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Groton United Methodist Women

Salad & Dessert Buffet

Wednesday, May 1st

from 11 am - 1 pm

Please join us for lunch or make your own to-go!

Men & Women \$8 – Children 6 and under free

at the Groton United Methodist Church

Proceeds to UMW Missions

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Groton Area's
KG Roundup
has been rescheduled to
April 30th
All scheduled times will stay the same. Please contact Heidi Krueger at the elementary school to confirm this new date.
605/397-2317



HARR
Motors

4255 6th

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!!!

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Thursday, April 25, 2019

10:00am: Golf: Girls Varsity Meet @ Redfield Golf Course

3:30pm: Track: 7th/8th Meet @ Milbank High School

Friday, April 26, 2019

1:00pm: Track: Varsity Meet @ Sisseton High School

Saturday, April 27, 2019

7 p.m.: Prom at Groton Area High School

Sunday, April 28, 2019

2 p.m. - 5 p.m.: Bridal Shower for Emily Kern at Emmanuel Lutheran Church

5:30 p.m.: Princesses Prom Grand March at the GHS Gym

Monday, April 29, 2019

2:00pm: Track: 7th/8th Meet @ Redfield Jr-Sr High School

Tuesday, April 30, 2019

8:30am- 3:30pm: KG Roundup (Screening) at Groton Area Elementary School

1:00pm: Track: Varsity Meet @ Milbank High School

DI Pork Loin Meal, 5-7 p.m., HS Gym.

7:00pm: Middle School Spring Concert

Wednesday, May 1, 2019

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.: United Methodist Women May Salad & Dessert Buffet at the UMC.

7 p.m.: Carnival of Silver Skates annual meeting at the warming house.

Thursday, May 2, 2019

10:00am: Golf: Girls Varsity Meet @ Lee Park Golf Course

DI Pork Loin Meal, 5-7 p.m., HS Gym.

7:00pm: High School Spring Concert and Awards Night

Friday, May 3, 2019

Howard Wood Relays in Sioux Falls

4:00pm: Track: Varsity Meet @ Sisseton High School

7:00pm: FFA Banquet Groton Area High School

Saturday, May 4, 2019

8 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Groton City-wide Rummage Sale

Howard Wood Relays in Sioux Falls

Sunday, May 5, 2019

5:00 p.m. Groton Softball, Baseball and T-Ball parent meeting at the Legion

**Come and go Bridal shower for Emily Kern, bride to be of Nathan Skadsen,
Sunday, April 28 2019 2-5 pm at
Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

Silver Skates Annual Meeting

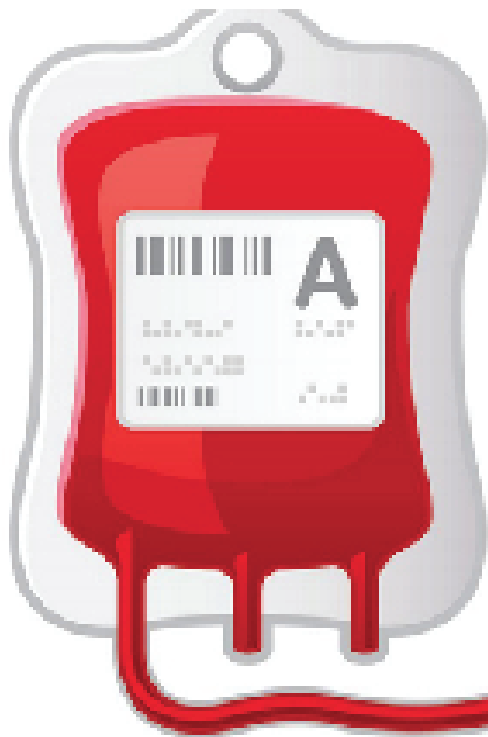
Does your child enjoy ice skating?

Do you like to see community traditions continue?

Do you have creative or organizational talents waiting to be shared with others?

Please join us for the Carnival of Silver Skates annual meeting on Wednesday, May 1 at 7:00 p.m. at the warming house.

Upcoming
**COMMUNITY
EVENTS**



**Be a hero.
Save a life.**

vitalant.

**Blood Drive
Monday, April 29
12:15 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Groton Community Center
Call 397-8498 or 397-7525 to sign up**

Don't forget to fill out your Fast Track Health History online the day of your donation to speed up the process! The link for your Fast Track Health History can be found at <https://www.vitalant.org/health>.

NOW HIRING!

Truss Pros

10954 424th Avenue | Britton, SD 57430

Looking for assemblers - both shifts

* New Starting Wage - \$15/hr day shift and
\$16/hr night shift
Overtime Available

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Comprehensive Health,
- Dental & Vision insurance
- Life Insurance
- Short-term Disability and Long-term Disability
- 401k
- Holiday Pay
- Vacation Pay
- Paid Sick Leave
- Referral Bonuses

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

Groton Area ranked second in BackgroundChecks

Brandon Valley and Groton Area school districts were rank first and second, respectively. Arlington, Warner and Dell Rapids school districts round out the top five. Sioux Falls School District was ranked 11th and Harrisburg School District ranked 14.

The rankings were determined by assessing crucial scholastic and financial metrics, including the student-to-teacher ratio, standardized test scores, teacher quality, graduation rate, and school funding for over 10,000 schools in the U.S. Information was gathered from the databases at the National Center for Education Statistics and the U.S. Department of Education.

BackgroundChecks.org is a free online directory and portal for accessing public records and running background checks. To see the rankings of school districts, visit BackgroundChecks.org.

Work Begins on Highways 37 and 14 in Huron

HURON, S.D. – Reede Construction began work on the intersection of Highway 37 (Dakota Avenue) and Highway 14 in Huron on Monday, April 22.

Work was originally scheduled to start early April but was postponed due to weather.

This segment of the project will be constructed one quadrant at a time. Traffic will be placed in a two-way configuration in the eastbound lanes of Highway 14 and the southbound lanes of Highway 37.

The \$8 million project will reconstruct 1.1 miles of Dakota Avenue from 15th Street N. to 3rd Street N., add turn lanes to the Highway 14 intersection and reconstruct the 21st Street intersection.

Public meetings for the project will be held Wednesdays at 10 a.m. at the SDDOT conference room on 901 Dakota Avenue N. in Huron beginning April 24. These meetings will help the public to stay up to date on project timing and answer questions.

Updates on the project will also be available at <http://www.sddot.com/travelers/projects/Default.aspx> once construction has begun.

Through truck traffic is being advised to take an alternate route due to anticipated traffic volumes and narrowed lanes. Drivers should be prepared for suddenly slowing and merging traffic, reduced speeds and construction workers and equipment adjacent to the driving lanes.

The overall completion date for the project is set for Nov. 1, 2019.

For complete road construction information, visit www.safetravelusa.com/sd or dial 511.

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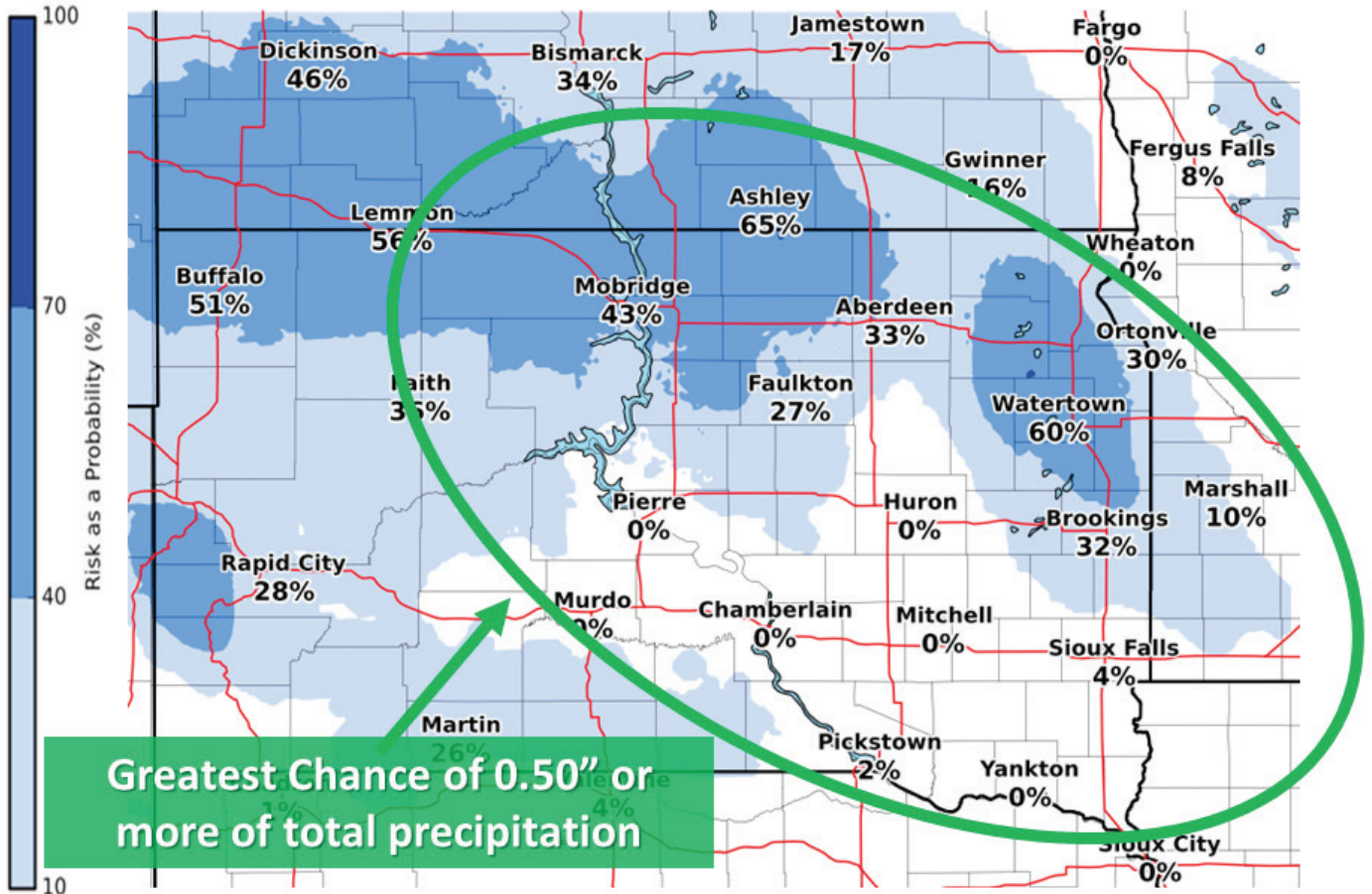
Chance of Receiving 1" of Snow Overnight Friday Into Early Saturday Morning

National Weather Service



Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 4/24/2019 4:07 PM Central



Published on: 04/24/2019 at 5:36PM

There are increasing chances of seeing some snow overnight Friday and into Saturday morning. Right now, 1-3" is possible especially for north central South Dakota and over the Sisseton Hills. Either way, most of the area is expected to receive a good shot of moisture generally in the 0.25" to 0.75" range.

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Today in Weather History

April 25, 1994: Lightning from a thunderstorm 4 miles W of Aberdeen struck two houses, causing structural damage and starting a fire which caused further damage to one home. The second house suffered damage only to a surge protector.

April 25, 1996: An intense area of low pressure brought high winds of 30 to 50 mph with isolated gusts to 80 mph to central and north central South Dakota from the morning to the evening of the 25th. The dry April soil was picked up by the high winds, lowering visibilities in blowing dust. Some places experienced dust storm conditions with low visibilities and drifting dust. Many roofs lost shingles due to the strong winds. In Eagle Butte, the Vietnam Veterans Center roof was blown off. Other buildings were also damaged across the area, along with some broken windows. Some power poles and lines were downed west of Fort Pierre. Some trees and branches were also downed. Near Isabel, a cattle trailer was tipped over, and two calf shelters were destroyed. Also, a twenty foot Conoco sign was blown down near Isabel along with other signs damaged across the area. The dust storm reminded many of the 1930s. Some wind gusts include 60 mph at Mobridge and Selby, 70 mph at Miller, Pierre, and Murdo, and 80 mph at Isabel and Eagle Butte.

1875: New York City received three inches of snow, the latest measurable snowfall on record for that location.

1880: A violent tornado, at times up to 400 yards wide, swept away at least 20 homes in Macon, Mississippi. Pieces of houses were found 15 miles away. 22 people died, and 72 were injured. Loaded freight cars were thrown 100 yards into homes. Clothes were carried for eight miles.

1898 - The temperature at Volcano Springs CA hit 118 degrees to establish a U.S. record for the month of April. (The Weather Channel)

1910: Chicago, Illinois was blanketed with 2.5 inches of snow, and a total of 6.5 inches between the 22nd and the 26th. It was the latest significant snow on record for the city. Atlanta, Georgia also received late-season snowfall when 1.5 inches fell. Their 32 degrees low is the latest freeze on record.

1912: An estimated F4 tornado struck Ponca City, Oklahoma. One person was killed, and 119 homes were damaged or destroyed. Dozens of oil derricks were flattened or twisted, southwest of town. The tornado was reportedly visible and audible for 20 miles.

