics in recent years and almost single-handedly brought liberal priorities like "Medicare for all" and free college education into the party's mainstream.

"If he doesn't run, there's a massive void in this country," said RoseAnn DeMoro, an activist and former executive director of the National Nurses United union, who reiterated her support for Sanders. "The passion in that base goes away. That base evaporates. It doesn't go to someone else. There would be a void so deep it would go to (President Donald) Trump, I suspect."

Politico reported Wednesday that in July 2016, a former senior adviser forcibly kissed a young female staffer after making sexually explicit comments. Sanders' team said the adviser, who denies the allegation, would not be involved in a second campaign should there be one; and former campaign manager Jeff Weaver, who was aware of some of the incidents, would not serve as campaign manager again.

No one has alleged that Sanders had direct knowledge of the incidents.

"Obviously, it's impacted all of us quite a bit. It's very upsetting," said Heather Gautney, executive director of Our Revolution, the political arm of Sanders' network.

Despite her concern, Gautney warned Democrats that a 2020 contest without Sanders would inflict serious damage on ambitious plans to shake up health care, education, housing and other liberal priorities.

"Bernie is holding the flank on the left. If he doesn't run for president, then the whole horizon shifts, and universal health care maybe gets taken off the table," Gautney said. "In my view, he is an absolutely necessary part of our political system."

Sanders may not be taken seriously by some in the political establishment, but he would be a force in the 2020 contest should he run. Having nearly beaten Hillary Clinton in the 2016 contest, he boasts an engaged nationwide network, an incredible grassroots fundraising ability, and would almost certainly take some of the very same voters being courted by likely 2020 contenders such as Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker and former Texas Congressman Beto O'Rourke.

Former Sanders' staffer Giulianna Di Lauro Velez, who alleged she was harassed during the 2016 campaign, wrote Thursday in *The Intercept* that sexual harassment is prevalent in many political campaigns. But she wrote that new allegations on Sanders 2016 campaign indicate "the depth of the problem was likely deeper than most knew."

She called on Sanders to "take the rare step of setting up an independent investigation into the 2016 allegations."

A Sanders spokesman did not immediately respond to questions about Velez's comments.

Earlier in the day, Sanders apologized, as he did last week, for the harm done under his watch and offered a direct message to women affected.

"I thank them from the bottom of my heart for speaking out. What they experienced was absolutely

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unacceptable and certainly not what a progressive campaign — or any campaign — should be about,” Sanders said during an unrelated Capitol Hill press conference, highlighting mandatory training and a third-party hotline instituted during his subsequent Senate re-election to safeguard against further harassment.

Sanders added: “Every woman in this country who goes to work today or tomorrow has the right to make sure that she is working in an environment which is free of harassment, which is safe and is comfortable, and I will do my best to make that happen.”

Sanders’ critics in the Democratic Party — and many remain three years after his heated feud with Clinton — seized on the new revelations as reason to abandon any 2020 plans.

“These allegations inform us that Bernie is really not concerned about the well-being of women. And therefore, he would not represent us well as the president,” said Toni Van Pelt, president of the National Organization for Women. “I really think Bernie needs to sit down.”

Sanders’ vast political network does not agree.

Several groups allied with the Vermont senator have ramped up activities in recent days to bolster a likely presidential bid. Our Revolution launched a “Run Bernie Run” online campaign and petition drive on Wednesday while groups like People for Bernie Sanders and Organizing for Bernie plan to host nearly 400 events across the country on Saturday encouraging a second run.

Katherine Brezler, co-founder of People for Bernie Sanders, said the allegations of sexual harassment had absolutely no impact on her preference for Sanders. The New York activist said that sexual harassment was present in virtually every one of the 100 or so campaigns she’s worked on.

“I’ve met those people and they’re not Bernie Sanders,” Brezler said. “We are not going anywhere.”

Associated Press writers Elana Schor and Juana Summers in Washington contributed to this report.

Tearful Murray: Australian Open could be his last tournament

By JOHN PYE, AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Andy Murray is still hoping to make it to one more Wimbledon tournament before his problematic hip forces him into retirement. For now, he’s only committing to the Australian Open.

In an emotional news conference Friday, when a tearful Murray had to leave the room shortly after his first attempt to get it started, and needed to pause several times to compose himself once it had resumed, he confirmed he’d play his first-round match at the Australian Open next week but wasn’t sure how much longer he could continue beyond that.

The 31-year-old Murray said he practiced in the off-season with the main goal of making one last run at Wimbledon, where he ended the 77-year drought for British men with his title in 2013, but now wasn’t sure he’d make it that far.

“I can still play to a level — not a level I’m happy playing at,” he said. “But also, it’s not just that. The pain is too much really.

“I don’t want to continue playing that way. I tried pretty much everything that I could to get it right — that hasn’t worked.”

The three-time Grand Slam champion is scheduled to open against No. 22-ranked Roberto Bautista Agut at Melbourne Park, where the season-opening major begins Monday.

He has reached the final five times at the Australian Open but never won the title. Getting through the first round will be a major achievement in 2019 for the former No. 1-ranked Murray, who has slumped to No. 230 after playing just 12 matches last year following surgery on his right hip in January.

He opened this season last week at the Brisbane International, where he won his opening match against James Duckworth but lost in the second round to Daniil Medvedev, showing visible signs of limping between points and struggling to move freely around court. He had an incomplete practice match against long-time friend and top-ranked Novak Djokovic on Thursday at Melbourne Park, but only won two games.

Murray has had a celebrated career, breaking long Grand Slam droughts for British men when he won the U.S. Open in 2012 and at Wimbledon the following year — when he was the first British man since Fred

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Perry in 1936 to win the prestigious lawn tennis title. He also became the only player to win consecutive singles gold medals at the Olympics when he won at London in 2012 and Rio in 2016.

Long considered part of the so-called Big Four in men's tennis with Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, Murray likely will be the youngest of them to retire after 20 months of trying to deal with his painful hip.

At 37, Federer is in Australia attempting to win the title for the third consecutive year and for a seventh time overall. At 31, top-ranked Djokovic is at Melbourne Park also trying to win a seventh Australian title. The 32-year-old Nadal is ranked No. 2 and confident of extending his career for several years.

Murray has been preparing for the 2019 season knowing that his career could be over within months. In his training program last month, he told his support group that the pain was becoming too much and that he needed to set a date for retirement.

"I spoke to my team and I told them I can't keep doing this, that I needed to have an end point because (I was) sort of playing with no idea when the pain was going to stop," he told the news conference Friday. "I said to my team 'I think I can get through to Wimbledon' ... that's where I would like to stop — stop playing."

Murray added, becoming tearful again, "But I'm also not certain I'm able to do that.

"I'm not sure I'm able to play through the pain for another four or five months."

Players and coaches around the world rallied around Murray. Juan Martin del Potro, who has struggled with injuries throughout his career, posted a message on Twitter expressing his support: "Andy, just watched your conference. Please don't stop trying. Keep fighting ... You deserve to retire on your own terms."

Commentator Darren Cahill praised his contribution to the sport, as did fellow player Grigor Dimitrov.

Murray said he's considering another hip operation, more to improve his quality of life than as a way of returning to the top level in tennis.

"I have the option to have another operation, which is a little bit more severe than what I've had before — having my hip resurfaced," he said. "That's something that I'm seriously considering right now. Some athletes have had that and have gone back to competing (but) the reason for having an operation like that is not to return to professional sports, you know, it's just for a better quality of life."

Murray said he'd spoken extensively to long-time doubles star Bob Bryan about recovering from a similar operation, but couldn't see himself recovering to be fit enough for singles and he wasn't considering transitioning to doubles.

"I have a severely damaged right hip," he said. "Obviously you see me running around a tennis court, walking in between points, and obviously I know it doesn't look good ... look comfortable.

"But there's little things, day-to-day, that are also a struggle. It would be nice to be able to do them without any pain: putting shoes on, socks on, thinks like that. That's the main reason for doing it."

More AP Tennis: <https://www.apnews.com/apf-Tennis> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

AP FACT CHECK: Trump falsely claims Obama support for wall

By HOPE YEN and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the deceptive use of a video, President Donald Trump on Thursday heartily thanked his White House predecessor for supporting his policy at the Mexican border. Barack Obama has offered no such support; only criticism.

Trump also denied that he ever expected Mexico to make a direct payment for his border wall, despite a call in a campaign policy paper for a "one-time payment" from Mexico of \$5 billion to \$10 billion, with options for Mexico to contribute in alternative ways. Mexico is refusing to contribute at all.

A look at Trump's statements Thursday as he traveled to Texas to make his case for what he calls a security and humanitarian crisis, a possible precursor to declaring a national emergency at the border:

OBAMA VIDEO

TRUMP: "President Obama, thank you for your great support — I have been saying this all along!" —

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tweet, accompanied by video of Obama speaking as president in 2014.

TRUMP: "Obama used to call it a crisis at the border, too." — remarks before departing the White House for Texas.

THE FACTS: Obama's remarks in the short video clip do not support Trump's proposal for a border wall or endorse the path Trump is considering now: declaring a national emergency that might enable him to circumvent Congress and unilaterally spend money on the wall. Instead, Obama was asking Congress to approve an emergency appropriation to deal with a surge of tens of thousands of unaccompanied children and youth, mostly from Central American, trying to cross the border from Mexico.

"We now have an actual humanitarian crisis on the border," Obama said at the time, accompanied by Vice President Joe Biden. He was referring specifically to the surge of minors that year.

That crisis eventually eased as the U.S. stepped up border enforcement, surveillance and resources for the waves of unaccompanied children. Now, a sharp increase in the number of families at the border, coupled with the Trump administration's hard-line stance, is overwhelming border resources, worsening a backlog in the asylum system and leaving migrants to live in abysmal conditions on the Mexican side.

Trump, however, has been unable to convince Congress that the border poses a national security risk. He has made a series of statements falsely claiming that terrorists are pouring in from Mexico, that a wall would choke off shipments of illicit drugs, which actually come mainly through legal ports of entry, and that people who get in the country illegally commit a disproportionate share of violent crime.

Late in his presidency, Obama was repeatedly critical of Trump's immigration stance and the wall specifically. In May 2016, for example, he said: "Suggesting that we can build an endless wall along our borders, and blame our challenges on immigrants — that doesn't just run counter to our history as the world's melting pot; it contradicts the evidence that our growth and our innovation and our dynamism has always been spurred by our ability to attract strivers from every corner of the globe."

MEXICO AND THE WALL

TRUMP, on Mexico paying for the wall: "I never meant they're going to write out a check." — remarks before departure to Texas.

TRUMP: "Mexico is paying for the wall indirectly. And when I said Mexico will pay for the wall, in front of thousands and thousands of people, obviously they're not going to write a check." — remarks before departure.

TRUMP: "They're paying for the wall in a great trade deal." — remarks in Texas.

THE FACTS: Actually, a Trump campaign policy paper envisaged an explicit payment from Mexico: "It's an easy decision for Mexico: make a one-time payment of \$5-10 billion," the paper said.

The plan also outlined various ways for Trump to compel Mexico to pay for the wall, such as by Washington cutting off billions of dollars in remittances sent back to Mexico by immigrants living in the U.S., or by recouping the money through trade tariffs or higher visa fees. None of that has happened.

Instead, Trump is arguing that the updated trade agreement with Canada and Mexico will pay for the wall because of economic benefits he predicts will come from the deal. Nothing in the trade agreement would cover or refund the construction cost or require a payment from Mexico. Instead, he is assuming a wide variety of economic benefits will come from the agreement that can't be quantified or counted on. For example, he has said the deal will dissuade some U.S. companies from moving operations to Mexico and he credits that possibility as a payment by Mexico.

The agreement preserves the existing liberalized environment of low or no tariffs among the U.S., Mexico and Canada, with certain improvements for each country. The deal has yet to be ratified in any member country and there is no assurance it will win legislative approval.

Although his campaign left open the possibility that Mexico might somehow contribute to the cost indirectly, Trump roused his crowds with the straight-ahead promise: "I will have Mexico pay for that wall."

Again and again at his rallies, Trump asked his crowds dramatically who would pay for the wall.

"Mexico," they responded.

"Who?" he's asked again.

"Mexico," they roared.

Now he is saying his words were not meant to be taken literally.

Associated Press writers Cal Woodward, Colleen Long and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Trump campaign policy on Mexico paying for wall: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160721080848/https://www.donaldjtrump.com/positions/pay-for-the-wall>

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Cohen, ex-Trump lawyer, to testify publicly before Congress

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, ERIC TUCKER and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, will testify publicly before a House committee next month in a hearing that could serve as the opening salvo of a promised Democratic effort to scrutinize Trump, his conflicts of interest and his ties to Russia.

The House Oversight and Reform Committee announced Thursday that Cohen will appear before that panel Feb. 7, a little more than a month after the Democrats took the House majority.

The hearing marks the latest step in Cohen's transformation from a trusted legal adviser to the president to a public antagonist who has cooperated extensively against him. Although Democrats say the questioning will be limited to avoid interfering with open investigations, the hearing is still likely to pull back the curtain on key episodes involving Trump's personal life and business dealings, including hush-money payments to women and a proposed Moscow real estate deal, that federal prosecutors have been dissecting for months.

Cohen is a pivotal figure in investigations by special counsel Robert Mueller into potential coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign and by federal prosecutors in New York into campaign finance violations related to payments to buy the silence of a porn actress and a former Playboy Playmate who say they had sex with Trump. Federal prosecutors have said Trump directed those payments during the campaign.

Trump has denied having the extramarital affairs.

Cohen has pleaded guilty in both investigations and was sentenced last month to three years in prison. An adviser to Cohen, Lanny Davis, said shortly after he was sentenced that the former political fixer wanted to testify and "state publicly all he knows."

In a statement released on Thursday, Cohen said he had accepted the invitation "in furtherance of my commitment to cooperate and provide the American people with answers."

Cohen added: "I look forward to having the privilege of being afforded a platform with which to give a full and credible account of the events which have transpired."

