

Groton Daily Independent

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Service Notice: Denny Davies

Services for Dennis "Denny" Davies, 63, of Groton will be 2:00 p.m., Saturday, January 26th at the United Methodist Church, Groton. Pastor Brandon Dunham will officiate. Burial will take place at a later date in Wilmot.

Visitation will be held at the chapel on Friday from 5-7 p.m.

Denny passed away January 22, 2019 at his home.

The Northeast Conference Wrestling tournament scheduled for Thursday, January 24th in Clear Lake has been cancelled.

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Thursday, January 24, 2019

4:00pm: Wrestling: Boys Varsity Northeast Conference @ Deuel High School

Friday, January 25, 2019

Lewis and Clark Debate at Yankton High School

Boys basketball at Clark (7th grade at 4 p.m., 8th grade game at 5 p.m., junior varsity at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.)

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.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Rep. Dusty Johnson Announces Seat on House Agriculture Committee

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson (R-S.D.) today announced he will serve on the House Committee on Agriculture for the 116th Congress.

“Serving on the Agriculture Committee is a true honor and I am proud to give South Dakota a voice at this table,” said Johnson. “I relentlessly advocated for a seat on this committee since being elected to Congress. My placement on this committee will have a direct impact on South Dakota’s largest and most significant industry, and I am thankful to have the opportunity to advance sound agriculture policy that serves farmers, ranchers and consumers in our state. My colleagues passed a strong Farm Bill last year, and I look forward to seeing it through to implementation.”

“I’m excited to welcome Dusty to the House Agriculture Committee. On the heels of the 2018 Farm Bill, it is critical that strong Members like Dusty are involved in overseeing the implementation of all areas of the bill – from the farm safety net to conservation to rural broadband. There is much work to be done in the 116th Congress, and I look forward to working alongside Dusty on behalf of rural America,” said House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Mike Conaway.

“South Dakota Farm Bureau is proud to have Dusty selected as one of the few new Republicans appointed to the House Agriculture Committee. The Agriculture Committee gives Dusty the chance to advocate for not only farm risk management tools, but also conservation, rural development, research and much more,” said Scott VanderWal, President of the South Dakota Farm Bureau. “We look forward to working with Dusty to advance policies that help South Dakota farmers and ranchers continue to feed the world.”

“Dusty’s appointment to the House Agriculture Committee is big news for South Dakota Corn. As USDA implements the 2018 Farm Bill, we look forward to working with Dusty to ensure South Dakota farmers have a seat at the table,” said Troy Knecht, President of the South Dakota Corn Growers Association. “During this uncertainty in the farm economy, it is more important than ever to have an advocate for speedy implementation.”

“South Dakota Soybean would like to extend our Congratulations to Congressman Johnson for this very strategic appointment,” said Jeff Thompson, President of the South Dakota Soybean Association. We are excited that he will be seated on the Ag Committee. The Congressman will be a tremendous asset to the committee and a leading advocate for South Dakota farmers. His leadership will provide a voice for all current and future farm families.”

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Governor Noem's Budget Presentation for FY 2020

South Dakota For the Next Generation



Governor
Kristi Noem
FY 2020 Budget
Recommendations

Fiscal Management

- Fiscal Discipline
- No New Taxes
- Seeking efficiencies
- Transparency

Remote Seller Collections

- South Dakota led the nation by preserving the sales tax model for all states

	Current Year	Change from Previous Year
December 2016	\$3,824,527	
December 2017	\$4,931,666	\$1,107,139
December 2018	\$6,326,749	\$1,395,083

Budget Revisions

	FY 2019	FY2020
December Bottom Line	\$2,697,527	\$187,292
January Revenue Increases	\$4,351,781	\$1,011,152
January Expense Reductions	<u>\$17,859,823</u>	<u>\$13,431,918</u>
Total	\$24,909,131	\$14,630,362

Caring for Our Citizens

▪ Provider Rate Changes

- ✓ \$3.8M one-time for 2.5% provider inflation + targeted inflation
- ✓ \$5.8M ongoing for 2.5% provider inflation + targeted inflation

▪ Innovation Grants

- ✓ \$5.0M one-time for Nursing Homes
- ✓ \$1.0M one-time for Primary and Prenatal Care

Improving Public Safety

▪ Confronting the Meth Epidemic- \$4.6M

- ✓ \$1.4M one-time and \$250K ongoing for Meth Media Campaign
- ✓ \$731K ongoing for school based meth education
- ✓ \$200K ongoing for Meth Interdiction Team
- ✓ \$2.1M ongoing for Meth treatment

▪ Mental Health- \$490K

- ✓ \$139K ongoing for mental health court treatment
- ✓ \$351K ongoing for System of Care School Coordinators

▪ State Radio- \$4.6M

- ✓ \$4.6M one-time for state radio infrastructure improvements



Kickstarting the Economy

- **Reprioritizing Ag Development**
 - ✓ Executive Reorganization
- **Expanding Rural Broadband**
 - ✓ \$5.0M one-time development grants
- **Enhancing Ellsworth Air Force Base**
 - ✓ \$1.8M one-time state matching grant



Protecting Natural Resources

- **Second Century Habitat Initiative**
 - ✓ \$1.0M one-time partnership funding
- **Enhancing Predator Control**
 - ✓ \$225K ongoing predator control funding
- **Palisades State Park**
 - ✓ \$500K one-time partnership funding



Improving Education

- **Opportunity Scholarship for Homeschoolers**
 - ✓ \$100K ongoing to expand the opportunity scholarship to homeschoolers
- **State Aid and Technical Institutes to 2.5%**
 - ✓ \$1.7M ongoing funding increase
- **Family Education Service Grants**
 - ✓ \$215K ongoing for grant funding
- **Tribal Relations Indian Education Coordinator**
 - ✓ Executive Reorganization



Supporting Veterans

- **Veterans' Bonus Program**
 - ✓ \$600K one-time to continue bonuses for wartime veterans
- **Veterans' Benefits Staff**
 - ✓ \$130K ongoing and 2.0FTE to provide assistance to veterans
- **Veterans' Home Gift**
 - ✓ \$100K ongoing in other fund authority



State Employees

- Attract the best and the brightest to state government
- Retain the dedicated employees we already have
 - ✓ 2.5% Market Adjustments for all permanent employees
 - ✓ \$1.7M ongoing in General Funds to eliminate the need for an employee health insurance premium



FY2019 General Bill Amendments

	General Funds
Rural Broadband Expansion	\$5,000,000
State Radio Infrastructure and Systems Upgrade	\$4,620,920
Provider Rate Increases	\$3,776,805
Methamphetamine Prevention Campaign	\$1,375,000
Other Adjustments	\$257,048
Care Coordination Agreements	(\$6,843,582)
State Aid Revision	(\$6,903,895)
Department of Social Services Operations	(\$19,832,331)
Total	(\$18,550,035)

FY2019 Emergency Special Appropriations

	General Funds
Jameson Prison Annex Expansion	\$7,392,235
Provider Innovation Grants	\$6,000,000
National Guard Readiness Center	\$3,884,885
Extraordinary Litigation Fund	\$2,300,000
Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program	\$1,845,000
Metrology Lab	\$1,660,000
Second Century Pheasant Habitat	\$1,000,000
Rural Healthcare Recruitment Assistance Programs	\$979,849
Fire Suppression Fund	\$906,658
Veteran's Bonus Program	\$600,000
Emergency and Disaster Fund	\$550,596
Elm Lake Dam	\$521,403
Palisades State Park	\$500,000
Tax Refunds for Elderly and Disabled	<u>\$450,000</u>
Total	\$28,590,626

FY2020 Recommended Changes

	General Funds
Provider Inflation	\$19,211,130
State Aid to Education and Technical Institutes Formula	\$11,160,327
State Employee Salary Policy	\$9,567,792
DSS/DHS Consumer Expansion	\$8,647,610
State Employee Health Insurance	\$8,597,854
Maintenance and Repair	\$4,928,770
Meth Prevention and Treatment Services	\$3,258,002
Medicaid Revisions	(\$12,337,302)
Other Increases and Decreases	<u>\$1,098,536</u>
Total	\$54,132,719

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Bottom Line

	FY2019	FY2020
Increased Ongoing Revenues vs. Adopted	\$348,324	\$54,132,719
One-Time Increased Receipts	\$2,532,180	\$0
Transfer from Reserves in Excess of 10%	\$7,160,087	\$0
Mid-Year Expense Adjustments and Transfers	\$18,550,035	\$0
Emergency Special Appropriations	(\$28,590,626)	\$0
Ongoing Expense Adjustments	\$0	<u>(\$54,132,719)</u>
Bottom Line	\$0	\$0

Total Recommended Budget

	FY2019 Adopted	FY2019 Revised	FY2020 Recommended
General	\$1,641,545,684	\$1,651,586,275	\$1,695,678,403
Federal	\$1,693,947,992	\$1,723,465,260	\$1,754,611,362
Other	<u>\$1,418,360,081</u>	<u>\$1,462,640,286</u>	<u>\$1,415,008,955</u>
Total	\$4,753,853,757	\$4,837,691,821	\$4,865,298,720

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Cook/ Dietary Aide

Flexible schedule and
new wage scale.



Contact Pam Rohrbach



GROTON
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

1106 North Second Street
605.397.2365



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”

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NWS ABERDEEN



JANUARY 23, 2018

Ground Blizzard expected



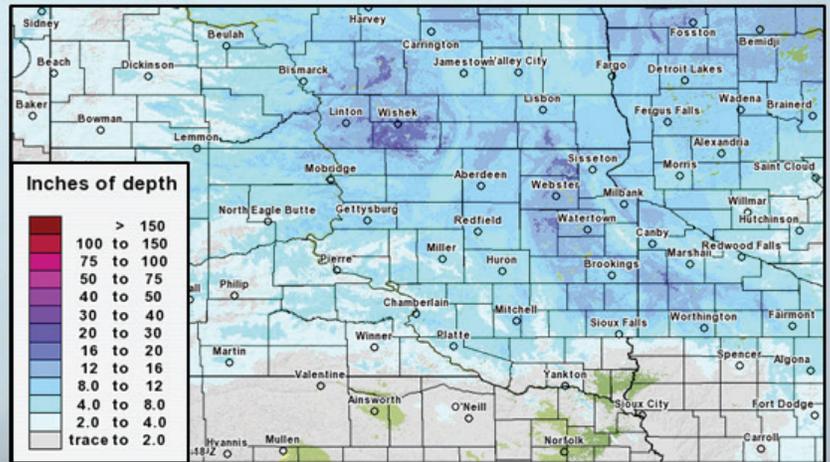
Worst conditions expected **tonight into early Thursday** over **eastern SD and western MN**

Check out your latest forecast...
www.weather.gov/abr



Although not all of this snow will be available to blow around... How much snow is on the ground?

Image: Estimated Snow Depth (many locations over 8")



What is a Ground Blizzard?



When **existing snow** on the ground combines with strong winds to create **significantly reduced visibilities** from blowing and drifting snow

Published on: 01/23/2019 at 8:34AM

A Ground Blizzard is expected tonight into early Thursday morning over eastern SD and western MN. What is a Ground Blizzard? One of the most infamous ground blizzards was the Children's Blizzard of 1888, which killed an estimated 235 people in the Great Plains. While still dangerous, this Ground Blizzard is not expected to last too long, and mainly be during the nighttime hours. <https://www.weather.gov/safety/winter-ground-blizzard>

For more information on the Children's Blizzard, [click here](#)

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Today in Weather History

January 24, 1972: Snowfall of a dusting to as much as 8 inches accompanied by 30 to 40 mph winds resulted in widespread blowing and drifting snow across much of South Dakota. Many roads were blocked by drifting snow. Visibilities were near zero at times. Many activities were canceled or postponed.

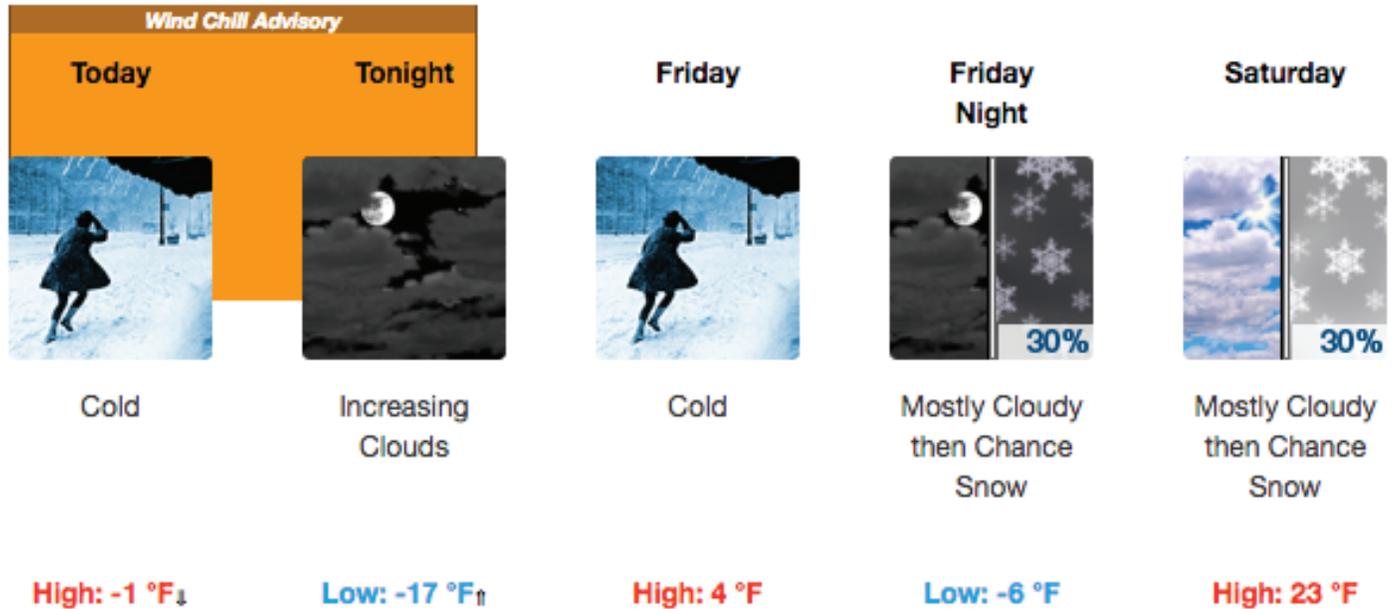
January 24, 1985: Blizzard conditions associated with an Arctic front moved into western Minnesota and northeast South Dakota during the afternoon and continued into the evening. The blizzard brought travel to a standstill. Winds increased to 40 to 60 mph. Many roads were closed due to drifts of snow. Temperatures fell rapidly behind the front with wind chills of 30 to 50 below zero overnight. There were some accidents and stranded motorists. Many vehicles went into the ditch with many people stranded. The National Guard was called upon to search for stranded motorists. Portions of northeast South Dakota experienced near blizzard conditions as wind speeds gusted to near 60 mph with dangerous travel conditions.

