

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Area Schedule of Events

**Groton Area starting 2 hours late on
Thursday, Jan. 31.
No 8:30 a.m. Preschool.
OST opens at 7 a.m.**

AND

**GBB vs. Northwestern (re-scheduled for Monday, February 4; 6:30 PM)
BBB vs. Langford (re-scheduled for February 14, 6:30 PM....JH BBB vs. Langford Can-
celled)
JHBBB @ Webster for 1/31/2019 – start time at 3:00 PM instead of 4:00 PM.**

Thursday, January 31, 2019

Today is Backward Day and Inspire Your Heart with Art Day
4:00pm: Basketball: Boys 7th/8th Game vs. Webster Area High School @ Webster Armory (7th grade
at 4 p.m., 8th grade at 5 p.m.)
6:30pm: Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. Tiospa Zina @ Groton Area High School

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 lo-
cated at 10 East Railroad
Ave. It takes cardboard, pa-
pers and aluminum cans.

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It's Girls' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Tiospa Zina
Wambdi
VS**



Groton Area Tigers

Thursday, Jan. 31, 2019

8:00 p.m.

at the Groton Area Arena

Broadcast Sponsored by:

Allied Climate Professionals

Bahr Spray Foam

Blocker Construction

Doug Abeln Seed Company

James Valley Seed - Doug Jorgensen

John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric

Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.

Northeast Chiropractic Clinic

Professional Management Services, Inc.

Sanford Health

Tyson DeHoet Trucking

Weber Landscaping

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Record Low Temps January 30, 2019

Location	Temperature	Previous Record	Year
Britton	-40°F	-36°F	1996
Summit	-38°F	-32°F	1996
Aberdeen	-37°F	-32°F	1916
Eureka	-37°F	-36°F	1916
Watertown	-33°F	-28°F	1918
Webster	-31°F	-30°F	1893
Roscoe	-29°F	-26°F	1996



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 1/30/2019 10:04 AM Central

Published on: 01/30/2019 at 10:06AM

Cook/ Dietary Aide

Flexible schedule
and new wage
scale.

Contact Pam Rohrbach



GROTON
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

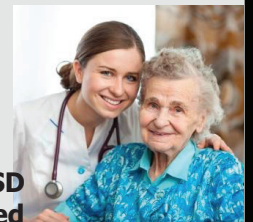
1106 North Second Street
605.397.2365

HELP WANTED

Director of Nursing

Current RN licensure in SD
BSN/MSN degree preferred
Sign on bonus available
Full benefits included.

Contact Brynn Pickrel



GROTON
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

1106 North Second Street
605.397.2365

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Dear EarthTalk: It seems to me the single biggest potential "environmental" problem we could face—even bigger than global warming or a nuclear war—is a comet or asteroid striking the Earth. Do we currently track these

space rocks and if so, how? And do we have any hope of deflecting them if they are headed right for us?
—James McClintock, Austin, TX

Environmental advocates don't normally consider interstellar rocks to be their discipline, per se, but it is true that such an event could cause considerable environmental damage and even threaten the very existence of life on Earth. Indeed, when a 10-kilometer-wide asteroid struck the Earth some 66 million years ago, it wiped out three-quarters of the planet's plant and animal species (including the dinosaurs) and caused damage to the environment that lasted centuries.

Humans weren't around to witness the effects of that cataclysm, of course, but we do know that a large impact today could trigger massive firestorms, mudflows, earthquakes and tsunamis as well as acid rain, ozone depletion and rapid greenhouse warming—not to mention an "impact winter" whereby pulverized rock dust and other debris would blanket the skies and block the transmission of sunlight, effectively stopping photosynthesis around the globe. A big enough strike could effectively wipe out life on Earth.

NASA's Planetary Defense Coordination Office (PDCO) is charged with providing timely and accurate communications on these threatening space rocks—including issuing warnings about potential impacts—and leading the coordination of federal response planning. Currently PDCO uses a combination of existing satellite and telescope technologies to track comets and asteroids but is currently developing a new space-based infrared telescope dubbed "NEOCam" (short for Near-Earth Object Camera) specifically for the purpose of surveying the solar system for large space rocks (larger than 140 meters across). But the project is far from a front-burner concern for NASA right now, and proponents are hoping Congress will earmark funds specifically to complete its development in the short term.

Meanwhile, the California-based B612 Foundation is focusing on detection of smaller asteroids. "The real gap is the 100 times as many asteroids smaller than 140 meters but still large enough to destroy things on the ground," reports Ed Lu, the co-founder of B612. His team is currently working on a network of five to 10 telescope-equipped satellites to track these smaller space rocks and provide early warning services.

But just because we're able to detect and track asteroids doesn't mean we can deflect them. According to expert witness testimony at a 2013 Congressional hearing on the topic, NASA would need five years' lead time—and a commitment of hundreds of millions of dollars—to be able to intercept an asteroid.

Despite this warning, we've made no progress in the intervening years. A June 2018 report from the Cabinet-level National Science and Technology Council warns that America remains unprepared for an asteroid impact event and urges the federal government to fund efforts to get ready for what astronomers say is inevitable at some point in the future. That said, unlike other environmental problems besetting us, there isn't anything individuals can do to protect the planet from asteroid or comet strikes—except to urge their representatives in Congress to support legislation that funds programs and technologies designed to detect and deflect those incoming civilization busters.

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

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Today in Weather History

January 31, 1969: Minnesota experienced many winter storms throughout the month of 1969 where several people had died from heart attacks and auto accidents. Many roads were blocked or iced over several times during the month. Considerable snow during the month of January along with frequent periods of strong winds resulted in many days of blowing and drifting snow across northeast South Dakota. There were also many days with freezing rain. The most significant icing occurred on the 22nd and the 27th. There were numerous days where the traffic was at a standstill due to blocked roads and closed airports. Many school closings occurred throughout the month with many activities cancelled. Many rural roads went long periods without being opened resulting in hardships for farmers. Days of blowing snow were the 8th, 19th, 22nd, 23th, 24th, 26th, 27th, and 31st. Days of freezing rain were the 5th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and the 22nd.

1911: Tamarack, California was without snow the first eight days of the month, but by the end of January, they had been buried under 390 inches of snow, a record monthly total for the United States. By March 11, 1911, Tamarack had a record snow depth of 451 inches.

1979: A winter storm that started on the previous day and ended on this day spread 2 to 4 inches of rainfall in 24 hours over much of coastal Southern California, and two inches of snow in Palm Springs. Snow fell heavily in Palm Springs and 8 inches fell at Lancaster. All major interstates into Los Angeles were closed. Snow drifts shut down Interstate 10 on both sides of Palm Springs, isolating the city.

1949 - The temperature at San Antonio, TX, plunged to a record low of one degree below zero. Helena MT reached 42 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum)

1966 - A blizzard struck the northeastern U.S. When the storm came to an end, twenty inches of snow covered the ground at Washington D.C. (David Ludlum)

1982 - A snowstorm struck Missouri, Illinois and Indiana. Twenty-five inches of snow at Greenville IL, located east of Saint Louis, paralyzed the community. The storm left 4000 motorists stranded for two days. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm in the Pacific Northwest produced wind gusts to 85 mph in Oregon, and nearly two inches of rain in twelve hours in the Puget Sound area of Washington State. Ten inches of snow at Stampede Pass WA brought their total snow cover to 84 inches. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty-one cities in the central and northeastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date, with many occurring during the early morning hours. Temperatures in western New York State reached the 60s early in the day. Strong northerly winds in the north central U.S. produced wind chill readings as cold as 60 degrees below zero in North Dakota. (National Weather Summary)

1989 - The barometric pressure at Norway, AK, reached 31.85 inches (1078.4 mb) establishing an all-time record for the North American Continent. The temperature at the time of the record was about 46 degrees below zero (The Weather Channel). Severe arctic cold began to invade the north central U.S. The temperature at Great Falls MT plunged 85 degrees in 36 hours. Valentine NE plummeted from a record high of 70 degrees to zero in just nine hours. Northwest winds gusted to 86 mph at Lander WY, and wind chill readings of 80 degrees below zero were reported in Montana. Sixty-four cities in the central U.S. reported record highs for the date as readings reached the 60s in Michigan and the 80s in Kansas. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - High winds in Montana on the 28th, gusting to 77 mph at Judith Gap, were followed by three days of snow. Heavy snow fell over northwest Montana, with up to 24 inches reported in the mountains. An avalanche covered the road near Essex with six feet of snow. Snow and high winds also plagued parts of the southwestern U.S. Winds gusted to 54 mph at Show Low AZ, and Flagstaff AZ was blanketed with eight inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Wind ...

Today

Tonight

Friday

Friday Night

Saturday



80% → 30%

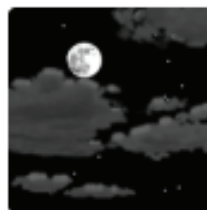
Snow then
Chance Snow



Mostly Cloudy



Mostly Sunny



Partly Cloudy



Mostly Sunny

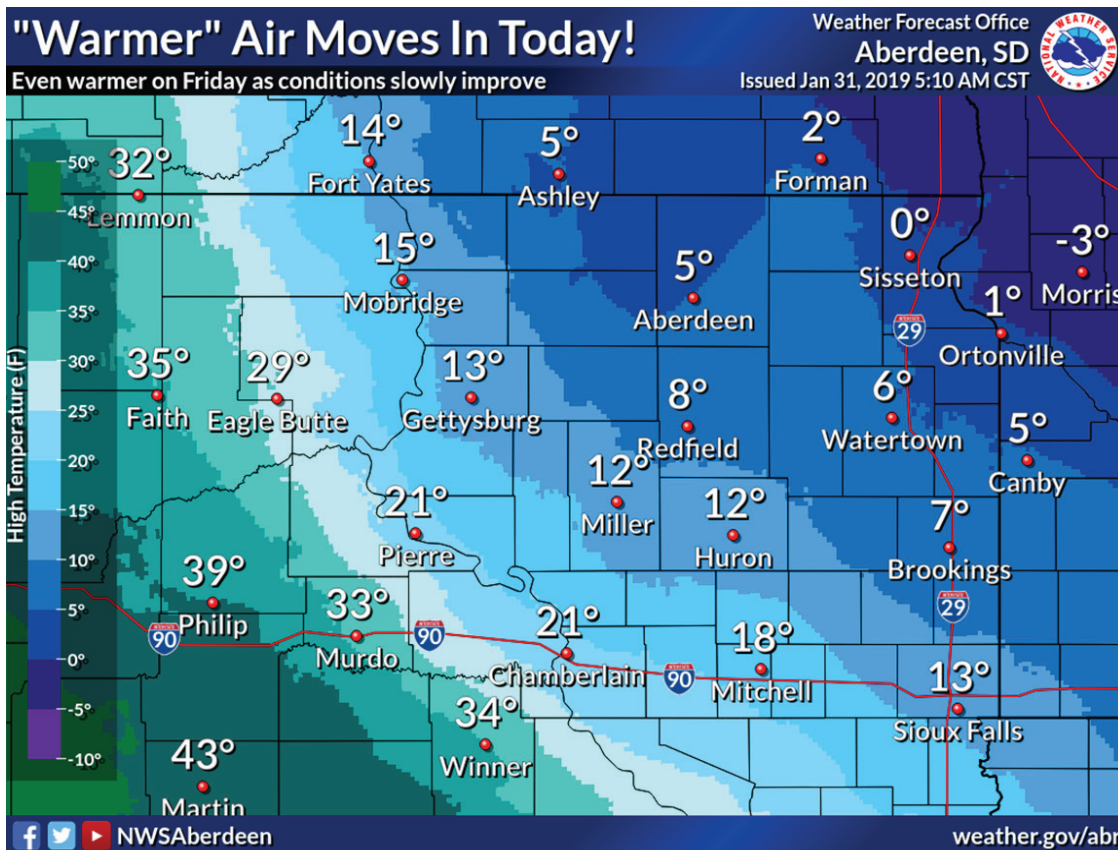
High: 5 °F

Low: -5 °F

High: 27 °F

Low: 14 °F

High: 27 °F



The Arctic air mass will slowly begin to erode today as warmer air pushes in from the west. Bitterly cold wind chills this morning will also begin to improve some by this afternoon. Eastern portions of the forecast area will remain quite cold today, but not as frigid as yesterday. Meanwhile, across central South Dakota, 20s and 30s will begin moving in. An area of light snow will also move across the region this morning, with accumulations under an inch. Friday's temperatures will range from the 20s to the 40s across the area, with the warmest readings over central South Dakota.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: -16 °F at 5:01 PM

Low Outside Temp: -36 °F at 8:22 AM

High Gust: 8 mph at 12:12 PM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 51 in 1924