Trump has denied wrongdoing and sought to minimize Cohen's statements by painting him as a liar. Asked by reporters in Texas on Thursday about Cohen's appearance, Trump said he's "not worried about it at all."

Cohen acknowledged in the Mueller investigation that he lied to Congress by saying negotiations over a Trump Tower in Moscow had ended in January 2016 when he actually pursued the project into that June, well into Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. In New York, he acknowledged his involvement in payments to porn actress Stormy Daniels and former Playboy model Karen McDougal.

The chairman of the oversight panel, Democratic Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, said the committee is consulting with Mueller's office about the testimony. He told reporters on Thursday that "there will be limitations" on the topics covered in Cohen's testimony.

"We don't want to do anything to interfere with the Mueller investigation — absolutely nothing," Cummings said.

The panel's top Republican, Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, said Cohen's appearance shows that Cummings is using the "committee as a venue for political theater rather than legitimate oversight," noting how Cohen has admitted knowingly lying to Congress and is a witness in ongoing investigations.

"This makes clear that Chairman Cummings and the Democrats will do whatever it takes to attack this President," Jordan said in a statement.

A spokesman for Mueller declined to comment.

Cummings has signaled that his committee is more interested in investigating the president's involvement in the campaign violations to which Cohen pleaded guilty last year.

Cummings has sent document requests to the White House and the Trump Organization that seek to determine why Trump, who reimbursed Cohen for the hush-money payments, omitted that debt on his public financial disclosure form. Cummings is also requesting a raft of potentially revealing communications about the payments and other legal services Cohen provided for the president and his company.

The oversight hearing may not be Cohen's only appearance. House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., said he welcomes Cohen's testimony before the oversight panel, but "it will be necessary, however, for Mr. Cohen to answer questions pertaining to the Russia investigation, and we hope to schedule a closed session before our committee in the near future."

Cohen testified before the House intelligence panel in a closed-door hearing in 2017, before his role in the federal investigations was fully known and when Republicans controlled the committee. The GOP-led committee later ended its investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, saying there was no evidence of collusion or conspiracy between Trump's campaign and Russia.

Schiff wants to restart parts of that probe.

The Senate intelligence committee has also asked Cohen to return. He spoke to that panel in 2017.

"The request still stands, regardless of any public testimony Mr. Cohen may give on other issues," its chairman, Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., said in a statement.

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey in McAllen, Texas, and Darlene Superville and Padmananda Rama in Washington contributed to this report.

Sheriff: Jayme Closs found alive, suspect in custody

By TODD RICHMOND, Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A 13-year-old northwestern Wisconsin girl who went missing in October after her parents were killed has been found alive in a rural town about an hour from her home, authorities said Thursday.

The Barron County Sheriff's Department said on its Facebook page that Jayme Closs has been located and that a suspect was taken into custody. Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald said Jayme was expected to be reunited with her family Thursday night.

Fitzgerald said authorities in Douglas County, about 70 miles north of Barron County, located the girl. The Douglas County Sheriff's Office confirmed on its website that Jayme was found in the Town of Gordon at 4:43 p.m. Thursday, and that a suspect was taken into custody 11 minutes later.

Neither statement gave any further information about the suspect. Jayme's grandfather, Robert Naiberg, told the Minneapolis Star Tribune that Jayme was being treated at a hospital.

Sue Allard, Jayme's aunt, told the Star Tribune that she could barely express her joy after learning the news Thursday night.

"Praise the Lord," Allard said between sobs. "It's the news we've been waiting on for three months. I can't wait to get my arms around her. I just can't wait."

The Barron County sheriff's office plans to hold a news conference Friday morning to discuss the case. Gillian Drummond, a spokeswoman for the Wisconsin Department of Justice, and Leonard Peace, a spokesman for the FBI in Wisconsin, declined comment Thursday evening. Both agencies have been involved in the search for Jayme.

Jayme has been missing since her parents, James and Denise Closs, were found shot to death Oct. 15 in the family's home near Barron. Investigators said Jayme was quickly ruled out as a suspect.

Detectives pursued thousands of tips, watched dozens of surveillance videos and conducted numer-

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ous searches in the effort to find Jayme. Some tips led officials to recruit 2,000 volunteers for a massive ground search on Oct. 23 but it yielded no clues.

Fitzgerald said in November that he kept similar cases in the back of his mind as he worked to find Jayme, including the abduction of Elizabeth Smart, who was taken from her Salt Lake City home in 2002, when she was 14 years old. She was rescued nine months later with the help of two witnesses who recognized her abductors from an "America's Most Wanted" episode.

"I have a gut feeling she's (Jayme's) still alive. I've always been a glass half-full kind of guy," Fitzgerald said at the time.

The Town of Gordon lies about 40 miles south of the Lake Superior shoreline and 65 miles north of Barron, where the Closs family lived. Gordon is home to about 645 people. The area is heavily forested. Logging is the top industry in the region.

Town Chairman Denny Kline said Jayme was found about six miles east of town. He described the area as a small-town development with single-family, cabin-like homes.

He said he first learned Jayme had been found while listening to a police scanner, adding that he heard Jayme was walking down the road and someone stopped near her. Kline said he heard over the scanner that Jayme told them who she was and they brought her to their home.

"A lot of people were very concerned, did a lot of praying and all that," he said. "Prayers were answered, for finding her, anyway."

Resident Kristin Kasinskas told the Star Tribune that a neighbor waking a dog knocked on her door Thursday afternoon. Standing with her was a skinny, dirty girl with matted hair, wearing shoes too big for her feet.

"This is Jayme Closs! Call 911!" the neighbor said to Kasinskas. Jayme was quiet, her emotions "pretty flat," Kasinskas' husband, Peter, said.

The woman who found Jayme asked the newspaper not to use her name.

In the 20 minutes Jayme was in their home, the Kasinskas tried to make her feel more comfortable, they said. They offered her water and food, but she declined both.

Jayme told the couple she didn't know where she was or anything about Gordon. From what she told them, they believe she was there for most of her disappearance.

"I honestly still think I'm dreaming right now. It was like I was seeing a ghost," Peter Kasinskas said. "My jaw just went to the floor."

The Associated Press was not able to verify the Kasinskases' account with authorities late Thursday. The non-emergency line at the Douglas County Sheriff's Office rang unanswered and Sheriff Thomas Dalbec didn't respond to an email.

Barron Mayor Ron Fladten said Thursday night he hadn't heard any details about Jayme's discovery yet but was overjoyed at learning she is alive.

"There was a lot of discouragement because this took quite a while to play out," Fladten said. "A lot of people have been praying daily, as I have. It's just a great result we got tonight. It's unbelievable. It's like taking a big black cloud in the sky and getting rid of it and the sun comes out again."

He acknowledged that Jayme may not be the same person she was before she disappeared.

"I hope that she's in good shape," the mayor said. "She's no doubt been through just a terrible ordeal. I think everybody wishes her a good recovery and a happy life going into the future."

The notification that Jayme had been found came just four hours after Fitzgerald had taken to Twitter to debunk a report that she had been found alive near Walworth County. Douglas County, where Jayme was found, is hundreds of miles northwest of Walworth County.

Associated Press writer Amy Forliti in Minneapolis contributed to this report.

How you (and your finances) can survive the federal shutdown

By SARAH SKIDMORE SELL, AP Personal Finance Writer

There's no end in sight to the partial federal shutdown and, more distressing to federal workers, no paycheck in sight either.

The shutdown has furloughed 380,000 federal workers and forced an additional 420,000 to work without pay. President Donald Trump has said he is willing to keep the government closed for months or even years to get his demands met. But even if an agreement is reached and the government reopens, it could be some time before anyone earns a fresh paycheck or gets potential back pay.

It's a burden that few American households can bear without strain. Some experts weigh in with tips on how to cope:

PRIORITIZE YOUR BILLS

Sit down and take a good look at what bills are due, or will be due soon.

Rank your obligations by importance in case you cannot meet them all. Mortgage and utility bills should top the list, followed by credit card payments and any other revolving debt. Consider making just the minimum payments on your credit cards for now. Then look at any other spending to figure out what is essential and what can be trimmed. Limit spending to must-have items only until pay resumes.

CONTACT LENDERS

Contact the lenders for your mortgage, credit cards, auto loans and any other expenses to discuss your options.

The upside is that companies are aware of the situation and a number of them are offering help.

Chase, for one, has been automatically refunding overdraft or monthly service fees for customers who had direct deposit of federal government paychecks to savings and checking accounts since the shutdown began. It also is offering various hardship options for its auto, credit card and mortgage customers. AT&T said that it will waive late fees, provide extensions and otherwise work with customers on flexible payments for phone, internet and television service as long as the shutdown is in effect.

Several large banks, such as Bank of America and Wells Fargo, are also making their hardship programs available to federal workers and others hurt by the shutdown. The terms vary but typically include options for delayed payment, waived fees or loan modifications on various products. Smaller banks are taking steps as well: Oceanfirst Bank in New Jersey said it will grant forbearance or temporarily suspend mortgage payments for up to 90 days for borrowers whose income is affected by the shutdown.

But you must contact the companies to get any sort of assistance.

FIND FUNDS

It's time to find some money to tide you over.

Households without emergency savings should consider other sources of cash, such as selling assets, be it stock or unused items around the house. Other options include withdrawals from a Roth IRA, which are tax and penalty free; borrowing from cash value life insurance policies; or tapping a home equity line of credit.

Consider borrowing from family, if it isn't too fraught with complications.

There are decent opportunities to borrow elsewhere as well. Some banks, such as Navy Federal Credit Union are offering certain customers affected by the shutdown a loan of up to \$6,000 at 0 percent APR. Others, such as USAA, are offering low-interest loans to certain impacted workers. The American Federation of Teachers, a union that represents a number of federal government employees, is also offering interest-free loans for its impacted members.

Try and avoid riskier sources for money, such as raiding your retirement stash or college savings for the kids; the long-term negatives might not be worth the short-term relief. Avoid title loans or payday lending as the interest rates are exorbitant. While some use of credit cards is understandable, be aware that those balances may become due before your pay resumes.

CONSIDER UNEMPLOYMENT

You may be able to seek unemployment depending on your job and where you live. Unemployment

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rules are determined by state law, so whether you qualify is based the state you live in, said Tom Spiggle, founder of Spiggle Law Firm in D.C.

A word of warning: You'd be obligated to repay the state for any benefits you received if you are granted unemployment but later receive back pay.

GET A SIDE HUSTLE

Federal workers can find another paying job as long as there is no ethics rule or statute that prohibits it, Spiggle said. Some positions may prohibit you from doing related work but may allow you to do unrelated work.

The U.S. Coast Guard suggested employees hold garage sales or offer to babysit, walk pets or housesit to earn cash — tips that were perceived by many as tone-deaf and were later removed from a support program website. But sadly, it may come to that for many families. The flexibility and cash found through the gig economy may prove essential for some workers.

Barbara O'Neil, a financial planner and professor at Rutgers University, suggests workers should inventory their skill set and think about ways to convert those into an income stream.

However, time may be an issue for those working without pay. Spiggle said there has been some speculation that the TSA agents who called in sick were doing so to work other jobs to make ends meet. He warns that is an improper use of sick leave and could get a worker disciplined or even fired.

SEEK ASSISTANCE

If you find you cannot get by, look into what public assistance is available. Call 211 or visit www.211.org to find out what human services programs are available in your community. Examples include SNAP — the supplemental nutrition assistance program — energy assistance and food pantries. Several food pantries nationwide have made themselves available for those individuals or families at risk of going hungry due to the shutdown.

TALK IT OUT

There is a sense of powerlessness to this situation that is frustrating for workers, said Dennis Nolte, vice president and financial planner at Sea Coast Investment Services in Florida. Workers have "have no earthly idea when they'll be able to go back to work" and are stuck in an odd limbo between employed and unemployed. He recommends talking to friends or relatives or forming a group with co-workers to commiserate about uncertainty to help keep the stress in check.

At the border, Trump moves closer to emergency declaration

By CATHERINE LUCEY, LISA MASCARO and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — Taking the shutdown fight to the Mexican border, President Donald Trump edged closer Thursday to declaring a national emergency in an extraordinary end run around Congress to fund his long-promised border wall. Pressure was mounting to find an escape hatch from the three-week impasse that has closed parts of the government, cutting scattered services and leaving hundreds of thousands of workers without pay.

Trump, visiting McAllen, Texas, and the Rio Grande to highlight what he says is a crisis of drugs and crime, said that "if for any reason we don't get this going" — an agreement with House Democrats who have refused to approve the \$5.7 billion he demands for the wall — "I will declare a national emergency."

Some 800,000 workers, more than half of them still on the job, were to miss their first paycheck on Friday under the stoppage, and Washington was close to setting a dubious record for the longest government shutdown in the nation's history. Those markers — along with growing effects to national parks, food inspections and the economy overall — left some Republicans on Capitol Hill increasingly uncomfortable with Trump's demands.

Asked about the plight of those going without pay, the president shifted the focus, saying he felt badly "for people that have family members that have been killed" by criminals who came over the border.

Trump was consulting with White House attorneys and allies about using presidential emergency powers to take unilateral action to construct the wall over the objections of Congress. He claimed his lawyers told

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him the action would withstand legal scrutiny “100 percent.”

Such a move to bypass Congress’ constitutional control of the nation’s purse strings would spark certain legal challenges and bipartisan cries of executive overreach.

A congressional official said the White House has directed the Army Corps of Engineers to look for billions of dollars earmarked last year for disaster response for Puerto Rico and other areas that could be diverted to a border wall as part of the emergency declaration. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak publicly.

“We’re either going to have a win, make a compromise — because I think a compromise is a win for everybody — or I will declare a national emergency,” Trump said before departing the White House for his politically flavored visit to the border. He wore his campaign-slogan “Make America Great Again” cap throughout.

It was not clear what a compromise might entail, and there were no indications that one was in the offing. Trump says he won’t reopen the government without money for the wall. Democrats say they favor measures to bolster border security but oppose the long, impregnable barrier that Trump envisions.

