

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 1, 2019 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 234 ~ 1 of 55

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Friday, March 1, 2019

Basketball: Boys Varsity Region 1A: High Seed (Host) #1 vs #4/#5 Winner #2/#7 Winner vs #3/#6 Winner
State Debate at Sioux Falls O'Gorman High School

Saturday, March 2, 2019

State Debate at Sioux Falls O'Gorman High School

Sunday, March 3, 2019

2:00pm- 6:00pm: Open Gym at GHS Arena (Grades JK-8
2pm - 4pm; Grades 6-12 4pm - 6pm)

Bates Township

BATES TOWNSHIP ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

Bates Township will hold its annual meeting and election on Tuesday, March 5th, 2019 at the home of the Clerk, 14523 409th Ave, Conde.

Election of officers and business meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m.

We will be receiving bids for road maintenance and gravel. Please mail bids to

Betty Geist, Bates Township Clerk, 14523 409th Ave., Conde, SD 57434 prior to meeting date.

Betty Geist, Township Clerk

Help Wanted

Looking for a fun, part-time job? Groton Dairy Queen is now hiring. Stop in for an application. (0216.0316)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

- 1- Groton Care & Rehab Help Wanted Ad
- 1- Help Wanted
- 1- Bates Township Notice
- 2- Open House Retirement for BC Auditor
- 2- 2019 Football Schedule
- 3- Boys Region 1A Bracket
- 4- GDILIVE.COM Tonight
- 5- I "Hate" Winter Party at Groton Care & Rehab
- 6- Wolves players named to NSIC All-Conference
- 7- Bowling Scores
- 7- Lady Tigers end season at Redfield/Doland
- 7- Bowling Scores
- 7- Rep. Johnson Opposes Democrat Gun Control Bills
- 8- Today in Weather History
- 9- Weather Pages
- 11- Daily Devotional
- 12- 2019 Groton Events
- 13 - News from the Associated Press

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**



OPEN HOUSE RETIREMENT

Please join us in extending best wishes to Maxine Fisher, who is retiring from Brown County Auditor's office on March 1st. Maxine has been an esteemed member of Brown County for 47 years.

We invite you to attend an Open House on Friday, March 1st from 2pm to 4pm at the Brown County Auditor's Office.

Ready for some football?!

Week zero for 2019 is Fri, August 23.

Here is the GHS Fall Schedule:

Wk	Opponent	Location
8/23	McLaughlin	Home
8/30	Ellendale/Edgeley/Kulm, ND	Away
9/6	Webster Area	Away
9/13	Sisseton	Home
9/20	Milbank	Home
9/27	Redfield/Doland	Away
10/4	Aberdeen Roncalli	Home
10/11	OPEN	
10/18	Mobridge-Pollock	Away

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Region 1A Boys Basketball Tournament

Print Bracket

#1 Tiospa Zina

Score:

Date: March 1, 2019

Time: 7:00

Site: Agency Village

Score:

Groton Area

#4 Groton Area

Score: 62

Date: Feb 26, 2019

Time: 8:00

Site: Groton

Score: 44

#5 Milbank

#2 Aberdeen Roncalli

Score: 74

Date: Feb 26, 2019

Time: 7:00

Site: Aberdeen Roncalli

Score: 52

#7 Webster Area

#3 Redfield/Doland

Score: 61

Date: Feb 26, 2019

Time: 7:00

Site: Redfield

Score: 60

#6 Sisseton

Aberdeen Roncalli

Score:

Date: March 1, 2019

Time: 7:00

Site: High Seed

Score:

Redfield/Doland

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

School	Seed Pts.
Tiospa Zina	44.000
Aberdeen Roncalli	43.400
Redfield/Doland	40.211
Groton Area	39.700
Milbank	39.579
Sisseton	39.444
Webster Area	37.316

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

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It's Boys' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



Tiospa Zina
Wambdi VS



Groton Area Tigers

Region 1A Game

Friday, March 1, 2019

7:00 p.m.

at Agency Village

We have ordered our own internet line for this game so we'll have excellent video.

Broadcast Sponsored By:

Aberdeen Chrysler Center
Allied Climate Professionals w/ Kevin Nehls
Bahr Spray Foam
BK Custom T's & More
DeHoet Trucking
Full Circle Ag
Groton American Legion
Groton Care & Rehab Center
Johnson Agency (JR)
Jungle Lanes & Lounge
Locke Electric
Lori's Pharmacy
Mike-N-Jo's Body-N-Glass
Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.
Northeast Chiropractic Clinic w/ Taylor Anderson
Olde Bank Cafe
Olson Development
Professional Management Services
TNTax Business Solutions
Truss Pros of Britton
Weber Landscaping



I "HATE"

WINTER

PARTY

Free Root Beer Floats

Open to the community

Thursday, March 7th

Starting at 2 p.m.



GROTON

CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

1106 North Second Street
605.397.2365

Three Wolves honored on NSIC All-Conference teams, Sather named Coach of the Year

Burnsville, Minn. – The Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference released this morning the 2019 men's basketball all-conference teams. Three Northern State Wolves were honored, as well as head coach Paul Sather. Ian Smith, Justin Decker, and Gabe King were named to the first, second, and honorable mention teams, while Sather grabbed his second straight NSIC Coach of the Year award.

Sather led the Wolves to back-to-back NSIC overall and North Division Championships this season, finishing the league schedule with an 18-4 record. Northern closed out the regular season, leading the NSIC in scoring defense, scoring margin, 3-point field goal percentage defense, and assists. In addition, NSU sits eighth in the country in 3-point field goal percentage, and ranks in the top-30 in rebound margin, assist/turnover ratio, and field goal percentage. The Wolves are 22-6 overall heading into postseason play.

Smith started 26 games for the Wolves thus far in 2018-19, leading the team averaging 14.0 points and 5.4 assists per game. The senior is shooting 47.6 percent from the floor this season, and has totaled 150 rebounds and 22 steals. Smith recorded a career high 39 points versus Wayne State at 11 assists versus Minnesota Crookston this season. He has four double-doubles on the year and has knocked down double figure points in 23 contests. Smith finished the year ranked eighth in scoring, third in assists, and four in assist/turnover ratio in the NSIC. This is the third all-conference honor of his career.

Decker started 27 games for the Wolves this season, averaging 11.4 points and 4.4 rebounds per game. He is shooting 52.9 percent from the floor and 71.9 percent from the foul line this season. The senior has 24 assists, 14 blocks, and ten steals on the year. Decker notched a career high 25 points against Concordia-St. Paul, nine rebounds versus MSU Moorhead, and two steals versus Minnesota Duluth. The second team nod is the first all-conference honor of his career.

King started all 28 games for Northern in the regular season, averaging 11.0 points and 4.0 rebounds per game. He has come on strong as of late, averaging 18.4 points per game in the team's last five contests. The junior is shooting 49.1 percent from the floor, 42.5 percent from the 3-point line, and 89.6 percent from the foul line. He leads the team with 45 made 3-pointers, and has added 45 assists, 11 blocks, and ten steals. King tallied a career high 23 points versus Southwest Minnesota State, eight rebound against Northwest Missouri State, six assists versus Concordia-St. Paul, and three steals against St. Cloud State this season. This is the first all-conference accolade of his career.

Kusler and Wadsworth named to NSIC Women's Basketball All-Conference teams

Burnsville, Minn. – The Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference released this morning the 2019 women's basketball all-conference teams. Northern State junior Brianna Kusler and freshman Lexi Wadsworth were named to the NSIC first team and freshman team.

Kusler has started 25 games for Northern in her junior campaign, averaging a team leading 11.7 points and 9.7 rebounds per game. She is shooting 40.2 percent from the floor and 83.5 percent from the foul line. The Aberdeen native has 55 assists, 23 steals, and four blocks. She has recorded seven double-doubles this season, and went on a 9-game streak with double figure rebounds. Kusler tallied a career high 20 points in two games this season, and grabbed a career high 16 rebounds versus Minnesota Crookston. She ranks third in rebounding, second in free throw percentage, and second in defensive rebounds in the NSIC. This is the first NSIC All-Conference honor of her career.

Wadsworth has started all 28 games for the Wolves in her true freshman campaign. She is second on the team averaging 10.0 points and 6.5 rebounds per game. Wadsworth is shooting 40.2 percent from the floor and 41.2 percent from the 3-point line, with 21 made 3-pointers. She recorded a career high 19 points twice this season, and a career high 12 rebounds versus Concordia-St. Paul. The freshman has 280 points, 182 rebounds, 47 assists, 15 steals, and 11 blocks this season. She is one of just five players named to the NSIC All-Conference freshman team.

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Pheasants fly past Lady Tigers

Redfield/Doland defeated Groton Area in the second round of the Region 1A Girls' Basketball Tournament, 42-22. The game was played Thursday in Redfield.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Aberdeen Chrysler Center, Allied Climate Professionals w/ Kevin Nehls, Bahr Spray Foam, BK Custom T's & More, DeHoet Trucking, Full Circle Ag, Groton American Legion, Groton Care & Rehab Center, Johnson Agency (JR), Jungle Lanes & Lounge, Locke Electric, Lori's Pharmacy, Mike-N-Jo's Body-N-Glass, Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc., Northeast Chiropractic Clinic w/ Taylor Anderson, Olde Bank Cafe, Olson Development, Professional Management Services, TNTax Business Solutions, Truss Pros of Britton and Weber Landscaping.

Groton Area had the first lead at 2-0 and the game was tied at two and four before the Pheasants would score nine straight points to take a 13-4 lead. Redfield/Doland led at half time, 20-11, and at the end of the third quarter, 31-20.

The Tigers shot 22 percent from the field, making eight of 37 field goals while the Pheasants were 16 of 39 for 41 percent. Groton Area was four for four from the line and the Pheasants were five of nine. Redfield/Doland had seven team fouls and seven turnovers. Groton Area had eight team fouls and 12 turnovers. Jennie Doeden had seven of the team's 25 rebounds and Doeden and Eliza Wanner each had three of the team's eight assists.

Kaycie Hawkins led the Tigers in scoring with eight points followed by Allyssa Locke with five, Jennie Doeden had four, Payton Maine three and Eliza Wanner two.

The Pheasants were led by Hannah Kuehn with 13 followed by Kailee Clause with nine, Georgia Kuehn had seven, Eve Millar six, Trista Frost four and Chelsea Smith three.

Groton Area finishes the season with a 10-12 record.

Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Foxes 26 ½ Coyotes 24, Cheetahs 23, Shih Tzus 20 ½ Chipmunks 13, Jackelopes 13

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 203, 197, Scott Kampa 182, Roger Spanier 180

Women's High Games: Vicki Walter 168, Dar Larson 158, Darci Spanier 157

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 542, Scott Kampa 486, Rick Carlson 484

Women's High Series: Vicki Walter 463, Darci Spanier 423, Michelle Johnson 413

Rep. Johnson Opposes Democrat Gun Control Bills

Washington, D.C. – This week U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson (R-S.D.) voted against two Democrat gun control measures. The two bills proposed by Democrats in the House (H.R.8, H.R.1112) would heavily curb law-abiding citizens' access to firearms.

H.R.8 would criminalize almost all gun transfers between private individuals, including some family members. It is an extensive overregulation of individuals' Second Amendment rights. H.R.1112 would create bureaucratic delay by extending the three-day waiting background check determination window to ten days and undermines law-abiding citizens' ability to defend themselves.

"I was proud to cast my vote, not once, but twice this week against gun control bills proposed by Democrats," said Johnson. "A background check system already exists in our country. We have to uphold the 2nd Amendment rights of law-abiding South Dakotans and our country."

Additionally, Rep. Johnson supported an amendment vote that would require U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to be notified when illegal immigrants try to purchase a firearm through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. This vote passed the U.S. House, even though 208 Democrats voted against the measure.

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Today in Weather History

March 1, 1970: Freezing rain and drizzle impacted much of South Dakota on March 1, 1970. Ice accumulation up to 1/8 of an inch thick was reported in Rapid City, with heavier amounts in the northwestern part of the state. Some utility lines were broken, but there was no extensive line damage. Also, some schools were closed due to icy roads.

March 1, 1998: Incredible amount of snow falls on Lead, South Dakota from February 25 through March 1. The official storm total was 103 inches for the five day period. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the NWS Office in Rapid City.

March 1, 2014: Arctic air combined with strong northwest winds to bring bitter cold wind chills to central and northeast South Dakota east of the Missouri River. Bitter wind chills of 35 below to around 40 below occurred. Some of the coldest wind chills include; 39 degrees below zero west of Long Lake; 40 degrees below zero at Highmore; 41 degrees below zero near Roy Lake; and 42 degrees below zero at Summit.

1910: The worst avalanche in US history regarding lives lost, occurred Wellington, Washington. Heavy snow occurred from February 26 through the 28th, which blocked the rail lines. Weather conditions turned on the 28th with a thunderstorm occurring over the area. Just after 1 AM on March 1st, a ten to 14 foot high mass of snow broke free from the mountainside and pushed the trains 150 feet down into the Tye River gorge. In all, 96 people were killed by this avalanche. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

2006: The day's high temperature of 93 degrees at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport in Texas broke a 107-year-old record. Other hot north Texas cities included Wichita Falls with 96 degrees and Fort Worth Meacham Airport with 90 degrees.

1910 - The deadliest avalanche of record in the U.S. thundered down the mountains near Wellington Station WA sweeping three huge locomotive train engines and some passenger cars, snowbound on the grade leading to Stevens Pass, over the side and into a canyon, and burying them under tons of snow. The avalanche claimed the lives of more than 100 people. The station house at Wellington was also swept away. (The Weather Channel)

1914 - High winds and heavy snow crippled New Jersey and New York State. Two feet of snow were reported at Ashbury Park, and at New York City the barometric pressure dropped to a record 28.38 inches. The storm caused complete disruption of electric power in New Jersey. (David Ludlum)

1980 - Norfolk, VA, received 13.7 inches of snow to push their season total to a record 41.9 inches exceeding their previous record by more than four inches. (David Ludlum)

1980 - An unusually large Florida tornado, 500 yards in width at times, killed one person and caused six million dollars damage near Fort Lauderdale. (The Weather Channel)

1983 - A ferocious storm battered the Pacific coast. The storm produced heavy rain and gale force winds resulting in flooding and beach erosion, and in the mountains produced up to seven feet of snow in five days. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm crossing the Great Lakes Region produced heavy snow and gale force winds from Wisconsin to northern New England, with eight inches of snow reported at Ironwood MI. (The National Weather Summary)






1988 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in north central Texas. Baseball size hail was reported at Lake Kickapoo. Hail fell continuously for thirty minutes in the Iowa Park area of Wichita Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - March came in like a lion, with snow and high winds, in the northwestern U.S. Winds gusted to 86 mph in the Rosario Strait of western Washington State. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A series of low pressure systems moving out of the Gulf of Alaska spread high winds and heavy snow across western Alaska. Winds in the Anchorage area gusted to 69 mph at Glen Alps, and Talkeetna was buried under three feet of snow in two days. Valdez received 21.4 inches of snow, raising their total for the winter season to 482.4 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
 100% → 70%		 30%		
Snow then Snow Likely	Mostly Cloudy	Chance Snow	Decreasing Clouds	Cold
High: 17 °F	Low: -3 °F	High: 6 °F	Low: -17 °F	High: -1 °F

Light Snow overnight into early Friday afternoon,
with additional **Light Snow** of around 1" or less during the day Saturday over south central SD

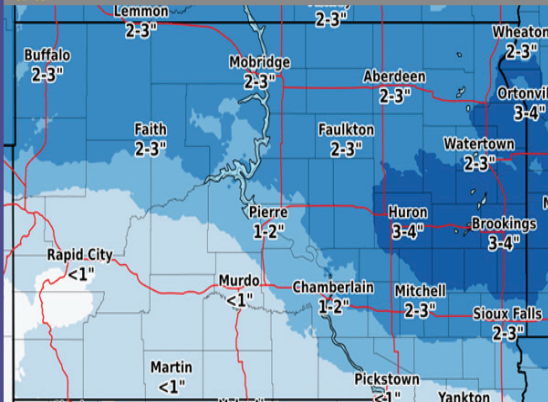
then

Bitterly Cold to Dangerous Wind Chills Saturday night into Monday!



NWS Aberdeen, SD
Updated: 2/28/2019 1:49 PM Central


Snow Forecast overnight into Friday afternoon



BITTERLY COLD Saturday night into Monday morning

Wind Chills of -20 to -40°
Frostbite possible in 30 minutes or less

EXTREME COLD



Published on: 02/28/2019 at 1:51PM

1910 - The deadliest avalanche of record in the U.S. thundered down the mountains near Wellington Station WA sweeping three huge locomotive train engines and some passenger cars, snowbound on the grade leading to Stevens Pass, over the side and into a canyon, and burying them under tons of snow. The avalanche claimed the lives of more than 100 people. The station house at Wellington was also swept away. (The Weather Channel)

1914 - High winds and heavy snow crippled New Jersey and New York State. Two feet of snow were reported at Ashbury Park, and at New York City the barometric pressure dropped to a record 28.38 inches.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 19 °F at 3:35 PM

Low Outside Temp: -2 °F at 4:12 AM

High Gust: 16 mph at 12:48 PM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 73° in 1992

Record Low: -29° in 1962

Average High: 33°F

Average Low: 13°F

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.55

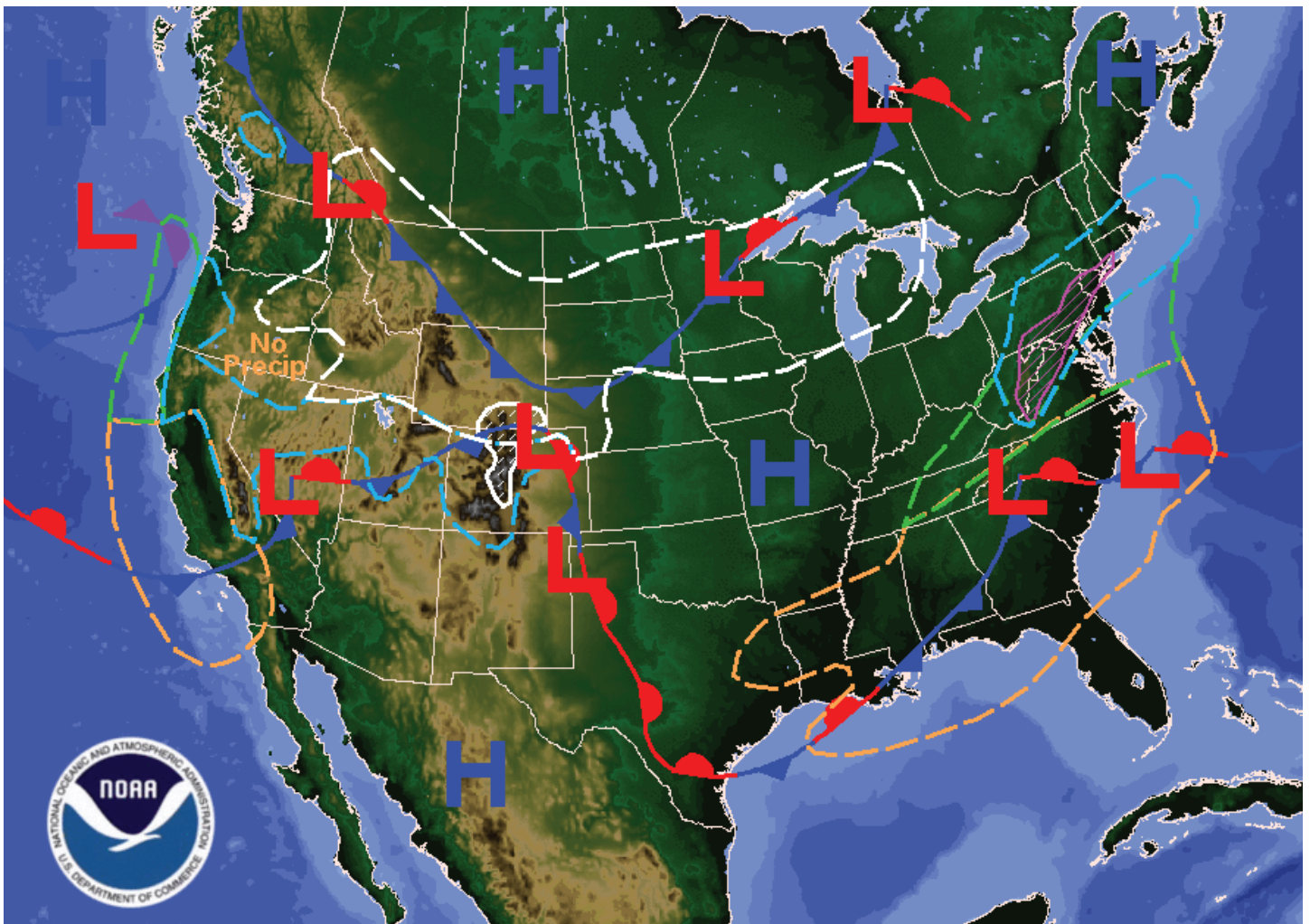
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.02

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:21 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:11 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Mar 01, 2019, issued 4:29 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Mcreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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UH, OH, HERE COMES MY DAD!

