

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Feb. 14, 2019 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 219 ~ 1 of 47

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Thursday, February 14, 2019

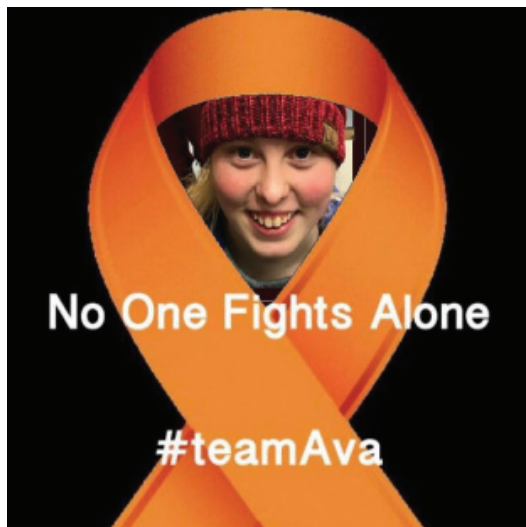
LifeTouch Pictures Groton Area Elementary School,
Groton Area High School

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

- 1- Groton Care & Rehab Help Wanted Ad
- 1- Tunheim celebrate is Saturday
- 2- Lazy Farmers February Meeting
- 2- GDILIVE.COM Games for tonight
- 3- Lawmakers spar over potential reduction in state sales tax rate
- 3- Flowers and Balloons
- 7- Today in Weather History
- 8- Weather Pages
- 10- Daily Devotional
- 11- 2019 Groton Events
- 3



Ava's celebration of life will be on Saturday at 3pm at the Groton High School Gym

HELP WANTED

Director of Nursing



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

Contact Brynn Pickrel



GROTON

CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

1106 North Second Street
605.397.2365

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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OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Lazy Farmers February Meeting

The Lazy Farmers meeting was held Monday the 4th of February at Northern Electric. Faith Flihs lead the club in the US pledge, and Logan Person lead the club in the 4-H pledge. There was one talk which was read by Kayla Lier about parts of a soccer field. Some topics that came up where about-H Fruit sales the next meeting which will be held Sunday the 3 of March we are planning on doing welding and crafts at 1pm and the meeting at 3pm.

Sincerely, Faith Flihs

It's Girls' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



Groton Area Tigers

Thursday, Feb. 14, 2019
8:00 p.m.
at Milbank

It's Boys Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



Groton Area Tigers

Thursday, Feb. 14, 2019
8:00 p.m.
at Langford

Broadcast of these games is sponsored by the

Aberdeen
Chrysler Center

901 Auto Plaza Drive
Aberdeen, SD

800.874.9173

www.aberdeenchrysler.com



Lawmakers spar over potential reduction in state sales tax rate

By: Bart Pfankuch

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit news organization. Find more in-depth reporting at www.sdnewswatch.org.

A debate is raging in Pierre this legislative session over how – and some say even if – taxpayers will see a reduction in the sales tax rate now that South Dakota has begun to collect new money from online retailers.

When it comes to legislative intrigue, the contentious wrangling over the sales tax rate has all the elements of great theater: millions of dollars at stake, intraparty division among the Republican majority, past promises made and fears of future promises broken.

Standing at the center of it all is state Sen. Jeff Partridge, a Rapid City Republican with an imposing physical presence, a deep booming voice and a professional background in finance.

Partridge, who sits on the powerful Joint Appropriations Committee, set the debate in motion in 2016, when he offered a measure now known as “The Partridge Amendment.” The amendment stated that the state sales tax would slowly be reduced if South Dakota won its U.S. Supreme Court case that sought to collect sales taxes from online retailers located outside the state who refused to pay up. For each \$20 million in new tax revenues collected from online retailers, the state sales tax – the main funding source of state operations – would be lowered by one-tenth of one percent a year a maximum of five times.

The amendment was put forth as a balm to fiscally conservative Republican lawmakers who at the time were on the fence about whether to raise the sales tax from 4.0 to 4.5 to get money to help boost the pay of teachers, whose average wage was lowest in the nation. The first vote to raise the sales tax to help teachers lost by one vote in the House of Representatives, and Partridge recalls that his amendment helped push a second vote on the sales tax hike through the House and eventually into law.

“I think there were legislators that were wanting to get us out of last place in teacher pay but had heartburn about raising taxes,” Partridge said in a recent interview. “This amendment was one way to say if we receive the money,



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3 rose bouquet. \$20

6 rose bouquet. \$35

12 rose bouquet. \$50

Also have assorted arrangements.

Starting at \$15.

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we'll lower the rate and so we're not really growing government."

Last summer, the state prevailed in the landmark Supreme Court case against Wayfair and other online sellers, and in November, new sales tax revenues started rolling in.

To follow up on his 2016 promise, Partridge said he met with lawyers in the Legislative Research Council, the group that helps draft legislative language and protects the legality of actions taken by state government.

The result was this year's Senate Bill 86, which strikes all the language in his 2016 amendment and clears up what Partridge describes as "ambiguities" in the process of determining how much new money is being collected from online retailers, what time frame is used to determine if the \$20 million threshold is met and how a sales tax reduction would take place. The measure passed through the Senate on Monday by a vote of 28-6.

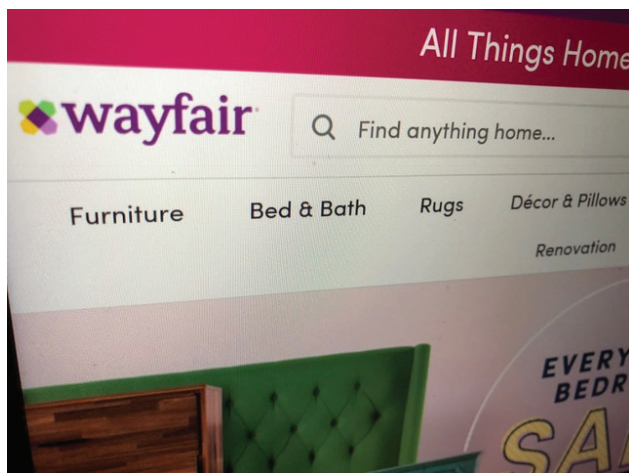
The bill states that the \$20 million must be new money in one calendar year derived as a result of the high court ruling and that the sales tax would be reduced the following year. The bill names the Appropriations Committee as the entity to manage the process in the Legislature.

The sales tax could be reduced by .1 percent a year to no lower than 4.0 percent; sales tax rates charged by municipalities, capped at 2 percent, would not be affected.

In recent committee meetings and in an interview with News Watch, Partridge said his bill simply lays out a legal process for calculating the new revenue and then creating language to reduce the sales tax rate as promised in 2016.

"I am trying to present the very legal and rational approach to enacting my original intent," Partridge said. "It's my amendment and I fully intend to reduce the sales tax rate."

But opponents of Senate Bill 86, including several lawmakers from within Partridge's own party, note that as in all legal matters, the devil is in the details of the bill.



South Dakota lawmakers are debating whether to reduce the state's sales tax rate as collections from online retailers come in. Last year, the state won a U.S. Supreme Court case requiring online retailers to remit sales tax.

Vocal opposition arises

The opponents say the bill language is problematic in that it removes the "trigger" that would require future legislatures to reduce the sales tax. In fact, the measure states that the Appropriations Committee "may" file a bill to reduce the sales tax rate if online collections top \$20 million, rather than it "shall" file such a bill. That verbiage, opponents say, will allow future lawmakers to ignore the promise made in the original Partridge Amendment.

"It leaves it all discretionary into the future," Sen. Lance Russell, a Hot Springs Republican who serves on the Taxation Committee, said at a recent cracker barrel event. "If you think these people have any intention of reducing the sales tax, think again."

Furthermore, some lawmakers have argued that the \$20 million threshold should not be restricted to collections from a single calendar year, but instead should lead to a sales tax reduction anytime the new revenue exceeds \$20 million.

The bill had a bumpy path through three meetings of the Senate Taxation Committee before it passed last week on

a 4-2 vote. At one point, the bill was amended to use the new revenues to reduce the sales tax on food, though that amendment was stripped away two days later.

At the last minute, Russell tried to kill the bill but was rebuffed by the committee.

"This is nothing more than a glorified appeal with a lot of language in it that makes everything very un-

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helpful," Russell said at one meeting. "So, we would have a bill that is nothing more than what I consider nothing."

The political action group Americans for Prosperity South Dakota has taken a strong interest in Senate Bill 86, and opposes the measure at this time, said Don Haggar, a former Republican lawmaker from Sioux Falls who is now state director of the national lobbying group.

Haggar, who testified against the bill in the Senate committee, said the language in the bill, particularly the word "may," provides too much leeway for future legislatures to find justification to not reduce the sales tax as promised in 2016.

"I don't think that carries enough weight," Haggar said. "Knowing legislators the way I do, they're probably more likely not to do it than to honor it."

Haggar also said the process for determining the new online revenues is vague in Senate Bill 86 and does not address complex situations where an online retailer could open a building in the state, or in which a business with a store in South Dakota sees its online sales become dominant. "How do you measure that growth when it's a moving target?" he said.

Haggar said he is working with the Legislative Research Council on a separate measure that could use a so-called vehicle bill – one filed early in the session without language that has its intent language added later – to accomplish his group's goal of upholding the pledge to reduce the sales tax rate. The prosperity group has hinted of bringing the sales tax reduction measure to a statewide referendum if it doesn't believe actions taken by the 2019 Legislature go far enough to ensuring the rate gets reduced.

In an interview, Partridge said the Appropriations Committee is best equipped to make decisions on sales tax projections and any potential reductions in the rate. He noted that if the new revenues came close to \$20 million in one year but technically did not reach the threshold, the committee could still file a bill to reduce the rate.

At one point in the interview, he acknowledged that "current events" could also play a role in the actions future appropriators would take.

"It's integral for them to reduce the tax rate in conjunction with estimates of the revenues based on what else is going on, based on econometrics and potential current events," Partridge said. "Even with the sales tax increase, we continue to have a very low burden on the citizens of south Dakota."

That description doesn't totally jibe with what Partridge, then a House member, said when introducing his initial amendment on the House floor in 2016.

In those remarks, he assured his colleagues the amendment would "bind" future legislators to reduce the sales tax rate.



Sen. Jeff Partridge, R-Rapid City.

"It's a fiscally conservative movement to reduce the rate and give money back to the people and bind legislators of the future to give additional revenue back," Partridge said then.

The .5 percent sales tax rate increased implemented in 2016 raised roughly \$108 million a year, of which about \$68 million went to raise teacher pay and another \$40 million for property tax relief for residents.

Since the debate over Senate Bill 86 began, there has been no indication that the sales tax revenue provided to teachers or for property tax relief would be affected.

A call for flexibility

Sen. Susan Wismer of Britton, the lone Democrat on the Senate Taxation Committee, said in an interview that future legislatures should have some flexibility in determining whether to reduce the sales tax. She said there may come a time when the \$20 million threshold is met, but that the sales tax should not be reduced if money is needed to solve a social services or health care crisis, similar to what the state is now seeing with the closure of nursing homes.

She said the opposition to Senate Bill 86 is rooted among hardline fiscally con-

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servative Republicans who refuse to raise taxes no matter what the consequences are to the residents of the state. "They don't want to acknowledge the cost to society and this state of their refusal to adequately fund education and health care," she said.

Wismer, who voted in favor of Senate Bill 86 in committee, said more moderate Republicans "see the data and understand our terrible rankings in umpteen categories and know that we want to do better, and are willing to take the hard votes to make that happen."

How a lawmaker votes on Senate Bill 86, and whether the sales tax rate ever gets reduced, could also serve as fodder in future election campaigns, not unlike how the vote to raise the sales tax for teacher pay in 2016 came up as an election issue in some 2018 races.

Wismer said lawmakers should put the needs of South Dakotans above any pledge or commitment they made to never raise taxes.

"It's important to our communities, because state government isn't just about a healthy state government, it's about the health of our citizens and we are ignoring the health of our citizens over bragging rights to have the number one business climate and lowest state tax ranking."

Estimates of how much new sales tax revenue will be generated by the remote online sellers vary wildly. Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, state officials said South Dakota was losing an estimated \$48 million to \$58 million a year in uncollected taxes from remote online retailers, though it is unlikely that full amount would ever be collected.

Partridge said he suspects the state will see right around the \$20 million mark per year, though the figure could rise as more retail purchases are made online over time. He added that reducing the sales tax by a tenth of a percent would probably cost the state about \$24 million in lost revenues based on current collections.

Gov. Kristi Noem, who has said she supports efforts to lower the sales tax rate if new collections are high enough, said in her recent budget address that online sales now make up nearly 10 percent of retail sales in the state and that online sales are growing by about 15 percent a year.

"If the state receives a windfall of new revenue due to our new remote seller law, we should return that windfall to the taxpayers," Noem said. "I know there is interest in clarifying this language, and I want to be part of that conversation."

In November, the first month the taxes were collected from remote online sellers who did not voluntarily remit, the state saw only a \$300,000 bump in sales tax revenues, from about \$1.1 million to \$1.4 million. The December figures are due out next week.

However, most lawmakers and officials believe the new revenues will increase significantly starting March 1, when the state activates its Marketplace website that will make it easier for remote sellers to comply with the sales tax laws and enable more online sales activity to take place.

Senate Bill 86 now moves to the House for debate.

ABOUT BART PFANKUCH

Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal. Bart has spent almost 30 years as a reporter and editor.



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Today in Weather History

February 14, 1967: The heaviest snow fell in the central part of the state with Pierre receiving 10 inches with 14 inches reported near Harrold. Elsewhere, 1 to 4 inches of snow was common. Winds of 20 to 30 mph with gusts over 40 mph caused extensive drifting and blowing snow reducing visibilities to near zero at times. Many schools were closed and other activities canceled. Temperatures of 5 to 15 degrees below zero were common the morning of the 15th. A farmer died in the storm near Yale where his car stalled, and he attempted to walk.

February 14, 1979: High winds of 50 mph or greater and snow from a half inch to more than 14 inches moved through the state late on the 14th with winds slowly subsiding on the 16th. Visibility was reduced to near zero at the height of the storm, and no travel was advised. Temperatures fell to 25 degrees below zero with wind chills to 80 to 90 below on the 15th. One man suffered frostbite after being stranded in his truck for seventeen hours. Power was lost at Wall due to high winds snapping power lines together.

1895: The greatest snowfall in the history of Houston, Texas occurred on the 14th and 15th. The Houston area saw 20 inches of snow.

1990: Valentine's Day was a snowy one for many parts of Iowa and Illinois. Five to ten inches of snow fell across Iowa. Six to 12 inches of snow blanketed northern Illinois, and strong northeasterly winds accompanied the heavy snow. Air traffic came to a halt during the evening at O'Hare Airport in Chicago, where 9.7 inches of snow was reported. More than 250 traffic accidents were reported around Des Moines, Iowa during the evening rush hour. An ice storm glazed east central sections of Illinois, causing twelve million dollars damage in Champaign County alone.

2010: Vancouver continues to struggle with above average, non-winter-like temperatures during the first weekend of the 2010 Winter Olympics. In fact earlier this morning, Vancouver was warmer, 48 degrees, than Miami, Florida 45 degrees!

