

Groton Daily Independent

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Bates Township ROW Maintenance

Bates Township Board of Supervisors reminds all landowners and tenants that the road right-of-way extends 33 feet from the center of the township road. This ditch is to be maintained and mowed. Any crops planted in the road right-of-way will be mowed and expenses charged to the landowner.

Landowner is responsible for spraying all noxious weeds.

Bates Township Board of Supervisors

Betty Geist
Township Clerk
(0313.0320)

Published twice at the total approximate cost of \$20.11. 17307

Death Notice: Kevin Radke

Kevin Radke, 38, of Ferney passed away March 20, 2019 at his home. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

CLOSED! Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Noem Signs Bill to Enhance Intellectual Diversity on Campuses Signs 16 Bills on Variety of Topics

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem today signed HB1087, a bill to increase intellectual diversity on college campuses.

“Our university campuses should be places where students leave their comfort zones and learn about competing ideas and perspectives,” said Noem. “I hope this bill lets the nation know that in South Dakota, we are teaching our next generation to debate important issues, work together to solve problems, and think independently.”

The bill directs the Board of Regents, which oversees our state universities, to ensure that each and every state-run institution of higher education is maintaining a commitment to the principles of free expression and encouraging the discussion of topics in an environment that is intellectually and ideologically diverse. The Regents are also required to submit a report to the governor and legislature on the topic.

Noem signed the following bills today:

SB3 – An act to create the Special Education Interim Legislative Committee

SB4 – An act to revise certain provisions regarding the classification of agricultural land for property tax purposes

SB16 – An act to establish certain provisions regarding financial security for the decommissioning of wind turbines

SB48 – An act to authorize certain improvement districts to issue convention facility on-sale licenses to sell alcoholic beverages

SB54 – An act to regulate the use of care and maintenance funds by perpetual care cemeteries

SB56 – An act to revise certain provision regarding the regulation of fireworks

SB61 – An act to provide certain provisions regarding nursing facility closures

SB64 – An act to require certain wind energy facilities to include aircraft detection lighting systems

SB66 – An act to establish an interim legislative committee to study issues related to electric services in an annexed area

HB1022 – An act to revise certain provisions regarding the limitations on indemnification by the state

HB1034 – An act to revise certain provisions regarding unemployment insurance contribution rates

HB1035 – An act to rename the unemployment insurance program to the reemployment assistance program

HB1046 – An act to revise certain provisions regarding the attorney recruitment assistance program

HB1087 – An act to promote free speech and intellectual diversity at certain institutions of higher education

HB1090 – An act to repeal certain provisions regarding the exercise of certain powers over certain property

HB1110 – An act to establish a penalty for certain persons who fail to file a birth certificate or who fail to provide the notice required for the filing of a death certificate

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Noem Approves Pro-Life Legislative Package

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem today approved a package of bills to strengthen the rights of unborn children.

“A strong and growing body of medical research provides evidence that unborn babies can feel, think, and recognize sounds in the womb. These are people, and they must be given the same basic dignities as anyone else,” said Noem. “The bills I signed today will crack down on abortion providers in South Dakota by requiring them to provide pregnant moms with specific, scientific information about their baby. Additionally, these bills criminalize forced abortions and will give people the opportunity to hear their baby’s heartbeat before having an abortion. I’m grateful for the partnership of the legislature on these bills and the ways we’re working together to protect the unborn.”

“South Dakota Right to Life extends our heartfelt appreciation to Governor Noem for her tireless devotion to pregnant mothers and their preborn children,” said Dale Bartscher, Executive Director of South Dakota Right to Life. “In signing these pro-life bills that had broad legislative support, Governor Noem has demonstrated once again that she is a champion for life.”

“The Family Heritage Alliance Action Team thanks Governor Noem for her strong stand on protecting the lives of unborn children in the State of South Dakota,” said Norman Woods, Executive Director of Family Heritage Alliance. “Across the nation, we see state governments discussing and enacting laws that allow for the killing of a child at any stage of pregnancy. In South Dakota however, we have a governor committed to protecting unborn children, and she has shown her support again today with her signature on these bills.”

“Our work isn’t done until abortion is eliminated completely, but this is a step forward for life,” Noem concluded.

Noem’s pro-life package includes:

SB72 – An act to provide for a form a physician must use to obtain consent to an abortion

HR1055 – An act to require parental notification and agreement before the institution of an order to withhold resuscitation from certain patients

HR1177 – An act to provide an opportunity to view a sonogram and hear the child’s heartbeat prior to an abortion

HR1190 – An act to provide for certain reporting requirements related to abortions

HR1193 – An act to provide a criminal penalty for causing an abortion against a pregnant mother’s will

These laws will go into effect on July 1.



 **HARR**
Motors

**4255 6th Ave
SE, Aberdeen**

Hi, my name is Bary Keith, a Groton resident. I have just recently joined the Harr Motors sales team. I'm excited to start helping people get into the right vehicle for them. Right now, any vehicle purchased from me, until the end of April, will receive an Autostart at no charge. Give me a call (605-216-6952) or (605-725-8624) or stop out and see me at Harr Motors today!!!

Flooding Closes Portion of Lake Vermillion Recreation Area

PIERRE, S.D. – A portion of Lake Vermillion Recreation Area near Canistota is closed due to flooding.

This closure affects the park's East Unit, which includes the east campground and east boat ramp as well as access points on the south and east sides of Lake Vermillion. Access to the West Unit of the recreation area will not be impacted.

Recent rainfall and snowmelt has caused the secondary spillway to run over, which is designed to remove heavy water pressure from the dam face on the lake.

Park Manager Derek Dorr says flooding due to spillway runoff doesn't typically last very long, but with a higher than normal rate of snowmelt in the runoff area, he expects it will last several days. The East Unit will reopen when waters recede and the area is useable.

Randall Creek Campground Closed to Evaluate Bridge

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks officials have closed the campground at Randall Creek Recreation Area while they evaluate the condition of the bridge leading into the campground.

Debris collision from a flash flood last week may have damaged the bridge, which is the only way to access the campground. The day-use area and boat ramp remain open and accessible to vehicles.

The park will not be taking any new camping reservations at this time. Campers with upcoming reservations will be notified of the situation, and kept informed as more information is available.

Officials will be evaluating the bridge over the next several weeks and do not currently have an estimate of when it might reopen.

Noem Signs Bill to Streamline Renewable Energy Potential

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem yesterday signed SB15, a bill to streamline the permit procedures for solar and wind energy facilities and assist the PUC in managing its docket.

"Harnessing South Dakota's sunshine and wind is critical to expanding clean, renewable energy solutions," said Noem. "But like any industry, renewable energy production cannot thrive under heavy regulation and long approval processes. This bill is a commonsense approach from industry experts, legislators, and the Commission to reduce regulatory redundancy, right-size the permitting process, and provide certainty to further solar and wind energy production in South Dakota."

SB15 clarifies that the Public Utilities Commission has authority to ensure solar and wind energy facilities are permitted in a timely fashion and with public safety in mind. All projects permitted under SDCL 49-41B will benefit from the updated process. The bill also strikes duplication of efforts done at the local level.

Following Noem's February veto of SB14, the governor's office, the Commission, industry experts, and legislators came together to create this legislation as a product of true collaboration, input, and compromise. SB15 provides for an orderly process of accepting and hearing public comments, unifies the timeline of like-permitting processes, and grants deference during the Commission's permitting process to permit findings the local unit of government has already decided.

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The South Dakota Seal

"It's a great privilege and honor to represent South Dakota here in the United States Senate and in this office. This is their building, and now we will have a permanent piece of South Dakota that will forever stay in this beautiful room in our nation's Capitol."



WASHINGTON — Last week, the state seal of South Dakota was added to the ceiling of Sen. John Thune's (R-S.D.) majority whip office. This carries on a tradition that the occupant of the Republican whip office add his or her home state's seal to the space. The South Dakota state seal was hand-painted by staff in the Architect of the Capitol's office, which is responsible for maintaining and preserving the Capitol building for the American people.

"There's a neat history that comes with the office of the majority whip," said Thune. "Each office holder here has the opportunity to be able to add his state's seal, a hand-painted state seal, on the ceiling of this very ornate and beautiful office. The office of the Architect of the Capitol is responsible for maintaining the Capitol, and they're just very talented. They do hard work every day, making sure that our nation's Capitol is a place that people from all over the country can have an opportunity to come and visit and enjoy. It's a great privilege and honor to represent South Dakota here in the United States Senate and in this office. This is their building, and now we will have a permanent piece of South Dakota that will forever stay in this beautiful room in our nation's Capitol."



Property tax assessment freeze program deadline approaching

PIERRE, S.D. – Elderly and disabled South Dakotans have until April 1 to apply for property tax relief under South Dakota's Assessment Freeze for the Elderly and Disabled Program.

Under the program, for tax purposes, the homeowner's property assessment is prevented from increasing. If the actual value of the home increases, the homeowner still pays property taxes on the former (lower) value.

To be eligible for the Assessment Freeze for the Elderly and Disabled Program, individuals must meet the following qualifications:

- Have incomes of less than \$28,279.43 for a single-member household (only one individual in the household) or less than \$35,349.28 for a multiple-member household

- Have owned or retained a life estate in a single-family dwelling, in fee or by contract to purchase, for at least one year and have been a resident of South Dakota for at least one year

- Have resided for at least 200 days of the previous calendar year in the single-family dwelling

- Be 65 years of age or older or disabled

- Un-remarried widows/widowers of those who were previously qualified may still qualify in some circumstances. The valuation limit for the program is \$194,115.32 or more of full and true value, meaning that property valued above those limits is not eligible unless the applicant has previously qualified.

Deadline to apply for the program is April 1, 2019, and applications must be submitted to the applicant's local county treasurer's office.

Applications are available at local county treasurer offices or by calling the Department of Revenue at 1-800-829-9188. An online application is available at http://dor.sd.gov/Taxes/Property_Taxes/Forms.aspx.

For additional information on the assessment freeze or other property tax relief programs, please contact the Department of Revenue's property tax division.

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Today in Weather History

March 21, 1997: As temperatures began to warm up towards the end of March, the near-record to record winter snowpack over central, north central, and northeast South Dakota began melting. The resulting runoff filled up ditches, lakes, creeks, streams, and low-lying areas. The massive amount of water swamped hundreds of sections of county and township roads as well as several state and federal highways. The inundated parts of roads were either broken up or washed out. Tens of culverts were blown out or damaged, and several bridges were either destroyed or washed out by chunks of ice and the high water flow. Road closures were extensive, with rerouting taking place for school buses, mail carriers, farmers, and ranchers. Many spillways and dams received some damage or were washed out. In addition, thousands of acres of farmland and pastureland were underwater. Due to the high groundwater, a countless number of homes received water in their basements. A few towns were partially flooded, including Twin Brooks in Grant County, Corona in Roberts County, and Raymond in Clark County. The following week, in the early morning hours of March 27, water flowed into Raymond filling the basements of several homes. In rural areas, several farms were surrounded by water and were inaccessible, leaving some people stranded and livestock marooned. Many other residences and businesses, mainly across northeast South Dakota, received significant damage or were a total loss. As a result, several people had to be evacuated. At the time, many long-term residents said this was the most significant flooding they had seen in their lifetimes. The flooding continued into early to mid-April.

March 21, 2012: Several record high temperatures occurred across the region in March.

1801: The Jefferson Flood hit the Connecticut Valley. The flooding was the greatest since 1692. The Federalists named the flood for the new President, who they blamed for the disaster.

1876: More than 40 inches of snow stopped traffic at Montreal, Quebec Canada. Trains were delayed, and mail carriers resorted to snowshoes.

1932: A tornado swarm occurred in the Deep South. Between late afternoon and early the next morning, severe thunderstorms spawned 31 tornadoes in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Tennessee. The tornadoes killed 334 persons and injured 1784 others. Northern Alabama was hardest hit. Tornadoes in Alabama killed 286 persons and caused five million dollars damage.

1951: Antarctica is the windiest place in the world. Port Martin averaged 40 mph winds throughout the year. On this day, the winds averaged 108 mph.

1952 - Severe thunderstorms spawned thirty-one tornadoes across Arkansas, Tennessee, Missouri, Mississippi, Alabama and Kentucky. The tornadoes killed 343 persons and caused 15 million dollars damage. Arkansas and Tennessee each reported thirteen tornadoes. The towns of Judsonia AR and Henderson TN were nearly wiped off the map in what proved to be the worst tornado outbreak of record for Arkansas. A tornado, one and a half miles wide at times, left a church the only undamaged building at Judsonia. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm in the Northern High Plains Region produced blizzard conditions in western South Dakota. Winds gusted to 70 mph at Rapid City SD, and snowfall totals ranged up to 20 inches at Lead SD. The high winds produced snow drifts six feet high. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Bitterly cold weather prevailed across the northeastern U.S. Portland ME reported their coldest spring day of record with a morning low of 5 above, and an afternoon high of just 21 degrees. Marquette MI reported a record low of 15 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (The Weather Channel)

1989 - Snow blanketed the northeastern U.S. early in the day, with six inches reported at Rutland VT. Morning and afternoon thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds from southwestern Mississippi to southwest Georgia. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - The first full day of spring was a cold one for the eastern U.S. Freezing temperatures damaged 62 percent of the peach crop in upstate South Carolina, and 72 percent of the peach crop in the ridge area of South Carolina. Elkins WV, which a week earlier reported a record high of 82 degrees, was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 16 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Today



Patchy Fog
then Sunny

High: 41 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 19 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 38 °F

Friday
Night



Mostly Clear


Low: 24 °F

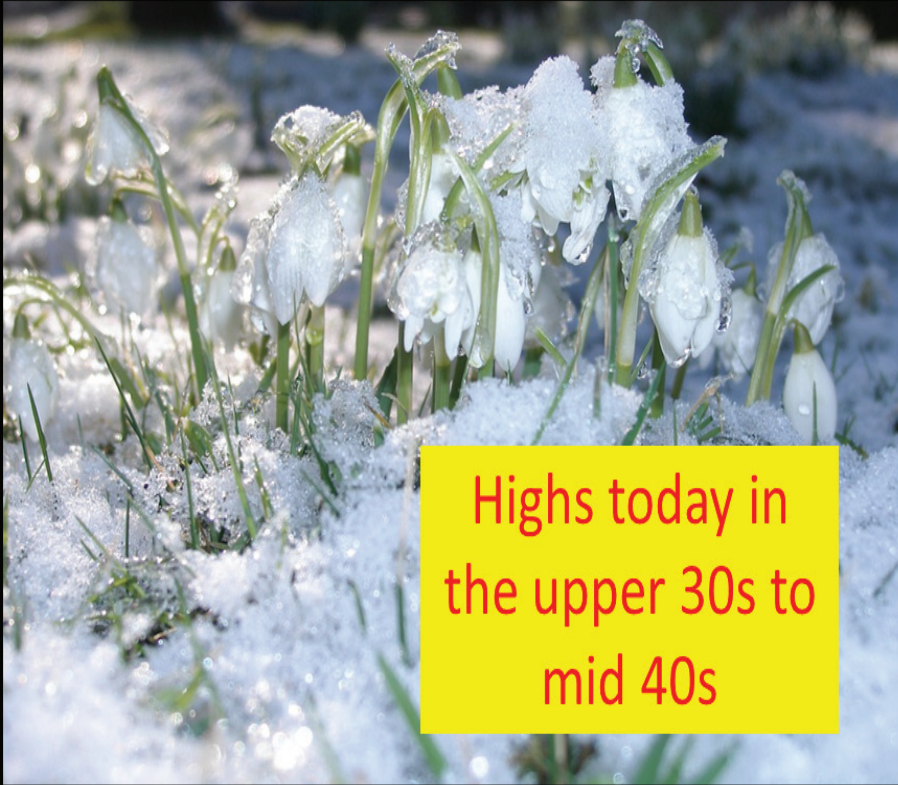
Saturday




Mostly Sunny

High: 45 °F

 **Snow Melt To Continue** 



Highs today in
the upper 30s to
mid 40s

 National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD 

Published on: 03/21/2019 at 5:00AM

Dry conditions are expected today and Friday under high pressure. Abundant sunshine and high temperatures in the upper 30s to the mid 40s will lead to a continued slow snow melt across the region.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 38 °F at 12:39 PM

Low Outside Temp: 20 °F at 6:52 AM

High Gust: 14 mph at 1:10 AM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 76° in 1926, 1910