1940: A record-breaking 19.9 inches of snow fell in Richmond, Virginia on this day. The storm, which began on the 23rd, produced a total of 21.6 inches of snow for the Richmond area. The headline in the Richmond Times-Dispatch was "Blizzard Sweeps State, Bringing Deep Snow; Public Schools Closed." You can read more about this event, as well as a snowstorm that occurred on February 8, 1936, by clicking [HERE](#).

1967: A tornado outbreak across the Central U.S. was the furthest north ever recorded in the winter up to that time. Severe weather occurred across a good portion of southeast and east-central Iowa. Two-inch hail fell at Armstrong, and over two dozen tornadoes were reported. Five miles north of Fort Madison, one fatality occurred from a tornado along with six injuries. A tornado causing F4 damage killed 3 people and injured 216 in St. Louis County, Missouri. Storms also affected parts of northern and central Illinois. One strong tornado in Mason County killed one person and injured three others. Another tornado moved across the Champaign-Urbana metropolitan area, injuring five people. Other strong tornadoes were reported across Carroll County in Mt. Carroll, where 12 people were injured, and near Gladstone in Henderson County. Funnel clouds were reported across the southwest section of Chicago, IL. High winds gusting to 48 mph caused a wall of a building under construction to collapse killing one and injuring four others. Iowa had never recorded a tornado in January before this outbreak. 32 total tornadoes occurred, 14 of them in Iowa. Nine twisters occurred in Missouri, 8 in Illinois and 1 in Wisconsin.

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Cold Today and Friday

- Wind Chills -20 to -35F today and tonight

- Scattered snow showers tonight and Friday

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD
Updated: 1/24/2019 5:08 AM Central

Published on: 01/24/2019 at 5:13AM

Arctic high pressure settles over the Dakotas this morning bringing chilly temperatures and bitterly cold wind chills. Colder air will linger through Friday. Isolated to scattered snow showers will develop across the region tonight and Friday.

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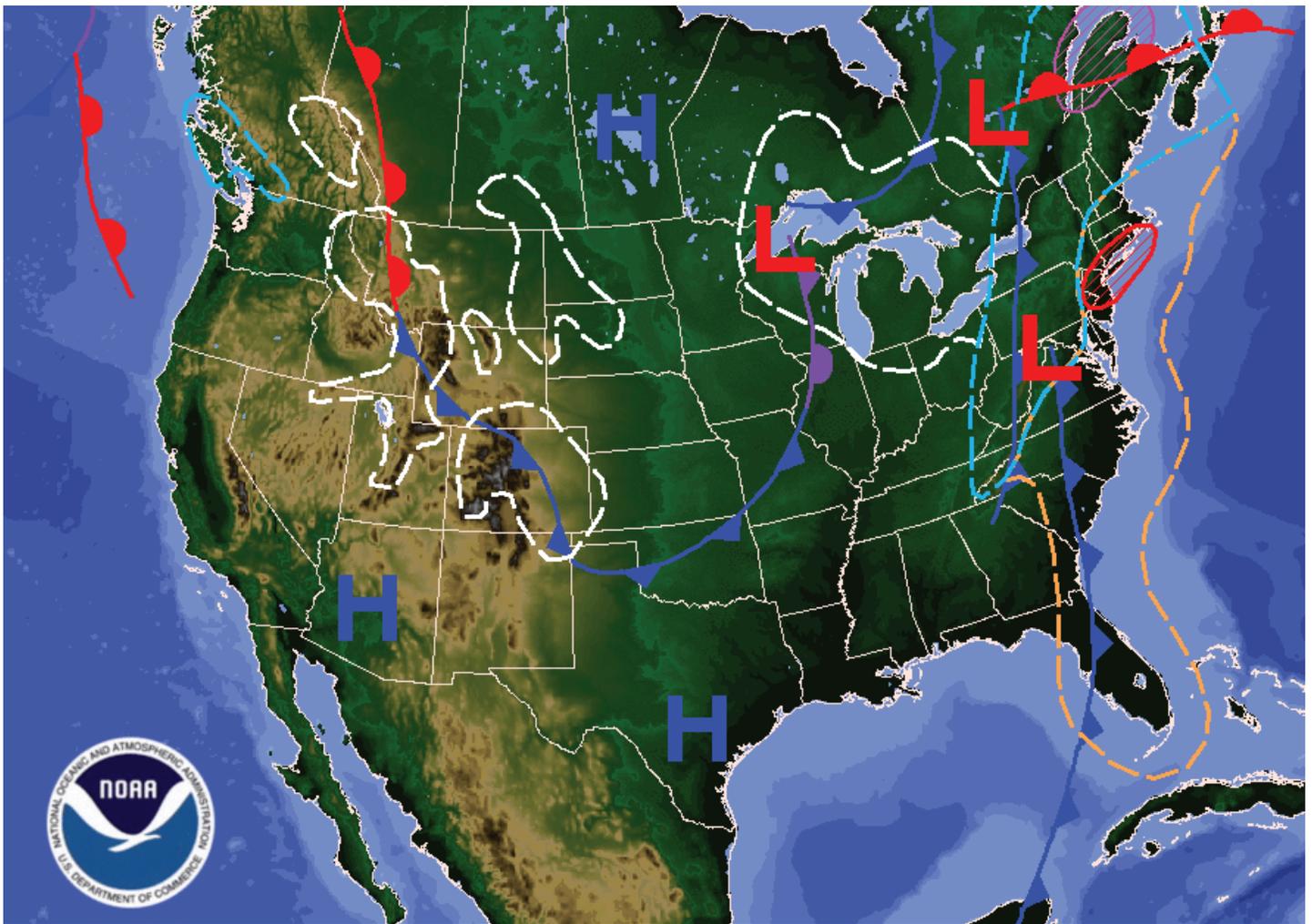
Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 24 °F at 8:54 PM
Low Outside Temp: -6 °F at 12:00 AM
High Gust: 26 mph at 9:36 PM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1981
Record Low: -35 in 1915
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.36
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.36
Precip Year to Date: 0.09
Sunset Tonight: 5:29 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:02 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Jan 24, 2019, issued 3:59 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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JUMPING HURDLES

Normally, when Ben came home from work, his teenage daughter would run up to him and hug him and kiss him. One afternoon, however, he came home, and she was not there to greet him.

Frightened, he called her name. Unfortunately, she did not respond. He went to the phone to call the police and noticed that a note was taped to the desk beneath it. Hurriedly, he read the note: Dad, I went back to the school to practice jumping hurdles. Love ya! Karen.

Everyone has their share of hurdles. Some are taller than others, and there may be a longer distance between them. But they are there every day and everywhere. We have problems to solve, temptations to overcome, burdens to bear - for ourselves and others - and battles to fight. We can face and fight them or flee from them. However, they will never go away unless and until we work with the Lord to overcome them.

Faith and trust in God can turn our obstacles into opportunities, sadness into smiles, and tragedies into triumphs - depending on what and how we choose to deal with them.

David faced many of the same situations that we do. Yet, we find no record that he spent time on self-pity or self-resignation. He prayed and believed that God could and would take care of every one of them. And He did!

Hear his praise report: Praise be to the Lord, for He has heard my cry for mercy!

Because hurdles come from God, we can get over them with God.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to fill our lives with faith to overcome each hurdle we face and give You all the praise. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 28:6 Praise be to the Lord, for He has heard my cry for mercy.

2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 01/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 03/17/2019 Groton American Legion Spring Fundraiser
- 04/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/27/2019 Fireman's Stag
- 05/04/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/27/2019 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- 06/14/2019 SDSU Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 06/15/2019 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 06/21/2019 Best Ball Golf Tourney
- 07/04/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 07/14/2019 Summer Fest
- 08/22/2019 First Day of School
- 09/07/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/08/2019 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
- 11/09/2019 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/07/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course 2019 Holiday Party
- 12/07/2019 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services

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News from the Associated Press

Texas man gifts \$1 million to South Dakota veterans home

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Texas man with no known ties to a South Dakota veterans home has given the facility \$1 million.

Eighty-five-year-old Arlyn Reinert died in April and willed his life savings to the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home in Hot Springs. South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem announced the gift Wednesday during her budget address to the Legislature. Noem said Reinert was a career Air Force veteran who lived a frugal life in Perryton, Texas.

Public probate documents show Reinert died at a nursing home in Perryton. He was never married and had no children. One of Reinert's acquaintances, veterans' service officer Dempsey Malaney, tells the Rapid City Journal he has no clue as to why Reinert chose to leave his estate to the veterans home in South Dakota.

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

No travel advisory for northeast South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Transportation officials are advising against travel in northeast South Dakota because of a blizzard warning.

The Department of Transportation says high winds are reducing visibility on some roads to near zero because of the blowing snow. The travel advisory includes Interstate 29 from Watertown to the North Dakota border.

Dupree and Eagle Butte schools are opening two hours later Thursday morning because of the weather.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

02-08-27-32-35

(two, eight, twenty-seven, thirty-two, thirty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$48,000

Lotto America

01-04-27-34-47, Star Ball: 1, ASB: 4

(one, four, twenty-seven, thirty-four, forty-seven; Star Ball: one; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$14.24 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$96 million

Powerball

23-25-47-48-50, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 3

(twenty-three, twenty-five, forty-seven, forty-eight, fifty; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$144 million

Simpson, Armstrong lead South Dakota past North Dakota

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GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — Tristan Simpson and Brandon Armstrong scored 13 points apiece and South Dakota led from start to finish in a 70-56 victory over North Dakota on Wednesday night.

Armstrong came off the bench, made two free throws and missed his only shot in the first half. He scored 11 points after halftime, including 7-of-10 free throws for 9-of-12 from the line for the game.

Stanley Umude added 12 points and Trey Burch-Manning had eight rebounds for the Coyotes (9-11, 3-4 Summit League). South Dakota played only seven players. Armstrong and Burch-Manning, the only reserves, gave the Coyotes 22 bench points.

Marlon Stewart scored a season-high 22 points and had seven rebounds for the Fighting Hawks (8-13, 2-6). Cortez Seales added 10 points and Filip Rebraca had 11 rebounds.

North Dakota had as many turnovers as field goals — 9 — in the first half and shot 31 percent from the field.

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>

Noem's first budget seeks hikes for providers, state workers

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem used her first budget address Wednesday to propose slightly higher spending for education, state employees and Medicaid providers than former Gov. Dennis Daugaard suggested in his final budget address last year.

Noem, the new Republican governor, proposed a nearly \$1.7 billion general fund budget for the 2020 budget year that starts July 1. She is proposing roughly \$54 million in new ongoing spending, including 2.5 percent increases for education, Medicaid providers and state workers; Daugaard had recommended 2.3 percent hikes in his December budget address.

"The budget I proposed today is structurally balanced," Noem said. "It provides for a prudent plan to confront the issues that we face in our state ... and it doesn't needlessly grow government."

Noem's budget proposal funds priorities from her State of the State address earlier in January, including mental health, fighting meth addiction and connecting more people to high-speed internet. She is calling for one-time spending including \$3.8 million for Medicaid providers, \$5 million for nursing home grants and \$5 million for expanding rural broadband.

She's also proposing \$4.6 million to fight the methamphetamine epidemic, including more than \$1 million for a meth media campaign.

"We will use this funding to reach out to every South Dakotan through various media platforms to ensure that they understand the horrible truths about what this epidemic in our state is and how we can overcome it," said Noem, whose public safety plan also includes ongoing spending of about \$730,000 for school-based meth education, \$2.1 million for treatment and about \$140,000 for a new mental health court in Minnehaha County.

House Majority Leader Lee Qualm said he's excited about Noem's plan for fighting meth abuse, particularly prevention efforts. He said also that the state needs to do something about nursing homes or South Dakota will see closures, calling for additional money in the long-term care system.

South Dakota's nursing home Medicaid rate is about \$146 per day, short of the roughly \$181 daily cost of care, resulting in a \$42 million annual shortfall, according to the South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations. The group says a nursing home in Tripp closed last year and two more in Madison and Mobridge are scheduled to shut down by the end of the month.

CEOs across the state, whether they're at hospitals or nursing homes, are thankful for the "positive movement in today's budget," said Deb Peters, the association's vice president of communications and

member relations. Noem said her budget proposal includes a rate hike for nursing homes and \$5 million for innovation grants to "seek bigger picture solutions to the challenges that we face."

"Many nursing homes in this state are struggling," Noem said. "Nursing home closures are very hard. Real people — our parents, our grandparents — they're all impacted."

Noem's also proposing emergency appropriations of more than \$28 million for the current state budget year, matching some of Daugaard's priorities such as \$7.4 million to expand the Jameson Annex at the South Dakota State Penitentiary and roughly \$3.9 million for a National Guard Readiness Center.

But Noem is shelving a proposal from Daugaard to require state workers to pay premiums for the South Dakota State Employee Health Plan. Eric Ollila, executive director of the South Dakota State Employees Organization, said it would have been a "radical change" from anything state employees have seen.

"It would've really caused some severe damage at the lower end of the scale, where we have a lot of employees," he said.

Lawmakers will reshape the current budget and approve the next one during the 2019 session. Noem's plan for next budget year calls for spending about \$1.75 billion in federal funds, more than \$1.4 billion in other state money and about \$1.7 billion in general funds, totaling over \$4.8 billion.

Noem said her budget proposal doesn't include any new projected revenues after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in South Dakota's favor opened the door for consumers to see sales tax on more online purchases from out-of-state companies. The state on Nov. 1 started requiring many internet retailers outside South Dakota to collect the taxes.

"We shouldn't plan for and budget dollars that aren't in the door yet," Noem said. "It's just not fiscally sound."

Lobbyist sues South Dakota House speaker over floor access

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A longtime lobbyist is suing the speaker of the South Dakota House, alleging that he banned her from the chamber's floor after she wrote a magazine column saying the number of "wackies" in the Legislature was increasing.

Yvonne Taylor, who heads the South Dakota Municipal League, alleges that Speaker Steve Haugaard barred her from the House floor during a private meeting at the Capitol on Jan. 14, the Argus Leader reported.

"One important aspect of lobbying is circulating bill sponsor sheets and explaining to legislators the bill they are being asked to sponsor," the lawsuit states. "Legislators sign the bill sponsor sheet in order to become a sponsor of a bill. This activity occurs almost exclusively on the floors of the House and Senate."

Taylor said Haugaard objected to a column she wrote in May for the Municipal League, which advocates on behalf of the state's municipalities. In the May column, Taylor lamented the "wackies" who oppose government and any taxation, even when groups that would pay added taxes or fees want them.

Taylor alleges that Haugaard said it made the Legislature look like "a bunch of buffoons" and accuses him of unlawful retaliation and violating her free speech rights. The lawsuit contends that banning Taylor from the floor prevented her from being able to adequately represent her group's members.

The House floor is typically open to lobbyists, journalists and members of the public. The newspaper reported that Haugaard didn't respond to its message left Tuesday seeking comment.