1899 - A great blizzard struck the eastern U.S. Washington D.C. received 20.5 inches of snow to bring their total snow depth to nearly three feet. The storm produced 36 inches of snow at Cape May NJ. (David Ludlum)

1940 - A "Saint Valentine's Day Blizzard" hit the northeastern U.S. Up to a foot and a half of snow blanketed southern New England, and whole gales accompanied the heavy snow stranding many in downtown Boston. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A powerful storm spawned severe thunderstorms in Texas and Oklahoma, and produced heavy snow in the Rocky Mountain Region. Snowfall totals in Colorado ranged up to 27 inches at Telluride. Straight line winds gusting to 104 mph howled through Guadalupe Pass in West Texas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong northerly winds ushered arctic air into the north central U.S. Snow and high winds created blizzard conditions in Minnesota and the Dakotas. Winds gusted to 56 mph at Rapid City SD, and reached 65 mph at Cody WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - While "Valentine's Day" was a soggy one in the Ohio Valley and the Tennessee Valley, unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Seventeen cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Valentine's Day was a snowy one for many parts of the western and central U.S. Five to ten inches of snow fell across Iowa, and 6 to 12 inches of snow blanketed northern Illinois, and strong northeasterly winds accompanied the heavy snow. Air traffic came to a halt during the evening at O'Hare Airport in Chicago, where 9.7 inches of snow was reported. More than 250 traffic accidents were reported around Des Moines IA during the evening rush hour. An icestorm glazed east central sections of Illinois, causing twelve million dollars damage in Champaign County alone. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 - Dallas receives 3 inches of snow, wreaking havoc with Valentine's Day flower deliveries. The greatest snowfall since 1978 caused numerous traffic accidents, power outages and flight cancellations at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

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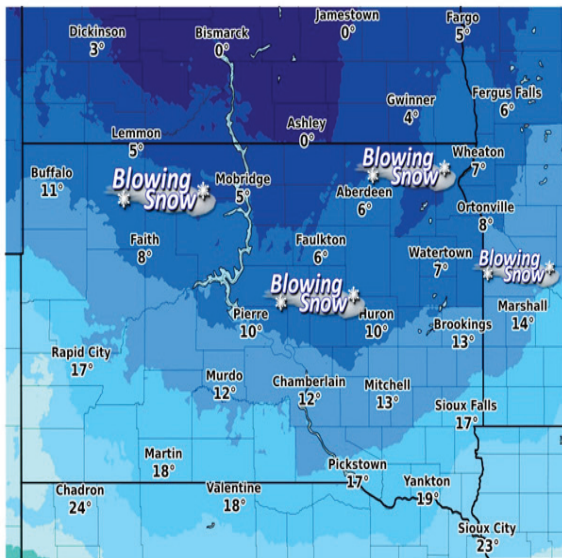
Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Mostly Clear	Cold	Slight Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Chance Snow
High: 6 °F	Low: -19 °F	High: 3 °F	Low: -3 °F	High: 13 °F

Gusty Winds-Blowing Snow Today/Low Winds Chills Tonight

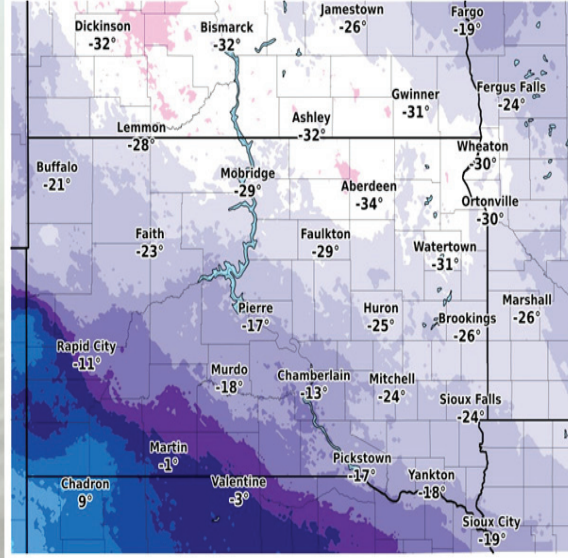
Strong winds will blow light falling snow and existing snow cover, leading to the potential for reduced visibilities of less than one mile at times. Rural areas will be most impacted.

Arctic air and bitterly cold wind chills are expected tonight through early Friday morning.

High Temperatures Today



Lowest Wind Chills Tonight



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 2/14/2019 4:08 AM Central

Published on: 02/14/2019 at 4:12AM

Gusty winds will combine with light falling snow and somewhat fresh snow cover to result in blowing snow today. Visibilities in rural areas may be reduced to less than one mile at times. Cold air and bitterly cold wind chills will settle in over the region tonight.

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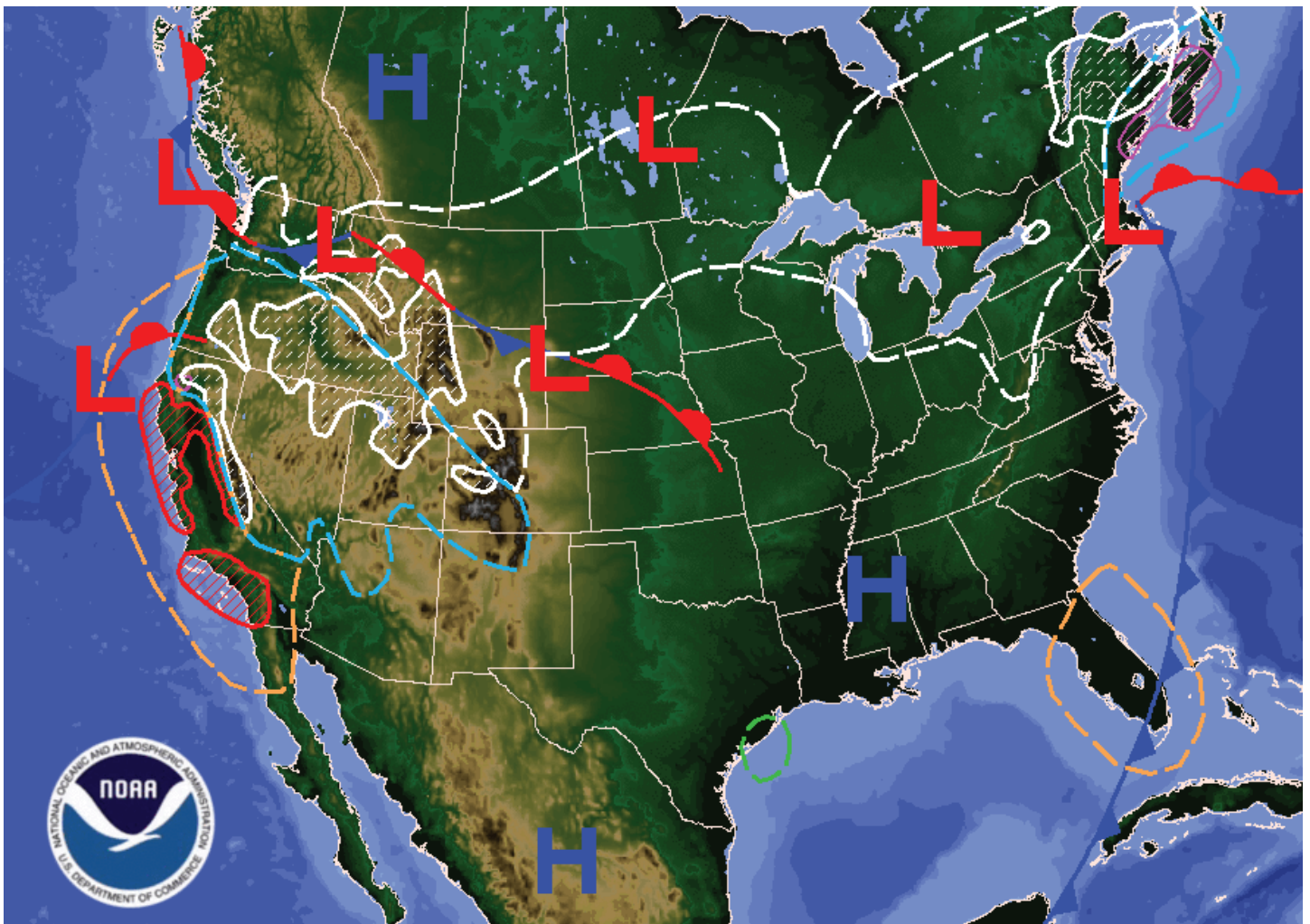
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 22 °F at 1:52 PM
Low Outside Temp: -16 °F at 1:49 AM
High Gust: 20 mph at 2:09 PM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 57° in 1934
Record Low: -30° in 1906, 1936
Average High: 28°F
Average Low: 7°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.21
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.68
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:59 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:36 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Feb 13, 2019, issued 4:46 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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



FEAR OF THE LORD? WHATS THAT ALL ABOUT?

We hear and read of it often. We know that we are somehow obligated to do it. We might wonder if it is something we feel. We may even be curious to know if others recognize it in our lives. We could think that if we go to church, read the Bible, give money to His work, meditate, pray, and witness, we are demonstrating our fear of Him.

I remember as a child fearing my father. And, that fear had many sides to it. I remember fearing his wrath if I disobeyed him, or if he caught me being disobedient to one of his standards. I also recall the fear I had of him finding out if I did not do my best, honor my mother, did not practice the piano, or caused problems at school.

When I understood what he wanted of or from me, and refused to do what he expected of me, that was the source of my fear. I knew that I would eventually have to face him, and knew that when I did, it would be unpleasant. Thats the way it is with God, too.

When we understand what He wants of and from us, and we do or do not do it, thats when and where our fear should begin. And, when we know what He wants from us, and turn from whatever it is that displeases Him, and look to Him for forgiveness, that is when our conversion begins. Turning from evil to God for salvation is the tipping point.

Following conversion comes devotion - which means that we dedicate our lives to wanting to know Him, obey Him, follow Him, serve Him, and fear that we do not dishonor Him by being disobedient. It is only His wisdom that will lead us to obedient, disciplined and righteous living.

Fear is a good thing if it keeps us close to our Heavenly Father

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we fear You because we love You and want to please You. Give us Your wisdom, as well as Your love, we pray. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

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

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News from the Associated Press

Man's death in Sioux Falls attributed to cold exposure

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police say a man found dead under a viaduct in Sioux Falls is believed to have died from exposure to the cold.

The man's body was discovered early Tuesday by someone who knew him. Police spokesman Sam Clemens says an autopsy will be done before a final cause of death is determined, but exposure is the preliminary finding. There are no signs of foul play. The man has not been identified.

It's the second cold weather death in South Dakota this year. A Mobridge woman died in freezing temperatures outside her mobile home in January.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

07-23-24-27-28

(seven, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-seven, twenty-eight)

Estimated jackpot: \$89,000

Lotto America

05-06-18-26-45, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 3

(five, six, eighteen, twenty-six, forty-five; Star Ball: three; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$15.05 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$190 million

Powerball

02-08-14-24-69, Powerball: 26, Power Play: 2

(two, eight, fourteen, twenty-four, sixty-nine; Powerball: twenty-six; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$242 million

Wednesday's Scores

By The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Florence/Henry 46, Great Plains Lutheran 33

Little Wound 81, St. Francis Indian 80, 2OT

Miller 52, Faulkton 50

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

Lawmakers anticipate slight bump in state tax collections

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota legislative budget-writers anticipate they will have slightly more money than previously expected when they set state spending this session.

The Legislature's Revenue Projection Subcommittee recommended Wednesday a general fund revenue projection of roughly \$1.7 billion for the upcoming 2020 budget year that starts July 1. The recommendation is roughly \$5.6 million more than Gov. Kristi Noem anticipated in her budget proposal last month.

Subpanel Chairman Sen. Justin Cronin says the recommendation is "very solid." Governor's office Chief of Finance Liza Clark says it's a conservative estimate.

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The group is recommending a roughly \$1.65 billion revenue target for the current budget year, up about \$3.7 million from Noem's budget plan.

The Joint Committee on Appropriations is scheduled Thursday to debate the recommendations.

Lawmakers will revise the current year's budget and shape the next one this session.

Sports betting in Deadwood? Senate endorses asking voters

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Senate passed a measure Wednesday that would ask voters to allow sports betting in Deadwood, a plan supporters said would help keep the historic mining town competitive as a gambling destination.

The chamber voted 18-14 to send the measure to the House. Republican Sen. Bob Ewing, the bill's sponsor, said backers believe voters should be given the opportunity to decide if they'd like to have sports wagering available in Deadwood.

"Sports betting is and has been happening in our state for a long time illegally," Ewing said. "It is illegal, so let's correct that and make it legal."

The push comes after the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way last year for all states to offer legal sports betting. Revenue Department Deputy Secretary David Wiest opposed the measure in a recent committee hearing, saying regulation costs would exceed revenues generated.

The proposed constitutional amendment would allow the Legislature to authorize wagering in Deadwood and at tribal casinos.

The Senate State Affairs Committee voted 5-4 earlier Wednesday to send a measure that would put a proposed casino complex in Yankton on the ballot to the chamber's floor without recommendation. It will take a majority vote to debate the bill.

Kasi Haberman, Convention and Visitor's Bureau director in Yankton, said the Port Yankton casino and entertainment project is an effort to drive tourism for the city and state.

Opponents included tribes in Nebraska and South Dakota. Yankton Sioux Tribe Vice Chairman Jason Cooke said the tribe's casino employs people and helps support programming including education. Cooke said Port Yankton would be "very detrimental" to his tribe.

The proposed constitutional amendment would ask voters to allow a nonprofit group one gaming license in the southeastern South Dakota city.

SkyWest to serve Pierre, Watertown under federal program

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The federal Transportation Department has chosen SkyWest to provide federally subsidized commercial air service to Pierre and Watertown.

SkyWest will provide six weekly direct round-trip flights between Pierre and Denver and six weekly round-trip flights to Denver that will be shared with Watertown.

The service is to begin in April. It will be under the Essential Air Service program, which subsidizes airline flights to dozens of communities across the county that otherwise would have no air service.

The announcement comes less than a month after California Pacific Airlines stopped service to the two cities.

SkyWest will operate under the United Express brand using 50-seat jets.

Port Yankton casino plan heads to state Senate floor

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A measure to put a proposed casino complex in Yankton on the ballot has narrowly survived its first legislative test.

The Senate State Affairs Committee voted 5-4 Wednesday to send the measure to the floor without recommendation. It will take a majority vote to debate the bill.

Kasi Haberman, Convention and Visitor's Bureau director in Yankton, says the Port Yankton casino and entertainment project is an effort to drive tourism for the city and state.

Opponents included tribes in Nebraska and South Dakota. Yankton Sioux Tribe Vice Chairman Jason Cooke says the tribe's casino employs people and helps support programming including education. Cooke says Port Yankton would be "very detrimental" to his tribe.

The proposed constitutional amendment would ask voters to allow a nonprofit group one gaming license in the southeastern South Dakota city.

Lewis purchases Shopko pharmacy assets in 6 communities

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Lewis Drug says it has purchased pharmacy assets from Shopko Stores in six communities in South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa.

The company said Wednesday it bought prescription files and records from Shopko pharmacies in Madison, Mitchell and Sisseton, South Dakota; Luverne and St. James, Minnesota and Ida Grove, Iowa.

Lewis Drug currently operates in four of the communities and is in the process of opening new locations in Sisseton and St. James. Lewis Drug is also opening a new location in Aberdeen, South Dakota where Shopko ended pharmacy operations in January.

Once the new locations are opened, Lewis Drug will operate 58 pharmacies in the three states.

Man who killed Twin Cities activist sentenced to 20 years

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The man convicted of fatally shooting a Twin Cities activist has been sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Sid Strickland-Green was sentenced Monday for the death of 33-year-old Tyrone Williams last spring. A jury convicted the 28-year-old defendant of unintentional second-degree murder last month.

Prosecutors say Williams and the Strickland-Green knew each other and had argued in the days before the victim was fatally shot outside his mother's house in Minneapolis.

Williams organized and marched against the police killings of black men and in solidarity with Dakota Access Pipeline protesters. Some of the people who marched with him sat with Williams' family during court proceedings. His uncle, Sidney Nevils says his nephew was a rising star in the African-American community and was in the process of changing the community.

South Dakota group wants to rescind Wounded Knee medals

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota group is pushing to rescind medals awarded for the Wounded Knee Massacre following a tweet by President Donald Trump.

Four Directions Inc. sent letters to Trump and other federal officials last week, asking for the removal of 20 medals awarded to soldiers who took part in the 1890 massacre that killed an estimated 250 Native Americans, including many women and children.

The Rapid City Journal reports the group wants language rescinding the medals included in the next National Defense Authorization Act.

Trump made light of the Wounded Knee massacre in a tweet last month. The tweet mocked a video from Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Democratic presidential hopeful Trump has mocked for her claim to Native American ancestry.

South Dakota's congressional delegation also criticized the Trump tweet.

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

Parkland massacre survivors privately mourning anniversary

By TERRY SPENCER, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — The communities and families terrorized by the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School massacre will spend Thursday's anniversary visiting graves, packing meals for the needy and

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contributing to other service projects as they quietly remember the 14 students and three staff members who lost their lives.

Victims' families say they will mourn out of the public eye. The Parkland school will be on a half-day schedule: Stoneman Douglas students will serve breakfast to first responders and will be dismissed nearly three hours before the time the shooting began, about 2:20 p.m. Many say they will avoid school altogether. Students at other Broward County schools will also work on service projects and observe a moment of silence.

A ceremony honoring the victims will be held in a park near the school where students also will prepare meals for disadvantaged children. A nondenominational, temporary temple will open in neighboring Coral Springs, where half the school's students live. Visitors will be allowed to mourn, contemplate, leave mementos and write message on its walls. The temple will remain open until May, when it will be burned in a purification ceremony.