Record Low: -12° in 1965

Average High: 42°F

Average Low: 22°F

Average Precip in Mar.: 0.67

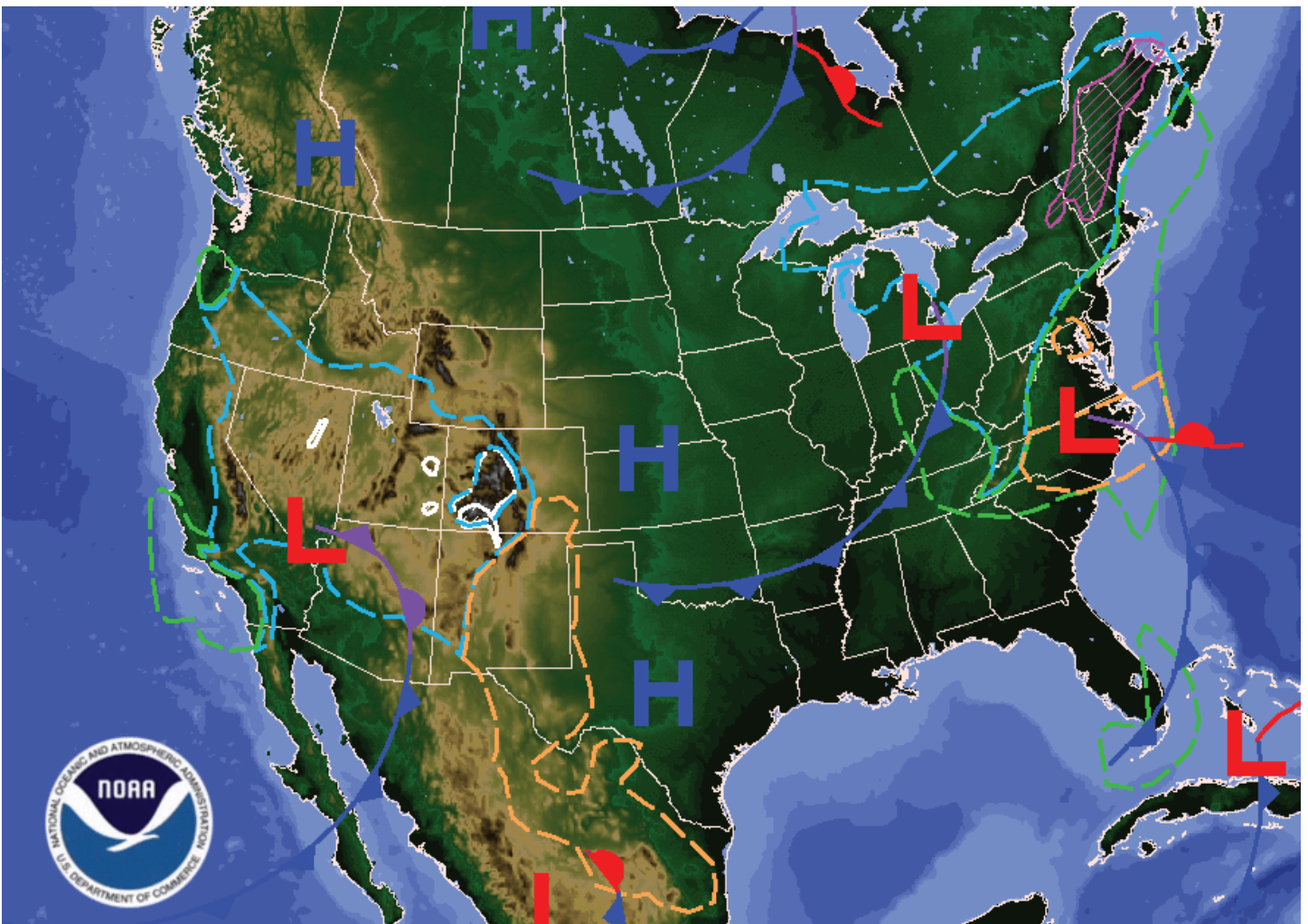
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.87

Average Precip to date: 1.69

Precip Year to Date: 3.06

Sunset Tonight: 7:47 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:33 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Mar 21, 2019, issued 7:27 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Kong 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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VALUES BEGIN AT HOME

Morris Massey was a professor of communication at the University of Colorado. While there, he became famous for a film entitled, *What You Are is Where You Were When?* Though the title may be confusing, the message is not. All of us are value programmed in our homes by the time we are six. Value programmed means that our behaviors or lifestyles come from our parents or primary teachers. And, these behaviors or values are so deeply ingrained within us that we live or behave them without even thinking about them. Unless there is an event in our lives that force us to change, we take them to our grave.

My son, said Solomon, once again wanting his sons undivided attention, challenged him to keep your fathers commands and do not forsake your mothers teachings.

Now, Solomon or the mother of that particular son, certainly did not know about Morris Massey or his research. But, they did know the importance, influence, and impact that how they lived and what they taught their children was critical for their childrens wellbeing. So, they chose to make an issue about how they should live. And, furthermore, made no apology for doing so.

Throughout Scripture, fathers and mothers are authorized, with divine authority, to set the boundaries, behaviors, and attitudes of their children. Solomon and his wife were determined to do this. They realized their obligation to God and were willing to obey Him.

Prayer: Father, children are entrusted to parents as Your gifts to them, to lead and train them in Your paths. Give parents courage and insight to follow Your directions! In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 6:20 My son, obey your fathers commands, and dont neglect your mothers instruction.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 01/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 03/17/2019 Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
- 04/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/27/2019 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 05/04/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/27/2019 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program (Memorial Day)
- 06/13/2019 Transit Fundraiser (Thursday Mid-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
- 06/22-23/2019 Groton Junior Legion Tournament
- 06/29/2019 Groton U10/U12 Round Robin Tournament
- 07/04/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 07/14/2019 Summer Fest/Car Show (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/18/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Tournament
- 07/21/2019 Granary Ice Cream Social & Family Music Fest
- 08/02/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Wine on Nine
- 08/09-11/2019 State Junior Legion Tournament in Groton
- 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
- 09/08/2019 Granary Living History Fall Festival
- 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 (Halloween)
- 11/09/2019 Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/07/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Holiday Party
- 12/07/2019 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- Bingo: every Wednesday, Labor Day-Memorial Day, 6:30pm at the Legion Post #39

2020 Groton SD Community Events

- 4/4/2020 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 4/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 5/2/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)

News from the Associated Press

Man accused of killing, dismembering girlfriend due in court

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man accused of killing his girlfriend and dumping her dismembered body into a river in Michigan's Upper Peninsula is due in court.

Stephen Falkenberg is scheduled for an initial appearance in Yankton County court Thursday in the death of Tamara LaFramboise. Defense attorney Clint Sargent says Falkenberg will plead not guilty to a second-degree murder charge. Prosecutors say Falkenberg killed LaFramboise in Yankton where they both lived.

Authorities say Falkenberg drove to Menominee County, Michigan where he grew up and discarded the victim's dismembered body in the Little River where two boys discovered it Saturday. The woman's head, hands and feet have not been found.

A probable cause affidavit says Falkenberg told his sister he had an argument with LaFramboise at her Yankton apartment and that he pushed her, she hit her head and died.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

04-09-16-29-31

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

Estimated jackpot: \$182,000

Lotto America

04-21-22-38-42, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 3

(four, twenty-one, twenty-two, thirty-eight, forty-two; Star Ball: nine; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$16.97 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$50 million

Powerball

10-14-50-53-63, Powerball: 21, Power Play: 2

(ten, fourteen, fifty, fifty-three, sixty-three; Powerball: twenty-one; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$550 million

Sioux Falls woman pleads no contest to day care abuse

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A former Sioux Falls day care worker facing dozens of child abuse charges has pleaded no contest to two counts.

A no contest plea isn't an admission of guilt but is treated as such for sentencing. The Argus Leader reports Kenedi Wendt is to be sentenced in June.

Authorities allege the 23-year-old Wendt and another worker at Little Blessings Learning Center were caught on surveillance video last year slamming children to the ground, yanking them by their arms and stomping on them.

Thirty-one-year-old Theresa Gallagher has pleaded not guilty and is scheduled for trial in June.

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

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Chronic wasting confirmed in a captive elk in Clark County

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's state veterinarian says chronic wasting disease has been confirmed in a captive elk in Clark County.

Dustin Oedekoven said Wednesday the owner of the 21-month-old female elk noticed the animal was sick and contacted his veterinarian. The USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, later confirmed samples tested positive for the disease.

Chronic wasting disease is endemic in free-ranging deer and elk in and around the Black Hills. The disease was last diagnosed in captive elk in South Dakota in 2001.

CWD is a fatal disease that strikes the nervous system in deer, elk and moose. Oedekoven says state and federal animal health officials are working with the owner of the affected herd to investigate the disease and mitigate further infection.

South Dakota governor signs bills aimed at curbing abortion

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Wednesday signed a package of bills aimed at curbing abortion.

Noem said the bills will "crack down on abortion providers in South Dakota" by requiring providers to use a state form women must sign before they can end a pregnancy.

"A strong and growing body of medical research provides evidence that unborn babies can feel, think, and recognize sounds in the womb. These are people, they must be given the same basic dignities as anyone else," Noem said in a statement.

Another new law will require doctors to give a woman an opportunity to view a sonogram and hear the heartbeat of a fetus before an abortion. Another bill criminalizes causing an abortion against a woman's will.

Groups opposing abortion praised the Republican governor.

"In signing these pro-life bills that had broad legislative support, Governor Noem has demonstrated once again that she is a champion for life," Dale Bartscher, executive director of South Dakota Right to Life, said in Noem's news release.

But Sarah Stoesz, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood North Central States, says South Dakota lawmakers spent "precious taxpayer resources" on bills that unnecessarily restrict a woman's access to a safe, legal abortion, the Argus Leader reported.

"The state has already squandered hundreds of thousands of dollars in litigation fees fighting for medically unnecessary abortion restrictions," Stoesz said in a statement. "The people of South Dakota want their lawmakers to focus on improving the health of our state; instead, they've passed more legislation that's based on medically inaccurate information and contrary to the recommendations of health care professionals."

Planned Parenthood runs South Dakota's only abortion clinic.

Dakotas tribes seek more crime-fighting help from feds

By BLAKE NICHOLSON Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — American Indian reservations in the Dakotas need more resources and cooperation from the federal government to combat crime and improve safety, tribal leaders told members of Congress on Wednesday as they detailed a range of problems including drug trafficking, sex crimes, and missing and murdered indigenous women.

Officials with federal law enforcement agencies testified during the field hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs that they're boosting efforts to combat crime in Indian Country but have limited resources.

The hearing was held by North Dakota Sen. John Hoeven, who chairs the committee, and the other two members of the state's all-Republican delegation, Sen. Kevin Cramer and Rep. Kelly Armstrong.

The testimony will be used to support legislation aimed at boosting public safety for tribes, including

Savanna's Act, Hoeven said. The bill is named for Savanna Greywind, a 22-year-old Fargo woman with ties to two reservations who was killed while her baby was cut from her womb in August 2017.

The bill aims to improve tribal access to federal crime information databases and create standardized protocols for responding to cases of missing and slain Native American women.

Standing Rock Chairman Mike Faith noted the weekend discovery in Michigan of the dismembered body of Tamara LaFramboise, an American Indian woman from South Dakota who had gone missing.

"We had a woman who was missing for many months, and she was under the water, and that crime is unsolved," Three Affiliated Tribes Councilwoman Judy Brugh said, referring to the case of Olivia Lone Bear, whose body was discovered last summer in a pickup truck pulled from a lake on the Fort Berthold Reservation. She had been missing for nearly a year and her death remains a mystery.

Family members of the 32-year-old mother of five accused federal law officials of being slow to launch their search. Brugh on Wednesday also criticized the Bureau of Indian Affairs, saying the agency needs to "step it up" on the reservation.

Charles Addington, deputy director of the BIA's Office of Justice Services, said the agency has made great strides in combating drug trafficking on reservations. In fiscal 2018, the BIA and tribal law enforcement programs reported a 47 percent increase in drug cases and a 26 percent increase in drug-related arrests on reservations across the country, he said.

In January, BIA officers made five drug-related arrests on the Standing Rock Reservation, which straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border. They seized large amounts of methamphetamine and prescription pain pills and thousands of dollars in drug money, Addington offered as an example.

Drug trafficking is often tied to violence against Native Women, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Chairwoman Ella Robertson said in prepared remarks read by Councilwoman Lisa Jackson.

"We have experienced sex trafficking where some of our young women were trafficked off-reservation through methamphetamine drug trafficking and abused as part of a migrant industry," she said.

Cases of sexual abuse of children on reservations account for 40 percent of FBI investigations in the Upper Midwest and require 80 percent of agents' time, said Jill Sanborn, special agent in charge in Minneapolis.

Robertson urged Congress to pass Savanna's Act; the Survive Act, which would increase federal money to help crime victims on reservations; and the Tribal Law and Order Act, a provision of which would encourage the hiring of more law officers for Indian lands.

Myra Pearson, longtime chairwoman of the Spirit Lake Nation, said the tribe's reservation encompasses nearly 400 square miles and has just six federal officers. Law enforcement staffing, training and equipment for the reservation has historically been underfunded, she said.

"We are left with a justice system that is ill-equipped," Pearson said.

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

Sheckler Foundation Announces \$10,000 BTC Grant Recipients and Skate For a Cause Tour Stops

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Mar 20, 2019--The Sheckler Foundation today announced they are taking their 10th annual Skate For a Cause nationwide this summer, with the revealing of the 10 recipients that will receive \$10,000 "Be The Change" (BTC) grants. The Foundation will be donating a total of \$100,000 to causes across the United States that support its core mission for supporting injured action sports athletes and children in need.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190320005710/en/>

Sheckler Foundation Announces \$10,000 BTC Grant Recipients and Skate For a Cause Tour Stops (Graphic: Business Wire)

"Skate For a Cause" Nationwide Demo Tour:

For the last 9 years, Skate For A Cause has been a local, family-friendly event that features a world-class

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skate jam and carnival aimed to help raise funds for the Sheckler Foundation's "Be the Change" initiative. This year, to celebrate the 10 th Anniversary, the Sheckler Foundation is taking Skate For a Cause on a 10-city nationwide demo tour. Attendees can come see Ryan Sheckler and Sheckler Foundation SKATEboard members when they visit any one of the cities represented by the grant winners.

10 BTC \$10,000 Grant Recipients and Skate For a Cause Tour Schedule:

From February 28 – March 13 th supporters entered their favorite causes for "Be the Change," and The Sheckler Foundation is pleased to announce the following winning recipients will be included in each stop of the demo tour across the U.S. Each recipient will receive a \$10,000 grant to support their efforts to "Be the Change."

1. Houston, Texas – Southside Skatepark Skateboarding Day Camp

Southside Skatepark will use its grant to give 50 scholarships to kids wanting to attend its skate camp, teaching perseverance, self-reliance, exposure to cultures outside their own and to never, ever give up.

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/0p1veEcTSXw>

2.Rapid City, South Dakota – Process Skate Ministry Indoor Skatepark

After making a huge impact with Grace & Peace Skatepark in Colorado Springs, Process Skate Ministry plans to build another indoor skatepark in Rapid City, South Dakota to provide a safe, sober, year-round facility that skaters could come do what they love in a fun, encouraging environment. Process Skate Ministry focuses on at-risk youth in the areas of building relationships, finding community, overcoming fears and pushing themselves.

YouTube link:https://youtu.be/A67n_XWKVN0

3.Coconut Creek, Florida – Skate. Surf. Science

Designed to enrich children's school curriculum, its co-op classes offer physical activity through surf and skate lessons. Attendees can create their own skateboard decks, learn how a skateboard is created and find out what science has to do with landing a trick. At the classes, students are not just skaters in a park or surfers in the water, but scientists talking about motion, Newton's laws, simple machines and the environment.

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKAbGWb5zOk>

4.Minneapolis, MN – Wiggle Your Toes

Wiggle Your Toes is a small but mighty non-profit in Minneapolis, MN that was founded by an amputee for the limb-loss and limb-difference community by providing peer support, financial assistance and sport-specific prosthetics (which insurance companies still refuse to pay for, considering them not necessary).

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leKZVL1NcMk>

5.New York, NY –Harold Hunter Foundation's Legacy Program

HHF's Legacy Program provides essential support and resources, while harnessing and developing potential within the community through a combination of skateboarding activities, mentoring, case management, life skills workshops and psychosocial support.

YouTube link: https://youtu.be/_W6FuYgwNg0

6.Sacramento, CA – Project Lifelong

Project Lifelong's mission is to empower youth through skateboarding. Its shared dream and vision is to help make skateboarding accessible to any child, from any neighborhood designed to connect with marginalized youth from underserved areas.

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwDUBKQzVjU>

7.Trenton, NJ – Freedom

Freedom is an all-volunteer 501c(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to giving more people the opportunity to learn the life lessons skating teaches. Freedom's work to provide a safe space for skating and to provide skateboards to youth who would not otherwise be able to afford them are crucial to creating positive opportunities for kids who need them most.

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/WqglULmpQ3o>

8.Lincoln, NE – The Bay

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The Bay is Nebraska's only public indoor skatepark, and the largest in the region. The Bay provides access to cameras, high-end computers and other digital arts equipment, helping to close the tech gap for kids living in poverty. All-Access Pass holders qualify for free/reduced lunch, are involved in the juvenile justice system, have experienced homelessness, come from single-family homes or foster care, and/or come from newly immigrant households.

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I23XrIQrHIY&t=21s>

9. Nashville, TN – Maple Built

Maple Built is a non-profit apprenticeship program utilizing woodworking to shape the future for young men in Nashville, TN. One of the primary avenues through which Maple Built creates jobs for the young men of Nashville, is through Salem Board Co. (SBCo.). SBCo. is a skateboard manufacturing company that was started in October of 2012 as a means to provide on-the-job training for the youth of North Nashville.

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtMxQ0UlyPM>

10. Tempe, AZ – Skate After School

Skate After School is a nonprofit providing innovative after school programs to underserved youth in the greater Phoenix area. Skate After School began as a community project nearly seven years ago. Today, it is a nonprofit that serves roughly 240 students per week across eight low-income schools in the Valley with a team of over 30 qualified volunteers.

YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSZ_nhaTSGQ

The Sheckler Foundation will announce the dates for each stop of the Summer 2019 "Skate For a Cause" Nationwide Demo Tour in the coming weeks.

For additional info on The Sheckler Foundation, stay tuned to: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and visit: shecklerfoundation.org.

About Sheckler Foundation:

Founded in 2008, The Sheckler Foundation was created as an avenue for Ryan Sheckler, his family, friends and business associates to give back to the community and industry that they are so grateful for. Fueled by the desire to contribute to the many causes that directly benefit and enrich the lives of children and injured action sports athletes, the Sheckler Foundation will produce fundraising events, passion projects and web-based initiatives to raise capital and awareness. Our ultimate goal is to empower our community to "Be the Change!"

