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Friday, March 29, 2019

6:00pm- 9:00pm: Elementary PAC Movie Night, Groton Area Elementary School
7:00pm: Middle School Talent Show, GHS Gymnasium

CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Click on Ad to sign up!



Greenhouse Raffle

Prizes are:
Greenhouse (12'x7.5', 2 shelves, 2 outlets, light)
Hunting Blind (Hexagon with 6 shooting windows)
Free delivery within 20 miles
2 Dairy Queen \$50 Gift Cards

**Need not be present to win. \$10 Donation
Drawing to be held April 15th**

**Contact any Robotics member for a ticket or
call Jim Lane at 605/397-7013.**

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Chicken Soup
for the Soul.

**“THE LEAST AMOUNT
OF JUDGING WE CAN
DO, THE BETTER OFF
WE ARE.”**

Michael J. Fox

Groton Dairy Queen's 25th Anniversary!

Come Celebrate With Us - March 25-29!



**Today:
Small Cones
25¢**



DQ
Grill & Chill

11 East US 12, Groton

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

DQ
Grill & Chill

605-397-8627

NOW HIRING!

Truss Pros

10954 424th Avenue | Britton, SD 57430

Looking for assemblers - both shifts &
Class A CDL Drivers

New Starting Competitive Wages
Overtime Available

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Comprehensive Health, Dental & Vision insurance
- Life Insurance
- STD
- LTD
- 401k
- Holiday Pay
- Vacation Pay
- Paid Sick Leave
- Referral Bonuses

To apply visit www.uslbm.com/careers or call Diane at 605-448-2929.



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!!!



S.D. infants still dying at a high rate due to sleep issues

By: Bart Pfankuch

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

South Dakota infants are dying in their sleep at a rate far higher than the national average and above neighboring states, but new efforts are underway to save babies from a cause of death that health experts say is mostly preventable.

From 2013 to 2017, more than 70 percent of infant deaths that occurred after hospital discharge in South Dakota were due to sleep-related causes, according to the state Department of Health.

The mortality rate for South Dakota infants from 2013 to 2015 due to a range of sleep-related causes was 157.3 deaths per 100,000 live births, 46th worst in the nation. Under a new, broader cause of death called Sudden Unexpected Infant Death, the South Dakota mortality rate is 43 percent higher than the national average of 89.2 and the highest among seven Great Plains states. SUID deaths all occur during sleep and include those from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, accidental suffocation and strangulation and causes that cannot be determined.

Infant mortality due to sleep-related causes remains problematic despite extensive public education and media campaigns to prevent it. The number of American infants dying during sleep dropped dramatically in the 1990s when parents were educated through the "Back to Sleep" health campaign to place babies on their backs at bedtime, opening their airways, reducing the chances of suffocation or choking and allowing a baby to cry and awaken a caregiver if in peril.

Since 1999, however, the SUID death rate has leveled off, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In response, national and state health officials – including in South Dakota — have recently energized efforts to reduce sleep-related infant deaths. Data collection and analysis have increased; education programs are expanding for parents; and programs provide government-funded cribs that are safer for infants. Updated health recommendations include not allowing babies to sleep with a parent, placing babies on firm sleep surfaces and removing loose clothing, blankets or toys that can block airways. A new method called co-sleeping, in which a baby sleeps separate from a parent but within earshot, is being promoted.

Meanwhile, a tribal health agency in South Dakota recently received a multi-million dollar, 5-year grant to reduce the high infant mortality rate among Native Americans, including promotion of safe sleeping practices.

"People need to be aware that the problem hasn't gone away," said Bonny Specker, an epidemiology professor and director of the E.A. Martin Nutrition Program at South Dakota State University.

"For a while, these deaths really decreased significantly, and then I think everyone said, 'OK, put them to sleep on their back and problem solved.' But it's obviously not solved because there's still infants dying."

Sleep-related deaths a nagging concern

From 2013 to 2017 in South Dakota, 396 babies died within a year of being born, of which 95 died from sleep-related causes after being discharged from the hospital.

State records show that overall infant mortality rates in South Dakota have been fairly steady or declining slightly in recent years and have remained close to the national average. Despite the slow decline, however, the 2017 rate jumped to 7.75 deaths per 1,000 live births, the highest in six years and third-highest since 2004, putting South Dakota at 41st worst in the nation that year.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends safe steps - including removing soft objects and loose bedding from beds - to keep babies safe as they sleep.

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Yet the mortality data also show that sleep-related accidents remain a significant cause of infant deaths in South Dakota.

Birth defects and premature births have long been the biggest causes of infant mortality in South Dakota and across the country, followed by sleep-related accidents and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The new classification of sleep-related deaths, SUID, includes SIDS and accidental deaths.

State data show that in the 5-year period from 2013-2017, birth defects caused 24.2 percent of infant deaths in South Dakota, followed by premature births (15.9 percent), accidents (11.1 percent) and SIDS (8.6 percent.) The accident category is dominated by suffocation or breathing restriction during sleep.

In terms of hard numbers, the South Dakota Infant Death Review from 2013-2017 shows that 61,245 babies were born in South Dakota, of which 396 died. Of those, 151 died after leaving the hospital, a period known as post-neonatal and which generally excludes birth defects or premature birth weight.

More than 70 percent of the 151 deaths after hospital discharge, 95 in all, were classified as sleep-related with bed-sharing the most common cause. Records show that 44 of the sleep-related deaths occurred in an adult bed, 19 in a crib and 12 on a couch with 20 locations undetermined.

State data also shed light on other trends surrounding infant deaths.

The infant mortality rate for children of mothers who use tobacco is 11.35 per 1,000 births, more than double the rate for non-users. The disparity is even greater when it comes to post-neonatal deaths that occur after the baby has left the hospital.

Some data also suggest that income level plays a role in infant mortality rates in South Dakota. Babies born to mothers who receive benefits from the federal Women, Infants and Children nutrition supplement program have a 30 percent higher mortality rate than those born to mothers not on the program, with the greater disparity again coming after babies are released from the hospital.

State and national data also show that infant mortality rates are higher among non-whites. According to the CDC, the highest infant mortality rate nationally in 2016 was among non-Hispanic blacks at 11.4 deaths per 1,000 live births. American Indian/Alaska Natives were next at 9.4, followed by Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders at 7.4, Hispanics at 5.0, non-Hispanic whites at 4.9 and Asians at 3.6.

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In term Sleep-related deaths a nagging concern

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South Dakota data generally follow that trend line. The American Indian infant mortality rate from 2013-17 (12.2) was about double that of white

SLEEP-RELATED INFANT DEATHS REMAIN HIGH IN SD

This chart shows the rate of infant deaths per 100,000 live births at separate 3-year intervals over the past 25 years due to sleep-related causes including Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and accidental suffocation and strangulation. The rates across the country dropped dramatically from the early 1990s to the early 2000s due to an extensive safe sleeping public awareness campaign, but have not fallen as fast since then and have risen slightly in some states. The final category shows the change in the rate from 2002 to 2015, a period when public health campaigns tapered off. South Dakota's most recent mortality rate (157.3) is 43 percent higher than the national average (89.2) and remains the highest in the Great Plains region.

Location	1990-92	2000-02	2013-15	% chg 2002-15
U.S.	150.3	94.5	89.2	-5.7
Iowa	168.6	97.8	81.2	-17.0
Minn.	151.0	72.3	63.7	-12.0
Mont.	254.3	151.6	136.4	-10.0
Neb.	178.3	102.9	86.7	-15.7
N.D.	152.1	130.1	114.2	-12.2
S.D.	248.8	164.9	157.3	-4.6
Wyo.	303.8	100.4	86.6	-13.8

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Public health efforts expanding

The focus on improving infant health in South Dakota sharpened in 2011 after a task force formed by former First Lady Linda Dugaard released a report citing three main problem areas: tobacco use by parents, particularly mothers; a lack of prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy, and continued unsafe sleep practices.

One immediate response was creation of the South Dakota Cribs for Kids program within the Department of Health that provides a safe portable crib, sleep wear and educational materials to low-income parents.

The program gave out about 1,400 safe-sleep cribs and kits last year, said Katelyn Strasser, maternal child health epidemiologist within the state health department.

Strasser said other state efforts focus both on education and improving behaviors prior to and after births, providing education and support for new parents both through home visits and at health department offices across the state. Health workers push healthy lifestyles that include avoiding smoking and drug and alcohol use before and after pregnancy.

She said the understanding of causes of sleep-related deaths is steadily improving and leading to new education initiatives and recommendations.

"What we're really finding throughout our data is that there are other safety factors beyond just putting infants being put on their backs," she said.

As a result of the Dugaard task force report, the state intensified collection and analysis of data surrounding parenting and also after an infant death occurs. The state, and now some tribes, have implemented a Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, or PRAMS, that surveys parents about behaviors and practices. The state also created the South Dakota Infant Death Review, which compiles a wide range of data to help spot trends and identify ways to improve infant health.

Parenting, however, remains a personal process often driven by cultural norms or familial traditions, sometimes making it difficult to change behaviors and improve infant safety, Strasser said.

For instances, the data show that parents are still sleeping or nursing with their babies in their bed and allowing stuffed animals, toys, bumper pads or loose blankets in cribs despite the inherent risk.

"Those are behavior modifications that can take a little time to change," Strasser said. "In some cases, you're not only trying to change the behavior of the parents, but also other caregivers like grandparents."

TIPS TO IMPROVE INFANT SLEEP SAFETY

These are the Level 1, or most important, recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics for parents to create a safe sleep environment for infants up to one year old. The full list can be found online here.

- Place infant on his or her back for every sleep.
- Use a firm sleep surface.
- Breastfeeding is recommended.
- Room-sharing with the infant on a separate sleep surface is recommended.
- Keep soft objects and loose bedding away from the infant's sleep area.
- Consider offering a pacifier at nap time and bedtime.
- Avoid smoke exposure during pregnancy and after birth.
- Avoid alcohol and illicit drug use during pregnancy and after birth.
- Avoid overheating.
- Pregnant women should seek and obtain regular prenatal care.
- Infants should be immunized in accordance with AAP and CDC recommendations.
- Do not use home cardiorespiratory monitors as a strategy to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- Health care providers, staff in newborn nurseries and NICUs, and child care providers should endorse and model the SIDS risk-reduction recommendations from birth.
- Media and manufacturers should follow safe sleep guidelines in their messaging and advertising.
- Continue the "Safe to Sleep" campaign, focusing on ways to reduce the risk of all sleep-related infant deaths, including SIDS, suffocation, and other unintentional deaths.
- Pediatricians and other primary care providers should actively participate in this campaign.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Native communities see higher death rates

While education and prevention programs seek to improve sleep safety for all infants in South Dakota, state and tribal officials are aware of unique challenges in the Native American community.

The main conclusion of the 2016 Infant Death Review prepared by the state health department states that, "South Dakota's infant mortality rate can be improved by preventing accidental deaths. Prevention activities should be directed to those at highest risk: American Indian infants and infants who sleep in unsafe settings."

While the overall infant mortality rate in the country is highest among African Americans, CDC data show that the rate of deaths due to sleep-related SUID causes is highest for American Indian/Alaska Natives among all racial and ethnic groups.

The national SUID rate for the American Indian population from 2013 to 2016 was 206 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared to 181 for black infants, 85 for whites, 52 for Hispanics and 34 for Asians.

A wide range of economic, social and environmental challenges facing Native communities in South Dakota all play a role in the high infant mortality rate, said Linda Littlefield, a social work and public health specialist with the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board who is program manager for the federal Northern Plains Healthy Start Program

Littlefield said the disparity between infant death rates among Native Americans compared to other populations is troubling to public health officials.

She said research increasingly shows that the disparity in Native American health is due to "social determinants of health," which include widespread poverty and a lack of access to transportation, healthy food, affordable housing, education and familial and community support.

Littlefield and others also point to historical trauma – including the horrors of the boarding school era — and isolation suffered by Native peoples as weakening a culture that considers infants and children sacred and places a high value on self-protection within communities.

"We're seeing improvements in infant mortality, state-wide and nationally, but the disparity is a bigger issue, a more troublesome issue," Littlefield said. "If you're living on a reservation in South Dakota, you are probably dealing with deficiencies in every single one of the social determinants of health."

Nurses and health officials within the tribal chairman's health board, which serves 18 tribes and Native groups in

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four Great Plains states, are aware that different approaches are needed to reach and teach Native men and women about positive pre-natal habits and to prevent infant mortality, including through safe-sleep practices.

"We recognize that approaches that apply in white communities might not apply or work in Native communities," she said.

One example: Natives who have suffered historical trauma and displacement do not respond well to being told what to do or how to live, even regarding the dangers of sharing a bed with a baby, Littlefield said. A recent state report showed that only 22 percent of Native American infants are always placed in their own crib or bed compared to 42 percent of white infants.

"My program teaches every participant about the correct sleep behaviors because it's an important issue," she said. "But there can be resistance in the Native community, culturally, because Native women want to sleep with their babies and there is a want to be close to their babies."

Littlefield said she and her colleagues sometimes work with clients who are poor, have little access to transportation or may live with many family members in a confined area. She said her team takes a respectful, informative approach to providing education and intervention.

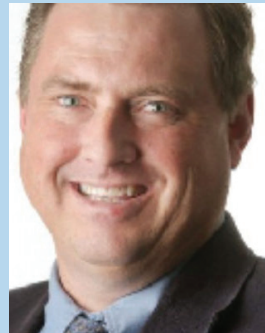
"It's a difficult challenge and we have to continue to work on that," she said.

Littlefield was notified this month that the tribal chairman's health agency has been awarded a 5-year federal Healthy Start grant that will provide about \$1.1 million a year to reduce infant mortality in its service area. The grant supports an evidence-based health model that will target both pre-natal and post-natal care. Services may include case management, health education, parental training, referrals to local services and home health visits for income-qualifying clients. The grant will also allow for provision of car seats, diapers and cribs designed to allow for safe sleeping by infants.

Littlefield said she is gratified to work in a field where education and intervention can help save lives.

"Sleep deaths are some of the most preventable deaths," Littlefield said. "It's probably one of the most significant areas where our efforts can have an impact."

ABOUT BART PFANKUCH



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

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Today in Weather History

March 29, 1982: An early season Tornado briefly touched down at Swett, South Dakota (11 miles west of Martin). The tornado overturned and heavily damaged a mobile home. One person was slightly injured, and another barely escaped injury, as he left the trailer just seconds before the storm struck.

March 29, 1998: A supercell thunderstorm produced 13 tornadoes across southern Minnesota. The strongest tornado was an F4. Two people died during this tornado event.

1848: Niagara Falls eased to a trickle during the late afternoon and then became "silent" for 30 hours. Most people noticed the silence on the morning of the 30th. This is the only time in recorded history that both Falls stopped flowing. An ice jam at the neck of Lake Erie and the Niagara River entrance between Fort Erie, Ontario Canada, and Buffalo, NY, was caused by the wind, waves, and lake currents. People even ventured into the gorge, discovering relics like weapons from War of 1812.

1886: Rainfall amounts of 6-12 inches occurred over northwest Georgia in a 3-day period from March 29 through April 2. This caused record flooding on the Oostanaula and Etowah Rivers that merge to form the Coosa River. Floodwaters, up to 11 feet deep covered portions of Broad Street in Rome with extensive record flooding. The stage height reached 40.3 feet. Flood stage is 25 feet. This record flood and another major flood in 1892 prompted the citizens of Rome to raise the town by 12 feet. This feat was accomplished by bringing in thousands of wagon loads of dirt. An official rainfall amount of 7.36 inches was recorded on this day in Atlanta. The 7.36 inches is the most Atlanta has seen in one day since record-keeping began in 1878.

1942: A slow-moving low-pressure system brought 11.5 inches of snow to the nation's capital on March 29, 1942. It still stands as the highest March snowfall on record in Washington, D.C. on a single calendar day. Also, Baltimore, Maryland recorded an imposing total of 21.9 inches of snow on the same day. On the flip side, eight days later, the temperature in D.C. soared to 92 degrees on April 6, 1942, and it remains the highest temperature on record for April 6. Click [HERE](#) for a video about the weather conditions during this event from the Weather Prediction Center.

2007: If thunder is heard, one should go to a lightning safe area. A high school athlete was struck and killed by lightning at a track meet in Carbondale, Illinois. A bolt or 2 had been seen miles away, and a distant rumble of thunder was heard before the deadly strike.