THE FAMILIES

For the victims' families, there is no day without pain, so while Thursday may cut a bit deeper, in some ways it won't be any different than the previous 364 days. The families remain outspoken in their demand that school Superintendent Robert Runcie be fired and against the reinstatement of suspended Sheriff Scott Israel, saying their inaction and mistakes allowed the shooting to happen. Still, most who have spoken publicly say they plan to spend Thursday quietly.

Jaime Guttenberg's family, for example, will visit her grave, while Nick Dworet's will go to the beach where his ashes were scattered in the ocean. Athletic Director Chris Hixon's family is preparing for a race in his honor on Saturday.

"We are going to simply reflect and remember," said Tony Montalto, president of the victims' families' organization, Stand With Parkland. "That is the best thing."

Montalto's 14-year-old daughter Gina died in the shooting.

THE SCHOOL

Stoneman Douglas students will mark the tragedy by working on service projects. They can also receive mental health counseling and visit therapy dogs. Volunteers will provide massages and manicures. Security will be heightened at Stoneman Douglas and throughout the district. Maintenance workers will be kept out of Broward schools to avoid banging and loud noises that might upset students and teachers.

Mickey Pope, the district's chief of student-support services, said the staff worked with mental health counselors, community groups, the victims' families and others for four months to devise a plan that they believe will honor those killed and allow students and staff to mourn.

Many Stoneman Douglas students are skipping school Thursday. For some it's too emotional; others don't want to be in the spotlight.

Jessie Frengut, a senior, said she and friends, including one wounded in the attack, are going to a farm to spend time with animals trained to comfort people with post-traumatic stress disorder.

"It will just be better for us if we do something on our own," she said.

Alexis Grogan, a junior, said she'll spend the day picking up beach trash, dedicating her work to those who died.

"I survived something and I don't want to waste what I call a second chance at life because those who have passed don't get that," she said. "We have to make a difference for them."

THE TEMPLE

San Francisco-area artist David Best began building temples honoring the dead in 2000 at Nevada's Burning Man festival after a protege died in a motorcycle accident. He has since built them worldwide, including in Northern Ireland for those killed in political strife and in Nepal for the 2015 earthquake victims. Like those structures, the Stoneman Douglas temple will be burned.

This creation, "The Temple of Time," represents the indefinite period it will take for the community to come to grips with the slayings. Best rejected naming it "The Temple of Healing" because he said that is impossible for the victims and their families.

It's an Asian design with a spire roof that has intricate designs cut into it.

"It is a big, ornate structure that someone will come and put their faith in. I am the carpenter; I don't

write the doctrine," Best said. "Each person can come in with whatever they have."

Best's regular volunteers — 26 of them came to Florida from around the country — scrambled last week to finish the approximately 1,600-square-foot (150-square-meter) temple. Community members donated their time to help.

Plywood sheets and cedar beams were piled everywhere as the building took shape, meeting Florida's stringent hurricane code even though it will be burned before the storm season starts. Most construction materials and other expenses are being paid by former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's public arts foundation, but neither Best nor his workers are paid.

"The initial reaction (people have) is, 'This is really crazy, why are you burning this? It is really beautiful.' But at the end of the period it usually makes sense to everyone," said volunteer Paul Walker, an English artist who now lives in San Francisco. "The fire is very therapeutic."

Associated Press Writer Kelli Kennedy in Miami contributed to this report.

Find all The Associated Press' coverage marking one year since the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, at <https://apnews.com/ParklandFloridaschoolshooting>

AP Interview: Philippine journalist sees threat to democracy

By KIKO ROSARIO and VICENTE GONZALES, Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The head of a Philippine online news site who was arrested by government agents in a libel case accused President Rodrigo Duterte's administration on Thursday of acting like a dictatorship and using the law as a weapon to muzzle dissent.

"What we're seeing ... is a level of impunity that I frankly haven't seen, and I've been a journalist for more than 30 some odd years," Maria Ressa told The Associated Press on Thursday after posting bail in a Manila court.

Ressa, who was selected by Time magazine as one of its Persons of the Year last year, is the head of Rappler Inc., which has aggressively covered Duterte's administration.

She was arrested Wednesday over a libel complaint from a businessman. Duterte's government has said the arrest was a normal step in response to the complaint and had nothing to do with press freedom.

Rappler said the businessman filed the complaint five years after the article appeared in 2012, and the law under which Ressa was charged by the government, the Cybercrime Prevention Act, did not go into effect until months after the article's publication.

Ressa said the complaint had previously been dismissed by the National Bureau of Investigation and then "magically reappeared" under Duterte's Department of Justice.

She said the case was emblematic of the government's mobilization of the legal system against its critics.

"I've called it the weaponization of the law," she said, noting that she was charged retroactively for an article that was published before the cybercrime law took effect. "I can tell you as a journalist I've worked under dictatorship, and even dictatorships have clearer rules that they follow than where we are today."

Since taking office in 2016, Duterte has openly lambasted journalists who write unfavorable stories about him. He has particularly bristled at critical coverage of his anti-drug campaign, which has left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead and drawn international condemnation.

The article that spawned the libel complaint included allegations that a businessman was linked to illegal drugs, human trafficking and a murder case, citing an unspecified intelligence report.

National Bureau of Investigation agents served the warrant against Ressa late Wednesday afternoon and escorted her from the Rappler office to NBI headquarters, where she stayed overnight.

Ressa called the timing of her arrest "malicious," since she was unable to seek bail the same day.

"It absolutely is part of the big picture of intimidation and harassment," she said. "If the government wanted me to feel that it had power over me, it made that very clear. I couldn't leave."

Duterte previously banned a Rappler reporter from his news briefings after a government agency found

that the news site violated a constitutional prohibition on foreign ownership of media when it received money from an international investment firm. Rappler has rejected the ruling.

Ressa, who has worked with CNN, also was the winner of two prestigious journalism awards last year, a Press Freedom award from the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, and the International Center for Journalists' Knight International Journalism Award.

In its selection of Ressa as a Person of the Year, Time magazine cited her and several other journalists as "guardians" in what it said was an effort to emphasize the importance of reporters' work in an increasingly hostile world.

Ressa said she didn't consider herself special.

"I'm just one person but I'm a journalist and Rappler is an organization of journalists," she said. "Our power emanates from the people where we help. Well, the pillar of democracy is when you have the freedom of the press that gives every Filipino citizen the right to information, to facts. And that allows us to hold the powerful to account."

Rosario reported from Bangkok.

Airbus abandons iconic A380 superjumbo, lacking clients

By ANGELA CHARLTON and JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

TOULOUSE, France (AP) — European plane maker Airbus said Thursday it will stop making its superjumbo A380 in 2021 for lack of customers, abandoning the world's biggest passenger jet and one of the aviation industry's most ambitious and most troubled endeavors.

Barely a decade after the double-deck, 500-plus-seat plane started carrying passengers, Airbus said that key client Emirates is cutting back its orders, and as a result, "we have no substantial A380 backlog and hence no basis to sustain production."

The decision could affect up to 3,500 jobs and already cost plane maker 463 million euros (about \$523 million) in losses in 2018, Airbus said.

The company, a European economic powerhouse, is also girding for serious disruption to its cross-continental manufacturing from a likely chaotic British exit from the EU next month. CEO Tom Enders, however, said Thursday that "We are getting signals that make me a little more optimistic that we'll see a more orderly Brexit." He wouldn't elaborate.

The end of the young yet iconic jet is a boon for rival Boeing and an embarrassing symbolic blow for Airbus. A pall of mourning hung in the atmosphere Thursday at its headquarters in the southern French city of Toulouse — but there was also a hint of relief after years of straining to keep the A380 alive.

"It's a painful decision for us," Enders said. "We've invested a lot of effort, a lot of resources, a lot of sweat ... but we need to be realistic."

It's also sad news for Emirates, which has the A380 as the backbone of its fleet, based out of Dubai, the world's busiest airport for international travel.

When it started taking on passengers in 2008, the A380 was hailed for its roominess, large windows, high ceilings and quieter engines. Some carriers put in showers, lounges, duty free shops and bars on both decks.

Airbus had hoped the A380 would squeeze out Boeing's 747 and revolutionize air travel as more people take to the skies.

Instead, airlines have been cautious about committing to the costly plane, so huge that airports had to build new runways and modify terminals to accommodate it. The double-decker planes started flying in 2008.

The A380 had troubles from the start, including tensions between Airbus' French and German management and protracted production delays and cost overruns. Those prompted a company restructuring that cost thousands of jobs.

Among early detractors of the A380 was analyst Richard Aboulafia of Washington-based Teal Group,

who said its demise "was inevitable."

"But thanks to the strength of the market right now, and the strength of Airbus's other products, the damage will not have a huge impact on the industry," he told The Associated Press. "For Boeing, it has been a very long time since they needed to worry about the A380 as a competitive factor."

Airbus reported net profit of 3.1 billion euros over last year, up from 2.4 billion euros in 2017.

But it also reported losses: In addition to the A380 hit, Airbus reported a charge of 436 million euros on the A400M, used by several European militaries — and another 123 million-euro charge for complying with ethics rules as the company faces fraud investigations in the U.S., Britain and France.

Airbus also acknowledged Thursday that a recent data breach apparently targeted intellectual property. Guillaume Faury, head of Airbus commercial aircraft and future CEO of the overall group, said the company is taking technical and legal measures in response.

Airbus said it forecasts similar profits in 2019, in line with growth in the world economy and air traffic.

It promised airlines that it would still maintain the more than 230 A380s currently in flight, with Faury calling it a "benchmark" for the company even as its death is being programmed.

Emirates said Thursday it had struck a deal valued at \$21.4 billion with Airbus to replace some A380s with A350 wide-bodies and smaller A330 planes.

Emirates has long been the largest operator of the A380. Before Thursday's announcement, it had 162 of the jets on order.

"While we are disappointed to have to give up our order, and sad that the program could not be sustained, we accept that this is the reality of the situation," Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the chairman and CEO of Emirates, said in a statement. "For us, the A380 is a wonderful aircraft loved by our customers and our crew. It is a differentiator for Emirates. We have shown how people can truly fly better on the A380."

Industry experts initially expected A380s to long outlast the Boeing 747, which is celebrating its 50th birthday this year.

But airlines seem to increasingly favor more mid-size planes for regional routes, notably in Asia, instead of the hulking A380s or even 747s, increasingly used as a cargo plane.

Jon Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

School massacre 1 year later: A time to remember the victims

By TERRY SPENCER, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School massacre a year ago renewed the national debate on guns and school safety, turned some victims' parents and surviving students into political activists and at least temporarily ended the local sheriff's career.

But Thursday's anniversary will primarily be about remembering the 14 students and three staff members who died in the third high-profile mass shooting in Florida since 2016. An interfaith service will be held at a Parkland park, near the school, to remember the victims. Students also will perform service projects and observe a moment of silence and a non-denominational, temporary temple will open in neighboring Coral Springs for people to pay their respects. The structure will eventually be burned in a purification ceremony. Security throughout the community and at schools will be high.

"We don't need (the anniversary) to remind us what happened. We live with it every day," said businessman Andrew Pollack, whose 18-year-old daughter Meadow died in the attack. He met with President Donald Trump at the White House after the shooting and became an adviser to Gov. Ron DeSantis and his predecessor, Rick Scott. Other fathers like Fred Guttenberg and Manuel Oliver have become active in Democratic politics.

And victims' relatives from both sides helped lead the successful push to remove Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel. DeSantis suspended the Democratic sheriff last month, citing incompetence in his handling of the shooting. Israel is fighting the suspension in the state Senate and says he will try to win back the office in next year's election.

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The massacre also led some Stoneman Douglas students to form the group "March for Our Lives," which holds rallies nationwide calling for tougher gun regulations and toured the country registering young adults to vote.

"It was the kids themselves that made Parkland an unusual shooting," said Adam Winkler, a professor at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law and gun rights expert. Just in Florida, 49 people died in the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando and five died at Fort Lauderdale's airport in 2017. There have been other notable mass shootings across the country during that period — at a Las Vegas concert, a Pittsburgh synagogue and a Texas high school. But none resonated politically like Stoneman Douglas.

"What we haven't seen is a mobilization of the students in quite the same way," Winkler said.

But Thursday will be mostly a day to push aside politics. Victims' families who have spoken publicly say they will spend the day quietly, visiting their loved one's grave or participating in low-key events like a community walk.

"We are going to simply reflect and remember," said Tony Montalto, president of the victims' families' organization, Stand With Parkland. "That is the best thing." Montalto's 14-year-old daughter Gina died in the shooting.

At Stoneman Douglas, students will mark the tragedy by working on service projects. They also can receive mental health counseling and visit therapy dogs. Volunteers will provide massages and manicures.

Mickey Pope, the district's chief of student-support services, said the staff worked with mental health counselors, community groups, the victims' families and others for four months to devise a plan they believe will honor those killed and allow students and staff to mourn.

Still, many Stoneman Douglas students are skipping school. For some it's too emotional; others don't want to be in the spotlight.

Alexis Grogan, a junior, said she'll spend the day picking up beach trash, dedicating her work to those who died.

"I survived something and I don't want to waste what I call a second chance at life because those who have passed don't get that," she said. "We have to make a difference for them."

In Coral Springs, San Francisco-area artist David Best will open "The Temple of Time," which at 1,600 square feet (150 square meters) represents the indefinite period it will take for the community to come to grips with the slayings. It's an Asian design with a spire roof that has intricate designs cut into it.

Best rejected naming it "The Temple of Healing" because he said that is impossible for the victims and their families. Since 2000, he has built such temples worldwide, including in Northern Ireland for those killed in political strife and in Nepal for the 2015 earthquake victims. Like those structures, the Stoneman Douglas temple will be burned along with whatever mementos, writings and art that mourners leave behind. That ceremony will happen in May.

Most construction materials and other expenses are being paid by former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's public arts foundation, but neither Best nor his workers are paid.

"When the smoke goes up and the flames go up, it will have a great meaning," said volunteer Tony Bianco, an Army veteran and artist from Coral Gables,

Associated Press Writers Kelli Kennedy in Fort Lauderdale and Lisa Marie Pane in Boise, Idaho, contributed to this report.

Find all The Associated Press' coverage marking one year since the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, at <https://apnews.com/ParklandFloridaschoolshooting>

US says ex-intel official defected to Iran, revealed secrets

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former U.S. Air Force counterintelligence specialist who defected to Iran despite warnings from the FBI has been charged with revealing classified information to the Tehran government,

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including the code name and secret mission of a Pentagon program, prosecutors said.

The Justice Department also accused Monica Elfriede Witt, 39, of betraying former colleagues in the U.S. intelligence community by feeding details about their personal and professional lives to Iran. Four hackers linked to the Iranian government, charged in the same indictment, used that information to target the intelligence workers online, prosecutors said Wednesday.

Witt had been on the FBI's radar at least a year before she defected after she attended an Iranian conference and appeared in anti-American videos. She was warned about her activities, but told agents that she would not provide sensitive information about her work if she returned to Iran, prosecutors say. She was not arrested at the time.

"Once a holder of a top secret security clearance, Monica Witt actively sought opportunities to undermine the United States and support the government of Iran — a country which poses a serious threat to our national security," said FBI executive assistant director Jay Tabb, the bureau's top national security official.

Tabb said "she provided information that could cause serious damage to national security," though he did not provide specifics.

Witt remains at large in Iran, as do the four hackers, who prosecutors say were acting on behalf of the country's powerful, government-linked Revolutionary Guard. That group, a branch of Iran's armed forces, has previously been designated by the U.S. government as a terrorism supporter.

The indictment was unsealed the same week as Iran celebrates the 40th anniversary of its Islamic Revolution and as the country denounced a Middle East security conference in Warsaw co-hosted by the U.S. and Poland. Officials said the indictment's timing was unconnected to the meeting.

Witt served in the Air Force between 1997 and 2008, where she was trained in the Farsi language and was deployed overseas on classified counterintelligence missions, including to the Middle East. She later found work as a Defense Department contractor. The Texas native defected to Iran in 2013 after being invited to two all-expense-paid conferences in the country that the Justice Department says promoted anti-Western propaganda and condemned American moral standards.

The Treasury Department on Wednesday sanctioned the New Horizon Organization, which organized the conferences Witt attended and hosts events that American officials say promote Holocaust denial, conspiracy theories and also serve as a platform to recruit and collect intelligence from attendees.

Witt first traveled to a "Hollywoodism" conference in 2012, when she appeared in Iranian television videos in which she was identified as a former U.S. service member with critical views of America. She was then warned by FBI agents that she was a potential recruitment target for Iranian intelligence.

