

Groton Area Schedule of Events

Saturday, March 9, 2019

Regional Destination Imagination, Groton Area High School

Best of Show Competition, Sioux Falls Washington High School

Sunday, March 10, 2019

2:00pm- 6:00pm, Open Gym, GHS Arena

Grades JK-8 2pm - 4pm; Grades 6-12 4pm - 6pm

Monday, March 11, 2019

Big Question National Qualifier Debate, Aberdeen Central High School

7:00pm- 9:00pm, School Board Meeting, Groton Area High School

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

End of 3rd Quarter, Groton Area School District

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Girls Varsity State Tournament @ Sioux Falls

Boys Varsity State Tournament @ Sioux Falls

No School, Groton Area School District - Spring Break

Friday, March 15, 2019

Girls Varsity State Tournament @ Sioux Falls

Boys Varsity State Tournament @ Sioux Falls

- 1- Help Wanted
- 1- Groton Coffee Cup Bowling
- 2- Truss Pros is Hiring
- 2- City widening streets
- 2- Return to DST means increased driving danger
- 4- I "Hate" Winter Party at Groton Care & Rehab
- 4- The evolution of the storm forecast
- 5- Lane presented with "Mentor of the Year" Award
- 5- Overall map of Winter Storm Watch
- 6- How much snow so far?
- 6- Winter Storm Watch Issued
- 7- Winter Weather Threats timeline
- 8- Today in Weather History
- 9- Weather Pages
- 11- Daily Devotional
- 12- 2019 Groton Events
- 13 - News from the Associated Press

Help Wanted

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

CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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The City of Groton Public Works Department has been busy widening out the streets in preparation for the upcoming two winter storms expected to hit the area. In the right photo, some residents were surprised when they came outside to suddenly find their vehicle parking in the middle of the street. That is how much the snow has encroached in on the roads. The snow blower was able to get between the vehicle and the curb to remove the snow. (Photo

by Paul Kosel)

Return to Daylight Saving Time Means Increased Driving Danger, Warns AAA South Dakota Sunday's "spring forward" can lead to driver drowsiness.

March 7, 2019 – One of the most anticipated "signs of spring" arrives this weekend when the clocks "spring forward" (Daylight Saving Time officially begins at 2 a.m. Sunday, March 10), and we lose an hour of sleep in exchange for extended daylight hours throughout the summer. However, come next Monday morning, the commute will look very different for school students waiting for buses and motorists driving to work – in the dark.

"Most people will see a dramatic difference during their morning commute on Monday, as roadways remain darker longer, causing concern for pedestrians," said Marilyn Buskohl, spokesperson for AAA South Dakota. "Motorists need to be aware of these dan-

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gers, remain alert, and minimize distractions to reduce the risk of motor vehicle crashes, and pedestrians, including school students waiting at bus stops, should be extra careful as well."

Spring forward...to drowsy driving?

In addition to darker morning commutes, the time change can create another danger: interrupted sleep patterns and drowsy motorists.

Drivers who miss between one to two hours of the recommended seven hours of sleep in a 24-hour period nearly double their risk for a crash, according to research from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that 35 percent of U.S. drivers sleep less than the recommended seven hours daily. And with drowsy driving involved in more than one in five fatal crashes on U.S. roadways each year, AAA warns drivers that getting less than seven hours of sleep may have dangerous and deadly consequences.

In a AAA Foundation survey, nearly all drivers (97 percent) say they view drowsy driving as a serious threat to their safety and a completely unacceptable behavior. However, 29 percent admitted to driving when they were so tired they had a hard time keeping their eyes open.

"A change in time can mean that drivers are more tired than they realize," noted AAA South Dakota's Buskohl. "Drivers who miss just an hour or two of the recommended seven hours of sleep a night nearly double their risk for a crash."

AAA South Dakota offers motorists and pedestrians the following safety tips:

AAA South Dakota's Tips for Drivers

Rest Up: Get plenty of rest before getting behind the wheel of a vehicle. If you do begin to feel drowsy while driving, pull over immediately and rest or call a family member or friend for assistance.

Be prepared for morning/afternoon sun glare: Sun glare in the morning or early evening can cause temporary blindness. To reduce the glare, AAA South Dakota recommends wearing high-quality sunglasses and adjusting the car's sun visors as needed. Use of the night setting on rearview mirrors can reduce glare from headlights approaching from the rear.

Car Care Maintenance: Keep headlights, tail lights, signal lights, and windows (inside and out) clean.

Ensure headlights are properly aimed: Misaimed headlights blind other drivers and reduce visibility.

Keep headlights on low beams when following another vehicle, so other drivers are not blinded.

Reduce your speed and increase your following distances. It is more difficult to judge other vehicles' speeds and distances at night.

Be mindful of pedestrians and crosswalks: Yield the right of way to pedestrians in crosswalks and do not pass vehicles stopped at crosswalks.

AAA South Dakota Tips for Pedestrians

Cross at intersections or crosswalks - not in the middle of the street or between parked cars. Do not jaywalk.

Avoid walking in traffic where there are no sidewalks or crosswalks. If you have to walk on a road that does not have sidewalks, walk facing traffic.

Evaluate the distance and speed of oncoming traffic before you step out into the street.

Wear bright colors or reflective clothing if you are walking near traffic at dawn, dusk and night. Carry a flashlight when walking in the dark.

Allow extra time and distance for a vehicle to stop in inclement weather.

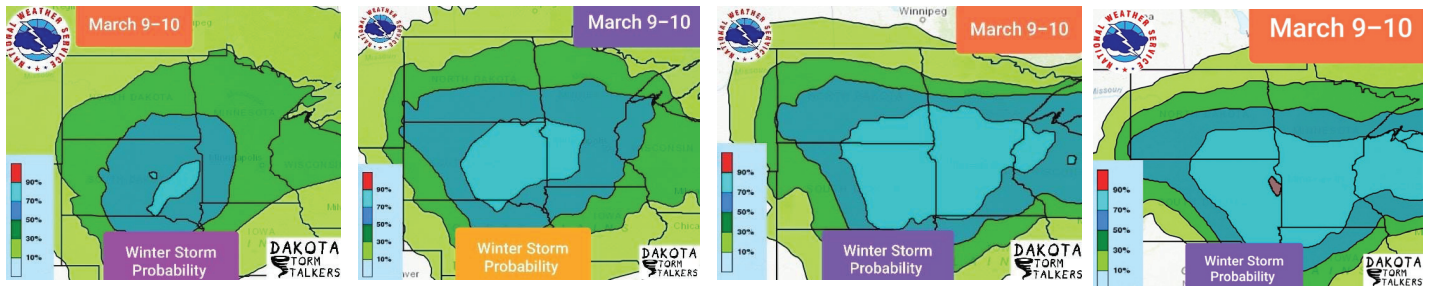
While walking, pocket the cell phone and avoid listening to music at a volume that prohibits you from hearing approaching danger.

Do not let umbrellas or jacket hoods block your view of approaching traffic.

Additional information on drowsy driving and how motorists can recognize the symptoms may be found at <https://exchange.aaa.com/safety/driving-advice/drowsy-driving/>

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The evolution of the storm forecast

As each day gets closer to the storm, the size of it enlarges significantly. The light blue area represents the highest probability of a winter storm. See how it has enlarged from a few days ago in the left photo to today in the right photo.



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

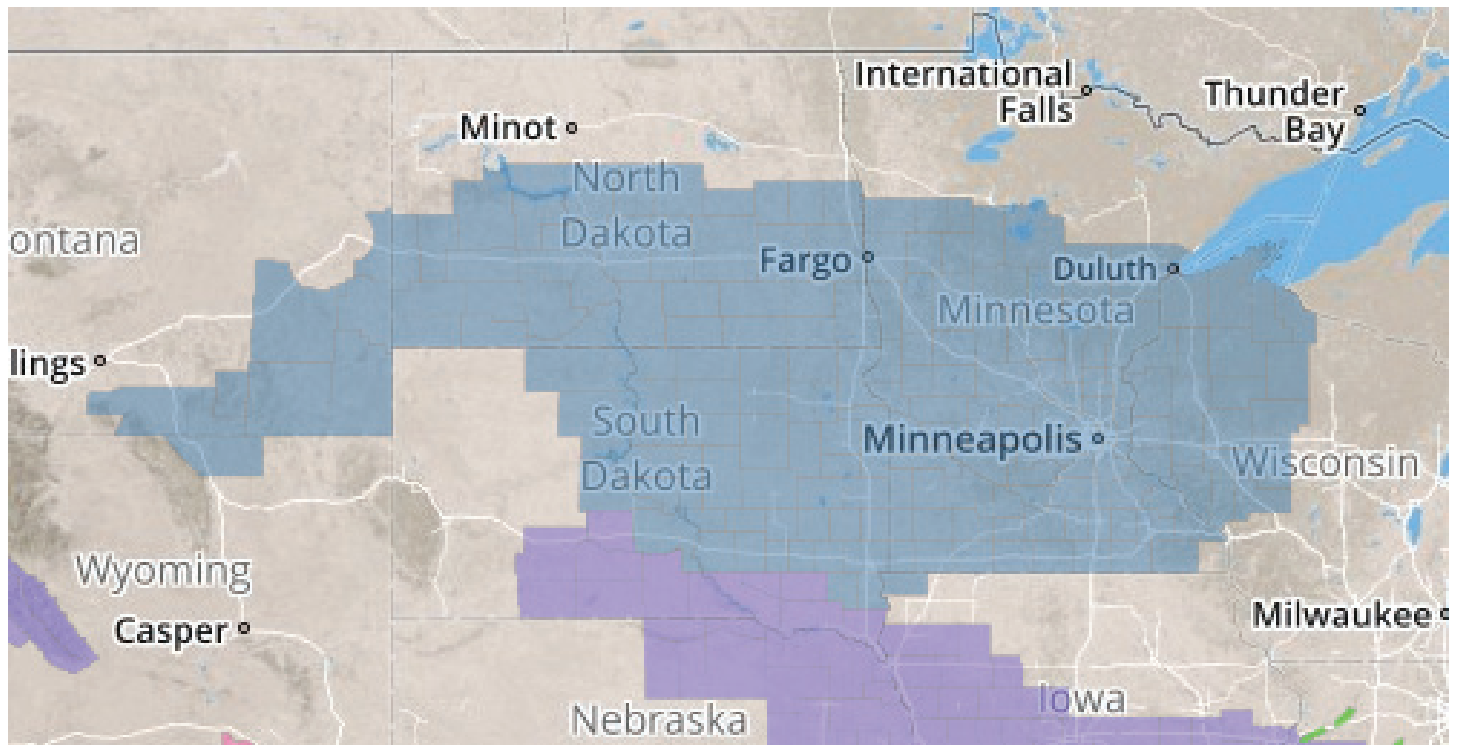
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Lane presented with "Mentor of the Year" Award

Jim Lane was recently honored with the "Mentor of the Year" award at the South Dakota Robotics State Tournament. Pictured are some of the Robotics team members with Jim Lane. Left to right are Jackson Dinger, Axel Warrington, Jim Lane, Noah Tullis in back, Nick Morris in front, Travis Townsend, Adrian Knudson and Dan Feist. (Courtesy Photo)



Winter Storm Watch Area

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❄️ HOW MUCH SNOW SO FAR? 3-5-19 ❄️

Location	2018-2019 total through March 5	Normal For The Season	Record (Year)	Current Rank
Aberdeen	54.4"	38.2"	109.8 (1936-37)	22 nd
Watertown	54.3"	30.3"	79.4 (2010-11)	7 th
Sisseton	59.3"	34.5"	83.3 (1993-94)	11 th
Wheaton	43.4"	32.7"	82.3 (1996-97)	21 st
Pierre	36.1"	28.8"	82 (1951-52)	21 st
Mobridge	61.9"	30.4"	83.1 (2010-11)	3 rd
Kennebec	38.2"	31.5"	73.2 (2000-01)	41 st
Timber Lake	40.5"	35.4"	92.9 (1949-50)	32 nd



Updated: 3/5/2019 10:14 AM Central

WINTER STORM WATCH

Issue Date: 3:51 AM Thu, Mar 7, 2019

Expiration: 12:00 PM Sun, Mar 10, 2019

...WINTER STORM WATCH IN EFFECT FROM SATURDAY MORNING THROUGH SUNDAY MORNING...

* WHAT...Heavy snow possible. Total snow accumulations of 7 to 10 inches possible. Winds could gust as high as 40 mph.

* WHERE...Portions of northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota.

* WHEN...From Saturday morning through Sunday afternoon.

* ADDITIONAL DETAILS...Travel could be very difficult. Blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility.

A Winter Storm Watch means there is potential for significant snow, sleet or ice accumulations that may impact travel. Continue to monitor the latest forecasts.

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Winter Weather Threats Timeline

	FRI 6pm to midnight	SAT midnight to 6am	SAT 6am to noon	SAT noon to 6pm	SAT 6pm to midnight	SUN midnight to 6am	SUN 6am to noon	SUN noon to 6pm	SUN 6pm to midnight
Mobridge & surrounding area		Snow		Blowing Snow					
Pierre & surrounding area		Snow		Blowing Snow					
Redfield & surrounding area		Snow		Blowing Snow					
Aberdeen & surrounding area		Snow		Blowing Snow					
Sisseton & Surrounding Area		Snow		Blowing Snow					
Watertown & Surrounding Area		Snow		Blowing Snow					

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic created
3/7/2019 5:58 AM

Published on: 03/07/2019 at 6:02AM

Moderate to Heavy wet snow will be possible Saturday into Saturday night. Blowing Snow expected Saturday night into Sunday as winds gust up to 40 or 45 mph. Latest forecast at www.weather.gov/abr

Getting Traction

Tips for Traveling in Winter Weather

- Check the NWS forecast
- Check road conditions
- Stay mobile
- Winterize your vehicle
- Pack an emergency supply kit

weather.gov/winter

Published on: 03/06/2019 at 8:59PM

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Today in Weather History

March 7, 1998: A winter storm tracked across South Dakota resulting in heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches across most of central South Dakota from the evening of the 6th into the afternoon of the 7th. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Fort Pierre and near Stephan, 7 inches at Blunt, Pierre, and Murdo, and 8 inches across far southern Jones and Lyman counties. Many activities were canceled, and travel was significantly disrupted, especially on Interstate-90.

1717 - The Great Snow, a composite of four winter storms to hit the eastern U.S. in nine days, finally came to an end. Snow depths averaged 60 inches following the storm. Up to four feet of snow fell around Boston MA, and snow drifts 25 feet high were reported around Dorchester MA. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1932 - A severe coastal storm set barometric pressure records from Virginia to New England. Block Island RI reported a barometric pressure reading of 28.20 inches. (David Ludlum)

1970: Last near total eclipse of the sun in Washington, DC in this century. Sun was 95% eclipsed.

1987 - Forty-five cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Huron SD hit 80 degrees, and Pickstown SD reached 81 degrees. Rochester MN and Rockford IL smashed their previous record for the date by sixteen degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - High winds along a sharp cold front ushered snow and arctic cold into the Central Rocky Mountain Region and the Northern Plains. Snowfall totals in Utah ranged up to sixteen inches at Brighton. Winds gusted to 66 mph at Rapid City SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

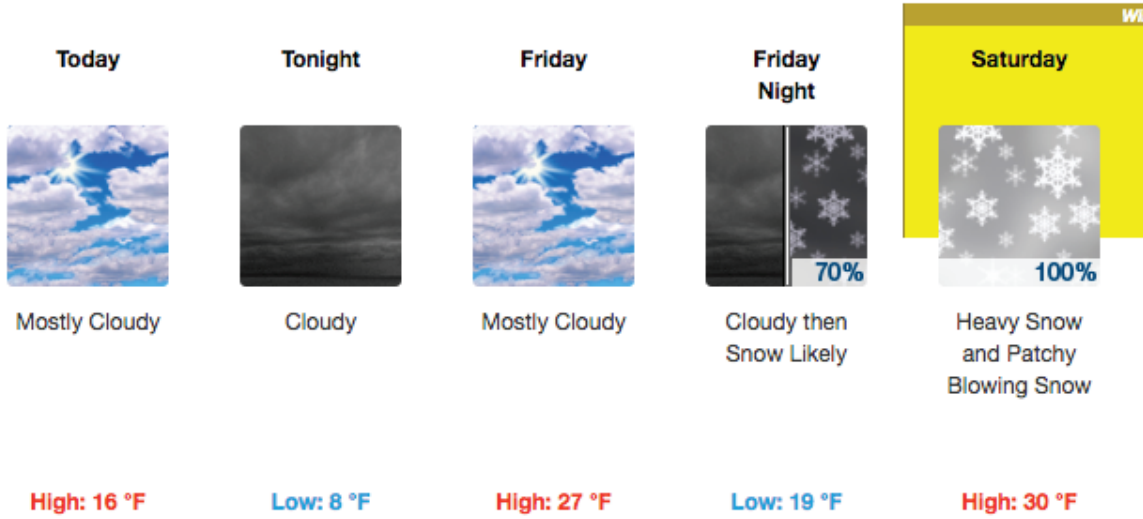
1989 - Blustery northwest winds ushered arctic cold into eastern U.S. Burlington VT reported a record low of 14 degrees below zero. Snow and ice over the Carolinas replaced the 80 degree weather of the previous day. High winds and heavy surf caused five million dollars damage along the North Carolina coast. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A major ice storm left much of Iowa under a thick coat of ice. It was the worst ice storm in at least twenty-five years for Iowa, perhaps the worst of the century. Up to two inches of ice coated much of western and central Iowa, with three inches reported in Crawford County and Carroll County. As much as five inches of ice was reported on some electrical lines. The ice downed 78 towers in a 17-mile stretch of a high voltage feeder near Boone costing three electric utilities fifteen million dollars. Damage to trees was incredible, and clean-up costs alone ran into the millions. Total damage from the storm was more than fifty million dollars. (Storm Data)

1997: The worst was finally over for states hit hard by the flooding Ohio River. The river crested on the 6th at Louisville, Kentucky, at 15 feet above flood stage, after topping out at nearly 13 feet at Cincinnati, Ohio and more than 7 feet at Huntington, West Virginia.

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Winter Weather: Weekend Snow Amounts

Most Likely Snow Amount
(current forecast)

Widespread **5 to 10"** of snow likely, but there is still some uncertainty in the exact amounts for Saturday into Saturday night.

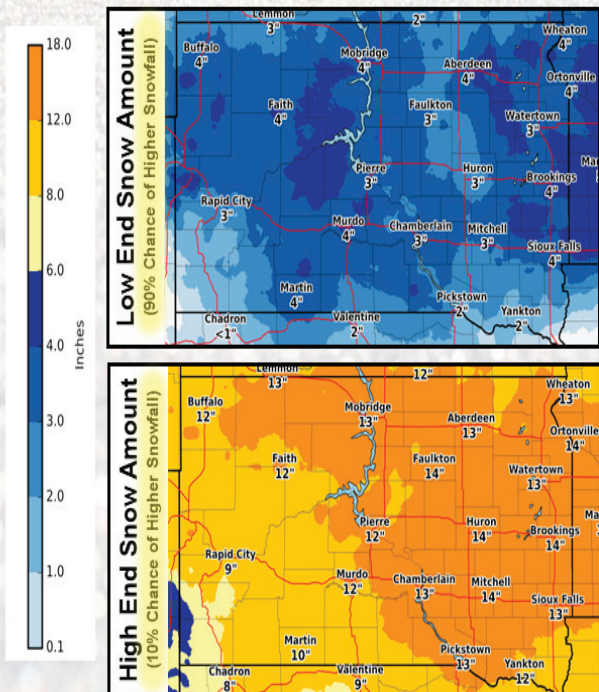


SNOW Saturday into Saturday night
Blowing Snow Saturday night into Sunday

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr Graphic created 3/7/2019 5:24 AM

Published on: 03/07/2019 at 5:30AM



Widespread 5 to 10 inches of snow is likely, but there is still some uncertainty in the exact amounts for Saturday into Saturday night. The images to the right show some of the uncertainty with this storm. There is a 90% chance of getting at least 3 to 4 inches of snow, and a 10% chance of getting at least 10 to 13 inches of snow. For your site specific forecast, check out www.weather.gov/abr

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 14 °F at 2:51 PM

Low Outside Temp: -6 °F at 6:38 AM

High Gust: 14 mph at 11:48 AM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 70° in 2016

Record Low: -24° in 1995

Average High: 35°F

Average Low: 16°F

Average Precip in Mar.: 0.17

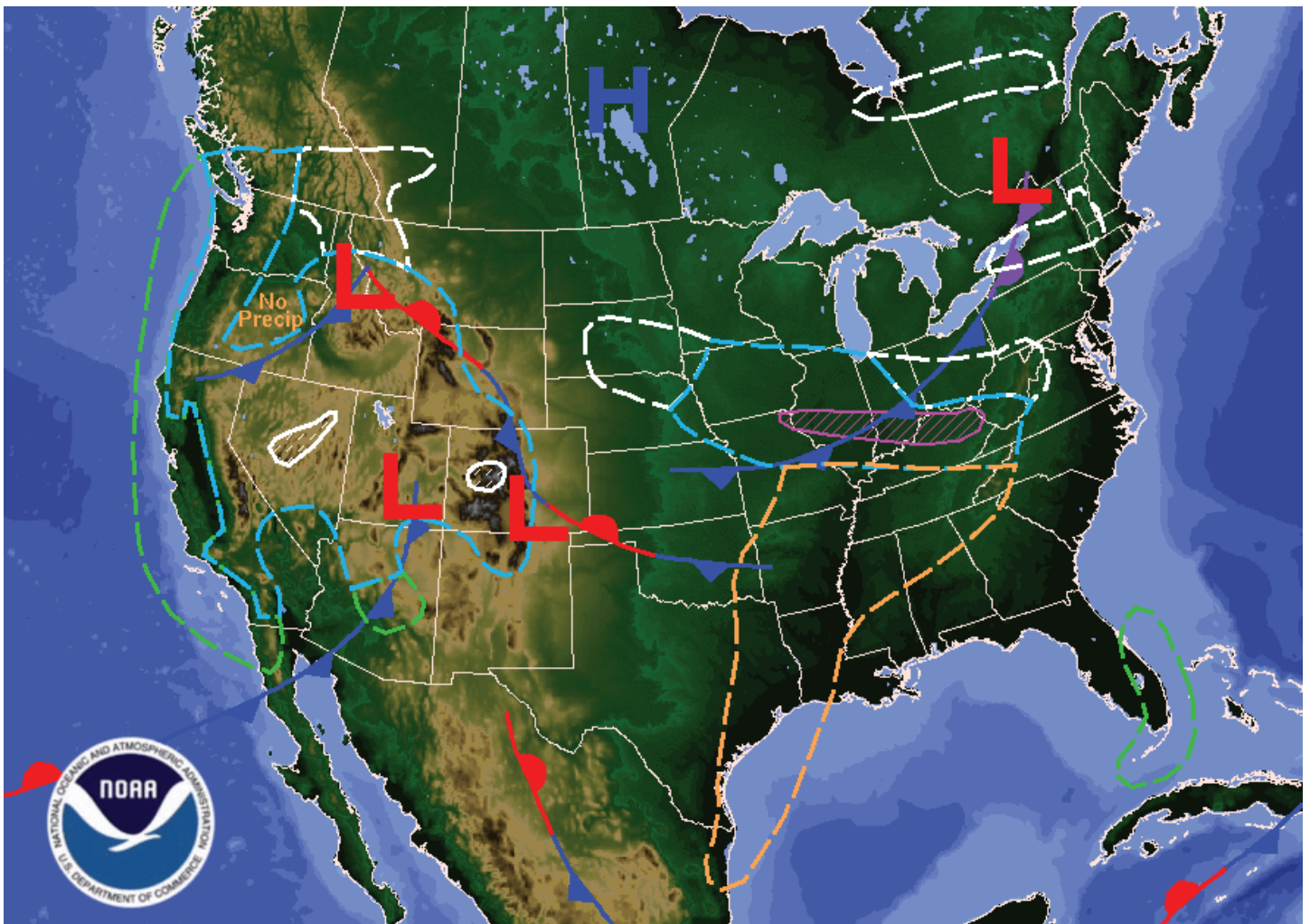
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.19

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:29 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:00 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Mar 07, 2019, issued 4:41 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

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

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SWEET SLEEP!

Wheres Babe? I cant find Babe, Papa. Help me! Ive looked all over and dont know where else to look, said my beloved grandson. Together we walked through each room in our home looking for Babe. Finally, we found him. Babe was already in bed waiting for Keller. Now, Keller felt secure and would soon be asleep.

Sleep is a problem for many people. In fact, ten percent of Americans have been diagnosed with chronic insomnia. As staggering as that number is, it does not include those who use alcohol or other over-the-counter remedies to assist them when they want to fall asleep.

We have all experienced those nights when sleep seemed to be an enemy. We toss and turn while looking for a comfortable spot. We seek a correct room temperature as the tick of the clock echoes in our ears. And, time passes by as the sleep we crave eludes us.

Why is an obvious question. Too much food? Overwhelmed with guilt? Anxiety from a bad decision? Facing a day that we know will be difficult? The questions vary. But, When you lie down you will not be afraid; when you lie down your sleep will be sweet. Always? Really? How?

Sweet sleep, according to Solomon, is the result of using sound judgment and discernment that comes from God. If we carefully and completely follow Gods teachings and are obedient to His laws, He will grant us His peace, rest, and safety. God has provided His wisdom for all of the problems we will ever face in life even sleep in His Word

Only fools reject Gods advice and gifts. And lie awake wondering.

Prayer: Lord, help us to realize and accept all that is available to us if we walk with and are faithful to You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 3:24 You can go to bed without fear; you will lie down and sleep soundly.

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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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

04-07-09-21-30

(four, seven, nine, twenty-one, thirty)

Estimated jackpot: \$149,000

Lotto America

12-17-25-34-45, Star Ball: 6, ASB: 3

(twelve, seventeen, twenty-five, thirty-four, forty-five; Star Ball: six; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$16.47 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$45 million

Powerball

06-10-21-35-46, Powerball: 23, Power Play: 2

(six, ten, twenty-one, thirty-five, forty-six; Powerball: twenty-three; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$381 million

Panel passes bills aimed at possible Keystone XL protests

By JAMES NORD Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota legislative panel voted Wednesday to endorse bills proposed by Gov. Kristi Noem aimed at preparing for potential protests over the Keystone XL oil pipeline despite opposition from tribal representatives who said they weren't consulted about the contentious legislation.