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KEYWORD: UNITED STATES NORTH AMERICA ARIZONA CALIFORNIA FLORIDA MINNESOTA NEBRASKA NEW JERSEY NEW YORK SOUTH DAKOTA TENNESSEE TEXAS

INDUSTRY KEYWORD: WOMEN PHILANTHROPY CHILDREN PARENTING TEENS OTHER PHILANTHROPY CONSUMER FAMILY FOUNDATION FUND RAISING MEN

SOURCE: Sheckler Foundation

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Union Pacific, BNSF working to restore rail traffic

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Union Pacific says its crews are working around the clock so rail traffic can return to normal in Nebraska and adjacent states hard hit by floodwaters from a late-winter storm and snowmelt.

Spokeswoman Raquel Espinoza said Wednesday that workers are clearing trees and other debris off the Omaha-based railroad's tracks and have begun repairing them and bridges. Some of the lines run between Nebraska and Iowa or merely within Nebraska.

She says water remains over portions of the tracks between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Kansas City, Kansas. The company is unsure when that line can be reopened. Levees have been breached or overtopped in southwest Iowa.

Fort Worth, Texas-based BNSF Railway says it also is confronting flood-related washouts in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota.

Officials: Tattoos identify victim who had been dismembered

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Tattoos on the dismembered body of a South Dakota woman found in a river in Michigan's Upper Peninsula helped authorities identify the victim, according to investigators.

Stephen Falkenberg, 45, is accused of killing Tamara LaFramboise, 46, in Yankton, South Dakota, where they both lived, and taking her body to Menominee County, Michigan, where he allegedly dumped it in the icy Little River, not far from his brother's house. The victim's head, hands and feet remain missing, Menominee County Sheriff Kenny Marks said at a news conference Wednesday. Authorities urged citizens in the area to keep a look out for any evidence in the case.

Two boys walking a dog spotted the woman's body in the river Saturday, according to authorities. An investigator who responded recalled a nationwide law enforcement bulletin about a missing person from South Dakota, which led authorities to contact officials in Yankton County.

The chief assistant prosecuting attorney in Menominee County, Jeffrey Rogg, said no charges would be filed in Michigan at this time. Yankton County prosecutors have charged Falkenberg with second-degree murder. He was being held on \$1 million bond. Falkenberg's attorney, Clint Sargent, said his client will plead not guilty during a court appearance Thursday.

The victim's mother, who reported LaFramboise missing March 5, told investigators her daughter had a turbulent, "on-again, off-again" relationship with Falkenberg, according to a probable cause affidavit. The document says Falkenberg told his sister he had an argument with LaFramboise at her Yankton apartment and that he pushed her, she hit her head and died. He said he dismembered the body to conceal her identity, according to the document.

Pompeo heads to Lebanon, where Hezbollah is at peak strength

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hopes to use his first visit to Lebanon this week to step up pressure on Iran and its local ally, Hezbollah. But he could face resistance even from America's local allies, who fear that pushing too hard could spark a backlash and endanger the tiny country's fragile peace.

Hezbollah wields more power than ever in parliament and the government. Pompeo will meet Friday with President Michel Aoun and will also hold talks with Lebanon's parliament speaker and foreign minister — all three of whom are close Hezbollah allies. He will also meet with Prime Minister Saad Hariri, a close Western ally who has been reluctant to confront Hezbollah.

"We'll spend a lot of time talking with the Lebanese government about how we can help them disconnect from the threat that Iran and Hezbollah present to them," Pompeo told reporters earlier this week.

But isolating Hezbollah, whose military power dwarfs that of the Lebanese armed forces, could prove impossible.

The Iran-backed group has an arsenal of tens of thousands of rockets and missiles. Its battle-hardened

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cadres fought Israel to a stalemate in 2006, and have fought alongside President Bashar Assad's army since the early days of the Syrian civil war, securing a string of hard-won victories. Over the past year, the group has translated this power into major political gains unseen in the past.

Hezbollah and its allies today control a majority of seats in parliament and the Cabinet, after it managed in 2016 to help Aoun, an allied Christian leader, be elected president. The group has three Cabinet seats, the largest number it has ever taken, including the Health Ministry, which has one of the largest budgets.

That has angered Washington, where U.S. officials have called on Hariri's national unity government to ensure Hezbollah does not tap into public resources. Last month, U.S. Ambassador Elizabeth Richard expressed concerns over Hezbollah's growing role in the new Cabinet, saying it does not contribute to stability.

Lebanon has long been a political battleground in the region-wide struggle between Washington and Tehran. But tensions have risen since President Donald Trump withdrew from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran.

The United States backs a coalition of groups opposed to Hezbollah led by Hariri's Sunni-led Future Movement and the right-wing Christian Lebanese Forces, but Washington's local allies are proceeding with caution. Memories are fresh of the clashes that erupted in May 2008, when the Shiite Hezbollah rapidly defeated a group of Sunni opponents on the streets of Beirut.

"Washington should be careful not to push Lebanon to the brink, as Hezbollah would retaliate if its survival is at stake," said Joe Macaron, a resident fellow at the Arab Center in Washington. "In the current status quo, the most effective way to restrain Hezbollah remains within the intricate parameters of the Lebanese political system," he said.

The Trump administration appears to be aware of the difficulties it faces, and while it has talked tough about Hezbollah, it has done little beyond strengthening already tough sanctions on the group, which has long been blacklisted as a terrorist organization by Western countries.

The United States is a strong supporter of Lebanon's national army, supplying it with arms and more than \$1.5 billion in aid over the past decade. But Hezbollah, the only group that did not disarm after the 1975-1990 civil war, takes credit for ending the 18-year Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon in 2000 and says it is the only force capable of repelling another Israeli invasion.

During his visit to Lebanon, Pompeo is expected to reiterate Washington's support to the Lebanese army. In return, he is expected to demand that Lebanon's Central Bank act to prevent Iran from using the country's banking sector to evade sanctions.

Asked by journalists on his way to the Middle East about his meetings with Aoun, who helped facilitate Hezbollah's rise to power, Pompeo responded: "In my business we talk to a lot of people that we're hoping to change their way."

Aoun is scheduled to visit Russia later this month for talks with President Vladimir Putin. The two are expected to discuss a number of topics, including the return of Syrian refugees and oil and gas exploration in the Mediterranean, which has been a source of tension between Lebanon and Israel.

Pompeo will likely offer continued U.S. mediation to try and resolve the maritime border dispute between Lebanon and Israel. Lebanon plans to begin offshore oil and gas exploration later this year.

A closer look at New Zealand's new weapons ban

By FOSTER KLUG and JULIET WILLIAMS Associated Press

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (AP) — Only a week after attacks on two mosques in New Zealand killed 50 worshippers, the country has banned sales of "military-style" semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity magazines.

In the world of politics, it's a lightning fast response, especially when compared to the deeply contentious, long-running gun control debate in the United States.

The suddenness of Thursday's ban, which came as the dead were being buried, has raised many questions, especially for those not familiar with firearms.

Here's a closer look:

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WHAT'S BEING BANNED?

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said that "every semi-automatic weapon used in the terrorist attack last Friday will be banned." She said that includes "military-style" semi-automatic firearms and high-capacity magazines.

Ardern said a sales ban was effective immediately to prevent stockpiling and would be followed by a complete ban on the weapons after new laws are rushed through.

The ban includes any semi-automatic guns or shotguns that are capable of being used with a detachable magazine that holds more than five rounds. It also extends to accessories used to convert guns into what the government called "military-style" weapons.

Many different types of firearms, from pistols to rifles and shotguns, can be semi-automatic. Semi-automatic refers to a firearm's ability to self-load, not only firing a bullet with each trigger pull, but also reloading and making the firearm capable of firing again.

WHAT'S NOT BEING BANNED?

The ban does not include semi-automatic .22 caliber or smaller guns that hold up to 10 rounds or semi-automatic and pump-action shotguns with non-detachable magazines that hold up to five rounds. The guns not banned are commonly used by farmers and hunters.

Caliber is the measurement of the diameter of the inside of a gun barrel. A higher caliber firearm uses larger rounds that can do more tissue damage and are more lethal.

The government said the police and military would be exempt, as would businesses carrying out professional pest control. Access for international shooting competitions would also be considered.

WHAT HAPPENS TO BANNED GUNS?

Ardern said people could hand over their guns under an amnesty while officials develop a formal buyback scheme, which could cost up to 200 million New Zealand dollars (\$140 million).

New Zealand police said on their website that the "transitional period" would allow people to arrange to hand over their unlawful firearms to police without penalties. It encouraged people to fill out an online form and said after that police would be in touch to make arrangements.

There could be legal exemptions to the ban, such as for pest controllers, but Ardern said any exemptions would be "tightly regulated."

"For other dealers, sales should essentially now cease. My expectation is that these weapons will now be returned to your suppliers and never enter into the New Zealand market again," she said.

HOW MANY GUNS ARE AFFECTED?

There are nearly 250,000 licensed gun owners in New Zealand, which has a population of 5 million people. Officials estimate there are 1.5 million guns in the country.

Sydney University gun policy expert Philip Alpers estimated that only 6 percent of all weapons in New Zealand were registered.

He said there could be 500,000 semi-automatic rifles and shotguns. But, he added, "only a small proportion of those would be capable of taking a large-capacity magazine. So that's the number that everyone is trying to guess."

DO NEW ZEALANDERS SUPPORT IT?

The ban is widely supported and puts New Zealand "almost exactly in line" with Australia, the United Kingdom and "somewhat with Canada," according to Professor Kevin Clements, chairman of Peace and Conflicts studies at the University of Otago and a firearms expert.

One of New Zealand's largest gun retailers, Hunting & Fishing New Zealand, said it supports "any government measure to permanently ban such weapons."

The company said it would no longer stock any assault-style firearms of any category and would also

stop selling firearms online.

"What (Ardern's) done is a very brave move, and it's the kind of move that can only be done in a common-law country where guns are not a right. Guns are a real privilege. If there was a legal right like there is in the United States, this would be much more difficult," said International law Professor Alexander Gillespie of Waikato University.

But, he added, "it's going to be expensive, and there's going to be a lot of pushback."

WHAT'S NEXT?

Alpers noted that New Zealand, although it requires handgun registration, "is still the only country apart from the United States and to some degree Canada that doesn't have (firearm) registration as its third pillar of gun control" along with licensing and treating possession as a conditional privilege.

Alpers said rifles and shotguns aren't registered in the country.

He called that "a very important loophole" but said Ardern "has flagged her determination to pursue registration. Whether she'll be able to do it completely or not ... is another question."

Klug reported from Seoul, South Korea. Associated Press writers Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia, and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul contributed to this report.

Trump's invective at John McCain dismays some Republicans

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Casting aside rare censure from Republican lawmakers, President Donald Trump aimed new blasts of invective at the late John McCain, even claiming credit for the senator's moving Washington funeral and complaining he was never properly thanked.

By the time the president began his anti-McCain tirade in Ohio on Wednesday, several leading Republicans had signaled a new willingness to defy Trump by defending the Vietnam War veteran as a hero seven months after he died of brain cancer. One GOP senator called Trump's remarks "deplorable."

Trump then launched a lengthy rant in which he claimed without citing evidence that McCain had pushed for a war and failed America's veterans.

"I gave him the kind of funeral that he wanted," Trump told reporters at a campaign-style rally in Lima, Ohio. "I didn't get (a) thank you but that's OK."

In fact, McCain's family made clear that Trump was not welcome during the weeklong, cross-country ceremonies that the senator had planned himself. Instead, McCain invited former Presidents George W. Bush, who defeated McCain during the 2000 GOP nomination fight, and Barack Obama, who defeated him in 2008, to deliver eulogies on the value of pursuing goals greater than oneself. Trump signed off on the military transport of McCain's body, went golfing and was uncharacteristically quiet on Twitter during the Washington events.

Trump's publicly nursed grudge against McCain has not appeared to alienate core supporters, some of whom had soured on the senator by the time of his death. Aware of this, GOP lawmakers until now have stayed subdued or silent though Trump sometimes infuriated them with his comments on their late colleague.

McCain's allies suggested it was time for that to change.

"I hope (Trump's) indecency to John's memory and to the McCain family will convince more officeholders that they can't ignore the damage Trump is doing to politics and to the country's well-being or remain silent despite their concerns," said Mark Salter, McCain's biographer. "They must speak up."

Trump has said for years that he doesn't think McCain is a hero because the senator was captured in Vietnam. McCain was tortured and held prisoner for more than five years.

The president has never served in the military and obtained a series of deferments to avoid going to Vietnam, including one attained with a physician's letter stating that he suffered from bone spurs in his feet.

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One McCain Senate vote in particular is the thumbs-down Trump can't seem to forget. The Arizona senator in 2017 sank the GOP effort to repeal Obama's health care law. Trump was furious, and it showed even in the days after McCain's death last August. The administration lowered the American flag over the White House to half-staff when McCain died on a Saturday, but then raised it by Monday. After public outcry, the White House flags were again lowered.

This week, Trump unloaded a new series of anti-McCain tweets in which he said he never had been "a fan" and never would be.

His relentless new targeting of the deceased senator seemed to cross a boundary for several Republicans.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell called McCain "a rare patriot and genuine American hero in the Senate." McConnell tweeted, "His memory continues to remind me every day that our nation is sustained by the sacrifices of heroes."

The Kentucky Republican, who is up for re-election next year, never mentioned Trump, but others weren't so shy.

Sen. Johnny Isakson of Georgia said not only the McCain family but the nation "deserves better" than Trump's disparagement.

"I don't care if he's president of the United States, owns all the real estate in New York, or is building the greatest immigration system in the world," Isakson told The Bulwark, a conservative news and opinion website. Later, Isakson called Trump's remarks "deplorable."

"It will (be) deplorable seven months from now if he says it again," Isakson continued in remarks on Georgia Public Broadcasting's "Political Rewind" radio show, "and I will continue to speak out."

Utah Sen. Mitt Romney, the GOP's 2012 presidential nominee whom Trump briefly considered nominating as secretary of state, tweeted praise for McCain on Tuesday — and criticism of Trump.

"I can't understand why the President would, once again, disparage a man as exemplary as my friend John McCain: heroic, courageous, patriotic, honorable, self-effacing, self-sacrificing, empathetic, and driven by duty to family, country, and God," Romney wrote.

Pushback also came from Sen. Martha McSally, a Republican Air Force veteran appointed to McCain's seat from Arizona.

"John McCain is an American hero and I am thankful for his life of service and legacy to our country and Arizona," she tweeted Wednesday. "Everyone should give him and his family the respect, admiration, and peace they deserve."

That McSally declined to criticize Trump directly reflected the broader wariness among Republicans to cross a president famous for mobilizing his followers against GOP lawmakers he deems disloyal. But this week, Trump seemed to inspire a new determination among some to draw a line, however delicately.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, who wept openly on the Senate floor after McCain died but has allied himself strongly with Trump, said, "I think the president's comments about Sen. McCain hurt him more than they hurt the legacy of Sen. McCain."

"A lot of people are coming to John's defense now. ... I don't like it when he says things about my friend John McCain."

Democratic leaders, meanwhile, were eager to jump into the uproar.

"I look forward to soon re-introducing my legislation re-naming the Senate Russell Building after American hero, Senator John McCain," tweeted Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro and Catherine Lucey in Washington and Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Follow Kellman on twitter at <http://www.twitter.com//APLaurieKellman>

Trump says public should see 'ridiculous' Mueller report

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said he believes special counsel Robert Mueller's report should be released to the public, even as he disparaged its very existence as "ridiculous."

"Let it come out, let people see it," Trump told reporters as he left the White House on Wednesday for a trip to Ohio. "Let's see whether or not it's legit."

Mueller is expected to present a report to the Justice Department any day now outlining the findings of his nearly two-year investigation into Russian election meddling, possible collusion with Trump campaign officials and possible obstruction of justice by Trump .

Mueller is required to produce a confidential report that at a minimum explains decisions about who was and was not prosecuted. Attorney General William Barr is then expected to produce his own report for Congress and has said he wants to make public as much of Mueller's findings as he can under the law.

Trump said he was personally looking forward to reading the findings, even as he scorned the fact that Mueller was empowered to write the report in the first place.

"I just won one of the greatest elections of all time in the history of this country. ... And now I have somebody writing a report that never got a vote?" Trump said. "It's called the Mueller report. So explain that because my voters don't get it. And I don't get it."

Trump went on to mischaracterize the effort, saying "it's sort of interesting that a man out of the blue just writes a report."

The House voted unanimously last week for a resolution calling for any report in Mueller's investigation to be made public. It was a symbolic action designed to pressure Barr into releasing as much information as possible.

Trump and his outside attorneys have worked for months now to undermine Mueller and cast doubt on his eventually findings. Trump continued that effort Wednesday, calling Mueller "conflicted" and criticizing the lawyers who have worked on the case.

Though Mueller's office has said nothing publicly about the timing of a report, several prosecutors detailed to Mueller's team have left in recent months, suggesting the investigation is winding down.

Trump, for his part, said he had no idea when the report would be released, but maintained his innocence, saying there was "no collusion" and "no obstruction. There was no nothing."

"With all of that being said," he added, "I look forward to seeing the report."

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Dubai finds itself entangled in case against R. Kelly

By JON GAMBRELL and MALAK HARB Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Dubai found itself entangled in the sex abuse case against American R&B singer R. Kelly on Thursday after the performer asked a U.S. judge to allow him to come to the Arabian Peninsula sheikhdom to perform shows and "meet with the royal family."

Officials in Dubai and the wider United Arab Emirates did not immediately respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press regarding the singer's request, which an Illinois judge could consider at a court hearing on Friday.

However, Kelly's request highlighted the close political and security ties between the U.S. and the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms. It also comes as celebrities and even world leaders on the run have chosen Dubai as a safe haven.

Kelly was charged on Feb. 22 with 10 counts of aggravated sexual abuse for allegedly assaulting three underage girls and one adult woman, coming after the release of a documentary "Surviving R. Kelly." He has denied ever abusing anyone.

In a court filing Wednesday, Kelly's lawyer Steven A. Greenberg said the singer needed to raise money as "he has struggled of late to pay his child support and other child related expenses."