"She chose not to heed our warning that travel to Iran could potentially make her susceptible to recruitment," Tabb said. "She continued to travel."

Later that year, she was hired by an individual — who is not named in the indictment but who professed to have ties to high-level officials — to help in the filming of an anti-American propaganda commercial.

She returned to another conference in 2013 and remained in Iran. This time, with free housing and computer equipment, she went to work for the Iranians, supplying information about a classified Defense Department program and assembling into "target packages" research she conducted into the lives, locations and missions of former colleagues, the indictment said.

The accused hackers exploited that research, contacting Witt's former colleagues through impostor Facebook and email accounts. Their goal was to induce the targets to click on links and attachments containing malicious software that, if opened, could compromise their computers and networks.

The case was unsealed soon after the Justice Department freed from custody an American-born Iranian television anchorwoman who'd been detained for days by the FBI as a material witness in an unspecified criminal investigation in Washington, where the Witt indictment was filed. Marzieh Hashemi works for the Press TV network's English-language service. She has not been charged with any crimes. Justice Department officials wouldn't say if the investigations were connected.

The indictment includes snippets of dialogue between Witt and the person who hired her, identified only as Individual A.

In 2012, for instance, the person wrote her, "should i thank the sec of defense...u were well trained. Witt replied with a smiley emoticon, "LOL thank the sec of defense? For me? Well, I loved the work, and I am endeavoring to put the training I received to good use instead of evil. Thanks for giving me the opportunity," the indictment says.

Using a typed smiley-face, Witt wrote in a later message, "If all else fails, I just may go public with a program and do like Snowden" — a reference to Edward Snowden, a former NSA contractor who leaked classified U.S. information.

Officials would not elaborate on why the indictment was brought six years after her detection, except to say they had to move classified intelligence into an unclassified format for use in a criminal case.

"Our intelligence professionals swear an oath to protect our country, and we trust them to uphold their oath. With good reason," said Assistant Attorney General John Demers, the head of the Justice Department's national security division. "But every great while, one of these trusted people fails us."

Associated Press writer Jamie Stengle in Dallas and AP researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Judge finds Manafort lied to investigators in Russia probe

By CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort intentionally lied to investigators and a federal grand jury in the special counsel's Russia probe, a judge has ruled.

U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson's decision was another loss for Manafort, a once-wealthy political consultant who rose to lead Donald Trump's 2016 campaign and now faces years in prison in two criminal cases brought in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation.

The four-page ruling hurts Manafort's chance of receiving a reduced sentence, though Jackson said she would decide the exact impact during his sentencing next month. It also resolves a dispute that had provided new insight into how Mueller views Manafort's actions as part of the broader probe of Russian election interference and any possible coordination with Trump associates.

Prosecutors have made clear that they remain deeply interested in Manafort's interactions with a man the FBI says has ties to Russian intelligence. But it's unclear exactly what has drawn their attention and whether it relates to election interference because much of the dispute has played out in secret court hearings and blacked out court filings.

In her ruling Wednesday, Jackson provided few new details as she found there was sufficient evidence to say Manafort broke the terms of his plea agreement by lying about three of five matters that prosecutors had singled out. The ruling was largely a rejection of Manafort's attorneys' argument that he hadn't intentionally misled investigators but rather forgot some details until his memory was refreshed.

The judge found that Manafort did mislead the FBI, prosecutors and a federal grand jury about his interactions with Konstantin Kilimnik, the co-defendant who the FBI says has ties to Russian intelligence. Prosecutors had accused Manafort of lying about several discussions the two men had including about a possible peace plan to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict in Crimea.

During a sealed hearing last week, Mueller prosecutor Andrew Weissmann said one of the discussions—an Aug. 2, 2016, meeting at the Grand Havana Room club and cigar bar in New York—went to the "larger view of what we think is going on" and what "we think the motive here is."

"This goes, I think, very much to the heart of what the Special Counsel's Office is investigating," Weissmann said, according to a redacted transcript of the hearing. He added: "That meeting and what happened at that meeting is of significance to the special counsel."

The meeting occurred while Manafort was still in a high-ranking role in the Trump campaign. Rick Gates, Manafort's longtime deputy and also a Trump campaign aide, attended. And prosecutors say the three men left separately so as not to draw attention to their meeting.

Weissmann said investigators were also interested in several other meetings between Kilimnik and

Manafort including when Kilimnik traveled to Washington for Trump's inauguration in January 2017. And Manafort's attorneys accidentally revealed weeks ago that prosecutors believe Manafort shared polling data with Kilimnik during the 2016 presidential campaign.

On Wednesday, Jackson found that in addition to his interactions with Kilimnik, there was sufficient evidence that Manafort had lied about a payment to a law firm representing him and about an undisclosed Justice Department investigation.

But she found there wasn't enough evidence to back up two other allegations. The judge said prosecutors failed to show Manafort intentionally lied about Kilimnik's role in witness tampering or about Manafort's contacts with the Trump administration in 2017 and 2018.

Kilimnik, who lives in Russia, was charged alongside Manafort with conspiracy and obstruction of justice. He has yet to appear in a U.S. court to face the charges.

Manafort's sentencing is set for March 13. He faces up to five years in prison on two felony charges stemming from illegal lobbying he performed on behalf of Ukrainian political interests.

Separately, he faces the possibility of a decade in prison in a federal case in Virginia where he was convicted last year of tax and bank fraud crimes. Sentencing in that case was delayed pending Jackson's ruling in the plea-deal dispute.

Read the order: <http://apne.ws/NFRmWXy>

This story has been corrected to show the name of the club is the Grand Havana Room, not the Grand Havana Club.

Border security brawl seems near a serene resolution

By ALAN FRAM, ANDREW TAYLOR AND JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress is set to resolve its clattering brawl with President Donald Trump in uncommonly bipartisan fashion as lawmakers prepare to pass a border security compromise providing a mere sliver of the billions he's demanded for a wall with Mexico and averting a rekindled government shutdown this weekend.

With Trump's halfhearted signature widely expected but hardly guaranteed, congressional leaders planned votes Thursday on the sweeping package. Passage first by the Republican-led Senate, then the Democratic-controlled House, was virtually certain, with sizable numbers of both parties' members set to vote "yes." Bargainers formally completed the accord moments before midnight Wednesday.

"I'm sure it's going to pass. I don't know of any drama," said House Democrats' chief vote-counter, Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C.

Trump's assent would end a raucous legislative saga that commenced before Christmas and was ending, almost fittingly, on Valentine's Day. The low point was the historically long 35-day partial federal shutdown, which Trump sparked and was in full force when Democrats took control of the House, compelling him to share power for the first time.

Trump yielded Jan. 25 after public opinion turned against him and congressional Republicans. He'd won not a nickel of the \$5.7 billion he'd demanded for his wall but had caused missed paychecks for legions of federal workers and federal contractors and lost services for countless others. It was a political fiasco for Trump and an early triumph for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

The fight left both parties dead set against another shutdown. That sentiment weakened Trump's hand and fueled the bipartisan deal, a pact that contrasts with the parties' still-raging differences over health care, taxes and investigations of the president.

The product of nearly three weeks of talks, the agreement provides almost \$1.4 billion for new barriers along the boundary. That's less than the \$1.6 billion for border security in a bipartisan Senate bill that Trump spurned months ago, and enough for building just 55 miles of barricades, not the 200-plus miles he'd sought.

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Notably, the word "wall" — which fueled many a chant at Trump campaign events and rallies as president — does not appear once in the 1,768 pages of legislation and explanatory materials. "Barriers" and "fencing" are the nouns of choice.

The compromise would also gradually pressure Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, to gradually detain fewer unauthorized immigrants. To the dismay of Democrats, it would still leave an agency many of them consider abusive holding thousands more immigrants than it did last year.

The measure contains money for improved surveillance equipment, more customs agents and humanitarian aid for detained immigrants. The overall bill also provides \$330 billion to finance dozens of federal agencies for the rest of the year.

Trump has talked for weeks about augmenting the agreement by taking executive action to divert money from other programs for wall construction, without congressional sign-off. He might declare a national emergency, which has drawn opposition from both parties, or invoke other authorities to tap funds targeted for military construction, disaster relief and counterdrug efforts.

Those moves could prompt congressional resistance or lawsuits, but would help assuage supporters dismayed that the president is yielding.

Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., who leads the hard-right House Freedom Caucus, told reporters "it would be political suicide" if Trump signs the agreement and did nothing else to find added money.

The measure was expected to be carried by pragmatists from both parties. Many of Congress' most liberal members were expected to oppose it, unwilling to yield an inch to Trump's anti-immigrant policies, while staunch conservatives preferred a bill that would go further.

"I made a promise to my community that I wouldn't fund ICE," said Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., a freshman who's become a face of her party's left wing and a leading proponent of eliminating the agency.

Though Trump lost the highest-profile issue at stake, he all but declared victory Wednesday.

At the White House, he contended that a wall "is being built as we speak." Work on a small stretch of barriers is due to start this month in Texas' Rio Grande Valley under legislation Congress approved last year.

Swallowing the deal would mark a major concession by Trump, who has spent months calling the situation at the southern border a national security crisis.

In private conversations, Trump has called the congressional bargainers poor negotiators, said a person familiar with the conversations who wasn't authorized to speak publicly. Trump has also made clear that he wanted more money for the wall and has expressed concern the plan is being framed as a defeat for him in the media.

Trump has repeatedly vowed Mexico would pay for the wall, a suggestion that country has spurned. His descriptions of the wall's size have fluctuated, at times saying it would cover 1,000 of the 2,000-mile boundary. Previous administrations constructed over 650 miles of barriers.

Facing opposition from Trump, Democrats lost their bid to include language giving federal contractors back pay for wages lost during the last shutdown. Federal workers have been paid for time they were furloughed or worked without paychecks.

Also omitted was an extension of the Violence Against Women Act. Democrats say this will give them a chance later this year to add protections for transgender people to that law.

Associated Press writer Catherine Lucey contributed to this report.

EPA sets toxins response plan amid criticism from lawmakers

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and JOHN FLESHER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency is expected to announce a plan for dealing with a class of long-lasting chemical contaminants amid complaints from members of Congress and environmentalists that it's not moved aggressively enough to regulate them.

So-called forever chemicals, perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl compounds, or PFAS, pose "a very im-

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portant threat," acting EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said in an interview with ABC News Live ahead of a scheduled briefing Thursday in Philadelphia.

Wheeler said the agency was moving forward with the process under the Safe Drinking Water Act that could lead to new safety thresholds for the presence of the chemicals in water, but he did not commit in the interview to setting standards.

The chemicals are found in consumer products ranging from fabrics, rugs and carpets to cooking pots and pans, outdoor gear, shampoo, shaving cream, makeup and even dental floss. Increasing numbers of states have found them seeping into drinking water supplies.

Scientific studies have found "associations" between the chemicals and cancer, thyroid disease, ulcerative colitis and other health issues.

With the Senate considering whether to confirm him as EPA chief, Democratic and Republican lawmakers have pressed Wheeler to establish mandatory limits for PFAS in public water systems.

Republican Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, whose state of West Virginia was one of the first where PFAS contamination was linked to human health problems, said she voted for Wheeler's appointment in committee earlier this month only after he privately assured her the EPA would tackle the problem.

Capito was one of 20 senators who wrote to Wheeler demanding ceilings on two phased-out types of PFAS chemicals. They pressed Wheeler for other "immediate actions" to protect the public from other versions of the industrial compounds.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., also called for legal limits and said if EPA balked, Wheeler "didn't deserve" to run the agency.

But environmental groups said they expected the EPA response to do little to move the agency forward from its 2018 pledges to tackle PFAS.

Scott Faber of the Environmental Working Group said that without firm action and deadlines, he expected the EPA announcement to be no more than a "plan to plan."

In the ABC interview, Wheeler also indicated that the agency would target communities most affected. "We need to make sure that every American regardless of ZIP code has safe, reliable drinking water," he said, adding that "we haven't slowed down, we've actually speeded up the process."

Betsy Southerland, a former science and technology director in EPA's Office of Water, told The Associated Press that Wheeler's plan appeared designed to slow the federal response and encourage states to set their own standards.

That would create more uncertainty about the proper threshold for requiring water treatment for PFAS, said Southerland, who resigned in 2017 to protest the Trump administration's environmental policies.

"It allows industry and federal agencies that should be actively cleaning up to sit back and say, 'It's a big mess, no one knows what the correct number is, so we won't take any action until the confusion is settled,'" she said.

Flesher reported from Traverse City, Michigan.

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. BORDER SECURITY SEEMS NEAR A SERENE RESOLUTION

Congress is set to resolve its clattering brawl with President Donald Trump in uncommonly bipartisan fashion as lawmakers prepare to pass a border security compromise.

2. FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL MASSACRE ONE YEAR LATER

The anniversary of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School massacre will primarily be about remembering the 14 students and three staff members who died in the third high-profile mass shooting in Florida since 2016.

3. WHO WILL STOP MAKING SUPERJUMBO JETS IN 2021

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European plane manufacturer Airbus says it will stop making its superjumbo A380 in 2021 for lack of customers.

4. HOW THE EL CHAPO VERDICT IS BEING SEEN IN HIS HOME STATE

U.S. officials hailed the conviction of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman but in the drug lord's home state of Sinaloa, many residents say they don't expect the violence and trafficking to abate.

5. ISLAMIC STATE WAR MUSEUM HONORS FALLEN MILITIAMEN

Housed inside Baghdad's historic, Ottoman-era al-Qishla building, the war museum glorifies the sacrifices of thousands of mainly Shiite militiamen who died fighting the Islamic State group.

6. FENTANYL DEATHS FROM 'MEXICAN OXY' PILLS HIT ARIZONA HARD

Arizona and other southwestern states bordering Mexico have become a hot spot in the nation's fentanyl crisis. Fentanyl deaths tripled in Arizona alone from 2015 through 2017.

7. JOURNALIST CRITICAL OF PHILIPPINE LEADER RELEASED

Maria Ressa, the award-winning head of a Philippine online news site that has aggressively covered President Rodrigo Duterte's administration has posted bail and walked free after being arrested in a libel case.

8. EPA TO RELEASE PLAN TO DEAL WITH CHEMICAL CONTAMINANTS

The Environmental Protection Agency is expected to announce a plan for dealing with a class of long-lasting chemical contaminants amid complaints from members of Congress and environmentalists.

9. CLEANING ROUTINE SHOWS PROMISE IN CURBING SUPERBUG INFECTION

A new study finds a way for people to cut their risk of developing a dangerous superbug infection after leaving the hospital.

10. WHICH NFL QUARTERBACK WAS TRADED TO BRONCOS

The Baltimore Ravens agreed to trade veteran quarterback Joe Flacco to the Broncos in exchange for a fourth-round pick in this year's NFL draft.

Perennial presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche dead at 96

LEESBURG, Va. (AP) — Lyndon LaRouche Jr., the political extremist who ran for president in every election from 1976 to 2004, including a campaign waged from federal prison, has died. He was 96.

LaRouche's political action committee confirmed Wednesday on its website that LaRouche died a day earlier.

The cult-like figure, who espoused a wide range of conspiracy theories and advocated for an overhaul of the world's economic and financial systems, ran first as a U. S. Labor Party candidate and later, after an apparent shift to the right, as a Democratic or independent candidate.

In 1986, LaRouche described himself as being in the tradition of the American Whig party, a forerunner of the Republican Party in the first half of the 19th century. In 1990, he ran unsuccessfully to represent Virginia in Congress.

His views evolved throughout his life, but a central tenet of his apocalyptic platform warned of an inevitable global downward slide into crisis.

His PAC described him as a "philosopher, scientist, poet, statesman" who died on the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln, whom he celebrated in his writings.

"Those who knew and loved Lyndon LaRouche know that humanity has suffered a great loss, and today we dedicate ourselves anew to bring to reality the big ideas for which history will honor him," the organization said in a statement posted online.

LaRouche grew up in Lynn, Massachusetts, and in the late 1940s and early 1950s was a member of the Socialist Workers Party, taking the name "Lyn Marcus."

He ran his 1992 campaign from a prison cell after a 1988 conviction for mail fraud and conspiracy to defraud the IRS by defaulting on more than \$30 million in loans from campaign supporters. During a 1984 libel trial, LaRouche said he had no income and had filed no tax returns for 12 years. He said he did not know who paid his bills.