The Republican governor's bills would require pipeline companies to chip in on protest-related expenses and create a way to pursue money from those who fund destructive demonstrations. They were introduced late in the session, timing critics panned.

Faith Spotted Eagle, of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, said the measures are an attempt to "legislate by ambush." Crow Creek Sioux Tribe Chairman Lester Thompson said voices shouldn't be squashed about environmental concerns that affect resources people depend on to live.

The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe supports the constitutional rights of tribal members and the public to peacefully assemble and engage in free speech on issues of great importance, lobbyist Remi Bald Eagle said, adding the tribe does not support riots.

"Together these bills send the message that the state of South Dakota is more interested in getting paid to suppress its citizens' rights than it is paying attention to the rights of its citizens," Bald Eagle said.

The Joint Committee on Appropriations voted Wednesday to send the bills to the Senate floor. Governor's office lobbyist Matt McCaulley said the legislative package would spread the risk and expense of extraordinary pipeline-related law enforcement costs among the state, counties, federal government, pipeline companies and rioters.

Noem's bills come after opponents of the Dakota Access oil pipeline staged large protests that resulted in 761 arrests in southern North Dakota over a six-month span beginning in late 2016. The state spent tens of millions of dollars policing the protests.

Noem said earlier this week that officials will make sure there's a source of funding so local governments aren't bankrupted during construction and that the state can aggressively pursue people who choose to fund violent protests. The governor said she's proposing a new framework for oil pipeline construction .

One bill would tap a pipeline developer, among other sources, to fund extraordinary expenses that arise

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from pipeline protests. Approved claims from the state, cities or counties would be billed to the pipeline developer, which could contest the claims. The legislation establishes the pipeline engagement activity coordination expenses fund, or PEACE fund.

The other bill would create an avenue for the state to seek money from people who engage in "riot boosting," or encouraging violent protests. People who solicit or pay someone to break the law or be arrested would be subject to paying three times the amount that would compensate for the detriment caused.

Money collected would be used to pay for riot damage claims or could be transferred into the PEACE fund.

Bald Eagle said the Cheyenne River Sioux are deeply worried that it will unfairly impose civil penalties on tribal members. The tribes weren't consulted with in "any way or form" about legislation, Bald Eagle said.

He said the measure requiring pipeline developers to help fund extraordinary protest costs would allow the state to launder money given by corporations for the purpose of denying residents the right to peaceable assembly without persecution.

"It turns our law enforcement agencies into mercenaries," he said.

In urging committee members to pass the legislation targeting "riot boosting," Republican Rep. Chris Karr said many rioters are funded by out-of-state money with the goal of shutting down oil pipelines, echoing similar statements from Noem at a Monday press conference.

"Typically they align themselves and term themselves as environmentalists, but not necessarily how I would define an environmentalist," Noem said. "I'd say the most typical national offender that we see funding these types of activities would be George Soros."

But Laura Silber, a spokeswoman for the liberal billionaire philanthropist's Open Society Foundations, told South Dakota Public Broadcasting that Soros opposes violence. It's odd the governor is trying to tarnish a surge in public activism, Silber said.

"To suggest that somebody is paying for these people to turnout and protest and do someone's bidding that's paid for by Mr. Soros or anyone else, it does a grave disservice to these people who are standing up and making their voices heard," Silber said.

South Dakota officials have already changed state law in anticipation of Keystone XL protests. In 2017, they made it a Class 1 misdemeanor for someone to stand in the highway to stop traffic or to trespass in a posted emergency area.

Noem's office said her bills arose from discussions with lawmakers, authorities, stakeholders and pipeline developer TransCanada. The 1,184-mile (1,900 kilometer) pipeline is intended to ship up to 830,000 barrels a day of Canadian crude through Montana and South Dakota to Nebraska, where it would connect with lines to carry oil to Gulf Coast refineries.

A federal judge in Montana in February largely kept in place an injunction that blocks TransCanada from performing preliminary work on the stalled pipeline.

Fire destroys Gettysburg business; no one hurt

GETTYSBURG, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are investigating the cause of a fire that destroyed a Gettysburg business.

The American News reports that R&K Mechanical caught fire about 3 a.m. Tuesday and quickly became engulfed. The business offered concrete, welding, carpentry and earth-moving services.

Potter County Emergency Manager Cheryl Sautner says no one was injured, but the building is a total loss.

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

South Dakota Senate revives bill to legalize industrial hemp

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota senators have approved a bill to legalize industrial hemp a day after it faltered on the chamber's floor.

The Senate voted 21-14 Wednesday to endorse the proposal, which Gov. Kristi Noem has opposed. Changes made there must be debated in the House before it could head to Noem's desk.

The bill initially fell short of the two-thirds margin required for it to pass in the Senate. But supporters amended it Wednesday, allowing it to move forward with a simple majority vote.

Republican Sen. Jordan Youngberg, a bill co-sponsor, asked his colleagues to "kick it through and support our farmers." Noem has requested that legislators hold off on legalizing hemp this year, saying the state isn't ready.

Overriding a potential veto would require two-thirds support in both legislative chambers.

School lessons targeted by climate change doubters

By MICHAEL MELIA Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — A Connecticut lawmaker wants to strike climate change from state science standards. A Virginia legislator worries teachers are indoctrinating students with their personal views on global warming. And an Oklahoma state senator wants educators to be able to introduce alternative viewpoints without fear of losing their jobs.

As climate change becomes a hotter topic in American classrooms, politicians around the country are pushing back against the near-universal scientific consensus that global warming is real, dire and man-made.

Of the more than a dozen such measures proposed so far this year, some already have failed. But they have emerged this year in growing numbers, many of them inspired or directly encouraged by a pair of advocacy groups, the Discovery Institute and the Heartland Institute.

"You have to present two sides of the argument and allow the kids to deliberate," said Republican state Sen. David Bullard of Oklahoma, a former high school geography teacher whose bill, based on model legislation from the Discovery Institute, ran into opposition from science teachers and went nowhere.

Scientists and science education organizations have blasted such proposals for sowing confusion and doubt on a topic of global urgency. They reject the notion that there are "two sides" to the issue.

"You can't talk about two sides when the other side doesn't have a foot in reality," said University of Illinois climate scientist Donald Wuebbles.

Michael Mann, director of the Earth System Science Center at Penn State University, said these legislative proposals are dangerous, bad-faith efforts to undermine scientific findings that the fossil-fuel industry or fundamentalist religious groups don't want to hear.

In the mainstream scientific community, there is little disagreement about the basics that greenhouse gases from the burning of coal, oil and gas are causing the world to warm in a dangerous manner. More than 90 percent of the peer-reviewed studies and scientists who write them say climate change is a human-caused problem.

A Nobel Prize-winning international panel of scientists has repeatedly published reports detailing the science behind climate change and how the world is likely to pass a level of warming that an international agreement calls dangerous. The U.S. government last year issued a detailed report saying that "climate-related threats to Americans' physical, social and economic well-being are rising."

The battle over global warming resembles the fight that began decades ago over the teaching of evolution, in which opponents led by conservative Christians have long called for schools to present what they consider both sides of the issue.

Some of those who reject mainstream climate science have cast the debate as a matter of academic freedom.

James Taylor, a senior fellow at Heartland, an Illinois-based group that dismisses climate change, said it is encouraging well-rounded classroom discussions on the topic. The group, which in 2017 sent thousands of science teachers copies of a book titled "Why Scientists Disagree About Global Warming," is now taking its message directly to students. A reference book it is planning for publication this year will rebut arguments linking climate change to hurricanes, tornadoes and other extreme weather.

"We're very concerned the global warming propaganda efforts have encouraged students to not engage in research and critical thinking," Taylor said, referring to news reports and scientific warnings.

Neither Discovery nor Heartland discloses the identities of its donors.

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Instruction on the topic varies widely from place to place, but climate change and how humans are altering the planet are core topics emphasized in the Next Generation Science Standards, developed by a group of states. Nineteen states and the District of Columbia have adopted the standards, and 21 others have embraced some of the material with modifications.

Still, a survey released in 2016 found that of public middle- and high-school science teachers who taught something about climate change, about a quarter gave equal time to perspectives that “raise doubt about the scientific consensus.”

By early February, the Oakland, California-based nonprofit National Center for Science Education flagged over a dozen bills this year as threats to the integrity of science education, more than the organization typically sees in an entire year.

Several of them — including proposals in Oklahoma, North Dakota and South Dakota — had language echoing model legislation of the Seattle-based Discovery Institute, which says teachers should not be prohibited from addressing strengths and weaknesses of concepts such as evolution and global warming.

Similar measures became law in Louisiana in 2008 and Tennessee in 2012. In states where they may not be feasible politically, Discovery has urged legislators to consider nonbinding resolutions in support of giving teachers latitude to “show support for critical thinking” on controversial topics. Lawmakers in Alabama and Indiana passed such resolutions in 2017.

Discovery officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Florida state Sen. Dennis Baxley is pressing legislation that would allow schools to teach alternatives to controversial theories.

“There is really no established science on most things, you’ll find,” the GOP legislator said.

Elsewhere, lawmakers in Connecticut and Iowa, which both adopted the Next Generation Science Standards, have proposed rolling them back. Connecticut state Rep. John Piscopo, a Republican who is a Heartland Institute member, said he wants to eliminate the section on climate change, calling it “totally one-sided.”

Other bills introduced this year in such states as Virginia, Arizona and Maine call for teachers to avoid political or ideological indoctrination of their students.

“If they’re teaching about a subject, such as climate change, and they present both sides, that’s fine. That’s as it should be. A teacher who presents a skewed extension of their political beliefs, that’s closer to indoctrinating. That’s not good to kids,” said Virginia state Rep. Dave LaRock, a Republican.

While there are many details about climate science hotly debated among scientists, it is well-established that global warming is real, human-caused and a problem, said scientist Chris Field, director of the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment.

“When people say we ought to present two sides, they’re saying we ought to present a side that’s totally been disproven along with a side that has been fundamentally supported by the evidence,” Field said.

Associated Press science writer Seth Borenstein contributed to this story from Washington.

A look at 2019 bills related to climate change and education

By The Associated Press undefined

In statehouses around the country, lawmakers this year have introduced bills seen as threatening instruction on science, including on climate change.

Here is a look at pieces of legislation flagged by the nonprofit National Center for Science Education, and the inspiration behind some of them.

ARIZONA

A proposal from Rep. Mark Finchem, a Republican, seeks to prohibit teachers from advocating for “any side of a controversial issue” and require them to provide students with materials supporting both sides of any controversy presented in class. The bill does not single out any specific issues. Finchem did not respond to requests for comment.

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CONNECTICUT

A bill in the state House would eliminate climate change from the Next Generation Science Standards that were adopted in Connecticut in 2015. The author, Rep. John Piscopo, a Republican, is a member of the Heartland Institute who said he has found the advocacy group's materials questioning the scientific consensus on climate change to be persuasive. He also introduced a separate bill that would prohibit the use of the standards altogether.

FLORIDA

A bill in the state Senate would allow school districts to teach alternatives to controversial theories. The bill was suggested by the Florida Citizens Alliance, a grassroots group that says it opposes indoctrination in public schools, and introduced by Sen. Dennis Baxley, a Republican. A separate bill proposed by Republican Rep. Walter Bryan "Mike" Hill in the state House would require instructional materials to provide "objective, balanced, and noninflammatory viewpoints on controversial issues."

IOWA

Two separate bills in the Iowa House seek to reverse the state's adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards. The sponsors, Rep. Sandy Salmon and Rep. Skyler Wheeler, each have objected to the inclusion of climate change in the standards.

MAINE

A bill in the state House proposed to prohibit teachers from advocating for any side of a controversial issue that has appeared in a political platform on the local, state, or federal level. The bill sponsored by Rep. Lawrence Lockman, a Republican, did not mention any issues specifically and was defeated. Lockman did not respond to messages seeking comment. He has said he believes it's an open question whether human activity is the primary cause of climate change.

MONTANA

A bill defeated in the Montana House would have required any instruction on climate change to include a list of claims questioning whether it is actually happening. It was proposed by Rep. Joe Read, a Republican.

OKLAHOMA

Sen. David Bullard, a Republican, took inspiration from the Discovery Institute's model legislation for a bill calling for teachers to address "strengths and weaknesses" of scientific theories. The bill was defeated in committee.

NORTH DAKOTA

A bill proposed by Sen. Jeff Hoverson called for giving teachers freedom to teach strengths and weaknesses of theories and controversies. Hoverson, a Republican, withdrew the bill and said he wanted to assess the strength of local support for it before proceeding further.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Three bills have been proposed so far in South Dakota to give teachers freedom regarding controversial issues or to prohibit political indoctrination.

VIRGINIA

A bill calling for teachers to avoid political or ideological indoctrination of their students was proposed by state Rep. Dave LaRock, a Republican who said his bill was inspired by the work of David Horowitz, a conservative activist.

Pine Ridge man pleads guilty in reservation slaying

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The second of three men accused in a fatal shooting on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 2017 has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder.

Jamie Shoulders entered the plea in federal court Tuesday. Prosecutors say the 26-year-old Pine Ridge man went with two others to buy drugs from 41-year-old Christopher Janis in May 2017 and that Shoulders shot Janis who was in a minivan.

Clarence Yellow Hawk is still facing a first-degree murder charge and other counts in the shooting death. A third man, Scott Benson, pleaded guilty last May to being an accessory in the case. He was sentenced

to 10 years in prison.

Sioux Falls school leaders apologize for KKK attire in play

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Sioux Falls School District is apologizing for allowing a high school play performance that included student actors dressed in Ku Klux Klan clothing.

District administrators say the production of "The Foreigner" at Roosevelt High School last weekend was not properly vetted. A local social advocacy group Establishing Sustainable Connections raised concerns about the racist attire. In a Facebook post, the organization said in today's political climate, the imagery of KKK robes and hoods furthers the racial tension in the community.

District spokeswoman DeeAnn Konrad says the district violated its drama approval process on whether the costumes, themes, language and choreography are considered appropriate by community and state standards.

It's not the first time the play has generated such a backlash. The production was canceled at New Prague High School in Minnesota two years ago.

1 person killed in rollover interstate crash near Brandon

BRANDON, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol says one person has died in a crash on Interstate 90 near Brandon.

The patrol says the rollover crash involved just one vehicle and happened about 8 p.m. The victim has not been identified.

Authorities temporarily rerouted eastbound traffic on the interstate.

Like Mike: LeBron overwhelmed after passing Jordan, his hero

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — From the very first day LeBron James picked up a basketball, he wanted to be like Mike.

James and his closest friends idolized Michael Jordan while they grew up together on Akron's competitive playgrounds and tough streets. As James grew into a tantalizing basketball prospect capable of jumping from high school to the NBA as the No. 1 draft pick, he studied, imitated and drew profound inspiration from Jordan's tongue-wagging dunks, that fadeaway jumper, his competitive fire — even the little details of the way Jordan wore his sneakers and shorts.

James proudly put No. 23 on his back as soon as he could get it as a high school sophomore. He has never taken it off.

"He was everything," James said.

Jordan has also admired James' game for years.

"I want to congratulate LeBron on achieving another great milestone during his amazing career," Jordan said in a statement to The Associated Press on Thursday through his spokeswoman, Estee Portnoy.

When James surpassed Jordan's career points total Wednesday night, he did it in a pair of Nikes with "Thank You M.J." written neatly on the side. That tribute doesn't begin to encompass what Jordan's radiance meant to a youngster who dreamed of finding a better life through basketball.

"M.J. was an inspiration," James said. "M.J. was the lightning in a bottle for me, because I wanted to be like him."

James has grown into a 34-year-old man with three championship rings and a redoubtable 16-year NBA career. Yet he is still in awe of Jordan, who has represented the apex of achievement for his entire life.

James moved past Jordan into fourth place on the NBA's career scoring list with a driving three-point play in the second quarter of the Los Angeles Lakers' 115-99 loss to the Denver Nuggets. He bettered Jordan's 32,292 career points with another variation of the brute physical brilliance that defines his playing style — a style that was influenced by Jordan's combination of grace and aggressiveness.

James finished with 31 points, seven rebounds and seven assists. His struggling Lakers rallied late, but

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dropped their fourth straight game in a season that appears to be lost.

Every loss eats at James, yet he fidgeted in front of his locker afterward with the anxiousness of a rookie, still buzzing over the enormity of the moment in his life.

"When you're an inner-city kid from Akron, Ohio, like myself and my guys growing up, you look for anything that can inspire you," James said. "You're always just up against the numbers of failing. The percentages of guys like myself — single-parent household, only child, underprivileged — (the chance of) making it out is not high at all. M.J. had a lot to do with me making it out, along with my mother, along with the city itself, along with the Little League coaches I had. But Mike had no idea what he was doing for a kid that was growing up a 45-minute flight away from Chicago, where he was putting in that work."

James acknowledged he missed most of the tribute video aired at Staples Center during the timeout after his milestone points. That's because he was crying into a towel on the Lakers' bench.

James is among the last active players who were old enough to witness Jordan in his prime with the Chicago Bulls. Little LeBron would buy packs of basketball cards hoping for a Jordan, and he would study every aspect of Jordan's game, down to the way he wore his calf sleeve turned slightly inside-out so that the red lining showed.

James couldn't afford Air Jordans, but he remembers walking through the mall and marveling at the pristine red-and-black shoes. They inspired him to dream of having his own shoes, a natural result of being the star he hoped to become.

"You guys have no idea what M.J. did for me and my friends growing up," James said. "Just in a sense of, some days where you just don't feel like you're going to make it to the next day where I grew up, because of everything that's going on. Like I wrote on my shoes today, I thank M.J. more than he would ever know. I've got to carry it on to the next kid. Hopefully I can inspire the next kid."

James is an inspiration to a generation now, many of whom have already reached the NBA. Several of the Nuggets spoke of idolizing James while they grew up, and his own Lakers locker room includes teammates playing alongside one of their boyhood heroes.

"I never saw Michael live," said Moritz Wagner, the Lakers' 21-year-old German rookie center. "(James) is the G.O.A.T. of our generation."

James trails only Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (38,387 points), Karl Malone (36,928) and Kobe Bryant (33,643) on the scoring chart. He seems likely to become the top scorer in NBA history if major injuries don't cloud his next three seasons with the Lakers — but those moments just might not resonate as profoundly for James.

This achievement also might be the biggest highlight of a disappointing season with the Lakers (30-35), who have fallen to the fringe of playoff contention. The struggles bother James, who has played in the last eight NBA Finals and hasn't missed the postseason since 2005.

But James still seems relatively content with his move to Hollywood, where he is closer to his burgeoning career as an entertainment mogul. He has spoken repeatedly of patience with the young Lakers while the club attempts to land a second superstar to turn James' next team into a title contender.

Even if this season is a failure, James will never forget the night when he made a historic connection with his childhood hero.

"It's crazy," James said. "My high school best friends, they text me and they can't believe it. I can't believe it either. We remember walking up and down those Akron streets with a basketball, just singing, 'I wanna be, I wanna be, I wanna be like Mike.'"

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

23 tornado deaths 'gut wrenching' in tiny Alabama community

By JAY REEVES and KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

BEAUREGARD, Ala. (AP) — With nearly two dozen people killed in a tornado outbreak that shattered a rural community in east Alabama, notifying the families of the dead was a huge, gut-wrenching task, done in the privacy of a country church.

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Pastor Rusty Sowell, with the county coroner behind him, would put his hand on the door to each Sunday school classroom at Providence Baptist Church, where dozens of family members were told to gather. Inside, people awaited word on whether loved ones were dead or alive.

First they told one family that a relative was dead, and then another. Then there was another and another in a string of heart-shattering gatherings where people heard the worst possible news.

Sowell had preached about the mystery of death and the need for God. Now he focused on the faces of the survivors.

"It was surreal. It was sacred, if I can use that term," he said.

There were 23 dead in all — 17 meetings with relatives. His eyes reddened Wednesday at the haunting memory of simply entering room after room after room.

"The toughest part was opening the door and looking in the eyes of that family member who was hoping against hope that it wasn't their loved one that had died," said Sowell, pastor of Providence Baptist. "I would say to myself, 'Just breathe, just breathe.'"

Coroner Bill Harris' radio had started crackling with a rising death count within minutes after an EF4 tornado ripped apart the Beaugard community in the deadliest U.S. tornado in almost six years. It was the largest of at least 11 twisters that struck the Southeast on Sunday, weather officials said.

First came confirmation of three deaths, he said, then five, then seven. As the number rose into the double digits, he began setting up a temporary command post at a middle school and called for help.

Once the dead were gathered from fields and roads and splintered homes, each was given a post-mortem examination in a portable autopsy facility set up in the school's parking lot. The dead were identified either through ID cards, tattoos, scars or photos.

"We double-checked it and we doubled-checked it again," Harris said.

Then came the process of notifying the next of kin at Providence Baptist, just a few miles from where the tornado scoured the ground, littering gullies with pieces of homes and stripping ridges bare of trees.

Many families already knew the worst, Sowell said, but it was still tough for them to hear the words.

Harris said it was easiest to let Sowell, an old friend, enter each room first, followed by another pastor, himself and then a sheriff's investigator. As coroner, Harris said, he's learned to let a pastor or someone else lead the way.

"When you're the first one in the room they know it's bad," he said.

Some cried, Sowell said, and many were in shock. Some leaned on each other; many leaned on God in a community dotted with churches both large and small.

"I saw a lot of love from the family to each other, and a lot of faith. Their faith was holding them up," he said.

Seven funeral homes in all are handling services for the 23 victims, Harris said, and one mortuary is preparing 10 bodies on its own.

Sowell is now overseeing a disaster recovery operation that's taking in donations and dispensing food, water, clothes, tarps, cleaning supplies and more from a church building across the road from where families learned their relatives had died.

Harris said he hasn't had time to think about the emotional magnitude of the loss in a county of more than 160,000 people. Relatives say one extended family lost 10 people in all, and officials said as many as 116 homes were destroyed or severely damaged.

"I'm still in go mode," he said. "Sometimes you just have to put your blinders on and get the job done."

AP video journalist Joshua Replogle contributed to this report.

China's Huawei sues to challenge US security law

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

SHENZHEN, China (AP) — Chinese tech giant Huawei is challenging a U.S. law that labels the company a security risk and would limit its access to the American market for telecom equipment.

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Huawei Technologies Ltd.'s lawsuit, announced Thursday, asks a federal court to reject as unconstitutional a portion of this year's U.S. military appropriations act that bars the government and its contractors from using Huawei equipment.

It comes as the biggest global maker of network equipment fights a U.S. campaign to persuade allies to shun Huawei. That effort threatens to block access to major markets as phone carriers prepare to invest billions of dollars in next-generation, 5G networks.

The complaint, filed in Plano, Texas, the headquarters of Huawei's U.S. operations, cites the framers of the U.S. Constitution, including Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, in arguing that the law in question violates the constitutional separation of powers, denies due process and amounts to a "Bill of Attainder" that singles out a specific entity for adverse treatment.

It says the law causes the company "concrete and particularized injury, and imminent future injury" and subjects it to a "burden that is severe, permanent and inescapable" that amounts to a corporate "death penalty."

Huawei, China's first global tech brand, is at the center of U.S.-Chinese tensions over technology competition and cyber-spying. The company has spent years trying to put to rest accusations it facilitates Chinese spying or is controlled by the ruling Communist Party.

Increasingly, both sides appear to be resorting to courts to press their cases.

"We are compelled to take this legal action as a proper and last resort," the company's rotating chairman, Guo Ping, said at a news conference. Guo said the ban would limit competition, slowing the rollout of fifth-generation communications and raising consumer prices.

Huawei has pleaded not guilty to U.S. trade-theft charges after a federal court in Seattle unsealed a 10-count indictment in January against two of its units, Huawei Device Co. and Huawei Device USA. The charges include conspiracy to steal trade secrets, attempted theft of trade secrets, wire fraud and obstruction of justice.

The company's chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, is fighting extradition to the U.S. after she was arrested in Vancouver, Canada on Dec. 1. U.S. prosecutors have filed charges accusing Meng, who is the daughter of Huawei's founder, of lying to banks about dealings with Iran.

Huawei denies any wrongdoing.

At a routine briefing Thursday, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman noted that the Chinese government has also objected to the law.

"We believe that it is perfectly proper and fully understandable for companies to defend their legitimate rights and interests through legal means," Lu Kang said. He said he had no information about whether China would join Huawei in the lawsuit.

Huawei has about 40 percent of the global market for network gear. Its U.S. sales evaporated after a congressional panel in 2012 cited the company and a Chinese competitor, ZTE Corp., as security risks and told phone carriers to avoid dealing with them.

U.S. authorities "have hacked our servers and stolen our emails" but have presented no evidence to support their security claims, Guo said. He complained Washington was "sparing no effort to smear" the company.

Huawei says the new law would shrink its potential U.S. market further by prohibiting the government from buying the Chinese vendor's technology and from buying goods or services from or giving grants or loans to companies or other third parties that do. The United States accounts for 20 to 25 percent of the global market for computer and telecom technology.

Huawei says the U.S. law it is protesting improperly has Congress play the role of a court.

The ban is "based on numerous false, unproven and untested propositions," said Song Liuping, the company's chief legal officer, at the news conference. "Huawei has an excellent security record and program. No contrary evidence has been offered."

The Chinese government says Washington fabricates or exaggerates security concerns to block competition.

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Huawei, based in Shenzhen, near Hong Kong, is a leading developer of 5G along with rivals Nokia Corp. of Finland and Sweden's LM Ericsson. Industry analysts say excluding the Chinese vendor from markets for 5G equipment would reduce competition and might lead to higher prices.

Founded in 1987 by a former military engineer, Huawei overtook Ericsson in 2017 as the biggest global supplier of network gear. It says it supplies 45 of the world's top 50 phone companies and has contracts with 30 carriers to test 5G wireless technology.

European governments are balking at U.S. pressure to ban Huawei. The company has announced contracts with customers including the United Arab Emirates in the Middle East for network technology.

China's government arrested two Canadians, a former diplomat and a businessman, on Dec. 10 in what was widely seen as an attempt to pressure Canada to release Meng, the company's CFO.

On Monday, Beijing accused the two men of acting together to steal state secrets. That followed the Canadian government's announcement Friday that the extradition proceeding for Meng would be allowed to continue.