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

South Dakota Senate panel rejects anti-nepotism bill

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota Senate panel has rejected a bill that sought to block state officials from hiring relatives.

The Senate State Affairs Committee voted unanimously Wednesday against the measure. The proposal came after Gov. Kristi Noem announced in December that her daughter would be a policy analyst in the governor's office.

Republican Sen. Stace Nelson, the bill's sponsor, says nepotism is government corruption. Democratic

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Sen. Craig Kennedy, a bill opponent, says the measure wasn't crafted well.

Noem spokeswoman Kristin Wileman said in an earlier statement that the governor should be able to develop a team who will deliver results for the state "regardless of their last name."

The bill would have prohibited state officials and employees from serving in a supervisory capacity over relatives including parents, spouses, children and siblings.

Noem offers civics test requirement for high school students

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem has proposed a measure that would require students to pass a civics test to graduate from high school.

The bill introduced Wednesday at the request of the governor's office calls for high school students to score at least 70 percent on the test to get a diploma.

Noem said this month in her State of the State address that it's only fair that young people demonstrate a basic knowledge of the nation's institutions and history before graduating from high school and taking on their responsibilities as citizens.

The civics exam would include at least 50 questions from the U.S. citizenship test. The requirement would take effect starting next school year.

South Dakota lawmakers also are considering other civics education bills this session.

5-year-old knocked unconscious after second-floor fall

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police say a 5-year-old girl was knocked unconscious after falling over a second-floor railing inside a Sioux Falls hotel.

Authorities say the girl, from Mitchell, was playing with a ball with other children in the hallway of the Ramada Inn Sunday when the ball went over the railing. Police spokesman Sam Clemens says that as the children were running after it, the girl was unable to slow down, flipped over the railing and fell to the first floor.

She was taken to the hospital, but Clemens says she was not seriously hurt.

Maduro faces off with US over Venezuela rival's power claim

By JOSHUA GOODMAN, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelans headed into uncharted political waters Thursday, with the young leader of a newly united and combative opposition claiming to hold the presidency and socialist President Nicolas Maduro digging in for a fight with the Trump administration.

Violence flared again Wednesday during big anti-government demonstrations across Venezuela, and at least seven protesters were reported killed in the escalating confrontation with Maduro, who has been increasingly accused of undemocratic behavior by the United States and many other nations in the region.

Juan Guaido, the new leader of the opposition-controlled National Assembly, turned up the heat by declaring himself interim president before a mass of demonstrators in Caracas. He said it is the only way to end the Maduro "dictatorship" in Venezuela, which has seen millions flee in recent years to escape sky-high inflation and food shortages.

"We know that this will have consequences," Guaido shouted to the cheering crowd, then slipped away to an unknown location amid speculation that he would soon be arrested.

In a united and seemingly coordinated front, the U.S., Canada and some Latin American and European countries announced that they supported Guaido's claim to the presidency.

But Russia, China, Iran, Syria, Cuba and Turkey have voiced their backing for Maduro's government.

President Donald Trump promised to use the "full weight" of U.S. economic and diplomatic power to push for the restoration of Venezuela's democracy. "The people of Venezuela have courageously spoken out against Maduro and his regime and demanded freedom and the rule of law," he said in a statement.

Maduro fired back by breaking diplomatic relations with the U.S., the biggest trading partner for the oil-exporting country, and ordering American diplomats to get out of the country within 72 hours. Washington

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said it would ignore the order.

The socialist leader, who so far has been backed by the military, as well as the government-packed courts and a constituent assembly, recalled the long history of heavy-handed U.S. interventions in Latin America during the Cold War as he asked his allies for support.

"Don't trust the gringos," he thundered to a crowd of red-shirted supporters gathered at the presidential palace. "They don't have friends or loyalties. They only have interests, guts and the ambition to take Venezuela's oil, gas and gold."

China's Foreign Ministry called on the United States to stay out of the crisis, while Russia's deputy foreign minister warned the U.S. against any military intervention in Venezuela.

Some Russian officials reacted with anger to the opposition protests. Alexei Pushkov, chairman of the information committee at the Russian Federation Council, called Guaido's declaration "an attempted coup" backed by the U.S.

Russia has been propping up Maduro with arms deliveries and loans. Maduro visited Moscow in December, seeking Russia's political and financial support. Over the last decade, China has given Venezuela \$65 billion in loans, cash and investment. Venezuela owes more than \$20 billion.

On Thursday, attention will shift to Washington, where diplomats at the Organization of American States will hold an emergency meeting on the Venezuelan situation. The debate promises to be charged, and the National Assembly's newly picked diplomatic envoy will be lobbying to take Venezuela's seat from Maduro's ambassador.

Meanwhile, many Venezuelans will be looking for Guaido to re-emerge and provide guidance on the opposition's next steps. The armed forces' top command, which has so far remained silent, is also expected to issue a statement, although nobody expects the general's loyalties to Maduro to have shifted.

The price of oil slipped for the third time in four days Wednesday, an indication that international energy markets are not overly concerned yet that the situation in Venezuela — America's third top oil supplier and owner of Houston-based Citgo — will disrupt global crude supplies.

Tensions began ramping up earlier this month as Maduro took the oath of office for a second six-year term won in an election last May that many in the region contend was not free or fair because his strongest opponents were barred from running.

The 35-year-old Guaido, a virtually unknown lawmaker at the start of the year, has reignited the hopes of Venezuela's often beleaguered opposition by taking a rebellious tack amid Venezuela's crushing economic crisis.

He escalated his campaign Wednesday by declaring that the constitution gives him, as president of the congress, the authority to take over as interim president and form a transitional government until he calls new elections.

Raising his right hand in unison with tens of thousands of supporters, he took a symbolic oath to assume executive powers: "Today, January 23, 2019, I swear to formally assume the powers of the national executive as president in charge of Venezuela."

The assault on Maduro's rule came after large crowds gathered in Caracas waving flags and chanting "Get out, Maduro!" in what was the biggest demonstration since a wave of unrest that left more than 120 dead in 2017.

There were no signs that security forces heeded Guaido's call to join the anti-Maduro movement and go easy on demonstrators. Hours after most demonstrators went home, violence broke out in Altamira, an upscale zone of Caracas and an opposition stronghold, when National Guardsmen descended on hundreds of youths, some of them with their faces covered, lingering around a plaza. Popping tear gas canisters sent hundreds running and hordes of protesters riding two and three on motorcycles fleeing in panic.

Blocks away, a small group knocked a pair of guardsmen riding tandem off their motorcycle, pelting them with coconuts as they sped down a wide avenue. Some in the group struck the two guardsmen with their hands while others ran off with their gear and set their motorcycle on fire.

Meanwhile, four demonstrators were killed by gunfire in the western city of Barinas as security forces

were dispersing a crowd. Three others were killed amid unrest in the border city of San Cristobal.

Marco Ponce, a coordinator with the Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict, a human rights monitoring group, said at least 12 had been killed overall, giving names but no details on the other cases.

Amid the showdown, all eyes are on the military, the traditional arbiter of political disputes in Venezuela — and to which Guaido has been targeting his message.

On Monday, a few dozen national guardsmen seized a stockpile of assault rifles in a pre-dawn uprising that was quickly quelled, although residents in a nearby slum showed support for the mutineers by burning cars and stoning security forces. Disturbances flared up that night in other working-class neighborhoods where the government has traditionally enjoyed strong support, and continued into the late hours Tuesday and Wednesday as well.

Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

Joshua Goodman on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/APjoshgoodman>

Ending showdown with Pelosi, Trump postpones State of Union

By KEVIN FREKING, MATTHEW DALY and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said he is postponing his State of the Union address until the partial government shutdown ends, yielding after a weeklong showdown with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Following a high-stakes game of dare and double-dare, Trump conceded Wednesday night that “no venue that can compete with the history, tradition and importance of the House Chamber.” He said he was not looking for an alternate option after Pelosi served notice earlier in the day that he wouldn’t be allowed to deliver the address to a joint session of Congress next week.

Pelosi had taken the step after Trump said he planned to show up in spite of Democratic objections to the speech taking place with large swaths of the government shut down.

Denied that grand venue, Trump promised to come up with some sort of alternative event. The White House scrambled to find a site matching the gravitas of the traditional address from the rostrum of the House to lawmakers from both parties, Supreme Court justices, invited guests and a television audience of millions.

“As the Shutdown was going on, Nancy Pelosi asked me to give the State of the Union Address. I agreed,” Trump tweeted shortly after 11 p.m. EST. “She then changed her mind because of the Shutdown, suggesting a later date. This is her prerogative - I will do the Address when the Shutdown is over.”

Fireworks over the speech shot back and forth between the Capitol and the White House as the month-long partial government shutdown showed no signs of ending and about 800,000 federal workers faced the prospect of going without their second paycheck in a row come Friday.

Pelosi told Trump the House wouldn’t approve a resolution allowing him to address Congress until the shutdown ended. Trump shot back that Pelosi was afraid of hearing the truth.

“I think that’s a great blotch on the incredible country that we all love,” Trump said earlier Wednesday. “It’s a great, great horrible mark.”

The drama surrounding the State of the Union address began last week when Pelosi asked Trump to make other plans but stopped short of denying him the chamber for his address. Trump called her bluff Wednesday in a letter, saying he intended to come anyway.

“It would be so very sad for our Country if the State of the Union were not delivered on time, on schedule, and very importantly, on location,” he wrote.

Pelosi quickly squelched the speech, writing back that the House “will not consider a concurrent resolution authorizing the President’s State of the Union address in the House Chamber until government has opened.”

The president cannot speak in front of a joint session of Congress without both chambers’ explicit per-

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mission. A resolution needs to be approved by both chambers specifying the date and time for receiving an address from the president.

The gamesmanship unfolded as the Senate prepared to vote this week on dueling proposals on the shutdown. A Republican one would give Trump money for the wall while one from Democrats would reopen government through Feb. 8, with no wall money, giving bargainers time to talk about it.

Both proposals were likely to fail to reach the 60-vote threshold needed in the Senate, where Republicans hold a 53-47 majority. As well, House Democrats were putting forward a new proposal, aiming to lure Trump away from his demand for a border wall by offering billions of new dollars for other border security measures.

The Constitution states only that the president "shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union," meaning the president can speak anywhere he chooses or give his update in writing. The address has been delayed before.

Ronald Reagan's 1986 State of the Union address was postponed after the Challenger space shuttle exploded in flight on Jan. 28 of that year.

But there is no precedent for a State of the Union invitation being rescinded.

Presidents Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and Jimmy Carter issued their final messages in print. As Eisenhower recovered from a heart attack in 1956, he prepared a seven-minute, filmed summary of the message from his retreat in Key West, Florida, that was broadcast nationwide. Richard Nixon sent a printed message in 1973; his staff said an oral message would have come too soon after his second inaugural address.

White House officials had been working on a backup plan to have Trump give the speech somewhere else if Democrats blocked access to the House chamber. Nevertheless, they were rattled by Pelosi's move Wednesday and expressed concern it would further sour shutdown negotiations.

Pelosi said that when she extended her Jan. 3 invitation to Trump to deliver the State of the Union address on Jan. 29, there was no thought that the government would still be shut down.

She wrote Wednesday: "I look forward to welcoming you to the House on a mutually agreeable date for this address when government has been opened."

Moments after her letter became public, Trump told reporters he wasn't surprised by Pelosi's action. Democrats have become "radicalized," he claimed. He expanded on those sentiments during a subsequent event at the White House, calling the cancellation a "disgrace" and asserting that Pelosi didn't want to hear the truth about the need for better border security.

The White House and Democratic lawmakers have been accusing one another of pettiness since Pelosi raised doubts about the speech. Trump followed up by revoking her use of a military plane for a congressional delegation visit to Afghanistan.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville, Andrew Taylor, Laurie Kellman, Jill Colvin and Zeke Miller contributed to this report.

Ex-girlfriend: Accused bank shooter fascinated with violence

By TERRY SPENCER, Associated Press

SEBRING, Fla. (AP) — A former prison guard trainee accused of fatally shooting five people inside a Florida bank branch has long been fascinated with the idea of killing, but people who could have done something about it didn't take his threats seriously, a woman who identified herself as his former girlfriend told a television station.

Zephen Xaver, 21, "for some reason always hated people and wanted everybody to die," Alex Gerlach told WSBT-TV in Indiana, shortly after Wednesday's massacre in Sebring. "He got kicked out of school for having a dream that he killed everybody in his class, and he's been threatening this for so long, and he's been having dreams about it and everything."

"Every single person I've told has not taken it seriously, and it's very unfortunate that it had to come to

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this," Gerlach said.

Gerlach told The Washington Post that Xaver said he purchased a gun last week and "no one thought anything of it" because he had always liked guns. Public records and neighbors say Xaver and his mother moved to Sebring in the fall from Plymouth, Indiana, a small city south of South Bend, home of the University of Notre Dame.

Investigators said Xaver called police from inside the SunTrust Bank branch Wednesday, saying "I have shot five people."

Then he barricaded himself inside and when negotiations failed, the SWAT team burst in, capturing Xaver and discovering the bodies, police said. Investigators did not offer a possible motive, and a police spokesman said he did not know if the attack began as a robbery. The victims were not immediately identified. No one else was inside the bank.

The bank sits between a hotel and a hair salon located in a business district of U.S. 27. The four-lane highway passes through farming communities and small towns as it connects South Florida and central Florida. Sebring, with 10,000 residents, is known internationally for its annual 12 Hours of Sebring endurance auto race that draws world-class drivers.

"Today's been a tragic day in our community," Sebring Police Chief Karl Heglund said during a Wednesday news conference. "We've suffered significant loss at the hands of a senseless criminal doing a senseless crime."

He said more information would be released at a Thursday morning press conference.

Witness Stefan Roehrig told WFLA in St. Petersburg that the SWAT team attached cables to the door handles but ended up pulling the handles off, so they drove the armored vehicle into the bank. They then led Xaver out in handcuffs.

"The suspect, they slammed him pretty good I think and brought him out here," he told the TV station.

Florida Department of Corrections records show that Xaver was hired as a trainee prison guard at Avon Park Correctional Institution on Nov. 2 and resigned Jan. 9. No disciplinary issues were reported. Xaver lived in a non-descript pre-fabricated home about 4 miles (6.5 kilometers) from the bank. No one answered the door Wednesday night after police finished searching the home.

John Larose, who lives next door, said Xaver kept to himself, but he could hear him playing and yelling at video games in the middle of the night.

Xaver briefly was an online student of Salt Lake City-based Stevens-Henager College. A spokeswoman for the college, Sherrie Martin, confirmed that Xaver was enrolled from September 2018 until December, when he withdrew.

Gov. Ron DeSantis was in the region for an infrastructure tour and traveled to Sebring after the shooting. He said the Florida Department of Law Enforcement would assist Sebring police and the Highlands County sheriff's office.

"Obviously, this is an individual who needs to face very swift and exacting justice," DeSantis said of the suspect.