1920 - Clear Spring, MD, received 31 inches of snow in 24 hours to establish a state record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1921 - The temperature in Washington D.C. dropped from 82 degrees to 26 degrees thus ending an early spring. (David Ludlum)

1935 - A severe duststorm blanketed Amarillo, TX, for 84 hours. During one six hour period the visibility was near zero. (28th-31st) (The Weather Channel)

1945 - Providence, RI, hit 90 degrees to establish a March record for the New England area. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms spawned tornadoes in Mississippi, and produced high winds and heavy rain in Louisiana. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 92 mph at Houma LA, and caused a million dollars damage in Terrebonne Parish. Avondale LA was deluged with 4.52 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms in the Lower Mississippi Valley spawned a tornado which injured two persons at Bunkie LA, and produced high winds which down a large tree onto a trailer at Bastrop LA claiming the life of one child and injuring another. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced torrential rains in northeastern Texas and southwestern Arkansas. Longview TX reported 14.16 inches of rain. More than eleven inches of rain at Henderson TX caused a dam to give way, and people left stranded in trees had to be rescued by boat. Total damage in northeastern Texas was estimated at 10 to 16 million dollars. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today



Wintry Mix
Likely then
Mostly Cloudy

High: 39 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 20 °F

Friday



Partly Sunny

High: 45 °F

Friday
Night



Partly Cloudy

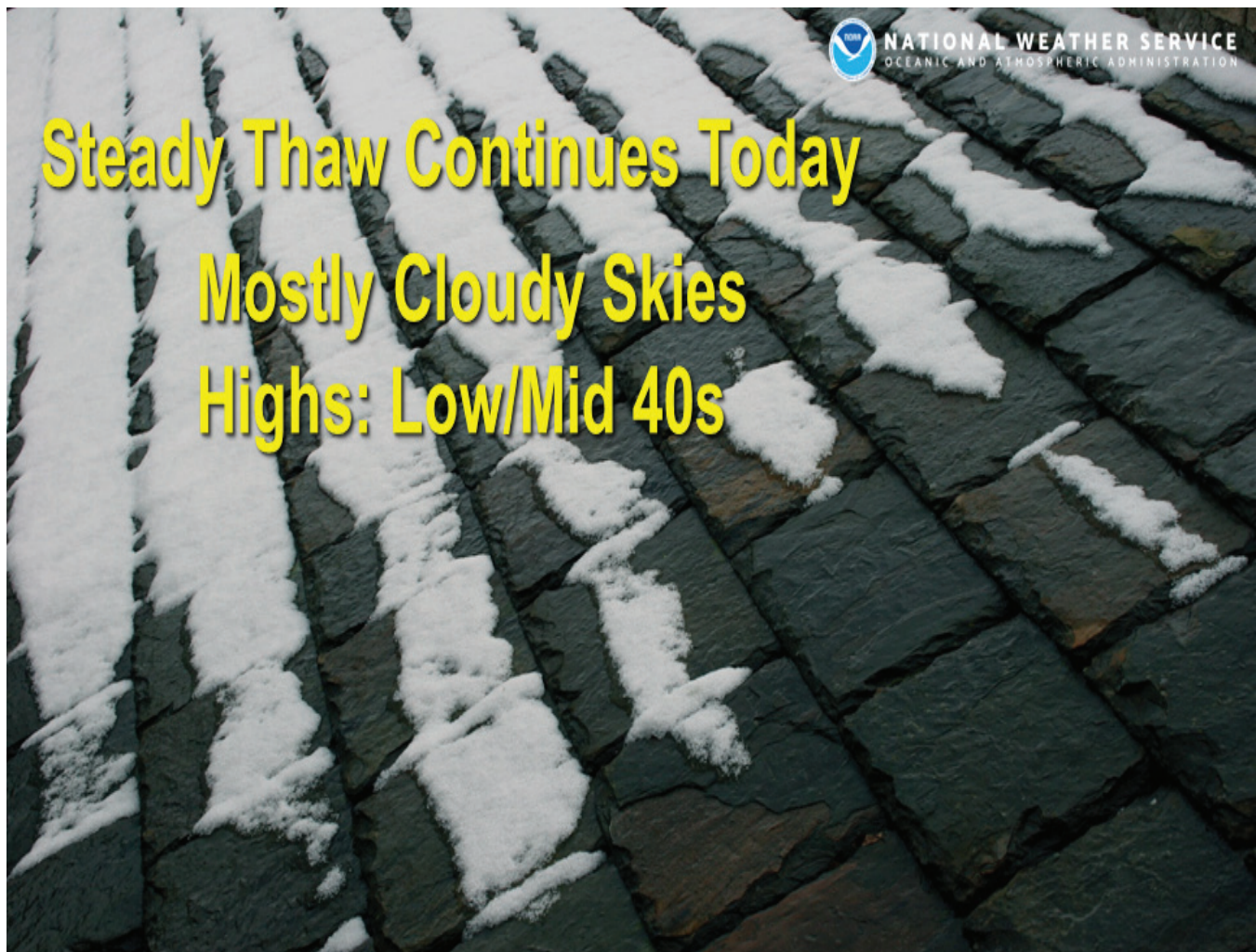
Low: 19 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 36 °F



Steady Thaw Continues Today

Mostly Cloudy Skies

Highs: Low/Mid 40s

Published on: 03/29/2019 at 7:18AM

The slow and steady snow melt will continue today before colder air briefly surges back in tonight and Saturday. Temps will fall into the upper teens to lower 20s tonight.

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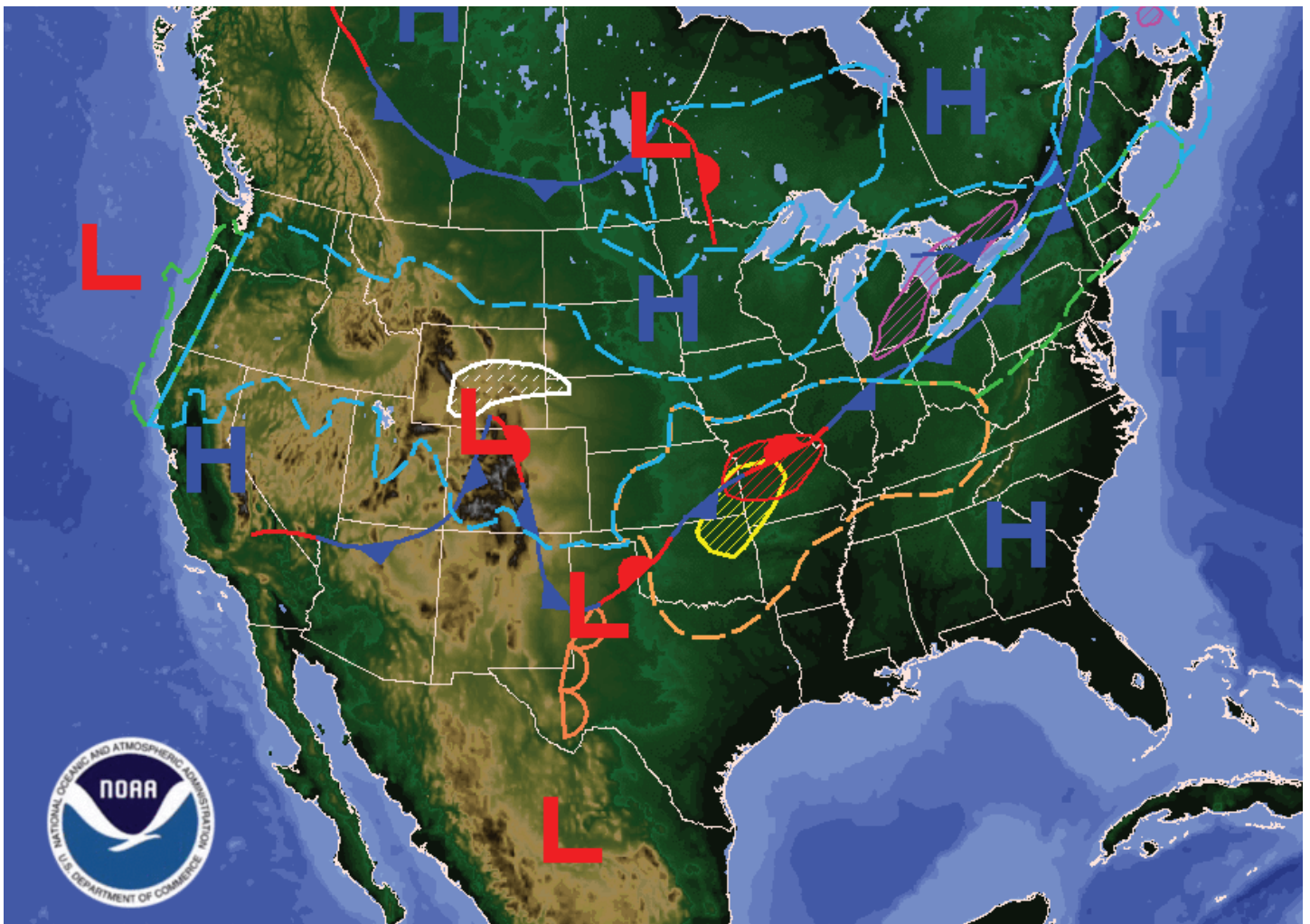
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 39 °F at 4:25 PM
Low Outside Temp: 29 °F at 10:26 PM
High Gust: 15 mph at 1:07 PM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 78° in 1986, 1910
Record Low: -9° in 1969
Average High: 47°F
Average Low: 25°F
Average Precip in Mar.: 1.01
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.87
Average Precip to date: 2.03
Precip Year to Date: 3.06
Sunset Tonight: 7:58 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:18 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Mar 29, 2019, issued 4:36 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Kebede 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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BEHIND EVERYTHING: GODS WISDOM

Its not an everyday thought. Nor do we look at the beauty that surrounds us, the miracles that invade our lives, the unexpected meeting of our needs out of nowhere, or waking up to see the dawn of a new day. Somehow, we rarely see, or acknowledge, or are even aware of the wisdom of God at work in our lives and our world.

I was appointed from eternity...from the very beginning before the world began, when there were no oceans, no springs with water, before the mountains were settled, before the hills, before He made the earth or its fields, or any of the dust of the world...before the heavens were set in place or He marked the horizons of the moon or established the clouds, or fixed the borders of the oceans and the foundation of the earth, I was the craftsman at His side!

What a description of the wisdom of God in creation! Before anything was, there was wisdom - Gods wisdom - present and at work, forming and fashioning, settling and securing everything. Land before water, skies before birds, heavens before the clouds - and on and on. First, His presence, then His plan and now His purpose. Things did not just happen. Gods wisdom was at work, is at work, and will be at work throughout eternity

After looking at wisdom at work, Solomon says in simple, easy to understand words, Now then, my sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep My ways. In other words, now that You see My wisdom, understand My wisdom, accept My wisdom and apply My wisdom to your lives

In the end: Whoever finds Me finds life and finds favor from the Lord. What a Creator!

Prayer: Its almost impossible, Father, to comprehend the fact that Your wisdom is available to us if we seek it. Unsettle our hearts until You control them! In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 8:32 Now then, my sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep My ways.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 01/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 03/17/2019 Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
- 04/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/27/2019 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 05/04/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/27/2019 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program (Memorial Day)
- 06/13/2019 Transit Fundraiser (Thursday Mid-June)
- 06/14/2019 SDSU Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 06/15/2019 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 06/21/2019 Best Ball Golf Tourney
- 06/22-23/2019 Groton Junior Legion Tournament
- 06/29/2019 Groton U10/U12 Round Robin Tournament
- 07/04/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 07/14/2019 Summer Fest/Car Show (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/18/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Tournament
- 07/21/2019 Granary Ice Cream Social & Family Music Fest
- 08/02/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Wine on Nine
- 08/09-11/2019 State Junior Legion Tournament in Groton
- 08/22/2019 First Day of School
- 09/07/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/08/2019 Sunflower Classic at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/08/2019 Granary Living History Fall Festival
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2019 Trunk or Treat/Halloween on Main (Halloween)
- 11/09/2019 Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/07/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Holiday Party
- 12/07/2019 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- Bingo: every Wednesday, Labor Day-Memorial Day, 6:30pm at the Legion Post #39

2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

Meth lab discovered in vacant home, 1 arrested

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man has been arrested after police say they found a methamphetamine lab in a vacant home.

The house is owned by the Sioux Falls Development Foundation and is scheduled to be torn down to make way for industrial development. Police say an employee from the foundation went to the home and found the 30-year-old man squatting there. Police say they found materials for making meth.

Authorities say a home-base meth lab is becoming uncommon because the risk of getting caught or killed has become too great. Police spokesman Sam Clemens says now most meth is imported from cartels across the southern border.

Stars will be on display as women's Sweet 16 tips off

By **DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer**

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — There will be plenty of star power and Pac-12 teams on display when the women's Sweet 16 tips off on Friday night with four games.

Napheesa Collier and UConn will get things started when they face UCLA. The Bruins crashed the Albany Regional by upsetting third-seed Maryland. With the school on spring break, coach Cori Close decided to keep the team on the East Coast after the victory in College Park. It just didn't make sense to fly all the way home, only to turn around.

Asia Durr and Louisville play the second game in New York, facing Oregon State. The Bruins and Beavers are two of five Pac-12 teams still in the tournament. All the coaches in the conference are rooting for each other.

"What I really like is I know genuinely we all care about each other's programs, and we're pulling for each other," Oregon coach Kelly Graves said. "The first text I got after we won our last game was from coach (Tara) VanDerveer. She's always championing the league. That always means a lot."

The Ducks, led by NCAA triple-double career record holder Sabrina Ionescu, will face South Dakota State. It's the first time the Jackrabbits, who have won 18 straight games, have made the Sweet 16. Mississippi State and star center Teaira McCowan will face Arizona State in the final game of the night.

Here are some other tidbits from Friday's games:

ROCKY TOP SPECULATION: While his name has been mentioned as a possible replacement for Holly Warlick at Tennessee, Jeff Walz suggested a different person for the open position — Geno Auriemma.

"I think Geno would be a wonderful candidate for that position that is open," Walz said jokingly.

Walz then got more serious saying that "I'm the head coach at the University of Louisville. I've loved it, enjoy it, it's been great. So now I'll start talking about our team so we can focus on that."

Hours earlier, Auriemma had opened his press conference saying that he "Just want to let everyone know that I'm still the coach at UConn, and I intend to be the coach at UConn next year in case anybody had any questions about that."

Auriemma later said he felt bad for Warlick, who was a longtime Tennessee assistant before moving into the head-coaching role in 2012 after Pat Summitt stepped aside because of early-onset dementia, Alzheimer's type.

"It wasn't easy from day one to do that job," Auriemma said. "And then, you know, you add the pressures of what's expected at a place like Tennessee. And the fact that everybody else has gotten better, and it's much more difficult to recruit the same players that were being recruited back then. And you add it all up, and it's not easy.

"So Holly was in a very difficult position from the minute she took the job. I feel terrible for her. Every school is entitled to have their own coach, obviously, and Tennessee is entitled to have whoever they want

as their coach. But any time a coach is in that situation, I feel it, because we're all part of the same community. Holly will land on her feet for sure."

HUGE CROWDS: Organizers are expecting big crowds in Portland at the Moda Center where they've opened the top level after 10,650 tickets were sold as of Thursday morning. The Albany Regional has also already sold nearly 8,000 tickets.

REMATCHES: Many of these teams have met over the past few years in the NCAA Tournament. Louisville ended Oregon State's run last season in the regional final. UConn topped UCLA in the Sweet 16 in 2017. Oregon has played all three other teams left in its region. The Ducks defeated South Dakota State 87-79 on Dec. 12 in Brookings, then beat Mississippi State 82-74 in Las Vegas, before twice defeating Pac-12 foe Arizona State (77-71 at home on Jan. 18, and 66-59 on March 3 in Tempe) during the conference season.

AP Sports Writer Anne M. Peterson contributed to this story.

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



UCLA head coach Cori Close, left, reacts as the daughter of Louisville head coach Jeff Walz, center, runs on the court to greet her father, right, during practice at the NCAA women's college basketball tournament, Thursday, March 28, 2019, in Albany, N.Y. UCLA faces UConn, and Louisville faces Oregon State in NCAA regional semifinal games on Friday. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

Flooding prompts criticism of way Missouri River dams run

By JOSH FUNK and JIM SALTER Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — After this spring's massive flooding along the Missouri River, many want to blame the agency that manages the river's dams for making the disaster worse, but it may not be that simple.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says much of the water that created the flooding came from rain and melting snow that flowed into the river downstream of all the dams, and at the same time, massive amounts of water filled the reservoirs and some had to be released.

For instance, the National Weather Service estimates that enough water poured into the reservoir behind Gavin's Point Dam on the South Dakota-Nebraska border during nine days in mid-March to totally fill the reservoir from empty more than twice.

But many people who live near the Missouri River believe the Corps isn't doing enough to prevent floods or is placing too much emphasis on other priorities, such as protecting endangered species and preserving barge traffic.

Republican U.S. Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri said Corps officials told him this week that they treat all eight priorities for the river equally.

"I was told point-blank, 'Flood control is not our top priority. It is not. Period.' They were very firm on that point," Hawley said. "I said, 'You've got to be kidding me.'"

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Corps officials say they work to balance all the priorities Congress approved when operating the dams, but no single priority outweighs all the others. Their operating model tries to maximize the benefit to several priorities when possible.

Hawley said Congress should consider "serious reform," such as deciding if the Corps should be taken out of the Department of Defense and placed under direction of another agency, such as the Department of Transportation or the Department of the Interior.

The Corps manages the Missouri River's system of dams and locks and decides when and how much water is released from reservoirs into the river. The severe flooding this month in Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri has renewed criticism of the Corps' management of the river.

