

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Area Schedule of Events

Monday, February 11, 2019

5:00pm: School Board Meeting

5:15pm: Basketball: Boys C Game vs. Aberdeen Roncalli @ Aberdeen Roncalli High School followed by JV and varsity

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

6:30pm: Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. Webster Area High School @ Groton Area High School

Thursday, February 14, 2019

LifeTouch Pictures Groton Area Elementary School, Groton Area High School

4:00pm: Basketball: Boys 7th/8th Game vs. Redfield-Doland @ Redfield Jr-Sr High School(7th Grade @ 4pm; 8th Grade @ 5pm)

6:30pm: Basketball: Girls Varsity Game @ Milbank

6:30pm: Basketball: Boys Varsity Game @ Langford

- 2- GDILIVE.COM - Boys Roncalli Game
- 3- GDILIVE.COM - Girls Webster Game
- 4- Ava Tunheim Memorial Game
- 6- Sen. Greenfield's Column
- 7- Groton Care & Rehab Help Wanted Ads
- 8- Today in Weather History
- 9 Weather Pages
- 11- Daily Devotional
- 12- 2019 Groton Events
- 13- News from the Associated Press

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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.

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It's Boys Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



Aberdeen

Roncalli VS

Cavaliers



Groton Area Tigers

Monday, Feb. 11, 2019

8:00 p.m.

at Aberdeen Roncalli

Ava Tunheim Memorial Game

Broadcast of this game is sponsored by

Aberdeen
Chrysler Center

901 Auto Plaza Drive
Aberdeen, SD

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www.aberdeenchrysler.com

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It's Girls Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Webster
Bearcats**

VS



Groton Area Tigers

Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2019

8:00 p.m.

at Groton Area Arena

Broadcast of this game is sponsored by

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

Groton student's life to be celebrated at game against Roncalli

Ava Tunheim Memorial Game



A tweet from Roncalli Basketball said the following: All ticket proceed from tonight's Roncalli vs. Groton basketball game will go to the memorial of Ava Tunheim, a 7th grade Groton student who passed away Sunday morning. Her life was cut way to short and we will play in her memory tonight. Please leave your passes at home. The varsity game will tip off at 8 p.m.

Tunheim was a middle schooler from Groton who died early Sunday, according to the tweet. Tunheim had been fighting leukemia since Jan. 2018, according to a GoFundMe account set up for her family at <https://www.gofundme.com/avatunheim>.

A post on the Groton Area school Facebook Page stated: "With great sadness we can share that Ava Tunheim has passed away after her most courageous battle with cancer. Please keep this family in your thoughts and prayers.

Our school counseling team along with the help and support of others will be available on Sunday afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00 PM in the Groton Area High School library for students or staff members.

We will continue to offer this support for the students and staff on Monday and for as long as necessary."

By Cuyler Meade cmeade@aberdeennews.com

Ava Tunheim died Sunday, completing her battle of over a year with leukemia. The Groton student and former athlete will be memorialized, in part, during the Aberdeen Roncalli versus Groton boys basketball game at Roncalli Gym tonight.

The color of the Groton community's shared fight behind Tunheim has been orange, said Groton boys basketball coach Justin Hanson in a phone interview Sunday. That's the color of leukemia awareness, and it's symbolized the town's rally around the struggle of its middle school-aged daughter.

"It really rallied — like most things that do in small communities — the kids came together," Hanson said. "The kids came together, boys, girls, all ages, and the community stood behind her and her fight, and (Sunday) morning, when she passed, it was really sad, because the entire community — in the grocery store, people were sad. Social media, people were sad, you go to open gym, people were sad. And then at church, people were sad. It's never easy losing someone young, and it's twice as hard for students losing a classmate and athletes losing a teammate."

Tunheim, Hanson said, was a highly involved student at Groton who was beloved by her community. Her diagnosis in January 2018 was a shock to the town, but it brought people together for her benefit. Even when she was taken to Texas for aggressive treatment, Hanson said, Tunheim remained hopeful and positive.

"She was always happy-go-lucky, loving, had a smile on her face," Hanson said. "Even her last days, she was smiling in pictures I saw. It was a hard one to swallow."

Orange will be the theme color of the basketball game tonight, which is scheduled to tip off at 8 p.m., as members of both teams will be wearing the color pregame, and fans are invited to wear it also.

Roncalli has joined in grieving and memorializing its neighbor and rival school's student, as Cavaliers head coach Brian Dolan called Hanson Sunday to discuss how to be part of the remembrance, Hanson said. A tweet Sunday from the Roncalli Basketball account @Roncalli_CavsBB read "All ticket proceeds from tomorrow night's Roncalli vs Groton basketball game will go to the memorial of Ava Tunheim, a 7th grade Groton student who passed away this morning ... Please leave your passes at home."

The effort means a lot to Hanson and the Groton community, the coach said.

"There's a lot more to athletics than winning or losing," Hanson said. "That's the thing that's really nice and kind of the positive that can be taken out of situations like this. It's really nice to see how people can

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come together.”

Hanson said it was actually Groton students who initiated the plan to wear orange one more time.

“The students decided they’d make it an orange night,” he said. “They tweeted it on social media, the Roncalli students got on board, coach Dolan and I talked, we got on board. (Dolan’s) actually having some T-shirts made for the boys to wear as warmups in honor of Ava. It’s really breathtaking to see things come together like that. I think it’ll be a super-emotional game, probably for both communities.”

Of course, Groton/Roncalli is a historic rivalry, and not historically the most friendly of such, either. But that’s been laid aside without a thought, it seems, for something more important.

“That’s the biggest takeaway,” Hanson said. “All of us need to step back and look and be proud of our kids, because this could be the nastiest rivalry in the world — not saying it is, but it could be — but us as adults need to step back and see there’s a bigger picture here. The kids are willing to put the rivalry aside and be supportive for something that’s an unfortunate event. Put the wins and losses and rivalry aside and see the bigger picture. That’s life, it’s what we’re handed, and we can’t take certain things for granted. That’s super-cool.

“Obviously, Groton/Roncalli is a rivalry going back so many years, but the fact that coach Dolan can reach out to me on a Sunday afternoon and have a conversation about this ... I want people to take away from this that the Groton/Roncalli rivalry is a rivalry in athletics and athletics only.”



The Groton community was always behind Ava Tunheim as was evident at many home games. (Facebook Photo from Nathan Tunheim’s page)

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Glimpse From Greenfield

Brock Greenfield
State Senator
District 2

The 2019 Session continues to roll on!

In Senate State Affairs, we heard SB 108, which sought to make the majority party's caucus open to the public. People have brought bills several different times seeking to address this matter. In a nutshell, caucus is an hour-long meeting prior to floor session each day that helps people prepare by getting a

briefing on what each bill seeks to do. There is a dialogue about what came out in committee testimony and what amendments may be coming relative to each bill. There are no secret conversations and no arms being twisted, rather a free flow of information and some candid discussions. Bills such as this one seem to imply that something sinister is occurring behind closed doors. I, on the other hand, feel this is an efficient and effective way for legislators to become more educated on what we will be voting on in an unfiltered environment. This bill was worded in a way that only the majority party would have to conduct its caucuses in an open setting, while the minority would not have to abide by the same rules. Currently, each caucus can establish its own protocols. The bill died 7-2.

We also heard SB 126 in committee. This bill seeks to insert into our statute that "The official indigenous language of the state is the language of the O'ceti Sakowin, Seven Council Fires, also known by treaty as the Great Sioux Nation, comprised of three dialects, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota." In function, it merely acknowledges Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota as being the three original dialects that are spoken by those in Indian Country. It is inserted after the language that establishes English as the official common language of South Dakota and establishes that English, being the common language, is the only language utilized in public records and documents of any public meeting. Nothing regarding English being the common language and the official language of public record is changed by this bill. Simply put, SB 126 was brought forth by several folks, including a number of American Indian students, to reflect that their native tongue is important to their heritage and should be recognized by our state as such. An amendment I offered makes clear that no public documents or records are required to be printed in anything but the common language. We had really good testimony from people of all ages between seven and 80-something. It was one of the genuinely heart-warming bills that we have heard so far, and it led to a full committee room.

On the floor, I brought SB 56 which sought to revise our fireworks code to bring it up-to-date with present-day language. Since the last time our fireworks language was revisited, the world has changed dramatically. Commercial and consumer fireworks have vastly improved over the past twenty years, and they are even spoken of in different terms by federal regulations. 1.4G fireworks are those that can be purchased by consumers for the own private, "backyard" displays. 1.3G fireworks are those commercial fireworks used by pyrotechnics for large-scale displays. Our code did not reference either. Further, a number of federal regulations have been updated with far more recent language than our statutes referenced. Formerly, state law called for a 25-foot NO SMOKING buffer zone outside a fireworks retailer and a 150-foot zone outside which a person can discharge fireworks. The new standard is that people have to be outside a 50-foot radius to smoke and outside a 300-foot radius to discharge fireworks. This bill recognizes these new safety zones. And because the retail fireworks season begins on June 27, I added an emergency clause to the bill so it would go into effect immediately after the bill is signed if it passes. Otherwise, it would not go into effect until July 1, which is halfway through the retail season. This bill is supported by the industry and the consumers I have spoken with, and it passed the Senate, 31-0.

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SB's 136 and 137 seek to provide for the utilization of telehealth by health care professionals and to provide for the payment of claims by health care professionals who provide consultation via telehealth. These bills attempt to bring South Dakota in line with the ever-changing and evolving medical profession and acknowledge that not every consultation has to be done via an in-office visit. In practice, this has the potential to save people a lot of time and health-related charges. I have even seen studies that speak to the greatly decreased costs associated with telehealth visits. This has the potential to save millions of dollars in the aggregate and should lead to more efficiencies and lower costs in the short- and long-terms.

Finally, SB 55 originally sought to require the national motto "In God We Trust" to be prominently displayed in each public school. The bill was amended in Senate Education Committee to make the language permissive and to merely allow the motto to be displayed in schools. One of the issues raised was that the original bill was an unfunded mandate. When the sponsor of the bill attempted to amend the bill back to its original version on the floor, I did support the effort. However, it was defeated. In the final analysis, the Senate passed the permissive language as sent to us by the Education Committee, 27-7, and I voted in favor of it.

In appropriations, we heard from some of the larger departments, including the Departments of Health, Corrections, and Education. We also heard specifically on the topic of Correctional Health which continues to vie for more and more general fund dollars. The budget remains a hugely important issue to people of all walks of life, and we will begin to really hone in on priorities once the revenue estimate is adopted later this week. Stay tuned for more discussions about education, caring for the aged and those with disabilities, funding for state employee salary increases and various other priorities in the near future.

This coming weekend, we will be in Lake Norden at 1:30 for a cracker barrel at the Community Center. On Monday (President's Day), we will be in Clark at the Ulyot Building (City Hall) at 10:00 and then in Redfield at the Depot at 2:00. We hope to see you if you are able to attend! God bless each of you!

Brock

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Today in Weather History

February 11, 2002: High winds of 35 to 45 mph gusting to 60 to 65 mph affected central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota through the afternoon and into the evening hours. The high winds caused some spotty tree and roof damage along with a few power outages. A few downed power lines in Aberdeen resulted in a short power outage for some people. Also, a streetlight pole was knocked down in Aberdeen. Some wind gusts included 55 mph at Wheaton, 58 mph at McLaughlin, 59 mph at Pierre, 61 mph at Sisseton and Aberdeen, 62 mph at Mobridge, and 63 mph at Graceville, Minnesota.

1895: The low temperature was 11 degrees below zero at Moline, Illinois marking the last of a station record 16 consecutive days on which the low temperature was at or below zero. During the first 11 days of February, the highest temperature recorded at Moline was only 13 degrees above zero. Their current average high temperature for early February is in the lower 30s.

1935: Africa's lowest recorded temperature occurred on this date in 1935. A bitterly cold 11 degrees below zero was registered at the Atlas Mountains village of Ifrane, Morocco.

1983: Called the "Megalopolitan blockbuster snowstorm," this major snowstorm impacted the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England. Snowfall up to 25 inches fell at Allentown, Pennsylvania. Snowfall amount of 35 inches occurred in parts of the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia at Glen Cary. Windsor Locks, Connecticut recorded a record 19 inches in 12 hours. A ship sunk off the Virginia/Maryland coast killing 33. There were 46 total storm-related fatalities. New 24-hour snowfall records were set in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and Allentown Pennsylvania and Hartford Connecticut. Five inches of snow in one hour was recorded at Allentown and Hartford.

1899 - Perhaps the greatest of all arctic outbreaks commenced on this date. The temperature plunged to 61 degrees below zero in Montana. At the same time a "Great Eastern Blizzard" left a blanket of snow from Georgia to New Hampshire. The state of Virginia took the brunt of the storm, with snowfall totals averaging 30 to 40 inches. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Denver, CO, reported only their third occurrence of record of a thunderstorm in February. Ten cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Huron SD reported February temperatures averaging 19 degrees above normal. Williston ND reported readings averaging 24 degrees above normal for the month. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Bitter cold air gripped the north central U.S. Morning lows of 35 degrees below zero at Aberdeen SD, Bismarck ND and International Falls MN were records for the date. Bemidji MN was, officially, the cold spot in the nation with a low of 39 degrees below zero, however, a reading of 42 degrees below zero was reported at Gettysburg SD. In the Northern High Plains Region, Baker MT warmed from 27 degrees below zero to 40 above. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - While much of the continental U.S. enjoyed sunshine and seasonable temperatures, a strong weather system over the Hawaiian Islands deluged Honolulu with 2.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A winter storm produced up to ten inches of snow in Vermont, and up to nine inches of snow in Aroostook County of northeastern Maine. A three day snowstorm began to overspread Oregon, and the winter storm produced 29 inches of snow at Bennett Pass. Mild weather continued in the central U.S. La Crosse WI reported a record forty-seven consecutive days with temperatures above normal. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 - North Dakota Governor John Hoeven declares a snow emergency as winds gusting over 70 mph along with heavy snow produces low visibilities and drifts up to 20 feet in northwestern North Dakota. Amtrak train service is interrupted in the region. The Weather Doctor

2006 - Snowfall records fell in Philadelphia and Allentown, Pennsylvania, Bridgeport and Hartford, Connecticut, Newark, New Jersey, and Worcester and Boston, Massachusetts. The highest total reported was 30.2 inches at Fairfield, CT. New York City set a record one-day snowfall record of 26.9 inches in Central Park.

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Today

Tonight

Tuesday

Tuesday
Night

Wednesday



Snow Likely

Snow Likely
then Chance
Snow

Cold

Partly Cloudy

Cold

High: 19 °F

Low: 5 °F

High: 10 °F

Low: -9 °F

High: 10 °F

❁ Light Snow Today into Tonight

Forecast Snow Amounts Today into Tonight

What	When	Confidence
Much Warmer 15 to 25°	This Afternoon	Very High
Snow Trace to 3"	Today into Tonight	High
Freezing Drizzle	Today	Low
Snow 1 to 2"	Thursday	Low

Aberdeen, SD
www.weather.gov/abr
2/11/2019 4:37 AM

Published on: 02/11/2019 at 4:43AM

Warmer with light snow today! Today will be the warmest day of the week, with temperatures topping out in the teens to low 20s. A trace to 3 inches of snow is expected through tonight as a trough of low pressure moves through the region. A short period of freezing drizzle will be possible, with little to no accumulation. Looking ahead, another 1 to 2 inches of snow will be possible Thursday.

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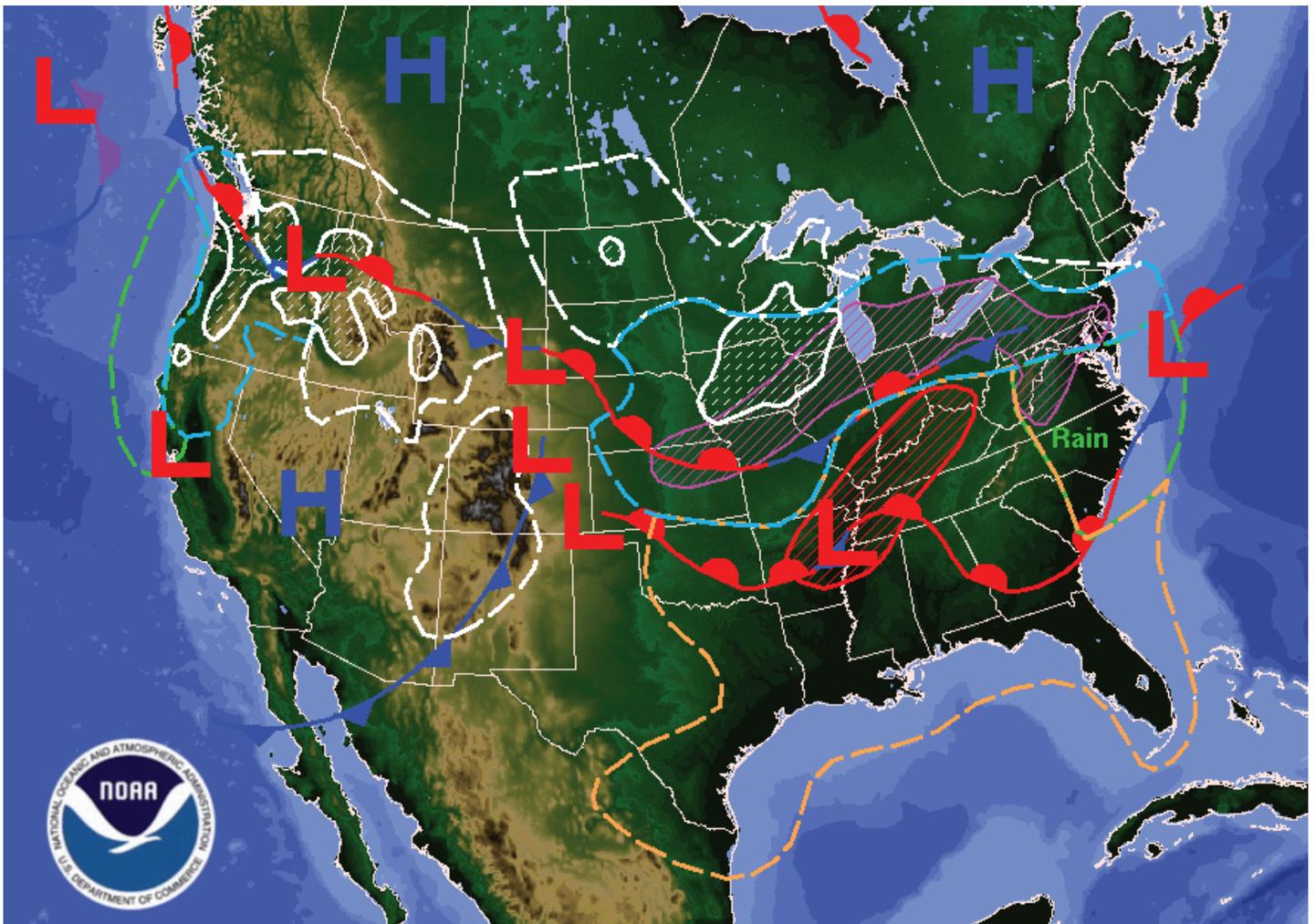
Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 3 °F at 12:47 AM
Low Outside Temp: -7 °F at 10:17 PM
High Gust: 22 mph at 11:45 AM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 2005, 1987
Record Low: -35 in 1988
Average High: 27°F
Average Low: 6°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.16
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.63
Precip Year to Date: 0.09
Sunset Tonight: 5:55 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:40 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Mon, Feb 11, 2019, issued 5:18 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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RIGHT CHOICES

When you come to a fork in the road, take it, is an oft-quoted bit of advice from Yogi Berra. It has brought a smile to the face of many when they first hear it. But if you listen to what he is saying, its rather dangerous. Let me explain.

