

Groton Garden Club

The Groton Garden Club met at the Groton Rehab Center with Eunice McColister and Pam Rix hosting. Vice president, Marg Overacker opened the meeting leading the pledge. Nine members answered roll call. National Garden club will be held June 2-8. The state meeting will be held June 8 in Sioux Falls. Next meeting will be at Groton Rehab Center at 5:30 p.m. on April 15 with Pat Larson and Eunice McColister hosting and Linda Gengerke giving the program. Following the meeting Linda Gengerke gave the program on "New and Improved varieties of Old Favorite." She showed pictures of old toy trucks filled with succulents.

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Rath gets Distinguished Service Award

Rapid Central High School band teacher Toby Rath has received the South Dakota High School Activities Association's Distinguished Service Award. He was presented with the award this past weekend at the All-State Band Concert. This award recognizes outstanding service to the youth of the state through various high school activities programs.

Toby is retiring this year after 39 years in education, the last 15 of which were at Central High School. The previous 24 years were at Groton Area. Rath said, "I taught at Groton 24 great years from 1980-2004."

Toby and his wife, Lois, live at Whitewood, S.D. Toby said that he plans to continue to sell real estate as he kept his license going over the years, first starting in Groton with Coldwell Bankers. He is now with Unlimited Realty in Sturgis. Lois has also retired from teaching.



Toby Rath

Groton Dairy Queen's 25th Anniversary!

Come Celebrate With Us - March 25-29!

Monday: Soft Drinks for 25¢

**Tuesday: Buy one regular priced Blizzard®
and get one of the same size or smaller for 25¢**

Wednesday: Root Beer Float: \$1.25

Thursday: Indian Tacos: \$5.25

Friday: Small Cones for 25¢



Thank You For 25 Years of Serving You, our great customers!



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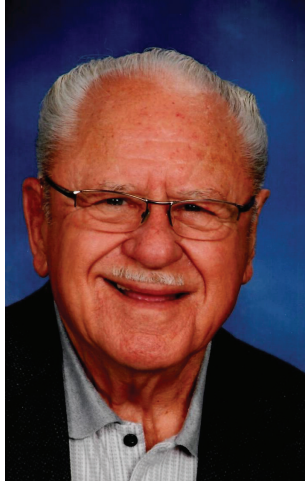


hm HARR
Motors

4255 6th Ave

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!!!

The Life of Jack Mahan



Mass of Christian Burial for Jack Mahan, 93, of Groton will be 11 a.m., Wednesday, March 27, 2019 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church. Father Mike Kelly will officiate. Burial will follow at a later date in Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Jack passed away March 20, 2019 at Sanford Aberdeen.

Derrill J. "Jack" Mahan was born on August 16, 1925 to Floyd and Blanche (Fortin) Mahan in Waubay, SD. He grew up and attended school in Turton. On October 4, 1950 he was united in marriage with Marjorie Peterson and together they made their home in Groton.

Jack began working for Bowles and Sour Motor Company of Groton in 1949. He became partner in 1961 and the business was later renamed, Pioneer Ford. Jack was part of the dealership for 65 years.

Jack was a member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church. He also belonged to the South Dakota Auto Dealers Association, Elks Lodge and was a charter member of Olive Grove Golf Course. He enjoyed reading and watching westerns, hunting and fishing with his family and friends. Jack also enjoyed the family cottage at Roy Lake for over 50 years. No one will ever forget how much he loved to sing and have a "bump." But his true love was always farming.

Celebrating his life are his three children, Thomas P. (Alesa) Mahan of Groton, Kathy Sundling of Groton, John R. (Julie) Mahan of Helena, Montana, five grandchildren; Traci Sundling, Vince (Raeann) DeCuio, Dominic (Michelle) Mahan, Jason (Amanda) Mahan, Andrea (Steve) Foran, twelve great-grandchildren, two great-great grandchildren, his brother, Thomas C. (Mary Ann) Mahan of Keller, Texas and his nieces and nephews, Mike Mahan, Pat Mahan, Ellen Cogdill and Kim Guhin.

Preceding him in death were his parents, his wife, Marjorie and his sister, Mertys Reese.

Casketbearers will be Jim White, Jesse Howard, Steve Dunker, Bill McKiver, Matt Johnson and Greg Anderson.

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Today in Weather History

March 27, 1993: Rain and rapid snowmelt caused the Big Sioux and Vermillion Rivers to rise to 1 to 8 feet above flood stage March 26th through March 31st, 1993. The worst of the flooding occurred in far southeast South Dakota where large areas of farmland were under water. The floodwaters closed at least four state highways in southeast South Dakota and blocked dozens of smaller roads in the east. Large chunks of ice on the Big Sioux led to many temporary ice jams. The ice jams took out fences and washed out roads. In some areas, the ice had to be pushed off of the streets with tractors.

1890: The middle Mississippi Valley saw a significant tornado outbreak on this day with 24, estimated F2 or stronger tornadoes impacting the area. Tornadoes killed at least 146 people. The most notable of the tornadoes was an estimated F4 that carved a path from the Parkland neighborhood to Crescent Hill in Louisville, Kentucky. This tornado destroyed 766 buildings and killed an estimated 76 to 120 people. Most of the deaths occurred when the Falls City Hall collapsed.

1931: A blizzard struck western Kansas and adjoining states was called the "worst since January 1888". Twenty children, ages seven to fourteen, were stranded in a makeshift school bus for 33 hours during this blizzard.

1946: Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada thawed out as the mercury soared to 74 degrees, their warmest March temperature on record.

1964: Great Alaskan earthquake left at least 100 dead in Anchorage, Alaska. The magnitude 9.2 quake is the largest in US history and the second strongest worldwide. Waves reached 103 feet above the low - tide mark.

1994: The Southeastern Palm Sunday Tornado Outbreak occurred on this date. What began as a peaceful Palm Sunday quickly changed to a historic day in weather history when a powerful tornado ripped through southern Alabama and Georgia. By the time the storm was over, 22 people were dead, and 92 were injured. The F4 tornado cut a 50-mile path from Ragland in St. Clair, County Alabama to the Georgia line. The storm touched down near Ragland at 10:51 am. The storm struck Ohatchee then roared across northeastern Calhoun County, passing near Piedmont and hitting Goshen in Cherokee County. The most disastrous damage occurred at Goshen, where the twister struck the Goshen United Methodist Church at 11:37 am. 20 people were killed at the church, which did not hear the tornado warning issued 10 minutes earlier by the National Weather Service in Birmingham. A tornado watch had been released at 9:30 am. Following the tornadoes, Vice President Al Gore pledged to extend NOAA Weatheradio coverage into the areas affected by the twisters, which had previously been unable to receive the alarm signals.

1890 - An outbreak of tornadoes occurred in the Ohio Valley. One of the tornadoes struck Louisville KY killing 78 persons and causing four million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1950 - A three day snowstorm in the High Plains Region finally came to an end. The storm produced 34 inches of snow in 24 hours at Dumont, located in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and a total of 50 inches. (David Ludlum)

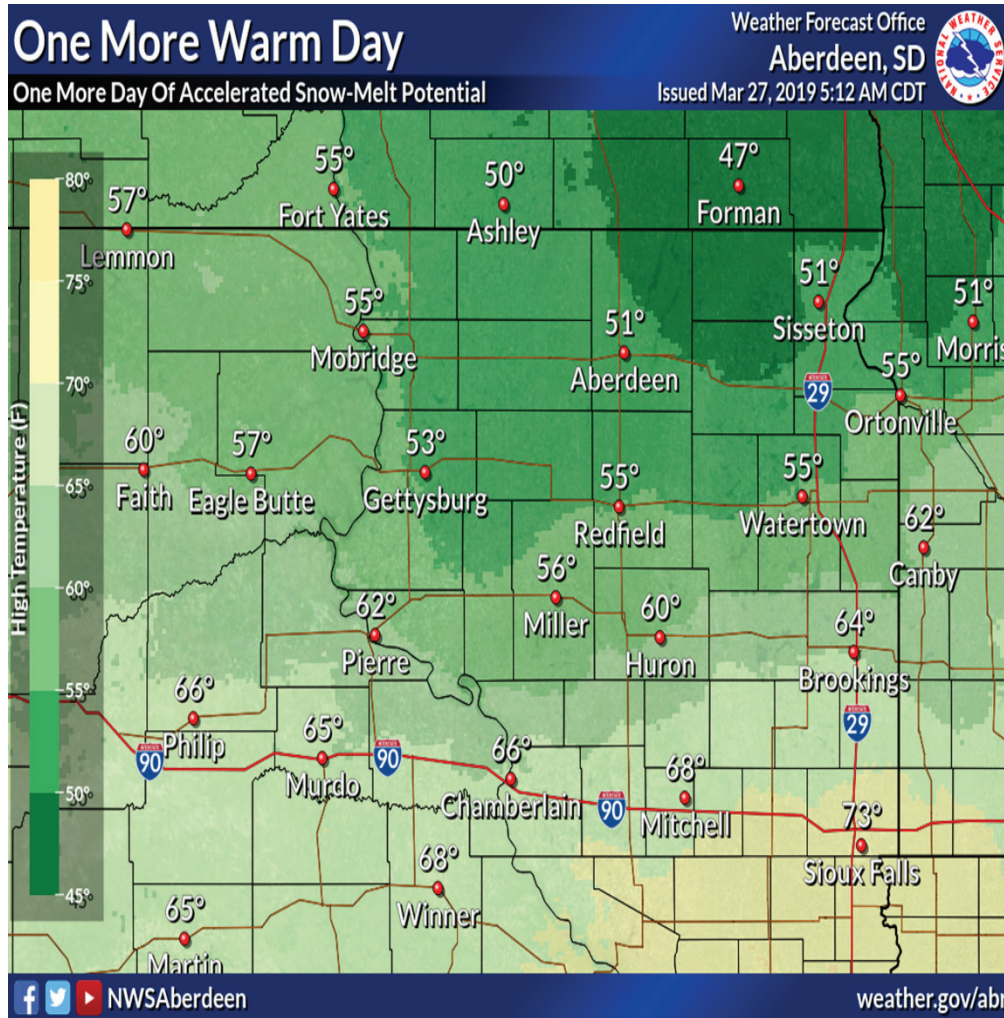
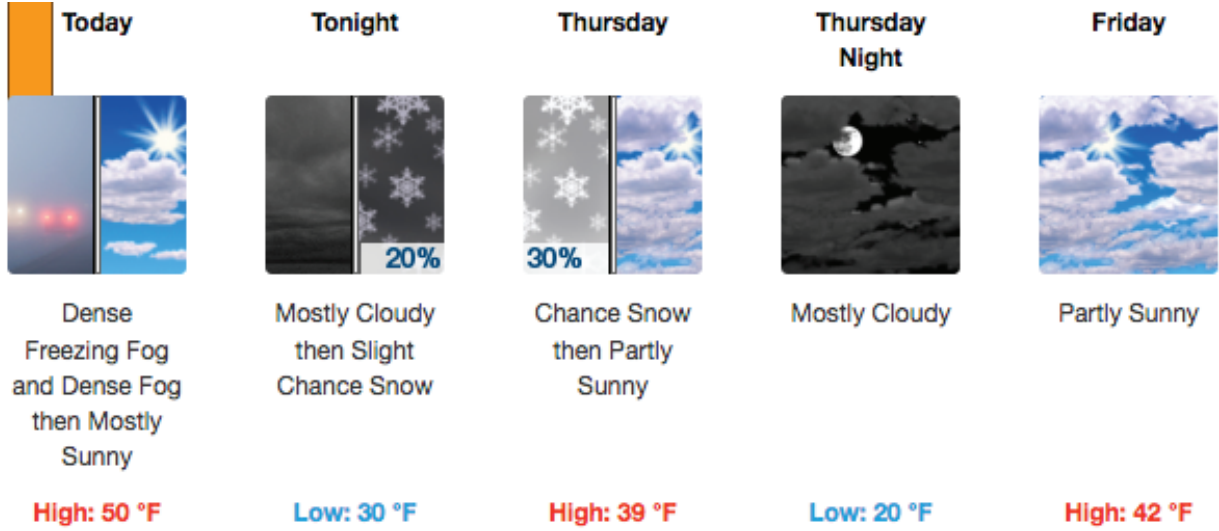
1984 - The temperature at Brownsville, TX, soared to 106 degrees, and Cotulla, TX, reached 108 degrees, equalling the March record for the U.S. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - The second blizzard in less than a week hit eastern Colorado and western Kansas. Snowfall totals ranged up to 24 inches at San Isabel CO. Winds gusted to 50 mph at Goodland KS. The high winds piled snow into massive drifts, closing roads for days and killing thousands of cattle. Snow drifts thirty feet high were reported in northwest Kansas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Temperatures rose quickly, then dropped just as rapidly, in the central U.S. Eight cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 80s. In southeastern Colorado, the temperature at Lamar CO reached 91 degrees. Strong southerly winds gusted to 63 mph at Gage OK. Strong northwesterly winds, gusting to 61 mph at Goodland KS, then proceeded to usher much colder air into the area. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Published on: 03/27/2019 at 6:26AM

The late March warmth will stick around today. But for the rest of the week, the expectation is for temperatures to cool back down into the 30s and 40s. Area snow-melt and the effects of additional ground water on rivers, streams and creeks could be accelerated some again today from the continued warmer weather.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 45 °F at 5:05 PM