Officials estimate that the flooding caused more than \$1 billion of damage to farms in Nebraska and Iowa, destroying stored crops and killing livestock. And the damage total will grow as floodwaters recede and other states assess conditions.

Nearly 400 farmers, landowners and business operators sued the Corps after the historic 2011 floods — and won. U.S. District Judge Nancy B. Firestone's ruling last year determined that severe Missouri River flooding "was caused by and was the foreseeable result" of the agency's management practices.

R. Dan Boulware, the St. Joseph, Missouri-based attorney for the lawsuit's plaintiffs, said those management practices are still in place, contributing to the flooding this month. He said the Corps stores more water in six upper-Missouri River basins than it needs to, and has also modified structures like dikes.

"The river itself is changed," Boulware said. "It spreads out and it doesn't flow like it used to flow. It's like a sluggish drain — it backs up."

Corps officials declined to discuss the lawsuit because it is still ongoing, but they defended the way they handled this spring's flooding. John Remus oversees the dams, including Gavin's Point Dam, for the Corps.

"There was far more water coming into Gavin's Point than we could hold," Remus said.

And the National Weather Service's Kevin Low said significantly more water poured into the Missouri River from rivers in Nebraska and Iowa with no dams, so officials couldn't regulate the flow from those. Low said the Platte River peaked at over 170,000 cubic feet per second of water on March 17.

Most other rivers that feed into the lower Missouri crested around the same time after heavy rains helped melt lingering snowpack that flowed right into rivers because the ground was still mostly frozen.

Emergency management directors in two northwestern Missouri counties that took the brunt of this year's flood damage have differing views on the Corps' responsibility.



FILE - This March 17, 2019 file photo provided by the U.S. Air Force shows an aerial view of Offutt Air Force Base and surrounding areas in Nebraska affected by flood waters. After this spring's massive flooding along the Missouri River, many want to blame the agency that manages the river's dams for making the disaster worse, but it may not be that simple. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says much of the water that created this month's flooding came from rain and melting snow that flowed into the river downstream of all the dams, and at the same time, massive amounts of water filled the reservoirs and some had to be released. (Tech. Sgt.

Rachelle Blake/U.S. Air Force via AP, File)

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Buchanan County Emergency Management Director Bill Brinton said a dam failure to the north sent a surge of additional water into the river, worsening an already bad situation.

"That dam failed and you had billions of gallons of water," Brinton said. "I don't see how you can blame the Corps. But I seem to be in the minority."

In Holt County, Missouri, 460 homes were damaged when the flood reached a foot above the 2011 record, and most are still underwater, Emergency Management Director Tom Bullock said.

Bullock's home is among the flooded ones. He's taken a motorboat out to it a few times but won't know the extent of the damage until he gets inside the home.

"They told us after the flood of '11 if you build up and elevate above this certain level it'll never happen again, so I did that," Bullock said. "It still wasn't high enough. So I don't know what the answer is. It gets pretty expensive."

Much of the concern about the Corps' management dates to 2004, when it initiated a management change partly to protect endangered species, including the pallid sturgeon, a seldom-seen, bottom-feeding fish.

Bullock agreed 2004 was the turning point when the Corps "started managing the river for recreation and wildlife."

"Used to be at the top of the list was flood control first place, and navigation second place. Those two things have moved to the bottom of the list," Bullock said.

"Ever since that happened, we've been flooded out regularly down here in the bottom," he added.

He's worried his and his neighbors' homes will be hit again this spring.

"We don't see an end in sight yet," Bullock said. "All of our levees are just destroyed. We have no protection from the high river now, or spring rains. We're sitting there exposed."

Salter contributed to this report from St. Louis.

Flooding forces evacuations on South Dakota reservation

By **DAVE KOLPACK** and **BLAKE NICHOLSON** Associated Press

Record-breaking flooding has forced dozens of people on a South Dakota reservation to evacuate and ranchers were working Thursday to get their livestock to higher ground while waiting for a river to crest.

High water from the Moreau River is threatening about 50 residences in an 8-mile (12.8-kilometer) stretch between White Horse and Thomas in north-central South Dakota, said Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe spokesman Remi Bald Eagle. He said about half a dozen people were rescued by helicopter. The tribe has asked others to voluntarily evacuate.

Bald Eagle said no injuries have been reported but some residents are refusing to leave because their cattle are trapped by flooding.

"Everybody is afraid that their livelihoods are going to be swept up by the water obviously," Bald Eagle said. "It



In this Monday, March 25, 2019 photo, standing water pools in a field near Loneman, S.D., on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, following spring flooding. (Ryan Hermens/Rapid

City Journal via AP)

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is really a critical time for the livestock folks because right now their cattle are all calving.”

The reservation has deployed 20,000 sandbags and a Pennington County rescue team is on hand if needed.

The National Weather Service said the worst appears to be over. The river has been as high as 28 feet (8.5 meters), or 8 feet (2 meters) above flood stage. It stood at about 23 feet (7.01 meters) Thursday morning and is expected to crest at 24 feet (7.3 meters) over the weekend, South Dakota meteorologist Jeff Chapman said.

On the Pine Ridge Reservation in southern South Dakota, the Oglala Sioux tribe is transitioning into recovery mode after flooding swamped roads, trapped people in homes and cut off water supplies to thousands.

“A lot of people lost their homes,” said state Rep. Peri Pourier, who is executive director of the Pine Ridge Reservation Emergency Relief nonprofit. “It’s going to be a big recovery effort — getting the manpower, the materials and resources to help recover.”

Elsewhere, meteorologists in Montana said a spring storm that is bringing rain and snow may lead to additional flooding as the runoff flows into rivers and streams already swollen with snowmelt. And North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum declared a statewide flood emergency after touring inundated homes in the western part of the state on Wednesday.

Rain is expected to prolong the flood fight along the swollen Missouri River, creating a second crest east of Kansas City. The river’s first crest is still making its way downstream, but the worst of the flooding is upstream in Missouri’s Holt and Atchison counties, where multiple levees breached.

Associated Press writers Matt Volz in Helena, Montana, and Heather Hollingsworth in Kansas City, Missouri, contributed to this report.

Mississippi St coach expects another grueling game vs ASU

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Mississippi State coach Vic Schaefer remembers the team’s last meeting with Arizona State as grueling. He expects much the same when the top-seeded Bulldogs face the No. 5 Sun Devils on Friday night in the Sweet 16.

The teams played last season at the Cancun Challenge, with Mississippi State downing Arizona State 65-57. The Bulldogs trailed by two going into the final quarter but prevailed in the end. Teaira McCowan led MSU with 15 points and 14 rebounds.

“Know them well. I’ve played them several times throughout my career,” Schaefer said. “We played them a year ago in the islands, had a knock-down, drag-out with them. It was a tremendous basketball game. We were fortunate to win that one.”

The Bulldogs (32-2) are making their fourth straight appearance in the Sweet 16 and they’re vying to make a third straight Elite Eight. They have an experienced team led by 6-foot-7 senior center McCowan, who is averaging 18.3 points and 13.5 rebounds.

Mississippi State has won 10 straight going into Friday’s game, which includes a victory over Arkansas for the SEC Tournament title. The Bulldogs also claimed the regular-season title, going 15-1 in conference play.

To get to Portland, Mississippi State defeated 16th-seeded Southern 103-46 in the opening round before an 85-61 victory over No. 9 Clemson on Sunday.

Arizona State (22-10) is making its sixth consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance. The team has reached the final eight twice, in 2007 and 2009. Overall, Arizona State is 2-2 in Sweet 16 games.

The Sun Devils downed No. 12 UCF 60-45 before edging fourth-seeded Miami 57-55 to advance.

ASU coach Charli Turner Thorne said she thinks Mississippi State is better than they were last year when the teams met.

“They’re just really good at knowing who they are. They know who they are. They know what their role is. They play it really well. Each person knows how they’re supposed to score. They look for each other, they take turns doing that role very, very well,” Turner Thorne said.

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Arizona State forward Kianna Ibis said: "I just remember it was a really close game. We knew that it was just a battle of possessions. That's what it possibly could be tomorrow, as well."

Second-seeded Oregon (31-4) plays No. 6 seed South Dakota State (28-6) in the late game Friday night.

SCOUTING THE DUCKS: Oregon is in the Sweet Sixteen for the third straight year. The Ducks have been to the Elite Eight the last two seasons, and are 8-2 in the NCAA Tournament under coach Kelly Graves.

Sabrina Ionescu is averaging 19.7 points, 8.2 assists and 7.5 rebounds. The junior guard had her 18th career triple-double, an ongoing NCAA record, in the Ducks' 91-68 second-round victory Sunday over Indiana. The Pac-12 Player of the Year finished with 29 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds.

Oregon easily dispatched No. 15 seed Portland State 78-40 in the first-round game.

SCOUTING THE JACKRABBITS: This is the first time South Dakota State has made the Sweet 16. It's also a first for a Summit League team. The Jackrabbits have won 18 straight games.

Overall, SDSU has been to the tournament nine times in the past 11 years. To get to this point, the Jackrabbits beat 11th seed Quinnipiac 76-65 then upset No. 3 Syracuse 75-64.

FAMILIAR FOES: Oregon has faced all three of the teams at the Portland Regional this season. The Ducks defeated South Dakota State 87-79 on Dec. 12 in Brookings, then beat Mississippi State 82-74 in Las Vegas, before twice defeating Pac-12 foe Arizona State (77-71 at home on Jan. 18, and 66-59 on March 3 in Tempe) during the conference season.

"I do think that's a little funny we have played all these teams before. I don't know if that's ever happened before," Ionescu said.

TRAVEL: Oregon got the travel advantage in the Portland Regional, with only about 110 miles separating the Moda Center from Eugene. Mississippi State, located in Starkville, is some 2,450 miles away.

ALL FOR ONE: Five Pac-12 teams are in the Sweet 16, pointing to the strength of the conference.

"What I really like is I know genuinely we all care about each other's programs, and we're pulling for each other. The first text I got after we won our last game was from coach (Tara) VanDerveer. She's always championing the league. That always means a lot," Graves said about his colleague at Stanford.

FANS: There were 10,650 tickets sold for the Portland Regional as of Thursday morning, prompting organizers to open the top level at the Moda Center. The home of the NBA's Trail Blazers seats nearly 20,000.



Mississippi State forward Anriel Howard (5) and guards Jazzmun Holmes (10) and Jordan Danberry (24) salute the crowd as they celebrate the team's 85-61 win over Clemson in a second-round women's college basketball game in the NCAA Tournament in Starkville, Miss., Sunday, March 24, 2019. (AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis)

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

Fire destroys longtime family business in Avon; no injuries

AVON, S.D. (AP) — Fire has destroyed a longtime family owned business in the Bon Homme County town of Avon.

Firefighters from seven area departments fought the Tuesday night blaze at Powers Furniture and Appliance downtown. They were able to stop the fire from spreading to neighboring buildings including the post office, but they weren't able to save the business.

No injuries were reported. The cause of the fire wasn't immediately determined.

The store that had operated more than half a century drew customers from several counties. Owner Kenny Powers tells the Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan that he hasn't decided whether to rebuild.

Information from: Yankton Press and Dakotan, <http://www.yankton.net/>

Authorities ID victims in South Dakota garbage truck crash

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota authorities have released the names of two men killed when their garbage truck crashed last week north of Mitchell.

The state Department of Public Safety identifies the victims as the driver, 61-year-old Glen White of Canova, and his passenger, 46-year-old Travis Meyer of Howard.

Authorities say the truck was northbound on Highway 37 near the James River bridge when it left the road last Thursday, went through a guardrail and ended up in the flooded river.

Crews found the truck on Saturday. The men's bodies were found inside the truck when it was pulled from the river Sunday.

Investigators believe equipment failure may have caused the crash. The speed of floodwaters on the river made the search and recovery difficult.

ACLU challenges South Dakota pipeline protest legislation

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union is challenging a new law signed by South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem aimed at potential protests against the planned Keystone XL oil pipeline.

The ACLU filed a federal lawsuit Thursday on behalf of groups and individuals planning to protest the pipeline or encourage others to do so.

Noem signed the act on Wednesday that allows officials to pursue money from demonstrators who encourage violence. The Republican governor also signed another bill requiring pipeline companies to help pay extraordinary expenses such as the cost of policing during protests, but the ACLU is not challenging that new law.

The pro-pipeline GAIN Coalition says the legislation provides "clarity about what crosses the line."

But the ACLU and American Indian tribes say Noem's approach will stifle free speech.

Ellsworth lands next generation Air Force bomber

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Ellsworth Air Force Base has been selected as one of three bases that will house the next generation of the long-range bomber currently in production.

The Air Force says Ellsworth will be home to a training squadron for the B-21 Raider which is scheduled to be in service by the middle of the next decade.

The Air Force has been leaning toward placing the new bomber at bases already hosting parts of the existing bomber fleet. Ellsworth is the current home to the 34th and 37th bomb squadrons, which fly B-1 Lancers.

South Dakota Sen. John Thune says the news is a home run for the base and the state.

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SDSU assistant tabbed as next head coach of men's hoops team

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota State has promoted assistant Eric Henderson to be the next head coach of its men's basketball team.

Henderson was an assistant the past three seasons. He succeeds T.J. Otzelberger, who is taking over as head coach at UNLV.

Otzelberger led the Jackrabbits to the NCAA Tournament twice in his three seasons, and athletic director Justin Sell says Henderson was a big part of that success.

Henderson has previously been an assistant at Wayne State and North Dakota State. He also coached in the prep ranks in Wisconsin.

Aberdeen man shot by police officer convicted of assault

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — An Aberdeen man who was shot twice by a police officer in 2016 has been convicted of felony aggravated assault and drug possession.

Authorities said Officer Ty Reinke shot 23-year-old Ehkhu Poe in the chest and arm after Poe had threatened some family members and charged the officer with a knife in August 2016. A state Division of Criminal Investigation probe determined that Reinke was justified in shooting Poe.

Poe pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. The American News reports that a judge convicted him Tuesday. The next phase of the trial later this year will determine if Poe was sane at the time of the crime and can be sentenced to prison. He could face up to 30 years behind bars.

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

Flooding causes Cheyenne River reservation evacuations

WHITE HORSE, S.D. (AP) — Record-breaking flooding has caused dozens of people to evacuate from a reservation in northwest South Dakota.

Officials on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe have declared a state of emergency and urged residents to voluntarily evacuate before the Moreau River crests Thursday.

The Argus Leader says about 50 people have been evacuated so far, some by helicopter. Some residents concerned for their livestock and property have refused to evacuate. Tribal chairman Harold Frazier says residents should take the threat seriously because the river has never been this high and is rising.

The National Weather Service says the river is expected to crest at more than 30 feet Thursday night. Severe flooding has also swamped the sprawling Pine Ridge Reservation in southern South Dakota, trapping some in their homes.

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

City leaders: Smollett owes Chicago \$130K for investigation

By AMANDA SEITZ and HERBERT G. McCANN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — City officials have ordered Jussie Smollett to pay \$130,000 to cover the cost of the investigation into his report of a street attack that Chicago police say was staged to promote his career.

A letter from the city's legal department sent Thursday to Smollett and his attorneys said the figure covers overtime worked by more than two dozen detectives and officers who spent weeks looking into Smollett's claim. The work included reviewing video and physical evidence and conducting interviews.

Those resources, the letter said, "could have been used for other investigations."

Hours earlier, President Donald Trump tweeted that the FBI and the Department of Justice would review the "outrageous" case, calling it an "embarrassment" to the country.

Prosecutors infuriated Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago's police chief this week when they abruptly dropped 16 felony counts that accused Smollett of making a false police report about being the target of

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a racist, anti-gay attack in January.

Smollett has maintained his innocence and insisted that the attack was real.

The prosecution sealed the case, but authorities still say the actor concocted the assault. Prosecutors offered no additional information Thursday during a court hearing where media attorneys argued that the public has a right to know what happened.

Trump tweeted: "FBI & DOJ to review the outrageous Jussie Smollett case in Chicago. It is an embarrassment to our Nation!"

The Justice Department sometimes brings federal cases after state prosecutors have declined to file charges, including after police shootings that the federal government believes might constitute civil rights violations. But department policy generally restricts prosecutors from bringing federal charges after state charges have been resolved, unless they can establish that the potential crime at issue is a federal one and involves "a substantial federal interest."

If Smollett fails to pay, officials could charge him with violating a city ordinance and seek fines, damages and court costs, the letter said.

A spokeswoman for Smollett attorney Patricia Brown Holmes declined to comment on the letter.

In the past, city officials have sought restitution from other people who made false reports and from businesses that pursued city contracts by seeking disadvantaged business status, said a spokesman for the legal department, Bill McCaffrey.

Investigators believe Smollett, who is black and gay, hired two brothers to stage the Jan. 29 attack in downtown Chicago and that Smollett hoped the attention would help advance his career. Police also allege that before the attack, Smollett sent a letter threatening himself to the Chicago television studio where "Empire" is shot.

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

Smollett attorney Tina Glandian said the two brothers are lying. She said Smollett had hired one brother as a personal trainer but had no idea who attacked him along a Chicago street until the brothers were later identified by police.