Wherever you want to go, is OK. Just follow your own path and enjoy life, is what I think Yogi Berra is suggesting. But, is following our own self-designed path the best thing we can do with the life God has given us?

God gave us His Proverbs for us to have His understanding to know right from wrong. In fact, if we go back to a conversation between God and Solomon, his first request of God was for the gift of insight: he wanted to be able to discern right from wrong. Solomon, at that time, wanted to honor God with his whole heart. He knew that honoring God would be difficult without Gods insight to guide him. What a wise request! God, he begged, please guide me.

Perhaps he saw his father, David, struggling with his humanity when he had to choose right from wrong. Perhaps he saw his father grieve over a poor decision that cost someone their life. Perhaps he saw David, his dad, deal with guilt when he did not follow Gods guidance. There was something deep within him that challenged him to be insightful, or discerning. So, he asked God for this gift of discernment, and when he understood and applied it in his life, he recognized its value. When he recognized its value to him, he wanted to pass it on for us to use in our lives. How thoughtful of him to want to share Gods Word with us to guide us and keep us from sin.

God has given us the only resource we need to be discerning: His Word. If we choose to honor Him we can find His directions in His Word. Life is safe and certain if we follow His Word!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we know that You will guide us and guard us if we seek Your will and stay obedient to Your Word. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 1:4 For giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young.

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
- 06/13/2019 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

Military Police Company honored for serving in Afghanistan

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and National Guard leaders honored soldiers from the Upper Midwest who spent about a year serving in Afghanistan.

A special ceremony was held Sunday afternoon at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Fargo for about 30 members of the North Dakota Army National Guard's 191st Military Police Company. The soldiers are from 20 communities in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota.

Burgum said it was also important to recognize and thank the families of the soldiers who spent so much time away. Sgt. First Class Tyson Mattson said his wife held the family together while he was serving.

The unit which provided protective service detail and secure transportation while assigned to NATO returned in December.

South Dakota man looks to improve state's drug courts

By **ARIELLE ZIONTS**, Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Ideas on how to solve the state's methamphetamine problems have been racing through the mind of Jay Erickson.

The 45-year-old Rapid City resident and small business owner has developed proposals based on his years of experience as a recovering meth addict, drug court participant and prisoner.

"I'm the kind of addict that needs to get the the bottom of why I can't stay quit," he told the Rapid City Journal.

With the South Dakota legislative session in full swing, politicians and criminal justice officials are also looking for ways to address widespread meth use and its contribution to crime and crowded jails and prisons.

Proposed solutions range from taking away presumptive probation, to building a prison for meth users, to increasing funding for drug treatment, to exploring alternatives to imprisonment for those convicted of ingesting drugs.

Erickson, who has speckled gray hair and a bright smile, spoke with confidence and passion as he explained his recipe for improving the system.

In his ideal world, the law against ingesting drugs would be abolished or become a misdemeanor. South Dakota is the only state where it's a felony, he pointed out.

"You're not (necessarily) driving, you're just high, or even coming down, you could have been high three days ago but it's still in your system," he said.

He said drug possession, but not drug dealing, should be treated like DUIs: the first two offenses are misdemeanors and only becomes a felony after the third offense.

Addicts often need many chances to achieve the difficult task of quitting drugs, and that change would give them more time to do so before becoming a felon, which can greatly limit a person's housing and job options, he said.

"I would have been very motivated to not become a felon," Erickson said.

In a 2016 study, the Urban Institute, a D.C.-based think tank, suggested reclassifying drug ingestion and possession as misdemeanors in order to improve on the successes of a 2013 criminal justice reform bill. The ACLU of South Dakota said it supports making drug ingestion a misdemeanor.

Erickson said police should focus less on drugs users and more on drug dealers and preventing meth from crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

"Which one is more of a threat to society or to themselves or to others? The guy who can get another 100 people high, or the guy who's got (evidence of drug use) in their urine?" he asked.

Lastly, Erickson said, we need to fund treatment places and widen access to treatment within prison.

One thing that won't work, he said, is the idea that the threat of prison can deter drug addicts.

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"You could say that you're going to cut the person's arm off the next time they use, they're going to do it anyway," Erickson said, calling addiction "a nightmare."

Erickson, who grew up in Rapid City, said he was first introduced to meth around 2006. He was prescribed Oxycontin after a four-wheeler accident and his friend started stealing and selling his drugs without his knowledge. The friend brought back cocaine and shared it with him, but Erickson later switched to using meth because it's much cheaper. He said he turned to drugs because he was depressed from being immobile.

Erickson said he eventually quit using drugs on his own, got married and had two boys. But he would relapse and then quit every six to 12 months, a cycle that caused pain for his family and contributed to his divorce.

After he and his wife separated in 2011, Erickson said, he looked into treatment for the first time. He was interested in the Keystone Treatment Center, but the facility didn't accept his insurance.

"I just didn't have that kind of money or insurance coverage. Still don't," he said.

Instead, he signed up for a more affordable program, an intensive outpatient program run by Pennington County. He said most of the participants were there on court order, whereas he was there of his own free will.

"As soon as the person giving the course would leave the room, everybody's talking about getting high," Erickson recalled. "If you really want to quit, your heart has to be in it," he said.

Erickson said the first time he was caught using drugs was in 2012. He said he kicked some friends out of his home after learning they were stealing from him, and they reported him to the police. He was convicted of drug possession and grand theft, according to Erickson and his profile on the Department of Correction's website. He said the grand theft charge was for pawning stolen items, including a gun that his friends brought to him.

"I didn't know, but should have known, that they were stolen," he said. "But I was so desperate to get more (money for meth) that I guess I didn't care."

Erickson was given probation in August 2013 and stayed clean for more than a year until he was caught relapsing, court records show.

When he was brought to court for his probation violation, Erickson said, he asked the judge if he could be ordered to attend an inpatient program, but the judge said that wasn't an option. But the judge said if he pleaded guilty, he could participate in the Sturgis drug court. The Rapid City specialty court didn't open until 2016.

"We need to have a conviction out of you before we can treat you. Well the problem is you become a felon," Erickson said.

Erickson explained how becoming a felon can lead to a difficult cycle, especially for those who live in low-income areas of Rapid City and reservations where meth is widespread.

"When these people haven't anything else, what are they going to do besides get high or decide to try selling? Especially when now you're a felon and you need to check the felon box to get housing or you need to check the felon box to get a job."

Erickson said he's lucky, because even though he will likely never be able to use his nursing license again, he was able to work at his small family-owned business.

"I did go ahead and take drug court because I was accepting it was the only help I had available to me. I thought great, here's something that's going to keep me accountable and monitor me."

The purpose of drug court is to avoid sending people to prison, treat addiction and prevent recidivism, according to the program's website. It involves random drug screenings, and individual and group therapy and drug counseling. Graduating from the program means avoiding prison, but it doesn't erase your conviction. A 2018 study by the Legislative Research Council found that graduates of the Sturgis and Sioux Falls drug courts were less likely to re-offend than those who didn't graduate and those who were served through the traditional court.

After beginning drug court in late 2014, Erickson said he relapsed three times until he was formally kicked out of the program in 2016. He said he knows one participant who was booted from the program after

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one relapse and another who had 11 chances.

It's "totally arbitrary," Erickson said.

Arman Zeljkovic, a prosecutor with the Pennington County State's Attorney Office, confirmed that it's up to the judge to determine how many chances people have in drug court. He said that if someone does relapse, they have the right to be represented by an attorney during a termination proceeding and evidentiary hearing.

After failing to graduate from drug court, Erickson was sentenced to eight years in prison. The sentence translated to spending a few weeks getting processed at the prison in Sioux Falls and then being incarcerated at the Rapid City Community Work Center, a minimum-security prison, for 2.5 years. Toward the end of his stay, Erickson said, he was allowed to leave the facility to work during the day.

While Erickson voluntarily signed up for coping skills and group therapy classes in prison, he said an assessment he took found he didn't qualify for the more intensive drug-treatment programs.

"I was addicted enough to get an eight-year sentence but not addicted enough to get treatment," he said, adding that people brought drugs back into the facility after returning from work. Erickson said he supports South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg's idea to build a prison specifically for people addicted to meth, so all addicts can get intensive treatment. But he noted that being in prison without intensive treatment was "not the answer."

Erickson said he was released from the Rapid City facility on Oct. 4, 2018. He would have to spend two more years on parole.

But just eight days later, he was arrested for allegedly possessing meth and having a positive drug test, police records show.

Erickson's idea to treat drug possession like DUIs is based on the theory that people will have more chances to avoid racking up a harmful felony.

"What they've got to do is provide a person chances. And that's the biggest thing I think an addict needs is one more chance."

But some might say Erickson had his chances to quit for good when he was attending the county treatment program, and especially when he was in drug court.

"You're absolutely right," he said. "Any addict wants to quit and is torn between (quitting and using). I think the best definition of addiction is continuing a bad behavior despite negative consequences.

"Anybody who's smoked and tried to quit will understand. Anybody who struggles with eating will understand. 'Why did I eat that pizza? Why did I have those extra two slices when I know this isn't what I wanted to do?'"

"There's bigger consequences (for using drugs) but the concept is the same" as other addictions, he explained.

Jay said he's stayed sober since his most recent arrest and is focusing on keeping clean, one day at a time.

"My plan is to beat the charge, and I don't trust the system anymore," Erickson said. "My best bet at this point is to get that charge dropped and then to build my life."

Because he is on parole, he can't participate in drug court again. People can't be in drug court since it's a probation sentence and part of the judicial system and also on parole, part of the Department of Corrections, Zeljkovic said.

Erickson said he thinks the key for him to stay sober is to work with his therapist to get to the root of why he uses meth.

He also leans on the support of his parents and church, attends Alcoholics Anonymous and a Christian support group for addicts, and participates in group therapy as part of his parole. He's motivated to permanently quit by his new support system and the possibility of gaining some custody of his two younger children.

South Dakota mother creates online support group

By J.T. FEY, Watertown Public Opinion

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — In its 1979 hit "Message in a Bottle," the rock group The Police sang about a lonely castaway who put a message in a bottle, threw it into the sea and a year later saw that a billion bottled replies had washed up on his shore.

Something similar is starting to happen to Ashley Holida.

A few years ago the Watertown mother learned her two children had sensory processing disorder. The website WebMD described SPD as "a condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information that comes in through the senses."

WebMD said SPD is currently not recognized as a distinct medical diagnosis, but that makes no difference to Holida. She was relieved to know there were steps that would help her kids.

"It led to answers to a lot of unanswered questions," she told the Watertown Public Opinion. "Why noises are so scary for them, and why it's so hard for them to have their faces washed. Or why one of them is scared to death to eat food while the other will eat most anything."

She got some answers but was still feeling quite alone.

"When my children began therapy I started to meet other moms, dads and grandparents who were asking me the same questions. I wished there was a support group. I wished there was a way to meet other people with similar stories."

That's when, proverbially, Holida threw her bottle in the water. On Jan. 25 she launched the Facebook site Watertown Support Group for SPD, autism and learning disabilities. She credits her husband, Mackenzie Holida, for giving her the support and encouragement to start the project.

The interest has been growing. So far 80 families have joined her site. They're asking questions and assisting each other as best they can. One woman from Oklahoma has joined, and Ashley Holida expects the site to continue to grow.

"My goal is to reach people in the community and the surrounding area who have similar stories. We can share advice, encouragement and support. It's a place where people can connect, and these children can (plan to) get together, play with children like them and not feel alone," she said. "I've met seven families so far with hopes that in the springtime when the weather isn't a negative 40, we can get together and play. That will be a really awesome experience."

SPD is considered to be part of the Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Ashley Holida originally thought perhaps her children had autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Doctors didn't agree but had no definite answers.

Her concerns grew after watching her son struggle through the first grade.

"He didn't suffer academically, but behaviorally he had a hard time, and that wore on his self-confidence. It was hard to watch," she said.

His second-grade teacher told Ashley Holida about SPD. Once she read about the disorder, she knew what was troubling her son. She said the staff at Big Stone Therapies in Watertown confirmed it.

Even at a very young age her daughter had the compulsion to eat non-food items. Ashley Holida thought perhaps it was an iron deficiency, but medical tests showed otherwise. Her need to put unusual items in her mouth or chew on her fingers until she hurt herself had Ashley Holida very worried.

Both children are now undergoing sensory integration therapy, which Ashley Holida said teaches them how to receive the input they need without overloading their senses.

"Our long-term goal for them is to be able to live life without having to deal with things that set them back," she said. "Just really to be able to live like everyone else; to not be so deeply impacted by the environment around them that's so scary to them."

Obanor leads Oral Roberts past South Dakota 86-72

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Kevin Obanor had 24 points and 14 rebounds as Oral Roberts topped South Dakota 86-72 on Sunday.

Sam Kearns had 17 points for Oral Roberts (10-17, 6-6 Summit League). Kaelen Malone added 11 points. Emir Ahmedic had 11 points for the visitors.

Emmanuel Nzekwesi, the Golden Eagles' leading scorer entering the matchup at 15 points per game, had 6 points on 3-of-10 shooting.

Triston Simpson had 20 points and nine rebounds for the Coyotes (9-15, 3-8), who have now lost four games in a row. Stanley Umude added 18 points and four blocks. Tyler Peterson had 10 points.

The Golden Eagles improve to 2-0 against the Coyotes this season. Oral Roberts defeated South Dakota 77-74 on Jan. 17. Oral Roberts plays North Dakota State on the road on Thursday. South Dakota faces Western Illinois on the road on Saturday.

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

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Council to draft new proposal for beekeeping in city limits

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls officials are reconsidering the city's restrictions on beekeeping after recent media attention about the declining bee population created a buzz.

City officials and beekeeping advocates met recently to discuss the prospect of legalizing apiaries, a place where bees or a collection of beehives are kept, the Argus Leader reported. Preserving hives and raising bees are prohibited within city limits, with the exception of agriculturally zoned land.

Councilor Theresa Stehly intends to draft a proposal that centers on protecting the public while opening more of the city to hobby apiaries. She sought feedback on the proposal from other councilors, a few beekeepers as well as officials with the zoning, city attorney's and animal control offices.

Assistant City Attorneys Ryan Sage and Keith Allenstein and Sioux Falls Animal Control Supervisor Julie DeJong appeared to be less eager to ease restrictions on beekeeping within city limits. Each raised concerns about the city's liability in the event of bee stings, bee swarms and general public safety.

"It's going to take one person to die and guess who's getting sued? The city of Sioux Falls — whether that's a successful suit or not," Allenstein said.

DeJong cited news stories from other parts of the United States where people have been injured by bees being kept in urban areas and noted officers in her department aren't adequately trained to handle bees or determine if someone fits the criteria required to be a beekeeper.

But the beekeepers attending the meeting rejected those notions, saying bee keepers are the primary recipients of honey bee stings as the honey bee species rarely acts defensively, and only does so when someone gets near a hive.

"Ninety percent of the population, what they know about bees is wrong," said Dave Jastram, an apiary enthusiast who used to run a commercial beekeeping operation.

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

Lawmakers to debate bills on industrial hemp, guns on campus

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers this week plan to debate bills on missing and murdered indigenous women, industrial hemp and campus gun policies.

Legislators return Monday to the Capitol.

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The Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday is scheduled to hear a bill that would direct the Division of Criminal Investigation to prepare guidelines for the reporting and investigation of missing and murdered indigenous women. It would also mandate the division establish training programs for law enforcement.

The committee is also set to debate a bill that would bar the state's public universities and technical schools from adopting rules restricting people's ability to carry guns on campuses beyond limitations in law.

Representatives are to debate a measure on the floor to allow the cultivation of industrial hemp. Gov. Kristi Noem has asked lawmakers to shelve that effort.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. TRUMP TRIES TO TURN BORDER DEBATE WITH EL PASO RALLY

In his first rally since November's midterm elections, the president is aiming to deliver on his elusive signature pledge to American voters.

2. SPONSOR BACKS OFF FAST-TRACK IMPEACHMENT IN VIRGINIA

A state lawmaker now suggests he won't move forward with plans to introduce an impeachment bill seeking the ouster of Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax.

3. UNDERCOVER SPY EXPOSED IN NYC WAS 1 OF MANY

The AP identifies six people who have been approached by undercover operatives in an apparent bid to record them making inflammatory statements about an Israeli company that makes smartphone hacking spyware.

4. IRANIANS MARK ANNIVERSARY OF 1979 REVOLUTION

Hundreds of thousands of people pour out onto the streets marking the date 40 years ago that is considered victory day in the Islamic Revolution.

5. EPA DECISION SOON ON CHEMICAL COMPOUNDS TIED TO HEALTH RISKS

An increasing number of states are saying the chemicals found on many fabrics, rugs and carpets, cooking pots and pans, outdoor gear and personal hygiene items have seeped into water supplies.