"Before he was arrested Mr. Kelly had signed a contract to perform between 3-5 shows in Dubai, UAE, in April 2019," the court filing read. "He requests permission to travel to Dubai for the shows. While there

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he is supposed to meet with the royal family.”

The filing does not elaborate on where Kelly is supposed to perform. There was no immediately publicized event for which Kelly was known to be a performer, nor did anyone in the entertainment industry hear about one.

However, Dubai’s luxury nightclubs often host hip hop and other artists for days at a time to perform and be seen among the millionaires of this skyscraper-studded city that is home to the world’s tallest building. Rich families also pay for celebrities at their parties.

It is also unclear what is meant by “royal family.” The UAE’s seven emirates are overseen by hereditary rulers who hold absolute power. Dubai’s ruler is Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, 69. His 36-year-old son, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, serves as Dubai’s crown prince and is next in line to be ruler.

The state-linked Abu Dhabi newspaper The National, which has written several times about the case against Kelly, reported Thursday on the singer’s request to come to Dubai, without mentioning his claim of seeing its rulers.

The R. Kelly filing comes as some in Dubai questioned the decision to host a Michael Jackson tribute show there later this month, after another documentary aired allegations the late pop star sexually abused children. Dubai Opera, which will host that event, told the AP the show would still be performed and that the venue will “have no further comment.”

Dubai, home to the world’s largest manmade archipelago the Palm Jumeirah and an indoor ski slope in its desert climes, has long drawn celebrities craving both luxury and seclusion. Will Smith is a repeated visitor. Lindsay Lohan lives off and on in the sheikhdom. David Beckham, Shah Rukh Khan and others are believed to own property in Dubai.

Yet it also has drawn world leaders seeking to escape their own countries. Pakistani Gen. Pervez Musharraf, facing criminal charges back home, fled to Dubai in 2016. Former Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra came to Dubai to avoid a criminal conviction in 2017, following in the footsteps of her brother, the ousted former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

The U.S. does not have an extradition treaty with the UAE. However, the U.S. stations some 5,000 troops in the country and Dubai’s Jebel Ali port is the biggest port of call for the U.S. Navy outside of America.

Kelly’s lawyer acknowledged that in his filing.

“The United States and the UAE have great relations and they (UAE) are not going to (jeopardize) that relationship to harbor R. Kelly,” the filing said.

Associated Press writer Michael Tarm in Chicago contributed to this report.

Analysis: The Islamic State group is down but isn’t done

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a campaign that spanned five years and two U.S. presidencies, unleashed more than 100,000 bombs and killed untold numbers of civilians, the U.S. military engineered the destruction of the Islamic State group’s self-proclaimed empire in Iraq and Syria.

That’s a military success, but not necessarily one that will last.

The Islamic State group is down, but it is not done.

President Donald Trump on Wednesday flashed a color-coded map to illustrate what he called the imminent demise of IS in its last speck of Syrian territory. At its peak, in 2014-15, it controlled an area the size of Britain across Syria and Iraq and launched a series of extremist attacks around the world.

His suggestion of finality for the anti-IS struggle, however, seemed premature.

If history is a guide, the reconquering of IS-held territory may prove a short-lived victory unless Iraq and Syria fix the problem that gave rise to the extremist movement in the first place: governments that pit one ethnic or sectarian group against another.

The U.S. military has been through this scenario before. In 2001, after the Sept. 11 attacks on New York

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and Washington, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, ousted the ruling Taliban regime in a matter of weeks and installed Hamid Karzai as the country's leader. The war seemed over. But the Taliban regrouped while Washington shifted its attention to Iraq's Saddam Hussein, and by 2009 the top U.S. commander in Kabul was calling the war a stalemate.

The U.S. military is still in Afghanistan amid uncertain peace prospects.

The Iraq experience followed a similar path. The U.S. military had seemingly conquered the Sunni insurgency in Iraq by 2011 after eight years of war. American forces departed, only to see sectarian tensions revive and provide an opening for Syria-based IS to take over large parts of Iraq in 2014.

As Army Gen. Lloyd Austin, architect of the plan for defeating IS in Iraq and Syria, put it in 2015, the majority of Sunnis in Iraq simply refused to fight for their government when IS swept across the Euphrates and took control of much of the country's north and west.

"They allowed — and in some cases facilitated — ISIS's push through the country," Austin said. The reason for their complicity, though he didn't say it, was a deep Sunni distrust of Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

President Barack Obama, who had called the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq a mistake, sent small numbers of U.S. military advisers back to Iraq in the summer of 2014, followed by an air campaign. This time a new approach was adopted: train and equip the Iraqis to do the fighting, rather than do the fighting for them. Thus was born a counter-IS strategy that ultimately prevailed in both Iraq and Syria.

The problem now is achieving the political goal of reconciling the rival internal groups in both countries.

Stephen Biddle, a professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University, sees a strong chance that IS will remain an insurgent threat in Iraq and Syria with an intensity that is likely to grow.

"If it gets worse, which it probably will, then I suspect that analysts in 2025 looking back on this will see the eviction of ISIS from its last contiguous territory and the associated American celebrations as yet another example of overly narrow, short-sighted reactions to secondary events," Biddle wrote in an email exchange.

Brett McGurk, the former special U.S. envoy to the counter-IS coalition, wrote on Twitter Wednesday that the Islamic State group is "near finished" in Syria "thanks to the campaign plan designed under Obama and carried forward under Trump." McGurk, who resigned in December after Trump abruptly declared that American forces would withdraw entirely, said the military success "requires follow-through."

A new analysis by the Institute for the Study of War says IS is re-establishing insurgent networks in historical strongholds in northern Iraq and setting the stage for future attacks on the Iraqi government.

"The U.S. and its partners should not view the current relative security in Baghdad as confirmation of the defeat of ISIS," the Institute's Brandon Wallace wrote in a recent analysis.

Gen. Joseph Votel, who oversees U.S. military operations in the Middle East as commander of Central Command, told Congress earlier this month that extremism in Iraq and Syria is a "generational problem."

When the U.S. military began its counter-IS campaign it focused mainly on Iraq, in part because Baghdad itself seemed in danger. The going was slow, and in May 2015 the whole effort appeared in doubt when Iraqi defenders were routed at Ramadi. The U.S. defense secretary at the time, Ash Carter, questioned the Iraqis' will to fight, but gradually the tide began to turn in their favor.

The Syria campaign also began slowly and was marked by startling setbacks. In September 2015, Austin, the commander of U.S. Central Command, acknowledged during congressional testimony that despite hopes of putting several thousand U.S.-backed Syrian rebels into battle against IS, they had managed only four or five.

"This is a total failure," Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., declared, prematurely.

But the effort gained momentum, and by early 2016 the U.S. had recruited and organized what came to be called the Syrian Democratic Forces, which U.S. special operations troops trained, advised and assisted. Despite new complications on the battlefield, such as Russia's entry into the conflict, the campaign methodically recaptured IS territory and cut off the extremists' lifelines.

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EDITOR'S NOTE — Robert Burns has been covering the U.S. military and national security for The Associated Press since 1990.

This story has been corrected to show Sessions' political party was R, not D.

Floods, destruction from cyclone continue in Mozambique

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

CHIMANIMANI, Zimbabwe (AP) — A week after Cyclone Idai hit coastal Mozambique and swept across the country to Zimbabwe, the death, damage and flooding continues in southern Africa, making it one of the most destructive natural disasters in the region's recent history.

Floodwaters are rushing across the plains of central Mozambique, submerging homes, villages and entire towns. The flooding has created a muddy inland ocean 50 kilometers (31 miles) wide where there used to be farms and villages, giving credence to Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi's estimate that 1,000 people may have been killed.

Torrential rains lifted — at least temporarily — Thursday, and floodwaters began to recede in Beira, the worst-hit city, and in the countryside, according to a Mozambican government report. Aid groups were working non-stop to rescue families clinging to tree branches and rooftops for safety from the surging waters.

"Yesterday, 910 people were rescued by the humanitarian community," said Caroline Haga of the International Federation of the Red Cross in Beira. She said 210 were rescued by five helicopters and 700 were saved by boats.

"We're hoping to rescue as many as we can today as it is not raining," she said. "Rescue activities will continue until everyone is brought to safety."

Aid organizations are trying to get food, water and clothing. It will be days before Mozambique's inundated plains drain toward the Indian Ocean and even longer before the full scale of the devastation is known.

Zimbabwe's eastern mountains have been deluged and the rain is continuing.

Aid has been slow to reach affected villagers due to collapsed infrastructure, although the military has been handing out small packets of cooking oil, maize meal and beans.

Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa received a somber welcome in the eastern town of Chimanimani Wednesday. Zimbabwean officials have said some 350 people may have died in their country. The force of the flood waters swept some victims from Zimbabwe down the mountainside into Mozambique, officials said.

With the search for survivors finished, Philemon Dada is has begun rebuilding his life in Chimanimani, once a picturesque town.

With a machete and a hoe, he began salvaging poles from the mud to construct a hut to shelter his small family, a first step in what he sees as a long and backbreaking journey to rebuild a life shattered by Cyclone Idai.

He is one of many villagers trying to pick up the pieces in Chimanimani after losing homes, livestock and, in many instances, family members. Some have been taken in by neighbors and others are sheltering with church pastors.

"I can say I am a bit lucky, my wife and son are still here with me but for everything else, I have to start from scratch," he said.

Dada has a few food items handed out by the Zimbabwe military, but he knows that like most aid it is unlikely to last long, and he is eager to start growing crops again. Like many people here, he survives on agriculture.

"My bean crop was ready for harvesting before the cyclone, the maize was close. I am back to zero," he said.

He is particularly pained by his two prized bulls that did the heavy work of drawing the plow for his field. They were killed in the floods.

"It may take a year, maybe even more years just to get back on my feet," he said.

Associated Press writer Andrew Meldrum in Johannesburg contributed to this report.

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Migrants encounter snafus with new US asylum policy

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Scheduling glitches led an immigration judge to deny the Trump administration's request to order four Central American migrants deported because they failed to show for initial hearings Wednesday in the U.S. while being forced to wait in Mexico.

The judge's refusal was a setback for the administration's highly touted initiative to make asylum seekers wait in Mexico while their cases wind through U.S. immigration courts.

One migrant came to court with a notice to appear on Saturday, March 30 and said he later learned that he was supposed to show up Wednesday. He reported in the morning to U.S. authorities at the main crossing between San Diego and Tijuana.

"I almost didn't make it because I had two dates," he said.

Similar snafus marred the first hearings last week when migrants who were initially told to show up Tuesday had their dates bumped up several days.

Judge Scott Simpson told administration lawyers to file a brief by April 10 that explains how it can assure migrants are properly notified of appointments. The judge postponed initial appearances for the four no-shows to April 22, which raised more questions about how they would learn about the new date.

Government documents had no street address for the four men in Tijuana and indicated that correspondence was to be sent to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Simpson asked how the administration would alert them.

"I don't have a response to that," said Robert Wities, an attorney for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

At least two others were given notices to appear Tuesday but, when they showed up at the border, were told by U.S. authorities that they were not on the schedule that day. Their attorneys quickly got new dates for Wednesday but Mexico refused to take them back, forcing them to stay overnight in U.S. custody.

Laura Sanchez, an attorney for one of the men, said she called a court toll-free number to confirm her client's initial hearing Tuesday but his name didn't appear anywhere in the system. Later, she learned that it was Wednesday.

Sanchez said after Wednesday's hearing that she didn't know if Mexico would take her client back. Mexican officials didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Homeland Security Department representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comment late Wednesday.

The snafus came two days before a federal judge in San Francisco hears oral arguments to halt enforcement of the "Migration Protection Protocols" policy in a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, Southern Poverty Law Center and Center for Gender & Refugee Studies.

The policy shift, which followed months of high-level talks between the U.S. and Mexico, was launched in San Diego on Jan. 29 amid growing numbers of asylum-seeking families from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Mexicans and children traveling alone are exempt.

Families are typically released in the U.S. with notices to appear in court and stay until their cases are resolved, which can take years. The new policy aims to change that by making people wait in Mexico, though it is off to a modest start with 240 migrants being sent back to Tijuana from San Diego in the first six weeks. U.S. officials say they plan to sharply expand the policy across the entire border.

Mexican officials have expressed concern about what both governments say is a unilateral move by the Trump administration but has allowed asylum seekers to wait in Mexico with humanitarian visas.

U.S. officials call the new policy an unprecedented effort that aims to discourage weak asylum claims

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and reduce a court backlog of more than 800,000 cases.

Several migrants who appeared Wednesday said they fear that waiting in Mexico for their next hearings would jeopardize their personal safety. The government attorney said they would be interviewed by an asylum officer to determine if their concerns justified staying in the U.S.

Some told the judge they struggled to find attorneys and were granted more time to find one. Asylum seekers are entitled to legal representation but not at government expense.

U.S. authorities give migrants who are returned to Mexico a list of no-cost legal providers in the U.S. but some migrants told the judge that calls went unanswered or they were told that services were unavailable from Mexico.

A 48-year-old man said under the judge's questioning that he had headaches and throat ailments. The judge noted that migrants with medical issues are exempt from waiting in Mexico and ordered a medical exam.

Associated Press writer Maria Verza in Mexico City contributed to this report.

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. NEW ZEALAND BANS 'MILITARY-STYLE' GUNS

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern bans the sales of semi-automatic and automatic weapons like the ones used in the attacks on two mosques in Christchurch that killed 50 worshippers.

2. US-BACKED FORCES OUST IS BUT VICTORY MAY NOT LAST

Down but not done, the Islamic State group could revive if governments continue to pit one ethnic or sectarian group against another.

3. 3RD PILOT AIDED PENULTIMATE LION AIR FLIGHT

An Indonesian official confirms that a third pilot was in the cockpit as the flight crew struggled to keep the plane aloft during the next-to-last flight of a Lion Air Boeing 737 Max 8 that crashed in October.

4. POMPEO ENCOUNTERS HEZBOLLAH AT PEAK STRENGTH

The U.S. secretary of state hopes to use his first visit to Lebanon this week to step up pressure on Iran and its local ally, Hezbollah, but he could face resistance.

5. COLLEGE ADMISSIONS SCAM PUNISHMENT COULD VARY

Experts disagree over whether many of the affluent parents — including Hollywood stars — charged in the scandal will actually spend time behind bars if convicted.

6. 'HE SAID HE NEEDED THE MONEY FOR THE METH'

A detective says a Salvadoran immigrant charged with four Nevada murders told police he robbed and killed his elderly victims because he needed money to buy methamphetamine, AP learns.

7. WHAT SCIENTISTS ARE WARNING

Historic flooding could soon deluge parts of several Southern states along the lower Mississippi River, where floodwaters could persist for several weeks.

8. WHO CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LOWER RATES

Borrowers, home buyers and home owners and investors are likely to benefit after the Federal Reserve said it may not raise rates at all during 2019.

9. DUBAI FINDS ITSELF ENTANGLED IN R. KELLY CASE

Dubai finds itself entangled in the sex abuse case against the R&B singer after he asked a U.S. judge to allow him to perform at the Arabian Peninsula sheikhdom.

10. GET READY FOR THE MADNESS

Reigning national champion Villanova will be in action along with Michigan, the runner-up from a year ago, as the NCAA Tournament gets underway.

After mosque attacks, New Zealand bans 'military-style' guns

By JULIET WILLIAMS and NICK PERRY Associated Press

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Thursday announced a ban of "military-style" semi-automatic firearms and high-capacity magazines like those used in the shootings at Christchurch mosques last week.

Ardern said a sales ban was effective immediately to prevent stockpiling and would be followed by a complete ban on the weapons after new laws were rushed through.

She said people could hand over their guns under an amnesty while officials develop a formal buyback scheme, which could cost up to 200 million New Zealand dollars (\$140 million).

The man charged in the mosque attacks had purchased his weapons legally using a standard firearms license and enhanced their capacity by using 30-round magazines "done easily through a simple online purchase," Ardern said.

"Every semi-automatic weapon used in the terrorist attack on Friday will be banned," she said.

The ban includes any semi-automatic guns or shotguns that are capable of being used with a detachable magazine that holds more than five rounds. It also extends to accessories used to convert guns into what the government called "military-style" weapons.

It does not include semi-automatic .22 caliber or smaller guns that hold up to 10 rounds or semi-automatic and pump-action shotguns with non-detachable magazines that hold up to five rounds. The guns not banned are commonly used by farmers and hunters.

The government said the police and military would be exempt as would businesses carrying out professional pest control. Access for international shooting competitions would also be considered.

There are nearly 250,000 licensed gun owners in New Zealand, which has a population of 5 million people. Officials estimate there are 1.5 million guns in the country.

Ardern's announcement comes as authorities announced that all 50 bodies from the attacks were formally identified and families were burying their loved ones.

At least nine funerals took place Thursday, including for a teenager, a youth soccer coach and a Muslim convert who loved connecting with other women at the mosque.

After Ardern's announcement, one of New Zealand's largest gun retailers, Hunting & Fishing New Zealand, reiterated its support of "any government measure to permanently ban such weapons."

"While we have sold them in the past to a small number of customers, last week's events have forced a reconsideration that has led us to believe such weapons of war have no place in our business — or our country," chief executive Darren Jacobs said in a statement.

Regardless of the ban, the company would no longer stock any assault-style firearms of any category and would also stop selling firearms online, he said.

Although the exact weapons used in the mosque attacks have not been made public, images of them posted by the gunman show at least one of them to be a semi-automatic rifle similar to an AR-15 that is widely available in New Zealand. Semi-automatic refers to a firearm's ability to self-load, not only firing a bullet with each trigger pull, but also reloading and making the firearm capable of firing again.

The military versions most resembling the AR-15 rifle are the M16 and M4 carbines, which can fire in semi-automatic mode, three-round burst mode or fully automatic mode.