Low Outside Temp: 30 °F at 8:14 AM

High Gust: 17 mph at 10:55 AM

Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 83° in 1946

Record Low: -12° in 1913

Average High: 46°F

Average Low: 24°F

Average Precip in Mar.: 0.92

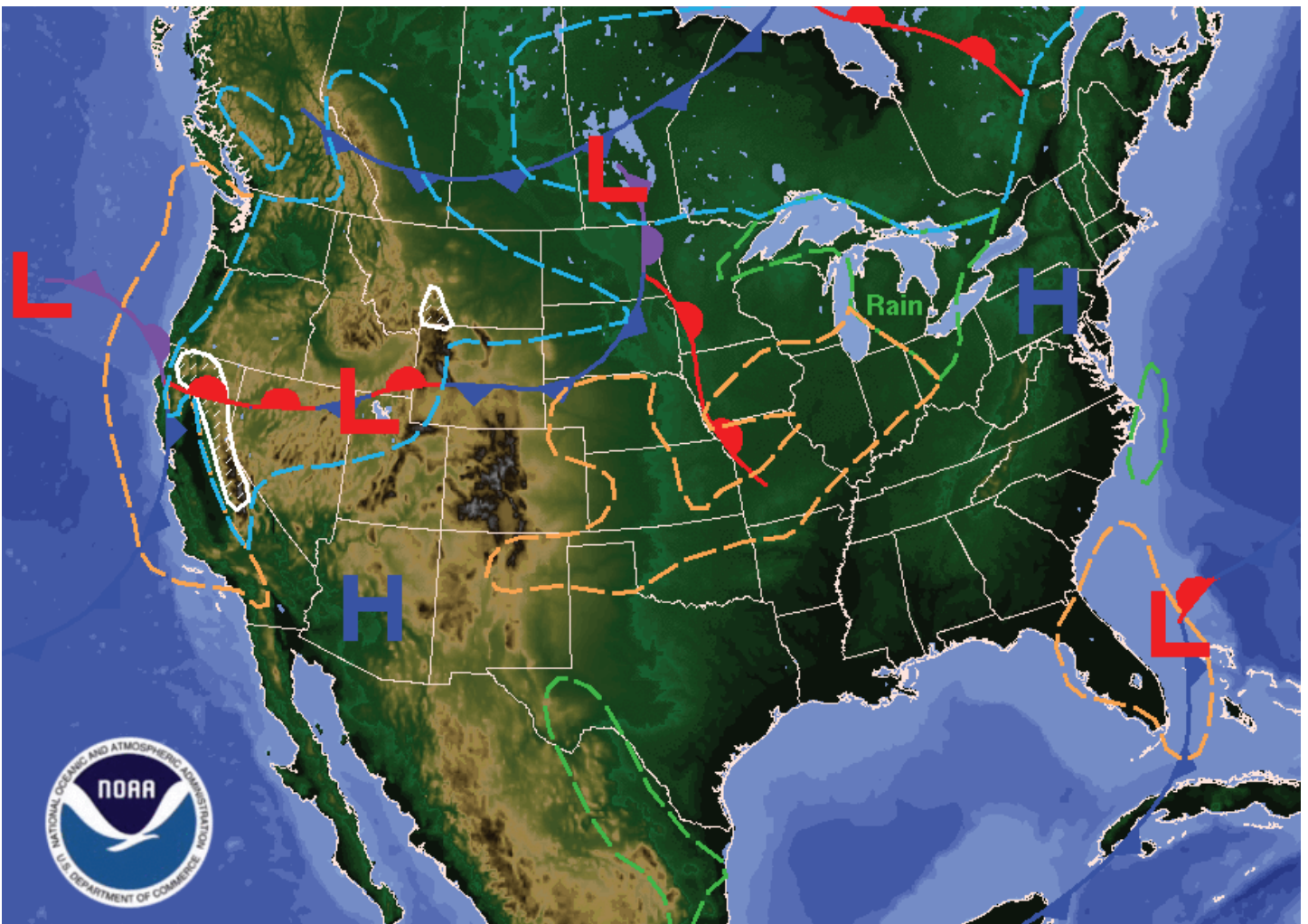
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.87

Average Precip to date: 1.94

Precip Year to Date: 3.06

Sunset Tonight: 7:55 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:22 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Mar 27, 2019, issued 4:46 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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POLAR OPPOSITES

Have it your way was the Burger King slogan for forty years. However, it was changed. Their new slogan is Be Your Way.

Why the change? In a recently released statement, the management team said the new motto is intended to remind people that they can and should live how they want anytime. Its ok not to be perfect. Self-expression is most important; its our differences that make us individuals instead of robots.

Burger Kings Senior Vice President noted in an interview that Have it Your Way focuses only on the purchase...the ability to customize a burger. By contrast, he said, Be Your Way is about making a connection with a persons greater lifestyle. How confusing.

A lifestyle reflects our way of life; our values and attitudes. If we be our way, it can be dangerous. It seems to suggest that anything goes... there is no wrong unless we agree on right and wrong. Furthermore, no one has any right to interfere with my way.

Unfortunately, our ways seldom agree with the ways of God unless we have been born again. Hearts are sinful, thoughts are corrupt, desires self-centered, and evil ways are the lifestyle of the non-believer.

To fear the Lord is to hate evil, said Solomon. Then, speaking on behalf of God, he said, I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.

Gods Word and wisdom is very clear: Its either His way or the evil way. It cannot be both.

Prayer: Lord, living our way a self-centered way - is the easy way - but the wrong way. Give us a deep desire to seek Your way and live a life that pleases You! In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 8:13 All who fear the Lord will hate evil. Therefore, I hate pride and arrogance, corruption and perverse speech.

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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 **AP** Associated Press

Flooding hits South Dakota American Indian reservation hard

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON** Associated Press

Flooding that has hit parts of the Midwest hard has nearly paralyzed an American Indian reservation in southern South Dakota, swamping roads, trapping people in homes and cutting off water supplies to thousands.

The situation on the sprawling Pine Ridge Reservation was improving Tuesday, but two weeks of severe flooding could put the Oglala Sioux tribe in recovery mode for months, if not longer, and deal a serious blow to its economy, President Julian Bear Runner said.

"This is going to have a devastating effect on us, I feel," he said. "The tribe is utilizing any and all of its resources to try to help the communities that have been impacted."

The prairie reservation is roughly the size of Delaware and Rhode Island combined and is home to nearly 20,000 people, about half living in poverty, according to U.S. Census Bureau statistics. Heavy snowfall and a rapid melt this month led to overland flooding, swollen creeks and rivers, swamped roads and broken water lines.

"Pine Ridge is like a desert when it comes to resources," said Peri Pourier, a tribal member and state representative. "We're using horses to get out to communities that are away from the main roads. We have elders out there that are just isolated."

Bear Runner, 33, said it's the worst flooding he has seen and that some tribal elders say they haven't seen so much water since they were children. He said the tribe was still on the "borderline" of emergency Tuesday with floodwaters receding, but many tribal members still don't have easy access "to pharmacies, medication, grocery stores, anything to help sustain themselves."

The tribe estimates as many as 8,000 people have had water supplies disrupted and another 2,000 have been hampered or trapped by floodwaters. Three people who suffered medical problems died before ambulances slowed by floodwaters could get to them, the tribe said, though it released no other details.

Gov. Kristi Noem sent National Guard soldiers to the reservation over the weekend to help distribute drinking water after floodwaters washed out a rural waterline. The state also sent a water rescue team to help move some tribal residents from isolated homes.

The soldiers ended their work Monday after the water line was repaired and water service restored. They distributed about 9,500 gallons of water in seven communities.

The federal Bureau of Indian Affairs also has provided manpower and equipment. The agency didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on its efforts.

Bear Runner said the tribe hasn't had time to estimate the amount of damage or detail what repairs will



In this Monday, March 25, 2019 photo, water from White Clay Creek pools near the ranch of Ernie Little on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, near Pine Ridge, S.D. (Ryan Hermens/Rapid City Journal via AP)

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be needed.

"I'm hoping if the state and federal government help out to the best of their abilities in assisting us, I suppose we can have this (recovery) done in a matter of months," he said. "But without necessary equipment, if we have to do it on our own, it could take up to a year."

Also Tuesday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a statement saying it's assessing two Superfund sites in states affected by the flooding. The EPA identified the Superfund sites as the Nebraska Ordnance Plant in Mead, Nebraska, and the Conservation Chemical Corporation in Kansas City, Missouri. Superfund is a law that gives the EPA funding and authority to clean up contaminated sites.

The Mead site operated as a munitions plant from 1942 to 1956 and its disposal of radioactive waste and other chemicals led to groundwater contamination. The EPA said it has not found evidence that any hazardous contaminants were released by the flooding.

The federal agency added that it will evaluate the sites further as floodwaters recede.

Elsewhere in the flood-fighting Midwest, levees shored up by sandbags were keeping the surging Missouri River at bay east of Kansas City. About 140 volunteers were sandbagging to protect a school in Norborne, Missouri. The Mississippi River was expected to flood some parks and railroad tracks as it crested Tuesday in Hannibal, Missouri.

Flooding along the Missouri River and its tributaries has caused at least \$3 billion in damage and contributed to at least three deaths. Floodwaters are receding but the National Weather Service forecast says significant rain is possible later in the week.

To the north, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz on Tuesday said people should be on guard for localized flooding but that ideal snowmelt conditions have lessened fears of catastrophic flooding.

"I don't want anybody to let their guard down (but) when it comes to the actual boots on the ground and the organization, very confident," Walz said of flood preparations.

The weather service is expecting moderate to major flooding in the Red River Basin of northwestern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota, and sandbag-filling efforts are underway in the Fargo-Moorhead metro area. However, the two cities have implemented significant flood-fighting measures in the last decade.

"If we had the same water levels (in Moorhead) that we had back in 2011, we would need (3 million) sandbags today to protect that critical infrastructure," Walz said. "We need a little over 100,000 now."

Associated Press Writers Steve Karnowski in Minneapolis and Heather Hollingsworth in Kansas City, Missouri, contributed to this report.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

04-14-22-43-58, Mega Ball: 9, Megaplier: 3

(four, fourteen, twenty-two, forty-three, fifty-eight; Mega Ball: nine; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$57 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$750 million

Nebraska fires hoops coach Miles; Hoiberg contacted

By ERIC OLSON AP Sports Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska fired seventh-year coach Tim Miles on Tuesday, and athletic director Bill Moos said he's spoken with former Iowa State and Chicago Bulls coach Fred Hoiberg to gauge his interest in the job.

Moos announced the firing two days after the Huskers finished a 19-17 season with an 88-72 loss to TCU in the second round of the NIT.

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Much was expected of the Huskers this season. They brought back four starters from a 22-win team that was fourth in the Big Ten, and the question among fans and media wasn't whether Nebraska would be in NCAA Tournament but how deep a run it could make. But the Huskers went into a free fall in January and February, losing 11 of 13 games on their way to a 13th-place finish in the conference.

Miles was 116-114 overall and 52-76 in Big Ten regular-season games. Nebraska was 10th or lower in the conference in five of Miles' seven years.

"I love his passion, his energy, his charisma, his integrity," Moos said at a news conference, "but in the end, I didn't feel we were competing the way I want our programs to compete in the Big Ten Conference."

Moos anticipated it would take seven to 14 days to name a successor to Miles. He said he has spoken with three or four possible candidates, and he confirmed Hoiberg was one of them.

Asked about Hoiberg's level of interest, Moos said: "I don't really have a true answer on that yet."

There has been speculation for several weeks connecting Hoiberg to the Nebraska job if Miles were fired. Hoiberg, fired in December by the Bulls, has said he's interested in getting back into coaching at either the NBA or college level. Hoiberg had no comment last Thursday when asked by The Associated Press about Nebraska other than to say, "There are lots of rumors out there."

The 46-year-old Hoiberg has ties to Nebraska. He was born in Lincoln, and his grandfather, Jerry Bush, was the Cornhuskers' coach from 1954-63.

Prior to taking the Bulls' job in 2010, he had enjoyed a successful five-year run as Iowa State's coach with his up-tempo, spread-the-floor offense. He went 115-56 and led the Cyclones to four straight NCAA Tournaments and two Big 12 Tournament titles.

The only time Miles got the Huskers to the NCAA Tournament was in 2014, when they won eight of their last nine regular-season games to finish fourth in the Big Ten and he was named conference coach of the year. Three straight sub-.500 seasons followed. Last season, Nebraska set a school record with 13 conference wins. But the Huskers were victims of a down year for the Big Ten and weren't selected for the NAAs.

The Huskers started this season 13-4 and appeared in the AP Top 25 for the first time since 2014. The Huskers were dealt a blow when second-leading scorer and starting lineup fixture Isaac Copeland went out for the season with a knee injury Jan. 26, but by then the season was on its way toward unraveling.

"Thank you to the University of Nebraska for a remarkable journey," Miles tweeted. "It was a great honor to represent this university the past seven years. I am extremely proud of what we were able to accomplish



FILE- In this March 10, 2019, file photo, Nebraska coach Tim Miles yells instructions during an NCAA college basketball game against Iowa, in Lincoln, Neb. Nebraska has fired seventh-year coach Tim Miles after the Cornhuskers finished 13th in the Big Ten and failed to make the NCAA Tournament for a fifth straight year. Athletic director Bill Moos announced the firing Tuesday, March 26, 2019, two days after the Huskers finished a 19-17 season with an 88-72 loss to TCU in the second round of the NIT. (AP Photo/

Nati Harnik, file)

during my tenure, most notably developing relationships with so many fantastic people associated with the Huskers... My family will always be cheering for the Huskers and look forward to seeing #Nebrasketball make history in the near future."

The Huskers lost by double digits seven times during the skid, and Miles rankled some fans with one of his comments on a podcast with Jeff Goodman of WatchStadium.com.

"If they fire me, they're still going to pay me. I'm still a millionaire, so I've got that going for me," Miles said. He later issued an apology.

Under terms of Miles' contract, which was set to expire in March 2021, he's owed a \$2.52 million buyout.

In a head coaching career dating to 1995, this is the first time the 52-year-old Miles has been fired. Former athletic director Tom Osborne hired the South Dakota native away from Colorado State in 2012 after he led the Rams to a 20-win season and the NCAA Tournament.

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

Funeral chapel to be turned into physical therapy center

By JIM HOLLAND Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Laura Bonsness often admired the vacant Serenity Springs Funeral Chapel on Sheridan Lake Road and wondered how her growing physical therapy practice might fit into the unique, semi-circular building with a stunning view of the Black Hills.