6. WHAT A US-NORTH KOREA DEAL COULD LOOK LIKE

Kim Jong Un may be willing to dismantle his main nuclear complex. The U.S. may be willing to cough up concessions, maybe remove some sanctions.

7. PARKLAND VICTIM'S MOTHER KEEPS UP DIZZYING PACE

Lori Alhadeff called out Trump in a gut wrenching speech on live TV, won a seat on the local school board in South Florida and started a foundation to make schools safer.

8. ANOTHER TEACHER WALKOUT APPEARS IMMINENT

Denver teachers are planning to strike for the first time in 25 years after failed negotiations with the school district over base pay.

9. WHO SHINED AT GRAMMYS

Kacey Musgraves' "Golden Hour" wins top album and Childish Gambino makes history when "This Is America" became the first rap-based track to win record and song of the year.

10. REDS CELEBRATING 150TH SEASON IN STYLE

Cincinnati will play games in 15 sets of throwback uniforms during a season-long celebration of the 1869 Red Stockings who pioneered professional baseball.

This story updates with a Virginia state lawmaker backing off an impeachment threat.

Virginia lawmaker backs off fast track for impeachment bill

By ALAN SUDERMAN and BEN FINLEY, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A Virginia lawmaker on Monday backed off his plans to swiftly introduce an impeachment bill seeking the ouster of the state's leading black elected official as Democrats struggled to

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address revelations of past racist behavior and allegations of sexual assault roiling its highest levels of office.

The effort to impeach Democratic Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax was prompted by the emergence of two women who accused him of sexual assault in the 2000s. Fairfax has vehemently denied the claims and called for authorities, including the FBI, to investigate.

Democratic Del. Patrick Hope tweeted early Monday that he got "an enormous amount of sincere and thoughtful feedback" from colleagues after circulating a draft of his impeachment bill, and that he sees that "additional conversations ... need to take place before anything is filed."

There's been little sign of broad appetite for impeachment, with lawmakers set to finish this year's session by the month's end. But the Legislature is swirling with questions about lines of succession and the political fallout for Democrats should their governor, lieutenant governor or attorney general leave office, willingly or not.

Gov. Ralph Northam and Attorney General Mark Herring are still trying to regain their political standing after awkwardly acknowledging that they each once wore blackface as young men in the 1980s. Calls for Northam's resignation raised the prospect of Fairfax taking over, which prompted his accusers to come forward.

All three scandals involve events that happened long before these leaders took office, but they've become a full-blown crisis for Democrats. The party counts on the support of black voters and has taken an almost zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct in the #MeToo era. A housecleaning could be costly: If all three Democrats resign, Republican state House Speaker Kirk Cox would become Virginia's governor.

Northam, a pediatric neurologist, said that he considered quitting, but has decided he's "not going anywhere" because the state "needs someone that can heal" it.

Northam said on CBS' "Face the Nation" that it's been a difficult week since a racist photo in his 1984 medical school yearbook surfaced, showing a person wearing blackface next to another person in a Ku Klux Klan hood and robe. Northam initially said he was in the photo, then denied it the next day, while acknowledging he did wear blackface to a dance party that same year.

"Virginia needs someone that can heal. There's no better person to do that than a doctor," Northam said. "Virginia also needs someone who is strong, who has empathy, who has courage and who has a moral compass. And that's why I'm not going anywhere."

Political considerations will be key to what comes next. Virginia is among a handful of states electing lawmakers this year, and Democrats had hoped to flip the Republican-controlled General Assembly.

Democratic Del. Patrick Hope said he wants to introduce articles of impeachment Monday against Fairfax, who is black. Meredith Watson and Vanessa Tyson have accused him of sexual assault and offered to testify at any impeachment hearing.

The Associated Press generally does not name people who say they are victims of sexual assault, but both women have come forward voluntarily.

Watson alleges Fairfax raped her while they were students at Duke University in 2000, her attorney said in a statement. Tyson, a California college professor, accused Fairfax of forcing her to perform oral sex on him at a Boston hotel in 2004.

The lieutenant governor issued a statement Saturday again denying he ever sexually assaulted anyone and making clear he does not intend to immediately step down. Instead, he urged authorities to investigate.

"Frankly, we really want any entity with comprehensive investigative power to thoroughly look into these accusations," Fairfax spokeswoman Lauren Burke said. "There needs to be verification of basic facts about these allegations. It feels like something bigger is going on here."

Some political observers noted that the threshold to start an impeachment process is remarkably high in the House of Delegates. The lawmakers are set to leave town before February ends, and have limited time and resources to immediately take on the complicated issue.

Still, "a clear sign of the depth of LG Fairfax's political crisis is the near-absence of voices in Virginia politics this weekend publicly urging him to remain in office," University of Mary Washington political science professor Stephen Farnsworth said in an email.

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If the Legislature is in session, the House would need a simple majority to vote to impeach Fairfax, said A.E. Dick Howard, a University of Virginia law professor. The Senate would then review evidence and hear testimony. That chamber would need a two-thirds vote to convict among senators who are present.

Another possibility: Fairfax simply hangs on as he disputes the allegations.

"Before Donald Trump, I would say with this kind of stuff, it's impossible for a person to just hang on, put their head down and ignore it," said Quentin Kidd, a political science professor at Christopher Newport University. "Post-Donald Trump, I think what elected officials are willing to do has changed in some ways. So can he hang on? Certainly he can hang on."

If Fairfax were to leave, it's unclear who could replace him. Northam may try to appoint a Democrat, while Republicans could mount a legal challenge with the goal of getting Senate Pro Tem Steve Newman to serve as both a voting senator and temporary lieutenant governor.

The attorney general's future also remains in question. Herring, who would become governor if both Northam and Fairfax leave office, initially made a forceful call for Northam to step down, but then he too acknowledged wearing blackface at a party in 1980. Herring has apologized but has not indicated he would resign.

Asked Sunday for his opinion on his subordinates, Northam told CBS it's up to them to decide whether they want to stay. He said he supports Fairfax's call for an investigation into the sexual assault allegations. Of Herring, he said that "just like me, he has grown."

Northam's pledge Sunday to work on healing Virginia's racial divide was his second in as many days. In his first interview since the scandal erupted, he told The Washington Post on Saturday that the uproar has pushed him to confront the state's deep and lingering divisions, as well as his own insensitivity. But he said that reflection has convinced him that, by remaining in office, he can work to resolve them.

"It's obvious from what happened this week that we still have a lot of work to do," Northam said. "There are still some very deep wounds in Virginia, and especially in the area of equity."

Finley reported from Norfolk, Virginia. Contributing to this report were Associated Press reporters Steve Helber in Chilhowie, Virginia; David McFadden in Baltimore; and Julie Pace and Michael Biesecker in Washington.

Liz Weston: Companies are also flunking retirement planning

By LIZ WESTON of NerdWallet

Plenty has been written about American workers' failure to plan adequately for retirement. Their employers seem to be doing an even worse job.

Only 1 in 10 large employers offers a formal phased-retirement program that lets workers cut back their hours or responsibilities before they quit work entirely, according to the 2018 Longer Working Careers Survey by professional services consultant Willis Towers Watson. Fewer than 1 in 3 of the companies surveyed offered their employees the option to work part time or switch to a less demanding job, according to the survey, which polled 143 large U.S. companies that employ 2.9 million people.

That's too bad, because flexible work arrangements don't just help people who need or want to work longer. These accommodations also could help workers who are starting families, pursuing degrees or caring for aging parents.

PROGRAMS VARY WIDELY

Formal phased retirement programs can take many forms. Examples cited in a 2017 report by the Government Accountability Office include:

- One program that allows workers who are at least 55 years old with 10 years of service to cut their hours by 20 percent with a 20 percent cut in pay, but keep health insurance and pension accrual benefits.
- Another that allows employees 60 and older with five years of service to reduce their hours by 20 percent to 50 percent, or even more if they're willing to lose their health insurance benefit.
- An employer that allows workers 55 and older with seven years of service to negotiate their own "glide

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path" to retirement, ramping down from full time to full retirement while retaining benefits.

—Yet another company that allows any employee to switch to less stressful or complex duties or phase to part-time work, retaining health insurance if they work at least 25 hours a week.

Employers that offer phased retirement typically say the plans are good for business, the GAO report found.

Phased retirement allows both the company and the worker to adjust over time, rather than scrambling to deal with an abrupt departure. Businesses can plan better since they know well in advance when an employee plans to leave, plus they can arrange for experienced workers to train or mentor younger ones, transferring years (and sometimes decades) of employer-specific knowledge.

"Otherwise, years of institutional knowledge could be walking out the door," says Susan Weinstock, vice president for financial resiliency programming at AARP.

FOR EMPLOYERS, RETIREMENT CAN DRAIN TALENT AND KNOWLEDGE

Most employers realize retirement is a looming issue, with 83 percent of the large employers Willis Towers Watson polled saying significant numbers of their workers are approaching retirement age. In fact, 54 percent of employers believe the loss of talent from retiring workers will be more significant than other labor market risks in the next five years, the survey found.

Employers may not fully grasp, however, how many people may need to keep working because they haven't saved enough, says retirement trends expert Catherine Collinson, CEO and president of the non-profit Transamerica Institute and Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies.

For example, 7 out of 10 employers polled in last year's Transamerica Survey of Employers Were confident that their workers would retire with adequate retirement savings. But 6 out of 10 employees had similar confidence. (Studies by the Employee Benefit Research Institute have found that 57 percent of U.S. households headed by people ages 35 to 64 are on track with retirement savings.)

EMPLOYEES CAN BE AFRAID TO ASK

Another disconnect: Employers often think their employees aren't interested in more flexible schedules or phased retirements, because workers haven't asked. But employees may be afraid to inquire, lest they seem less than gung-ho about their jobs or get shoved out the door before they're ready, Collinson says.

"Employees may not want to tip their hands," she says.

Flexible schedules and phased retirements aren't panaceas, of course. For many, continuing to work simply won't be an option. The Employee Benefit Research Institute found that nearly half of workers retired earlier than they expected for reasons that included layoffs, health issues or the need to care for someone else.

You may think you'll work until you die, in other words, but chances are pretty good that you won't.

Those who do want to work longer, and can, may have to take matters into their own hands. Collinson says people can improve their odds of negotiating a phased retirement by keeping their job skills up to date and focusing on job performance.

"A superstar is going to have greater negotiating power than the average employee," she says.

This column was provided to The Associated Press by the personal finance website NerdWallet. Liz Weston is a columnist at NerdWallet, a certified financial planner and author of "Your Credit Score." Email: lweston@nerdwallet.com. Twitter: @lizweston.

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Budget talks resuming amid pessimism over border differences

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Budget negotiators will meet Monday to revive talks over border security issues that are central to legislation to prevent key parts of the government from shutting down on Saturday,

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but an air of pessimism remains after talks broke down over the weekend.

They collapsed over Democratic demands to limit the number of migrants authorities can detain, and the two sides remained separated over how much to spend on President Donald Trump's promised border wall. A Friday midnight deadline is looming to prevent a second partial government shutdown.

Key negotiators plan to meet on Monday, Democratic and GOP aides say, but for now the mood is not hopeful.

Rising to the fore on Sunday was a related dispute over curbing Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, the federal agency that Republicans see as an emblem of tough immigration policies and Democrats accuse of often going too far.

The fight over ICE detentions goes to the core of each party's view on immigration. Republicans favor rigid enforcement of immigration laws and have little interest in easing them if Democrats refuse to fund the Mexican border wall. Democrats despise the proposed wall and, in return for border security funds, want to curb what they see as unnecessarily harsh enforcement by ICE.

People involved in the talks say Democrats have proposed limiting the number of immigrants here illegally who are caught inside the U.S. — not at the border — that the agency can detain. Republicans say they don't want that cap to apply to immigrants caught committing crimes, but Democrats do.

Democrats say they proposed their cap to force ICE to concentrate its internal enforcement efforts on dangerous immigrants, not those who lack legal authority to be in the country but are productive and otherwise pose no threat. Democrats have proposed reducing the current number of beds ICE uses to detain immigrants here illegally from 40,520 to 35,520.

But within that limit, they've also proposed limiting to 16,500 the number for immigrants here illegally caught within the U.S., including criminals. Republicans want no caps on the number of immigrants who've committed crimes who can be held by ICE.

Trump used the dispute to cast Democrats as soft on criminals.

"I don't think the Dems on the Border Committee are being allowed by their leaders to make a deal. They are offering very little money for the desperately needed Border Wall & now, out of the blue, want a cap on convicted violent felons to be held in detention!" Trump tweeted Sunday.

Acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney, in appearances on NBC's "Meet the Press" and "Fox News Sunday," said "you absolutely cannot" eliminate the possibility of another shutdown if a deal is not reached over the wall and other border matters. The White House had asked for \$5.7 billion, a figure rejected by the Democratic-controlled House, and the mood among bargainers has soured, according to people familiar with the negotiations not authorized to speak publicly about private talks.

"You cannot take a shutdown off the table, and you cannot take \$5.7 (billion) off the table," Mulvaney told NBC, "but if you end up someplace in the middle, yeah, then what you probably see is the president say, 'Yeah, OK, and I'll go find the money someplace else.'"

A congressional deal seemed to stall even after Mulvaney convened a bipartisan group of lawmakers at Camp David, the presidential retreat in northern Maryland. While the two sides appeared close to clinching a deal late last week, significant gaps remain and momentum appears to have slowed. Though congressional Democratic aides asserted that the dispute had caused the talks to break off, it was initially unclear how damaging the rift was. Both sides are eager to resolve the long-running battle and avert a fresh closure of dozens of federal agencies that would begin next weekend if Congress doesn't act by Friday.

"I think talks are stalled right now," Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., said on "Fox News Sunday." "I'm not confident we're going to get there."

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., who appeared on the same program, agreed: "We are not to the point where we can announce a deal."

But Mulvaney did signal that the White House would prefer not to have a repeat of the last shutdown, which stretched more than a month, left more than 800,000 government workers without paychecks, forced a postponement of the State of the Union address and sent Trump's poll numbers tumbling. As support in his own party began to splinter, Trump surrendered after the shutdown hit 35 days without getting money for the wall.

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The president's supporters have suggested that Trump could use executive powers to divert money from the federal budget for wall construction, though it was unclear if he would face challenges in Congress or the courts. One provision of the law lets the Defense Department provide support for counterdrug activities.

But declaring a national emergency remained an option, Mulvaney said, even though many in the administration have cooled on the prospect. A number of powerful Republicans, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., have also warned against the move, believing it usurps power from Congress and could set a precedent for a future Democratic president to declare an emergency for a liberal political cause.

As most budget disputes go, differences over hundreds of millions of dollars are usually imperceptible and easily solved. But this battle more than most is driven by political symbolism — whether Trump will be able to claim he delivered on his long-running pledge to “build the wall” or newly empowered congressional Democrats’ ability to thwart him.

Predictably each side blamed the other for the stall in negotiations.

“We were, you know, progressing well,” Rep. Tom Graves, R-Ga., said Sunday on ABC’s “This Week.” “I thought we were tracking pretty good over the last week. And it just seems over the last 24 hours or so the goalposts have been moving from the Democrats.”

House Budget Committee Chairman John Yarmuth, D-Ky., countered by saying on the same show, “The numbers are all over the place.”

“I think the big problem here is this has become pretty much an ego negotiation,” Yarmuth added. “And this really isn’t over substance.”

Associated Press writers Hope Yen, Andrew Taylor and Lisa Mascaro in Washington and Julie Walker in New York contributed to this report.

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Top Pentagon official in Afghanistan amid push for peace

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

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Pentagon’s top official made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan on Monday to meet with U.S. commanders and Afghan leaders amid a push for peace with the Taliban.

Pat Shanahan, the recently installed acting secretary of defense, said he has no orders to reduce the U.S. troop presence, although officials say that is at the top of the Taliban’s list of demands in exploratory peace negotiations.

Shanahan said he is encouraged that President Donald Trump’s administration is exploring all possibilities for ending a 17-year war, the longest in American history.

But he stressed that peace terms are for the Afghans to decide. Thus far the Taliban have refused to negotiate with the government of President Ashraf Ghani, calling it illegitimate. Washington is trying to break that impasse.

“The Afghans have to decide what Afghanistan looks like. It’s not about the U.S., it’s about Afghanistan,” Shanahan told reporters traveling with him from Washington.

Later, Shanahan flew to a military base ringed by snow-capped hills where he met Afghan army commandos, who are regarded as the most capable element of the Afghan military. He told reporters the U.S.-trained commandos are increasingly on the offensive against the Taliban.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the administration’s special envoy for Afghan peace talks, said Friday that although talks are in an early stage, he hopes a deal can be made by July. That is when Afghanistan is scheduled to hold a presidential election.

Shanahan, a former Boeing executive who had never been in Afghanistan until Monday, was scheduled to meet with Ghani and other top government officials.

Shanahan took over as acting secretary of defense on Jan. 1 after Jim Mattis submitted his resignation in December. Shanahan had been Mattis’ No. 2.

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Shanahan's views on the Afghan war are not widely known. He said he would use this week's visit to inform his thinking and to report back to Trump.

In testimony before Congress last week, Gen. Joseph Votel, the commander of U.S. Central Command, offered a largely optimistic view of Afghanistan, saying the current maneuvering between U.S. and Taliban negotiators is "our first real opportunity for peace and reconciliation since the war began."

Votel noted that the Taliban are still capable of inflicting significant casualties on Afghan government forces. Just last week the insurgents killed some two dozen Afghan troops in an attack on an army base in northern Kunduz province.

In addition to battling the Taliban, U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan are focused on an Islamic State affiliate known as ISIS-Khorasan, comprised of foreign fighters largely from Pakistan. "Left unchecked," Votel said in his report to Congress, ISIS-Khorasan "will continue to grow as a threat to our homeland."

In his remarks to reporters during his flight to Kabul, Shanahan said that although the Islamic State presence in Syria "has been decimated," local Syrian security forces are needed to ensure stability. He said IS still has a global presence.

"If something hasn't been completely eradicated, there is a risk of it returning," he said.