Record Low: -32 in 1996

Average High: 24°F

Average Low: 2°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.46

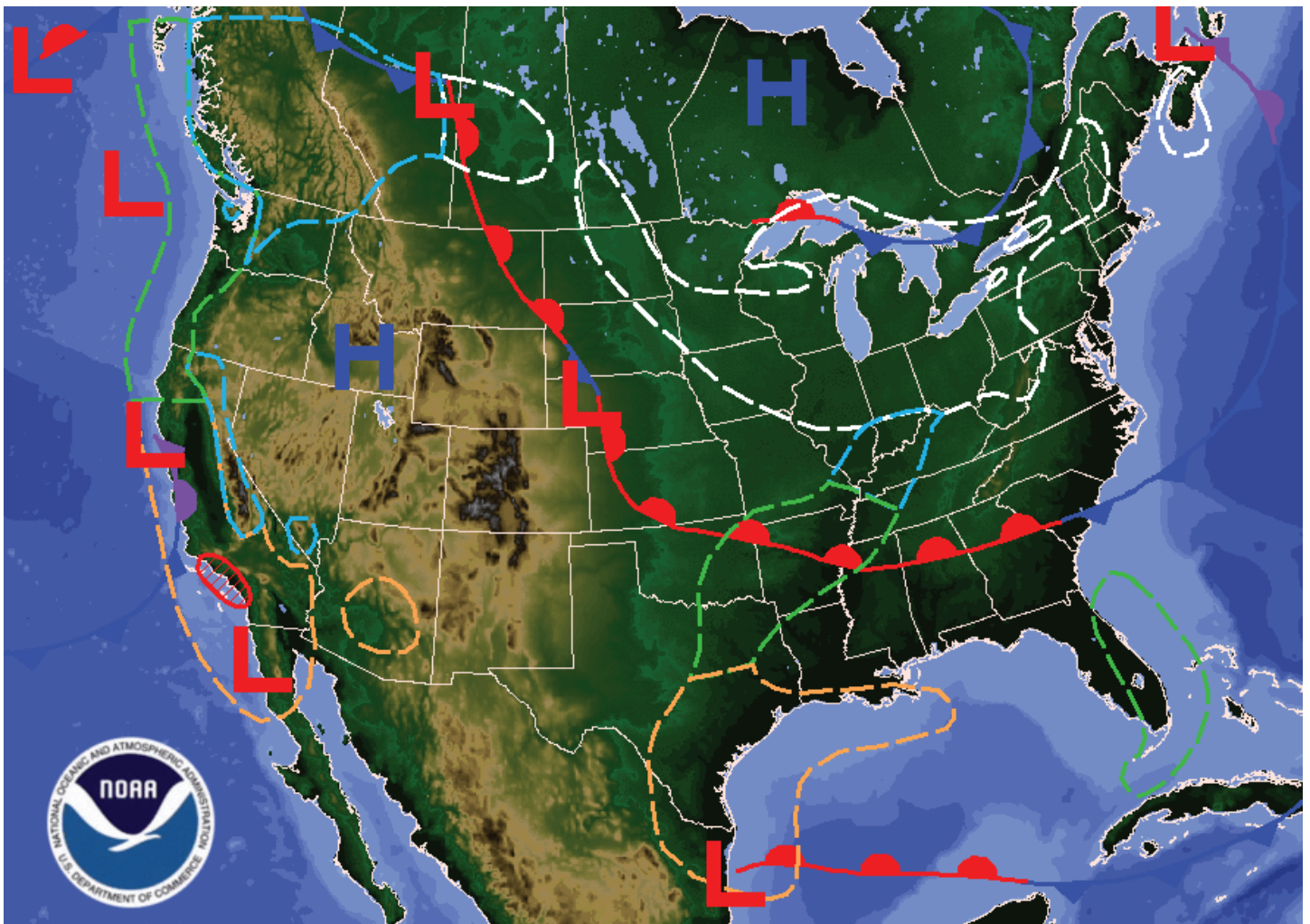
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.46

Precip Year to Date: 0.09

Sunset Tonight: 5:39 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:55 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Jan 31, 2019, issued 4:44 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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SUNSHINE AND STORMS

Whats that, Dad? asked his son, Ben.

A rainbow, responded his father.

Whats a rainbow, Dad? was his next question.

Well, Ben, a rainbow is a promise from God that He loves us and will always care for us, said Bens Dad.

What a comforting answer for us to think about when we face troubling times. The beauty and brilliance of the colors found in a rainbow are the results of reflections and refractions of the suns rays as they light-up the drops of rain that fall from the sky after the storm passes over us. But without the storm, there would be no rainbow.

We only see rainbows when the sun is behind us, and the rain is falling in front of us. As the rays of the sun pass through a drop of rain it is bent - or refracted - and separated into the different colors that light up the sky. What we see is a brilliant display of colors produced in the countless drops of rain that fall in front of the sun.

All of us have experienced many drops of rain falling on our paths and into our lives. But Gods love shines through each of them as the sun shines through the drops of rain that fall from the sky. It is the glow of His love that shines through the tears of grief, pain, hurt and suffering that fall from our eyes and brings us His comfort.

No one has lived a tear-free life. We have all been caught up in the storms of life - yet have survived. The Psalmist wrote, They have greatly oppressed me from my youth, but have not gained the victory over me. Storms and tears come and go, but Gods love will always protect us.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the assurance of Your love. May we look to You for healing when others harm us. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 129:2 They have greatly oppressed me from my youth, but have not gained the victory over me.

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

News from the Associated Press

Deep freeze expected to ease, but disruptions persist

By MICHAEL TARM and COREY WILLIAMS, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The painfully cold weather system that put much of the Midwest into a historic deep freeze was expected to ease Thursday, though temperatures could still tumble to record lows in some places before the region begins to thaw out.

Disruptions caused by the cold will persist, too, including power outages and canceled flights and trains. Crews in Detroit will need days to repair water mains that burst Wednesday, and other pipes can still burst in persistent subzero temperatures.

Before the worst of the cold begins to lift, the National Weather Service said Chicago could hit lows early Thursday that break the city's record of minus 27 (minus 32 Celsius) set on Jan. 20, 1985. Some nearby isolated areas could see temperatures as low as minus 40 (minus 40 Celsius). That would break the Illinois record of minus 36 (minus 38 Celsius), set in Congerville on Jan. 5, 1999.

As temperatures bounce back into the single digits Thursday and into the comparative balmy 20s by Friday, more people were expected to return to work in the nation's third-largest city, which resembled a ghost town after most offices told employees to stay home.

The blast of polar air that enveloped much of the Midwest on Wednesday closed schools and businesses and strained infrastructure with some of the lowest temperatures in a generation. The deep freeze snapped rail lines, canceled hundreds of flights and strained utilities.

Chicago dropped to a low of around minus 23 (minus 30 Celsius), slightly above the city's lowest-ever reading of minus 27 (minus 32 Celsius) from January 1985. Milwaukee had similar conditions. Minneapolis recorded minus 27 (minus 32 Celsius). Sioux Falls, South Dakota, saw minus 25 (minus 31 Celsius).

Wind chills reportedly made it feel like minus 50 (minus 45 Celsius) or worse. Trains and buses in Chicago operated with few passengers. The hardest commuters ventured out only after covering nearly every square inch of flesh against the extreme chill, which froze ice crystals on eyelashes and eyebrows in minutes.

The Postal Service took the rare step of suspending mail delivery in many places, and in southeastern Minnesota, even the snowplows were idled by the weather.

The bitter cold was the result of a split in the polar vortex, a mass of cold air that normally stays bottled up in the Arctic. The split allowed the air to spill much farther south than usual. In fact, Chicago was colder than the Canadian village of Alert, one of the world's most northerly inhabited places. Alert, which is 500 miles (804 kilometers) from the North Pole, reported a temperature that was a couple of degrees higher.

Officials in dozens of cities focused on protecting vulnerable people from the cold, including the homeless, seniors and those living in substandard housing.

At least eight deaths were linked to the system, including an elderly Illinois man who was found several hours after he fell trying to get into his home and a University of Iowa student found behind an academic hall several hours before dawn. Elsewhere, a man was struck by a snowplow in the Chicago area, a young couple's SUV struck another on a snowy road in northern Indiana and a Milwaukee man froze to death in a garage, authorities said.

Aside from the safety risks and the physical discomfort, the system's icy grip also took a heavy toll on infrastructure, halting transportation, knocking out electricity and interrupting water service.

Amtrak canceled scores of trains to and from Chicago, one of the nation's busiest rail hubs. Several families who intended to leave for Pennsylvania stood in ticket lines at Chicago's Union Station only to be told all trains were canceled until Friday.

"Had I known we'd be stranded here, we would have stayed in Mexico longer — where it was warmer," said Anna Ebersol, who was traveling with her two sons.

Ten diesel-train lines in the Metra commuter network kept running, unlike the electric lines, but crews had to heat vital switches with gas flames and watched for rails that were cracked or broken. When steel

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rails break or even crack, trains are automatically halted until they are diverted or the section of rail is repaired, Metra spokesman Michael Gillis explained.

A track in the Minneapolis light-rail system also cracked, forcing trains to share the remaining track for a few hours.

In Detroit, more than two dozen water mains froze. Customers were connected to other mains to keep water service from being interrupted, Detroit Water and Sewerage spokesman Bryan Peckinpaugh said.

Most mains were installed from the early 1900s to the 1950s. They are 5 to 6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 meters) underground and beneath the frost line, but that matters little when temperatures drop so dramatically, Peckinpaugh said.

On a typical winter day, the city has five to nine breaks, with each taking about three days to fix. But those repairs will take longer now with the large number of failures to fix, he added.

Detroit is in the second year of a \$500 million program to rehab its water and sewer system. Last year, 25 miles (40 kilometers) of water mains were replaced.

"Water pipes are brittle. The more years they've gone through the freeze-thaw cycle," the greater the stress and strain, said Greg DiLoreto, a volunteer with the American Society of Civil Engineers and chair of its committee on American infrastructure.

Pipes laid a century ago have far exceeded the life span for which they were designed, said DiLoreto, who described the aging process as "living on borrowed time."

"When we put them in — back in the beginning — we never thought they would last this long," he said.

The same freeze-thaw cycle beats up concrete and asphalt roads and bridges, resulting in teeth-jarring potholes.

"You won't see them until it starts warming up and the trucks start rolling over the pavement again," said DiLoreto who is based in Portland, Oregon.

Williams reported from Detroit. Associated Press writers Caryn Rousseau in Chicago, Rick Callahan in Indianapolis, Mike Householder in Detroit, David Koenig in Dallas, Gretchen Ehke in Milwaukee and Blake Nicholson in Bismarck, North Dakota, contributed to this story.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

03-04-15-19-34

(three, four, fifteen, nineteen, thirty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$59,000

Lotto America

06-10-23-38-41, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 5

(six, ten, twenty-three, thirty-eight, forty-one; Star Ball: seven; ASB: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$14.51 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$125 million

Powerball

02-12-16-29-54, Powerball: 6, Power Play: 2

(two, twelve, sixteen, twenty-nine, fifty-four; Powerball: six; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$174 million

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Purdue Fort Wayne rides Holba's fast start past S Dakota

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP) — Matt Holba scored 20 points making three 3-pointers in the first 6½ minutes of play and Purdue Fort Wayne throttled South Dakota 102-71 on Wednesday night.

Purdue Fort Wayne now has won back-to-back contests following a three-game skid.

The Mastodons never trailed and built a 21-7 lead as Holba made four 3-pointers and a layup with still 13:36 left before halftime. Purdue Fort Wayne scored a season-high 55 points in the first half and limited South Dakota to 34.3-percent shooting before intermission and led 55-33 at the break. Holba later added another 3 and a pair of foul shots to expand the lead to 41.

John Konchar led the Mastodons (14-10, 6-3 Summit League) with 21 points on 9-of-12 shooting with 10 rebounds and five assists. Holba shot 6 of 9 including 4 of 7 from beyond the 3 arc. Kason Harrell scored 18 and Dee Montgomery 12.

Stanley Umude scored a career-high 30 points for the Coyotes (9-13, 3-6), losers of two straight.

Polar blast envelops Midwest, strains aging infrastructure

By MICHAEL TARM and COREY WILLIAMS, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A blast of polar air enveloped much of the Midwest on Wednesday, cracking train rails, breaking water pipes and straining electrical systems with some of the lowest temperatures in a generation.

The deep freeze closed schools and businesses and canceled flights in the nation's third-largest city, which was as cold as the Arctic. Heavily dressed repair crews hustled to keep utilities from failing.

Chicago dropped to a low of around minus 23 (minus 30 Celsius), slightly above the city's lowest-ever reading of minus 27 (minus 32 Celsius) from January 1985. Milwaukee had similar conditions. Minneapolis recorded minus 27 (minus 32 Celsius). Sioux Falls, South Dakota, saw minus 25 (minus 31 Celsius).

Wind chills reportedly made it feel like minus 50 (minus 45 Celsius) or worse. Downtown Chicago streets were largely deserted after most offices told employees to stay home. Trains and buses operated with few passengers. The hardest commuters ventured out only after covering nearly every square inch of flesh against the extreme chill, which froze ice crystals on eyelashes and eyebrows in minutes.

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Officials in dozens of cities focused on protecting vulnerable people such as the homeless, seniors and those living in substandard housing.

At least eight deaths were linked to the system, including an elderly Illinois man who was found several hours after he fell trying to get into his home and a University of Iowa student found behind an academic hall several hours before dawn. Elsewhere, a man was struck by a snowplow in the Chicago area, a young couple's SUV struck another on a snowy road in northern Indiana and a Milwaukee man froze to death in a garage, authorities said.

Temperatures in Chicago were expected to tumble again into the minus 20s (minus 30s Celsius) early Thursday. Some isolated areas could see as low as minus 40 (minus 40 Celsius), according to the National Weather Service. Daytime highs could climb into the single digits before warming up to the comparatively balmy 20s (minus 7 to minus 2 Celsius) by Friday.

Aside from the safety risks and the physical discomfort, the system's icy grip also took a heavy toll on infrastructure, halting transportation, knocking out electricity and interrupting water service.

At least 2,700 flights were canceled nationwide, more than half of them at Chicago's two main airports. Another 1,800 flights scheduled for Thursday were also called off. Fuel lines at O'Hare Airport froze, forcing some planes to refuel elsewhere before continuing to their destination, an airport spokeswoman said.

Amtrak canceled scores of trains to and from Chicago, one of the nation's busiest rail hubs. Several

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families who intended to leave for Pennsylvania stood in ticket lines at Chicago's Union Station only to be told all trains were canceled until Friday.

"Had I known we'd be stranded here, we would have stayed in Mexico longer — where it was warmer," said Anna Ebersol, who was traveling with her two sons.

Chicago commuter trains that rely on electricity were also shut down after the metal wires that provide their power contracted, throwing off connections.

Ten diesel-train lines in the Metra network kept running, but crews had to heat vital switches with gas flames and watched for rails that were cracked or broken. When steel rails break or even crack, trains are automatically halted until they are diverted or the section of rail is repaired, Metra spokesman Michael Gillis explained.

A track in the Minneapolis light-rail system also cracked, forcing trains to share the remaining track for a few hours.

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Most mains were installed from the early 1900s to the 1950s. They are 5 to 6 feet underground and beneath the frost line, but that matters little when temperatures drop so dramatically, Peckinpaugh said.