This was at least the fourth mass shooting in Florida with five or more dead in the last three years. A gunman killed 49 at an Orlando nightclub in 2016, five died at the Fort Lauderdale airport in 2017 and 17 died in February at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in a Fort Lauderdale suburb.

SunTrust Chairman and CEO Bill Rogers released a statement saying the bank was "working with officials and dedicating ourselves to fully addressing the needs of all the individuals and families involved."

The bank's "entire team mourns this terrible loss," he said.

AP reporter David Fischer in Miami contributed to this report.

Trump's shutdown gift to Pelosi: A unified Democratic caucus

By LISA MASCARO, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has done something remarkable in the government shutdown: He's unified the diverse new House Democratic majority firmly behind Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

It's not even about the wall at this point. Democrats are sticking together with an unusual amount of unity as a way to strengthen Pelosi's hand and set a tone in the new Congress that Trump can't simply demand \$5.7 billion — using federal workers as leverage — to get his long-promised border wall with Mexico, or anything else on his wish list.

"People do understand that this is no longer just about the wall, it's about how Donald Trump operates with the Democratic majority in the House," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash.

"If we give into him on this, what happens if he wants to cut Social Security or Medicare or end legal migration or cut food stamps?" she asked. "Do we allow him to take us hostage for anything he wants?"

Pelosi, she said, is already proving herself to be a "strong" speaker, unlike her recent Republican predecessors. "She's also not afraid of him."

As the shutdown crisis begins a second month, the White House believes it's Democrats who will feel pressure to cave. Services are being disrupted and 800,000 federal workers are likely to miss another paycheck Friday. Republicans doubt all Democrats back Pelosi's view of the wall as immoral.

Trump told state and local officials on a conference call Wednesday, "Democrats are lousy politicians in many ways, they're lousy politicians and they have lousy policy, the only thing they do well is stick together."

The White House is eagerly watching Thursday's Senate votes on two bills to end the shutdown. Officials think it will be harder for Democrats to keep sticking together amid Trump's offers, according a person familiar with White House thinking who was not authorized to speak publicly. They are hopeful for defections by Democrats who may cross party lines to vote with the president. Trump is asking for \$5.7 billion for the wall in exchange for some temporary protections for immigrants facing deportations.

Back in the House, Democratic unity was never a given. In fact, Pelosi won the speaker's race only after a brutal campaign that overcame dissent from her members. When the new Congress convened in the new year, 13 days into the partial shutdown, lawmakers meeting behind closed doors openly worried.

They asked Pelosi: What was the strategy? The message? How were they going to end this? One prominent freshman, Rep. Abigail Spangberger, D-Va., stood up at one early meeting to voice concerns.

Leadership swooped in, churning out talking points to help lawmakers explain the Democratic position: Open up the government and then negotiations can begin on border security.

They provided outlines of border policies that Democrats support — improved fencing and technology, more personnel. It's what they refer to as a "21st century" border security system, unlike the old-fashioned wall. They are holding votes to re-open government and preparing their own border security plan with more than \$1 billion in new border security funding.

Part of the problem from the start of the shutdown was many new members didn't even have staff hired or district offices, creating logistical challenges to even be able to communicate with them, aides said.

Leaders sent lawmakers home last weekend with action plans. One suggestion was to meet with furloughed federal workers or Transportation Security Administration airport screeners being forced to work without pay and share their stories. Another was to visit food pantries to show the reach of the shutdown on ordinary Americans. Many Democrats did just that.

This week, as Democrats met behind closed doors, with polling showing Trump taking most of the blame for the shutdown, the caucus stood largely as one.

"Understand the impact of the unity of our caucus," Pelosi told them, according to an aide in the room unauthorized to discuss the private meeting by name.

Pelosi recounted her own experience, from more than decade ago, during the fight she and then-Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid waged against George W. Bush's plan to privatize Social Security.

"Week-in and week-out, we had to say to our group, 'Stick with the plan,'" she told them, which was to remain united as Democrats to preserve Social Security, as is. It was a lesson for today.

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"And so, what we are saying is, open up government. And then we can discuss," she told them. "Everything is on the table."

While the caucus is on board with Pelosi's strategy, some Democrats remain wary of holding out against Trump's border wall. Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., said he'd "give Trump the money" but wanted to make sure it was well spent.

"Why are we fighting over this?" he said on KFGO Radio.

Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., a newly elected member, drafted a letter to House leaders seeking a quick reopening of government while talks continue. It sent a message to leadership that patience isn't infinite.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania, another freshman Democrat, signed Luria's letter, saying, "We need to work together we need to open the government and then those kinds of conversations that need to be happening about national security border protection can happen."

Still fresh in many lawmakers' minds is the dysfunction in the House during the Republican majority under Speaker Paul Ryan, and before that under John Boehner. Repeatedly, conservatives from the Freedom Caucus broke ranks during key legislative fights, leaving GOP leadership weakened without the strength of the full caucus behind them.

Democrats say they don't want to undermine Pelosi and want to bolster her power to go toe to toe with Trump.

"While people don't agree with everything Nancy says ... they see what the guy on Pennsylvania Avenue, how divisive he is. He's not necessarily a guy that's trying to unify the country," said Rep. John Larson, D-Conn. He said the "anger" and "absurdity" of Trump trying to leverage the shutdown — "that's the unifying element that has kept everybody together."

It doesn't hurt that polling is on Democrats' side. A strong majority of Americans blame Trump for the record-long government shutdown and reject his primary rationale for a border wall, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Sixty percent of Americans say Trump bears a great deal of responsibility for the shutdown. About a third place the same amount of blame on congressional Democrats (31 percent) or Republicans (36 percent), according to the survey.

"By any reasonable-person standard we're trying our best to do the mature thing," said Rep. Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, who earlier joined a group challenging Pelosi for speaker but now turns his criticism toward Trump. "This is the great deal maker, right? He stinks at making deals."

Rep. Jim Clyburn of South Carolina, the Democratic whip in charge of rounding up votes, said holding Democrats together hasn't been so great a challenge.

"People know that this president that we currently have is not on the up and up," he said. "It's easy when you got that."

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey, Jill Colvin and Laurie Kellman contributed to this report.

Votes on Senate bills seen as progress even if they fail

By **ANDREW TAYLOR and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate is taking a new approach to ending the partial government shutdown by actually taking votes instead of just pointing fingers.

But competing bills appear likely to fail Thursday, caught in a poisonous Washington impasse.

Either measure would reopen federal agencies and pay 800,000 federal workers who are days from missing yet another paycheck. Republicans would couple ending the 34-day shutdown with \$5.7 billion for President Donald Trump's border wall and revamping immigration laws. Democrats would reopen agency doors for three weeks while bargainers seek a budget accord.

Twin defeats might spur the two sides into a more serious effort to strike a compromise. Almost every proposal needs 60 votes to advance in the Senate, which is under 53-47 Republican control.

"It's hard to imagine 60 votes developing for either one," said Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo.

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With the impacts of the shutdown becoming increasingly painful, however, lawmakers on both sides were trumpeting their willingness to compromise in the battle over border security and immigration issues such as protection against deportation for so-called Dreamer immigrants brought to the country illegally as children.

"It's clear what the president wants. It's clear what we want. If you have a negotiation, both parties are going to put on the table what they want," said House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md. "By definition a successful negotiation gets to a place where both sides feel they got something, right?"

But starting negotiations is a tripping point. Democrats insist on opening the government first rather than reward Trump's tactics, while Republicans warn that immediately reopening the government would give Democrats too much leverage in any talks.

"No shutdown. No hostages," said Rep. Ruben Gallegos, D-Ariz. "You get nothing in return until to release the hostages."

The partial shutdown began just before Christmas after Trump indicated that he wouldn't sign a stopgap spending bill backed by top Republicans like Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who shepherded a bill funding the government up to Feb. 8 through the Senate. The House passed a plan with wall funding as one of the last gasps of the eight-year GOP majority.

On Thursday, almost five weeks later, House Democrats continued work on a package that would ignore Trump's demand for \$5.7 billion for a wall with Mexico and would instead pay for other ideas aimed at protecting the border.

Details of Democrats' border security plan and its cost remained a work in progress. Party leaders said it would include money for scanning devices and other technological tools for improving security at ports of entry and along the boundary, plus funds for more border agents and immigration judges.

"If his \$5.7 billion is about border security, then we see ourselves fulfilling that request, only doing it with what I like to call using a smart wall," said No. 3 House Democratic leader Jim Clyburn, D-S.C.

A poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research released Wednesday was the latest indicator that the shutdown is hurting Trump with the general public. While his approval among Republicans remains strong, just 34 percent of Americans like his performance as president and 6 in 10 assign a great deal of responsibility to him for the shutdown, around double the share blaming Democrats.

The Senate GOP bill would temporarily shield from deportation 700,000 "Dreamers," protections Trump has tried terminating. He's also offered temporary protections for people who fled violence or natural disasters in several countries — another program the president has curtailed.

With Democrats eager to show they're trying to end the impasse, the House used mostly party-line votes Wednesday to approve one measure reopening government agencies through February. By a similar tally, the chamber voted to finance most shuttered agencies through September.

Growing numbers of House Democrats say the party should show where it stands on border security.

"Right now it's a vacuum and the president is offering fake plans to stop drug smuggling," said Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore. Offering a Democratic alternative "helps the possibility of beginning a real negotiation," he said.

AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro and writers Laurie Kellman and Matthew Daly contributed to this report.

Diversity highlights emerging field of Democratic candidates

By **JUANA SUMMERS** and **ELANA SCHOR**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The early days of the Democratic primary campaign are highlighting the party's diversity as it seeks a nominee who can build a coalition to take on President Donald Trump.

Of the more than half dozen Democrats who have either moved toward a campaign or declared their candidacy, four are women: Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Kamala Harris of California and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii. Harris is also African-American. Former Obama

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Cabinet member Julian Castro, who is Latino, has also joined the race.

And on Wednesday, Democrat Pete Buttigieg, the 37-year-old mayor of South Bend, Indiana, jumped into the campaign. If he wins the Democratic nomination, he would be the first openly gay presidential nominee from a major political party. He would also be the youngest person ever to become president if he wins the general election.

The diversity is likely to expand in the coming weeks as other Democrats enter the race. The field that's taking shape follows a successful midterm election in which Democrats elected a historically diverse class of politicians to Congress, a pattern they'd like to repeat on the presidential scale. Neera Tanden, president of the liberal Center for American Progress Action Fund, hailed the Democrats' multiple trailblazing candidates for reflecting that "the central opposition to Trump is around a vision of the country that's inclusive of all Americans."

"A lot of different people are going to see that they can be part of the Democratic Party" thanks to a field that showcases women, candidates of color, and the first potential LGBT nominee, Tanden said. The primary "hopefully will bring a lot of people into the process," she added, recalling the high number of voters who engaged in a 2008 Democratic primary that featured a possible female nominee, Hillary Clinton, and the man who would become the first black president, Barack Obama.

The array of backgrounds was on display Wednesday when Buttigieg spoke in personal terms about his marriage.

"The most important thing in my life — my marriage to Chasten — is something that exists by the grace of a single vote on the U.S. Supreme Court," Buttigieg told reporters. "So I'm somebody who understands — whether it's through that or whether it's through the fact that I was sent to war on the orders of the president — I understand politics not in terms of who's up and who's down or some of the other things that command the most attention on the news but in terms of everyday impacts on our lives."

Gillibrand has put her identity as a mother at the core of her campaign, and Harris launched her campaign on this week's Martin Luther King holiday, a nod to her historic bid to become the first black woman elected president.

A number of high-profile candidates remain on the sidelines, including two who would further bolster the diversity of the 2020 field: Sens. Cory Booker of New Jersey, who is black, and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota. Booker, who's widely expected to join the presidential fray in the coming days, visited the pivotal early-voting state of South Carolina this week for public events honoring King and private meetings with local activists.

Klobuchar is set to speak at the University of Pennsylvania on Thursday about her work on the Senate Judiciary Committee, where Booker and Harris also are members. The affable Midwesterner recently told MSNBC that her family "is on board" if she opts to run in 2020, though she's offered little clarity about her timetable to announce a decision.

Though Klobuchar would be the fifth major female candidate in the Democratic primary, female candidates shouldn't be shoehorned into a "narrative" dominated by their identity that excludes the policies they're championing, said Virginia Kase, CEO of the League of Women Voters.

Kase pushed back at one popular 2018 narrative in a recent interview, noting that that "every year is the year of the woman — the reality is that we've always been major contributors" in the electoral process.

Rashad Robinson, executive director of the civil rights-focused nonprofit Color of Change, said in an interview that the diversity of the Democratic field is "a great thing and we should celebrate it," adding, "Our work is always about changing the rules — changing the rules of who can run and who can rule and who can lead is incredibly important."

But in addition to those "unwritten rules," Robinson pointed to the urgency of changing the "written rules" of American life, adding that "diversity alone does not mean structures and policies and practices that have held so many back will change" overnight.

Meanwhile, three white male candidates who could scramble the race — former Vice President Joe Biden, Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, and former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke — are still weighing their own

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presidential plans. Biden addressed a key vulnerability in his potential candidacy this week by publicly airing regret about his support for a 1994 crime bill that's had particularly negative effects on African-American communities, while Sanders built his own new connections to black voters during a trip to South Carolina.

As Biden mulls a run for president, his allies have been sending supporters a memo that could serve as a rationale for a campaign. The memo hails Biden's long track record in politics and argues that at a time of "unprecedented political chaos" during Trump's administration, Biden would offer "trustworthy, compassionate leadership."

O'Rourke, for his part, continues to gauge his future amid pundits' criticism about blog posts he published during a recent road trip through multiple states. The 46-year-old Texan acknowledged that he's been "in and out of a funk" following his departure from Congress after losing a high-profile Senate race in November, sparking questions about the luxury of his indecision given the family wealth and network of passionate backers he can lean on.

As the Democratic field is poised to become more diverse, Republicans say Trump will run for re-election based on his record.

"The American people are better off now than they were two years ago because of President Trump's policies," said Republican National Committee spokeswoman Blair Ellis. "GDP and wages are up, unemployment has hit record lows, and industries across this country are thriving. These are the credentials the American voters want from their president and President Trump is the only person who can run on these results."

Associated Press writer Julie Pace in Washington contributed to this report.

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. TRUMP YIELDS TO PELOSI, POSTPONES STATE OF THE UNION

The president concedes that "no venue can compete with the history, tradition and importance of the House Chamber" and that he'll wait until the shutdown is over as the House speaker had demanded.

2. COMPETING BILLS IN SENATE TO END SHUTDOWN LIKELY TO FAIL

Republicans offer to end the 34-day stalemate with \$5.7 billion for Trump's wall and a revamping of immigration laws. Democrats want to open agency doors for three weeks while bargainers seek a budget accord.

3. HOW AMERICANS FEEL ABOUT SHUTDOWN

A strong majority fault Trump for the record-long government shutdown and reject his primary rationale for a border wall, an AP-NORC poll finds.