"I drive by that area all the time," she said. "I saw the (for sale) signs and thought 'gosh, that would be a great place.'"

Bonsness did more than just think about it. Two years of negotiations recently culminated in a deal with the current owners, listed in county records as a corporation operated by Michael and Lisa Carlsen of Aberdeen, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Bonsness, principal owner of About You Physical Therapy, is slated to close on the property in May.

Renovation of the 7,745-square-foot space will continue through the summer, with plans to move into the building this fall, she said.

Part of the sale process included a request to rezone the property from medium-density residential to office commercial. The Rapid City Council gave final approval of the change on March 18.

Since opening About You Physical Therapy in April of 2011, Bonsness has expanded into an adjacent suite and added a second location with a 2015 merger with SOAR Physical Therapy.

Bonsness shares ownership with therapists Karen Schumacher, Katie Steevers, Erin Fiedler and Jesse Ham. Matt Dormann operates SOAR Physical Therapy. Both offices employ 16 people, including nine



About You Physical Therapy owners, from left, Katie Steevers, Laura Bonsness, Karen Schumacher and Jesse Ham, talk on Thursday, March 21, 2019, about potential exterior paint colors for the remodel of the former Serenity Springs Funeral Chapel, which will become the home for their physical therapy and wellness firm later this year in Rapid City, S.D. (Jim Holland/Rapid City Journal via AP)

therapists.

SOAR will remain at its current location, while the Sheridan Lake Road office will move into the Serenity Springs building.

The change will mean more than double the space for her staff, which she said has been tripping over each other in the current 3,180-square-foot leased space.

"It's a good thing we like each other a lot. We're literally on top of each other in the space where we do administrative work or do our medical notes. We've got seven or eight people in a not very big room," Bonsness said.

The new space will allow About You to expand its physical therapy services, along with the addition and expansion of wellness, education and prevention programs and other interdisciplinary offerings, including massage therapy and programs to help those suffering from Parkinson's disease.

"Now, we'll be able to do what our whole vision was, physical therapy along with wellness and prevention and education," she said.

Bonsness is especially excited to be working in a building boasting a southwest panorama of the Black Hills skyline.

"It's really a gorgeous building with a gorgeous view," she said. "Just a great place for what we're doing with health and wellness, with that view of nature."

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

South Dakota college students brew beer in new course

By **MATTHEW GUERRY** Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — At a glance, the scene unfolding recently in one South Dakota School of Mines and Technology classroom resembled something halfway between a science fair and a beer festival.

Guests in attendance made their way from booth to booth, sampling and judging the different beers that students in a new class brewed this semester.

"They made a good try at it," said Hay Camp Brewery co-owner Karl Koth, who graduated from Mines and stopped by for a drink. "It was a good stab by everybody."

The course — officially dubbed Brewing Science and Engineering — opened for enrollment to students 21 and older this past fall. Around 50 students signed up, the Rapid City Journal reported.

In the first half of the year-long class, they were taught the hard science of beer production in the classroom. In the second, they split up in groups to put what they learned into practice.

"We were interested in teaching concepts of chemical and biological engineering to students in a way that they found enjoyable," explained Professor Todd Menkhaus, who pitched and teaches the course.



Shannon Morse and Saiprasad Sreekumar Ajitha sample beer brewed by their fellow students at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City, S.D., on Tuesday, March 19, 2019. (Matthew Guerry/Rapid City Journal via AP)

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Students from a wide range of programs signed up for the course, including those studying mechanical engineering and range management, Menkhaus said.

"The reason that I took this class is because one of the things that I do want to go into is potentially working at a microbrewery," said Sam Houtchins, a Mines chemistry student. "It's definitely to get an edge on the actual brewing process."

Menkhaus said the material covered, like fermentation, is applicable even outside the brewery setting. Cargill and Poet, he said, use very similar processes in the production of ethanol fuel.

It took about a month of lab work for Menkhaus' students to make something drinkable. Combining, mashing and boiling ingredients takes only one day.

Fermenting them, which converts natural sugars into alcohol, takes about two weeks. It's during this process, Menkhaus said, that beer begins to develop its flavor.

The resulting mixture is further conditioned, carbonated and bottled in the weeks that follow.

The five lab groups in Menkhaus' class each crafted a different style of beer. Samples of traditional wheat beers, red ales and dark porters were all passed around when students recently debuted their small batch brews.

That their beers may not have turned out tasting the way students hoped they would, Menkhaus said, is evidence that beer making is as much an art as it is a science.

In the remainder of the semester, students will try and maintain or improve their desired level of quality while scaling up for large barrel brews. Menkhaus added that there are plans to develop a student-led brewing operation outside of the class that could possibly raise scholarship money.

"Now that we have it, we have a lot of plans in place to really turn into something more than just a class and a lab," he said.

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

Dam in western South Dakota leaking water, expected to fail

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Officials expect a dam in western South Dakota to fail and are advising area residents as a precaution.

Deputy Pennington County Emergency Management Director Alexa White said Tuesday a small hole in the Quinn Dam is growing and now measures about 3 feet by 4 feet (0.9 meters by 1.2 meters).

White says the 60 residents in the small town of Quinn could be cut off, but there are no evacuations. Officials are confident culverts and the flood plain can handle the outflow, and no structures currently are in danger.

The National Weather Service has canceled a flash flood warning.

Officials with the South Dakota Department of Transportation closed Highway 14 between Wall and Philip as a precaution but have since reopened the highway.

Woman injured by shopping scooter sues Walmart

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls woman who claimed she was injured when a customer driving a motorized shopping scooter collided with her has filed a lawsuit against Walmart, accusing the mega retail company of negligence in its instructions on how to operate the scooter.

Versella Grasz, 85, was shopping at a Walmart in Sioux Falls in June 2017 when the driver of the scooter struck her right side. The lawsuit filed this week in Minnehaha County said Grasz was brought to her knees in pain before she was taken to a hospital.

Walmart said it regrets Grasz was injured, but stated the customer operating the scooter was responsible for the woman's injuries, the Argus Leader reported.

"We want all of our customers to have a pleasant shopping experience in our stores. We regret that Ms. Grasz was injured, however we do not feel that we did anything wrong," according to a released statement from a Walmart spokesperson.

Multiple pages in the lawsuit list injuries and subsequent medical costs. Grasz went to the emergency room following the incident and has since incurred nearly \$30,000 in medical bills, according to the suit.

The lawsuit also alleged Walmart was negligent because it is responsible for the upkeep, inspection and supervision of its motorized shopping carts, "so that plaintiff and the public could shop without being injured." The suit stated that Walmart "knew or should have known" that by allowing "unskilled shoppers" to drive the carts around other customers that a "foreseeable dangerous condition" presented itself.

Grasz is seeking a "reasonable amount" to be decided by a judge or jury.

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

South Dakota middle school teaches students with video games

By SHELLY CONLON Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — When eighth-grader Alyssa Lingen started her information and communications technology class this year at Patrick Henry Middle School, the art student was repulsed by anything related to computer science, she said.

But the minute she saw the little elephant she created move across a computer screen, dodging bad guys to gather coins, computer science completely changed her future, she said.

That wouldn't have been the case, though, if her teacher, Jason Whiting, had not opted to pioneer a coding course for middle school students this year. The course comes from Code.org, a national nonprofit focused on giving students access to computer science skills in schools for women and underrepresented minorities, according to the organization's website, the Argus Leader reported.

He's the only one in the Sioux Falls School District doing so, and he hopes teaching students how to build their own video games will only be the jumping off point for students to take computer science skills into future careers, he said.

"It's really good," Lingen said. "When I came into it, I didn't think I was going to like it at all, and then I started learning how to code. ... And now I'm planning on taking JavaScript coding in high school, actually."

Whiting chose to start the course after doing six years of the organization's Hour of Code event, which provides one-hour coding tutorials in 45 languages all over the world, he said.

He realized he could help teach programming languages on a larger scale for his middle school students by reaching them through something most of his students love, he said.

"The collaboration, which you can see in the classroom right now, the critical thinking, the problem solving, they get all those skills along the way as they're learning basically a second language," Whiting said.

And because each video game is different and personalized, students have thrived, especially after getting feedback from their peers, Whiting said.



In a Thursday, March, 21, photo, Information and Communications Technology instructor Jason Whiting talks Collin Feerick, 14, through how to create his own video game at Patrick Henry Middle School in Sioux Falls. (Shelly

Conlon/The Argus Leader via AP)

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Students are even researching how to code their own games outside of school hours, and bringing those skills back to the class, going beyond what the basic curriculum calls for, Whiting said.

The course took eighth-grader and regular gamer Jury Okene out of her own comfort zone, she said. She created a little alien whose mission is to collect silver coins versus gold coins, she said.

"I learned mostly about being patient and how to look more into things," Okene said. "Sometimes, the mistakes can be obvious. And I liked collaborating with my peers. Usually, I don't talk to many people, but it was a good experience."

His students may never use coding in JavaScript beyond his class, but they'll have at least a basic knowledge for how things work, Whiting said. That's enough to know students like Okene and Lingen will go into high school next year with new skills they can apply to their daily lives, he said.

"These students now, they all play video games," Whiting said. "You hear them now, talking about Fortnite. Now they're understanding how complex those things they use every day are. And it doesn't matter what career they go into, they need problem solving. They need critical thinking, and they need collaboration."

While graduation might be a few years away for Lingen, she's already thinking past her freshman year of high school. She now wants to become a programmer, a complete 180-degree turn from what the artist wanted to do before taking Whiting's class, she said.

"Creating something on a computer I can control and the game process of it is a lot of fun," Lingen said. "It's amazing, and it's never really finished because you always want to go back and add more or edit it to make it look prettier."

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

South Dakota men share stories on radio show

By ELISA SAND Aberdeen American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Bob Seaton and Lucas Murray carry on a casual conversation about spring and how a young lamb would be placed in a box set on the door of an open oven to keep it warm.

It didn't always work to keep the young lamb alive, Seaton said, but better than 50 percent of the time.

Murray counters with a side note about premature babies and how his grandmother left the hospital with her newborn and instructions to do the same.

Their conversation could be something overheard in a cafe. Instead, these two men are seated at a table at Heartland Casino, surrounded by recording equipment. They're capturing audio for the next edition of their radio show — "This Land Stretches on Forever."

Now with 21 episodes recorded, Murray, 40, and Seaton, 68, debuted their show on the Belle Fourche radio station KBFS-AM, which simultaneously broadcasts on KYDT-AM in Pinehaven-Sundance, Wyoming, the Aberdeen American News reported.

Talking about spring and caring for young lambs is just one of the little anecdotes they share on their hour-long radio show.

Station program director and on-air personality Alexa Althoff said their listeners love the show.

"Even our Wyoming listeners love it," she said.

The show started with a broadcast time of 5 a.m. Sunday and has since been bumped to a little later time, now broadcasting at 10 a.m.

The show also now airs locally on Hub City Radio stations KRBQ-FM and KSDN-AM at 8 a.m. Saturdays.

Murray said the idea for the show came about when he saw Althoff was looking for non-political radio shows. Althoff said her goal is to get the line-up close to a National Public Radio style setting. Murray said when he saw the notice, he knew it was something he wanted to do, so he reached out to Seaton.

Together they talk about whatever topic comes to mind — from horses and water to profiles of people and their stories like World War II veteran Ben Fiechtner, who grew up in Athboy, and Vera Lilly of Aberdeen, who shared her story about the Pheasant Canteen. Earl Grandpre of Aberdeen has also been featured, sharing his story about being a member of Conde's baseball team.

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Seaton said he told Murray about Fiechtner shortly after they started their radio show. Fiechtner is the father-in-law of Seaton's nephew. The full interview with Fiechtner is four hours, so excerpts have been shared on the show, including Episode 3, which ran on Veterans Day.

"He was on a ship that got torpedoed," Seaton said.

Murray said he'd like to see future episodes feature more of those profile pieces providing South Dakota perspectives about South Dakota.

"Some of these guys don't even think their stories matter," Murray said.

That perspective, he said, is baffling.

Seaton said everyone has a story.

"When I heard Ben, it kind of inspired me," Seaton said.

The conversation between Seaton and Murray flows easily. It's as if they've planned what they're going to say, but Seaton said that's not the case.

"None of it's scripted," he said. "We just talk."

It's that format that leads to conversations about the railroad or Seaton sharing memories of riding a horse about a mile and a half to his one-room school house as a young school boy or getting an opportunity to get out of school for the afternoon when a farmer stopped by looking for help in the field.

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

Flooding poses potential risk for 1 million private wells

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — More than 1 million private wells that supply drinking water in mostly rural parts of the Midwest could face the risk of contamination from floodwater, posing a health concern that could linger long after the flooding subsides.

Major flooding along the Missouri and Mississippi rivers and several smaller waterways has inundated states in the middle of America, from the Canadian border south to Kentucky. The National Weather Service has warned that with snowmelt in northern states only beginning, the threat of additional flooding persists well into spring.

The high water and swift current carries raw sewage from overburdened treatment plants, animal waste and pesticides from farm



People on a boat float down floodwaters that cover Washington Street Wednesday, March 20, 2019, in Hamburg, Iowa. As some communities along the Missouri River start to shift their focus to flood recovery after a late-winter storm, residents in two Iowa cities are still in crisis mode because their treatment plants have shut down and they lack fresh water. (Chris Machian/Omaha World-Herald via AP)

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fields, and spilled fuel.

"Whatever was on the land is in the water now," said Steve May, assistant chief of the Missouri Bureau of Environmental Epidemiology.

Contaminated water can carry bacteria such as E. coli that can cause gastrointestinal illness, reproductive problems and neurological disorders, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Infants, young children, pregnant women, elderly people, and people with compromised immune systems are particularly vulnerable.

The National Ground Water Association, a trade group for the industry that includes well systems, said there are 1.1 million private wells in 300 flooded counties in 10 states: Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota and Kentucky.