Huawei executives say American security warnings have yet to affect sales outside the United States. The company's 2018 revenue forecast is \$100 billion and its founder, Ren Zhengfei, said last month this year's target is \$125 billion.

Some European officials and others cite a Chinese security law requiring companies to cooperate with intelligence agencies they say might oblige Huawei and other tech companies to install "backdoors" in equipment to allow eavesdropping.

Huawei denies altering its equipment to facilitate spying. It has set up testing centers in Britain, Canada and continental Europe to allow governments to examine its technology.

"Huawei has not and will never implant 'backdoors,'" said Guo, the chairman.

For all of AP's tech coverage, visit: <https://apnews.com/apf-technology>

In Senate hearing, McSally says she was raped in Air Force

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Martha McSally, the first female Air Force fighter pilot to fly in combat, said she was sexually assaulted by a superior officer and later, when she tried to talk about it to military officials, she "felt like the system was raping me all over again."

The Arizona Republican, a 26-year military veteran, made the disclosure Wednesday at a Senate hearing on the military's efforts to prevent sexual assaults and improve the response when they occur. Lawmakers also heard from other service members who spoke of being sexually assaulted and humiliated while serving their country.

McSally said she did not report being raped because she did not trust the system, and she said she was ashamed and confused. She said she was impressed and grateful to the survivors who came forward to help change the system. She was in the ninth class at the Air Force Academy to allow women, and said sexual harassment and assault were prevalent. Victims mostly suffered in silence, she said.

Reading from a prepared statement, she spoke of her pride in the military and her service to the country and her deep conflict over suffering abuse while doing it. She referred to "perpetrators" who had sexually assaulted her, an indication that she had been attacked more than once. The Senate Armed Services Committee room was silent as she went on. Fellow senators, surprised by her statement, lauded her for coming forward.

"I'm deeply affected by that testimony," said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., who has pushed strongly for changes. At a break, McSally hugged others who were appearing before the committee, including a West Point graduate who detailed being raped by her commander.

Capt. Carrie Volpe, an Air Force spokeswoman, said the branch was appalled at and "deeply sorry" about what McSally had experienced.

"The criminal actions reported today by Senator McSally violate every part of what it means to be an

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Airman," she said in a statement. "And we stand behind her and all victims of sexual assault. We are steadfast in our commitment to eliminate this reprehensible behavior and breach of trust in our ranks."

In an interview with "CBS This Morning," McSally said she considered the prevalence of sexual assault and abuse in the military to be a national security threat. But she said people shouldn't think the problem comes from having women in the military.

"Think about it — if you have a predator, if you have a rapist who is serving in uniform, you don't deal with it by keeping a woman out of their unit. Because that predator is going to go assault someone else," she said.

In her remarks at the Senate hearing, McSally did not go into much detail. She did not say whether her assaults happened at the academy or during active duty. She didn't name any names. She focused on the need for accountability at the commander level and down, and the improvements she's already seen in the system.

McSally stayed silent for years. But later, as she watched the military grapple with how to handle sexual assaults, she felt like she should speak out.

"I was horrified at how my attempt to share generally my experiences was handled," she said. She almost left the Air Force after 18 years.

"Like many victims, I felt like the system was raping me all over again."

McSally's revelation comes not long after Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, detailed her own abuse and assault, and at a time of increased awareness over the problem of harassment and assault in the armed forces and the larger #MeToo movement that roiled Hollywood and major corporations.

Reports of sexual assaults across the military jumped nearly 10 percent in 2017 — a year that also saw an online nude-photo sharing scandal rock the Defense Department. Reporting for 2018 is not yet available. Reports of sexual assaults were also up at the military academies, most at West Point.

McSally said she shares in the disgust of the failures of the military system and many commanders who haven't addressed the problems of sexual misconduct. She said the public must demand that higher-ranking officials be part of the solution, setting the tone for their officers.

"We have come a long way to stop military sexual assault, but we still have a long way to go," the senator said. "It took many years and too many lives ruined."

Defense officials have argued that an increase in reported assaults reflects a greater willingness to report attacks, rather than indicating assaults are rising. Sexual assaults are a highly underreported crime, both in the military and across society. Greater reporting, they argue, shows there is more confidence in the reporting system and greater comfort with the support for victims.

The senator told The Wall Street Journal last year that she had been sexually abused as a teenager by her high school track coach. She said the coach took advantage of her through "emotional manipulation" because her father had died. He denied the allegations.

McSally served in the Air Force from 1988 until 2010 and rose to the rank of colonel before entering politics. She deployed six times to the Middle East and Afghanistan, flying 325 combat hours and earning a Bronze Star and six air medals. She was also the first woman to command a fighter squadron.

McSally, who had worked as a national security aide for Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., was elected to the House in 2014 and served two terms.

She was appointed by Gov. Doug Ducey, R-Ariz., in December to replace the late GOP Sen. John McCain after she narrowly lost last year's race for Arizona's other Senate seat to Democrat Kyrsten Sinema.

McSally had been critical of Donald Trump in 2016 but embraced a tough stance on immigration and praised the president during last year's midterm election.

She will serve until 2020, when voters will elect someone to finish the final two years of McCain's term.

Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo contributed to this report.

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10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. MAJOR CHANGE IN US ASYLUM PRACTICES

Border agents have been told to require Spanish speakers and migrants from Latin America to wait in Mexico during the asylum process, memos obtained by the AP reveal.

2. MANAFORT TO LEARN FATE

Trump's former campaign chairman is scheduled to find out his sentence for tax and bank fraud related to money he earned advising Ukrainian politicians.

3. TORNADO DEAD CHALLENGES TINY ALABAMA COMMUNITY

Notifying the families of the 23 dead was a huge, gut-wrenching task done in the privacy of a church in rural Beauregard.

4. HUAWEI SUES TO CHALLENGE US SECURITY LAW

Calling it tantamount to a corporate "death penalty," the Chinese tech giant is fighting U.S. efforts to persuade allies to bar it from supplying next-gen telecom networks.

5. A DIFFERENT KIND OF FRESHMAN MARKS PELOSI'S NEW MAJORITY

Young Democrats' willingness to question the protocols of Congress exposes the House speaker's leadership team to some high-profile stumbles.

6. HOW FACEBOOK IS CHANGING ITS MISSION STATEMENT

Zuckerberg's plan is to shift the social network's focus away from a service that connects everyone to one that favors encrypted conversations it can't read.

7. WHAT EXPERTS ARE SAYING ABOUT R. KELLY'S MEDIA FRENZY

The R&B singer's appearance on "CBS This Morning" was risky and could backfire if it gives prosecutors more information to use against him at trial.

8. BRACING FOR BREXIT PAIN IN SPAIN

Britain's impending departure from the European Union could punch a multi-million-euro hole in southern Spain's fruit and vegetables exports.

9. 'JEOPARDY!' HOST HAS CANCER

Alex Trebek says he's been diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer but intends to fight the disease and keep on working.

10. MOVE OVER HIS AIRNESS

LeBron James passes Michael Jordan for fourth place on the NBA's career scoring list after the Lakers' superstar scored his 32,293rd point against Denver.

Sanders' 2016 backers in New Hampshire holding back for now

By HUNTER WOODALL Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — New Hampshire has been good to Bernie Sanders, delivering him a 22-point victory in 2016 that was one of his biggest blowouts that year. But as he launches his second campaign for the presidency, there are early signs that he doesn't have a lock on the nation's first primary.

More than a half-dozen Democratic leaders, activists and lawmakers who endorsed the Vermont senator in 2016 said they were hesitant to do so again. Some said they were passing over the 77-year-old self-described democratic socialist in search of fresh energy while others said that, 11 months away from the primary, it's simply too early to make a choice.

That caution underscores one of the central challenges facing Sanders. His insurgent 2016 campaign took off in part because he was the sole alternative to the more establishment-oriented Hillary Clinton. But in a 2020 field that already spans a dozen candidates and includes several progressives, women and people of color, Sanders isn't the only option for people yearning for political change.

"He's right on many of the issues that I care about," said Jackie Cilley, a former state senator who en-

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dorsed Sanders in 2016. "But I'm just looking at some new candidates."

With his name recognition and residency in neighboring Vermont, Sanders goes into New Hampshire with an early advantage. But his rivals aren't ceding the state to him.

On a recent New Hampshire swing, California Sen. Kamala Harris insisted she would compete for the state and took a not-so-subtle dig at Sanders by noting she's not a democratic socialist. Sens. Elizabeth Warren, of neighboring Massachusetts, along with Cory Booker of New Jersey and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, have also visited New Hampshire.

Endorsements aren't the only sign of a candidate's strength. And Sanders and his team insist they won't take New Hampshire for granted. His first swing through early-voting states this week as a 2020 presidential candidate includes several stops in New Hampshire.

The senator plans to spend "a lot of time" in the state, said Jeff Weaver, Sanders' 2016 campaign manager who is now working as a senior adviser for the new campaign. He acknowledged it would be difficult for Sanders to notch as big of a victory in New Hampshire as he did in 2016.

"In a very big field, it will be impossible to get that kind of margin again," Weaver said.

Several Democrats said the size of the field has made them think twice about backing Sanders too quickly.

"It's massive," liberal activist Dudley Dudley said of the 2020 roster. "Our cup runneth over or something, I don't know. I'm struggling with it myself."

Dudley said she's still fond of Sanders but has also been impressed by other senators who have visited New Hampshire, including Sherrod Brown of Ohio.

"If I were to endorse (Sanders), it would be because I believe he is the most likely to be able to beat (President Donald) Trump," she said. "And it may come out that way. I don't know. But I want to weigh it. I want to look at all of the candidates."

Steve Marchand, the former mayor of Portsmouth, endorsed Sanders in 2016 but described himself as "wide open" when it comes to 2020.

"I'm not going to support anybody for a good long time," Marchand said. "I want to kick the tires on everybody."

Another hurdle for Sanders is one of his own making. His leftward push against Clinton in 2016 proved so popular among Democrats that it's now become vogue for the younger generation of 2020 candidates.

Looking at the crowded 2020 field, former state Sen. Burt Cohen said it seems like Sanders' 2016 agenda is "pretty much everybody's agenda," including "Medicare-for-all" and criticizing income inequality.

After endorsing Sanders in 2016 and working as a delegate for him at the Democratic National Convention, Cohen hasn't "fully decided yet" whether he'll support Sanders, saying, "I may end up endorsing Bernie. I'm not sure."

The approach is shared by fellow 2016 Sanders delegate Andru Volinsky, who now holds a seat on the state's executive council.

"My initial inclination is towards Sen. Sanders," Volinsky said. "But the door is not completely closed to others."

Despite the caution from some Democrats, others have already embraced his 2020 run.

Sanders has kept the support and help of Kurt Ehrenberg, who was the New Hampshire state director for the unsuccessful effort to get Warren to run during the 2016 cycle. He then became the New Hampshire political director for Sanders during the presidential campaign.

Rep. Mark King, a Nashua Democrat, endorsed Sanders in 2016 and said he plans to do so again, in part because Sanders has the same values and the same approach as he did before.

"I didn't just blindly follow the senator again," said King, who was a 2016 delegate for Sanders.

Guidelines ask agents to target Spanish speakers at border

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Border agents have been told to explicitly target Spanish speakers and migrants from Latin America in carrying out a Trump administration program requiring asylum seekers wait in Mexico,

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according to memos obtained by The Associated Press that reveal some inner workings of a top government priority to address the burgeoning number of Central Americans arriving in the country.

The Trump administration launched the program in late January in what marks a potentially seismic shift on how the U.S. handles the cases of immigrants seeking asylum and fleeing persecution in their homeland. The program initially applied only to those who turned themselves in at official border crossings, but a memo from a division chief of the Border Patrol's San Diego sector says it expanded Friday to include people who cross the border illegally.

The guidance includes instruction about various groups of immigrants who are not to be sent back to Mexico and instead go through the traditional asylum process in the U.S. immigration court system. They include pregnant women, LGBT migrants and people suffering medical issues. Authorities said previously that Mexican asylum seekers are excluded, as are children traveling alone.

U.S. officials must check if the asylum seeker has any felony convictions and notify Mexico at least 12 hours before they are returned. Those who cross illegally must have come as single adults, though the administration is in talks with the Mexican government to include families.

The program is being implemented as border arrests soared in February to a 12-year-high and more than half of those stopped arrived as families, many of them asylum seekers who generally turn themselves in instead of trying to elude capture. Guatemala and Honduras have replaced Mexico as the top countries, a remarkable shift from only a few years ago.

The instructions say Mexican officials insist that no more than 20 asylum seekers are returned each day from San Diego to Tijuana, Mexico, on Monday through Saturday, underscoring challenges that the U.S. faces in trying to quickly ramp up one of its top border enforcement priorities and most significant changes to the U.S. immigration system of Donald Trump's presidency. Authorities said Tuesday that more than 76,000 were stopped or apprehended at the Mexican border in February, more than double the same period last year.

A memo on Tuesday to top Border Patrol officials in San Diego said the agency is under "pressures to utilize this program as much as we can."

Asylum-seeking families are typically released from U.S. custody immediately and allowed to settle with family or friends while their cases wind through immigration courts, which often takes years. Critics say that amounts to "catch-and-release," which administration officials want to limit with the new Mexico program.

In a statement, the Department of Homeland Security described the program as "another tool available in the law" to respond to the record numbers of Central American migrants arriving at the border in recent months. The agency said the program is being carried out in a "thoughtful and deliberate manner" that protects vulnerable migrants and is done in collaboration with the Mexican government.

Two U.S. officials who were not authorized to discuss the internal guidance and spoke on condition of anonymity confirmed contents of the memos obtained by the AP.

Explicitly targeting Spanish speakers and Latin Americans had not been previously disclosed, though some critics said it was no surprise considering that recent arrest numbers are largely Central Americans.

Judy Rabinovitz, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, said the criteria "does smack of the same concerns we had in the Muslim ban," referring to Trump's ban on travelers from several predominantly Muslim countries, which was eventually upheld by the Supreme Court.

"We know they are trying to get at Central American asylum seekers but to see it written there so blatantly is so disturbing," said Rabinovitz, whose organization was among those that sued the administration last month to block the policy.

Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen has made the administration's "Migrant Protection Protocols" a top priority, working for months with Mexican counterparts to seal the broad outlines of an agreement in November.

Testifying Wednesday in Congress, Nielsen said the U.S., working with Mexico, was exercising its authority to make people wait outside the country.

"All asylum seekers have the opportunity to present their case," she said. "We're not turning anybody around."

The effort has gotten off to a modest start amid mixed signals from Mexican officials and been limited

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to San Diego. Tonatiuh Guillen, who heads Mexico's immigration agency, told the AP that Mexico accepted 112 Central Americans during the first five weeks, including 25 children. Homeland Security has declined to release numbers.

A Homeland Security official, speaking to reporters Friday on a conference call on condition of anonymity, said the administration planned to grow the effort exponentially across the border, including to people who cross illegally between border crossings. The official declined to say when or where but said it was likely to be expanded in the next few weeks.

One memo obtained by the AP shows that it had been expanded on the same day.

Associated Press Writer Colleen Long contributed to this report from Washington.

Manafort scheduled to learn sentence for tax and bank fraud

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — When former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort is sentenced for tax and bank fraud, U.S. District Judge T.S. Ellis III will likely issue the same lecture he gives to drug dealers and bank robbers.

"You write the pages to your own life story," Ellis routinely tells defendants before pronouncing sentence. He also tells those who appear before him that "life is a series of choices and living with the consequences of those choices."

Manafort's choices leave the 69-year-old with the very real possibility that he will spend the rest of his life in prison.

Under federal sentencing guidelines, Manafort could receive a 20-year sentence Thursday, though most observers expect he will receive less than that.

Last year, a jury in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, convicted Manafort on eight felonies related to tax and bank fraud charges for hiding foreign income from his work in Ukraine from the IRS and later inflating his income on bank loan applications. Prosecutors have said the work in Ukraine was on behalf of politicians who were closely aligned with Russia, though Manafort has insisted his work helped those politicians distance themselves from Russia and align with the West.

After his conviction, Manafort pleaded guilty to separate charges in the District of Columbia related to illegal lobbying. He faces up to five years in prison on each of two counts to which he pleaded guilty. In the District case, prosecutors say Manafort has failed to live up to the terms of his plea bargain by providing false information to investigators in interviews.

In the Virginia case, neither prosecutors nor defense attorneys have recommended a specific term to the judge in their sentencing memoranda. Manafort's lawyers have sought a sentence significantly below the guidelines, based on a number of factors.

First, they say Manafort has suffered serious health problems since he has been incarcerated, mostly in solitary confinement, at the Alexandria jail where he awaits sentence. They say he has developed gout and suffers debilitating foot pain as a result, and that he is experiencing feelings of claustrophobia and isolation.

Prosecutors say the claims of health issues have not withstood scrutiny and even if they did, poor health is not a reason to escape consequences of criminal conduct.

Defense attorneys have also complained that Manafort was unfairly snared by special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into whether Russia meddled on Donald Trump's behalf during the 2016 presidential campaign. They argue that Mueller went beyond the scope of his mandate to investigate Manafort. Even Ellis, at the outset of the case, speculated that prosecutors' true motive in prosecuting Manafort was to pressure him to provide evidence against Trump.

Prosecutors have disputed that, and in court filings have said Manafort's business dealings were under investigation even before Mueller was appointed as special counsel.

Defense lawyers have also cited the fact that Manafort has forfeited millions of dollars in cash and property as a result of his convictions, and has also suffered public shame as a result of his high-profile prosecution.

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Government lawyers countered that Manafort's millions were built on a criminal enterprise in which he hid tens of millions of dollars in foreign income and failed to pay more than \$6 million in taxes.

"Manafort has failed to accept that he is responsible for the criminal choices that bring him to this Court for sentencing," prosecutors Uzo Asonye, Andrew Weissmann, Greg Andres and Brandon Van Grack wrote in a sentencing memo Tuesday.

Seoul: Increased vehicle movement at NKorea's ICBM center

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's military said Thursday it is carefully monitoring North Korean nuclear and missile facilities after the country's spy agency told lawmakers that new activity was detected at a research center where the North is believed to build long-range missiles targeting the U.S. mainland.

Defense Ministry spokeswoman Choi Hyun-soo said the U.S. and South Korean militaries are closely coordinating intelligence over the developments at the North's missile research center in Sanumdong on the outskirts of the capital, Pyongyang, and also at a separate long-range rocket site. She did not elaborate on what the developments were.

A lawmaker who attended a closed-door intelligence briefing told The Associated Press that National Intelligence Service director Suh Hoon said his agency had monitored increased vehicle movement at the Sanumdong facility. Suh said in the briefing Tuesday that vehicles were transporting supplies, but avoided specific answers when lawmakers pressed him on what they were for, the lawmaker said. The lawmaker requested anonymity because the information was sensitive.

Suh also told lawmakers that North Korea is restoring facilities at a rocket launch site in Tongchang-ri that it partially dismantled last year as part of disarmament steps, an assessment supported by private U.S. reports based on satellite imagery. While the NIS believes North Korea has not produced plutonium for nuclear weapons in months, signs of uranium use have been seen at an enrichment facility at North Korea's main nuclear complex in Yongbyon, the lawmaker said. The International Atomic Energy Agency provided a similar estimation in a recent report.

The revelations follow the collapse of talks in Vietnam last week between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump over what the Americans said were excessive North Korean demands for sanctions relief in exchange for a limited offer to partially shutter the Yongbyon site.

It wasn't immediately clear how the findings might affect nuclear negotiations. The United States and North Korea accused each other of causing the breakdown of the talks in Vietnam, but both sides left the door open for future negotiations.

Some analysts said North Korea is apparently trying to convey displeasure over the summit's failure by creating an impression that it could resume missile or rocket tests. That would put pressure on Washington and Seoul, which has acted as a mediator, to make a deal, they said.

Kim said in a New Year's address that he was committed to his high-stakes summitry with Trump, but also warned he may need to pursue a "new way" if the United States continues to insist on unilateral demands and sanctions. After the Vietnam summit collapsed, North Korean diplomat Choe Sun Hui told reporters that Kim "might lose his willingness" to continue nuclear negotiations.

Moon Seong Mook, an analyst for the Seoul-based Korea Research Institute for National Strategy, said it's unlikely that North Korea will resume major missile tests or satellite launches anytime soon because that would risk destroying its fragile negotiations with Washington and could bring even harsher sanctions on its crippled economy.

He said North Korea will also want to see if South Korea will support its position more strongly. Undeterred by the breakdown of the talks in Vietnam, South Korea has continued to urge the United States to ease sanctions on North Korea to allow a resumption of inter-Korean economic projects and encourage more disarmament steps from the North.

When asked about the reports about work at the Tongchang-ri site, Trump told reporters at the White House he would be "very, very disappointed in Chairman Kim" if that were happening. He also said it was "a very early report" and that "we'll see what happens. We'll take a look. It will ultimately get solved."

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North Korea didn't immediately respond in its state media.

Experts say the Sanumdong facility is where North Korea assembles its intercontinental ballistic missiles. The North conducted three flight tests of developmental ICBMs in 2017 that demonstrated their potential ability to reach the continental United States.

Following his last ICBM test in November 2017, Kim declared that his nuclear force was complete. But experts say North Korea still needs to master a few remaining technologies, such as ensuring that the warhead survives the harsh conditions of atmospheric re-entry, to have functioning ICBMs.

In early 2018, Kim expressed his intention to deal away his weapons arsenal in return for security and economic benefits. The North initiated diplomacy with Washington and Seoul and has since unilaterally suspended nuclear and missile tests and dismantled its underground nuclear testing site without the presence of outside experts.

It also dismantled parts of the Tongchang-ri rocket launch facility. North Korea had carried out satellite launches at the site in recent years, resulting in U.N. sanctions over claims that they were disguised tests of banned missile technology.

After a September summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in Pyongyang, Kim agreed to "permanently shut down" the Tongchang-ri engine test ground and rocket launch pad with the participation of foreign experts.

Trump said Kim told him in Vietnam that North Korea will continue to suspend nuclear and missile tests while negotiations are underway, and South Korea and the U.S. announced Sunday that they are eliminating massive springtime military drills and replacing them with smaller exercises in an effort to support the talks.

Associated Press writer Hyung-jin Kim contributed to this report.

Out of the shadows: Loyal money man swept into Trump probes

By BERNARD CONDON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Allen Weisselberg is seemingly everything his longtime boss, Donald Trump, isn't.

The modest money man has always been content to work behind the scenes, with no hint of flash, braggadocio or ostentatious spending.

He lived in the same three-bedroom ranch house in suburban Long Island with the same woman for decades, shows up for work at Trump Tower every day and almost always goes to the same spot down the block for lunch. The bald, bespectacled, 71-year-old chief financial officer of the Trump Organization is known for being loyal, unobtrusive and, well, somewhat dull.

But Weisselberg also has his name on all manner of checks and documents of the company going back decades, is familiar with its tax returns, its lenders and investors, and is said to track every penny going in and out. And given what he knows, the prospect of him testifying in federal probes and congressional investigations of Trump's business empire could pose a new danger to president from one of his longest-serving confidants.

"He was like from central casting, a green-eyeshaded accountant," said Gwenda Blair, who interviewed Weisselberg for her book, "The Trumps: Three Generations of Builders and a President."

"He was not even remotely colorful, eyes cast down on the spreadsheet and the calculator — click, click, click," she said. "He's been in the inner, inner circle, but he is so colorless that he faded into the woodwork. That was his job, not to be noticed."

Weisselberg, who through the Trump Organization did not respond to requests for an interview, may not be able to keep that up much longer.

At least one of the Democratic-led House committees investigating Trump's finances, hush-money payments and taxes is seeking to question Weisselberg following Trump lawyer Michael Cohen's explosive testimony last week in which he dropped Weisselberg's name nearly 20 times.

Weisselberg also spoke to federal prosecutors last year as part of the investigation in which Cohen pleaded guilty to campaign-finance violations for payments to buy the silence of two women who claimed to have

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had affairs with Trump — porn star Stormy Daniels and Playboy centerfold Karen McDougal.

Weisselberg has not been charged in that case, but Cohen has said he was deeply involved and ultimately the one who decided how to secretly reimburse Cohen for a \$130,000 payment to Daniels.

For his grand jury testimony in the Cohen case, Weisselberg received limited immunity, which would preclude any truthful statements from being used against him in a criminal case. Federal prosecutors in New York have declined to say whether they are investigating Weisselberg himself.

Weisselberg started working for the Trump family in Brooklyn in 1973 under Fred Trump, Donald's father, and was there for all the son's big successes and flops.

He was overseeing the books when Donald built Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue, bought up several casinos in Atlantic City, and then drove them into bankruptcy. And he was there when Trump rose again as a reality-TV businessman and began slapping his name on hotels and residential towers owned by others. It was during that era that Weisselberg made a rare, if quiet, public appearance — as a guest judge on a 2004 episode of "The Apprentice."

He was so trusted by Trump that he was named as the only non-family member to help Trump sons Eric and Don Jr. manage the trust the president set up to hold his business assets while he is in office.

Weisselberg's family is deeply entwined in the company. His son Barry has managed the Trump Wollman Rink in Central Park. Another son, Jack, is an executive director at Ladder Capital, the biggest lender to the Trump Organization behind Deutsche Bank. Ladder had more than \$100 million lent out to Trump's company last year, according to the president's financial disclosure report.

As is the case with his boss, Weisselberg was registered as a Democrat for years, according to the research service Nexis. He gave money to campaigns by New York Sen. Chuck Schumer and New York Gov. Mario Cuomo before switching to the Republican Party for the 2016 election.

But that is pretty much where the similarities to his boss end.

Weisselberg has no Twitter or Facebook account, though he does maintain a LinkedIn page with one "connection" listed — Michael Calamari, a former bodyguard turned Trump Organization's chief operating officer.

He has bought a few properties over the years beside a home in Wantagh, New York. He has a vacation home in Boynton Beach, Florida, that he purchased 17 years ago for \$282,000. He bought two condominiums at Trump-branded buildings in Manhattan but sold them.

Weisselberg barely merits a mention in the many Trump biographies, nor in the many written by the man himself. He doesn't appear in "The Art of the Deal," for instance.

Trump's daughter, Ivanka, told The Wall Street Journal in a profile before the 2016 election that Weisselberg "is deeply passionate, fiercely loyal and has stood alongside my father and our family" for decades.