It was a beautiful fall evening in Lorain, Ohio. My friends and I were sitting on the steps of The Garfield Elementary School when I looked up the street and saw the outline of a man against the setting sun. There was no doubt it was my Dad. He had a very distinct limp that set him apart from others.

So, when I saw the limp, I went limp. With great fear, I uttered, Uh, Oh. Here comes my Dad. Not that I expected him to join the group and enjoy the evening with us. I feared his arrival because I was disobedient.

Be home before dark or else. He never finished the or else. The else was always consistent with what I had done or not done. And, it was always something that would serve my best interests. The one punishment I most remember was having to read or practice the piano before going to be with my friends after school. On occasion, it took several hours of practice. And, on occasion, there was the rod.

But he was never unfair. Never inconsiderate. Never a disciplinarian without reason for his chastisement. What he did was done for my sake: to protect me from harming myself or others. How Heavenly Father like! His goal? My best!

So, it is with God. Whenever we put our wants ahead of His needs, hopefully, He will intervene and place us on the correct path. As His children, we can expect Him to use various means to correct us: perhaps a financial loss because of greed and lack of giving, or even suffering to draw us back to His side to make us plead for His mercy and grace and healing.

Prayer: Give us a willing spirit, Father, to accept Your discipline when we walk in paths that would harm us. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 3:11 My child, dont reject the Lords discipline, and dont be upset when he corrects you.

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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

Survey suggests more economic growth for Midwest, Plains

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A new report says the Mid-America Business Conditions Index in February hit its highest level since September, signaling solid economic growth over the next three to six months for nine Midwest and Plains states.

The report issued Friday says the index rose to 57.9 last month from 56.0 in January. The September figure was 57.5.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss oversees the survey, and he says even stronger growth was hampered by shortages of skilled workers and international trade tensions.

The survey results are compiled into a collection of indexes ranging from zero to 100. Survey organizers say any score above 50 suggests growth. A score below that suggests decline.

The survey covers Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

Thursday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Class B Region 4 Semifinal
Dell Rapids St. Mary 56, Chester 37

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Class A Region 1 Semifinal
Aberdeen Roncalli 48, Milbank 43
Redfield/Doland 42, Groton Area 22
Class A Region 2 Semifinal
Flandreau 64, Madison 36
Hamlin 57, Sioux Valley 22
Class A Region 3 Semifinal
Sioux Falls Christian 63, Dell Rapids 47
West Central 56, Garretson 45
Class A Region 4 Semifinal
Beresford 55, Vermillion 53
Lennox 72, Tea Area 55
Class A Region 5 Semifinal
McCook Central/Montrose 55, Parker 32
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 59, Parkston 32
Class A Region 6 Semifinal
Crow Creek 62, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 61
Miller 58, Chamberlain 37
Class A Region 7 Semifinal
Todd County 71, Pine Ridge 65
Winner 71, Red Cloud 63
Class A Region 8 Semifinal
Belle Fourche 71, Rapid City Christian 47
St. Thomas More 60, Hill City 35

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Class B SODAK 16 State Qualifiers
Corsica/Stickney 47, Castlewood 41
DeSmet 64, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 35
Ethan 70, Dupree 38
Freeman 46, Avon 38
Ipswich 51, Bridgewater-Emery 40
Warner 65, Faulkton 53
Waverly-South Shore 48, Faith 43
White River 36, New Underwood 28

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

Simpson leads South Dakota over North Dakota St. 75-65

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Triston Simpson had 20 points as South Dakota defeated North Dakota State 75-65 on Thursday night.

Tyler Peterson had 15 points for South Dakota (12-16, 6-9 Summit League). Stanley Umude added 13 points. Brandon Armstrong had 12 points for the home team.

Tyson Ward tied a career high with 28 points and had six rebounds for the Bison (14-15, 8-7). Vinnie Shahid added 10 points. Jared Samuelson had six rebounds.

The Coyotes evened the season series against the Bison with the win. North Dakota State defeated South Dakota 71-65 on Dec. 29. South Dakota finishes out the regular season against North Dakota at home on Saturday. North Dakota State finishes out the regular season against Purdue Fort Wayne on the road on Saturday.

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

This was generated by Automated Insights, <http://www.automatedinsights.com/ap> , using data from STATS LLC, <https://www.stats.com>

Roberts County sheriff convicted of aggravated assault

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A jury has convicted the Roberts County sheriff of felony aggravated assault.

Twenty-eight-year-old Korey Ware, of Sisseton, was accused of assaulting a 30-year-old man at an Aberdeen bar on Oct. 6, 2018. He was a deputy sheriff at the time and also sheriff-elect, since he had won a June primary race and was unopposed in the November general election.

The charge didn't prevent him from being sworn in as sheriff in January, though his duties were restricted. The felony conviction could affect his ability to serve as sheriff.

The American News reports Ware was convicted Thursday and will be sentenced later.

Ware's attorney argued the injury fell short of being serious, since the man didn't immediately seek medical attention that night. But the prosecutor argued the man had to have his jaw wired shut.

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

Senate panel passes hemp bill despite big pressure from Noem

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota Senate panel approved a bill Thursday that would make it legal to grow industrial hemp, despite the governor's assertion the state isn't ready and her administration's concern that it could be a step toward legalizing marijuana.

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The Senate agriculture committee voted 7-2 to send the bill to the floor. If approved by the full chamber without any changes, the measure would go to Republican Gov. Kristi Noem, who has asked lawmakers not pass such a bill this year.

Craig Price, the Department of Public Safety secretary, said hemp and marijuana look alike and pointed out that both are forms of cannabis, though only marijuana could produce a high. He said officials believe allowing hemp cultivation would come with a multi-million dollar price tag and lead to another push to permit marijuana in South Dakota.

Republican Sen. Jordan Youngberg, a co-sponsor, said that's not the reason he proposed the measure. The 2018 federal farm bill legalized cultivation of industrial hemp nationally, and supporters say there's an industry ready in South Dakota to start processing hemp products.

The bill's main sponsor, Democratic Rep. Oren Lesmeister, said it would allow South Dakota farmers and ranchers to keep up with the demand and the expansion of the hemp industry. Two companies seeking to process hemp asked lawmakers to approve the bill.

"With ag being our No. 1 industry in the state, let's give the people who choose to do so the chance to plant and grow and process it," Lesmeister said.

The hearing was scheduled for earlier this month but the governor's office sought a delay so that more information, including a fiscal analysis, could be put together for lawmakers. Price estimated that the measure could require his agency to spend more than \$5 million on evidence storage, personnel, portable testing kits, possibly replacing detection dogs and a media campaign.

The committee vote underscores the rift between Noem and supportive legislators, including top Republicans, over legalizing hemp. Noem has put public pressure on lawmakers to scuttle the bill, and two of her advisers and the heads of the Health and Public Safety departments urged the committee to oppose it in an unusual show of force from the administration.

Their organized lobbying effort also included a Highway Patrol official showing committee members evidence bags of hemp and marijuana and a well-produced video of a drug detection dog in a state Capitol committee room flagging both to illustrate the difficulty of distinguishing between them for law enforcement. If the state's more than 50 police service dogs had to be replaced, it would cost nearly \$1 million, Price said.

The governor was traveling Thursday for events in Sioux Falls and Rapid City, but Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden watched the hearing in the Capitol committee chamber. Noem has twice asked legislators to set aside the bill this session, but she hasn't threatened to veto it. The House voted 65-2 in favor of the bill just days after she first asked.

Supporters say planting wouldn't even happen until 2020 under the bill, which defines industrial hemp as containing no more than 0.3 percent THC. But Price cautioned that South Dakota isn't ready to deal with the effects. He said law enforcement is already stretched thin, field tests used in traffic stops don't show THC percentages and authorities are worried that hemp would be used to camouflage drug shipments.

Justin Smith, a lobbyist for a honey- and beeswax-product manufacturer pushing for the bill, said hemp will be transported through South Dakota as part of interstate commerce because the farm bill legalized it at the federal level.

"All of these issues are coming to South Dakota already now that the 2018 farm bill is law," Smith said.

The measure would require prospective growers to get a Department of Agriculture license and pass state and federal background checks.

Applicants who have been convicted of a felony drug crime in the previous 10 years would be disqualified. The bill would allow Agriculture Department employees to enter areas where hemp is grown, stored and processed to take samples and perform inspections.

Former fire chief sentenced to jail in child porn case

ST. JOHNS, S.D. (AP) — A former St. Johns fire chief will spend some time in jail, but not prison for possessing child pornography.

A judge in Minnehaha County sent Jim Sideras to jail for 100 days Thursday after the former chief earlier pleaded guilty to one count of possession. Nine other counts were dropped. Sideras could have gotten 10 years in a state prison for the charge against him.

The 59-year-old Sideras was given a suspended 6-year sentence and 6 years of probation. He was also given a sentence of 180 days in jail with 80 days suspended.

Sideras told the court he takes full responsibility for his actions and was initially too embarrassed to accept help from a therapist. He was the city's fire chief for 6 years before he was charged in May 2017, just weeks shy of his retirement.

APNewsBreak: Tribe says Corps' pipeline findings preordained

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Native American tribe leading the fight against the Dakota Access oil pipeline said Thursday that an Army Corps of Engineers document shows the agency concluded the pipeline won't unfairly affect tribes before it consulted them.

Standing Rock Sioux officials say the document, which they shared with The Associated Press, bolsters the tribe's claim that the Corps disregarded a federal judge's order to seriously review the pipeline's potential impact on the Standing Rock Sioux and three other Dakotas-based tribes and to not treat the study as a "bureaucratic formality."

"This was a rigged process intended to justify a dangerous and illegal pipeline," Standing Rock Chairman Mike Faith said in a statement to the AP.

The Justice Department declined to comment Thursday. The Corps has said previously that the four tribes suing to shut down the pipeline that began delivering North Dakota oil to a shipping point in Illinois two years ago have been difficult to work with. And the agency did meet with the tribes before it presented its study findings to U.S. District Judge James Boasberg.

The tribes fear the pipeline could spill oil into the Missouri River and pollute water they rely on for drinking, fishing and religious purposes. Boasberg said the Corps "largely complied" with environmental law when permitting the pipeline, but he also ordered it to further study the pipeline's impact on the tribes.

Boasberg later said he "expects the Corps not to treat (this) as an exercise in filling out the proper paperwork" after the fact, though he also said he thought there was a "serious possibility" that the agency would be able to substantiate its prior conclusions.

The Corps in August 2018 announced that it had completed the work and that it confirmed the agency's earlier determination that the pipeline does not pose a higher risk of adversely affecting minorities. The four tribes have since challenged that conclusion, and the Corps in early February turned over to the tribes the documents it used to make its decision. The records are shielded from the public because some contain pipeline information that might be useful to vandals or terrorists.

One of the documents is a Feb. 4, 2018, draft memo from the Corps to the assistant secretary of the Army for civil works. It states that the agency performed the additional analysis ordered by the judge and "has identified no new information."

"Therefore, decisions made by the (Corps) were in accordance with the law and neither arbitrary nor capricious," the memo states.

The draft memo is dated more than three months before the Corps met with the tribes to hear their concerns.

"How could they conclude that there is 'no new information' before they even talked to us?" Faith said.

The Corps, which has said it had a hard time obtaining information it needed from the tribes, did meet with them in late May 2018.

The official memo it gave Boasberg three months later mirrors the February draft memo in structure but

is more detailed and includes two references to having met with tribes. It states that the agency "considered the comments and concerns expressed by the tribes" but that its overall review did not uncover "significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns."

Standing Rock attorney Jan Hasselman said the tribe believes the February memo shows that the Corps didn't seriously seek tribal input and that its findings were preordained.

"I don't think it's any new fact to anybody that this was a sham from the beginning, but it was a little startling to see it written down so plainly," he said.

Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

Military blows up projectiles damaged in Montana crash

By MATT VOLZ, Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — An Air Force bomb disposal unit blew up dozens of damaged projectiles along a rural Montana highway and recovered hundreds more after a truck hauling Navy weapons was in a crash earlier this month, military officials said.

The crash involving the military truck and two commercial trucks happened in severe winter conditions on Feb. 11 on U.S. Highway 212 in southeastern Montana. Details about the truck's cargo were only released this week by 28th Civil Engineer Squadron Explosive Ordnance Disposal team based in Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota.

The truck was carrying a shipment of U.S. Navy-owned military munitions and traveling after dark in blowing snow along the snow-covered roadway surrounded by ranchland, military and Montana Highway Patrol officials said. The crash happened on a hillcrest near a curve, when one truck crossed the centerline of the highway and struck another truck heading in the opposite direction, patrol Sgt. Dan Martin said Friday.

A third truck then crashed into the first two and ended up in a ditch. No injuries or property damage was reported.

The six-member disposal unit was called to the scene and used 128 pounds (58 kilograms) of explosives to detonate 60 hazardous munitions that were damaged, Air Force Lt. Daniel Rosenfield said. The unit recovered 420 other projectiles.

"All damaged projectiles were disposed of by detonating the hazardous munitions near the site of the vehicle accident," Rosenfield said. "There are no known environmental impacts as a result of the accident. Throughout the cleanup process, responding Airmen took the potential threats to life and environment seriously."

Rosenfield referred a query for details about the projectiles to Navy officials, who did not respond to an email requesting comment.

Martin said Department of Defense officials sealed off the crash site and didn't let the trooper who responded near the trucks.

"He wasn't allowed to go in and touch the vehicles because DOD said they don't want anyone in there," Martin said. "Once DOD got done with what they needed to do, the vehicles were retrieved by tow companies."

The driver who crossed the center line was cited for causing the crash. Martin declined to identify the driver, but said it was not the person who was transporting the munitions.

Pakistan brings captured Indian pilot to border for handover

By ZAHEER BABAR, Associated Press

WAGAH, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistani officials brought a captured Indian pilot to a border crossing with India for handover on Friday, a "gesture of peace" promised by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan amid a dramatic escalation with the country's archrival over the disputed region of Kashmir.

The pilot, identified as Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, was taken in a convoy that set out

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from the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore to the border crossing at Wagah earlier in the day, escorted by military vehicles with soldiers, their weapons drawn.

The Pakistani military has said his plane was downed on the Pakistani-held side of Kashmir on Wednesday.

On the Indian side of the border, turbaned Indian policemen were lined up along the road as a group of cheering Indian residents from the area waved India's national flag and held up a huge garland of flowers to welcome the pilot back.

The expected handover comes against the backdrop of blistering cross-border attacks across the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir that continued for a fourth straight day, even as the two nuclear-armed neighbors sought to defuse their most serious confrontation in two decades.

Tens of thousands of Indian and Pakistani soldiers face off along the Kashmir boundary known as the Line of Control, in one of the world's most volatile regions.

Tensions have been running high since Indian aircraft crossed into Pakistan on Tuesday carrying out what India called a pre-emptive strike against militants blamed for a Feb. 14 suicide bombing in Indian-controlled Kashmir that killed 40 Indian troops. Pakistan retaliated, shooting down two Indian aircraft Wednesday and capturing the pilot.

Since the escalation, world leaders have scrambled to head off an all-out war on the Asian subcontinent. President Donald Trump in Hanoi on Thursday said he had been involved in seeking to de-escalate the conflict.

Khan, the Pakistani premier, told lawmakers on Thursday, "We are releasing the Indian pilot as a goodwill gesture tomorrow."

But India made it clear that the latest escalation has changed its strategy and that going forward, it will strike, including inside Pakistan, if they get information of an attack in the planning. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier Thursday warned "India's enemies are conspiring to create instability in the country through terror attacks."

Also Friday, Pakistan's civil aviation authority partially re-opened the country's airspace, allowing travel to four major cities, another sign tensions with archrival India were de-escalating.

The agency issued a statement saying all domestic and international flights will be allowed to and from the cities of Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta. It said other airports, including the one located in the eastern city of Lahore that borders India, will remain closed until March 4.

Islamabad closed its air space on Wednesday after saying that Pakistan's military shot down two Indian warplanes and captured the Indian pilot. The closures snarled air traffic.

Residents of the Pakistani border town of Chikhoti reported heavy shelling overnight and Friday morning. More than 200 people had fled to a military organized camp about 20 kilometers (16 miles) away from the border.

Police in the Indian-controlled Kashmir said one man was wounded and at least two civilian homes were damaged in the cross-border shelling.

Kashmir has been divided but claimed in its entirety by both India and Pakistan since almost immediately after the two countries' creation in 1947. They have fought three wars, two directly over the disputed region.