Stagnant water could linger for days or even weeks even as flooding starts to subside in hard-hit areas, raising the risk that some of it will get into wells by flooding over the top, seeping through cracks or as a result of other flaws in the well structure.

Liesa Lehmann, private-water section chief for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, said her state has an estimated 700,000 to 800,000 private wells. The National Ground Water Association said the current flood poses a risk to more than 280,000 Wisconsin wells, the most in any state.

"Anyone who has a private well within a flood plain area of a major river, those wells are certainly going to be vulnerable to contamination," Lehmann said.

Drinking water comes from a variety of sources. Some public water supplies use rivers, streams, lakes or other bodies of water. Others use water from the ground. Either way, public water supplies are government-regulated and have safeguards to protect against contamination.

But the federal government estimates that about 15 million U.S. households — most often in rural areas that don't have access to public drinking water systems — rely on private wells. Those wells are not typically regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency, so it's up to the well owner to make sure the water is clean.

Owners of private wells use a variety of methods to remove contaminants, including filtration systems, water softeners, distillation systems that boil out the impurities, and disinfectants such as chlorine. But if floodwater gets into a well, those efforts may not be enough.

Lehmann said well owners who see floodwater near or over their wells should assume the drinking water supply is contaminated. She encouraged them to watch for any change in the color, smell or taste of their water, and to consider alternatives such as bottled water.

Once flooding recedes, remaining well water should be pumped out and the well should be disinfected, said Chuck Job, regulatory affairs manager for the National Ground Water Association. Lehmann said that because the presence of so much water poses an electrocution risk, well owners should hire professionals to do the work.

Once the well is disinfected, water should be tested to make sure it's safe, Job said.

At least one state is offering free well-water testing in flooded areas. Missouri property owners seeking free testing must obtain collection kits from the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory and submit samples using those kits.

Missouri State women crash Sweet 16 as No. 11 seed

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Sweet 16 is set and Missouri State is crashing the party for the first time in 18 years.

The 11th-seeded Lady Bears last made it this far in 2001 behind now-assistant coach Jackie Stiles during the team's historic Final Four run. They are the only double-digit seed to reach the regional semifinals after knocking off Iowa State on the Cyclones' home court. It's the ninth time in 10 years that a team seeded 10 or lower has reached the Sweet 16.

Missouri State had gone one-and-done in its previous four NCAA appearances.

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"Wow. That was amazing," said Missouri State coach Kellie Harper, who won three national championships as a point guard under Pat Summitt at Tennessee. "We did it our way. This is a dream come true."

While Notre Dame and Baylor cruised to easy victories, Missouri State wasn't the only lower seed to advance. Six seeds UCLA and South Dakota State also pulled off surprising wins, beating Maryland and Syracuse, respectively, on their home courts. It's the first trip to the Sweet 16 ever for the Jackrabbits.

"It's a great, great, great day to be a Jackrabbit," said South Dakota State coach Aaron Johnston, who suffered a fat lip in the postgame celebration.

Next up, UCLA will try to do something the school has never done — beat UConn. The Huskies have won all five meetings, including a 15-point win in the Sweet 16 in 2017. The Huskies won at UCLA by 18 points last year.

CONFERENCE DOMINANCE

The Pac-12 had five of its six teams advance to the round of 16 — the most of any conference. Oregon State will join UCLA in Albany, New York. Oregon and Arizona State advance to play in Portland, Oregon, on Sunday. Stanford rallied to beat BYU and reach the Chicago Regional.

"For five teams to be in the Sweet 16 is a great statement about our league," Stanford coach Tara VanDerveer said. "Congrats to UCLA and Oregon State. That's awesome."

It's the second time in three years that the Pac-12 has had five teams in the Sweet 16. The SEC and ACC each have three teams, with the Big 12, Big Ten, American, Missouri Valley and Summit all having one team.

GETTING BIG

Three of the finalists for the Lisa Leslie Award, given to the best center in the country, are still playing. Baylor's Kalani Brown, Mississippi State's Teaira McCowan and Iowa's Megan Gustafson are still around. If the Lady Bears and the Hawkeyes win their next games, Brown and Gustafson will square off. McCowan could potentially face off with either one if two of the teams reach the Final Four.

ATTENDANCE

Fans turned out, with no better place than Iowa's Carver-Hawkeye Arena. The two-day total of 23,096 in Iowa City set a record for combined first- and second-round attendance, topping South Carolina (21,129 in 2015). They showed up to watch the Hawkeyes and Gustafson, the women's Division I leading scorer this season.

Iowa drew an average of 11,548 over the first two rounds. The average attendance at the 16 sites was 5,299 — the highest average attendance for the opening rounds since 2008.

In 2015, the top 16 seeds were rewarded by hosting the first two rounds of the NCAA Tournament with "the hope that the move would create a better in-arena atmosphere" and "improve attendance," said Rhonda Lundin Bennett, chair of the Division I Women's Basketball Committee.

She's looking forward to the upcoming rounds after "three overtime games and competitive contests



Missouri State forward Abby Hipp, center, celebrates the team's 69-60 win over Iowa State in a second-round game in the NCAA women's college basketball tournament Monday, March 25, 2019, in Ames, Iowa. (AP Photo/

Matthew Putney)

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across the board.”

FALLING SHORT

Iowa State star Bridget Carleton had 31 points in the loss to Missouri State. She finished just seven points shy of tying Angie Welle's career scoring record at the school with 2,149 points.

Follow Doug Feinberg on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/dougfeinberg>

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

Ground, air search for girl resumes Wednesday

ROCKERVILLE, S.D. (AP) — The Pennington County Sheriff's Office says improved weather will allow additional searches to resume for a missing 9-year-old girl who ran away from a residential treatment facility last month.

The sheriff's office says air and ground searches will resume Wednesday for Serenity Dennard who disappeared in frigid weather Feb. 3 when she ran away from Black Hill's Children's Home near Rockerville. Authorities say she was not dressed for the weather and that it's unlikely she survived if she was outside.

Searchers with specially trained dogs have looked extensively for the girl, but have been hampered previously by wintry weather.

Soil moisture, winter wheat in good shape in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Soil moisture supplies appear in good shape in South Dakota as the spring planting season approaches.

The Agriculture Department says in its monthly crop report that topsoil moisture supplies in the state are rated 99 percent adequate to surplus, and subsoil moisture is 97 percent in those categories.

The state's winter wheat crop also looks to be in good shape, with only 3 percent of the crop rated less than fair.

The March report is the last monthly report. Weekly reports begin next week.

National American University transitions to online courses

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — National American University is closing its Sioux Falls and Rapid City campuses as well as others as the school transitions to online classes.

The for-profit university attributes the campus closures to a steep decline in revenue and shifting student preferences. NAU President Ronald Shape says the university leases all of its locations, which adds to the ongoing costs of supporting an educational model that doesn't fit today's preferences.

The Argus Leader says combined revenue from tuition and other sources was down 24 percent year-over-year in the second quarter of the company's current fiscal year. NAU campuses that have already closed include locations in Watertown and Rochester and Minnetonka, Minnesota.

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

Trump says Mueller report summary couldn't have been better

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An exuberant President Donald Trump took a victory lap on Capitol Hill, emboldened by the end of the special counsel's Russia probe, even as Democrats pressed insistently for Robert Mueller's full report and Justice Department officials said more information could be released in "weeks, not months."

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Trump strode into a high-spirited gathering of Senate Republicans on Tuesday, flanked by party leaders, saying the attorney general's weekend summary of Mueller's report "could not have been better." GOP senators applauded his arrival, and he celebrated what he called his "clean bill of health."

But challenges are ahead for both the Republicans and the Democrats who hope to deny Trump re-election next year. Both parties are readjusting their aims and strategies in the post-probe landscape, pivoting to health care and other issues that are more important for many voters, even with Mueller's full findings still unknown.

At House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's own closed-door caucus meeting Tuesday, she urged rank-and-file Democrats to "be calm" and focus on the policy promises of health care, jobs and oversight of the administration that helped propel them to the House majority last fall.

"Let's just get the goods," Pelosi said.

Not that the Democrats are forgetting Russia and the 2016 presidential election. Many Democrats dismiss the four-page summary released by Attorney General William Barr as inadequate.

"I haven't seen the Mueller report. I've seen the Barr report. And I'm not going to base anything on the Barr report," said Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland.

"The president is saying he's been completely and totally exonerated by the report," Raskin said. "The one sentence we've seen from the report says this is not an exoneration of the president."

Meanwhile, a Justice Department official said it will take Barr "weeks, not months" to finish reviewing Mueller's longer, still-confidential report and make a version available for the public. It's not clear whether that will be Mueller's own words or another synopsis.

Trump has said he "wouldn't mind" if the full report were released. But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he's hesitant to agree to releasing information from Mueller that would "throw innocent people who've not been charged under the bus." He is blocking legislation approved unanimously by the House calling for the report's release.

In the GOP luncheon, Trump was in a lively mood, senators said. Kevin Cramer of North Dakota said the president is "always high energy. He had a little extra today."

Russia report aside, the president showed an eagerness to move on. He told GOP senators that health care should be their focus heading into the 2020 election.

He said he wants them to abandon efforts to simply repeal "Obamacare" and instead focus on a replacement for President Barack Obama's signature law.

"I was a little surprised he came out of the chute in health care," said Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., after the meeting. "He wants us to try again."

Even so, the White House was making a new effort to get rid of the Affordable Care Act entirely. In a legal filing late Monday, the administration said it would not defend the act against a court challenge —



President Donald Trump accompanied by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky., left, and Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., right, arrives for a Senate Republican policy lunch on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, March 26, 2019. (AP

Photo/Andrew Harnik)

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essentially encouraging the law's demise.

Meanwhile, House Democrats, led by Pelosi, unveiled their own sweeping measure to rescue the program on Tuesday.

Trump's hour-long talk to Senate Republicans touched on trade, foreign policy and a vote later in the day on Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal, which the Senate declined to take up. Trump said the climate-change proposal would be a good campaign issue to fight over with Democrats.

Almost no mention was made of the president's national emergency declaration to expand the border wall with Mexico, even though the House was voting on an effort to block it as the senators lunched. Congress had voted to block Trump, and he had vetoed that action. House members voted 248-181 to override Trump's veto, but that was well short of the needed two-thirds majority. Fourteen Republicans joined Democrats in trying to block the president from taking military funds to build his long-promised wall.

The president seemed to have heeded advice from allies, including Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, who encouraged him to use the political capital he's now gained to accomplish policy goals.

Pelosi's advice to Democrats to stick with the strategy that won them control of the House in 2018 was reinforced by Obama himself, who counseled freshman Democrats at a reception Monday night.

Obama advised the newly elected lawmakers to focus on constituents' hopes and concerns, while also identifying issues they feel so strongly about that they'd be willing to lose their House seats in fights over them, according to people at the private party.

The focus must go beyond Russia and collusion, Democratic leaders said.

"House Democrats did not win the election on collusion; we didn't win the election on impeachment; we didn't win the election on obstruction of justice," said Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, the Democratic Caucus chairman. "Our candidates didn't even talk about those issues. What we all collectively talked about was making life better for everyday Americans ... and that's what we're going to continue to do."

At the same time, Democrats will continue their investigations of the Trump-Russia connection, and other aspects of the president's finances and business practices, including his tax returns.

"You can't move forward on a four-page memo," said Rep. Karen Bass of California. "It's hard for me to accept that as an objective opinion."

Six House Democratic committee chairmen have written to Barr asking to have Mueller's full report by April 2. If not, they have suggested subpoenas could be issued.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker, Andrew Taylor, Catherine Lucey, Jill Colvin, Alan Fram, Mike Balsamo and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

Follow all of AP's Trump Investigations coverage at <https://apnews.com/TrumpInvestigations> .

Major revamp planned for FAA's oversight process

By DAVID KOENIG and TOM KRISHER Associated Press

America's standing as the model for aviation-safety regulation will be on trial as congressional hearings begin into the Federal Aviation Administration's oversight of Boeing before and after two deadly crashes of its best-selling airliner.

The Senate aviation subcommittee is scheduled to hear testimony Wednesday from the acting head of the FAA, the Transportation Department inspector general, who is leading a review of the FAA and Boeing, and the nation's top transportation safety investigator.

Inspector General Calvin Scovel III is expected to reveal plans to significantly revamp the FAA's oversight of airplane construction this summer and discuss his office's findings of management weaknesses with a number of the agency's oversight processes over the years.

"While revamping FAA's oversight process will be an important step, continued management attention will be key to ensure the agency identifies and monitors the highest-risk areas of aircraft certification," Scovel wrote in his prepared remarks obtained by The Associated Press.

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Even though the agency has made improvements, it plans by July to develop new evaluation criteria for training and company self-audits, Scovel wrote.

Also on Wednesday, Acting FAA Administrator Daniel Elwell will testify that Boeing submitted an application on Jan. 21 spelling out changes it planned to make to crucial flight-control software on the 737 Max — the same system that is suspected of playing a role in the Oct. 29 crash of a Lion Air jet in Indonesia and the March 10 plunge of an Ethiopian Airlines Max. In all, 346 people died.

Elwell said FAA engineers and pilots have tested the update in a simulator and the plane, including recovering from an aerodynamic stall, according to a copy of his prepared remarks obtained by The Associated Press.

"The FAA's ongoing review of this software installation and training is an agency priority," Elwell is expected to testify.

An FAA spokesman said Wednesday that the Boeing submission was an "initial application" and that the agency had not yet received Boeing's completed plan for updating the software.

The Transportation Department watchdog has previously raised questions about the FAA's certification of Boeing planes and the seemingly close relationship between some agency managers and Boeing.

Elwell will defend collaboration with aircraft makers and airlines, saying that sharing information with companies gives the FAA more knowledge about emerging risks. The process, he planned to say, has "consistently produced safe aircraft designs for decades."

On the other end of Capitol Hill, the chairman of the House Transportation Committee is seeking an independent review of Boeing's proposed fix to its 737 Max aircraft, which has been grounded worldwide for two weeks. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., said the Max shouldn't be allowed to carry passengers until independent experts approve Boeing's work and ensure that pilots will be trained to fly the plane safely.