Many different types of firearms, from pistols to rifles and shotguns, can be semi-automatic. Semi-automatic rifles like the AR-15 can often be modified with aftermarket parts, or accessories, to fire in fully automatic mode and instructions can often be found on the internet.

Polly Collins, 64, of Christchurch, was thrilled to hear of Ardern's announcement as she visited a flower memorial for the victims.

"The prime minister is amazing," she said. "It's not like in America, where they have all these things and then they go 'Oh yeah, we'll deal with the gun laws,' and nothing's done."

At the cemetery, solemn farewells continued for Cashmere High School student Sayyad Ahmad Milne, 14, who was known as an outgoing boy and the school's futsal goalkeeper. Tariq Rashid Omar, 24, graduated

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from the same school, played soccer in the summer and was a beloved coach of several youth teams and was also buried Thursday.

In a post on Facebook, Christchurch United Football Club Academy Director Colin Williamson described Omar as "a beautiful human being with a tremendous heart and love for coaching."

Linda Armstrong, 64, a third-generation New Zealander who converted to Islam in her 50s, was also buried, as were Hussein Mohamed Khalil Moustafa, 70, Matiullah Safi, 55, and Haji Mohammed Daoud Nabi.

Police Commissioner Mike Bush said all 50 victims had been identified as of Thursday and their families were being notified. Investigators also were trying to conclude their work at the two mosques.

"We are working to restore them in a way that is absolutely respectful," he said.

An Australian white supremacist, Brenton Harrison Tarrant, was arrested by police who ran him off the road while he was believed to be on his way to a third target. He had livestreamed the attack on Facebook and said in his manifesto he planned to attack three mosques.

Also on Thursday, police said they'd inadvertently charged Tarrant with the murder of a person who is still alive.

Police said in a statement they had apologized to the person incorrectly named on the document and would change the charge sheet. They said the charge remains valid, so there was no chance the suspect would be released as a result of the error.

Police did not offer further details of what went wrong or make anybody available for an interview.

The name of the person on the charging sheet has been suppressed by court order. Officials said more charges against Tarrant would follow.

Tarrant, 28, is next scheduled to appear in court on April 5, and Bush said investigations into him were continuing. Police have said they are certain Tarrant was the only gunman but are still investigating whether he had support.

Meanwhile, preparations were underway for a massive Friday prayer service to be led by the imam of one of the mosques where worshippers were killed.

Imam Gamal Fouda said he is expecting 3,000 to 4,000 people at the prayer service, including many who have come from abroad.

Workers at the Al Noor mosque have been trying feverishly to repair the destruction, Fouda said.

"They will bury the carpet," he said. "Because it is full of blood, and it's contaminated."

Fouda said that he expects the mosque to be ready to open again by next week and that some skilled workers had offered their services for free.

Associated Press writer Kristen Gelineau also contributed to this report.

5 suspects at New Mexico compound face terror charges

By MARY HUDETZ Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Five extended family members who lived at a ramshackle New Mexico compound where a 3-year-old boy was found dead last year are due in federal court Thursday to face new charges that they plotted attacks on U.S. law enforcement and members of the military.

A federal grand jury last week indicted the five on charges including conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists between late 2017 and August 2018. Authorities said the group travelled from Georgia to New Mexico and lived on a remote property, where they built a makeshift settlement consisting of a camping trailer wedged into the desert and shielded by stacked tires.

The suspects have been in custody since their compound was raided in August, when authorities said they found 11 hungry children living in filth, guns and ammunition, a firing range, and the remains of the young boy, Abdul-Ghani Wahhaj. They were looking for the boy at the request of his mother in Georgia when they found the compound.

The boy was the son of Siraj Ibn Wahhaj, one of the five adults living at the compound, and had suffered from a medical condition that caused seizures, authorities said. He and Jany Leveille, whom Wahhaj

considers his wife, had held hours-long prayer rituals over the boy in the days leading to his death, but denied him medication because Leveille believed it suppressed Muslim beliefs, authorities said.

She also believed the boy would be resurrected as Jesus and give instructions on how to get rid of corrupt institutions that involve teachers, law enforcement and banks, an FBI agent testified in court last year.

Authorities also have accused Wahhaj and others of transporting weapons across state lines, and training children at a firing range on the property to carry out shootings and other attacks that never occurred.

The suspects' attorneys have disputed the allegations, saying they are based on the uncorroborated statements of children.

They plan to plead not guilty at their arraignment, the attorneys said.

All the suspects, except Wahhaj, also have been charged with participating in the kidnapping of his son.

Federal statutes generally only allow for charging parents with abducting their own children in international cases.

The results of an autopsy are still pending.

European, Canadian regulators to do own review of Boeing jet

By DAVID KOENIG and TOM KRISHER Associated Press

Boeing's grounded airliners are likely to be parked longer now that European and Canadian regulators plan to conduct their own reviews of changes the company is making after two of the jets crashed.

The Europeans and Canadians want to do more than simply take the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration's word that alterations to a key flight-control system will make the 737 Max safer. Those reviews scramble an ambitious schedule set by Boeing and could undercut the FAA's reputation around the world.

Boeing hopes by Monday to finish an update to software that can automatically point the nose of the plane sharply downward in some circumstances to avoid an aerodynamic stall, according to two people briefed on FAA presentations to congressional committees.

The FAA expects to certify Boeing's modifications and plans for pilot training in April or May, one of the people said. Both spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak about the briefings.

But there are clear doubts about meeting that timetable. Air Canada plans to remove the Boeing 737 Max from its schedule at least through July 1 and suspend some routes that it flew with the plane before it was grounded around the world last week.

American Airlines, Southwest Airlines and United Airlines, which are slightly less dependent on the Max than Air Canada, are juggling their fleets to fill in for grounded planes, but those carriers have still canceled some flights.

By international agreement, planes must be certified in the country where they are built. Regulators around the world have almost always accepted that country's decision.

As a result, European airlines have flown Boeing jets with little independent review by the European Aviation Safety Agency, and U.S. airlines operate Airbus jets without a separate, lengthy certification process by the FAA.

That practice is being frayed, however, in the face of growing questions about the FAA's certification of the Max. Critics question whether the agency relied too much on Boeing to vouch for critical safety matters and whether it understood the significance of a new automated flight-control system on the Max.

The FAA let the Boeing Max keep flying after preliminary findings from the Oct. 29 crash of a Lion Air Max 8 in Indonesia pointed to flight-control problems linked to the failure of a sensor. Boeing went to work on upgrading the software to, among other things, rely on more than one sensor and limit the system's power to point the plane's nose down without direction from the pilots.

The FAA's assurance that the plane was still safe to fly was good enough for the rest of the world until an Ethiopian Airlines Max 8 crashed. Satellite data suggests both planes had similar, erratic flight paths before crashing minutes after takeoff.

Patrick Ky, the executive director of the European regulator, said his agency will look "very deeply, very

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closely" at the changes Boeing and the FAA suggest to fix the plane.

"I can guarantee to you that on our side we will not allow the aircraft to fly if we have not found acceptable answers to all our questions, whatever the FAA does," he said.

The message was the same from Canada's Transport minister, Marc Garneau.

"When that software change is ready, which is a number of weeks, we will in Canada — even if it is certified by the FAA — we will do our own certification," he said.

Other countries could also conduct their own analysis of how much pilot training should be required on the Max. Ky noted that one Lion Air crew correctly disabled the plane's malfunctioning flight-control system, but not the crew on the next flight, which crashed. He said pilots under stress might have forgotten details of a bulletin Boeing issued in November that reminded pilots about that procedure.

The FAA's handling of issues around the Max jet have damaged its standing among other aviation regulators, said James Hall, former chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The FAA will have to be more transparent about its investigation, and it should require that pilots train for the Max on flight simulators, Hall said, because "that is how pilots train today, not on iPads."

John Hansman, an aeronautics professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and chairman of an FAA research and engineering advisory committee, said separate approvals by Canada and the Europeans will reassure the public because those countries are seen as having no vested interest in the plane.

"It's unfortunate because it will probably cause a delay, but it may be the right thing in the long haul," Hansman said. He expects that the FAA will wait until other regulators finish their reviews before letting the Max fly again.

FAA spokesman Greg Martin would not comment on whether the agency's reputation has been hurt by its approval of the Max, the crashes or the agency's initial hesitation to ground the planes after the second crash.

Meanwhile, the FAA is getting a new chief. The White House said Tuesday that President Donald Trump will nominate former Delta Air Lines executive and pilot Stephen Dickson to head the agency. Daniel Elwell has been acting administrator since January 2018.

Boeing too is shifting personnel. This week, the company named the chief engineer of its commercial airplanes division to lead the company's role in the investigations into the Oct. 29 crash of the Lion Air jet and the March 10 Ethiopian Airlines crash. The executive, John Hamilton, has experience in airplane design and regulatory standards.

From 2013 until early 2016, Hamilton oversaw the use of Boeing employees to perform some safety-certification work on behalf of the FAA. That program has come under criticism from critics including members of Congress.

The Justice Department is investigating the FAA's oversight of Boeing, and a federal grand jury issued a subpoena to someone involved in the plane's development. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao formally directed her agency's inspector general to audit the FAA's handling of that process. Congressional committees are looking into the matter as well.

A Senate subcommittee will hold a hearing on Max and aviation safety on March 27.

The company declined to comment. The Max, the latest and most fuel-efficient version of the half-century-old 737, is Boeing's best-selling plane, with more than 4,600 unfilled orders.

Associated Press writers Carlo Piovano in London and Robert Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

NCAA Tournament: Let the games begin _ in earnest

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

Reigning national champion Villanova will be in action along with Michigan, the runner-up from a year ago, while Belmont and Murray State open the NCAA Tournament as trendy upset picks.

There's Kansas and Michigan State to provide some blue-blood flavor, and Murray State's Ja Morant and

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Marquette counterpart Markus Howard some star power. There's the big-name coaches such as Syracuse's Jim Boeheim and the under-appreciated in Wofford's Mike Young.

What more could you want on the first real day of the dance?

Other than Zion Williamson, of course. Duke doesn't get started until Friday.

But there is still plenty of intrigue as the first round gets going Thursday in Des Moines, Iowa, with a matchup in the East Region between seventh-seeded Louisville and No. 10 seed Minnesota — the school coached by Richard Pitino, the son of disgraced Cardinals coach Rick Pitino.

The younger Pitino dismissed any notion that the NCAA Tournament selection committee made the matchup on purpose, perhaps to sell tickets or drive television ratings.

"I don't have a whole lot of opinion on it," Pitino said, "because when I'm sitting there Selection Sunday, I'm looking around, I'm excited about the fact that I know we're in the NCAA Tournament. I'll play whoever. I'm excited."

See? Intrigue abounds.

Also in Des Moines, the second-seeded Spartans face No. 15 seed Bradley, seventh-seeded Nevada meets No. 10 seed Florida, and the second-seeded Wolverines face No. 15 seed Montana.

Michigan is coming off a tough loss to Michigan State in the Big Ten Tournament title game, but coach John Beilein put a positive spin on the showing in Chicago. He saw a team executing at a higher level, one that is hungry to break through and deliver a national championship.

"I've had a lot of wins and a whole lot of losses, and after a loss, every time there seems to be a bounce in our team," said Beilein, whose Michigan teams have twice lost in the national title game. "Hopefully we will have the same edge, right, that we have had in the last couple of years in the first rounds after winning. I think we will have more of an edge, hopefully."

Here are some other things to watch as the tournament hits its stride:

NOVA'S TITLE DEFENSE: Villanova certainly didn't look like an NCAA Tournament team when it lost a Final Four rematch to Kansas to fall to 8-4 early in the season. But veterans Phil Booth and Eric Paschall dragged the Wildcats along, and their late-season run produced a Big East Tournament title and earned them a No. 6 seed in the South Region.

Jay Wright's crew opens against No. 11 seed Saint Mary's in Hartford, Connecticut. The Gaels are coming off a 60-47 upset of Gonzaga in the West Coast Tournament title game.

LET'S PLAY HORSE: The best one-on-one matchup of the entire tournament could come Thursday when Howard and the fifth-seeded Golden Eagles face Morant and No. 12 seed Murray State. Howard was the Big East player of the year while most NBA mock drafts have Morant going in the top five.

Even better? Morant and Howard have been friends since attending Chris Paul's camp together.

"Markus actually was the first person I talked to," Morant said. "We had a meeting that night when we got there. I sat at the table with him and had conversations with him. The experience was great, just being there with Chris Paul and other NBA players."

MISLABELED MID-MAJORS: Nevada returned the Martin twins, Cody and Caleb, along with star forward Jordan Caroline from last year's Sweet 16 team. Together, they powered the Wolf Pack to a 29-4 record and share of the regular-season Mountain West crown. First up for them is Florida, which forces turnovers by the dozen and feature a resurgent Jalen Hudson.

Two other mid-majors that could make March noise are Wofford and New Mexico State. The No. 7 seed Terriers, winners of 20 straight, open against No. 10 seed Seton Hall in Jacksonville, Florida, and the No. 12 seed Aggies go for their 31st win against No. 5 seed Auburn in Salt Lake City.

TIGER TROUBLES: Third-seeded LSU still won't have coach Will Wade on the sideline for his role in a wiretap scandal when the Tigers face No. 14 seed Yale in Jacksonville. Tony Benford will be in charge against the Ivy League champions, who have one of the nation's most electric offenses.

"The players, they've taken ownership of the locker room. They're holding everyone accountable," Benford said. "They're aware of what's going on the outside, but inside when we walk in those doors, hey, it's about preparing for — for instance, Yale."

KU'S CHANCE: Once the nation's No. 1 team, Kansas is down to one last chance to win a title ring. The

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Jayhawks failed to win a piece of the Big 12 regular-season title for the first time in 15 years, then lost to Iowa State in the conference tournament final. The fourth-seeded team in the Midwest Region opens against Northeastern in Salt Lake City.

"Every team has a different ceiling and coaches know that better than anybody," Jayhawks coach Bill Self said. "Our kids have done a pretty good job operating against that ceiling for the most part. Not always, obviously. But I think I know what this team is capable of and I think we're capable of doing some great things in this tournament. That pride makes it more challenging and more fun but it doesn't make it any easier."

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

APNewsbreak: Police say immigrant suspect killed for drugs

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — A detective says a Salvadoran immigrant charged with four Nevada murders told police he robbed and killed his elderly victims during a 10-day rampage in January because he needed money to buy methamphetamine.

The detective told the grand jury, which indicted Wilber Ernesto Martinez-Guzman in Reno last week, the 20-year-old who is living in the U.S. illegally broke into tears and repeatedly called himself an "idiot" before confessing to the murders during an interrogation hours after his arrest in Carson City on Jan. 19.

According to the grand jury transcript obtained by The Associated Press, Washoe County Sheriff's Detective Stefanie Brady testified March 13 that Martinez-Guzman initially denied any wrongdoing and was smiling and giggling through part of the questioning.

But after she confronted him with several contradictions in his story during a nearly three-hour interrogation, he said through a Spanish interpreter he had "done something that's unforgiveable."

She says he told her he shot the victims "because of the drugs."

"He said he needed the money for the meth and it was the meth," Brady testified, according to the 268-page transcript filed late Tuesday in Washoe District Court.

The grand jury indicted Martinez-Guzman last week on four counts of murder with the use of a deadly weapon, three counts of burglary while in possession of a firearm and one count each of burglary, burglary while gaining possession of a firearm and possession of a stolen firearm.

A not guilty plea was entered on his behalf during an arraignment Tuesday. His trial isn't scheduled to begin until April 2020.

His public defense attorney, John Arrascada, said in an email to AP he didn't receive the grand jury transcript until Wednesday, was reviewing it and had no immediate comment.

Federal officials have said Martinez-Guzman is in the U.S. illegally but they don't know how or when he crossed the border.

The case has drawn the attention of President Donald Trump, who says it shows the need for a border wall.

District Attorneys Chris Hicks of Washoe County and Mark Jackson of Douglas County announced last week they are seeking the death penalty but that Martinez-Guzman's immigration status had nothing to do with that decision.

The four slaying victims include Gerald David, 81, and his 80-year-old wife, Sharon David, a prominent Reno Rodeo Association couple who had employed Martinez-Guzman as a landscaper last summer at their house where they were found dead Jan. 16.

Police say they were shot with a .22-caliber handgun that Martinez-Guzman stole from them earlier.

Court documents allege that Martinez-Guzman's DNA was found on the same gun that was also used to kill Connie Koontz and Sophia Renken in their homes in Gardnerville south of Carson City.

Detective Brady told the grand jury that Martinez-Guzman was "engaging" and made "lots of eye contact" during the early stages of the interrogation at the Carson City sheriff's office.

"He smiled, kind of giggled through some of the questions. But he was very engaged in the conversation," she said.

After she read him his Miranda rights, "he actually acknowledged that he was fine not having an attorney because he hadn't done anything wrong," she said.

He indicated he had buried "a bunch of stuff" that he found by a river in Carson City. But when she confronted him about several contradictions, his answers became slower, his body posture was more slumped and he started touching his face uncontrollably.

When she asked him about some fishing poles that had been stolen from the Davids, "there was a really long pause. And at that point, he had dropped his head and began to cry with long deep breaths."

"He talked about how he was an idiot. He repeated that several times," Brady testified. "He talked about how he had done something that's unforgivable."

"He said ... something about if he tells me what he did, it's not going to bring back the people that he shot," she said, and then shortly after that blamed the killings on his need for money to buy drugs.

She said he initially denied he killed Renken, but ultimately acknowledged he shot her too.

'Full House' to big house in college scheme? Experts differ

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Could Aunt Becky be headed to prison? It could go either way, experts say.

Some of the wealthy parents accused of paying bribes to get their kids into top universities may get short stints behind bars, if convicted, to send a message that the privileged are not above the law, some lawyers say. But others predict that most, if not all, will end up with probation and a fine, particularly if they quickly agree to accept responsibility and cooperate, which observers anticipate many will do.