Smollett has repeatedly said the two masked men shouted slurs, wrapped a rope around his neck and poured a substance on him. He also told detectives that the attackers yelled that he was in "MAGA country," an apparent reference to Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan, police said.

Prosecutors initially charged Smollett with one felony count in February. A grand jury indicted him on 15 more counts earlier this month. But in a stunning reversal Tuesday, prosecutors abruptly dropped all charges, just five weeks after the allegations were filed.



In this image taken from video, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, right, and Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson appear at a news conference in Chicago, Tuesday, March 26, 2019, after prosecutors abruptly dropped all charges against "Empire" actor Jussie Smollett, abandoning the case barely five weeks after he was accused of lying to police about being the target of a racist, anti-gay attack in downtown Chicago. The mayor and police chief blasted the decision and stood by the investigation that concluded Smollett staged a hoax. (Mitch Armentrout/Chicago Sun-Times via AP)

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In return, prosecutors said, the actor agreed to let the city keep his \$10,000 in bail.

During Thursday's court hearing, prosecutors promised to notify media outlets if Smollett's lawyers tried to expunge his record. But lawyers for major news organizations, including The Associated Press, told the judge that the case has not been transparent.

"The public is entitled to know what happened and what's happening in this proceeding," media attorney Natalie Spears argued.

Judge LeRoy Martin said court proceedings had followed the law and that there was "no nefariousness."

In an interview with Chicago television station WGN, Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx said Wednesday that the law allows Smollett to have his police records sealed, but that the court files "should never have been sealed." She said she believes it was done in error but "that should not have happened."

If the case had gone to trial, Foxx said, Smollett never would have received a prison term because the 16 charges were the lowest possible form of felony. And if he pleaded guilty, it would have been to one count, not 16.

"For all of the noise and all of the media attention, it's a step up from a misdemeanor," Foxx said. Most comparable cases are resolved with probation or an agreement such as Smollett's if the defendants "don't have a long rap sheet or a violence in their background."

Foxx recused herself before Smollett was charged because she had discussed the case with a Smollett family member. The case was then handed to First Assistant State's Attorney Joseph Magats.

On Wednesday, the ex-chief of staff for former first lady Michelle Obama said she approached Foxx regarding the case on behalf of the actor's family. Tina Tchen released a statement saying she's a friend of Smollett's family and knows Foxx "from prior work together."

Tchen said her "sole activity" was to put the prosecutor in touch with "an alleged victim's family." Tchen said the Smollett family "had concerns about how the investigation was being characterized in public."

Email and text messages that Foxx's office provided to the Chicago Sun-Times show Tchen contacted Foxx to set up a telephone conversation with the Smollett relative. Foxx told the Sun-Times the relative expressed concerns over leaked information.

Foxx told the Chicago Tribune that she regretted dealing with the relative in the investigation's early phases.

Associated Press writers Caryn Rousseau in Chicago and Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

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

Democrats demand release of full report by Robert Mueller

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats intensified their demands for Robert Mueller's full report after learning the special counsel's findings from his Trump-Russia investigation run to more than 300 pages, while President Donald Trump boasted of total exoneration based on a four-page summary by his attorney general.

House Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler was told by Attorney General William Barr that there's no intention of giving the confidential report to Congress immediately as he redacts grand jury testimony and other elements.

Democrats say they may subpoena the report if it's not forthcoming by their Tuesday deadline, which Barr has said will not be met.

Through the day, tempers were rising on Capitol Hill.

Shaking her fist for emphasis, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Barr's summary, which cleared Trump of campaign collusion with Russia and criminal obstruction of Mueller's federal probe, was "condescending" and "arrogant."

"Mr. Attorney General," she said, "show us the report and we'll come to our own conclusions." She asked what Trump and the Republicans were afraid of and mocked them as "scaredy-cats."

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Trump himself headed to Grand Rapids, Michigan, for a Thursday campaign rally, where he deemed the probe "the greatest hoax in the history of our country" and warned that those behind it "would be held accountable."

"After three years of lies and smears and slander, the Russia hoax is dead," Trump told a packed house of roaring supporters. "This was nothing more than a sinister effort to undermine our historic election victory and to sabotage the will of the American people."

The length of Mueller's still-confidential report makes clear that there are substantially more details that he and his team have documented in their investigation than Barr disclosed to Congress and the public. The volume of pages was described Thursday by a Justice Department official and another person familiar with the document.

The Justice Department official said Barr discussed the length of the report during a phone call Wednesday with Nadler, who would only indicate it was less than 1,000 pages.

Both the department official and the other person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the document.

Barr would not commit to providing the full report with its underlying evidence, according to a House Democratic aide granted anonymity Thursday to brief reporters.

The attorney general has been going through the report amid Democratic concerns that what has been made public so far was tilted in Trump's favor. It's unclear whether whatever Barr might release next will be Mueller's own words or another summary. Nadler offered to join Barr to seek a judge's approval to unseal grand jury testimony, the aide said.

Barr has said he'll provide Congress with at least a partial version in April and told Nadler he would agree to testify before his committee.

As that battle brews, House Democrats barreled ahead with their own investigation of the Trump administration, and Trump resumed his attack on Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., just as the chairman of the intelligence committee was about to gavel his panel into session.

"Congressman Adam Schiff, who spent two years knowingly and unlawfully lying and leaking, should be forced to resign from Congress!" Trump tweeted early Thursday.

Republicans picking up on Trump's complaints formalized their demand that Schiff resign as chairman of the intelligence panel over his comments that there was significant evidence the president and his associates conspired with Russia.

"We have no faith in your ability to discharge your responsibilities" in line with the Constitution, the Republicans wrote to Schiff in a missive they read aloud at the hearing.



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi heaps scorn on Attorney General William Barr, saying his letter about special counsel Robert Mueller's report was "condescending," after Barr concluded there was no evidence that President Donald Trump's campaign "conspired or coordinated" with the Russian government to influence the 2016 election, during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington, Thursday, March 28, 2019. Pelosi also defended House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, who faced calls Thursday from Republicans to resign over his comments that there was significant evidence the president and his associates conspired with Russia. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

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Republicans pointed to Barr's synopsis, released Sunday, that said Mueller's probe didn't find that Trump's campaign "conspired or coordinated" with the Russian government to influence the 2016 presidential election.

Schiff stood by his remarks, listing the meetings that people in Trump's circle had with Russians. He noted Trump's pursuit of a deal to build a Trump Tower in Moscow.

"There is a different word for that than collusion, and it's called compromise," Schiff said, as he opened the session. The hearing was called to provide an overview on how Russia in the past has blackmailed Americans.

Since Barr's findings were released, Schiff this week has repeated his assertion that evidence of collusion is in "plain sight." He says Mueller's failure to find a criminal conspiracy with Russia does not absolve the Trump campaign.

Pelosi stood by Schiff, saying she was proud of him and taunting Republicans — including Trump — for fearing the chairman, whom she called a "patriotic leader."

"What is the president afraid of, Is he afraid of the truth?" she said. "They're just scaredy-cats."

Democrats complain that Barr overstepped by making the determination, with Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, that Trump did not obstruct the investigation.

While Barr's summary Sunday said Mueller did not find that the Trump campaign "conspired or coordinated" with the Russian government to influence the 2016 presidential election, it also said Mueller reached no conclusion on whether Trump obstructed the federal investigation, instead setting out "evidence on both sides" of the question.

"I would hope the attorney general would not be acting as a political operative for the president," said Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., a member of the Judiciary Committee. "The Department of Justice should not be involved in a cover-up of what's actually in the report."

Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., chairman of the House Oversight Committee, said Wednesday he was disappointed Barr would take weeks, not days, to release the report.

"The president has now an opportunity for weeks, it sounds like, to do these victory laps," said Cummings, noting that Trump's lawyer, Michael Cohen, is among those headed to jail as a result of the probe. "Cohen goes to jail, the president runs a victory lap."

Barr told the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., that he's combing through Mueller's report and removing classified, grand jury and other information in hopes of releasing the rest to Congress.

Trump has said he's fine with releasing the findings. "The president said, 'Just let it go,' and that's what's going to happen," Graham said.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker, Kevin Freking, 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> .

Third time lucky? UK lawmakers hold new vote on Brexit deal

By DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — On the day that Britain was originally scheduled to leave the European Union, lawmakers will vote Friday on what Prime Minister Theresa May's government described as the "last chance to vote for Brexit."

The House of Commons was voting on May's twice-rejected European Union withdrawal agreement amid continuing opposition from hard-line Brexit supporters and Northern Ireland lawmakers.

Attorney General Geoffrey Cox urged divided legislators to support the deal and finally break an impasse that has left Britons uncertain when, and even if, the country will leave the EU. If the deal is rejected, Britain will crash out of the bloc in two weeks unless the EU agrees to extend the deadline.

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Cox said Parliament should take "a single decisive step ... to afford certainty to the millions of people who are waiting for it."

The agreement still faces substantial opposition even after May sacrificed her job for her deal, promising to quit if lawmakers approved the deal and let Britain leave the EU in May.

Some previously resistant Brexit-backers have moved to support the deal. Former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson — a likely contender to replace May as Conservative Party leader — tweeted that rejecting it risked "being forced to accept an even worse version of Brexit or losing Brexit altogether."

But there is little hope of approval unless May can secure the support of the Democratic Unionist Party, which has refused to back the agreement because it treats Northern Ireland differently from the rest of the U.K. The small party has 10 seats in the House of Commons and some Brexit backers say they will take their cue from the DUP.

Parliament is voting Friday on the 585-page withdrawal agreement that sets out the terms of Britain's departure — including its financial settlement with the EU and the rights of EU and U.K. citizens — but not a shorter declaration on future ties that is also part of the divorce deal agreed between the U.K. and the EU late last year.

Its removal altered the deal enough to overcome a ban against asking lawmakers the same question over and over again.

May also hoped severing the link between the two parts of the deal would blunt opposition — though there was little sign of that.

Labour Party Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer said removing the political declaration from the vote made Brexit "blind, because you don't know where you are going, now the prime minister has said she is stepping down."

"So, the political declaration, the future relationship, is going now to be determined in a Tory leadership exercise," he said.

Two years ago, Britain triggered a two-year countdown to Brexit, with the departure date set for March 29, 2019.

But with British politicians deadlocked over whether to approve a divorce deal, the EU last week granted an extension. Under its terms, if the withdrawal agreement is approved by 11 p.m. U.K. time (2300GMT, 7 p.m. EDT), Britain will leave the 28-nation bloc on May 22.

If it is rejected, Britain has until April 12 to announce a new plan, or leave the EU without a deal, risking severe disruption for people and businesses.

International Trade Secretary Liam Fox said Friday was "the last chance we have to vote for Brexit as we understood it."

Almost three years after Britain voted in June 2016 to leave the EU, Brexit has brought the country's political system to a standstill. The impasse has frustrated EU politicians trying to negotiate an exit agreement, and surprised observers around the world who had viewed Britain's 1,000-year-old parliamentary system as a model of stability.

It has also left Britons on both sides frustrated and angry. Some Brexit supporters, who had planned to be celebrating Friday, were protesting instead.

Retired charity worker Mandy Childs, one of a band of hard-core Brexit supporters walking across England to London under the slogan "Leave Means Leave," said she felt "heartbroken."

"We were told over a hundred times by a British prime minister that we would be leaving on the 29th of March, 2019," she said.

"Now to do that, promise the British people that and then say 'actually, no, we need to just put it back' — absolute betrayal. And how dare she?"

Jeff Schaeffer in Great Missenden, England contributed to this story.

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

Trump pushes the angle of 'no collusion' in Russia report

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — Presenting himself as both vindicated and vindictive, a fired-up President Donald Trump turned the findings of the Russia investigation into a political weapon at a Michigan rally that was part victory lap, part 2020 campaign push.

Trump unleashed a fervent diatribe Thursday about the inquiry, which he deemed "the greatest hoax in the history of our country." He warned that those behind the probe "would be held accountable," aired his grievances about the "unfair" media coverage and seethed that the matter was an attempt "to tear up the fabric of our great democracy."

"After three years of lies and smears and slander, the Russia hoax is dead," said Trump. "This was nothing more than a sinister effort to undermine our historic election victory and to sabotage the will of the American people."

The rollicking 82-minute speech unfolded before a boisterous crowd in a key state that Trump swiped from Democrats in 2016. It marked his first political event since Attorney General William Barr released a summary that said special counsel Robert Mueller found no evidence that his campaign "conspired or coordinated" with the Russian government to influence the 2016 campaign. With the cloud of the probe largely lifted, Trump is hoping to win re-election by keeping Michigan and several other Rust Belt states in his column.

"It's going to be so much easier the second time: We're one for one," Trump boasted.

He basked in the adulation of his supporters at the Grand Rapids rally. The packed crowd, some of whom began to line up the night before, delivered a deafening roar for the president while unleashing its vitriol as he bashed the media and Democrats.

The president linked Mueller's probe with the myriad investigations launched by House Democrats and tried to make the case that, after Mueller's findings, further inquiries are partisan overreach.

"The Democrats now have to decide if they will continue to defraud the American public with this ridiculous bulls--t," said Trump, who urged the opposing party to instead work with him on issues like infrastructure repair and drug pricing.

While Trump's base has long been suspicious of Mueller, the president's team believes independents and moderate Democrats who backed him in the last election but have since soured may return to the fold if convinced he was unfairly targeted. Trump used the moment to heighten his attacks on the media, which many Trump supporters believe unjustly fanned the flames of the special counsel's probe in an effort to bring down the president.

Trump stood before a familiar backdrop: a giant American flag, signs reading "Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!" and, of course, "Make America Great Again." Though the aftermath of the probe was at the forefront of his mind, Trump also ticked off what he portrayed as his administration's accomplishments, including a booming stock market and victories over the Islamic State terror group.

He also framed the Democrats' presidential candidates as "radical," and slammed the Green New Deal, an ambitious, wide-ranging plan to combat climate change, as a "dangerous" reinvention of American society. But he spent relatively little time on his administration's renewed push to overturn the Affordable Care Act, other than to declare that the "Republican Party will be the party of health care." He didn't present many details as to what the new GOP plan might be.

His eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., provided a high-energy warm-up act and, in particular, savaged family foe Michael Avenatti, the celebrity lawyer who represented Stormy Daniels, the porn star who alleged an affair with the president. Avenatti was arrested this week on charges of extortion.

"For this week only, MAGA stands for Michael Avenatti got arrested," Trump Jr. boomed, taunting the once-rumored presidential candidate.

Loyal supporters started lining up in front of the Van Andel Arena on Wednesday evening, with some camping out in tents and sleeping bags overnight. By midafternoon, a crowd of thousands, many in red "Make America Great Again" hats, snaked for blocks around downtown Grand Rapids, just across the river from The Gerald Ford Presidential Museum.

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Trump's sojourn to the Midwest is expected to be the first of many.

His campaign is seeking to hold three key states that he swung from blue to red in 2016 — Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania — but that may prove difficult to hold after midterm elections showed rising Democratic energy. Still, advisers believe Trump's core supporters remain enthusiastic heading into 2020.

With an eye on local matters, Trump touted his support for the automobile industry and announced he would reverse part of his administration's own budget plan, which had proposed a 90 percent spending cut for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Trump said he would fully fund the cleanup program, offering the \$300 million the program has typically received.

Even before Thursday's barnburner, Grand Rapids held a special place in Trump lore.

On the eve of the 2016 election, Trump's breakneck final blitz of rallies was meant to come to an end in Manchester, New Hampshire. But just days before, the Trump campaign tacked on one more rally in the western Michigan city after seeing data that showed a surge for their candidate. The Grand Rapids rally didn't end until after midnight, bleeding into Election Day. Trump won Michigan by just 10,704 votes — his margins of victory in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania were similarly small — and those close to the president have long pointed to the rally as a reason for his victory.

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey and Kevin Freking in Washington contributed to this report.

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AP FACT CHECK: Trump misleads on health care, Russia probe

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rallying in Michigan, President Donald Trump bragged about a surging auto industry that isn't surging, a Republican rescue for health care that has yet to take shape, a "total" exoneration in the Russia investigation that was not offered.

And Trump, as he routinely does, took credit for a veterans health care initiative that his predecessor achieved and ignored the reality when veterans seek treatment — waiting times that still last for weeks.

Here's a look at rhetoric from his Grand Rapids rally on Thursday night, as well as his remarks leading up to it:

2016 ELECTION

TRUMP, on electoral votes: "We won 306 to 223." — rally.

THE FACTS: No. He won 304 to Hillary Clinton's 227, according to an Associated Press tally of the electoral votes in every state. He routinely misstates the result.

TRUMP: "We did really well with women." — rally.

THE FACTS: Not that well. He actually lost the women's vote.

About 54 percent nationally voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton, according to exit polls, compared with Trump's 41 percent. He won 52 percent of white women, according to those polls.

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP: "The Republican Party will become the party of great health care. ... Republicans want you to have an affordable plan that's just right for you." — rally.

TRUMP: "If the Supreme Court rules that Obamacare is out, we will have a plan that's far better than Obamacare." — remarks Wednesday to reporters.