These and other investigations are focusing on a new automated flight-control system that could push the plane's nose down under some circumstances. Boeing has described changes that will limit repetitive nose-down commands from the plane and reduce their magnitude. The company also has said it will pay to train pilots on the system.

Pilots at Southwest Airlines and American Airlines were angry that they did not learn of the software's existence until after the Lion Air crash.



FILE - This Thursday, March 14, 2019, file photo shows a Boeing 737 Max 8 airplane parked at Boeing Field in Seattle. America's standing as the model for aviation-safety regulation will be on trial as congressional hearings begin Wednesday, March 27, 2019, into the Federal Aviation Administration's oversight of Boeing before and after two deadly crashes of its best-selling airliner. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File)

Trump's attack on 'Obamacare' gives Democrats a fresh issue

By ELANA SCHOR and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is calling on Republicans to revive the effort to quash the Affordable Care Act, handing Democrats an opportunity to unite in defense of the law as they try to move past the Russia investigation and win the White House in 2020.

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Trump's administration is asking a federal appeals court to strike down the entire health care law. The president vowed on Tuesday to make the GOP the "party of health care" and told Senate Republicans to lean into their own agenda on the issue as they head into next year's election.

The moves could help Trump rally his conservative base as he celebrates Attorney General William Barr's summary of special counsel Robert Mueller's report that said there was no evidence that the president or his associates colluded with Russia in the 2016 campaign. But the push also poured political kerosene on an issue that many Democrats credit with powering their midterm election victories in November.

Top Democrats, including presidential candidates, said health care is an issue that resonates with voters more than the Mueller investigation.

"This is something that Americans care deeply about," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, a White House hopeful. "I may not have been asked about the Mueller report at town hall meetings, but I was sure asked about health care."

Other Democrats appeared to relish the chance to shift to health care. Asked if the Trump administration's court filing allowed Democrats to turn the page on Mueller, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she would have been talking about health care no matter what.

"We have been dealing with health care constantly," the California Democrat said. "The public attention has been on the Mueller report, but we have been focused on health care."

Another 2020 contender, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, said if Trump "wants to have a fight on health care, it's a fight we're willing to have. And it's a fight he is going to lose."

That confidence is in part because health care was a big political winner for Democrats last year. According to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 115,000 midterm voters nationwide, nearly 4 in 10 Democratic voters identified health care as the most important among a list of key issues including immigration, the economy and the environment. A Quinnipiac University poll released Tuesday found 55 percent of Americans supporting the improvement and not the replacement of the nation's health care system.

The Supreme Court has twice upheld President Barack Obama's health care law, known as "Obamacare." Five justices — a majority — who upheld the law in 2012 are still on the bench.

Trump's effort to repeal Obamacare narrowly failed in the Senate in 2017. Nearly two years later, it's unclear where the White House plans to focus its health care efforts. Trump's most recent budget backs one piece of the legislation that stalled in the Senate.

Republicans gained Senate seats last fall, but there's no indication that GOP senators want another fight over repealing Obamacare — particularly not those up for re-election next year. The GOP also lost control of the House, which means any attempt to dismantle the law could not pass Congress.



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., attends an event to announce legislation to lower health care costs and protect people with pre-existing medical conditions, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, March 26, 2019. The Democratic action comes after the Trump administration told a federal appeals court that the entire Affordable Care Act, known as "Obamacare," should be struck down as unconstitutional. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

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One White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity to address still-early talks, said discussions are ongoing with Pelosi's office on legislation to lower prescription drug prices, but no substantive path forward for a broader health care bill has emerged.

As the debate plays out on Capitol Hill, the White House made a surprising legal argument for eliminating the health care bill. In a Monday court filing, the administration said the entire health care law should be struck down as unconstitutional after Congress repealed fines on people who remain uninsured.

That's at odds with previous statements by leading congressional Republicans who said they didn't intend to repeal other parts of the law when they cut out its fines, effective this year. It's also a departure from the administration's earlier stance in a lower court, where it had argued that only federal safeguards for people with pre-existing medical conditions and limits on premiums charged to older, sicker people should be struck down.

Repeal of Obamacare in its entirety would risk making more than 20 million people uninsured. That includes some 12 million low-income people covered through its Medicaid expansion and some 11 million purchasing subsidized private health insurance through HealthCare.gov and state-run insurance markets.

Some Republicans say that wouldn't happen because the Trump administration's "repeal and replace" plan would send grants to states for them to run their own health insurance programs. However, during the 2017 congressional debate over repealing the health law, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated the GOP replacement plans would result in steep coverage losses.

Several GOP senators said Tuesday that Trump told them to ensure those with pre-existing conditions stayed protected as they work on an Obamacare replacement. Republicans appeared ready to back up the president on health care for now.

Trump is "thinking that's the issue that defines us as conservatives," Sen. Mike Braun, R-Ind., told reporters after the president addressed a closed-door meeting of GOP senators.

Rep. Steve Scalise, the House minority whip, said Democrats have "misled" voters about the benefits of Obamacare.

"They were misled about collusion with Russia," said Scalise, R-La. "The same people that have been misleading on all those other issues want to try to mislead people on health care costs."

The sudden focus on the health care law comes as Democratic presidential candidates have embraced a move toward a single-payer health care system known as "Medicare for All." The momentum for that effort could wane if congressional Democrats instead have to focus on defending Obamacare.

House Democrats on Tuesday unveiled legislation to shore up the Affordable Care Act and expand enrollment to millions more people.

"For (Trump) to bring this back up is traumatic, and it shines a real light on what the contrast is going to be between him and whoever the Democratic nominee is," said Andrew Bates, a spokesman for the Democratic group American Bridge. The group's planned \$50 million investment in deterring swing-state voters from backing Trump in 2020 will focus in part on health care, as well as other economic issues, Bates said.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaró, Zeke Miller, Kevin Freking, Mark Sherman and Hannah Fingerhut in Washington contributed to this report.

Search on for burial site of America's first published poet

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

NORTH ANDOVER, Mass. (AP) — Anne Bradstreet was the North American continent's first published poet, yet her legacy has largely been lost to time.

Now, professors and students at Merrimack College in Massachusetts are trying to pinpoint her burial site while at the same restoring her legacy and what they say is her rightful place in the pantheon of Western literature.

"Even though we don't know much about her, she was a household name in the 17th century, both here

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and in England," said Christy Pottroff, an assistant professor of English at Merrimack.

Bradstreet's 1650 book of poetry, "The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America," was a sensation both in the Colonies and in her native England, where people were fascinated by her accounts of everyday life in the New World.

Pottroff and associate English professor Ellen McWhorter are leading several students in the project, dubbed Finding Anne Bradstreet.

Bradstreet, who died in 1672, was from a prominent family. Her father, Thomas Dudley, served as governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. She married Simon Bradstreet, who also served as governor.

Because of her family's prominence and support, she had access to educational opportunities many Puritan women did not.

Most of her writings were about domestic life in the Colonies, her role as a woman and mother of eight, and her devotion to her husband.

"I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold, Or all the riches that the East doth hold," she wrote in a piece titled, "To My Dear and Loving Husband."

She also wrote about the horror of watching the family's home go up in flames.

"Then, coming out, behold a space, The flame consume my dwelling place," she wrote in "Verses upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666."

It was all written through the lens of her Puritan faith.

"She thought poetry was a vehicle for glorifying God," McWhorter said.

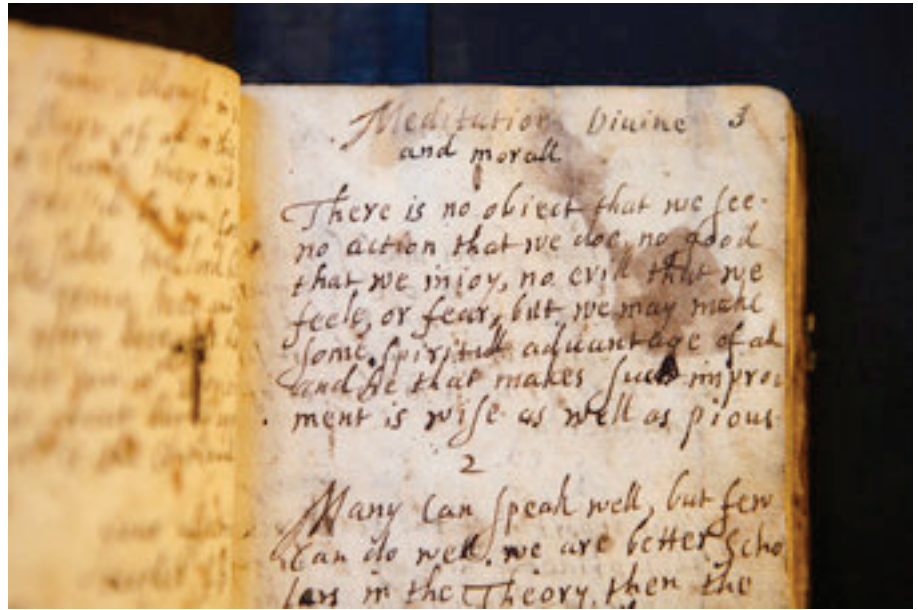
Bradstreet did not set out to become a published poet. Her writings were at first shared with family.

But her brother-in-law took her manuscripts to London, where they were published. There is a school of thought that he did so without her knowledge, but it is more likely she did know he intended to have them published, Pottroff said.

Although the project began just last year, McWhorter's fascination with Bradstreet dates to 2009 when she was interviewing for a job at Merrimack and learned the poet was buried somewhere on campus. It turns out that's not true. But scholars think she was buried not too far away in what is now North Andover, which in the 17th century was still part of Andover.

Even though there's a marker for Bradstreet in an old burial ground in town, it was put up about two decades ago and is not her gravesite. Her original grave marker was likely wooden and long lost to weather and time, Pottroff said.

The professors and students think she was actually buried near the cemetery on land where her family home used to be and which is now private property. The aim is to use ground-penetrating radar to find subterranean disturbances that might indicate a burial site. Given the passage of time, there are unlikely to be any remains, and even if there are, there are no plans to exhume them.



In this Wednesday, March 20, 2019, photo provided by the Board of Trustees of Stevens Memorial Library, a handwritten manuscript called "Meditations Divine and Moral," by 17th century poet Anne Bradstreet, rests on a table at the Houghton Library on the campus of Harvard University, in Cambridge, Mass. Bradstreet was the North American continent's first published poet. Her actual burial place is not known. (Courtesy of Board of Trustees of Stevens Memorial Library via AP)

The goal of the project is just to find the burial site and bring Bradstreet's work and life back into the light. "We want to rebuild some of her legacy that has been lost," said Emma Leaden, a senior English major at Merrimack helping with the project.

Leaden had never heard of Bradstreet but eagerly got involved in the project.

"I just thought finding the grave of America's first poet sounded exciting and very Indiana Jonesy," she said.

The group is developing a walking tour app about Bradstreet's life so people can trace the footsteps she may have taken around what was then a remote town. It's also putting together a Bradstreet lesson plan for high school teachers to use in the classroom.

Trump's 2020 machine a far cry from fly-by-night 2016 effort

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In 2016, President Donald Trump compared Hillary Clinton's campaign to the lumbering federal bureaucracy. Now he's building one of his own.

From an office tower across the Potomac River from Washington, from the bowels of the Republican National Committee's headquarters on Capitol Hill and from field offices across the country, Trump is assembling an army of operatives to fight for victory in what stands to be a legacy-defining political battle. Even with a sea of still-unfilled desks, his 2020 campaign is already unrecognizable from the fly-by-night operation of the last effort, when Trump won the White House despite his inexperienced campaign team.

Trump may still consider himself his own best strategist and communicator, but this time he's leaving nothing to

chance. Trump's 2020 effort is melding the RNC and his presidential campaign into one functional entity, with the two organizations sharing staff, resources and data in what they argue is the perfect model of the modern integrated campaign.

"We are creating the largest and most efficient campaign operation in American history with the ability to reach more voters than ever before," said Trump campaign manager Brad Parscale.

Still, the constant and greatest source of uncertainty for the new effort remains Trump — his disdain for feeling managed and his unwavering belief in his own gut instincts above all else.

"Everything the campaign does is to complement and reinforce the candidate, it's not a substitute for the candidate," said GOP strategist Alex Conant. "The candidate needs to be in sync with the campaign."

Trump's attacks on the late Sen. John McCain of Arizona earlier this month marked an example of how a candidate could unsettle his own political effort.

Driving the 2020 operation is Parscale, a confidant of Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner, who is the White House overseer of the campaign. Parscale brings an unusual pedigree to the position: He did website work for Trump's golf properties before being hired to run Trump's digital efforts in 2016, when his targeted Facebook ads helped drive Trump voters in the Midwest to the polls.



President Trump leaves after attending the weekly Republican policy luncheon on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, March 26, 2019. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

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A priority of both Parscale and Kushner, aides said, is reducing the disruptive staff turnover that defined Trump's first White House bid and continued through his first two years in the White House. Key campaign hires have had to pass muster with both men. And Parscale, with his 13-month tenure in the job, already has lasted longer than any of Trump's three 2016 campaign heads.

One reason that Trump is more open to a bulky campaign apparatus this time: the RNC's fundraising prowess. Trump self-funded his 2016 campaign to the tune of more than \$66 million, but he hasn't put any money into his campaign since November 2016, and officials say that, so far, he doesn't intend to.

Buoyed by the release of Attorney General William Barr's summary of the special counsel investigation, which had been hanging over the president's 2020 prospects, the announcement that Mueller found no evidence of collusion with Russia has served as an unofficial kickoff for Trump's campaign. But the GOP's fundraising operation is already well underway.