Officials say Trump overstated Kim's demand on sanctions

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — President Donald Trump said he walked away from his second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un because Kim demanded the U.S. lift all of its sanctions, a claim that North Korea's delegation called a rare news conference in the middle of the night to deny.

So who's telling the truth? In this case, it seems that the North Koreans are. And it's a demand they have been pushing for weeks in lower-level talks.

Trump's much-anticipated meeting with Kim, held in the Vietnamese capital Wednesday and Thursday, ended abruptly and without the two leaders signing any agreements. Trump spoke with reporters soon after the talks broke down and said the dispute over sanctions was the deal breaker.

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"Basically, they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety, and we couldn't do that," he said. "We had to walk away from that."

Hours later, two senior members of the North's delegation told reporters that was not what Kim had demanded. They insisted Kim had asked only for partial sanctions relief in exchange for shutting down the North's main nuclear complex. Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho said the North was also ready to offer in writing a permanent halt of the country's nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests.

Vice Foreign Minister Choe Sun Hui said Trump's reaction puzzled Kim and added that Kim "may have lost his will (to continue) North Korea-U.S. dealings."

The State Department then clarified the U.S. position.

According to a senior official who briefed the media on condition he not be named because he was not authorized to discuss the negotiations publicly, the North Koreans "basically asked for the lifting of all sanctions."

But he acknowledged the North's demand was only for Washington to back the lifting of United Nations Security Council sanctions imposed since March 2016 and didn't include the other resolutions going back a decade more.

What Pyongyang was seeking, he said, was the lifting of sanctions that impede the civilian economy and the people's livelihood — as Ri had claimed.

The U.N. Security Council has imposed nearly a dozen resolutions targeting North Korea, making it one of the most heavily sanctioned countries in the world. So Kim was indeed seeking a lot of relief — including the lifting of bans on everything from trade in metals, raw materials, luxury goods, seafood, coal exports, refined petroleum imports, raw petroleum imports.

But Kim wasn't looking for the lifting of sanctions on armaments. Those were imposed earlier, from 2006, when the North conducted its first nuclear test.

For Pyongyang, that's a key difference.

While it claims that its nuclear weapons are needed for self-defense, it was offering to at least for the time being accept sanctions directly related to nuclear weapons and missile technology. But the North has always considered the imposition of sanctions on other areas of trade even more nefarious and was singling them out as their negotiation point.

The State Department official said Trump and his negotiators deemed that to be a bridge too far because they had already determined that lifting the post-2016 sanctions would be worth "many, many billions of dollars" for the North and could essentially be used to fund their continued nuclear and missile programs.

So it was definitely a robust demand. But it wasn't, as Trump claimed, all the sanctions.

It also didn't come as a surprise. He said the North had been pushing that demand for weeks in lower-level talks.

Even so, both sides seemed determined to put a good face on the summit, which Trump said was generally friendly and constructive.

In a much softer tone than the officials at the late-night news conference, the North's state-run media made no mention of Trump's decision to walk away without any agreements and indicated that the North was looking ahead to more talks.

"The top leaders of the two countries appreciated that the second meeting in Hanoi offered an important occasion for deepening mutual respect and trust and putting the relations between the two countries on a new stage," it said. "They agreed to keep in close touch with each other for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the epochal development of the DPRK-U.S. relations in the future."

It said Kim expressed his thanks to Trump for making positive efforts for the successful meeting and talks "while making a long journey and said goodbye, promising the next meeting."

Talmadge is the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram: @EricTalmadge

Follow all of AP's summit coverage: <https://apnews.com/Trump-KimSummit>

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Washington Gov. Inslee joins Democratic presidential field

By **BILL BARROW** and **RACHEL LA CORTE**, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee will seek the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, mixing calls for combating climate change and highlights of his liberal record with an aggressive critique of President Donald Trump.

The 68-year-old governor is launching his bid Friday in Seattle, following recent visits to the first primary state of New Hampshire and the early caucus state of Nevada.

"We went to the moon and created technologies that have changed the world — our country's next mission must be to rise up to the most urgent challenge of our time: defeating climate change," Inslee says in a video announcement ahead of a public announcement later Friday in Seattle.

Inslee is the first governor to join a Democratic primary that has been dominated by senators. Montana Gov. Steve Bullock and former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper also are eyeing presidential campaigns.

It will not be easy for Inslee to garner attention with six prominent senators — Cory Booker of New Jersey, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Kamala Harris of California, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts — already running. Former Vice President Joe Biden and former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke also are expected to make highly anticipated 2020 announcements in the coming weeks.

Inslee acknowledges his underdog status but says his emphasis on combating climate change will set him apart.

"Climate change is a unifying issue," Inslee told The Associated Press in a recent interview, calling it a moral necessity and an economic opportunity.

He promises substantial investment in clean energy sources that reduce American dependence on fossil fuels.

"This issue is connected to virtually every other value system and thing we want to do in our communities," he said, mentioning environmental justice, infrastructure, clean energy, health care and national security.

Inslee argues that no presidential candidate has hinged a campaign as heavily on climate and environmental policy as he will. He may have a larger opening since billionaire environmental activist Tom Steyer has passed on a national campaign, opting instead to continue his advocacy for impeaching and removing Trump from office. Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a billionaire who has spent millions of dollars on climate issues, may run.

Inslee has not specifically endorsed the Green New Deal introduced by New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey. Inslee instead advocates for a more piecemeal approach he describes as ambitious but attainable, and he avoids promising specific reductions of carbon emissions under an absolute timeframe. The Green New Deal targets 2030 for the U.S. to become net carbon neutral.

Despite his emphasis on climate policy, Inslee says he's not a one-issue candidate. A former congressman, he pitches his breadth of personal and political experiences as ideal to bridge political and cultural divides among the Democratic base and the broader electorate.

Inslee is a white male baby boomer who was a clean-cut star athlete and honors student in the turbulent 1960s, when he met his high school sweetheart, Trudi. She is now his wife of 46 years. That puts Inslee closer to the septuagenarian Biden than to the young rock-star-style candidates like O'Rourke or Booker, both still in their 40s.

Inslee has nonetheless governed Washington as an unabashed liberal, promoting clean energy, gay rights, abortion rights, environmental preservation, tighter gun restrictions and more spending for education and job training. Most recently, he's called for a state-based public option health insurance plan in Washington that he calls a "step toward universal health care."

Republicans have not embraced him, with the state GOP recently deriding his "extreme environmental agenda" and pointing to its price tag.

Senate Republican leader Mark Schoesler has quipped that Inslee's policies "may be geared toward Iowa more than Washington."

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Inslee grew up in the Seattle area, with his mother working as a sales clerk and his father as a biology teacher and basketball coach in public schools. He started his legal and political career in small-town central Washington, where he won a state legislative post and, for one term, a congressional seat before being knocked out in the GOP sweep of 1994. He later returned to Congress representing a metro-Seattle district for 12 years before resigning to run for and win the governor's office in 2012.

Inslee raised his profile serving as Democratic Governors Association chairman in 2018; Democrats picked up seven governor's offices, and Inslee became a familiar guest to cable news audiences, using the opportunity to lambaste Trump on such issues as immigration and ethics.

"During the past two years, we've been challenged by federal actions that appeal more to our darker natures than our better angels," Inslee said in his January address of the Washington Legislature. "But we know that's not who we are."

Inslee says he doesn't necessarily buy into the usual political wisdom about lanes in a primary: liberals vs. moderates, older candidates vs. younger, white men vs. the others. But recent polling suggests at least some wisdom for trying to become the climate change candidate.

An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll from December found that self-identified liberal Democrats see the environment as a critical issue: 49 percent named it among their top priorities, compared with 29 percent of conservative and moderate Democrats. Sixteen percent of liberal and moderate Republicans and just 3 percent of conservative Republicans mentioned the environment as a major problem.

In an open-ended question, 24 percent of all adults queried named environmental issues and climate change among the top five priorities for the government to work on in 2019. That compares with 18 percent who mentioned the issue as a priority for 2018.

Still, the environment continues to trail behind the economy, health care and immigration as an issue that Americans see as important for the government to address this year.

Next week, Inslee plans to visit Iowa, which starts the nominating process with the first caucus, with trips to Nevada and California to follow.

Barrow reported from Atlanta and Hanover, New Hampshire. Associated Press associate polling director Hannah Fingerhut contributed to this report.

Follow the reporters on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> and <https://twitter.com/RachelAPOly>

Women say New York agency let sex harassment go on for years

By DAVID KLEPPER, Associated Press

GLENS FALLS, N.Y. (AP) — One woman says a male co-worker at her state job grabbed her head and forced it between his legs. Another woman says the same man exposed his penis to her while she worked in her cubicle. A third says the man pulled her into a small room, unzipped his pants and said, "Why don't we just get this over with?"

All three told The Associated Press that no one did anything significant about their complaints against Chad Dominie for at least two years, until one of the women said he grabbed her by the arms and threatened to sexually assault her in October 2017. That accusation prompted a call to police and a harassment charge against Dominie, an administrative assistant in a small office of a New York state agency that helps the disabled.

Dominie has acknowledged engaging in "locker room" behavior — "I tell her to 'shut her whore mouth' and I'm the big villain?" he said — but denied exposing himself or threatening or touching anyone inappropriately. He has been suspended from his job without pay since his arrest, pleaded guilty to a harassment violation — less than a misdemeanor — and paid \$120 in court costs. To date, he remains a state employee, pending the outcome of a disciplinary proceeding.

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"This has to stop," said Mary Tromblee, the woman who accused Dominie of threatening sexual assault and in the previous nine months complained that he twice lifted her skirt, reached down her blouse to grope her breast and exposed himself by her desk.

"Not one person protected me," said Tromblee, who took out a restraining order against Dominie and has now filed a federal harassment complaint. "I want people to know — you can stand up for yourself."

Though leaders such as Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo insist New York has a tough law on sexual harassment, with more changes proposed this legislative session, the allegations that roiled this office of less than two dozen in Glens Falls underscore a familiar criticism: Aggressive policies aren't of much use if managers don't take action.

Harassment is not a new problem in New York state government, nor is it for this particular agency, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities. The agency's No. 2 official, Jay Kiyonaga, was fired last year after an investigation revealed "reprehensible" and "sexually inappropriate" acts by him that went back years.

Dominie, 44, acknowledged in an interview with the AP that he engaged in "locker room" behavior that included calling female co-workers "whores," providing marijuana to supervisors and viewing pornography in the office.

He contended that he was only punished after he threatened to report the improper behavior of supervisors, and that his conduct and language were long tolerated as part of the office "culture."

"I was never offended by it," he said. "I'm an old Marine. It was a joke. We were just horseplaying."

Dominie, a 21-year veteran of the state agency who made \$41,000 a year before his suspension, says the allegations of harassment prompted his wife to divorce him, and he expects to be fired later this year. To make ends meet, he's been working as a youth sports referee.

Two supervisors, one of whom has since retired, declined to comment to the AP. But the agency issued a statement defending its handling of the situation.

"Upon learning of the allegations, OPWDD immediately reported the incident to law enforcement and the accused employee was placed on administrative leave," it said. The statement added that unnamed employees involved in the matter were "appropriately disciplined" and counseled, though it declined to offer details.

The women interviewed by the AP tell a much different story.

They said the two supervisors witnessed the behavior and didn't properly handle multiple complaints, some of which date to at least 2015. Instead of reporting them for further investigation, the women said, the supervisors would repeatedly call Dominie in for meetings with his accusers and ask him to "do better." The women said he would reform for a few days, only to go back to his old ways.

One woman recalled how Dominie not only used explicit language but also assigned letter grades — A, B, C, D or F — to female co-workers based on their outfits and appearance on any given day. The woman said he showed a particular interest in feet, forcing her to swear off open-toed shoes.

"It got to a point where I stopped caring what I look like. I stopped doing my makeup, doing my hair. I gained a lot of weight," one of the women recalled. "I would wake up every day thinking 'what can I do to stop him from bothering me today?'"

AP generally does not identify those who say they were sexually assaulted or harassed. Of the three women AP interviewed about Dominie, it is identifying only Tromblee, a 53-year-old registered nurse, because she said she wanted to tell her story publicly.

The two other women gave accounts that were consistent with the formal complaints Tromblee lodged with the state and with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Tromblee and another woman who spoke about Dominie still work in the office; a third has retired.

Tromblee recounted how one supervisor, a woman named Alexis Barlow, asked her whether she had provoked the harassment by flirting with Dominie. Tromblee said in her EEOC complaint that another supervisor, a man named Liam Stander, sometimes exchanged pornography with Dominie over their smartphones and simulated sexual intercourse with him through their clothes as employees watched.

Standar has since retired. He and Barlow declined to comment for this story.

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The agency's own employee policy states that harassment includes sexual jokes or stories, unnecessary touching, comments about a person's body or clothing. The policy also mandates training for all employees — featuring an online session that Dominie's accusers say clearly didn't work.

"We have to do it yearly," said one of the women. "You can just click through it, and you're done."

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. WHY DID IT SUDDENLY END?

President Donald Trump said he walked away from his second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un because Kim demanded the U.S. lift all of its sanctions, a claim that North Korea's delegation called a rare news conference in the middle of the night to deny.

2. DEMOCRATS DIGGING DEEPER

After three days of grilling Michael Cohen, President Trump's former lawyer, Democrats are quickly using his words as a roadmap to open new lines of investigation into the president's ties to Russia and summon additional witnesses.

3. NUCLEAR NEIGHBORS' CLASHES CONTINUE

Pakistan prepared to hand over a captured Indian pilot while blistering cross-border attacks across the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir continued for a fourth straight day

4. VENEZUELAN CLERIC TURNS THE OTHER CHEEK

Monsignor Hector Lunar is an outspoken priest who isn't shy about criticizing President Nicolas Maduro, even from the pulpit, even as Maduro loyalists are intent on discrediting him.

5. CANNABIS NO CAN DO

Hawaii has a track record of moving slowly on social issues and when it comes to legalizing marijuana for adult use, the islands are out of step with liberal stalwarts such as California and Vermont.

6. QUESTIONS OF CAMARADERIE

African-Americans have experienced variations of the "black friend defense" — saying that a person can't be racist because of the color of the company he keeps — for generations. The trope played out again out this week as Rep. Mark Meadows defended President Trump against testimony by Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen.

7. WE'LL TAKE 500 OF THOSE

U.K. officials and companies have been bracing for potential Brexit trade disruptions by stockpiling everything from ice cream and chocolate cookies to essential medicines and body bags.

8. UNACCEPTABLE REMARKS

YouTube says it will turn off comments on nearly all videos featuring kids after reports that pedophiles were leaving inappropriate comments on innocuous videos of children.

9. THEY'LL DRINK TO THAT

Iceland celebrates the anniversary of the lifting of a decades-long ban on beer with — what else? — a nationwide Beer Day.

10. BEYOND THE RING

Boxers Luis Ortiz and Erislandy Lara will fight at Brooklyn's Barclays Center after leaving behind their lives in Cuba for the ones they wanted for themselves and their families in the U.S.

NKorea leader Kim Jong Un tours Hanoi after summit breakdown

By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — A day after his stunning summit breakdown with Donald Trump, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un smiled broadly as he strode down a red carpet with Vietnam's president Friday, a military band playing as stiff-backed soldiers goose-stepped by.

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With Trump back in Washington, and both countries spinning their version of what happened during one of the most high-profile diplomatic collapses in recent years, Kim seemed confident and poised — a world leader taking his place on the international stage — as he stepped out of his armored limousine, embraced President Nguyen Phu Trong, the country's top leader and Communist Party chief, and accepted a bouquet of flowers from a beaming girl.

On Saturday he is expected to be driven back to the border with China where he will board his armored train for a 60-plus-hour trip, through the sprawl of China, back home to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital. But Friday saw his black limousine rolling beneath fluttering Vietnamese and North Korean flags — the U.S. ones have been mostly taken down — as a large crowd jammed the city's streets and waved flowers.

Talks between Kim and Trump broke down on Thursday, the second day of their two-day summit, in a dispute over how much sanctions relief Washington should provide Pyongyang in return for nuclear disarmament steps. Despite a senior North Korean official's suggestion — in a rushed, middle-of-the-night news conference called to dispute Trump's version of the summit's end — that Kim may have "lost the will" for diplomacy, the North Korean leader seems to have emerged from the diplomatic wreckage as a winner.

Kim stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Trump at the summit, an image that allows his propaganda services to portray him to his people and supporters as the leader of a nuclear-armed power, not an international pariah that starves its citizens so it can build nukes and missiles. He answered questions with humor and ease when confronted by an aggressive international media contingent here. And, crucially for his image at home, he stood firm on his demands for the relief of sanctions imposed over a nuclear program North Korea says it built in the face of unrelenting U.S. hostility meant to end its leadership.

Kim, as he considers his next move after Hanoi, will also be backed by state-controlled media that were already busy portraying the summit as a victory for their leader, saying Kim and Trump "appreciated that the second meeting in Hanoi offered an important occasion for deepening mutual respect and trust and putting the relations between the two countries on a new stage."

North Korea said it had asked for partial sanctions relief in return for closing its main nuclear site at Yongbyon, an important nuclear-fuel production facility but not the only place the North is believed to make bomb fuel.

The United States also put its interpretation on the summit breakdown, with senior officials saying that North Korea wanted billions of dollars in sanctions relief in return for only partial dismantlement of Yongbyon, and demanded the North scrap more of its nuclear program for such a high level of concessions.

It's unclear what will come next: Working-level meetings among experts to close the negotiating gap? Another summit? Or will Trump, consumed with controversy in Washington and burned by the failure in Hanoi, lose interest?

The worst-case scenario would be a return to the personal insults and threats of war between Trump and Kim in 2017 as the North staged a series of increasingly powerful weapons tests, including a nuclear detonation and displays of long-range missiles that can target the U.S. mainland, though experts believe those ICBMs are not yet complete.

Trump maintained ahead of the Hanoi summit that the economic benefits of a deal could push Kim to give up his nuclear ambitions.

Kim came into the summit feeling confident that he could settle something that would end painful economic sanctions while letting him keep much of his nuclear program and only making a "a variety of gestures that mimic disarmament," Jeffrey Lewis, a nuclear expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, wrote after the summit collapse. This outcome would be a signal that "the world must live with North Korea's bomb, but Kim won't rub it in anyone's face."

"Since it would be utter madness to try to topple a nuclear-armed dictator, it seems obvious which side should yield," Lewis said. If Trump "does not accept the reality that we now live with a nuclear-armed North Korea, then we are doomed to the collapse of negotiations, and perhaps even a return to the terror of 2017."

AP writer Hyung-jin Kim in Hanoi contributed to this report. Foster Klug, AP's bureau chief in South Korea, has covered the Koreas since 2005

Undeterred by summit collapse, Moon vows closer North ties

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean President Moon Jae-in said Friday his government plans to discuss with the United States the possibility of restarting joint inter-Korean economic projects to induce nuclear disarmament from North Korea.