"If the parents are well represented, it is reasonable to expect that possibly none will go to jail," said former federal prosecutor Jacob Frenkel. "These are not the type of offenses for which judges exercising their discretion would normally put people in jail," he said.

The parents ensnared in what prosecutors have called the biggest college admissions scam ever prosecuted by the U.S. Justice Department include Hollywood stars Lori Loughlin, who played Aunt Becky on the sitcom "Full House," and Felicity Huffman of "Desperate Housewives." Other parents are prominent figures in law, finance, fashion, the food and beverage industry, and other fields.

Prosecutors have said, though, that they believe other parents were involved and that the investigation — dubbed Operation Varsity Blues — continues.

The parents are charged with conspiracy to commit mail fraud and honest services mail fraud, a count that carries up to 20 years in prison, although defendants, especially first-time offenders, typically get far less than that.

Attorneys for at least some of the parents are likely already negotiating deals with prosecutors, experts say. And authorities have lots of leverage to push parents to plead guilty by promising to bring more charges, like tax evasion or money laundering, if they don't.

Frenkel, now a white-collar defense attorney at Dickinson Wright in Washington, said he suspects many parents could wind up pleading guilty to a tax charge, for deducting the bribes from their income taxes, and get probation.

Most parents could get merely a fine and community service, agreed Jeffrey Cramer, who was an assistant U.S. attorney in Chicago.

But those who went to great lengths to participate in the scam or enlisted their children help them carry it out may spend a few months behind bars, because judges may not see a financial penalty as sufficient punishment, he said.

"If you told (the parents) at the beginning of this that in addition to the bribe, you'd have to pay a \$200,000 penalty and have to work at the Beverly Hills food bank, they'd probably take that deal," said Cramer, now managing director of Berkeley Research Group consulting firm.

"You cannot have a criminal justice system where at the end of the day," he said, "the crime was worth

doing.”

The parents are accused of paying admissions consultant Rick Singer to rig standardized test scores and bribe college coaches and other insiders to get their children into selective schools. Coaches at schools including Yale University and the University of Southern California are also charged with accepting bribes.

Singer secretly recorded his conversations with the parents after agreeing to work with investigators in the hopes of getting a lesser sentence. He pleaded guilty last week to racketeering conspiracy and other charges.

Loughlin’s lawyers declined on Wednesday to comment. An email was sent to a communications firm hired by Huffman.

If any parents decide to fight the charges, they could argue they believed the services they were paying for were legitimate and didn’t realize what Singer was doing, lawyers say. They could also try to paint Singer as a liar who is trying to take them down in order to save himself, experts say.

“A high-on-the-food-chain cooperator is now reaching down below, and that gives an opportunity for the defense to exploit that the cooperator is facing a lot of time and therefore he is fabricating things,” said Boston criminal defense attorney Brad Bailey.

But the mountain of evidence against them, which includes recorded phone calls, emails, bank records and flight records, will be difficult to overcome, attorneys say.

“The defenses are about as viable as each of the benefiting kids making the varsity sports team,” Frenkel said.

The parents will likely try to stay out of prison by arguing they believed they were doing what was best for their children and have already been punished enough by being publicly humiliated and losing jobs, attorneys say.

But some experts say they doubt such a strategy would be successful.

“This is not the most sympathetic case, and I don’t know how many judges want to bend over backward for any of these individuals,” said Ilene Jaroslaw, a former federal prosecutor who is now a white-collar defense attorney at Phillips Nizer in New York.

“I expect that you’re going to see a number of these people spend some time in jail to send a message,” she said.

Lawyers who have seen less affluent clients go to prison for crimes seemingly less egregious say it would only be fair.

“You’ve already got a case that really illustrates the power of the privileged in the first place,” said New York criminal defense lawyer Matthew Galluzzo. “If you don’t send them to jail then you’re going to be proving the point — which is that you can get away with anything if you have money.”

Follow Alanna Durkin Richer at <http://www.twitter.com/aedurkinricher>

Forecasters: ‘Potentially historic’ flooding threatens South

By JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

Scientists are warning that historic flooding could soon deluge parts of several Southern states along the lower Mississippi River, where floodwaters could persist for several weeks.

The flood threat in the South will be discussed Thursday, when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration releases its 2019 spring outlook. Experts plan a briefing on their flood forecast at the National Water Center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Thursday’s report is aimed at helping emergency managers and other safety officials to prepare for flooding.

Flooding in Southern states this spring will be “potentially historic,” NOAA said in an advisory.

Rapidly melting snow in the upper Midwest is contributing to flooding that will eventually make its way downstream to the Gulf Coast, forecasters have said.

The expected surge of water from the north is unwelcome news in parts of Mississippi. In the western

part of that state, the Mississippi River is already swollen and has been flooding some communities unprotected by levees since last month.

One Mississippi region protected by levees is also flooding. That's because smaller rivers can't drain into the Mississippi River as normal because a floodgate that protects the region from even worse flooding by the big river has been closed since Feb. 15.

Around Rolling Fork, Mississippi, townspeople first noticed water rising from swamps near the Mississippi River in late February. The water eventually invaded some homes in that community, about 40 miles (65 kilometers) north of Vicksburg.

Major flooding is already occurring this week on the Mississippi River near several Southern cities including Arkansas City, Arkansas; Natchez, Mississippi; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, according to river gauges and data from NOAA.

Associated Press Writer Jeff Amy in Jackson, Mississippi, contributed.

Pelosi's no fan of impeachment: Just ask Clinton and Bush

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The day after Democrats swept to power, Speaker-to-be Nancy Pelosi stood before the cameras and declared impeachment was "off the table." That was November 2006.

More than a decade later, Pelosi, again facing a restive left flank but one ready to confront President Donald Trump, says she's "not for impeachment."

It's a remarkably consistent stance from Pelosi, who voted against the impeachment of Bill Clinton, tamped down efforts to impeach George W. Bush and now is leading the House through another moment when a vocal part of the electorate wants to end a presidency.

Pelosi's reluctance to launch impeachment proceedings infuriates the left flank and is testing her ability to hold restive House Democrats in line. But it also shows the political calculation of a seasoned leader who knows "public sentiment is everything," as she often says, and for now at least, Americans seem to prefer investigations to impeachment.

As Washington awaits special counsel Robert Mueller's report, the Democratic leader knows her party has little to gain and much to lose if they launch headlong into impeachment proceedings that are seen as partisan. House Republicans learned as much when then-Speaker Newt Gingrich's majority lost seats after their long campaign to impeach Clinton. When it comes to Trump, she recently told *The Washington Post*, "he's just not worth it."

"So many of you have said to me: 'Why are you saying this now?'" she told reporters later. "Because I have said it almost every day. But if I frame it that way, it gets more attention."

Rick Tyler, a GOP strategist and former Gingrich spokesman, says Pelosi has been a "keen observer" of history during her 30 years in the House and understands "impeachments are an inherently political process."

Even if the investigations bear out that Trump is "worthy of impeachment," he said, there's the political reality of a divided Congress that must agree. The House impeaches and sends the case to trial in the Senate. There, Republicans have the majority and would have the final say on conviction and removal, and "she knows full well there's no way in God's green earth the Senate is going to convict Donald Trump."

Pelosi has been down this road before. She stood on the House floor in 1998 and railed against Republicans for "hypocrisy" ahead of the votes against Clinton. Years later, as the Iraq war dragged on, her left flank led by then-Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio drew up articles of impeachment against Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney.

The day after the 2006 midterm elections that swept Democrats to power, Pelosi was asked how she, as the speaker-to-be from San Francisco, would handle those pushing the impeachment debate.

"Democrats are not about getting even," Pelosi said at the time. "Democrats are about helping the American people get ahead, and that's what our agenda is about. So while some people are excited about

prospects that they have in terms of their priorities, they are not our priorities. I have said, and I say again, that impeachment is off the table.”

She also noted that while she takes “great pride” in representing her California district, she “very, very, very much” respects that she would serve “as the speaker of the full House, not of the Democrats.”

The Democratic chairman of the House Oversight Committee during the Bush era, former Rep. Henry Waxman of California, recalled that Pelosi was unwavering in her approach to impeachment, in part because she knew it would go nowhere in the Senate.

“A lot of our friends were saying, ‘Impeach him!’ because they didn’t like his policies,” Waxman said. “That wasn’t in the cards.”

By 2008, the House had voted to shelve Kucinich’s impeachment resolution.

As Pelosi campaigned last fall before Democrats again took the majority, she suggested that had Democrats pushed the impeachment issue during the Bush years, her party would have never won back the White House and Barack Obama would not have become president.

“People wanted me to impeach Bush because of the war in Iraq,” she told The Associated Press during a campaign swing ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.

“If we had gone down that path, I doubt we would have won the White House the next time,” she said. “People have to see we’re working there for them.”

But this time is different. Billionaire Tom Steyer is running ads over impeachment, high-profile members of Congress are pushing the issue and Trump is facing more voluminous, if not more serious, allegations of collaborating with Russia to interfere in the 2016 election.

Also Trump is just two years in office as impeachment talk swirls, intensifying the debate among Democrats ahead of Trump’s re-election bid. Bush had been in the final years of his presidency.

Pelosi is tamping down expectations ahead of Mueller’s report, saying the House will wait to see “the facts of the case” while the House committees conduct their own oversight of the Trump administration.

Another former Gingrich aide, Rich Galen, remembers the way the Clinton impeachment hearings just “sucked the oxygen out of the House side of the Capitol.” He also remembers the sinking feeling on election night in 1998 when House Republicans thought they would add to their ranks, but instead saw seats slipping away. Gingrich was later booted from party leadership.

“I’m not Pelosi’s biggest fan,” Galen said, “but I think she’s got that right.”

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Minnesota’s famed winter isn’t what it used to be

By **AMY FORLITI** and **JEFF BAENEN** Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Bundled up against the icy cold and drifting snow, Don Olson has tended the trail of a popular cross country ski race in Minnesota for years.

Fixing problem spots on the Vasaloppet’s route often meant braving the freezing temperatures and frigid winds that have always defined this state. But recently, things have changed: Instead of plodding through the snow, Olson and other volunteers had to start making it.

“We just simply don’t get consistent snow anymore,” Olson said. “In order to survive, we felt like we needed to do this.”

Winter just isn’t the same in Minnesota these days. And as the latest season ends, residents say their lifestyles are changing with it.

Minnesota is among the fastest warming states, and Minnesota’s winters are warming faster than its other seasons. Data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration show that since 1970, Minnesota’s winters have warmed at an average rate of 1.1 degrees per decade — that’s more than five times faster than the rate of winter warming in previous years.

“We’ve lost some of our winter weather mojo,” said longtime meteorologist Paul Douglas. “Maybe one in four winters now, today, are old-fashioned pioneer winters, where we really get socked with cold and

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snow. The other 70, 75 percent of the winters are trending milder.”

Longtime residents who enjoy winter sports and activities have done their best to adjust, but it’s not always easy.

During mild spells, some sled dog races have been shortened or canceled. Snowmobilers say they’ve traveled greater distances to find good snow. Outdoor skating rinks and ponds have sometimes been too soft or slushy to use. And businesses that cater to ice anglers or other winter enthusiasts can see a slowdown.

Even Minnesota’s beloved moose have felt the effects, with parasites that don’t die off in milder temperatures a leading cause of moose deaths, according to a state study.

Grousing about the weather is regular conversation in the state, but plenty of Minnesotans actually love winter and say it’s part of their identity. Many are concerned that the season is not what it used to be.

“We’d like to go back to the nostalgia of just having cold weather. Grab a scarf and hot chocolate and enjoy it,” said Jim Dahline of the U.S. Pond Hockey Championships, an amateur tournament that in 2016 began starting two weeks later to increase its chances for skateable ice.

To be sure, Minnesota still gets cold. Minneapolis-St. Paul just endured its snowiest February ever — 39 inches. The polar vortex in January, and a similar event in 2014, brought the state some of its coldest weather in years.

But overall, winter is warming fast — by more than 5 degrees since 1970. Alaska and Vermont have also seen winters warm by more than 5 degrees, according to NOAA data.

Minnesota’s winter season has gotten shorter since 1970, too, with an average of 16 fewer days from the first frost to the last, and about 12 days less of ice cover on the state’s lakes.

The winter season is warming faster than other seasons because greenhouse gases are trapping heat in the atmosphere at a time when the earth is supposed to be cooling, said Kenny Blumenfeld, senior climatologist for the Department of Natural Resources. While Minnesota has been warming over the last century, the trend has been concentrated since 1970.

The changes are felt by many.

Musher Frank Moe loves running his sled dogs on cold winter nights under the stars, when the air is crisp and everything is quiet.

But there are fewer opportunities now because of patchy snow. He’s seen several local races that once brought tourism dollars to smaller northern Minnesota cities get canceled for good.

“When a local race gets canceled and you don’t have mushing conditions, you’ll either quit ... or you’ll move to some place where you think will have more predictable snow and weather,” Moe said.

That’s what Moe did. A decade ago, he and his wife moved 250 miles from Bemidji in north central Minnesota to the north shore of Lake Superior to increase their chances of reliable snow.

“It’s dramatic and everybody knows it,” Moe said of the change in Minnesota winters. “I don’t think there’s any climate change deniers in the musher world.”

No one has tallied the economic impact but milder winters take a toll on some businesses.

Steve Crumley, a snowmobiler who loves traveling the state with the Eden Prairie Snowdrifters club, said his group canceled several trips because of poor conditions.

“I certainly have noticed in the last five years we have to go further to find the good snow,” Crumley said.

Olson, the Vasaloppet race volunteer, said he’s worried about what’s in store in the years ahead.

“I don’t look forward to the day when our Minnesota winters are like Missouri or southern Iowa, or Nebraska — where you get snow one day and the next day it’s all mud,” he said.

Associated Press writers Doug Glass in Minneapolis and Blake Nicholson in Bismarck, North Dakota, contributed to this story.

Follow Amy Forliti on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/amyforliti>

Witness says officer questioned teen's actions in shooting

By RAMESH SANTANAM Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A witness in the shooting of an unarmed black teenager by a white police officer said Wednesday he saw the officer standing on the sidewalk, panicking, saying, "I don't know why I shot him. I don't know why I fired."

The trial of former East Pittsburgh Police Officer Michael Rosfeld ended for the day Wednesday in a Pittsburgh courtroom. It will reconvene Thursday morning.

John Leach, a neighbor who lives a few houses from the site of the June shooting, said he was on his front porch when Rosfeld fired three bullets into 17-year-old Antwon Rose II after pulling over an unlicensed taxicab suspected to have been used in a drive-by shooting minutes earlier. Rose was a front-seat passenger in the cab and was shot as he fled.

Rosfeld, 30, faces a charge of criminal homicide.

Leach, the second witness to testify Wednesday, said that after the shooting, he was watching Rosfeld on the sidewalk nearby saying repeatedly, "I don't know why I shot him. I don't know why I fired."

He said that later, he saw other officers consoling Rosfeld as he was crying, bent over and hyperventilating. Rosfeld, he said, looked as if he was about to pass out.

Defense attorney Patrick Thomassey had tried to discredit Leach's testimony, asking him if he was trying to "juice things up." Leach said, "I don't have any reason to."

Patrick Shattuck said Wednesday he was standing outside a senior center when Rosfeld pulled over the unlicensed cab in front of the building. Five to seven minutes after the shooting, Shattuck said Rosfeld, with swollen, red eyes, entered the building and said, "Why did he do that? Why did he do that? Why did he take that out of his pocket?"

East Pittsburgh Mayor Louis J. Payne, who was also there, said he, too, heard Rosfeld say, "Why did he do that?" but said he didn't hear the comment about the pocket.

Rosfeld was in the senior center only a few minutes when another officer came in and told him he couldn't be there. Rosfeld left, taking with him a rifle he had brought inside, Shattuck said.

Thomassey said Rosfeld did not intend to shoot anyone that day and did nothing wrong in his fatal encounter with Rose.

"You think Michael Rosfeld got up on the 19th of June and thought he was going to shoot someone? Of course not," he said.

Allegheny County Housing Authority officer Charles Rozzo, who responded to the shooting, testified that a distraught Rosfeld asked him how Rose was and if he "saw the gun." It's unclear what Rosfeld was referring to. Prosecutors said Rosfeld gave inconsistent statements about the shooting, including whether he thought Rose had a gun.

Authorities have said two guns were inside the vehicle and an empty magazine was in his pocket. One of the guns had Rose's DNA on it but does not appear to have been fired officials said.

The video of the shooting, recorded by neighbor Lashaun Livingston, was posted online, triggering protests in the Pittsburgh area last year, including a late-night march that shut down a major highway.

A jury of six men and six women, including three African-Americans, was selected across the state in Harrisburg last week and will be sequestered in a Pittsburgh hotel for the duration of the trial, expected to take a week or more.

Additional video was shown in court, taken by a University of Pittsburgh student who was in his car at a stop sign nearby. Peyton Deri said he couldn't really see whether there was anything in the hands of Rose or the vehicle's other occupant, Zaijuan Hester.

Rose's mother sent a letter to prosecutors Wednesday urging them to counter the defense's portrayal of her son as "just another thug." In the letter, she asks prosecutors to paint a picture of her son as he truly was.

"He was a rose that grew from concrete. Despite darkness all around him, he was kind, loving and funny," she wrote in the letter dated Tuesday.

She describes how he taught other children in the neighborhood how to Rollerblade and skateboard, and even gave away his skates to kids in need.

Rose had been riding in the front seat of the unlicensed taxi when Hester, in the backseat, rolled down a window and shot at two men on the street.

Hester, 18, of Swissvale, pleaded guilty Friday to aggravated assault and firearms violations for the shooting, which wounded a man in the abdomen. Hester told a judge that he, not Rose, did the shooting.