Weisselberg has also been tied to several Trump ventures tarnished by scandal. He reviewed the finances at the now-defunct Trump University, the real estate school hit by a fraud lawsuit that the president settled for \$25 million. He was a director of the shuttered Trump Foundation, which is being sued by New York's attorney general for allegedly tapping charitable donations for political and business purposes.

And in testimony before the House Oversight Committee last week, Cohen said Weisselberg knew about what Cohen said were falsified financial statements that Trump used to dupe insurers and investors. Cohen also said that it was Weisselberg who decided that the hush money that Cohen paid out of his own pocket to the porn star should be reimbursed in installments spread out over 12 months to "hide what the payment was."

And Weisselberg is likely to know the answer to the biggest question since his boss pulled off his surprise election to the presidency: Just how much is Trump worth?

Trump testified in a 2007 deposition that Weisselberg was the one who valued his properties and other assets.

"My numbers are pretty in line with what he says," Trump testified.

Ahead of court ruling, Census Bureau seeks citizenship data

By GARANCE BURKE and FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

As the U.S. Supreme Court weighs whether the Trump administration can ask people if they are citizens on the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau is quietly seeking comprehensive information about the legal status of millions of immigrants.

Under a proposed plan, the Department of Homeland Security would provide the Census Bureau with a broad swath of personal data about noncitizens, including their immigration status, The Associated Press has learned. A pending agreement between the agencies has been in the works since at least January, the same month a federal judge in New York blocked the administration from adding the citizenship question to the 10-year survey.

On Wednesday, a federal judge in California also declared that adding the citizenship question to the Census was unconstitutional, saying the move "threatens the very foundation of our democratic system."

The data that Homeland Security would share with Census officials would include noncitizens' full names and addresses, birth dates and places, as well as Social Security numbers and highly sensitive alien registration numbers, according to a document signed by the Census Bureau and obtained by AP.

Such a data dump would be apparently unprecedented and give the Census Bureau a view of immigrants' citizenship status that is even more precise than what can be gathered in door-to-door canvassing, according to bureau research.

Six former Census and DHS officials said they were not aware that individuals' citizenship status had ever before been shared with the Census. "Generally, the information kept in a system of records is presumed to be private and can't be released unless it fits with a certain set of defined exceptions," said Leon Rodriguez, who led the DHS agency responsible for citizenship under the Obama administration.

The move raises questions as to what the Trump administration seeks to do with the data and concerns among privacy and civil rights activists that it could be misused.

Census spokesman Michael Cook said the agreement was awaiting signatures at DHS, but that Census expected it would be finalized "as soon as possible."

"The U.S. Census Bureau routinely enters into agreements to receive administrative records from many agencies, including our pending agreement with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, to assist us in our mission to provide quality statistics to the American public," Cook said in a statement. "By law, the Census Bureau does not return any records to the Department of Homeland Security or any of its components, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement."

Jessica Collins, a spokeswoman for Citizenship and Immigration Services, said no agreement has been finalized. She said the purpose of such agreements is to help improve the reliability of population estimates for the next Census.

"The information is protected and safeguarded under applicable laws and will not be used for adjudicative or law enforcement purposes," Collins said.

Civil rights groups accuse the White House of pursuing a citizenship question because it would discourage noncitizens from participating in the Census and lead to less federal money and representation in Congress for states with large immigrant populations. Census researchers say including the question could yield significant underreporting for immigrants and communities of color.

Under the pending three-year information-sharing agreement, the Census Bureau would use the DHS data to better determine who is a citizen and eligible to vote by "linking citizenship information from administrative records to Census microdata."

"All uses of the data are solely for statistical purposes, which by definition means that uses will not directly affect benefits or enforcement actions for any individual," according to the 13-page document signed by a Census official.

Amy O'Hara, who until 2017 directed Census Bureau efforts to expand data-sharing with other agencies, said she was surprised a plan was in the works for sharing alien numbers, which are assigned to immigrants seeking citizenship or involved in law enforcement action.

"I wish that we were not on this path," she said. "If the citizenship question hadn't been added to the

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Census, this agreement never would have been sought.”

In previous administrations, government lawyers advised Census researchers to use a minimal amount of identifying data to get their jobs done, said O’Hara, now co-director of Georgetown University’s census research center. During her tenure, the bureau never obtained anything as sensitive as alien numbers, which O’Hara called “more radioactive than fingerprints.”

Some privacy groups worry the pending agreement is an end-run around the courts.

“What’s going on here is they are trying to circumvent the need for a citizenship question by using data collected by another agency for a different purpose,” Jeramie Scott, an attorney at the Electronic Privacy Information Center. “It’s a violation of people’s privacy.”

The agreement would bar the bureau from sharing the data with outside agencies. But confidentiality provisions have been circumvented in the past.

During World War II Congress suspended those protections, and the bureau shared data about Japanese-Americans that was used to help send 120,000 people to internment camps. Most were U.S. citizens. From 2002-2003, the Census Bureau provided DHS with population statistics on Arab-Americans that activists complained was a breach of public trust, even if the sharing was legal.

The quiet manner in which the agencies pursued sharing records could stoke concerns that the Trump administration may be seeking to create a registry of noncitizens, said Kenneth Prewitt, who was Census director from 1998-2001 and is now a Columbia University professor.

Census scholars say that could not happen without new legislation, which is not likely under the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives.

In mid-April, the Supreme Court will hear arguments as to whether the 2020 Census can include a citizenship question, with a decision expected weeks later.

Next week, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, whose department oversees the census, is set to testify before Congress on his role in the controversy.

California Democratic Rep. Jimmy Gomez, who sits on the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, said he was concerned to learn of the data-sharing proposal and that Ross would face related questions.

“The news of this proposed plan will surely send shockwaves through immigrant communities across the country,” Gomez said Wednesday. “This new development raises even more questions about the motivations behind this untested citizenship question and Secretary Ross better be ready to answer them.”

About 44 million immigrants live in the United States — nearly 11 million of them illegally. The 10-year headcount is based on the total resident population, both citizens and noncitizens.

The Census figures hugely in how political power and money are distributed in the U.S., and underreporting by noncitizens would have an outsized impact in states with larger immigrant populations. Political clout and federal dollars are both at stake because 10-year survey results are used to distribute electoral college votes and congressional district seats, and allocate more than \$880 billion a year for services including roads, schools and Medicare.

The push to get a clearer picture of the number of noncitizens in the U.S. comes from an administration that has implemented hard-line policies to restrict immigration in numerous agencies.

Against advice of career officials at the Census Bureau, Ross decided last year to add the citizenship question to the 10-year headcount, saying the Justice Department requested the question to improve enforcement of the federal Voting Rights Act.

Some prominent GOP lawmakers endorsed the citizenship question, saying it would lead to more accurate data, and a joint fundraising committee for Trump’s re-election campaign and the Republican National Committee used it as a fundraising tool. Immigrants’ rights groups and multiple Democratic-led states, cities and counties filed suit, arguing that the question sought to discourage the Census participation of minorities.

A citizenship question has not appeared on the once-in-a-decade headcount since 1950, though it has been on the American Community Survey, for which the Census Bureau annually polls 3.5 million households.

Documents and testimony in a New York trial showed that Ross began pressing for a citizenship question

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soon after he became secretary in 2017, and that he consulted Steve Bannon, President Donald Trump's former chief strategist, and then-Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, a vocal advocate of tough immigration laws who also has advised the president. Emails showed that Ross himself had invited the Justice Department request to add the citizenship question.

A March 2018 memo to Ross from the Census Bureau's chief scientist says the DHS data on noncitizens could be used to help create a "comprehensive statistical reference list of current U.S. citizens." The memo discusses how to create 'baseline citizenship statistics' by drawing on administrative records from DHS, the Social Security Administration, State Department and the Internal Revenue Service, in addition to including the citizenship question in the census.

In January, New York federal judge Jesse Furman ruled that Ross was "arbitrary and capricious" in proposing the question.

The new data comes from Citizenship and Immigration Services, a DHS agency that has taken on a larger role in enforcing immigration restrictions under Trump.

After Francis Cissna took over as director in October 2017, the agency initiated a "denaturalization task force" aimed at investigating whether immigrants obtaining their citizenship fraudulently. The agency also has slashed the refugee program to historic lows and proposed reinterpreting immigration law to screen whether legal immigrants are likely to draw on the public welfare system.

Cissna also rewrote the agency's mission statement: "Securing America's promise as a nation of immigrants" became "Securing the homeland and honoring our values."

Georgia's Stacey Abrams looks for a winning strategy in loss

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

ATLANTA (AP) — Stacey Abrams is a woman in demand.

Months removed from her surprisingly narrow defeat in the Georgia governor's race, Abrams is being heavily recruited to run for Senate, weighing another campaign for governor and even hearing overtures from prominent activists who want her to run for president.

It's a remarkable turn for a woman who, two years ago, was leading the vastly outnumbered House Democratic caucus at the Georgia Capitol. She now bounces from political gatherings in Las Vegas and Washington to debating societies in Oxford, England, not to mention an Atlanta union hall where she delivered this year's Democratic response to President Donald Trump's State of the Union.

"People are hungry for the kind of leadership Stacey has been exhibiting throughout her campaign and after," Leah Daughtry, a prominent Democrat who co-hosted a recent political conference for black women where Abrams got a rousing welcome. "Whatever she decided to do, she would have an army of people ready to step in and help."

Yet for someone with so many options, there's no obvious next step for Abrams.

She has entertained conversations in recent months with donors and other Democrats about running for president, according to aides. She has also been invited to Iowa next month to deliver a keynote address to the Polk County Democratic Party, an event that would put her in front of key activists in the nation's leadoff caucus state.

Those encouraging Abrams to run for the White House argue that her stock may never be as high as it is right now and that, in a field that already spans a dozen candidates, the nomination could go to anyone.

"It could literally be anybody's game," said Symone Sanders, a veteran of Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign and one of Democrats' most visible black female strategists.

But there are downsides. It's not clear that Abrams could sustain the kind of national fundraising base she managed in 2018 when she was trying to make history by becoming America's first black female governor and flipping an emerging Deep South battleground state. The field already includes successful fundraisers such as Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and two black candidates: Sens. Kamala Harris of California and Cory Booker of New Jersey.

That's led some Abrams insiders to say she's not looking at the presidential race as seriously as she is

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choosing between the Senate and another run for governor.

Those close to Abrams say one of her key considerations is how she can make the biggest impact on the issues she cares about most. She ran for governor promising to expand Medicaid insurance, prioritize spending on public education and continue to overhaul Georgia's criminal justice system.

She's added a full-throated discourse on voting rights since her gubernatorial campaign was marred by allegations that the victor, Republican Brian Kemp, used his previous post as secretary of state to make it harder for poor and middle-class Georgians to vote. Kemp vehemently denies wrongdoing.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is trying to coax Abrams into challenging Republican Sen. David Perdue in 2020 and has made voting rights a central pillar of his pitch.

"There's no one who knows how to fight for voting rights better than Stacey Abrams," Schumer, D-N.Y., said in an interview. "If she got to the Senate, she'd have a huge platform to do it, not just in Georgia, but nationally."

But some Georgians close to Abrams say she knows the limits of being a lone senator — and potentially one in the minority. They also note that she's well-aware of the risks that come with losing twice, particularly in back-to-back election cycles.

Her advocacy work since the election has focused most directly on Georgia, potentially positioning her for a 2022 rematch against Kemp. She morphed her campaign operation into a political action group, Fair Fight, focused on election law and ballot access. She's testified in front of a congressional hearing on voting matters and is pushing for a paper ballot system in Georgia.

Lauren Groh-Wargo, Abrams' longtime adviser and friend who ran her 2018 gubernatorial bid, said Abrams won't "foreclose any option until she has to."

But Groh-Wargo argued that an ability to advocate for voting rights will be crucial in Abrams' decision process.

"The way that election played out has been a singular experience for her, so she's still trying to process it all as she decides what's best," Groh-Wargo said, adding that she expects Abrams to declare her intentions on the Senate in early April. Any other decisions wouldn't necessarily come at the time, she said.

In the meantime, her star power isn't likely to dim.

She was in Great Britain this week speaking to The Oxford Union, a debating society that draws its members from the Oxford University Community. She heard "Run, Stacey, run!" chants last week at the Black Enterprise Women of Power Summit in Las Vegas.

She was a featured speaker at the Democratic National Committee's winter meeting last month in Washington, where she focused as much on her successes — winning 85,000 more votes in Georgia in a nonpresidential election year than Hillary Clinton won in 2016 — as on the result. And, of course, she gave a nod to what her fellow partisans are wondering about.

"I'm going to run for something," Abrams said, pausing with a grin. "I'm considering president of my homeowners association."

Whack reported from Philadelphia. Associated Press writers Julie Pace in Washington and Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this report.

Follow Barrow and Whack on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> and <https://twitter.com/emarvelous>

A different kind of freshman marks Pelosi's new majority

By LISA MASCARO and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It wasn't exactly a mic-drop moment. But when House Speaker Nancy Pelosi abruptly ended a conversation as a freshman lawmaker no longer seemed to be listening, it showed just how far the Democratic leader and the new majority have to go in getting used to each other.

A lot has changed in the 12 years since Pelosi last ran the House.

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The California Democrat is finding a freshman class whose members seem more eager to lead than be led. Part of a younger generation of lawmakers, mostly women and minorities, they bring perspectives and expectations different from some who have walked the halls for decades. A few, like New York's Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, carry their own stardom in real-time on social media.

Their willingness to question the protocols of Congress is exposing Pelosi's leadership team to high-profile stumbles. Leaders could not hold their majority in line on a routine procedural vote last week. And this week, a debate spilled into the open over a leadership plan for a resolution condemning anti-Semitism and Islamophobia largely in response to remarks made by Minnesota's Ilhan Omar.

"So, we have some internal issues," Pelosi acknowledged Wednesday during a private caucus meeting.

It was during that behind-closed-doors session that another newly elected Democrat, Jahana Hayes of Connecticut, stood to speak about the resolution, according to those in the room.

Hayes wanted more input on the process. Others worried that their legislative agenda had drifted way off track. Some questioned why Omar's actions were being singled out when others — namely President Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress — had repeatedly made offensive comments on race and religion.

When Pelosi addressed her, Hayes turned to walk away. Exasperated, Pelosi said if Hayes wasn't going to listen, the conversation was over. She set down the microphone.

Hayes later told reporters that she didn't realize Pelosi was talking to her. But, she said, she's ready to speak up again, every time she needs to.

"I don't want to wait two years before I raise my voice," she said. "I know that looks different or feels different to people. ... But I didn't come here to just sit quietly and fall in line."

Hayes said, "I don't mean that to be disrespectful. But the people in my district deserve a voice. These are important decisions." She added, "A new crop of freshmen, I guess."

Every new majority has its growing pains. GOP Speaker John Boehner never really figured out a way to control the tea party Republicans who ultimately forced his retirement. And Pelosi's predecessor, Republican Paul Ryan, called it quits rather than try to do much better.

Pelosi, who made history in 2007 as the first female speaker, has always been seen as a particularly strong leader. She fended off attempts to topple her return this year, and her stock soared among some Democrats as she took on Trump during the 35-day partial government shutdown.

But Pelosi faces a changed media environment that is rapidly chronicling every move of the historic freshmen class in real-time and a president in the White House eager, with his GOP allies in Congress, to capitalize on the divisions. Trump tweeted Wednesday about the resolution debate, saying it was "shameful" Democrats wouldn't take a stronger stand against anti-Semitism in their conference.

Democrats also returned a veteran leadership team, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer of Maryland and Majority Whip Jim Clyburn of South Carolina, who, along with up-and-comers, have made no secret of their interest in Pelosi's job. They are responsible for setting the floor schedule and counting the votes, and share some responsibility — and blame — for the leadership's early pitfalls.

While Democrats had a larger majority 12 years ago, the caucus was not as racially and ethnically diverse the first time Pelosi was speaker. There was a sense Wednesday among Democrats that Pelosi and her leadership team may have underestimated the anger and opposition that a resolution dealing only with anti-Semitism would inflame among progressives, who now include the first two Muslim women to serve in Congress.

Rep. Katie Hill, D-Calif., a freshman liaison to Democratic leaders, said Pelosi is juggling several dynamics. Managing the social media and instantaneous reaction that turned the issue "into this massive explosion ... is one of the biggest challenges," she said.

In fact, it wasn't Pelosi's idea to put forward the resolution on anti-Semitism, according to those familiar with the situation. They and others spoke about private conversations on condition of anonymity.

But after fielding some 100 calls over the weekend from other lawmakers, some proposing it as a response to Omar's comments about Israel, Pelosi agreed to the idea and suggested they broaden the resolution

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to include a rejection of anti-Muslim bigotry. Omar is Muslim-American and faces criticism, including by GOP lawmakers, and public threats.

The early drafts, though, went too far for some lawmakers, but not far enough for others. Jewish lawmakers, in particular, preferred the more narrow approach to anti-Semitism. Others wanted a more sweeping statement against other forms of racism and bigotry that, as Clyburn put it, was "anti-hate."

After Wednesday's session, Pelosi pivoted, shelving the issue that had already drained Democrats of much of their focus on the week's agenda.

"This is a distraction," said Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, D-N.J., who made similar remarks during the private session. "We came in promising a rigorous agenda for the people."

Others, though, said Democrats needed to remind Americans, and others, of the dangers of anti-Semitic tropes. Omar last week suggested the Jewish state's supporters are pushing lawmakers to pledge "allegiance" to a foreign country.

"It's important for us to have this conversation and for people to understand the history," said Rep. Juan Vargas, D-Calif. He faced his own run-in after Ocasio-Cortez tweeted about his views in what would have been seen as a rare display of intra-party disagreement.

Rep. Hank Johnson, D-Ga., said Pelosi is adroit at being able to "adapt to the reality once that reality becomes clear to her." He added, "We don't have a perfect leader, but she's doing an excellent job."

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., a progressive who is allied with Ocasio-Cortez and others in the new class, said, "I don't agree with Nancy Pelosi on a number of things, but I understand that she knows more about how the system works than I know."

Khanna added that the freshmen have brought "great energy and great voice, but ultimately Washington is still about getting things done, and Nancy Pelosi understands power."

A hot US job market is coaxing people in from the sidelines

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A surprisingly strong burst of job growth over the past year has led many economists to wonder: Where are all the workers coming from?

As recently as last spring, analysts had worried that hiring would slow as the pool of unemployed shrank. Many employers have complained for years that they could no longer find enough people to fill their open jobs.

Turns out they were both wrong.

The pace of hiring in 2018 was the most robust in three years, and for a surprising reason: Many more people have decided to look for work than experts had expected. The influx of those job seekers, if sustained, could help extend an economic expansion that is already the second-longest on record.

The growth in America's workforce — made up of people either working or looking for work — has helped reverse an alarming consequence of the recession: The exit of millions of Americans from the job market.

For five years after the Great Recession ended in 2009, many Americans gave up on their job hunts. Some suffered from disabilities. Others enrolled in school or stayed home to raise children. Still others were stymied by criminal pasts or failed drug tests. Some just felt discouraged by their job prospects. Because they weren't actively seeking work, they weren't even counted as unemployed.

Economists had speculated that millions of these people lacked necessary qualifications or were otherwise deemed undesirable by employers and might not work again. They were thought to be, in economic parlance, "structurally" unemployed. Subsequent hiring wouldn't necessarily help them.

Yet for the past few years it has. The proportion of Americans ages 25 to 54 who have a job has reached nearly 80 percent — the same as before the recession. Economists refer to this age group as "prime-age" workers. It excludes older Americans who have retired and younger workers who may be in school.

"The U.S. is a very diverse and dynamic economy and can often surprise us," said Julia Coronado, chief economist at MacroPolicy Perspectives. "This is a positive surprise. We're due for one."

On Friday, the government will report on job growth during February, and analysts are forecasting a

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solid if unspectacular gain of 183,000. That would fall below last year's monthly average of 220,000 but would still be enough to lower the unemployment rate, now 4 percent, over time.

That it took nearly a decade for the proportion of prime-age Americans who have jobs to reach its pre-recession level shows just how ruinous the Great Recession was. It destroyed 8.7 million jobs. And the recovery that followed was comparatively sluggish.

Still, the unemployment fell steadily, from 10 percent to 4.1 percent at the start of 2018. With so few people unemployed, businesses have increasingly begun recruiting more widely, including among people who hadn't been looking for work.

"Economists were too quick to discount what the economy was capable of going forward," said Martha Gimbel, chief economist at the job listings site Indeed. "There continues to be more room to draw people into the labor force and get them a job."

Other factors that have held some people back from seeking work have included the high cost of child care and a lack of paid leave. Research suggests that such costs have held back the workforce participation rate of prime-age U.S. women, a rate that trails those in most other industrialized countries.

Child care costs delayed the return of Valarie Regas of Atlanta to the job market after she gave birth to her second child in 2012. Regas wanted to go back, but most of the jobs she found didn't pay enough to cover child care. So she remained mostly out of the job market for five more years.

After completing a coding boot camp, Regas was hired last year by a division of the European aerospace giant Airbus. The company initially wanted someone with more experience, she said. But after she pitched them on her enthusiasm and willingness to learn, she was hired as a software programmer.

"Even with the exorbitant cost of child care, I am now bringing home real money," said Regas, 36.

Many companies are relaxing their education or experience requirements, according to economists and staffing agencies. They are considering more applicants with disabilities. Businesses are expanding their training programs. Some, analysts say, are also looking with a more open mind at people with criminal backgrounds.

Partly as a result, the number of people who either have a job or are looking for one grew 1.6 percent in 2018, sharply higher than the average annual gain of 0.4 percent in the first five years after the recession.

The rebound has confounded many experts' projections. The Federal Reserve has consistently underestimated the likelihood of more people finding jobs. In 2013, its policymakers estimated that "full employment" — the lowest point to which unemployment was thought capable of reaching without sparking higher inflation — would arrive when the unemployment rate was between 5.2 percent and 5.8 percent.

Unemployment is now 4 percent, with little inflation in sight.

And in 2014, the Congressional Budget Office forecast that the proportion of people ages 16 and up either working or looking for work — often called the participation rate — would be just 62.5 percent by the end of 2017 and would decline thereafter. Instead, the figure reached 63.2 percent in January, a five-year high.

Though the participation rate remains below its 2000 peak of 67.3 percent, most of the decline has resulted from aging, economists say. The huge baby boomer generation is retiring en masse.

"We have learned this year that there's more slack in the labor market because people are coming back in," Fed Chairman Jerome Powell told Congress last week.

The influx of people, Powell acknowledged last year, had come as a "surprise."

"That tells us that there is more room to grow, and that certainly has implications for monetary policy," he added.

If more Americans are available to work, it means companies won't necessarily have to raise pay so fast to hire people, a trend that helps limit inflation. Milder inflation allows the Fed to keep short-term rates comparatively low.

Average pay is still growing more slowly than it did the last time unemployment was this low. Adam Ozimek, an economist at Moody's Analytics, says this suggests that there is still room for companies to raise pay and perhaps entice even more people into the job market.

Women, it turns out, have returned to the workforce in greater numbers than men have. The proportion of prime-age women in the labor force is now higher than before the recession. And for women ages

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25 through 34, participation is at an 18-year peak. The participation rate for prime-age African-American women also exceeds its pre-recession level.

By contrast, prime-age men still lag behind their pre-recession level of participation. But the reasons aren't as discouraging as they were five years ago. In 2013, nearly half of prime-age men who were out of the workforce cited disability or illness, according to data compiled by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

But unemployment among the disabled fell last year to its lowest point in a decade. The government has also made it harder to obtain Social Security disability benefits. Now, less than 10 percent of men out of the workforce cite disability as the reason.

Instead, Ernie Tedeschi, an economist at Evercore ISI, notes that nearly a third say they aren't working because they've returned to school. And about a quarter cite family responsibilities, mostly the raising of children, up from just 10 percent in 2013.

As they assess a broader pool of job applicants, some companies are doing more to develop skills. Goodwill Industries has experienced soaring demand for its training programs, which seek to turn people with low skills or criminal backgrounds into job-ready applicants. Goodwill teaches such traditional skills as welding as well as so-called soft skills, which include getting along with workers and taking direction.

Jennifer Taylor, a vice president of Career Services at Goodwill of North Georgia, says companies are so hungry for workers that in some cases they hire people before they even finish their training. The Atlanta-based Goodwill placed 24,902 people in jobs last year, Taylor said, three times as many as it did five years ago.

"We are seeing vastly more employers that may not have used Goodwill in the past and that are significantly increasing their hiring on the spot," Taylor said. "They're struggling to find talent in the open marketplace."

A survey by Manpower found that 54 percent of employers invested in training programs in 2018, up from just 20 percent four years earlier. One-third said they're adjusting their education and experience requirements, with some no longer requiring a college degree.

Ricardo Madan of TEKsystems, a staffing firm, says his company is willing to train more of its new hires, rather than just finding already-qualified workers. Last year, the Charlotte-based company paid for a three-month boot camp for 25 potential employees run by Trilogy Education, a training company, and Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

It ended up hiring 19 of them.

"We weren't thinking this way five years ago," he said. "It's never been this hard to find people."

Report: Government kept tabs on journalists, 'instigators'

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The U.S. government ran an operation to screen journalists, activists and others while investigating last year's migrant caravan from Mexico, a San Diego TV station reported Wednesday, citing leaked documents.

Dossiers that included photos from their passports or social media accounts, date of birth and other details were kept in a database and some freelance journalists had alerts placed on their passports and were flagged for secondary screenings at customs points, the station KNSD-TV said.

One freelance photojournalist was denied entry to Mexico for reasons that were never stated, the station reported.

The documents, in the form of dossiers and screenshots, were provided to NBC 7 Investigates by a Homeland Security source on the condition of anonymity, the station reported. Those listed as warranting secondary screening included 10 journalists — seven of them U.S. citizens — a U.S. attorney and 47 people from various countries labeled as organizers, instigators or "unknown," the station said.

The intelligence-gathering efforts were done under the umbrella of "Operation Secure Line," which was designed to monitor the caravan of thousands of people who began making their way north from Central America late last year to seek asylum in the United States, the source told the TV station.

A Customs and Border Protection statement sent to The Associated Press on Wednesday said the extra

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security followed a breach of a border wall in San Diego on Nov. 25 in a violent confrontation between caravan members and border agents. The confrontation closed the nation's busiest border crossing for five hours on Thanksgiving weekend.