Moon's comments during a nationally televised speech came a day after a high-stakes nuclear summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un collapsed over what the Americans saw as excessive North Korean demands for sanctions relief in exchange for limited disarmament steps.

North Korea insisted it had asked only for partial sanctions relief in exchange for shutting down its main nuclear complex. Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho also said Washington had wasted an opportunity that "may not come again" and the North's position won't change even if the United States offers to resume talks.

The breakdown is a setback for Moon, whose desire for closer relations between the Koreas hinges on a nuclear breakthrough between the United States and North Korea. While Moon has prioritized stabilizing relations with the North amid the larger nuclear negotiations, his dovish approach has caused disagreements with Washington, which sees economic pressure as its main leverage with Pyongyang.

"I vow to help usher in an era of a peace-driven economy on the Korean Peninsula," said Moon, who preaches that South Korea should be in the "driver's seat" in international efforts to deal with the North.

However, if the nuclear negotiations derail, Moon could potentially face a serious dilemma over whether to continue to engage with the North or join another U.S.-led pressure campaign against it.

In a speech in Seoul commemorating the anniversary of a 1919 Korean uprising against Japanese colonial rule, Moon made a nationalistic call for inter-Korean cooperation, which he says would drive progress in negotiations between the United States and North Korea.

Moon said he would "consult" with the United States on resuming operations at an inter-Korean factory park in the North Korean border town of Kaesong and restarting South Korean tours to the North's scenic Diamond Mountain resort. It's impossible for Seoul to resume the projects under the current U.S.-led sanctions against the North. Moon also proposed the creation of a joint economic committee between the Koreas aimed at developing the North's crippled economy, which he said would be possible with progress in the North's denuclearization.

"We will closely communicate and cooperate with the United States and North Korea so as to help their talks reach a complete settlement by any means possible," he said. "Progress in inter-Korean relations will lead to the normalization of North Korea's relations with the United States and Japan, expanding into a new order of peace and security in Northeast Asia."

While Moon had been expected to make ambitious new proposals for engagement with the North while marking the centennial of an admired historical event, his speech ended without major announcements or fresh plans on inter-Korean economic activities. Moon spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom did not give a definite answer when asked whether the breakdown of the Hanoi summit forced Moon to modify his proposals.

Moon said the United States and North Korea still made "meaningful progress" in Hanoi as conversations between Trump and Kim Jong Un would have "enhanced mutual understanding and built more trust."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in Manila, Philippines, on Friday that the North Koreans demanded "full" sanctions relief in talks in Hanoi, contradicting Ri, who said the North asked only for partial relief.

"These are global demands for the denuclearization of North Korea and we are anxious to get back to the table so we can continue the conversation that will ultimately lead to peace and stability and a better life for the North Korean people and a lower threat, a denuclearized North Korea," Pompeo told reporters.

There had been hopes in Seoul that Trump and Kim would reach a deal that meaningfully reduces North Korea's nuclear weapons capability and softens sanctions against Pyongyang, which would give Moon more

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room to push his ambitious ideas on inter-Korean engagement. Aside of restarting the Kaesong factory park and South Korean tours to Diamond Mountain, the Koreas also aspire to reconnect their railways and roads.

Moon has desperately tried to maintain an impression that things are headed toward the North's denuclearization, trying to keep hard-liners in Washington at bay and a positive atmosphere of dialogue alive. That could become much harder to do if the United States and North Korea struggle to put their negotiations back on track and amid growing doubts on whether Kim would ever voluntarily deal away an arsenal he may see as his strongest guarantee of survival.

While Moon focuses predominantly on North Korea issues, critics say huge problems are being mishandled at home, including a decaying job market, falling birth rates and deep age, gender and political divides. Hwang Kyo-ahn, former South Korean prime minister and leader of the conservative Liberty Korean Party, criticized Moon for overselling a "rosy fantasy" on the North's denuclearization and that people's hopes are now turning into uneasiness.

"South Korea loses the most from the Hanoi summit ending without agreement," said Alison Evans, an analyst from IHS Markit. "Without progress on North Korea, Moon's domestic agenda becomes his only metric of success for voters, who have already criticized his administration for failing to deliver on economic metrics such as unemployment."

Moon had hoped to follow the Trump-Kim meeting with his own fourth summit with Kim, preferably in Seoul, a prospect that now looks murkier.

Associated Press writer Jim Gomez in Manila, Philippines, contributed to this report.

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Priest under siege in battle over Venezuela's political soul

By SCOTT SMITH, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Salsa music and long tirades blasted through loudspeakers for days at a colonial church in one of Venezuela's toughest slums aimed at drowning out Monsignor Hector Lunar — an outspoken priest who isn't shy about criticizing President Nicolas Maduro, even from the pulpit.

Then, the dark red letters appeared overnight, stenciled on the church's pale pink facade: "HECTOR LUNAR — PEDOPHILE — TERRORIST."

While appalled by the slurs, Lunar says he feels no need to defend himself. Parishioners show their support, he says, by filling the pews, knowing the attacks tapping into the worldwide sex-abuse scandals rocking the Roman Catholic Church come from Maduro loyalists intent on discrediting him.

"They have nothing to grasp onto," Lunar said. "We're holding firm and pressing forward with this fight, because this country has to change."

The conflict playing out in Petare, one of Latin America's largest slums, underscores the critical role played by the Catholic Church as Venezuela's political crisis crescendos. It also highlights divisions between local clergy and the Vatican on how best to confront Maduro.

While Venezuela's bishops have been leading a charge for Maduro's removal, urging a boycott of what they call an "illegitimate" presidential election last year and denouncing the government's human rights abuses, the Vatican has pursued a softer approach, with Pope Francis surprising many by sending an emissary to the socialist president's inauguration that dozens of countries shunned.

This unfolds as Venezuela's deepening political and economic collapse nears a breaking point. Opposition leader Juan Guaido burst onto the scene in January launching the first viable bid in years to change course in the once oil-rich country following two decades of socialist rule. He has since won backing from the United States and some 50 countries demanding that Maduro leave power.

One political battleground is at Lunar's Sweet Name of Jesus church on the edge of Petare, where some 400,000 people live crowded into the thousands of brightly colored cinderblock homes that blanket the

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Caracas hillsides as far as the eye can see. Notoriously poor and crime-ridden, the shanty town's residents struggle daily with scarce running water and frequent blackouts.

In his visits deep into Petare, the 39-year-old Lunar describes children who go hungry and residents dying at home because they can't afford medicine. Many of his young parishioners have been injured in clashes with security forces.

"Mass is Mass, but there have been moments when, yes, I've had to talk about the country's social affairs. It's impossible not to do so," Lunar said of his sermons. "The problem is one person who goes by the name of Nicolas Maduro."

Maduro refuses to abandon power and accuses the White House of mounting a coup against him to exploit the country's oil, the largest reserves in the world. He has appealed to the Argentine-born Pope Francis as his presidency comes under attack from within and from a growing coalition of foreign governments.

Maduro welcomed the Vatican emissary, Polish Monsignor George Koovakod, to his Jan. 10 inauguration, marking the start to a second term of a presidency that is widely criticized as illegitimate following an election banning the most popular challengers and political parties.

Sending a representative from the Vatican to Maduro's inauguration was seen by many as a goodwill gesture aimed at maintaining an open relationship with the government — in case the church could play a role in resolving Venezuela's crisis.

However, Pope Francis has since declined a request from Maduro to help relaunch talks with the opposition, saying that the Vatican would only get involved if both sides in the conflict asked it to step in and facilitate mediation. The Vatican expended its institutional prestige in 2016, attempting to mediate a dialogue that the pope later said "went up in smoke," placing blame on Maduro.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Church in Venezuela has taken a strong stance in recent years as an outspoken critic of Maduro's policies. The country's Episcopal Bishop's Conference has called on Maduro to release political prisoners and rejected his policies to consolidate power by forming a constituent assembly that has effectively gutted the opposition-controlled National Assembly. And at the outset of deadly street protests that left more than 120 dead in 2017, the church demanded Maduro's government immediately stop firing on protesters with tear gas, buckshot and live rounds — a call Maduro's government did not heed.

"The Episcopal Conference has been and is very critical of the Maduro government," said Hugo Perez Hernaiz, a former sociology professor at the Central University in Caracas. "They squarely blame the government, and they are very consistent on that."

The Catholic Church in Venezuela historically has been one of the most respected institutions in the country, he said, noting that the clergy played an influential role bringing an end to the Marcos Perez Jimenez dictatorship in 1958, issuing a letter months before his ouster cutting ties with the government.

In the current crisis, other churches across Venezuela have also become flashpoints for violence. A group of Guaido supporters holding a rally at a church in the port city of Maracaibo came under attack by 40 men armed with clubs who entered the sanctuary, vandalizing the altar and injuring 15 people, some with open head wounds, local media reported.

In Petare, the Maduro supporters came to the plaza for 19 consecutive days in late January and early February. They set up a stage with speakers just steps from the church's front doors, blasting loud music and politically charged speeches aimed at Lunar.

"He uses the excuse of being a priest and wearing the frock but has no right to be in the street promoting protests, promoting terrorism and asking for a military intervention," a Maduro supporter and local councilman, Abraham Aparicio, shouted into the microphone, adding that U.S. bombs won't just kill government supporters. "They're going to kill everyone, God forbid."

The derogatory graffiti shaming Lunar was painted on the front of the church and along one side. Several church members gathered the next morning to paint over it.

Lunar was first to pick up the roller brush, applying a light coat over the dark red letters. "God is great," he said in a booming voice as he handed the brush to parishioners who took turns painting. Several coats were required to finally hide the words.

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One of the volunteers, 64-year-old Jose Teran, said the church is sacred and should not be desecrated. He called Lunar a good priest who creates an environment where followers can come for refuge in these difficult times.

Teran also said he didn't believe the Maduro loyalists would give up quickly, expecting them to return with their speakers and more red paint.

"If they come to paint again," Teran said, "we'll cover it up again."

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

The Art of the Walk? Summit collapse and Trump's diplomacy

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and MATTHEW LEE, Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — President Donald Trump framed the breakdown of his nuclear summit with North Korea's Kim Jong Un as wisely knowing when "to walk." But the stunning collapse revealed the limits of his unique brand of personal diplomacy and raised concerns about future efforts to disarm a global threat.

Eyeing the history books and a much-needed political victory, Trump bet big on the two-day Vietnam summit only to be forced to explain away its sudden failure.

The president and North Korea gave conflicting explanations of what went wrong, though the result actually was a relief to some critics and even some Trump supporters who feared he might give too much away in pursuit of a deal.

Trump, the businessman who was elected in part on his boasts of deal-making prowess, said a proposed agreement was "ready to be signed." But he said he refused to accept what he described as North Korean insistence that all U.S. sanctions be lifted without the North committing to eliminate its nuclear arsenal.

"I'd much rather do it right than do it fast," the president said. "We're in position to do something very special."

The North said it had demanded only partial relief from the punishing sanctions.

Trump had pushed for the summit, telling wary aides that his personal chemistry with North Korea's young and reclusive leader outweighed any need for detailed, staff-level talks to iron out differences before either head of state set foot in Hanoi.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who along with his special envoy for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, had been leading the preparatory effort, said staff work had achieved some results but that negotiators had intentionally left some of the most contentious issues unresolved.

"We were hoping we could take another big swing when the two leaders got together," he told reporters as he flew from Vietnam to the Philippines after the summit collapsed. "We did. We made some progress. But we didn't get as far as we would have hoped we would have gotten."

Pompeo noted that "when you are dealing with a country that is of the nature of North Korea, it is often the case that only the most senior leaders have the capacity to make those important decisions."

Echoing the refrain that "no deal is better than a bad deal" — often used during the Obama administration by critics of its Iran negotiations — there was relief in some quarters that the president had not impulsively agreed to concessions without much in return.

"Kudos to him for walking away from the table," said Jonathan Schanzer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington think-tank that has been highly skeptical of Trump's efforts with Kim Jong Un. "No deal is, in fact, better than a bad deal."

And White House aides stressed that Trump stood strong. Some observers evoked the 1987 Reykjavik summit between Ronald Reagan and the Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev, a meeting that ended without a nuclear weapons deal but laid the groundwork for a future agreement.

Long-standing U.S. policy insists that American sanctions on North Korea will not be lifted until that country commits to, if not concludes, a complete, verifiable and irreversible end to its nuclear weapons program.

Trump, who did not consult with allies South Korea and Japan before breaking off the talks, declined to restate that goal Thursday, saying he wanted to retain flexibility with Kim.

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But North Korea's foreign minister, in a rare news conference, said that Trump wasted an opportunity that "may not come again" and that the North's position wouldn't change even if there was another round of dialogue.

The failure in Hanoi laid bare a risk in Trump's negotiating style: Preferring one-on-one meetings with his foreign counterparts, his administration doesn't always do the staff-level advance work intended to make a summit more of a victory lap than a negotiation.

"The developments over the past 48 hours highlight in stark fashion the inherent weaknesses of President Trump's preference for summit diplomacy — international media spectacles that have failed to achieve substantial progress on the key issues, especially denuclearization," said Paul Haenle, the director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy.

Unsurprisingly, former Obama administration officials agreed.

"At every step of the way, Trump has placed himself, rather than professionals, at the center of this process — and as a result, he's been outmaneuvered every step of the way," the National Security Action, a group of mainly Obama-era foreign policy practitioners, said in a statement.

Michael Fuchs, who worked on Asian issues as a State Department official under Obama, said there should be no more summits until the two sides are ready to announce a concrete agreement. "Let the real negotiators from both sides get to work," he said. "Until then, no more reality TV summitry."

One beneficiary of the Vietnam summit may have been the North Korean leader.

The first Trump-Kim meeting in Singapore gave the reclusive nation's leader an entry to the international stage. The second appeared to grant him the legitimacy his family has long desired.

Kim, for the first time, affably parried with the international press without having to account for his government's long history of oppression. He secured Trump's support for the opening of a liaison office in Pyongyang, without offering any concessions of his own. Trump's backing for that step toward normalization provided the sort of recognition the international community has long denied Kim's government.

Experts worried that the darker side of Kim's leadership, was being brushed aside. That includes massive human rights abuses, prison camps filled with dissidents, an absence of religious and speech freedoms and the executions of government and military officials.

Trump also appeared to accept the North Korean leader's assertion that he had nothing to do with the 2017 death of Otto Warmbier, an American college student who was imprisoned for allegedly taking a propaganda poster while on a visit to the country.

The president said he took Kim "at his word" that he was unaware of the mistreatment Warmbier was subjected to in custody, a remark that drew widespread criticism, even from Trump's former U.N. ambassador.

"Americans know the cruelty that was placed on Otto Warmbier by the North Korean regime," former Ambassador Nikki Haley said.

Still, Robert Gallucci, who negotiated with North Korea as a senior State Department official during the Clinton administration, said the unorthodox way in which the two North Korea summits were organized, may not have been a mistake given the unusual nature of the two leaders.

"It does have its down sides, and we just experienced the down side," Gallucci said. However, Hanoi wasn't a total disaster as long as the two sides are willing to keep at it.

"I'm feeling good because nothing really bad happened, and we have a prospect of using the momentum of the meeting of heads of state to propel working-level discussions, with the understanding here that both sides have invested politically in this, and leaders have invested personally in this, and they want it to work," Gallucci said.

Lee reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Deb Riechmann and Foster Klug in Hanoi contributed to this report.

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US, North Korea offer dueling accounts of talks breakdown

By **DEB RIECHMANN, HYUNG-JIN KIM and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press**

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — The U.S. and North Korea offered contradictory accounts Thursday of why the summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un broke down, though both pointed to punishing American sanctions as a sticking point in the high-stakes nuclear negotiation.

President Trump, who returned to the White House Thursday night, said before leaving Hanoi that the talks collapsed because North Korea's leader insisted that all the sanctions the U.S. has imposed on Pyongyang be lifted without the North firmly committing to eliminate its nuclear arsenal.

But North Korea challenged that account, insisting it had asked only for partial sanctions relief in exchange for shutting down its main nuclear complex. Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho commented on the talks during an abruptly scheduled middle-of-the-night news conference after Trump was in the air.

Ri said the North was also ready to offer in writing a permanent halt of the country's nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests and Washington had wasted an opportunity that "may not come again." He said the North's position won't change even if the United States offers to resume another round of dialogue.

Later, a senior U.S. official involved in the negotiations offered some clarification, saying the North wanted all sanctions, except for those involving weapons sales and transfers, to be lifted in exchange for the dismantlement of parts of the Yongbyon nuclear site. The official was not authorized to discuss the negotiations publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Trump, the official said, challenged the North Koreans to offer more or "go all in," but Kim would not agree.

Trump made no mention of the disagreement as he addressed U.S. troops during a stopover at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska, though White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said he was aware of Ri's comments.

Instead, Trump focused on U.S. military might and offered a broad warning to U.S. enemies.

"America does not seek conflict, but if we are forced to defend ourselves we will fight and we will win in an overwhelming fashion," he declared.

Earlier on Thursday in Hanoi, Trump had told reporters the North had demanded a full removal of sanctions in exchange for shutting the Yongbyon nuclear facility. Trump said that there had been a proposed agreement "ready to be signed." However, he said after the summit was cut short, "Sometimes you have to walk."

The demise of the talks came after Trump and Kim had appeared ready to inch toward normalizing relations between their still technically warring nations.

The American leader had dampened expectations that the negotiations would yield an agreement by North Korea to take concrete steps toward ending a nuclear program that Pyongyang likely sees as its strongest security guarantee. However, Kim, when asked whether he was ready to denuclearize, had said, "If I'm not willing to do that I won't be here right now."

But hours after both nations had seemed hopeful of a deal of some kind, the two leaders' motorcades roared away from the downtown Hanoi summit site within minutes of each other, lunch canceled and signing ceremony scuttled. The president's closing news conference was hurriedly moved up, and he departed for Washington more than two hours ahead of schedule.

The breakdown denied Trump a much-needed triumph amid growing political turmoil back home and the path forward now appears uncertain. Trump insisted his relations with Kim remain warm, but he did not commit to having a third summit with the North Korean leader, saying a possible next meeting "may not be for a long time."

Ri's comments reflected the North Koreans' disappointment, though there was a notable absence of bluster or threats by either side.

Both Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said significant progress had been made in Hanoi, but the two sides appeared to be galaxies apart on an agreement that would live up to stated American goals.

"Basically, they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety, and we couldn't do that," Trump told reporters.

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Kim, he said, appeared willing to close his country's main nuclear facility, the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center, if the sanctions were lifted. But that would leave him with missiles, warheads and weapon systems, Pompeo said. There are also suspected hidden nuclear fuel production sites around the country.