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Thousands of utility customers were without electricity after high winds also caused trees and branches to fall into power lines, especially in the south Chicago suburbs. The ComEd utility in northern Illinois said crews restored power to more than 42,000 customers and were working to restore another 9,400.

About 5,000 Duke Energy customers in central Indiana lost power due to high heating demand that tripped circuits. Another outage affecting 1,000 customers was reported near Kokomo, Indiana, about 40 miles north of Indianapolis.

Low temperatures can cause overhead wires to contract, said Otto Lynch, chief executive of Power Line Systems in Madison, Wisconsin, and a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

"The tension goes way up the wire and gets tighter and causes poles to break," Lynch said. "The wires are usually not going to break. It's really dependent on how the line was designed. Fifty years ago, they didn't do a whole lot of engineering" for the coldest possible temperatures.

Williams reported from Detroit. Associated Press writers Caryn Rousseau in Chicago, Rick Callahan in Indianapolis, Mike Householder in Detroit, David Koenig in Dallas, Blake Nicholson in Bismarck, North Dakota, and Gretchen Ehlke in Milwaukee contributed to this story.

Schools use quirky methods to announce weather closures

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — With talking hot dogs, professional sports announcers and quirky songs, some school districts are bringing a little levity to this week's life-threatening cold in the Midwest with their unique and funny school closure announcements.

The deadly arctic blast that has blanketed the region has prompted hundreds of school closures from the Dakotas to Missouri to Pennsylvania. Most districts informed students and parents in typical fashion, with a notice on their website or via the local airwaves.

Not so in Swartz Creek, Michigan. Superintendent Ben Mainka and Principal Jim Kitchen created a video that went viral on YouTube in which they don sunglasses and sing their closure announcement to the classic tune of "Hallelujah," with the chorus "It's a snow day, a winter cold day, stay home and just play, it's a great family day." The two followed it up a couple of days later with another announcement, this time to the tune of "Let it Go" from the Disney movie "Frozen."

Ryan Lefebvre, broadcaster for Major League Baseball's Kansas City Royals, made the latest announcement for the Lee's Summit, Missouri, school district, declaring in a video posted to Twitter that "it's too cold outside." While bundled in a hat and coat, he also assigned students two homework assignments for Wednesday — "do something nice for somebody" and "have fun."

In South Dakota, a video of a talking hot dog announced the Wednesday closure of the Parker School District with the words, "I'm a hot dog! I need some heat! I'm not a cold dog! ... You cannot have school! It's too cold outside."

Mr. Hot Dog — complete with eyes, teeth, a bun and mustard — suggested students instead watch Netflix or bake a cake, but "No Fortnite!"

"I think it shows the kids that we can have fun, that school is not just about books and reading and writing all of the time," said Superintendent Donovan DeBoer, who created the video using Snapchat. "They want to have a good experience, and this is a way we can do that."

DeBoer said unorthodox school closure announcements aren't necessarily a trend but simply the result of an evolution in technology, and the fact that "we all have Facebook, we all have cellphones." And he joked that "one of the best things we do as educators is steal good stuff from other educators."

DeBoer said videos he created in past years drew critical acclaim from his students, and "now I'm kind of stuck — every time we cancel school, what's next?" He said he has several more video ideas "in the pack there, waiting to come out. But hopefully we don't have too many more snow days."

Associated Press writers Amy Forliti in Minneapolis and Heather Hollingsworth in Kansas City contributed to this story.

Gov. Kristi Noem to sign 'constitutional carry' legislation

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem said Wednesday that she will sign into law a measure allowing people to carry concealed pistols without a permit in South Dakota.

The Republican governor tweeted that she would sign the bill Thursday, saying it would further protect the "Second Amendment rights of law-abiding South Dakotans." The move is a win for conservatives who have long supported the plan, which languished under former GOP Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

"Our Founding Fathers believed so firmly in our right to bear arms that they enshrined it into the Constitution," Noem wrote in her tweet announcing that she would sign the so-called constitutional carry bill. It's currently a misdemeanor for someone to carry a concealed pistol or to have one concealed in a vehicle without a permit, while openly carrying a firearm is legal.

South Dakota will join at least 13 states — including neighboring North Dakota — that allow people to carry a concealed handgun without a permit, according to the National Rifle Association Institute for Legislative Action.

Data from the Secretary of State's office showed there were roughly 107,000 pistol permits in South

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Dakota at the end of November.

The South Dakota Sheriffs' Association opposes the bill, arguing that the current limitations under the permit process are reasonable. The association's greatest concern is that the proposal wouldn't apply just to state residents, but also to anyone who comes to South Dakota, lobbyist Richard Tieszen told a Senate panel earlier this month.

House lawmakers voted Tuesday to send the bill to Noem.

Shannon Hoime, volunteer leader of the state's chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, called Noem's decision "an embarrassment."

"You would think the governor would take more than a day to consider why most South Dakotans — including law enforcement leaders and the wide majority of gun owners — oppose this. But you would be wrong," Hoime said in a statement.

Daugaard rejected a 2017 constitutional carry bill, saying the state's current permitting process is "simple and straightforward." Another try failed last year after he issued a veto threat.

Noem has previously said that she supports the "principle" of constitutional carry and urged passage of such a bill during her campaign for governor. She took office earlier this month.

South Dakota senators reversed course on a separate gun-rights proposal Wednesday, voting 22-10 against a bill that would have let permit holders carry concealed in the state Capitol and supplementary buildings.

Republican Sen. Arthur Rusch, an opponent, said he doesn't think a law enforcement officer arriving at the scene of a shooting would be able to distinguish the "bad guy from the good guy."

GOP Sen. Stace Nelson, the bill's sponsor, said the Capitol isn't a secure facility and lawmakers and state employees are at risk. There are no metal detectors or other security checks at the Capitol entrances to enforce the current prohibition on most people carrying guns in the building.

A separate measure to let people with an enhanced permit bring concealed handguns into the Capitol if they notify security beforehand hasn't yet had a legislative hearing.

The impact of the frigid cold, snowstorm, by the numbers

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A look at how this week's snowstorm and bitter cold have affected the United States, by the numbers:

22 — Number of states that recorded sub-zero temperatures Wednesday. Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York all saw temperatures that were below zero. New Hampshire also saw sub-zero temperatures at higher elevations. Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Idaho saw temperatures below zero as well, but not as a direct result of the surge of cold air that has hit the Upper Midwest, according to the National Weather Service.

139 million — Roughly the number of people in the U.S. who were under a wind chill advisory or wind chill warning as of midday Wednesday, according to information from the National Weather Service.

10 — Number of states where mail delivery was suspended either statewide or in part due to dangerously cold conditions, according to the U.S. Postal Service. The affected states include Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

370 — Number of blood drives sponsored by the American Red Cross that had to be cancelled nationwide due to winter weather. The Red Cross says these cancellations will lead to an estimated 11,600 uncollected blood donations for the month of January, based on the expected number of potential donors at cancelled drive locations.

94 — The difference in degrees between Wednesday morning's low temperature in Key West, Iowa, and Key West, Florida. According to AccuWeather.com, the morning low in Key West, Florida, was 66 degrees. The morning low in Key West, Iowa, was minus 28.

1 — Number of zebras reported dead as a result of the extreme cold. Authorities in northern Indiana say a zebra was found dead Wednesday at a farm outside Delphi, about 65 miles (105 kilometers) northwest of Indianapolis. Another zebra on the farm survived.

6 — Number of states that saw colder weather than the South Pole Wednesday. According to AccuWeather.

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com, the South Pole station registered a low of negative 26 (minus 32 Celsius) Wednesday morning. At that time, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois all had colder weather. It is the summer season in the southern hemisphere.

94 — The number of competitors who dropped out of the Arrowhead 135, an ultra endurance test in northeast Minnesota that requires entrants to cover 135 miles on foot, ski or bicycle. Fifty-two people — or roughly 36 percent of participants — completed the race that ended Wednesday. The average finish rate for participants is less than 50 percent.

South Dakota Senate rejects bill to allow guns in Capitol

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Senate has rejected a bill to allow concealed pistols in the state Capitol.

Senators voted 22-10 Wednesday against the proposal, which would have let permit holders carry guns in the Capitol and supplementary buildings.

Republican Sen. Arthur Rusch opposed the bill, saying he doesn't think an officer arriving at a shooting could discern the "bad guy from the good guy."

GOP Sen. Stace Nelson, the sponsor, says the Capitol isn't a secure facility and lawmakers and state employees are at risk.

The bill's rejection comes as Gov. Kristi Noem plans to sign a measure allowing people to carry concealed pistols without a permit in South Dakota.

A separate measure to let people with an enhanced permit bring concealed handguns into the Capitol if they notify security beforehand hasn't yet had a hearing.

Polygamous sect concerns prompt birth, death reporting bill

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota legislative panel on Wednesday backed a measure meant to address concerns about a polygamous group's Black Hills outpost by making it a misdemeanor not to report births and deaths.

The House Judiciary Committee voted 12-1 to send the measure to the chamber's floor. Republican Rep. Tim Goodwin, the sponsor, said the measure is a "tiny step" to start enforcement at the compound, which was founded by the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

"Finally, we're at least doing something," Goodwin said.

State law currently requires births and deaths to be reported, but there's no penalty for failing to do so. The Department of Health said in 2017 that no such records had been filed from the compound's address in the previous 10 years.

One former resident, though, said births occurred at the site, including two of her own children. She said the sect didn't allow her to get the documents for daughters born in 2008 and 2010.

The group, also known as the FLDS, opened the 140-acre compound near the town of Pringle more than a decade ago. Known to the faithful as "R23," the compound sits along a gravel road and is shielded from view by tall pine trees, a privacy fence and a guard tower.

The FLDS is a radical offshoot of mainstream Mormonism whose members believe polygamy brings exaltation in heaven. Polygamy is a legacy of the early teachings of the mainstream Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but the faith abandoned the practice in 1890 and prohibits it today.

Warren Jeffs, considered by the group to be a prophet who speaks for God, is serving a life sentence in Texas for sexually assaulting underage girls he considered to be his brides. His brother, Lyle Jeffs, was sentenced to prison in 2017 for his role in carrying out a multimillion-dollar food-stamp fraud scheme and for taking off his ankle monitor and fleeing from home confinement while awaiting trial. He was caught nearly a year later after pawn shop workers spotted him and called police.

The group has long been based out of a remote community on the Utah-Arizona border, but the sect

has been losing control of the municipal governments and police departments in sister cities of Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Arizona.

In 2017, Goodwin sought to have lawmakers look into the South Dakota outpost, including how many people lived there, whether it had a home-schooling program and whether residents were involved in polygamy or sex trafficking. Lawmakers decided not to, though, with one top legislator saying it was up to law enforcement to investigate.

Goodwin's legislation would make it a misdemeanor not to file a birth certificate within one year or to fail to notify the county coroner and sheriff of a death within 48 hours.

A company tied to Seth Jeffs, who authorities have said led the sect's South Dakota Black Hills compound, last year purchased about 40 acres of land in northern Minnesota. Seth Jeffs, who took a plea deal in the food-stamp fraud case, applied in August to build a 5,760-square-foot building on the Minnesota land.

TransCanada pursuing water permits for pipeline construction

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota regulators are reviewing three water permit applications filed by TransCanada Corp. related to the stalled construction of the Keystone XL crude oil pipeline project.

TransCanada has applied for permits to withdraw water from the Cheyenne, Bad and White rivers in western South Dakota, the Rapid City Journal reported.

A federal judge in Montana filed an injunction in November prohibiting TransCanada from starting to build the pipeline. Matthew John, a TransCanada spokesman, said since the judge's order was issued, the Canadian company has continued managing stakeholder engagement activities in South Dakota and internal planning.

The Keystone XL pipeline would run from Alberta, Canada, to Steele City, Nebraska, where it would connect with existing pipelines. The pipeline would enter South Dakota 32 miles (52 kilometers) northwest of Buffalo and run in a southeasterly direction through nine counties.

TransCanada's three applications consisted of water withdrawal requests totaling around 167 million gallons annually. The applications note the water would be used during construction for dust control, horizontal-directional drilling, pump-station construction and hydrostatic testing of the pipeline.

The South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources used stream gauges preserved by the U.S. Geological Survey and existing water-rights data to assess the three water permits before the state agency recommended approval of the applications.

The state Water Management board is scheduled to consider the applications on March 6. The hearing will be automatically postponed for at least 20 days if anyone files petitions against the applications and requests for a delay by Feb. 25.

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

Frigid arctic air in Midwest setting records in the Dakotas

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The frigid arctic air blanketing parts of the Midwest is setting records in the Dakotas.

The National Weather Service says that Devils Lake, North Dakota, set a record low for the date Wednesday, at minus 36 degrees (negative 38 degrees Celsius).

Weather service reports show that at least a dozen South Dakota cities broke or tied their record-low temperature for the date Wednesday. Britton was the coldest, at minus 40 degrees (negative 40 degrees Celsius).

Some of the previous South Dakota records were set about a century ago. The town of Webster broke a record that was set in 1893.

The bitter cold is the result of a split in the polar vortex that allowed temperatures to plunge much farther south than normal.

Mother, daughter plead guilty to helping shooting suspect

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A mother and daughter accused of attempting to help a wanted man leave the state after a fatal shooting in a Sioux Falls park have pleaded guilty to being accessories to a felony.

The Argus Leader reports that 38-year-old Chastity Becker and 18-year-old Essence Becker each faces up to five years in prison but likely will receive no prison time as long as they cooperate in the trial of Abraham Darsaw.

He's facing murder and other charges in a shooting last August that killed 25-year-old Moses Cole and critically injured another man following an argument at a barbecue.

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

Sheriff will keep certification while appeal moves forward

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A judge is allowing Marshall County Sheriff Dale Elsen to keep his law enforcement certification until his appeal is concluded.

The South Dakota Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission in December revoked Elsen's certification after he admitted to making sexually explicit comments in front of deputies and an inmate.

The American News reports that Elsen is appealing the decision, and a judge has granted his stay request.

Elsen is not charged with any crimes, but some county employees have made complaints against him. Several county employees and commissioners have expressed support for him.