His conspiracy theories included a claim that the International Monetary Fund was "engaged in mass

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murder" by spreading AIDS through its economic policies, that former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former Vice President Walter Mondale were Soviet "agents of influence" and that the Queen of England was involved in the drug trade. He said former Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos "was opposed to me and he fell as a result."

LaRouche called for a quarantine of AIDS victims and said most medical warnings about how the disease was spread were lies. He also referred to Zionism as "cult nonsense" and said the Holocaust was "mythical."

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith once characterized LaRouche's organization as an anti-Semitic political cult.

After his conviction, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison but was released in 1994.

Based outside Washington in Leesburg, Virginia, LaRouche's organization continued to operate during the years he was in prison. His followers could be found at major airports, where they distributed publications and tried to raise money.

The commitment of LaRouche followers reportedly inspired some people to hire so-called "deprogrammers" to kidnap his devotees to stop them from giving him their fortunes. One high-profile case involved a supposed conspiracy to kidnap DuPont heir Lewis duPont Smith and his wife to deprogram them. In 1992, a federal jury in Alexandria, Virginia, acquitted Smith's father, E. Newbold Smith, and three other men.

Lawsuit means Chicago Obama library plan no sure thing

By MICHAEL TARM, AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Odds may still favor the eventual construction of former President Barack Obama's \$500 million museum and library in a public park along Chicago's lakeshore, but it's no longer a sure thing in the face of a formidable legal challenge by a parks-advocacy group.

U.S. District Judge John Robert Blakey hears arguments Thursday in Chicago on a key motion by city attorneys to toss a lawsuit by Protect Our Parks that aims to halt the Obama Presidential Center from ever being built in the selected location.

Recent Chicago history illustrates lawsuits like the one filed by Protect Our Parks can stymie and even kill blockbuster projects, even ones proposed by VIPs with enormous financial and political influence.

A federal lawsuit brought by Friends of the Park helped scuttle a \$400 million plan by "Star Wars" creator George Lucas to build a museum on public land next to Chicago's lakefront. That Lucas suit, like the Obama-project complaint, argued the project ran afoul of laws dating back to the 1800s barring new developments in a 26-mile (42-kilometer) chain of parks hugging Lake Michigan.

As the litigation wound through federal court in 2016, Lucas ditched the Chicago plans. The museum is now under construction in Los Angeles.

A ruling by Judge Blakey in favor of Protect Our Parks could signal that the Obama Presidential Center is in real trouble.

A look at the project and some of the key legal issues:

Q: WHAT ARE THE PLANS?

A: If backers of the center prevail, the center would be built 7 miles (11 kilometers) south of downtown Chicago in Jackson Park, named after President Andrew Jackson. The park, landscaped in the 1800s and a site for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It's near low-income neighborhoods where Obama once worked as a community organizer. It's also just blocks from the University of Chicago, where Obama was a law professor and near where the Obamas lived until he won the presidency in 2008.

The center would comprise 20 acres (8 hectares) of the 500-acre (202-hectare) park. Its centerpiece building would be a 225-foot (69-meter) museum tower, with a cluster of lower buildings around it, including a 300-seat auditorium. The center's website says the complex will be "a world-class museum and public gathering space that celebrates our nation's first African American President and First Lady (Michelle Obama)."

It was originally slated to open in 2021, though ground hasn't yet broken.

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Q: WHAT'S THE AGREEMENT WITH CHICAGO?

A: The Obama Foundation, a private nonprofit, would pay the costs of constructing the complex. It would also be responsible for covering operating costs over the length of the 99-year agreement. Once built, however, the Obama Presidential Center's physical structures would be transferred to the city for free. So the city would formally own the center but not control what happens at it.

Among the steps taken to make the park land available for the project, the Chicago Park District first sold the land to the city for \$1. Illinois legislators — at the city of Chicago's urging — also amended the state's Illinois Aquarium and Museum Act to include presidential libraries as an exception to the no-development rules if there's a compelling public interest. The Chicago City Council approved the project by a 47-to-1 vote last May.

Q: WHAT'S THE CORE OBJECTION?

A: In its 2018 suit, which only names the city and park district as defendants, Protect Our Parks accused the city of illegally transferring park land to a private entity, The Obama Foundation. They say city officials manipulated the approval process and tinkered with legislation to skirt long-standing laws designed to ensure residents had unobstructed access to lakeside parks.

"Defendants have chosen to deal with it in a classic Chicago political way ... a short con shell game, a corrupt scheme to deceive and seemingly legitimize an illegal land grab," the lawsuit says. It also described the city as "gifting" prized land to a Chicago favorite son.

Democrat Obama remains hugely popular in overwhelmingly Democratic Chicago and most Chicagoans back the project.

But in a friend-of-the-court brief supporting Protect Our Parks, legal scholar Richard Epstein said public-trust doctrine places an extra burden on authorities to prove overwhelming public benefit when they offer the use of public parks to such popular, well-connected figures as Obama.

"Obama is one of the most powerful and influential personages in Chicago life, with deep ties to Mayor Rahm Emanuel (Obama's former White House chief of staff) and with many close connections to key city public officials," Epstein wrote. "His enormous clout cries out, not for deference, but for searching scrutiny" of whether benefits of the project far outweigh the loss of public-park access.

Among other assertions in the lawsuit is that the center would interfere with migrating butterflies and birds.

Q: THE CITY'S DEFENSE?

A: City lawyers say Protect Our Parks misreads the law, misrepresents how the approval process played out and exaggerates potential environmental disruptions. They say planners have done all they can to blend center facilities into the surrounding nature, including by planting more than 400 new trees.

City lawyers say they have demonstrated significant benefits, including that the center would provide a major economic boost to economically hard-hit minority communities in the vicinity. Backers estimate it'll create 5,000 jobs during construction and over 2,500 permanent jobs. An estimated 760,000 people could visit each year, foundation officials say.

Thirteen presidential foundations, including the George W. Bush Foundation and Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation, also threw support behind the project, saying in a joint filing that "it is neither unusual nor improper for the Obama Presidential Center to be linked to a non-governmental foundation."

And a friend-of-the-court brief submitted by 11 existing Chicago museums said the center in Jackson Park would "be a cultural and economic treasure for Chicago."

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

Fentanyl deaths from 'Mexican oxy' pills hit Arizona hard

By ANITA SNOW, Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Aaron Francisco Chavez swallowed at least one of the sky blue pills at a Halloween party before falling asleep forever. He became yet another victim killed by a flood of illicit fentanyl

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smuggled from Mexico into the Southwest — a profitable new business for drug gangs that has pushed the synthetic opioid to the top spot for fatal U.S. overdoses.

Three others at the party in Tucson also took the pills nicknamed “Mexican oxy” and police flagged down by partygoers saved them by administering naloxone overdose reversal medication. But the treatment came too late for Chavez, who died at age 19.

The four thought they were taking oxycodone, a much less powerful opioid, investigators believe. The death of Chavez and many others, officials said, illustrate how Arizona and other southwestern states bordering Mexico have become a hot spot in the nation’s fentanyl crisis. Fentanyl deaths tripled in Arizona alone from 2015 through 2017.

“It’s the worst I’ve seen in 30 years, this toll that it’s taken on families,” said Doug Coleman, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration special agent in charge of Arizona. “The crack (cocaine) crisis was not as bad.”

With plenty of pills and powder sold locally out of the arriving fentanyl shipments that are also distributed around the U.S., the drug that has surpassed heroin for overdose deaths has touched all Arizona demographic groups. Chavez’ family says he was working at a restaurant as a prep cook with dreams of becoming a chef and trying to turn his life around after serving prison time for a robbery conviction.

Also killed in the state over the last year by the pills that go for \$9 to \$30 each were a 17-year-old star high school baseball pitcher from a Phoenix suburb and a pair of 19-year-old best friends and prominent former high school athletes from the mountain town of Prescott Valley. The parents of one, Gunner Bundrick, said their son’s death left “a hole in our hearts.”

Popping the pills at parties “is a lot more widespread than we know,” said Yavapai County Sheriff’s Lt. Nate Auvenshine. “There’s less stigma to taking a pill than putting a needle in your arm, but one of these pills can have enough fentanyl for three people.”

Stamped with “M” on one side and “30” on the other to make them look like legitimate oxycodone, the pills started showing up in Arizona in recent years as the Sinaloa cartel’s newest drug product, said Tucson Police Lt. Christian Wildblood.

The fentanyl that killed Chavez was among 1,000 pills sneaked across the border crossing last year in Nogales, Arizona by a woman who was paid \$200 to tote them and gave two to Chavez at the party, according to court documents. It’s unknown if he took one or both.

At the same crossing last month, U.S. officials announced their biggest fentanyl bust ever — nearly 254 pounds (115 kilograms) seized from a truckload of cucumbers, enough to potentially kill millions. Valued at \$3.5 million, most was in powder form and over 2 pounds (1 kilogram) was made up of pills.

The tablets in most cases are manufactured in primitive conditions with pill presses purchased online and the amount of fentanyl in each pill can vary widely, Wildblood said.

“There is no quality control,” he said.

While Chinese shipments were long blamed for illegal fentanyl entering the U.S., Mexico’s Army in November 2017 discovered a rustic fentanyl lab in a remote part of Sinaloa state and seized precursors, finished fentanyl and production equipment — suggesting some of it is now being synthesized across the U.S. border.

Most fentanyl smuggled from Mexico is about 10 percent pure and enters hidden in vehicles at official border crossings around Nogales and San Diego, Customs and Border Protection data show. A decreasing number of smaller shipments with purity of up to 90 percent still enter the U.S. in packages sent from China.

Although 85 percent of the fentanyl from Mexico is seized at San Diego area border crossings, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration’s 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment said seizures have surged at Arizona’s border and elsewhere around the state.

DEA statistics show Arizona fentanyl seizures rose to 445 pounds (202 kilograms), including 379,557 pills, in the fiscal year ending in October 2018, up from 172 pounds (78 kilograms), including 54,984 pills, during the previous 12-month period.

The Sinaloa cartel’s ability to ramp up its own production of fentanyl and label it oxycodone shows the group’s business acumen and why it remains among the world’s top criminal organizations, despite the conviction in New York this week of cartel kingpin Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman Loera, Coleman said.

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"If they see a market for their stuff, they'll make it and bring it up," he said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says fentanyl is now the drug involved in the most fatal overdoses in the U.S., with fatalities from synthetic opioids including fentanyl jumping more than 45 percent from 2016 to 2017, when they accounted for some 28,000 of about 70,000 overdose deaths of all kinds.

Fentanyl was also involved more than any other drug in the majority of overdose deaths in 2016, the year the pop artist Prince died after taking fake Vicodin laced with fentanyl. Heroin was responsible for the most drug overdose deaths each of the four years before that.

CDC figures for Arizona show the statewide deaths involving synthetic opioids excluding methadone, largely from fentanyl, rose from 72 in 2015 to 123 in 2016 and then skyrocketed to 267 in 2017.

In the first federal conviction of its kind in Arizona that linked a death to distribution of any drug, a woman from a Phoenix suburb last year got 12 years in prison for selling fentanyl tablets that killed a 38-year-old Arizona man.

And in Tucson, Chavez' relatives wonder why the woman accused of smuggling the pills across the border allegedly decided to hand them out at the party, saying they were Percocet, which contains oxycodone and acetaminophen, and "something else," according to court documents.

The woman, Jocelyn Sanchez, denied describing them that way and was charged with transporting and transferring narcotics. Her lawyer, Joel Chorny, declined to discuss the case.

Nicknamed "Sonny Boy, Chavez was the third of 10 children born to Leslie Chavez, who was brought to the U.S. as an infant and deported back to Mexico last year, two months before he died. In a phone interview, she said Mexican officials arranged to have her son's body brought across the border so she could say goodbye.

She said she had "heard about how these pills were killing people" but never thought it would happen to one of her children.

Chavez had a 2-year-old daughter and despite his robbery conviction "was trying to get his life together, he was trying to be good" for the toddler, said his sister, Seanna Leilani Chavez.

The dealers, she said, are only interested in profits.

"They will sell you poison, take your money, and not think twice about how they could possibly be killing someone's son, father, brother or grandson," she said.

Follow Anita Snow on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/asnowreports>

Trump still coy on border deal - but claims victory anyway

By JILL COLVIN, ALAN FRAM and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional bargainers formally completed a bipartisan border security pact late Wednesday and President Donald Trump labored to frame it as a political win, even though it contains only a fraction of the billions for a "great, powerful wall" that he's been demanding for months.

Trump is expected to grudgingly accept the agreement, which was completed just before midnight. The measure — 1,768 pages of legislation and explanation — would avert another government shutdown and give the president what Republicans have been describing as a "down payment" on his signature campaign pledge.

Earlier in the day, Trump said he was still waiting to learn what its final language would be before making a decision. But he's not waiting to declare victory, contending at the White House on Wednesday that a wall "is being built as we speak."

Indeed, work on a first barrier extension — 14 miles in Texas' Rio Grande Valley — starts this month, approved by Congress about a year ago along with money to renovate and strengthen some existing fencing. But that's a far cry from the vast wall he promised during his campaign would "go up so fast your head will spin."

Sounding like he was again in campaign mode, he told a law enforcement group on Wednesday, "It's going to be a great, powerful wall. ... The wall is very, very on its way."

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Carried away by his own enthusiasm, perhaps, he added, "You are going to have to be in extremely good shape to get over this one. They would be able to climb Mount Everest a lot easier, I think."

Trump has a history of balking at deals after signaling he was on board. But barring White House discovery of any objectionable provisions, he was expected to acquiesce, according to White House officials and other Republicans close to the White House who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Trump and his aides have also signaled that he is preparing to use executive action to try to secure additional money for the wall by tapping into existing federal dollars without any congressional sign-off so he can show supporters he's continuing to fight. That could lead to resistance in Congress or federal court.

But assuming there are no surprises in the final text, "I think he's going to sign it," conservative Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., a close ally of the president, said Wednesday. He warned, though, that "it would be political suicide" if Trump signed the deal and then failed to take action to secure additional funding for the wall using his executive powers.

Swallowing the deal would mark a major concession by Trump, who has spent months insisting the situation at the southern border represents a national security crisis that demands an impregnable wall. He also had insisted he would accept nothing less than \$5.7 billion for the barrier — a demand that forced the 35-day partial shutdown that left hundreds of thousands of federal workers without paychecks and Republicans taking the brunt of the blame. There is no appetite for a repeat.

The deal, which lawmakers reached this week, would provide less than \$1.4 billion for border barriers while keeping the government funded through the end of September. While some conservatives, Fox News commentator Sean Hannity among them, have balked at the deal, other allies of the president have urged him to sign it and move on.

In private conversations since the deal was first announced, Trump has complained, calling the committee members poor negotiators, said a person familiar with the conversations who was not authorized to speak publicly. He has also made clear that he wanted more money for the wall and has expressed concern the plan is being framed as a defeat for him in the media.

There is also little doubt the deal will pass Congress, barring eleventh-hour surprises, with "no" votes most likely coming from liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans. Democratic leaders are selling it as solid compromise that will keep the government open.

The White House has long been laying the groundwork for Trump to use executive action to bypass Congress and divert money into wall construction. He could declare a national emergency or invoke other executive authority to tap funds including money set aside for military construction, disaster relief and counterdrug efforts.

The legislation would push Immigration and Customs Enforcement to gradually reduce the number of unauthorized immigrants it detains — currently 49,000 — though this year's figure would remain higher than last year's.

New barriers could only be built using existing technology, not solid concrete or steel walls that have been proposed and Trump has favored since his presidential campaign. Barriers would be curbed along certain portions of the border.

The measure also provides money to upgrade monitoring and surveillance equipment at border ports of entry and between them. There would be funds to hire more customs agents and immigration judges, improve conditions for detained immigrants and humanitarian aid to Central American countries to help stem the flood of migrants.

Facing opposition from Trump, Democrats lost their bid to make sure employees of federal contractors receive back pay for wages lost during the last shutdown. Federal workers have been paid for time they were furloughed or worked without paychecks.

Also not making the bill was a simple extension of the Violence Against Women Act. Democrats say this will give them a chance later this year to rewrite the law by including protections for transgender people.

Trump kept his cards close, telling reporters he would be taking "a very serious look" at the final text once the White House receives it and watching for any "land mines."

Lawmakers need to pass some kind of funding bill by midnight Friday to avoid another shutdown.

Meanwhile, active-duty troops from dozens of U.S. military units around the country are flowing to the southern border as part of the latest plan to send 3,750 new forces to help with surveillance and install more wire barriers.