Such "criminal events...involving assaults on law enforcement and a risk to public safety, are routinely monitored and investigated by authorities," the statement said.

"It is protocol following these incidents to collect evidence that might be needed for future legal actions and to determine if the event was orchestrated."

The statement didn't address specifics of why journalists would be on the list to have their passports flagged.

The American Civil Liberties Union condemned the operation.

"This is an outrageous violation of the First Amendment," attorney Esha Bhandari said. "The government cannot use the pretext of the border to target activists critical of its policies, lawyers providing legal representation, or journalists simply doing their jobs."

The documents, dated Jan. 9, are titled "San Diego Sector Foreign Operations Branch: Migrant Caravan FY-2019, Suspected Organizers, Coordinators, Instigators and Media." The source said the material was used by agents from the CBP and other agencies, including some San Diego FBI agents.

Two freelance photojournalists confirmed to the station that the information in their dossiers was accurate. Both were pulled in for secondary questioning at border crossings and one, Kitra Cahana, eventually was stopped in Mexico, denied entry and had to fly back to the U.S. They were not told why they were targeted.

One dossier was on Nicole Ramos, the refugee director and attorney for Al Otro Lado, a law center for migrants and refugees in Tijuana, Mexico. It included details such as the kind of car she drives and her mother's name, KNSD-TV reported.

"The document appears to prove what we have assumed for some time, which is that we are on a law enforcement list designed to retaliate against human rights defenders who work with asylum seekers and who are critical of CBP practices that violate the rights of asylum seekers," Ramos told the station by email.

R. Kelly goes back to jail, takes risks with TV interview

By TAMMY WEBBER and DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — R. Kelly's day began with a nationally televised broadcast in which he whispered, cried and ranted while pleading with viewers to believe him: He'd never had sex with anyone under 17 and never held anyone against her will.

The day ended with a trip to jail after the embattled R&B singer told a judge he could not pay \$161,000 in back child support he owes his children's mother.

Kelly no doubt hoped the raw interview aired Wednesday on "CBS This Morning" would help sway public opinion about the charges filed last month that accuse him of sexually abusing three girls and a woman. The interview was his first public defense since being charged and the first time he addressed allegations in the Lifetime series "Surviving R. Kelly," which aired in January. The documentary alleged that he held women captive and ran a "sex cult."

But experts said his appearance was also risky and could backfire if it gives prosecutors more information to use against him at trial. That's why most defense attorneys urge clients to keep quiet.

"In my history as a prosecutor, I loved it when a defendant would say things or make comments about his or her defense," said Illinois Appellate Judge Joseph Birkett, who said he did not watch the Kelly interview and was speaking only as a former prosecutor. "I would document every word they said ... (and) I could give you example after example where their statements backfired."

There have been cases in which people who spoke up pointed to evidence that ultimately helped win their freedom, but, Birkett said, "historically it's a bad idea."

One recent example was "Empire" actor Jussie Smollett, who was charged with falsely reporting a racist, anti-gay attack in Chicago. In charging documents, prosecutors cited statements he made during an interview on ABC's "Good Morning America" identifying two people in a still photo of the surveillance video

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as his attackers. Two brothers pictured in the photo later told police that Smollett had paid them to stage the attack because he wanted a raise and to further his career.

In Kelly's case, he and his attorney might have decided they had nothing to lose after the Lifetime series, said Fred Thiagarajah, a prominent Newport Beach, California, attorney and former prosecutor.

"A lot of the public already thinks he's guilty, and there is a very negative image of him, so the only thing he might think he can do is try to change their minds," Thiagarajah said. If the evidence against him is overwhelming, "this kind of interview might be kind of a Hail Mary" to influence a potential jury pool.

But the dangers of such an interview might outweigh any benefits if Kelly locked himself into a particular defense, Thiagarajah said. "He may not know all the evidence against him."

In the CBS interview, for example, he denied ever having sex with anyone under 17, even though he married the late singer Aaliyah when she was 15, and a videotape given to prosecutors in his current case purports to show Kelly having sex with a girl who repeatedly says she's 14. Kelly's attorney, Steve Greenberg, has said his client did not "knowingly" have sex with underage girls.

Thiagarajah said he might allow a client to do such an interview — but only if he were confident the client could keep his emotions in check and "stick to a script."

"If you get someone who is ranting and raving, I would never let that kind of person ever do an interview," he said.

On Wednesday's broadcast, Kelly's emotions swung wildly as he explained he was simply someone with a "big heart" who was betrayed by liars who hoped to cash in.

In a particularly dramatic moment, he angrily stood up and started pacing, his voice breaking as he yelled, "I didn't do this stuff! This is not me!" He cried as he hit his hands together, saying, "I'm fighting for my (expletive) life."

He insisted people were trying to ruin his 30-year career, but then said his fight was "not about music."

"I'm trying to have a relationship with my kids and I can't do it" because of the sex-abuse allegations, he shouted. "You all just don't want to believe it."

Hours later, Kelly went to the child-support hearing "expecting to leave. He didn't come here to go to jail," said his publicist, Darryll Johnson, who said Kelly was prepared to pay \$50,000 to \$60,000. He said Kelly did not have the whole amount because he has not been able to work.

A spokeswoman for the Cook County Sheriff's Office said Kelly would not be released from jail until he pays the full child-support debt. His next hearing was scheduled for March 13.

After his Feb. 22 arrest in Chicago, Kelly spent a weekend in jail before someone posted his \$100,000 bail. His defense attorney said at the time that Kelly's finances were "a mess."

Following the court hearing, the publicist said that the singer "feels good" about the TV interview.

CBS said it interviewed Kelly for 80 minutes. More of the interview is expected to air Thursday.

Interviews with two women who live with Kelly — Joycelyn Savage and Azriel Clary — will air Thursday. Savage's parents insist she is being held against her will. Kelly suggested during the interview that her parents were in it for the money and blamed them for his relationship with their daughter, saying they brought her to watch him perform when she was a teenager.

A lawyer representing the couple bristled at the allegation, saying Timothy and Jonjelyn Savage never asked for or received money from Kelly. The couple said they have not spoken to their 23-year-old daughter for two years and asked Kelly to make her available to talk to them.

"At no point did this family sell their daughter to anyone or provide their daughter for anything for money," attorney Gerald Griggs said Wednesday during a news conference.

Kelly acknowledged in the interview that he had done "lots of things wrong" when it comes to women, but he said he had apologized. The singer blamed social media for fueling the allegations against him. He also said that all of his accusers are lying.

The 52-year-old recording artist has been trailed for decades by allegations that he violated underage girls and women and held some as virtual slaves. Kelly has consistently denied any sexual misconduct and was acquitted of child pornography charges in 2008. Those charges centered on a graphic video that

prosecutors said showed him having sex with a girl as young as 13.

He has pleaded not guilty to 10 counts of aggravated sexual abuse.

Rising from poverty on Chicago's South Side, Kelly broke into the R&B scene in 1993 with his first solo album, "12 Play," which produced such popular sex-themed songs as "Your Body's Callin'" and "Bump N' Grind." He has written numerous hits for himself and other artists, including Celine Dion, Michael Jackson and Lady Gaga. One of his best-known hits is "I Believe I Can Fly."

This story has been corrected to show that interviews with two women who live with Kelly will air Thursday, not Friday.

Associated Press Writer Kate Brumback in Atlanta contributed to this story

Check out the AP's complete coverage of the investigations into R. Kelly.

Family devastated after losing 10 relatives in tornado

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

BEAUREGARD, Ala. (AP) — Cousins Cordarrly Jones and Demetria Jones have a hard time counting all the relatives they lost to a monster tornado that wiped out a rural community in Alabama.

Their grandparents, 89-year-old Jimmy Jones and 83-year-old Mary Louise Jones, were killed in their home on a two-lane road where most everyone shares family ties.

The couple's son Emmanuel Jones, a 53-year-old uncle to the cousins, is gone too. Also dead, they said, were seven cousins by both blood and marriage: Eric Jamal Stenson, 38; Florel Tate Stenson; 63; Henry Lewis Stenson; 65; James Henry Tate, 86; Tresia Robinson, 62; Raymond Robinson Jr., 63; and Maggie Delight Robinson, 57.

Stunned by the loss of 10 relatives and worried about still more who are hospitalized with serious injuries, the cousins stood Tuesday amid the wreckage of a row of family homes in tiny Beauregard, near the Georgia state line.

"It really hasn't fully hit me yet. I'm still trying to process it," said Cordarrly Jones, 29.

"Everybody in this area just about was related," said Demetria Jones, 28. "It's devastating."

With winds of as much as 170 mph (275 kph), the deadliest U.S. tornado in nearly six years rolled mobile homes across fields and caused even brick homes to collapse into unrecognizable heaps. At least 23 people were killed, some of them children. The full scale of the loss came into focus with the release of the names of the dead. The youngest victim was 6, the oldest 89.

It was the deadliest tornado to hit the U.S. since May 2013, when an EF5 twister killed 24 people in Moore, Oklahoma. The enormous twister apparently churned for about 70 miles (110 kilometers), crossing the state line and ending in neighboring Georgia, the National Weather Service said. Government teams that surveyed Sunday's damage confirmed there was an outbreak of at least 20 twisters in Florida, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina.

On Tuesday, the search for bodies, pets and belongings continued in and around Beauregard amid the din of beeping heavy machinery and whining chain saws. Sheriff Jay Jones said the list of the missing shrunk from dozens to just seven or eight.

Richard Tate, who is part of the same family and lost four close relatives, said he was lucky to be alive. "It could have taken all of us the way it was moving," said Tate, who was inside his home with his wife when the structure was destroyed.

Bernard Reese, a distant relative of the Jones cousins, picked through the remains of his aunt's house on Tuesday. He said he found more than a half-dozen bodies or fatally injured residents along Lee County 39, the road where so many of the family members died.

"It bothers me, but it had to be done," said Reese, who lives about 2 miles away. He arrived in his truck after the twister passed and climbed over downed trees and power lines to get to the scene.

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Reese's friend Dexter Norwood said he found three more bodies and the severed leg of a woman. "I keep seeing it. I ain't slept worth a crap," said Norwood, 46. He suffered a fractured vertebra when the twister hit the mobile home he shared with his wife, but he said both are fine.

The bloated corpse of a gray horse lay on the ground beside the couple's home. Norwood said he had to euthanize the animal after the storm because it suffered a serious leg injury.

The extent of the damage and death left him shaken.

"I never thought I'd see it," he said. "It's rough."

The Jones cousins, who survived at least in part because don't live on the road where their relatives died, said they had to talk their way past police barricades to get to the scene. Officers, they said, kept asking for something to prove they were related to the victims.

"I just had to tell them that everything that proves who I am is out on that road," Cordarry Jones said.

Gov sees Alabama tornado rubble as residents seek to recover

By KIM CHANDLER and JAY REEVES Associated Press

BEAUREGARD, Ala. (AP) — Alabama's governor walked a country road lined with shattered mobile homes Wednesday as the search for victims of a monstrous tornado ended and residents salvaged what they could from the rubble and planned funerals for the 23 dead.

"Y'all, it's horrendous, absolutely horrendous," Gov. Kay Ivey said after touring some of the worst devastation in an area of Lee County where "nothing's left standing, everything's in shreds."

Ivey signed a disaster assistance agreement with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and ordered state flags flown at half-staff until sunset Sunday.

As Ivey surveyed the damage, residents picked through mounds of splintered lumber, twisted metal and broken glass that had once been their homes.

Brooke Waldrop searched for the beloved motorcycle vest of her late stepfather, Marshall Grimes, who had belonged to a Christian motorcycle club.

"Words cannot express how much this man loved God and he loved his motorcycles," Waldrop said.

Grimes was among three people killed in the tornado-flattened home. Waldrop said her 11-year-old sister Kayla was the only person inside who lived.

Waldrop said someone found the vest and brought it to the funeral home Wednesday night. She hopes to put it in a shadow box and give it to her sister as a memento.

"For her to be the sole survivor of this one house is going to be hard for her," Waldrop said.

The huge EF4 tornado struck the rural community of Beauregard on Sunday afternoon, blasting an area nearly a mile wide with 170 mph (270 kph) winds.

The death toll stood at 23 as officials announced Wednesday that the search for victims had ended after two full days. Lee County Sheriff Jay Jones said the final seven people on officials' list of the missing had been accounted for and were alive.

"We are still in standby mode on the outside chance they find somebody else, which is not likely," County Coroner Bill Harris told a news conference.

The dead included four children and a couple in their 80s. Ten victims belonged to a single extended family. At least two funerals were scheduled for Thursday, with many more to follow soon after.

Kathy Pardrige wore a brace to keep her broken neck stabilized as she looked for anything salvageable in the ruins of her home. Pardrige, her family and their two dogs and pet rabbit all survived, but nearly everything they owned was destroyed.

They were at home when they heard the tornado alert on their phones, she said. A few minutes later, the house began to shake.

"My husband had grabbed me and we flew about 20 to 25 feet (6 to 8 meters) before we landed on the ground," she said.

Pope Francis sent condolences Wednesday to tornado victims in a telegram to the bishop of Mobile, Alabama, the Most Rev. Thomas Rodi. The pope said he was saddened to learn of the "tragic loss of life

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and injuries.”

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump said he will survey the damage Friday.

The National Weather Service has confirmed at least 34 tornadoes hit Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina on Sunday.

The twister that smashed Beaugard was the deadliest U.S. tornado in nearly six years. The weather service said it remained on the ground for an hour and 16 minutes, crossing the Chattahoochee River into western Georgia along a path stretching roughly 70 miles (112 kilometers). That meant the tornado traveled at an average speed of nearly 55 mph (90 kph).

And though it lost some intensity entering Georgia, the twister injured seven people in the neighboring state.

“Typically, in the Southern plains of the U.S. in what they call the traditional tornado alley, that would be a fast forward speed,” said Chris Darden, meteorologist in charge of the weather service’s Birmingham office.

Twisters in states like Oklahoma and Kansas can travel as slow as 10 or 15 mph (16 or 24 kph), he noted.

“Our storms tend to move faster,” Darden said of the Southeast tornadoes.

Alabama and several other Southern states could soon be under threat of more severe storms — including the risk of some tornadoes — with a new system expected to reach the South this weekend, forecasters said.

A vast part of the region from Texas to Georgia will be under threat of severe weather Saturday, the national Storm Prediction Center warned. The at-risk area is home to 41 million people and includes major cities such as Dallas, New Orleans and Atlanta.

The Beaugard tornado was the deadliest to hit the U.S. since May 2013, when an EF5 twister killed 24 people in Moore, Oklahoma.

Associated Press writers Kate Brumback and Jeff Martin in Atlanta and Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia, contributed to this report.

Las Vegas bets on Elon Musk for tunnel transit system

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Entrepreneur Elon Musk’s dream of an express tunnel transit system could finally become a reality in Las Vegas after major setbacks in other cities.

Las Vegas’ tourism agency announced Wednesday it is recommending that an enterprise backed by the divisive billionaire receive a contract to build and operate an underground tunnel system through which autonomous electric vehicles would whisk people around a mega convention center, and in the future, possibly the city’s famous casino-filled corridor.

If approved, the system of just over a mile (1.6 kilometer) long would debut by January 2021 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, which hosts more than 1 million people every year. The Musk-owned The Boring Company would build the project costing from \$35 million to \$55 million.

It’s different from his beleaguered efforts to build underground tunnel systems in other cities because Musk will be paid for it if the contract is approved. Projects in Los Angeles and Chicago have drawn opposition and skepticism from residents and officials about whether they will actually open.

Musk has faced recent blowback because of his behavior and tweeting habits. He has had dust-ups with stock market regulators and agreed last year to step down as chairman of the board of Tesla, his electric car company.

But Las Vegas tourism officials are ready to get on board with a Musk project.

“It’s really innovative. I think it will be an attraction in and of itself, frankly,” Steve Hill, president and CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, told The Associated Press.

Details of the project have not been finalized. But Hill said the system will probably have three or four stations, each situated at entrances to the convention center’s halls. People would be carried to the hall of their choice in electric vehicles moving through parallel tunnels, each running in one direction.

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The fleet could include Tesla's Model X and Model 3 and a vehicle with capacity for about 16 people. All vehicles would be fully autonomous, meaning they won't have drivers.

Hill said the authority is looking at options that would allow 4,400 to 11,000 people to use the system per hour. That passenger volume would depend on the size of the stations and number of vehicles — estimated between 90 and 140 — moving through the tunnels.

The Las Vegas Convention Center, which attracts worldwide gatherings including the premier Consumer Electronics Show, is undergoing an expansion. When finished, convention attendees could log about two miles (3.2 kilometers) walking from one end to the other. The distance led officials to look for a transportation solution.

The service within the convention center is expected to be free for people attending events.

The convention center is operated by the authority, which is funded by a county room tax and is responsible for promoting the destination around the world. The tourism agency is governed by a board of directors.

The authority is expected to present to the board the recommendation to select Musk's company March 12. If approved, Hill said the agency hopes to return to the board with a full design and proposed contract by June.

Musk in December unveiled a test tunnel built under a Los Angeles suburb, allowing reporters and guests to take rides. It came almost two years to the day after Musk announced on Twitter that "traffic is driving me nuts" and he was "going to build a tunnel boring machine and just start digging."

"I am actually going to do this," he added in response to initial skepticism. Soon after, he began The Boring Company, tongue in cheek intentional.

The skepticism has not subsided. The Boring Company in November canceled its plans for another test tunnel in the Los Angeles area after a neighborhood group filed a lawsuit over concerns about traffic and disruptions from trucks hauling out dirt during the boring process.

Now plans for a project in Chicago appear to be in jeopardy. Neither mayoral candidate approves of plans announced in June that called for a system similar to the one proposed for Las Vegas. It would carry people between Chicago's downtown and O'Hare International Airport at speeds of up to 150 mph (241.4 kph) through underground tunnels.

Hill said he does not expect permitting processes in the Las Vegas area to put the project behind schedule should it be approved, because the city is "committed to innovation."

"Look at everything that we have built in Las Vegas, and this city and everybody who has built it found ways to make that happen," he said. "As long as this continues to make sense, I believe that we will figure out how to make it happen."

Hill acknowledged the technology that will be used in the project has not been used commercially, but he said the company has the talent to make the project a reality.

The confidence in The Boring Company is such that the authority already has optional routes for the tunnel system to expand to connect to the Las Vegas Strip, the city's downtown and McCarran International Airport. An expansion of that magnitude could be a solution to the congestion affecting the Strip and nearby areas.

"We do see it as a real opportunity and something we would like to pursue," Hill said.

Steve Davis, president of The Boring Company, said the speed at which the vehicles will move inside the convention center's tunnels will depend on the number of stations built. The technology involved in the project is being tested every day in the tunnel in Hawthorne, California, he said.

The company believes it will be able to deliver the project by the 2021 deadline, just before that year's edition of the CES tech gadget gathering. It is also eyeing the expansion possibility.

"If the community likes it, and they come, they ride at the convention center and they say 'This is great. It's comfortable. It's fast. It's awesome.' Well, there are other places it can go," Davis said.

Kelly interview becomes a spotlight moment for Gayle King

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Gayle King's composure during an interview with an emotional R. Kelly about the sex abuse charges against the singer likely helped her more than any answers helped him.

King proved unflappable as a crying Kelly leaped up in anger. In the excerpt aired on "CBS This Morning" on Wednesday, she didn't flinch from challenging the singer as he denied multiple allegations that he sexually abused underage girls and was controlling in his relationships. She drew praise for her performance.

Her best friend Oprah Winfrey urged CBS News to make the full 80-minute conversation with Kelly available. CBS later announced that it will air a prime-time special on Friday based on the interview.

"Gayle King is again teaching a master's class in interviewing," Yamiche Alcindor, White House correspondent for PBS' "NewsHour," said on Twitter. "She remains so calm and focused while @rkelly loses it."

Kelly was out on bail following his Feb. 22 arrest in Chicago on charges of sexually abusing three girls and a woman (he was sent back to jail Wednesday afternoon over unpaid child support bills). Legal attention was refocused on Kelly following Lifetime's documentary special, "Surviving R. Kelly."

"He had a lot to get off his chest," King told her colleagues on "CBS This Morning," admitting surprise that he even agreed to speak publicly. She sat mostly stone-faced across from Kelly as he denied wrongdoing.

"Are you saying that everybody in that documentary was not telling the truth about you? Everybody?" King asked.

After pointing out some details of his alleged abuse, she asked, "why would all of these women tell these different stories about you if they were not true, and they don't know each other? That defies logic to me."

When he denied ever having sex with anyone under the age of 17, she said, "it's so hard to believe that." She remained seated when Kelly jumped up to complain about his character being destroyed.

"Robert, we have to have a conversation," she said. "I don't want you just ranting at the camera."

King said later that she did not feel physically threatened, although she worried Kelly might knock into her accidentally.

"I know that he was upset with the questions and I know that he was irritated with me at certain points during the interview," King told colleagues on the CBSN digital network. "But I never thought that he was going to hurt me."

Ronn Torossian, a crisis management expert and CEO of 5W Public Relations, said King did a fantastic job speaking with Kelly in the nearly 10-minute excerpt aired on "CBS This Morning."

"She was extremely professional in a trying time," Torossian said. "She kept her composure and came equipped to battle." The interview "brings the Gayle King brand to another level."

If that's the case, King's timing couldn't be better.

The 64-year-old journalist spent many years working in local television in Hartford, Connecticut; Kansas City, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., but many knew her from the association with Winfrey. When King helped launch the CBS morning show in 2011, she had less celebrity wattage than her partners at the time, Charlie Rose and Norah O'Donnell.

Rose was since fired over sexual misconduct allegations. O'Donnell remains, with new partners John Dickerson and Bianna Golodryga. King has arguably become the indispensable figure on the morning show, and she's had a run of newsmaking interviews with presidential contender Howard Schultz, sexual abuse survivor Elizabeth Smart and Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam about his school yearbook photo which showed a person in blackface and another wearing a Ku Klux Klan uniform (he has denied he was either person).

King told Oprah magazine that it was Kelly's team that reached out to her for the interview.

"I had some reservations because I was thinking 'What are we gonna get? He's just going to deny it!' But I did it because I at least thought there would be some...if not contrition, then at least acknowledgement that 'This is a bad situation, and I have made some mistakes.' But instead, he seems to believe everyone is out to get him," she said.

Some news reports depicted King as unhappy with turmoil at the morning show, where top producer Ryan Kadro recently lost his job amid ratings problems. She's working on a contract that expires this year,

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and keeping her is a challenge for new CBS News President Susan Zirinsky. The two women were not made available for comment on Wednesday.

In an interview with the Hollywood Reporter published last week, King was asked whether she sees herself at CBS News this time next year.

"Oooh, that's a good question," she said. "All I can say is I really love my job. And I think it's kind of foolish to predict the future."

Check out the AP's complete coverage of the investigations into R. Kelly.

FIFA's record finances reignites World Cup pay parity debate

By **ROB HARRIS AP Global Soccer Writer**

LONDON (AP) — When world soccer executives receive FIFA's annual report this year, they will see that \$753,000 is funding a women's league in Colombia, \$588,197 is helping female players in New Zealand and girls in Botswana are benefiting from \$341,600.

That's merely a snapshot of the \$270.3 million that the body that governs world soccer has invested in projects worldwide between 2016 and 2018.

Four years since police raided the hotel and offices of soccer officials and FIFA's Zurich headquarters in 2015 in a scandal that threatened the organization's existence, FIFA is awash with cash. People with knowledge of FIFA's finances told The Associated Press that in the four-year period covering the 2018 World Cup, FIFA's reserves soared to \$2.74 billion and revenue rose to \$6.4 billion. The people spoke on condition of anonymity because the financial results remain confidential.

Now, the organization is eager to show that handouts no longer line the pockets of its top managers. Rather, the money is being used to build stadiums, train coaches and provide more playing opportunities. But while the annual report underscores FIFA's financial vitality, it also highlights the glaring disparity between men and women's soccer.

Last summer's World Cup is a good example: France banked \$38 million from FIFA for winning the championship, but the women's champion this July will earn just \$4 million.

U.S. coach Jill Ellis, who is leading her team's title defense in France, said she is disappointed with the financial rewards.

"You want to make sure there is a fair apportionment of winnings going out," Ellis said.

Most upsetting to critics is the fact that the financial gulf appears to be growing. FIFA has doubled the overall prize money fund to \$30 million since the last Women's World Cup in Canada in 2015. But that total amount is less than the \$40 million increase that men's World Cup prize money will get in 2022 — for a total of \$440 million in prize money.

"The difference between the men's and women's prize money is ridiculous," said Tatjana Haenni, who stepped down as FIFA head of women's soccer in 2017. "It's really disappointing the gap between the men's and women's World Cups got bigger. It sends the wrong message."

The world players' union said the disparity is a reflection of FIFA's priorities as well as of the status of women's soccer.

"In most countries, the pace of change has not been fast enough nor the changes progressive enough to make up for decades of neglect of the women's game," FIFPRO said in a statement to the AP. "Even today women's football remains an afterthought for many of football's male administrators and the game lags embarrassingly behind other more progressive sports and industries."

"Most troubling of all is that the gender gap in football is even widening in some areas, including the share of FIFA World Cup prize money."

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has said critics are "perfectly justified" and have a "fair point."

"We need to try to find what is the most balanced way and I think we made a step and there will be many more steps going ahead," Infantino said in October before his ruling council approved the 2019 Women's World Cup prize scale. "Maybe one day women's football will generate more than men's football."

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Exactly how much money women's soccer generates is unclear, as much of FIFA's revenue comes from top sponsors who are signed up for both World Cups.

"That's something never really analyzed," said Haenni, who spent 19 years at FIFA. "What is the potential value of the Women's World Cup? Nobody knows the Women's World Cup commercial value because it's not sold separately. This is something that should at least be discussed."

One of FIFA's main sponsors is listening.

Credit card giant Visa said last week that it would support "women's football with a marketing investment equal to our support of the men's FIFA World Cup in Russia." It did not disclose any figures.

Visa is one of the sponsors that stuck with FIFA through its corruption scandal, calling for the departure in 2015 of Sepp Blatter, FIFA's then-president who was eventually banned for financial misconduct.

After being elected as Blatter's successor in 2016, Infantino said "FIFA was clinically dead as an organization." Now, the Swiss-Italian has the budget is in a healthy state, and is due to be re-elected unopposed in June to a four-year term.