1920 - Atlanta, GA, received 1.5 inches of snow, and experienced their latest freeze of record with a morning low of 32 degrees. The high of just 39 degrees was only their second daily high colder than 40 degrees in April. (The Weather Channel)

1984 - A late season snowstorm struck the Northern Rockies and the Northern Plains. The storm produced some unusually high snowfall totals. The town of Lead, located in the Black Hills of western South Dakota, was buried under 67 inches of snow. Red Lodge, located in the mountains of southern Montana, reported 72 inches of snow. Up to 60 inches blanketed the mountains of northern Wyoming. It was rated the worst late season storm of record for much of the affected area. (25th-28th) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)


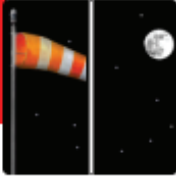

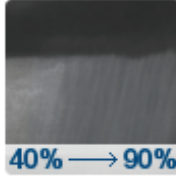

1987 - Low pressure off the coast of North Carolina produced heavy rain flooding creeks in the foothills and the piedmont area, before moving out to sea. The low pressure system also produced wind gusts to 50 mph in Virginia. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

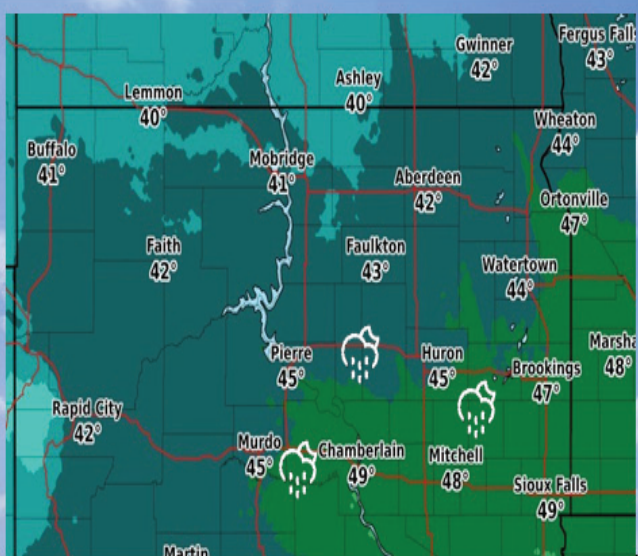
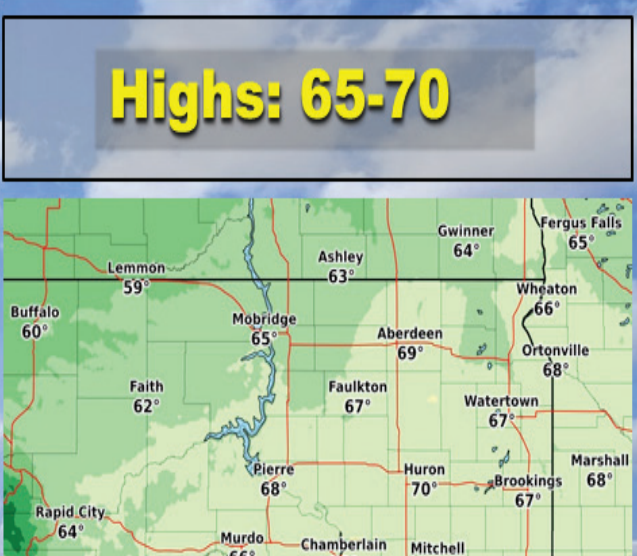
1990: Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Texas to Nebraska. Thunderstorms spawned fifteen tornadoes, including a powerful F4 tornado near Weatherford, Texas. Between 3 PM and 8 PM, a storm complex tracking northeastward across central Kansas spawned four tornadoes along a 119-mile path from Ness to Smith Center, with the last tornado on the ground for 55 miles. Del Rio TX was hit with hail two inches in diameter and wind gusts to 112 mph. Brown County and Commanche County in Texas were deluged with up to 18 inches of rain, and flooding caused more than 65 million dollars damage.

2008 - Anchorage, AK, receives a record 17.2 inches at the airport and 22 inches in northeast Anchorage from the 25th to 26th. The 15.5 inches on the 25th makes it the third most received on any one day in Anchorage.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
				
20%			40% → 90%	80% 60%
Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms and Breezy	Clear and Blustery then Clear	Increasing Clouds	Chance Showers then Showers	Rain/Snow then Showers Likely
High: 71 °F	Low: 29 °F	High: 61 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 51 °F

Tonight	Thursday
	
Rain Showers in south central and southeast SD	Highs: 65-70
Winds: Northwest 10-20mph	Wind: Northwest gusting to 30-40mph
	National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD Updated: 4/24/2019 2:30 PM Central

Published on: 04/24/2019 at 3:37PM

Tonight's lows are expected in the low 40s across the region. A front passing through the region could bring some rain showers to south central and southeastern SD. Thursday is expected to be dry and breezy with highs in the upper 60s and winds gusting 30-40 mph Thursday evening.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 78 °F at 3:45 PM

Low Outside Temp: 47 °F at 6:19 AM

High Gust: 27 mph at 12:56 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 97° in 1962

Record Low: 19° in 1958, 2013

Average High: 62°F

Average Low: 36°F

Average Precip in April: 1.34

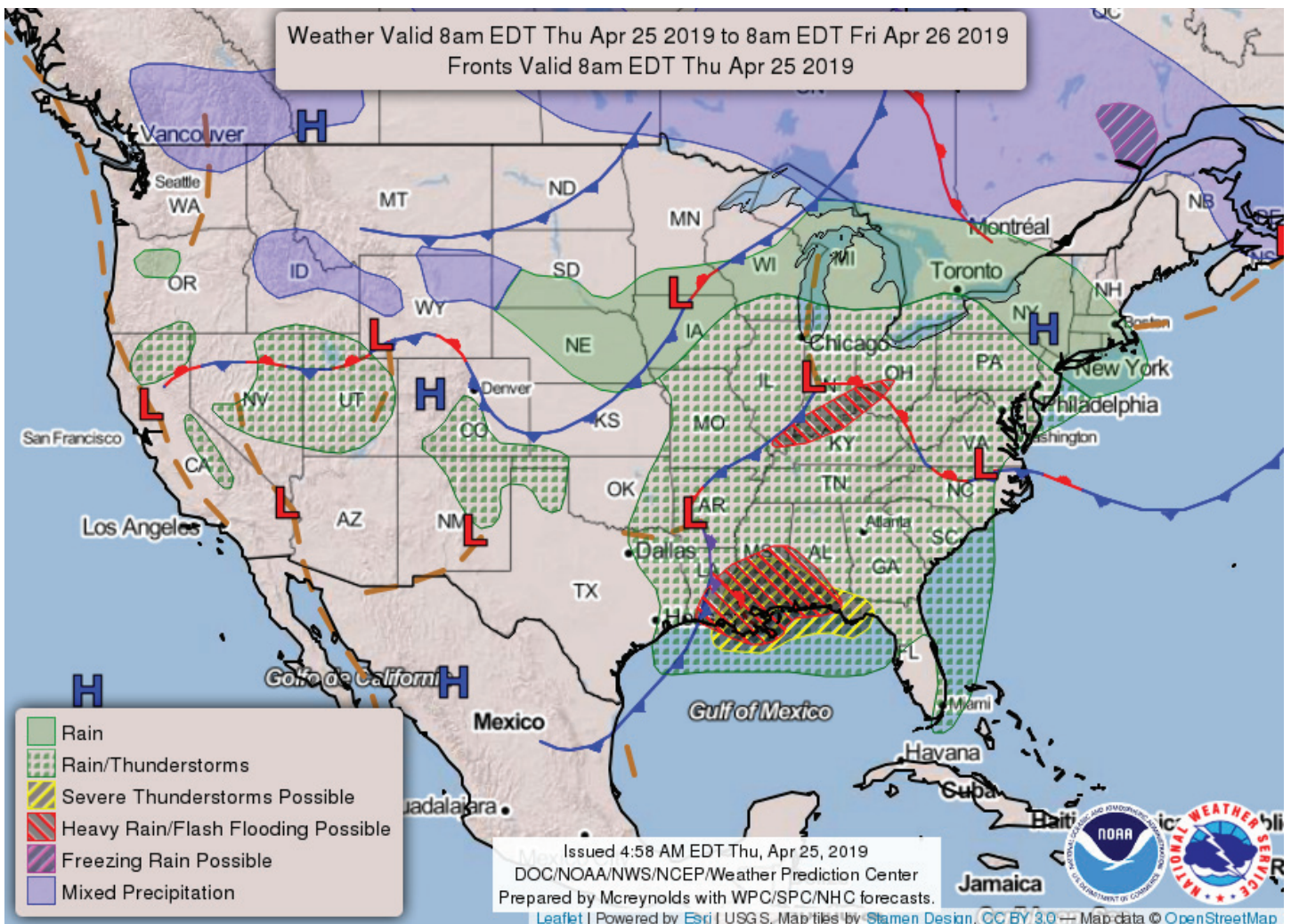
Precip to date in April: 1.42

Average Precip to date: 3.52

Precip Year to Date: 4.46

Sunset Tonight: 8:33 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:30 a.m.



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WHY CHARACTER COUNTS

Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me!

That little phrase has been used by many parents and teachers to comfort children who have been harassed. Words used to describe another person are important because they form the foundation of one's reputation. And, like it or not, everyone has a reputation.

Age is almost irrelevant when we talk about another person. Opinions are formed, decisions made, and often opportunities or limitations are placed on another individual because of what is said about them. Never mind who said what, an opinion is formed. Even first impressions or a few words shared about another person can last a lifetime. What is said and heard about someone can build them up or tear them down.

If the words are praiseworthy, they can bring honor to that person. If they are mean-spirited, they may result in a life of torment to the one defamed. Words stick and sometimes shatter hopes and dreams. What we do and what others say about what we do is critical!

A person is praised because of their wise choices, and one with a warped mind is despised, wrote Solomon. This warning reminds us that we are responsible for what others believe about us based on our behavior. Prudence describes the choices we make and are observed by others. If our choices are honorable, we will be praised. Otherwise, our reputation for having a warped mind, or being a person with a crooked heart will come to light.

What a challenge this presents to Christians. We must walk our talk!

Prayer: Lord, You, as well as everyone else, observe everything we do. May we live honorably, righteously, and always in agreement with Your teachings! In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 12:8 A person is praised because of their wise choices, and one with a warped mind is despised.

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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

Great Western Bancorp, Inc. Declares Increased Quarterly Cash Dividend

SIOUX FALLS, S.D.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Apr 25, 2019--The Board of Directors of Great Western Bancorp, Inc. (NYSE: GWB) today announced that it has declared a quarterly cash dividend to its stockholders.

A quarterly cash dividend of \$0.30 per common share will be paid on May 24, 2019, to all stockholders of record as of the close of business on May 10, 2019. This represents an increase of 20% compared to the most recent quarterly dividend of \$0.25 per common share. Future dividends will be subject to Board approval.

About Great Western Bancorp, Inc.

Great Western Bancorp, Inc. is the holding company for Great Western Bank, a full-service regional bank focused on relationship-based business and agribusiness banking. Great Western Bank offers small and mid-sized businesses a focused suite of financial products and a range of deposit and loan products to retail customers through several channels, including the branch network, online banking system, mobile banking applications and customer care centers. The bank services its customers through more than 170 branches in nine states: Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. To learn more about Great Western Bank visit www.greatwesternbank.com.

Forward-Looking Statements

The materials posted may contain forward-looking statements, including guidance, involving significant risks and uncertainties, which will be identified by words such as "believe," "expect," "anticipate," "intend," "estimate," "should," "is likely," "will," "going forward" and other expressions that indicate future events and trends and may be followed by or reference cautionary statements. A number of factors could cause actual results to differ materially from those in the forward-looking information. These factors are outlined in our most recent earnings press release and in more detail in our most current 10-Q and 10-K filings. Great Western Bancorp, Inc. disclaims any obligation to update any of the forward-looking statements that are made from time to time to reflect future events or developments or changes in expectations.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

07-22-23-26-29

(seven, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-six, twenty-nine)

Estimated jackpot: \$300,000

Lotto America

03-14-15-26-46, Star Ball: 4, ASB: 2

(three, fourteen, fifteen, twenty-six, forty-six; Star Ball: four; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$18.66 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$212 million

Powerball

06-32-35-36-65, Powerball: 4, Power Play: 5

(six, thirty-two, thirty-five, thirty-six, sixty-five; Powerball: four; Power Play: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$150 million

AP joins global initiative to expand reporting on religion

By The Associated Press undefined

The Associated Press is joining with the Religion News Service and the nonprofit publisher The Conversation to form a global initiative to expand news reporting on religion in the United States and around the world.

The collaboration is being funded by an 18-month, \$4.9 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to the Religion News Service's parent organization, the nonprofit Religion News Foundation. The grant represents one of the biggest investments in religion news coverage in decades.

The initiative will create a joint news desk to produce multi-format coverage of major faiths, with a focus on illuminating the religious practices and principles that underlie current events and cultural movements.

To help build the initiative, the AP will hire eight religion journalists, and the Religion News Service will hire three. The Conversation will add two editors. The organizations will also hire additional business staff to help administer the grant.

"This collaboration significantly expands AP's capacity to explore issues of faith, ethics and spirituality as a social and cultural force," said AP Vice President and Managing Editor Brian Carovillano.

The initiative "fundamentally transforms religion journalism in the U.S. and globally," said Thomas Gallagher, CEO of the Religion News Foundation and publisher of its news service. "Competent, reliable, professional religion journalism is needed more than ever."

Bruce Wilson, chief innovation and development officer at The Conversation, which publishes analysis and commentary from academic experts, said the initiative "can bring our fresh insights to an even wider range of audiences across the country and globally."

Each of the three organizations will retain editorial control of its content, which will be labeled and distributed by the AP. Opinion pieces from the Religion News Service will be available to AP members and customers but will not run on AP's news wire.

The Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment has sought to improve public understanding of religion by funding documentaries about religious leaders and traditions and by supporting the Religion News Service.

"This is an opportunity to bring content about religion to a much broader audience and market than has previously been possible," said Michael Fabiano, AP's vice president for local media.