Trump has taken an ambivalent approach to Afghanistan, saying his instinct upon entering office in 2017 was to withdraw. Yet he chose instead to add about 3,500 troops in 2017-2018 to bolster the U.S. effort to train and advise Afghan forces. After Mattis resigned in December, Trump insisted that he had been unhappy with how Mattis handled Afghanistan. Since then, the administration has said it achieved a tentative "framework" for fuller peace negotiations with the Taliban.

"We do not know whether we will achieve an agreement," Trump said in his State of the Union address to Congress last week, "but we do know that after two decades of war, the hour has come to at least try for peace."

Rap artists and women take center stage at Grammys

By DAVID BAUDER, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Rap artists and women have felt shunned by the Grammy Awards in recent years. But this year, they both took center stage.

Childish Gambino's disturbing look at race relations, "This is America," won record and song of the year on Sunday's telecast. It was the first time a rap-based song won both of those awards, considered — with album of the year — the recording industry's most prestigious.

Kacey Musgraves won top album and matched Childish Gambino with four Grammys total. A year after many women felt left out of the Grammy telecast, they delivered the night's most memorable performances. The best new artist winner, British singer Dua Lipa, also cast major shade on the outgoing recording academy president.

Lady Gaga and Brandi Carlile won three Grammys apiece, and former first lady Michelle Obama was a surprise guest at the top of the show on CBS.

Childish Gambino, the stage name of actor Donald Glover, and another prominent rap nominee, Kendrick Lamar, both declined invitations to perform or attend Sunday's show. Some rap artists feel the Grammys have been slow to recognize how the genre now dominates popular music.

Ludwig Goransson, a songwriter and producer on "This is America," said backstage that he was surprised the victories were so historic. Just listening to the radio, watching the culture and seeing how many rap songs are downloaded is evidence of rap's impact.

"It's about time something like this happened with the Grammys as well," Goransson said.

Cardi B became the first solo woman to win best rap album, although Lauryn Hill was the lead singer of the Fugees, which won the same award at the 1997 Grammys. Cardi B was so nervous accepting the award that she joked, "Maybe I need to start smoking weed."

She looked anything but rattled earlier, when her rendition of "Money" was among the night's performance highlights. Janelle Monae delivered a smoking version of her hit "Make Me Feel"; St. Vincent and

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Dua Lipa's duet on "Masseduction" was steamy; H.E.R. turned heads with "Hard Place"; and Carliie sang an inspired version of her hit "The Joke."

Being part of a big night for women was huge to her, Carliie said backstage after the show.

"I'm a kid from the '90s and Lilith Fair, you know, and those women were just dominating those platforms," she said. "They were dominating those arena and amphitheater stages. They were getting record deals. They were becoming record executives themselves. They completely controlled the airwaves. They were on the radio. And to watch that backslide for the last 20 years has been heartbreaking. Tonight, it gives me hope as a mother of two young daughters."

When she accepted her best new artist award, Dua Lipa pointedly said, "I guess this year we really stepped up."

That was a reference to outgoing Recording Academy CEO Neil Portnow, who said women needed to "step up" when he was asked about the lack of women in top categories in 2018. He later acknowledged it was a poor choice of words and delivered another mea culpa on Sunday's show.

Yet Dua Lipa was rewarded by having her acceptance speech cut off mid-sentence. She wasn't alone, however, as a handful of other artists were also hustled off the stage, and the show seemed disjointed at the end, rushing through its final awards. Under the circumstances, having a lengthy tribute to Portnow before he gave his own speech seemed tone-deaf.

Lipa said later she would have thanked her fans, her inspirations and team if she had more time.

When she was onstage, Lipa was one of a handful of winners who paid special tribute to fellow artists. Another was Drake, whose appearance to accept the Grammy when "God's Plan" won best rap song was a surprise because he's not big on award shows.

He reminded fans and fellow artists that awards are based on the subjective views of others, and aren't contests in which there are clear winners and losers.

"You've already won if you have people who are singing your songs word for word, if you're a hero in your hometown. Look, if there are people who have regular jobs who are coming out in the rain and the snow, spending their hard-earned money to buy tickets to come to your shows, you don't need this right here. I promise you. You already won," he said at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Musgrave picked up album of the year for "Golden Hour," which is labeled country but had wider appeal.

"I never dreamed that this record would be met with such love, such warmth, such positivity," said Musgraves, who performed a stately version of her song "Rainbow."

Dolly Parton starred in the best of the night's two tributes to veteran artists, performing a medley of her songs with Miley Cyrus, Katy Perry and Maren Morris. The highlight of Diana Ross' night was the cute introduction by a grandson with a mountain of hair.

The Grammys took some online blowback by having Jennifer Lopez deliver a tribute to Motown, once the nation's preeminent label for black artists. Despite her hustle, Lopez was outshone by show host Alicia Keys and Smokey Robinson delivering one verse of "Tracks of My Tears" a capella.

Obama appeared on the show's opening with Keys, Gaga, Lopez and Jada Pinkett Smith to describe the role music had played in their lives — seemingly a pointed reference to last year's controversy over women artists.

"Music has always helped me tell my story," Obama said. "Whether we like country or rap or rock, music helps us share ourselves. It allows us to hear one another."

Another ex-White House resident was awarded a Grammy on Sunday. Former President Jimmy Carter, who is 94, won an award for best spoken word recording.

It's his second Grammy.

Associated Press writers Mesfin Fekadu, Nekesa Mumbi Moody, Jonathan Landrum and Beth Harris contributed to this report.

Trump tries to turn border debate his way with El Paso rally

By ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is trying to turn the debate over a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border back to his political advantage as his signature pledge to American voters threatens to become a model of unfulfilled promises.

Trump will hold his first campaign rally since November's midterm elections in El Paso, Texas, on Monday as he faces a defining week for his push on the wall — and for his presidency and his 2020 prospects. Weakened by the disastrous government shutdown and facing a fresh deadline Friday, Trump is trying to convince people that that he'll continue to push to build his long-promised wall, even though there's no way it would be anywhere near complete by the time voters have to decide whether to give him another term.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers were negotiating ahead of Friday's deadline, but on Sunday people familiar with the talks said the mood among the bargainers had grown sour. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private talks.

Acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney said during news show appearances Sunday that another shutdown remained on the table, although he also said Trump probably would be willing to compromise over how much of the \$5.7 billion for wall construction he's demanded would be allocated. "Someplace in the middle," Mulvaney said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Even Trump's full demand is a fraction of the money he needs to complete the barrier he wants. His vision for the wall already has been substantially scaled down since the 2016 campaign, when it was to be built of concrete and span the length of the border and be paid for by Mexico. Now, he's looking to build "steel slats" along much of the 1,900-mile stretch, relying on natural barriers for the rest. The amount of federal funding he's seeking would pay for fewer than 200 miles of new barrier.

The president, who feared a backlash from his most loyal supporters last year if he didn't use the last gasp of unified Republican control in Washington to fight for the wall, isn't expected to provoke another standoff with Congress. West Wing aides have acknowledged there is insufficient support among Republicans to sustain another shutdown fight.

Still, Trump has publicly dismissed the work of congressional negotiators as a "waste of time" and on Sunday said he thinks Democrats want a shutdown to turn attention from the economy and other positive news for his administration. Trump also continued to threaten to flex his executive powers by trying to unilaterally tap into existing federal dollars to build the wall through a declaration of a national emergency or another presidential action.

Any independent moves would face almost immediate legal challenges that even Trump's aides fear will be successful. Still, they reckon it will show Trump as determined to fight for the wall, and figure that voters will blame the courts and Congress rather the president.

For some supporters, that's not enough. California-based conservative leader Mark Meckler, who helped found the tea party movement, said Trump's base voters are done waiting for him to deliver on the wall. He warned that the president risks alienating his strongest supporters unless he "goes to war" with Democrats.

"A political crusade is not enough," Meckler said. "Politicians say stuff. He's either doing it or he's not doing it."

The border debate has also proven to be a drag on the president's support among Republican lawmakers, many of whom don't share the president's zeal for the wall. Last month Trump was forced to surrender the shutdown fight after senators in his party broke ranks amid the increasingly painful impacts of the stoppage. It coincided with mounting intraparty disagreements over the president's policies for Afghanistan and Syria that led to a striking rebuke of them earlier this month led by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

For all of that, though, Trump advisers on the campaign and inside the White House insist, that fulfilled or not, the promise of a wall is a winning issue for Trump. The president has already sought to rewrite the "Build the Wall" chants that were a staple of his 2016 campaign to "Finish the Wall," and will use his rally in Texas to go in-depth on the issue, aides said.

Highlighting their differing view of the electorate, Democrats are likewise adamant that Trump's struggles for the wall are a political boon to them, believing their 2018 midterm election gains in the House proved

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that voters want to block Trump's agenda.

An AP-NORC poll conducted during last month's shutdown found that more Americans opposed than favored building a wall along the Mexican border, 49 percent to 36 percent. Eight in 10 Democrats opposed building the wall and only about 1 in 10 were in favor. Nearly 8 in 10 Republicans favored the wall, while only about 1 in 10 were opposed.

A Trump campaign adviser said the Trump team sees the El Paso rally as less about winning over voters ahead of the 2020 election and more an opportunity to reshape the debate around the wall. The campaign views the rally, which is to take place just a few hundred yards from El Paso's border fence, as an opportunity for Trump to make the case that border barriers work, said the adviser, who was not authorized to discuss campaign strategy by name and requested anonymity.

Trump has repeatedly exaggerated the impact of El Paso's fencing on the city's crime rate, as well as statistics about crime committed by people who have entered the U.S. illegally.

El Paso is home to one potential Democratic challenger to Trump, former Rep. Beto O'Rourke, who unsuccessfully challenged Sen. Ted Cruz in 2018 and maintains an army of small-dollar donors and a large social media following. The campaign adviser, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal thinking, insisted the venue had nothing to do with O'Rourke.

But there was nothing subtle about O'Rourke's response: He'll be joining a march through his hometown to protest a border wall at the same time as Trump's rally.

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

AP Exclusive: Undercover spy exposed in NYC was 1 of many

By RAPHAEL SATTER, AP Cybersecurity Writer

LONDON (AP) — When mysterious operatives lured two cybersecurity researchers to meetings at luxury hotels over the past two months, it was an apparent bid to discredit their research about an Israeli company that makes smartphone hacking technology used by some governments to spy on their citizens. The Associated Press has now learned of similar undercover efforts targeting at least four other individuals who have raised questions about the use of the Israeli firm's spyware.

The four others targeted by operatives include three lawyers involved in related lawsuits in Israel and Cyprus alleging that the company, the NSO Group, sold its spyware to governments with questionable human rights records. The fourth is a London-based journalist who has covered the litigation. Two of them — the journalist and a Cyprus-based lawyer — were secretly recorded meeting the undercover operatives; footage of them was broadcast on Israeli television just as the AP was preparing to publish this story.

All six of the people who were targeted said they believe the operatives were part of a coordinated effort to discredit them.

"There's somebody who's really interested in sabotaging the case," said one of the targets, Mazen Masri, who teaches at City University, London and is advising the plaintiffs' attorney in the case in Israel.

Masri said the operatives were "looking for dirt and irrelevant information about people involved."

The details of these covert efforts offer a glimpse into the sometimes shadowy world of private investigators, which includes some operatives who go beyond gathering information and instead act as provocateurs. The targets told the AP that the covert agents tried to goad them into making racist and anti-Israel remarks or revealing sensitive information about their work in connection with the lawsuits.

NSO has previously said it has nothing to do with the undercover efforts "either directly or indirectly." It did not return repeated messages asking about the new targets identified by the AP. American private equity firm Francisco Partners, which owns NSO, did not return a message from the AP seeking comment.

The undercover operatives' activities might never have been made public had it not been for two researchers who work at Citizen Lab, an internet watchdog group that is based out of the University of Toronto's Munk School.

In December, one of the researchers, John Scott-Railton, realized that a colleague had been tricked into

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meeting an operative at a Toronto hotel, then questioned about his work on NSO. When a second operative calling himself Michel Lambert approached Scott-Railton to arrange a similar meeting at the Peninsula Hotel in New York, Scott-Railton devised a sting operation, inviting AP journalists to interrupt the lunch and videotape the encounter.

The story drew wide attention in Israel. Within days, Israeli investigative television show Uvda and The New York Times identified Lambert as Aharon Almog-Assouline, a former Israeli security official living in the plush Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Hasharon.

By then, Scott-Railton and the AP had determined the undercover efforts went well beyond Citizen Lab.

Within hours of the story's publication, Masri wrote to the AP to say that he and Alaa Mahajna, who is pursuing the lawsuit against NSO in Israel, had spent weeks parrying offers from two wealthy-sounding executives who had contacted them with lucrative offers of work and insistent requests to meet in London.

"We were on our guard and did not take the bait," Masri wrote.

Masri's revelation prompted a flurry of messages to others tied to litigation involving NSO. Masri and Scott-Railton say they discovered that Christiana Markou, a lawyer representing plaintiffs in a related lawsuit against NSO-affiliated companies in Cyprus, had been flown to London for a strange meeting with someone who claimed to be a Hong Kong-based investor. Around the same time, Masri found out that a journalist who had written about NSO was also invited to a London hotel — twice — and questioned about his reporting.

"Things are getting more interesting," Masri wrote as the episodes emerged.

Like Almog-Assouline, the undercover operative the AP exposed in New York, the covert agents who pursued the lawyers made a string of operational errors.

The attempt to ensnare Alaa Mahajna, the lead lawyer in the Israeli suit, was a case in point.

On Nov. 26 he heard from a man who said his name was Marwan Al Haj and described himself as a partner at a Swedish wealth management firm called Lyndon Partners. Al Haj offered Mahajna an intriguing proposition. Al Haj said one of his clients, an ultra-rich individual with family ties to the Middle East, needed legal assistance recovering family land seized by Jewish settlers following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

"I believe you may be a good fit for this challenging task," Al Haj wrote.

The request made sense. As a human rights lawyer based in Jerusalem, Mahajna has defended Palestinian activists and others at the receiving end of the Israeli government's ire. But Mahajna became suspicious as he tried to learn more about the case. Al Haj was cagey about his client and seemed unwilling to provide any paperwork, Mahajna told the AP.

"Not even the basic stuff," Mahajna said. "Usually people flood you with documents and stories."

Mahajna said he was unsettled when Al Haj suddenly offered him an all-expenses-paid trip to London; no one had even asked him whether the case had any hope of success.

"At some point it was abundantly clear that this is not a bona fide approach," Mahajna said.

Ten days later, Masri, the legal adviser in the Israeli lawsuit, received an email offering him a place on the advisory board of a Zurich-based company called APOL Consulting.

Masri became skeptical after he checked out the company's website. Consulting firms typically trade on their employees' intelligence and skill, so Masri expected the company's site to prominently display the names, headshots and qualifications of its staff.

"Here there wasn't even a name of one human," he said.

When Masri turned down the position on APOL's board, the representative who'd contacted him — a man who called himself Cristian Ortega — pressed Masri to see him in London anyway.

"I would consider it a privilege to have a chance to meet you in person for a friendly chat," Ortega said in a Jan. 7 email. "No strings attached of course."

Masri said that by then he and Mahajna had come to believe that Ortega and Al Haj were fictions and that their companies were imaginary.

But they didn't yet know how widespread the covert operations were.

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The undercover agents got a little further with Christiana Markou, the lawyer who is pursuing the Cypriot case against NSO-affiliated entities.

Her lawsuit, like Mahajna's, draws heavily on reports by Citizen Lab that found that NSO spyware had been used to break into the phones of the Mexican activists and journalists who are the plaintiffs in both cases.

Markou told the AP she was approached over email Dec. 21 by a man who presented himself as Olivier Duffet, a partner at Hong Kong-based ENE Investments.

Duffet was ostensibly interested in inviting Markou — a leading data protection and privacy lawyer in Cyprus — to give a lecture at a conference. Markou said she proposed discussing the lecture over Skype, but he insisted on an in-person meeting in London, eventually flying her out, putting her up in a fancy hotel and chatting for a little more than an hour.

Most of the discussion revolved around the proposed lecture — but then Duffet suddenly pivoted to the NSO case, asking her whether she felt the lawsuit was winnable and who was funding it.

Markou said she "gave either incorrect answers or expressly refused to answer" because she found his questions suspicious.

Yet another target, Eyad Hamid, a London-based journalist who wrote a story about NSO, said he was also invited to a London hotel on two separate occasions to discuss his coverage of the Israeli company.

The purported company used in the operation targeting him was Mertens-Giraud Partners Management, which was described as a Brussels-based wealth management firm.

Neither MGP — nor any of the other companies — truly existed. The AP's searches of the Orbis database of some 300 million companies, local corporate registries and trademark repositories turned up no trace of a Swiss firm called APOL, a Swedish company called Lyndon partners, a Belgian company called Mertens-Giraud or a Hong Kong-based firm named ENE Investments. Local phone books didn't carry listings for a Zurich-based man named Cristian Ortega, a Hong Kong-based man named Olivier Duffet or anyone in Sweden bearing the name Marwan Al Haj.

There was no hint of APOL when the AP visited its supposed office not far from Zurich's central train station; tenants said they'd never heard of the company. It was the same story in Hong Kong; a management representative at the Central Building, where ENE Investments was supposedly located, said he didn't know anything about the company. An AP journalist wasn't able to speak to anyone at Mertens-Giraud's alleged office on Brussels' Rue des Poissoniers; the entire building was boarded up for renovations.

At the modern office block in downtown Stockholm where Lyndon Partners claimed to have its headquarters, service manager Elias Broberger said he could find no trace of the wealth management firm.

"It says they are located here," Broberger said as he examined Lyndon Partners' professional-looking website. "But we don't have them in any of our systems: not the booking system; not the member system. We don't bill them; they don't bill us.

"I can't find them."

Who hired the undercover agents remains unclear, but their operational and digital fingerprints suggest they are linked.

The six operatives all began approaching their targets around the same time with individually tailored pitches. Their bogus websites followed the same patterns; all of them were hosted on Namecheap and many were bought at auction from GoDaddy and used the Israeli web design platform Wix. The formatting of the websites was similar; in at least two instances — MGP and Lyndon Partners — it was identical. Even the operatives' email signatures were the same — consisting of three neatly packed, colorful lines consisting of a phone number, web address and email.