Vice President Mike Pence shuttled through meetings on Capitol Hill, but there were no signs of any breakthroughs. Pence panned, for now, a last-ditch effort led by GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina to strike a bipartisan immigration compromise. It would have linked wall funding to deportation protections for some immigrants, including young people here illegally known as Dreamers. But Pence, in a briefing with reporters, said the president prefers to wait for the courts to decide that issue.

Graham sounded deflated after talks among senators essentially collapsed, and said, “It is time for President Trump to use emergency powers” to fund wall construction.

Pence said the president has “made no decision” about declaring a national emergency, but added, “The president’s going to get this done one way or the other.”

Visiting a border patrol station in McAllen, Trump viewed tables piled with weapons and narcotics. Like nearly all drugs trafficked across the border, they were intercepted by agents at official ports of entry, he was told, and not in the remote areas where he wants to extend tall barriers.

Still, he declared: “A wall works. ... Nothing like a wall.”

He argued that the U.S. can’t solve the problem without a “very substantial barrier” along the border, but offered exaggerations about the effectiveness of border walls and current apprehensions of those crossing illegally.

Sitting among border patrol officers, state and local officials and military representatives, Trump insisted he was “winning” the shutdown fight and criticized Democrats for asserting he was manufacturing a sense of crisis in order to declare an emergency. “What is manufactured is the use of the word ‘manufactured,’” Trump said.

As he arrived in Texas, several hundred protesters near the airport in McAllen chanted and waved signs opposing a wall. Across the street, a smaller group chanted back: “Build that wall!”

In Washington, federal workers denounced Trump at a rally with congressional Democrats, demanding he reopen the government so they can get back to work.

On Capitol Hill, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi accused the president of engaging in political games to fire up his most loyal supporters, suggesting that a heated meeting Wednesday with legislators at the White House had been “a setup” so that Trump could walk out of it.

In an ominous sign for those seeking a swift end to the showdown, Trump announced he was canceling his trip to Davos, Switzerland, scheduled for later this month, citing Democrats’ “intransigence” on border security. He was to leave Jan. 21 to attend the World Economic Forum.

The partial shutdown would set a record early Saturday, stretching beyond the 21-day closure that ended on Jan 6, 1996, during President Bill Clinton’s administration.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Colleen Long, Alan Fram, Deb Riechmann and Zeke Miller in Washington and Nomaan Merchant in McAllen, Texas, contributed to this report.

For AP's complete coverage of the U.S. government shutdown: <https://apnews.com/GovernmentShutdown>

This story has been corrected to say 21-day shutdown was during Clinton, not Bush administration.

Man who fired on police station sentenced to 195 years

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, Associated Press

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (AP) — A gunman sentenced to 195 years in prison for an attack on a police station apologized Thursday to the parents of an undercover narcotics detective who was mistakenly shot and killed by a fellow officer during the ambush.

Before a judge sentenced him, Michael Ford said he didn't intend to harm anybody but himself when he opened fire on a Prince George's County police station in March 2016. In November, a jury convicted Ford, 25, of second-degree murder in the killing of Detective Jacai Colson even though he didn't fire the shot that killed the four-year veteran of the county's police department.

"That man does not deserve to be dead. I should be dead," Ford told Colson's parents.

Before hearing Ford's apology, James and Sheila Colson criticized authorities for not seeking criminal charges against the officer who killed their son. Jacai Colson exchanged gunfire with Ford before Officer Taylor Krauss fatally shot the 28-year-old plainclothes detective with a rifle, mistaking him for a threat.

Sheila Colson described Krauss as careless and reckless and said she believes her son was killed because he was black. Ford also is black. Krauss is white.

"Not once did I get an, 'I'm sorry,' from Taylor Krauss. Not once," she said.

She and her husband also accused police officials of lying to them about the circumstances of their son's death, misleading them to believe he was caught in a crossfire.

"To this day, no one can give me an explanation for why my son was shot," she said, fighting back tears.

Ford's two younger brothers, Malik and Elijah Ford, drove him to the police station and recorded video of the shooting with their cellphones. Though not accused of firing any shots, they pleaded guilty to related charges and were sentenced Thursday to 20 and 12 years in prison, respectively.

Circuit Court Judge Lawrence Hill Jr. told Malik and Elijah that they "sold their brother down the river out of greed" for the car he promised to leave them. The judge told Michael Ford he has no doubt he tried to kill officers and civilians even if he intended to die himself.

"You are responsible for the death of Jacai Colson," he said.

Ford testified he was trying to get himself killed by police when he fired his handgun nearly two dozen times outside the station. He said he didn't intend for anyone else to be harmed.

County prosecutor Joseph Ruddy argued Ford's actions created a "combat zone" and caused Colson's death even though he didn't fire the fatal shot. Ford didn't hit anybody when he fired 23 shots from a handgun, but bullets he fired struck two passing vehicles and an ambulance, according to Ruddy.

"That was no suicide mission. That was a mission to kill cops," the prosecutor had said in the trial's closing arguments.

Krauss testified that he never saw Colson hold up a badge or heard him identify himself as a police officer before shooting him once in the chest.

A grand jury declined to indict Krauss on any charges related to Colson's shooting. Colson's parents sued Krauss and Prince George's County.

County Executive Angela Alsobrooks, who was the county's top prosecutor when Michael Ford was charged and tried, said she "spent many hours walking the Colsons through every piece of evidence, walking the crime scene with them, and we answered every question they had."

"Ultimately a grand jury of 23 Prince Georgians reviewed that evidence and declined to indict Officer Krauss," Alsobrooks said in a statement. "I can never begin to understand what they feel as grieving parents, and my thoughts and prayers continue to be with the Colson family."

Ford's brothers recorded cellphone videos of the ambush after dropping him off at the station in Landover, a suburb of Washington, D.C. They agreed to film the shooting so the video could be sent to a website

known for posting users' violent videos, a police detective testified in 2016.

One of the videos shows Ford screaming obscenities and shouting, "Do something!" in between shots. Ford, then 22, also dictated his last will and testament on video minutes earlier.

Ford said he was hearing voices in his head the day of the shooting.

Hill ruled before the trial that Ford couldn't present an insanity defense despite his serious mental health issues.

Antoini Jones, Ford's attorney, told jurors that Colson didn't match the gunman's description apart from his race. At the start of the trial, Jones said the evidence would show the detective was shot "because he was black."

Colson was a Boothwyn, Pennsylvania, native. He and Krauss worked in the narcotics unit together, seated at connecting desks.

Prince Georgia's County Police Chief Hank Stawinski issued a statement afterward that "the sentences as rendered today can never assuage the pain, loss and the years of healing that remain before us all."

He didn't address accusations by Colson's parents that police officials had lied to them but directed words to the family and others, saying, "I wish peace upon the Colson family, this institution, and our community."

Payday without pay hits federal workers as shutdown drags on

By BRADY McCOMBS and JULIET LINDERMAN, Associated Press

OGDEN, Utah (AP) — Payday will come Friday without any checks for about 800,000 federal employees affected by the government shutdown, forcing workers to scale back spending, cancel trips, apply for unemployment benefits and take out loans to stay afloat.

IRS employee Krystle Kirkpatrick and her family, including her two children, ages 6 and 12, aren't eating out, buying brand-name foods or getting drinks at the gas station. Her husband is working overtime in his job as a machinist to try to make up for her lost paycheck.

Her mortgage company informed her it won't let her skip a payment, and she still has to pay daycare even though her children aren't going or she will lose their spot to another family on the waiting list. She has applied for unemployment but doesn't know when the benefits will begin arriving.

"It's a very scary feeling to know that your payday is coming and nothing is coming," the Ogden woman said. "I don't think the administration and the houses of Congress understand the repercussions of not having a paycheck."

The shutdown, which enters its 21st day Friday, will be the longest in history by this weekend and is forcing many American families to make tough decisions. It's especially hard for workers who don't have enough savings to cover their mortgages and other bills.

Roughly 420,000 federal employees were deemed essential and are working unpaid. An additional 380,000 are staying home without pay. While furloughed federal workers have been given back pay in previous shutdowns, it's not guaranteed that will happen this time. Government contractors, who have been placed indefinitely on unpaid leave, don't get compensated for lost hours.

Most of the government workers received their last paycheck two weeks ago, and Friday will be the first payday with no money.

At a rally Thursday in Ogden, about 100 furloughed IRS employees gathered outside the federal building to call for an end to the shutdown, chanting, "We want to work, we want to work."

Kandice Johns held a sign that read, "Congress do your job. We want to work." But Tiauna Guerra was more critical of President Donald Trump: "If he wouldn't be so for the wall and trying to make this happen, maybe we wouldn't in this situation?"

Around the country, some workers are relying on donations, including launching GoFundMe campaigns. A food pantry has opened up at a Coast Guard base in Boston. Some workers are thinking about taking second jobs.

Michelle Wallace, a 34-year-old mother of four, made a tough decision Thursday after she realized there would be no last-minute deal to end the shutdown, meaning her husband, a federal worker, would miss

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a paycheck.

A nurse fresh out of school and strapped with student debt, Wallace told her 16-year-old son that the family couldn't go to his basketball tournament in a neighboring town an hour away from their home in the Peoria, Illinois, area because they couldn't afford to buy tickets or use the half-tank of gas it would take to get there.

"We want to be there to support him," Wallace said through tears. "But there's no end in sight for the government opening back up, I don't know when we'll have enough money coming in, and I can't justify spending anything."

Theodore Atkinson, a furloughed trial attorney in the Justice Department's civil division, said he is spending "extraordinarily stressful" days anxiously watching the news at his home in Baltimore.

He was told to stay home during the last government shutdown in 2013. But this time, he had little time to prepare for a missed paycheck or tie up loose ends with the cases he is working on, he said.

With two children and a mortgage, child support and alimony payments, Atkinson said he has taken out a personal loan to cover two paychecks, just to be safe. But if the shutdown stretches into February, he may need to take out another.

"It's all uncertain and I don't know how it ends or resolves itself," he said. "This isn't a matter of me not going to the movies or out to eat as much. I can't cut off my power or my cellphone or move out of my house."

Daniel Lickey, one of 3,750 workers on furlough from the IRS office in Ogden, said he won't be able to send money to his parents, who are raising his special-needs niece and nephew. He will also have to lean on a single mother he shares a duplex with to pay his share of rent this month.

Most worrisome to Lickey is the possibility he will not be able to buy the medicine he takes for his bipolar disorder, which costs \$75 with insurance. He just used his savings to fix his car.

"Without my medication, my suicidal thoughts and tendencies ramp up," said Lickey, 32. "I don't want to go to that dark and scary place."

Documentary puts new attention on R. Kelly sex allegations

By **RUSSELL CONTRERAS** and **MICHAEL TARM**, Associated Press

R. Kelly, one of the top-selling recording artists of all time, has been dogged for years by allegations of sexual misconduct involving women and underage girls — accusations he and his attorneys have long denied.

But an Illinois prosecutor's plea for potential victims and witnesses to come forward and new protests have sparked hope among some advocates that the R&B star might face criminal charges.

"Please come forward. There's nothing that can be done to investigate these allegations without cooperation between victims and witnesses," Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx said Tuesday at a news conference in Chicago. "We cannot seek justice without you."

Still, some legal experts and prosecutors say it may be difficult to bring charges. Accusers and witnesses would have to speak out, and even then, prosecutors could have a hard time winning a conviction.

In recent days, Kelly has faced increased pressure from advocates who have protested outside of his Chicago studio and demanded that police investigate allegations against minors.

The latest attention comes days after Lifetime aired the documentary "Surviving R. Kelly," which revisited old allegations and brought new ones into the spotlight. The series follows the BBC's "R Kelly: Sex, Girls & Videotapes," which was released last year. It alleged that the singer was holding women against their will and running a "sex cult."

Activists from the #MeToo and #MuteRKelly social media movements have seized on the renewed attention to call for streaming services to drop Kelly's music and promoters not to book any more concerts.

The allegations extend beyond Illinois. A lawyer representing an Atlanta-area couple who appeared in the Lifetime documentary said Georgia prosecutors have reached out to him. Attorney Gerald Griggs represents Timothy and Jonjelyn Savage, who have said repeatedly that Kelly has brainwashed their daughter

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and kept her from contacting them.

Despite the accusations that span decades, the star singer, songwriter and producer who rose from poverty on Chicago's South Side has retained a sizable following.

Kelly broke into the R&B scene in 1993 with his first solo album, "12 Play," which yielded such popular sex-themed songs as "Bump N' Grind" and "Your Body's Callin'." Months later, the then-27-year-old faced allegations he married 15-year-old Aaliyah — a multi-platinum R&B vocalist who later died in a plane crash in the Bahamas. Kelly served as the lead songwriter and producer for Aaliyah's 1994 debut album, "Age Ain't Nothing but a Number."

Kelly and Aaliyah never confirmed the marriage, although Vibe magazine published a copy of the purported marriage license. Court documents later obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times showed Aaliyah admitted lying about her age on the license. In May 1997, she filed suit in Cook County, Illinois, to expunge all records of the marriage, court documents showed.

A judge later agreed to seal the marriage records. Kelly won three Grammys that year for "I Believe I Can Fly," a song that would be sung at churches and graduations across the U.S.

He has not only written numerous hits for himself but for other artists including Celine Dion, Michael Jackson and Lady Gaga. His collaborators have included Jay-Z and Usher.

Still, accusations of inappropriate sexual misconduct followed Kelly for much of his career.

In February 2002, a 27-minute video surfaced that showed a man purported to be Kelly engaged in sex acts involving an underage girl. The singer was later indicted on child pornography charges and it appeared that Kelly's career was in jeopardy.

Almost a year later, Kelly was arrested in Florida after authorities found digital images of the singer allegedly involved in sex acts with an underage girl, but those charges were dropped over a dispute on the search warrant.

Both Kelly and the girl denied they were the ones in the video, even though the quality of the video was good and multiple witnesses at trial testified it was clearly them.