As of this week, the military had installed about 105 miles of wire along the border and planned an additional 140 miles of the concertina wire. The bulk of that will be in California and Arizona, in locations between ports of entry that are identified by U.S. Customs and Border Protection as vulnerable.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller, Jonathan Lemire and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

AP FACT CHECK: Declaring emergency for wall not so ordinary

By HOPE YEN and CALVIN WOODWARD, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump would be taking an extraordinary step by declaring a national emergency to steer money to his promised border wall. He's making it sound quite ordinary.

TRUMP: "You know, we already have national emergencies out there. You know, President Obama, President Clinton, President Bush — they've declared many national — this is not unique. They've declared many national emergencies. Many, many." — remarks at a Cabinet meeting Tuesday.

THE FACTS: The emergency action Trump has been contemplating would be rare. The presidents he cites did not use emergency powers to pay for projects that Congress wouldn't support.

Emergency declarations by Obama, Bush and Clinton were overwhelmingly for the purpose of addressing crises that emerged abroad. Many blocked foreign interests or terrorist-linked entities from access to funds. Some prohibited certain imports from or investments to countries associated with human rights abuses.

"It's extremely rare for a president to declare a national emergency in a bid to fund domestic construction projects, particularly one that Congress has explicitly refused to fund," said Andrew Boyle, an attorney in the national security program at the Brennan Center for Justice. "The ones that former presidents declared are of a different sort."

With Congress unwilling to give Trump anything close to the \$5.7 billion he wants to build a portion of the border wall, the White House has made clear that he would seek money from other sources, whether with an emergency declaration or by other means.

Altogether, Clinton declared 17 national emergencies, Bush, 13, and Obama, 12, according to a list compiled by the Brennan Center.

The Brennan Center has tracked 58 emergency declarations back to 1978, of which 31 remain in effect.

Obama's emergency declarations were aimed at blocking property of "certain persons" involved in crises abroad — Ukraine, Burundi, Venezuela, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Yemen, and Libya, among other countries. He also used the declarations to punish the Russian government and transnational organizations.

His only declaration not centered on foreign interests came in 2009, when he declared a national emergency to deal with the H1N1 flu pandemic.

Bush and Clinton were similarly focused on foreign crises in their declarations. Clinton used one to prohibit transactions with the Taliban in 1999; Bush issued several in response to the 2001 terrorist attacks.

AP researcher Jennifer Farrar in New York contributed to this report.

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NASA rover finally bites the dust on Mars after 15 years

By **MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's Opportunity, the Mars rover that was built to operate for just three months but kept going and going, rolling across the rocky red soil, was pronounced dead Wednesday, 15 years after it landed on the planet.

The six-wheeled vehicle that helped gather critical evidence that ancient Mars might have been hospitable to life was remarkably spry up until eight months ago, when it was finally doomed by a ferocious dust storm.

Flight controllers tried numerous times to make contact, and sent one final series of recovery commands Tuesday night, along with one last wake-up song, Billie Holiday's "I'll Be Seeing You," in a somber exercise that brought tears to team members' eyes. There was no response from space, only silence.

Thomas Zurbuchen, head of NASA's science missions, broke the news at what amounted to a funeral at the space agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, announcing the demise of "our beloved Opportunity."

"This is a hard day," project manager John Callas said at an auditorium packed with hundreds of current and former members of the team that oversaw Opportunity and its long-deceased identical twin, Spirit. "Even though it's a machine and we're saying goodbye, it's still very hard and very poignant, but we had to do that. We came to that point."

The two slow-moving, golf cart-size rovers landed on opposite sides of the planet in 2004 for a mission meant to last 90 sols, or Mars days, which are 39 minutes longer than Earth days.

In the end, Opportunity outlived its twin by eight years and set endurance and distance records that could stand for decades. Trundling along until communication ceased last June, Opportunity roamed a record 28 miles (45 kilometers) and worked longer than any other lander in the history of space exploration.

Opportunity was a robotic geologist, equipped with cameras and instruments at the end of a mechanical arm for analyzing rocks and soil. Its greatest achievement was discovering, along with Spirit, evidence that ancient Mars had water flowing on its surface and might have been capable of sustaining microbial life.

Project scientist Matthew Golombek said these rover missions are meant to help answer an "almost theological" question: Does life form wherever conditions are just right, or "are we really, really lucky?"

The twin vehicles also pioneered a way of exploring the surface of other planets, said Lori Glaze, acting director of planetary science for NASA.

She said the rovers gave us "the ability to actually roll right up to the rocks that we want to see. Roll up to them, be able to look at them up close with a microscopic imager, bang on them a little bit, shake them up, scratch them a little bit, take the measurements, understand what the chemistry is of those rocks and then say, 'Oh, that was interesting. Now I want to go over there.'"

Opportunity was exploring Mars' Perseverance Valley, fittingly, when the fiercest dust storm in decades hit and contact was lost. The storm was so intense that it darkened the sky for months, preventing sunlight from reaching the rover's solar panels.

When the sky finally cleared, Opportunity remained silent, its internal clock possibly so scrambled that it no longer knew when to sleep or wake up to receive commands. Flight controllers sent more than 1,000 recovery commands, all in vain.

With project costs reaching about \$500,000 a month, NASA decided there was no point in continuing.

Callas said the last-ditch attempt to make contact the night before was a sad moment, with tears and a smattering of applause when the operations team signed off. He said the team members didn't even bother waiting around to see if word came back from space — they knew it was hopeless.

Scientists consider this the end of an era, now that Opportunity and Spirit are both gone.

Opportunity was the fifth of eight spacecraft to successfully land on Mars, all belonging to NASA. Only two are still working: the nuclear-powered Curiosity rover, prowling around since 2012, and the recently arrived InSight, which just this week placed a heat-sensing, self-hammering probe on the dusty red surface to burrow into the planet like a mole.

Three more landers — from the U.S., China and Europe — are due to launch next year. NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said the overriding goal is to search for evidence of past or even present microbial life at Mars and find suitable locations to send astronauts, perhaps in the 2030s. “While it is sad that we move from one mission to the next, it’s really all part of one big objective,” he said.

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California governor wants users to profit from online data

By DON THOMPSON, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom has set off a flurry of speculation after he said the state’s consumers should get a piece of the billions of dollars that technology companies make by capitalizing on personal data they collect.

The new governor has asked aides to develop a proposal for a “data dividend” for California residents but provided no hints about whether he might be suggesting a tax on tech companies, an individual refund to their customers or something else.

“Companies that make billions of dollars collecting, curating and monetizing our personal data have a duty to protect it,” the Democrat said in his first State of the State speech Tuesday. “California’s consumers should also be able to share in the wealth that is created from their data.”

Tech companies, for example, sell the data to outside businesses that target ads to users. The European Union and Spain’s socialist government last year each proposed taxing big internet companies like Google, Facebook and Amazon.

Common Sense Media, which helped pass California’s nation-leading digital privacy law last year, plans to propose legislation in coming weeks that would reflect Newsom’s proposal, founder and CEO James Steyer said, without providing details.

Starting next year, California’s European-style privacy law will require companies to tell customers upon request what personal data they have collected and why, which categories of third parties have received it, and allow consumers to delete their information and not sell it.

U.S. Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, predicted in November that California would consider legislation that would “send a shiver down the spine” of tech companies.

He described the proposal as returning 25 percent of the value of an individual’s data. It wasn’t clear how the calculation would be made.

Warner’s office said Wednesday that he made the comment after speaking with Steyer. Warner is considering federal legislation requiring companies like California-based Facebook and Google to provide users with annual estimates of what their data is worth.

Axios calculated that the average Facebook user is worth \$7.37 to the company, while a Twitter user is worth \$2.83, and a Reddit user, about 30 cents. The calculation basically divided the companies’ annual revenue by their monthly active users.

Steyer promised “landmark legislation” that will change the way consumers view the value and privacy of their online information. Most consumers don’t realize that companies “are taking your data at extremely detailed levels and selling it and monetizing it,” he said.

“You’re basically saying, ‘It’s my data,’” Steyer said. “And if you do use it, I would like a portion of that because you’re monetizing my personal information. That’s a big deal, and that will represent an enormous step forward for consumers in California and all across the country.”

California-based tech giants Facebook and Google did not immediately comment.

Newsom’s office would not say who is leading his review. Newsom “is open to constructive input” from national experts and lawmakers, spokesman Brian Ferguson said in a statement.

The governor’s office pointed to proposals elsewhere that would put a tax on data, including one that

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died in the Washington state Legislature in 2017. That measure would have taxed receipts from the sale of state residents' personal data at a rate of 3.3 percent.

Mahsau Dae of the Internet Association said the industry will look forward to reviewing the governor's eventual proposal but that "free and low-cost, data-driven online services offer Californians — and all Americans — enormous benefits."

Jeffrey Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy, said Newsom "is off to the wrong start" on protecting consumer privacy.

"They shouldn't be tricked into giving away their privacy for a small discount," he said in an email. "Selling it for a few bucks isn't the answer and will make the problem worse."

Dan Goldstein, president the digital marketing agency Page 1 Solutions, said a tax might not benefit consumers, while some sort of profit-sharing plan would likely return a "pittance of a benefit" to individuals.

Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes last year suggested that users could band together to negotiate payments or a data tax could be administered, similar to a fund that annually shares oil profits with Alaska residents.

Consumer Federation of California executive director Richard Holober hailed the proposal while alluding to the vast financial divide between rich and poor, particularly in California, which is struggling to address homelessness and an affordable housing crisis.

The governor previously asked Silicon Valley companies to match \$500 million in state funds with their own low-interest loans for developers to build homes for middle-income residents in some of the state's costliest areas.

"We have such a disparity here with everyday Californians who are having trouble paying their rent or sending their kids to college," Holober said. "California has created a very fertile land for these corporations to become fabulously wealthy, and they need to give back."

Newsom's announcement excited lawmakers who authored California's privacy law, but they had no information about it.

Democratic Senate Majority Leader Bob Hertzberg called the proposal "the next frontier of the online data and privacy conversation."

Democratic Assemblyman Ed Chau, who is chairman of the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection, said the proposal "highlights the value of data, which has often been described as the new oil in this technological data-driven economy."

China, US start trade talks ahead of March tariff deadline

BEIJING (AP) — U.S. and Chinese negotiators began trade talks Thursday that President Donald Trump says will help decide whether he escalates a fight over Beijing's technology ambitions by raising tariffs on \$200 billion of imports from China.

Businesspeople and economists say the two days of talks are unlikely to resolve the battle that threatens to drag on weakening global economic growth. They say Chinese negotiators are trying to persuade Trump they are making enough progress to postpone a March 2 deadline for the duty increase.

The chief American envoy, Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, and his Chinese counterpart, Vice Premier Liu He, shook hands at the start of the meeting at a government guesthouse but said nothing to reporters.

There are few signs of movement on the thorniest issue: Washington's demand that Beijing scale back plans for government-led creation of global competitors in robotics and other technologies. China's trading partners say those violate Beijing's market-opening obligations and some American officials worry they might erode U.S. industrial leadership.

Trump agreed in December to postpone more tariff hikes while the two sides negotiate. That expires March 1. The following day, a 10 percent tariff imposed in July on \$200 billion of Chinese imports would rise to 25 percent.

On Tuesday, Trump said while he is not inclined to extend the deadline, he might let it "slide for a little

while" if talks go well. Earlier, the White House called March 2 a "hard deadline."

Business groups see the decision by the top trade envoys, Lighthizer and Liu, to take part in person as a sign the negotiations are making progress. Thursday was their second meeting following negotiations last month in Washington.

The U.S. delegation also included Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and David Malpass, a Treasury undersecretary who is Trump's nominee for World Bank president.

Companies on both sides have been battered by Washington's tariffs and retaliatory duties imposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping's government. The stakes are rising as global economic growth cools.

Trump hiked tariffs on Chinese goods over complaints Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology. The dispute has spread to include Chinese industry development, cyberspying and the countries' lopsided trade balance.

Chinese leaders have offered to narrow their multibillion-dollar trade surplus with the United States. But they balk at making major changes in development plans they see as a path to prosperity and more global influence.

Chinese officials reject complaints that foreign companies are required to hand over technology. But business groups and foreign governments point to rules they say compel companies to disclose trade secrets or share technology with state-owned partners.

Chinese officials also are balking at U.S. pressure to accept an enforcement mechanism to monitor whether Beijing carries out its promises.

Beijing has tried to deflect pressure by emphasizing China's growth as an export market. It has announced changes over the past year to open finance and other fields, including allowing full foreign ownership in its auto industry for the first time.

Regulators have announced plans to improve protection of foreign patents and copyrights.

It is unclear whether that will satisfy Washington and other governments that complain the system is rigged to extract technology from foreign companies and to use official industrial standards to shield Chinese enterprises from competition.

AP journalists Christopher Bodeen and Emily Wang contributed to this report.

In House's Yemen vote, Congress reasserts war-making powers

By LISA MASCARO, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Asserting congressional authority over war-making powers, the House passed a resolution Wednesday that would force the administration to withdraw U.S. troops from involvement in Yemen, in a rebuke of President Donald Trump's alliance with the Saudi-led coalition behind the military intervention.

Lawmakers in both parties are increasingly uneasy over the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and skeptical of the U.S. partnership with that coalition, especially in light of Saudi Arabia's role in the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, a critic of the royal family.

Passage would mark the first time Congress has relied on the decades-old War Powers Resolution to halt military intervention. It also would set up a potential confrontation with the White House, which has threatened a veto. The House voted 248-177 to approve the measure, sending it to the Senate, where a similar resolution passed last year.

"We have helped create, and worsen, the world's largest humanitarian crisis," said Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., during the debate. "Our involvement in this war, quite frankly, is shameful."

The chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., said the vote represents "Congress reclaiming its role in foreign policy."

Senate approval would set up a showdown with the administration — a veto would be Trump's first — over the president's shifting approach on foreign policy.

Lawmakers are quick to point out that Trump wants to withdraw troops from the wars in Syria and Af-

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ghanistan as part of his "America First" approach, but he has shown less interest in limiting the U.S. role in Yemen.

The White House says the House resolution is "flawed" because U.S. troops are not directly involved in military action in Yemen, where the coalition is fighting the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in a conflict largely seen as a proxy war involving the Mideast's dominant regional players.

Since 2015, the administration says, the U.S. has provided support to the coalition, including intelligence and, until recently, aerial refueling, but it has not had forces involved in "hostilities."

Congress has not invoked the War Power Resolution, which requires approval of military actions, since it was enacted in 1973. Lawmakers approved more sweeping authorizations for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that some argue are being used too broadly for other military actions.

Newly emboldened Democrats in the House, eager to confront Trump on foreign policy, and Republicans in both chambers have shown a willingness to put a legislative check on the president's agenda.

In the House, 18 Republicans, including members of the GOP's libertarian-leaning wing and Trump allies in the conservative Freedom Caucus, joined Democrats in passing the Yemen measure.

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., who drafted the legislation, said there's an emerging bipartisan alliance that's skeptical of military intervention without congressional oversight.

"It's not just about Yemen. It's about the Congress taking a stand and every future president having to think twice about whether to authorize a military intervention without congressional approval," Khanna said in an interview.

The Senate version is from independent Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and backed by Utah Republican Sen. Mike Lee.

Before Wednesday's vote, the House overwhelmingly agreed to add an amendment offered by Republicans who are seeking to expose emerging Democratic divisions over support for Israel.

The amendment reaffirms the U.S. commitment "to combat anti-Semitism around the world" and says it's in the national security interest to oppose boycotts of Israel. That's a reference to the Boycott, Divest and Sanction movement that has gained support of some lawmakers.

First-term Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., one of the Muslim-American women elected to Congress, came under criticism this week for her comments against the Israel lobbying organization AIPAC that raised anti-Semitic stereotypes. She later apologized.

The House added another GOP amendment that would allow continued intelligence sharing, which drew fire from the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU warned it gives the president broad authority to provide the Saudis and others with U.S. intelligence information about Yemen, and the group said the package, overall, is now weaker than originally proposed.

Now the Yemen measure goes to the Senate, where a similar resolution on removing U.S. involvement in the war was approved with Republican support late last year.

At the time, Congress was eager to send a message to both the president and the Saudis after the October murder of the U.S.-based journalist Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. The U.S. has sanctioned 17 Saudi individuals for their involvement in the killing, and U.S. intelligence officials have concluded that the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, must have at least known of the plot. Trump so far has decided not to impose harsher penalties on the prince. The kingdom insists he did not order the killing.

The outcome of the legislation is uncertain. Republicans control the Senate, 53-47, and a simple majority is needed to pass.