The 2015-18 finances exceed the forecasts that were presented to the FIFA Congress in June.

While FIFA projected cash reserves to increase to \$1.653 billion in the 2018 World Cup cycle, they had grown to \$2.74 billion at the end of 2018, according to the people with knowledge of the finances.

Following the corruption scandal of 2015, FIFA had modestly aimed to raise \$5 billion by the end of last summer's World Cup in Russia — a projection later increased to \$6.1 billion. Those expectations were eclipsed when the four-year cycle ended with revenues of \$6.4 billion, according to the people with knowledge of the financial report, which shows a profit of around \$1 billion.

Haenni noted the challenge lies in ensuring that FIFA's riches don't all go to men's soccer.

"Some federations won't have proper structures for the women's teams," Haenni said. "You want to know where the money is going and linked to creating a more balanced environment for women's teams."

More AP soccer: <https://apnews.com/apf-Soccer> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

'Jeopardy!' host Alex Trebek says he has pancreatic cancer

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Jeopardy!" host Alex Trebek said he has been diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer but intends to fight the disease and keep on working.

In a video posted online Wednesday, the 78-year-old said he was announcing his illness directly to "Jeopardy!" fans in keeping with his long-time policy of being "open and transparent."

He's among 50,000 other American who receive such a diagnosis each year, Trebek said. Normally, the "prognosis for this is not very encouraging, but I'm going to fight this, and I'm going to keep working."

Trebek said he plans to beat the disease's low survival rate with the love and support of family and friends and with prayers from viewers.

He lightened the difficult message with humor: He said he must beat the odds because his "Jeopardy!" contract requires he host the quiz show for three more years.

"So help me. Keep the faith and we'll win. We'll get it done," he said, his voice calm and steady.

Trebek, a native of Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, has been host of the syndicated quiz show since 1984. He and his wife, Jean Currivan, have two children.

Ken Jennings, a longtime "Jeopardy!" player who took part in the show's "All-Star Games" that ended Tuesday, posted a tweet in which he compared Trebek to the late TV journalist Walter Cronkite.

"I've said this before but Alex Trebek is in a way the last Cronkite: authoritative, reassuring TV voice you hear every night, almost to the point of ritual," Jennings wrote.

Trebek has gone online before to get out word about his health. In January 2018, he posted a video announcing he'd undergone surgery for blood clots on the brain that followed a fall he'd taken. The show was on hiatus during his recovery.

In 2007, he was hospitalized for about a week after suffering what was described as a minor heart attack.

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The show has yet to bring in a substitute host for him — save once, when he and “Wheel of Fortune” host Pat Sajak swapped their TV jobs as an April’s Fool prank.

In a Twitter post, Sajak wrote “there is no one I know who is stronger and more determined, and I would never bet against him. We, and the entire country, are pulling for you, Alex.”

Trebek, the smoothest of TV game show hosts, admitted to a case of nerves during rehearsals in January for the show’s first-ever “All-Star Games,” a team-play tournament that made new demands on its host.

“This will probably start me drinking again,” he joked.

Although Trebek had publicly toyed with the idea of retiring, he instead renewed his deal in 2018 with Sony Pictures Television for three more years, through the 2021-22 season.

In the January set interview with The Associated Press, Trebek discussed his decision to keep going with “Jeopardy!”

“It’s not as if I’m overworked — we tape 46 days a year,” he said. But he noted he’s been working on TV for more than 50 years and was, as he put it, “78-and-a-half now. I’m slowing down.”

“It’s logical to start thinking about retiring,” he said. “And I will someday, when I feel I’ve lost enough of my abilities and am messing up a little too much, or it’s no longer any fun.”

“And it’s still fun,” he said.

Trebek, who holds a philosophy degree from the University of Ottawa, was a TV and radio reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. before moving to the United States. He became a U.S. citizen in 1998.

He’s won five Emmys as best game show host and received a lifetime achievement award from the TV academy in 2011.

Created by entertainer-producer Merv Griffin, “Jeopardy!” debuted as a NBC daytime show in 1964 with host Art Fleming and ran for more than a decade before going into syndication. The version with Trebek shifted the show largely into early evening slots.

US plans end to wolf protections; critics say it’s premature

By **MATTHEW BROWN** and **JOHN FLESHER** Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — U.S. wildlife officials plan to lift protections for gray wolves across the Lower 48 states, re-igniting the legal battle over a predator that’s running into conflicts with farmers and ranchers as its numbers rebound in some regions.

The proposal would give states the authority to hold wolf hunting and trapping seasons. It was announced Wednesday by acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt at a wildlife conference in Denver.

Wolves had previously lost federal protections in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming, where hunters and trappers now kill hundreds of the animals annually.

Wildlife advocates and some members of Congress reacted with outrage to the latest proposal and promised to challenge any final decision in court.

Jamie Rappaport Clark, a former director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service now with the group Defenders of Wildlife, warned of an “all-out war on wolves” if the plan advances.

“We don’t have any confidence that wolves will be managed like other wildlife,” she said.

But government officials countered that the recovery of wolves from widespread extermination last century has worked and they no longer need the Endangered Species Act to shield them.

“Recovery of the gray wolf under the Endangered Species Act is one of our nation’s great conservation successes, with the wolf joining other cherished species, such as the bald eagle, that have been brought back from the brink,” U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spokesman Gavin Shire said in an emailed statement.

Agriculture groups and lawmakers from Western states are likely to support the administration’s proposal.

Further details were expected during a formal announcement planned in coming days.

Long despised by farmers and ranchers, wolves were shot, trapped and poisoned out of existence in most of the U.S. by the mid-20th century.

They received endangered species protections in 1975, when there were about 1,000 left, only in northern Minnesota. Now more than 5,000 of the animals live in the contiguous U.S.

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Most are in the Western Great Lakes and Northern Rockies regions.

Protections for the Northern Rockies population were lifted in 2011. State officials and government biologists say the region's wolves have continued to thrive despite pressure from hunting. The animals are prolific breeders and can adapt to a variety of habitats.

Wildlife advocates want federal protections kept in place until wolves repopulate more of a historical range that stretched across most of North America.

Since being reintroduced in Yellowstone National park and central Idaho in the mid-1990s, the Northern Rockies population has expanded to parts of Oregon, Washington and California.

Those states so far have not allowed hunting, despite growing pressure from ranchers whose livestock herds have been attacked.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has argued for years that gray wolves have recovered in the lower 48 states, despite experts who contend they occupy only about 15 percent of the territory they once roamed. Agency officials insist the recovery of wolves everywhere is not required for the species no longer to be in danger of extinction.

John Vucetich, a wildlife biologist at Michigan Technological University, said most wolf experts probably would agree the species is not at imminent risk. But said he dropping federal protections was a premature move.

Many people "still find it difficult to live with wolves," primarily because they kill livestock as well as deer and elk that people like to hunt, Vucetich said. If wolves are returned to state management, he said, "I do worry that some of the states could be overly aggressive and that wolves could fare worse than their current condition."

The government first proposed revoking the wolf's protected status across the Lower 48 states in 2013. It backed off after federal courts struck down its plan for "delisting" the species in the western Great Lakes region states of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials disclosed to the AP last year that another scientific review of the animal's status had been launched.

Shire declined to disclose the agency's rationale for determining the species had recovered, but said members of the public would have a chance to comment before a final decision in coming months.

Ryan Yates, director of congressional relations for the American Farm Bureau Federation, applauded the federal agency's plan and said many farmers and ranchers have lost livestock to wolf kills since the species was granted legal protections. The farmers and ranchers will respect state regulations aimed at managing wolf populations, he said.

"Some people like them, some people don't, but the law's the law," Yates said.

Lawmakers in Congress frustrated with court rulings maintaining protections for wolves have backed legislation to forcibly strip protections in the Great Lakes region and beyond. A similar effort by lawmakers ended protections for Northern Rockies wolves.

Flesher reported from Traverse City, Michigan. Associated Press writer Gillian Flaccus contributed from Portland.

Follow Matthew Brown at <https://twitter.com/matthewbrownap>

Ghosn's journey: Star auto executive to masked suspect

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

Carlos Ghosn, the star auto executive credited with rescuing both Renault and Nissan, left a drab Tokyo detention center Wednesday after more than three months in custody, his identity obscured by a surgical mask, hat and construction worker's outfit.

The jet-setting turnaround wizard was pursued by TV news helicopters as he traveled in a tiny Suzuki van through Tokyo streets after his release on 1 billion yen (nearly \$9 million) bail — a peculiar and humbling

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episode in a journey that has highlighted distinct aspects of Japanese corporate life and its justice system.

Brazilian-born and raised in Lebanon, Ghosn had been held since his arrest on Nov. 19 shortly after he arrived at a Tokyo airport aboard a private jet. He has stoutly maintained his innocence and vowed to fight charges he falsified financial reports and committed breach of trust.

No date has been set for his trial, which will pit the proud, cosmopolitan European and his star legal team against Japanese prosecutors whose determination to prove their case was evident in their crusade to keep Ghosn isolated in the detention center. Only after he agreed to install a surveillance camera at his door and not use the internet, and of course not flee Japan, was he able to gain release on bail, after two denials.

The timing of Ghosn's release allows him to spend his 65th birthday, on Saturday, with family.

Ghosn proved his mettle at tire company Michelin before he was recruited to help restore profitability at Renault AG, which is 15 percent owned by the French government. Dispatched by Renault in 1999 to help turn around its alliance partner Nissan, he delivered. Ghosn bet early on that emissions crackdowns would eventually bring an end to the era of gasoline and diesel engines, so he has championed bringing electric and autonomous cars to the masses, fighting resistance within both companies.

He won a rare degree of admiration and respect in Japan at a time when foreign top executives were a rarity. But two decades on, the welcome wore thin.

Ghosn, who by that time led the Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi Motors alliance, found himself the subject of an internal investigation, initiated by whistleblowers, Nissan says, into his compensation and handling of company funds.

Ghosn's star-level pay has drawn attention, since executives in Japan tend to be paid far less than their international counterparts. Some of the charges against him relate to reporting of his deferred income, promised as money, stocks and other items for a later date, including after retirement — money Ghosn says was never paid, or even agreed upon.

Nissan, which makes the March subcompact, Leaf electric car and Infiniti luxury models, says its internal probe found Ghosn hid his pay and misused company funds and assets for personal gain. It dismissed him as chairman, though he remains on the company's board pending a shareholders meeting.

Ghosn also faces charges of breach of trust that stem from his handling of investment losses and payments to a Saudi businessman. He says the investment losses, temporarily transferred onto and then off of Nissan's books, caused the company no losses. The payments, he says, were for legitimate business purposes.

Many within Nissan are thought to have opposed an effort to draw the company and Renault closer, or even to merge them.

In an interview in Paris with The Associated Press, defense lawyer Jean-Yves Le Borgne said Ghosn had a "plot against him" and fell into "a kind of trap" laid by detractors of the plan, which would have put in place a strong French boss.

Le Borgne said he hopes the defense team will get access to all relevant documents, not just those prosecutors select to disclose.

Ghosn's lawyers want to establish his innocence, rebuild his reputation "and show what has happened is nothing but a terrible accident of a great boss," Le Borgne said Wednesday.

Dapper in his tailored dark suits, Ghosn during his prime as an auto executive commanded immediate attention upon entering a room. He is a towering figure in France, where Renault is one of the heavyweight industrial survivors, and has met repeatedly with the past four French presidents; no major economic event in France was held without him.

But in Japan, some of his fellow executives at Nissan have been forthright in condemning him.

The company is declining comment on the criminal case against Ghosn. But shortly after Ghosn's arrest, Nissan CEO Hiroto Saikawa said he held too much power in the company.

"Beyond being sorry I feel great disappointment, frustration, despair, indignation and resentment," Saikawa said, apologizing profusely for the situation, which has raised serious questions about overall

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corporate governance at Nissan and drawn promises for improvements.

Prosecutors have made it clear that Ghosn is to get no special treatment. They had insisted that he should be kept in detention to prevent him from tampering with evidence or leaving the country. He gained his release on bail only after offering to adhere to restrictions to prevent that.

The conviction rate in Japan is more than 99 percent. To help even the odds Ghosn has hired a star defender, Junichiro Hironaka.

France's finance minister said the decision to free Ghosn on bail would allow him to defend himself "freely and serenely."

At a news conference Wednesday, Bruno Le Maire said Ghosn was entitled to the presumption of innocence. He said the solidity of the alliance with Nissan is of tremendous importance.

While Ghosn is enjoying liberty after nearly four months in solitary confinement, his lawyers have cautioned that prosecutors have leeway to file new charges.

His journey has just begun.

Alighting from the tiny, non-descript van used to convey him out of the detention center, having shed his mask and hat, Ghosn smiled.

Associated Press writers Yuri Kageyama in Tokyo and Jeffrey Schaeffer, Elaine Ganley and Sylvie Corbet in Paris contributed to this report.

Eyes in the sky: Heat-seeking drones used after tornado

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

Rescue crews didn't have to stumble through every destroyed building in their search for victims after a tornado ravaged a corner of Alabama this week: They used heat-seeking drones to let them know whether there was anyone beneath the ruins.

In so doing, they joined the increasing ranks of public safety agencies across the U.S. and around the world that have employed unmanned thermal-imaging aircraft during critical situations, including manhunts, wildfires and other natural disasters.

In tornado-stricken Alabama, Lee County Sheriff Jay Jones said Tuesday it was not clear if drones spotted any bodies or anyone injured or trapped in the debris. But at the least, they helped reassure searchers that they hadn't overlooked anyone in the aftermath of the twister that killed 23 people.

"They gave us an overhead view of areas we might have missed had we been at eye level on land," Jones said.

Thermal-imaging drones use infrared cameras that find heat sources on the ground, in buildings or in water, at any time of day, whether from a human or animal, alive or newly deceased, or from other things, such as flames.

The devices can transmit a color-coded image in real time to a laptop, cellphone, tablet or large-screen monitor. Depending on the settings the user chooses, heat sources can be made to stand out in bright red, white or other colors.

Law enforcement officers and firefighters who use such airborne technology swear by it as a tool to protect and save lives. Drones are cheaper than manned aircraft such as helicopters, which can't get into tight spaces and require more training.

Officials in China, Nepal and Mexico used drones — with and without heat-detecting equipment — after devastating earthquakes. Firefighters battling fast-moving blazes in California's woods employed heat-seeking drones to map fires and search burned homes. They also have been used to locate missing people, as in the case of an 11-year-old girl found last year in the thick woods of North Carolina.

In Hamilton County, Tennessee, Sheriff's Detective Marty Dunn got an urgent call last summer. A man involved in a domestic dispute had fled his home and ventured into the swampy woods near Chattanooga, perhaps with the intention of harming himself.

Dunn rushed to the scene with a thermal-imaging drone. He guided the aircraft over the thick canopy

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of trees and found what he had been looking for in about 6 minutes — a heat signature that told him a human was sitting at the base of a tree. The man was rescued quickly and safely, Dunn said.

It took less time than a search by deputies and police dogs would have, he said.

"It's an amazing tool," Dunn said. "It worked out for the best."

In the San Francisco area, the Menlo Park Fire Protection District boasts a fleet of about 15 drones with varying capabilities, some with regular cameras, some with thermal-imaging ones. During last year's devastating wildfires in Northern California, thermal-imaging drones mapped areas where fires raged. The pictures were sent to firefighters' cellphones, helping them attack the flames efficiently, Chief Harold Schapelhouman said.

Menlo Park firefighters also used thermal drones to find people lost in San Francisco Bay, and took drones to Texas to help after Hurricane Harvey. There, the aircraft scouted out flooded areas to make rescue-boat navigation easier amid fallen trees, power lines and other obstacles, Schapelhouman said.

"It's a super-efficient piece of equipment," said Schapelhouman, who estimates the department has spent \$200,000 on its drone program, including pilot training.

In Polk County, Florida, Sheriff Grady Judd has a team of 20 drone pilots on his Aerial Response Team. Polk County uses its thermal-imaging drones at night, finding burglars who thought they were safe hiding in the dark.

Drone operations in Florida are limited by strict laws. Judd said the sheriff's office can use drones only in an emergency, such as a tornado or hurricane, or with a court order.

"We can't put it in the air just to look at traffic flows or to write traffic citations or anything like that," Judd said. "You can't launch them to do even population surveillance at a football game to see where you're having trouble."

A Portland, Oregon-based company, FLIR Systems, designs, makes and sells thermal-imaging cameras used by police and fire departments. It has been working on airborne thermal-imaging technology for about 40 years and jumped into the drone camera business for public safety agencies about four years ago, said Jeff Frank, senior vice president for global product strategy.

Camera-and-drone combinations can range from about \$1,500 to around \$10,000, Frank said.

In a study issued last May, the Center for the Study of Drones at Bard College reported at least 910 state and local police, sheriff, fire and emergency-service agencies in the U.S. have acquired drones.

The report's author, Dan Gettinger, said it is not clear how many agencies have drones with thermal-imaging capabilities but estimated it is less than 25 percent and increasing.

Associated Press reporter Kim Chandler contributed to this report from Lee County, Alabama.

North Korea said to be rebuilding structures at rocket site

By **HYUNG-JIN KIM** and **KIM TONG-HYUNG** Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea is restoring facilities at a long-range rocket launch site that it dismantled last year as part of disarmament steps, according to foreign experts and a South Korean lawmaker who was briefed by Seoul's spy service.

The finding follows a high-stakes nuclear summit last week between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump that ended without any agreement.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service provided the assessment about the North's Tongchang-ri launch site to lawmakers during a private briefing Tuesday. North Korea didn't immediately respond in its state media.

"I would be very disappointed if that were happening," Trump told reporters at the White House, adding that he would be "very, very disappointed in Chairman Kim." He said it was "a very early report" and that "we'll see what happens. We'll take a look. It will ultimately get solved."

An article from 38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, cited commercial satellite imagery as indicating that efforts to rebuild some structures at the site started sometime between Feb. 16

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and March 2.

Dismantling parts of its long-range rocket launch facility was among several steps the North took last year when it entered nuclear talks with the United States and South Korea. North Korea has carried out satellite launches at the site in recent years, resulting in U.N. sanctions over expert claims that they were disguised tests of banned missile technology.

It wasn't immediately clear how the report might affect nuclear diplomacy. The Trump-Kim summit fell apart because of differences over how much sanction relief North Korea could win in return for closing its aging main nuclear complex. The U.S. and North Korea accused each other of causing the summit breakdown, but both sides left the door open for future negotiations.

Trump said Kim told him that North Korea would continue to suspend nuclear and missile tests while negotiations are underway, and South Korea and the U.S. announced Sunday that they are eliminating massive springtime military drills and replacing them with smaller exercises in an effort to support the talks.

One of the South Korean lawmakers who attended the intelligence briefing said Wednesday that NIS director Suh Hoon said the structures being restored at the launch site include roofs and building doors.

The lawmaker requested anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the information.

He quoted Suh as saying that the move could be preparation to restart long-range rocket launches if nuclear diplomacy completely collapses, or could be an attempt to add structures that could be dramatically blown up in a show of denuclearization commitment when U.S. inspectors visit if negotiations with Washington go well.

The NIS said it couldn't confirm the report on Suh's briefing.

The 38 North report published Tuesday said the rail-mounted processing building, which is where space launch vehicles are worked on before they're moved to the launch pad, is being reassembled. It said two support cranes can be seen at the building, and walls have been erected and a new roof added.

At the engine test stand, the website said it appears that the engine support structure is being reassembled. It said new roofs have been installed on the fuel and oxidizer buildings.

The report was written by Jack Liu and Jenny Town.

Beyond Parallel, a website run by the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank, issued a similar assessment of the Tongchang-ri site. It said satellite imagery taken Saturday, two days after the failed summit, showed North Korea "is pursuing a rapid rebuilding" of the rocket site.

After repeated failures, North Korea successfully put a satellite into orbit for the first time in 2012 in a launch from the site, which is also known as the Sohae Satellite Launching Station. North Korea had another successful satellite launch in 2016.

North Korea has said its satellite launches are part of its peaceful space development program. None of the country's high-profile missile tests, including three ICBM launches in 2017, was conducted at the site.

But many outside experts say ballistic missiles and rockets used in satellite launches share similar bodies, engines and other technology. They say each of the North's satellite launches was believed to have improved its missile technology.

After carrying out the third of its three ICBM launches in late 2017, North Korea claimed to be able to attack the mainland United States with nuclear-armed missiles. Foreign missile experts say the North still needs to master a few remaining technologies, such as perfecting a re-entry vehicle, to have functioning ICBMs.

In early 2018, North Korea abruptly expressed its intention to deal away its weapons arsenal in return for political and economic benefits. The North has since suspended nuclear and missile tests and dismantled its underground nuclear testing site.

Its dismantling of parts of the Tongchang-ri facility occurred at the beginning of U.S.-North Korea negotiations last year. Both the launch pad and engine test stand were in about the same condition since last August, according to the 38 North report.

After a September summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, Kim agreed to "permanently shut down" the Tongchang-ri engine test ground and rocket launch pad with

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the participation of foreign experts.

A statement issued by Kim and Moon categorized the steps as parts of a broader goal to make the Korean Peninsula free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threat. This could suggest that North Korea acknowledged that the Tongchang-ri site is a nuclear-related facility.

Associated Press writer Deb Riechmann in Washington contributed to this report.

A record-breaking US trade deficit: Does it really matter?

By JOSH BOAK AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. trade deficit reached its highest sum ever last year, defying President Donald Trump's efforts and promises to shrink it through his economic policies. The irony is that those policies likely contributed to the deficit.

Trump entered office insisting that decades of trade gaps had crushed the U.S. economy and that he would forge new agreements that would diminish the deficits.

It hasn't happened.

The government said Wednesday that the U.S. trade gap in goods and services reached \$621 billion last year, its highest total since 2008. And the U.S. deficits in goods with China and Mexico surged to record highs.

As president, Trump's signature effort to stimulate U.S. growth — deficit-funded tax cuts — likely helped fuel the willingness of American corporations and households to spend, including on imported goods. That is especially true at a time when much of the rest of the economic world has weakened and is less likely to buy U.S. goods. The result has been more imports than exports.

What's more, the tariffs Trump imposed on steel, aluminum and hundreds of billions' worth of Chinese goods likely contributed to the trend: During 2018, American companies that import goods from China appeared to accelerate their spending on them to avoid Trump's future import taxes.

Here is a look at the trade deficit and its causes and effects:

WHAT IS THE TRADE GAP?

Trump often misrepresents the trade deficit. He has frequently labeled it an outright economic loss.

"We've been losing, on average, \$375 billion a year with China," the president said in February, referring to the 2017 deficit in goods between the United States and China. That imbalance surged to \$419.2 billion in 2018 under Trump's watch.

Yet the trade gap isn't an outright loss. It simply reflects the greater value of what the United States imports compared to what it exports. And it's not necessarily a cause for concern.

Last year's trade deficit paid for smartphones, kitchen appliances, clothing, auto parts and a whole range of goods that were made more affordable because of China's lower manufacturing costs. Those lower costs have indeed contributed to the loss of U.S. factories to foreign countries and devastated vast swaths of the industrial Midwest. But lower import prices have also benefited companies and millions of consumers in ways that boosted the U.S. economy — 70 percent of which consists of consumer spending. The ability and willingness of Americans to spend, including on imports, is generally a healthy economic sign.

In its relationship with China, a bigger problem for the U.S. economy than trade deficits is the widespread suspicion that Beijing steals intellectual property and requires American companies that operate there to turn over technology secrets — two issues at the heart of the administration's negotiations with Beijing. Such policies weaken the ability of U.S. companies to compete and inflict billions in losses, according to a report last year by Lee Branstetter, an economist at Carnegie Mellon University and a fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

ARE TRADE GAPS BAD FOR THE ECONOMY?

Not always.

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In the accounting for the nation's gross domestic product — the broadest gauge of the economy — a trade deficit does subtract from growth. But last year's higher U.S. trade gap resulted mainly from the economy's strength, notably robust spending on imports.

Indeed, the last time the trade deficit narrowed by a significant amount, it was because the economy was mired in a devastating downturn — the Great Recession, which lasted from late 2007 to mid-2009. The trade gap in goods sank 38 percent in 2009 to \$503.6 billion. By contrast, in 2018, after years of economic expansion, the gap in goods had swollen to a record \$878.7 billion.

DID ANYTHING ELSE WIDEN THE TRADE GAP?

Kimberly Clausing, an economist at Reed College, points to a sharp increase in government borrowing. The tax cuts that Trump signed into law reduced federal revenue by 1 percent of GDP. This meant the United States had to resort to additional borrowing to help drive growth.

Trump had pledged both faster growth and lower trade deficits. But his impulse to achieve faster growth through government borrowing contributed to a wider trade gap.

"A budget deficit is the public sector adding additional borrowing to the U.S. economy, making the gap between our spending and our earning even larger," Clausing said. That increase contributed to the wider trade gap.

Another factor in the increased trade deficit has been a stronger dollar, another sign of economic health. A higher-valued dollar, compared with other nations' currencies, makes the goods that Americans import relatively more affordable and our exports comparatively more expensive overseas. That disparity has helped drive up demand for imports over exports.

WHY DIDN'T TRUMP'S TARIFFS CURB THE TRADE DEFICIT?

Researchers at the New York Federal Reserve examined this issue last year. Tariffs and counter-tariffs make goods more expensive. This can lead to declines in both imports and exports. When both imports and exports drop, the trade deficit can't easily improve.

And Trump's threat of tariffs probably worsened the situation last year, said Stephen Stanley, chief economist Stephen Stanley at Amherst Pierpont Securities,

The White House initially charged a 25 percent tax on \$50 billion of Chinese imports in June. In September, it imposed a 10 percent tax on an additional \$200 billion of Chinese goods. And it threatened to escalate that tax to 25 percent at the start of 2019 and essentially impose tariffs on all Chinese imports unless progress was made in trade talks.

Trump suspended the additional tariff hikes. But his threat likely caused importers to bring more of their goods into the United States before January to avoid the risk of a higher tax, Stanley said. This action turned out to inflate the trade gap.

HOW DOES THE TRADE GAP AFFECT ORDINARY PEOPLE?

On a day-to-day basis, not very much. The U.S. economy amounts to about \$20 trillion a year, a sum so huge it is difficult to fully fathom. The trade gap last year was equal to only about 3 percent of that sum.