The operatives' LinkedIn pages were similar, too, featuring men in sunglasses shot from a distance, facing away from the camera, or at unusual angles — a tactic sometimes used to frustrate facial recognition algorithms.

Despite the indications that the undercover agents are all linked, there is no conclusive evidence who they might work for. An Israeli television channel, Channel 12, broadcast a report on Saturday claiming that an Israeli private investigation firm, Black Cube, had been investigating issues around the lawsuits

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against NSO. The TV channel showed secretly shot footage of the Cypriot lawyer, Markou, and the London journalist, Hamid, which matched the pair's description of their encounters with undercover agents.

The TV segment was critical of the lawyers suing NSO, and quoted NSO founder Shalev Hulio in an interview accusing Markou and her colleagues of pursuing the lawsuits as a "PR exercise."

NSO has previously denied hiring Black Cube, and Black Cube in a letter sent last month to the AP said it was not involved in the effort to ensnare researchers at Citizen Lab. "Black Cube had nothing to do with these alleged events," the letter said, adding that no one acting on the company's behalf did either.

Black Cube does have a possible tie to Almog-Assouline, the man who held the hotel meeting about NSO in New York. During a long-running Canadian legal battle between two private equity firms — Catalyst Capital and West Face Capital — one man caught up in the litigation said he recognized Almog-Assouline because he'd been approached by the same operative under a different identity several years ago.

"I recognized the individual, down to the accent and the anecdotes," said the man, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

In court filings, Black Cube has acknowledged dispatching agents to meet with "various individuals" involved in the private equity firms' feud. But it's unclear if other investigations firms might also have done work connected to the two companies' legal battle.

Black Cube did not respond to repeated questions about whether it had ever employed Almog-Assouline. The firm previously drew international opprobrium for its unrelated work protecting the reputation of disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein.

Almog-Assouline himself denied working for Black Cube when two AP reporters confronted him in New York last month.

He has refused to answer any questions since.

When an AP reporter rang the door at his penthouse in Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Hasharon a week ago, a woman who identified herself as his wife said he wasn't home. When the reporter followed up with a phone call to Almog-Assouline, he said: "I have no interest in speaking to you."

Aron Heller in Ramat Hasharon, Israel, David Keyton in Stockholm, Sweden, Jamey Keaten in Zurich, Vincent Yu in Hong Kong, Sylvain Plazy in Brussels, Josef Federman in Jerusalem and Meneloas Hadjicostis in Nicosia, Cyprus, contributed to this report.

Online:

Documents related to the undercover operation: <https://www.documentcloud.org/search/projectid:42174-Citizen-Lab-Undercover-Op>

Raphael Satter can be reached on: <http://raphaelsatter.com>

Female acts, rap songs win big at the Grammy Awards

By MESFIN FEKADU, AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Women and rap triumphed at the Grammys on Sunday as female acts took home top prizes including album of the year and best new artist, and Childish Gambino made history when his hit "This Is America" became the first rap-based track to win record and song of the year.

Kacey Musgraves' country-pop release "Golden Hour" won album of the year, and British singer Dua Lipa won best new artist — a year after female voices were somewhat muted at the 2018 ceremony and the Grammys were criticized for the low number of female nominees.

Six women were nominated for best new artist, and five of the eight album-of-the-year nominees were women, including Brandi Carlile, who described herself as "a kid from the '90s from Lilith Fair."

"Those women were just dominating those platforms. They were dominating those arena and amphitheater stages. They were getting record deals. They were becoming record executives themselves," Carlile said. But watching those gains "backslide for the last 20 years has been heartbreaking."

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"Tonight gives me hope as a mother of two young daughters," said Carlile, who won three honors in the Americana category and was the most nominated woman with six.

Musgraves and Gambino were the night's top winners, taking home four awards each. "This Is America" also won best music video and best rap/sung performance.

Ludwig Goransson, who co-wrote and produced Gambino's song, said he was surprised a rap song had never won in the past.

"If you listen to the radio or if just you watch our culture or look at the most downloaded and streamed artists and bought albums, you see what's at the top and what people listen to and you see what people get inspired by. It's about time something like this happened," he said backstage.

Gambino's historic win comes years after rappers have struggled to win in the top categories, including Jay-Z, Kanye West and Kendrick Lamar. Drake, who has lost in the big four categories over the years, told the room of musicians that winning awards isn't necessary if you have real fans attending your concerts and singing your songs.

"Look, if there are people who have regular jobs who are coming out in the rain and the snow, spending their hard-earned money to buy tickets to come to your shows, you don't need this right here. I promise you. You already won," said Drake, who won best rap song for "God's Plan."

He tried to continue speaking but was cut off as the ceremony suddenly went to a commercial.

The last time a rapper won album of the year was in 2004 with Outkast. Only a handful of rappers have won best new artist. Cardi B also made history as the first solo female to win best rap album (Lauryn Hill won as a member of the Fugees at the 1997 Grammys).

She was shaking onstage as she tried to give a thank-you speech with her rapper-husband Offset holding her arm.

"The nerves are so bad. Maybe I need to start smoking weed," she said as the audience laughed. "I just want to say thank you everybody that was involved ... I want to thank my daughter."

At the 2018 Grammys, male acts dominated in nominations, and the only woman competing for the top award, Lorde, did not get a chance to perform onstage.

Recording Academy CEO Neil Portnow, who last year said women need to "step up" and later acknowledged that it was a "poor choice of words," seemed to address his 2018 comments during Sunday's show.

"This past year I've been reminded that if coming face to face with an issue opens your eyes wide enough, it makes you more committed than ever to help address those issues. The need for social change has been the hallmark of the American experience, from the founding of our country to the complex times we live in today," said Portnow, who did not seek a renewal on his contract, which ends this year.

Lipa alluded to Portnow's 2018 words when she won best new artist: "I guess this year we've really stepped up."

The Grammys kicked off with a group of powerful women, including Michelle Obama, describing the role of music in their lives.

"Music has always helped me tell my story," said Obama, who surprised the audience with her appearance. "Whether we like country or rap or rock, music helps us share ourselves. It allows us to hear one another."

Gaga, Jada Pinkett Smith and Jennifer Lopez also spoke and stood in solidarity with Obama, Gaga and Alicia Keys, who hosted the show.

"Yes, ladies," Keys said. "There's nothing better than this."

Gaga won three Grammys, including best pop duo/group performance for the Oscar-nominated hit "Shallow," a win she shared with Bradley Cooper. Gaga performed the song solo since Cooper was in London for the British Academy Film Awards.

Dolly Parton was honored and performed alongside Miley Cyrus, Musgraves, Maren Morris and Katy Perry. But the country music icon truly shined when she sang "Red Shoes" with country foursome Little Big Town providing background vocals.

Yolanda Adams, Fantasia and Andra Day teamed up for a stirring performance of "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman" in honor Aretha Franklin, who died last year.

Diana Ross earned a standing ovation when she emerged onstage in a bright red dress to perform "Reach

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Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand)" and "The Best Years of My Life." She celebrated her 75th birthday early with the performance, saying afterward, "Happy birthday to me!" Her actual birthday is March 26.

R&B singer H.E.R., who won two R&B awards, stunned as she played her guitar and sang. Chloe x Halle, nominated for two awards, impressed when they sang Donny Hathaway and Roberta Flack's "Where Is the Love."

Ariana Grande won her first Grammy in the same week that she publicly blasted Grammys producer Ken Ehrlich and accused him of lying about why she was no longer performing at the show.

Beck was a double winner during the pre-telecast, taking home best alternative music album and best engineered album (non-classical) for "Colors." Emily Lazar, one of the engineers who worked on the album and won alongside Beck, was the first female mastering engineer to win in the latter category.

Beyonce, Jay-Z, Ella Mai, Pharrell Williams, Hugh Jackman, Sting, Shaggy, Dave Chappelle, "Weird Al" Yankovic, the late Chris Cornell, Greta Van Fleet and even former President Jimmy Carter also picked up early awards ahead of the live show.

AP Entertainment Writer Jonathan Landrum Jr. contributed to this report.

Online: <https://www.grammy.com/>

Socialist Maduro seeks to raise dollars with appeal to greed

By MANUEL RUEDA, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — When Jose Humberto Vivas needs to trade dollars for Venezuelan bolivars, he usually flouts the nation's rigid exchange controls by turning to illegal currency traders.

But last week, Vivas put a few hundred dollars in his wallet and headed to an exchange house regulated by Venezuela's socialist government, lured by the seemingly improbable prospect of an official rate that is more inviting than the black market rate.

"I haven't been here in years," Vivas said as he stood in line outside Italcambio, a normally lifeless exchange house in downtown Caracas protected by tinted windows and an armed security guard who inspects customers' IDs.

"There's a long wait here . and it takes days to get the money transferred to your account, but it might be worth it," said Vivas, who makes a living from selling dairy products.

Little noticed amid the turmoil unleashed by the opposition's renewed push to oust President Nicolas Maduro, Venezuela's central bank devalued the country's currency on Jan. 28 by 50 percent, eclipsing the parallel black market rate.

The government now buys \$1 for 3,303 bolivars, while the informal market buys them at 3,120 bolivars, according to the website DolarToday. It is the first time the official exchange rate has been higher than that of the black market since currency controls were put in place more than a decade ago, analysts said.

The controls were implemented in 2003 by Hugo Chavez, the late president who initiated Venezuela's socialist system, and have frequently made the simple task of exchanging money into a stressful ordeal that involves searching for illegal currency dealers, logging into websites banned by the government, and sending wire transfers to foreign banks.

But as Maduro's government runs out of hard currency amid an onslaught of international pressure and economic sanctions, it is tacking in a markedly capitalist direction, encouraging Venezuelans to sell their greenbacks to the local financial system.

In a statement issued Jan. 29, the Central Bank described the devaluation as an economic stabilization measure aimed at controlling hyperinflation by undermining the black market.

Analysts called it a desperate gambit to raise hard cash in a country now beset by severe U.S. oil sanctions that could cost the government up to \$11 billion in revenue over the next 12 months. Without one of its most important sources of income, Venezuela will be hard-pressed to purchase food and other imports,

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potentially worsening shortages and deepening its economic collapse.

Russ Dallen, CEO at Caracas Capital Markets, said dollars could now come into Venezuela's empty state coffers through state-regulated wire transfers from the estimated 3 million Venezuelan migrants who have fled the country's instability. Up until now, they have mostly used black market traders to an estimated \$1 billion a year to loved ones, but could be enticed into the official system if the official exchange rate stays favorable.

"They are going for the diaspora dollars," Dallen said of Maduro's administration.

The government is also attempting to gain more dollars from rich Venezuelans and a few straggling tourists who use their foreign credit cards at the official exchange rate, something that would have been unfeasible a few weeks ago.

But the strategy is controversial.

Maduro's opponents argue that selling dollars to the government is tantamount to funding repression. Others say the move will not eliminate the longstanding spread between the two rates, which has often allowed richer Venezuelans to take advantage of the distortion and pocket juicy profits.

Asdrubal Oliveros, an economic consultant based in Caracas, predicts the amount of money the Venezuelan government can raise through currency markets will fall short of what it needs to remedy its financial woes. Strict requirements mandated by U.S. sanctions could also force some foreign banks to stop funding credit card transactions in Venezuela altogether, as Bank of America recently announced.

The government and its state-owned entities currently owe around \$150 billion to creditors around the world, while the country's foreign currency reserves have fallen to just \$8 billion.

Forced to meet interest payments on the few remaining loans and bonds the government hasn't yet defaulted on, the Maduro administration must finance its huge budget deficit by printing even more bolivars, further accelerating prices.

Last year, inflation in the South American country hit 1 million percent.

"Hyperinflation is a fiscal problem," Oliveros said. "If you don't control your expenditures and reduce deficits, you will not be able to tackle it."

Meanwhile, other obstacles could limit the central bank's efforts to raise dollars.

Currently, it takes four days — an eternity in today's Venezuela — for the bolivars purchased at state-regulated exchange houses to be deposited into a person's account. Cash exchanges have been impossible for months due to shortages of bolivar bills.

"Reliability, speed and convenience carry a lot of weight in currency exchanges," Oliveros said.

Last week, dozens of people trying to sell small amounts of dollars and euros at the official rate were turned away from exchange houses after trading was suspended due to a glitch with the central bank's currency platform.

"It's so frustrating," said Adolfo Estanford, a lawyer who had hoped to get \$20 worth of bolivars. He said he needed the money for food and transport.

"Everything here is so improvised," he said. "I feel like I've been made a fool of."

Manuel Rueda on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ruedareport>

'I want her back': A grieving Parkland mom fights on

By KELLI KENNEDY, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — Every morning, Lori Alhadeff makes breakfast for her two boys, gets dressed and sprays on her daughter's Victoria's Secret perfume.

The scent is part of her armor, propelling her through her whirlwind of a day as she fields hundreds of emails and juggles two phones, a constant reminder of why she ran for and won a seat on the local school board, and started a foundation to make schools safer. Why she called out President Trump in a televised, gut-wrenching tirade.

"I smell Alyssa," Lori Alhadeff says, "so I feel like she's more a part of me."

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A year ago, 14-year-old Alyssa Alhadeff was one of 17 people killed by a gunman who stalked the halls of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. And now, her mother keeps up a dizzying pace of advocacy, insisting that it helps her handle the grief, though there is the sense that if she ever allowed herself to stop she would be swallowed whole by sorrow.

"For me, it's honestly still 2/14/18," she says, through tears that often come as she remembers her daughter. "It's not really set in that this is a reality for me. I feel that Alyssa is still coming home. She's at her soccer game and she's still going to walk through this door."

When word of the shootings spread on that Valentine's Day a year ago, Lori rushed to the high school with her husband, Ilan, and best friend, Emily Price. Other students, running from the school, told them Alyssa had been shot.

They split up and went in vain to different hospitals, looking for Alyssa without success. The Alhadeffs spent an agonizing night at a hotel.

The next morning, morgue workers would not allow them to see their daughter. All they would show them was a photo of Alyssa's face.

"That's when I knew with 100 percent certainty that Alyssa was killed," her mother says.

Alyssa had tried to hide under a table in her English class. The gunman, armed with an AR-15 style semi-automatic rifle, sprayed bullets through a window; Alyssa was shot 10 times, in the heart, on the top of her head and in her femoral artery — her "soccer leg," her mom says.

The Alhadeffs would finally be reunited with their daughter as they planned her funeral.

"Her body was really cold," Lori Alhadeff recalls. She tried to warm Alyssa with her hands, "to bring her back to life." She clipped locks of the girl's long, brown hair, to keep.

Seething, she asked her husband to drive her to the park where students and media had gathered. She approached a line of reporters.

She did not know what to say. But she felt compelled to speak.

"A crazy person just walks right into the school, knocked on the window of my child's door and starts shooting, shooting her and killing her," she screamed. "President Trump, you say what can you do, you can stop the guns from getting into these children's hands, put metal detectors at every entrance to the school."

CNN captured the moment live; her rage was so overwhelming, her grief so palpable, that for a moment the shaken anchor struggled to speak. The outburst would be seen worldwide.

After the funeral, Alhadeff's grief quickly turned to action.

A 44-year-old former teacher, Alhadeff started Make Our Schools Safe, aiming to harden schools against intruders and to train students and teachers so they know how to respond. Test scores don't matter, she says, if kids don't come home alive.

She and her husband marched with Parkland students in Washington, demanding gun control. And in May, she was elected to the school board.

"I have to keep pressing forward. I know that I can't bring Alyssa back but ... if I can change the life of one person ... ," she says, her voice trailing off in tears.

Emily Price's daughter Abby was Alyssa's best friend. The two families moved to Parkland five years ago. Their girls shared the same birthday and quickly became inseparable.

Lori, Emily and Abby visited Alyssa's grave on Thanksgiving.

"There's some days that I feel like staying in bed and not doing anything and it just feels like it's the end of the world ... (Lori) is able to draw strength from Alyssa on a daily basis and get up and be a force to be reckoned with," Price says.

Ryan Petty, whose 14-year-old daughter Alaina died in the shooting, says Alhadeff isn't afraid to demand answers from school administrators when other board members are too timid.

"The other board members need to have the courage to stand up and ask the tough questions that Lori has started to ask," says Petty, who lost his own bid for the board.

Her fearlessness is out of character for the petite and normally reserved Alhadeff.

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"That was Alyssa enabling me to use my voice," she says.

Alyssa was in many ways a typical teenager. She loved boys and going to the beach. She excelled in math and Spanish, was a gifted writer and captain of her soccer team. She wasn't afraid to speak her mind.

She didn't have a boyfriend and wasn't looking forward to Valentine's Day. Lori knew that and tucked a pair of earrings and a chocolate bar in a gold bag for her. Alyssa was delighted and Snapchatted about it on the way to school before her mom dropped her off.

"I told Alyssa that I loved her," she says. It was the last time she would see her daughter alive.

Reminders of Alyssa are everywhere: Photos of Alyssa along with her brothers, now 11 and 14. The silver heart necklace Lori wears, etched with a picture of mother and daughter. The stones painted with Alyssa's name, leading up to the front door.

Much of Alyssa's turquoise-colored bedroom remains untouched. Her retainer is still there, as are mementos of teammates and friends. Her yellow soccer jersey, No. 8, hangs on the wall. And her dirty clothes are still in the hamper by the bed.

"I haven't washed them yet because it's too hard," her mother says, crying again.

"I want her back. I want her back."

Associated Press writer Terry Spencer contributed to this report.

EPA decision soon on chemical compounds tied to health risks

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, MICHAEL CASEY and JOHN FLESHER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The chemical compounds are all around you. They're on many fabrics, rugs and carpets, cooking pots and pans, outdoor gear, shampoo, shaving cream, makeup and even dental floss. Increasing numbers of states have found them seeping into water supplies.

There's growing evidence that long-term exposure to the perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl compounds, or PFAS, can be dangerous, even in tiny amounts.

The Environmental Protection Agency is looking at how to respond to a public push for stricter regulation of the chemicals, in production since the 1940s.

A decision is expected soon.

At hearings around the country last year, local and state officials asked the agency to set a maximum level for PFAS in drinking water nationwide. It will take that, officials said, to stop contamination and hold polluting parties responsible.

But it's more than a U.S. problem.