4. VENEZUELAN HEAD INTO UNCHARTED POLITICAL WATERS

Opposition leader Juan Guaido is claiming to hold the presidency while socialist President Nicolas Maduro digs in for a fight with the Trump administration.

5. WHAT PONTIFF FACES IN PANAMA

Pope Francis arrives amid a political crisis in Venezuela, a migration standoff at the U.S.-Mexico border and tens of thousands of excited young Central Americans welcoming him.

6. POLICE: FORMER PRISON GUARD TRAINEE KILLS 5 IN FLORIDA BANK

Authorities do not yet have a motive after they say new resident Zephen Xaver, 21, opened fire inside a SunTrust Bank in the small town of Sebring.

7. AMANDA KNOX WINS JUDGMENT

A court orders Italy to pay the former U.S. student \$20,000 for failure to provide legal assistance and a translator during questioning following the 2007 killing of her British roommate.

8. SCIENTISTS POISED FOR DEEPWATER MISSION

The unprecedented, yearslong quest would explore the Indian Ocean and document changes that could

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affect billions in the region over the coming decades.

9. BEWARE: ROBOTS ARE COMING FOR YOUR JOBS

A quarter of U.S. jobs will be severely disrupted as artificial intelligence accelerates the automation of existing work, a new report finds.

10. AUSTRALIAN OPEN FINAL SET

Defending U.S. Open champion Naomi Osaka will face Petra Kvitova for the title, and the winner also will move up to No. 1 in the WTA rankings for the first time.

Osaka vs. Kvitova for Australian Open title, No. 1 ranking

By HOWARD FENDRICH, AP Tennis Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Naomi Osaka never made it past the fourth round at any of the first 10 Grand Slam tournaments of her career. Now, still just 21, she's suddenly on the verge of a second consecutive major championship.

And the No. 1 ranking, too.

Osaka moved one victory away from adding the Australian Open trophy to the one she collected 4½ months ago at the U.S. Open, using her smooth power to produce 15 aces and groundstroke winners at will while beating Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 in the semifinals Thursday.

"I just told myself to regroup in the third set and just try as hard as I can," said Osaka, who saved four break points in the last set and finished the match with an ace at 115 mph (185 kph).

"I was so scared serving second serves. I was like, 'Oh, my God. Please!'" Osaka said. "Somehow, I made it. I guess that's experience."

A day after erasing four match points and a 5-1 deficit in the third set to stun Serena Williams in the quarterfinals, Pliskova could not produce the same kind of comeback.

Instead it is Osaka, the only Japanese woman to win a major singles title, who will face two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova on Saturday. The winner will rise to the top of the WTA rankings for the first time; Osaka is currently No. 4, Kvitova is No. 6.

In the men's semifinals, Rafael Nadal continued his relentless roll through the draw by defeating Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-2, 6-4, 6-0 at night. Nadal has not dropped a set as he bids for a second Australian Open title and 18th Grand Slam trophy overall.

Osaka's fourth-round finish at Melbourne Park a year ago was her best showing at a major until last year's U.S. Open, where she outplayed Williams in the final. A victory over Kvitova would make Osaka the first woman to win two Slams in a row since Williams claimed four straight across the 2014-15 seasons.

Two years ago, Kvitova missed the Australian Open, just weeks after her left hand was stabbed by an intruder at her home in the Czech Republic. Back at her best during what she calls her "second career," Kvitova surged to a 7-6 (2), 6-0 victory against 35th-ranked American Danielle Collins after Rod Laver Arena's retractable roof was closed as the temperature soared toward 105 degrees (40 Celsius).

Kvitova reached her first major final since the December 2016 knife attack that led to hours of surgery on the hand she holds her racket with — and first since winning Wimbledon for the second time in 2014.

"I didn't know even if I (was) going to play tennis again," Kvitova said. "It's been a long journey."

Against Collins, a two-time NCAA champion at the University of Virginia who was 0-5 at Slams until this one, Kvitova was more aggressive throughout, mixing big lefty forehands and well-timed pushes forward to the tune of a 30-9 edge in total winners.

But the key to the outcome might very well have been what happened at 4-all after 35 minutes of action: That's when the decision finally was made to close the 15,000-seat stadium's cover, drawing cheers of approval from broiling spectators.

Kvitova probably wanted to applaud, too.

"I was happier than the fans that the roof closed," she said afterward. "I like to play indoors. It helped me a little bit."

She's made clear over the years she is not a huge fan of playing in stifling heat. Not too many people

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truly are, of course, but Collins is OK with it and thought the roof should have stayed open.

"I grew up in Florida and am used to it being really hot all the time. So I kind of embrace that very well," Collins said. "Indoor tennis is a different game. Certainly had its effect."

When play resumed after a five-minute delay, it went from being completely even to tilted in Kvitova's favor. She dominated the tiebreaker and the second set to stretch her winning streak to 11 matches.

Osaka, meanwhile, extended her Slam run to 13 matches while putting a stop to Pliskova's 10-0 start to the season.

Osaka accumulated a 56-20 advantage in winners — and held on when it all could have slipped away.

She began the day having won 58 matches in a row after taking the first set, but that seemed in danger when Pliskova broke to end the second and had three break points to go up 2-0 in the third.

But Osaka steeled herself there, erasing the first break chance with a huge forehand, the second with a down-the-line backhand winner. On the third, another terrific backhand forced a forehand error into the net by Pliskova, who cracked her racket against the blue court. When Pliskova netted a return of an 83 mph (133 kph) second serve to make it 1-all, Osaka tugged at the brim of her pink visor and let out a big exhale.

The match would continue for another 28 minutes, but it basically was done, then and there. That stretch began a nine-point, three-game run for Osaka, and she was on her way. She would face one last break point at 4-3, but saved it with a 108 mph (174 kph) ace.

Follow Howard Fendrich on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/HowardFendrich>

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

AP-NORC poll: 6 in 10 Americans blame Trump for shutdown

By **STEVE PEOPLES** and **EMILY SWANSON**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A strong majority of Americans blame President Donald Trump for the record-long government shutdown and reject his primary rationale for a border wall, according to a new poll that shows the turmoil in Washington is dragging his approval rating to its lowest level in more than a year.

Overall, 34 percent of Americans approve of Trump's job performance in a survey conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That's down from 42 percent a month earlier and nears the lowest mark of his two-year presidency. The president's approval among Republicans remains close to 80 percent, but his standing with independents is among its lowest points of his time in office.

"Trump is responsible for this," said poll respondent Lloyd Rabalais, a federal contractor from Slidell, Louisiana, who's not affiliated with either political party.

The 47-year-old has been furloughed for more than a month. He said he'd need to start drawing on his retirement savings next week to pay his bills if the shutdown continues.

"I do support a wall, but not the way he's handling it," Rabalais added. "Trump guaranteed everybody that Mexico would pay for the wall. Now he's holding American workers like me hostage."

The drop in approval comes as Trump begins the third year of his presidency under the weight of the longest government shutdown in U.S. history, an international trade war that's straining the global economy and new revelations about his push for a real estate deal in Russia during his 2016 campaign.

Compared with earlier presidents, Trump's approval rating has been relatively stable over the course of his presidency, ranging from the mid-30s to the mid-40s.

By contrast, President Barack Obama never fell below 40 percent in polling by Gallup. Still, five presidents since Gallup began measuring presidential approval have had their rating fall into the 20s at least once, including Harry S. Truman, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. Trump has never fallen into that range of historic lows, but he's also the only president never to have reached 50 percent in Gallup's polling.

The new AP-NORC poll shows most Americans see the shutdown as a major problem, and they blame

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Trump far more than congressional Democrats for the mess that has ensnared the lives of roughly 800,000 government workers who are going without pay.

Sixty percent of Americans say Trump bears a great deal of responsibility for the shutdown. About a third place the same amount of blame on congressional Democrats (31 percent) or Republicans (36 percent).

Sixty-five percent of Americans, including 86 percent of Democrats, 69 percent of independents and 33 percent of Republicans, call the shutdown a major problem.

Trump may be popular overall with Republicans, but a sizable share holds him responsible for the current situation. Almost 3 in 10 Republicans think Trump bears a great deal of responsibility, while 73 percent of his party says he's at least partly responsible.

"The large part of the responsibility belongs to the president because he made the decision," said poll respondent Sandra Olson, of Northwood, Iowa. The 76-year-old registered Republican said she voted for Trump once and likely will again.

"We have never in my lifetime seen a president who has been so maligned and attacked and vilified," Olson said.

Trump's demand for a \$5.7 billion border wall is also unpopular.

Overall, 49 percent of Americans oppose the plan to build a massive wall along the Mexican border; 36 percent of the nation is in favor. Opinions fall largely along ideological lines, with 8 in 10 Democrats opposing the wall and nearly 8 in 10 Republicans supporting it.

About 7 in 10 supporters of the wall prefer to extend the shutdown than to reach a deal without funding it, while a nearly identical number on the other side would rather the shutdown continue than provide that funding.

The poll shows significant skepticism of the president's argument that a wall would significantly reduce crime, stem the flow of illegal drugs or help the U.S. economy. The poll was conducted the week after Trump used such factors to justify his demand for the wall during a primetime address from the Oval Office.

In the nationally televised speech, he highlighted the case of one immigrant in the country illegally accused of beheading and dismembering an American citizen.

About 6 in 10 Americans do say the wall would at least slightly decrease the number of people entering the U.S. illegally, though only 3 in 10 think the number would significantly decrease. Yet just 35 percent of Americans believe the wall would make the country safer, while a majority of Americans — 57 percent — believe it would make no difference to safety in the U.S. Only 21 percent believe the wall would significantly reduce the availability of illegal drugs in the nation, though 28 percent say access to illegal drugs would be slightly reduced; 49 percent say the wall would have no effect.

On the economy, about as many Americans say the border wall would do more to help — almost 3 in 10 — as say it would do more to hurt; 43 percent say the wall would not make much difference to the U.S. economy.

Poll respondent Kelley Thorson, of St. Robert, Missouri, who backed Trump in the 2016 election, says she supports the wall but largely disagrees with the president's rationale.

"I can't say it would make us safer," the 57-year-old said. "Criminals are going to get here no matter what."

While partisan opinions of Trump have remained relatively constant throughout his presidency, the poll shows that disapproval has grown particularly among independents who do not lean toward either party.

Just 28 percent of independents say they approve, compared with 71 percent who disapprove. In December, 37 percent of independents approved of Trump's job performance, while 58 percent disapproved.

Women also are more likely to disapprove today compared with a month ago — 71 percent to 58 percent. And 76 percent of college graduates disapprove today, compared with 65 percent who disapproved in December.

The president isn't doing anything well right now, said poll respondent J. Edwin Hixson, a 71-year-old retired truck driver from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, who didn't vote for Trump or Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election.

"This isn't a reality show. We're in serious trouble," he said.

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The AP-NORC poll of 1,062 adults was conducted Jan. 16 to 20 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods, and later interviewed online or by phone.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

Peoples reported from New York.

Uncharted waters: Scientists to explore Indian Ocean depths

BREMEVERHAVEN, Germany (AP) — Scientists prepared Thursday to embark on an unprecedented, years-long mission to explore the Indian Ocean and document changes taking place beneath the waves that could affect billions of people in the surrounding region over the coming decades.

The ambitious expedition will delve into one of the last major unexplored frontiers on the planet, a vast body of water that's already feeling the effects of global warming. Understanding the Indian Ocean's ecosystem is important not just for the species that live in it, but also for an estimated 2.5 billion people at home in the region — from East Africa, the Arabian peninsula, South and Southeast Asia.

The Nekton Mission, supported by over 40 organizations, will conduct further dives in other parts of the Indian Ocean over three years. The research will contribute to a summit on the state of the Indian Ocean planned for late 2021.

The Ocean Zephyr is preparing to leave Bremerhaven, Germany, on the first leg of trip. Researchers will spend seven weeks surveying underwater life, map the sea floor and drop sensors to depths of up to 2,000 meters (6,560 feet) in the seas around the Seychelles.

Little is known about the watery world below depths of 30 meters (100 feet), which scientists from Britain and the Seychelles will be exploring with two crewed submarines and a remotely operated submersible in March and April.

Ronny Jumeau, the Seychelles' ambassador to the United Nations, said such research is vital to helping the island nation understand its vast ocean territory.

While the country's 115 islands together add up to just 455 square kilometers (176 sq. miles) of land — about the same as San Antonio, Texas — its exclusive economic zone stretches to 1.4 million square kilometers (540 million square miles) of sea, an area almost the size of Alaska.

Jumeau said the Seychelles aims to become a leader in the development of a "blue economy" that draws on the resources of the ocean. The archipelago relies on fishing and tourism, but has lately also been exploring the possibility of extracting oil and gas from beneath the sea floor.

"Key to this is knowing not only what you have in the ocean around you, but where it is and what is its value," he said. "It is only when you know this that you can properly decide what to exploit and what to protect and leave untouched."

"Research expeditions such as the Nekton Mission are therefore vital to help us fill those gaps and better know our ocean space and marine resources to make wise decisions in planning the future of our blue economy," Jumeau added.

The island nation of fewer than 100,000 people is already feeling the effects of climate change, with rising water temperatures bleaching its coral reefs.

"Our ocean is undergoing rapid ecological transformation by human activities," said Callum Roberts, a marine conservation biologist at the University of York, England, who is a trustee of the mission.

"Seychelles are a critical beacon and bellwether for marine conservation in the Indian Ocean and globally," he said.

The mission's principal scientist, Lucy Woodall of Oxford University, said the researchers expect to dis-

cover dozens of new species, from corals and sponges to larger creatures like types of dog-sharks.

The Associated Press is accompanying the expedition and will provide live underwater video from the dives, using new optical transmission technology to send footage from the submarines to the ship and from there, by satellite, to the world.

Link: <https://nektonmission.org/mission-ii>

Venezuela's Guaido leaps from back-bench to center stage

By **FABIOLA SANCHEZ** and **SCOTT SMITH**, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — The rise of Juan Guaido from back-bench obscurity to the U.S-backed, self-declared interim president of Venezuela in just three weeks has been meteoric - and by his own recognition risky.

Few Venezuelans had even heard of the fresh-faced, 35-year-old lawmaker when he was plucked from anonymity and named as president of the opposition-controlled National Assembly in early January. The move set up a high-stakes standoff with President Nicolas Maduro, who is increasingly seen as a dictator both at home and abroad.

Instead of backing down, Guaido stunned Venezuelans on Wednesday by declaring himself interim president before cheering supporters in Venezuela's capital, buoyed by massive anti-government protests. And support from President Donald Trump, Canada and numerous Latin American countries, along with the Organization of American States, immediately rolled in.

But even as he was symbolically sworn in, he foretold of dangers, telling supporters: "We know that this will have consequences." Moments later he slipped away to an unknown location amid speculation he would soon be arrested.