For 2020, Trump's campaign is benefiting from the RNC's access to high-dollar donors, as well as Trump's massive grassroots email list for small-dollar contributors. Through the end of 2018, the last date for which figures are publicly available, the campaign had brought in more than \$129 million. President Barack Obama, by comparison, didn't even begin his 2012 re-election campaign until 2011. Party operatives think the 2020 campaign and allied GOP groups will need to raise more than \$1 billion for Trump's re-election effort.

Trump's campaign is spending heavily out of the gate, with twice as much spent on digital advertising so far this year as the Democratic field combined, according to data compiled by Democratic digital marketing firm Bully Pulpit Interactive.

Beyond early fundraising success, the campaign says it is deploying its dollars more efficiently than previous campaigns.

Trump's 2016 effort was entirely dependent on the RNC in the general election for data, field workers and rapid response, leaning on the national party's army of staffers in swing states and yearslong technology investments to win. The party operation dwarfed Trump's campaign staff of just over 100.

Heading into 2020, Trump and the Republican Party are increasingly indistinguishable. In the main hallway of the party's Capitol Hill headquarters, glossy photos of Trump have replaced photos of other GOP presidents. Political director Chris Carr holds the title for both the campaign and the RNC. And while state-based operatives may work for either entity or their joint venture, known as "Trump Victory," they will share a common organizational chart.

The RNC's existing data operation, which Democrats are frantically trying to replicate, has been steadily honed over the last six years, soaking up consumer data and years of political outreach to produce "voter scores" on every voting-age American. The 100-scale scores are then used by GOP campaigns to identify and contact the voters they need to turn out at the polls.

Trump's campaign is aiming even higher going forward, planning to build a team of more than 1 million volunteers to reach out to swing voters, aides said.

"We will have a formidable ground game, one volunteer for every 13 swing voters, and a data operation that cannot be replicated," Parscale promises.

Trump's 2016 campaign chief executive, Steve Bannon, who has feuded with some in the president's orbit since leaving the White House, assesses the 2020 operation positively.

"They got an operation stood up," he says approvingly.

Associated Press writer Karl Ritter in Rome contributed to this report.

Thai anti-military parties say they have seats to form govt

By KAWEEWIT KAEWJINDA Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A group of Thai political parties led by one ousted from power in a military coup said Wednesday that they believed they won enough seats in the recent general election to form the next government.

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The announcement came amid concerns about potential irregularities in Sunday's vote, the first since a 2014 coup, and before a full preliminary vote count has even been released. Official results aren't due until May.

The leader of the Pheu Thai party, which headed the last elected government, and the leaders of five other parties held a news conference to say they believed they had won more than 250 seats in the 500-seat lower house. They said another small party had also agreed to join their potential government.

"Today, we hold the fact that parties on the side of democracy have received majority support from the people, although figures are not stable yet," Pheu Thai's Sudarat Keyuraphan said.

The Election Commission, appointed by the ruling junta's hand-picked legislature, delayed the release of a full preliminary vote count on election night and then again on Monday. The commission has now said it will release its final preliminary results on Friday.

The incomplete results reported so far show Pheu Thai won the most seats, while the military-backed Palang Pracharath party appeared to have received the most votes. Both have said those results mean they have a mandate to form the next government.

Palang Pracharath party leader Uttama Savanayana told a news conference Wednesday that the party was waiting for official results, but had talked with several other parties, both big and small. He said the party was open to negotiating over policies, but not on its plan to nominate junta leader and current Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha as the next premier.

"How many votes each party has is based on their own understanding, not official results," he said.

Even if the Pheu Thai-led coalition comes together and it secures more than 250 lower house seats, it may not get to form the government due to the country's new political system.

Since the coup, the junta has used the absolute power it granted itself to go about rewriting the country's laws, including commissioning a new constitution and creating an electoral system that severely handicaps parties without links to the military.

Under the new rules, an unelected 250-member Senate appointed by the junta will join the 500 elected members of the lower house in a vote for prime minister, meaning a party without Senate support would have to get the support of 376 house members to ensure its choice becomes premier.

The vote for prime minister will likely take place sometime in May and Prayuth will have a considerable advantage.

The coalition announced Wednesday calls itself the "democratic front." The six parties that signed a joint statement were Pheu Thai, Future Forward, Seri Ruam Thai, Prachachart, Puea Chat and Palang Puangchonthai. Pheu Thai's secretary-general, Phumtham Wechayachai, said the New Economics party had verbally committed to joining the coalition.

Future Forward party leader Thanathorn Juangroonruangkit said his party has committed to working



Workers load campaign billboards displayed on roadsides to promote candidates for a general election onto a truck in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, March 27, 2019. The results of Sunday's general election will be formally announced on May 9. (AP Photo/Gemunu Amarasinghe)

with the coalition to “stop the junta’s extension of power.” He invited other parties that had vowed to oppose the junta during their election campaigns to join them.

Thanathorn said his party stands by the principle that it would support the party that had won the most seats in the election, which he said has turned out to be Pheu Thai.

“We believe that the most appropriate candidate for prime minister is Sudarat,” Thanathorn said.

Sudarat said the coalition’s main intentions are to halt the junta’s rule and stop Prime Minister Prayuth from returning as prime minister.

“The people’s expectations are for us to keep our promise to the people, which is to stop the junta’s extension of power and for us to be able to form a government,” Sudarat said. “We will try our best to fulfill the people’s expectations.”

The Election Commission has kept a low profile since its last news conference and had yet to comment on the democratic front’s claim that it had won a majority. The last comment on its official Facebook page was from Wednesday morning.

“Let’s take a break from stressful issues,” the post began, going to ask people to show appreciation to scouts and other volunteers who had helped set up polling stations on election day.

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. TRUMP’S 2020 MACHINE A FAR CRY FROM FLY-BY-NIGHT 2016 EFFORT

The president is assembling an army of operatives to fight for re-election in what stands to be a legacy-defining political battle.

2. FAA PLANNING REVAMP OF AIRCRAFT OVERSIGHT

While the agency has made improvements to its oversight of airplane manufacturers, it plans by July to develop new evaluation criteria for training and company self-audits.

3. DISMISSAL OF JUSSIE SMOLLETT ATTACK CASE BRINGS BACKLASH

Both Chicago’s mayor and police chief raise questions about why the “Empire” actor was not forced to admit what prosecutors say was a publicity stunt.

4. ‘I’M NERVOUS, I’M SCARED’

While confident he will eventually be exonerated, famed attorney Michael Avenatti says he is concerned about federal charges for extortion and wire and bank fraud.

5. DEMS ZERO IN ON TRUMP’S ATTACK ON ‘OBAMACARE’

Democrats are seizing a political opportunity as Trump revives his push to quash the Affordable Care Act.

6. CYCLONE-DAMAGED CITY LONG KNEW PERILS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Much of the Mozambican city of Beira is below sea level on a coastline that experts call one of the world’s



Actor Jussie Smollett talks to the media before leaving Cook County Court after his charges were dropped, Tuesday, March 26, 2019, in Chicago. (AP Photo/Paul Beaty)

most vulnerable to global warming's rising waters, AP finds.

7. WHAT HAS WEST CONCERNED

As Ukraine's presidential election draws near, its ultranationalist groups are becoming increasingly visible.

8. US SHUTS INTERIOR CHECKPOINTS TO FOCUS ON MEXICO BORDER

The U.S. Border Patrol temporarily closes highway checkpoints in West Texas and New Mexico to handle an influx of Central American families arriving at the border.

9. CARDI B RESPONDS TO BACKLASH OVER OLD INSTAGRAM LIVE VIDEO

The Grammy-winning rapper tries to clarify herself after a video resurfaced online where she says she drugged and robbed men for money.

10. NFL MAKES BIG CHANGE IN RULEBOOK

Pass interference, whether flagged or not, can be challenged by coaches and reviewed by officials next season.

Mozambique city battled climate change, then came a cyclone

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

BEIRA, Mozambique (AP) — Long before Cyclone Idai roared in and tore apart Mozambique's seaside city of Beira, the mayor dreamed of protecting his people from climate change.

It would be a huge challenge. Large parts of the city of 500,000 residents are below sea level on a coastline that experts warn is one of the world's most vulnerable to global warming's rising waters.

With the World Bank's support, a \$120 million project was approved in 2012 to help spare the city's fading Art Deco center and makeshift slums from rising waters. An 11-kilometer (seven-mile) system of drainage canals and water retention basins now snakes from the beach deep into boggy neighborhoods.

It meant "the end of suffering of a whole population," Mayor Daviz Simango declared as the project's first phase was completed last year.

But the cyclone that struck on March 14 brought a whole new level of pain to Beira, with images of destruction to chill any seaside nation already fearing for its survival.

"We were really well prepared for disasters like flooding," Simango told The Associated Press, pausing from his work directing the disaster response in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods, Munhava.

The new system worked perfectly when there was flooding two months ago, said the mayor, a civil engineer who at times personally oversaw its construction. Residents told him they no longer needed to sleep on their tables.

Then "God changed his plan and brought a cyclone," Simango said. Packing winds of some 240 kilometers (150 miles) an hour, the storm ripped apart structures built to withstand less than half that intensity.



FILE - In this Monday March 25, 2019 file photo a young boy sits on a fallen tree outside a school in Beira, Mozambique. Beira's mayor Davis, Simango dreamed about protecting his people from climate change with much of the city being below sea level on a coastline that experts call one of the world's most vulnerable to global warming's rising waters. (AP Photo/Themba Hadebe, File)

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"This cyclone destroyed everything we built for more than 100 years."

It was painful watching the cyclone veer toward Beira, said World Bank staffers involved in the project who kept in touch with people on the ground until the storm severed power and communications.

With Idai, "suddenly we have a cyclone category 4 hitting, and it's very vulnerable," Michel Matera, a senior urban specialist with the World Bank, told the AP. "Yes, we were doing the right thing but it was not enough."

Long and narrow with a 2,400-kilometer (1,500-mile) Indian Ocean coastline, Mozambique is on the frontline of fighting climate change in Africa, where most nations have little infrastructure and funding to cope. Rapidly growing coastal cities like Beira are especially at risk.

The mayor called it unjust that African nations face some of the toughest challenges while contributing little to global warming. People in rich, industrialized nations produce much of the carbon dioxide and other gases that are warming the planet by burning the most coal, diesel, gasoline and jet fuel.

But while Simango believes the international community should help African nations, he stressed the continent's leaders must do their part to fight graft and not pocket the aid.

"Sometimes we get money, resources but the corruption kills us," he said. "We must be more prepared as leaders, doing our best to use every cent to save lives."

Ordinary Mozambicans may not be familiar with the science behind climate change. But the Beira residents who pick their way through inundated streets, and the longtime fishermen who keenly watch the sea and sky, have noticed changes.

They note that local temperatures that once topped out at around 34 degrees Celsius (93 degrees Fahrenheit) now reach a sweltering 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). That warming air can hold more moisture, experts say, meaning the potential for heavier rains.

For fisherman Nueve Savimbi, who stood with a bamboo fishing pole where Beira's new concrete drainage system meets the sea, it took the raging storm to open his eyes.

"I've heard about climate change but didn't believe it until I saw the cyclone," he said. "Without this (drainage system), there would be flooding here. But there is still work to do. Channels like this should be built elsewhere."

Without extensive study, scientists cannot directly link a single weather event like Cyclone Idai to the changing climate, but global warming is responsible for more intense and more frequent extreme weather events, as well as droughts, floods and fires.

Mozambique ranks third among African nations in vulnerability to weather-related disasters, behind Somalia and Madagascar, and studies say climate change will make those threats more intense and unpredictable, according to the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, a World Bank-managed grant-funding partnership.

For residents recovering from the cyclone and those watching with alarm from afar — the storm hit as Africa Climate week unfolded across the continent in Ghana, another vulnerable coastal nation — the time has come to treat climate change as an emergency.

"Cyclone Idai was an uncommonly fierce and prolonged storm, yet another alarm bell about the dangers of climate change, especially in vulnerable, at-risk countries," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday. "Such events are becoming more frequent, more severe and devastating and more widespread, and this will only get worse if we do not act now."

The world must deliver on the \$100 billion pledged as part of the Paris climate agreement to help Mozambique and other developing nations build climate resilience, Guterres said. Countries around the world, rich and poor, had more than \$2.2 trillion in economic losses from climate-related disasters between 1998 and 2017, the U.N. Office for Disaster Risk Reduction said in October.

In Beira, it is too early to calculate the cyclone's toll, whether in economic losses or even in lives.

Some residents say they believe an exodus will begin, with people leaving the port city for higher, safer places. Others argue that eventually, there will be nowhere else to go.

"Other districts have flooding," said Julia Castigo, who stood on the beach watching survivors arrive by boat from the badly hit district of Buzi. "The flooding will find us."

Another onlooker, Paolo Fernando Machata said a major flood nearly two decades ago didn't reach his village, but this one swallowed it. He spent three days stranded in flood waters, he said, pointing to his bandaged, swollen feet.

"I'd never heard about climate change," he said. "What I know is, things are changing. If cyclones like this keep happening, we will lose this town and the people in it, and our society."

Still, that society has already shown flashes of resilience amid the destruction. Beira's seaside bars have reopened, pulsing with generator-powered music. Muddy markets bustle again, and shop owners have cleared away broken glass and reopened. Some classes have resumed as children in bright uniforms now share school buildings with displaced people.

From the international relief operations base at Beira's airport, Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, deputy director of the United Nations humanitarian operation, was frank. "I think the world realizes we haven't done enough about climate change," he told journalists. Disasters "are getting worse around the world. All of us must be prepared."

For Beira's mayor, the time to take climate change seriously has come. Standing in a still-sodden neighborhood, he urged U.S. President Donald Trump to come to Mozambique and see for himself.

"I think he is living in another world," Simango said of Trump's expressions of doubt about global warming. "I've seen by my own eyes the rising of the sea level. I've seen by my own eyes people suffering. I've seen flooding. Climate change is a reality. Climate change is bringing us trouble."

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Dismissal of Smollett case brings backlash, more questions

By MICHAEL TARM and AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Prosecutors still insist Jussie Smollett faked a racist, anti-gay attack on himself in the hopes that the attention would advance his acting career. The "Empire" star still says he was assaulted by two men late at night in downtown Chicago.