Super weed that attacks crops makes new inroads in Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota agriculture officials say a super weed that can devastate corn and soybean crops has made new incursions into the state by way of livestock feed.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture says cows have eaten remnants of the weed in feed and it has shown up in manure that farmers spread on fields. The Star Tribune reports that it has been confirmed in six Minnesota counties.

The aggressive pigweed species is native to the desert regions of the southwestern U.S. and northern Mexico, but has spread to more than half the states, including North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

North Dakota State University officials gearing up to fight the weed say the spread of Palmer amaranth can reduce yields by up to 91% for corn and 79% for soybeans.

Information from: Star Tribune, <http://www.startribune.com>

Officials discuss parameters of North Dakota oil study

By BLAKE NICHOLSON Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A federal estimate of recoverable oil in North Dakota and the surrounding area needs to factor in more geologic formations and rapidly advancing technology, state and energy industry officials said Wednesday.

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The U.S. Geological Survey has begun updating its estimate of recoverable oil and gas resources in the Williston Basin in North Dakota, eastern Montana and northwestern South Dakota. It expects to wrap up the effort by the end of the year, Energy Resource Program Coordinator Walter Guidroz said during a meeting with the officials to map out the best strategy for compiling the new estimate.

The USGS in 2013 estimated 7.4 billion barrels of oil could be recovered from the basin's Bakken and underlying Three Forks shale formations, which encompass about 25,000 square miles within the Williston Basin. However, there are 17 other, smaller geologic formations that also show "significant" potential with new drilling and hydraulic fracturing technology, according to state Mineral Resources Director Lynn Helms. Five have already been studied by state officials.

"They've identified maybe a billion barrels of oil potential," Helms said.

North Dakota is already the nation's second-leading producer of crude behind Texas, accounting for about 12 percent of U.S. production. The state saw record production in January of 1.4 million barrels daily. Almost all of that came from the Bakken and Three Forks, where technology advancements are enabling companies to extract more oil "than we ever thought possible," Continental Resources Geologic Manager Tony Moss said.

"We've completely replaced our top 10 (producing) wells within about the last year and a half," he said. "We're really just getting to the point where we feel like we're really starting to optimize development."

Continental estimates as much as 40 billion barrels of recoverable oil from the Bakken and Three Forks alone.

Sen. John Hoeven and industry officials asked the USGS in September 2017 for a new federal assessment, saying it could show stronger production potential.

"We have to continue to attract capital and investment not only to produce the resource but to get all the infrastructure we need to do it right," Hoeven said Wednesday, detailing a laundry list of needs including pipelines, processing plants, roads, bridges, houses, stores and bigger airports.

The USGS in December 2017 committed to a study, which Guidroz said is now in the initial stages. There is no set budget for the study, he said.

This story has been corrected to show that officials are discussing the process for releasing estimates of oil resources and will release actual figures later, and that the Williston Basin is in eastern Montana, not western.

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

Hemp, drug laws set for legislative studies in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers during next year's legislative session will revisit whether to legalize hemp and will consider the state's drug laws and access to mental health treatment.

The Legislature's Executive Board on Tuesday finalized the topics for this summer's interim legislative studies, which take place every year while legislators are not in session. The lawmakers look at data and testimony from field experts to see how the Legislature could improve laws when it reconvenes the following session.

The study on industrial hemp will look at the impact of legalizing the production of the crop in South Dakota and the costs to law enforcement, The Rapid City Journal reported. The Legislature passed a bill to legalize hemp last month, but Gov. Kristi Noem vetoed it.

Rep. Oren Lesmeister, the House Minority Whip who introduced the bill this year, will be one of 11 legislators on the hemp study.

The executive board also voted to establish a subcommittee of five legislators to study the state's problem with methamphetamine addiction and treatment.

The subcommittee falls under a bigger study involving 15 legislators who will study alternatives to imprisonment for drug offenses, treatment options for addiction and the fiscal impact to state and local

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governments for incarcerating drug offenders. House Speaker Rep. Steven Haugaard will chair that study. Board members also appointed 20 legislators to serve on five task forces, which will each examine different aspects of mental health treatment accessibility in the state.

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

Ellsworth Air Force Base to receive first B-21 Raider planes

By SETH TUPPER Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — John Thune was on a Sioux Falls golf course during a May 2005 weekend when he received a call he'd been dreading.

His chief of staff phoned to say Ellsworth Air Force Base was on a closure list that the Department of Defense would publish the following week.

Thune had been a U.S. senator only four months, after narrowly defeating incumbent Minority Leader Tom Daschle.

Ellsworth was one of the biggest issues in the campaign. Each candidate claimed he was better able to protect the base and the combined total of nearly 7,000 military and civilian jobs the base supported in the Rapid City area.

When the call came about Ellsworth's potential closure, it was put up or shut up time for Thune, who cut his golf game short.

"I immediately left, went into the office and spent the next six hours on the phone trying to reverse it, calling everybody I knew, mostly politicians," Thune told the Rapid City Journal in a recent interview.

Nobody offered to help. It was a rude awakening for Thune, who was an up-and-coming Republican with a national profile after toppling Daschle in 2004 and narrowly losing to Democratic Sen. Tim Johnson in 2002.

"We realized there was not going to be a political solution to this," Thune said. "Nobody was going to say, 'Gee whiz, you fought and bled for us in back-to-back Senate races, so we're going to take care of you.' We realized we were going to have to win this one on the merits. So that's when we just really went to work."

Later in 2005, a team of South Dakotans including Thune convinced the Pentagon's Base Realignment and Closure Commission, known by the acronym BRAC, to remove Ellsworth from the closure list.

With that burst of intense work over, the long-term work to safeguard Ellsworth's future began, not only by Thune but also by the state's other two congressional delegates, the governor, the Legislature, business leaders and local government officials in Box Elder and Rapid City, the Ellsworth Task Force and, eventually, the Ellsworth Development Authority.

Over the next 14 years, the efforts of those and other Ellsworth boosters brought improvements to the base including a new wastewater treatment plant, a financial services center, a drone unit, an expanded training airspace and safer accident potential zones. It was all part of a coordinated effort to make Ellsworth as BRAC-proof as possible.

Then, on March 27 of this year, the Air Force announced Ellsworth as the preferred location to receive the first B-21 Raider planes when they're ready to fly, perhaps sometime during the mid-2020s, after which the B-1s at Ellsworth will be gradually phased out. The Air Force also said Ellsworth will be the training unit for the new bombers.

Ellsworth boosters from Thune on down characterized the announcement as a pivotal moment. For them, it was a manifestation of the stable future they've been working to create for Ellsworth since the dark days of 2005.

The plan to close Ellsworth included transferring its B-1 bombers to Dyess Air Force Base in Texas. Dyess did better than Ellsworth on a Defense Department scoresheet, and one of the most important categories on the scoresheet was training airspace.

At the time, the Air Force said the airspace available to Dyess was better and twice as large as that available to Ellsworth. Luckily for South Dakota, the Dyess airspace was mired in a lawsuit during the BRAC

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process, which helped Ellsworth backers overcome the deficiency.

Thune and his staff members who worked on Ellsworth issues, including Qusi Al-Haj in Rapid City, knew Ellsworth's airspace would continue to be a liability in future base-closure considerations. So in February 2006, Thune announced a plan to nearly quadruple the size of that airspace.

"The airspace had to be fixed going forward," Thune said. "It was a 10-year war."

Wrangling the factions affected by the proposal proved challenging. Ranchers had concerns about living and working under the roar of bomber planes. General aviators were worried about losing access to the skies and being inconvenienced by Air Force training flights. And the Federal Aviation Administration was faced with managing the competing interests in an airspace overlapping several FAA regional territories and parts of Montana, Wyoming and the Dakotas.

Thune and his staff worked through the objections in meeting after meeting, year after year, with representatives of the various interests. In 2015, with the airspace proposal entering a final phase of consideration that included a decision by the FAA, Thune rose to the chairmanship of the Senate Commerce Committee, after serving as its ranking member. Thune said his leadership posts meant "the FAA was interested in being helpful" to him.

The expanded airspace, known as the Powder River Training Complex, won approval from the Air Force and FAA and began hosting training flights in 2015.

Dennis Daugaard, who served as lieutenant governor from 2003 to 2011 and governor from 2001 until earlier this year, said the airspace expansion was critically important.

"By far, the Powder River Training Complex expansion was the big win in terms of preserving the base," Daugaard said in a recent Journal interview. "Sen. Thune really deserves a lot of credit for that."

While Thune's office was beginning its push to expand Ellsworth's airspace, he and the rest of the congressional delegation — consisting at the time of Sen. Tim Johnson and Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, both Democrats — along with state and local officials were angling for a consolidated Air Force Financial Services Center at Ellsworth. The base was chosen for the mission in 2006, bringing travel-voucher processing from other locations to Ellsworth.

One reason Ellsworth boosters coveted the financial services center was because it represented an extra mission for Ellsworth, which at the time of the BRAC process in 2005 was a base with a sole mission of flying B-1s.

Efforts to add additional missions paid off again in 2010 when Ellsworth was chosen to host a drone unit, the 89th Attack Squadron. The drones have been used in the Middle East, where they are put into the air before a remote pilot at Ellsworth takes over the controls.

Meanwhile, the congressional delegation worked to secure funding for physical improvements on the base. From the time of Ellsworth's 2005 placement on the BRAC list until 2011, when Congress banned earmarks, Sen. Johnson inserted \$96.23 million worth of earmarks into appropriations bills for projects at Ellsworth, including housing, a headquarters facility and other structures.

Johnson retired in 2015 and was succeeded in the Senate by Mike Rounds, who was governor during the 2005 BRAC scare. Herseth Sandlin lost her 2010 re-election bid to Republican Kristi Noem, and Noem left the House this year when she became governor. She was succeeded in the House by Republican Dusty Johnson.

Pat Burchill, chairman of the Ellsworth Development Authority, said Thune's continued presence in Congress has been a boon to the base.

"One person has been the hub of all the spokes in the wheel," Burchill said, "and that person is Senator Thune. He's been the constant."

Efforts to safeguard Ellsworth at the local level coalesced into the Ellsworth Development Authority, which was created in 2009.

Mark Merchen, now a business consultant in Rapid City, was working for West River Electric Association in 2005 and was representing the association on the board of a community improvement initiative known as Black Hills Vision. When Ellsworth was put on the BRAC list, then-Gov. Rounds asked Black Hills Vision

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to formulate a "Plan B" for the base's land, buildings and infrastructure in case it closed.

Merchen led the Plan B effort, and when Ellsworth was removed from the BRAC list, the Plan B discussions shifted to safeguarding Ellsworth's future.

Taking inspiration from the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority, which was created in 2006 by the Rounds administration to facilitate the conversion of the closed Homestake gold mine to a deep underground science laboratory, Merchen and other local leaders hatched the idea of creating an authority to aid Ellsworth.

They pitched the idea to Gov. Rounds, who in 2009 was mired in budget difficulties brought on by the Great Recession. Rounds asked then-Lt. Gov. Daugaard to spearhead the creation of the Ellsworth Development Authority, and Daugaard worked with legislative leaders to win approval of the authorizing legislation in 2009.

Merchen said support from local business leaders was crucial during the authority's earliest days. He was loaned out by West River Electric to be the authority's executive director for its first several years, and numerous local businesses helped with the authority's early office and administrative expenses.

"I give all the credit in the world to the community for always believing this was an important thing for everybody to be a part of," Merchen said.

One of the first projects undertaken by the authority was the construction of a wastewater treatment plant to be shared by Ellsworth and its neighbor city, Box Elder. The authority issued \$24 million in bonds for the project, which are being paid off with fees from Ellsworth and Box Elder. Construction of the plant was finished in 2014.

Another project of the authority is the prevention and removal of non-conforming uses, such as housing projects, on land in the designated accident potential zones around the base.

The authority's current executive director, Scott Landguth, said the authority has spent nearly \$20 million on its land program, at first utilizing state funding, and then a program that pairs 75% federal funding with a 25% state match.

Some of the money has been used to buy easements on ranch land bordering the north side of the base, to ensure that no non-conforming structures, such as a residential housing project, are ever built on that land.

The money has also been used to acquire land in accident potential zones south of the base in Box Elder. Those land acquisitions have included the purchase of several hundred mobile homes that have since been removed, after residents were given up to a year to relocate. After buying and clearing land, the authority puts easements on it to prevent future non-conforming uses and then seeks to sell the land back into private ownership. The authority has also worked with Box Elder to transfer land for public use.

In all, the authority has done deals on 70 properties totaling 4,000 acres, and the authority continues to seek deals with willing sellers. It was once estimated that the total cost for all the needed easements, land acquisitions and structure removals in the accident potential zones would reach \$35 million; with the \$20 million already spent and \$4 million in additional funding already obtained, approximately \$11 million may still need to be obtained and spent.

Besides major projects, the four-employee authority also works to ease the everyday concerns that afflict the base's leadership, such as arranging a deal for base personnel to obtain Rapid City library cards, and working with Douglas School District officials to solve busing problems for Air Force parents and students.

Landguth said commanders at Ellsworth often lean on the authority for help, and they advise their successors to do the same.

"The comment I've heard is that they've all said to one another as they come in, 'If you have a problem, talk to the authority,'" Landguth said.

Since the Air Force awarded Virginia-based Northrop Grumman a contract to build a next-generation, long-range strike bomber in 2015, many have assumed that existing B-1 bases including Ellsworth would host the new bombers.

A degree of certainty was added to that expectation with the Air Force's March 27 announcement that Ellsworth is the preferred base to receive the first B-21s. The selection was made by outgoing Air Force

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Secretary Heather Wilson, whose previous job was president of the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology in Rapid City.