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

Fall trial set for suspect in 2015 murder-for-hire case

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The man accused of fatally stabbing a Rapid City woman in an alleged murder-for-hire case four years ago has been scheduled for trial this fall.

Richard Hirth faces murder and other charges in the 2015 stabbing death of 22-year-old Jessica Rehfeld. The Rapid City Journal reports he's set for trial Oct. 28 through Nov. 8 in Rapid City.

Hirth was arrested in May 2016 after police said a witness came forward to lead them to Rehfeld's grave south of Rockerville. She had been missing for a year.

Another man has pleaded guilty to murder in the case, and two others have pleaded guilty to helping move Rehfeld's body. Rehfeld's ex-boyfriend is accused of plotting the killing and has pleaded not guilty to murder.

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

Rapid City lawyer accused of failing to pay federal taxes

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City lawyer and one-time public prosecutor is accused of failing to pay more than \$224,000 in federal taxes.

The Rapid City Journal reports that former Pennington County State's Attorney's Office Chief Deputy Gregory Sperlich pleaded not guilty Monday to four counts of failure to pay taxes. He was not jailed but was ordered to surrender his passport.

The indictment accuses Sperlich of failing to pay income and self-employment taxes to the Internal Revenue Service from 2013-2016. He could face up to four years in prison if convicted.

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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. WATCHDOG ISSUES SOBERING REPORT ON AFGHANISTAN

As the U.S. pursues peace in the war-torn country, the Afghan government has been unable to expand control of its country, Afghan security forces are shrinking and gaps in security are growing.

2. AP: ICE FORCE-FEEDING DETAINEES ON HUNGER STRIKE

Federal immigration officials are force-feeding six immigrants through plastic nasal tubes during a hunger strike that's gone on for a month inside a Texas detention facility, the AP learns.

3. DEEP FREEZE EXPECTED TO EASE IN MIDWEST

Disruptions caused by the historic cold weather system will persist, however, including power outages and canceled flights and trains.

4. 'THINGS ARE VERY TOUGH HERE'

Venezuelans of every age, class and occupation line the streets of Caracas and tell the AP why President Nicolas Maduro must step down for the good of the country.

5. FEDS MOVE AHEAD WITH OIL LEASES NEAR SACRED SITES

U.S. land managers will move forward with the sale of oil and gas leases that include land near parks and sites sacred to Native American tribes, AP finds.

6. PONTIFF TO MAKE HISTORIC VISIT TO BIRTHPLACE OF ISLAM

Pope Francis' visit to the United Arab Emirates next week marks the first ever papal visit to the Arabian Peninsula.

7. 2020 DEMOCRATS TARGET MIDWEST VOTERS

The party could soon have multiple presidential contenders who have deep roots in the region including Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota.

8. NEARLY HALF OF US ADULTS HAVE HEART OR BLOOD VESSEL DISEASE

The medical milestone cited by the American Heart Association is mostly due to recent guidelines that expanded how many people have high blood pressure.

9. WHAT CBS IS BETTING BIG ON

"The World's Best," a new talent competition, is given the coveted post-Super Bowl time slot.

10. PATRIOTS PUT '72 DOLPHINS IN SIGHTS

New England is trying to match a Miami accomplishment — becoming the first NFL team in 46 years to win the Super Bowl a year after losing the game.

Less is more? Trump out of sight as border talks play out

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — No televised roundtables with Cabinet secretaries. No freewheeling speeches from the Oval Office. No shouted comments on his way to Marine One.

Where's the president? While the federal government is open once again, President Donald Trump has been largely behind closed doors.

Republicans and Democrats alike seem just fine with Trump hanging back as legislators try to work out a deal to keep the government open and resolve a standoff over funding for the president's long-sought wall at the southern border. In fact, some lawmakers think less Trump might be a good thing, given his rocky relationships with legislators and open criticism of his negotiating abilities.

Over the last five days, Trump has had no public events.

The White House says the president has made his demands for border wall funding clear and that he is letting the committee process play out on Capitol Hill. One official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss private talks, stressed that Trump was "engaged at every level" on border security, including receiving a lengthy briefing on the topic Wednesday, and has continued to get his message out, including doing an interview with The Daily Caller. The official added that the White House has also been heavily

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involved at a staff level.

Democrats, for their part, are more pointed about the positive aspects of less Trump.

Said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat: "When the president stays out of the negotiations, we almost always succeed. When he mixes in, it's a formula for failure. So I'd ask President Trump, 'Let Congress deal with it on its own.'"

Asked about Schumer's comment, Trump told The Daily Caller, "I don't blame him." But the president added that "without our involvement, a deal is not going to get done."

While Trump has been avoiding public appearances, he's continued dishing out his practiced blend of bluster and blame on Twitter — including contradicting his intelligence chiefs and slamming a former staffer for writing a White House tell-all. He has also weighed in on the congressional negotiations, saying that if the negotiating committee "is not discussing or contemplating a Wall or Physical Barrier, they are Wasting their time!"

Never able to stay out of the public eye for long, Trump will be speaking up more in the coming days. He'll do an interview with CBS that will air during the Super Bowl on Sunday, his State of the Union address is Tuesday and the White House is weighing travel options for after the speech to drive home his message on border security.

Going quiet after the fractious fight with Democrats raised questions about whether Trump was missing an opportunity to publicly frame the debate and push his border security arguments. But some Republicans said it was the right move.

"I think it's smart for him to hang back here," said Marc Short, former White House director of legislative affairs. "I do think he should still be traveling to vulnerable districts to put pressure on (Democrats) politically. But I think it's fine for him not to be at the center of the negotiations."

Trump's allies also noted that he has been working on a variety of other issues throughout this period. He called Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido to offer his support Wednesday. He attended a political function at the Trump International Hotel on Monday night. He hosted Sen. David Perdue of Georgia for lunch at the White House on Sunday.

"There's a ton going on. It's Venezuela, China, North Korea. It's not the public event stuff," said former Trump campaign aide Barry Bennett.

Bennett argued that giving Congress some space made sense for Trump, adding: "If I was him, I would see what they offer. If they don't solve it, then solve it yourself."

Report: Afghan forces still shrinking, security gaps growing

By **ROBERT BURNS, AP National Security Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Trump administration pushes for peace in Afghanistan, a new U.S. watchdog report says Afghan security forces are shrinking, gaps in security are growing, and the Taliban are largely holding their own despite a surge in American bombing.

These trends reflect what U.S. military officials call a stalemated war, more than 17 years after U.S. forces invaded following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Gauges of battlefield momentum have changed little over the past year, according to a watchdog agency known as the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. In a report to Congress on Thursday, it said the Afghan government controls or influences 54 percent of districts, down from 56 percent a year earlier, and the Taliban's share slipped from 14 percent to 12 percent. Contested territory increased from 30 percent to 34 percent.

The Pentagon insists that military pressure on the Taliban is mounting. Last year the U.S. vastly increased its use of air power in support of Afghan forces. According to U.S. Central Command data, U.S. aircraft dropped 6,823 bombs in the first 11 months of 2018. That compares with 4,361 bombs dropped in all of 2017.

Even so, the Afghan government has been unable to expand its control of the country, and analysts say an outright military victory by either side is beyond reach.

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Amid reports that President Donald Trump is considering withdrawing as many as half of the 14,000 U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has been publicly emphasizing the sacrifices his troops are making in fighting the Taliban. Ghani was reported to have said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last weekend that 45,000 Afghan security personnel had died since September 2014. President Barack Obama ended the U.S. ground combat role against the Taliban at the end of 2014 while focusing more on training and advising Afghan forces.

The heavy losses suffered by Afghan forces partly explain why Kabul is unable to build its army and police to their authorized strength of a combined 352,000. Thursday's inspector general report said the army and police are at a combined total of just over 308,000, down from 312,000 a year earlier and nearly 316,000 in 2016. The cost of arming, training, paying and sustaining those forces falls largely to the U.S. government at more than \$4 billion a year.

Although U.S. commanders have long argued they are making progress toward enabling the Afghan government to defend its own people, Trump has said many times that he doubts the wisdom of continuing the war. His Afghanistan envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, said in recent days the U.S. and the Taliban agreed in principle to a framework for peace, although important elements are yet to be settled, including buy-in by the Afghan government.

Taliban officials, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media, said the two sides had reached an understanding about the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops and that the militant group had made assurances that Afghan soil would not be used again for attacks against the United States or others.

Afghan officials hope Trump will explain his intentions in further detail during his State of the Union address next week.

In a report to the Senate Intelligence Committee on Tuesday, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said neither the Afghan government nor the Taliban will be able to gain a strategic military advantage in 2019 if U.S.-led coalition support remains at current levels.

"Afghan forces generally have secured cities and other government strongholds, but the Taliban has increased large-scale attacks, and Afghan security suffers from a large number of forces being tied down in defensive missions, mobility shortfalls, and a lack of reliable forces to hold recaptured territory," his report said.

Associated Press writers Deb Riechmann in Washington and Kathy Gannon in Islamabad contributed to this report.

Scenes from a protest: Venezuelans fill streets of capital

By The Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelans of every age, class and profession poured into the streets of the capital on Wednesday to demand that President Nicolas Maduro step down and to express their support for the young opposition leader who has declared himself interim president.

Dressed in suits, scrubs, and jeans, they waved the national flag, displayed signs, and chanted slogans. One disgusted vendor threw devalued national currency into the air.

Protesters who made an appearance were heeding a call from opposition leader Juan Guaido to stage mass demonstrations despite crackdowns on previous protests.

Here are some scenes from across Caracas:

NO MORE DICTATORSHIP

Marching outside an office building on the eastern side of the city, Evelyn Melendez carried a red-and-white sign that read, "No more dictatorship," and sang songs opposing Maduro.

Melendez said she lives in a working-class neighborhood at the opposite end of the city, but she is too afraid to protest near her home, because in her neighborhood she has already been beaten up by government supporters for canvassing for an opposition party.

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"Things are very tough here," said the 23-year-old Melendez, who wore a black T-shirt and baseball cap. "People are dying of hunger and over the lack of medicines. We hope that Maduro, the usurper, steps down from the presidency and stops causing harm to our people."

GASSED PENSIONERS

Leyda Brito turned up at one of Wednesday's protests wearing a red helmet with the number 647. It stands for the number of days that have passed since a group of pensioners was gassed by Venezuelan police during a protest in 2017.

Brito, 60, said she is struggling to live off her pension, which is roughly \$10 a month. She said she was particularly frustrated by the Venezuelan government's refusal to accept international humanitarian aid.

"Maduro is a tyrant," Brito said. "We need a transition here and we need free elections."

WORTHLESS CASH

A woman who identified herself as Josefina arrived at one of the protest points in Caracas holding a thick wad of bolivar bills.

The notes were issued early last year by Venezuela's Central Bank but hyperinflation has rendered them worthless. Josefina, who lives in a hillside slum and works as a street vendor, threw the green bills up in the air in protest, as she screamed out chants against Maduro's government.

"This money is worth nothing," said Josefina, who declined to give her last name for fear of repercussions from the government.

"Our military needs to man up and take the peoples' side," she said, referring to the military's ongoing support of Maduro.

Josefina is hopeful that the economy will improve if Guaido becomes the country's president. "Maduro has no support in my neighborhood," she said.

WANTED: INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

Construction company owner Pedro Cruz attended a walkout Wednesday with a half-dozen of his employees.

Carrying a large Venezuelan flag, Cruz said further repression of protests was likely in the upcoming days, but he is hopeful that the United States and more than two dozen other countries supporting Guaido will be able to put pressure on Maduro and force him to hold transparent elections.

"We have been under the occupation of Cuba for too long," Cruz said, referring to the country's close ties to the communist-run island. Cuba's late president Fidel Castro traded favors and sustained a long friendship with the late socialist Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

"But we have to be optimistic," Cruz added. "We have the support of many countries, and that could help us reach a solution."

AN AILING COUNTRY

Wearing a white medical jacket over surgical scrubs, anesthesiologist Hugo Rosillo led a team of doctors and nurses to the street to protest in front of a once-renowned children's hospital that he said now feels more like a "storeroom for cadavers."

Rosillo said he has some hope for the country given Guaido's push to form a transitional government.

"We are facing the biggest crossroads that we have had since the revolution," Rosillo said.

A change needs to come soon. Rosillo said medical shortages have prevented doctors from treating curable illnesses at the J.M. de los Rios Children's Hospital, located just blocks from the Miraflores presidential palace.

He said medical personnel have been unable to provide basic antibiotics to treat common infections or relief to families whose children have cancer and other life-threatening diseases.

"And we the doctors are frustrated and immigrating to other countries," he said.

DANGEROUS STREETS

An office worker who only wanted to be identified as Adriana because she feared possible repercussions from Maduro's government arrived at a walkout with a sign that read, "You also have reasons" to protest. Adriana said she worked for a telecommunications company until December, but quit her job because her

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office was far from home, and public transportation has become too expensive and unreliable.

"We want the army to join us, and help us to remove this terrorist government," she said. "I had to leave my son at home, because right now it is too dangerous for him to be in the streets. In my neighborhood the military is forcibly recruiting teenagers."

THE DARKEST DAYS

Retired diplomat Martin Mercado, 84, said this isn't the first time he's had to live through a dictatorship in Venezuela — but it's the darkest. Venezuela endured the rule of the late military strongman Marcos Perez Jimenez in the 1950s, but Mercado says he doesn't recall people in those days going hungry, lacking medicine or standing in long lines for basic goods as has happened under Maduro.

Violent street demonstrations erupted last week after Guaido declared during a huge opposition rally in Caracas that he had assumed presidential powers under the constitution and planned to hold fresh elections to end Maduro's "dictatorship."

Mercado says he's afraid more blood will be spilled before Maduro will leave.

"This is no ordinary situation," he said. "They are trying to recruit young people to become human shields. If something were to happen, clashes, many people would die. We hope that this will not happen."

Mercado said he's putting his trust in Guaido to lead Venezuela through a smooth transition.