But trade battles do have consequences. Trump's tariffs on imported washing machines, for example, caused that sector's prices to shoot up. And businesses that depend on Chinese imports say they're grappling with higher prices.

In the view of the vast majority of economists, trade wars of the kind Trump has instigated benefit no one in the long run. And by themselves, they don't typically produce any meaningful change in the trade deficit.

Sen. McSally, former Air Force pilot, says officer raped her

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Martha McSally, the first female Air Force fighter pilot to fly in combat, said Wednesday that she was sexually assaulted by a superior officer, and later, when she tried to talk about it to military officials, she “felt like the system was raping me all over again.”

The Arizona Republican, a 26-year military veteran, made the disclosure at a Senate hearing on the military’s efforts to prevent sexual assaults and improve the response when they occur. Lawmakers also heard from other service members who spoke of being sexually assaulted and humiliated while serving their country.

McSally said she did not report being raped because she did not trust the system, and she said she was ashamed and confused. She said she was impressed and grateful to the survivors who came forward to help change the system. She was in the ninth class at the Air Force Academy to allow women, and said sexual harassment and assault were prevalent. Victims mostly suffered in silence, she said.

Reading from a prepared statement, she spoke of her pride in the military and her service to the country and her deep conflict over suffering abuse while doing it. She referred to “perpetrators” who had sexually assaulted her, an indication that she had been attacked more than once. The Senate Armed Services Committee room was silent as she went on. Fellow senators, surprised by her statement, lauded her for coming forward.

“I’m deeply affected by that testimony,” said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., who has pushed strongly for changes. At a break, McSally hugged others who were appearing before the committee, including a West Point graduate who detailed being raped by her commander.

Capt. Carrie Volpe, an Air Force spokeswoman, said the branch was appalled at and “deeply sorry” about what McSally had experienced.

“The criminal actions reported today by Senator McSally violate every part of what it means to be an Airman,” she said in a statement. “And we stand behind her and all victims of sexual assault. We are steadfast in our commitment to eliminate this reprehensible behavior and breach of trust in our ranks.”

In her remarks, McSally did not go into much detail. She did not say whether her assaults happened at the academy or during active duty. She didn’t name any names. She focused on the need for accountability at the commander level and down, and the improvements she’s already seen in the system.

McSally stayed silent for years. But later, as she watched the military grapple with how to handle sexual assaults, she felt like she should speak out.

“I was horrified at how my attempt to share generally my experiences was handled,” she said. She almost left the Air Force after 18 years.

“Like many victims, I felt like the system was raping me all over again.”

McSally’s revelation comes not long after Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, detailed her own abuse and assault, and at a time of increased awareness over the problem of harassment and assault in the armed forces and the larger #MeToo movement that roiled Hollywood and major corporations.

Reports of sexual assaults across the military jumped nearly 10 percent in 2017 — a year that also saw an online nude-photo sharing scandal rock the Defense Department. Reporting for 2018 is not yet available. Reports of sexual assaults were also up at the military academies, most at West Point.

McSally said she shares in the disgust of the failures of the military system and many commanders who haven’t addressed the problems of sexual misconduct. She said the public must demand that higher-ranking officials be part of the solution, setting the tone for their officers.

“We have come a long way to stop military sexual assault, but we still have a long way to go,” the senator said. “It took many years and too many lives ruined.”

Defense officials have argued that an increase in reported assaults reflects a greater willingness to report attacks, rather than indicating assaults are rising. Sexual assaults are a highly underreported crime, both in the military and across society. Greater reporting, they argue, shows there is more confidence in the reporting system and greater comfort with the support for victims.

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The senator told The Wall Street Journal last year that she had been sexually abused as a teenager by her high school track coach. She said the coach took advantage of her through "emotional manipulation" because her father had died. He denied the allegations.

McSally served in the Air Force from 1988 until 2010 and rose to the rank of colonel before entering politics. She deployed six times to the Middle East and Afghanistan, flying 325 combat hours and earning a Bronze Star and six air medals. She was also the first woman to command a fighter squadron.

McSally, who had worked as a national security aide for Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., was elected to the House in 2014 and served two terms.

She was appointed by Gov. Doug Ducey, R-Ariz., in December to replace the late GOP Sen. John McCain after she narrowly lost last year's race for Arizona's other Senate seat to Democrat Kyrsten Sinema.

McSally had been critical of Donald Trump in 2016 but embraced a tough stance on immigration and praised the president during last year's midterm election.

She will serve until 2020, when voters will elect someone to finish the final two years of McCain's term.

Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo contributed to this report.

Trump still hopes for North Korea deal after ominous report

By **DEB RIECHMANN** and **MATTHEW LEE** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Satellite photos showing new activity at a North Korean rocket launch site raised fresh doubts Wednesday that Kim Jong Un will ever give up his drive for nuclear weapons, yet talks continue and President Donald Trump said he was still hoping for the agreement that eluded the leaders at last week's summit.

The president said his relationship with the North Korean leader remains "good" even though Trump walked away from negotiations at their high-profile meeting in Vietnam. He said then that the North's concessions on its nuclear program weren't enough to warrant sanctions relief, and he said Wednesday he'd be unhappy if reports prove true that Kim is rebuilding a launch site after promising in Vietnam to extend his ban on nuclear and rocket tests.

"I would be very, very disappointed in Chairman Kim," Trump said when reporters asked him about reports of new work at the Sohae Satellite Launch Station, which is tucked into the hills northwest of Pyongyang. "I don't think I will be" disappointed, Trump said, "but we'll see what happens."

Past administrations discovered the perils of trying to do business with North Korea, which has a history of backing out of agreements. Trump believes his discussions will be different because Kim he has publicly announced his desire to focus on economic development in his reclusive nation, which is suffering under harsh U.S. and international sanctions.

Trump has favored direct talks with Kim, but with no third summit under discussion right now, the next stage of negotiations is likely to be conducted at lower levels. Trump's envoy to North Korea, Steve Biegun, had lunch Wednesday at the State Department with his counterparts from Japan and South Korea. The South Koreans have proposed semiofficial three-way talks with the United States and North Korea as it works to put nuclear diplomacy back on track.

Suh Hoon, the director of South Korea's National Intelligence Service, told his nation's lawmakers in Seoul that North Korea was restoring facilities at a rocket launch site it had dismantled last year in a goodwill measure.

Meanwhile, 38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, said commercial satellite imagery indicates the rebuilding started between Feb. 16 and March 2. And the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank in Washington, issued another report saying satellite imagery taken Saturday — just two days after the summit ended — showed North Korea "pursuing a rapid rebuilding" of the rocket site.

Some analysts think the work is a signal that Kim is getting ready to conduct more tests, but others suggest he's just registering his disappointment that no agreement was reached at the summit. Trump himself added to the confusion, saying his administration had a hand in the report on Sohae being made public.

"It's a very early report. We're the ones that put it out," Trump said without elaborating.

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Joel Wit, a North Korea proliferation expert who helped negotiate with North Korea in the mid-1990s, said the new work at Sohae is Kim's way of showing that he's "getting impatient with lack of progress in negotiations."

"We have to watch to see what else happens," Wit said. "It's a space launch facility and has been used to send satellites into space. ... Problem is, some of the technologies are the same."

He said there is no evidence that North Korea's work at the site signals Kim is preparing to test another intercontinental missile. He said North Korea has never tested an ICBM at Sohae. "Preparations for any launch would require a wide range of activities not observed at the site," Wit said.

Trump and Kim, who also met in Singapore last year, have not said if there will be a third summit. For now, discussions with North Korea will be conducted by their subordinates. Biegun, the U.S. envoy to North Korea, gave members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee a classified update Tuesday afternoon on Capitol Hill.

Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said that before any further summits between the leaders, there must be lower-level discussions to determine how far Kim is willing to go to denuclearize. That's all the more important "to continue to test the North Koreans' willingness now that they know they're not going to get an easy deal," Menendez said.

Committee Chairman Jim Risch, R-Idaho, said Biegun has a vision of where the U.S. wants to take the talks.

"He has clear knowledge of the steps that it takes to get there, and he's laid that out for the North Koreans," Risch said.

There's no framework agreement "to put the details on it yet," he said. But he added: "The differences have been narrowed."

Less upbeat, Committee member Edward Markey, D-Mass., said the work at Sohae could be a sign that Kim is more interested in getting concessions from the U.S. than conducting good faith efforts to denuclearize. He said he's also worried that future satellite launches at Sohae could help Kim further his work on ballistic missiles to threaten the U.S. and its allies with a nuclear attack.

"President Trump never codified in writing North Korea's missile and nuclear testing freeze," Markey said. "Without that formal commitment, North Korea might claim it is doing nothing wrong and derail the fragile diplomatic process under way."

Dissent among Dems postpones action on anti-Semitism measure

By LAURIE KELLMAN and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats on Wednesday postponed indefinitely a vote on a resolution condemning anti-Semitism after a contentious meeting in which some new members confronted leaders over their push to rebuke Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota.

In the party's weekly closed meeting, Democrats protested the way Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other leaders tried to rush out a resolution this week responding to Omar's latest remark about Israel. Omar last week suggested the Jewish state's supporters are pushing lawmakers to pledge "allegiance" to a foreign country.

That forced Democratic leaders to respond, but their draft of the resolution condemning anti-Semitism angered Omar's fellow freshmen and their liberal supporters. Pelosi had already said the measure would be broadened to decry anti-Muslim bias. But that didn't quiet the ranks, and the party's first major dissension broke out in an uncomfortable confrontation, according to three officials familiar with the episode, who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private matters.

The upheaval prompted Democrats, who regularly celebrate their diversity, to push off a decision about the resolution.

"It is shameful that House Democrats won't take a stronger stand against Anti-Semitism in their conference," President Donald Trump tweeted. "Anti-Semitism has fueled atrocities throughout history and it's inconceivable they will not act to condemn it!"

Rep. Jahana Hayes of Connecticut complained that Pelosi left Democrats out of the loop on the resolu-

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tion's details.

"My comments were about the process we are using when concerns arise," Hayes said in a statement. "As a member of Congress I should not get important information from cable news."

Two people with knowledge of the situation said Hayes was engaged in conversation with a colleague when Pelosi asked her a question. The congresswoman did not respond because she did not hear the speaker address her, these people say. Most lawmakers had left the room at the time.

Then Pelosi said, "If you're not going to listen to me, I'm done talking," according to a person in the room.

A senior Democratic aide said Pelosi had earlier acknowledged the issues and said the resolution was not final. One person in the room quoted the speaker as saying the leaders had tried to increase communication so that members stay united and have "a clearer understanding of what our purpose is as a caucus, how we proceed."

Some Democrats hugged Omar, one of two Muslim women in Congress, during the meeting, according to other officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity. She's also received powerful boosts from fellow Democratic freshmen Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan.

Opposition to the resolution came from the most junior ranks of Democrats to the most senior and spanned some of the party's caucuses.

Rep. Katie Hill, D-Calif., said she spoke up in a leadership meeting earlier this week about the original draft being "reactionary" to Omar's most recent comment. The dissention over the issue, Hill said, "has been building for a while."

House Budget Committee Chairman John Yarmuth, D-Ky., suggested Omar and her comments about the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a lobbying group, will loom over any such measure, however it's worded.

"Whatever we do it's going to look like we're responding specifically to her and to AIPAC and so I'm leaning against," he said.

Many have pointed to the fact that Omar was the target of an anti-Muslim poster that appeared last week at the West Virginia Capitol in Charleston, with her picture over an image of the World Trade Center's burning towers.

"We're very concerned about that and we want that paid attention to," said Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif. "Many members of the D caucus are concerned and concerned over the general rise in hatred that we have seen. And so we want to make clear that we make a stand against all forms of bigotry and hatred."

There was also dissention among the Democrats on whether a resolution condemning anti-Semitism was even necessary, given that the House voted on a similar measure already.

"I'm not sure we need to continue to do this every single time," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, the co-chairwoman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

The upheaval was a striking change from the heady first days of Democratic control, which installed Pelosi as speaker for the second time. Omar is among the most prominent freshman, as evidenced by her appearance on the cover of Rolling Stone's March issue with Pelosi, Hayes and Ocasio-Cortez. The resolution has created friction among Pelosi and all three of the women in the photo.

Omar, one of two Muslim women in Congress, has declined to comment, but a series of remarks about U.S.-Israel policy have forced the Democrats to respond. Pelosi, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel and other Democrats condemned Omar's remarks about divided loyalties. She did not apologize.

The Democratic dissension was noted by Republicans with not just a little glee.

"It looks like the Democrats are doing a nice job of chewing themselves up," said Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville, Padmananda Rama and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

Follow Kellman and Mascaro on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman> and <http://www.twitter.com/LisaMascaro>

This story has been corrected to show that Rep. Jayapal's first name is Pramila, not Primayla.

Gas scarcity could turn Venezuela's crisis to catastrophe

By SCOTT SMITH and SHEYLA URDANETA Associated Press

MARACAIBO, Venezuela (AP) — Marin Mendez leaned a shoulder into his rusty Chevy Malibu, rolling it forward each time the line of cars inched closer to the pump. Waiting hours to fill up, he says, is the high cost he pays for gasoline that's nearly free in socialist Venezuela.

"You line up to get your pension, line up to buy food, line up to pump your gas," an exasperated Mendez said after 40 minutes of waiting in the sweltering heat in Maracaibo — ironically the center of the country's oil industry — and expecting to be there hours or days more. "I've had enough!"

Lines stretching a mile (kilometer) or more to fuel up have plagued this western region of Venezuela for years — despite the country's status as holder of the world's largest oil reserves. Now, shortages threaten to spread countrywide as supplies of petrol become even scarcer amid a raging struggle over political control of Venezuela.

The Trump administration hit Venezuela's state-run oil firm PDVSA with sanctions in late January in a sweeping strategy aimed at forcing President Nicolas Maduro from power in favor of opposition leader Juan Guaido.

Doomsday predictions immediately followed — mostly fueled by Maduro's opponents and U.S. officials — that Venezuela's domestic gasoline supplies would last no more than a week or so. That hasn't happened yet, but more misery is feared as expected shortages have economic implications far beyond longer gas lines, turning Venezuela's crisis to a catastrophe.

"Crucially, it will lead to more shortages of food and basic goods," said Diego Moya-Ocampos, a Venezuela analyst with the London-based consulting firm IHS Global Insight.

That's because the vast oil reserves that once made Venezuela Latin America's wealthiest country provide the primary source of the hard currency it needs to import food and other goods. Today, its basic infrastructure — roads, power grid, water lines and oil refineries — is crumbling. Food and medicine, nearly all of it imported, are scarce and expensive as Venezuela endures the world's highest inflation.

Critics blame Venezuela's collapse on the government's two decades of self-proclaimed "socialist revolution," which has been marred by corruption and mismanagement, first under the late Hugo Chavez and now under Maduro's rule.

The U.S. sanctions essentially cut PDVSA off from its Houston-based subsidiary Citgo, depriving it of \$11 billion in hard currency from exports this year that U.S. officials say bankrolled Maduro's "dictatorship." U.S. officials have turned control of Citgo over to Guaido's interim government, essentially expropriating the company, a strategy Venezuela's socialist government employed for years by seizing private companies.

Opposition leaders bent on ousting Maduro say they recognize the U.S. crackdown on the oil sector will be painful for their people, but add that the measures are necessary to keep Maduro's government from further looting Venezuelan resources.

Meanwhile, a defiant Maduro says the economic war led by the White House is a precursor to a military invasion to oust him from power and seize Venezuela's vast oil wealth. Maduro tweeted a warning on Wednesday that nobody should be fooled by apparent gestures of assistance, alluding to tons of U.S. humanitarian aid he recently blocked from entering.

"The Venezuelan opposition and the U.S. government don't want to help the country," Maduro said. "Just the opposite. They crave our natural resources. They want to unleash 'The Oil War' to invade and dominate our homeland."

Despite years of economic decline leading to Venezuela's current crisis, residents enjoy some of the world's cheapest gasoline — filling up a tank for less than a penny. But gas is already hard to get in Maracaibo and other cities along the Colombian border, where smugglers sneak Venezuela's dirt-cheap fuel into the neighboring country, selling it at international prices for a quick profit.

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Ixchel Castro, a Mexico City-based analyst at the Wood Mackenzie energy research firm, said Venezuela's domestic gasoline supply has been down by as much as 15 percent in recent years as the country's refineries and infrastructure fail — a trend that is expected to accelerate.

PDVSA provided 160,000 barrels a day for domestic use last year, but with the U.S. sanctions and ongoing infrastructure challenges, that supply can be expected to fall to 60,000 barrels a day, she said, meeting just 38 percent of the country's needs.

Exacerbating the problem are shortages of diluent, a critical product needed to thin Venezuela's tar-like heavy crude so it can be piped over 100 miles (160 kilometers) from the field to be turned into gasoline. Russia has stepped in, sending two tankers of the thinner, but these supplies will last just five to 10 days, said Russ Dallen, managing partner of Caracas Capital, a brokerage company.

"It's nothing," he said. "It's a drop in the bucket of what they need."

Gasoline won't completely dry up in Venezuela, which still has access to waning domestic production, as well as fuel in storage and shipments from India and European countries that aren't subject to sanctions. But the fuel quality will suffer and there will be shortages, Castro said.

These are already being felt in San Cristobal near the Colombian border, where 55-year-old mechanic Gerardo Marquez said he got in line one recent Monday afternoon. On Tuesday the gas truck didn't show up as promised, and on Wednesday he was still there after spending two nights with his car.

Relatives did bring him food, water and a pillow, and gave him a chance to get away for bathroom breaks, he said. But he barely napped. "We're all on guard so they don't rob us," he said.

In Maracaibo, once known as the Saudi Arabia of Venezuela as a center of the country's oil boom, residents have endured shortages for at least three years. Trucks to deliver the fuel are too few and daily power failures compound the problem, leaving gas pumps idle. Just two of Maracaibo's 150 gas stations have generators to provide gas during rampant blackouts.

Fed up with waiting in lines, the 62-year-old Marin said he plans to start hoarding gas at home, despite the danger the explosive fuel poses to his wife, children and grandchildren. He relies on his car for his part-time job ferrying paying customers to supplement his modest \$6-a-month pension checks.

"My grandchildren don't know what it's like to eat a piece of meat or bit of chicken," he said.

In the capital, Caracas, residents brace for shortages like these to finally hit them. The metropolitan area of 7 million people has so far been immune to frustrating gas lines.

But an attendant at a PDVSA station sees them coming, recounting how a customer filled up his car then returned a few minutes later with an empty tank. He'd siphoned his tank to get around a government ban on filling up gas cans to crack down on smugglers.

"Most Venezuelans have no idea of the magnitude of what is coming," said Caracas taxi driver Jhaims Bastidas, waiting to fill up. "I imagine it'll go beyond gasoline shortages to food and medicine — even worse than we have it now."

Smith reported from Caracas, Venezuela. Associated Press writer Clbyburn Saint John reported from San Cristobal, Venezuela.

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

Angry and defiant, IS families surrender in Syria

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BAGHOUZ, Syria (AP) — Angry crowds evacuating from the last shred of territory held by Islamic State militants in Syria praised the extremist group Wednesday and chanted "Islamic State will remain," in a menacing show of support, even as defeat loomed.

There were no signs of combat as calm prevailed for a third day to allow for evacuations from the eastern Syrian village of Baghouz. Associated Press journalists positioned across from the IS's riverside pocket of land saw lines of pickup trucks, motorcycles and people walking on foot, apparently a group of evacuees.

The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, which is spearheading the fight against IS in Syria, has been

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surprised by the large number of civilians — family members of IS fighters in the thousands — who have been streaming out of the tiny enclave. In recent weeks, the Kurdish-led SDF has been alternately applying military force to put pressure on militants who refuse to surrender and holding fire long enough to allow for evacuations and surrender.

Thousands of people have trickled out of Baghouz in the last few days. The latest wave of evacuations brings the IS a step closer to defeat by the Kurdish-led SDF. That would be a milestone in the devastating four-year campaign to defeat the group's so-called "caliphate" that once covered a vast territory straddling both Syria and Iraq. The fight against IS has taken place amid Syria's nearly 8-year-old civil war.

On Wednesday, hundreds of evacuees walked through the dusty desert plateau to get on trucks to carry them to displaced persons camps miles away. Meanwhile, lines of men walked guided by their enemy, the SDF, to another corner of the plateau to be screened and searched by members of the U.S-led coalition.

As defeat neared, the anger of defiant supporters among the evacuees was palpable.

Women seen at a reception area set up in the desert, where they were screened by SDF officials, were rowdy and aggressive. They angrily denounced journalists, and praised IS. Engulfed in conservative black robes with a black face covers, they pointed their fingers at the sky and screamed: "Islamic State will stay, God is great, God is great, Islamic State will stay!" Two women took off their shoes and raised them in the direction of journalists. "Take a picture of the shoe, the shoes are better than you," one said. Children joined, raising their fingers in the air.

A man who refused to give his name screamed at journalists filming the evacuees praying, and decried their being depicted as terrorists. "We only implemented God's laws," he shouted, covering half his face.

Abu Sham, a member of the IS religious police who exited Baghouz on Tuesday, said fighters who remained inside are willing to die for the group.

"The Islamic State is not finished," the 39-year old said, using a moniker that means the father of Syria. "I didn't lose hope."

A 30-year-old Iraqi woman said her 1-month-old baby, who was sick, died overnight in the reception area from the cold.

"I didn't want to leave except to treat her," said the woman who identified herself as Um Fatima. She cursed the SDF and said: "The Islamic state will remain and expand, God willing," and walked away. A group of men were seated on the ground, under the watchful eye of SDF fighters, many of them covering their faces with checkered scarves.

Many among those leaving Wednesday appeared to be wives and children of IS militants. But among those who emerged were 13 Yazidi children from Iraq, looking dusty and dirty and in a state of shock. At least 75 men also came out, going straight to the interrogation area.

After sundown, new trucks carrying more evacuees arrived.

The scenes of surrender, humiliation and anger highlighted the desperation of the group as their last bastion teeters on the edge of collapse.

The SDF announced a military operation to liberate Baghouz in September, but has held off on a full blown assault after it became apparent that a huge number of civilians were still inside. Over the last three weeks, more than 10,000 people, many of them exhausted and wounded IS followers, have evacuated.

The militants — many of them foreigners, including Iraqis and Central Asians along with some Syrian fighters — are now fighting their final battle, holed up in tunnels and caves inside Baghouz. An SDF commander said Wednesday when the last batch of civilians and evacuees leave, the group will bomb the remaining hardcore militants who have vowed to die in Baghouz.

The commander said those fighters are ready to blow themselves up. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Another SDF military commander said at least 400 IS fighters were caught trying to leave Tuesday. He said the men were working with a smuggling ring to get away from SDF areas. He also spoke on condition of anonymity.

After days without fighting, the SDF and the coalition launched an intense assault Friday that targeted an ammunition warehouse in the IS-held area and advanced forces inside, tightening the noose on the

militants.

Evacuees said the strikes ignited a fire that burned part of the tent encampment where thousands of family members and civilians had been placed. The fire forced many people to run toward the nearby Euphrates River, where some dug holes on the waterfront to seek refuge, said Abu Mariam, an evacuee who lost his wife and two children in the fire.

Loubna, a 30-year-old woman from the Syrian town of al-Bab, said there were many bodies on the streets in the IS-held area, burned by the fire. The fire was still smoldering days later.

Loubna said she opted to leave but her husband, a Syrian, decided to stay. He will fight till the end, she said, adding he is prepared to blow himself up. "They have their planes. We have God's help," she said. Loubna said didn't think she would see her husband again, and will raise her five kids to become jihadists.

Homeland Security secretary insists border crisis is 'real'

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen insisted Wednesday the crisis at the southern border is not manufactured, as she faced questions from Democrats for the first time since they took control of the House.

"We face a crisis — a real, serious and sustained crisis at our borders," she said at a House Homeland Security Committee hearing. "Make no mistake: This chain of human misery is getting worse."

Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson said he wanted to use the hearing in part to give Nielsen the opportunity to start a "serious discussion," rather than echoing President Donald Trump's claims of a security crisis at the border, and to say what she knew about the family separations last year. He said real oversight over the border was long overdue.

"No amount of verbal gymnastics will change that she knew the Trump administration was implementing a policy to separate families at the border," Thompson said. "To make matters worse, the administration bungled implementation of its cruel plan, losing track of children and even deporting parents to Central America without their children."

Nielsen was grilled on whether she was aware of the psychological effects of separating children from their parents, and when she knew ahead of time about the "zero tolerance" policy that led to the separation of more than 2,700 children from their parents last year. And she was asked about conversations with Trump as he declared a national emergency at the border to try to gain funding for his proposed wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

"There is an emergency," Nielsen said. "I have seen the vulnerable populations. This is a true humanitarian crisis that the system is enabling. We have to change the laws."

White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders weighed in on the hearing via Twitter:

"The crisis at our border is no secret," she wrote. Democrats were "just choosing to ignore it."

The hearing is one of three at the Capitol on immigration Wednesday. Since Democrats took control of the House, they have prioritized investigating last year's family separations and have subpoenaed documents related to the policy.

As Nielsen spoke to the House, Customs and Border Commissioner Kevin McAleenan presented a slide show to the Senate Judiciary Committee that highlighted the growing number of groups with at least 100 people in remote areas like the New Mexico Bootheel and Ajo, Arizona, and the unprecedented challenges of attending to medical needs at its short-term holding facilities.

Tens of thousands of families are crossing the border illegally every month, straining resources. Last month, there were more than 76,000 migrants apprehended — it was more than double the same period last year. And she said the forecast is that the problem will grow worse as weather gets better; traditionally the early spring months see higher illegal crossings.

The new figures reflect the difficulties Trump has faced as he tries to cut down on illegal immigration, his signature issue. But it could also help him make the case that there truly is a national emergency at the border — albeit one built around humanitarian crises and not necessarily border security.

The Senate is expected to vote next week and join the House in rejecting Trump's national emergency declaration aimed at building border walls, but Trump would almost certainly veto the measure and the issue is likely to be settled in the courts.

Lawmakers also asked Nielsen about the conditions of children held at Border Patrol facilities, and whether asylum seekers were being wrongly turned away at the border.