Wilson's nomination as Air Force secretary in 2017 is one aspect of safeguarding Ellsworth that Thune does not receive or take credit for. He and his staff have said they had nothing to do with the choice of Wilson as nominee, but they were happy to have her in the job at a time when B-21 basing decisions were being considered.

The arrival of the B-21 could bring new challenges to Ellsworth, possibly including more scrutiny of the base's training airspace. To avoid conflicts with commercial flights, the training airspace is currently capped at 26,000 feet, except for higher-altitude waivers granted for periodic large-force exercises. It's anticipated that the B-21 may routinely need a higher altitude ceiling, which could require more talks with the FAA.

That's a better problem than a BRAC listing, and with everything that has been done to make Ellsworth harder to close, the specter of future BRAC proceedings seems less threatening.

"What a difference 14 years makes," Thune said.

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

Spring planting getting underway in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Spring planting is getting underway in South Dakota.

The Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop report that 2% of the spring wheat crop and 3% of the oats crop are seeded. Both are well behind the average pace, after severe flooding in the state.

The wet spring has boosted soil moisture. The report says topsoil moisture supplies statewide are rated 100% adequate to surplus, and subsoil moisture is 99% in those categories.

The state's winter wheat crop is rated 2% poor, 45% fair, 51% good and 2% excellent.

False statement conviction overturned

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge has overturned the conviction of a Pine Ridge man accused of making a false statement in an assault case.

A jury convicted Weldon Two Bulls last month after he told a Bureau of Indian Affairs agent that he was too drunk to remember what happened to Sheena Between Lodges who was found with a brain bleed and bruises to her body in an assault last November. No one has been charged in the attack.

The Rapid City Journal says Judge Roberto Lange this week overturned the conviction saying jury instructions were flawed, but that even with the correction instructions no reasonable jury could find that Two Bulls lied when he told the agent he was too drunk to remember what happened to Between Lodges.

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

Second businessman accused of defrauding investors on trial

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A second South Dakota businessman accused of defrauding investors in a scheme to build an \$11 million fish farm is on trial in federal court.

Timothy Burns is charged with wire fraud and aiding and abetting for his alleged role in soliciting investors for Global Aquaponics in Brookings.

Businessman Tobias Ritesman pleaded guilty to all 18 counts against him last week. The Argus Leader says five charges against Burns involve two \$50,000 checks and three \$25,000 checks sent by investors in October 2016. Burns' attorney told jurors Tuesday that Burns genuinely thought the project would be successful and invested his own money in the operation.

But, Assistant U.S. Attorney Ann Hoffman told the jury Burns knowingly participated in a scheme to steal money and use it for his own interests.

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

Ex-Vice President Joe Biden launches 2020 White House bid

By STEVE PEOPLES and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Vice President Joe Biden formally joined the crowded Democratic presidential contest on Thursday, declaring the soul of the nation at stake if President Donald Trump wins re-election.

In a video posted on Twitter, Biden focused on the 2017 deadly clash between white supremacists and counter protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia. Biden noted Trump's comments that there were some "very fine people" on both sides of the violent encounter, which left one woman dead.

"We are in the battle for the soul of this nation," Biden said. "If we give Donald Trump eight years in the White House, he will forever and fundamentally alter the character of this nation — who we are. And I cannot stand by and watch that happen."

The 76-year-old Biden becomes an instant front-runner alongside Vermont

Sen. Bernie Sanders, who is leading many polls and has proved to be a successful fundraiser. Among Democrats, Biden has unmatched international and legislative experience, and he is among the best-known faces in U.S. politics. He quickly racked up endorsements on Thursday morning, becoming the first Democrat running for president with the backing of more than one U.S. senator.

Still, Biden must compete in a field that now spans at least 20 Democrats and has been celebrated for its racial and gender diversity. As an older white man with occasionally centrist views, Biden has to prove he's not out of step with his party. He's betting that his working-class appeal and ties to Barack Obama's presidency will help him overcome those questions.

Biden has said he would campaign as an "Obama-Biden Democrat," who is as pragmatic as he is progressive.

Just minutes after the announcement, the GOP lashed out against Biden's record in the Obama administration, a line of attack in sharp contrast with recent criticism against other 2020 Democrats that has largely focused on them being too liberal, or even socialists.

"Biden's fingerprints are all over foreign policy blunders and the weakest economic recovery since World War II," Republican National Committee spokesman Michael Ahrens said. "We don't need eight more years of Biden. Just ask President Obama, who isn't even endorsing his right-hand man."

While it's true that Obama hasn't explicitly endorsed Biden's bid, the former president took the unusual step of weighing in on Thursday's announcement through a spokeswoman.

"President Obama has long said that selecting Joe Biden as his running mate in 2008 was one of the best decisions he ever made," Obama spokeswoman Katie Hill said. "He relied on the vice president's knowledge, insight, and judgment throughout both campaigns and the entire presidency. The two forged a special bond over the last 10 years and remain close today."

Privately, Trump allies have warned that Biden might be the biggest re-election threat given the former vice president's potential appeal among the white working class in the Midwest, the region that gave



FILE - In this March 26, 2019, file photo, former Vice President Joe Biden speaks at the Biden Courage Awards in New York. (AP Photo/Frank Franklin II, File)

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Trump a path to the presidency.

Biden is paying special attention to Pennsylvania, a state that swung to Trump in 2016 after voting for Democratic presidential candidates for decades.

The former vice president will be in the state three times within the opening weeks of his campaign. He'll be in Philadelphia on Thursday evening headlining a fundraiser at the home of David L. Cohen, executive senior vice president of Comcast. Biden is aiming to raise \$500,000 at the event.

He will hold an event in Pittsburgh on Monday and will return to Philadelphia in the next two weeks for a major rally.

He's scheduled to make his first media appearance as a 2020 presidential contender Friday morning on ABC's "The View," a move that may help him make an appeal to women whose support will be crucial to winning the primary.

As he neared his campaign launch, Biden's challenges have come into greater focus.

He struggled last month to respond to claims that he touched 2014 Nevada lieutenant governor nominee Lucy Flores' shoulders and kissed the back of her head before a fall campaign event. A handful of other women have made similar claims, though none has alleged sexual misconduct.

Biden, a former U.S. senator from Delaware, pledged in an online video to be "much more mindful" of respecting personal space but joked two days later that he "had permission" to hug a male union leader before addressing the group's national conference.

Biden also has been repeatedly forced to explain his 1991 decision, as Senate Judiciary Committee chairman, to allow Anita Hill to face difficult questions from an all-male panel about allegations of sexual harassment against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, who later was confirmed to the high court.

He has since apologized for his role in the hearing. But in the #MeToo era, particularly after the contentious confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, the episode remains a significant political liability.

Likewise, Biden once played a key role in anti-crime legislation that had a disproportionately negative impact on African Americans. And while several 2020 Democratic contenders have embraced the possibility of reparations to African Americans for slavery in recent weeks, Biden last month struggled to explain comments he made as a freshman senator in 1975 about the school busing debate.

His first White House bid in 1988 ended after a plagiarism scandal. He dropped out of the 2008 race after earning less than 1 percent of the vote in the Iowa caucuses. Later that year, Obama named Biden as his running mate.

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. Associated Press writer Julie Pace in Washington contributed to this report.

Who's running for president? Meet the Democratic candidates

By The Associated Press undefined

With the entrance of former Vice President Joe Biden into the 2020 Democratic presidential contest on Thursday, the field is largely set, with all the big names included.

The sprawling Democratic field features candidates ranging from 37 to 77 years old; liberals and moderates; senators, governors and mayors; and an unprecedented number of women and minorities. Democrats view the upcoming election as a must-win, and they're looking to nominate someone who is their best hope to beat President Donald Trump.

Here are the 20 candidates:

JOE BIDEN

Age: 76

Best known for: Being former President Barack Obama's vice president from 2009 to 2017 and U.S. senator from Delaware from 1973 to 2009.

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Biggest strength: He's well-known nationally and popular in some places Democrats have lost recently, such as working-class swing states Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, his birthplace.

Biggest weakness: Biden would be the oldest person ever elected president, with a nearly five-decade record for opponents to comb through, at a time many in his party are clamoring for a new generation to take the reins. The notoriously chatty former senator also tends to commit verbal gaffes and faced recent accusations by some women of uninvited, though nonsexual, touching.



Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., answers questions during a presidential forum held by She The People on the Texas State University campus Wednesday, April 24, 2019, in Houston. (AP Photo/Michael Wyke)

CORY BOOKER

Age: 49

Best known for: Serving as mayor of Newark and, currently, U.S. senator from New Jersey. He made headlines last year during his self-proclaimed "I am Spartacus" moment" as he flouted Senate rules against disclosing confidential documents during Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court confirmation fight.

Biggest strength: His optimistic, unity-first attitude could resonate at a time of deep political divisions.

Biggest weakness: Trying to convince voters that he's tough enough to take on Trump.

PETE BUTTIGIEG

Age: 37

Best known for: Serving as mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and being a former Naval intelligence officer.

Biggest strength: He's won over voters and many skeptics with his intelligence and an articulate yet plain-spoken speaking style. He's also shown an ability to inspire voters of different ages with a message of hope and "a new generation of leadership" and has been able to raise millions more than many of his Democratic rivals.

Biggest weakness: His youth and lack of political experience — his only public office has been leading the community of about 100,000 people — will give some voters pause. He also will need to ramp up his campaign operations and do more to appeal to minority voters in order to maintain his early momentum.

JULIAN CASTRO

Age: 44

Best Known for: Serving as Health and Human Services secretary during President Barack Obama's second term and as the mayor of San Antonio, Texas, for five years.

Biggest strength: His youthfulness and status as the only Latino in the race could help him win the votes of Democrats looking for a new face of their party.

Biggest weakness: His fundraising lags well behind other contenders.

JOHN DELANEY

Age: 56

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Best known for: Being a former congressman from Maryland.

Biggest strength: He has rolled out a rural-focus policy that includes proposals to strengthen family farmers and rural infrastructure, a plan that could play well in the battleground Rust Belt states won by Trump.

Biggest weakness: Low name recognition.

TULSI GABBARD

Age: 38

Best known for: Serving as a U.S. representative for Hawaii; the first American Samoan and first Hindu to be elected to Congress.

Biggest strength: Her military service in Iraq and Kuwait with the Hawaii National Guard.

Biggest weakness: She has been criticized for traveling to Syria in 2017 to meet with Syrian President Bashar Assad, who has been accused of war crimes and even genocide. She was also forced to apologize for her past work advocating against gay rights.

KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND

Age: 52

Best known for: The senator from New York is one of her chamber's most vocal members on issues of sexual harassment, military sexual assault, equal pay for women and family leave.

Biggest strength: Not being afraid to defy her own party in the #MeToo era, calling early for Democratic Sen. Al Franken's resignation over sexual misconduct allegations and saying Bill Clinton should have voluntarily left the presidency over an affair with intern Monica Lewinsky.

Biggest weakness: Sluggish campaign fundraising in the wake of some unpleasant #MeToo headlines of her own, with Gillibrand acknowledging there were "post-investigation human errors" made when her Senate office investigated allegations of sexual misconduct against various staffers.

KAMALA HARRIS

Age: 54

Best known for: The former California attorney general is now the junior U.S. senator from California, known for her rigorous questioning of Trump's nominees.

Biggest strength: As the one black woman in the race, she's able to tap into networks like historically black colleges and universities and her Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority that haven't been fully realized before.

Biggest weakness: Her prosecutorial record has come under scrutiny amid a push for criminal justice reform.

JOHN HICKENLOOPER

Age: 67

Best known for: Being a quirky brewpub owner who became a politician late in life, rising to governor of Colorado.

Biggest strength: An unorthodox political persona and successful electoral track record in a swing state. He's one of the few governors in a race heavy with senators and D.C. stalwarts.

Biggest weakness: He's previously joked that he was too centrist to win the Democratic nomination. As governor he disappointed some environmentalists by not regulating the energy industry more. He's another white male baby boomer in a party filled with younger and more diverse candidates that better reflect its base.

JAY INSLEE

Age: 68

Best known for: Being governor of Washington state and a former congressman.

Biggest strength: His campaign emphasis is on combating climate change, which he frames as an eco-

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conomic opportunity in addition to a moral imperative.

Biggest weakness: He risks being labeled a one-issue candidate.

AMY KLOBUCHAR

Age: 58

Best known for: The three-term Minnesota senator raised her national profile during a Senate committee hearing for Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh when she asked him whether he had ever had so much to drink that he didn't remember what happened. He replied, "Have you?"

Biggest strength: She's known as a pragmatic lawmaker willing to work with Republicans to get things done, a quality that's helped her win across Minnesota, including in rural areas that supported Trump in 2016. She says her Midwestern sensibilities would help Democrats reclaim critical battlegrounds like Wisconsin and Michigan.

Biggest weakness: Her pragmatism may work against her in a primary, as Democratic voters increasingly embrace more liberal policies and positions. There have also been news reports that she has mistreated staff.

WAYNE MESSAM

Age: 44

Best known for: Serving as the mayor of Miramar, Florida, and playing on the Florida State University Seminoles' 1993 national championship football team.

Biggest strength: He touts his mayoral experience balancing government regulations needed to protect the environment while allowing room for companies to prosper.

Biggest weakness: Low name recognition and funding.

SETH MOULTON

Age: 40

Best known for: The Massachusetts congressman and Iraq War veteran gained national attention for helping lead an effort within the party to reject Nancy Pelosi as House speaker after Democrats regained control of the chamber.

Biggest strength: Military and congressional experience.

Biggest weakness: Low name recognition, late start on the fundraising necessary to qualify for the summer debate stage.

BETO O'ROURKE

Age: 46

Best known for: The former congressman narrowly lost the 2018 Senate race to Republican Ted Cruz in Texas, the country's largest conservative state.