AP NewsBreak: ICE force-feeding detainees on hunger strike

By GARANCE BURKE AND MARTHA MENDOZA, Associated Press

Federal immigration officials are force-feeding six immigrants through plastic nasal tubes during a hunger strike that's gone on for a month inside a Texas detention facility, The Associated Press has learned.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement says 11 detainees at the El Paso Processing Center have been refusing food, some for more than 30 days. Detainees who reached the AP, along with a relative and an attorney representing hunger strikers, said nearly 30 detainees from India and Cuba have been refusing to eat, and some are now so weak they cannot stand up or talk.

Another four detainees are on hunger strikes in the agency's Miami, Phoenix, San Diego and San Francisco areas of responsibility, said ICE spokeswoman Leticia Zamarripa on Wednesday.

The men say they stopped eating to protest verbal abuse and threats of deportation from guards. They are also upset about lengthy lock ups while awaiting legal proceedings.

In mid-January, two weeks after they stopped eating, a federal judge authorized force-feeding of some El Paso detainees, Zamarripa said. She did not immediately address the detainees' allegations of abuse but did say the El Paso Processing Center would follow the federal standards for care.

ICE officials say they closely monitor the food and water intake of detainees identified as being on a hunger strike to protect their health and safety.

The men with nasal tubes are having persistent nose bleeds, and are vomiting several times a day, said Amrit Singh, whose two nephews from the Indian state of Punjab have been on hunger strike for about a month.

"They are not well. Their bodies are really weak, they can't talk and they have been hospitalized, back and forth," said Singh, from California. "They want to know why they are still in the jail and want to get their rights and wake up the government immigration system."

Singh's nephews are both seeking asylum. Court records show they pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge in September after illegally walking across the border near El Paso.

There have been high-profile hunger strikes around the country at immigration detention centers in the past, and non-consensual feeding and hydration has been authorized by judges in court orders. Media reports and government statements don't indicate immigration detainees actually underwent involuntary feeding in recent years, opting to end their hunger strikes when faced with nasal intubation. ICE did not immediately respond to queries about how often they are force-feeding detainees.

To force-feed someone, medical experts typically wind a tube tightly around their finger to make it bend easily, and put lubricant on the tip, before shoving it into a patient's nose. The patient has to swallow sips

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of water while the tube is pushed down their throat. It can be very painful.

The El Paso detention facility, located on a busy street near the airport, is highly guarded and surrounded by chain-link fence.

Ruby Kaur, a Michigan-based attorney representing one of the hunger strikers, said her client had been force-fed and put on an IV after more than three weeks without eating or drinking water.

"They go on hunger strike, and they are put into solitary confinement and then the ICE officers kind of psychologically torture them, telling the asylum seekers they will send them back to Punjab," Kaur said.

Eiorjys Rodriguez Calderin, who on a call from the facility described himself as a Cuban dissident, said conditions in Cuba forced him and other detainees to seek safety in the U.S., and they risk persecution if they are deported.

"They are restraining people and forcing them to get tubes put in their noses," said Rodriguez, adding that he had passed his "credible fear" interview and sought to be released on parole. "They put people in solitary, as punishment."

Those "credible fear" interviews are conducted by immigration authorities as an initial screening for asylum requests.

ICE classifies a detainee as a hunger striker after they refuse nine consecutive meals. Federal courts have not conclusively decided whether a judge must issue an order before ICE force-feeds an immigration detainee, so rules vary by district and type of court, and sometimes orders are filed secretly.

In Tacoma, Washington, where immigration detainees have held high-profile hunger strikes in recent years, courts have ordered force-feeding at least six times, according to court records. In July 2017, a federal judge refused to allow ICE to restrain and force-feed a hunger striking Iraqi detainee who wanted to be housed with fellow Iraqi Chaldean Christians detained Arizona facility.

Since May 2015, volunteers for the nonprofit Freedom for Immigrants have documented 1,396 people on hunger strike in 18 immigration detention facilities.

"By starving themselves, these men are trying to make public the very suffering that ICE is trying keep hidden from taxpayers," said Christina Fialho, director of the group.

While court orders allowing force-feeding have been issued in cases involving inmates, Fialho couldn't recall a situation when involuntary feeding actually occurred in immigration detention facilities because the inmates opted to eat.

The force-feeding of detainees through nasal tubes at Guantanamo Bay garnered international blowback. Hunger strikes began shortly after the military prison opened in 2002, with force-feeding starting in early 2006 following mass refusals to eat.

After four weeks without eating, the body's metabolic systems start to break down, and hunger strikers can risk permanent damage, including cognitive impairment, said Dr. Marc Stern, a correctional physician at the University of Washington in Seattle who has previously consulted with the Department of Homeland Security.

"You can become demented and lose coordination, and some of it is reversible, some of it isn't," Stern said. "The dangers are not just metabolic. If you are very weak, you could very simply get up to do something and fall and crack your skull."

Force-feeding raises ethics issues for medical professionals who work inside ICE facilities.

The American Medical Association has expressed its concerns about physicians participating in the force-feeding of hunger strikers on multiple occasions, and its own principles of medical ethics state "a patient who has decision-making capacity may accept or refuse any recommended medical intervention."

The association also endorses the World Medical Association Declaration of Tokyo, which states that when prisoners refuse food and physicians believe they are capable of "rational judgment concerning the consequences of such a voluntary refusal of nourishment, he or she shall not be fed artificially."

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Patriots put '72 Dolphins in their sights in different way

By EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Yes, it's time for another story about the Patriots trying to accomplish something nobody has done since the 1972 Dolphins.

But not THAT story.

Eleven years after falling one win short of matching Miami's undefeated season, New England is attempting to become the first team since those famed Dolphins to follow a loss in the Super Bowl with a championship the very next year.

Not quite as glamorous. But in some respects, every bit as difficult.

"When we got back to camp, Don Shula made us watch that game every day for like a week," said Mercury Morris, the outspoken running back who mostly sat the bench during Miami's humbling 24-3 loss to Dallas in Super Bowl VI. "He told us, 'See how sick you feel now? Just think of how sick and sorry you'll be if you don't go redeem yourself.'"

With their win over the Dolphins, the Cowboys became the first team to come away with the title a year after a Super Bowl loss. (They had fallen 16-13 to Baltimore in Super Bowl V). Then, sparked by their own humbling defeat, the Dolphins did the same thing — and went 17-0 along the way.

Neither feat has been repeated in 46 years since, although the Patriots came oh-so-close to perfection in the 2007 season, losing the Super Bowl to the Giants to finish 18-1.

"It made us very aware of what we had to do better than the year before," Dolphins punter Larry Seiple said of the loss at Tulane Stadium, where Miami managed only 185 yards. "It kind of inspired us to stay together as a team and get back there."

As it turns out, easier said than done.

Over the years, other teams have had their chances.

The 1980s Denver Broncos went to three Super Bowls over four seasons and lost all of them badly — to the point that John Elway conceded to wondering whether it was worth all the fuss fighting to get back, year after year.

In the 1990s, the Buffalo Bills made four straight Super Bowls and lost every one.

But they are the exceptions.

Most teams that lose the Super Bowl don't come close the next season, and that trend has increased since the advent of free agency, when turning over a third of the roster — even for the most successful teams — is becoming the norm.

Over the past 20 seasons, nine Super Bowl losers have failed to even make the playoffs the next year. Another four made the playoffs but lost their first game. Not a single one has returned to the Super Bowl. Until this season.

"The biggest issue to me was feeling like we were going to right a wrong from that last season," said Kurt Warner, whose Rams fell off the map after their 20-17 Super Bowl loss to New England in 2002 that marked the start of the Patriots dynasty. "Anytime you allow one season to carry over into another, I think you're going to have problems."

New England has rebounded from last year's Super Bowl loss to the Philadelphia Eagles. Making their ninth Super Bowl appearance since the start of the Bill Belichick-Tom Brady era, the Patriots seem to come up with new ways every year to reimagine what's possible.

"I think, honestly, after what happened last year in the Super Bowl, guys are hungry," linebacker Kyle Van Noy said. "And I feel like we got humbled. We're not taking things for granted."

Neither did the Dolphins.

And though they ended up undefeated, that wasn't the main mission when they started that season. They were motivated by a lopsided loss in the biggest game the season before.

"It was an embarrassing performance," Morris said. "It was a specific source of redemption. Because pride is one thing. But to redeem yourself from something is another. There's more value in the concept of redemption than there is in being great."

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

2020 Democrats weigh how to recapture voters in Midwest

By ELANA SCHOR and SARA BURNETT, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The clearest path for Democrats to return to the White House runs straight through the upper Midwest, fueling debate over who is best positioned to recapture the region's working-class voters who broke for President Donald Trump in 2016.

Though the first prominent Democrats to announce their 2020 candidacies hail from the coasts, several Midwestern natives — including Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota — are offering themselves as potential contenders uniquely attuned to the region's priorities.

Brown, who will launch a tour of early-voting states in Iowa on Thursday with a message focused on workers, has been explicit in his appeal, saying recently that he could win his crucial home state, "where they know me best."

That's a tantalizing argument for Democrats who are desperate to reclaim Wisconsin and Michigan, which would significantly reduce Trump's already narrow path to victory in the Electoral College. Tom Russell, a Wisconsin-based Democratic strategist who worked on last year's successful bid to unseat GOP Gov. Scott Walker, said the Midwest is winnable for a Democrat who focuses on "not talking down to voters."

"It's about being able to create a message and persona for yourself that's not elitist in nature," Russell said. "We've got plenty of great coastal candidates running or looking at running, but particularly in the primary, they end up talking to the bubble."

Democrats have reason for optimism. Beyond Walker's defeat, they picked up a governor's mansion in Kansas and won the majority of the region's hardest-fought Senate seats during last year's midterms.

Midwestern appeal has sometimes helped presidential candidates. As a U.S. senator from Illinois, Barack Obama introduced himself to voters in neighboring Iowa as one of them. His victory in the 2008 Iowa caucuses was crucial, cementing him as a serious candidate who would ultimately clinch the Democratic nomination and the presidency.

But more often, success in the Midwest comes down to more than geography. Ahead of the 2012 campaign, then-Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty was seen as a promising candidate because of his background as a low-key Republican leader of a traditionally Democratic state. But he never made it to the Iowa caucuses. Similarly, Walker was seen as a front-runner in the early days of the 2016 Republican primary but withdrew after a disappointing third-place finish in the Iowa straw poll.

Charles Franklin, director of the Marquette Law Poll at Milwaukee's Marquette University, said he's "somewhat dubious" that being a Midwesterner translates into success at the regional or national level.

"It's not like his neighborliness did him any favors," Franklin said of Walker.

More fundamentally, there's no guarantee that voters are familiar with — or fond of — their regional political leaders. In a Marquette Law poll conducted earlier this month, nearly two-thirds of Democrats and independents said they didn't know enough about Klobuchar to have an opinion about her. Of the eight candidates whose names were included in the poll, only Julian Castro of Texas was less familiar to Wisconsin voters.

With name identification numbers far lower than coastal rivals such as Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Brown and Klobuchar have their work cut out for them. Brown's new tour, which will also stop in New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada, could give him a needed boost as he weighs a primary campaign.

As the tour begins, even Brown says he doesn't see his potential candidacy as solely geared to the Midwest.

"I think it's an appeal to working-class voters from all regions and of all races," Brown told The Associated Press, describing his message as a product of "who I am and my whole career," not shaped by "focus groups."

Klobuchar also dismissed the notion that her commanding re-election victory in November, in which she

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won 42 counties that Trump claimed in 2016, makes her uniquely qualified to capture Midwestern voters. Yet she also touted the power of the playbook she's used to win over Minnesotans "in this time of highly polarized politics, where people are in opposite corners of the boxing ring."

"While I stand my ground on issues that matter to me, I'm also someone who looks for common ground," she said in an interview. "That's only way you can get to higher ground."

Still, if she mounts a presidential bid — she said she'll announce a decision "shortly" — Klobuchar could surprise rivals in Iowa, a neighboring state she's visited multiple times since Trump's election. David Johnson, a former Iowa state senator who switched his affiliation from Republican to independent in 2016 out of opposition to Trump, said Klobuchar is a familiar face who shares the workhorse sensibilities of many people in the state.

"She's real knowledgeable, and she has a real sense of humility about it," Johnson said. "She's level-headed. She's not a grenade-thrower."

Recalling Klobuchar's pitch to bridge the divide between rural and metro areas during remarks to the Iowa Farmers Union last month, Johnson added that "a majority of Americans want some sanity to return to Washington and the Congress, and I believe she's the one candidate that can bring that together, rather than both parties operating in the extremes."

Brown's keen focus on blue-collar areas feeling the economic wallop of globalization has its own dark-horse potential. He also brings a fluency in civil rights issues that could break through with black and Hispanic voters in early primary states that follow the overwhelmingly white electorate in Iowa.

Ohio Democratic Party Chairman David Pepper pointed to one small but meaningful touch that's succeeded for Brown: publicly name-checking their state's smaller manufacturing hubs, a signal that he cares about areas seeking "a role that's positive in this 21st-century economy."

Pepper recalled that Democrats instinctively pushed back at Trump's call to "make America great again" in 2016, but the president connected with Midwestern voters who "thought, at least they saw someone who seemed to appreciate they are struggling."

That connection is at the core of the presidential pitch from another Midwestern hopeful, Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana. "To me, the really important thing to do in the so-called Rust Belt is to demonstrate there's a way forward that isn't soaked in nostalgia," the 37-year-old Buttigieg said this month as he announced his candidacy. "So, yeah, we have a relationship to our past, but we're not trying to recapture it."

But if you ask Brown, the very term "Rust Belt" talks down to Midwesterners.

"It demeans who we are," he said. "It diminishes our work."

Burnett reported from Chicago.

University investments fare well in 2018, but worries linger

By COLLIN BINKLEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hundreds of U.S. universities made strong returns on their financial investments last year, but experts worry the gains could be jeopardized by increased spending at many schools.

A survey of more than 800 colleges and universities found that their endowments returned an average of 8.2 percent in fiscal year 2018, down from the previous year's average of 12.2 percent but a major improvement over two sluggish years before that.