In Chicago, the jury of nine men and three women deliberated for about seven hours before acquitting the singer in 2008 on charges of videotaping himself having sex with a girl who prosecutors allege was as young as 13.

After the acquittal, Kelly vowed not to abandon the explicit music that helped make him famous.

"Absolutely not, and I tell people all the time, man," Kelly told The Associated Press in 2012. "Make no mistake about it, R. Kelly is not going anywhere. It's just that R. Kelly has such a unique talent, and I've been blessed to be able to do all type of genres of music ... I'm exploring my gift right now."

Now 52, his hits have dwindled, but he was still able to sell out arenas across the nation until the pressure of the #MeToo movement damaged his reputation and hurt concert bookings.

He settled at least three lawsuits accusing him of having sex with underage girls filed between 1997 and 2002. One accuser said Kelly forced her to have an abortion.

The accusers, all black women, said years after the trial that Kelly kept them locked up and used them for sex at his will. The Lifetime series interviewed women who said they were physically assaulted, had to ask for permission to eat or use the restroom and were taped engaging in sex acts. Some women said they had to escape or be rescued.

Critics suggested that Kelly's alleged abuse continued and was largely ignored because the victims were black women.

Jim DeRogatis, a longtime music critic for the Chicago Sun-Times, played a key role in drawing the attention of law enforcement to the allegations. He received the recording of the sex tape in the mail in 2002, then turned it over to prosecutors. Kelly was charged months later. In 2017, he wrote a story for BuzzFeed about the allegations Kelly was holding women against their will in Georgia.

Kim Mehlman-Orozco, author of "Hidden in Plain Sight: America's Slaves of the New Millennium" and an expert witness in sex trafficking cases, said she was struck by the similarities from the accusations in the "Surviving R. Kelly" documentary and the stories told by convicted sex traffickers.

"These sex traffickers didn't allow women to talk to each other, and the traffickers compared themselves

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to God," Mehlman-Orozco said.

Kelly's Chicago attorney, Steve Greenberg, said in a phone interview that the allegations in the Lifetime documentary were false.

Winning a conviction under current sex-trafficking laws will be a challenge because Kelly's defense will argue that the women entered into his home willingly and Kelly did not benefit financially from their exploitation, Mehlman-Orozco said. Prosecutors could seek a conviction on lesser charges such as endangerment of a minor or money laundering — charges some alleged sex traffickers have faced.

"But witnesses will have to come forth," Mehlman-Orozco said.

Associated Press Writer Russell Contreras is a member of the AP's race and ethnicity team. Follow Contreras on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/russcontreras>.

Strong economy does little to lift department store sales

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and MICHELLE CHAPMAN, AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — It was supposed to be a great holiday shopping season. Many investors had expected department stores to enjoy robust sales in light of a U.S. economy buoyed by low unemployment, higher wages, strong consumer confidence and cheap gas.

So when Macy's and Kohl's reported lackluster numbers on Thursday, they were taken aback, sending retail stocks into a tailspin and calling into question whether such mall-based chains can compete in a changing landscape where shoppers are shifting more of their spending online.

Macy's saw only a slight increase of 1.1 percent in sales during November-December at stores opened at least year. And while sales were strong during Black Friday and Cyber Monday, the company said sales fell off noticeably until the week of Christmas.

Meanwhile, Kohl's reported a small sales growth that showed a dramatic slowdown from a year ago. Comparable sales rose 1.2 percent, versus 6.9 percent in the previous year.

Shares of Macy's plummeted nearly 18 percent Thursday, suffering its worst one-day decline. Kohl's stock closed down nearly 5 percent. Even Target's stock took a hit, falling nearly 3 percent despite showing strong holiday sales.

Earlier this week, J.C. Penney, one of the stragglers in the department store sector, reported a drop in comparable store sales of 3.5 percent for November and December. But because Macy's is considered a barometer of spending, particularly for the middle class and for mall spending, investors may be looking for deeper meaning in its performance.

"Macy's report spooked investors because investors expected it to be a great holiday season across the board," said Neil Saunders, managing director at GlobalData Retail, a retail research firm. "Now, they're questioning how good the holiday season was. There is a lot of uncertainty out there."

Adding to the uncertainty is that investors will not be getting December's monthly retail sales data next week from the Commerce Department if the government shutdown is still in effect, as most observers expect. Saunders said investors are also worried that a recovery among traditional stores like Macy's is losing momentum, raising concerns that they might have to ramp up investments even more to increase sales.

Analysts say factors like a shift to online spending and consumer preferences for so-called experiences like spas and restaurants have hurt impulse spending that likely put a dent in December's figures for Macy's and Kohl's.

Online sellers are relentlessly growing their share of retail sales. In November, e-commerce and catalog sales jumped 10.8 percent from a year earlier, according to Commerce Department data, more than double the overall sales increase of 4.2 percent. Department store sales slipped 0.2 percent during the same period.

And Marshal Cohen, chief industry adviser at NPD Group, estimates that as much as 40 percent of shoppers bought experiences as gifts this holiday season, up from 25 percent just a few years ago.

Analysts also point to factors that hit Macy's in particular. Some believe, for instance, the company may

not have done enough to make its merchandise and marketing compelling for customers as it tried to compete against online players like Amazon.

Target, on the other hand, bucked the trend by posting strong online growth in November and December. Sales for merchandise ordered online and picked up at stores surged 60 percent. That is key to Target's campaign to hold online retailers like Amazon at bay, particularly during the competitive holiday season, because shoppers can dodge shipping fees.

Target Corp. said Thursday that sales at stores open at least a year increased 5.7 percent in the period, up from 3.4 percent a year earlier. Comparable online sales climbed 29 percent.

The company still expects full-year adjusted earnings in a range of \$5.30 to \$5.50 per share. Analysts polled by FactSet foresee \$5.39 per share. The maintained outlook may have disappointed investors.

Macy's on Thursday lowered its fiscal 2018 earnings outlook to \$3.95 to \$4 per share from its prior per-share earnings for \$4.10 to \$4.30 per share. That's well below the per-share projections of \$4.23 from industry analysts.

AP Economics Writer Chris Rugaber contributed to this report in Washington.

Surgeons fear pelvic mesh lawsuits will spook patients

By GENE JOHNSON, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Doctors who specialize in female pelvic medicine say lawsuits by four states, including Washington and California, over products used to treat pelvic floor disorders and incontinence might scare patients away from the best treatment options — or maybe even push the products off the market.

Sixty-three Washington surgeons signed a letter to state Attorney General Bob Ferguson, arguing his consumer-protection lawsuit against Johnson & Johnson and its Ethicon Inc. subsidiary is off-base. The lawsuit says the companies failed to disclose risks associated with the products, but in their letter the doctors said they were never deceived and that the case is based on a misconception about how they assess dangers posed by medical procedures.

"We have served on national and regional medical societies in women's health," wrote Dr. Jeffrey Clemons, a pelvic reconstructive surgeon in Tacoma. "It is astonishing to us that the AG is proceeding with this lawsuit without first availing themselves of the significant experience and expertise of this group."

Doctors in California are drafting a similar letter to Attorney General Xavier Becerra, and the president of the American Urogynecologic Society, which represents 1,900 medical professionals, has issued a statement expressing some of the same concerns.

Clemons and two other doctors who signed the Washington letter have been retained by defense counsel as consultants in the case, but Clemons said he wrote it without payment or assistance from Johnson & Johnson.

At issue is "transvaginal mesh" — plastic mesh products that are implanted to correct a variety of pelvic floor disorders.

They came on the U.S. market in the late 1990s to treat stress urinary incontinence — a condition triggered by physical activity like coughing, sneezing or running that is common and sometimes debilitating in women after childbirth. The treatment involves using a thin mesh strip, called a "mid-urethral sling," to support the urethra, the tube that carries urine away from the bladder.

The products were so successful — one of the most significant advances in women's health in recent decades, the physicians said — that companies began developing similar mesh products to treat another condition, called pelvic organ prolapse.

In such cases, pelvic organs such as the uterus and bladder drop from their normal position due to muscle weakening. A sheet of mesh can be used to support the pelvic floor.

However, treating pelvic organ prolapse with mesh proved problematic after those products were introduced in 2004. They were more likely to bring serious complications, including permanent incontinence, severe discomfort and an inability to have sex.

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued warnings in 2008 and 2011, and companies pulled most of the transvaginal mesh products for organ prolapse from the market.

Tens of thousands of women have filed liability claims against Johnson & Johnson and other companies, with some saying they knew nothing about the potential complications.

The doctors say Washington's lawsuit conflates the acceptable risks of using pelvic mesh to treat incontinence with the less tolerable risks of using it for pelvic organ prolapse. They're worried it could force mid-urethral slings off the market, though the attorney general's office says that's not the goal.

Washington, California, Kentucky and Mississippi are pursuing lawsuits that claim Johnson & Johnson deceived doctors and patients, and that the surgeries ruined some women's quality of life. They say product marketing brochures and instruction pamphlets should have contained much more detail about the risks.

The company updated its instruction pamphlets in 2015 — effectively admitting the earlier versions were inadequate, Washington state says.

"The purpose of our lawsuit is to require Johnson & Johnson to disclose to doctors and patients the serious risks associated with surgical mesh," Ferguson said in an emailed statement. "Johnson & Johnson knew about these risks for years and misrepresented them for more than a decade, even as it sold thousands of these devices in Washington."

Washington's lawsuit seeks fines for each alleged violation of the state's Consumer Protection Act, an amount that could easily run into the millions. The attorney general's office also wants to bar Ethicon from representing that its surgical mesh is superior to traditional treatments, such as repair using the patient's tissue, and it says a key question is whether the pamphlets could have deceived the least sophisticated surgeons, not the most sophisticated.

In their letter last month, the surgeons insist they were never misled — nor could they have been, because they don't rely on a company's marketing materials or instruction pamphlets to divine the risks of medical devices.

Instead, the letter said, they rely on their education, journals, conferences, textbooks and other unbiased sources, and they counsel their patients accordingly.

In declarations filed in King County Superior Court, some said Ethicon paid for them to undergo training that fully explored the devices' risks, and others said they learned about the uses and risks from those specially trained doctors.

Clemons and the other surgeons do not dispute that some women have suffered complications from the use of mesh to treat incontinence, but they say any surgery has risks, and the risks of that procedure are well within accepted norms. Millions of women worldwide have been treated with mid-urethral slings.

The letter cited a recent large study of the English National Health Service database that found complications prompted the removal of mesh slings in just 1.4 percent of patients within the first year after surgery, 2.7 percent within five years and 3.3 percent within nine years.

In fact, Clemons said, the mid-urethral sling has become the "gold standard" among surgical options for stress urinary incontinence because it offers better outcomes than other types of surgery, can be performed on heavier patients who otherwise would be ineligible for surgery, and requires less cutting and recovery time.

The Washington Attorney General's Office said in a court filing the fact that doctors obtain also risk information elsewhere does not excuse the companies from ensuring their instructional pamphlets are "truthful and complete."

The office agreed that many women have had positive outcomes with the devices and said it does not seek to restrict access to them.

Nevertheless, the state is relying on an expert witness, Dr. Bruce A. Rosenzweig, a gynecologist at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, who insisted in a deposition that polypropylene mesh is an "unsafe material to be placed permanently in the female pelvis." That position is contrary to the scientific literature, according to the surgeons' letter.

Clemons is a retired Army colonel who spent a decade as the chief of urogynecology and pelvic reconstructive surgery at Madigan Army Medical Center. He serves on the board of the American Urogynecologic

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Society and has performed about 1,250 mid-urethral sling surgeries; he used to cut his own mesh slings before Ethicon's came on the market.

After filing the lawsuit, the Washington Attorney General's Office tried to recruit him as an expert witness, he said. Although he is a fan of Ferguson's Democratic politics — Clemons donated \$550 to his re-election campaign last month — he declined.

"I'm not anti-Bob Ferguson at all," Clemons said. "I just disagree with him on this."

Follow Gene Johnson at <https://twitter.com/GeneAPseattle>

Isolation greets Maduro's new term as Venezuela's president

By **SCOTT SMITH, Associated Press**

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — President Nicolas Maduro celebrated the start to a second term as Venezuela's leader Thursday, but his world got smaller as countries seized upon the inauguration to cut back diplomatic ties, reject his legitimacy and label him a dictator.

Once among Latin America's wealthiest countries, Venezuela is enduring a historic crisis following two decades of socialist rule, with residents struggling to afford basic goods as inflation soars, driving mass migration.

Maduro's second six-year term extends the country's socialist revolution amid widespread complaints that he has stripped the country of its last vestiges of democracy.

Seventeen Latin American countries, the United States and Canada denounced Maduro's government as illegitimate in a measure adopted Thursday.

Maduro rejected the accusation, vowing to continue the legacy of the late President Hugo Chavez and accused the United States of trying to ignite unrest through its increasing economic sanctions.

"Venezuela is the center of a world war led by the North American imperialists and its allies," he declared in a speech after his swearing-in. "They have tried to convert a normal inauguration into a world war."

Maduro, a 56-year-old former bus driver and Chavez's hand-picked successor, took the helm of government after narrowly winning election following Chavez's 2013 death. He denies being a dictator and often accuses President Donald Trump of leading an economic war against Venezuela that is destroying the country.

In May, Maduro declared victory following an election that his political opponents and many foreign nations consider illegitimate because popular opponents were banned from running and the largest anti-government parties boycotted the race.

On Thursday, the Organization of American States voted not to recognize the legitimacy of Maduro's second term, adopting a resolution presented by Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the United States, Paraguay and Peru. Venezuela's ambassador to the OAS, Samuel Moncada, denounced the move as "a hostile act ... against the will of our nation."

Paraguay went a step further, severing diplomatic ties. Peru also called home its top diplomat from Caracas in protest and banned 100 members of Maduro's administration from entering the country. Argentina suspended Venezuelan diplomatic and official passports for banned high-ranking members of Maduro's administration from entering.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement that the United States would keep up pressure in support of the Venezuelan people.