THE FACTS: Republicans may aspire to great health care but they don't have a comprehensive plan for it. And there's no indication that the White House, executive branch agencies like Health and Human Services, and Republicans in Congress are working on one.

Trump's recent budget called for repealing "Obamacare" and setting hard limits on federal spending for Medicaid, which covers low-income people. Some Republicans argue that would be better, because the

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federal government would create a new program of health care grants to states. But when the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office analyzed similar proposals a couple of years ago, it estimated such changes would result in deep coverage losses, not to mention weaker insurance protections for people with pre-existing medical conditions.

Trump's budget also called for hundreds of billions of dollars in Medicare cuts to hospitals and other service providers, a nonstarter with lawmakers in Congress worried about re-election next year.

The Supreme Court has upheld the health care law twice in previous challenges. The five justices who first upheld it in 2012 are still on the court.

Congressional Republicans are generally trying to steer away from Obamacare spats. Some are trying to focus on areas where they might find common ground with Democrats and the president, such as reducing prescription drug costs.

TRUMP: "We will always protect patients with pre-existing conditions, always." — rally.

THE FACTS: He's not protecting health coverage for patients with pre-existing medical conditions. In fact, the Trump administration is pressing in court for full repeal of the Affordable Care Act — including provisions that protect people with pre-existing conditions from health insurance discrimination.

Trump and other Republicans say they'll have a plan to preserve those safeguards, but the White House has provided no details. And it's a stretch to think they could get a Republicans-only plan passed through Congress with the House under Democratic control.

Meanwhile House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has unveiled her own plan to shore up and expand the ACA, which would make many more middle-class people eligible for subsidies to help pay their premiums, and also make the subsidy amounts more generous.

Former President Barack Obama's health care law requires insurers to take all applicants, regardless of medical history, and patients with health problems pay the same standard premiums as healthy ones. Bills supported in 2017 by Trump and congressional Republicans to repeal the law could have pushed up costs for people with pre-existing conditions.

AUTOS

TRUMP: "We're bringing a lot of those car companies back. They're pouring back in." —rally.

TRUMP: "We're opening up car plants in Michigan again for the first time in decades. They're coming in, really pouring in. ... And this has been happening pretty much since I've been president. It's really amazing what's going on ... We've brought back so much industry, so many car companies to Michigan, so we're very happy." — remarks while departing for Michigan.

THE FACTS: There is very little truth in those remarks.

The only automaker announcing plans to reopen a plant in Michigan is Fiat Chrysler, which is restarting an old engine plant to build three-row SUVs. It's been planning to do so since before Trump was elected. GM is even closing two Detroit-area factories: one that builds cars and another that builds transmissions.

Automakers have made announcements about new models being built in the state, but no other factories have been reopened. Ford stopped building the Focus compact car in the Detroit suburb of Wayne last year, but it's being replaced by the manufacture of a small pickup and a new SUV. That announcement was made in December 2016, before Trump took office.

GM, meantime, is closing factories in Ohio and Maryland.

Trump can plausibly claim that his policies have encouraged some activity in the domestic auto industry. Corporate tax cuts freed more money for investment and potential tariff increases on imported vehicles are an incentive to build in the U.S.

But automakers have not been "pouring in" at all, as he persistently claims, and when expansion does happen, it's not all because of him.

Fiat Chrysler has been planning the SUVs for several years and has been looking at expansion in the Detroit area, where it has unused building space and an abundant, trainable automotive labor force.

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Normally it takes at least three years for an automaker to plan a new vehicle, which is the case with the three-row Jeep Grand Cherokee and the larger Wagoneer and Grand Wagoneer SUVs that will fill the restarting Detroit-area plant and an existing one. Several years ago then-CEO Sergio Marchionne said the Wagoneer would be built in the Detroit area.

Detroit automakers usually build larger vehicles in the U.S. because the profit margins are high enough to cover the higher wages paid there versus Mexico or another lower-cost country.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

TRUMP: "After three years of lies and smears and slander, the Russia hoax is finally dead. The collusion delusion is over. The special counsel completed its report and found no collusion and no obstruction. ...Total exoneration, complete vindication." — rally.

THE FACTS: Mueller did not vindicate Trump in "total" in the Russia probe.

Mueller's exact words in the report, as quoted by Attorney General William Barr, say: "While this report does not conclude that the President committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him."

The four-page summary by Barr released Sunday notes Mueller did not "draw a conclusion — one way or the other — as to whether the examined conduct constituted obstruction," but rather set out evidence for both sides, leaving the question unanswered of whether Trump obstructed justice. Barr wrote in the summary that ultimately he decided as attorney general that the evidence developed by Mueller was "not sufficient" to establish, for the purposes of prosecution, that Trump committed obstruction.

Barr's summary also notes that Mueller did not find that the Trump campaign conspired or coordinated with Russia to tip the 2016 presidential election in Trump's favor. To establish a crime, Mueller must generally meet a standard of proving an offense beyond a reasonable doubt. The summary did not clear the president of improper behavior regarding Russia but did not establish that "he was involved in an underlying crime related to Russian election interference," Mueller said in a passage from the report quoted by Barr.

The summary signed by Barr gave the bottom line only as he and his deputy saw it. Democrats are pushing for release of Mueller's full report, which is more than 300 pages. Barr is expected to release a public version of the document in the coming weeks.

TRUMP, speaking about allegations in a so-called dossier about contacts between Russia and the Trump campaign during the 2016 election: "It came out after the election and everybody had a big fat yawn. ...All of a sudden I heard, 'Were you involved with Russia? I said, 'Russia? What the hell does Russia have to do with my campaign?'" — rally.

THE FACTS: There actually was plenty that Russia had to do with Trump's campaign.

According to U.S. intelligence agencies and lengthy indictments brought by Mueller's team, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a multipart influence campaign aimed at hurting Democrat Hillary Clinton's candidacy, undermining American democracy and helping Trump get elected.

That effort included the hacking of the Democratic National Committee, Clinton's campaign and other Democratic groups. Russian intelligence officers then coordinated the release of stolen emails and internal documents.

There were also plenty of people around Trump receptive to Russia's help, though Mueller's report ultimately did not find that those contacts amounted to a criminal conspiracy, according to Barr's summary.

In the middle of the campaign, Donald Trump Jr. met at Trump Tower with a Russian lawyer thinking he would be getting "dirt" on Clinton. Trump Jr. agreed to the meeting, which included Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner and Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, despite it being described to him as part of a Russian government effort to help his father.

IMMIGRATION

TRUMP, on diversity visas: "They're giving us their worst people." — rally.

THE FACTS: That's false.

The diversity visa lottery program is run by the U.S. government, not foreign governments. Other

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countries do not get to sort through their populations looking for bad apples to put in for export to the U.S. Citizens of qualifying countries are the ones who decide to bid for visas under the program. Trump repeatedly blames foreign states.

The program requires applicants to have completed a high school education or have at least two years of experience in the last five years in a selection of fields. Out of that pool of people from certain countries who meet those conditions, the State Department randomly selects a much smaller pool of winners. Not all winners will have visas ultimately approved, because they still must compete for a smaller number of slots by getting their applications in quickly. Those who are ultimately offered visas still need to go through background checks, like other immigrants.

The lottery is extended to citizens of most countries, except about 20. The primary goal is to diversify the immigrant population by creating slots for underrepresented parts of the world.

VETERANS

TRUMP: "They've been trying to get VA Choice for over 40 years. Couldn't do it. I got it. We signed it six months ago." — rally.

THE FACTS: Not true. He's not the first president in 40 years to get Congress to pass a private-sector health program for veterans; he expanded it. Congress first approved the program in 2014 during the Obama administration. The program currently allows veterans to see doctors outside the VA system if they must wait more than 30 days for an appointment or drive more than 40 miles (65 kilometers) to a VA facility.

Now they are to have that option for a private doctor if their VA wait is only 20 days (28 for specialty care) or their drive is only 30 minutes.

TRUMP: "Instead of waiting online for 1 day, 1 week, 2 months, ...they now go outside, they see a private doctor, we pay the bill, they get better quickly." — rally

THE FACTS: Also not right. Veterans still must wait for weeks before they can get private care outside the VA system.

The program currently allows veterans to see doctors outside VA if they must wait more than 30 days for an appointment or drive more than 40 miles (65 kilometers) to a VA facility. Under new rules to take effect in June, veterans are to have that option for a private doctor if their VA wait is only 20 days (28 for specialty care) or their drive is only 30 minutes.

But the expanded Choice eligibility may do little to provide immediate help. That's because veterans often must wait even longer for an appointment in the private sector. Last year, then-Secretary David Shulkin said VA care is "often 40 percent better in terms of wait times" compared with the private sector. In 2018, 34 percent of all VA appointments were with outside physicians, down from 36 percent in 2017.

At a hearing Tuesday, the top health official at VA, Dr. Richard Stone, described the start of the expanded Choice program to "almost be a non-event," in part because wait times in the private sector are typically longer than at VA.

The VA also must resolve long-term financing because of congressional budget caps after the White House opposed new money to pay for the program. As a result, lawmakers could be forced later this year to limit the program or slash core VA or other domestic programs.

Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar in Washington and Tom Krisher in Detroit contributed to this report.

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Trump says Special Olympics funding to be restored, not cut

By COLLIN BINKLEY and CATHERINE LUCEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump says he is backing off his budget request to eliminate funding for the Special Olympics, reversing course on a proposal that was unlikely to be approved by Congress after days of bipartisan criticism.

Speaking to reporters Thursday as he left the White House for a rally in Michigan, Trump said he had authorized funding for the organization.

"I heard about it this morning," he said. "I have overridden my people. We're funding the Special Olympics."

Trump's announcement came after Education Secretary Betsy DeVos spent days defending the proposal, which drew widespread condemnation from lawmakers as well as advocates and celebrities. The president's sudden reversal reflected a political desire to move away from a plan that was not expected to pass Congress but also underscored Trump's comfort with undercutting top officials.

Said Trump: "I've been to the Special Olympics. I think it's incredible."

DeVos, walking back her defense of the cuts proposal, issued a statement, saying: "I am pleased and grateful the President and I see eye to eye on this issue and that he has decided to fund our Special Olympics grant. This is funding I have fought for behind the scenes over the last several years."

The remarks were a sharp contrast from her comments to Senate Democrats in a budget hearing earlier in the day. DeVos said her department had to make "tough choices" on the budget and insisted the Special Olympics should be supported through private donations.

In a heated exchange with Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., DeVos said she "wasn't personally involved" in pushing for elimination of the funding, but she defended it as her agency seeks to cut \$7 billion for the 2020 budget. "Let's not use disabled children in a twisted way for your political narrative," she said.

The president's shift Thursday was not the first time he has undermined a top aide. He repeatedly berated former Attorney General Jeff Sessions in public and private and clashed openly with former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, ultimately firing him in a tweet.

The Trump administration's education budget proposal called for the elimination of \$17.6 million in funding for the Special Olympics, amounting to roughly 10 percent of the group's overall revenue. Most of its funding comes from individual and corporate contributions and other fundraising efforts.

The Special Olympics is the largest sports organization in the world for people with intellectual disabilities, with over 5 million athletes from 174 countries participating in competitions while spreading a global message of inclusion and empowerment. The organization celebrated its 50th anniversary last year.

Trump officials previously called for the elimination of Special Olympics funding in their budget proposal for 2019, but Congress rejected the idea. Lawmakers from both parties said they would reject it again for 2020.

Durbin told DeVos on Thursday that it would be shameful to pull support for the Special Olympics, saying "someone has to accept responsibility for a bad decision."

Asked Thursday whether he supports the proposed cut, House Minority Leader Kevin, McCarthy, R-Calif., told reporters, "No. I fully support Special Olympics."

Before Trump's announcement his campaign sought to use the funding conflict as an attack against Democrats over abortion. Deputy Communications Director Matt Wolking tweeted Thursday: "I'm sure Democrats who see abortion as the cure for Down syndrome and other disabilities are sincerely concerned about kids having the chance to be in the Special Olympics."

DeVos faced questioning on a range of topics Thursday, including her proposed rewrite of rules around campus sexual assault and her handling of for-profit colleges.

Murray said the Education Department has been too slow to process more than 100,000 applications for loan forgiveness from students who say they were cheated by for-profit colleges. DeVos previously delayed an Obama-era rule allowing such forgiveness, but a federal judge said the delay was unlawful.

Asked on Thursday how many applications had been approved since the judge's order was issued, DeVos she didn't know but that officials are "reviewing them regularly."

Others criticized DeVos' department for being unresponsive to congressional requests for information.

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Blunt, chairman of the Senate subcommittee over the education budget, said he shared that concern. "There are two or three departments we're just not getting responses back from as quickly as we should," Blunt told DeVos. "We're your funding source and have an oversight responsibility in addition to that."

Binkley reported from Boston. Associated Press writer Alan Fram contributed to this report.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. TRUMP REVELS IN RETELLING EARLY RESULTS OF MUELLER PROBE

A fired-up President Donald Trump turned the findings of the Russia investigation into a political weapon at a Michigan rally.

2. WHO'S TURNING UP THE PRESSURE FOR MUELLER REPORT

Democrats intensified their demands for Robert Mueller's full report after learning the special counsel's findings from his Trump-Russia investigation run to more than 300 pages.

3. WHITHER BREXIT

On the day that Britain was originally scheduled to leave the European Union, lawmakers are facing what Theresa May's embattled government describes as the "last chance to vote for Brexit."

4. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT COULD REVIEW SMOLLETT CASE

Some former federal prosecutors say there are enough anomalies to justify a Justice Department review of why Chicago prosecutors dismissed all charges against the actor Jussie Smollett.

5. MOSQUE SURVIVOR SAYS HE FORGIVES ATTACKER

A man who survived New Zealand's mosque attacks told a crowd of about 20,000 people he forgives the terrorist who killed his wife and 49 others.

6. ARABS SEEK UNITY ON GOLAN HEIGHTS AND JERUSALEM

Arab leaders meeting in Tunisia on Sunday hope to project unified opposition to the Trump administration's acceptance of Israeli control over the Golan Heights and Jerusalem, but there are rifts.

7. WHY HOMELESSNESS IS RISING IN ARGENTINA

An economic crisis, soaring inflation and a spike in utility bills fueled by government austerity measures have left more Argentines unable to afford a home in the South American country.

8. TRUMP SURPRISES HIS AIDES AND ALLIES WITH ABRUPT DECREES

A series of announcements by President Donald Trump in a 72-hour span last week upended planning on three of the administration's most important foreign policy initiatives.

9. HAWAII WEIGHS NATION'S FIRST STATEWIDE BAN ON FLAVORED E-CIGARETTES

Hawaii is considering a new crackdown on nicotine: outlawing flavored electronic cigarette liquids and flavored tobacco to combat a spike in teenage vaping.

10. OPENING DAY TURNS INTO RECORD HOME RUN DERBY

The baseball was flying on a record-setting opening day as a total of 48 home runs were hit across Major League Baseball.

S. Korean leader to meet with Trump in US on nuke diplomacy

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean President Moon Jae-in will travel to the United States in two weeks for a summit with President Donald Trump on stalemated North Korean nuclear diplomacy.

It would be their first meeting since Trump's second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi last month collapsed due to disputes on U.S.-led sanctions. The breakdown of that summit put Moon, a liberal who has shuttled between Washington and Pyongyang, in a difficult position on how to further engage North Korea and facilitate the nuclear diplomacy.

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Moon's office said Moon will visit the United States on April 10-11 to discuss how to strengthen their countries' alliance and achieve North Korea's complete denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The White House said Trump and first lady Melania Trump will welcome Moon and his wife Kim Jung-sook to the White House on April 11. It said in a statement the alliance between the U.S. and South Korea "remains the linchpin of peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and in the region."

Earlier this month, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui threatened to pull out of the nuclear negotiations with the United States citing a lack of its corresponding steps to match some disarmament measures North Korea took last year. She said Kim would soon decide whether to continue the talks and his moratorium on nuclear and missile tests.

South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers in a private briefing Friday that North Korea has nearly completed its work to restore a long-range rocket launch facility that it had partially dismantled last year at the beginning of the nuclear diplomacy, according to Kim Min-ki, one of the lawmakers who attended the meeting.

The lawmaker also cited the National Intelligence Service as saying the North's uranium-enrichment facility at its main nuclear complex remains operational. The NIS said it doesn't comment on intelligence assessments provided to lawmakers.

Citing analyses of commercial satellite imagery, many civilian experts in the U.S. have previously given similar assessments on the North's Tongchang-ri launch facility and the Yongbyon nuclear complex. But there have been no reports that North Korea is preparing for a long-range rocket launch or a nuclear test anytime soon.

Moon's push to expand ties with North Korea and resume dormant inter-Korean economic projects is in doubt as U.S. officials maintain that sanctions on North Korea would stay in place unless the country takes significant denuclearization steps.

North Korea recently withdrew its entire staff at a frontline liaison office with South Korea before sending some of them back to the office. Seoul's Defense Ministry said Friday that North Korea hasn't responded to its offer 11 days ago to hold military talks to discuss planned joint searches for Korean War dead at their border area.