UK's May asks a wary EU to delay Brexit until June 30

By JILL LAWLESS and LORNE COOK Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Exactly 1,000 days after Britain voted to leave the European Union, and nine days before it is scheduled to walk out the door, Prime Minister Theresa May hit the pause button Wednesday, asking the bloc to postpone the U.K.'s departure until June 30.

EU leaders, who are exasperated by Britain's Brexit melodrama, will only grant the extension if May can win the U.K. Parliament's approval next week for her twice-rejected Brexit deal. Otherwise, the U.K. is facing a chaotic "no-deal" departure from the bloc within days, or a much longer delay that May says she will not allow while she is in power.

May, who has spent two and a half years trying to lead Britain out of the EU, said it was "a matter of great personal regret" that she had to seek a delay to Brexit.

In a televised statement from 10 Downing St., May said she shared the frustration felt by many Britons who have "had enough" of endless Brexit debates and infighting — though she did not accept a role in causing it. Instead, she blamed Parliament for the deadlock, and warned that if lawmakers did not back her deal it would cause "irreparable damage to public trust."

"It is high time we made a decision," May said.

In a letter to European Council President Donald Tusk, May acknowledged that the Brexit process "clearly will not be completed before 29 March, 2019" — the date fixed in law two years ago for Britain's departure.

May asked to delay Britain's withdrawal until June 30, and said she would set out her reasons to EU leaders at a summit in Brussels on Thursday.

Her longshot plan is to hold a third vote in Parliament on her deal next week, then use the EU-granted extension to pass the legislation needed for an orderly departure from the EU.

"As prime minister I am not prepared to delay Brexit any further than June 30," May told the House of Commons — a hint she could quit if Britain is forced to accept a longer pause.

Tusk said he thought a short delay to Brexit "will be possible, but it would be conditional on a positive vote on the withdrawal agreement in the House of Commons."

May's request — and Tusk's response — leaves Britain and the bloc facing Brexit uncertainty right up to the deadline for departure. Withdrawing without a deal could mean huge disruptions for businesses and U.K. residents, as well as those in the 27 remaining EU countries.

"Even if the hope for a final success may seem frail, even illusory, and although Brexit fatigue is increasingly visible and justified, we cannot give up seeking until the very last moment a positive solution," Tusk said in Brussels.

Tusk made clear what other EU leaders have long hinted: The EU is unwilling to give Britain more time unless the government can find a way out of the Brexit impasse.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that "if the (EU) Council is to decide on extending the deadline for Britain, then we would like to know: Why, why, why?"

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said a delay could only be granted if May guaranteed that its purpose "is to finalize the ratification of the deal already negotiated."

EU leaders are united in saying that the divorce deal it spent more than a year and a half negotiating with Britain can't be renegotiated.

But the deal has twice been rejected twice by hefty margins in Britain's Parliament, amid opposition from pro-Brexit and pro-EU lawmakers.

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May had planned to try again this week to get the agreement approved, until the speaker of the House of Commons ruled that she can't ask Parliament to vote on the deal again unless it is substantially changed.

May told Tusk that despite the ruling "it remains my intention to bring the deal back to the House." She's likely to do that next week — within days or hours of Britain's scheduled departure — by arguing that circumstances have changed and the speaker's bar on a third vote no longer applied.

But she faces a struggle to overturn the huge margins of defeat for her deal in previous votes in January and last week.

Tusk did not say whether the EU would be willing to grant a long delay to Brexit if Britain changed course and abandoned May's deal for a new approach.

British opposition politicians, and pro-EU members of May's Conservative government, have urged a longer extension, saying a delay of just a few months could leave the country once again facing a no-deal Brexit this summer.

They want to commit to a close post-Brexit economic relationship with the bloc to ease disruption for businesses and citizens.

Opposition Labour Party lawmaker Angela Eagle said May should "stop banging her head against the brick wall of her defeated deal" and seek cross-party support for a new Brexit strategy.

But a shift to "soft Brexit" would infuriate the pro-Brexit wing of May's divided party, and a long delay would require Britain to participate in May 23-26 elections for the European Parliament.

May said postponing Brexit beyond June would result in Parliament spending "endless hours contemplating its navel on Brexit."

Any delay that required Britain to take part in European parliamentary elections would be a major headache for the bloc. Britain's seats already have been allocated to other countries to fill in the May election.

Britain believes it would not have to participate if it got a three-month delay, because the newly elected European parliament is not due to convene until July. Some EU officials take a different view and want any extension to end by May 23, the first day of the European elections.

The Brexit-fueled political chaos has drawn reactions ranging from sympathy to scorn at home and around the world. On its front page Wednesday, the Brexit-backing Daily Mail newspaper bemoaned the time since the referendum as "1,000 lost days."

Juncker said Britain's Parliament needed to decide whether it would approve the only deal that is on the table.

"If that doesn't happen, and if Great Britain does not leave at the end of March, then we are, I am sorry to say, in the hands of God," he said. "And I think even God sometimes reaches a limit to his patience."

Cook reported from Brussels. Raf Casert in Brussels, Samuel Petrequin in Paris, Danica Kirka in London and Geir Moulson and Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed.

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

Respecting elders: Maya Angelou clip sparks courtesy debate

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Put a handle on it.

If you don't know what that means, you might not call elders by "Mr.," "Miss" or "Mrs.," insist that your children do the same or demand it for yourself. If you've heard the term, you're likely familiar with the history of the politics of respectability and what that means to some African-Americans, pro and con.

Are you from the North or the South? A small town or big city native? From a religious, school or immigrant community that uses elder honorifics? Perhaps you're Professor, Doctor or Judge.

All of the above were widely debated on social media last week, focused on an old talk-show clip of the late Maya Angelou sharply chiding a young woman for addressing her as Maya rather than Miss Angelou before asking the poet and memoirist for her views on interracial marriage.

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"I'm not 'Maya.' I'm 62 years old. I have lived so long and tried so hard that a young woman like you, or any other, you have no license to come up to me and call me by my first name. That's first," she said to claps from the audience. "Also, because at the same time, I am your mother, I am your auntie, I'm your teacher, I'm your professor. You see?"

Angelou, who was black, apologized later in the show to her questioner, also black.

Pierre Phipps, who tweeted the snippet, has heard from all sides since then and said opinions are varied and plentiful. After his March 14 tweet sent Angelou's name trending on Twitter, Phipps said the Kim in the clip reached out.

Turns out she's Kim Watts, 49, an educator in the San Francisco Bay Area. Watts told The Associated Press by phone Wednesday that she doesn't have a Twitter account but friends and family alerted her to the hub-bub. She said she was a 20-year-old college student in 1989 when she went on a class trip to San Francisco to sit in the audience for a taping with Angelou of the talk show "People are Talking."

"Her response threw me off. It was a little awkward for me, but at the same time it was like, oh my God this is Maya Angelou," Watts said. "I remember feeling like, oh my gosh I insulted one of my icons, a person I look up to."

Watts said she got a kick out of people new the clip thinking she was still a teen.

The 29-year-old Phipps, whose Twitter handle is @PrinceCharmingP, can't remember where he found the vintage exchange when he tweeted it out with: "I can't wait to turn 30 so I can read one of y'all for calling me by my first name like this:"

He told the AP in an interview that he was surprised at the attention the tweet has received, especially among young people who disagreed with Angelou. She died in 2014 at age 86, and also favored the title Dr. in light of her numerous honorary doctorates.

"They think Miss Angelou's response was very elitist. They were really, really pissed about it," said Phipps, who lives in Los Angeles and writes for television. "We're living in progressive times and a lot of people said once they turn 18, they feel like they have an even platform no matter how old you are. History is no longer playing a part in how we go about our everyday lives. History is becoming history."

Phipps grew up in Chicago, but he has plenty of older female relatives from the South, including Mississippi and Alabama.

"It's an unwritten rule on respect for elders in which a lot of us were born and raised to 'put a handle on it,'" he said. "Me personally, coming from a strong black Southern family, I didn't see anything wrong with her response. Everyone is raised differently."

Watts, who was adopted as a child by white parents, said she was not raised with the courtesy title tradition or practice for elders in her life.

"I wasn't thinking about that in the moment," she said of her encounter with Angelou. "I like that this conversation, though, is focused on respect. Given my age now, I can see both sides of it."

Carrie Salow is a 55-year-old mother of two girls in Phoenix, where she moved from Grand Rapids, Michigan, when she was 15.

"I absolutely expect my teen daughters to call their friends' parents Mr. and Mrs., and I expect the same," said Salow, who is white. "The kids who live across the street from us are now young adults, in and out of college. They still call me Mrs. Salow and I feel it is appropriate."

Valencia Bey, 49, was born and raised in Chicago and now lives in nearby Oak Park, Illinois. She spent most of her summers in Shelby, Mississippi, with her maternal grandparents and extended family.

"You just did NOT call elders by their first name," said Bey, who is black. "I was taught by folks who felt the way Ms. Angelou did. Addressing someone as Mr. or Miss was a sign of respect, especially those who came from the Jim Crow South, where calling a grown black person by their first name was a sign of disrespect. White people would purposely not call them Mr. or Mrs. or Miss to reinforce that they were considered inferior."

Against the backdrop of African-American history, such honorifics are heavy indeed.

"Like Angelou, our elders have lived lives some of us can only imagine, especially if they grew up in a

society that was founded on white supremacy," wrote Britni Danielle, in a piece about the tweet at Essence online.

"Often times, they weren't given the respect they were due by the outside world, which regularly sought to humiliate and dehumanize them at every turn. Those who did dare speak up and demand their proper did so knowing the price could be steep," she wrote.

The 55-year-old Lucy O'Donnell, with a nearly 18-year-old daughter and a 21-year-old son in Los Angeles, was raised in Arlington, Virginia.

"Two of my daughter's friends initially addressed me as Mrs., and I have to say I hadn't even given it a thought until then. I told them that they were welcome to call me by my first name but that if it was important in their households to address adults more formally that was fine, too," said O'Donnell, who is white. "Both switched to Lucy pretty quickly. The only tradition I can't abide is Mrs. and a husband's first and last name."

Danielle acknowledged young blacks responding to Phipps' tweet who thought Angelou was out of line, writing:

"We live in a time where some people don't really value the things and people who came before them. That's how we get shirts declaring, 'I'm not my ancestors,' or people looking to cancel dead Black writers like Angelou because they do not like an answer they'd given decades ago without understanding the context of the times."

Harvard profits from early photos of slaves, lawsuit says

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Harvard University has "shamelessly" turned a profit from photos of two 19th-century slaves while ignoring requests to turn the photos over to the slaves' descendants, according to a lawsuit filed Wednesday.

Tamara Lanier, of Norwich, Connecticut, is suing the Ivy League school for "wrongful seizure, possession and expropriation" of images she says depict two of her ancestors. Her suit, filed in Massachusetts state court, demands that Harvard immediately turn over the photos, acknowledge her ancestry and pay an unspecified sum in damages.

Harvard spokesman Jonathan Swain said the university "has not yet been served, and with that is in no position to comment on this complaint."

At the center of the case is a series of 1850 daguerreotypes, an early type of photo, taken of two South Carolina slaves identified as Renty and his daughter, Delia. Both were posed shirtless and photographed from several angles. The images are believed to be the earliest known photos of American slaves.

They were commissioned by Harvard biologist Louis Agassiz, whose theories on racial difference were used to support slavery in the U.S. The lawsuit says Agassiz came across Renty and Delia while touring plantations in search of racially "pure" slaves born in Africa.

"To Agassiz, Renty and Delia were nothing more than research specimens," the suit says. "The violence of compelling them to participate in a degrading exercise designed to prove their own subhuman status would not have occurred to him, let alone mattered."

The suit attacks Harvard for its "exploitation" of Renty's image at a 2017 conference and in other uses. It says Harvard has capitalized on the photos by demanding a "hefty" licensing fee to reproduce the images. It also draws attention to a book Harvard sells for \$40 with Renty's portrait on the cover. The book, called "From Site to Sight: Anthropology, Photography, and the Power of Imagery," explores the use of photography in anthropology.

Among other demands, the suit asks Harvard to acknowledge that it bears responsibility for the humiliation of Renty and Delia and that Harvard "was complicit in perpetuating and justifying the institution of slavery."

A researcher at a Harvard museum rediscovered the photos in storage in 1976. But Lanier's case argues Agassiz never legally owned the photos because he didn't have his subjects' consent and that he didn't have

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the right to pass them to Harvard. Instead, the suit says, Lanier is the rightful owner as Renty's next of kin. The suit also argues that Harvard's continued possession of the images violates the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery.

"Renty is 169 years a slave by our calculation," civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump, one of Lanier's lawyers, said in an interview. "How long will it be before Harvard finally frees Renty?"

Lanier says she grew up hearing stories about Renty passed down from her mother. While enslaved in Columbia, South Carolina, Renty taught himself to read and later held secret Bible readings on the plantation, the suit says. He is described as "small in stature but towering in the minds of those who knew him."

The suit says Lanier has verified her genealogical ties to Renty, whom she calls "Papa Renty." She says he is her great-great-great-grandfather.

If given the photos, Lanier said she would tell "the true story of who Renty was." But she also hopes her case will spark a national discussion over race and history.

"This case is important because it will test the moral climate of this country, and force this country to reckon with its long history of racism," Lanier said at a news conference outside the Harvard Club of New York City.

Crump, her attorney, added that the case could allow Harvard to "remove the stain from its legacy" and show it has the courage "to finally atone for slavery."

Lanier alleges that she wrote to Harvard in 2011 detailing her ties to Renty. In a letter to Drew Faust, then Harvard's president, Lanier said she wanted to learn more about the images and how they would be used. She was more explicit in 2017, demanding that Harvard relinquish the photos. In both cases, she said, Harvard responded but evaded her requests.

The school has used the photos as part of its own effort to confront its historical ties to slavery. At the 2017 conference called "Universities and Slavery: Bound by History," referenced in the lawsuit, Harvard printed Renty's portrait on the program cover and projected it on a giant screen above the stage.

In the image, Renty stares hauntingly into the camera, his hair graying and his gaunt frame exposed.

Lanier, who was in the audience at the event, said she was stunned by a passage in the program that described the origins of the photo but seemed to dismiss her genealogical findings. It said that the photo was taken for Agassiz's research and that "while Agassiz earned acclaim, Renty returned to invisibility."

The suit alleges that "by contesting Ms. Lanier's claim of lineage, Harvard is shamelessly capitalizing on the intentional damage done to black Americans' genealogy by a century's worth of policies that forcibly separated families, erased slaves' family names, withheld birth and death records, and criminalized literacy."

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

AP-NORC Poll: Most at least partly confident in Russia probe

By ERIC TUCKER and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the special counsel investigation into Donald Trump's presidential campaign winds down, a new poll finds that most Americans are at least moderately confident that Robert Mueller's probe has been fair and impartial.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research also finds that most Americans have some concern that Trump's campaign had improper connections to Russia, though fewer than half say the president has done something illegal in his ties to Russia.

The survey was conducted as the Justice Department prepares to receive the findings of Mueller's investigation into possible coordination between the Trump campaign and Russia and possible obstruction of justice by Trump himself. Though Mueller's report will be confidential, Attorney General William Barr has said he wants to make as much public as he can under the law.

Overall, about 6 in 10 Americans have at least some confidence in the fairness of the investigation, with 33 percent very confident. Thirty-seven percent are not very or not at all confident in a fair investigation.

On Wednesday, Trump denounced the probe as "ridiculous" but said, "Let it come out, let people see it."

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Approval of Trump in the new poll stands at 40 percent, up slightly from 34 percent who approved in January. The January poll was conducted during the month-long government shutdown and found a dip in his approval rating. But compared with previous presidents, Americans' feelings on Trump have been remarkably stable, fluctuating within a narrow band from about the mid-30s to the mid-40s.

The new poll results reflect continued deep partisan divisions about both Trump and the Mueller investigation, with views of the probe — and the president's actions — largely unchanged over the past year.

In the latest poll, 80 percent of Republicans and just 8 percent of Democrats say they approve of Trump.

Fifty-five percent of Republicans say they have little to no confidence in a fair investigation by Mueller. Just 18 percent of Republicans are very confident, though another 28 percent say they are moderately confident. By contrast, most Democrats — 80 percent — have at least some confidence.

The only criminal case Mueller has brought since the last AP-NORC poll in December involved longtime Trump confidant Roger Stone, who is accused of obstruction and false statements.

"I have a lot of respect for Mueller, from everything that I've heard," said 76-year-old Paul Seamans, of North Andover, Massachusetts, who is self-employed and said his political views lean conservative. "And if they do find something that he's done wrong — and I'm talking about Trump — he should have to answer to it."

But, he added, "I'm not sure if Trump has done anything wrong. There's been no real proof."

The poll shows that 45 percent of Americans are extremely or very concerned that Trump's campaign had inappropriate contacts with Russia, and another 18 percent are moderately concerned.

About a third of Americans say Trump has done something illegal when it comes to his ties with Russia, while roughly an additional third say he has done something unethical.

"I don't like it at all," said 85-year-old Arlene Jornlin of New Berlin, Wisconsin. "I think Trump is shady enough without Putin helping him. I'm down on both of them, really."

Among Democrats, roughly two-thirds think the president's ties to Russia include criminal behavior. That compares with just about 1 in 10 Republicans. A majority of Republicans think the president has not done anything wrong in his links to Russia, though a modest share — 37 percent — do think he's done something unethical.

Karen Glidden, 70, a Republican who lives in Champion, Michigan, said she believes Trump has his problems, but he's "a smarter man than to get involved with the Russians."

She said that though she has little trust in politicians, she does have some faith in Mueller or is at least reserving final judgment until the end of the investigation.

"The eyes of the world are on him so he's got to be more straight," Glidden said.