"It is time for Venezuelan leaders to make a choice," Pompeo said. "Now is the time to convince the Maduro dictatorship that the moment has arrived for democracy to return to Venezuela."

Argentine President Mauricio Macri also denounced Maduro, saying he lacks the authenticity won through honest elections despite the elaborate inauguration ceremony.

"Nicolas Maduro today is making a mockery of democracy," Macri said on Twitter. "Venezuelans know it, the world knows it. Venezuela lives under a dictatorship."

Most countries from Europe and Latin American didn't send representatives to the swearing-in.

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Presidents Miguel Diaz-Canel of Cuba, Evo Morales of Bolivia and Anatoli Bibilov of a breakaway province of Georgia were among the few foreign leaders who attended the ceremony at the country's Supreme Court.

Venezuela, which sits atop the world's largest oil reserves, produced 3.5 million barrels of crude daily when Chavez took power. Output has plummeted to less than a third of that. Critics blame years of rampant corruption and mismanagement of the state-run oil company PDVSA.

The economic collapse has thrown the nation of 30 million people into turmoil.

The economy in 2019 will continue to contract and inflation will skyrocket at a staggering 23 million percent, forecasts Francisco Rodriguez, a former Venezuelan official who is now chief economist at New York-based Torino Capital.

An estimated 2.3 million Venezuelans have fled, according to the United Nations. Those remaining live on a monthly minimum wage equal to less than \$5 and falling daily.

Venezuela's splintered opposition movement has failed to counter the socialist party's dominance as Maduro's government has jailed or driven into exile its most popular leaders.

The opposition-led Congress opened its session for the year, led by 35-year-old Juan Guaido, who accused Maduro of "usurping the presidency."

"Today there is no head of state. Today there is no commander-in-chief," Guaido said.

The Trump administration has increased pressure on Maduro through financial sanctions, targeting dozens in Maduro's government. U.S. banks are also banned from doing business with Venezuela, putting a financial strangle-hold on the cash-strapped country.

David Smilde, a Tulane University professor and expert on Venezuela, said that sanctions aren't likely to create change. Ultimately, Maduro's government isn't worried about its international reputation, he said.

"He still has control of the institutions," Smilde said. "He has the guns. He has the money."

While Maduro's popularity has plunged amid scarcities, hyperinflation and rising authoritarianism that have sparked a mass emigration, supporters who receive government subsidies in shantytowns continue to back him.

"It's not the president's fault," said Frances Velazquez, a 43-year-old mother of two who survives with the help of government-subsidized boxes of rice, flour and cooking oil. Velazquez blamed opportunists who drive up the prices of scarce items for making life difficult for families like hers.

Others, like 52-year-old construction worker Ramon Bermudez, have lost hope of escaping Maduro's rule. He pointed out the irony of living in a nation with the world's most abundant oil reserves yet having to wait in line overnight to fill three small canisters of natural gas to cook at home.

"All that's left to do is raise your hand to heaven and ask God to help us," said Bermudez, camped out on a Caracas sidewalk with hundreds of others waiting for gas. "There's nothing more."

Associated Press writers Luis Alonso Lugo in Washington and Fabiola Sanchez and Jorge Rueda in Caracas contributed to this report.

Congo's surprise election result could face court challenge

By MATHILDE BOUSSION, Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — Congo appeared on the cusp of its first peaceful transfer of power with the surprise victory Thursday of opposition candidate Felix Tshisekedi, despite clear signs that a rival opposition leader actually won in a landslide.

With no major protests in the capital and limited violence elsewhere in the vast Central African country, the population seemed to be choosing stability over credibility, accepting Tshisekedi's win and the end to President Joseph Kabila's long and turbulent rule.

But a court challenge to the results could spin the country into chaos, observers warned.

The influential Catholic Church, which deployed 40,000 observers at all polling stations, said official results did not match its findings, and diplomats briefed on them said rival opposition candidate Martin Fayulu won easily.

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Fayulu alleges that Kabila engineered a backroom deal with the largely untested Tshisekedi to protect his power base in a country with staggering mineral wealth. An outspoken campaigner against Congo's widespread graft — it ranked 161th among 180 countries in Transparency International's latest index — Fayulu denounced the official results as "robbery."

He called on people to "rise as one man to protect victory."

As night fell, scores of police with automatic rifles and tear gas launchers were positioned along a road in Kinshasa leading to the Kingabwa neighborhood, a Fayulu stronghold. One vehicle was filled with military personnel in combat gear.

Despite the heavy security presence, the nation of 80 million remained largely calm. Some protest violence was reported in Kikwit, a Fayulu stronghold, where police said three people were killed. Police also confirmed "agitations" in Congo's third-largest city, Kisangani, but said they were quickly brought under control.

It was not immediately clear whether Fayulu would challenge the election results in court. Candidates have two days after the announcement to file challenges and the constitutional court has seven days to consider them before results are final.

Careful statements by the international community did not congratulate Tshisekedi, merely taking note of official results and urging peace and stability in a country with little of it. Observers appeared to be watching for the reactions of Fayulu's supporters.

Two diplomats said all major election observation missions, including those of the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, showed similar results to those of the Catholic Church. The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press.

Tshisekedi, who received 38 percent of the vote according to official results, had not been widely considered the leading candidate. Long in the shadow of his father, the late opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, he startled Congo last year by breaking away from the opposition's unity candidate, Fayulu, to stand on his own.

Fayulu, a former Exxon manager and Kinshasa lawmaker, received 34 percent of the vote in the official results. He was a vocal activist during the two-year delay in Congo's election, insisting it was time for Kabila to go. Fayulu was backed by two popular opposition leaders barred by the government from running.

Even before the election announcement, some observers suggested that Kabila's government might make a deal with Tshisekedi as hopes faded for ruling party candidate Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, who received just 23 percent of the vote.

Many Congolese objected to Shadary, suspecting that he would allow Kabila to continue to rule from behind the scenes and protect his vast assets.

Several Congo analysts agreed that it appeared Kabila made a quiet agreement with Tshisekedi, saying Fayulu would have posed more of a threat.

"If Fayulu and his allies, with their own independent security and financial networks, had taken power they would have changed the power structure of Congo and definitively ousted Kabila and his clan," said Patrick Smith of the newsletter Africa Confidential. "Tshisekedi, with his weaker network, looks like being the junior partner in his accommodation with the Kabila establishment."

Pierre Englebert, a fellow at the Atlantic Council's Africa Center, said Tshisekedi would be more malleable and might allow Kabila's network to continue.

"One possibility for today's result is that once the regime saw the catastrophic mistake Kabila had made by nominating Shadary, it scrambled to come up with a Plan B. Enter Tshisekedi," Englebert wrote in an analysis. Tshisekedi "has wavered at times in his opposition to the regime and is far from having his late father's intransigence."

By breaking away from the opposition coalition supporting Fayulu, Tshisekedi "positioned himself to bargain with the regime," Englebert wrote. "But if the history of the Kabila regime and its tight control on the state and its security apparatus are any indication, the ... new president-elect is likely to end up on the losing end of this bargain."

Western powers appeared wary.

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Britain's foreign secretary said he was "very concerned about discrepancies" in Congo's results, adding that the United Nations Security Council would discuss the matter on Friday. France's foreign minister bluntly cast doubt on the official results and Belgium's foreign minister expressed concern. There was no immediate United States comment.

The delayed results, 10 days after the Dec. 30 vote, came after international pressure to announce an outcome that reflected the will of the people, with the U.S. threatening sanctions.

The largely peaceful election faced numerous problems as many voting machines that Congo used for the first time malfunctioned. Dozens of polling centers opened hours late as materials went missing. Most alarming to many Congolese, some 1 million of the country's 40 million voters were barred from participating, with the electoral commission blaming a deadly Ebola virus outbreak.

The difference between Tshisekedi and Fayulu in official results was some 684,000 votes. Some observers said the barred voters could have made the difference.

Congo's government cut internet service the day after the vote to prevent speculation on social media. It remained off in parts of the country on Thursday.

Some Congolese weary of Kabila's 18-year rule, the two turbulent years of election delays and years of conflict that killed millions said they simply wanted peace. Some said they would be happy as long as Fayulu or Tshisekedi won, recalling the violence that followed past disputed elections.

Kabila has ruled since 2001 in the troubled nation rich in the minerals key to smartphones around the world. He is barred from serving three consecutive terms, but until he announced last year that he would step aside many Congolese feared he'd find a way to stay in office.

Now Congo faces a new leader who is little known after spending many years in Belgium and standing behind his outspoken father. The 56-year-old Tshisekedi took over as head of Congo's most prominent opposition party in early 2018, a year after his father's death.

Gleeful Tshisekedi supporters who took to the streets in Kinshasa to celebrate said they were happy to see Kabila step down.

"This is the coronation of a lifetime," said the deputy secretary-general of Tshisekedi's party, Rubens Mikindo. "This is the beginning of national reconciliation."

Associated Press journalists Saleh Mwanamilongo and David Keyton in Kinshasa, Andrew Meldrum in Johannesburg and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

This version corrects name of neighborhood with police presence to Kingabwa.

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As Trump visits border, Texas landowners prepare wall fight

By NOMAAN MERCHANT, Associated Press

HIDALGO, Texas (AP) — As President Donald Trump traveled to the border in Texas to make the case for his \$5.7 billion wall, landowner Eloisa Cavazos says she knows firsthand how the project will play out if the White House gets its way.

The federal government has started surveying land along the border in Texas and announced plans to start construction next month. Rather than surrender their land, some property owners are digging in, vowing to reject buyout offers and preparing to fight the administration in court.

"You could give me a trillion dollars and I wouldn't take it," said Cavazos, whose land sits along the Rio Grande, the river separating the U.S. and Mexico in Texas. "It's not about money."

Trump arrived Thursday in McAllen, a city of 143,000 that is on the busiest part of the border for illegal crossings. He toured a section of the border and said "a lot of the crime in our country is caused by what's coming through here."

He added: "Whether it's steel or concrete, you don't care. We need a barrier."

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Congress in March funded 33 miles (53 kilometers) of walls and fencing in Texas. The government has laid out plans that would cut across private land in the Rio Grande Valley. Those in the way include landowners who have lived in the valley for generations, environmental groups and a 19th century chapel.

Many have hired lawyers who are preparing to fight the government if, as expected, it moves to seize their land through eminent domain.

The opposition will intensify if Democrats accede to the Trump administration's demand to build more than 215 new miles of wall, including 104 miles in the Rio Grande Valley and 55 miles near Laredo. Even a compromise solution to build "steel slats," as Trump has suggested, or more fencing of the kind that Democrats have previously supported would likely trigger more court cases and pushback in Texas.

Legal experts say Trump likely cannot waive eminent domain — which requires the government to demonstrate a public use for the land and provide landowners with compensation — by declaring a national emergency.

Standing near the Rio Grande, Trump was asked Thursday how quickly border wall construction could start if he declared an emergency.

"I think very quickly," he said, adding that while someone "perhaps" might sue to stop construction, "we would win that suit, I believe, very quickly."

While this is Trump's first visit to the border in Texas as president, his administration's immigration crack-down has been felt here for months.

Hundreds of the more than 2,400 children separated from their parents last summer were detained in cages at a Border Patrol facility in McAllen. Three "tender-age" facilities for the youngest children were opened in this region.

The president also ordered soldiers to the border in response to a wave of migrant caravans before the November election. Those troops had a heavy presence in the Rio Grande Valley, though they have since quietly left. A spokeswoman for the border security mission said they closed their base camp along the border on Dec. 22.

But Trump's border wall will last beyond his administration. Building in the region is a top priority for the Department of Homeland Security because it's the busiest area for illegal border crossings. More than 23,000 parents and children were caught illegally crossing the border in the Rio Grande Valley in November — more than triple the number from a year earlier.

Homeland Security officials argue that a wall would stop many crossings and deter Central American families from trying to migrate north. Many of those families are seeking asylum because of violence in their home countries and often turn themselves in to border agents when they arrive here.

The number of families has surged. DHS said Wednesday that it detained 27,518 adults and children traveling together on the southern border in December, a new monthly high.

With part of the \$1.6 billion Congress approved in March, U.S. Customs and Border Protection announced it would build 25 miles (40 kilometers) of wall along the flood-control levee in Hidalgo County, which runs well north of the Rio Grande.

Congress did not allow construction of any of Trump's wall prototypes. But the administration's plans call for a concrete wall to the height of the existing levee, with 18-foot (5.5 meters) steel posts on top. CBP wants to clear 150 feet (45 meters) in front of any new construction for an "enforcement zone" of access roads, cameras, and lighting.

The government sued the local Roman Catholic diocese late last year to gain access for its surveyors at the site of La Lomita chapel, which opened in 1865 and was an important site for missionaries who traveled the Rio Grande Valley by horseback.

It remains an epicenter of the Rio Grande Valley's Catholic community, hosting weddings and funerals, as well as an annual Palm Sunday procession that draws 2,000 people.

The chapel is a short distance from the Rio Grande. It falls directly into the area where CBP wants to build its "enforcement zone."

The diocese said it opposes a border wall because the barrier violates Catholic teachings and the church's responsibility to protect migrants, as well as the church's First Amendment right of religious freedom. A

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legal group from Georgetown University has joined the diocese in its lawsuit.

Father Roy Snipes leads prayers each Friday for his chapel to be spared. Wearing a cowboy hat with his white robe and metal cross, he's known locally as the "cowboy priest" and sometimes takes a boat on the Rio Grande to go from his home to the chapel.

"It would poison the water," Snipes said. "It would still be a sacred place, but it would be a sacred place that was desecrated."

The Cavazos family's roughly 64 acres (0.25 square kilometers) were first purchased by their grandmother 60 years ago.

They rent some of the property to tenants who have built small houses or brought in trailers, charging some as little as \$1,000 a year. They live off the earnings from the land and worry that a fence would deter renters and turn their property into a "no man's land."