Biggest strength: A do-it-yourself campaign style that packs lots of travel and multiple events into long days and encourages off-the-cuff discussions with voters that still allow O'Rourke to talk up his days as a onetime punk rock guitarist and his love for his home on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Biggest weakness: He's longer on enthusiasm and vague, bipartisan optimism than actual policy ideas, and the style-over-substance approach could see O'Rourke's strong early fundraising slip once the curiosity begins to fade.

TIM RYAN

Age: 45

Best known for: The Ohio congressman made an unsuccessful bid to replace Nancy Pelosi as House Democratic leader in 2016.

Biggest strength: Ryan has touted himself as a candidate who can bridge Democrats' progressive and

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working-class wings to win the White House.

Biggest weakness: Low name recognition, late start on grassroots fundraising.

BERNIE SANDERS

Age: 77

Best known for: A 2016 presidential primary campaign against Hillary Clinton that laid the groundwork for the leftward lurch that has dominated Democratic politics in the Trump era.

Biggest strength: The Vermont senator, who identifies himself as a democratic socialist, generated progressive energy that fueled his insurgent 2016 campaign and the best fundraising numbers of any Democrat so far.

Biggest weakness: Expanding his appeal beyond his largely white base of supporters.

ERIC SWALWELL

Age: 38

Best known for: The California congressman is a frequent guest on cable news criticizing President Donald Trump.

Biggest strength: Media savvy and youthfulness could appeal to young voters.

Biggest weakness: Low name recognition, late start on grassroots fundraising.

ELIZABETH WARREN

Age: 69

Best known for: The senator from Massachusetts and former Harvard University law professor whose calls for greater consumer protections led to the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau under President Barack Obama.

Biggest strength: Warren has presented a plethora of progressive

In the running for 2020

REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

Incumbent



Exploring a challenge



DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES



*Sanders, an independent, is seeking the Democratic nomination.

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policy ideas, including eliminating existing student loan debt for millions of Americans, breaking up farming monopolies and mammoth technology firms, implementing a "wealth tax" on households with high net worth and providing universal child care.

Biggest weakness: She is viewed as one of the most liberal candidates in the Democratic field, which could hurt her among moderates. Her policy-heavy approach also risks alienating voters at a time when other candidates are appealing to hearts as much as to minds.

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

Age: 66

Best known for: Best-selling author and spiritual leader.

Biggest strength: Outsider who could draw interest from voters who are fans of her books.

Biggest weakness: Low name recognition, little political experience.

ANDREW YANG

Age: 44

Best known for: Entrepreneur who has generated buzz with his signature proposal for universal basic income to give every American \$1,000 a month, no strings attached.

Biggest strength: Robust policy agenda, tech savvy.

Biggest weakness: Low name recognition, no political experience.

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. JOE BIDEN FORMALLY JOINS DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST

The former vice president's announcement marks the unofficial end of the chaotic early phase of the 2020 presidential season.

2. PUTIN, KIM DISCUSS HOW TO BREAK N. KOREA NUCLEAR STANDOFF

Putin and Kim say they had good talks about their joint efforts to resolve a standoff over Pyongyang's nuclear program, amid stalled negotiations with the United States.

3. WHO IS FORMING BATTLE PLAN FOR POST-MUELLER PROBES

As House Democrats ramp up their post-Mueller investigations into Trump, his strategy for responding is simple: Resist on every legal front.

4. FLEEING FIRE COMMON IN CALIFORNIA; EVACUATION PLANS AREN'T

Despite the tragic outcome of that day in November 2018 and the confusion faced by people, the city's careful planning made a difference, Paradise Mayor Jody Jones insists.

5. TEXAS EXECUTES AVOWED RACIST IN DRAGGING DEATH OF BLACK MAN

John William King, who was white, received a lethal injection for the slaying of James Byrd Jr., who was chained to the back of a truck and dragged for nearly 3 miles along a secluded road outside Jasper, Texas.

6. VETERAN HELD ON ATTEMPTED MURDER COUNTS AFTER CAR HITS CROWD

A former U.S. Army sharpshooter with a history of PTSD plowed his car at high speed into a group of pedestrians in a quiet Silicon Valley suburb, injuring eight people including three children.

7. COLOMBO AREA STILL ON EDGE AFTER EASTER BLASTS

Sri Lanka's capital remains jittery as authorities set off more controlled detonations of suspicious items, soldiers stop and search vehicles and some businesses advise staff to stay indoors.

8. FLORIDA OFFICER TO BE SENTENCED FOR KILLING BLACK MOTORIST

Former Palm Beach Gardens officer Nouman Raja faces a minimum of 25 years and Circuit Judge Joseph Marx could give him a life sentence for the 2015 shooting of Corey Jones.

9. COURT APPROVES RELEASE OF NISSAN'S EX-CHAIRMAN

Carlos Ghosn paid \$4.5 million in bail, clearing the way for his release but under strict conditions.

10. WHY 2 IOWA TIGHT ENDS LIKELY TO GO IN 1ST ROUND OF NFL DRAFT

With the emphasis on more passing and a shift toward more open offenses, the tight end spot has become a critical component of NFL attacks.

Putin: NKorea ready to denuclearize _ if it gets guarantees

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and ERIC TALMADGE Associated Press

VLADIVOSTOK, Russia (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said after his summit with Kim Jong Un Thursday that the North Korean leader is ready to proceed toward denuclearization — but needs solid security guarantees to do so.

Putin said that he will be willing to share details of the summit with U.S. President Donald Trump, adding that “there are no secrets.” He noted that Kim himself encouraged him to explain certain nuances of Pyongyang’s position to Trump.

The summit on Russky Island, across a bridge from the far-eastern port city of Vladivostok, reflected Russia’s effort to emerge as an essential player in the North Korean nuclear standoff, a role that would raise Moscow’s global clout and its leverage with Washington.

Putin emphasized that the North Korean leader is ready to move toward a nuclear-free status but would only proceed when he gets solid guarantees. He did not, however, specify what those guarantees would look like. “Above all, he focuses on protecting national interests and security,” Putin said.

Earlier in the day, Putin voiced confidence that Kim’s visit will “help better understand what should be done to settle the situation on the Korean Peninsula, what we can do together, what Russia can do to support the positive processes going on now.”

Kim’s meeting with Putin follows a year of intense diplomacy the North hopes will help it get out from under international sanctions over its nuclear weapons and long-range missile programs. Kim has already held four summits with Chinese President Xi Jinping, three with South Korean President Moon Jae-on and two with President Donald Trump.

Kim’s second summit with Trump in February ended without any agreements, and his trip to Russia reflects his desire to put more pressure on Washington and show some independence from Beijing as well.

For Putin, the meeting offers a chance to increase his role as a potential broker. He immediately emphasized that he was willing to share details of the talks with Trump.

The Russian leader emphasized that Moscow and Washington both want Pyongyang to denuclearize. When he sat down for talks with Kim, he praised him for engaging in dialogue with the U.S.

“We welcome your efforts to develop an inter-Korean dialogue and normalize North Korea’s relations



Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un take an elevator heading to the talks in Vladivostok, Russia, Thursday, April 25, 2019. Putin and Kim are set to have one-on-one meeting at the Far Eastern State University on the Russky Island across a bridge from Vladivostok. The meeting will be followed by broader talks involving officials from both sides. (Alexei Nikolsky, Sputnik, Kremlin Pool

Photo via AP)

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with the United States," Putin told Kim.

Following their one-on-one meeting at the start of broader talks involving officials from both sides, Putin and Kim said they had a good discussion.

"We discussed the situation on the Korean Peninsula and exchanged opinions about what should be done to improve the situation and how to do it," Putin said. Kim described the talks as "candid and meaningful."

"The reason we visited Russia this time is to meet and share opinions with your excellency, President Putin, and also share views on the Korean Peninsula and regional political situation, which has garnered the urgent attention of the world, and also hold deep discussions on strategic ways to pursue stability in the regional political situation and on the matters of jointly managing the situation," Kim said.

Looking confident but a bit stiff, Kim also congratulated the Russian leader on his re-election to another six-year term last year.

"Ceaselessly bolstering and developing strategic and traditional relations between North Korea and Russia ... is my and my government's firm and unwavering position," Kim said later at a state banquet, where he made a toast.

Since the Trump-Kim talks in February ended without a deal because of disputes over U.S.-led sanctions, there have been no publicly known high-level contacts between the U.S. and North Korea — although both sides say they are still open to a third summit.

Kim wants the U.S. to ease the sanctions to reciprocate for some partial disarmament steps he took last year. But the U.S. maintains the sanctions will stay in place until North Korea makes more significant denuclearization moves.

North Korea has increasingly expressed frustration at the deadlocked negotiations. Last week, it demanded U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo be removed from the talks and strongly criticized national security adviser John Bolton.

In Seoul, President Moon said Thursday he'll try to hold a fourth summit with Kim and facilitate the resumption of U.S.-North Korea talks.

Kim arrived in Vladivostok Wednesday aboard his private train and offered what is possibly his first interview ever with a foreign media outlet. He told Russian state television that he was hoping that his first visit to Russia would "successful and useful." He evoked his father's "great love for Russia" and said that he intends to strengthen ties between the two countries. The late Kim Jong Il made three trips to Russia, the last time in 2011.

Like the U.S., Russia has strongly opposed Pyongyang's nuclear bid. Moscow was part of six-nation talks on the North Korean standoff that fell apart after Pyongyang's withdrawal in 2009.

Putin said he wasn't sure if the talks could be revived, but he emphasized that international involvement will be needed to discuss guarantees for Pyongyang.

Dmitri Trenin, the director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, said ahead of Thursday's talks that Putin will likely encourage Kim to continue constructive talks with the U.S., reflecting Russia's own worry about the North nuclear and missile programs. "Russia can't be expected to side with North Korea and, let's say, support the North Koreans all the way in the Security Council," he said.

Trenin said Moscow doubts the North could be persuaded to fully abandon its nuclear weapons, considering that a "mission impossible."

"North Korea will not give up the only guarantee of the survival of the North Korean state and its regime," Trenin said.

Russia would also like to gain broader access to North Korea's mineral resources, including rare metals. Pyongyang, for its part, covets Russia's electricity supplies and investment to modernize its dilapidated Soviet-built industrial plants, railways and other infrastructure.

Vladivostok, a city of more than half a million on the Sea of Japan, faced gridlock on its roads as traffic was blocked in the city center due to Kim's visit.

The authorities have temporarily closed the waters around Russky Island to all maritime traffic.

Kim was expected to return to Pyongyang on Friday.

Talmadge, the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief, reported from Tokyo. Associated Press writers Hyung-jin Kim and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, South Korea, contributed to this report.

Some women of color frustrated by Biden's presidential bid

By **JUANA SUMMERS** and **ERRIN HAINES WHACK** Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Former Vice President Joe Biden's decision to enter the Democratic presidential race is causing consternation among some Democrats, particularly women of color, who have been hoping for a nominee who better reflects the nation's diversity.

At the She the People forum, billed as the first presidential forum focused on women of color, Roxy D. Hall Williamson's shoulders slumped at the mention of Biden, who made his campaign announcement on Thursday.

"I know that we have been cultured to feel that only the white man can save us," the LaMarque, Texas, organizer said Wednesday. "I just don't feel like Biden is our answer."

Biden's candidacy is likely to reshape the Democratic race, which has put the party's diversity on display. The group of eight 2020 hopefuls who spoke at the forum was comprised of one black man, one black woman, three other women, a Latino man and two white men, all making the case for why they should be the nominee.

Black female voters will play a critical role in the Democratic Party's attempt to defeat President Donald Trump in 2020. An inability to earn their support in past cycles has spelled political peril for Democratic candidates. For his part, Biden has maintained strong ties to the African American community over the decades.

The raucous, standing-room crowd in the 1,800-person capacity auditorium at the historically black Texas Southern University listened intently as the candidates were questioned about maternal mortality, immigration, tribal sovereignty, income inequality and other issues. Attending were Sen. Cory Booker, former Obama Cabinet member Julian Castro, Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, Sen. Kamala Harris, Sen. Amy Klobuchar, former Rep. Beto O'Rourke, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Sen. Elizabeth Warren.

LaTosha Brown, the co-founder of Black Voters Matter, said she was initially eager for Biden to enter the race but now sees "strong alternatives" to him.

"I'm over white men running the country," Brown said. "I don't know if him getting in changes the field. He has name recognition, but his strength is also his weakness. Who is his announcing going to surprise?"

She added: "To ignite the kind of base that needs to be ignited to beat Trump, I'm not sure he moves them."

In interviews, black women repeatedly pointed to a singular issue plaguing Biden's candidacy: his



Democratic presidential candidate Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii, answers questions during a presidential forum held by She The People on the Texas State University campus Wednesday, April 24, 2019, in Houston. (AP Photo/Michael Wyke)

handling of the 1991 Supreme Court confirmation hearing of Clarence Thomas and the Senate Judiciary Committee's treatment of Anita Hill, a black professor who faced a panel of white male lawmakers about her sexual harassment allegations against Thomas. Biden, then a U.S. senator from Delaware, was the committee's chairman,

Williamson said that she was "still salty" about the role Biden played in the hearing and that "it wasn't OK then and it's not OK now."

Adoneca Fortier, 55, said that she hoped that Biden would more fully address his role in the hearings, perhaps by extending a personal apology to Hill.

"If there is an apology, I think it would be genuine because I think he realizes what's happening now," Fortier said, adding that she hoped Biden would choose a woman of color as his running mate.

Cherisse Scott, 44, of Memphis, said the issue is "bigger than Anita Hill."

"Though we supported President Obama, I think we still wanted to see more happening on behalf of black and brown communities, specifically black communities," Scott said. "I think Joe Biden's great. I think Joe Biden was a hell of a vice president. But I wouldn't vote for him for president."