But with little explanation, authorities on Tuesday abruptly dropped all charges against Smollett, abandoning the criminal case only five weeks after the allegations were filed. In return, prosecutors said, the actor agreed to let the city keep his \$10,000 in bail.

The dismissal drew a swift backlash from the mayor and police chief and raised questions about why Smollett was not forced to admit what prosecutors had said they could prove in court — that the entire episode was a publicity stunt.

Among those sure to keep pressing for answers is Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who appeared blindsided by the decision. His voice rising in anger at times, Emanuel called the deal "a whitewash of justice" and lashed out at Smollett. He said Smollett had exploited hate-crime laws meant to protect minorities by turning the laws "inside out, upside down for only one thing — himself."



Actor Jussie Smollett, center, leaves the Leighton Criminal Courthouse in Chicago after prosecutors dropped all charges against him on Tuesday, March 26, 2019. (Ashlee Rezin/

Sun-Times/Chicago Sun-Times via AP)

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"Where is the accountability in the system?" Emanuel asked. "You cannot have, because of a person's position, one set of rules apply to them and another set of rules apply to everybody else."

Smollett has become a household name as a result of the case, but it's unclear if the dropped charges will diminish the taint that followed his arrest last month. His insistence that he had been vindicated may make the entertainment industry cautious about fully embracing him.

Defense attorneys said Smollett's record was "wiped clean" of the 16 felony counts related to making a false report. The actor, who also agreed to do community service, insisted that he had "been truthful and consistent on every single level since day one."

"I would not be my mother's son if I was capable of one drop of what I was being accused of," he told reporters after a court hearing. He thanked the state of Illinois "for attempting to do what's right."

In a statement, a spokeswoman for the Cook County prosecutors' office said the dismissal came "after reviewing all of the facts and circumstances of the case." Tandra Simonton called it "a just disposition and appropriate resolution" but said it was not an exoneration.

First Assistant State's Attorney Joseph Magats said prosecutors "stand behind the investigation and the facts."

When dropping cases, prosecutors will sometimes insist that the defendant accept at least a measure of responsibility. Outside court, neither Smollett nor his legal team appeared to concede anything about his original report in January.

Defense attorney Patricia Brown Holmes said Smollett was "attacked by two people he was unable to identify" and "was a victim who was vilified and made to appear as a perpetrator."

Authorities alleged that Smollett, who is black and gay, knew the men and arranged for them to pretend to attack him.

Emanuel, who leaves office in May after two terms, said the hoax could endanger other gay people who report hate crimes by casting doubt on whether they are telling the truth.

Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson said Chicago "is still owed an apology."

"I've heard that they wanted their day in court with TV cameras so that America could know the truth. They chose to hide behind secrecy and broker a deal to circumvent the judicial system," he said.

Chicago's top prosecutor, Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx, recused herself from the investigation before Smollett was charged, citing conversations she had with a Smollett family member.

Many legal experts were surprised by the dismissal, especially the fact that it did not include any condition that Smollett apologize and admit he staged the assault.

"This situation is totally bizarre. It's highly, highly unusual," said Phil Turner, a Chicago defense attorney and former federal prosecutor with no ties to the case.

Smollett reported that he was attacked around 2 a.m. on Jan. 29 on his way home from a sandwich shop. Investigators said he made the false report because he was unhappy with his pay on "Empire" and believed it would promote his career.

The actor plays the gay character Jamal Lyon on the hit Fox TV show, which follows a black family as they navigate the ups and downs of the recording industry.

Smollett said two masked men shouted racial and anti-gay slurs, poured bleach on him, beat him and looped a rope around his neck. He claimed they shouted, "This is MAGA country" — a reference to President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan. He asserted that he could see one of the men was white because he could see the skin around his eyes.

Police said Smollett paid \$3,500 to the two men, both of whom are black.

The men were brothers Abimbola "Abel" and Olabinjo "Ola" Osundairo, and one of them had worked on "Empire." An attorney for them, Gloria Schmidt, has said the brothers agreed to help Smollett because of their friendship with him and the sense that he was helping their careers. They declined to comment.

Schmidt said in a statement Tuesday: "The Osundairo brothers were fully prepared to testify in any criminal proceeding in the Jussie Smollett case."

Before the attack, police said, Smollett also sent a letter threatening himself to the Chicago studio where

"Empire" is shot. The FBI, which is investigating that letter, has declined to comment.

Smollett said he wanted "nothing more than to get back to work." But his future with the show was unclear. Shortly after the charges were filed, producers announced that his character would be removed from the final two episodes of the season.

Fox Television, which produces "Empire," issued a one-sentence statement late Tuesday saying only that the company was "gratified" that the charges had been dropped.

Associated Press Writer Caryn Rousseau contributed to this report.

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

Check out the AP's complete coverage of the Jussie Smollett case.

Ukraine's ultra-right increasingly visible as election nears

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — As Ukraine's presidential election draws near, its ultranationalist groups are becoming increasingly visible, posing a dilemma for the West.

Thousands of far-right activists marched to incumbent President Petro Poroshenko's administration headquarters earlier this month, chanting about alleged corruption and throwing funeral-style bouquets and toy pigs to symbolize the embezzlement of state funds. Ultranationalists have also gone to campaign rallies where they fight with police and heckle Poroshenko, who is running for a second five-year term in the March 31 presidential election. And earlier this month, the ambassadors of the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations sent a letter to the Interior Ministry voicing concern about the ultra-right's assertive posturing ahead of Sunday's presidential vote.

The protests reflect the growing presence of far-right groups in Ukraine and their power in shaping the nation's political agenda, leaving the West in a quandary. On the one hand, the ultranationalists have played a key role in fighting Russia-backed separatist rebels in the east and are now challenging government corruption. On the other, they are pushing with increasing boldness for changes that go against traditional democratic ideals.

In a series of violent actions that underline their strength, right-wing radicals in recent years have assaulted gatherings by LGBT and women's rights activists, attacked Roma encampments around the country, derailed a lecture on the history of the Holocaust and brawled with pro-Russia veterans. The ultra-right groups also have a strict, military-style structure, and many of their members have battlefield experience from years of fighting in the east.

While the far-right groups have so far failed to unite behind a single presidential candidate, they have



In this April 21, 2018 photo, members of the nationalist group Sokil, the youth wing of the Svoboda party, chant slogans and light flares during a concert in Kiev, Ukraine. The influence of nationalist groups has steadily grown since 2014, driven by public dismay over the country's economic woes and rampant corruption. (AP Photo/Felipe Dana)

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gained growing clout, with the government reluctant to challenge them. Andriy Biletsky, the leader of the National Corps, one of the most visible ultra-right groups, predicted that the nationalists "will become the backbone of civil defense in Ukraine."

Andriy Yermolayev, the head of the New Ukraine independent thinktank, said the government in the past had turned a blind eye to the rise of nationalist groups, using them as a scare tactic. He added that now the ultra-right has turned on the authorities.

"The well-organized and aggressive nationalism in Ukraine is a child of the government," Yermolayev said. "The government has lost control over radical nationalists. Poroshenko has lost that game."

The government has also been beset by allegations of corruption, after a journalistic investigation linked Poroshenko's top associate and an arms factory he controls to alleged embezzlement in the defense sector. The president denied any wrongdoing and ordered an official probe into the claims.

The country's ultranationalist groups came to the fore in 2014, when they spearheaded massive street protests that led to the ouster of Russia-friendly President Viktor Yanukovich. Russia responded by annexing Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and backing separatists in the east, moves that drew Western sanctions. Thousands of Ukrainian nationalists then headed to the east, forming volunteer battalions that served as a vanguard for the Ukrainian forces in the rebel regions.

Since then, the influence of nationalist groups has steadily grown, driven by public dismay over the country's economic woes and rampant corruption. Mostly teenage members of the ultra-right groups have followed the guidance of war veterans, practicing martial arts and learning how to handle weapons. The number of ultra-nationalists is estimated at about 10,000, and they can quickly take thousands to the streets and resort to violence.

"They have undergone organizational, military and ideological training," Yermolayev said. "They are strongly motivated and active."

Torch-bearing ultra-right activists regularly march to the beat of drums across the downtown Ukrainian capital, chanting "Death to Traitors of Ukraine!" During one scuffle at the memorial to a Red Army general killed in WW II, an elderly woman approached a group of radical nationalists shouting "Hang the Russians!" and defied them, saying: "I'm Russian, hang me!" One of the right-wingers, Kiryl Nedin, pushed her back and was briefly detained for resisting police.

At one demonstration, Yevhen Karas, the leader of C14, a highly visible nationalist group, boasted of the growing power of the ultra-right.

"Of all the political parties in Ukraine, I think, no one (except us) can gather so many people, who sincerely and regularly will come to protests and actions," he said.

International human rights groups have strongly criticized the Ukrainian government for failing to track down and punish those responsible for the acts of violence and intimidation. The government has promised to rein in the ultranationalists, but has taken no action.

Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said the right-wing organizations will be stopped.

"They all know it very well," he said. "And... there will be no amnesty for them."

The Ukrainian ultra-right argues that the nationalist ideology will eventually prevail not only in Ukraine but across Europe as well. A growing nationalist wave has taken hold in Europe, with populist governments in countries like Hungary and Poland and an increased presence of the far-right Alternative for Germany party in Germany's politics.

Miroslav Mares, an expert on right-wing extremist groups at Brno University, said Ukraine's far right has been successful in reaching out to ultranationalist forces in Europe.

"They have good relations to some neo-Nazi groupings in Central and Eastern Europe," Mares said. He added that early in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, some members of Europe's neo-Nazi groups trained and fought with the Azov Battalion, a Ukrainian ultra-right paramilitary group created by Biletsky that advocated white supremacist views.

The Ukrainian far right also appears to have ties in other countries. Australian Brenton Tarrant, accused of slaughtering 50 people at two mosques in the city of Christchurch in New Zealand, mentioned a visit to

Ukraine in his manifesto, and some reports alleged that he had contacts with the ultra-right. The Soufan Center, a research group specializing on security, has recently alleged possible links between Tarrant and the Azov Battalion.

Yermolayev, the political analyst, noted that a violent image projected by Ukrainian nationalists could serve as an argument for those in the European Union who are reluctant about putting Ukraine on a membership track any time soon.

"How can you integrate a country plagued not only by corruption but also nationalism?" he said.

Save The Children: 7 killed in airstrike on Yemen hospital

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A hospital in a rural area of northwest Yemen was hit by an airstrike Tuesday killing seven people and wounding eight others, Save the Children said.

The international aid organization, which supports the hospital, said in a statement sent to the Associated Press that four of those killed were children and two adults are unaccounted for.

Save The Children said a missile struck a petrol station near the entrance to Kitaf rural hospital, about 100 kilometers (62 miles) from the city of Saada at 9:30 a.m. local time on Tuesday.

"The missile was said to have landed within 50 meters of the facility's main building," it said.

The organization said the hospital had been open for half an hour and many patients and staff were arriving on a busy morning.

Among the dead were a health worker and the worker's two children and a security guard, it said.

Save the Children, which reported earlier this week that 37 Yemeni children a month had been killed or injured by foreign bombs in the last year, demanded an urgent investigation into the attack.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the organization's chief executive, said: "We are shocked and appalled by this outrageous attack."

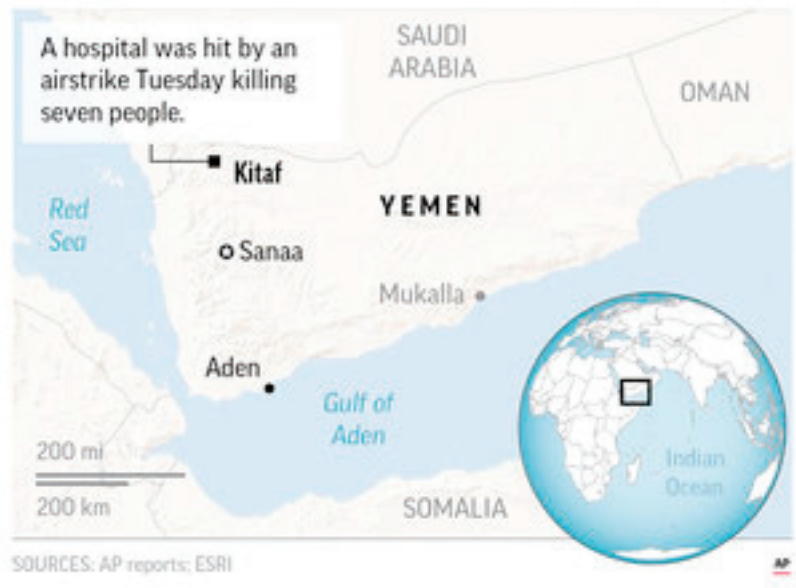
"Innocent children and health workers have lost their lives in what appears to be an indiscriminate attack on a hospital in a densely populated civilian area," she said. "Attacks like these are a breach of international law."

Thorning-Schmidt said the hospital is one of many Save the Children supports in Yemen, "but time after time, we see a complete disregard by all warring parties in Yemen for the basic rules of war."

The conflict in Yemen began with the 2014 takeover of the capital, Sanaa, by Iranian-backed Houthi Shiite rebels, who toppled the government of Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

A Saudi-led coalition allied with Hadi's internationally recognized government has been fighting the Houthis since 2015.

Saudi-led airstrikes have hit schools, hospitals and wedding parties and killed thousands of Yemeni civil-



Graphic corrects Katif to Kitaf; a hospital in a rural area of northwest Yemen was hit by an airstrike Tuesday.;

ians. The Houthis have fired long-range missiles into Saudi Arabia and targeted vessels in the Red Sea.

The fighting in the Arab world's poorest country has killed thousands of civilians, left millions suffering from food and medical shortages, and pushed the country to the brink of famine.