Also Friday, South Korea received the first two of the 40 F-35A fighter jets that it has agreed to buy from Lockheed Martin by 2021. The F-35A jets that arrived at an airport in southern South Korea have become the country's first stealth fighter jets. North Korea has previously called the introduction of F-35A aircraft a plot by Seoul to attack North Korea.

Some experts say North Korea still hopes to keep diplomacy with the United States alive because it is desperate to win sanctions relief to revive its trouble economy.

In a possible reflection of its resolve to press ahead with its engagement policy on North Korea, South Korea's Unification Ministry on Friday reiterated its position that it will push to hold a regular summit with North Korea and realize Kim's promise to travel to Seoul.

Homelessness rises in Argentina's capital amid crisis

By DEBORA REY Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — A smiling two-year-old Valentina Aleman runs down a sidewalk in Buenos Aires, dodging cardboard boxes, a worn-out sofa and a broken refrigerator without noticing the cars zooming dangerously close to her and others — risks of living on the streets.

A makeshift tent of cardboard and plastic bags on the side of a busy avenue in the Argentine capital serves as shelter for the girl, her four siblings and her parents, who sleep sharing two old mattresses laid out on the concrete.

"Being here with (the children) is not nice. The main risk is their health," Valentina's mother, Damiana, said while the kids played with used toys. "They want to watch TV. My oldest asks why we can't be at home with our TV and our bed."

Families living on the streets outside shopping malls, bus stations and parks have become an increasingly

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common sight in Buenos Aires, as an economic crisis, soaring inflation and a spike in utility bills fueled by austerity measures have left more people unable to afford a home. The long-running crisis sharpened in 2018 when the Argentine peso lost about half its value following a run on the currency.

The number of people in extreme poverty in Argentina's capital - the country's wealthiest area - has doubled in the past three years to 6.5 percent, or about 198,000 people, according to official figures. The Buenos Aires city government has yet to release homeless numbers for the end of 2018, but local civic groups estimate the figure at around 8,000 people.

Argentines continue to lose purchasing power to an inflation rate that reached 47.6 percent last year, the highest since 1991, and many are frustrated with the decision by President Mauricio Macri's government to slash subsidies on utilities and public transportation. On average, in the past year natural gas has shot up 77.6 percent, electricity by 46 percent and water by 26 percent.

Eight months ago, the Aleman family became unable to keep up with soaring utilities costs. The family paid about \$112 per month in rent. Their finances collapsed when they received a \$246 electricity bill. Then Valentina's father, Emilio, lost his job in a furniture factory that shut down amid the crisis.

"Seven out of every 10 families see the cost of utilities as a problem for their domestic finances," said Matias Barroetavena, director of the Center of Metropolitan Studies, a Buenos Aires-based research center.

Reducing poverty is still on the to-do list for Macri, who has entered the last year of his presidential term and has launched a re-election bid for October's voting.

When Macri took office in 2015, he said his administration should be judged by its ability to reduce poverty. "Zero poverty" became one of his top goals.

But poverty in Argentina increased to 32 percent of the population in the second half of 2018 from 27.3 percent in the first half, the INDEC official statistics agency said on Thursday.

"I trusted him when he said 'zero poverty'. It looked like he would stand by the poor," Aleman said. "But Macri actually meant getting rid of the poor, rather than improving the economy."

Following last year's devaluation of the peso, Argentina was forced to seek a record financing deal with the International Monetary Fund. The decision brought back bad memories for Argentines who blame the IMF for introducing policies that led to the country's worst crisis in 2001 when one in every five Argentines went unemployed and millions slid into poverty.

Macri says he underestimated the macroeconomic imbalances inherited from his populist predecessor, center-left President Cristina Fernandez. He argues that correcting them became more difficult when Argentina's worst drought in decades deprived his government of much-needed farm export revenue. Argentina's economy was also hit by "external factors," including the U.S.-China trade war, he said.

Macri has seen his popularity ratings plunge. Fernandez is tied with him in most polls even though she faces numerous investigations into alleged corruption during her 2007-2015 administration.

A poll conducted in Buenos Aires and its suburbs showed that 65 percent of respondents said their income was not enough to make ends meet. Fifty-two percent said they had reduced their food consumption as a result. The Center of Metropolitan Studies surveyed 1,523 people between Feb. 26 and March 2 in a poll that had a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points.

Shelters in Buenos Aires are at full capacity. But since most are divided by gender, families often prefer staying on the streets to splitting up.

And it's not only the homeless demanding beds in shelters. Residents from the suburbs are increasingly choosing to stay in the city from Monday to Friday to avoid spending on public transportation. Workers who earn the minimum wage of about \$280 a month are estimated to spend 10 percent of their salaries on public transportation, according to estimates from the Buenos Aires Ombudsman's office.

The Alemans now rely on the money that Emilio gets gathering cardboard and recyclable waste, meals at soup kitchens and on the generosity of nearby residents. Not all empathize, however. Some have called the police to remove them from the sidewalk.

"When people live on the streets, they feel like they're a waste of space, like they deserve to be there. Your opinion of yourself is so low," said Horacio Avila, a social psychologist who co-founded Project 7, which provides assistance to the homeless. Avila himself was homeless for over 10 years.

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Leaning out of an igloo-looking structure made out of layers of cloth and plastic tethered to a supermarket car, Hector Garcia jokes with passers-by.

"You keep laughing, you will be right next to me soon," he sometimes tells people with a laugh.

Garcia has been living on the street of a middle-class Buenos Aires' neighborhood for four years since losing an administrative job. Nowadays, he survives by repairing home appliances or disassembling them to sell the scraps. He shares the improvised shack with 77-year-old retiree Maria Ortega.

Garcia also believed his living conditions would improve after the change of government.

"The government provides you with the possibility of getting off the streets for five or six months. That's not a solution," the 57-year-old said about government housing subsidies.

"At least I don't get any bills here," Garcia said before ducking back inside his shelter.

Border Patrol orders quick releases of families

By ASTRID GALVAN and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of migrant families and children entering the U.S. from Mexico is so high that Border Patrol is immediately releasing them instead of transferring them to the agency responsible for their release, forcing local governments to help coordinate their housing, meals and travel.

"We need to work toward a clean sweep," Border Patrol Deputy Chief of Operations Richard Hudson said in a letter obtained by The Associated Press sent to sector chiefs Thursday. "This should be our daily battle rhythm."

Agents are still doing medical screenings and criminal checks, but the decision means thousands of families will be released without first going through U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement, which manages their deportation cases.

The Del Rio and Rio Grande Valley sectors in Texas and the Yuma, Arizona, sector earlier announced that agents would begin to release families on their own recognizance. A Border Patrol official not authorized to speak on the matter said Wednesday that El Paso and San Diego planned on doing the same. Some sectors were not part of the change, including Tucson, Arizona and El Centro, California.

Families are typically released with notices to appear in immigration court due to legal restrictions on detaining them and lack of holding space. Until now, Customs and Border Protection has detained them briefly before turning them over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement, generally within 72 hours, to be released pending the outcome of their immigration cases.

The move came as Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen wrote to Congress asking for emergency funding for humanitarian and operational needs, and the ability to detain families together as long as necessary to deport people faster.

"The volume of 'vulnerable populations' is unsustainable. Our system has been able to cope with high numbers in the past, but the composition of today's flows makes them virtually unmanageable," she wrote.

Arrests all along the southern border have skyrocketed in recent months. Border agents are on track to make 100,000 arrests and denials of entry at the southern border this month, over half of which are families with children. To manage the crush, U.S. Customs and Border Protection is reassigning 750 border inspectors from their usual duties at the ports of entry to help Border Patrol keep pace with arrivals in between ports of entry. The head of the agency held a press conference in El Paso on Wednesday to say the breaking point had arrived.

But federal lawmakers have fought over whether there is a "crisis" at the border, particularly amid President Donald Trump's push for a border wall that he claimed will solve all the immigration problems. Wisconsin Republican Sen. Ron Johnson, Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, said Thursday the evidence shows the immigration system is cracking under the strain.

"The sad reality is that we now have a virtual open border for any migrant who crosses with a minor, and our border security enforcement has been reduced to a mere speed bump for migrants on their path to long-term occupancy in the United States," he said, adding border officers are being asked to perform an impossible task with no help from Congress.

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And along the border, officials were working to manage the families that had been suddenly released. Yuma Mayor Douglas Nicholls said his city is working with various non-governmental organizations to make sure families released by the Border Patrol have temporary housing, food, medical care and help with traveling to their intended destinations.

Most immigrant families coming to the U.S. don't plan on staying in the border towns they cross through, but rather to meet up with family throughout the country.

"Focusing on the humanitarian effort is the most important focus for the city, Nicholls.

The Yuma Sector has over the last two years seen an extraordinary spike in the number of immigrant families who turn themselves in. Yuma Deputy Chief Patrol Agent Carl E. Landrum said Thursday that agents have arrested 30,000 people in the relatively small sector since October 1.

The facility in Yuma has the capacity to temporarily hold 410 people. Until Thursday, ICE had been picking all of these families up and taking them to Phoenix and Tucson to be processed. But the numbers have swelled so much now that ICE doesn't have enough resources to pick everybody up, so Border Patrol agents themselves are releasing families in Yuma.

"It is overwhelming us locally, as well as overwhelming the system nationally," Landrum said.

"The sheer volume of family units crossing the border has overwhelmed ICE's limited transportation resources; combined with a requirement to detain these individuals for no more than 20 days, the agency has no option but to expeditiously arrange for their release," ICE spokeswoman Sarah Rodriguez said in a statement.

The agency makes "every attempt to coordinate the release of these individuals with NGOs that provide assistance with basic needs, but the heavy influx in recent months has inundated these organizations as well," Rodriguez said.

Galvan reported from Phoenix. Associated Press reporter Elliot Spagat contributed from San Diego.

Trump surprises his aides and allies with abrupt decrees

By **MATTHEW LEE** and **DEB RIECHMANN** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There was just one problem when President Donald Trump walked down the stairs of Air Force One and unceremoniously declared that the Islamic State had lost the last of its territory in Syria.

He wasn't supposed to announce it yet.

Instead, the plan was to let U.S.-backed Syrian Defense Forces proclaim the victory, in recognition of its losses over five years of battle.

But Trump was on the tarmac on a sunny afternoon in South Florida holding a map of Iraq and Syria, which happened to be upside-down. "Here's ISIS on Election Day," he said, pointing to a spot showing IS controlled territory in red. "Here's ISIS right now," he said, gesturing to another point.

Back in Syria, commanders fumed.

"Of course, the SDF was expecting to announce it to the world, but the White House did it a day earlier," said an SDF official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

It was one of a series of Trump announcements in a 72-hour span last week that upended planning on three of the administration's most important foreign policy initiatives. Even with a president known for impulsivity, this was unusual, leaving stunned aides scrambling to explain the moves, according to U.S. and foreign officials.

The announcements, which came as the White House awaited the conclusions of the probe by special counsel Robert Mueller, started with Trump declaring on Twitter that the U.S. would recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, reversing decades of American policy.

Trump made the Golan announcement on March 21 while Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was in Jerusalem, planning for a routine day of meetings. It had become anything but routine by dusk.

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The announcement was quickly criticized as a violation of international law from friends and foes who view the strategic highlands captured from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war as occupied territory.

Trump had cast aside plans to announce the step days later during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington. He also rejected advice from advisers who suggested he wait, at least until Pompeo left his last Mideast stop in Lebanon, where Syria's influence is strong.

The abrupt announcement caught Americans and Israelis off guard, delaying Pompeo and Netanyahu's dinner as they made a hastily arranged call to Trump, during which the prime minister in the midst of a heated election campaign effusively praised the president.

Back in Washington, Trump's tweet set off alarm at the State Department and National Security Council, not least among lawyers who would have to find a justification for the recognition that flew in the face of U.N. Security Council resolutions previous administrations had supported, according to officials.

When Trump formally signed off on the recognition, with Netanyahu at his side at the White House on Monday, he did through a presidential proclamation rather than by an executive order, which carries more weight.

The next day, as the president flew to his Mar-a-Lago resort, he got word on the plane from acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan that the battle to clear the last remaining ISIS fighters from Syrian territory had been won.

The final liberation had been expected for months and the Pentagon and State Department had worked with the White House to carefully craft a plan for the announcement.

Casting aside a plan to let the SDF announce the victory to the world, press secretary Sarah Sanders walked back to the press quarters aboard Air Force One just as it was landing to deliver the news.

SDF commanders were caught unaware and expressed anger and disappointment, though they said nothing in public, according to the officials.

Americans involved in the campaign searched for a way to make amends, ultimately opting not to release a formal written statement from Trump welcoming the victory until almost 2 p.m. on Saturday, following the SDF announcement on the ground in Syria.

Later on Friday, Trump unleashed a tweet from his private club in Palm Beach, Florida, saying he was reversing his administration's decision to slap sanctions on North Korea.

"It was announced today by the U.S. Treasury that additional large scale Sanctions would be added to those already existing Sanctions on North Korea," he tweeted. "I have today ordered the withdrawal of those additional Sanctions!"

What sanctions was Trump talking about? None had been announced on Friday. Was he referring to Treasury's announcement the day before that targeted two Chinese shipping companies suspected of helping North Korea evade sanctions? Was he talking about pausing enforcement of existing sanctions, or saying he didn't want to see any new ones put on Pyongyang right now?

A person familiar with the action later told The Associated Press that Trump's tweet was not about the Chinese shipping sanctions at all. Instead, the person said, the president was saying he was opposed additional large-scale sanctions on North Korea at this time. The person was not authorized to discuss the president's comments and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Sanders would say only that Trump "likes" North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and "doesn't think these sanctions will be necessary."

Sen. Edward Markey, D-Mass., the ranking member of the East Asia subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Trump's tweet confused the world and his own administration. "This episode continues to make painfully clear that the Trump administration lacks a coherent, coordinated strategy for denuclearizing North Korea, addressing its other, troubling behaviors, and creating the lasting peace we all seek," Markey told the AP.

Either way, Trump's tweet left the impression that he's unwilling to increase pressure on North Korea, and weakens the effort to get the country to give up his nuclear weapons, said David Maxwell of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "I can't believe that this is the way we are executing strategy on a country like North Korea," Maxwell said. "This will probably be studied in international relations circles

in the future.”

FBI could review the many suspicions around Smollett case

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — The FBI was already investigating Jussie Smollett before President Donald Trump tweeted that the agency and the Department of Justice would review the case, which the president called “an embarrassment” to the nation.

Trump’s tweet on Thursday came two days after a surprise decision by Cook County prosecutors to drop all charges against the “Empire” actor, who was accused of orchestrating a fake attack involving two men who beat him on a downtown Chicago street. The president did not specify what aspect of the case would be probed, and Department of Justice officials declined to comment.

Some former federal prosecutors say there are enough anomalies to justify a Justice Department review of why prosecutors dismissed all 16 felonies. Among the red flags they cited: the unusual level of secrecy around the proceedings, including sealed court documents; prosecutors’ often muddled and contradictory explanations; and the absence of any requirement that the accused accept responsibility in exchange for dropping charges.

Investigators believe Smollett hired two brothers to stage the Jan. 29 attack and that Smollett hoped the attention would help advance his career. Police also allege that before the attack, Smollett sent a letter threatening himself to the Chicago television studio where “Empire” is shot. The FBI has been investigating that letter.

State prosecutors insisted that they could still prove Smollett concocted the entire assault. And even after charges were thrown out, the actor maintained that the attack was real.

Phil Turner, an assistant U.S. attorney in Chicago before entering private practice, said federal prosecutors could, at minimum, seek an order for state prosecutors to preserve emails, texts and other documents that might shed light on why they acted as they did with Smollett.

Prosecutors’ hasty calling of the Tuesday hearing with no prior public notice and their swift sealing of court records showed a highly unusual and suspicious level of secrecy, Turner said.

“It makes it look like they were clearly trying to pull a fast one,” he said. “It all smells funny.”

Federal prosecutors could, in theory, bring charges under a law that requires public officials to provide honest services to citizens if evidence emerges that any decision was made at the behest of influential people outside the state’s attorney’s office, Turner said.

Justice Department investigators “could try to show that, if Cook County prosecutors did a favor for someone by dropping charges, that deprived people in Cook County of the honest services they deserve,” he said.

The case, he theorized, could qualify as a federal matter if communications about the decision took place on the phone or internet, placing it within federal jurisdiction.

Another former federal prosecutor, Joel Bertocchi, sounded much more skeptical about the chances of a full-fledged investigation.

“You’d have to show the decision (to drop charges) was corrupt — not just bad or unexplainable,” he said. “Traded favors is not enough for corruption. It has to be money. And there’s no indication of that here.”

While U.S. attorneys can in principle look into whatever they want, Bertocchi said, accepted practice is that they need some indication an actual crime was committed. “You can’t just investigate someone willy-nilly.”

The suspicions about the Smollett charges were shared by many in Chicago, including Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who has led official voices of outrage, telling reporters that “something is rotten in Denmark.” The city said Thursday it is seeking \$130,000 from Smollett to cover the costs of the investigation into his reported beating.