On the rest of the property are plywood barns, enclosures for cattle and goats, and a wooden deck that extends into the river, which flows serenely east toward the Gulf of Mexico. Eloisa's brother, Fred, can sit on the deck in his wheelchair and fish with a rod fashioned from a long carrizo reed plucked from the riverbank.

Surveyors examined their property in December under federal court order. The family hasn't yet received an offer for their land, but their lawyers at the Texas Civil Rights Project expect a letter with an offer will arrive in the coming weeks.

"Everybody tells us to sell and go to a better place," Eloisa Cavazos said. "This is heaven to us."

Government shutdown stymies immigrants' asylum cases

By AMY TAXIN, Associated Press

The partial government shutdown over President Donald Trump's demand for a border wall is playing havoc with the nation's already backlogged immigration courts, forcing the postponement of hearings for thousands of immigrants.

For some of those asking for asylum in the U.S., the impasse could mean years more of waiting — and prolonged separation from loved ones overseas — until they get a new court date.

But for those immigrants with little chance of winning their bids to stay in this country legally, the shutdown could help them stave off deportation that much longer — adding to the very delays the Trump administration has railed against.

"It is just dripping with irony," said Sarah Pierce, policy analyst at the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute. "This administration has put a lot of emphasis on speeding up court cases, and the shutdown obviously is just going to cause massive delays."

The shutdown has furloughed hundreds of thousands of government employees and halted services that aren't deemed essential, including, in many instances, the immigration courts overseen by the Justice Department.

Hearings involved detained immigrants are still going forward. But untold thousands of other proceedings have been postponed. No one knows for how long; it depends on when employees return to work and hearings can be reset.

Immigration experts said cases could be delayed months or years since the courts have more than 800,000 pending cases, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University, and many courtrooms are tightly booked.

Immigration Judge Dana Marks, former president of the National Association of Immigration Judges, said she has at least 60 hearings a day in her San Francisco courtroom and no space on her docket for at least the next three years.

"The cases that are not being heard now — there is no readily available place to reschedule them until at least 2022 or beyond," Marks said of her courtroom.

Immigration judges hear a wide range of complex cases from immigrants from across the world, some who have recently arrived in the United States, others who have lived in the country for years and the government is seeking to deport.

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Immigration judges have long sought more staffing to handle the ballooning caseload, which has roughly doubled in five years following a surge in Central American children and families arriving at the southern border. The Trump administration has tried to speed up the courts by assigning immigration judges quotas and stopping them from shelving cases.

Some of the toughest cases immigration judges hear are claims for asylum, or protection from persecution. And long wait times can be especially difficult for asylum seekers, since they can't bring spouses or children to join them in the United States unless their asylum requests are approved.

Reynold Finnegan, an immigration attorney in Los Angeles, said one of his Afghan clients hasn't seen his wife or children in nearly nine years. After being kidnapped and tortured by the Taliban, the man left his homeland, traveled across the world and made his way to the U.S.-Mexico border to seek asylum, Finnegan said.

He waited more than six years for his final hearing before an immigration judge, but it was canceled last week because of the shutdown, and he doesn't know how much longer it will take.

"He is devastated," Finnegan said. "He was really planning on seeing his wife later in the year when he got approved, and his children."

Since the shutdown began in December, immigrants have had to prepare for their scheduled court hearings and in many cases travel to court, knowing the proceedings might be postponed. In Northern states, that can mean hourslong car trips through ice and snow and taking days off from work.

The delays are painful for many immigrants, especially those who have strong asylum claims or green card applications and want to get their lives on solid footing in the United States.

Those with the weakest asylum claims actually benefit from the delays, because they are able to remain in the U.S. in the meantime and hold out hope of qualifying for legal status by some other means down the road.

In the 2017 fiscal year, immigration courts decided more than 52,000 asylum cases. About 1 in 5 were approved, according to statistics from the courts.

This isn't the first time immigration courts have been crippled by a government shutdown. More than 37,000 immigration hearings were delayed by one in 2013.

And it isn't just immigration courts that are affected. Since Justice Department attorneys are allowed to work in limited circumstances only, some high-profile civil cases have been put on hold, including a lawsuit in Oregon by the widow of Robert "LaVoy" Finicum, a man shot by police in 2016 after the takeover of a wildlife refuge.

Government attorneys have also sought to put on hold environmental cases, including challenges to logging projects and wild horse roundups in Montana and a lawsuit over the disposal in Oklahoma of toxic coal ash from power plants.

Most major criminal cases are expected to stay on track because of federal requirements for a speedy trial.

One aspect of immigration unaffected by the shutdown is the review of applications for green cards and citizenship. That's because those tasks, which are handled by an agency in the Homeland Security Department, are paid for by application filing fees.

One asylum seeker, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of persecution in her home country, said the wait has been unbearable since her 2014 court date was twice delayed. It is now set for February.

"The past four years have been horrible enough, but this uncertainty, and my life being handled with such, I don't know, no one cares, basically," she said. "The process takes forever — just to get the date in front of the judge."

Associated Press writers Dave Kolpack in Fargo, North Dakota; Amy Forliti in Minneapolis; and Matthew Brown in Billings, Montana contributed to this report.

AP Explains: How Yemen's rebels increasingly deploy drones

By JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — In Yemen, the high-pitched whine of drones has been a part of life for over 15 years, ever since the first U.S. drone strike here targeting al-Qaida in 2002. On Thursday, an attack on a military base where America once ran its drone program showed that the U.S. is no longer the only force deploying them.

The attack by Yemen's Shiite Houthi rebels that killed at least six people shows how the Arab world's poorest country has become one of the world's top battlefields for drones. Both the rebels and the Saudi-led coalition fighting them, as well as the U.S., continue to use them for surveillance and attacks.

But while the U.S. uses American-made drones and the coalition has turned to Chinese suppliers, the manufacturer of the Houthis' drones in both the air and the sea has been a contentious question.

THE IRAN LINK

A 2018 report by a United Nations panel of experts on Yemen looked particularly at the Houthis' Qatef-1 drone.

"Although Houthi-aligned media announced that the Sana'a-based ministry of defence manufactured the (drone), in reality they are assembled from components supplied by an outside source and shipped into Yemen," the report said. The Qatef, or "Striker," "is virtually identical in design, dimensions and capability to that of the Ababil-T, manufactured by the Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industries."

The Ababil-T can deliver up to a 45-kilogram (100-pound) warhead up to 150 kilometers (95 miles) away.

The Qatef-2K, which the Houthis said they used in Thursday's attack, similarly resembles the Iranian designs.

A research group called Conflict Armament Research, with the permission of the United Arab Emirates' elite Presidential Guard, also examined seized drones used by the Houthis and their allies to crash into Patriot missile batteries in Saudi Arabia.

The research group similarly said those drones share "near-identical design and construction characteristics" of Iranian drones.

THE DRONE BOAT

Coalition forces last year also showed journalists a Houthi "drone boat" filled with explosives that failed to detonate.

The officials also shared black-and-white images they said came from the "drone boat." They said the pictures and associated data from the boat's computer showed Iranians building components for its guidance system in eastern Tehran, with a hat in the background of one picture bearing the symbol of Iran's hard-line paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

They said those involved in building the components probably believed it would be destroyed in the blast, so they didn't wipe the computer's hard drive.

For its part, Iran repeatedly has denied supplying the Houthis with drone or ballistic missile technology. However, Iran would have an interest in seeing Saudi Arabia, its archrival in the region, tied down in a bloody, protracted conflict with no clear end in sight.

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

Top US diplomat assails Obama in Mideast policy speech

By MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer

CAIRO (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered a scathing rebuke of the Obama administration's Mideast policies on Thursday, accusing the former president of "misguided" thinking that diminished America's role in the region while harming its longtime friends and emboldening Iran.

In a speech to the American University in Cairo, Pompeo unloaded on President Donald Trump's predecessor, saying he was naive and timid when confronted with challenges posed by the revolts that convulsed the Middle East, including Egypt, beginning in 2011.

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Pompeo denounced the vision outlined by President Barack Obama in a speech he gave in Cairo in 2009 in which he spoke of "a new beginning" for U.S. relations with countries in the Arab and Muslim world.

"Remember: It was here, here in this very city, another American stood before you," Pompeo told an invited audience of Egyptian officials, foreign diplomats and students. "He told you that radical Islamist terrorism does not stem from ideology. He told you 9/11 led my country to abandon its ideals, particularly in the Middle East. He told you that the United States and the Muslim world needed 'a new beginning.' The results of these misjudgments have been dire."

Pompeo said that the U.S. was "timid" about "asserting ourselves when the times — and our partners — demanded it."

The secretary did not mention Obama by name but the remarks still struck listeners in the U.S. as unusually partisan.

"It's a speech shocking for its use of domestic politics, for kind of attacking a prior president in an international setting and for going to a long-time ally and questioning some of the foundations of the relationship with the ally," said Heather Hurlburt, an analyst with the New America, a nonpartisan think tank. "Those are all things that secretaries of state don't normally do but seem to becoming standard practice with Pompeo."

Pompeo's speech came on the third leg of a nine-nation Mideast tour aimed at reassuring America's Arab partners that the Trump administration is not walking away from the region amid confusion and concern over plans to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria.

Former Obama administration officials rejected Pompeo's assertions as petty, political and weak. They said the speech pandered to authoritarian leaders and ignored rights violations that Obama had called out.

"That this administration feels the need, nearly a decade later, to take potshots at an effort to identify common ground between the Arab world and the West speaks not only to the Trump administration's pettiness but also to its lack of a strategic vision for America's role in the region and its abdication of America's values," National Security Action group, a group of former officials, said in a statement.

Rob Malley, who was Obama's national security council director for the Middle East and is now at the International Crisis Group, said hearing Pompeo's speech was like "like listening to someone from a parallel universe" in which the region's shortcomings were ignored.

"In that parallel universe, the Arab public probably will receive it enthusiastically," he said. "Back on planet earth, they will see it for what it is: a self-congratulatory, delusional depiction of the Trump administration's Middle East policy."

Pompeo blamed the previous administration's approach to the Mideast for the ills that consume it now, particularly the rise of the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria and Iran's increasing assertiveness, which he said was a direct result of sanctions relief, since rescinded by the Trump administration, granted to it under the 2015 nuclear deal.

He said Obama ignored the growth of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement in Lebanon to the detriment of Israel's security and not doing enough to push back on Iran-supported rebels in Yemen.

Since Trump's election, however, Pompeo claimed this was all changing.

"The good news is this: The age of self-inflicted American shame is over, and so are the policies that produced so much needless suffering," he said. "Now comes the real 'new beginning.' In just 24 months, actually less than two years, the United States under President Trump has reasserted its traditional role as a force for good in this region, because we've learned from our mistakes."

In the speech entitled "A Force for Good: America's Reinvigorated Role in the Middle East," Pompeo extolled the Trump administration's actions across the region cementing ties with traditional, albeit authoritarian, friendly governments, taking on the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria and imposing tough new sanctions on Iran.

"President Trump has reversed our willful blindness to the danger of the regime and withdrew from the failed nuclear deal, with its false promises," Pompeo said.

Since withdrawing from the nuclear deal last year, the administration has steadily ratcheted up pressure on Tehran and routinely accuses the nation of being the most destabilizing influence in the region.

It has vowed to increase the pressure until Iran halts what U.S. officials describe as its "malign activities" throughout the Mideast and elsewhere, including support for rebels in Yemen, anti-Israel groups, and Syrian President Bashar Assad.

"The nations of the Middle East will never enjoy security, achieve economic stability, or advance the dreams of its peoples if Iran's revolutionary regime persists on its current course," Pompeo said.

Flexin' in her Complexion: Bullied girl a messenger of hope

By LEANNE ITALIE, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Kheris Rogers was in the first grade in a predominantly white private school in Los Angeles when she felt the bite of racism among her peers — she was being bullied because of her dark skin. She tearfully kept it to herself, eventually turning to her older sister, Taylor Pollard, and switching to a more diverse school, where colorism among fellow African-American students surprised and confused her.

With her young sister's self-esteem bruised, Pollard inadvertently launched Kheris to social media fame in 2017 when she posted a photo of the girl on Twitter dressed up for a fashion show, using their beloved grandmother's down-home words for a hashtag: "Flexininhercomplexion."

Soon, Kheris had her own Twitter and Instagram accounts (@KherisPoppin) and was posting photo shoots of herself that she and Pollard created. Her own fashion line followed, with T-shirts sporting her tagline, "Flexin' in My Complexion," along with backpacks reading "The Miseducation of Melanin" and other apparel and accessories.

Lupita Nyong'o posted a photo of herself wearing a black version of the shirt with bright yellow letters in support of Kheris. Whoopi Goldberg sported one while attending the Rodarte show at New York Fashion Week in September. Alicia Keys lauded her black girl magic.

While the words of her tormenters no longer sting, they haven't been forgotten. The behavior wasn't restricted to children, either.

"The kids would always call me names," Kheris, now 12, told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "They would always tease me for my dark-skin complexion. They used to call me dead roach and say I've been in the oven too long. When I really knew I was being bullied because of my color was when my teacher handed me a black crayon instead of a brown crayon to draw our portraits for parent conferences."

Pollard, who at 24 is now Kheris' manager, suspected something was amiss and Kheris finally told her family.

"I had no friends. I was only invited to one of the birthday parties that they had. Everybody else was invited and I wasn't," Kheris recalled.

Now in middle school, things are more than just a little looking up.

Kheris was chosen as one of Teen Vogue's "21 Under 21" inspiring girls and femmes of 2018 and attended the magazine's teen summit. She was picked by LeBron James as one of 16 people to help mark his 16th shoe release with Nike, modeling in ads for the company. She's been featured in a spread in Essence magazine and walked the runway of "America's Next Top Model" after Tyra Banks learned of her plight.

She has shown her own line in Harlem during New York Fashion Week, and she hasn't hit the eighth grade yet.

Julee Wilson, fashion and beauty director for Essence magazine, called support for Kheris "both an honor and responsibility."