"We couldn't quite get there today," Pompeo said, minimizing what seemed to be a chasm between the two sides.

Longstanding U.S. policy has insisted that U.S. sanctions on North Korea would not be lifted until that country committed to, if not concluded, complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. Trump declined to restate that goal Thursday, insisting he wanted flexibility in talks with Kim.

Ri said North Korea proposed that U.S. and North Korean technicians jointly dismantle plutonium, uranium-enrichment and other nuclear material-making facilities at Yongbyon in the presence of U.S. experts.

He said it is "the biggest denuclearization measure that we can take" given the current status of mutual confidence between the two countries.

In return, Ri said North Korea asked the U.S. to lift five kinds of sanctions that are related to its civilian economy and public livelihoods.

The failure in Hanoi laid bare a risk in Trump's negotiating style. Preferring one-on-one meetings with his foreign counterparts, his administration often eschews the staff-level work usually done in advance to assure a deal.

There was disappointment and alarm in South Korea, whose liberal leader has been a leading orchestrator of the nuclear diplomacy and who needs a breakthrough to restart lucrative engagement projects with the impoverished North. Yonhap news agency said that the clock on the Korean Peninsula's security situation has "turned back to zero" and diplomacy is now "at a crossroads."

The two leaders had seemed to find a point of agreement when Kim, who fielded questions from American journalists for the first time, was asked if the U.S. may open a liaison office in North Korea. Trump declared it "not a bad idea," and Kim called it "welcomeable." Such an office would mark the first official U.S. presence in North Korea and a significant grant to a country that has long been deliberately starved of international recognition.

There had long been skepticism that Kim would be willing to give away the weapons his nation had spent decades developing and Pyongyang felt ensured its survival. But even after the summit ended, Trump praised Kim's commitment to continue a moratorium on missile testing.

Associated Press writers Matthew Lee, Jill Colvin, Zeke Miller and Darlene Superville in Washington contributed to this report.

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Many view 'black friend defense' as a tired, hollow argument

By TERRY TANG and DEEPTI HAJELA, Associated Press

Kelly Darden Jr. still remembers one of the first times he experienced the "black friend defense."

Back in high school, a group of white classmates dressed in Confederate-inspired clothing as part of a social club called the "Rebel Rousers" and insisted they weren't racist when confronted because some of them knew Darden, who is black.

"It was insulting," the 64-year-old Greenville, North Carolina, man recalled Thursday. "I was insulted by it even when it was occurring."

Darden and countless other African-Americans have experienced variations of the "black friend defense" — saying that a person can't be racist because of the color of the company he keeps — for generations. And the trope played out in front of a national TV audience this week as Republican Rep. Mark Meadows

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defended President Donald Trump against testimony by Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, who claimed the president is racist. Meadows, of North Carolina, quickly sent social media into a frenzy when he pointed to Lynne Patton, a black Trump administration staffer, and said Patton never would tolerate working for a racist.

Many consider the "black friend defense" a tired and hollow argument.

"The fact someone would actually use a prop, a black woman in this chamber, in this committee, is alone racist in itself," Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib of Michigan said in response to Meadows' interaction with Patton, who works at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

An outraged Meadows, who is white, hit back, saying he can't be racist because he has nieces and nephews of color and he is friends with Rep. Elijah Cummings, who is black and was chairing the hearing.

The "defense" has a history of being part of a politician's playbook.

Trump himself has trotted it out more than once. While giving remarks during a 2016 presidential campaign stop, Trump pointed to someone in the crowd and yelled "Look at my African-American over there."

A few black celebrities have been called props or "Uncle Toms" for throwing support Trump's way or simply just meeting with him. Kanye West, Steve Harvey and Jim Brown have all been criticized.

Harvey, who voted for Hillary Clinton, told media outlets in 2017 that he regretted meeting with the president at Trump Tower because of the backlash. He only did so in the hopes of helping with Trump's transition to the White House.

In "4 Little Girls," Spike Lee's 1997 documentary revisiting the deadly 1963 Birmingham church bombing, former Alabama governor and onetime staunch segregationist George Wallace talks about how he has helped black people. At one point, he is seen sitting behind the governor's desk and summons a black man.

"Here's one of my best friends right here ... my best friend right here. I wouldn't go anywhere without him," Wallace says while holding the man's hand. The man stands quietly but doesn't say anything.

The phenomenon was the subject of a 2014 study done by University of London Business School professor Daniel A. Effron.

In his research, Effron noted that former Bosnian leader Radovan Karadzic said he held no anti-Muslim prejudice because his former barber was Muslim. In 2016, Karadzic was convicted of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity for wartime atrocities including the 1995 massacre of 8,000 Muslim men.

Tyler Parry, an associate professor of African American Studies at California State University in Fullerton, said using black people as political props is something that occurred as far back as the 19th century in debates about slavery. In Antebellum-era writings by former slave owners, they would often describe their relationship with slaves as a friendship. It was a way for them to justify their stance on slavery.

Parry said he finds it remarkable that people in the public eye keep using "the black friend" excuse over and over in almost verbatim language rather than issue a mea culpa. It comes off shallow and brings the authenticity of the friendship into question, he said.

"There's a few studies that say it's a way to overcompensate — particularly a white person or a person of privilege feels the need to accumulate friends of color in case they are ever accused of racism," Parry said. "If they can deflect the criticism and place it upon their friend as a way to explain it, they can get off the hook."

Patton, the Trump administration staffer, denied she was a figurehead being exploited by Republicans. A former event planner best known for her work on the wedding of Trump's son Eric, Patton slammed Democratic lawmakers who "placed more credence on the word of a self-confessed convicted perjurer" than a highly educated black woman working alongside the president.

"That is not the resume of a prop. It is however, the resume of someone who remains completely unfazed by the criticism of others and laser focused," Patton wrote on Instagram.

Associated Press writer Jesse J. Holland in Washington contributed to this report.

Tang, Hajela and Washington cover race and ethnicity for The Associated Press. Follow them on twitter:

@ttangAP, @dhajela, and @jessejholland and search for their work at <https://apnews.com> .

California residents survey damage as historic floods recede

By **TERENCE CHEA and JANIE HAR, Associated Press**

GUERNEVILLE, Calif. (AP) — Tom Orr began moving lyrics and scripts, clothes and photo albums from his apartment as authorities ordered evacuations along a rising Northern California river threatening to hit a historic crest.

But the actor and writer couldn't move costumes, computers and performance videos. So he shifted those to his loft bed about 10 feet up and prayed they would survive. On Wednesday, television news footage showed muddy brown water nearly swallowing his ground-level unit and much of the tiny town of Guerneville, part of Sonoma County's famed wine country and a popular tourist destination.

Residents awoke Thursday to sunshine and began assessing the damage while the water started receding. Orr, 48, was among those still unable to get into his house after the rain-swollen Russian River reached nearly 46 feet (14 meters) Wednesday night, its highest level in more than 20 years.

"I feel so helpless just sitting here and waiting before I can go back and start salvaging whatever I can," Orr said in text messages to The Associated Press before preparing for a friend to take him by canoe to work at the Main Street Bistro, one of the few places in town that did not flood.

Sonoma County officials said they expected the communities of Guerneville and Monte Rio to be accessible by car Friday. The two-day storm rendered the towns reachable only by boat on Wednesday.

One National Weather Service station measured 20 inches of rain in 48 hours.

While no flood-related serious injuries or deaths were reported in Sonoma County, a man about 150 miles (330 kilometers) to the north in Ferndale died trying to reach three children.

The unidentified man was trying to walk from a barn to his home through up to 5 feet (1.5 meters) of water Wednesday evening when he was carried away by the fast-moving current, said Samantha Karges, a spokeswoman with the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office.

Two adults and a child tried to rescue the man, but their tractor stalled in the water. Deputies in a boat then rescued them and the three children from the home, Karges said.

The missing man's body was found Thursday morning. He was the father of a 12-year-old trapped in the home with two children under 4, Karges said. She was not sure if all three children were related. The low-lying rural area about 215 miles (473 kilometers) north of San Francisco is home to many dairy farms and flooded when the Eel River went over its banks.

In Sonoma County, Guerneville and Monte Rio remained cut off by floodwaters that swamped the communities. Water was chest-high in some places, several feet in others.

In downtown Guerneville, some residents stood on the roofs of their flooded two-story houses, watching neighbors and others paddling kayaks, canoes and rowboats down watery streets. Oversized National Guard truck occasionally slogged by.

Drone video showed a sign reading "Monte Rio awaits your return" hanging over muddy water that hid any trace of the road beneath.

In Sonoma County, Sheriff Mark Essick said Thursday that three women had to be rescued. Two were on a boat without paddles, and one was rescued from a tree after driving her car into floodwaters, he said.

About 2,000 homes, businesses and other structures were flooded by water up to 8 feet (2.4 meters) deep. About 3,500 people were under evacuation orders.

In addition, two wastewater treatment plants were not working, leading to concerns about sewage spills, said Briana Khan, a Sonoma County spokeswoman.

Guerneville, a town of 4,500, is a former logging community now popular with day-tripping tourists, including gays and lesbians who flock to the town's resorts and fine restaurants. Throughout the storm, residents with canoes and kayaks gave rides to neighbors and documented the rising water with photos posted to social media.

Locals are accustomed to the Russian River flooding in rainy weather, but not like this.

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In Monte Rio, 28-year-old Michael Super watched helplessly as water seeped in from five different entry points, including doors and walls. He grabbed the cat and dog and found higher ground.

He said the landlord has insurance, but the silt and dirty water are a mess to clean.

"A lot of the furniture will have to go into the dump," he said. "We've seen oil and gas sheens and alcohol bottles so the water is unsafe."

Orr moved to Guerneville about five years ago, driven out of San Francisco by rising costs. He helped create a dinner theater show at a local restaurant. It didn't work out, but he stayed on, unable to move back to the city.

He started moving items out of his house Tuesday afternoon, humming a version of "My Funny Valentine" called "My Floody Valentine" to keep up his spirits. By 10 p.m., the water was too high for him to get inside.

He doesn't have insurance, but the items he hopes survive are not easily replaceable: computers, floppy disks and videotapes containing decades of essays, performances, ideas for musicals and "sassy satirical parodies of Broadway show tunes."

He's a cabaret performer accustomed to cracking jokes to keep the grief at bay.

"This is the most serious thing that's ever happened to me, but I don't know the punchline," he said. "For now, I'm trying to do my best to keep everybody laughing."

Har reported from San Francisco. Associated Press Writer Olga R. Rodriguez and Paul Elias in San Francisco also contributed to this report.

Paying full Bryce: Harper, Phils agree to record \$330M deal

By RONALD BLUM, AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It took a long time and a lot of money, but the Philadelphia Phillies finally landed Bryce Harper with a record contract.

The young star outfielder and the Phillies agreed Thursday to a \$330 million, 13-year contract, the largest deal in baseball history.

Harper's agent, California-based Scott Boras, said the deal was agreed to at 10:34 a.m. PST, subject to a successful physical.

Phillies manager Gabe Kapler and his players learned of the agreement from fans behind Philadelphia's dugout who saw media reports on their mobile devices during a spring training game in Clearwater, Florida.

"If the reports are true, it's a huge moment for our baseball team," Kapler said. "Certainly I think that the city of Philadelphia would embrace Bryce Harper. I think he would be very happy in this city because our fans care deeply about winning."

A 26-year-old All-Star who had spent his entire big league career with the Washington Nationals, Harper topped the \$325 million, 13-year agreement outfielder Giancarlo Stanton reached before the 2015 season with the Miami Marlins.

"Harper's goal was he wanted the largest contract and he wanted his value," Boras said. "He wanted the largest length he could get because he really wanted to stay in one city and one uniform, wanted to get a ballpark he hit well in, saw the ball well."

Harper has a .279 career average with 184 homers and 521 RBIs, including a .268 average with 14 homers, 32 RBIs and a .930 OPS in 47 games at Citizens Bank Park. He likely would hit third or fourth, according to Kapler.

"We get a whole lot better on the field," the manager said. "Bryce Harper is a sensational teammate."

Harper's agreement surpasses the previous high for a free agent, set last week when infielder Manny Machado signed a \$300 million, 10-year deal with the San Diego Padres. Harper's average annual value of \$25.4 million ranks 14th in baseball history, well below the high of \$34.1 million set by Arizona pitcher Zack Greinke as part of a \$206.5 million, six-year contract that started in 2016.

Harper gets a \$20 million signing bonus in equal installments this June 1 and Nov. 1, a \$10 million salary this year, \$26 million in each of the following nine seasons and \$22 million in each of the last three years.

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None of the money is deferred, and he gets a full no-trade provision.

Philadelphia will forfeit its second-highest draft selection, currently No. 55, and \$500,000 of its 2019-20 international signing bonus pool allotment. Because Washington paid luxury tax last season, its compensation pick will be after the fourth round, about 140th.

Following a slow offseason of negotiations that sparked outrage from the players' association, three players in a 10-day span agreed to deals guaranteeing a total of \$890 million. Colorado third baseman Nolan Arenado, who would have been eligible for free agency next offseason, signed a \$260 million, eight-year agreement this week.

"We want our best players to sign the biggest, longest contracts," said Milwaukee Brewers star Ryan Braun, the 2012 NL MVP. "Overall, it's a good day for all baseball players to see him get properly compensated."

Phillies owner John Middleton met with Harper in a Las Vegas hotel suite and at dinner around the time of the winter meetings in December and then again last weekend. Boras said Middleton's wife, Leigh, and Harper's wife, Kayla, were part of the gathering.

"Bryce just really enjoyed John's passion for winning and the commitment he could make to the franchise," Boras said.

Philadelphia has been among the most active teams this offseason, adding outfielder Andrew McCutchen for \$50 million over three years and reliever David Robertson for \$23 million over two years, and acquiring catcher J.T. Realmuto and shortstop Jean Segura.

"We thought we were a complete team. Now, we're even more of a complete team," McCutchen said.

Philadelphia also gave ace Aaron Nola a \$45 million, four-year deal.

"Pretty cool," Nola said. "Glad to claim him and looking forward to him getting here."

After leading their division in early August, the Phillies went 16-33 over the final 49 games of last season and at 80-82 finished with a losing record for the sixth straight season. Harper will return to his old home in the season's second week, when the Phillies play at the NL East rival Nationals on April 2 and 3.

San Francisco and the Los Angeles Dodgers had also pursued Harper in recent weeks, and the Giants offered \$310 million over 12 years, a person familiar with the talks said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the proposal was not publicly revealed. San Francisco's plan would be less lucrative to Harper because of high California taxes.

Boras said shorter-term offers had average annual values as high as \$42.5 million.

Boras was the agent for a record contract for the fourth time after pitcher Kevin Brown's \$105 million, seven-year deal with the Los Angeles Dodgers ahead of the 1999 season, Alex Rodriguez's \$252 million, 10-year agreement with Texas before the 2001 season and Rodriguez's \$275 million, 10-year contract with the New York Yankees before the 2008 season.

Harper has been an All-Star in six of seven big league seasons and was the unanimous winner of the 2015 NL MVP award.

An up-and-down defender and an unusual mix of popular and polarizing, Harper is known for the occasional contretemps with opponents, one particular exchange with a reporter about a "clown question," and, most infamously, a dugout dustup in which he was choked by then-teammate Jonathan Papelbon during a game.

Washington took him with the No. 1 overall pick in the 2010 amateur draft and called him up to the majors less than two years later at age 19. He would go on to become the 2012 NL Rookie of the Year for a Nationals club that won its first division title and made its postseason debut.

Harper was also an integral part of the team that added NL East titles in 2014, 2016 and 2017 and never finished lower than second place in his seven seasons. Another key stat, though: The Nationals never won a playoff series in that span.

His best year was 2015, when at age 22 he hit .330 with 42 homers, 99 RBIs, 118 runs and 124 walks, amassing an OPS of 1.109.

Last year, he hit 34 homers and produced a career-high 100 RBIs while walking 130 times, although his batting average dipped to .249. He started more than a third of his games in center field instead of his

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usual spot in right because of injuries to teammates.

With Washington's Nationals Park hosting the 2018 All-Star Game, Harper stole the show the day before the Midsummer Classic by winning the Home Run Derby before an ecstatic crowd filled with folks wearing his No. 34 Nationals jersey. Harper wore a headband with the D.C. flag's design, reflecting his oft-stated pride in playing for Washington.

But that eventually ran its course. The Nationals made an offer toward the end of last season — a \$300 million, 10-year contract that included \$100 million in deferred money that Harper would have not entirely received until he was 60. The offer no longer was on the table after free agency opened without an agreement.

A year after going 82-80 and missing the playoffs under rookie manager Dave Martinez, the Nationals will move forward without Harper.

Washington general manager Mike Rizzo would have loved to keep Harper in his team's lineup but didn't sit around and wait to find out whether that would happen. Instead, Rizzo spent money elsewhere, adding lefty starter Patrick Corbin on a \$140 million deal and righty starter Anibal Sanchez, along with second baseman Brian Dozier, a pair of catchers in Yan Gomes and Kurt Suzuki and two key bullpen pieces in Trevor Rosenthal and Kyle Barraclough.

AP Baseball Writer Janie McCauley, AP Sports Writer Howard Fendrich and AP freelance writer Andrew Wagner contributed to this report.

More AP MLB: <https://apnews.com/MLB> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Neo-Nazi group's leader is black man who vows to dissolve it

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, Associated Press

One of the nation's largest neo-Nazi groups appears to have an unlikely new leader: a black activist who has vowed to dismantle it.

Court documents filed Thursday suggest James Hart Stern wants to use his new position as director and president of the National Socialist Movement to undermine the Detroit-based group's defense against a lawsuit.

The NSM is one of several extremist groups sued over bloodshed at a 2017 white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Stern's filing asks a federal court in Virginia to issue a judgment against the group before one of the lawsuits goes to trial.

Stern replaced Jeff Schoep as the group's leader in January, according to Michigan corporate records. But those records and court documents say nothing about how or why Stern got the position. His feat invited comparisons to the recent Spike Lee movie "BlacKkKlansman" in which a black police officer infiltrates a branch of the Ku Klux Klan.

Neither Stern, who lives in Moreno Valley, California, nor Schoep responded Thursday to emails and calls seeking comment.

Matthew Heimbach, a leading white nationalist figure who briefly served as the NSM's community outreach director last year, said Schoep and other group leaders have been at odds with rank-and-file members over its direction. Heimbach said some members "essentially want it to remain a politically impotent white supremacist gang" and resisted ideological changes advocated by Schoep.

Heimbach said Schoep's apparent departure and Stern's installation as its leader probably spell the end of the group in its current form. Schoep was 21 when he took control of the group in 1994 and renamed it the National Socialist Movement, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

"I think it's kind of a sad obit for one of the longest-running white nationalist organizations," said Heimbach, who estimates it had about 40 active, dues-paying members last year.