Cynthia Dismuke, 53, of Houston, is undecided on a candidate in 2020 but finds Biden's openness to a female running mate attractive. Nevertheless, she was one of many women at the event who came away impressed with Warren, saying, "She's not making promises. She has a plan."

"I don't necessarily want another white male ticket," Dismuke said. "I want to see who's going to get Trump out of office."

Leah Daughtry, CEO of the 2016 Democratic National Convention, said Wednesday's forum was a testament to the strength of black women at the polls.

"We show up and we make the difference in any election," said Daughtry, the forum's honorary co-chair. "We aren't interested in the flash. We want to know: What are you going to do? What are your policies that are going to impact our lives?"

Fleeing fire common in California; evacuation plans aren't

By **DAMON ARTHUR** Redding Record Searchlight

PARADISE, California (AP) — Wildfire surrounded Darrel Wilken and the three hospital patients in his car. But instead of evacuating Paradise, they were stuck in traffic along with thousands of others.

Cars burned in front of them. Trees, homes and buildings exploded into flames as the gusting firestorm destroyed nearly everything around them.

Wilken, a nurse, knew about Paradise's evacuation plan, which includes route maps and zones. But the speed and intensity of the fire forced him to improvise, he said.

Despite the tragic outcome of that day in November 2018 and the confusion faced by people like Wilken, the city's careful planning made a difference, Paradise Mayor Jody Jones insists.

"I don't know that you could ever prepare for something like what happened here. It was just so fast," Jones said. "But we were not caught flat-footed. We did know what to do. Our people knew what to do, and it did save lives."

Counter-intuitive as it may sound, Paradise has some of the strongest evacuation planning in California. In fact, a USA TODAY Network-California survey of communities at high risk from wildfire found only 22% (including Paradise) have a robust, publicly available evacuation plan.

The scale of disaster in the Camp Fire was unprecedented, but the scene of people fleeing wildfire was familiar, repeated numerous times over the past three years up and down California from Redding and Paradise to Santa Rosa, Ventura and Malibu.

In many of those communities, motorists became stuck in traffic as officials tried to evacuate thousands onto a few roads leading away from the flames.

NO REQUIREMENT TO PLAN

The 85 deaths and nearly 19,000 buildings destroyed in Paradise's Camp Fire made it the deadliest and

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most destructive blaze in California history. Eight of those who perished were found in their vehicles, with two others found outside near vehicles.

In some spots, burned-out and abandoned vehicles lined roads leading out of town.

But none of that has created a detectable sense of urgency for more evacuation planning.

Using Cal Fire's designation of wild-fire risks across the state, the USA TODAY Network-California requested evacuation plans from 27 communities at greatest risk of fire.

One group consisted of the 15 most populous communities where 95% or more of residents live in very high hazard areas for wildfires; the other group included the 15 places with the highest sheer number of residents living in that riskiest zone. Three communities appeared on both lists.

Reporters contacted officials in each of those 27 communities, and filed document requests under the California Public Records Act with those that refused to release plans.

They found that fewer than one in four, just 22%, have a robust evacuation plan that is available to the public.

California does not require communities to plan for wildfire evacuations. And while experts recommend cities and counties develop evacuation plans, there is disagreement over what should be included in those plans.

Tom Cova is a University of Utah geography professor who has done extensive research on environmental hazards, emergency management, transportation, and geographic information science.

Cova said he doesn't understand why communities wouldn't do more evacuation planning.

"To me, it says, one, communities are complacent or ignorant of the risks, and two, it's a failure on the part of local and state governments to not require them (certainly for the highest hazard communities)," Cova said in an email.

Jones, the Paradise mayor, said other communities around the state in high fire hazard areas should learn a lesson from what happened in her town.

"Have a plan, an evacuation plan," she said. "You're going to have tragedy if you don't have a plan."

But some emergency officials say fires are too unpredictable for that.

Evacuation areas depend on the fire itself and what areas or neighborhoods it is threatening, said Paul Lowenthal, assistant fire marshal and public information officer for Santa Rosa.

He acknowledged the difficulty of evacuating tens of thousands of residents during the Tubbs Fire in October 2017, when between 80,000 and 100,000 residents were evacuated and Highway 101 was clogged.

Lowenthal said evacuation plans may be helpful in communities with few roads in and out. But in communities like Santa Rosa, where there are more options, he believes they aren't needed.

"Conditions dictate the extent and need for evacuations," Lowenthal said.



FILE - This Nov. 8, 2018, file photo shows Medical personnel evacuate patients as the Feather River Hospital burns while the Camp Fire rages through Paradise, Calif. Tens of thousands of people fled the fast-moving wildfire. (AP Photo/

Noah Berger, File)

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FIRE EVERYWHERE

Paradise had detailed evacuation plans that had worked in the past, including in 2017, Jones said. The evacuation plan breaks the town into 14 zones. Residents living in each zone evacuate depending on where the fire is located.

The plan is mailed to every home in Paradise each year. The community even practiced evacuating, she said.

But the Camp Fire, which broke out the morning of Nov. 8, 2018, was different. It was “everywhere” by the time it got to Paradise, Jones said.

“The plan was never for the whole town to evacuate at once, so I’m not sure I would say it went according to plan because the evacuation plan we had was predicated on evacuation by zones in a very orderly manner,” Jones said.

“And the entire town, because of the wind, the embers were coming in everywhere all at once, so we had fires all over town and the entire town was evacuating at one time, which is going to overrun your transportation system.

“I don’t care what town you are, where you live or how big your streets are. They’re not sized to take the entire population at one time,” she said.

City and county officials had planned on having motorists evacuate via the five two-lane roads and one four-lane road leading out of town. But fire forced officials to close three of those routes, further clogging the remaining roads, Jones said.

Still, Jones is convinced the evacuation plan and residents’ familiarity with it saved lives.

“People were aware. In Paradise, you had fire every year. You had evacuations every year, usually by zone. People knew what to do, so that was helpful,” she said.

Without that, she said, the situation would have been even more chaotic.

Wilken, the nurse, said he had been through two previous evacuations in Paradise. Both went more smoothly, but the Camp Fire was different.

“It just happened too quickly. It was a blitzkrieg of fire, and no one was prepared for that,” Wilken said.

SECRET PLANS

When USA TODAY Network-California reporters contacted community leaders and emergency managers around the state, some claimed they do have plans but refused to make them available.

Reporters submitted requests for copies of evacuation plans in March to Los Angeles, El Dorado and San Bernardino counties through the California Public Records Act.

Emily Montanez, a senior program manager with the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management, said the evacuation report is not available to the public because it contains sensitive information about the sheriff’s office main station and substations.

Los Angeles County later released a copy of the evacuation plan after it received a public records request for the document.

In San Bernardino County, the sheriff’s and fire departments have developed evacuation plans, but “the information is not public record because of the possibility of someone using that information to hamper evacuations during an emergency,” said Scott Vanhorne, a spokesman for a county supervisor.

However, in response to a USA TODAY Network public records request, county officials two days later provided 851 pages of documents.

While the documents referred to the roles and responsibilities of various agencies during emergency evacuations, they did not include a separate appendix on evacuations.

The county also did not provide the evacuation plan for the communities of Lake Arrowhead, Crestline and Running Springs — three communities where at least 95% of residents live in very high hazard areas for wildfires.

El Dorado County officials also initially refused to release information about evacuation plans that would cover Pollock Pines, one of the 15 largest communities in the state where more than 95% of residents

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live in a very high hazard zone for wildfire.

"I confirmed with the (lieutenant) for our (emergency services) division that we do not release our emergency plan, for obvious security reasons," wrote El Dorado County Sheriff's Sgt. Anthony Prencipe, in an email response. He did not elaborate on those reasons.

Then, in response to a Public Records Act request, the county provided one page from its emergency operations plan that refers to evacuations. Three paragraphs on that page were blacked out.

El Dorado County officials also provided several pages of what it called evacuation plans for the area of Mosquito and Swansboro roads near Placerville, but those consisted mostly of general instructions to residents on how to prepare themselves.

WHAT IS AN EVACUATION PLAN?

The detail and quality of evacuation plans vary from community to community across the state.

"One of the more impressive" evacuation plans, according to researcher Cova, was developed by San Diego County and is included as a 76-page appendix to its emergency operations plan.

The evacuation plan is a "regional, 50,000-foot view of evacuation planning" not intended to replace on-the-spot decision making in specific emergencies, said Alex Bell, a spokeswoman for San Diego County.

The county's evacuation plan was born out of the lessons learned from evacuating New Orleans residents during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, as well as hurricanes Irma and Harvey in 2017.

San Diego's evacuation plan also contains estimates on the number of residents within communities in the county who may require evacuation assistance, sheltering, transportation and help with pet evacuation.

It provides general evacuation routes and road capacities, county-wide shelter capacities, resources available locally and through mutual aid and access considerations for people with disabilities.

There is "all sort of disagreement out there" about what makes a viable evacuation plan, said Tim Haney, professor of sociology and director of the Centre for Community Disaster Research at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta.

He looks for:

- Distinctions between what's needed for slow- vs. fast-onset disaster.
- Plans for the vulnerable: low-income, elderly, disabled, those without a vehicle, etc. The plan should note where those populations are concentrated relative to the hazard and what kind of transportation they'll need.
- A plan for what to do when people don't hear the evacuation order, don't trust it or choose not to evacuate. Will uniformed officers knock on doors, and if so how will that be staffed and organized?
- An estimate of the number of people who will need shelter while they are evacuated and where those shelters will be set up. A plan also should identify sources of food, toiletries, etc. Shelter plans should be set up in a way to minimize risk of gendered violence. Shelter plans should also accommodate pets.
- Assurance that emergency social services such as mental health services will be available and evacuees will know how to get those services.

"A successful evacuation is basically a chain of events that must happen smoothly and if any one link in the chain breaks, the plan fails," Cova said.

A PATCHWORK APPROACH

State law doesn't require evacuation plans. City and county authorities can decide whether to have one, said Mark Pazin, chief of law enforcement for the California Office of Emergency Services.

"Nothing is mandated, but it's highly advisable, given the drama we've seen up and down the state," Pazin said.

Nine of the 27 communities surveyed for this story are in Los Angeles County, which has an evacuation plan within its overall emergency operations plan, but those plans aren't readily available to the public.

Los Angeles County released a copy of its evacuation plan in response to a public records request from the USA Today Network.

The 73-page evacuation plan is part of the county's Operational Area Emergency Response Plan.

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While the plan was not available without a public records request, it begins by addressing the "officials, employees and residents of Los Angeles County."

Two Los Angeles County communities, Malibu and Topanga Canyon, have individual evacuation plans that are posted on the internet.

Three communities in San Bernardino County — Lake Arrowhead, Crestline and Running Springs — are covered under the agency's evacuation plan for the mountain communities in an area stretching from Crestline to Big Bear, said Glenn Barley, San Bernardino County unit chief for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

While evacuation routes are posted online, the complete evacuation plan for Crestline, Running Springs and Lake Arrowhead are not publicly available, Barley said.

Two other communities on the list — Magalia and Paradise — have posted evacuation plans online.

The city of Glendale's 2008 emergency plan identifies nine brush fire zones in neighborhoods near the mountains.

Each of the zones includes a population figure and notes about narrow roads or remote neighborhoods with restricted access. The plan cautions that such road conditions could lead to problems for emergency responders as well as people evacuating.

"I looked at that and I don't know if there is a problem. I wouldn't call that a problem, maybe a concern," said Dan Bell, a spokesman for the city.

Bell said the city has updated the plans but declined to release those newer documents. He said the plans do not list solutions or steps the city is taking to address road obstacles in the brush fire zones.

While officials in Sonoma, Shasta and Ventura counties evacuated tens of thousands of residents from wildfires over the past three years, those counties also do not have evacuation plans.

'CONCERN WITH THAT PRE-PLANNED STUFF'

Kevin McGowan, assistant director of emergency services for Ventura County, said fires are too unpredictable to plan for evacuations: You don't know where they will start and you don't know where they'll go.

"Our concern with that pre-planned stuff is that it doesn't lend itself to that dynamic decision-making process," McGowan said.

He said when fires break out firefighters and law enforcement personnel are authorized to make decisions about evacuations quickly based on current conditions.

"We built a culture in Ventura County to evaluate evacuation needs right away," he said.

Planning out evacuations ahead of time would be very hard to do, he said.

"It's not something you can just have written and on the shelf and then just pull it out. It doesn't work that way with wildfires," McGowan said.

Ventura County officials do evacuation planning for tsunamis, but emergency planners know where a tsunami will come from. Those evacuation plans are available online, McGowan said.

As far as traffic congestion during evacuations, McGowan said evacuation plans aren't likely to solve that problem.

"Every single one of these really large fires had traffic congestion," McGowan said. However, it wasn't gridlock, he said.

"There's absolutely no evacuation in the history of the world that is going to go absolutely seamless," McGowan said.

Evacuation plans are helpful for "well-defined hazards such as a tsunami or dam failure, said Briana Khan, a spokeswoman for Sonoma County.

Wildfire evacuation plans also may help smaller communities but not larger ones, she said. Plus, there's the cost.

"Most communities in California do not have wildfire evacuation plans due to the need to expend resources in addressing other hazards such as flooding or earthquakes," Khan said.

However, she said, Sonoma County is interested in developing evacuation planning for its most at-risk communities.

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"Although we do not have a definite timeline in place for delivering and exercising these plans, the county is very aware of — and is counting on — the significant community interest in this subject," Khan said.

Since the 2017 fires, officials also have begun sending out emergency warnings and calling for evacuations earlier, she said.