Trump has yet to veto any measures from Congress. If he did veto the Yemen resolution, it's unclear whether lawmakers would have enough support to override him.

Michigan governor on way out pardoned 'career drunk driver'

By ED WHITE, Associated Press

TROY, Mich. (AP) — In his final days in office, Gov. Rick Snyder wiped out the felony drunken-driving conviction of a man who pleaded for a pardon so he could seek a promotion as the next president of the

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Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants.

Jim Jagger's application for a pardon sailed swiftly: He filed in late October, got a hearing in December and won Snyder's blessing before Christmas, despite opposition from the Oakland County prosecutor, who vigorously claimed it was "special treatment" for a "career drunk driver," according to records obtained by The Associated Press.

"The average Joe out there is not going to get a pardon" for the same crime, prosecutor Jessica Cooper told the AP. "Nor should they."

A pardon is an extraordinary tool in the state constitution that makes a conviction disappear. During Snyder's eight years as governor, people filed more than 4,000 applications for a pardon or commutation, which shortens a prison sentence. He granted fewer than 100.

It's not publicly known why the governor or his aides were so interested in helping Jagger, who makes \$144,000 a year as a vice president at the CPA group. But with Snyder's term nearing an end, his staff put the case "at the top of the stack and said, 'Process this one,'" said Chris Gautz, a spokesman at the Corrections Department, where pardon files are screened.

Jagger, 54, of Royal Oak, had four drunken-driving convictions from 1989 to 2007. It's typically a misdemeanor, but he faced a felony charge after the last arrest because of his repeat offenses. No one was injured in the incidents. Judge Michael Warren sentenced him to 135 days in jail after an assistant prosecutor called Jagger a "danger to the public."

Jagger served his sentence, but the pardon means the felony is off the books.

He and his lawyer, Bill Urich, didn't respond to AP's multiple requests for an interview. Nor did Peggy Dzierzawski, the current president of the CPA group. Snyder, who is a CPA, left office on Jan. 1. An aide, Allison Scott, said he was away and unavailable to answer questions.

Jagger's desire for a pardon is detailed in documents obtained by the AP under a public records request.

He explained it during a Dec. 12 hearing with the Michigan parole board, which makes recommendations to the governor and voted in Jagger's favor. Since 2016, he has been senior vice president and chief marketing officer at the Michigan CPA organization. The Troy-based group serves 18,000-plus members by offering career workshops, monitoring industry trends and influencing laws and accounting rules in Lansing.

Jagger said he's a "leading candidate" to succeed Dzierzawski as president in 2019 but that a felony conviction on his record would put him "down on the ladder" and probably spoil his chances with the board of directors, according to a transcript. He said Dzierzawski was the only person at work who knew about his past.

"I have a limited window of earning potential left, and I'm trying to maximize that. ... But even if it's not that opportunity, there will be other opportunities or I could actively pursue a job," Jagger said of the benefits of a pardon.

He said he hasn't had a drink since the 2007 arrest.

"The me of 14, 15 years ago wouldn't imagine that I would have the life that I have now," said Jagger, who is married and has two children. "So regardless of the outcome of this, I'm a fairly lucky, blessed person."

The parole board recommended a pardon, 9-1, saying Jagger wanted to enhance his career and volunteer at his children's school without the burden of a felony. Chairman Michael Eagen told Snyder that Jagger had made an "exemplary adjustment in the community."

Gautz of the Corrections Department said the board was "never pressured" by Snyder's office about what to recommend.

"The board's vote doesn't matter because the governor can pardon anyone he wishes," Gautz said.

It wasn't the first time that Snyder, a Republican, had used his power to clear a drunken driver. In 2014, he pardoned Alan Gocha, a \$250,000-a-year lawyer with political connections to Republicans. Gocha said the misdemeanor was making it harder to work and to travel outside the U.S.

On its website, the CPA organization said it had an "impeccable relationship" with Snyder. Rich Baird, a Snyder confidant who was his personal trouble-shooter around Michigan, appears in a video on the website, praising the association for being a "steadfast partner in so many of the things that we've done."

Jagger spent \$24.70 in October to send his pardon application overnight to Lansing. A background investigation by the Corrections Department began immediately, records show.

Cooper, the Detroit-area prosecutor, smelled favoritism. She said Jagger's "standout features" appeared only to be his "high income job and his apparent connections."

"The term 'justice is blind' is meant to reaffirm the core concept of the criminal justice system; that all people are equal in the eyes of the law, regardless of how rich or poor they are, and regardless of how powerful or powerless they are in society," Cooper said in a Nov. 28 letter to the parole board. "Granting Mr. Jagger's pardon request ... would make a mockery of this concept."

Separately, the attorney general's office also objected.

Cooper told the AP that her office in 2018 filed felony charges against nearly 700 people who were repeat offenders like Jagger.

"I'm sure they would all like to petition and be excused," she said. "I'm a prosecutor. We have strong opinions because we see the devastation, the families destroyed, the people who might never walk again" because of drunken driving.

Follow Ed White at <http://twitter.com/edwhiteap>

Strangers' suspicions rankle parents of mixed-race children

By JONATHAN J. COOPER, Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Amberkatherine DeCory carried photos of her daughter's birth certificate in her diaper bag in case she had to prove that the lighter-skinned girl was really hers. Cydnee Rafferty gives her husband a letter explaining that he has permission to travel with their 5-year-old biracial daughter.

Families like theirs were not surprised when they heard that Cindy McCain had reported a woman to police for possible human trafficking because the widow of Sen. John McCain saw her at the airport with a toddler of a different ethnicity. Officers investigated and found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Parents whose children have a different complexion say they regularly face suspicion and the assumption that they must be watching someone else's kids.

"This is a problem that, to be frank, well-meaning white people get themselves into," said Rafferty, who is African-American and whose husband is white. "They think, 'If it doesn't make sense to me it must not be right.'"

After McCain's report, Rafferty posted to Twitter a selfie of her with her two children, ages 5 and 5 months.

"I know they don't look like me, but I assure you, I grew them in my belly," Rafferty wrote to McCain.

Earlier this month, McCain claimed on Phoenix radio station KTAR that the woman was waiting for a man who bought the child to get off a plane and that her Jan. 30 report to police had stopped the trafficking. She urged people to speak up if they see anything odd.

"I came in from a trip I'd been on," McCain said. "I spotted — it looked odd — it was a woman of a different ethnicity than the child, this little toddler she had. Something didn't click with me. I tell people 'trust your gut.'"

She said she spoke about her suspicions with police "and they went over and questioned her. And, by God, she was trafficking that kid."

Phoenix Police Sgt. Armando Carbajal confirmed that McCain requested a welfare check on a child at the airport, but said officers found "no evidence of criminal conduct or child endangerment."

McCain has declined interview requests and has not said if anything besides the difference in ethnicity led her to suspect trafficking. A spokesman for the McCain Institute for International Leadership at Arizona State University said McCain was "only thinking about the possible ramifications of a criminal act, not the ethnicity of the possible trafficker."

After police debunked her claim, McCain reiterated the importance of speaking up when something looks wrong.

"I apologize if anything else I have said on this matter distracts from 'if you see something, say some-

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thing," she wrote on Twitter.

Rafferty, a 38-year-old New Yorker, was surprised that McCain, who adopted a daughter from Bangladesh, would make the same something's-not-right assumption that mixed-race families grapple with constantly. It's not always summoning the police. Other, more common ways of calling out the differences sting too.

For Rafferty, the questions are frustrating and offensive: "Whose baby is that?" from a woman in the grocery store. "Where's her beautiful golden skin and curly hair?" from a client at the office, who had a distinct idea of how a biracial child should look. "You're the ...?" followed by a pause for her to fill in the blank with "mom."

And if she pushes a stroller on Manhattan's Upper West Side, everyone assumes she's the nanny. At the park, neither the mothers nor the caregivers know whether to embrace her in their camp.

DeCory, a 38-year-old police officer outside Minneapolis who has African-American and Native American ancestry, said the anxiety between mom and baby is a constant challenge for mixed-race families that isn't talked about enough.

She recalls being haunted by a terrifying vision she couldn't shake: Someone would question whether she was truly the mother of her daughter, and she wouldn't be able to prove it. She'd imagine her daughter, Mila, being placed between her and a white woman while someone in authority watched to see which way she crawled.

Until her daughter could speak, DeCory carried her birth certificate and even a photo of her giving birth, just in case she had to prove that her light-haired, blue-eyed child was truly her own. As Mila has gotten older, her hair has darkened. She's now 11.

DeCory didn't face the same anxieties with her other two children, who have darker skin closer to her own. "I would get anxiety going out with her in public," DeCory said. "I was very reluctant to breastfeed her in public or do anything that would draw attention to me."

Absent Iran takes center stage at Mideast talks in Poland

By MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Although it is absent from the stage, Iran is nevertheless taking the spotlight at a Middle East security conference co-hosted by the United States and Poland that has highlighted deep divisions between the U.S. and some of its traditional allies.

Amid uncertainty over its aims and questions about what it will deliver, the conference opened late Wednesday in Warsaw with some 60 nations in attendance. Yet, in an apparent test of U.S. influence and suspicions in Europe and elsewhere over the Trump administration's intentions in Iran, many countries aren't sending their top diplomats and will be represented at levels lower than their invited foreign ministers.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence attended along with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his counterparts from numerous Arab nations. But France and Germany are not sending Cabinet-ranked officials, and European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini is staying away.

Russia and China aren't participating, and the Palestinians, who have called for the meeting to be boycotted, also will be absent. Iran, which is this week celebrating the 40th anniversary of its Islamic Revolution, denounced the meeting as a "circus" aimed at "demonizing" it.

In a bid to encourage better participation, Pompeo and others sought to broaden what was initially advertised as an Iran-centric meeting to include the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the fight against the Islamic State group, and the conflicts in Syria and Yemen. That effort produced only mixed results, particularly with longtime European allies who are trying to save the 2015 Iran nuclear deal after last year's U.S. withdrawal.

And, while the agenda gives no hint of any concrete actions that might result beyond creating "follow-on working groups" on a variety of common concerns like terrorism and cybersecurity, comments from several participants belied the underlying theme: countering Iran.

Pence will address the conference on a range of Middle East issues, Pompeo will talk about U.S. plans in Syria following President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw U.S. troops and Trump's senior adviser and

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son-in-law Jared Kushner and his peace partner, Jason Greenblatt, will speak about their as-yet unveiled Israeli-Palestinian peace plan.

Greenblatt, whose portfolio extends only to the Israeli-Palestinian peace effort, said Iran is the top priority and derided the Palestinians for their boycott and insistence that their case is the region's most important issue.

In a series of tweets on Wednesday, Greenblatt said the Palestinian position "impedes nations from countering the common enemy of Iran."

"Iran is the primary threat to the future of regional peace/security," he said. "That's what Palestinian leaders don't grasp; as a consequence of being detached from new realities, we see Palestinians increasingly left behind/more isolated than ever."

On his way to Warsaw Netanyahu made clear the conference is centered on Iran.

"It is a conference that unites the United States, Israel, many countries in the world, many countries in the region, Arab countries, against Iran's aggressive policy, its aggression, its desire to conquer the Middle East and destroy Israel," he told reporters.

Netanyahu sent out a belligerent rallying cry to his Arab partners, saying he planned to focus on the "common interest" of confronting Iran. He made the comments during an off-the-cuff interview with reporters on a Warsaw street, shortly after meeting Oman's foreign minister.

Although Netanyahu used the Hebrew word "milchama," or "war," in his comments, his office later changed its official translation and said he was referring to a "common interest of combatting Iran."

Pompeo has predicted that the conference will "deliver really good outcomes" and has played down the impact of lower-level participation. "We think we will make real progress," Pompeo said. He didn't, however, offer any details about specific outcomes.

Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz, the conference co-host, also steered clear of describing potential results. And, even he could not paper over the differences between the U.S. and Europe, including Poland, over the Iran nuclear deal.

"We consider this to be a valuable element on the international arena," Czaputowicz told a joint news conference with Pompeo on the eve of the conference.

In a joint opinion piece published Wednesday by CNN, Pompeo and Czaputowicz said they didn't expect all participants to agree on policies or outcomes but called for an airing of unscripted and candid ideas.

"We expect each nation to express opinions that reflect its own interests," they wrote. "Disagreements in one area should not prohibit unity in others."

In fact, three of Washington's main European allies, Britain, France and Germany, have unveiled a new financial mechanism that the Trump administration believes may be designed to evade U.S. sanctions on Iran. British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt is attending the Warsaw conference, but his main interest is in a side meeting on the conflict in Yemen, according to diplomats familiar with the planning.

Analysts and former officials associated with the Obama administration that forged the nuclear deal as a signature foreign policy achievement questioned the value of the conference, particularly the signs of disunity it will present.

"The result of this conference ideally would be a demonstration of Iranian isolation and unity amongst American allies in Europe and the Middle East," said William Wechsler, senior adviser for Middle East programs at the Atlantic Council in Washington.

"It's another example of what we've seen of countries in Europe demonstrating — sometimes subtly and sometimes not — their differences with the American administration," he said. "If at the end of the day it looks like America is being isolated from its partners, then it's not as successful as you want it to be."

And Ned Price, President Barack Obama's former national security spokesman, said European nations downgraded their delegations because they believed the Trump administration was going to use the summit as an "anti-Iran pep rally."

"Time and again, this administration had found itself drunk on its own Kool-Aid, isolated from our friends, and belatedly forced to scramble to save face," Price said, adding that not a single country in the EU en-

dorsed Trump's pullout from the Iran nuclear deal.

The Trump administration has repeatedly denied allegations that it is seeking regime change in Iran. And yet, mixed messages continue to come from Washington.

Earlier this week, Trump's national security adviser John Bolton released a short video on the anniversary of the Iranian revolution in which he called Iran "the central banker of international terrorism" and accused it of pursuing nuclear weapons and missiles to deliver them. It ended with a not-so-veiled threat to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: "I don't think you'll have many more anniversaries to enjoy."

Khamenei, meanwhile, denounced the United States in a speech on Wednesday.

"About the United States, the resolution of any issues is not imaginable and negotiations with it will bring nothing but material and spiritual harm," Khamenei said. He described any possible future negotiations as an "unforgivable mistake" that would be like "going on your knees before the enemy and kissing the claws of the wolf."

Associated Press writers Aron Heller in Warsaw and Deb Reichmann in Washington contributed.

Cleaning routine shows promise in curbing superbug infection

By **MARILYNN MARCHIONE, AP Chief Medical Writer**

Think of it as decontaminating yourself. Hospitalized patients who harbor certain superbugs can cut their risk of developing full-blown infections if they swab medicated goo in their nose and use special soap and mouthwash for six months after going home, a study found.

It's a low-tech approach to a big problem: About 5 percent of patients have MRSA — antibiotic-resistant Staph bacteria — lurking on their skin or in their noses, putting them at high risk of developing an infection while recovering from an illness or an operation. These can affect the skin, heart, brain, lungs, bones and joints, and most of them land people back in the hospital.

The hygiene steps that researchers tested trimmed that risk by nearly one third.

"It's a very simple solution. You don't have to swallow a medicine, you just have to clean the outside of your body for a little while longer," said Dr. Susan Huang of the University of California Irvine School of Medicine. She led the federally funded study, published Wednesday by the New England Journal of Medicine.

A lot has been done to curb infections in hospitals and attention is shifting to what happens after patients leave. Nine states — California, Washington, Nevada, Minnesota, Illinois, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Maine and New Jersey — require that hospitals test the most vulnerable patients, such as those in intensive care, for MRSA. Many other places do it voluntarily.

The study involved more than 2,000 patients at hospitals in southern California who were found to carry MRSA, or methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus bacteria. All were given information on ways to avoid infection, and half also got special products — mouthwash, liquid soap containing an antiseptic and an antibiotic ointment to swab in the nose. They were told to use these Monday through Friday, every other week for six months.

A year later, 6 percent of those in the deep-clean group had developed a MRSA infection versus 9 percent of the others. They also had fewer infections from other germs. Doctors estimated that 25 to 30 people would need to be treated to prevent one case.

There were no serious side effects; 44 people had dry or irritated skin, and most continued using the products despite that.

Heather Avizius was one. The 41-year-old nanny has had MRSA infections in the past and entered the study after severe complications of Crohn's disease landed her in St. Jude Medical Center in Fullerton, California, eight years ago.

"I took the regimen very, very seriously" and has not had MRSA since, she said. "I felt cleaner and safer" and less worried about spreading germs to her children, she said.

Nearly half dropped out of the study early or couldn't be found for follow-up.