Harvard University remained the wealthiest school in the nation with an endowment valued at more than \$38 billion, while the University of Texas system jumped Yale University to take the No. 2 spot with just under \$31 billion.

Poor performance by U.S. and international stocks dragged returns down from their 2017 rates, but other types of investments fared relatively well, according to the researchers behind the annual study.

"Endowments on average experienced solid returns in 2018," said Kevin O'Leary, CEO of TIAA Endowment and Philanthropic Services. He added that little changed in the types of investments schools made

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compared to the year before.

Along with the TIAA, an investment and banking firm based in New York, the study was conducted by the National Association of College and University Business Officers, a Washington group that represents more than 1,900 schools.

Despite the recent success, many colleges are failing to hit their long-term financial goal, the survey found. Schools in the survey aim for a 10-year average return of 7.2 percent, but after 2018 the average moved up to just 5.8 percent. Strong growth in some years has largely been tempered by investment losses in 2009, 2012 and 2016.

Coupled with increased spending, that long-term underperformance could leave schools with financial constraints as they try to serve future generations, said Susan Whealler Johnston, CEO of the college business association.

"We remain concerned, however, that the below-target long-term rates of return will make it harder for colleges and universities to increase spending to support their missions," Johnston said.

Of the schools surveyed, 66 percent said they dipped further into their endowments to cover annual budgets in 2018, with a median increase of 6.6 percent. About half of the spending went to student financial aid, while most of the remainder went to academic programs, faculty jobs, campus operations and maintenance.

Johnston said more schools have come to rely on their endowments to fill gaps left by lagging education funding in some states.

There are also concerns about whether donations made to schools will continue at past rates. A tax law that took effect in 2018 makes it less advantageous for many people to make donations, leaving some worried that contributions will fall. Johnston said officials are still trying to determine how colleges have been affected.

Overall, wealthier schools fared better than those with smaller endowments in 2018, largely because they invest less in stocks and more in alternative investments like venture capital, said O'Leary.

But institutions of all types fared far better than the U.S. stock market more broadly. The Standard & Poor's 500 index, a broad measurement of the market, ended 2018 down 6.2 percent, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 5.6 percent.

Other than the upturn at the University of Texas system, which saw a jump of 16.4 percent, the list of the wealthiest schools stayed mostly the same. Behind Yale were Stanford and Princeton universities, with more than \$25 billion, while the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Pennsylvania each topped \$13 billion.

But the vast majority of endowments were much smaller. More than half of the schools surveyed had endowments of less than \$200 million, resulting in an overall median of \$140 million.

Follow Collin Binkley on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/cbinkley>

Parole recommended for Manson follower Leslie Van Houten

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A California panel on Wednesday recommended that Charles Manson follower Leslie Van Houten be paroled after serving more than four decades in prison.

After a hearing at the women's prison in Corona, California, commissioners of the Board of Parole Hearings found for the third time that the 69-year-old Van Houten was suitable for release.

If her case withstands a 150-day review process, it will rest in the hands of California's new Gov. Gavin Newsom. Van Houten was recommended for parole twice previously, but then-Gov. Jerry Brown blocked her release.

Van Houten was among the followers in Manson's murderous cult who stabbed to death wealthy grocer Leno LaBianca and his wife, Rosemary, in 1969. Van Houten was 19 during the killings, which came a day after other Manson followers killed pregnant actress Sharon Tate and four others in Los Angeles.

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Tate's sister attended Wednesday's proceedings and said afterward that she vehemently disagrees with the parole recommendation.

"I just have to hope and pray that the governor comes to the right decision" and keeps Van Houten behind bars, Debra Tate said. Newsom's office didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Van Houten's lawyer, Rich Pfeiffer, said he was pleased with how the commissioners focused on making sure that she took "full responsibility" for her role in the killings.

"She chose to go with Manson. She chose to listen to him. And she acknowledges that," Pfeiffer said. He predicted that it "will be much more difficult" for Newsom to block parole than it was for Brown.

In his decision last year, Brown acknowledged Van Houten's youth at the time of the crime, her more than four decades of good behavior as a prisoner and her abuse at the hands of Manson. But he said she still laid too much blame on Manson for the murders.

At her last hearing, Van Houten described a troubled childhood. She said she was devastated when her parents divorced when she was 14. Soon after, she said, she began hanging out with her school's outcast crowd and using drugs. When she was 17, she and her boyfriend ran away to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury District during the city's Summer of Love.

She was traveling up and down the California coast when acquaintances led her to Manson. He was holed up at an abandoned movie ranch on the outskirts of Los Angeles where he had recruited what he called a "family" to survive what he insisted would be a race war he would launch by committing a series of random, horrifying murders.

Van Houten said she joined several other members of the group in killing the LaBiancas, carving up Leno LaBianca's body and smearing the couple's blood on the walls.

No one who took part in the Tate-LaBianca murders has been released from prison.

Manson died in 2017 of natural causes at a California hospital while serving a life sentence.

Earlier this month, a California parole panel recommended for the first time that Manson follower Robert Beausoleil be freed. Beausoleil was convicted of killing musician Gary Hinman.

This story has been updated to reflect the prison is in Corona, California, not Chino.

Associated Press journalists Don Thompson in Sacramento and Amy Taxin in Orange County contributed to this report.

Follow Weber at <https://twitter.com/WeberCM>

Dems see future in Abrams as she prepares to rebut Trump

By **BILL BARROW** and **ERRIN HAINES WHACK**, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Stacey Abrams will be doing more than rebutting President Donald Trump next week. As the first black woman to deliver a Democratic response to a State of the Union address, she'll represent what many in the party see as their political future.

In picking Abrams, the Georgian who narrowly lost her bid to be the nation's first African-American woman governor, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer is reflecting the party's hope to win future elections with appeals to women and people of color. He's also signaling the party's desire to make inroads in the diversifying South and Sun Belt after disappointing losses there during last year's midterms.

Abrams, 45, represents the growing political clout of black women. That's something Schumer wants to tap into by recruiting her to compete in next year's Georgia Senate race, a decision that could have national implications for Democrats if she successfully flips the seat and, in the process, turns out enough voters to make the Deep South state competitive at the presidential level.

Schumer and others "understand the power and prowess and contributions of black women ... and choosing Stacey Abrams is the physical embodiment of that recognition," said Democratic strategist Sy-

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more Sanders.

The speech offers Abrams a high-profile launching pad to a Senate campaign. Though she hasn't decided whether she'll run, Schumer has spent the past several weeks courting Abrams to challenge first-term Republican Sen. David Perdue. She has also met with Nevada Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, chairwoman of Senate Democrats' 2020 campaign efforts, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Sen. Kamala Harris, a presidential contender who is currently the lone black woman in the Senate.

There's virtually no path to a Democratic Senate majority without defeating Perdue, who raised the prospect of an Abrams challenge in a fundraising appeal Wednesday. But beyond the Senate math, some Democrats hope an Abrams candidacy could help them win Georgia's 16 electoral votes in a presidential election.

With its growing diversity and urbanization, Georgia is being eyed as one of the next battleground states. Abrams' performance in 2018 surprised observers who assumed a toss-up environment was several elections away. Her 1.92 million votes were about 85,000 more than what Democrat Hillary Clinton received in a higher-turnout presidential election two years earlier.

Despite Abrams' loss, her presence at the top of the ticket helped others. Democratic Rep. Lucy McBath flipped a suburban Atlanta congressional seat Republicans had occupied for decades. A neighboring suburban district went narrowly to the GOP incumbent and is again a top Democratic target in 2020. Democrats also flipped at least a dozen state legislative seats across the northern Atlanta suburbs, mirroring trends in metro areas across the country.

Abrams' high-wattage return to public life elevates her — at least for now — above fellow 2018 candidates who drew national attention but lost: Texas Senate nominee Beto O'Rourke and Andrew Gillum, the former Tallahassee mayor who ran to become Florida's first black governor. O'Rourke is considering a presidential bid, but has taken a back seat as high-profile senators formally launch campaigns. Gillum recently opted to join CNN as a political commentator.

Yet for all Abrams' star power, the juxtaposition with Trump could highlight Democrats' struggles among white voters outside metro areas, where Trump draws his strongest support. During her gubernatorial campaign, Abrams emphasized the importance of Medicaid expansion to Georgia's rural hospitals, trying to reach both small-town white voters and the considerable black populations in central and southern Georgia.

Returns nonetheless showed her losing ground from Democrats' 2014 and 2016 performances in rural counties. Had Abrams replicated Democrats' 2014 percentages across rural Georgia alongside her strength in cities and suburbs, she'd likely be governor.

Former Georgia Democratic Chairman DuBose Porter, a longtime Abrams mentor and confidant, is a small-town white Democrat who insists Abrams' message has wide appeal. "She will talk about the issues that really do matter to working Americans and families who Stacey Abrams speaks for more than anyone else I know," Porter said.

As she prepares for the biggest political speech of her life, Abrams will have to decide what kind of tone to strike.

Running for governor, she rarely mentioned Trump directly unless asked, sticking mostly to state-based issues. She won't have that luxury in a nationally televised address.

She's built her reputation as a wonkish but optimistic politician who argues both a visionary and pragmatic liberalism. But her last high-profile speech was unapologetically terse as she ended her gubernatorial bid without a traditional concession. Instead, she accused now-Gov. Brian Kemp of using his last post as Georgia secretary of state to deny thousands of Georgians access to the ballot box, effectively ensuring his own promotion.

"So let's be clear," she said. "This is not a speech of concession because concession means to acknowledge an action is right, true or proper. As a woman of conscience and faith, I cannot concede that."

Porter said he expects Abrams will be "thoughtful" in her approach.

"She's speaking on behalf of an alternative to what we've had in Washington the last two years," Porter said. "It's not about her. It's about something better for everyone."

Whack reported from Philadelphia. Follow the reporters on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> and <https://twitter.com/emarvelous>.

Peace with the Taliban? Trump warned of Afghan pullout risks

By DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trump administration claims of progress in talks with the Taliban have sparked fears even among the president's allies that his impatience with the war in Afghanistan will lead him to withdraw troops too soon, leaving the country at risk of returning to the same volatile condition that prompted the invasion in the first place.

Discussions between a U.S. envoy and the Taliban are advancing weeks after the administration said it wanted to begin drawing down troops in Afghanistan. That has prompted some critics to note that President Donald Trump is telegraphing a withdrawal — the same thing he accused President Barack Obama of doing by saying he wanted to end the American combat mission in 2014.

"It's an effort to put lipstick on what will be a U.S. withdrawal," said Ryan Crocker, a former U.S. ambassador to Kabul under Obama.

A negotiated settlement to America's longest war poses a dilemma for Trump. He has often declared he wants to end lengthy overseas military entanglements, something he made clear in December by declaring the Islamic State group defeated in Syria and announcing he was pulling 2,000 American troops from that country over the objections of his top foreign policy advisers.

The stakes are higher in Afghanistan, a conflict that has cost 2,400 American lives and hundreds of billions in taxpayer dollars. The U.S. invaded the country to oust the Taliban and al-Qaida in October 2001 in response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and the CIA director warned as recently as Tuesday that Afghanistan could once again become a terrorist haven.

But now even fellow Republicans worry that reports of progress will embolden Trump to withdraw troops from Afghanistan before the region is stable and will reintroduce the conditions that first ensnared America in the conflict. The Taliban now control nearly half the country and carry out near-daily attacks, and foreign-policy experts fear that any progress on protecting women and minorities in the country could be lost if the militant group is once again part of the government.

The top Republican in Congress, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, cautioned the president against a hasty exit from the war.

"While it is tempting to retreat to the comfort and security of our own shores, there is still a great deal of work to be done," McConnell said Tuesday. "And we know that left untended, these conflicts will reverberate in our own cities."

James Dobbins, special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan during the Obama administration, said Trump "seems to have abandoned" the conditions-based strategy he espoused in 2017. The future of troops in Afghanistan is anybody's guess, he said.

"I don't think anybody, including probably him, can predict his behavior," Dobbins said.

White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said Tuesday that the administration's priority is to "end the war in Afghanistan, and to ensure that there is never a base for terrorism in Afghanistan again." Afghan officials hope Trump will explain his intentions in further detail during his State of the Union address next week.

Taliban officials, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media, said that the two sides had reached an understanding about the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops and that the militant group had made assurances that Afghan soil would not be used again for attacks against the United States or others.

On the U.S. side, Trump's Afghanistan envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, said, "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, and 'everything' must include an intra-Afghan dialogue and comprehensive cease-fire."

That's something the Taliban have refused to do, though they said Wednesday that they aren't seeking a monopoly on power in a future Afghan administration but are instead looking for ways to co-exist with

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Afghan institutions —“tolerate one another and start life like brothers.”

If the Taliban agree to talk to the Afghan government and stop fighting while they do so, the negotiations could be a “significant step,” Dobbins said. If they don’t agree, “then the whole thing is null and void.”

Moreover, he said, the U.S. should stay until a peace deal between the Taliban and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani’s government is implemented.

“If the U.S. leaves once the Afghans begin talking to each other, those talks will end and the war will resume,” Dobbins said. “If the U.S. leaves after they’ve come to an agreement but before it’s implemented, that agreement will never be implemented and the war will resume.”

Nicholas Burns, a career foreign service officer and former undersecretary of state during George W. Bush’s administration, said he thinks Trump is right to find a way to bring U.S. troops home from Afghanistan. But he, too, thinks that the president’s impatience is the driving force behind current talks with the Taliban.

“I think there’s an advantage to going slowly here,” said Burns, who is now at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. “Go quickly and we risk giving away too much to the Taliban.”

The Pentagon has been developing plans to withdraw as many as half of the 14,000 U.S. troops still in Afghanistan.

Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan told reporters Tuesday that there has been no change in the U.S. military strategy in Afghanistan, which is to force the Taliban to the peace table by realigning troops to train and advise Afghans and by getting greater support from the region.

Talks led by Khalilzad must be given time to work, Shanahan said. Yet nobody knows how long Trump is willing to wait.