Haney, the Mt. Royal University researcher, said the success of an evacuation plan rests on several things: effective communication, whether a community trusts its local government, resources available to residents and geography.

The trend among emergency managers is to develop evacuation plans for many different types of disasters — hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, fires, etc. — rather than a single evacuation plan for each, Haney said.

"It's really about imagining the different scenarios — making plans flexible enough to fit many different disaster types," Haney said.

"Things that never happened before happen all the time," he said.

What happened during the Camp Fire in 2018 had happened before, although on a smaller scale, said Jones, the Paradise mayor.

Because of evacuation problems during a 2008 wildfire, Paradise and county officials drew up evacuation plans that include evacuation zones and routes, she said.

"We had terrible traffic jams (in 2008) and from that we developed an evacuation plan," Jones said.

But Jones takes away a different lesson than emergency leaders in other parts of California. She doesn't see the Camp Fire deaths as a sign that planning is futile. Quite the opposite.

"(Eighty-five) deaths is a lot and it's terrible, but our residents knew what to do," she said.

USA Today Network-California reporter Megan Diskin contributed to this report.

At Kim-Putin summit, hearty handshakes and manspreading

By ERIC TALMADGE Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The ambiance was friendly. Nice, comfy seats. An exchange of polite welcomes.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un even managed to match Russian President Vladimir Putin's manspreading — the two sat with knees spread wide apart as they chatted before the start of their first summit, which began Thursday in the Far East port city of Vladivostok.

With so little else to go on, it's a common practice for North Korea watchers to pay extremely close attention to Kim's every word and gesture when he makes public appearances. Summits are no exception, and there's always lots of analytical commentary, insightful and silly.

What caught the attention of many outside observers Thursday wasn't the scene, but the sound — of Kim's loud breathing.

Clips of the introductory encounter were quickly tweeted around the world, many with comments about the leader's audible breathlessness. South Korea's media, meanwhile, speculated that it could be a sign of Kim's poor health. He is, after all, overweight and a notoriously heavy smoker.

But when the two delivered their opening comments to start the actual talks, Kim seemed to have gotten over whatever the problem was.

Experts have noted that when Kim met President Donald Trump for the first time, they nearly lunged at each other with hands outstretched for a handshake. They vied several times to lead the other with an alpha male hand on the back. Gazes were carefully not averted, lest that appear to suggest submission.

The impression from their second encounter, in Hanoi two months ago, was more measured. The two tended to mirror each other more closely, which is a sign of respect and cooperation rather than aggression.

Kim's first greeting with Putin was more like his performance in Hanoi, though a bit stiffer. It was in some ways similar to an old style Soviet meeting, with a bit of a formal chill to it.

He and Putin approached each other with fixed smiles and held an extended handshake for the cameras. It's often an awkward moment, even for the most experienced politicians. But they appeared relaxed — or perhaps just well-poised — as they also did during the initial part of the talks, which were broadcast live.

Unlike the much taller Trump, Putin is roughly the same height as Kim, which probably helped.

The health of the North Korean leader has been the topic of speculation before.

During his first summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, last April, he appeared to be out of breath as he signed a guestbook after a short walk. He was also shown on TV red-faced at a banquet, likely from the ample beverages available.

But Kim has managed to make it through nearly a dozen summits now. His meetings with Moon, in particular, were well received in the South and seen to reveal a genuine warmth and desire for better relations.

It remains to be seen how effective he will be in getting out from under the sanctions that have been imposed on his country for its nuclear weapons programs. But if nothing else, he has demonstrated a surprising air of confidence alongside some of the biggest players on the world stage.



Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un talk during their meeting in Vladivostok, Russia, Thursday, April 25, 2019. North Korean leader Kim managed to match Russian President Vladimir Putin's manspreading - the two sat with knees spread wide apart as they chatted before the start of their first summit, which began Thursday in the far eastern port city of Vladivostok.

(Sergei Ilnitsky/Pool Photo via AP)

Father of suspected Easter bombers arrested; Colombo on edge

By EMILY SCHMALL and BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — The father of two of the suspected Easter suicide bombers was arrested on suspicion of aiding his sons on Thursday, according to Sri Lanka's former navy chief, as investigators continued to comb his Colombo mansion for evidence of the attacks that killed 359 people.

Jayanath Colombage, now a counterterrorism expert at the Pathfinder Foundation, confirmed the arrest to The Associated Press. He said it was unclear whether the father or his home, where an explosion Sunday killed three police officers, had been under surveillance ahead of the attacks.

Sri Lankan police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera did not answer repeated calls and messages seeking comment, but earlier said 58 people had been detained since the bombings.

The mansion was the site of a ninth explosion Sunday, which one of the suspects apparently detonated to ward off police.

Sri Lanka's capital remained jittery Thursday as authorities set off more controlled detonations of suspicious items, soldiers stopped and searched vehicles and some businesses advised staff to stay indoors, four days after the string of suicide bombings in and around Colombo that officials say were conducted by local Muslim extremists.

John Keells Holdings, the parent company of the Cinnamon Grand hotel, one of the sites stricken in the Easter Sunday bombings, told employees at its various hotel properties to stay inside "further to the communications we have received" in an email shared with the AP.

It was not immediately clear where the warning originated, and a police spokesman did not respond to several calls and messages.

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The streets around Dematagoda, a wealthy Colombo neighborhood where officials say many of the bombing suspects lived, were quiet Thursday.

Investigators continued to comb through the mansion of the father of two of the suspects with nine front balconies and a white BMW parked out front.

In a house on the other side of a quiet, leafy lane full of large houses, a 14-year-old boy said he used to ride bicycles and play soccer with one of the suspect's children, a 10-year-old boy who frequently visited his relatives there, and that the other children at the house were too young to play outside. He said his entire house shook when the bomb went off.

Sri Lankan police continued their search for additional explosives in and outside of Colombo, detonating a suspicious item in a garbage dump in Pugoda, about 35 kilometers (22 miles) east of the capital.

Sri Lanka's civil aviation authority also banned drones and unmanned aircraft "in view of the existing security situation in the country," according to a statement.

Hobby drones have been used by militants in the past to carry explosives. Iraqi forces found them difficult to shoot down while driving out the Islamic State group, whose members loaded drones with grenades or simple explosives to target government forces. And Yemen's Houthi rebels have used drones, most recently to target a military parade in January, killing troops.

The attacks Easter Sunday mainly at churches and hotels killed at least 359 people and wounded 500 more, the government said Wednesday. Most were Sri Lankan but the Foreign Ministry has confirmed 36 foreigners died. The remains of 13 have been repatriated. Fourteen foreigners are unaccounted for, and 12 were still being treated for injuries in Colombo hospitals.

A top Sri Lankan official has said that many of the suicide bombers were highly educated and came from well-off families.

Junior Defense Minister Ruwan Wijewardene said at least one had a law degree and others may have studied in the U.K. and Australia.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said one of the bombers had been in the country on a student visa with a spouse and child before leaving in 2013.

A British security official also confirmed one bomber is believed to have studied in the U.K. between 2006 and 2007. The security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the investigation, said British intelligence was not watching Abdul Lathief Jameel Mohamed during his stay in the country. His name was first reported by Sky News.

Sri Lankan government leaders have acknowledged that some intelligence units were aware of possible terror attacks against churches or other targets weeks before the bombings. The president asked for the resignations of the defense secretary and national police chief without saying who would replace them.

Sri Lankan authorities have blamed a local extremist group, National Towheed Jamaat, whose leader,



Sri Lankan navy soldiers perform security checks on motorists at a road in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Thursday, April 25, 2019. Sri Lanka banned drones and unmanned aircraft and set off more controlled detonations of suspicious items Thursday four days after suicide bombing attacks killed more than 350 people in and around the capital of Colombo. (AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena)

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alternately named Mohammed Zahran or Zahran Hashmi, became known to Muslim leaders three years ago for his incendiary online speeches. On Wednesday, Wijewardene, the junior defense minister, said the attackers had broken away from National Towheed Jamaat and another group, which he identified only as "JMI."

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the attacks. Authorities remain unsure of the group's involvement, though they are investigating whether foreign militants advised, funded or guided the local bombers.

Associated Press journalists Rishabh R. Jain and Jon Gambrell in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Gregory Katz in London contributed to this report.



In this Saturday, April 6, 2019 photo, supporters of Spain's far-right Vox Party wave Spanish and VOX flags during a party event in Leganes, on the outskirts of Madrid, Spain. A substantial pool of undecided voters and a right-wing splintered by a rising populist party are making confident predictions harder to come by as Spain prepares for its third parliamentary election in less than four years.

(AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)

AP EXCLUSIVE: At Walmart, using AI to watch the store

By ANNE D'INNOGENZIO AP Retail Writer

LEVITTOWN, N.Y. (AP) — Inside one of Walmart's busiest Neighborhood Market grocery stores, high resolution cameras suspended from the ceiling point to a table of bananas. They can tell how ripe the bananas are from their color.

When a banana starts to bruise, the cameras send an alert to a worker. Normally, that task would have relied on the subjective assessment of a human, who likely doesn't have time to inspect every piece of fruit.

Welcome to Walmart's Intelligent Retail Lab — the retail giant's biggest attempt to digitize the physical store.

The thousands of cameras are a key feature of the lab, which officially opens inside this 50,000-square-foot store on Thursday. Walmart envisions using them, combined with other technology like sensors on shelves, to monitor the store in real time so its workers can quickly react to replenish products or fix other problems. The technology, shown to The Associated Press, will also be able to track when shelves need to be restocked or if shopping carts are running low. It can spot spills on the floor and even detect when cash registers need to be opened up before long lines start forming.

Walmart's deep dive into artificial intelligence in its physical store comes as Amazon raised the stakes in the grocery business with its purchase of Whole Foods Market nearly two years ago.

That's put more pressure on Walmart and other traditional retailers like Kroger and Albertson's to pour money into technology in their physical stores. At the same time, they're trying to keep food prices down and manage expenses. Amazon has been rolling out cashier-less Amazon Go stores, which has shelf sensors that track the 1,000 products on its shelves.

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Walmart's online U.S. sales are still a fraction of Amazon's online global merchandise empire, which reached \$122.98 billion last year.

Walmart hopes to start scaling some of the new technology at other stores in the next six months, with an eye toward lowering costs and thus lower prices. As the shopping experience improves, the retailer expects to see higher sales.

"We really like to think of this store as an artificial intelligence factory, a place where we are building these products, experiences, where we are testing and learning," said Mike Hanrahan, CEO of Walmart's Intelligent Retail Lab and co-founder of Jet.com, purchased by Walmart three years ago. "If we know in real time everything that's happening in the store from an inventory and in stock perspective, that really helps us re-think about how we can potentially manage the store."

Hanrahan says the cameras are programmed to focus primarily on the products and the shelves at this point. They currently do not recognize faces, determine the ethnicity of a person picking up the product or track the movement of shopper, he says. A glass enclosed data center at the back of the store houses nine cooling towers, 100 servers and other computer equipment that processes all the data.

There are signs throughout the store alerting and educating shoppers about how the store is being used as a lab. Still, all the cameras could raise privacy concerns.

"Machine learning fundamentally finds and matches patterns," says Steven M. Bellovin, professor of computer science at Columbia University and an expert on privacy, who hasn't seen the new Walmart AI Lab. But he says companies run into trouble where it starts to match the behavior to a specific customer.

Hanrahan says Walmart has made sure to protect shoppers' privacy and also emphasized that it does not have cameras at the pharmacy, in front of the rest rooms or its employees' breakrooms.

Walmart's new living lab marks its second in a physical store. Last year, Walmart's Sam's Club opened a 32,000 square foot lab store, the quarter of a size of a typical Sam's Club store. It's using the store to test new features surrounding its Scan & Go App, which lets customers scan items as they shop and then buy from their phones, skipping the checkout line.

The retail lab is the third project from Walmart's new incubation arm, created after the Jet.com acquisition as a way for the discounter to shape the future of retail.

It follows the launch of Jetblack, a shopping by text service aimed at affluent shoppers in New York. Walmart's second incubation project to launch was Spatial&, a VR tech company. As part of the launch, it's bringing tractor-trailers to some of Walmart's parking lots of some of its stores so customer can experience DreamWorks Animation's "How to Train Your Dragon" through virtual reality.

Hanrahan says the company is embracing the labs in stores because it can better understand the real



A customer shops for bananas at a Walmart Neighborhood Market, Wednesday, April 24, 2019, in Levittown, N.Y. High resolution cameras suspended from the ceiling point to the table of bananas and determine from the color of the bananas how ripe they are. When a banana starts to bruise, that would send an alert to an associate to replenish. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

ways that technology affects customers and workers. It also wants to educate shoppers.

Walmart has made a point to not hide the technology. Small educational kiosks are set up throughout the store. It plans to bring in local schools and communities.

Despite the signs and visible cameras, many shoppers including Marcy Seinberg from Wantagh, New York, didn't seem to notice or care.

"I am not bothered by it," Seinberg said. "If technology saves me money, I would be interested."

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

US measles cases hit highest mark in 25 years

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Measles in the U.S. has climbed to its highest level in 25 years, closing in on 700 cases this year in a resurgence largely attributed to misinformation that is turning parents against vaccines.

"This is alarming," said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University vaccine expert. Not only is measles dangerous in itself, but its return could mean other vaccine-preventable diseases seemingly consigned to the past may be coming back as well, he said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 695 cases had been reported in 22 states this year as of Wednesday afternoon. That was up from 626 reported Monday and makes this the nation's worst year for measles since 1994, with eight months still to go in 2019. There were 963 cases in 1994.

Roughly three-quarters of this year's illnesses in the U.S. have been in New York state, mainly in two ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities in Brooklyn and suburban Rockland County. Most of those cases have been in unvaccinated people.