The Illinois Prosecutors Bar Association on Thursday issued a scathing critique of Cook County prosecutors. The group said State’s Attorney Kim Foxx and her representatives “fundamentally misled the public on the law and circumstances surrounding the dismissal.”

"The manner in which this case was dismissed was abnormal and unfamiliar to those who practice law in criminal courthouses across the State," it said.

The critique also highlighted what it called the "uncontested sealing" of the case, saying Cook County prosecutors had "falsely informed the public" that the action was mandatory under Illinois law.

The fact that Tuesday's hearing was not put on the public court schedule and other factors added to an "appearance of impropriety," according to the bar association, which said Cook County prosecutors had "fallen woefully short" of legal ethics.

The Arlington, Virginia-based National District Attorneys Association also weighed in, saying in a statement that aspects of the case may have run afoul of best practices, including the decision to abandon the charges without forcing Smollett to accept some degree of guilt.

The group alluded to Foxx's decision to recuse herself before Smollett was charged because she had discussed the case with a Smollett family member. If the chief prosecutor withdraws, it said, the best practice is for the whole office to step away from a case and to appoint a special prosecutor.

Foxx defended her office's decisions. Even if a trial had been held, Smollett would never have received a prison term because the 16 charges were the lowest form of felony. And if he pleaded guilty, it would have been to one count, not 16, she said.

"For all of the noise and all of the media attention, it's a step up from a misdemeanor," she told Chicago television station WGN. Most comparable cases are resolved with probation or an agreement such as Smollett's if the defendants "don't have a long rap sheet or a violence in their background."

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

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

'Texas 7' prison-break gang member gets execution reprieve

By **JUAN A. LOZANO** and **MICHAEL GRACZYK** Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (AP) — A member of the "Texas 7" gang of escaped prisoners won a reprieve Thursday night from execution for the fatal shooting of a suburban Dallas police officer after claiming his religious freedom would be violated if his Buddhist spiritual adviser wasn't allowed to be in the death chamber with him.

The U.S. Supreme Court blocked Patrick Murphy's execution about two hours after he could have been executed.

Murphy's attorneys had said that Texas prison officials' efforts to prevent the inmate's spiritual adviser, a Buddhist priest, from being with him when he is put to death violated Murphy's First Amendment right to freedom of religion. Murphy, 57, became a Buddhist almost a decade ago while incarcerated.

Lower courts had rejected Murphy's argument.

But in a concurring opinion Thursday night, the newest justice on the court, Brett Kavanaugh, said the Texas prison system allows a Christian or Muslim inmate to have a state-employed Christian or Muslim religious adviser present either in the execution room or in the adjacent viewing room. But inmates of other religious denominations who want their religious adviser to be present can have the adviser present only in the viewing room and not in the execution room itself, he said.

"As this Court has repeatedly held, governmental discrimination against religion_in particular, discrimination against religious persons, religious organizations, and religious speech_violates the Constitution," he wrote. "The government may not discriminate against religion generally or against particular religious denominations."

Kavanaugh said Texas can't move forward with Murphy's punishment unless the state permits his Buddhist adviser or another Buddhist reverend of the state's choosing to accompany Murphy in the chamber during the execution.

"What the State may not do, in my view, is allow Christian or Muslim inmates but not Buddhist inmates

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to have a religious adviser of their religion in the execution room," the justice said.

Kavanaugh did not hear any death penalty cases in his 12 years as an appeals court judge joining the Supreme Court.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice spokesman Jeremy Desel the state would review the ruling to determine how to respond.

Desel said Murphy would be returned from the Huntsville Unit prison, where executions are carried out, to the Polunsky Unit, about 45 miles to the east, where death row inmates are imprisoned.

"I knew there was a thin thread of possibility," a smiling Murphy said from a holding cell just a few feet from the death chamber after he was told by the warden he received a reprieve.

Texas officials argued to the court, citing security concerns, that only chaplains who had been extensively vetted by the prison system were allowed within the chamber. While Christian and Muslim chaplains were available, no Buddhist priest was. Prison officials allowed Murphy to visit with his spiritual adviser for about 40 minutes Thursday afternoon.

Murphy was among the inmates who escaped from a South Texas prison in December 2000 and then committed numerous robberies, including the one in which they shot 29-year-old Irving police Officer Aubrey Hawkins 11 times, killing him.

Hawkins, who had been with the Irving police force about 14 months, had just finished Christmas Eve dinner with his family when he responded to the call about the robbery at a sporting goods store and was ambushed.

The escaped inmates were arrested a month later in Colorado, ending a six-week manhunt. One of them killed himself as officers closed in and the other six were convicted of killing Hawkins and sentenced to death. Murphy would have been the fifth to be executed. The sixth inmate, Randy Halprin, has not been given an execution date.

Murphy would have been the fourth inmate put to death this year in the U.S. and the third executed in Texas, the nation's busiest capital punishment state.

In February, the Supreme Court rejected a request from a Muslim death row inmate in Alabama to have his Islamic spiritual adviser be present in the execution chamber. Dominique Ray, who was executed, also argued his religious rights were violated because Alabama allows a Christian chaplain employed by the prison to be in the execution chamber.

Murphy was convicted under Texas' law of parties, which holds a person criminally responsible for the actions of another if they are engaged in a conspiracy.

Murphy's attorneys had also asked the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals to stop his execution, arguing his death sentence is unconstitutional because he was only the lookout during the robbery, never firing at Hawkins because he had left the scene before the shooting began.

The appeals court earlier this week turned down the request while the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles declined to recommend either a commutation of his sentence or a 90-day reprieve.

"It is unconscionable that Patrick Murphy may be executed for a murder he did not commit that resulted from a robbery in which he did not participate," his attorneys, David Dow and Jeff Newberry, said in a statement.

Toby Shook, the lead prosecutor who handled Murphy's case and those of the other five members, said Murphy actively participated in the robbery, monitoring a police scanner from a getaway vehicle and telling the other inmates when Hawkins was coming to the back of the store.

"He alerted them. That allowed them to set up their ambush," said Shook, who is now a criminal defense attorney in Dallas.

Murphy was serving 50 years for a Dallas sexual assault but was only 15 months away from being released on mandatory parole when he took part in the prison escape.

Shook said Murphy has a very long and violent criminal history, including molesting his step-sister and pulling a gun on his father.

"They all were violent felons," Shook said. "So, he fit in perfectly with the rest of the Texas 7. He actively

participated in all their robberies and all their crimes when they were out on the run.”

Lozano reported from Houston.

Associated Press writer Jake Bleiberg in Dallas contributed to this report.

Follow Juan A. Lozano on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/juanlozano70>

Tag `em! Opening day turns into record Home Run Derby

By **BEN WALKER AP Baseball Writer**

Bryce Harper bowed to his new fans, Mookie Betts and the World Series champion Boston Red Sox drew cheers far from Fenway Park and the great Mariano Rivera threw one more strike from the mound at Yankee Stadium.

Then it was time to play Home Run Derby on a record-setting opening day.

The ball was flying Thursday — Joc Pederson and the Los Angeles Dodgers connected eight times, and the total of 48 across the majors was the most ever to start.

“Everyone kind of knocked us last year for scoring too many runs off homers,” said Max Muncy, who also connected at Dodger Stadium. “But if you’re going to do it, you might as well do it like that.”

Elsewhere, Lorenzo Cain made a game-saving catch in Milwaukee, Javier Baez swung a powerful bat for the Cubs and Detroit’s Jordan Zimmermann came close to giving Major League Baseball a perfect start.

A week after Ichiro Suzuki and the Seattle Mariners swept two games from Oakland at the Tokyo Dome, everybody was in action.

The packed crowd at Citizens Bank Park was especially energized by Harper and the Philadelphia Phillies in a 10-4 win over Atlanta.

“The atmosphere was unbelievable,” Harper said. “The atmosphere was rocking all through the game.”

The weather also cooperated. A year after it was more fit for snowballs than baseballs at some stadiums, the conditions were fine. A little rainy in Kansas City, causing a slight delay, but no freezing temperatures anywhere.

Cy Young Award winners past and present took the hill — Jacob deGrom and Max Scherzer delivered the marquee matchup that was expected, but a duel never developed between Justin Verlander and Blake Snell. Zimmermann carried a perfect game into the seventh inning at Toronto.

Robinson Cano, Andrew McCutchen and Marwin Gonzalez got key hits for their new clubs. Harper, Manny Machado and Paul Goldschmidt didn’t.

Fernando Tatis Jr. represented the rookies well — just a few months past his 20th birthday, the highly touted San Diego Padres prospect became the youngest player with a multihit game in an opener since Robin Yount in 1975.

Playing up the power factor that often dominates these days, the NL champion Dodgers set an opening day record for home runs in a 12-5 win over Arizona. The eight drives also tied a franchise record for any game.

New managers began with a mixed bag. Minnesota’s Rocco Baldelli and Cincinnati’s David Bell won while Brandon Hyde, taking over the 115-loss Orioles, Toronto’s Charlie Montoyo, Texas’ Chris Woodward and the Angels’ Brad Ausmus lost.

“I think the dugout seemed a little quieter than normal,” Hyde said. “I just felt like it was quieter than normal because of some jitters from some younger players.”

The sellout crowd in the Bronx had plenty to cheer, including Rivera’s ceremonial toss. The first player to be unanimously elected to the Hall of Fame, he zinged it, too.

In Seattle, the Red Sox were greeted with huge cheers as the champs were introduced. Boston rooters who traveled cross-country chanted “Mookie! Mookie!” for the AL MVP.

The Mariners made a lot of noise with their bats, hitting three early home runs off Red Sox ace Chris

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Sale, two by Tim Beckham, in a 12-4 win. Then again, the Red Sox lost their opener last year before reeling off a team-record 108 wins.

At Target Field, there was a different look as Cleveland took on Minnesota. The Twins showed off a new backdrop beyond the center field fence, with 5,700 sea green juniper plants now making up the batter's eye.

The Indians, meanwhile, wore uniforms without the divisive Chief Wahoo logo on them for the first time in 70 years.

Everyone on field, however, wore a patch commemorating the 150th anniversary of the first professional baseball team.

In Philly, Harper was a huge hit — even though he went 0 for 3 with two strikeouts.

Fresh off signing a \$330 million contract, Harper came onto the field wearing cleats featuring the green Phillie Phanatic. Harper did a pronounced bow to the stands in right field when he took his position and threw a warmup ball into the third deck.

Many fans wore his new No. 3 jersey. Earlier in the day, MLB announced Harper had the sport's top-selling jersey, ending a two-year run for the No. 99 of Yankees slugger Aaron Judge.

The crowd of 45,000 stood for Harper's at-bats and chanted his name. Harper's deal was the largest in baseball history until Angels star Mike Trout topped that with a \$426.5 million contract.

Trout, a two-time MVP and generally regarded as the best player in baseball, has never won a playoff game in his eight years with the Angels. He went 1 for 3 as Los Angeles opened this season with a 4-0 loss to Oakland.

AP Sports Writers Dan Gelston, Dave Campbell and Tim Booth contributed to this report.

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

Trump turns Mueller probe's findings into political weapon

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — Presenting himself as both vindicated and vindictive, a fired-up President Donald Trump on Thursday turned the findings of the Russia investigation into a political weapon at a Michigan rally that was part victory lap, part 2020 campaign push.

Trump unleashed a fervent diatribe about the inquiry, which he deemed "the greatest hoax in the history of our country." He warned that those behind the probe "would be held accountable," aired his grievances about the "unfair" media coverage and seethed that the matter was an attempt "to tear up the fabric of our great democracy."

"After three years of lies and smears and slander, the Russia hoax is dead," said Trump. "This was nothing more than a sinister effort to undermine our historic election victory and to sabotage the will of the American people."

The rollicking 82-minute speech unfolded before a boisterous crowd in a key state that Trump swiped from Democrats in 2016. It marked his first political event since Attorney General William Barr released a summary that said special counsel Robert Mueller found no evidence that his campaign "conspired or coordinated" with the Russian government to influence the 2016 election. With the cloud of the probe largely lifted, Trump is hoping to win re-election by keeping Michigan and several other Rust Belt states in his column.

"It's going to be so much easier the second time: We're one for one," Trump boasted.

He basked in the adulation of his supporters at the Grand Rapids rally. The packed crowd, some of whom began to line up the night before, delivered a deafening roar for the president while unleashing its vitriol as he bashed the media and Democrats.

The president linked Mueller's probe with the myriad investigations launched by House Democrats and tried to make the case that, after Mueller's findings, further inquiries are partisan overreach.

"The Democrats now have to decide if they will continue to defraud the American public with this ridiculous

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bull--t," said Trump, who urged the opposing party to instead work with him on issues like infrastructure repair and drug pricing.

While Trump's base has long been suspicious of Mueller, the president's team believes independents and moderate Democrats who backed him in the last election but have since soured may return to the fold if convinced he was unfairly targeted. Trump used the moment to heighten his attacks on the media, which many Trump supporters believe unjustly fanned the flames of the special counsel's probe in an effort to bring down the president.

Trump stood before a familiar backdrop: a giant American flag, signs reading "Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!" and, of course, "Make America Great Again." Though the aftermath of the probe was at the forefront of his mind, Trump also ticked off what he portrayed as his administration's accomplishments, including a booming stock market and victories over the Islamic State terror group.

He also framed the Democrats' presidential candidates as "radical," and slammed the Green New Deal, an ambitious, wide-ranging plan to combat climate change, as a "dangerous" reinvention of American society. But he spent relatively little time on his administration's renewed push to overturn the Affordable Care Act, other than to declare that the "Republican Party will be the party of health care." He didn't present many details as to what the new GOP plan might be.

His eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., provided a high-energy warm-up act and, in particular, savaged family foe Michael Avenatti, the celebrity lawyer who represented Stormy Daniels, the porn star who alleged an affair with the president. Avenatti was arrested this week on charges of extortion.

"For this week only, MAGA stands for Michael Avenatti got arrested," Trump Jr. boomed, taunting the once-rumored presidential candidate.

Loyal supporters started lining up in front of the Van Andel Arena on Wednesday evening, with some camping out in tents and sleeping bags overnight. By midafternoon, a crowd of thousands, many in red "Make America Great Again" hats, snaked for blocks around downtown Grand Rapids, just across the river from The Gerald Ford Presidential Museum.

Trump's sojourn to the Midwest is expected to be the first of many.

His campaign is seeking to hold three key states that he swung from blue to red in 2016 — Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania — but that may prove difficult to hold after midterm elections showed rising Democratic energy. Still, advisers believe Trump's core supporters remain enthusiastic heading into 2020.

With an eye on local matters, Trump touted his support for the automobile industry and announced he would reverse part of his administration's own budget plan, which had proposed a 90 percent spending cut for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Trump said he would fully fund the cleanup program, offering the \$300 million the program has typically received.

Even before Thursday's barnburner, Grand Rapids held a special place in Trump lore.

On the eve of the 2016 election, Trump's breakneck final blitz of rallies was meant to come to an end in Manchester, New Hampshire. But just days before, the Trump campaign tacked on one more rally in the western Michigan city after seeing data that showed a surge for their candidate. The Grand Rapids rally didn't end until after midnight, bleeding into Election Day. Trump won Michigan by just 10,704 votes — his margins of victory in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania were similarly small — and those close to the president have long pointed to the rally as a reason for his victory.

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey and Kevin Freking in Washington contributed to this report.

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New York sues billionaire family behind maker of OxyContin

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York is suing the billionaire family behind the company that created OxyContin, joining a growing list of state and local governments seeking to hold not only the firm but its owners ac-

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countable for the nation's opioid crisis.

The state, which averages nine opioid-related deaths per day, on Thursday expanded an existing lawsuit against pill maker Purdue Pharma to add members of its controlling Sackler family as defendants. Five other companies that produce opioid painkillers and four drug distributors, which buy medications in bulk and sell them to pharmacies, were also added as defendants.

"This is an extensive lawsuit that leaves no stone unturned," New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat, said at a news conference.

While other states and localities have filed similar suits, New York is taking some novel approaches, such as seeking to bar the companies from marketing and distributing painkillers in New York unless they abide by strict safeguards.

The suit claims drug manufacturers collaborated to falsely deny the serious risks of opioid addiction, and it accuses drug distributors of skirting systems meant to limit orders for painkillers. Distributors even helped pharmacies game the system to evade the caps, the lawsuit alleges.

But at the heart of the case are Purdue and the Sacklers, whom James called "the masterminds behind this crisis."

The suit, like others filed elsewhere, alleges aggressive marketing of OxyContin beginning in the mid-1990s led to massive overprescribing and a scourge of dependency, addiction and death. Once the pills ran out, the lawsuit alleges, many patients craving the same effects turned to cheaper, more potent alternatives: heroin and fentanyl.

Representatives for Purdue and Sackler family members said the suit misleadingly blames them for a problem that's far bigger than OxyContin.

"The state is seeking to publicly vilify Purdue" and the Sacklers with ill-supported claims about a drug that currently accounts for under 2 percent of all opioid prescriptions, the Stamford, Connecticut-based company said in a statement.

The Sackler relatives named in the suit — all former Purdue board members who remain shareholders — said in a statement issued through a spokeswoman that they "have always acted properly."