In Europe, Australia, Asia and elsewhere, regulators and consumers are confronting discoveries of PFAS contamination, especially around U.S. military bases, where they're used in firefighting foam.

WHAT ARE PFAS?

Industries use the chemicals in coatings meant to protect consumer goods from stains, water and corrosion.

DuPont says its scientists invented the earliest form of the nonstick compound in 1938. They were impressed with how water and grease slipped off the new substance and how it seemed never to break down — winning it the name "forever compound." Various types soon were on the market, first in Teflon products. Thousands of variants have been produced since then, for a host of uses.

By the 1970s, manufacturers conceded that PFAS were building up in the bodies of employees who worked with them. Recent scientific reports have estimated that nearly all people in the U.S. have some PFAS chemicals in their blood. Studies of workers exposed on the job and people who drank contaminated water, in addition to lab analyses of animals, have pointed to ties between some PFAS types and human illness.

Industries have phased out two of the most-studied versions of PFAS. Manufacturers say newer forms

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are safer and don't remain in the human body as long as older types. Some researchers say too little is known about them to be sure of that.

WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY?

DuPont agreed to a court-supervised public health study after a farmer in Parkersburg, West Virginia, brought a lawsuit blaming runoff from a PFAS facility for the deaths of his cattle. The 2005-2013 study monitored and tested nearly 70,000 people who had been drinking water tainted with PFOA, one of two kinds of PFAS since phased out of production.

The study found "probable links" between high levels of PFOA in the body and excessive cholesterol levels, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, testicular and kidney cancer, and problems in pregnancies.

The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry said last year that medical studies pointed to "associations" between the industrial compounds and those ailments, and also to liver problems, low birth weight and other health issues.

The federal toxicology report also says EPA's "advisory level" of 70 parts per trillion of PFOA and PFOS — the two older, phased-out versions — in drinking water is too weak. Before the report was released, a White House email disclosed by Politico called it a "potential public relations nightmare."

HOW WIDESPREAD IS EXPOSURE?

EPA-mandated testing of about 5,000 of the roughly 150,000 public water systems in the U.S. that was completed in 2016 found dangerous levels of the same two PFAS compounds in 66 systems. Local and state testing since then has identified high levels in scores of additional systems.

Contaminated materials are disposed of in landfills and sewage treatment systems. Firefighting foams are sprayed on the ground. The chemicals seep into soils, waterways, sediments and groundwater; some are incinerated, generating air pollution.

Many states aren't waiting for the EPA, particularly regarding groundwater and, more recently, drinking water.

New Jersey and Vermont are among those that have set standards more stringent than the EPA's; New Hampshire may join them.

New York is considering the toughest standard yet. In December, a state drinking water commission recommended a maximum limit of 10 parts per trillion for PFOA and PFOS. That follows revelations of widespread PFAS contamination in several communities.

Other states are trying to determine the extent of the contamination, according to the National Conferences of State Legislatures. North Carolina lawmakers approved money for monitoring and treatment. Washington state's Department of Health plans to test hundreds of water systems for any trace of the chemicals.

Legislation in other states has proposed things such as banning use of PFAS in food packaging and prohibiting its use in firefighting foam.

Dozens of military installations have been affected. Tests found drinking water contamination exceeding the EPA's health advisory for a lifetime of exposure for two PFAS compounds, PFOS and PFOA.

WHAT ABOUT WILDLIFE?

Unsurprisingly, the chemicals have turned up in a variety of wildlife species, including fish, bald eagles and mink.

Michigan agencies plan to sample a variety of wild game, such as ducks and other waterfowl, for the chemicals. They already test fish and deer. The state issued a "do not eat" advisory last October for deer taken near a marsh polluted with PFAS — probably from a former Air Force base — after one of the animals registered 5,000 parts per trillion in its body.

Michigan, Minnesota and New Jersey include PFAS chemicals in fish advisories, warning people to limit consumption of such popular game species as bass, walleye and brook trout.

"If it's affecting human beings, it will be affecting wildlife as well," said Cheryl Murphy, a Michigan State

University biologist.

The harm to wildlife is unclear, partly because PFAS chemicals don't necessarily accumulate in animals the way other chemicals do, she said. Older, larger fish have higher levels of mercury and PCBs because those contaminants are passed up food chains, from smaller species to bigger ones. But high levels of PFAS are being found in middle-sized fish such as bluegill.

Casey reported from Concord, New Hampshire, and Flesher reported from Traverse City, Michigan,

AP FACT CHECK: Trump claims he's vindicated in Russia probe

By HOPE YEN, CALVIN WOODWARD and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is declaring exoneration prematurely in the Russia investigation.

He's tweeting that Republican Sen. Richard Burr, who chairs the Senate intelligence committee, has "announced" the panel found no collusion or conspiracy between Russia and the Trump campaign during the 2016 election. That's taking it too far. Burr did say in a published interview that he had found no evidence so far of collusion after two years of investigation, but the probe is continuing. Burr also indicated the committee's final report may not even reach a conclusion on the question, leaving it up to the public to decide.

Trump is also taking undue credit for the economy and falsely asserting a sudden turnaround under his watch, claiming job growth from the twilight of the Obama administration as his own.

That overreach, seen in his State of the Union speech and other forums, extends to his boast about the shrinking numbers of people on food stamps. Likewise, a surge in energy production under President Barack Obama ended up on Trump's ledger of achievement.

A look at some of the claims from the past week and the reality:

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

TRUMP: "Senator Richard Burr, The Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, just announced that after almost two years, more than two hundred interviews, and thousands of documents, they have found **NO COLLUSION BETWEEN TRUMP AND RUSSIA!** Is anybody really surprised by this?" — tweet Sunday.

TRUMP: "The mainstream media has refused to cover the fact that the head of the **VERY** important Senate Intelligence Committee, after two years of intensive study and access to Intelligence that only they could get, just stated that they have found **NO COLLUSION** between 'Trump' & Russia." — tweet Friday.

THE FACTS: Trump is overstating it. Burr, R-N.C., did tell CBS that he could not conclude there was collusion during the 2016 election based on the available evidence after his panel interviewed more than 200 witnesses and reviewed more than 300,000 pages of documents. But Burr also allowed that some questions raised during the Russia probe could occupy the committee "for the next decade."

"If we write a report based upon the facts that we have, then we don't have anything that would suggest there was collusion by the Trump campaign and Russia," he said in the interview that appeared Thursday. Burr's comment was similar to what he has frequently said over the last two years. In August, for instance, Burr told The Associated Press that there is "no factual evidence today that we've received" on collusion or conspiracy between Russia and Trump's campaign, but that he's still open on the issue.

Burr's comment last week was not an official declaration on behalf of the committee exonerating Trump of collusion, and the chairman suggested that its final report may not draw a conclusion.

"What I'm telling you is that I'm going to present, as best we can, the facts to you and to the American people," Burr told CBS. "And you'll have to draw your own conclusion as to whether you think that, by whatever definition, that's collusion."

The Senate committee's work is separate from that of special counsel Robert Mueller, who is also probing Russian election interference, questions of collusion and possible obstruction of justice by the Trump campaign.

ECONOMY

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TRUMP: "We have a great economy DESPITE the Obama Administration and all of its job killing Regulations and Roadblocks. If that thinking prevailed in the 2016 Election, the U.S. would be in a Depression right now! We were heading down." — tweet Saturday.

THE FACTS: There's no evidence of a sudden economic turnaround under Trump's watch, let alone one that averted a "Depression."

The economy expanded at an annual rate of 3.8 percent last spring and summer, a solid pace but not out of line with Obama's record. It was just the fastest in four years.

Economists generally acknowledge that growth has accelerated compared with 2016 and 2017, and most partly credit Trump's tax cuts for fueling more consumer and business spending. The economy is on pace to grow at roughly 3 percent in 2018, which would be the first time since 2005 it would reach that mark.

Yet it barely missed that cutoff in 2015, when it expanded 2.9 percent under Obama.

Independent economists expect slower growth this year as the effect of the Trump administration's tax cuts fade, trade tensions and slower global growth hold back exports, and higher interest rates make it more expensive to borrow to buy cars and homes.

JOBS

TRUMP: "We have created 5.3 million new jobs and, importantly, added 600,000 new manufacturing jobs — something which almost everyone said was impossible to do." — State of the Union speech Tuesday.

THE FACTS: That's not what he's done. He's measuring from Election Day in November 2016 rather than when he took office on Jan. 20, 2017.

Since January 2017, the U.S. has added 4.9 million jobs, not 5.3 million. Of them, 454,000 were in manufacturing, not 600,000, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Trump apparently reasons that employers and investors were so encouraged by his victory that they stepped up their hiring and investing right after the Nov. 8 election. But the economy simply does not turn on a dime like that, and Trump did not inherit a mess. zz

Here's what history will record: More jobs were created in Obama's last two years (5.1 million) than in Trump's first two years (4.9 million).

Growth in manufacturing employment began in Obama's second term, when 386,000 of these jobs were added during that term, and accelerated under Trump.

FOOD STAMPS

TRUMP: "Nearly 5 million Americans have been lifted off food stamps." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: The number of people receiving food stamps actually hasn't declined nearly that much since Trump took office or even since he was elected.

In January 2017, 42.7 million people were using food stamps. That declined to 38.6 million in September 2018, a drop of 4.1 million, not nearly 5 million.

Monthly comparisons don't mean much because the numbers go up and down over the short term. A more meaningful measure is how many people were using food stamps, on average, over the course of a year.

By that measure, the food stamp rolls declined by only 1.8 million in the 2017 and 2018 budget years. Even that period, which began in October 2016, includes a substantial drop that happened under Obama. Go back to October 2015, the start of the 2016 budget year, and the drop is 3.9 million.

ENERGY

TRUMP: "We have unleashed a revolution in American energy — the United States is now the No. 1 producer of oil and natural gas in the world." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: That depends on what the definition of "we" is. His claim is true in the unlikely event he was also crediting Obama and other recent presidents who were aggressive about energy production. The government says the U.S. became the world's top natural gas producer in 2013, under the Obama

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administration.

The U.S. now leads the world in oil production, too, under Trump. That's largely because of a boom in production from shale oil, which also began under Obama.

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP: "The next major priority for me, and for all of us, should be to lower the cost of health care and prescription drugs, and to protect patients with pre-existing conditions." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: His rhetoric is at odds with his actions when it comes to protecting people with pre-existing medical conditions. In reality, his administration is seeking in a lawsuit to eliminate such coverage. His Justice Department is arguing in court that those protections in the Obama-era health law should fall. The short-term health plans Trump often promotes as a bargain alternative offer no guarantee of covering pre-existing conditions.

Government lawyers said in legal filings last June that they will no longer defend key parts of the Affordable Care Act, including provisions that guarantee access to health insurance regardless of any medical conditions. Then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions wrote in a letter to Congress that Trump approved the legal strategy.

A federal judge in Texas in December ruled the entire Obama-era law, including coverage for pre-existing conditions, was unconstitutional because Congress repealed its fines on uninsured people. The suit has moved to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. In the meantime, the law's provisions remain in effect. Trump has hailed the initial court ruling as "great" and predicted that it would go to the Supreme Court and be upheld.

Obama's health care law requires insurers to take all applicants, regardless of medical history, and patients with health problems pay the same standard premiums as healthy ones. Bills supported in 2017 by Trump and congressional Republicans to repeal the law could have pushed up costs for people with pre-existing conditions.

IMMIGRANTS-JOBS

TRUMP: "Working-class Americans are left to pay the price for mass illegal migration: reduced jobs ..." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: Employment data suggest that the influx of immigrants helps increase overall hiring for the U.S. economy rather than erode job growth. The trend is clear in the government's monthly jobs report. The statistics don't distinguish between immigrants who are in the U.S. legally and illegally.

Nearly 64 percent of immigrants hold jobs, compared with roughly 60 percent of workers born in the United States, according to the Labor Department. Last year, immigrants accounted for roughly 40 percent of the 2.4 million jobs added.

Because a steady growth in the workforce helps the economy expand, economists say fewer immigrants would equal slower growth and fewer jobs. Falling birth rates and the retirement of the vast generation of baby boomers mean fewer people will flow into the workforce in the coming years — a drag on economic growth, which will, in turn, probably limit hiring.

Many economists have noted that adding immigrants would help maintain the flow of workers into the economy and support growth.

IMMIGRANTS-WAGES

TRUMP: "Working-class Americans are left to pay the price for mass illegal migration: ... lower wages" — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: The weight of research suggests that immigrants have not suppressed wages.

David Card, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley first studied the issue in 1990 by reviewing the arrival of Cuban migrants in Miami during the 1980 "Mariel boat lift." This historical rush of immigrants created a natural experiment to measure what then happened to incomes in the local area.

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He concluded: "The influx appears to have had virtually no effect on the wages or unemployment rates of less-skilled workers."

Giovanni Peri, an economist at the University of California, Davis studied immigration into California between 1960 and 2005. He wrote in a 2010 paper that it had "essentially" no effect on wages or employment of native-born workers.

But many people seeking to reduce immigration rely on research from George Borjas, a Harvard economist. His research found that the arrival of Cubans in the Mariel boat lift caused wages to fall for native-born high school dropouts in Miami. Other economists have questioned his methodology.

In addition, Borjas' findings would apply to a small fraction of U.S. jobholders today, only about 6.2 percent of whom lack a high school degree.

Other explanations for sluggish wage growth go beyond immigration. They include the decline in unionization, an intensified push to maximize corporate profits, growing health insurance costs that supplant wages and the rise of a lower-wage global labor force that in an intertwined worldwide economy can hinder pay growth for Americans.

LABOR FORCE

TRUMP: "All Americans can be proud that we have more women in the workforce than ever before." — State of the Union address.

TRUMP: "More people are working now than at any time in the history of our country. One hundred fifty-seven million people at work."

THE FACTS: Yes, but that's because the population has grown. It's more than doubled since 1950 and, in recent months, it's been increasing by 150,000 to nearly 200,000 per month.

Births are the primary driver of population growth, with immigration also contributing. In 2030, that's expected to change, with immigration overtaking the natural increase from births exceeding deaths.

As for women, the big question is whether greater percentages of them are working or searching for a job than at any point in history. And on this count, women have enjoyed better times.

Women's labor force participation rate right now is 57.5 percent, according to the Labor Department. The rate has ticked up recently, but it was higher in 2012 and peaked in 2000 at roughly 60 percent.

Overall, 63.2 percent of Americans are working or looking for work. That's a few ticks higher than when Trump was inaugurated, when it was 62.9 percent, but far below the 2000 peak of 67.3 percent. The rate has declined partly because of aging, as a wave of baby boomers retire, but even among younger workers it's below where it was nearly two decades ago.

BORDER-EL PASO

TRUMP: "The border city of El Paso, Texas, used to have extremely high rates of violent crime, one of the highest in the entire country and considered one of our nation's most dangerous cities. Now, immediately upon its building, with a powerful barrier in place, El Paso is one of the safest cities in our country. Simply put, walls work and walls save lives." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: That's a distorted picture of El Paso, where Trump is going Monday to showcase his push for a border wall.

El Paso has never been considered one of the nation's most dangerous cities. In fact, its murder rate was less than half the national average in 2005, the year before the start of its border fence. The city has experienced ebbs and flows in violent crime but they have largely mirrored national trends and been under national averages for decades.

BORDER SECURITY

TRUMP: "The lawless state of our southern border is a threat to the safety and security and financial well-being of all America." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: Whether the border is sufficiently secure or not cuts to the core of a heated national de-

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bate, but it's far from lawless. The number of people arrested for crossing illegally has plunged in the past decade and is near its lowest level since the mid-1990s, illustrating a substantial downward trend in the number of migrants trying to sneak in. Border Patrol personnel, detection technology and physical barriers have increased in that time.

LEGAL IMMIGRATION

TRUMP: "I want people to come into our country in the largest numbers ever but they have to come in legally." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: His policy recommendations to date do not reflect this wish.

The plan he proposed upon taking office would have sharply limited the ability of citizens and permanent residents to bring in family, which he derisively called "chain migration." The Cato Institute, which favors more open immigration policies, estimated his plan would cut the number of legal immigrants by up to 44 percent, the largest cut to legal immigration since the 1920s.

According to data from the Homeland Security Department, about 750,000 of more than 1.1 million people who obtained green cards in 2017 — or two-thirds — did so through family relations. Trump's plan called for limiting family-based green cards to spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens and green card holders, a dramatic cut. He's also slashed the number of refugees the U.S. will accept for two straight years and he wants to eliminate diversity visas.

He's talked about switching to merit-based, instead of family-based, immigration and said at times that he wants to make it easier for temporary workers to work and graduates from top colleges to stay in the country. But researchers have said the net effect of his proposals would be fewer legal immigrants.

MIDDLE EAST WARS

TRUMP: "Our brave troops have now been fighting in the Middle East for almost 19 years." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: Trump exaggerated the length of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan began in October 2001, in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks. The invasion of Iraq was in March 2003. The U.S. has been at war for a bit more than 17 years.

Also, he refers to fighting in the Middle East. Iraq is in the Middle East, but Afghanistan is in Central Asia.

STACEY ABRAMS-ECONOMY

ABRAMS, former candidate for Georgia governor, in the Democratic response to Trump's speech: "The Republican tax bill rigged the system against working people. Rather than bringing back jobs, plants are closing, layoffs are looming and wages struggle to keep pace with the actual cost of living.

THE FACTS: The economy is doing better after the introduction of the Trump administration's tax cuts than Abrams suggests. The number of people seeking unemployment benefits, a proxy for layoffs, briefly fell to a five-decade low last month. And average hourly pay is running ahead of inflation.

TARIFFS

TRUMP: "We recently imposed tariffs on \$250 billion of Chinese goods — and now our treasury is receiving billions of dollars." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: This is misleading. Yes, money from tariffs is going into the federal treasury, but it's largely coming from U.S. businesses and consumers. It's not foreign countries that are paying these import taxes by cutting a check to the government.

His reference to money coming into the treasury "now" belies the fact that tariffs go back to the founding of the country. This revenue did not start with his increased tariffs on some goods from China.

Tariffs did produce \$41.3 billion in tax revenues in the last budget year, according to the Treasury Department. But that is a small fraction of a federal budget that exceeds \$4.1 trillion.