The number of cases is likely to go even higher. Measles is highly contagious and can spread through the air when someone coughs or sneezes. And in recent days, Jewish families have been gathering for Passover meals. It can take 10 to 12 days for symptoms to develop.

The CDC recommends the vaccine for everyone over a year old, except for people who had the disease as children. Those who have had measles are immune.

The vaccine, which became available in the 1960s, is considered safe and highly effective, and because of it, measles was declared all but eliminated in the U.S. in 2000. But it has made comebacks since then, including 667 cases in 2014.

Public health experts say some U.S. communities have low vaccination rates because of the spread of bad information — especially the now-debunked notion that the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine is linked



FILE - In this March 27, 2019, file photo, a woman receives a measles, mumps and rubella vaccine at the Rockland County Health Department in Pomona, N.Y. Measles cases in the U.S. this year have climbed to the highest level in 25 years, according to preliminary figures, a resurgence attributed largely to misinformation about vaccines. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig, File)

to autism — through social media, pamphlets, hotlines and other means.

"Many parents are afraid. And if you want to believe your kid doesn't need that many shots, there's plenty of places to find people who agree with you," said Dr. Jonathan Fielding, former head of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. "It's not so easy to discern what is real and what is not."

Measles in most people causes fever, runny nose, cough and a rash all over the body. However, a very small fraction of those infected can suffer complications such as pneumonia and a dangerous swelling of the brain.

According to the CDC, for every 1,000 children who get measles, one or two will die from it. No deaths have been recorded this year.

Measles' return may be an early warning sign of resurgences in other vaccine-preventable diseases such as rubella, chickenpox and bacterial meningitis, Schaffner said.

"Measles is the signal that in these communities where there's profound under-vaccination, they are susceptible to a whole menu of communicable diseases we thought were relegated to yesteryear," he said.

Sixty-one of the new cases were reported in hard-hit New York City.

Up to now, the biggest single U.S. measles outbreak in recent years was in 2014, when 383 cases were reported in the Amish community in nine Ohio counties. But on Wednesday, New York City officials said the outbreak centered in some of Brooklyn's Jewish neighborhoods has accounted for 390 cases since October.

"These cases are stark reminders of why New Yorkers must get vaccinated against the measles as soon as possible," New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot said.

Ultra-Orthodox rabbis generally have no religious objections to vaccines and have urged their followers to get inoculated. But the "anti-vaxxer" movement has made inroads among the ultra-Orthodox, even though they have little exposure to the internet.

"There's a lot of misinformation from this anti-vaccine movement within the community. Some of the misinformation is that it causes autism, that the vaccines contain mercury, that the disease, itself will protect them from cancer, eczema," said Dr. Joseph Kaplovitz, a pediatrician who serves the ultra-orthodox community in Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood.

Earlier this month, city officials ordered mandatory vaccinations in four ZIP codes in Brooklyn and threatened fines of up to \$1,000 for noncompliance. City officials said 12 people have been issued summonses.

There have been three measles-related deaths reported in the U.S. since 2000, the last one in 2015. The worst year for measles in modern U.S. history was 1958, with more than 763,000 reported cases and 552 deaths.

AP video journalist Robert Bumsted contributed to this report from New York.

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Boeing's troubled jet is costing \$1 billion to fix so far

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Boeing is already estimating a \$1 billion increase in costs related to its troubled 737 Max and has pulled its forecast of 2019 earnings because of uncertainty surrounding the jetliner, which remains grounded after two crashes that killed 346 people.

The \$1 billion figure is a conservative starting point. It covers increased production costs over the next few years but does not include the company's spending to fix software implicated in the crashes, additional pilot training, payments to airlines for grounded jets, or compensation for families of the dead passengers.

The estimate was disclosed Wednesday in a presentation for investors as Boeing released first-quarter financial results, which missed Wall Street expectations.

While lacking many details, the disclosures gave the clearest picture yet of the financial damage that the accidents are causing to the aerospace giant.

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Boeing CEO Dennis Muilenburg repeated that the company is making progress on updating key flight-control software in the Max with the goal of convincing regulators to let the plane fly again.

Chicago-based Boeing Co. said its previously issued full-year guidance didn't account for 737 Max impacts. It plans to issue new guidance at a future date.

The company also said it is suspending stock buybacks. Boeing spent \$2.3 billion in the first quarter to buy its own stock, which is designed to make remaining shares more valuable.

Investors and consumers have been scrutinizing Boeing since Max jets crashed in October and March. The accidents have damaged the company's reputation for safety, caused the worldwide grounding of about 370 Max jets, and raised questions about the U.S. government's approval of the plane in 2017.

In January, Boeing projected full-year adjusted earnings of about \$20 a share. After the company's announcement that it was cutting production of the Max, however, analysts had dropped their forecast all the way to \$16.40 on average, according to FactSet.

On a conference call, Muilenburg defended the company after an analyst asked how Boeing got in this spot. The CEO disputed the notion that Boeing engineers and federal regulators may not have fully understood how pilots would interact with new anti-stall software called MCAS.

"There was no surprise or gap or unknown here, or something that somehow slipped through a certification process," Muilenburg said.

"We also know there are areas where we can improve," he added, explaining why Boeing is now upgrading MCAS with changes that will limit the software's ability to automatically force the plane's nose down powerfully in some circumstances.

Executives gave no update on a timetable for regulatory approval of the software fix and pilot-training program. The company has completed test flights, and the next crucial step is a certification flight with Federal Aviation Administration representatives on board.

Preliminary reports indicate that faulty sensor readings triggered MCAS and pushed the nose down in both the Oct. 29 crash of a Lion Air jet off the coast of Indonesia and the March 10 crash of an Ethiopian Airlines Max. Boeing began working on a software fix immediately after the first crash.

Foreign regulators are expected to take longer than FAA to approve resumed flights. When that happens, Boeing says it has a plan to win over passengers who are reluctant to get back on a Max jet, but admits it will take time for travelers to regain confidence in the plane.

"We think a key voice in all of this will be the pilots for our airlines," Muilenburg said. "That bond between the passenger and the pilot is one that is critical."

Dennis Tajer, a 737 pilot and union spokesman at American Airlines, said that "if and when we are confident in the Max we will do more than speak publicly about it, we will be right there with our passengers."

Tajer said Muilenburg, airline CEOs and regulators should show their faith in the Max by flying on it too,



FILE - In this April 10, 2019, file photo a Boeing 737 MAX 8 airplane being built for India-based Jet Airways lands following a test flight at Boeing Field in Seattle. Boeing Co. reports earnings Wednesday, April 24. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File)

perhaps with their families.

Boeing reported first quarter net earnings of \$2.15 billion, down \$328 million or 13% from a year earlier. Revenue slid \$465 million or 2%, to \$22.92 billion, on fewer deliveries of 737s.

Profit adjusted to exclude non-repeating items was \$3.16 per share. Analysts surveyed by FactSet expected \$3.19 per share on revenue of \$22.94 billion, and both of those forecasts had been reduced considerably in the past month.

Boeing has about 4,600 unfilled orders for the Max. After the planes were grounded and no more were being delivered to airlines, the company cut its production from 52 to 42 a month, at least temporarily jeopardizing plans to boost production to 57 planes a month this summer.

Goldman Sachs analyst Noah Poponak said the impact of the Max grounding was earlier and larger than he had expected.

UBS analyst Myles Walton said the company's estimate of a \$1 billion hit from the Max situation was "likely below the low end of anyone's thinking." Still, Boeing stock should get a boost, he added, when the company submits its work to the FAA for certification, likely in the next couple weeks.

The shares rose \$1.44 to close at \$375.46. Despite a recent slump, the stock has gained 16.4% this year and is up 4.5% since the first fatal crash.

David Koenig can be reached at <http://twitter.com/airlinewriter>

Asian shares mixed after US stocks retreat from record high

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were mixed Thursday after U.S. stocks closed lower, giving back some of its gains a day after the S&P 500 and Nasdaq hit record highs.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 edged up 0.2% in early trading to 22,247.14. South Korea's Kospi fell nearly 0.3% to 2,195.56. Hong Kong's Hang Seng slipped 0.5% to 29,805.83, while the Shanghai Composite inched up nearly 0.1% to 3,201.61. Australia's trading was closed for Anzac Day, a national holiday.

Investors are also watching for the U.S. economic growth data being released later in the week.

On Wall Street, energy stocks led the modest slide as crude oil prices fell after a three-day rally. Communications companies also helped pull the market lower, offsetting gains in real estate and other sectors. Bond prices rose as traders took a more defensive approach.

Stocks wavered between small gains and losses through much of the day as investors continued to wade through a steady flow of corporate earnings.

The S&P 500 index fell 6.43 points, or 0.2%, to 2,927.25. The benchmark index closed at a record



A currency trader walks by the screen showing the Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI) at the foreign exchange dealing room in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, April 25, 2019. Asian shares were mixed Thursday after U.S. stocks closed lower, giving back some of its gains a day after the S&P 500 and Nasdaq hit record highs. (AP Photo/

Lee Jin-man)

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high on Tuesday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 59.34 points, or 0.2%, to 26,597.05. The Nasdaq composite lost 18.81 points, or 0.2%, to 8,102.01. The index was also coming off a record high close.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude lost 30 cents to \$65.59 a barrel. It fell 0.6% to settle at \$65.89 per barrel. Oil had been climbing recently since dropping below \$43 in late December. Brent crude fell 26 cents to \$74.31 per barrel.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose to 112.14 Japanese yen from 111.85 yen. The euro weakened to \$1.1150 from \$1.1206.

AP Business Writers Alex Veiga and Damian J. Troise contributed to this report.

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Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, April 25, the 115th day of 2019. There are 250 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 25, 1507, a world map produced by German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller contained the first recorded use of the term "America," in honor of Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci (vehs-POO'-chee).

On this date:

In 1859, ground was broken for the Suez Canal.

In 1898, the United States Congress declared war on Spain; the 10-week conflict resulted in an American victory.

In 1915, during World War I, Allied soldiers invaded the Gallipoli (guh-LIHP'-uh-lee) Peninsula in an unsuccessful attempt to take the Ottoman Empire out of the war.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. and Soviet forces linked up on the Elbe (EL'-beh) River, a meeting that dramatized the collapse of Nazi Germany's defenses. Delegates from some 50 countries gathered in San Francisco to organize the United Nations.

In 1959, the St. Lawrence Seaway opened to shipping.

In 1964, vandals sawed off the head of the "Little Mermaid" statue in Copenhagen, Denmark.

In 1972, Polaroid Corp. introduced its SX-70 folding camera, which ejected self-developing photographs.

In 1983, 10-year-old Samantha Smith of Manchester, Maine, received a reply from Soviet leader Yuri V. Andropov to a letter she'd written expressing her concerns about nuclear war; Andropov gave assurances that the Soviet Union did not want war, and invited Samantha to visit his country, a trip she made in July.

In 1990, the Hubble Space Telescope was deployed in orbit from the space shuttle Discovery. (It was later discovered that the telescope's primary mirror was flawed, requiring the installation of corrective components to achieve optimal focus.)

In 1993, hundreds of thousands of gay rights activists and their supporters marched in Washington, D.C., demanding equal rights and freedom from discrimination.

In 1995, show business legend Ginger Rogers died in Rancho Mirage, California, at age 83.

In 2002, Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes of the Grammy-winning trio TLC died in an SUV crash in Honduras; she was 30.

Ten years ago: In her first trip to Iraq as America's top diplomat, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton tried to reassure nervous Iraqis that the U.S. wouldn't abandon them, even as she said the American troop withdrawal would stay on schedule. Finance ministers meeting in Washington said they saw signs the global economy was stabilizing but cautioned it would take until the middle of the next year for the world to emerge from the worst recession in decades. Actress Beatrice Arthur died in Los Angeles at age 86.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama, in a joint news conference in Seoul alongside South Korean President Park Geun-hye (goon-hay), said the U.S. stood "shoulder to shoulder" with its ally in refusing to

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accept a nuclearized North Korea. The United States and other nations in the Group of Seven said they'd agreed to "move swiftly" to impose additional economic sanctions on Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine.

One year ago: Ford Motor Co. said it would get rid of most of its North American car lineup as part of a broad plan to save money and make the company more competitive; the Mustang sports car and a compact Focus crossover vehicle would be the only cars sold in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Danish engineer Peter Madsen was convicted of murder for luring a Swedish journalist onto his homemade submarine before torturing and killing her; Madsen was later sentenced to life in prison.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Al Pacino is 79. Ballroom dance judge Len Goodman (TV: "Dancing with the Stars") is 75. Rock musician Stu Cook (Creedence Clearwater Revival) is 74. Singer Bjorn Ulvaeus (BYORN ul-VAY'-us) (ABBA) is 74. Actress Talia Shire is 74. Actor Jeffrey DeMunn is 72. Rock musician Steve Ferrone (Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers) is 69. Country singer-songwriter Rob Crosby is 65. Actor Hank Azaria is 55. Rock singer Andy Bell (Erasure) is 55. Rock musician Eric Avery is 54. Country musician Rory Feek (Joey + Rory) is 54. TV personality Jane Clayson is 52. Actress Renee Zellweger is 50. Actress Gina Torres is 50. Actor Jason Lee is 49. Actor Jason Wiles is 49. Actress Emily Bergl is 44. Actor Jonathan Angel is 42. Actress Marguerite Moreau is 42. Singer Jacob Underwood is 39. Actress Melonie Diaz is 35. Actress Sara Paxton is 31. Actress Allisyn Ashley Arm is 23. Actress Jayden Rey is 10.

Thought for Today: "It's the friends you can call up at 4 a.m. that matter." — Marlene Dietrich, German-American actress (1901-1992).