Last week, Venezuela's feared SEBIN intelligence police pulled Guaido from his vehicle as he headed to a town hall meeting and briefly detained him. And the rival constitutional assembly controlled by Maduro's allies threatened Guaido and others with an investigation for treason.

Key to Guaido's rise to prominence has been timing - and behind-the-scenes backing.

As Venezuela's economic crisis deepens, with masses fleeing the country to escape runaway inflation on pace to surpass 23 million percent, many are desperate for a new leader to rescue the once-wealthy oil nation. Into that void stepped Guaido.

An industrial engineer who cut his political teeth in a student protest movement a decade ago, he was elected to the National Assembly in 2015, and in its first session this year was named its leader.

At the time, Maduro made light of his newcomer status, feigning confusion over whether his name was "Guaido" or "Guaire," a notoriously polluted river that runs through Caracas.

But following Wednesday's presidential self-declaration, and a U.S. led chorus of Western hemisphere nations backing his challenge, Maduro responded with fury, swiftly cutting off diplomatic relations with the United States and giving American diplomats 72 hours to leave the country.

The architect of Guaido's meteoric rise is Leopoldo Lopez, Venezuela's most popular opposition leader, who is muzzled under house arrest and considered by government opponents to be a political prisoner.

At a time when many had written off the National Assembly, which was stripped of its last bit of power after the government set up the rival constitutional assembly in 2017, Lopez maneuvered behind the scenes for his Popular Will party to assume the presidency of the gutted legislature.

He then tapped Guaido, serving his first full term as a lawmaker, who rose to the helm of their party in Venezuela after eight more senior politicians sitting on Popular Will's national board were exiled since 2014.

Guaido has been a loyal acolyte of Lopez for years, standing beside him at a 2014 news conference when the activist announced a strategy of anti-Maduro unrest. What was called "The Exit" bitterly divided the opposition because it came less than a year into Maduro's presidency, when support for his rule was still strong.

The two talk a half dozen times each day, and not a single speech or move isn't coordinated with Lopez

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first, said one ally, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the internal proceedings.

Because Guaido was unknown, Leon said that he hadn't even measured Guaido's approval ratings, like he does numerous other politicians. But he plans to start doing so this week.

Critics say Guaido lacks a political vision, pointing to his rambling debut speech as the legislature's president, which was full of rhetorical barbs aimed at the "usurper" Maduro but short on specifics on how to get out of the malaise.

Still, others see his youth and relative inexperience as breathing life into the beaten-down opposition, making Maduro's frequent diatribes that it is dominated by elitist relics from Venezuela's pre-revolutionary past harder to stick.

Guaido told The Associated Press in a recent interview he doesn't fear running into the same fate as his political allies. He pointed to scars on his neck caused by rubber bullets fired during 2017 street demonstrations against Maduro.

"I still have projectiles lodged here," he said.

Guaido has endured hardships for much of his life. At age 15, shortly after Maduro's mentor, the late Hugo Chavez, assumed the presidency and ushered in a socialist overhaul, Guaido and his family survived a torrential mudslide that killed thousands and left many more homeless in the port city of La Guaira, a short distance from Caracas and home to the capital's airport.

"We are survivors," he said. "If they take Juan Guaido prisoner, someone else will emerge, because our generation won't give up."

Like Lopez, the wiry Guaido prides himself an athlete and is a devotee of his hometown's Sharks — a perennial loser in the Venezuelan baseball league. He and his wife, a fellow activist, have a daughter named for Francisco de Miranda, a precursor to Venezuelan independence hero Simon Bolivar.

While in congress, Guaido earned a reputation as a hard worker and consensus-builder while serving as the head of the comptroller commission that investigates allegations of government corruption.

Now he is drawing attention on the international stage.

U.S. President Donald Trump promised to use the "full weight" of the U.S. economic and diplomatic power to push for the restoration of Venezuela's democracy.

But for the frontal assault on Maduro's authority to succeed, Venezuelans fearful of taking to the streets again after past uprisings ended in violent crackdowns and bitter divisions must be prepared to risk it all again.

On Wednesday, they responded to Guaido's call by gathering in the tens of thousands in Caracas waving flags and chanting "Get out Maduro!" in what was the largest demonstration since a wave of unrest that left more than 120 dead in 2017.

While the protests were mostly peaceful there were no signs that security forces heeded Guaido's call to join the anti-Maduro movement and go light on demonstrators. His supporters say the constitution gives him the authority to declare himself interim presidency as head of the National Assembly.

"The constitution gives me the legitimacy to carry out the charge of the presidency over the country to call elections," Guaido said last week. "But I need backing from the citizens to make it a reality."

Associated Press writer Joshua Goodman contributed to this report.

Fabiola Sanchez on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/fisanchezn>

Scott Smith on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ScottSmithAP>

Chefs and truck drivers beware: AI is coming for your jobs

By MATT O'BRIEN, AP Technology Writer

Robots aren't replacing everyone, but a quarter of U.S. jobs will be severely disrupted as artificial intelligence accelerates the automation of existing work, according to a new Brookings Institution report.

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The report, published Thursday, says roughly 36 million Americans hold jobs with “high exposure” to automation — meaning at least 70 percent of their tasks could soon be performed by machines using current technology. Among those most likely to be affected are cooks, waiters and others in food services; short-haul truck drivers; and clerical office workers.

“That population is going to need to upskill, reskill or change jobs fast,” said Mark Muro, a senior fellow at Brookings and lead author of the report.

Muro said the timeline for the changes could be “a few years or it could be two decades.” But it’s likely that automation will happen more swiftly during the next economic downturn. Businesses are typically eager to implement cost-cutting technology as they lay off workers.

Some economic studies have found similar shifts toward automating production happened in the early part of previous recessions — and may have contributed to the “jobless recovery” that followed the 2008 financial crisis.

But with new advances in artificial intelligence, it’s not just industrial and warehouse robots that will alter the American workforce. Self-checkout kiosks and computerized hotel concierges will do their part.

Most jobs will change somewhat as machines take over routine tasks, but a majority of U.S. workers will be able to adapt to that shift without being displaced.

The changes will hit hardest in smaller cities, especially those in the heartland and Rust Belt and in states like Indiana and Kentucky, according to the report by the Washington think tank. They will also disproportionately affect the younger workers who dominate food services and other industries at highest risk for automation.

Some chain restaurants have already shifted to self-ordering machines ; a handful have experimented with robot-assisted kitchens .

Google this year is piloting the use of its digital voice assistant at hotel lobbies to instantly interpret conversations across a few dozen languages. Autonomous vehicles could replace short-haul delivery drivers. Walmart and other retailers are preparing to open cashier-less stores powered by in-store sensors or cameras with facial recognition technology.

“Restaurants will be able to get along with significantly reduced workforces,” Muro said. “In the hotel industry, instead of five people manning a desk to greet people, there’s one and people basically serve themselves.”

Many economists find that automation has an overall positive effect on the labor market, said Matias Cortes, an assistant professor at York University in Toronto who was not involved with the Brookings report. It can create economic growth, reduce prices and increase demand while also creating new jobs that make up for those that disappear.

But Cortes said there’s no doubt there are “clear winners and losers.” In the recent past, those hardest hit were men with low levels of education who dominated manufacturing and other blue-collar jobs, and women with intermediate levels of education who dominated clerical and administrative positions.

In the future, the class of workers affected by automation could grow as machines become more intelligent. The Brookings report analyzed each occupation’s automation potential based on research by the McKinsey management consulting firm. Those jobs that remain largely unscathed will be those requiring not just advanced education, but also interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence.

“These high-paying jobs require a lot of creativity and problem-solving,” Cortes said. “That’s going to be difficult for new technologies to replace.”

Trump, GOP embrace amid political fallout from shutdown

By ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

SANTA ANA PUEBLO, N.M. (AP) — As President Donald Trump’s approval rating falls, the Republican Party is grasping him ever tighter.

Gathering in New Mexico, the Republican National Committee’s governing body will take the unusual

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step Friday of voting to declare the party's "undivided support" for Trump and his "effective presidency."

Amid concerns about the political fallout from the government shutdown and what might be ahead in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, the RNC move is an attempt to block another Republican from mounting a primary challenge that, even if unsuccessful, could damage Trump going into the general election. More fundamentally, it cements a merger between the RNC and Trump, a onetime Democrat who now asserts full control over virtually every aspect of the GOP.

"President Trump has incredible support amongst Republican voters and the full support of the RNC," said RNC Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel. "Our unprecedented relationship with the President and his campaign will be key to his re-election and ensuring we continue this great American comeback."

The resolution set to pass this week stems from internal controversy after the GOP's last failed presidential nominee, McDaniel's uncle Mitt Romney, lashed out at Trump's character and global leadership in an op-ed earlier this month. The scathing message was widely interpreted as a sign of encouragement for Republicans, including former Ohio Gov. John Kasich and former Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake, to take on Trump.

Ardent pro-Trump members of the committee wanted to respond by explicitly endorsing the president, essentially circumventing the nominating process, in a rebuke of those considering challenging him. The more strident effort failed in an RNC sub-committee meeting, but the sentiment stood.

A new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows Republicans are largely standing by the president, even as his overall approval rating has eroded amid the ongoing government shutdown. About 8 in 10 Republicans approve of the job Trump is doing, which is similar to his level of support among Republicans in AP-NORC polls throughout his presidency.

Overall, Trump's approval rating stands at 34 percent, its lowest point in more than a year.

Incumbents in either party bring universal name recognition and massive institutional support to their re-election campaigns, and an insurgent effort to deny Trump the nomination would almost certainly fail. But there is still ample room for a potential spoiler to enter the race, and Trump advisers are mindful that the one-term presidents in the modern era were weakened by primary challengers.

Trump critics contend the unusual move to back Trump is tantamount to "rigging" the 2020 primary season in Trump's favor. While no primary rival has yet emerged, Trump detractors have called for a more traditional Republican to mount a campaign to deny Trump the nomination — or at least to weaken his standing.

"This is an assault on the voice of the people," said former New Hampshire GOP Chairwoman Jennifer Horn. "If the president were strong, he wouldn't need them to do this."

As the RNC gathered in New Mexico, anti-Trump conservative group Defending Democracy Together announced it was running an ad on Fox News urging the RNC against "rigging" the 2020 primary in Trump's favor.

Trump's 2016 effort was entirely reliant on the RNC in the general election for data, field and rapid response, leaning on the national party's army of staffers in swing states and yearslong technology investments to win. Trump's campaign staff of just over 100 was dwarfed by the RNC's efforts.

But still party leaders were never fully on board with Trump and debated cutting off support for his effort on several occasions, including after the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape in which he bragged about being able to grope women.

Heading into 2020, Trump and the Republican Party are increasingly indistinguishable. In the main hallway of the party's Capitol Hill headquarters, glossy photos of Trump have replaced photos of other GOP presidents. Political director Chris Carr holds the title for both the campaign and the RNC, and the party's regional communications team is being rebranded as 'strategic communications' as it prepares to run the Trump campaign's state-based communications efforts.

Carr briefed RNC members on the new division of labor among the committee, the Trump campaign and state parties, according to six RNC members who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the private presentation. They described it as a "merger" between the entities, contending it will eliminate duplication and redundancy in their efforts.

But the structure also ensures that the resources of the national party will go to protect the president

should any challenger emerge from within the GOP.

The RNC has also maintained its joint fundraising agreement with the Trump campaign from 2016 and plans to broaden it to benefit critical swing-state parties in the coming months.

And in a wake-up call to state parties, Carr warned that they would have to meet specific metrics to receive disbursements from the RNC.

One campaign official compared the role of the RNC to that of a primary subcontractor — coordinating messaging and field on behalf of Trump's operation.

Government shutdown delays, disrupts environmental studies

By JOHN FLESHER and TAMMY WEBBER, Associated Press

The rainwater collection system is broken at the environmental research station on a remote, rocky Pacific island off the California coast. So is a crane used to hoist small boats in and out of the water. A two-year supply of diesel fuel for the power generators is almost gone.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel ordinarily would help with such problems. But they haven't been around since the partial federal government shutdown began a month ago, forcing researchers with the nonprofit Point Blue Conservation Science to rely on volunteers to haul bottled water and 5-gallon (18-liter) jugs of diesel to the Farallon Islands National Refuge, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from San Francisco.

Still, the scientists are pressing on with their long-running study of elephant seals during the crucial winter breeding season. They tag and monitor the lumbering creatures, whose numbers are recovering after being hunted to near-extinction, and study how warming oceans could affect them.

"We've found some creative solutions, but things will get more strained the longer the shutdown is continued," said Pete Warzybok, a marine ecologist with Point Blue.

The impasse has delayed, disrupted and now threatens to derail environmental research projects across the nation — and not just those conducted by government agencies.

Scientists with universities, nonprofit organizations and private companies say their inability to collaborate with federal partners, gain access to federal lands and laboratories, and secure federal funding is jeopardizing their work on a vast array of subjects, including invasive and endangered species and air and water quality.

Researchers might miss court-ordered deadlines for reports involving endangered plants or animals. Warm-weather field studies that must be planned months in advance could be delayed or canceled. And studies that rely on strict monitoring or testing schedules could be compromised.

Depending on how long the shutdown lasts, the damage could range from inconvenient to irreparable.

Scientists with a constant presence on the Farallones since 1968 might have to leave if their agreement with the government isn't renewed by the end of March. Besides opening a gap in decades of data collection, their absence would leave the islands and their wildlife vulnerable to trespassers.

Nobody from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was available to respond because employees are not allowed to work during the shutdown, according to voicemail messages.

Scientist Harvey Bootsma needs to book a National Park Service boat for summer experiments involving quagga mussels in Lake Michigan, where the invasive pests are suspected of causing a decline in perch, whitefish and other prized species.

If the government doesn't reopen soon, "it could really mess us up," said Bootsma, of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

One increasingly likely casualty is the world's longest continuous study of a predator-prey relationship in one location. For 60 years, biologists have documented population shifts and interactions between gray wolves and moose at Isle Royale National Park in Lake Superior. Much of the data is collected during winter, when scientists use planes to observe the wolves forming packs, battling over territory and killing moose, but the team is shut out of the park.

The seven-week mission isn't dead yet, but prospects fade daily.

The loss of a season's worth of data would be "devastating," said Rolf Peterson of Michigan Technologi-

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cal University, the co-leader. "Continuity is what's at the core of a lot of observational science, especially long-term projects. At some point, the loss of continuity degrades the integrity and value of the work itself. And there are things that don't come around a second time."

The timing is particularly bad because the park recently began a multiyear effort to replenish its wolf population, which had fallen to two. Four were flown to Isle Royale from the mainland last fall — one later died — and researchers planned to relocate several others this winter. Peterson's group also wants to dart 20 moose and fit them with radio collars to gauge their reaction to the arriving wolves.

"Both of these projects, while partially supported by other funds, require National Park Service personnel and facilities to operate," agency spokeswoman Alexandra Picavet said. "Until there is an approved funding source to support those functions, both operations are suspended."

Also at risk are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's aerial surveys of endangered Mexican gray wolves in Arizona and New Mexico, which usually happen in late January and early February.