The group has drawn much larger crowds at rallies.

NSM members used to attend rallies and protests in full Nazi uniforms, including at a march in Toledo,

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Ohio, that sparked a riot in 2005. More recently, Schoep tried to rebrand the group and appeal to a new generation of racists and anti-Semites by getting rid of such overt displays of Nazi symbols.

It appeared that Stern had been trying for at least two years to disrupt the group. A message posted on his website said he would be meeting with Schoep in February 2017 "to sign a proclamation acknowledging the NSM denouncing being a white supremacist group."

"I have personally targeted eradicating the (Ku Klux Klan) and the National Socialist Movement, which are two organizations here in this country which have all too long been given privileges they don't deserve," Stern said in a video posted on his site.

On Wednesday, lawyers for the plaintiffs suing white supremacist groups and movement leaders over the Charlottesville violence asked the court to sanction Schoep. They say he has ignored his obligations to turn over documents and give them access to his electronic devices and social media accounts. They also claim Schoep recently fired his attorney as a stalling tactic.

A federal magistrate judge in Charlottesville ruled last Friday that Stern cannot represent the NSM in the case because he does not appear to be a licensed attorney. That did not deter Stern from filing Thursday's request for summary judgment against his own group.

"It is the decision of the National Socialist Movement to plead liable to all causes of actions listed in the complaint against it," he wrote.

Stern served a prison sentence for mail fraud at the same facility as onetime Ku Klux Klan leader Edgar Ray Killen, who was convicted in the "Mississippi Burning" killings of three civil rights workers. Killen died in January 2018.

In 2012, Stern claimed Killen signed over to him power of attorney and ownership of 40 acres of land while they were serving prison terms together. A lawyer for Killen asked a judge to throw out the land transfer and certify that Killen and his family owned the property.

YouTube suspends comments on videos of kids

RACHEL LERMAN, AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — YouTube said Thursday it will turn off comments on nearly all videos featuring kids — potentially affecting millions of posts on the site — after reports last week that pedophiles were leaving inappropriate comments on innocuous videos of children.

The change comes as YouTube grapples with moderating content across its platform as concerns about hate speech, violence and conspiracy theories continue to plague it.

It will take YouTube several months to disable comments on all videos featuring minors, the company said. It already started the process last week when it turned off comments from tens of millions of videos.

Advertisers including Nestle, AT&T and Fortnite-maker Epic Games pulled ads from YouTube last week after the inappropriate comments about children were unearthed by a popular YouTuber and media reports. At least one company, Nestle, was satisfied with YouTube's response and reinstated ads late last week.

A small number of channels which have videos featuring kids will be allowed to keep comments turned on. But they must be known to YouTube and must actively monitor the comments beyond the standard monitoring tools YouTube provides.

Turning off comments on such a large number of videos seems an "extreme reaction," said eMarketer analyst Paul Verna. But the issue involves the safety of children, so it makes sense YouTube would want to act quickly, he said.

Comments aren't the main focus of the video-publishing site, but turning them off will likely diminish the experience for many users and video creators, he said.

YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki acknowledged the concerns Thursday, tweeting, "Nothing is more important to us than ensuring the safety of young people on the platform."

The company said it has also released an updated version of its automated moderating system that it expects will identify and delete two times as many inappropriate comments.

YouTube, like Facebook, Twitter and other sites that allow user publishing, have faced increasing calls to

monitor what appears on their sites and get rid of unsuitable content. The companies all say they have taken action to protect users. But issues keep popping up.

Concerns about YouTube comments weren't even a top priority for advertisers and viewers a couple weeks ago, Verna said.

"It just makes you wonder, what's the next thing that going to happen?"

Trump border emergency foes close in on needed Senate votes

By ALAN FRAM and ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate opponents of President Donald Trump's declaration of a national emergency at the Mexican border moved within a hair Thursday of having enough votes to prevail, and one Republican suggested he risks a rebuff by the GOP-led chamber if he doesn't change course.

Trump's move would "turn a border crisis into a constitutional crisis," veteran Sen. Lamar Alexander said on the Senate floor. But he stopped just short of saying he'd support a resolution blocking the president's move. Had Alexander pledged his vote, it would probably be enough for the Senate to pass a measure repealing the emergency declaration.

Speaking later to reporters, Alexander, R-Tenn., warned what might happen if Trump doesn't settle for using other money he can access without declaring an emergency.

"He can build a wall and avoid a dangerous precedent and I hope he'll do that," Alexander said. "So that would change the voting situation if he would agree to do that."

The Democratic-led House voted Tuesday to upend Trump's declaration, which he declared to circumvent Congress and funnel billions of extra dollars to erecting his proposed wall.

Trump has promised to veto the effort to thwart him, and Congress seems all but certain to lack the two-thirds majorities in each chamber that would be needed to override his veto. But the showdown puts GOP lawmakers in a ticklish spot that party leaders are hoping to ease.

Republicans say a Senate vote is likely in two weeks, but exactly what the Senate will vote on remains unclear.

Several Republicans said that behind closed doors, they were considering several options for alternative language. Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, was among those suggesting provisions making it harder for future presidents to divert federal dollars to projects of their choosing by declaring emergencies.

"I wouldn't be surprised if some changes are made," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas.

While the wall elicits wide public opposition, Trump remains wildly popular with hard-right voters and GOP lawmakers cross him at their peril. Trump warned Republicans anew against challenging him.

"I really think that Republicans that vote against border security and the wall, I think you know, I've been OK at predicting things, I think they put themselves at great jeopardy," Trump said in excerpts of an interview with Fox News Channel's "Hannity" show released Thursday.

While congressional Republicans are reluctant to confront Trump, many say his move tramples Congress' constitutional power to control spending. They say it would set a precedent for future Democratic presidents to declare emergencies for their own purposes, and they worry he would siphon money to barrier construction from home-state projects.

Alexander, a three-term senator who plans to retire in 2021, has no re-election worries.

"I support what the president wants to do on border security, but not the way he has been advised to do it," said Alexander, 78. "It is unnecessary and unwise to turn a border crisis into a constitutional crisis about separation of powers."

Presidents have declared 58 national emergencies under a 1976 law. But never has one declared an emergency after Congress had explicitly denied the money in question, Alexander said.

GOP Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Thom Tillis of North Carolina have said they will vote to derail the emergency declaration. Just four Republicans would be needed to send the measure to Trump for his promised veto, assuming that all 47 Democrats and their independent allies vote as expected to confront the president.

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By law, the resolution cannot be filibustered and would only need a majority to pass the Senate, usually 51 votes.

Congress has voted to limit spending for barriers to just under \$1.4 billion. Trump featured the wall as a central plank of his presidential campaign and repeatedly said Mexico would pay for it, which hasn't happened.

Trump has said he needs additional barriers to halt drugs, human traffickers and unauthorized immigrants from slipping into the U.S. Opponents say there is no crisis.

The emergency declaration would let Trump divert \$3.6 billion from military construction to erect more border barriers. He's invoking other authorities to transfer an additional \$3.1 billion to construction.

Lawsuits have been filed aimed at derailing the declaration, which could at least prevent Trump from getting the extra money for months or more.

Meanwhile, Collins and three other moderate senators introduced their own resolution blocking the emergency.

The proposal is identical to the one-sentence, House-approved measure. The new legislation lets senators put their stamp on congressional opposition to Trump's move.

The other sponsors are Sens. Tom Udall, D-N.M., Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., and Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska. Only Murkowski doesn't face re-election next year.

AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro in Washington and AP writer David Sharp in Portland, Maine, contributed.

SpaceX debuts new crew capsule in crucial test flight

By **MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — SpaceX closes in on human spaceflight with this weekend's debut of a new capsule designed for astronauts.

The six-day test flight will be real in every regard, beginning with a Florida liftoff Saturday and a docking the next day with the International Space Station. But the Dragon capsule won't carry humans, rather a test dummy — named Ripley after the tough heroine in the "Alien" films — in the same white SpaceX spacesuit that astronauts will wear.

NASA doesn't expect this crucial shakedown cruise to go perfectly. But the lessons learned should improve safety when two NASA astronauts strap into a Dragon as early as July.

"Giant leaps are made by a series of consistent smaller steps. This one will be a big step!" retired astronaut Scott Kelly, NASA's former one-year space station resident, tweeted Thursday.

Boeing is also in the race to end NASA's eight-year drought of launching U.S. astronauts on U.S. rockets from U.S. soil. The space agency is turning to private taxi rides to reduce its pricey reliance on Russian rockets to get astronauts to and from the space station. NASA is providing \$8 billion for SpaceX and Boeing to build and operate these new systems.

"On a personal level, this is an extremely important mission," SpaceX executive Hans Koenigsmann told reporters Thursday. "And I'm pretty sure it's not just me, I think everybody within SpaceX feels this and wants to get this right."

A look at the newest space ride:

CREW VS. CARGO

SpaceX has made 16 space station deliveries over the past seven years. The private company overhauled the cargo Dragon capsule to make it safe — and comfortable — for passengers. It's slightly bigger — 27 feet (8 meters) tall — and also launches atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. But now there are four seats, three windows, computer touch screens and life-support systems. Instead of solar wings, solar cells are on the spacecraft itself. And eight engines are built into the capsule walls for use in an emergency; these abort engines could shoot the capsule off a malfunctioning rocket anytime during the launch.

SPACEX CHIC

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You can't go into space looking dowdy. SpaceX founder and chief executive Elon Musk wants Dragon riders looking sharp and 21st century, just like their new, white, sleek spaceship. The streamlined spacesuits are also white with black trim, with matching helmets and gloves. No bulky orange flight suits left over from NASA's space shuttle program. Boeing is going with royal blue spacesuits for its Starliner capsule crews.

ALONG FOR THE RIDE

The life-size test dummy Ripley — wearing SpaceX's slick new spacesuit — is strapped into one of the capsule's seats. The mannequin, whose name was unveiled Thursday, is rigged with sensors to see how it holds up. Ripley is similar to Starman, which blasted off last year in the driver's seat of Musk's red Tesla convertible, on a test launch of the company's bigger Falcon Heavy rocket. The capsule can accommodate up to seven astronauts. For this test, it's carrying 450 pounds (200 kilograms) of supplies and gear.

OLD PAD, NEW LOOK

Kennedy Space Center's historic Launch Complex 39A, used a half-century ago for Apollo moon shots and later space shuttle flights, has been remodeled and gussied up by tenant SpaceX. Most notable is the long, enclosed, gleaming white walkway at the top. The old bridge for rocket-boarding astronauts was open to the elements. Astronauts like the new, air-conditioned design. "They're very happy that it's covered, and we're trying to keep the mosquitoes out. Those Florida mosquitoes, they can get in anywhere," said NASA's commercial crew program manager, Kathy Lueders.

FLIGHT RUNDOWN

This mission is a night owl's dream, with most of the big events happening in the wee hours. Saturday's liftoff is scheduled for 2:49 a.m. to sync up with a space station arrival the next day. Unlike cargo Dragon, plucked from orbit by the station's robot arm and guided to its berth, crew Dragon will dock on its own early Sunday morning. The three space station astronauts will enter the Dragon, unload the fresh supplies on board and then fill it with science samples and old equipment. The capsule will undock March 8 and, shortly after sunrise, parachute into the Atlantic, a couple hundred miles off the Florida coast.

HOT COMPETITION

Just because SpaceX is first off the pad doesn't mean it will launch astronauts before Boeing. SpaceX is shooting for a July crew launch, but that could slip depending on the results of the upcoming demo and a launch abort test this spring. Several items — parachutes and thrusters, among others — still need work and possibly redesign before certified for human use. Boeing is targeting an April test flight of its Starliner capsule without crew, and a launch with three astronauts no earlier than August. Whichever company delivers astronauts first wins a small U.S. flag left at the station by the last shuttle crew in 2011. NASA's Doug Hurley and Boeing's Christopher Ferguson — who both flew that final shuttle mission — will test drive the new commercial capsules. Hurley will ride the Dragon and Ferguson the Starliner.

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US growth is likely to slow from 2.6 pct. pace last quarter

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy turned in a solid performance in 2018, boosted in part by tax cuts and higher government spending. But growth slowed by year's end, and most economists envision a weaker outlook for the coming months and probably years.

The nation's gross domestic product, the broadest gauge of economic health, expanded at a 2.6 percent annual rate in the October-December period, the government said Thursday. That was down from a 3.4 percent rate in the July-September period and a sizzling 4.2 percent pace from April through June. During those months, the economy benefited from tax cuts and from higher government spending, the gains from which are thought to be fading.

For 2018 as a whole, GDP growth amounted to 2.9 percent, the government said, the best showing since 2015. It was just below the 3 percent pace the administration has said it can maintain consistently.

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By contrast, most economists foresee slower growth ahead. For the current January-March quarter, many analysts say they think growth could slow to a 2 percent annual rate or less.

"I think the economy will be steadily throttling back over the next two years," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics.

The economy's pace of expansion last quarter reflected a slowdown in consumer spending and the start of a 35-day partial shutdown of the government, which subtracted an estimated 0.1 percentage point from growth. That weakness was offset somewhat by a gain in business investment and less of a drag from trade.

The \$1.5 trillion tax cut that President Donald Trump pushed through Congress in late 2017 and billions of extra dollars in government spending that Congress added for military and domestic programs helped accelerate the economy last year.

In the view of most economists, though, 2018 may turn out to have been the economy's high point for some time. Many are forecasting that growth this year will slow to around 2.2 percent and to weaken further in 2020. Some analysts say they think the economy could even dip into recession next year as the support from the tax cuts fades and the global economy sputters.

Zandi has forecast growth of 2.5 percent this year and just above 1 percent in 2020 and estimates the chance of a recession starting in 2020 at about 50-50. The National Association for Business Economics said in a survey released this week that roughly half the economists who responded to its latest survey expect a recession to have begun by the end of 2020.

The forecasts from the Trump administration are far rosier. Its officials have projected that the administration's policies will produce growth surpassing 3 percent in coming years.

Kevin Hassett, chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, argued in an interview Thursday that private forecasters are relying on outdated models that don't fully reflect the latest research. Hassett said he had forecast growth of 3.1 percent for 2018, when measured on a fourth-quarter-to-fourth-quarter basis and said that that pace was achieved.

"It worked exactly the way I said," Hassett said.

For 2019 as a whole, Hassett said he foresees growth improving to 3.2 percent — well above the expectations of most economists.

The economic expansion, now in its 10th year, is the second-longest on record. If it lasts beyond June, it will surpass the decade-long recovery from March 1991 to March 2001. Despite its duration, the expansion has been marked by the weakest annual growth rates of any recovery in the post-World War II period — just above 2 percent.

In a separate report Thursday, the government said that applications for unemployment benefits, a reflection of layoffs, rose by 8,000 last week to a seasonally adjusted 225,000. That is still a low level by historical standards and suggests that businesses are mostly maintaining their workers in a tight job market. The unemployment rate is 4 percent, near a half-century low.

The economy's 2.6 percent annual growth rate last quarter, though solid, was the slowest since a 2.2 percent pace in the first quarter of 2018. That was followed by two strong quarters last year. Trump has often cited those performances as evidence that his program of tax cuts, reductions in regulations and tougher enforcement of trade agreements was working.

Thursday's GDP report from the Commerce Department had been delayed by a month because of the government shutdown. And there will be only two estimates for last quarter's GDP, rather than the usual three.

The report showed that consumer spending slowed to a still solid growth rate of 2.8 percent in the fourth quarter, down from 3.5 percent growth in the third quarter. Business investment spending came in at a strong 6.2 percent annual rate, up from 2.5 percent in the previous quarter.

The trade deficit subtracted an estimated 0.2 percentage point from the annual growth rate, though that was much less of a drag than the 2 percentage point cut in the third quarter.

Government spending grew at a rate of 0.4 percent. But non-defense spending fell at a rate of 5.6 per-

cent, a drop that partially reflected the government shutdown.

AP Economics Writers Josh Boak and Christopher Rugaber contributed to this report.

DeVos proposes federal tax credits to advance school choice

By COLLIN BINKLEY, AP Education Writer

The Trump administration renewed its push for school choice on Thursday with a proposal to provide \$5 billion a year in federal tax credits for donations made to groups offering scholarships for private schools, apprenticeships and other educational programs.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos unveiled the plan as a "bold proposal" to give students more choices without diverting money from public schools.

"What's missing in education today is at the core of what makes America truly great: freedom," DeVos said. "Kids should be free to learn where and how it works for them."

Legislation for the tax credits is being introduced by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Rep. Bradley Byrne, R-Ala.

DeVos said she expects to face opposition, and Democrats quickly let her know she'll get it. Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Senate education committee, said the proposal is "dead on arrival."

"Secretary DeVos keeps pushing her anti-public school agenda despite a clear lack of support from parents, students, teachers, and even within her own party," Murray said in a statement. "Congress has repeatedly rejected her privatization efforts, and she should expect nothing less here."

The proposal will also face a difficult time in the House, where Democrats gained a majority in the November midterm elections. Rep. Bobby Scott, chairman of the House education committee, said Democrats "will not waste time on proposals that undermine public education."

"We're focused on reversing our chronic underfunding of public schools so that all students — regardless of their background — can learn in schools that are healthy, safe and provide a quality education," Scott said.

Education officials crafted the plan in an attempt to make school choice more politically appealing, after previous initiatives failed to take hold. Congress rejected DeVos' efforts to boost funding for charter schools and to create federal vouchers to attend private schools.

Opponents of charter schools and vouchers argue that they steer money away from public schools. But DeVos contends the proposal would spark new funding that could be used for a range of education options including public or private schools.

"The only folks who are threatened are those who have a vested interest in suppressing education freedom," DeVos said. "The program won't take a single cent from local public school teachers or public school students."

But The National Association of Secondary School Principals called the plan "insulting" and said it "reflects this administration's persistent disdain for public education." The group contends that it would make it harder for public schools to attract and retain good teachers.

The plan, called the Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunity Act, would allow states to set their own rules around the credits, including which students are eligible for scholarships and where they could be used. Possible programs include apprenticeships, private schools, home schooling, special education, tutoring or public virtual schools.

The proposal would offer a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for individuals and businesses that donate to scholarship groups approved by the state, meaning that every dollar given takes a dollar off the donor's tax bill.

Credits would be capped at 10 percent of an individual's gross income and 5 percent of a business' taxable income. Education officials said it's unlikely the \$5 billion annual cap would be hit.

States could decide not to participate, but DeVos said she believes that would lead to a backlash from students and their families. "Demand will rise, and pressure will mount on those that have not yet embraced the opportunity," she said.

Eighteen states already offer their own scholarship tax credits, including Alabama, Arizona, New Hamp-

shire and Virginia. Most programs are aimed at helping students from low-income families or those with disabilities. A federal version was discussed as part of last year's tax overhaul but wasn't included in the law.