She added: "To stand in the face of society's narrow beauty standards isn't an easy task, and she's doing it with an incredible amount of grace. We can't wait to see how Kheris pushes the 'Flexin' in My Complexion' movement forward in the future. There's no doubt in our minds that she'll continue to remind the world that Black is incredibly beautiful."

Mom Erika Pollard, a social worker, said Kheris travels the country speaking at conferences about empowerment.

"As a parent, of course, you know, it was heartbreaking, but it made us stronger," she said of the rough years. "It pulled us together as a family because it's something that we had to conquer together. Now she's making a positive difference within her community, which I'm so proud of at such a young age."

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Kheris said she now considers her life a mission.

"Flexin' in My Complexion isn't just about me," she said. "It's about every brown, dark, freckled, fair-skinned person who wants to tell the world, 'I am more than just the color of skin.'"

She hopes to spread her message across the world.

"I want to be a spokesperson for racism and colorism (issues)," she said.

Kheris now has lots of friends as a seventh-grader and knows exactly how to handle bullies: "Back off because I'm flexin' in my complexion and it doesn't matter what you think about me. It matters what I think about myself."

Liberals dare Trump to back their bills lowering drug prices

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Challenging President Donald Trump to make good on his pledge to cut prescription drug prices, congressional liberals proposed legislation Thursday to bring U.S. prices in line with the much lower costs in other countries.

The Democratic bills stand little chance of becoming law in a divided government. But the effort could put Republicans on the defensive by echoing Trump's pledge to force drugmakers to cut prices.

Democrats and Trump agree that people in the United States shouldn't have to pay more for their medications than do those in other economically advanced countries.

The Trump administration has put forward its own plan for reducing drug prices, but industry analysts have seen little impact so far. The pharmaceutical industry said the Democratic bills would "wreak havoc on the U.S. health care system."

The new legislation was offered by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., and others. Cummings leads the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which is expected to take a major role on drug pricing.

The lawmakers want to:

—Open up generic competition to patent-protected U.S. brand-name drugs that are deemed "excessively priced."

—Allow Medicare to directly negotiate with drugmakers.

—Let consumers import lower-priced medications from Canada.

There was no immediate response from the administration.

"Today I say to President Trump, if you are serious about lowering the cost of prescription drugs in this country, support our legislation and get your Republican colleagues on board," Sanders said at a Capitol Hill press conference.

"No more talk. No more tweets," said Cummings. "The American people want action."

Holly Campbell, a spokeswoman for the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, said Sanders' plan would harm U.S. patients. The industry argues that government price regulation could limit access to some medicines, undermine financial incentives for research, and compromise safety standards. Sanders says drugmakers are primarily interested in protecting profits.

As a presidential candidate, Trump initially called for Medicare to negotiate drug prices and favored allowing people to legally import lower-priced medications from abroad.

But Medicare negotiation is a political nonstarter for most Republicans, who favor a free-market approach to the U.S. pharmaceutical industry and prize its capacity for innovation.

As president, Trump has come out with a plan to lower drug costs that relies on dozens of regulatory actions. The goal is to eliminate incentives for drugmakers, pharmacy benefit managers and insurers to stifle competition at the expense of consumers. Independent experts say the administration proposals would have an impact, but not limit the ability of drug companies to set high prices.

Time and again, Trump has complained that other countries where governments set drug prices are taking advantage of Americans. Indeed, one of his ideas would shift Medicare payments for drugs administered in doctors' offices to a level based on international prices.

"We are taking aim at the global freeloading that forces American consumers to subsidize lower prices in foreign countries through higher prices in our country," the president said when he made that proposal shortly before last year's congressional elections.

The Democratic bills would go far beyond Trump's approach.

The newest idea would essentially apply to any U.S. patent-protected brand-name drug, whether or not government programs are bearing the cost. By comparison, Trump's international pricing proposal would not apply to retail pharmacy drugs purchased by Medicare beneficiaries or to medications for privately insured people. It's the result of a joint effort between Sanders and Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif.

Drugs found to be "excessively priced" by the government could face generic competition. A medication's cost would be deemed "excessive" if its price in the U.S. was higher than the median, or midpoint, price in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Japan.

If the manufacturer was unwilling to cut its U.S. price, then the government could allow generic companies to make a more affordable version of the medication. Generic drugmakers would have to pay "reasonable" royalties to the company that holds the patent.

No stethoscope for pain: Scientists seek real way to measure

By LAURAN NEERGAARD, AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Is the pain stabbing or burning? On a scale from 1 to 10, is it a 6 or an 8?

Over and over, 17-year-old Sarah Taylor struggled to make doctors understand her sometimes debilitating levels of pain, first from joint-damaging childhood arthritis and then from fibromyalgia.

"It's really hard when people can't see how much pain you're in, because they have to take your word on it and sometimes, they don't quite believe you," she said.

Now scientists are peeking into Sarah's eyes to track how her pupils react when she's hurting and when she's not — part of a quest to develop the first objective way to measure pain.

"If we can't measure pain, we can't fix it," said Dr. Julia Finkel, a pediatric anesthesiologist at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, who invented the experimental eye-tracking device.

At just about every doctor's visit you'll get your temperature, heart rate and blood pressure measured. But there's no stethoscope for pain. Patients must convey how bad it is using that 10-point scale or emoji-style charts that show faces turning from smiles to frowns.

That's problematic for lots of reasons. Doctors and nurses have to guess at babies' pain by their cries and squirms, for example. The aching that one person rates a 7 might be a 4 to someone who's more used to serious pain or genetically more tolerant. Patient-to-patient variability makes it hard to test if potential new painkillers really work.

Nor do self-ratings determine what kind of pain someone has — one reason for trial-and-error treatment. Are opioids necessary? Or is the pain, like Sarah's, better suited to nerve-targeting medicines?

"It's very frustrating to be in pain and you have to wait like six weeks, two months, to see if the drug's working," said Sarah, who uses a combination of medications, acupuncture and lots of exercise to counter her pain.

The National Institutes of Health is pushing for development of what its director, Dr. Francis Collins, has called a "pain-o-meter." Spurred by the opioid crisis, the goal isn't just to signal how much pain someone's in. It's also to determine what kind it is and what drug might be the most effective.

"We're not creating a lie detector for pain," stressed David Thomas of NIH's National Institute on Drug Abuse, who oversees the research. "We do not want to lose the patient voice."

Around the country, NIH-funded scientists have begun studies of brain scans, pupil reactions and other possible markers of pain in hopes of finally "seeing" the ouch so they can better treat it. It's early-stage research, and it's not clear how soon any of the attempts might pan out.

"There won't be a single signature of pain," Thomas predicted. "My vision is that someday we'll pull these different metrics together for something of a fingerprint of pain."

NIH estimates 25 million people in the U.S. experience daily pain. Most days Sarah Taylor is one of them.

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Now living in Potomac, Maryland, she was a toddler in her native Australia when the swollen, aching joints of juvenile arthritis appeared. She's had migraines and spinal inflammation. Then two years ago, the body-wide pain of fibromyalgia struck; a flare-up last winter hospitalized her for two weeks.

One recent morning, Sarah climbed onto an acupuncture table at Children's National, rated that day's pain a not-too-bad 3, and opened her eyes wide for the experimental pain test.

"There'll be a flash of light for 10 seconds. All you have to do is try not to blink," researcher Kevin Jackson told Sarah as he lined up the pupil-tracking device, mounted on a smartphone.

The eyes offer a window to pain centers in the brain, said Finkel, who directs pain research at Children's Sheikh Zayed Institute for Pediatric Surgical Innovation.

How? Some pain-sensing nerves transmit "ouch" signals to the brain along pathways that also alter muscles of the pupils as they react to different stimuli. Finkel's device tracks pupillary reactions to light or to non-painful stimulation of certain nerve fibers, aiming to link different patterns to different intensities and types of pain.

Consider the shooting hip and leg pain of sciatica: "Everyone knows someone who's been started on oxycodone for their sciatic nerve pain. And they'll tell you that they feel it — it still hurts — and they just don't care," Finkel said.

What's going on? An opioid like oxycodone brings some relief by dulling the perception of pain but not its transmission — while a different kind of drug might block the pain by targeting the culprit nerve fiber, she said.

Certain medications also can be detected by other changes in a resting pupil, she said. Last month the Food and Drug Administration announced it would help AlgometRx, a biotech company Finkel founded, speed development of the device as a rapid drug screen.

Looking deeper than the eyes, scientists at Harvard and Massachusetts General Hospital found MRI scans revealed patterns of inflammation in the brain that identified either fibromyalgia or chronic back pain.

Other researchers have found changes in brain activity — where different areas "light up" on scans — that signal certain types of pain. Still others are using electrodes on the scalp to measure pain through brain waves.

Ultimately, NIH wants to uncover biological markers that explain why some people recover from acute pain while others develop hard-to-treat chronic pain.

"Your brain changes with pain," Thomas explained. "A zero-to-10 scale or a happy-face scale doesn't capture anywhere near the totality of the pain experience."

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Bomb-laden rebel drone kills 6 at Yemen military parade

By AHMED AL-HAJ, Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — A bomb-laden drone launched by Yemen's Shiite rebels exploded over a military parade Thursday for the Saudi-led coalition, killing at least six people in a brazen attack threatening an uneasy U.N.-brokered peace in the Arab world's poorest nation.

The attack at the Al-Anad Air Base showed the unwillingness of Yemen's Houthi rebels to halt fighting in the civil war, even if it doesn't violate a peace deal reached last month in Sweden between them and Yemen's internationally recognized government.

The Houthi attack near the southern port city of Aden with a new drone variant also raised more questions about Iran's alleged role in arming the rebels with drone and ballistic missile technology, something long denied by Tehran despite researchers and U.N. experts linking the weapons to the Islamic Republic.

The assault shocked the pro-government troops, who carried away the dead and wounded, their fatigues stained with blood. All the victims were government forces, officials said.

"We were under the impression that the coalition has a tight control over airspace and there is no way

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the Houthis can send drones or planes to attack us in the south," said Mohammed Ali, a soldier in Al-Annad 2nd Brigade guarding the parade.

Yemeni army spokesman Mohammed al-Naqib was speaking at a podium during the parade, with photos of Yemen's president and Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia's crown princes behind him, when a high-pitched whine drew his attention and others. A moment later, the drone exploded overhead, pelting him and others with shrapnel.

In the chaotic aftermath, soldiers carried away a severely wounded comrade. A pool of blood collected in front of the plush seats set aside for high-ranking military officials.

At least six people were killed, medical officials said. Among the wounded were Yemeni Military Intelligence Service chief Mohammad Saleh Tamah; Deputy Chief of Staff Saleh al-Zindani; senior military commander Mohammad Jawas; and Lahj Gov. Ahmed al-Turki, Yemeni officials said. All the officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to journalists.

The Houthis immediately claimed the attack in the southern province of Lahj at a base where U.S. special forces once led their own drone war against Yemen's al-Qaida branch.

Although the attack did not technically violate a cease-fire negotiated last month for the port of Hodeida, it was hoped that deal might eventually lead to a general de-escalation in the fighting.

"Once again this proves that the Houthi criminal militias are not ready for peace and that they are exploiting truces," said Moammar al-Eryani, the information minister of Yemen's internationally recognized government. "Here the Houthi militias are sending Iranians plane carrying explosives to prove to the world that they're not serious about peace and they only understands the language of force."

The government described the attack as "a message of blatant defiance to the international community and outright rejection to peace efforts." It blamed the U.N. for its "silence and leniency" toward the Houthis, saying that has encouraged the rebels to continue "barbaric and aggressive practices ... threatening the regional security."

Yahia al-Sarei, a spokesman for Houthi-affiliated forces, called the drone attack a response to the coalition's continuation of "airstrikes and targeting innocent civilians and the escalation of the mercenaries across all front lines."

Yemen plunged into civil war in 2014 when rebels captured the capital of Sanaa. A coalition led by Saudi Arabia entered the war in March 2015 as government forces looked poised to lose Aden to the Houthi advance. The U.S. supported the coalition for years despite its airstrikes killing civilians, and is only recently beginning to step back after the October killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul by Saudi agents.

The two sides last month agreed to a prisoner swap and cease-fire in Hodeida, a port of entry for much of the humanitarian aid to Yemen, to try to provide relief to a population pushed to the brink of famine by the war.

Fighting has largely abated in Hodeida but progress on the withdrawal has been slow. The U.N. humanitarian aid chief on Wednesday accused the rebels of blocking humanitarian supplies traveling from areas under their control to government-held areas.

The use of a drone also raised new concerns over Iran's influence in the conflict. Officials in the coalition have shown journalists a series of drones they said showed a growing sophistication by the Houthis, starting first with plastic foam models that could be built by a hobby kit to one captured in April that closely resembled an Iranian-made drone.

Those drones have been flown into the radar arrays of Saudi Arabia's Patriot missile batteries, according to the research group Conflict Armament Research, disabling them and allowing the Houthis to fire ballistic missiles into the kingdom unchallenged.

Iran has been accused by the U.S. and the U.N. of supplying ballistic missile technology and arms to the Houthis, which Tehran denies.

Houthi media quoted its military describing the drone as a new variant of its Qasef, or "Striker," drone. The Qasef-2K has been designed to explode at a height of 20 meters (about 65 feet) and rain shrapnel on

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its target, according to the Houthis.

A U.N. panel of experts on Yemen issued a report in 2018 noting that the Houthis' Qasef-1 drone "is virtually identical in design, dimensions and capability to that of the Ababil-T, manufactured by the Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industries." The Ababil-T can deliver up to a 45-kilogram (100-pound) warhead up to 150 kilometers (95 miles) away.

Such drones remain difficult to shoot down with either light or heavy weapons. Iraqi forces learned from driving out the Islamic State group from northern Iraq, where the extremists would load drones with grenades or simple explosives to target their forces.

Qasef drones are launched with pre-programmed coordinates to follow, unlike other drones where a pilot flies it via a video link, said Jeremy Binnie, a weapons expert who works as the Middle East and Africa editor at Jane's Defence Weekly.