They and the company said they would fight the new allegations, which come two days after Purdue and the Sacklers agreed to pay \$270 million to the state of Oklahoma to settle an opioid lawsuit there. In settling the case, Purdue denied any wrongdoing.

It was the first settlement in a recent wave of nearly 2,000 lawsuits that the company says could push it into bankruptcy. New York, in its lawsuit, accused the Sacklers of pulling hundreds of millions of dollars from the company because of potentially costly litigation.

James, the New York attorney general, said she was open to settlement talks but hadn't been approached. In addition to potentially banning the companies from selling the drugs, her lawsuit seeks penalties and damages that could add up to tens of millions of dollars and a dedicated fund to curb the opioid epidemic.

Since 2013, opioid-related deaths statewide have more than doubled, and there's been a 30-fold increase in fentanyl-related deaths in New York City, according to the lawsuit. It accuses the companies of deliberately betraying their duties under state drug laws "in order to profiteer from the plague they knew would be unleashed."

New Yorker Justin Sangeorge says he experienced that plague firsthand after having a dental procedure, getting an opioid prescription and becoming addicted.

"I couldn't believe how readily available pharmaceutical drugs were," said the social worker, who has gotten treatment, is now recovering and spoke at a news conference with James.

"We hold accountable drug dealers, drug traffickers, I know, but the pharmaceutical companies hide behind this legitimate enterprise, and as far as I'm concerned, are just as guilty as a drug trafficker or a drug cartel," Sangeorge said.

The suit accuses Purdue in particular of downplaying addiction risks and pushing doctors to increase dosages even as the dangers became known, the lawsuit said. Some of the company's marketing tactics included hiring a respected New York City doctor to tout the drug and sending representatives on more

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than a million sales visits to doctors' offices, the lawsuit said.

Richard Sackler, then senior vice president responsible for sales, proudly told the audience at an Oxy-Contin launch party in 1996 that it would create a "blizzard of prescriptions that will bury the competition," the lawsuit said.

Purdue and the Sacklers have said they're committed to trying to stem opioid addiction, including through the Oklahoma settlement. It includes \$75 million from the Sacklers, though they weren't personally sued in that case.

Nearly \$200 million of the money will go toward establishing a National Center for Addiction Studies and Treatment at Oklahoma State University in Tulsa.

The Sacklers have given tens of millions of dollars to New York City cultural institutions. Several members of the family own multimillion-dollar Manhattan apartments. One has a \$5 million Long Island estate.

In the past few weeks, as the accusations against the family have mounted, the Tate museums in London and the Guggenheim Museum in New York have cut ties with the family, and other institutions have come under pressure to turn down donations or remove the Sackler name.

The other defendants in New York's lawsuit are: Johnson & Johnson and Janssen Pharmaceuticals; U.K.-based Mallinckrodt plc, which has an opioid manufacturing plant in Hobart, New York; Dublin-based Endo and Allergan; Israeli pharmaceutical company Teva and the drug distributors McKesson, Amerisource-Bergen, Cardinal Health and Rochester Drug Cooperative Inc.

Endo said in a statement that it denies the allegations in the lawsuit and intends to vigorously defend itself.

Cardinal Health said it has a "rigorous system" to track pharmacy orders and has stopped suspicious orders for hundreds of millions of painkiller pills over the last decade. In a statement, the Dublin, Ohio-based company said: "Our people operate in good faith, and our goal is to get it right."

McKesson had no specific response to the New York suit but said it has "strong programs" to try to prevent opioid abuse.

The other companies declined comment or did not immediately respond to requests for it.

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Bump stocks are turned in or destroyed as ban takes effect

By LISA MARIE PANE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — The largest supplier of bump stocks turned in its entire remaining inventory to be destroyed — some 60,000 devices. Washington state's buyback program was so popular it ran out of money. One dealer held a "Viking funeral" for his last bump stock, pouring a can of beer on it and then melting it down with a flamethrower.

A nationwide ban took effect Tuesday on bump stocks, the attachment used by the gunman in the 2017 Las Vegas massacre to make his weapons fire rapidly like machine guns.

How many of the estimated half-million devices believed to be in circulation in the U.S. are still around is anyone's guess, but in the weeks leading up to the ban, there were signs that many were destroyed or turned in as required.

Anyone in possession of a bump stock from now on can be charged with a federal offense punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives outlawed the attachments at President Donald Trump's direction after the Las Vegas gunman rained fire from his high-rise hotel suite on concertgoers, killing 58 people in the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

On Thursday, the Supreme Court declined to put the ban on hold.

As the prohibition drew near, RW Arms in Fort Worth, Texas, featured a countdown clock on its website and heavily promoted last chances to buy the accessories. By the time the ban took effect, RW Arms was left with 60,000, probably worth millions, since they sell for around \$150 to \$250 each.

The company turned over crates of them to the ATF, and a video showed boxes being loaded onto a

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conveyor belt and fed into an industrial grinder.

Washington state set aside \$150,000 to offer owners \$150 for each device they turned in to police. Within weeks, the money had been used up.

The ATF declined to say how many people brought their bump stocks to an ATF office.

T.J. Kirgin, owner of a firearms tactical gear company in St. Peters, Missouri, said that in the weeks before the measure went into effect, he made one last sweep through his warehouse to make sure he didn't have any more devices left.

And then he took his very last one and with some friends held a mock funeral for it, reducing it to a hunk of melted plastic embedded in a rock.

While gun control activists welcomed the end of the line for a device blamed for horrifying carnage, Kirgin called it not just the day bump stocks died but the day freedom died.

"If they can do this with a piece of plastic, then they'll be able to do it with another piece of plastic and another piece of metal, another piece of plastic," he said. "And it's just systematically taking away Second Amendment rights."

This story has been amended to correct the full name of the ATF.

US charges Facebook with high-tech housing discrimination

By MAE ANDERSON and BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — The federal government charged Facebook with high-tech housing discrimination Thursday for allegedly allowing landlords and real estate brokers to systematically exclude groups such as non-Christians, immigrants and minorities from seeing ads for houses and apartments.

The civil charges filed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development could cost the social network millions of dollars in penalties. But more than that, they strike at the heart of Facebook's business model — its vaunted ability to deliver ads with surgical precision to certain groups of people and not others.

"Facebook is discriminating against people based upon who they are and where they live," HUD Secretary Ben Carson said. "Using a computer to limit a person's housing choices can be just as discriminatory as slamming a door in someone's face."

In a statement, Facebook expressed surprise over the charges, saying it has been working with HUD to address its concerns and has taken steps to prevent discrimination, including eliminating thousands of ad-targeting options last year that could be misused by advertisers.

Just last week, Facebook agreed to overhaul its targeting system and abandon some of the practices singled out by HUD to prevent discrimination, not just in housing listings but in credit and employment ads as well. The move was part of a settlement with the American Civil Liberties Union and other activists.

"We're disappointed by today's developments, but we'll continue working with civil rights experts on these issues," the company said.

The HUD charges were seen as a possible prelude to a wider regulatory crackdown on the digital advertising industry, which is dominated by Facebook and Google. And the case was yet another blow to Facebook, which has come under siege from lawmakers, regulators and activists and is under investigation in the U.S. and Europe over its data and privacy practices.

HUD spokesman Brian Sullivan said the agency has reached out to Google and Twitter to "better understand their advertising practices." But he said neither is currently under investigation. Twitter says it doesn't allow discriminatory advertising, while Google says its policies prohibit targeting ads based on sensitive categories such as race, ethnicity and religious beliefs.

Google, in particular, has ad-targeting options similar to Facebook's.

The technology at the center of the clash with HUD has helped make Facebook rich, with annual revenue of close to \$56 billion. Facebook gathers enormous amounts of data on what users read and like and who their friends are, and it uses that information to help advertisers and others direct their messages to exactly the crowd they want to reach.

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HUD said Facebook is allowing advertisers to practice a sort of high-tech form of red-lining by excluding people in entire neighborhoods or ZIP codes from seeing their ads. The company was accused, too, of giving advertisers the option of showing ads only to men or only to women.

Facebook also allegedly allowed advertisers to exclude parents; those who are non-American-born; non-Christians; and those interested in Hispanic culture, "deaf culture," accessibility for the disabled, countries like Honduras or Somalia, or a variety of other topics.

The case will be heard by an administration law judge unless HUD or Facebook decides to move it to federal court.

"The nature of their business model is advertising and targeted advertising, so that is a slippery slope. That is their business model," said Dan Ives, an industry analyst with Wedbush Securities. "The government launched this missile and caught many in the industry by surprise."

Ives said the move may mean U.S. regulators are taking broader aim at the digital advertising market. "This is a clear shot across the bow for Facebook and others," he said.

Galen Sherwin of the ACLU likewise warned: "All the online platforms should be paying close attention to these lawsuits and taking a hard look at their own advertising platforms."

Facebook is already under fire for allowing fake Russian accounts to buy ads targeting U.S. users and sow political discord during the 2016 presidential election. The company has also been criticized for allowing organizations to target groups of people identified as "Jew-haters" and Nazi sympathizers.

HUD brought an initial complaint against Facebook in August. Facebook said in its statement that it was "eager to find a solution" but that HUD "insisted on access to sensitive information — like user data — without adequate safeguards."

In its settlement with the ACLU and others, Facebook said it will no longer allow housing, employment or credit ads that target people by age, gender or ZIP code. It said it will also limit other targeting options so that these ads don't exclude people on the basis of race, ethnicity and other legally protected categories, including sexual orientation.

"Unless and until HUD can verify that there is an end of the discriminatory practices, we still have a responsibility to the American people," said Raffi Williams, deputy assistant HUD secretary.

Ortutay reported from San Francisco. AP Business Writer Michelle Chapman in Newark, New Jersey, and AP Technology Writer Rachel Lerman in San Francisco contributed to this report.

Asian stocks rise as US, China resume trade talks

By ANNABELLE LIANG Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Asian markets were mostly higher on Friday as U.S. and Chinese officials kicked off a fresh round of trade talks in Beijing.

The Shanghai Composite index added 0.6 percent to 28,944.33 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 1.7 percent to 3,044.63. South Korea's Kospi gained 0.3 percent to 2,134.28.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 1 percent to 21,232.93. The country's retail sales fell slightly in February from a month earlier, preliminary data showed. But industrial production rose 1.4 percent, as compared to January's 3.4 percent decline. The unemployment rate beat market expectations, falling to 2.3 percent in February from 2.5 percent in the previous month.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was up 0.2 percent at 6,189.80. Shares rose in Taiwan and Singapore but fell in Indonesia.

U.S. negotiators, led by Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, attended a working dinner Thursday night with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He, who is expected to travel to Washington next week.

The three of them posed for a photo at a government guesthouse before negotiations resumed on Friday but did not talk to reporters.

"Investor eyes will be glued to news feeds looking for any more details - rumored or true - emerging

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from the talks. This could cause some abrupt intra-day volatility across the markets," Jingyi Pan of IG said in a market commentary.

News about the talks was read as largely positive by the markets. At a speech in Washington on Thursday, White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said the U.S. administration was prepared to continue trade negotiations with China for weeks or even months. This was taken as a sign of commitment to reaching a deal.

On Wall Street, traders shrugged off a discouraging announcement by the Commerce Department. It said U.S. economic growth had slowed sharply in the last three months of 2018 to an annual rate of just 2.2 percent, due to weakness in consumer spending, business investment, government spending and housing.

Most indexes finished higher, as bond yields rose and financial, technology and industrial stocks climbed. The broad S&P 500 index was 0.4 percent higher at 2,815.44. The Dow Jones Industrial Average also gained 0.4 percent to 25,717.46. The Nasdaq composite rose 0.3 percent to 7,669.17 and the Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks picked up 0.8 percent to 1,535.10.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude added 35 cents to \$59.65 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 11 cents to settle at \$59.30 per barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, edged up 37 cents to \$67.47 per barrel. The contract shed 14 cents to \$67.10 per barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar strengthened to 110.78 yen from 110.63 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1228 from \$1.1221.

AP Business Writer Alex Veiga contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 29, the 88th day of 2019. There are 277 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 29, 1951, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were convicted in New York of conspiracy to commit espionage for the Soviet Union. (They were executed in June 1953.)

On this date:

In 1638, Swedish colonists settled in present-day Delaware.

In 1867, Britain's Parliament passed, and Queen Victoria signed, the British North America Act creating the Dominion of Canada, which came into being the following July.

In 1912, British explorer Robert Falcon Scott, his doomed expedition stranded in an Antarctic blizzard after failing to be the first to reach the South Pole, wrote the last words of his journal: "For Gods sake look after our people."

In 1943, World War II rationing of meat, fats and cheese began, limiting consumers to store purchases of an average of about two pounds a week for beef, pork, lamb and mutton using a coupon system. (The Associated Press noted, "From the customer viewpoint, the unrationed oasis of food will be the restaurant or other public eating place.")

In 1951, The Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "The King and I" opened on Broadway.

In 1962, Jack Paar hosted NBC's "Tonight" show for the final time. (Johnny Carson debuted as host the following October.)

In 1971, Army Lt. William L. Calley Jr. was convicted of murdering 22 Vietnamese civilians in the 1968 My Lai (mee ly) massacre. (Calley ended up serving three years under house arrest.) A jury in Los Angeles recommended the death penalty for Charles Manson and three female followers for the 1969 Tate-La Bianca murders. (The sentences were later commuted.)

In 1973, the last United States combat troops left South Vietnam, ending America's direct military involvement in the Vietnam War.

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In 1974, eight Ohio National Guardsmen were indicted on federal charges stemming from the shooting deaths of four students at Kent State University. (The charges were later dismissed.)

In 1989, at the Academy Awards, "Rain Man" won best picture, best director for Barry Levinson and best actor for Dustin Hoffman; Jodie Foster won best actress for "The Accused." (This was the Oscars ceremony that featured the notorious opening number with Rob Lowe and "Snow White.")

In 2005, attorney Johnnie L. Cochran Jr. died in Los Angeles at age 67. Former U.S. Senator Howell Heflin died in Sheffield, Alabama, at age 83.

In 2017, Britain filed for divorce from the European Union as Prime Minister Theresa May sent a six-page letter to EU Council President Donald Tusk. Two former aides to New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie were sentenced to prison for creating a colossal traffic jam at the George Washington Bridge for political revenge, a scandal that sank Christie's White House hopes.

Ten years ago: General Motors CEO Rick Wagoner resigned under White House pressure. A gunman killed seven residents of the Pinelake Health and Rehabilitation Center in Carthage, N.C., along with a nurse. (Robert Kenneth Stewart was convicted of second-degree murder and other charges and sentenced to more than 140 years in prison.) A stampede at a World Cup qualifying soccer match in the Ivory Coast killed 22 people.

Five years ago: Two Spanish journalists, Javier Espinosa and Ricardo Garcia Vilanova, were freed after being held captive for six months in Syria by a rogue al-Qaida group. Mao Asada of Japan topped the free skate to capture her third world figure skating title.

One year ago: Russia announced the expulsion of more than 150 diplomats, including 60 Americans, and said it was closing a U.S. consulate in retaliation for Western expulsions of Russian diplomats over the poisoning of an ex-spy and his daughter in Britain. Malala Yousafzai returned home to Pakistan for a four-day visit, the first by the 20-year-old Nobel laureate since she was shot by the Taliban five years earlier for speaking out in support of education of girls. The 2018 baseball season began with a home run from Ian Happ of the Chicago Cubs on the season's first pitch, while Giancarlo Stanton hit two homers in his debut with the New York Yankees. Rusty Staub, whose fiery orange hair and gregarious personality had charmed baseball fans in the United States and Canada during an All-Star career that spanned 23 seasons, died in Florida at the age of 73.

Today's Birthdays: Author Judith Guest is 83. Former British Prime Minister Sir John Major is 76. Comedian Eric Idle is 76. Composer Vangelis is 76. Basketball Hall of Famer Walt Frazier is 74. Singer Bobby Kimball (Toto) is 72. Actor Bud Cort is 71. Actor Brendan Gleeson is 64. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Earl Campbell is 64. Actress Marina Sirtis is 64. International Gymnastics Hall of Famer Kurt Thomas is 63. Actor Christopher Lambert is 62. Rock singer Perry Farrell (Porno for Pyros; Jane's Addiction) is 60. Comedian-actress Amy Sedaris is 58. Model Elle Macpherson is 56. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., is 55. Actress Annabella Sciorra (shee-OR'-uh) is 55. Movie director Michel Hazanavicius (mee-SHEHL' ah-zah-nah-VEE'-see-oos) is 52. Rock singer-musician John Popper (Blues Traveler) is 52. Actress Lucy Lawless is 51. Country singer Regina Leigh (Regina Regina) is 51. Country singer Brady Seals is 50. Former White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs is 48. CBS News correspondent Lara Logan is 48. Actor Sam Hazeldine is 47. International Tennis Hall of Famer Jennifer Capriati is 43. Actor Chris D'Elia is 39. Rhythm and blues singer PJ Morton is 38. Actress Megan Hilty is 38. Pop singer Kelly Sweet is 31.

Thought for Today: "If men could foresee the future, they would still behave as they do now." — Russian proverb.