Lawmakers described the new plan as a response to President Donald Trump's call for school choice in his State of the Union address. Trump's speech largely avoided education but included a single line saying that "the time has come to pass school choice for America's children."

Speaking alongside DeVos, Cruz said Thursday that he believes in public schools, but he argued that providing options will spur improvement at all schools.

"Competition improves," he said. "And in this case, injecting new money to give that freedom, to give that competition, to give that power of choice, will enhance the quality of education to kids all across the country."

The proposal drew applause from some groups that support school choice, including the Center for Education Reform. Jeanne Allen, the group's CEO, called it "a welcome sign in the battle for more opportunities for students."

Some conservative groups found fault with DeVos' proposal. The Heritage Foundation applauded it for pursuing school choice but said federal tax credits would open the door for undue federal regulation.

"It would grow, rather than reduce, federal intervention in education," the group said. "It would be better for the Education Department to keep highlighting the great advances that states have made in school choice."

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

Why small US theaters have canceled 'To Kill a Mockingbird'

By **MARK KENNEDY**, AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Dozens of community and nonprofit theaters across the U.S. have been forced to abandon productions of "To Kill a Mockingbird" under legal threat by Broadway and Hollywood producer Scott Rudin. The combative move has prompted calls for a boycott of Rudin's work.

Rudin is arguing that author Harper Lee signed over to him exclusive worldwide rights to the title of the novel and that Rudin's current adaptation on Broadway — written by Aaron Sorkin — is the only version allowed to be performed.

That means different adaptations have had to be scuttled in such small venues as the Grand Theatre in Salt Lake City; Mugford Street Players in Marblehead, Massachusetts; and the Kavinoky Theatre in Buffalo, New York, as well as a planned United Kingdom and Ireland tour. They had licensed the rights for a different version, written by Christopher Sergel and licensed by The Dramatic Publishing Company or DPC.

In a statement, Rudin defended his position. "We hate to ask anybody to cancel any production of a play anywhere, but the productions in question as licensed by DPC infringe on rights licensed to us by Harper Lee directly," he said.

"The Sergel play can contractually continue to be performed under set guidelines as described in detail in its own agreement with Harper Lee — and as long as those guidelines are adhered to, we have no issue with the play having a long life."

Anger over the move has triggered an online revolt using the rallying cry #BoycottRudinplays. Chris Peterson, founder of the OnStage Blog, wants ticket buyers to steer clear of all current and upcoming Rudin productions on Broadway, including "Hilary and Clinton," "Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus," "King Lear," "The Ferryman" and "The Book of Mormon."

"If a theatre was consciously stealing creative license, that would be one thing. This is something else entirely. This is wrong," he writes. "Prohibiting others to perform this piece goes against everything the novel is about in the first place."

The all-volunteer Curtain Call Theatre in Braintree, Massachusetts, said it received a letter threatening damages of up to \$150,000, a staggering amount for a venue where tickets for plays are \$20 and \$25 for musicals.

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"Due to the substantial financial impact defending such an action would have on our small theatre group, we have no choice but to comply and, thus, cancel our upcoming production of 'To Kill a Mockingbird.' Not doing so would put our theatre at great risk," the theater said in a statement.

In Ohio, the Dayton Playhouse, an active community theater since 1959, had to abruptly cancel its "To Kill a Mockingbird." The cast and crew have been hard at work on the production for weeks.

"I feel terrible for our artists, onstage and backstage, who poured their hearts into making something beautiful and meaningful, only to have it ended so suddenly," said Matt Lindsay, chair of the Dayton Playhouse's board of directors.

The Broadway adaptation by Sorkin, creator of TV's "The West Wing" and the Oscar-winning screenwriter of "The Social Network," stars Jeff Daniels as Atticus Finch, the Alabama lawyer who defends a black man from a false charge of raping a white woman.

A spokesman for the American Association of Community Theatre said Thursday the organization would not weigh in on the dispute.

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

Israel's Netanyahu jolted by corruption recommendations

By ARON HELLER and JOSEF FEDERMAN, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's attorney general on Thursday recommended criminal charges against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a series of corruption cases, shaking up an already tumultuous election campaign and threatening to end the Israeli leader's decades-long political career.

The potential charges stretch across an array of embarrassing scandals that have painted Netanyahu as a hedonistic, and sometimes petty, leader with a taste for expensive gifts and an obsession over his public image. They include allegations he accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars of champagne and cigars from billionaire friends, and allegedly used his influence to help a wealthy telecom magnate in exchange for favorable coverage on a popular news site.

While a final decision on charges is still months away, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit's recommendations threatened to hurt Netanyahu's standing in the heat of a tight re-election battle. Netanyahu quickly faced calls to immediately step aside while he deals with the distraction of trying to clear his name.

Appearing on national TV late Thursday, Netanyahu dismissed the allegations as an "unprecedented witch hunt" by political opponents intent on seeing him lose the April 9 election.

He called the timing of the recommendations "outrageous" and accused prosecutors of caving in to pressure from "the left." Appearing emotional at times, he called the case a "blood libel," said he would debunk all charges and vowed to remain prime minister for many years.

"This house of cards will collapse," he said as he addressed voters. "Don't let this witch hunt affect you."

Mandelblit announced his recommendations after more than two years of intense investigations and deliberations by police, legal experts and financial regulators.

"The attorney general has reached his decision after thoroughly examining the evidence collected during the investigations," his statement said.

Netanyahu was not formally charged. Under Israeli law, he is entitled to defend himself at a hearing before charges are officially filed. That process is expected to take many months and be completed long after the election.

Tomer Naor of the Movement for Quality Government, a watchdog group, said the hearing process could take about a year. While charges are not guaranteed, he said most of the cases, particularly the bribery case, appeared to be solid.

The recommendations nonetheless plunged Israel into uncharted legal waters, marking the first time in its history that a sitting prime minister is so close to facing criminal charges.

While Israeli prime ministers are not required by law to resign if charged, the prospect of a prime minister standing trial while simultaneously running the country could increase calls, even from his allies, to

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step down.

Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who spent time in prison for corruption, stepped down a decade ago, months before police completed an investigation against him. As opposition leader, Netanyahu called on Olmert to step down before his indictment, saying he could not devote his full attention to governing.

Netanyahu has a solid base of hard-line, nationalist and religious voters who are likely to rally behind him. For now, Likud officials and his current coalition partners are also supporting him.

But polls have indicated that the upcoming vote, in which Netanyahu is seeking a fourth consecutive term, could be swayed by a small number of voters who abandon him in favor of a new centrist party headed by a popular former military chief, Benny Gantz.

Those voters could well be turned off by Netanyahu's lengthy rule and never-ending scandals.

Gantz, whose campaign has focused heavily on Netanyahu's character, late Thursday called on Netanyahu to resign immediately to deal with his legal problems.

He said Israel could not afford to have a "part-time prime minister."

"Let's imagine our reality when the prime minister needs to divide his time between court and dealing with the critical issues facing the state of Israel," he said.

Even before Thursday's announcement, Netanyahu's campaign had shown signs of trouble.

The alliance formed by Gantz and Yair Lapid, another centrist leader, has been welcomed by voters. Their "Blue and White" alliance enjoys a slight lead in opinion polls, making them the first credible threat to Netanyahu's decade-long rule.

Lapid also called on Netanyahu to step down.

"This is a sad day for the state of Israel," he said. "If Netanyahu loves the state of Israel as he always says he does, then he needs to do what's best for the country. He needs to resign, immediately."

Netanyahu has also come under fire, both in Israel and abroad, for forming a partnership with the political heirs of an ultranationalist party that was banned for its racist views toward Arabs.

The campaign now appears to be morphing into a referendum on Netanyahu as he seeks to become the longest-serving premier in Israeli history. Netanyahu has been prime minister since 2009 and served a previous term between 1996 and 1999.

Netanyahu had previously tried unsuccessfully to persuade Mandelblit to delay publication of his recommendations until after the election. And on Thursday, the Supreme Court rejected an attempt by the Likud Party to block publication.

The most serious allegations against Netanyahu involve his relationship with Shaul Elovitch, the controlling shareholder of Israel's telecom giant Bezeq.

Mandelblit recommended a bribery charge in the case based on evidence collected that confidants of Netanyahu promoted regulatory changes worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Bezeq.

In exchange, they believe Netanyahu used his connections with Elovitch to receive positive press coverage on Bezeq's popular news site Walla.

A related charge against Netanyahu's wife, Sara, was dropped.

Mandelblit's statement said there was a unanimous opinion among investigators that the relationship between Netanyahu and the Elovitches was "give or take," constituting bribery.

Mandelblit also filed breach of trust charges in two other cases. One involves accepting gifts from billionaire friends, including over \$300,000 worth of champagne and cigars from Hollywood mogul Arnon Milchan.

The second revolves around alleged offers of advantageous legislation for a major newspaper in return for favorable coverage.

Mandelblit's office said the timing of Netanyahu's hearing would be set in the near future in coordination with the prime minister's lawyers.

President Donald Trump, with whom Netanyahu has forged a close connection, offered the Israeli leader a boost earlier Thursday.

"I can say this: that he's done a great job as prime minister. He's tough, he's smart, he's strong," Trump said in Hanoi, where he was holding a summit with the leader of North Korea.

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Yohanan Plesner, a former lawmaker who now heads the Israel Democracy Institute, an independent think tank, said he does not expect any dramatic changes in voting patterns, but there could be small enough shifts "that can actually make the difference."

Plesner said from a "practical standpoint," Netanyahu should step down due to the severity of the charges. "But this will probably not happen," he said.

Follow Heller at www.twitter.com/aronhellerap and Federman at www.twitter.com/joseffederman

Patriots owner pleads not guilty to prostitution charges

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft has pleaded not guilty to two counts of misdemeanor solicitation of prostitution in a Florida case, according to court documents released Thursday.

Kraft's attorney Jack Goldberger filed the written plea with the Palm Beach County court on Wednesday. Kraft, 77, is requesting a non-jury trial.

Kraft was among hundreds of men charged in a crackdown on massage parlor prostitution and an investigation into human trafficking at Florida spas. Ten spas have been closed and several people, mostly women originally from China, have been charged with running the operation.

Jupiter, Florida, police say in court documents that Kraft was chauffeured to the Orchids of Asia Day Spa in a 2014 white Bentley on the evening of Jan. 19, where investigators say they videotaped him engaging in a sex act and then handing over an undetermined amount of cash.

Kraft returned 17 hours later, arriving at the upper-middle class shopping center where the spa was located in a chauffeured 2015 blue Bentley, the documents said. Kraft, who is worth \$6 billion, was videotaped engaging in sex acts before paying with a \$100 bill and another bill, police said. He then flew to Kansas City to watch his Patriots defeat the Chiefs in overtime hours later.

Kraft's team then defeated the Los Angeles Rams in the Super Bowl two weeks later, their sixth championship since the 2001 season.

Under Florida law, if Kraft is convicted, he would be required to complete 100 hours of community service, attend a class on the dangers of prostitution and its connection to human trafficking and pay a \$5,000 fine. He could also get a year in jail, although that is unlikely.

He could also enroll in a diversion program. He would still have to perform the community service, attend the class and pay a fine, but he would avoid a criminal record.

From a few icicles, a winter wonderland of ice sprouts

By ROBERT F. BUKATY, Associated Press

NORTH WOODSTOCK, N.H. (AP) — On a clear, frigid night in a courtyard made of walls of ice, Bruce McCafferty and his young son stand mesmerized, bathed in the pulsating rainbow light emanating from a series of stout ice formations.

McCafferty and his son Dougie have come out to Ice Castles in North Woodstock, New Hampshire, a collection of ice tunnels, caverns and a 97-foot (30-meter) ice slide that cover an acre (half a hectare) of farmland that some have said are like something out of the movie "Frozen."

The winter wonderland, one of six in North America, is built from scratch when the cold conditions allow the ice to sprout from the barren ground.

Other parks are located in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin; Excelsior, Minnesota; Dillon, Colorado; Midway, Utah; and Edmonton, Alberta. This year, the attractions will stand until early March in most locations.

At the center of the New Hampshire attraction stand six ice structures that are nearly four feet tall (more than a meter tall) and are lit from within by colored lights.

"It's quite magical, isn't it?" McCafferty said. "It's an amazing creation. I'd really like to know how they actually built it."

The attraction starts small in December, when the site's lead builder Matt Pasciuto and his team set up

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icicle farms: metal racks that are sprayed with water to allow icicles to grow on them overnight. The icicles are then harvested by "ice artists," who place them around more than 70 sprinklers.

"Once we turn the sprinklers on, the water starts freezing to those icicles, making them grow together, bigger and bigger and thicker and thicker," Pasciuto said. "We grow the castle about two to three feet (a half-meter to one meter) at a time."

Within a few weeks, the icicles have managed to cover the entire park, and some reach heights of 20 feet (six meters).

On a recent sunny day, the massive ice walls shined with a glacial blue hue. After the sun went down, the castles burst with colors thanks to LED lights embedded in the ice. The astonishing visuals are complemented by a synchronized fantasy soundtrack playing throughout the venue.

The attraction, which moved to this year from neighboring Lincoln, draws tens of thousands of visitors each season.

"When the movie 'Frozen' came out, that was a huge boost because now everyone says, 'Oh, we get to see an actual ice castle,'" Pasciuto said.

Three years ago, Adam Schellinger started bringing his girlfriend on annual dates to the Ice Castles in New Hampshire, a three-hour drive from their hometown of Brooklyn, Connecticut. On last year's visit, Schellinger got down on one knee and popped the question. The crowd immediately cheered. The couple was married in September.

"When I proposed, it was blue, and then it went to purple," recalled Schellinger, who returned for a visit with his wife Ashley a couple weeks ago. "It was just awesome — a great backdrop for sure."

After a mild start to the winter, the weather in New Hampshire this year has mostly cooperated with only a few days with above-freezing temperatures. But that isn't always the case, according to Melissa Smuzynski, public relations director for Ice Castles. She said some locations occasionally have had to cut their seasons short due to warmer winters but that "we haven't noticed a long-term pattern over the years of our seasons becoming shorter."

But Pasciuto says he dreads the warmer days.

"The last couple of years we've had some really bad warm spells in February where it gets to 60 degrees (Fahrenheit, 15 degrees Celsius). This is New Hampshire — that shouldn't happen," he said. "We love the cold. We want a nice long winter."

Trump accepts Kim 'word' he had no role in Warmbier death

By CATHERINE LUCEY and DAN SEWELL, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Thursday he takes North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "at his word" that Kim was unaware of the alleged mistreatment of an American college student who died after being imprisoned there.

Kim "tells me he didn't know about it, and I will take him at his word," Trump said in Vietnam.

The president's comments about the Otto Warmbier case called to mind other times when he chose to believe autocrats over his own intelligence agencies, including siding with the Saudi royal family regarding the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and supporting Russia's Vladimir Putin's denials that he interfered with the 2016 election.

He drew a rebuke from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. "There is something wrong with Putin, Kim Jong Un — in my view, thugs — that the president chooses to believe," Pelosi said.

A lawyer for the Warmbier family declined to comment.

But some prominent Republicans spoke out to condemn North Korea and express support for the Warmbier family.

"We must remember Otto, and we should never let North Korea off the hook for what they did to him," Ohio's Republican senator, Rob Portman, said in a statement.

Portman has been in contact with Warmbier's family since the suburban Cincinnati youth was imprisoned in early 2016 for allegedly stealing a propaganda poster. Warmbier died in June 2017 after being returned

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home in a vegetative state. His parents say he was tortured.

Trump's former U.N. ambassador Nikki Haley said on Twitter that "Americans know the cruelty that was placed on Otto Warmbier by the North Korean regime. Our hearts are with the Warmbier family for their strength and courage. We will never forget Otto."

Warmbier, a University of Virginia student had been visiting North Korea with a tour group when he was detained. A court there sentenced him to 15 years of hard labor for the alleged offense.

Last year, a U.S. judge ordered North Korea to pay more than \$500 million in a wrongful death suit filed by Warmbier's parents.

U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell in Washington harshly condemned North Korea for "barbaric mistreatment" of Warmbier, awarding punitive damages and payments covering medical expenses, economic loss and pain and suffering to parents Fred and Cindy Warmbier.

Trump has claimed credit for freeing American prisoners abroad and had used Warmbier's death as a rallying cry against the North Korea's human rights abuses before softening his rhetoric ahead of talks with Kim.

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Eric Tucker contributed from Washington D.C. Sewell reported from Cincinnati.

Gov.'s wife expresses regret after complaint of racist tour

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Virginia first lady Pam Northam has expressed regret after the mother of an African-American teenager complained that a tour of the governor's mansion was racially insensitive.

Northam said Wednesday that is she is working to make sure the stories of slaves who worked in the mansion's historic kitchen before the Civil War are told properly.

Northam's statement comes amid heightened racial tension in Virginia politics. Gov. Ralph Northam and Attorney General Mark Herring have recently apologized for wearing blackface decades ago. The state's highest elected black official, Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, has compared himself to Jim Crow-era lynching victims after two women accused him of sexual assault.

State employee Leah Walker made the complaint. Her eighth-grade daughter toured the mansion this month as a part of the Senate page program. Walker says Pam Northam singled out African-American students when passing out cotton and discussing the horrors of slavery.

Northam's office said the first lady did not single anyone out.

Walker's account differs from an account of the tour written by her daughter. Her daughter did not explicitly say only African-American pages were singled out by the first lady.

Democratic Sen. Scott Surovell and Republican Sen. Bill Stanley said both their daughters, who were also on the tour, said Northam did not single anyone out.

New sensors monitor sick babies without wires blocking hugs

By LAURAN NEERGAARD, AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Peek into any U.S. hospital's baby ICU, and you'll see sick and premature newborns covered in wired monitors that tear at fragile skin and make it hard for parents to cuddle their kids.

Now researchers have created tiny skin-like wireless sensors that may finally cut those cords.

"This need was so compelling," said John Rogers, a Northwestern University bioengineer who led the sensors' development. "Without the wires, it's much easier for the parents, mothers in particular, to interact and hold their babies."

Nearly 300,000 U.S. newborns wind up in neonatal intensive care units each year, because they were born prematurely or with serious health problems. It's critical to track their heartbeat and other vital signs so doctors and nurses can rapidly spot if their youngest patients are in trouble.

But today, that means sticky electrodes tethered by wires to a variety of beeping monitors that surround the incubator. The nest of wires impedes skin-to-skin contact with a parent that's known to help preemies thrive, much less rock a baby or breast feed, said Dr. Amy Paller, a Northwestern pediatric dermatologist.

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And no matter how carefully doctors and nurses remove the electrodes, preemies whose skin isn't fully developed are prone to injuries and scarring.

Going wireless in the NICU is a lot harder than, say, measuring a jogger's heart rate with a FitBit.