A California mission to gather data on fish and study how climate change is affecting oceans, which began 70 years ago, also is in limbo. A research ship was reserved for this winter's operation, carried out by a federal, state and university partnership. But because it's owned by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the San Diego-based vessel is off-limits until the shutdown ends. No suitable replacement is available, said program director Brice Semmens.

Data gaps from a lost mission would be harmful because "the ocean is changing so rapidly now," he said. "We need to understand how these changes are going to affect populations we care about, like shellfish or Dungeness crab."

The shutdown also is taking a toll on the next generation of environmental researchers.

Federal scientists teach and monitor graduate students' projects at universities nationwide. Now, the schools may cancel some courses and students are worrying about graduating on time.

Three experts with the U.S. Geological Survey teach in the wildlife and fisheries program at the University of Georgia, where a statistical modeling class was scratched because the government instructor isn't allowed to work, biology professor John Maerz said.

"We depend on them being there; we build our curriculum and projects around them," Maerz said. "You can't replace that expertise."

Many students are struggling to do research with federal laboratories and other facilities shuttered. Professors are hesitating to accept another class of graduate students because they don't know whether they'll get federal grants to pay the newcomers and fund their work.

"I applied for a bunch of grants last year and am waiting to see if I'll get funding so I can determine whether to admit a grad student and if so, how many," said Andrew Dessler, an atmospheric scientist at Texas A&M. "The way things are going, I may not take any."

Flesher reported from Traverse City, Michigan, and Webber from Chicago. AP reporter Susan Montoya Bryan contributed from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

LA teachers union, school district team to seek state money

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles teachers returned to work Wednesday after contentious negotiations ended with a new contract and a commitment by the union and the district to work together to get more state money for schools in part by pushing to overhaul California's property tax system.

Teachers greeted students with smiles, hugs and high-fives after voting the night before to ratify the deal that includes a 6 percent pay hike for educators and a commitment by the district to reduce class sizes.

The ratification vote period began Tuesday and will end Friday evening but most teachers already had cast ballots and 81 percent favored the contract, the union said. The tally was more than 20,000 "yes" votes to fewer than 5,000 "no" votes.

The teachers' return followed six days of picketing and a marathon bargaining session brokered by Mayor

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Eric Garcetti.

Third-grade teacher Van Morales said it was a joy to go back to her students. "It's missed time that we need to make up," she said.

LA Unified School District Superintendent Austin Beutner said financial challenges remain despite the hard-fought deal with United Teachers Los Angeles. The district is projecting a half-billion-dollar deficit this budget year and has billions obligated for pension payments and health coverage for retired teachers.

"The issue has always been how do we pay for it?" Beutner said. "We can't solve 40 years of underinvestment in public education in just one week or just one contract."

To that end, Beutner, union head Alex Caputo-Pearl and Garcetti agreed to "jointly advocate for increased county and state funding" for public education, according to a summary of the agreement released by UTLA.

As part of that team effort, the mayor will endorse California's Schools and Communities First ballot initiative and work with LAUSD and UTLA for its passage next year, the union statement said. Garcetti said he hopes to "build on the momentum we gained over the last week, and bring the same energy and spirit we saw in the streets" to push for education resources.

The initiative, which has qualified for the 2020 ballot, would hike property taxes on California businesses and generate revenue for local and state governments that would filter to public education. It would change a key provision of Proposition 13, the landmark 1978 initiative that capped property taxes, slashing state revenue and saddling school districts with shrinking budgets.

Supporters of the new initiative estimate that more than \$11 billion per year would be restored for public schools, community colleges, health clinics and other vital services.

Opponents say increasing property taxes on business would drive jobs out of state and make it more expensive to live in California.

"We just negotiated raises for teachers," said David Kline, a vice president for the advocacy group California Taxpayers Association. "The last thing they need is to wipe out that benefit by increasing the cost of living."

Kline suggested Beutner and Caputo-Pearl could find a sympathetic ear when they travel to Sacramento to ask Gov. Gavin Newsom for money. State government has controlled the allocation of money for schools since Prop. 13 was passed.

The new governor's budget proposal includes a \$3 billion one-time payment to California's teacher pension fund. Newsom said he wants to help districts that are seeing more of their budgets eaten up by pension obligations.

Newsom also wants to invest \$500 million in infrastructure to provide more childcare and \$750 million for kindergarten programs. His predecessor, Gov. Jerry Brown, presided over an escalation of financing for schools.

"Increases in state funding are already translating into real progress for kids and classrooms, including investments in community schools," Newsom said in a statement Tuesday.

Los Angeles teachers headed back to work a day after Denver teachers voted to go on strike after more than a year of negotiations. Colorado teachers have the right to strike, but state officials could delay the walkout by up to 180 days.

In Oakland, California, some teachers called in sick last week as part of an unofficial rally over their contract negotiations, which hinge partly on a demand for smaller class sizes.

Teachers hoped to build on the "Red4Ed" movement that began last year in West Virginia and moved to Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona, Colorado and Washington state. It spread from conservative states with "right to work" laws that limit the ability to strike to the more liberal West Coast with strong unions.

Along with the pay raise and class-size reductions, the Los Angeles contract adds more than 600 nursing positions over the next three years. Teachers had complained that some schools only had a nurse on campus one day a week.

Additional counselors and librarians are also part of the agreement.

The new contract, which runs until June 2022, also eliminates a longstanding clause that gave the district authority over class sizes, officials said. Many schools will see a class-size reduction of about four students

in three years — though 90 high-needs campuses will see six fewer students per class during that time.

Associated Press writers Amanda Lee Myers and John Antczak contributed to this report.

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Venezuela crisis looms over pope's Central America visit

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

PANAMA CITY (AP) — Pope Francis has arrived in Panama amid a political crisis in nearby Venezuela, a migration standoff over the proposed U.S.-Mexico border wall and tens of thousands of wildly excited young Central Americans welcoming him.

As Francis opens his first full day Thursday, all eyes will be on whether he refers to the upheaval in Venezuela when he addresses Panama's president and later the region's bishops.

Francis rounds out the day with his evening welcome to tens of thousands of young Catholics gathered for World Youth Day, the church's big youth rally.

His visit is taking place against the backdrop of a new migrant caravan heading to the U.S.-Mexico border. The plight of migrants, as well as that of indigenous peoples, are particularly close to Francis' heart and are expected to feature into his remarks while in Panama.

As he flew from Rome on Wednesday, another issue closely watched by the Vatican erupted, with the president of Venezuela's opposition-controlled National Assembly declaring himself interim president and a number of regional countries including the United States recognizing him.

The Vatican had said previously that the pope would refrain from making explicit reference to Venezuela while in Panama, but the developments ensured he would face questions during the trip and en route home.

The Vatican is in something of a bind in Venezuela. Local bishops vocally oppose the socialist regime of President Nicholas Maduro, but the Holy See is keeping up diplomatic relations with the government, to the extent that it sent its interim charge d'affaires to Maduro's inauguration earlier this month.

The Vatican spokesman didn't respond when asked Wednesday for comment about the developments.

Francis arrived in Panama to the raucous chants of World Youth Days past: "This is the youth of the pope," the crowd chanted over and over.

It was a particularly exuberant airport welcome that must have been a pleasant surprise for Francis after a year that saw less-than-enthusiastic welcomes for the pope in Chile and Ireland as well as the eruption of the global sex abuse scandal that has tarnished his legacy.

Crowds are expected to be smaller than usual for this World Youth Day — only about 150,000 people had registered as of last week — but thousands more will certainly throng Francis' main events, which include the formal opening Thursday, a vigil Friday and a final Mass on Sunday.

The Vatican conceded that the January date doesn't suit school vacations in Europe or North America, both of which typically send huge numbers of pilgrims to World Youth Day gatherings.

Francis' trip, the first in a year packed with foreign travel, comes at a critical moment in the papacy as the Catholic hierarchy globally is facing a crisis in credibility for covering up decades of cases of priests molesting young people.

Dems prepare own border security package shunning Trump wall

By ALAN FRAM, ANDREW TAYLOR and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats, feeling pressure to display their vision for border security, are preparing a package that would ignore President Donald Trump's demand for \$5.7 billion for a wall with Mexico and would instead pay for other ideas aimed at protecting the border.

As the government slogged through a record 33rd day of its partial shutdown Wednesday, details of Democrats' border security plan and its cost remained a work in progress, though some said it might match Trump's \$5.7 billion figure. Party leaders said it would include money for scanning devices and other

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technological tools for improving security at ports of entry and along the boundary, plus funds for more border agents and immigration judges.

"If his \$5.7 billion is about border security, then we see ourselves fulfilling that request, only doing it with what I like to call using a smart wall," said No. 3 House Democratic leader Jim Clyburn, D-S.C.

Democrats' movement toward producing a plan, which they said they expected to unveil this week, was significant because it underscored a growing uneasiness with letting Trump cast them as soft on border security. It came as the Senate prepared for Thursday votes on rival plans for reopening federal agencies and paying 800,000 federal workers who are days from missing yet another paycheck.

Republicans would couple ending the shutdown with financing Trump's wall and revamping immigration laws. Democrats would reopen agency doors through Feb. 8 while bargainers seek an accord.

Both faced likely defeat, but that might spur the two sides into a more serious effort to strike a compromise when each saw it lacked the votes to prevail. Both proposals would need 60 votes to pass in a chamber with 53-47 Republican control.

Ominously, the day's signs pointed to continued partisan hostilities.

Trump told White House reporters that Democrats had become "radicalized" and "a very, very dangerous party," and took personal aim at Congress' top two Democrats. He said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer is "very strongly dominated" by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, calling him her "puppet."

Schumer, D-N.Y., called on Senate Republicans to abandon Trump despite his sway with conservative voters, saying, "I know that President Trump has some power in these Republican primaries, but sometimes you have to rise to the occasion."

A poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research released Wednesday was the latest indicator that the shutdown is hurting Trump with the general public. While his approval among Republicans remains strong, just 34 percent of Americans like his performance as president and 6 in 10 assign a great deal of responsibility to him for the shutdown, around double the share blaming Democrats.

The Senate GOP bill would temporarily shield from deportation 700,000 "Dreamers," migrants who arrived in the U.S. illegally as children, protections Trump has tried terminating. He's also offered temporary protections for people who fled violence or natural disasters in several countries — another program Trump has curtailed.

Democrats have objected to other provisions making it harder for Central American minors to gain asylum in the U.S.

The testy relationship between Trump and Pelosi, D-Calif., decayed further when she informed him he couldn't use the House chamber for his planned State of the Union address next Tuesday. She invited him to speak "when government has been opened."

Trump said he'd plan an event elsewhere and called Pelosi's move "a great blotch on the country" that showed she didn't want "the truth" about border security. But late Wednesday night he tweeted that he would postpone the address until after the shutdown had ended, saying no other venue could match the House chamber.

The clash over the speech suggested that a collaborative atmosphere that could facilitate a shutdown deal wasn't at hand.

Democratic leaders have insisted they won't negotiate with Trump on border security unless he reopens the government. Trump has said he'll end the shutdown only if Congress provides money for the wall, though White House officials have indicated he's open to counteroffers.

Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., has urged the White House to provide green cards to 700,000 Dreamers as a way to break the impasse. Lankford has mentioned this to White House adviser Jared Kushner, said a person familiar with the conversations who wasn't authorized to speak publicly.

With Democrats eager to show they're trying to end the impasse, the House used mostly party-line votes Wednesday to approve one measure reopening government agencies through February. By a similar tally, the chamber voted to finance most shuttered agencies through September.

Growing numbers of House Democrats say the party should show where it stands on border security.

"Right now it's a vacuum and the president is offering fake plans to stop drug smuggling," said Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore. Offering a Democratic alternative "helps the possibility of beginning a real negotiation," he said.

Their proposal is expected to exceed the \$1.6 billion Trump initially sought for the wall before upping his request.

AP congressional correspondent Lisa Mascaro and writers Laurie Kellman and Matthew Daly contributed.

Police: 5 fatally shot inside Florida bank, suspect arrested

By TERRY SPENCER and DAVID FISCHER, Associated Press

SEBRING, Fla. (AP) — A gunman opened fire inside a Florida bank Wednesday, killing five people before surrendering to a SWAT team, police said.

The shooter called police to report that he had fired shots inside the bank in Sebring, in central Florida. Negotiations failed to persuade the barricaded man to leave the building. The SWAT team then entered the bank, and the gunman eventually gave up, police said.

Investigators did not offer a possible motive, and a police spokesman said he did not know if the attack began as a robbery. The victims were not immediately identified.

"Today's been a tragic day in our community," Sebring Police Chief Karl Hoglund told a news conference. "We've suffered significant loss at the hands of a senseless criminal doing a senseless crime."

Authorities identified the suspect as 21-year-old Zephen Xaver, who was arrested at the SunTrust branch, Hoglund said.

Xaver briefly was an online student of Salt Lake City-based Stevens-Henager College. A spokeswoman for the college, Sherrie Martin, confirmed that Xaver was enrolled from September 2018 until December, when he withdrew. She said his residence was listed as Sebring.

Florida Department of Corrections records show that Xaver was hired as a trainee prison guard at Avon Park Correctional Institution on Nov. 2 and resigned Jan. 9. No disciplinary issues were reported.

Gov. Ron DeSantis was in the region for an infrastructure tour and traveled to Sebring after the shooting. He said the Florida Department of Law Enforcement would assist Sebring police and the Highlands County sheriff's office.

"Obviously, this is an individual who needs to face very swift and exacting justice," DeSantis said of the suspect.

An FBI mobile command unit arrived at the bank Wednesday evening to join the investigation.

Late Wednesday, police investigators still swarmed the bank, which sits between a hotel and a hair salon located in a business district of U.S. 27. The four-lane highway passes through farming communities and small towns as it connects South Florida and central Florida.

Meanwhile, police had wrapped up work at Xaver's nicely maintained, pre-fabricated home about 4 miles (6.5 kilometers) from the bank.

John Larose, who lives next door to Xaver's home, said Xaver and his mother had moved in several months ago. Xaver kept to himself, but Larose said he could hear Xaver playing and yelling at video games in the middle of the night.

SunTrust Chairman and CEO Bill Rogers released a statement saying the bank was "working with officials and dedicating ourselves to fully addressing the needs of all the individuals and families involved."

The bank's "entire team mourns this terrible loss," he said.

Sebring is a small, rural city northwest of Lake Okeechobee. The Sebring International Raceway hosts an annual WeatherTech SportsCar Championship race.

Fischer contributed to this report from Miami.

Applications for US unemployment aid fall to 49-year low

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of people seeking jobless benefits dropped last week to the lowest level since November 1969, a sign the job market remains strong despite the partial government shutdown, now in its fifth week.

The Labor Department said Thursday that weekly applications for unemployment aid declined 13,000 to a seasonally adjusted 199,000. The four-week average, a less volatile figure, dropped 5,500 to 215,000.