In November, Khalilzad told Afghan journalists that he wanted to see concrete results by spring. Trump gave Khalilzad six months to show results, according to a former Afghan official, who is privy to details about the negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity to protect his sources of information about the talks.

The official said the militant group refuses to negotiate with the current Afghan government and insists on the creation of an interim government. Once that happens, the group wants to convene a grand national assembly to change the Afghan constitution to make it more to their liking, the former Afghan official said.

The official said the Taliban don’t see that a U.S. pledge to withdrawal is contingent on a cease-fire and a requirement to negotiate with the Afghan government. Moreover, the official said, Ghani remains upset that the U.S. is talking to the Taliban without representatives from his government present.

It also remains unclear how the U.S. could verify Taliban pledges that terrorist groups won’t use Afghanistan as a staging area for attacks.

“If there were an eventual peace agreement,” CIA Director Gina Haspel told a Senate panel on Tuesday, “a very robust monitoring regime would be critical and we would still need to retain the capability to act in our national interest if we needed to.”

Associated Press writer Kathy Gannon in Islamabad contributed to this report.

Police release photos of “persons of interest” in attack

By DON BABWIN, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Detectives reviewed surveillance footage of “Empire” actor Jussie Smollett walking to his downtown Chicago apartment, but so far none of the video shows him being attacked by two masked men, although investigators have obtained images of people they would like to question, a police spokesman said Wednesday.

Spokesman Anthony Guglielmi tweeted photos of the “persons of interest” Wednesday evening.

Investigators “for the most part” can confirm the route Smollett took early Tuesday when he says he was attacked along a street in the Streeterville neighborhood after visiting a sandwich shop, Guglielmi said. However, there are gaps, and none of the footage shows an attack, he said, although the review is ongoing.

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Smollett, who is black and gay and plays the gay character Jamal Lyon on the hit Fox television show, said the men beat him, subjected him to racist and homophobic insults, threw an "unknown chemical substance" on him and put a thin rope around his neck before fleeing.

Guglielmi said detectives, who are investigating the allegations as a possible hate crime, have looked at hundreds of hours of surveillance video from businesses and hotels in the heavily monitored area. But he said they still need to collect and view more. He said they are expanding the search to include footage from public buses and buildings beyond the scene's immediate vicinity in the hopes of spotting the men who match Smollett's description of the suspects.

"We haven't seen anybody, at this point, matching the description he gave. Nobody looks menacing, and we didn't find a container anywhere," Guglielmi said, referring to a container for the liquid that the actor said was thrown at him.

Smollett has not spoken publicly about the attack, but his representative told The Associated Press Wednesday night that the actor "is at home and recovering."

Now in its fifth season, the hourlong drama follows an African-American family as they navigate the ups and downs of the record industry. Smollett's character is the middle son of Empire Entertainment founder Lucious Lyon and Cookie Lyon, played by Terrence Howard and Taraji P. Henson, respectively.

After the attack, Smollett returned to his apartment, and his manager called police from there about 40 minutes later, Guglielmi said. When officers arrived, the actor had cuts and scrapes on his face and the rope around his neck that he said had been put there by his assailant. According to Guglielmi, the 36-year-old later went to Northwestern Memorial Hospital after police advised him to do so.

The FBI is investigating a threatening letter targeting Smollett that was sent last week to the Fox studio in Chicago where "Empire" is filmed, Guglielmi said. The FBI did not immediately return a call seeking comment Wednesday.

Bobby Rush, a Democratic congressman from Chicago, issued a statement calling on the agency to conduct "an immediate and sweeping civil rights investigation into the racist and homophobic attack."

In addition to his acting career, Smollett has a music career and is a noted activist, particularly on LB-GTQ issues. Smollett's representative said his concert scheduled for Saturday in Los Angeles will go on as planned.

The report of the attack drew a flood of outrage and support for Smollett on social media. Among the many celebrities and politicians who weighed in was California Sen. Kamala Harris, a 2020 Democratic presidential hopeful who knows Smollett. She called the attack "outrageous" and "awful."

Some of the outrage stems from Smollett's account to detectives that his attackers yelled that he was in "MAGA country," an apparent reference to the Trump campaign's "Make America Great Again" slogan.

Chicago has one of the nation's most sophisticated and extensive video surveillance systems, including thousands of cameras on street poles, skyscrapers, buses and in train tunnels.

Police say the cameras have helped them make thousands of arrests. In one of the best-known examples of the department's use of the cameras, investigators in 2009 were able to recreate a school board president's 20-minute drive through the city, singling out his car on a succession of surveillance cameras to help them determine that he committed suicide and had not been followed and killed by someone else, as his friends speculated.

Apple busts Facebook for distributing data-sucking app

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and FRANK BAJAK, AP Technology Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Apple says Facebook can no longer distribute an app that paid users, including teenagers, to extensively track their phone and web use.

In doing so, Apple closed off Facebook's efforts to sidestep Apple's app store and its tighter rules on privacy.

The tech blog TechCrunch reported late Tuesday that Facebook paid people about \$20 a month to install and use the Facebook Research app. While Facebook says this was done with permission, the company

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has a history of defining "permission" loosely and obscuring what data it collects.

"I don't think they make it very clear to users precisely what level of access they were granting when they gave permission," mobile app security researcher Will Strafach said Wednesday. "There is simply no way the users understood this."

He said Facebook's claim that users understood the scope of data collection was "muddying the waters."

Facebook says fewer than 5 percent of the app's users were teens and they had parental permission. Nonetheless, the revelation is yet another blemish on Facebook's track record on privacy and could invite further regulatory scrutiny.

And it comes less than a week after court documents revealed that Facebook allowed children to rack up huge bills on digital games and that it had rejected recommendations for addressing it for fear of hurting revenue growth.

For now, the app appears to be available for Android phones, though not through Google's main app store. Google had no comment Wednesday.

Apple said Facebook was distributing Facebook Research through an internal-distribution mechanism meant for company employees, not outsiders. Apple has revoked that capability.

TechCrunch reported separately Wednesday that Google was using the same privileged access to Apple's mobile operating system for a market-research app, Screenwise Meter. Asked about it by The Associated Press, Google said it had disabled the app on Apple devices and apologized for its "mistake."

The company said Google had always been "upfront with users" about how it used data collected by the app, which offered users points that could be accrued for gift cards. In contrast to the Facebook Research app, Google said its Screenwise Meter app never asked users to let the company circumvent network encryption, meaning it is far less intrusive.

Facebook is still permitted to distribute apps through Apple's app store, though such apps are reviewed by Apple ahead of time. And Apple's move Wednesday restricts Facebook's ability to test those apps — including core apps such as Facebook and Instagram — before they are released through the app store.

Facebook previously pulled an app called Onavo Protect from Apple's app store because of its stricter requirements. But Strafach, who dismantled the Facebook Research app on TechCrunch's behalf, told the AP that it was mostly Onavo repackaged and rebranded, as the two apps shared about 98 percent of their code.

As of Wednesday, a disclosure form on Betabound, one of the services that distributed Facebook Research, informed prospective users that by installing Facebook Research, they are letting Facebook collect a range of data. This includes information on apps users have installed, when they use them and what they do on them. Information is also collected on how other people interact with users and their content within those apps, according to the disclosure.

Betabound warned that Facebook may collect information even when an app or web browser uses encryption.

Strafach said emails, social media activities, private messages and just about anything else could be intercepted. He said the only data absolutely safe from snooping are from services, such as Signal and Apple's iMessages, that fully encrypt messages prior to transmission, a method known as end-to-end encryption.

Strafach, who is CEO of Guardian Mobile Firewall, said he was aghast to discover Facebook caught red-handed violating Apple's trust.

He said such traffic-capturing tools are only supposed to be for trusted partners to use internally. Instead, he said Facebook was scooping up all incoming and outgoing data traffic from unwitting members of the public — in an app geared toward teenagers.

"This is very flagrantly not allowed," Strafach said. "It's mind-blowing how defiant Facebook was acting."

Bajak reported from Lima, Peru. Associated Press Writer Kelvin Chan in London contributed to this story.

Judge: PG&E put profits over wildfire safety

By SUDHIN THANAWALA, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A U.S. judge berated Pacific Gas & Electric Corp. on Wednesday, accusing the nation's largest utility of enriching shareholders instead of clearing trees that can fall on its power lines and start fires and making "excuses" to avoid turning off electricity when fire risk is high.

Judge William Alsup in San Francisco did not immediately order PG&E to take any of the dramatic measures he has proposed to try to stop more wildfires.

But he warned that he was not ruling out at least some new requirements on the company if it did not come up with a plan to "solve" the problem of catastrophic wildfires in California.

"To my mind, there's a very clear-cut pattern here: that PG&E is starting these fires," Alsup said. "What do we do? Does the judge just turn a blind eye and say, 'PG&E continue your business as usual. Kill more people by starting more fires.'"

Alsup is overseeing a criminal conviction against PG&E on pipeline safety charges stemming from a 2010 gas line explosion in the San Francisco Bay Area that killed eight people and destroyed 38 homes.

He proposed earlier this month as part of PG&E's probation that it remove or trim all trees that could fall onto its power lines in high-wind conditions and shut off power when fire is a risk regardless of the inconvenience to customers or loss of profit.

Alsup said his goal was to prevent PG&E equipment from causing any wildfires during the 2019 fire season.

PG&E shot back in a court filing last week that the judge's proposals would endanger lives and could cost as much as \$150 billion to implement.

Kevin Orsini, an attorney for the company, said PG&E shared the judge's concerns about wildfire and was working to reduce risk. But there weren't enough qualified tree trimmers, and shutting off power would have "repercussions that affect the community," he said.

Power cutoffs impact first responders, critical medical care and phone service and are potentially fatal, the utility said in its court filing.

"PG&E is facing a fundamental problem. The state is facing a fundamental problem," Orsini said.

PG&E announced last year that it would cut off power preemptively when fire danger was high and did so for the first time in October for about 60,000 customers in Northern California. The move prompted complaints and demands for reimbursement from some customers.

Attorneys for wildfire victims, California regulators and the U.S. Department of Justice also spoke at Wednesday's hearing.

Alsup was also critical of the California Public Utilities Commission, accusing it of working slowly and using former PG&E employees. The judge later apologized for those comments but still questioned how so many fires broke out under the CPUC's watch.

Later, CPUC President Michael Picker told lawmakers it would take between 15,000 and 20,000 new workers to "police" every utility pole and wire, adding "that's just not going to work."

Regulators are looking at deploying drones to monitor equipment, Picker said. At the Legislature's direction, the CPUC is now requiring utilities to submit wildfire mitigation plans, and the CPUC wants to contract for about 100 new workers to help monitor utility safety.

It's also conducting a review of PG&E's safety culture that could result in replacing the utility's entire board, breaking up its electric and gas division or other major changes. That review could take a year. Regulators have learned that fines are not an effective way to make change at PG&E, Picker said.

Some lawmakers mirrored Alsup's frustrations that regulators work too slowly.

"What assurance can I give my constituents that things are going to be safer this year?" Democratic Assemblyman Jim Wood, who represents Santa Rosa, which was hit by a devastating 2017 wildfire, said in a pointed exchange.

Picker said addressing California's wildfires is a huge challenge driven by climate change that will require multiple solutions.

"I don't think that we are prepared in any way here in the state of California for the enormity of what

we're seeing," he said.

PG&E's return to a U.S. courtroom came a day after it declared bankruptcy in the face of billions of dollars in potential liability from wildfires in California in 2017 and 2018. PG&E in that case is seeking another judge's approval to obtain up to \$5.5 billion in financing and pay \$130 million in bonuses to thousands of employees.

Alsup only briefly mentioned the bankruptcy case during Wednesday's hearing. Filing for bankruptcy generally does not put criminal proceedings on hold, so PG&E's Chapter 11 reorganization may not allow it to avoid any orders issued by Alsup.

The judge found separately that PG&E violated its probation for failing to notify probation officials that a prosecutor's office had opened a full investigation into the utility's role in a 2017 California wildfire. Alsup said he would set a sentencing date later.

Kate Dyer, another attorney for PG&E, said the company had communicated with probation officials and didn't hear until recently that it had not met their expectations.

Alsup said he would wait to see a wildfire mitigation plan PG&E was scheduled to submit to the CPUC on Feb. 6 before deciding what, if any, additional requirements to order.

PG&E is facing hundreds of lawsuits from victims of wildfires in 2017 and 2018, including the nation's deadliest wildfire in a century.

That blaze in November killed at least 86 people and destroyed 15,000 homes in and around the Northern California town of Paradise. The cause is still under investigation, but suspicion fell on PG&E after it reported power line problems nearby around the time the fire broke out.

Associated Press writer Kathleen Ronayne contributed from Sacramento, Calif.

Schumer wields leverage and a flip phone against Trump

By LISA MASCARO, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House plan for peeling off Democrats to support President Donald Trump's demands for billions in border wall money ran into a particularly stubborn obstacle: Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer's flip phone.

Schumer had already been talking with his colleagues for months, anticipating Trump's fight long before the shutdown battle began. Soon after the midterm elections in early November, the New Yorker started doing what he does best, talking to his senators.

One by one, he dialed them on his vintage flip phone to gauge support for spending money on the wall with Mexico. He made a beeline for them across the Senate floor. He cornered them in the Senate gym. Most Democrats told him they were against it.

That unity buoyed Democrats during the just-concluded shutdown saga and is now girding them for the next round, with a second federal closure threatened by the White House.

While Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., seized the starring role against Trump's border wall, Schumer played no small part by helping shore up his side of the Capitol and bolstering Pelosi's position.

It's a strategy the Democrats will rely on as the next shutdown deadline, Feb. 15, nears, and as Senate Democrats use their minority status as leverage to align with Pelosi's House majority on various fronts.

"If anything, our unity is stronger today than it was," Schumer said Tuesday.

It was his most high-profile role since taking on the leader's position in 2017.

During Trump's first two years, Senate Democrats held together to vote against the Republican tax plan, resulting in a partisan measure that has failed to gain widespread popular appeal. Democrats also denied Republicans the votes needed to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, after dissent from the GOP ranks left Republicans without enough support.