First, Rogers' team developed ultrathin sensors made of a flexible silicone that moves like skin and clings without any strong adhesive.

Then the researchers embedded the sensors with spring-like electronics that flex as the body moves, and are waterproof and made with materials that — unlike today's NICU monitors — don't interfere with X-rays or MRI scans.

And key to being lightweight, they don't need batteries. Under the crib mattress sits a transmitter that wirelessly charges the sensors much like some smartphone chargers — while simultaneously relaying all the sensors' measurements to hospital computers.

Replacing today's multiple monitors takes just two wireless sensors — one made for the chest or back, and one to wrap around a foot — that work together. For example, the upper sensor measures heart activity, while the foot sensor uses light to measure blood oxygen levels. How long it takes a heartbeat's pulse to reach the foot corresponds to blood pressure, Rogers explained — no bruising blood pressure cuff required.

How reliable are they? Researchers put the wireless sensors on the bodies of 20 babies in Northwestern-affiliated NICUs who also had the normal wired monitoring. The wireless sensors worked just as well, Rogers and Paller reported Thursday in the journal *Science*.

"This is a promising technology and may eliminate stick-on sensors," said Dr. Rosemary Higgins, a neonatologist at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, who wasn't involved with the research.

The studies are continuing and Rogers said the sensors now have been used on about 80 babies with similar results and no sign of skin trouble.

"It's really amazing," said Theodora Flores, as she held one of her twin daughters, Genesis, in the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago this week. Genesis is part of the wireless testing and the new mom said fewer wires would mean, "I can move freely with her a little bit more."

It would take far more testing for Food and Drug Administration approval of wireless sensors.

But Rogers said the bigger need is in developing countries that can't afford today's wired monitoring even for preemies. He estimates the new sensors could be made for about \$10 to \$15. With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Save the Children, Rogers is preparing for a pilot trial of the wireless sensors in Zambia in April, with the goal of testing up to 20,000 sensors in India, Pakistan and Zambia by year's end.

The technology "has great potential impact on monitoring practices all over the world and may give many neonates a more equitable opportunity to survive," Dr. Ruth Guinsburg of the Federal University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, wrote in a commentary in *Science*.

AP video journalist Teresa Crawford contributed to this report from Chicago.

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Students in Hamburg, elsewhere call for climate action

BERLIN (AP) — Thousands of students skipped class Friday in Hamburg to call for action against global warming, part of a string of protests that have been taking place in cities across the world over recent months.

The rally in Germany's northern port city was led by Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg, who has become a prominent voice in campaigns against climate change.

In January, the 16-year-old spoke at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, telling business and government leaders: "I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day."

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At the Hamburg protest, students held banners featuring slogans such as "March now or swim later" — a reference to rising sea levels from melting ice caps — and "We (heart) Greta."

Speakers at the rally also took aim at Germany's plan to phase out the use of coal by 2038, a timeline they consider too slow to curb emissions of carbon dioxide that are heating the atmosphere.

Similar protests were planned in dozens of European cities and further afield.

There have been mixed reactions to the protests from German authorities, with some criticizing the fact that students are missing lessons to take part.

"Nobody is going to make the world a better place by skipping school," Hamburg's top education official, Ties Rabe, said on Twitter.

Thunberg suggested that it is in politicians' hands to end the protests, by taking tougher measures to prevent potentially catastrophic climate change.

"We will continue to school strike until they do something," she said. "We are striking because we have done our homework and they have not."

Asian markets rise on China-US trade prospects

By ANNABELLE LIANG, Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Asian shares were mostly higher on Friday after a report suggested that the leaders of China and the U.S. could be endorsing a trade deal in weeks.

According to Bloomberg, U.S. officials are preparing a final trade deal ahead of a summit between President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, which could take place as soon as mid-March. It cited unnamed sources close to the matter.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index picked up 1.1 percent to 21,617.84 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.4 percent to 28,761.76. The Shanghai Composite index fell back from early gains, edging just 0.1 percent higher to 2,945.05 and Australia's S&P ASX/200 gained 0.6 percent to 6,202.40.

Shares rose in Singapore and Indonesia but fell in Malaysia. South Korean markets were closed for a holiday.

Traders hope that a tariffs battle waged by the world's two largest economies would soon be called off if a deal is reached.

Trump and Xi agreed to a 90-day ceasefire in December after raising import taxes on billions of dollars of each other's goods. The U.S. was set to hit China with a fresh wave of tariffs once the agreement expires on Saturday.

While progress on issues like Washington's unhappiness over Beijing's technology policy has been slow, Trump said he will postpone the tariffs to give the countries more time to talk. He did not say for how long.

Buying in Asia was supported by an announcement by MSCI, a leading provider of indexes and analytics. MSCI said it will quadruple the weight of Chinese A shares in its global indexes by November. It will also add more Chinese stocks to its Emerging Markets Index, giving the country's foreign inflows a much-needed boost.

A private survey also added to Chinese growth hopes. The Caixin manufacturing purchasing manager's index, which measures growth in the sector, jumped to 49.9 in February, from 48.3 in the previous month. The index is on a 100-point scale, with 50 separating contraction from growth.

This comes after China's official manufacturing PMI fell 0.3 points to 49.2 in February, a three-year low.

WALL STREET: Stocks slid Thursday on news that the U.S. economy slowed at the end of last year, although the performance still beat analysts' expectations. The country's gross domestic product expanded at a 2.6 percent annual rate in the October-December period, down from 3.4 percent in the third quarter. The S&P 500 index lost 0.3 percent to 2,784.49 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.3 percent to 25,916.00. The Nasdaq composite shed 0.3 percent to 7,532.53, while the Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks also dropped 0.3 percent to 1,575.55.

ENERGY: U.S. crude added 23 cents to \$57.45 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It finished 28 cents higher at \$57.22 a barrel overnight. Brent crude, used to price international

oils, gained 31 cents to \$66.62 a barrel. The contract gave up 27 cents to \$66.31 in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar strengthened to 111.71 yen from 111.39 yen on Thursday. The euro eased to \$1.1370 from \$1.1371.

Tesla to close stores to reduce costs for \$35,000 Model 3

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE and TOM KRISHER, AP Business Writers

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Tesla will only sell its electric cars online as it accelerates its cost cutting so it can realize its long-running goal of selling a mass-market sedan for \$35,000.

The change announced Thursday will allow the Silicon Valley automaker to begin selling its Model 3 for \$35,000 — a price point that Tesla CEO Elon Musk has been striving to reach in order to appeal to more consumers and generate the sales the company needs to survive.

The cheapest Model 3 that could be ordered before Thursday started at \$42,900.

To save money, Tesla will close many of its stores, but leave some open as galleries or “information centers” in high-traffic areas. Musk declined to specify how many stores will be closed or how many employees will be laid off. The company has 378 stores and service locations worldwide.

“This is the only way to achieve the savings for this car and be financially sustainable,” Musk told reporters during a conference call. “It is excruciatingly difficult to make this car for \$35,000 and be financially sustainable.”

The online sales shift will enable Tesla to lower all vehicle prices by 6 percent, on average, including its higher-end Model S and Model X.

All other major automakers rely on vast dealer networks, but Musk co-founded Tesla in 2003 in an effort to shake up the industry, starting with a focus entirely on a fleet of cars powered by electricity instead of gasoline.

Although he said going online-only was a difficult decision, Musk believes it’s the right one.

“It’s 2019,” he said. “People want to buy things online.”

That is particularly true of younger, technologically fluent consumers who already are accustomed to buying almost everything at Amazon and having it delivered to them quickly, said Karl Brauer, executive publisher of Kelley Blue Book.

Musk “doesn’t need the whole world to buy into this,” Brauer said. “All he needs is the same basic demographic that has been interested in his cars from Day One.”

Although he said he didn’t know for certain, Musk predicted there’s enough pent-up demand to sell about 500,000 Model 3s annually at the starting price of \$35,000.

But buyers will have to wait far longer than they do when shopping on Amazon.

A U.S. consumer who places an order for the Model 3 at its new lower price now will likely get it by the end of June before a tax credit for electric vehicles is scheduled to be reduced, Musk said.

The store closures will come on top of a decision to cut 3,150 jobs, or about 7 percent of Tesla’s workforce, announced earlier this year.

Despite the austerity measures, Musk told reporters Tesla will lose money in the current quarter ending in March, backpedaling a statement he made last October when he pledged the company would remain profitable from that point on. But Musk said it’s “likely” Tesla will bounce back with a profit during the April-June period.

Tesla’s stock fell 3 percent in extended trading after the news came out.

The Palo Alto, California, company is slashing costs just a few months after paying half of a \$40 million settlement of a case that the Securities and Exchange Commission filed against Musk last September after he tweeted that he had lined up financing for a potential buyout for the company. The SEC alleged Musk misled investors after concluding he didn’t have the money to pull off the deal.

The SEC has asked a federal judge to hold Musk in contempt after he posted another tweet about key Tesla information without getting company approval as required in the settlement of its previous case.

Musk declined to take questions about the SEC’s attempt to hold him in contempt — an action that legal

experts say could culminate in him being forced out as CEO in a worst-case scenario.

Krisher reported from Detroit.

Gap to split into 2, with Old Navy gaining independence

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO, AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Gap Inc. is splitting into two.

The retailer said Thursday that it's creating two independent publicly traded companies — low-priced juggernaut Old Navy and a yet-to-be named company, which will consist of the iconic Gap brand, Athleta, Banana Republic as well as the lesser known names Athleta, Intermix and Hill City.

The San Francisco-based company said the spin-off will enable each company to focus on flexibility and pare down costs.

The company also said that it will be shuttering 230 Gap brand stores over the next two years. A year ago, the Gap brand had 725 stores worldwide. After the closures, which also include the 68 stores it shuttered this year, the chain will be down to roughly 427 stores. It expects to have more than 40 percent of Gap's business coming from online after the restructuring.

Gap's stock surged 25 percent in after-market trading.

The split up, which followed a comprehensive board review, comes as Old Navy has been thriving, while Gap still hasn't been able to regain its footing despite numerous attempts to fix the business. Once the go-to place for casual clothing, Gap has been mired in a sales funk for years, hurt by increasing competition from the likes of Target and Amazon.

Analysts applauded the move.

"This is great news for Old Navy, no longer having its success consistently outweighed by sluggish performance by Gap," said Tiffany Hogan, senior analyst at Kantar Consulting. "But for the Gap, this seems like potentially a last significant effort to help the brand find its place in a market where it has lost relevance."

She noted that in order for Gap to succeed, it needs to find the right mix of style and basics for its stores, while getting a better grasp of who its customer is.

Separately, Gap Inc. reported that Gap's overall sales at stores opened at least year were down 1 percent during the fiscal fourth quarter. By division, the Gap brand posted a 5 percent drop, while that figure at Banana Republic was down 1 percent. Old Navy posted sales that were unchanged from a year ago. But that was on top of a 9 percent gain in the year-ago period.

"It's clear that Old Navy's business model and customers have increasingly diverged from our specialty brands over time, and each company now requires a different strategy to thrive moving forward," said Robert Fisher, Gap Inc.'s chairman.

Gap's current CEO, Art Peck, will hold the same position at the new company after the separation. Sonia Syngal, current CEO of Old Navy, will continue to lead the brand as a stand-alone company, which has about \$8 billion in annual revenue. The new company that Peck will run has about \$9 billion in annual revenue.

During a conference call with investors on Thursday, Peck called the separation a "unique and catalyzing moment to simplify what we are doing and how we're doing it."

Upon separation, Gap Inc. shareholders are expected to receive a pro-rata stock distribution and as a result will own shares in both the new company and Old Navy in equal proportion. The deal is expected to close in 2020.

The new company will be based in Gap Inc.'s current headquarters and Old Navy will remain at its current headquarters, both located in San Francisco.

Gap's shares rose \$6.50 to \$31.90 in extended trading after the split-up was announced.

Follow Anne D'Innocenzio: <http://twitter.com/ADInnocenzio>

Amazon, wrestling with counterfeits, seeks to crack down

By **JOSEPH PISANI, AP Retail Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — The Carhartt hoodie that Laura Serghe bought two years ago looked phony. And then, what was supposed to be an Eastpak backpack, arrived recently with messy stitching and a label inside that peeled off easily.

Both were bought from one place: Amazon, the world's largest online retailer, whose rapid growth, particularly among third-party sellers, has led to a counterfeit problem.

"I'm not going to buy from Amazon anymore," says Serghe, a freelance photographer in London who unwittingly bought what she believes were fakes. "I've had enough."

Amazon has wrestled with counterfeit products on its site for years. But the problem seems to have gotten worse, with Amazon acknowledging for the first time in its annual report in February that fake goods could hurt its business and reputation. Now it's trying to crack down: On Thursday, it announced a number of tools that it says will help reduce the amount of fakes on its site.

Counterfeits are a costly problem for the company since Amazon typically refunds shoppers who believe they were duped. Knock-offs could also cause shoppers like Serghe to lose their trust.

Looking back, Serghe says the prices of the items she bought were suspiciously low. The backpack, for example, was about 60 percent cheaper than authentic Eastpak backpacks she has previously bought.

"Now I'm questioning everything," she says.

Counterfeiters usually get their products on Amazon through its growing third-party marketplace, where sellers can list their products directly on the site. It's an important part of Amazon's business since it allows Amazon to offer millions more products on its site. More than half of all products sold on Amazon last year came from third-party sellers.

The new tools Amazon announced Thursday include a way for brands to remove fake items from the site themselves, rather than reporting them to Amazon and then waiting for the company to do something. It is also using machine learning to automatically scan listings to remove suspected counterfeits and has created unique serial codes that can be placed on products during the manufacturing process, which can then be monitored by Amazon on its site.

Amazon says one of the brands using the tools is handbag and luggage seller Vera Bradley, which says it wants to make sure its customers get authentic Vera Bradley items from Amazon.

For now, the tools are invite-only, but the company says it will work to add more brands quickly.

"This would force other competitors of Amazon to also step up their game," said Sridhar Tayur, a professor of operations management at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business.

Counterfeits are a problem on other sites, too. Last year, the U.S. Government Accountability Office bought 47 items from Amazon, eBay, Walmart.com and other online stores that have a third-party marketplace. Of those items, 20 were counterfeit, including makeup, phone chargers and travel mugs.

AP Writer Michelle Chapman also contributed to this story from Newark, New Jersey.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 1, the 60th day of 2019. There are 305 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 1, 1932, Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., the 20-month-old son of Charles and Anne Lindbergh, was kidnapped from the family home near Hopewell, New Jersey. (Remains identified as those of the child were found the following May.)

On this date:

In 1781, the Continental Congress declared the Articles of Confederation to be in force, following rati-

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fication by Maryland.

In 1790, President George Washington signed a measure authorizing the first United States Census. (Census Day was Aug. 2, 1790.)

In 1867, Nebraska became the 37th state as President Andrew Johnson signed a proclamation.

In 1893, inventor Nikola Tesla first publicly demonstrated radio during a meeting of the National Electric Light Association in St. Louis by transmitting electromagnetic energy without wires.

In 1954, four Puerto Rican nationalists opened fire from the spectators' gallery of the U.S. House of Representatives, wounding five members of Congress. The United States detonated a dry-fuel hydrogen bomb, codenamed Castle Bravo, at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed an executive order establishing the Peace Corps.

In 1962, the first Kmart store opened in Garden City, Mich.

In 1966, the Soviet space probe Venera 3 impacted the surface of Venus, becoming the first spacecraft to reach another planet; however, Venera was unable to transmit any data, its communications system having failed.

In 1971, a bomb went off inside a men's room at the U.S. Capitol; the radical group Weather Underground claimed responsibility for the pre-dawn blast.

In 1974, seven people, including former Nixon White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, former Attorney General John Mitchell and former assistant Attorney General Robert Mardian, were indicted on charges of conspiring to obstruct justice in connection with the Watergate break-in. (These four defendants were convicted in Jan. 1975, although Mardian's conviction was later reversed.)

In 1981, Irish Republican Army member Bobby Sands began a hunger strike at the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland; he died 65 days later.

In 1990, the controversial Seabrook, New Hampshire, nuclear power plant won federal permission to go on line after two decades of protests and legal struggles.

Ten years ago: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations concluded its 14th annual summit in Thailand by vowing to push ahead with plans to become a European Union-style economic community by 2015. At a one-day summit in Brussels, European Union leaders flatly rejected a new multibillion euro bailout for eastern Europe.

Five years ago: Russian troops took over Crimea as the parliament in Moscow gave President Vladimir Putin a green light to use the military to protect Russian interests in Ukraine. French filmmaker Alain Resnais, director of such art house classics as "Hiroshima Mon Amour" and "Last Year at Marienbad," died in Paris at age 91.

One year ago: President Donald Trump announced that the U.S. would impose steep tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, escalating tensions with China and other trading partners and raising the prospect of higher prices for Americans; stocks closed sharply lower on fears of a trade war, with the S&P 500 losing more than 1 percent for a third straight day. Kroger said it was raising the minimum age to buy guns at its Fred Meyer stores, becoming the third major retailer to place restrictions on gun sales that exceed those in federal law. After Delta reacted to the Florida school massacre by announcing that it would no longer offer discount fares to NRA members, pro-gun Georgia lawmakers killed a proposed tax break on jet fuel that would have saved the airline millions of dollars.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Robert Clary is 93. Actor Robert Conrad is 84. Rock singer Mike D'Abo (Manfred Mann) is 75. Former Sen. John Breaux, D-La., is 75. Rock singer Roger Daltrey is 75. Actor Dirk Benedict is 74. Actor-director Ron Howard is 65. Country singer Janis Gill (aka Janis Oliver Cummins) (Sweethearts of the Rodeo) is 65. Actress Catherine Bach is 64. Actor Tim Daly is 63. Singer-musician Jon Carroll is 62. Rock musician Bill Leen is 57. Actor Bryan Batt is 56. Actor Maurice Bernard is 56. Actor Russell Wong is 56. Actor Chris Eigeman is 54. Actor John David Cullum is 53. Actor George Eads is 52. Actor Javier Bardem (HAH'-vee-ayr bahr-DEHM') is 50. Actor Jack Davenport is 46. Rock musician Ryan Peake (Nickelback) is 46. Actor Mark-Paul Gosselaar is 45. Singer Tate Stevens is 44. Actor Jensen Ackles is 41. TV host Donovan Patton is 41. Rock musician Sean Woolstenhulme (WOOL'-sten-hyoolm) is 38. Actor Joe Tippett is 37. Actress Lupita Nyong'o is 36. Pop singer Kesha (formerly Ke\$ha) is 32. Rhythm-and-blues singer Sammie

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is 32. Pop singer Justin Bieber is 25.

Thought for Today: "An essential aspect of creativity is not being afraid to fail." — Edwin H. Land, American investor (born 1909, died this date in 1991).

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