"Many people may think 'I feel fine, I don't really need to do this,'" said Dr. John Jernigan of the U.S.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But “the risk doesn’t end once you go home.”

Federal grants paid for the products. They would cost \$150 to \$200 for six months otherwise, Huang said. The antiseptic soap was a 4 percent chlorhexidine solution sold in many drugstores.

Other soaps, even ones labeled antibacterial, “may not have the active ingredients to remove MRSA,” said Dr. Robert Weinstein, another study leader and an infections specialist at Cook County Health and Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

It’s worth it for patients to do whatever they can to prevent an MRSA infection, he said.

“You left the hospital, you don’t want to go back.”

Marilynn Marchione can be followed at <http://twitter.com/MMarchioneAP>

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UK’s May fights to avoid another defeat on Brexit strategy

By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Theresa May was scrambling Thursday to avoid another defeat on her Brexit plans amid opposition from members of her own party who claim she is moving in the wrong direction in efforts to overcome the impasse blocking a deal.

Hard-line pro-Brexit lawmakers in May’s Conservative Party said a motion to be voted on in Parliament later effectively rules out the threat of Britain leaving the European Union without an agreement on departure terms and future relations, a move they say undermines Britain’s bargaining position.

“Conservative MPs (members of Parliament) really ought not to be associated with anything, express or implied, which seems to take ‘no deal’ off the table,” said Brexit-backing Conservative lawmaker Steve Baker in a tweet.

Baker and other Brexiteers are threatening to rebel against the government, or abstain, in a vote intended to buy the government more time to seek changes from the EU to a Brexit divorce agreement.

International Trade Secretary Liam Fox, a prominent Brexit supporter in Cabinet, warned that a government defeat, though not legally binding, would send the wrong signal to EU leaders.

“They will be looking to see whether Parliament is showing consistency,” he said.

“I think that there’s a danger that we send the wrong signals and I think that we need to understand that the public want us to leave the European Union but they would prefer us to leave the European Union with a deal.”

Two weeks ago, Parliament voted to send May back to Brussels to seek changes to a section of the withdrawal agreement intended to ensure an open border between the U.K.’s Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland after Brexit.

Lawmakers also voted to rule out a “no-deal” exit, though without signaling how that should happen.

May has chosen to ignore that instruction and refuses to take a “no-deal” Brexit off the table as she attempts to win concessions from the bloc. Most businesses and economists say the British economy would be severely damaged if the country crashed out of the EU on the scheduled Brexit date of March 29 without a deal, bringing tariffs and other impediments to trade.

Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay told lawmakers that “the only way to avoid ‘no-deal’ is either to secure a deal on the terms the prime minister has set out” or to cancel Brexit - something the government says it won’t do.

Thursday’s main vote is on a government motion that essentially treads water, reaffirming Parliament’s commitment to its decisions of Jan. 29. Lawmakers will also get the chance to consider amendments from opposition and pro-EU lawmakers seeking to postpone Brexit or steer the U.K. away from the “no-deal” cliff edge. None of the votes is legally binding on the government.

The remaining 27 EU nations insist that the legally binding withdrawal agreement struck with May’s

government in November can't be renegotiated.

Leaders of the bloc have expressed exasperation at Britain's desire for last-minute changes, and its failure, amid seemingly endless wrangling in the U.K. Parliament, to offer firm proposals.

European Council President Donald Tusk, who chairs summits of EU leaders, tweeted: "No news is not always good news. EU27 still waiting for concrete, realistic proposals from London on how to break #Brexit impasse."

Follow AP's full coverage of Brexit at: <https://www.apnews.com/Brexit>

China, US open trade talks as Beijing says exports rebound

By JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — U.S. and Chinese negotiators opened talks Thursday on a sprawling trade dispute as Beijing reported its January exports rebounded despite President Donald Trump's tariff hikes.

Trump said earlier the talks could help decide whether he escalates the fight over China's technology ambitions by going ahead with more penalty duties March 2 on \$200 billion of Chinese goods.

The battle between the two biggest economies has fueled fears it will drag on weakening global growth. China's economy grew at its slowest pace in three-decades last year, adding to pressure on communist leaders to reach a settlement.

Both sides have expressed optimism but released no details. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and his Chinese counterpart, Vice Premier Liu He, shook hands at the start of the meeting at a government guesthouse but said nothing to reporters.

The U.S. delegation also includes Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and David Malpass, a Treasury undersecretary who is Trump's nominee for World Bank president.

On Tuesday, Trump said that while he is not inclined to extend the deadline, he might let it "slide for a little while" if talks go well. Earlier, the White House called March 2 a "hard deadline."

Economists and business groups say the planned two days of negotiations allow too little time to reach a final settlement, but Beijing hopes to persuade Trump enough progress is being made to forestall the new tariff hikes.

There was no indication whether negotiators are making progress on the thorniest dispute: U.S. pressure on Beijing to scale back plans for government-led creation of Chinese global leaders in robotics and other technologies.

A Ministry of Commerce spokesman, Gao Feng, told reporters at a regular weekly briefing that he had no details on the status of the talks.

Meanwhile, customs data released Thursday showed Chinese exports in January rose 9.1 percent from a year earlier, recovering from December's 3.5 percent decline.

Exports to the United States sank 2.4 percent, squeezed by Trump's tariff hikes on billions of dollars of Chinese products. Imports of American goods plunged 41.2 percent, reflecting retaliatory Chinese duties and orders to importers to find other suppliers.

The fight reflects growing frustration among Beijing's trading partners over official plans to subsidize and promote fledgling Chinese technology industries. Washington, Europe, Japan and other governments say those violate Beijing's market-opening obligations. Some American officials worry they might erode U.S. industrial leadership.

Trump raised tariffs in July over complaints Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology. The dispute includes cyber-spying traced to China, the country's multibillion-dollar trade surplus with the United States and support for state industry.

Beijing has offered to narrow its trade surplus by purchasing more American soybeans, natural gas and other exports. But the government has resisted pressure to cut back development plans it sees as a path to prosperity and global influence.

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A deal on changes in Chinese industrial and market regulations might be possible in three months, said Yu Miaojie, a Peking University economist. But he said Beijing likely will insist it is entitled as a developing country to retain protection for its industries.

"It is hard to reach an agreement within a short time on structural reforms if the United States demands too much," Yu said. He said his own view is that China "already has offered too much," given its relatively low state of development.

"It is equivalent to the U.S. demanding China define itself as a very advanced and perfect economy, which is not true," he said. "China is a developing country and its reforms need to take place step by step."

While the January trade data were stronger than expected, Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said global demand for Chinese exports is weakening.

"The broad trend in shipments still appears to be pointing down," he said in a report.

Chinese officials reject complaints that foreign companies are required to hand over technology. But business groups and foreign governments point to rules they say compel companies to disclose trade secrets or share technology with state-owned partners.

Chinese officials also balk at U.S. pressure to accept an enforcement mechanism to monitor whether Beijing carries out its promises.

Beijing has tried to deflect pressure by emphasizing China's growth as an export market. It has announced changes over the past year to open finance and other fields, including allowing full foreign ownership in its auto industry for the first time.

AP researcher Yu Bing contributed.

Highlights of the \$330 billion-plus bill to avoid shutdown

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's not just about President Donald Trump's border wall.

The border security issues that sparked a 35-day government shutdown are but one element of a massive \$330 billion-plus spending measure that wraps seven bills into one, funding nine Cabinet agencies, including the departments of Justice, State, Agriculture and Commerce. End-stage fights over unrelated policy provisions produced a deadlock, so efforts to extend soon-to-expire laws like the federal flood insurance program were dropped.

Highlights of the measure, which runs 1,768 page of legislative text and explanation, include:

BORDER SECURITY, BUT NOT JUST BARRIERS

There's nearly \$1.4 billion for 55 miles of new barriers, well less than Trump wanted. There would be curbs on where construction could occur. There's more than \$1 billion for other forms of border security, including improvements in surveillance equipment, hiring 600 additional customs officers, more immigration judges and \$414 million in humanitarian aid for unauthorized immigrants who are detained.

A BILLION HERE, A BILLION THERE

Most of the bill deals with spending minutia such as a \$1 billion increase to gear up for the 2020 census, an almost 4 percent budget increase for NASA and an \$11.3 billion budget for the IRS. Most agencies are kept relatively level compared to last year, and the measure rejects big spending cuts — such as a \$12 billion cut to foreign aid and the State Department — proposed by Trump.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE PAY

Trump has proposed a pay freeze for civilian federal employees, but the measure would guarantee those workers a 1.9 percent increase, according to No. 2 House Democrat Steny Hoyer of Maryland. The military got a 2.6 percent increase in legislation that passed Congress last year.

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'EXTENDERS'? NEVER MIND

Lawmakers in both parties eyed the measure to renew the government's troubled federal flood insurance program through Sept. 30, but it and a full menu of expiring laws collectively known as "extenders" went unaddressed in the end. That meant a host of miscellaneous provisions were dropped in the final stages.

A drive by Senate Republicans to extend the Violence Against Women Act was blocked by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who feared it would undercut efforts to update the law this spring.

Meanwhile, an extension of a Medicaid provision on home- and community-based nursing care, grants for the poor under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program and fixes to a trust fund that finances dredging and maintenance of ports and harbors will also have to advance later.

A bid by Pelosi to win back pay for federal contractors laid off during the recent shutdown was blocked by the White House.

ODDS AND ENDS

There's \$3 billion to help state and local law enforcement, including for combatting opioids abuse. There are funds for the Coast Guard's first new icebreaker in four decades, increases for roads and mass transit, and money for clean air and water projects and foreign aid.

BIG TRUCKS

For fans of the truly obscure, there's a provision to exempt sugar beet trucks in rural Oregon from length limits. It would also add exemptions to federal truck weight rules in the state of Kentucky.

Asian shares retreat as China, US begin trade negotiations

By ANNABELLE LIANG, Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Asian stocks were mostly lower on Thursday as China and the U.S. kicked off two days of trade negotiations in Beijing. Regional indexes have advanced for three straight days on hopes that both sides will make headway on big issues like Beijing's technology policy.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng gave up 0.7 percent to 28,305.33. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 0.1 percent to 6,060.50 and the Kospi in South Korea lost 0.5 percent to 2,191.42. The Shanghai Composite index eased 0.4 percent to 2,709.73.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 0.1 percent to 21,155.44 after preliminary data showed that its economy had expanded by 1.4 percent in 2018's fourth quarter, helped by strong domestic demand. This was a vast improvement from a broad contraction in the previous quarter. Shares rose in Taiwan and the Philippines but fell in Singapore.

"For Asia markets, the exhaustion of the positive sentiment that powered U.S. markets overnight looks to invite the region to tread water in the session," Jingyi Pan of IG said in a commentary.

News that Chinese and American officials planned to hold further talks in Beijing has fueled trading in Asia and beyond. A tariffs truce, which was put in place by Chinese leader Xi Jinping and President Donald Trump in December, will expire soon. On March 2, the U.S. is expected to more than double import taxes on \$200 billion in Chinese goods.

Trump has hinted that he might hold off on these tariffs if enough progress was made at the talks. On Wednesday, he told reporters that discussions were "going along very well".

Traders are also waiting for Chinese trade data that will be released later in the day. A decline in the country's exports or imports could cement worries that the world's no. 2 economy was slowing.

WALL STREET: U.S. stocks edged higher Wednesday on hopes that negotiators will come close to a deal after trade talks. Energy companies, retailers and industrial stocks climbed. The S&P 500 added 0.3 percent to 2,753.03 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.5 percent at 25,543.27. The Nasdaq composite rose 0.1 percent to 7,420.38. The Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks gained 0.3 percent to 1,542.94.

ENERGY: U.S. crude rose 15 cents to \$54.05 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile

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Exchange. It picked up 80 cents to settle at \$53.90 per barrel in New York. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 16 cents to \$63.77 per barrel. It added \$1.19 close at \$63.61 per barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar slipped to 110.97 yen from 110.98 yen late Wednesday. The euro strengthened to \$1.1277 from \$1.1261.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Feb. 14, the 45th day of 2019. There are 320 days left in the year. This is Valentine's Day.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Feb. 14, 2018, a gunman identified as a former student opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School near Fort Lauderdale, Florida, killing 17 people in the nation's deadliest school shooting since the attack in Newtown, Connecticut, more than five years earlier.

On this date:

In 1663, New France (Canada) became a royal province under King Louis XIV.

In 1859, Oregon was admitted to the Union as the 33rd state.

In 1903, the Department of Commerce and Labor was established. (It was divided into separate departments of Commerce and Labor in 1913.)

In 1912, Arizona became the 48th state of the Union as President William Howard Taft signed a proclamation.

In 1913, labor leader Jimmy Hoffa was born in Brazil, Ind.; college football coach Woody Hayes was born in Clifton, Ohio; sports broadcaster Mel Allen was born in Birmingham, Ala.

In 1929, the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre" took place in a Chicago garage as seven rivals of Al Capone's gang were gunned down.

In 1949, Israel's Knesset convened for the first time.

In 1876, inventors Alexander Graham Bell and Elisha Gray applied separately for patents related to the telephone. (The U.S. Supreme Court eventually ruled Bell the rightful inventor.)

In 1979, Adolph Dubs, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, was kidnapped in Kabul by Muslim extremists and killed in a shootout between his abductors and police.

In 1984, 6-year-old Stormie Jones became the world's first heart-liver transplant recipient at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (she lived until November, 1990).

In 2013, double-amputee and Olympic sprinter Oscar Pistorius shot and killed his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, at his home in Pretoria, South Africa; he was later convicted of murder and is serving a 13-year prison term. American Airlines and US Airways announced an \$11 billion merger that turned American into the world's biggest airline.

In 2017, a former store clerk was convicted in New York of murder in one of the nation's most haunting missing-child cases, nearly 38 years after 6-year-old Etan Patz (AY'-tahn payts) disappeared while on the way to a school bus stop.

Ten years ago: Savoring his first big victory in Congress, President Barack Obama used his weekly radio and Internet address to celebrate the just-passed \$787 billion economic stimulus bill as a "major milestone on our road to recovery." Jazz drummer Louie Bellson, who'd performed with Duke Ellington and Bellson's late wife, Pearl Bailey, died in Los Angeles at age 84.

Five years ago: Drawing a link between climate change and California's drought, President Barack Obama said the U.S. had to stop thinking of water as a "zero-sum" game and needed to do a better job of figuring out how to make sure everyone's water needs were satisfied. An attempt by the United Auto Workers to organize employees at a Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, fell short in a 712-626 vote. Jim Fregosi, a former All-Star who'd won more than 1,000 games as a manager for four teams, died in Miami at age 71.

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One year ago: Stormy Daniels' manager said the porn star now believed she was free to discuss what she said was a sexual encounter with Donald Trump; she believed that Trump lawyer Michael Cohen had invalidated a non-disclosure agreement. After initially appearing to cast doubt on allegations that former aide Rob Porter had abused two ex-wives, Trump declared that he was "totally opposed to domestic violence." South African president Jacob Zuma, whose tenure had been marked by scandals, resigned after being ordered to do so by his party, the African National Congress.

Today's Birthdays: TV personality Hugh Downs is 98. Actor Andrew Prine is 83. Country singer Razy Bailey is 80. Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is 77. Jazz musician Maceo Parker is 76. Movie director Alan Parker is 75. Journalist Carl Bernstein is 75. Former Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., is 72. TV personality Pat O'Brien is 71. Magician Teller (Penn and Teller) is 71. Cajun singer-musician Michael Doucet (doo-SAY') (Beausoleil) is 68. Actor Ken Wahl is 62. Opera singer Renee Fleming is 60. Actress Meg Tilly is 59. Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Kelly is 59. Singer-producer Dwayne Wiggins is 58. Actress Sakina Jaffey is 57. Actor Enrico Colantoni is 56. Actor Zach Galligan is 55. Actor Valente Rodriguez is 55. Rock musician Ricky Wolking (The Nixons) is 53. Former tennis player Manuela Maleeva is 52. Actor Simon Pegg is 49. Rock musician Kevin Baldes (Lit) is 47. Rock singer Rob Thomas (Matchbox Twenty) is 47. Former NFL quarterback Drew Bledsoe is 47. Actress Danai Gurira is 41. Actor Matt Barr is 35. Actress Stephanie Leonidas is 35. Actor Jake Lacy is 33. Actress Tiffany Thornton is 33. Actor Brett Dier is 29. Actor Freddie Highmore is 27.

Thought for Today: "To find a man's true character, play golf with him." — P.G. Wodehouse (1881-1975).