The tariffs paid by U.S. companies also tend to result in higher prices for consumers, which is what hap-

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pened for washing machines after the Trump administration imposed import taxes.

DRUG PRICING

TRUMP: "Already, as a result of my administration's efforts, in 2018 drug prices experienced their single largest decline in 46 years." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: Trump is selectively citing statistics to exaggerate what seems to be a slowdown in prices. A broader look at the data shows that drug prices are still rising, but more moderately. Some independent experts say criticism from Trump and congressional Democrats may be causing pharmaceutical companies to show restraint.

The Consumer Price Index for prescription drugs shows a 0.6 percent reduction in prices in December 2018 when compared with December 2017, the biggest drop in nearly 50 years. The government index tracks a set of medications including brand drugs and generics.

However, that same index showed a 1.6 percent increase when comparing the full 12 months of 2018 with the entire previous year.

"The annualized number gives you a better picture," said economist Paul Hughes-Cromwick of Altarum, a nonprofit research organization. "It could be that something quirky happened in December."

Separately, an analysis of brand-name drug prices by The Associated Press shows there were 2,712 price increases in the first half of this January, as compared with 3,327 increases during the same period last year.

The size of this year's increases was not as pronounced. Both this year and last, the number of price cuts was minuscule. The information for the analysis was provided by the health data firm Elsevier.

WAGES

TRUMP: "Wages are rising at the fastest pace in decades, and growing for blue collar workers, who I promised to fight for, they're growing faster than anyone else thought possible." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: This is an unsupported statement because the data on hourly wages for private workers only go back to 2006, not decades.

But data on wages for production workers date back to 1939 — and Trump's claim appears to be unfounded.

Average hourly earnings for production and nonsupervisory workers are up 3.4 percent over the past year, according to the Labor Department. Those wage gains were higher as recently as early 2009. And they were averaging roughly 4 percent before the start of the Great Recession in late 2007.

There are other ways to track wage gains — and those don't work in Trump's favor, either.

Adjusted for inflation, median weekly wages rose just 0.6 percent in 2018. The gains in weekly wages were 2.1 percent in 2015.

ABRAMS-MIGRANT CHILDREN

ABRAMS, in the Democratic response: "We know bipartisanship could craft a 21st century immigration plan but this administration chooses to cage children and tear families apart."

THE FACTS: The cages that Abrams mentions are actually chain-link fences and the Obama administration used them, too.

Children are held behind them, inside holding Border Patrol facilities, under the Trump administration. As well, Obama's administration detained large numbers of unaccompanied children inside chain link fences in 2014. Images that circulated online of children in cages during the height of Trump's family separations controversy were actually from 2014 when Obama was in office.

Children are placed in such areas by age and sex for safety reasons and are held for up to 72 hours by the Border Patrol.

The Department of Homeland Security's inspector general visited five detention facilities for unaccom-

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panied children on the Texas border with Mexico in late June, during the height of the furor over family separations, and found they appeared to comply with detention standards. The government watchdog reported that cleanliness was inconsistent but that the children had access to toilets, food, drinks, clean bedding and hygiene items.

At the height of the family separations, about 2,400 children were separated. Since then, 118 children were separated. Immigration officials are allowed to take a child from a parent in certain cases — serious criminal charges against a parent, concerns over the health and welfare of a child or medical concerns.

That policy has long been in place and is separate from the now-suspended zero-tolerance Trump administration policy that saw children separated from parents only because they had crossed illegally.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

TRUMP: "Human traffickers and sex traffickers take advantage of the wide open areas between our ports of entry to smuggle thousands of young girls and women into the United States and to sell them into prostitution and modern-day slavery." — State of the Union address.

THE FACTS: His administration has not supplied evidence that women and girls are smuggled by the "thousands" across remote areas of the border for these purposes. What has been established is nearly 80 percent of international trafficking victims cross through legal ports of entry, a flow that would not be stopped by a border wall.

Trump distorts how often trafficking victims come from the southern border, according to the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, a global hub for trafficking statistics with data contributed by organizations from around the world.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline, a venture supported by federal money and operated by the anti-trafficking group Polaris, began tracking individual victim records in 2015. From January through June 31, 2018, it tracked 35,000 potential victims. Of those, there was a near equal distribution between foreigners on one hand and U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents on the other.

Most of the labor trafficking victims were foreign, and most of the sex trafficking victims were U.S. citizens. Of foreign nationals, Mexico had the most frequently trafficked.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Josh Boak, Juliet Linderman, Colleen Long, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Ellen Knickmeyer, Jill Colvin and Lolita C. Baldor in Washington, and Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

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El Paso bristles at Trump's claim that wall made city safe

By WILL WEISSERT, Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — People walking over the Paso del Norte Bridge linking this West Texas border city to Mexico can watch President Donald Trump's border wall getting bigger in real time.

Workers in fluorescent smocks can be seen digging trenches, pouring concrete and erecting rust-colored slabs of 18-foot-high metal to replace layers of barbed wire-topped fencing along the mud-colored Rio Grande, which is usually little more than a trickle.

Most of the more than 70,000 people who legally cross four city bridges daily — to shop, go to school and work — pay the construction in the heart of downtown no mind. But on a recent weekday, one man stopped and pointed, saying simply "Trump."

In his State of the Union address, the president said a "powerful barrier" had cut crime rates in El Paso. He's holding a rally here Monday to show why he's demanding more than 100 miles of new walls, costing \$5.7 billion, along the 1,900-mile border, despite opposition from Democrats and some Republicans in Congress.

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But many in this city of dusty desert winds and blistering salsa, bristle at the prospect of their home becoming a border wall poster child.

Trump said barriers turned El Paso from one of the nation's most dangerous cities to one of its safest, but that's not true. El Paso, population around 800,000, had a murder rate less than half the national average in 2005, a year before the most recent expansion of its border fence. That's despite being just across the border from drug violence-plagued Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

Many residents say El Paso embodies a cross-border spirit that transcends walls rather than proving more are needed.

"The richest of the rich, the poorest of the poor, we all have different reasons for wanting to cross, and people cross every day," said El Paso City Council member Peter Svarzbein.

El Paso lays bare the mixed feelings the border inspires. Even native Beto O'Rourke, a former Democratic congressman now mulling a presidential run, says barriers are inevitable but that Trump's calls for an expanded wall are the "cynical rhetoric of war, of invasions, of fear."

O'Rourke will help lead a Monday evening march opposing the wall with dozens of local civic, human rights and Hispanic groups at the same time Trump is holding his rally. Organizers expect thousands to turn out.

"While some try to stoke fear and paranoia, to spread lies and a false narrative about the U.S.-Mexico border and to demand a 2,000-mile wall along it at a time of record safety and security, El Paso will come together for a march and celebration that highlights the truth," O'Rourke said in a statement.

For centuries, virtually nothing but an often easily wadable Rio Grande stood between the city and Juarez. But worsening economic problems in Mexico increased the flow of immigrants into the United States in the 1970s, prompting Congress to approved chain-link fencing here and in San Diego dubbed the "Tortilla Curtain." More barriers were added in the 1990s and 2006.

Public reaction to the security measures initially was positive in some quarters because it helped reduce vagrancy and petty crime. But many residents now complain that Trump's demands have gone too far, making their home sound like a war zone and offending both them and people from Mexico.

"The border is fluid culturally, economically," said Cesar Blanco, a Democratic lawmaker who lives a stone's throw from the wall. "We are a binational community."

Those who live near the wall say they see few people climbing the barriers now. In fiscal year 2017, about 25,000 people were apprehended in Border Patrol's El Paso sector, down from 122,000-plus in fiscal year 2006.

Instead, those crossing illegally now tend to do so outside the city in desolate deserts where deaths from exposure have risen. Democrats argue that electronic sensors and patrols are a more effective answer for additional border security.

The demand for more and bigger walls has become "the supreme symbol of racism," said Fernando Garcia, executive director of the Border Network for Human Rights in El Paso. "Obviously he'll have some people attend his rally," he said of Trump, but "he cannot lie about what we're about."

Many Republicans, though, insist the low crime rate here is not a coincidence.

"There are regular shoot-outs near the border, dangerous narcotics trafficked," said recently elected Republican Congressman Chip Roy, who represents a district between Austin and San Antonio. "The good news is that we can stop this," Roy said in a post-State of the Union fundraising email championing a Trump-backed wall.

The FBI's Uniform Crime Report shows that El Paso's annual number of reported violent crimes dropped from nearly 5,000 in 1995 to around 2,700 in 2016. But that corresponded to similar declines in violent crime nationwide and included times when the city's crime rates actually increased year-over-year, despite new fencing and walls.

The towering barriers don't stop Juarez from almost seeming like another neighborhood in El Paso. From many places, you can see white city buses rumbling on the other side of the border and read green street signs marking that city's major thoroughfares in Spanish. Buildings more than a few stories tall in El Paso have sweeping views of downtown Juarez.

Mickie Subia's single-story home in the historic, downtown Chihuahuita neighborhood is steps from the barrier, providing glimpses of Mexico through fencing and metal slats. She said the wall doesn't make her feel safer.

"We don't have a problem with Border Patrol," Subia said. "We don't have a problem with anyone coming from over there, either."

Dee Margo, El Paso's mayor and a former Republican state lawmaker, tweeted after the State of the Union that his city was "NEVER one of the MOST dangerous cities in the U.S.," adding that border walls are only partly the reason.

"I'm really glad President Trump is coming here," he said in a subsequent interview. "I just hope we get chance to show him what it's really like on the border."

Associated Press writer Astrid Galvan contributed to this report.

Rep Walter Jones Jr. of North Carolina dies on 76th birthday

By GARY D. ROBERTSON, Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Republican U.S. Rep. Walter B. Jones Jr. of North Carolina, a once-fervent supporter of the 2003 invasion of Iraq who later became an equally outspoken critic of the war, died Sunday on his 76th birthday.

The congressman's office confirmed his death in a statement, saying Jones died in Greenville, North Carolina. His health declining in recent months, Jones entered hospice care in January after breaking his hip. He had been granted a leave of absence from Congress in late 2018 and was sworn in for his last term back home.

Jones was a political maverick unafraid to buck his own party. He was one of the first Republicans to reverse direction on the war in Iraq, even as his North Carolina district included the sprawling Marine installation Camp Lejeune.

His ultimate opposition to the Iraq war came with the irony that he instigated a symbolic slap against the French when their country early on opposed U.S. military action. Jones was among the House members who led a campaign that resulted in the chamber's cafeteria offering "freedom fries" and "freedom toast" — instead of French fries and French toast.

Jones said he introduced legislation that would have required President George W. Bush's administration to begin withdrawing troops in 2006 because the reason given for invading Iraq, weapons of mass destruction, had proved false.

"If I had known then what I know now, I wouldn't have supported the resolution" to go to war, Jones said in 2005. Jones took heat for his reversal from GOP colleagues. He ultimately signed well over 11,000 letters to the families of dead troops, describing that as a penance of sorts.

"For me, it's a sacred responsibility that I have to communicate my condolences to a family," Jones said in a 2017 interview with The Associated Press. "And it's very special to me because it goes back to my regretting that I voted to go into the Iraq war."

Jones, who had served in Congress since 1995, had already announced his 2018 campaign would be his last. His death means Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper will schedule a special election to decide who will complete Jones' two-year term in the coastal 3rd Congressional District. State law requires the schedule include primary races as well in the GOP-leaning district. No specific dates are mandated in the law for the elections.

Jones also was a relentless advocate for campaign finance reform and controlling the national debt. The fiscal and social conservative won unopposed in last November's general election after fending off Republican primary challengers stoked partly by Jones' willingness to dissent from the Washington leaders of his party. For example, he voted against the tax overhaul promoted by President Donald Trump and a "repeal and replace" plan for President Barack Obama's health care law.

In a 2018 AP interview, Jones said that he wasn't afraid to oppose GOP leaders "when I don't think

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they're right."

"It's absolutely about principle," he said. "When I leave Congress, I would rather have one thing said about me: 'I will never question Walter Jones' integrity.'"

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a release that Jones' "relentless work on behalf of our men and women in uniform, veterans, military families and caregivers honored our American values and strengthened our country."

"He will be long remembered for his tireless advocacy for eastern North Carolina, which he loved dearly, and for always following his convictions, no matter the political cost," added Republican U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina.

Either Jones or his father, Walter Jones Sr., represented eastern North Carolina in Congress for five decades. The elder Jones, a Democrat, represented the region from 1966 until his death in 1992. Walter Jones Jr., then also a Democrat, lost the party primary to succeed him. He became a Republican and was sent to Washington two years later.

Walter Beamon Jones Jr. was born in Farmville in 1943. He attended Hargrave Military Academy in Virginia during high school and then graduated with a bachelor's degree from Atlantic Christian College — now known as Barton College — in 1966.

He served in the North Carolina state House from 1982 through 1992, where he often clashed with Democratic leaders. He and Cooper were among 20 House Democrats who joined Republicans in toppling state Democratic Speaker Liston Ramsey from power in 1989.

In a statement, Cooper on Sunday called Jones a longtime friend and "public servant who was true to his convictions and who will be missed."

Survivors include his wife, Joe Anne, and a daughter, Ashley. Funeral arrangements weren't immediately announced.

Associated Press writers Jonathan Drew and Martha Waggoner contributed to this report.

Dems' 2020 field now includes Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar

By SARA BURNETT, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar on Sunday joined the growing group of Democrats jostling to be president and positioned herself as the most prominent Midwestern candidate in the field, as her party tries to win back voters in a region that helped put Donald Trump in the White House.

"For every American, I'm running for you," she told an exuberant crowd gathered on a freezing, snowy afternoon at a park along the Mississippi River with the Minneapolis skyline in the background.

"And I promise you this: As your president, I will look you in the eye. I will tell you what I think. I will focus on getting things done. That's what I've done my whole life. And no matter what, I'll lead from the heart," the three-term senator said.

Klobuchar, who has prided herself for achieving results through bipartisan cooperation, did not utter Trump's name during her kickoff speech. But she did bemoan the conduct of "foreign policy by tweet" and said Americans must "stop the fear-mongering and stop the hate. ... We all live in the same country of shared dreams." And she said that on her first day as president, she would have the U.S. rejoin an international climate agreement that Trump has withdrawn from.

Trump responded to Klobuchar's announcement with a tweet mocking her stance on global warming, a phenomenon he has disputed in the past. He wrote that Klobuchar talked proudly "of fighting global warming while standing in a virtual blizzard of snow, ice and freezing temperatures. Bad timing. By the end of her speech she looked like a Snowman(woman)!" Trump often overlooks evidence of record global warming and conflates cold spells and other incidents of weather with climate, which is long-term.

Klobuchar also spoke of the need to "heal the heart of our democracy and renew our commitment to the common good."

Asserting Midwestern values, she told a crowd warmed by hot chocolate, apple cider, heat lamps and

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bonfires: "I don't have a political machine. I don't come from money. But what I do have is this: I have grit."

Klobuchar, who easily won a third-term last year, has pointed to her broad appeal across Minnesota as she has discussed a 2020 run. She has drawn support from voters in urban, suburban and rural areas, including in dozens of counties Trump won in 2016.

She has said that success could translate to other Midwestern states such as Michigan and Wisconsin, reliably Democratic in presidential races for decades until Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton.

She said the country's "sense of community is fracturing" today, "worn down by the petty and vicious nature of our politics. We are all tired of the shutdowns and the showdowns, the gridlock and the grandstanding."

The list of Democrats already in the race features several better-known senators with the ability to raise huge amounts of money — Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Kamala Harris of California, Cory Booker of New Jersey and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York.

The field soon could expand to include prominent Democrats such as former Vice President Joe Biden of Delaware and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

A Des Moines Register/CNN/Mediacom poll conducted by Selzer & Company in December found that Klobuchar was largely unfamiliar to likely Iowa caucus-goers, with 54 percent saying they didn't know enough about her to have an opinion, while 38 percent had a favorable opinion and 8 percent had an unfavorable opinion.

"She starts out perhaps with a better understanding of Midwestern voters, but I think she faces the same hurdles every one of them face, which is: Are Iowans going to find them either the best candidate to defeat Donald Trump or the candidate that most aligns with their ideologies and issues?" said John Norris, a longtime Iowa-based Democratic strategist. "I don't know that coming from Minnesota gives her any advantage with Iowans."

Klobuchar, 58, is known as a straight-shooting, pragmatist willing to work with Republicans, making her one of the Senate's most productive members at passing legislation.

The rally took place not far from the Interstate 35W bridge over the Mississippi. The span was built after the previous bridge collapsed in 2007, killing 13 people. Klobuchar had worked with then Sen. Norm Coleman, R-Minn., to help fund the new bridge and get it completed at a faster-than-usual pace.

"We worked across the aisle to get the federal funding and we rebuilt that I-35W bridge — in just over a year. That's community. That's a shared story. That's ordinary people doing extraordinary things," she said.

Klobuchar's focus in recent months has included prescription drug prices, a new farm bill and election security. She supports the "Green New Deal," a Democratic plan proposed this past week to combat climate change and create thousands of jobs in renewable energy.

But her legislative record has drawn criticism from both the GOP and some fellow Democrats. Some Republicans say Klobuchar is able to get things done because she pushes smaller issues. Some progressives say she lacks the kind of fire and bold ideas needed to bring significant change and excite voters.

Klobuchar on Sunday also responded to reports in BuzzFeed and HuffPost that she has mistreated staff, saying she "can be tough" but has many staff members who've worked for her for many years.

"I can push people. I know that," she told reporters after the event. "I have I'd say high expectations for myself, I have high expectations for the people who work for me, but I have high expectations for this country. And that's what we need. We need someone who is focused on getting things done for this country."

Klobuchar, a lawyer and the former prosecutor in Minnesota's largest county, raised her national profile during a Senate Judiciary Committee last fall for Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh, who was accused of sexually assaulting a woman when they were both in high school.

When Klobuchar asked Kavanaugh whether he ever had had so much to drink that he didn't remember what happened, he turned the question around. He asked Klobuchar, "Have you?"

Unruffled, Klobuchar continued as Kavanaugh asked again. Kavanaugh later apologized to Klobuchar, whose father is an alcoholic.

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"When you have a parent who's an alcoholic, you're pretty careful about drinking," she said. "I was truly trying to get to the bottom of the facts and the evidence."