The tally of furloughed federal employees requesting unemployment aid jumped to 25,419, more than double the previous week. Those figures are tracked separately from other unemployment claims.

Weekly applications for jobless aid are a proxy for layoffs. The data suggests employers are confident enough about the economy to hold onto their workers. The Labor Department was funded before the shutdown and is still releasing its weekly report.

'The Milkman Model': Big brand names try reusable containers

By KATHERINE ROTH, Associated Press

A new shopping platform announced Thursday at the World Economic Forum aims to change the way we buy many brand-name products. Loop, as the platform is called, would do away with disposable containers for things like shampoo and laundry detergent from some of the world's biggest manufacturers. Instead, those goods will be delivered in sleek, reusable containers that will be picked up at your door, washed and refilled.

"Loop is about the future of consumption. And one of the tenets is that garbage shouldn't exist," says Tom Szaky, CEO of the Trenton, New Jersey-based international recycling company TerraCycle, which is behind Loop.

"Removing plastics from the ocean is not enough. We need to get at the whole idea of disposability and single-use items," says Szaky. "We're going back to the milkman model of the 1950s. You buy the milk but the milk company owns the bottle, which you leave in the milk box to be picked up when you're done with it."

Companies partnering with Loop include Nestle, Procter & Gamble, PepsiCo and other top brands.

"Our goal is that by 2030, all of our packaging will be reusable or recyclable," says Virginie Helias, vice president and chief sustainability officer at Procter & Gamble. Loop, she said, "is a very new idea and somewhat risky because no one has tried it. But the response has been very positive, and we've selected 10 of our brands to be a part of the pilot project, with a plan to add more later pending positive results."

Pantene shampoo, for instance, "will come in a beautifully decorated, lightweight-aluminum pump container," Helias says. "Tide in the U.S. will come in a stainless-steel bottle with a durable twist cap. Cascade will come in ultra-durable packaging. Crest mouthwash will come in a glass bottle. The idea is ultra-durability, convenience and also ultra-luxurious packaging."

Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream, a Nestle product, will be delivered in a posh, double-walled, stainless-steel tub designed to keep ice cream cold longer.

And instead of adding dirty disposable diapers to landfills, soiled diapers can, starting only in the Paris area, be placed in sleek, durable diaper containers. When a container is filled, Loop will pick it up and deliver a clean, empty one. New technology allows Loop to process and recycle the dirty diapers, something TerraCycle has already started doing in Amsterdam.

"We have only one planet, and we have to take care of it for the long term," says Laurent Freixe, CEO of the Americas Region of Nestle, which hopes to do away with all its non-recyclable packaging by 2025. "We want to strive for Zero Waste at both the production and consumption level. Loop is so innovative that we felt we had to be a part of it and learn from it."

The rise of the "Zero Waste" movement and concern about the environment have led many businesses to try to reduce packaging and single-use containers. Loop is unusual in its international scope and the size of the companies participating.

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Initially, Loop will offer about 300 products, with plans to add to the list later. According to TerraCycle, partners include Procter & Gamble, PepsiCo, Nestle, Unilever, Mars Petcare, The Clorox Company, The Body Shop, Coca-Cola, Mondelez International, Danone, Jacobs Douwe Egberts, BIC, Nature's Path, Thousand Fell, Greenhouse, Grilliance, Preserve, Carrefour, UPS and the sustainable-resource management company Suez.

Greenpeace, which has criticized many big manufacturers for creating much of the plastic waste polluting the world's oceans, joined in a panel about sustainable consumption at which Loop was announced in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday. Jennifer Morgan, international executive director of Greenpeace, said beforehand, "While Greenpeace welcomes the aim of the Loop Alliance to move away from throwaway culture and disposability, what the platform will mean for the environment depends on whether corporations worldwide are actually ready to change their business models, or if this effort just becomes a distracting side project to generate positive PR."

She warned that most businesses behind the initiative are still expanding production of single-use plastic, although company representatives focused on the progress they have vowed to make in adopting more sustainable packaging.

Loop is slated to launch this spring in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and also in Paris and some of its suburbs. Shoppers will be able to buy Zero-Waste products from the Loop website to be delivered to their homes in specially designed shipping totes, and, eventually, at participating retailers, such as Carrefour grocery stores in Paris.

Loop intends to expand to the U.S. West Coast, Toronto and the United Kingdom by the end of this year or early 2020, followed by Japan — ideally in time for the 2020 Olympics, Szaky says.

"It means more delivery trucks, but far fewer garbage trucks," he says.

Huawei announces 5G smartphone based on own technology

By **JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese tech giant Huawei announced plans Wednesday for a next-generation smartphone that will use its own technology instead of U.S. components, maneuvering to gain a competitive edge and sidestep complaints it is a security risk.

The leading supplier of network switching gear for phone companies, Huawei Technologies Ltd. is spending heavily to develop its own chips, an area where the U.S. dominates. That can reduce Huawei's multibillion-dollar annual components bill and help insulate it against possible supply disruptions when U.S.-Chinese relations are strained.

The handset, billed by Huawei as the first foldable fifth-generation smartphone, will be unveiled next month at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, the industry's biggest annual event, said Richard Yu, CEO of the company's consumer unit.

The phone is based on Huawei's own Kirin 980 chipset and Balong 5000 modem. The company says the Kirin 980, released in August, performs on a par with Qualcomm Inc.'s widely used Snapdragon 845.

Sales of Huawei smartphones and other consumer products rose more than 50 percent last year over 2017, showing "no influence" from Western security warnings, Yu told reporters. He said the consumer unit's sales topped \$52 billion, or more than half of the \$100 billion in annual revenue the company has forecast. Huawei has yet to release 2018 results for the whole company.

"In this complicated political environment, we still maintain strong growth," Yu said.

Chinese companies are trying to develop technology to better compete with Western suppliers in telecoms, solar power, electric cars, biotechnology and other fields.

The ruling Communist Party's plans for state-led development of such industries, along with robotics and artificial intelligence, helped trigger a trade war with President Donald Trump.

Both sides have raised tariffs on tens of billions of dollars of each other's goods in the dispute over American complaints Beijing steals or pressures foreign companies to hand over technology. Washington also says Chinese technology plans violate Beijing's market-opening obligations.

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Huawei surpassed Apple as the No. 2 global smartphone brand behind Samsung in mid-2018. It uses Qualcomm in its high-end fourth-generation smartphones and earlier Kirin versions in lower-end models. The company, based in the southern city of Shenzhen near Hong Kong, also has developed chips for servers and mobile devices.

Apple Inc. and Samsung Electronics Ltd. already make their own chips.

Qualcomm has far more smartphone chip technology but Huawei is catching up, said Xi Wang of IDC. "Generally speaking, Huawei's chips are equal to Qualcomm chips in performance," Wang said. "Not only at the mid-level but at the high end, Huawei can compete with Qualcomm."

Huawei, founded in 1987 by a former military engineer, has rejected accusations it is controlled by the ruling Communist Party or modifies its equipment to allow eavesdropping.

Its U.S. market evaporated after a congressional panel labeled Huawei and its smaller Chinese rival ZTE Corp. security risks in 2012 and told phone companies to avoid dealing with them.

ZTE was nearly driven into bankruptcy last year after the Washington cut off access to U.S. technology over its exports to Iran and North Korea. President Donald Trump restored access after ZTE paid a \$1 billion fine and agreed to replace its executive team and install U.S.-chosen compliance officers.

Australia, Japan and some other governments also have imposed curbs on use of Huawei technology.

The company has stepped up efforts to mollify security fears after its chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, was arrested in Canada on Dec. 1 on U.S. charges she lied to banks about trade with Iran.

Huawei's founder and CEO, Ren Zhengfei, is Meng's father. In a rare public appearance, he told foreign reporters in a 2½-hour interview on Jan. 15 that he would reject requests from Chinese authorities for confidential information about its customers.

Yu said that despite "political noise" in some countries, Huawei sales outside the United States haven't suffered due to security concerns. The company says it serves 45 of the 50 biggest global phone companies and has signed contracts with 30 carriers to test 5G technology.

"Worldwide, all the carriers love us," said Yu.

Yu repeated Ren's assurances that Huawei has never received an official request for confidential information about customers.

"At Huawei, we never do these kinds of things," he said. "We always protect our customer."

Asian shares buoyed by US earnings, upbeat talk on China

By ANNABELLE LIANG, Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Asian stocks were mostly higher on Thursday as positive U.S. earnings reports reassured investors that the world's largest economy was on track. Poor Japanese data for the second straight day weighed on the Nikkei 225 index.

KEEPING SCORE: The Shanghai Composite index gained 0.5 percent to 2,594.18 and South Korea's Kospi rose 0.5 percent to 2,136.70. Hong Kong's Hang Seng picked up 0.1 percent to 27,045.06. Australia's S&P ASX 200 added 0.2 percent to 5,854.90. Japan's Nikkei 225 index declined 0.3 percent to 20,540.44 after a preliminary survey showed manufacturing slowing in January. Shares rose in Taiwan and Singapore but fell in Malaysia.

WALL STREET: Strong quarterly earnings by big companies like IBM, Proctor & Gamble and United Technologies helped most U.S. indexes finish Wednesday with slight gains. IBM stocks surged 8.5 percent to \$132.89 after its fourth-quarter results exceeded expectations. But traders were worried about reports that the U.S. had turned down an offer by Chinese trade officials to meet in Washington this week, citing the lack of progress on issues like intellectual property rights. White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow denied it. The S&P 500 index added 0.2 percent to 2,638.70. The Dow Jones Industrial Average advanced 0.7 percent to 24,575.62 and the Nasdaq composite gained 0.1 percent to 7,025.77. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks dipped 0.2 percent to 1,454.26.

JAPAN PMI: On Thursday, a private survey suggested that Japanese manufacturing had slowed in January. The Markit/JMMA flash purchasing managers' index fell to 50.0 from December's 52.6. Readings above

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50 indicate expansion on the index's 100-point scale. The survey found that key output and new orders contracted while exports slumped further. Just a day ago, Japan released weaker-than-expected trade data for December, with exports registering its largest drop in two years, mostly due slowing demand in China.

CHINA TALK: Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan took aim at the U.S. in pointed comments at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Wang said that "Shifting blame for one's own problems onto others will not resolve the problems," alluding to a trade war with Washington that has both sides imposing heavy taxes on each other's imports. Wang said China still has "enormous market potential" despite its recent worse-than-anticipated slowdown.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "Major Asia-Pacific indices are fluctuating around the session breakeven point, reflecting the ongoing global debate about growth prospects," Michael McCarthy, Chief Market Strategist at CMC Markets in Sydney, said in an interview.

ENERGY: U.S. crude oil dropped 18 cents to \$52.44 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract shed 39 cents to \$52.62 per barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, shed 19 cents to \$60.95 per barrel. It lost 36 cents to \$61.14 in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar slipped to 109.53 yen from 109.61 yen late Wednesday. The euro rose to \$1.1389 from \$1.1381.

AP Markets Writer Marley Jay contributed to this story. He can be reached at <http://twitter.com/Marley-JayAP>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Jan. 24, the 24th day of 2019. There are 341 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 24, 2013, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced the lifting of a ban on women serving in combat.

On this date:

In 1848, James W. Marshall discovered a gold nugget at Sutter's Mill in northern California, a discovery that led to the gold rush of '49.

In 1862, author Edith Wharton was born in New York.

In 1942, the Roberts Commission placed much of the blame for America's lack of preparedness for Imperial Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on Rear Adm. Husband E. Kimmel and Lt. Gen. Walter C. Short, the Navy and Army commanders.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill concluded a wartime conference in Casablanca, Morocco.

In 1965, British statesman Winston Churchill died in London at age 90.

In 1975, the extremist group FALN bombed Fraunces Tavern in New York City, killing four people.

In 1984, Apple Computer began selling its first Macintosh model, which boasted a built-in 9-inch monochrome display, a clock rate of 8 megahertz and 128k of RAM.

In 1985, the space shuttle Discovery was launched from Cape Canaveral on the first secret, all-military shuttle mission.

In 1987, gunmen in Lebanon kidnapped educators Alann Steen, Jesse Turner, Robert Polhill and Mitheleshwar Singh. (All were eventually released.)

In 1989, confessed serial killer Theodore Bundy was executed in Florida's electric chair.

In 1993, retired Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall died in Bethesda, Maryland, at age 84.

In 2003, former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge was sworn as the first secretary of the new Department of Homeland Security.

Ten years ago: Pilot Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, who'd safely landed a crippled US Airways jetliner in

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the Hudson River, received a hero's homecoming in Danville, Calif. President Barack Obama met with his economic advisers after asking Americans to support his economic package as a way to better schools, lower electricity bills and health coverage for millions who lose insurance. Brazilian model Mariana Bridi, 20, died after contracting an infection that had forced doctors to amputate her hands and feet.

Five years ago: A truck bombing struck the main security headquarters in Cairo, one of a string of bombings targeting police in a 10-hour period, killing 6 people on the eve of the third anniversary of the revolt that overthrew President Hosni Mubarak and left the Arab nation deeply divided.

One year ago: President Donald Trump told reporters that he would be willing to answer questions under oath from special counsel Robert Mueller. Former sports doctor Larry Nassar, who had admitted molesting some of the nation's top gymnasts for years under the guise of medical treatment, was sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison. Chipper Jones, Jim Thome, Vladimir Guerrero and Trevor Hoffman were elected to the baseball Hall of Fame. Scientists in China announced that they had used the cloning technique that produced Dolly the sheep to create healthy monkeys; it was the first such achievement in primates. Singer Elton John announced that he would be retiring from the road after an upcoming three-year global tour.

Today's Birthdays: Cajun musician Doug Kershaw is 83. Singer-songwriter Ray Stevens is 80. Singer-songwriter Neil Diamond is 78. Singer Aaron Neville is 78. Actor Michael Ontkean is 73. Actor Daniel Auteuil is 69. Country singer-songwriter Becky Hobbs is 69. Comedian Yakov Smirnoff is 68. South Korean President Moon Jae-in is 66. Actor William Allen Young is 65. Bandleader-musician Jools Holland is 61. Actress Nastassja Kinski is 58. Rhythm-and-blues singer Theo Peoples is 58. Country musician Keech Rainwater (Lonestar) is 56. Comedian Phil LaMarr is 52. Olympic gold medal gymnast Mary Lou Retton is 51. Rhythm-and-blues singer Sleepy Brown (Society of Soul) is 49. Actor Matthew Lillard is 49. Actress Merrilee McCommas is 48. Blues/rock singer Beth Hart is 47. Actor Ed Helms is 45. Actor Mark Hildreth is 41. Actress Christina Moses is 41. Actress Tatyana Ali is 40. Rock musician Mitchell Marlow (Filter) is 40. Actress Carrie Coon is 38. Actor Daveed Diggs is 37. Actor Justin Baldoni is 35. Actress Mischa Barton is 33.

Thought for Today: "To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often." — Winston Churchill (1874-1965).