Schumer has been praised, but also criticized, for not forcing his senators to fall in line the way past leaders have done. Liberals railed against him for failing to stop Brett Kavanaugh from being confirmed to the Supreme Court, even though only one Democrat voted for Trump's nominee.

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Schumer is proving to be a different kind of leader, nudging his caucus to hold together on big fights, but also cutting senators loose to vote as they wish at other times.

Last year, Schumer looked the other way as several Democrats supported a Republican banking bill that reversed some Democratic changes put in place after the Great Recession. This month, as soon as the shutdown ended, Schumer lifted the blockade on a GOP foreign policy bill supporting Israel that divided Democrats; their votes allowed it to easily advance.

Schumer is showing the strength that Senate Democrats can assert in the chamber where 60 votes are usually needed to advance legislation to support or thwart Trump's agenda.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., a member of the leadership team, said Schumer has "an uncanny way to be able to listen" to the various views and end up with a position that "eventually everybody can feel OK with."

Days after the Nov. 6 election when Democrats suffered defeats in the Senate, Schumer started dialing up Democrats about the border wall. Four colleagues from states where Trump is popular lost their elections. But without much prodding, senators were lining up against giving Trump the money he wanted, according to a senior Democratic aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe private conversations.

Senators had approved a border security package and saw no reason to spend more. Plus, Democrats had just won the House, strengthening their hand. By the time the White House thought about flipping Democrats, it was too late.

"It's old the minds and hearts thing," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn. Schumer, he said, "knows the minds and hearts of his colleagues."

Even in Virginia, where Sen. Tim Kaine represents thousands of federal workers who would eventually go without pay during the record 35-day shutdown, Democrats held firm.

"The issue that the president chose to battle on, he just picked an issue where every Democrat is completely unified," Kaine said. "Our caucus just welded together."

In the end, just one Democrat, Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, voted for the wall money. The White House didn't even bother trying to call another potential Democratic vote, Sen. Doug Jones of Alabama.

Emboldened by their newfound leverage, Democrats are now looking at areas where they can unite against some policies and perhaps win some GOP support on issues such as prescription drug prices, administration oversight or protecting special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

The night before a pivotal White House meeting in December, when the shutdown was a possibility but not yet reality, Schumer and Pelosi discussed strategy. They couldn't have imagined what would come next.

With the television cameras rolling the next day at the White House, Trump said in an exchange with Schumer that he would "take the mantle" and own the shutdown. Schumer can be seen trying to hold back a smile.

A short while later Schumer arrived back at the Capitol for a private lunch with Democratic senators. They, too, were stunned.

The shutdown would drag for more than a month, but for Senate Democrats the new Congress was just beginning.

"It reinforced a lot of our steadfastness and resolve," said Blumenthal, and "trust in our values and in the American people to see through Trump's bullying and bluster."

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Activists in Paris protest against Google's tax setup

PARIS (AP) — Activists from an anti-globalization group have staged a protest at Google's Paris headquarters to criticize the company for paying little tax.

Attac members gathered at Google's offices Thursday and set up a pulley to pass bags of fake money between the firm's premises and a public finance center across the street.

According to Attac, Google's French subsidiary reported revenue of 325 million euros (\$371 million) in 2017 and paid 14 million euros (\$16 million) in income tax. The group says Google France shifts more than 85 percent of its French revenue to countries with more favorable tax regimes.

So-called profit-shifting is technically legal in the EU, where foreign companies have their regional base in one country where they negotiate favorable tax terms.

France's finance minister, Bruno Le Maire, this month announced plans to tax multinational technology companies, like Google, that have revenues of at least 750 million euros worldwide and 25 million euros in France.

University investments fare well in 2018, but worries linger

By COLLIN BINKLEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hundreds of U.S. universities made strong returns on their financial investments last year, but experts worry the gains could be jeopardized by increased spending at many schools.

A survey of more than 800 colleges and universities found that their endowments returned an average of 8.2 percent in fiscal year 2018, down from the previous year's average of 12.2 percent but a major improvement over two sluggish years before that.

Harvard University remained the wealthiest school in the nation with an endowment valued at more than \$38 billion, while the University of Texas system jumped Yale University to take the No. 2 spot with just under \$31 billion.

Poor performance by U.S. and international stocks dragged returns down from their 2017 rates, but other types of investments fared relatively well, according to the researchers behind the annual study.

"Endowments on average experienced solid returns in 2018," said Kevin O'Leary, CEO of TIAA Endowment and Philanthropic Services. He added that little changed in the types of investments schools made compared to the year before.

Along with the TIAA, an investment and banking firm based in New York, the study was conducted by the National Association of College and University Business Officers, a Washington group that represents more than 1,900 schools.

Despite the recent success, many colleges are failing to hit their long-term financial goal, the survey found. Schools in the survey aim for a 10-year average return of 7.2 percent, but after 2018 the average moved up to just 5.8 percent. Strong growth in some years has largely been tempered by investment losses in 2009, 2012 and 2016.

Coupled with increased spending, that long-term underperformance could leave schools with financial constraints as they try to serve future generations, said Susan Whealler Johnston, CEO of the college business association.

"We remain concerned, however, that the below-target long-term rates of return will make it harder for colleges and universities to increase spending to support their missions," Johnston said.

Of the schools surveyed, 66 percent said they dipped further into their endowments to cover annual budgets in 2018, with a median increase of 6.6 percent. About half of the spending went to student financial aid, while most of the remainder went to academic programs, faculty jobs, campus operations and maintenance.

Johnston said more schools have come to rely on their endowments to fill gaps left by lagging education funding in some states.

There are also concerns about whether donations made to schools will continue at past rates. A tax law that took effect in 2018 makes it less advantageous for many people to make donations, leaving some worried that contributions will fall. Johnston said officials are still trying to determine how colleges have been affected.

Overall, wealthier schools fared better than those with smaller endowments in 2018, largely because they invest less in stocks and more in alternative investments like venture capital, said O'Leary.

But institutions of all types fared far better than the U.S. stock market more broadly. The Standard &

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Poor's 500 index, a broad measurement of the market, ended 2018 down 6.2 percent, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 5.6 percent.

Other than the upturn at the University of Texas system, which saw a jump of 16.4 percent, the list of the wealthiest schools stayed mostly the same. Behind Yale were Stanford and Princeton universities, with more than \$25 billion, while the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Pennsylvania each topped \$13 billion.

But the vast majority of endowments were much smaller. More than half of the schools surveyed had endowments of less than \$200 million, resulting in an overall median of \$140 million.

Follow Collin Binkley on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/cbinkley>

Asia shares gain on uptick in China factory survey, Fed talk

By ELAINE KURTENBACH, AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares rose in Asia on Thursday after a survey of Chinese manufacturers showed factory activity improved slightly in December.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 index surged 1.3 percent to 20,833.59 and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong also gained 1.3 percent, to 28,001.17. South Korea's Kospi added 0.4 percent to 2,214.24, while Australia's S&P ASX 200 edged 0.1 percent higher to 5,889.50. The Shanghai Composite index climbed 0.6 percent to 2,591.84 and India's Sensex advanced 0.6 percent to 35,805.51. Shares were higher in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

WALL STREET: Stocks powered higher Wednesday after the Federal Reserve signaled it could hold off on interest rate increases in the coming months, citing muted inflation. The benchmark S&P 500 index is now track to end January with its biggest monthly gain in more than three years, and the gains pushed the Dow Jones Industrial Average above 25,000 points for the first time since early December. The S&P 500 index rose 1.6 percent to 2,681.05. The Dow gained 1.8 percent to 25,014.86. The Nasdaq composite climbed 2.2 percent to 7,183.08 and the Russell 2000 index of smaller companies picked up 1.1 percent, to 1,486.94. The Russell is up more than 10 percent this month.

CHINA MANUFACTURING: An official measure of China's manufacturing improved in January but forecasters say economic activity is sluggish as Chinese leaders try to resolve a tariff battle with Washington. The purchasing managers' index issued Thursday by the government statistics agency and an industry group rose 0.1 points on a 100-point scale but stayed below a level that shows activity expanding. Measures for employment and domestic demand weakened. China's economic growth sank to a three-decade low in 2018 after activity decelerated in the final quarter of the year.

US-CHINA TRADE: Trade talks opened Wednesday between the U.S. and China and will loom over the market for the remainder of the week. The high-level talks are aimed at settling a months' long trade war that has raised fears of slower economic growth. Industrial and technology companies have warned about slowing sales because of the trade impasse.

SAMSUNG DISAPPOINTS: Samsung Electronics Co. said it posted a near-30 percent drop in operating profit for the last quarter after seeing slowing global demand for its memory chips and smartphones. It still finished the year with record earnings, but Samsung said it expects its overall annual earnings to decline this year because of the sluggish semiconductor market, although it sees its sales of memory chips and organic light-emitting diode panels used in mobile devices rebounding in the second half.

FED TALK: With pressures on the U.S. economy rising — a global slowdown, a trade war with China, a nervous stock market — the Fed signaled Wednesday that it is in no hurry to resume raising interest rates. And with inflation remaining tame, the rationale to tighten credit has become less compelling. "The situation calls for patience," Chairman Jerome Powell said at a news conference. "We have the luxury to be patient."

ENERGY: U.S. crude oil rose 36 cents in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange to \$54.59 per barrel. It gained 1.7 percent to settle at \$54.23 per barrel in New York on Wednesday. Brent

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crude, used to price international oils, added 52 cents to \$62.06 per barrel. It had added 0.5 percent to close at \$61.65 per barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar weakened to 108.86 yen from 109.04 yen on Tuesday. The euro rose against the dollar to \$1.1507 from \$1.1479.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Jan. 31, the 31st day of 2019. There are 334 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 31, 1971, astronauts Alan Shepard, Edgar Mitchell and Stuart Roosa blasted off aboard Apollo 14 on a mission to the moon.

On this date:

In 1606, Englishman Guy Fawkes, convicted of high treason for his part in the "Gunpowder Plot," was set to be hanged, drawn and quartered, but broke his neck after falling or jumping from the scaffold.

In 1863, during the Civil War, the First South Carolina Volunteers, an all-black Union regiment composed of former slaves, was mustered into federal service at Beaufort, South Carolina.

In 1865, the U.S. House of Representatives joined the Senate in passing the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution abolishing slavery, sending it to states for ratification. (The amendment was adopted in December 1865.) Gen. Robert E. Lee was named general-in-chief of the Confederate States Army by President Jefferson Davis.

In 1917, during World War I, Germany served notice that it was beginning a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare.

In 1929, revolutionary Leon Trotsky and his family were expelled from the Soviet Union.

In 1945, Pvt. Eddie Slovik, 24, became the first U.S. soldier since the Civil War to be executed for desertion as he was shot by an American firing squad in France.

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman announced he had ordered development of the hydrogen bomb.

In 1958, the United States entered the Space Age with its first successful launch of a satellite, Explorer 1, from Cape Canaveral.

In 1961, NASA launched Ham the Chimp aboard a Mercury-Redstone rocket from Cape Canaveral; Ham was recovered safely from the Atlantic Ocean following his 16 1/2-minute suborbital flight.

In 1990, McDonald's Corp. opened its first fast-food restaurant in Moscow.

In 2000, an Alaska Airlines MD-83 jet crashed into the Pacific Ocean off Port Hueneme (wy-NEE'-mee), California, killing all 88 people aboard.

In 2005, Jury selection began in Santa Maria, California, for Michael Jackson's child molestation trial. (Jackson was later acquitted.)

Ten years ago: Iraqis passed through security checkpoints and razor-wire cordons to vote in provincial elections considered a crucial test of the nation's stability. A gasoline spill from a crashed truck erupted into flames in Molo, Kenya, killing at least 115 people. Serena Williams routed Dinara Safina 6-0, 6-3 to win her fourth Australian Open. Bruce Smith and Rod Woodson were elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in their first year of eligibility; they were joined by Bob Hayes, Randall McDaniel, Derrick Thomas and Buffalo owner Ralph Wilson.

Five years ago: The long-delayed, controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline cleared a major hurdle toward approval as the U.S. State Department reported no major environmental objections to the proposed \$7 billion project. A week of peace talks aimed at stemming Syria's civil war ended in Geneva with no concrete progress.

One year ago: A train carrying dozens of Republican members of Congress to a strategy retreat crashed into a garbage truck in rural Virginia, killing one person in the truck and injuring others; there were no serious injuries aboard the chartered Amtrak train. Republican congressman Trey Gowdy of South Carolina,

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who became known for leading a House panel's investigation into the 2012 attacks against Americans in Benghazi, Libya, announced that he would be retiring from Congress after his term expired. Much of the world was treated to a rare triple lunar treat - a total lunar eclipse combined with a particularly close full moon that was also the second full moon of the month.

Today's Birthdays: Composer Philip Glass is 82. Former Interior Secretary James Watt is 81. Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands, the former queen regent, is 81. Actor Stuart Margolin is 79. Actress Jessica Walter is 78. Former U.S. Rep. Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., is 78. Blues singer-musician Charlie Musselwhite is 75. Actor Glynn Turman is 73. Baseball Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan is 72. Actor Jonathan Banks is 72. Singer-musician Harry Wayne Casey (KC and the Sunshine Band) is 68. Rock singer Johnny Rotten is 63. Actress Kelly Lynch is 60. Actor Anthony LaPaglia is 60. Singer-musician Lloyd Cole is 58. Actress Paulette Braxton is 54. Rock musician Al Jaworski (Jesus Jones) is 53. Actress Minnie Driver is 49. Actress Portia de Rossi is 46. Actor-comedian Bobby Moynihan is 42. Actress Kerry Washington is 42. Bluegrass singer-musician Becky Buller is 40. Singer Justin Timberlake is 38. Actor Tyler Ritter is 34. Country singer Tyler Hubbard (Florida Georgia Line) is 32. Folk-rock singer-musician Marcus Mumford (Mumford and Sons) is 32. Actor Joel Courtney is 23.

Thought for Today: "We live in a moment of history where change is so speeded up that we begin to see the present only when it is already disappearing." — R.D. Laing, Scottish psychiatrist (1927-1989).