Among the other Midwestern lawmakers who could also seek the nomination are Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, who has been visiting early voting states, and Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, who established an exploratory committee last month.

Klobuchar campaigned with Democrats in Iowa last fall, and in December spoke to progressive farmers and activists about the importance of bridging the divide between urban and rural areas. She said the lesson learned after the 2016 election was "we are not going to leave the Midwest behind."

"This is the moment for the Midwest," she said, "and we don't want to be forgotten again in a national election."

AP Polling Editor Emily Swanson in Washington contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show the bridge Klobuchar referenced is the Interstate 35W bridge, not the Interstate 35 bridge.

Trump-Kim summit to focus on NKorea nuke complex, US rewards

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — When President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un first met in Singapore last year, there was pomp, there was circumstance, but there wasn't much substance.

Before they meet again in Vietnam on Feb. 27-28, there's growing pressure that they forge a deal that puts them closer to ending the North Korean nuclear weapons threat.

But what could that look like?

Kim may be willing to dismantle his main nuclear complex. The U.S. may be willing to cough up concessions, maybe remove some sanctions. The question, however, is whether what's on offer will be enough for the other side.

Here's a look at what each side could be looking for as Trump and Kim try to settle a problem that has bedeviled generations of policymakers.

DESTROYING A NUKE COMPLEX

The North's Yongbyon (sometimes spelled Nyongbyon) nuclear complex, located about 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of Pyongyang, has facilities that produce both plutonium and uranium, two key ingredients in nuclear weapons. North Korea's state media have called the complex of a reported 390 buildings "the heart of our nuclear program."

After a September meeting with Kim, South Korean President Moon Jae-in told reporters that Kim promised to dismantle the complex if the United States takes unspecified corresponding steps. Stephen Biegun, the U.S. special representative for North Korea, recently said that Kim also committed to the dismantlement and destruction of North Korea's plutonium and uranium enrichment facilities when he met visiting Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last October.

Since fresh diplomatic efforts began last year, the North has suspended nuclear and missile tests and dismantled its nuclear testing site and parts of its long-range rocket launch facility. But destroying the Yongbyon complex would be Kim's biggest disarmament step yet and would signal his resolve to move forward in negotiations with Trump.

There is worry among some, however, that the complex's destruction won't completely dispel widespread skepticism about North Korea denuclearization commitments. It would still have an estimated arsenal of as many as 70 nuclear weapons and more than 1,000 ballistic missiles. North Korea is also believed to be running multiple undisclosed uranium-enrichment facilities.

"We could call (Yongbyon's destruction) a half-deal or a small-deal," said Nam Sung-wook, a professor at Korea University and a former president of the Institute for National Security Strategy, a think tank af-

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filiated with South Korea's main spy agency. "It's really an incomplete denuclearization step" that matches past tactics meant to slow disarmament steps so it can win a series of concessions.

U.S. REWARDS

To get the North to commit to destroying the Yongbyon complex, some experts say Trump needs to make important concessions.

Those would likely need to include jointly declaring an end of the 1950-53 Korean War, opening a liaison office in Pyongyang, allowing North Korea to restart some economic projects with South Korea and possibly easing some sanctions on the North.

Kim may most want sanctions relief to revive his country's dilapidated economy and bolster his family's dynastic rule.

"For North Korea, abandoning the Yongbyon complex is a fairly big (negotiating) card ... so the North will likely try to win some economic benefits," said Chon Hyun-joon, president of the Institute of Northeast Asia Peace Cooperation Studies in South Korea.

At the Singapore summit, Kim and Trump agreed to establish new relations between their countries and build a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. But they didn't elaborate on how to pursue those goals.

North Korea has since complained about the lack of action by the United States, saying it already took disarmament steps, and returned American detainees and the remains of American war dead. The U.S. for its part suspended some of its military drills with South Korea, a concession to North Korea, which calls the exercises dress rehearsal for invasion.

Kim and Moon agreed at the first of their three summits in 2018 to settle an end-of-war declaration. Moon said last month it could ease mutual hostility between Washington and Pyongyang, and accelerate North Korea's denuclearization.

But some worry that a declaration ending the Korean War, which was stopped by an armistice and has yet to be replaced with a peace treaty, might provide North Korea with a stronger basis to call for the withdrawal of 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea.

In his New Year's address, Kim also said he was ready to resume operations at a jointly run factory park in the North Korean border town of Kaesong and restart South Korean tours to the North's Diamond Mountain resort. Those are two of the now-dormant inter-Korean projects that supplied badly needed foreign currency for the impoverished North.

A BREAKTHROUGH?

To make the Vietnam summit a blockbuster, Trump will likely need more than Yongbyon.

A bigger deal would see a detailed accounting of North Korea's nuclear assets, and possibly shipping some North Korean nuclear bombs or long-range missiles out of the country for disabling.

That would be costly. North Korea would likely demand a drastic easing of sanctions and a resumption of exports of coal and other mineral resources.

A North Korean declaration of its nuclear program would provide invaluable information, if verified by U.S. intelligence, to Washington and others. It would offer looks at hidden nuclear fuel facilities and missile deployments, which is why Pyongyang has been reluctant to provide it.

According to South Korean and other assessments, Yongbyon alone is estimated to have 50 kilograms (110 pounds) of weaponized plutonium, enough for six to 10 bombs, and a highly enriched uranium inventory of 250 to 500 kilograms (550 to 1,100 pounds), sufficient for 25 to 30 nuclear devices.

Undisclosed uranium enrichment facilities would up the stockpile.

Because of the difficulty involved, Trump may want to focus on the North's long-range missiles, which could, when perfected, pose a direct threat to the U.S. mainland. But such a partial deal would rattle many in South Korea and Japan, which are well within striking distance of North Korea's short- and medium-range missiles.

If lower level officials can't lay the ground for a bigger deal ahead of the summit, the Kim-Trump meeting could be cancelled, said Lim Eul Chul, a professor at South Korea's Kyungnam University who has advised

the Moon government on North Korea-related policies.

Possible impeachment could further upend Virginia politics

By ALAN SUDERMAN, Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Virginia lawmakers on Monday will reluctantly face the unprecedented prospect of impeaching the state's second most powerful leader as they struggle to address revelations of past racist behavior and allegations of sexual assault roiling its highest levels of office.

At least one lawmaker said he will try to pursue impeachment of Democratic Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax after two women accused Fairfax of sexual assault in the 2000s, a move that experts believe would be a first in Virginia. Fairfax has vehemently denied the claims and called for authorities, including the FBI, to investigate.

There's little sign of broad appetite for impeachment, with lawmakers set to finish this year's session by the month's end. But the Legislature is swirling with questions about lines of succession and the political fallout for Democrats should the governor, lieutenant governor or attorney general leave office, willingly or not.

Gov. Ralph Northam and Attorney General Mark Herring, both Democrats, are embroiled in their own scandal after acknowledging they wore blackface in the 1980s. Northam, a pediatric neurologist, said Sunday that he considered resigning but that he's "not going anywhere" because the state "needs someone that can heal" it.

Northam said on CBS' "Face the Nation" that it's been a difficult week since a racist photo in his 1984 medical school yearbook surfaced, showing a person wearing blackface next to another person in a Ku Klux Klan hood and robe. Northam initially said he was in the photo, then denied it the next day, while acknowledging that he did wear blackface to a dance party that same year.

"Virginia needs someone that can heal. There's no better person to do that than a doctor," Northam said. "Virginia also needs someone who is strong, who has empathy, who has courage and who has a moral compass. And that's why I'm not going anywhere."

The scandals have become a full-blown crisis for Virginia Democrats. Although the party has taken an almost zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct in the #MeToo era, a housecleaning in Virginia could be costly: If all three Democrats resigned, Republican state House Speaker Kirk Cox would become governor.

Political considerations will be key to what comes next. Virginia is among a handful of states electing lawmakers this year, and Democrats had hoped to flip the Republican-controlled General Assembly.

Democratic Del. Patrick Hope said he wants to introduce articles of impeachment Monday against Fairfax, who is black. Meredith Watson and Vanessa Tyson have accused him of sexual assault and offered to testify at any impeachment hearing.

The Associated Press generally does not name people who say they are victims of sexual assault, but both women have come forward voluntarily.

Watson alleges Fairfax raped her while they were students at Duke University in 2000, her attorney said in a statement. Tyson, a California college professor, accused Fairfax of forcing her to perform oral sex on him at a Boston hotel in 2004.

The lieutenant governor issued a statement Saturday again denying he ever sexually assaulted anyone and making clear he does not intend to immediately step down. Instead, he urged authorities to investigate.

"Frankly, we really want any entity with comprehensive investigative power to thoroughly look into these accusations," Fairfax spokeswoman Lauren Burke said. "There needs to be verification of basic facts about these allegations. It feels like something bigger is going on here."

Some political observers said it's possible impeachment would move forward in the House of Delegates — even if the threshold to start the process is remarkably high. However, lawmakers are set to leave town before February ends and may lack the time and resources to immediately take on the complicated issue.

"A clear sign of the depth of LG Fairfax's political crisis is the near-absence of voices in Virginia politics this weekend publicly urging him to remain in office," University of Mary Washington political science

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professor Stephen Farnsworth said in an email.

If the Legislature is in session, the House would need a simple majority to vote to impeach Fairfax, said A.E. Dick Howard, a University of Virginia law professor. The Senate would then review evidence and hear testimony. That chamber would need a two-thirds vote to convict among senators who are present.

Another possibility: Fairfax simply hangs on as he disputes the allegations.

"Before Donald Trump, I would say with this kind of stuff, it's impossible for a person to just hang on, put their head down and ignore it," said Quentin Kidd, a political science professor at Christopher Newport University. "Post-Donald Trump, I think what elected officials are willing to do has changed in some ways. So can he hang on? Certainly he can hang on."

If Fairfax were to leave, it's unclear who could replace him. Northam may try to appoint a Democrat, while Republicans could mount a legal challenge with the goal of getting Senate Pro Tem Steve Newman to serve as both a voting senator and temporary lieutenant governor.

Meanwhile, the attorney general's future is unknown. Herring, who acknowledged wearing blackface at a party in 1980, would become governor if both Northam and Fairfax left office. Herring has apologized but has not indicated he would resign, despite his initial forceful call for the governor to step down.

Asked Sunday for his opinion on his subordinates, Northam told CBS that it's up to them to decide whether they want to stay in office. He said he supports Fairfax's call for an investigation into the sexual assault allegations. Of Herring, he said that "just like me, he has grown."

Northam's pledge Sunday to work on healing Virginia's racial divide was his second in as many days. In his first interview since the scandal erupted, he told The Washington Post on Saturday that the uproar has pushed him to confront the state's deep and lingering divisions, as well as his own insensitivity. But he said that reflection has convinced him that, by remaining in office, he can work to resolve them.

"It's obvious from what happened this week that we still have a lot of work to do," Northam said. "There are still some very deep wounds in Virginia, and especially in the area of equity."

Associated Press reporters Steve Helber in Chilhowie, Virginia; Ben Finley in Norfolk, Virginia; David McFadden in Baltimore; Julie Pace and Michael Biesecker in Washington; Jonathan Drew in Durham, North Carolina; Michael Kunzleman in College Park, Maryland; Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston; and Thomas Beaumont in Mason City, Iowa, contributed to this report.

Warren takes on Trump, says he may not be 'free' in 2020

By JULIE PACE, AP Washington Bureau Chief

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — Back in Iowa as a full-fledged presidential candidate, Democrat Elizabeth Warren took aim at President Donald Trump on Sunday, saying he "may not even be a free person" by next year's election.

The Massachusetts senator also urged fellow candidates to avoid letting Trump define the contours of the election with his personal and provocative attacks.

"Every day there is a racist tweet, a hateful tweet — something really dark and ugly," Warren said as she opened an event in Cedar Rapids. "What are we as candidates, as activists, as the press, going to do about it? We're going to chase after those every day?"

Warren has been a frequent Trump target. Hours after she formally kicked off her campaign on Saturday, the president renewed his criticism of her past claims of Native American heritage. In a tweet, Trump called Warren "Pocahontas" and said he would see her "on the campaign TRAIL."

The White House didn't explain what the president was referring to in his tweet, though some Democrats accused him of making light of the Trail of Tears — the forced removal of Cherokee and several other Native American tribes from their lands in the 1830s. Warren's campaign wouldn't say what the senator believes Trump was referencing.

Warren emerged as one of the Democratic Party's fiercest and most effective Trump critics during the 2016 election, campaigning vigorously for Hillary Clinton. But she's largely avoided talking about Trump

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since she began testing the waters for a presidential campaign more than a month ago, hewing more closely to the populist economic message that has long made her a favorite of liberals.

That shift made her sharp, though brief, shot at Trump on Sunday all the more notable.

"By the time we get to 2020, Donald Trump may not even be president. In fact, he may not even be a free person," she said.

Warren told reporters her comments were a reference to the multiple investigations that have shadowed Trump's presidency. Asked if she supported impeaching Trump, Warren was noncommittal, saying only that special counsel Robert Mueller needs to be allowed to finish his investigation and make his report public.

"If we go down that path, we're going to need to help pull this country together and have as many people as possible understand it was a legitimate process based on facts," she said.

Trump has not been charged with any crimes, but several of his former advisers have pleaded guilty to a variety of charges.

The president's ability to create controversies and drive debate poses a challenge for Warren and other Democrats. While Democrats are eager for candidates to show they can handle Trump's aggression, they also risk overshadowing their own visions for the country if they respond to every attack or provocation.

Warren's campaign launch has been shadowed by the controversy surrounding her past claims to Native American heritage. She's apologized for claiming Native American identity on multiple occasions early in her career.

Trump has frequently taken digs at the senator by calling her Pocahontas, a reference to the native woman who lived in present-day Virginia in the 1600s and agreed to marry an English colonist to help ensure peace and protect her people.

Voters in Cedar Rapids did not ask Warren about the controversy during a question-and-answer session, focusing instead on her stances on issues including tariffs and student loan debt.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, Feb. 11, the 42nd day of 2019. There are 323 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 11, 1990, South African black activist Nelson Mandela was freed after 27 years in captivity.

On this date:

In 1531, the Church of England grudgingly accepted King Henry VIII as its supreme head.

In 1929, the Lateran Treaty was signed, with Italy recognizing the independence and sovereignty of Vatican City.

In 1937, a six-week-old sit-down strike against General Motors ended, with the company agreeing to recognize the United Automobile Workers Union.

In 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Josef Stalin signed the Yalta Agreement, in which Stalin agreed to declare war against Imperial Japan following Nazi Germany's capitulation.

In 1963, American author and poet Sylvia Plath was found dead in her London flat, a suicide; she was 30.

In 1968, New York City's fourth and current Madison Square Garden, located on Manhattan's West Side at the site of what used to be the Pennsylvania Station building, opened with a "Salute to the USO" hosted by Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. (The same evening, the New York Rangers played their final game at the third Garden, tying the Detroit Red Wings 3-3.)

In 1979, followers of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (hoh-MAY'-nee) seized power in Iran.

In 1986, Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky was released by the Soviet Union after nine years of captivity as part of an East-West prisoner exchange.

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In 2006, Vice President Dick Cheney accidentally shot and wounded Harry Whittington, a companion during a weekend quail-hunting trip in Texas.

In 2008, the Pentagon charged Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (HAH'-leed shayk moh-HAH'-med) and five other detainees at Guantanamo Bay with murder and war crimes in connection with the Sept. 11 attacks.

In 2012, pop singer Whitney Houston, 48, was found dead in a hotel room bathtub in Beverly Hills, California.

In 2013, with a few words in Latin, Pope Benedict XVI did what no pope had done in more than half a millennium: announced his resignation. The bombshell came during a routine morning meeting of Vatican cardinals. (The 85-year-old pontiff was succeeded by Pope Francis.)

Ten years ago: The nation's top bankers went before the House Financial Services Committee, pledging to build public trust with greater lending and fewer perks. All-Star shortstop Miguel Tejada pleaded guilty to lying to Congress about steroids in baseball. (He was sentenced to a year's probation.) Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., who first went to Congress in 1955, became the longest-serving member of the U.S. House of Representatives. President Robert Mugabe (moo-GAH'-bay) swore in longtime rival Morgan Tsvangirai (SVAHNG'-ur-eye) as Zimbabwe's prime minister.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama, during a joint White House news conference with French President Francois Hollande, vowed to come down like "a ton of bricks" on businesses that violated Iranian sanctions while nuclear negotiations were under way, and conceded "enormous frustration" with stalled Syrian peace talks. At the Sochi Games, Carina Vogt of Germany won women's ski jumping's first-ever Olympic gold medal.

One year ago: A Russian passenger plane crashed into a snowy field six minutes after taking off from Moscow, killing all 65 passengers and six crew members; investigators would blame human error, saying the pilots had received flawed air speed readings after failing to turn on a heating unit for the measurement equipment. Amid swirling winds, 17-year-old snowboarder Red Gerard won the United States' first gold medal of the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, capturing the men's slopestyle event. Singer Vic Damone, who possessed what Frank Sinatra once called "the best pipes in the business," died in Florida at the age of 89.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Conrad Janis is 91. Fashion designer Mary Quant is 85. Actress Tina Louise is 81. Bandleader Sergio Mendes is 78. Actor Philip Anglim is 67. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush is 66. Actress Catherine Hickland is 63. Rock musician David Uosikkinen (aw-SIK'-ken-ihn) (The Hooters) is 63. Actress Carey Lowell is 58. Singer Sheryl Crow is 57. Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin is 55. Actress Jennifer Aniston is 50. Actor Damian Lewis is 48. Actress Marisa Petroro is 47. Singer D'Angelo is 45. Actor Brice Beckham is 43. Rock M-C/vocalist Mike Shinoda (Linkin Park) is 42. Singer-actress Brandy is 40. Country musician Jon Jones (The Eli Young Band) is 39. Actor Matthew Lawrence is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kelly Rowland is 38. Actress Natalie Dormer is 37. Singer Aubrey O'Day is 35. Actress Q'orianka (kohr-ee-AHN'-kuh) Kilcher is 29. Actor Taylor Lautner is 27.

Thought for Today: "Life does not count by years. Some suffer a lifetime in a day, and so grow old between the rising and the setting of the sun." — Augusta Jane Evans, American novelist (1835-1909).