U.N. humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock has said about 80 percent of Yemen's population — 24 million people — need humanitarian assistance including nearly 10 million "just a step away from famine" and nearly 240,000 "facing catastrophic levels of hunger."

Thorning-Schmidt called for an immediate suspension of arms sales to the warring parties and diplomatic pressure to end the conflict.

"We must stop this war on children," she said.

This story corrects hospital name to Kitaf.

Avenatti charged with fraud as he testified in related case

By BRIAN MELLEY and AMY TAXIN undefined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Even before federal prosecutors unsealed charges against Michael Avenatti, the lawyer best known for representing porn actress Stormy Daniels in legal battles against President Donald Trump was facing legal scrutiny for his business practices.

Avenatti was testifying Friday in his own defense in a civil case that included allegations he pocketed \$1.6 million from a client as the feds were including that claim in their criminal case that could put him behind bars for decades.

Avenatti, 48, faces charges in California for allegedly filing bogus tax returns to secure \$4 million in loans and embezzling the client's settlement funds. He faces charges in New York of threatening to release damaging information against Nike if it didn't pay him and another lawyer up to \$25 million.

About 12 hours after being released from custody, Avenatti returned to his combative form Tuesday and went on the offensive, accusing Nike of "rampant" corruption.

He claimed on Twitter that Nike funneled "large sums" of money to elite student-athletes bound for top colleges and said the corruption reached the highest levels at the company.

Prosecutors haven't commented on whether Avenatti's information about Nike was accurate but said he crossed a line by trying to enrich himself with threats.

A Nike spokesman declined to answer questions about Avenatti's tweets. The company released a statement Monday saying it will "not be extorted or hide information that is relevant to a government investigation."

While he confidently declared after his release from custody that he would be exonerated, Avenatti told



Attorney Michael Avenatti leaves Federal Court after his initial appearance in an extortion case Monday, March 25, 2019, in New York. Avenatti was arrested Monday on charges that included trying to shake down Nike for as much as \$25 million by threatening the company with bad publicity. (AP Photo/Kevin Hagen).

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CBS on Tuesday that he is concerned about the charges.

"I'm nervous, I'm scared," he said. "If I wasn't, it wouldn't make a lot of sense."

The arrest of Avenatti, who seized the spotlight as a Trump antagonist and considered his own run for president, came as a surprise to many, but not to some of those who have worked with him.

Jason Frank, who was an independent contractor for the now-bankrupt firm of Eagan Avenatti, has been seeking compensation he claims he's owed for work done before he resigned in 2016, according to federal court filings.

Frank is still trying to collect a \$10 million judgment his firm won against Eagan Avenatti and a \$4 million personal judgment against Avenatti.

Avenatti repeatedly failed to turn over court-ordered records, and deposited millions of dollars of client fees into accounts hidden during bankruptcy proceedings, Frank's lawyers wrote in filings seeking a court-appointed receiver.

"The conduct described in the criminal complaint is the conduct we've seen Mr. Avenatti engage in with respect to his debts to his partners going back years," attorney Andrew Stolper said. "What you see is a lawyer using his kind of inside knowledge of the legal system."

Most of a nearly \$1.4 million payment sent to Eagan Avenatti as part of a settlement with the NFL was funneled to an account for personal expenses such as rent on a luxury apartment and monthly payments on a Ferrari, Frank's lawyers said.

On Friday, Stolper questioned Avenatti under oath at a debtor exam about a \$4 million payment his firm received from Los Angeles County on behalf of a paraplegic man who tried to kill himself in jail.

Avenatti testified that he paid the firm's client, Geoffrey Johnson, all the money he was owed, but checks show Johnson received monthly payments totaling no more than a couple of hundred thousand dollars over the past three years, Stolper said.

In an email to The Associated Press, Avenatti said Johnson approved all transactions and accounting and has been kept in the loop.

"He has repeatedly thanked me for my dedication to his case and the ethics I have employed," Avenatti wrote.

Avenatti was also questioned in court about the case of Gregory Barela, who he negotiated a \$1.9 million settlement for in an intellectual property dispute against a Colorado company, according to court records.

Barela hired new lawyers to chase the money down after he said Avenatti wouldn't pay him. They went to the FBI after finding records that \$1.6 million was paid to Avenatti.

Attorney Steven Bledsoe sat in court Friday afternoon as Avenatti repeatedly dodged questions and denied stiffing Barela.

"Avenatti testified he paid Mr. Barela everything he was owed without ever identifying any payment," Bledsoe said. "Documents show he didn't pay anything. It was just B.S."

Prosecutors also dispute Avenatti's account.

While he was still on the witness stand in Los Angeles, prosecutors filed a wire fraud charge in U.S. District Court in Santa Ana accusing Avenatti of embezzling from Barela.

Prosecutors said Avenatti deceived Barela about the date he received the payment and never turned it over to him. At one point, he provided a \$130,000 "advance" on the payment he already received and later offered to loan Barela \$100,000 if he paid interest.

"It appears Mr. Avenatti loaned the client's own money to the client," U.S. Attorney Nick Hanna said in announcing the charges. "Money that Mr. Avenatti had already secretly collected."

Attorney Ken White, a former federal prosecutor, said the relatively short criminal complaints without disclosing too much evidence indicates prosecutors are confident they have a strong case. Indictments are likely to offer more information and, possibly, additional charges that could include evidence uprooted by Frank.

"It will be interesting to see when the indictment finally comes down to what extent it's going to mirror more of what his former partner's been saying," White said.

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Taxin reported from Santa Ana. Associated Press writer Jim Mustian in New York contributed to this report.

Centene to buy WellCare for \$15B creating ACA powerhouse

ST. LOUIS (AP) — With the Trump administration again taking aim at the Affordable Care Act, Centene will spend more than \$15 billion on rival WellCare Health Plans, both big players in the ACA market.

The deal Wednesday comes two days after the administration attacked the ACA in court, saying that former President Barack Obama's health care law should be declared unconstitutional after Congress repealed one part of it — unpopular fines on people who remain uninsured.

The deal would create a powerhouse medical provider in Medicare, Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act marketplace with about 22 million members in the U.S. It will have more than 12 million Medicaid and approximately 5 million Medicare members, including the Medicare prescription drug plan.

The transaction includes 3.38 shares of Centene stock and \$120 in cash for each share of WellCare stock, or \$305.39 per WellCare share. That's about a 32 percent premium to WellCare's Tuesday closing stock price. The companies put the deal's value at \$17.3 billion.

Shares of WellCare jumped more than 14 percent before the market open on Wednesday. Centene's stock declined 5.5 percent.

Centene Corp. shareholders will own about 71 percent of the business, with WellCare shareholders owning approximately 29 percent.

The combined company's board will have 11 members, with nine from Centene's board and two from WellCare's board. Centene Chairman and CEO Michael Neidorff will serve in those roles after the combination.

The combined business will be based in St. Louis, where Centene is headquartered. It will continue to support WellCare's operations in Florida. WellCare is based in Tampa.

The deal is expected to close in the first half of 2020. It still needs approval from Centene and Wellcare Health Plans Inc. shareholders.

Asian shares mixed following rebound on Wall Street

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares were mixed in Asia early Wednesday after U.S. stocks finished broadly higher on Wall Street, erasing modest losses from a day earlier.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index fell 0.5 percent to 21,328.88 while the Shanghai Composite added 0.6 percent to 3,013.57. Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.5 percent to 28,717.32, but Australia's S&P ASX 200 shed 0.3 percent to 6,112.00.

China reported a drop in industrial profits in the latest signal of softening growth in the world's No. 2 economy.

The National Bureau of Statistics reported Wednesday that profits of China's major industrial firms fell 14 percent from a year earlier in the January-February period.

Weak data from China often support share prices as market players speculate the government may take fresh measures to prop up growth.

Overnight in U.S. markets, financial, technology and health care stocks accounted for much of the rally. Banks got a boost from rising bond yields, which let them charge higher rates on loans.

But homebuilders slumped on new data showing the pace of newly started residential construction projects fell sharply last month.

On Tuesday the yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note edged up to 2.42 percent from 2.41 percent late Monday. However, it's still below the yield on the three-month Treasury bill, which many see as a warning sign of a possible recession.

The S&P 500 index gained 0.7 percent to 2,818.46. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.6 percent to 25,657.73, while the Nasdaq composite added 0.7 percent, to 7,691.52. The Russell 2000 index

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of smaller company stocks picked up 1 percent to 1,528.17.

U.S. stocks are on track to finish the quarter with solid gains at the end of this week. The benchmark S&P 500 index is up more than 12 percent so far in 2019, an unusually strong start to a year.

Still, uncertainty remains over how the U.S. and China will resolve their costly trade dispute and how a slowing global economy will affect corporate profits as companies begin to report results for the first quarter next month.

Trade talks are due to resume in Beijing on Thursday.

"The ability to strike an economically viable, mutually agreeable, politically acceptable, and commercially enforceable deal within a reasonably quick time will be put to the test," Mizuho Bank said in a commentary. "Without obsessing over every minute detail, suffice to say that optimism over the potential for such a trade deal has been challenged by the ability to get both sides on the same page over a whole range of issues."

ELSEWHERE IN ASIA: South Korea's Kospi edged 0.1 percent higher to 2,149.80 and the Sensex in India climbed 0.3 percent to 38,355.95. Shares fell in Taiwan and Indonesia but rose in Singapore and Thailand.

ENERGY: Energy companies have been gaining as the price of U.S. crude oil hovers near \$60 per barrel. U.S. benchmark crude added 5 cents to \$59.99 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It gained \$1.12 Tuesday to \$59.94 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, picked up 9 cents to \$67.52 per barrel.

CURRENCIES: The dollar weakened to 110.54 Japanese yen from 110.63 yen on Tuesday. The euro fell to \$1.1258 from \$1.1266.

AP Business Writer Alex Veiga contributed.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, March 27, the 86th day of 2019. There are 279 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 27, 1977, in aviation's worst disaster, 583 people were killed when a KLM Boeing 747, attempting to take off in heavy fog, crashed into a Pan Am 747 on an airport runway on the Canary Island of Tenerife (ten-uh-REEF').

On this date:

In 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon (hwahn pahns duh LEE'-ohn) sighted present-day Florida.

In 1625, Charles I acceded to the English throne upon the death of James I.

In 1933, Japan officially withdrew from the League of Nations.

In 1942, during World War II, Congress granted American servicemen free first-class mailing privileges.

In 1958, Nikita Khrushchev became Soviet premier in addition to First Secretary of the Communist Party.

In 1964, Alaska was hit by a magnitude 9.2 earthquake (the strongest on record in North America) and tsunamis that together claimed about 130 lives.

In 1968, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin (gah-GAH'-rihn), the first man to orbit the Earth in 1961, died when his MiG-15 jet crashed during a routine training flight near Moscow; he was 34.

In 1975, construction began on the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which was completed two years later.

In 1980, 123 workers died when a North Sea floating oil field platform, the Alexander Kielland, capsized during a storm.

In 1995, "Forrest Gump" won six Academy Awards, including best picture and a second consecutive best actor Oscar for Tom Hanks; Jessica Lange won best actress for "Blue Sky."

In 2006, Al-Qaida conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee) testified at his federal trial that he was supposed to hijack a fifth airplane on Sept. 11, 2001, and fly it into the White House.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama launched a fresh effort to defeat al-Qaida terrorists in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, ordering in 4,000 more troops. A suicide bomber set off an explosion at a

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packed mosque in Pakistan near the Afghan border, killing at least 48 people. The rising Red River broke a 112-year record and threatened the dikes fortifying Fargo, N.D. The main suspect in the Phoenix serial shooter attacks, Dale Hausner, was sentenced to death for six murders that had put the city on edge for nearly two years. (Hausner committed suicide in an isolation cell in June 2013.)

Five years ago: Face to face at the Vatican for the first time, President Barack Obama and Pope Francis focused on their mutual respect and shared concern for the poor. The U.S. Air Force took the extraordinary step of firing nine midlevel nuclear commanders and announcing it would discipline dozens of junior officers at a nuclear missile base, responding firmly to an exam-cheating scandal. A judge in Missoula, Montana, sentenced Jordan Graham to more than 30 years in prison for killing Cody Johnson, her husband of eight days, by pushing him from a cliff in Glacier National Park. James Schlesinger, 85, who'd held a long string of Cabinet and other high-level positions in three U.S. administrations, died in Baltimore.

One year ago: Retired Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, in an essay on The New York Times website, called for the repeal of the Second Amendment to allow for significant gun control legislation. The co-owner of a Kansas water park and a ride designer were charged with reckless second-degree murder in the decapitation of a 10-year-old boy on the ride in 2016. (A judge dismissed the charges last month, finding that state prosecutors had shown inadmissible evidence to grand jurors.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Julian Glover is 84. Actor Jerry Lacy is 83. Hall of Fame racer Cale Yarborough is 80. Actor-director Austin Pendleton is 79. Actor Michael York is 77. Rock musician Tony Banks (Genesis) is 69. Rock musician Andrew Farriss (INXS) is 60. Actor Brian Tarantina is 60. Jazz musician Dave Koz (kahz) is 56. Movie director Quentin Tarantino is 56. Rock musician Derrick McKenzie (Jamiroquai) is 55. Rock musician Johnny April (Staind) is 54. Actress Talisa Soto is 52. Actor Ben Koldyke is 51. Actress Pauley Perrette is 50. Singer Mariah Carey is 49. Rock musician Brendan Hill (Blues Traveler) is 49. Actress Elizabeth Mitchell is 49. Actor Nathan Fillion is 48. Hip-hop singer Fergie is 44. Jazz musician Tia Fuller is 43. Actress Emily Ann Lloyd is 35. San Francisco Giants catcher Buster Posey is 32. Actress Brenda Song is 31. Pop singer-songwriter Kimbra is 29. Actress Taylor Atelian is 24. Classical crossover singer Amira Willighagen (TV: "Holland's Got Talent") is 15.

Thought for Today: "Fanaticism consists in redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim."
— George Santayana, American philosopher (1863-1952).