Homeland Security's top internal watchdog official, John Roth, was also testifying Wednesday, and James McHenry, a Justice Department who oversees clogged immigration courts. Also Thursday, Customs and Border Protection officials will testify about challenges of hiring and recruiting Border Patrol agents, including a contract worth up to \$297 million for consulting firm Accenture. The firm successfully recruited only two agents during its first 10 months of the contract.

Associated Press Writer Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

Broken bones from falls on the rise among older dog walkers

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Broken bones from falls while dog walking are on the rise among older U.S. adults and hip fractures are among the most common injuries.

That's according to a study published Wednesday in JAMA Surgery.

University of Pennsylvania researchers examined government data on emergency room visits for dog walking injuries in adults aged 65 and older. The numbers nationwide jumped from almost 1,700 in 2004 to about 4,400 in 2017.

Almost 80 percent of the patients were women, who tend to have less dense bones than men.

While dog-walking causes fewer than 1 percent of fractures among older adults, the numbers are higher than expected and the risk is often underappreciated, said study co-author Dr. Jaimo Ahn, an orthopedic surgeon.

Injuries typically happen when a dog pulls on a leash and walkers lose their balance.

Breaking bones, especially hips, can sharply diminish elderly adults' health. Previous research suggests that at least 1 in 4 older adults dies within one year of breaking a hip.

But research shows that dogs can be good companions for older adults and can help them stay active. So before embarking on those outings, older people should consider strength training for themselves and obedience training for their dogs, Ahn said.

Susan Bush, 69, has had several injuries from falls while walking her dogs. The worst happened three years ago, while putting her leashed shepherd mix, Piper, on the porch of her Pocono Pines, Pennsylvania cottage just as a bear came out of the woods.

"I held onto her leash to keep her from chasing the bear," Bush recalled. Bush fell on her right hip and broke her leg.

Extensive surgery and rehab repaired the break, but "I'm still fighting to walk. I can't go upstairs without a cane."

She later had hip replacement surgery, but won't give up on dogs.

"Old people need our dogs. We need our soul mates," Bush said.

Dr. John Fernandez, an orthopedic surgeon at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, said he treats injuries connected to dog walking at least weekly and he's noticed an increase among older patients. He said that hospital coding changes that include more specific details about how injuries occurred might partly explain the increase. But Fernandez said the numbers also likely reflect an aging U.S. population.

AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner at @LindseyTanner.

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More migrants crossing US southern border in large groups

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of migrant families crossing the southwest border is again breaking records, and the crush is overwhelming border agents and straining facilities, officials said.

More than 76,000 migrants crossed the U.S.-Mexico border last month, more than double the number from the same period last year. Most were families coming in ever-increasingly large groups — there were 70 groups of more than 100 people in the past few months, and they cross illegally in extremely rural locations with few agents and staff. There were only 13 large groups during the previous budget year, and only two the year before.

The system “is well beyond capacity, and remains at the breaking point,” U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said during a press conference Tuesday.

The new figures reflect the difficulties President Donald Trump has faced as he tries to cut down on illegal immigration, his signature issue. But it could also help him make the case that there truly is a national emergency at the border — albeit one built around humanitarian crises and not necessarily border security. The Senate is expected to vote next week and join the House in rejecting his national emergency declaration aimed at building border walls, but Trump would almost certainly veto the measure and the issue is likely to be settled in the courts.

After the deaths of two migrant children in Border Patrol custody, Customs and Border Protection stepped up medical screenings. They also announced sweeping changes including more rigorous interviews as migrants come into the system.

And McAleenan said a new processing center would be built in El Paso, Texas, that will be better suited to manage families and children and handle medical care concerns — but it’s not a permanent solution.

“While our enhanced medical efforts will assist in managing the increased flows, the fact is that these solutions are temporary and this solution is not sustainable,” he said.

While fewer people overall are being apprehended crossing the border illegally each year — about 400,000 over the last budget year compared with the high of 1.6 million in 2000, the increasing numbers are alarming, officials said.

Those apprehended used to be mostly single men from Mexico, but are now mostly families from Central America — since October, more than 130,000 families have been apprehended between ports of entry. From October through September 2018, about the same number of families was apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border. Tens of thousands of children illegally cross the border alone. While single men used to evade capture, the families are seeking out agents.

Customs and Border Protection also reported using firearms less and less. There were 15 instances where officers and agents used firearms during the budget year 2018, down from a high of 55 reported during the 2012 budget year, and down from 17 during 2017’s budget year and 25 the year before.

Despite high-profile instances in recent months where agents used tear gas on groups of migrants that included children, use of less-lethal force like tear gas, batons or stun guns are also down, to 898. That’s a decrease from the high in 2013 of 1,168, according to the data.

Border officials said the large families groups are creating opportunities for smugglers because attention is diverted to the large groups. Border officials say they worry they’re spending too much time on migrant care and not enough on security.

During 2018’s fiscal year, border agents and officers seized 1.1 million pounds of marijuana, 282,570 pounds of cocaine, 6,552 pounds of heroin and 2,463 pounds of fentanyl, mostly through ports of entry, according to the border security report from budget year 2018, released Tuesday. Fentanyl seizures were up nearly 70 percent from the last budget year.

Complaints of excessive force prompted the border enforcement agency to commission an audit and investigation by the Police Executive Research Forum, a research and policy group. The 2013 audit highlighted problems that included foot-patrol agents without access to less-lethal options, and it recommended

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law enforcement not be allowed to use deadly force when people throw rocks — a suggestion that was rejected.

Following those reviews, major training and policy changes were made. Border Patrol agents now undergo scenario-based drills at the academy and learn how to de-escalate tense situations. They get 64 hours of on-the-job training on use of force. Agents and officers are authorized to use deadly force when there is reasonable belief in an imminent danger of serious physical injury or death to the officer or another person.

They have discretion on how to deploy less-than-lethal force: It must be both “objectively reasonable and necessary in order to carry out law enforcement duties” — and used when other “empty hand” techniques are not sufficient to control disorderly or violent subjects.

Officials say they deploy the lowest form of force necessary to take control of a situation, but instances a few months ago where tear gas was used on migrants that included children drew strong criticism.

The story corrects month to October, not January, on apprehensions between ports of entry.

Why a meaningful US-China trade deal could be hard to reach

By **JOSH BOAK** and **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER** AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The world’s two largest economies are locked in negotiations that may soon produce a deal to suspend their trade war.

Yet despite signals from Chinese and U.S. officials that some truce could be forthcoming, there are few signs of any truly transformed trade relationship. Beijing’s longstanding policy of subsidizing its own businesses and charges that it illicitly obtains U.S. technology remain key obstacles to any meaningful U.S.-China trade deal.

In the meantime, the government said Wednesday that the trade deficit in goods with China — the gap between the value of the U.S. products China buys and the higher value of what it sells to the U.S. — hit a record \$419.2 billion last year.

A senior Trump administration official asserted this week that progress had been made during trade talks over the past two weeks, only to acknowledge that the eventual outcome remains a mystery and that China faced no timetable for responding to the U.S. priorities. The official insisted on anonymity to discuss private conversations.

U.S. and Chinese officials have hinted that some kind of agreement could be finalized by the end of March, with Trump and President Xi Jinping possibly meeting to formalize the deal at Trump’s private club in Mar-a-Lago, Florida.

For its part, Beijing is publicly expressing its intent to crack down on policies that have long enabled Chinese companies and local government officials to force American and other foreign businesses to share their technology as the price of admission to the vast Chinese market. But such public pledges represent far less than the enforceable commitments to reform such policies that U.S. negotiators are seeking.

Last year, Trump imposed a series of tariffs on Chinese goods in hopes of pressuring Beijing to support more favorable terms for the United States. In June, the White House levied import taxes of 25 percent on \$50 billion of Chinese imports. It followed in September with 10 percent duties on an additional \$200 billion. All told, the U.S. tariffs covered roughly half of what the U.S. buys from China.

But the blowback from the Trump tariffs — and China’s retaliatory import taxes on U.S. goods — has been steady, at home and abroad. Many businesses are now paying higher costs to import electrical components and other goods from China that aren’t made in the United States. The duties cost consumers \$1.4 billion a month and businesses \$3 billion a month by the end of last year, according to research released last week by Mary Amiti, an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and economists from Princeton and Columbia universities.

And a survey led by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta found that the tariffs had caused U.S. companies to cut their spending on large equipment by 1.2 percent, or \$32.5 billion, last year.

Both figures are relatively modest, given that the U.S. economy produces \$20 trillion of goods and ser-

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vices a year. But there are also secondary effects. The stock market plummeted 19 percent last fall, partly on fears that the trade war would inflict severe damage.

Nor have the tariffs provided the negotiating leverage that Trump sought. Many of China's concessions appear designed to appease some U.S. concerns, rather than establish guidelines for trade that each country would be bound to follow.

Beijing has offered to buy more American farm goods and energy — a pitch that Xi made to Trump when they met during a December dinner at a global conference in Buenos Aires with the idea of narrowing the U.S. trade gap with China.

China's ceremonial legislature was poised this week to back a law that would discourage officials in the country from pressuring U.S. companies to hand over technology. It was a response to concerns about Chinese disrespect for intellectual property that Trump had raised when he first imposed import taxes on Chinese goods.

But it's unclear whether China would actually enforce this commitment — a concern that could potentially prevent a meaningful trade agreement. Speaking to a House panel last week, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said, "I can point to many examples" of Beijing signing onto an agreement "and in very few cases have they actually kept their obligations."

Lighthizer also stressed that it wouldn't be enough for Beijing to agree to additional purchases of American soybeans, natural gas another goods. Any far-reaching agreement, he said, would need to include changes in China's policies toward intellectual property protection, forced technology transfer and the subsidization of Chinese companies.

Erin Ennis, vice president at the U.S.-China Business Council, said that agreeing on an enforcement mechanism is a huge challenge. The Trump administration wants to be able to impose tariffs on China if it violated its promises in any future pact — without retaliation. Yet Beijing would likely regard such a mechanism as infringing on its sovereignty.

But without enforcement, "it's difficult to see how they will conclude a deal," Ennis said.

Beijing is also resisting U.S. demands to change industrial policies, said Willy Lam, a political analyst at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. And instead of pulling back on support for technology development, Premier Li Keqiang, in his report to the national legislature on 2019 government goals, promised even more such support.

"The Chinese will never agree to compromise on this, because it is key to the country's future," Lam said. "The whole socialist approach to high-tech innovation involves the state playing a big role. The Chinese will never give this up."

That said, China does appear at least open to prying open more of its financial sector, which has largely been closed off to U.S. and European banks.

"What is certain is that in opening up the financial sector, China and the United States can fully agree on each other," Guo Shuqing, the chairman of China's banking regulator, told reporters Tuesday.

AP Business Writer Joe McDonald in Beijing and AP Writer Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Dinosaur tracks make fresh impression at Valley Forge park

By MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

VALLEY FORGE, Pa. (AP) — The national park on the site where George Washington and the struggling Continental Army endured a tough winter during the American Revolution boasts a new feature that's a couple of hundred million years old — dozens of fossilized dinosaur footprints discovered on rocks used to pave a section of hiking trail.

The trace fossils, as they are known, are scattered along a winding trail at Valley Forge National Historical Park, on slabs purchased in 2011 from a nearby commercial quarry.

To the untrained eye, they appear as indistinguishable bumps in the sandstone rock, with the largest about 9 inches long. On a recent weekday, hikers, joggers and dog walkers used the trail, oblivious to the

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marks of prehistoric animals beneath their feet.

Those marks drew the attention of Tom Stack not long after he began working as a volunteer park ambassador at Valley Forge in 2017.

Stack, who has a background in geology and paleontology, recognized the approximately 210 million-year-old rocks known as argillite as being similar in age and type to fossil-bearing rocks used to construct a 1930s-era bridge on the Gettysburg battlefield, about 100 miles (161 kilometers) to the west.

Most of the tracks left in what were once muddy flats consist of three-toed foot impressions from the early days of dinosaurs, although Stack also found footprints from a non-dinosaur reptile, a relative of the modern crocodile. The largest would have been a bipedal theropod that was 6 (1.8 meters) to 9 feet (2.7 meters) long and 4 (1.2 meters) to 6 feet (1.8 meters) high.

"They're subtle, they're not easy to spot, but once you learn the characteristics of them, given the right sunlight angle and, at times, the moisture on the rock, then they are easier to identify," Stack said.

There are also distinctive patterns in the rock thought to be caused by the cracking of dried mud, and from the ripples of a lake or river.

The National Park Service requested the exact location of the rocks not be publicized, to help protect them from being damaged or removed. Officials said visitors will be told about the rocks and how park resources are protected, but not where to find them. The 5-square-mile (13 square kilometer) park has about 30 miles (48 kilometers) of trail.

The dinosaur footprints Stack found are not unique or even particularly rare, and don't add to the body of scientific knowledge about the creatures, said National Park Service paleontology program coordinator Vince Santucci. They date from later in the Triassic period and before the Jurassic era that's so familiar to moviegoers.

"There's no question that they are" dinosaur trace fossils, said Santucci, who examined them in person last April. "They're consistent with the tracks that occur in equivalent-age beds all over the East Coast."

More than 270 National Park Service properties contain some sort of paleontological resource, from Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado and Utah to the fossils scattered in rock used to build the Lincoln Memorial and Capitol Reflecting Pool in Washington, D.C.

Most fossils found on Park Service land are still where they were discovered, in the original bedrock location. But others were moved by human activity, including a set of burrows from an ancient species that appear on the rock facade of a visitor's center bathroom at Valley Forge. Those rocks originated outside the park.

There also happens to be a significant Ice Age fossil location beneath the Valley Forge park, the Port Kennedy bone cave. First discovered in 1871, it has produced fossils that include giant tapirs, ground sloths and saber-toothed cats. Port Kennedy is considered one of the most important mammal fossil sites in North America, with some findings having been displayed at the park visitor center, although most are at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. That 750,000-year-old site was lost after a quarry was filled — partly with asbestos — before being rediscovered by scientists in 2005. It is not accessible to the public.

There are at least 35 Park Service properties known to have fossil tracks of ancient vertebrates, and vandalism and theft have been a problem. Federal law prohibits visitors from disturbing park elements.

A park spokesman said there have been preliminary discussions about developing an interpretive program to give visitors information about the trace fossils. Stack said the park should consider removing rocks that contain the best fossils, to prevent damage or theft.

"I would think they are of value as an educational tool," said Helen Delano, a senior scientist with the Pennsylvania Geologic Survey. "Dinosaurs are a wonderful way to hook people into paying attention to the geological environment. Every kid loves dinosaurs."

Stack said the rocks are abundant, cheap and durable, so they have long been used for paving, sidewalks, garden walls and similar features in the Philadelphia area.

Trump to battle investigations with condemnation and lawyers

By CATHERINE LUCEY and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House has beefed up its legal team. Its political team is ready to distract and disparage. And President Donald Trump is venting against Democratic prying.

Trump's plan for responding to the multiplying congressional probes into his campaign, White House and personal affairs is coming into focus as newly empowered Democrats intensify their efforts. Deploying a mix of legal legwork and political posturing, the administration is trying to minimize its exposure while casting the president as the victim of overzealous partisans.

"It's a disgrace, it's a disgrace for our country," Trump said at the White House on Tuesday as he accused Democrats of "presidential harassment."

Typically used to setting the national or global agenda, presidents are by definition on their back foot when they come under investigation. And the latest fusillade of requests for information has the Trump White House, already increasingly focused on the twin challenges of dealing with the probes and the 2020 election, in a reactive position.

Trump's response points to his increasing frustration with Congress and his intention to seize on the investigations as evidence that he is under siege in Washington.

While Trump is far from the first president to bristle at Capitol Hill oversight, his enthusiastic embrace of political victimhood is still novel — and stands to serve as a key part of his re-election argument. Trump has made railing against the so-called witch hunt against him a staple of his rallies and speeches, revving up crowds by mocking his investigators and news coverage of their proceedings.

That attitude was emphasized Tuesday by Trump's son Eric, who was among the 81 people and organizations that the House Judiciary Committee has contacted seeking documents as part of a probe into possible obstruction of justice, corruption and abuse of power. Calling Congress "incompetent," Eric Trump told Fox News Radio "we're going to fight the hell out of it. And we'll fight where we need and we'll cooperate where we need, but the desperation shows."

Aware that the shift to divided government would usher in an onslaught of investigations, the White House began making defensive moves late last year. Seeking to be ready for the Democratic-led House, more than a dozen lawyers were added to the White House Counsel's Office and a seasoned attorney was added to the communications team to handle questions related to the probes.

After Democrats took the House last November, Trump declared that they had to choose between investigating him and earning White House cooperation on matters of bipartisan concern like health care and infrastructure. Trump assessed publicly Tuesday that Democrats had made their choice, saying, "So the campaign begins."

His aides had already made that determination, with press secretary Sarah Sanders issuing an acerbic statement late Monday calling the Judiciary Committee probe a "disgraceful and abusive investigation." Trump's campaign spokeswoman, Kayleigh McEnany, accused Democrats of stopping "at nothing, including destroying the lives and reputations of many innocent Americans who only have sought to serve their country honorably, but who hold different political views than their own."

White House officials described their plan for addressing the mounting requests as multi-layered. Lawyers in the counsel's office plan to be cooperative, but are unlikely to provide Democrats with the vast array of documents they're looking for. In particular, they intend to be deeply protective of executive power and privilege — a defense used by previous administrations against probing lawmakers with varying degrees of success.

Trump said President Barack Obama "didn't give one letter" when his administration came under congressional investigation. But Obama spokesman Eric Shultz tweeted that the Obama White House produced hundreds of thousands of documents for various congressional inquiries.

Meanwhile, others in the White House and the president's orbit are preparing to do what they can to bring the fight to Democrats, preparing dossiers about Obama's invocation of executive privilege when House Republicans investigated his administration. And all acknowledge there is no chance that Trump will

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stop commenting and criticizing the investigations.

The officials declined to speak on the record in order to discuss the sensitive planning.

The administration approach was on display this week as White House counsel Pat Cipollone pushed back against a request from the House Oversight and Reform Committee for documents related to security clearances for White House officials. In a letter released by the committee chairman, Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., Cipollone called the request "unprecedented and extraordinarily intrusive" and offered to provide a briefing and documents "describing the security clearance process." White House officials said the Cummings inquiries were seen by aides as a thinly veiled attempt to gain potentially embarrassing information on the president's son-in-law, senior adviser Jared Kushner.

Cummings shot back that the White House position defied "plain common-sense" and said he would consult with colleagues on his next move.

The exchange was predictable, with both sides using the exchange of letters for political means, and in anticipation of almost certain judicial proceedings.

Former Obama administration associate counsel Andy Wright, who also worked as a Capitol Hill investigator, said both parties are aware that their correspondence has multiple audiences.

"You have to assume it's going to play out in the public space," he said. "But you also want to create that record of reasonableness so that the court will be inclined to rule in your favor if and when it comes to that."

As the Judiciary Committee's voluminous requests circulated around Washington on Monday, the president's outside array of former allies, associates and staffers communicated among themselves about who was named in the requests and whether they faced new legal jeopardy. Still, some expressed some relief that the requests dealt with documents previously turned over to other investigators. Others maintained the wide-ranging request would bolster Trump's argument that the probe was a vendetta against him.

But the request affirmed the shadow that current and former staffers still live under. Nearly all the current and former administration officials, friends and family listed on the request have hired private attorneys to navigate both the Mueller probe and now the oversight process — among them Hope Hicks, Reince Priebus, Steve Bannon, Kushner and Don McGahn.

For more in-depth information, follow AP coverage at <https://apnews.com/TrumpInvestigations>

Asian shares mostly lower as US-China trade optimism fades

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were mostly lower Thursday as optimism about progress in trade talks between the U.S. and China started wearing off.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 slipped 0.7 percent in early trading to 21,439.64. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged up nearly 0.3 percent to 6,262.20. South Korea's Kospi was slightly lower at 2,175.26. Hong Kong's Hang Seng dipped nearly 0.5 percent to 28,902.43, while the Shanghai Composite was also down 0.5 percent at 3,087.41.

On Wall Street, health care companies led U.S. stocks broadly lower Wednesday, giving the market its third straight loss. Technology and energy stocks also bore the brunt of the selling, offsetting gains in materials and utilities companies. Several retailers also rose. Smaller companies fell more than the rest of the market.

The S&P 500 dropped 18.20 points, or 0.7 percent, to 2,771.45. The benchmark index is now on track for its first weekly decline since January. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 133.17 points, or 0.5 percent, to 25,673.46. The Nasdaq composite lost 70.44 points, or 0.9 percent, to 7,505.92. The Russell 2000 index of smaller companies gave up 31.46 points, or 2 percent, to 1,536.82.

Disappointing economic reports, uncertainty over trade and fears of a slowdown in economic growth have been weighing on the market the past couple weeks.

"Regional stock markets will likely endure a tough start to the day following the dismal showing overnight

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by Wall Street. World growth and tariff fears are likely to be on investors' lips and will cap rallies in stocks during the Asian session," said Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst at OANDA.

At times, the market has also drawn optimism over the prospects that the U.S. and China will resolve their trade dispute. U.S. and Chinese officials have hinted that some kind of agreement could be finalized by the end of March, with President Donald Trump and President Xi Jinping possibly meeting to formalize the deal at Trump's private club in Mar-a-Lago, Florida.

Last year, Trump imposed a series of tariffs on Chinese goods in hopes of pressuring Beijing to support more favorable terms for the United States. In June, the White House levied import taxes of 25 percent on \$50 billion of Chinese imports. It followed in September with 10 percent duties on an additional \$200 billion.

Asian investors were also staying cautious ahead of a European Central Bank board meeting later in the global day.

ENERGY: U.S. crude gained 15 cents to \$56.37 a barrel. It slid 0.6 percent to settle at \$56.22 a barrel in New York Wednesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, was also higher, adding 29 cents to \$66.28 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 111.66 yen from 111.86 yen Wednesday. The euro strengthened to \$1.1308 from \$1.1304.

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Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 7, the 66th day of 2019. There are 299 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 7, 1936, Adolf Hitler ordered his troops to march into the Rhineland, thereby breaking the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY') and the Locarno Pact.

On this date:

In 1793, during the French Revolutionary Wars, France declared war on Spain.

In 1850, in a three-hour speech to the U.S. Senate, Daniel Webster of Massachusetts endorsed the Compromise of 1850 as a means of preserving the Union.

In 1911, President William Howard Taft ordered 20,000 troops to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border in response to the Mexican Revolution.

In 1912, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen arrived in Hobart, Australia, where he dispatched telegrams announcing his success in leading the first expedition to the South Pole the previous December.

In 1926, the first successful trans-Atlantic radio-telephone conversations took place between New York and London.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. forces crossed the Rhine at Remagen, Germany, using the damaged but still usable Ludendorff Bridge.

In 1955, the first TV production of the musical "Peter Pan" starring Mary Martin aired on NBC.

In 1965, a march by civil rights demonstrators was violently broken up at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, by state troopers and a sheriff's posse in what came to be known as "Bloody Sunday."

In 1975, the U.S. Senate revised its filibuster rule, allowing 60 senators to limit debate in most cases, instead of the previously required two-thirds of senators present.

In 1981, anti-government guerrillas in Colombia executed kidnapped American Bible translator Chester Bitterman, whom they accused of being a CIA agent.

In 1994, the U.S. Navy issued its first permanent orders assigning women to regular duty on a combat ship — in this case, the USS Eisenhower.

In 1999, movie director Stanley Kubrick, whose films included "Dr. Strangelove," "A Clockwork Orange"

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and "2001: A Space Odyssey," died in Hertfordshire, England, at age 70, having just finished editing "Eyes Wide Shut."

Ten years ago: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton met with Turkish leaders in Ankara, where she announced that President Barack Obama was planning to make his own visit, which took place in April 2009. Western-backed Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad submitted his resignation (however, he retained his position under a new government). Former Metropolitan Opera general manager Schuyler Chapin died in New York at age 86. Former child actor and singer Jimmy Boyd ("I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus") died in Santa Monica, Calif., at age 70.

Five years ago: Russia was swept up in patriotic fervor in anticipation of bringing Crimea back into its territory, with tens of thousands of people thronging Red Square in Moscow chanting, "Crimea is Russia!"

One year ago: The White House said Mexico, Canada and other countries could be spared from President Donald Trump's planned steel and aluminum tariffs under national security "carve-outs." For the second time in less than a week, a storm rolled into the Northeast with as much as two feet of wet, heavy snow that grounded flights, closed schools and knocked out power.

Today's Birthdays: TV personality Willard Scott is 85. International Motorsports Hall of Famer Janet Guthrie is 81. Actor Daniel J. Travanti is 79. Entertainment executive Michael Eisner is 77. Rock musician Chris White (The Zombies) is 76. Rock singer Peter Wolf is 73. Rock musician Matthew Fisher (Procol Harum) is 73. Pro Football Hall of Famer Franco Harris is 69. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Lynn Swann is 67. Rhythm-and-blues singer-musician Ernie Isley (The Isley Brothers) is 67. Rock musician Kenny Aronoff (BoDeans, John Mellencamp) is 66. Actor Bryan Cranston is 63. Actress Donna Murphy is 60. Actor Nick Searcy is 60. Golfer Tom Lehman is 60. International Tennis Hall of Famer Ivan Lendl is 59. Actress Mary Beth Evans is 58. Singer-actress Taylor Dayne is 57. Actor Bill Brochtrup is 56. Author E.L. James is 56. Author Bret Easton Ellis is 55. Opera singer Denyce Graves is 55. Comedian Wanda Sykes is 55. Actor Jonathan Del Arco is 53. Rock musician Randy Guss (Toad the Wet Sprocket) is 52. Actress Rachel Weisz (wys) is 49. Actor Peter Sarsgaard is 48. Actor Jay Duplass is 46. Classical singer Sebastien Izambard (Il Divo) is 46. Rock singer Hugo Ferreira (Tantric) is 45. Actress Jenna Fischer is 45. Actor Tobias Menzies is 45. Actress Sarayu Rao is 44. Actress Audrey Marie Anderson is 44. Actor TJ Thyne is 44. Bluegrass singer-musician Frank Solivan is 42. Actress Laura Prepon is 39. Actress Bel Powley is 27. Actress Giselle Eisenberg (TV: "Life in Pieces") is 12.

Thought for Today: "History and experience tells us that moral progress cannot come in comfortable and in complacent times, but out of trial and out of confusion." — Gerald R. Ford, 38th President of the United States (1913-2006).

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