It's far from clear that Mueller's findings, even if damaging for the president, would be likely to lead to impeachment proceedings in Congress. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi recently sought to tamp down that possibility.

The poll shows Americans are divided over whether Congress should take steps to remove Trump from office if the Justice Department finds he did not have inappropriate contact with Russia but nonetheless obstructed the investigation.

Mueller has been investigating whether the president has sought to undermine the Russia probe, including by firing FBI Director James Comey in May 2017 and by asking Comey months earlier to drop his investigation into ex-national security adviser Michael Flynn.

If Mueller does not determine illegal ties with the Kremlin but does find evidence of criminal obstruction, 52 percent of Americans think Congress should move to oust Trump from the White House, while 46 percent say Congress should not take steps to impeach Trump.

An overwhelming majority of Democrats — 90 percent — think Trump has tried to stymie the investigation, and 8 in 10 think Congress should attempt to remove him if the Department of Justice finds evidence of obstruction even if there was no inappropriate contact with Russia. About a quarter of Republicans, 24 percent, say Trump has tried to obstruct the Russia probe and roughly as many think Congress should take steps to remove him if that's the case.

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The AP-NORC poll of 1,063 adults was conducted Mar. 14-18 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods, and later interviewed online or by phone.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

Centrist or liberal? Beto O'Rourke's political splits

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

DUBUQUE, Iowa (AP) — At a packed eastern Iowa house party, a staffer for Democrat Beto O'Rourke's presidential campaign tried to clear enough space for the candidate to reach the kitchen, where he would need to climb a stepladder to address the crowd.

"I need my lane," the staffer bellowed as he moved through the crowd. "Beto's coming right through here."

Somewhere in the rows of pressed-together faces, a spectator quipped: "But which lane is it? The liberal lane? Some other lane?"

That's a prophetic question for one of the 2020 field's most unconventional candidates. In a primary that has so far been defined by progressive energy, the former Texas congressman with a scant political resume is trying to avoid definition. He left a distinctly moderate record behind in Congress and, in the early days of his presidential campaign, has vowed to work with Republicans and woo voters who backed Donald Trump in 2016. But he's also hit progressive talking points on everything from white privilege to marijuana legalization.

The architects of his campaign insist he's not interested in adhering to a particular ideological lane, and O'Rourke himself shuns party labels. But trying to have it both ways could leave Democratic voters with the impression that O'Rourke is a candidate with a split political personality.

"I see him as offering Rorschach politics," said Norman Solomon, a Bernie Sanders delegate to the 2016 Democratic National Convention from California. "In the age of Trump, when you want to be something for everybody, you're going to end up being amorphous for a lot of people."

Backers say O'Rourke can and should toggle between liberal and moderate positions depending on the topic.

"If there's an issue he might be more centrist on, he's honest about that. He doesn't try to pander to a certain base," said Rep. Kathleen Rice, D-N.Y., who endorsed O'Rourke over another, home-state Democrat in the race, Sen. Kristen Gillibrand.

Rice described O'Rourke's work in Congress as progressive on issues like gay rights and the environment but seeking consensus on other topics, such as veteran's issues. She also applauds how he's introduced himself to voters by taking lots of questions: "He creates the space for a dialogue. He is not just throwing out red meat to people."

As a presidential candidate, O'Rourke has moved more to the center than he did last fall, when he nearly upset incumbent Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas. O'Rourke had called for impeaching Trump but has since backtracked. He once endorsed Sanders' "Medicare for All," but now backs a more moderate House plan known as "Medicare for America."

"It's got to be all of us, not just Democrats, not just Republicans," O'Rourke repeats while campaigning. "I'm running for president for every single state in the United States of America and every single person in every single one of those states."

That rhetoric sounds a lot like Barack Obama's pitch to voters in 2008. Solomon, who was a Democratic delegate for Obama that year, said trying to recreate the former president's brand of pragmatic progressivism isn't a winning strategy in 2020, when many Democratic voters are motivated by anger toward Trump. That could also be a challenge for Obama's vice president, Joe Biden, who is nearing a decision

on whether to join the campaign as a leading centrist candidate.

"We can't just be nice to Republicans," said Solomon. "We know that doesn't work."

O'Rourke has deviated from messages of moderation by expressing openness to adding justices to the Supreme Court and tearing down U.S.-Mexico border walls in places like his hometown, El Paso. He's also equated the criminal justice system to modern day Jim Crow laws because he says it's so much tougher on people of color.

And O'Rourke has championed the "Green New Deal," liberal Democrats' sweeping plan to combat climate change, and a federal assault weapons ban, though he concedes that current owners of AR-15 rifles should be allowed to keep using them "responsibly and safely."

It's all a far cry from when O'Rourke arrived to Congress in 2012. Though he called for the federal legalization of marijuana long before much of the rest of the country began to turn on the issue, O'Rourke pledged to be pro-business and joined the New Democrat Coalition rather than the Congressional Progressive Caucus. He'd also said he would support raising the Social Security eligibility age and basing eligibility on recipient income.

O'Rourke refused to back Nancy Pelosi's House minority leader bid in 2016, dismissing her and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York while campaigning against Cruz for misunderstanding Texas. But Pelosi had only kind words for O'Rourke last week, calling him a "welcome addition" to the 2020 primary.

He also drew criticism from home-state Democrats for failing to endorse Gina Ortiz Jones, who was trying to unseat Republican Rep. Will Hurd in November. Hurd lives outside San Antonio and when a 2017 snowstorm canceled flights to Washington, he and O'Rourke drove from Texas to the nation's capital, livestreaming for hours and developing a friendship that some celebrate as a rarity in such hyperpartisan times.

But Democrat MJ Hegar, who nearly defeated Republican Rep. John Carter in a suburban district outside Austin and may challenge him again in 2020, pointed to that bond as an example of how O'Rourke and other members of Congress' "good ole boys club" were "looking out for your bros more than fighting for your values."

Rice counters that the party doesn't have to agree on everything.

"The last thing the Democrats need to do is to kill each other," the congresswoman said. "We need to remember that we're all on the same side."

Associated Press writer Elana Schor in Washington contributed to this report.

Federal Reserve foresees no interest rate hikes in 2019

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve left its key interest rate unchanged Wednesday and projected no rate hikes this year, reflecting a dimmer view of the economy as growth weakens in the United States and abroad.

The Fed said it was keeping its benchmark rate — which can influence everything from mortgages to credit cards to home equity lines of credit — in a range of 2.25 percent to 2.5 percent. It also announced that by September, it will no longer reduce its bond portfolio, a change intended to help keep long-term loan rates down.

Combined, the moves signal no major increases in borrowing rates for consumers and businesses. And together with the Fed's dimmer forecast for growth this year — 2.1 percent, down from a previous projection of 2.3 percent — the statement it issued after its latest policy meeting suggests it's grown more concerned about the economy. What's more, with inflation remaining mild, the Fed feels no pressure to tighten credit.

In signaling no rate increases for 2019, the Fed's policymakers reduced their forecast from two that were previously predicted in December. They now project one rate hike in 2020 and none in 2021. The Fed had

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raised rates four times last year and a total of nine times since 2015.

The central bank's theme Wednesday, in its statement and in a news conference by Chairman Jerome Powell, is that it will remain continually "patient" about pursuing any further rate hikes. In his news conference, Powell used some version of the word "patient" no fewer than 10 times.

Stock market indexes initially rallied on the news, but the gains soon faded and many stocks finished the day down. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 141 points, or 0.5 percent. Analysts said the Fed's downgraded outlook for the economy might have alarmed investors.

"We think the Fed's forecasts are still too upbeat," said Michael Pearce, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics, saying he thinks sluggish growth will lead the Fed to start cutting rates early next year.

The Fed's decision Wednesday was approved on an 11-0 vote.

Still, stock prices have been generally surging since early January, when Powell abruptly reversed course and made clear that the Fed was in no hurry to raise rates and would likely slow the runoff from its balance sheet.

And while stocks struggled Wednesday, the Fed's plans for no credit tightening this year sent Treasury yields tumbling, with the 10-year yield touching its lowest level in more than a year. The yield reached 2.53 percent, down from 2.61 percent late Tuesday and 3.2 percent late last year.

The Fed's policymakers have clearly settled on the belief that more than a decade after they cut their benchmark rate to a record low near zero — and kept it there for seven years — that rate has now reached what's called "neutral": neither stimulating nor restraining economic growth.

The central bank's pause in credit tightening is a response, in part, to slowdowns in the U.S. and global economies. It says that while the job market remains strong, "growth of economic activity has slowed from its solid rate in the fourth quarter."

Some Fed watchers have said they think the next rate move could be a cut later this year if the economy slows as much as some fear it might. But at his news conference, Powell played down that prospect.

"It is a great time for us to be patient and to watch and wait," Powell said, invoking the theme he has sounded in recent months.

In its statement, the Fed laid out a plan for stemming the reduction of its balance sheet: In May, it will slow its monthly reductions in Treasuries from \$30 billion to \$15 billion and end the runoff altogether in September. Starting in October, the Fed will shift its runoff of mortgage bonds into Treasuries so its overall balance sheet won't drop further.

The Fed had aggressively bought mortgage and Treasury bonds after the 2008 financial crisis to help cut borrowing rates, spur lending and stimulate growth. With the economy now much stronger, the Fed has been gradually shrinking its bond portfolio. But now it's prepared to slow and then stop that process to avoid putting upward pressure on loan rates.

The central bank's new embrace of patience and flexibility reflects its response since the start of the year to slow growth at home and abroad, a nervous stock market and persistently mild inflation. The Fed executed an abrupt pivot when it met in January by signaling that it no longer expected to raise rates anytime soon.

The shift toward a more hands-off Fed and away from a policy of steadily tightening credit suggests that the policymakers recognize that they went too far after they met in December. At that meeting, the Fed approved a fourth rate hike for 2018 and projected two additional rate increases in 2019. Powell also said he thought the balance sheet reduction would be on "automatic pilot."

That message spooked investors, who worried about the prospect of steadily higher borrowing rates for consumers and businesses and perhaps a further economic slowdown. The stock market had begun falling in early October and then accelerated after the Fed's December meeting.

President Donald Trump, injecting himself not for the first time into the Fed's ostensibly independent deliberations, made clear he wasn't happy, calling the December rate hike wrong-headed. Reports emerged that Trump was even contemplating trying to fire Powell, who had been his hand-picked choice to lead the Fed.

But after the December turmoil, the Fed in January began sending a more comforting message. At an

economic conference soon after New Year's, Powell stressed that the Fed would be "flexible" and "patient" in raising rates.

Powell, appearing last week on CBS's "60 Minutes," denied that pressure from Trump had influenced the Fed's policy shift. Private economists generally agree that a slowing economy and a sinking stock market, which eased Fed worries about any possible stock bubble, were more decisive factors.

Asian shares gain as Fed says it will hold off on rate hikes

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares in Asia were mostly higher on Thursday after the Federal Reserve said it has ruled out interest rate increases for this year.

The Shanghai Composite index advanced 0.6 percent to 3,109.48 while Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 0.2 percent to 29,365.55. South Korea's Kospi climbed 0.3 percent to 2,182.77, while Australia's S&P ASX lost 0.5 percent to 6,137.20.

Shares were higher in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

Japan's markets were closed for a national holiday.

U.S. equities fell Wednesday, led by banks, after the central bank said it expects no interest rate increases this year and issued a dimmer outlook on the U.S. economy. The Fed also downgraded its outlook for the economy.

The S&P 500 dropped 0.3 percent to 2,824.23. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 0.5 percent to 25,745.67, while the Nasdaq composite eked out a slight gain, adding 0.1 percent to 7,728.97. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks gave up 0.8 percent to 1,543.16.

The real action centered in the bond market, where prices rose sharply, pulling the 10-year Treasury yield as low as 2.52 percent, the lowest level in more than a year. That was down from 2.61 percent late Tuesday and from 3.20 percent late last year.

The two-year Treasury yield, which is more influenced by Fed movements, fell to 2.39 percent from 2.45 percent late Tuesday.

Yields have been falling steadily since November, as worries rose about a slowing global economy and traders subsequently made moves in anticipation of a more patient Fed.

The Fed's decision to put rate increases on hold is a marked change from three months ago, when the central bank projected two rate hikes in 2019. The move comes as Fed officials project that the U.S. economy will grow more slowly this year and in 2020, a change from the panel's projections just three months ago.

It hit the dollar, which dropped to 110.50 Japanese yen from 110.70 yen. The euro climbed to \$1.1424 from \$1.1414 on Wednesday.

News of tighter supplies of oil and continued production cuts helped to push the price of benchmark U.S. crude oil above \$60 a barrel.

Benchmark U.S. oil shed 5 cents to \$60.18 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It jumped 94 cents to \$60.23 per barrel on Wednesday, closing above \$60 per barrel for the first time since November.

The rise came after the U.S. government reported that supplies of oil fell 9.6 percent last week and news that OPEC plans on maintaining deep production cuts.

The price of oil has been increasing sharply since Christmas Eve, when it hit a low of just over \$42 per barrel. That followed a 44 percent plunge since October 3, when it hit a high of just over \$76 per barrel. Brent crude gained 9 cents to \$68.59 per barrel.

AP Business writers Damian J. Troise, Alex Veiga and Stan Choe contributed to this report.

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Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 21, the 80th day of 2019. There are 285 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 21, 2006, the social media website Twitter was established with the sending of the first "tweet" by co-founder Jack Dorsey, who wrote: "just setting up my twttr."

On this date:

In 1556, Thomas Cranmer, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, was burned at the stake for heresy.

In 1685, composer Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany.

In 1788, fire broke out in New Orleans on Good Friday, destroying 856 out of more than 1,100 structures; one death was reported.

In 1918, during World War I, Germany launched its Spring Offensive on the Western Front, hoping to break through the Allied lines before American reinforcements could arrive. (Although successful at first, the Spring Offensive ultimately failed.)

In 1925, Tennessee Gov. Austin Peay (pee) signed the Butler Act, which prohibited the teaching of the Theory of Evolution in public schools. (Tennessee repealed the law in 1967.)

In 1935, Persia officially changed its name to Iran.

In 1945, during World War II, Allied bombers began four days of raids over Germany.

In 1963, the Alcatraz federal prison island in San Francisco Bay was emptied of its last inmates and closed at the order of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

In 1976, champion skier Vladimir "Spider" Sabich was shot and killed by his girlfriend, actress-singer Claudine Longet, in the home they had shared in Aspen, Colorado; Longet, who maintained the shooting was an accident, served 30 days in jail for negligent homicide.

In 1981, Michael Donald, a black teenager in Mobile, Alabama, was abducted, tortured and killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan. (A lawsuit brought by Donald's mother, Beulah Mae Donald, later resulted in a landmark judgment that bankrupted one Klan organization.)

In 1990, Namibia became an independent nation as the former colony marked the end of 75 years of South African rule.

In 2007, former Vice President Al Gore made an emotional return to Congress as he pleaded with House and Senate committees to fight global warming; skeptical Republicans questioned the science behind his climate-change documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth."

Ten years ago: In Oakland, Calif., parolee Lovelle Mixon shot and killed two motorcycle officers, then killed two SWAT team members while holed up in an apartment before he was killed by law enforcement. A busload of activists representing working- and middle-class families paid visits to the lavish Connecticut homes of American International Group executives to protest the tens of millions of dollars in bonuses awarded by the struggling insurance company after it had received a massive federal bailout. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (hah-meh-neh-EE') dismissed overtures from President Barack Obama, saying Tehran did not see any change in U.S. policy under its new administration.

Five years ago: A federal judge ruled that Michigan's ban on gay marriage was unconstitutional, striking down a law widely embraced by voters a decade earlier. (More than 300 same-sex couples in four Michigan counties wed the next day before an appeals court suspended the decision; two Detroit-area nurses are asking the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the marriage ban.) Character actor James Rebhorn, 65, died in South Orange, New Jersey.

One year ago: As a SWAT team moved in on his SUV, Mark Conditt, the suspect in the deadly bombings that had terrorized Austin, Texas for three weeks, used one of his own devices to take his own life. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg apologized for a "major breach of trust;" the apology came after it was revealed that the data mining firm Cambridge Analytica, whose clients included the Trump campaign, may have used data improperly obtained from Facebook users to try to sway elections. The fourth nor'easter

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in three weeks dumped more than a foot of snow on some parts of the East Coast.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Kathleen Widdoes is 80. Songwriter Chip Taylor ("Wild Thing") is 79. Folk-pop singer-musician Keith Potger (The Seekers) is 78. Actress Marie-Christine Barrault is 75. Singer-musician Rose Stone (Sly and the Family Stone) is 74. Actor Timothy Dalton is 73. Singer Ray Dorset (Mungo Jerry) is 73. Singer Eddie Money is 70. Rock singer-musician Roger Hodgson (Supertramp) is 69. Rock musician Conrad Lozano (Los Lobos) is 68. Rhythm-and-blues singer Russell Thompkins Jr. is 68. Comedy writer-performer Brad Hall is 61. Actress Sabrina LeBeauf is 61. Actor Gary Oldman is 61. Actress Kassie Depaiva is 58. Actor Matthew Broderick is 57. Comedian-actress Rosie O'Donnell is 57. Actress Cynthia Geary is 54. Rock musician Jonas "Joker" Berggren (Ace of Base) is 52. Rock MC Maxim (Prodigy) is 52. Rock musician Andrew Copeland (Sister Hazel) is 51. Hip-hop DJ Premier (Gang Starr) is 50. Actress Laura Allen is 45. Rapper-TV personality Kevin Federline is 41. Actress Sonequa Martin-Green (TV: "The Walking Dead") is 34. Actor Scott Eastwood is 33. Actress Jasmin Savoy Brown is 25. Actor Forrest Wheeler is 15.

Thought for Today: "Never lose your temper with the press or the public is a major rule of political life."
— Dame Christabel Pankhurst, English suffragist (1880-1958).