"They're like slow missiles. Once they are launched, there is no control," Binnie said. "They do have excellent intelligence on the ground. They needed to specifically know when those guys are in the stands to be able to target."

Associated Press writers Brian Rohan and Maggie Michael in Cairo and Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed.

Brexit sparks showdown between UK Parliament and government

By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — As Brexit enters its endgame, the big divide is not between the U.K. and the European Union, but between Britain's government and its Parliament.

Since Britain and the EU struck a divorce deal late last year, the U.K.'s executive and legislature have been at war, with Prime Minister Theresa May struggling to win Parliament's backing for the deal ahead of a vote next week, and lawmakers battling to grab control of the Brexit process.

A series of heated debates and stunning government defeats has made for high political drama — and destabilized a country without a formal written constitution, whose democracy rests on centuries of accumulated laws, precedents and conventions.

As lawmakers held a second day of rancorous debate on the Brexit deal on Thursday, London School of Economics professor Iain Begg said Britain is "getting very close" to a constitutional crisis.

"It's pretty clear that if Theresa May loses the vote next week, we don't actually know what happens next," Begg said. "And that's beyond political."

The divorce agreement lays out the terms of the U.K.'s departure from the EU on March 29 and sets the framework for future relations. It was sealed by Britain and the EU in November — a milestone that should have set the U.K. on the road to an orderly exit.

But it has displeased both sides of Britain's Brexit divide. Many lawmakers who back leaving the EU say it leaves the U.K. tethered to the bloc's rules and unable to forge an independent trade policy, while pro-Europeans argue it is inferior to the frictionless economic relationship Britain currently enjoys as an EU member.

May postponed a vote on the agreement in December to avert a crushing defeat, and signs suggest the House of Commons will reject the deal in a rescheduled vote on Tuesday.

An already fractious Brexit debate turned feverish Wednesday when lawmakers passed an amendment forcing the government to come back to Parliament with a new plan within three working days of the deal being rejected.

Pro-Brexit lawmakers said the amendment should not have been allowed. They accused Commons Speaker John Bercow, who is supposed to be the impartial arbiter of House rules, of tearing up parliamentary precedent and siding with anti-Brexit legislators.

Conservative legislator Crispin Blunt said it appeared to many "that the referee is no longer neutral." Another Conservative, Adam Holloway, accused Bercow of having a rude anti-Brexit sticker on his car.

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(Bercow replied that the car, and the sticker, belonged to his wife).

Britain's lively and partisan newspapers also weighed in. "Out of order," blared the Daily Mail, while the tabloid Sun branded Bercow the "Speaker of the devil."

Bercow was unrepentant.

"My job is not to be a cheerleader for the executive branch," he said. "My job is to stand up for the rights of the House of Commons."

Unfortunately for constitutional clarity, experts say both Bercow and his detractors have a point. As the ultimate authority in the House of Commons, the speaker had the power to allow a vote on an amendment to the government's business motion. But in doing so, he ignored both precedent and the advice of parliamentary staff.

The incident was the latest in a series of power struggles between the executive and the legislature over Brexit. After Britons voted in a 2016 referendum to leave the EU, May's government tried to trigger the formal exit process without a vote in Parliament. After a legal battle, the Supreme Court ruled that lawmakers must be consulted.

Since then, government and Parliament have feuded about who is driving the Brexit car. Lawmakers' position was strengthened when May lost her parliamentary majority in an ill-advised snap election in 2017.

"We are seeing pretty open tension between Parliament and government, and a Parliament that is willing to be quite assertive," said Alice Lilly, a senior researcher at the Institute for Government think tank. "Where that will go from here, who knows?"

To complicate matters, both Parliament and May's Conservative administration are split down the middle over Brexit.

A majority of lawmakers oppose a no-deal Brexit, which would impose barriers to trade with the EU, potentially triggering gridlock at ports, shortages of goods and volatile public anger.

But there is no agreement on what path to take instead. The 650 members of Parliament include 200 or more backers of May's deal, 100 or so supporters of a no-deal Brexit, multiple advocates of a "soft Brexit" that keeps Britain close to the EU, and a faction arguing for a second referendum.

"We hear repeatedly that Parliament is not going to allow a 'no-deal' Brexit, but the constitutional question that then comes up is: How?" Begg said.

"There doesn't seem to be a majority in Parliament for any of the available models for getting out of this predicament."

If May's deal is defeated next week, Parliament may get its chance to take control. It does not have much time. Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29 — deal or no deal.

"At some point is that government and Parliament are going to have to reach some kind of consensus," Lilly said. "There is a ticking clock, so there is a real sense of urgency around this."

Follow Jill Lawless on Twitter at <http://Twitter.com/JillLawless>

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

Industrials lead US stocks higher again; Macy's nosedives

By MARLEY JAY, AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A day of back-and-forth trading Thursday ended with the fifth gain in a row for U.S. stocks. Industrial companies like Boeing and General Electric rose while retailers fell as Macy's suffered its biggest loss of all time.

Stocks struggled in the early going and the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 175 points after U.S. and Chinese officials wrapped trade talks in Beijing. Transportation and machinery companies climbed after the U.S. Trade Representative said China agreed to buy more agricultural and manufactured products.

Macy's said its sales over the holidays were worse than expected and slashed its annual profit and sales forecasts. Kohl's and L Brands also posted disappointing results and a wide variety of retailers plunged

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as investors worried that the stock market's December plunge stopped some shoppers from spending as much as they had planned.

"High-end consumers, even though they're making decent money (and) the economy is going on relatively strong, it may have affected their willingness to splurge over the holidays," said Ken Perkins, president of the research firm Retail Metrics. "It was not good timing at all."

The S&P 500 index added 11.68 points, or 0.5 percent, to 2,596.64. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 122.80 points, or 0.5 percent, to 24,001.92 after it fell 175 points in the morning.

The Nasdaq composite rose 28.99 points, or 0.4 percent, to 6,986.07. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks picked up 6.63 points, or 0.5 percent, to 1,445.43.

U.S. negotiators said China's delegation pledged to buy more energy and agricultural products and manufactured goods. That helped Boeing climb 2.6 percent to \$352.61 and General Electric jumped 5.2 percent to \$8.94 while Deere rose 3.1 percent to \$159.12.

However, that point is considered a relatively minor area of disagreement, and there were no hints of progress on bigger issues. The U.S. wants China to change its technology policy to reduce cyber theft of trade secrets and seeks more access to the Chinese market and increased protection for foreign patents and copyrights.

Macy's said holiday sales slowed in the middle of December and the department store cut its annual profit and sales forecasts. Its stock plunged 17.7 percent to \$26.11 in heavy trading. Macy's went public in February 1992 and reached an all-time high of almost \$73 a share in mid-2015, but four of the five biggest one-day plunges in its history have come in the last three years.

Macy's announcement came as a surprise because investor expectations for the holiday season have been high. Unemployment is the lowest it's been in decades, wages are rising and consumer confidence is high, while gas prices dropped late last year. In late December, stocks rallied after Mastercard SpendingPulse said shoppers spent \$850 billion between Nov. 1 and Dec. 24, an increase of 5 percent from the same time a year earlier.

But the stock market fell sharply in October and then took a dramatic drop over the first three weeks of December. Shortly afterward the federal government went into a partial shutdown that is still ongoing.

While large numbers retailers took steep losses Thursday, Perkins said the market turmoil is a much bigger problem for companies like Macy's because most stocks are owned by relatively wealthy people. That means big box stores and companies that sell less expensive goods won't be affected as much, as shown by Target's stronger sales report. Perkins added that said Amazon likely had a "stellar" holiday season.

Chipmakers rose and other technology stocks edged higher, while high-dividend stocks like utilities and household goods companies made strong gains.

Oil prices extended their rally to a ninth consecutive day. U.S. crude added 0.4 percent to \$52.59 a barrel in New York. It's now up 23.7 percent since hitting an 18-month low on Dec. 24. Brent crude, the international standard, slid 0.4 percent to \$61.68 a barrel in London.

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell was interviewed at the Economic Club of Washington DC. Stocks briefly fell after Powell said he expects the Fed's \$4 trillion bond portfolio to shrink until it is "substantially smaller than it is now." Powell noted that the Fed had about \$1 trillion on its balance sheet before the 2007-08 financial crisis.

The Fed's bond holdings are slowly shrinking, which tends to put upward pressure on long-term interest rates. Investors have grown concerned about the effects of those tighter credit conditions as the global economy slows. Powell said in December that the Fed could slow the changes to its portfolio if necessary.

Bond prices slipped. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose to 2.74 percent from 2.72 percent.

In other energy trading, wholesale gasoline added 0.4 percent to \$1.43 a gallon and heating oil rose 1.3 percent to \$1.91 a gallon. Natural gas dipped 0.5 percent to \$2.97 per 1,000 cubic feet.

Gold fell 0.4 percent to \$1,287.40 an ounce and silver shed 0.6 percent to \$15.64 an ounce. Copper lost 0.7 percent to \$2.97 a pound.

The dollar rose to 108.42 yen from 108.28 yen and the euro fell to \$1.1500 from \$1.1544.

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France's CAC 40 lost 0.2 percent while Germany's DAX edged up 0.3 percent. The British FTSE 100 rose 0.5 percent.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index, which gained more than 1 percent on Wednesday, fell 1.3 percent and the Kospi in South Korea dropped 0.1 percent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng recovered from early losses and added 0.2 percent.

AP Markets Writer Marley Jay can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MarleyJayAP>

This story has been updated to correct the price of natural gas, which dipped to \$2.97 per 1,000 cubic feet, not \$2.70.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 11, the 11th day of 2019. There are 354 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 11, 1913, the first enclosed sedan-type automobile, a Hudson, went on display at the 13th National Automobile Show in New York.

On this date:

In 1861, Alabama became the fourth state to withdraw from the Union.

In 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed the Grand Canyon National Monument (it became a national park in 1919).

In 1935, aviator Amelia Earhart began an 18-hour trip from Honolulu to Oakland, California, that made her the first person to fly solo across any part of the Pacific Ocean.

In 1939, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Lord Halifax, the British foreign secretary, met with Italian leader Benito Mussolini in Rome.

In 1963, the Beatles' single "Please Please Me" (B side "Ask Me Why") was released in Britain by Parlophone.

In 1964, U.S. Surgeon General Luther Terry issued "Smoking and Health," a report which concluded that "cigarette smoking contributes substantially to mortality from certain specific diseases and to the overall death rate."

In 1977, France set off an international uproar by releasing Abu Daoud, a PLO official behind the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics.

In 1978, two Soviet cosmonauts aboard the Soyuz 27 capsule linked up with the Salyut 6 orbiting space station, where the Soyuz 26 capsule was already docked.

In 1989, nine days before leaving the White House, President Ronald Reagan bade the nation farewell in a prime-time address, saying of his eight years in office: "We meant to change a nation and instead we changed a world."

In 1995, 51 people were killed when a Colombian DC-9 jetliner crashed as it was preparing to land near the Caribbean resort of Cartagena — however, 9-year-old Erika Delgado survived.

In 2003, calling the death penalty process "arbitrary and capricious, and therefore immoral," Illinois Gov. George Ryan commuted the sentences of 167 condemned inmates, clearing his state's death row two days before leaving office.

In 2010, Miep Gies (meep khees), the Dutch office secretary who defied Nazi occupiers to hide Anne Frank and her family for two years and saved the teenager's diary, died at age 100.

Ten years ago: In a rare Sunday session, the Senate advanced legislation that would set aside more than 2 million acres in nine states as wilderness. A passenger ferry sank in a storm off Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing at least 230 people. The movie "Slumdog Millionaire" won four Golden Globes, including best drama; the late Heath Ledger won best supporting actor for "The Dark Knight" while Kate Winslet received

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two acting awards for "Revolutionary Road" and "The Reader." Theater and movie director Tom O'Horgan died in Venice, Fla., at age 84.

Five years ago: Former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, 85, died eight years after a devastating stroke left him in a coma. Alex Rodriguez was dealt the most severe punishment in the history of baseball's drug agreement when an arbitrator ruled the New York Yankees third baseman was suspended for the entire 2014 season as the result of a drug investigation. Gracie Gold won her first U.S. figure skating title at the championships in Boston; Charlie White and Meryl Davis won a record sixth straight U.S. ice dance title.

One year ago: Walmart announced that it was boosting its starting salary for U.S. workers and handing out bonuses, on the same day the company confirmed it was closing dozens of Sam's Club warehouse stores. President Donald Trump was quoted as having used bluntly vulgar language during an Oval Office meeting with lawmakers while asking why the U.S. would accept more immigrants from Haiti and African countries rather than places like Norway. Edgar Ray Killen, a 1960s Klan leader who was convicted decades later in the slayings of three civil rights workers, died in prison at the age of 92.

Today's Birthdays: Former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien (zhahn kray-tee-EHN') is 85. Actor Mitchell Ryan is 85. Actor Felix Silla is 82. Movie director Joel Zwick is 77. Country singer Naomi Judd is 73. World Golf Hall of Famer Ben Crenshaw is 67. Singer Robert Earl Keen is 63. Actress Phyllis Logan is 63. Musician Vicki Peterson (The Bangles) is 61. Actress Kim Coles is 57. Actor Jason Connery is 56. Former child actress Dawn Lyn (TV: "My Three Sons") is 56. Contemporary Christian musician Jim Bryson (MercyMe) is 51. Rock musician Tom Dumont (No Doubt) is 51. Movie director Malcolm D. Lee is 49. Singer Mary J. Blige is 48. Musician Tom Rowlands (The Chemical Brothers) is 48. Actor Marc Blucas is 47. Actress Amanda Peet is 47. Actor Rockmond Dunbar is 46. Actress Aja Naomi King is 34. Actress Kristolyn Lloyd is 34. Reality TV star Jason Wahler is 32. Pop singer Cody Simpson is 22.

Thought for Today: "If you are ruled by mind you are a king; if by body, a slave." — Cato, Roman statesman and historian (234 B.C.-149 B.C.)

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