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Death Notice:

Duane Neumann

Duane Neumann, 91, of Aberdeen and formerly of Groton passed away April 27, 2019 at his home. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

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



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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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

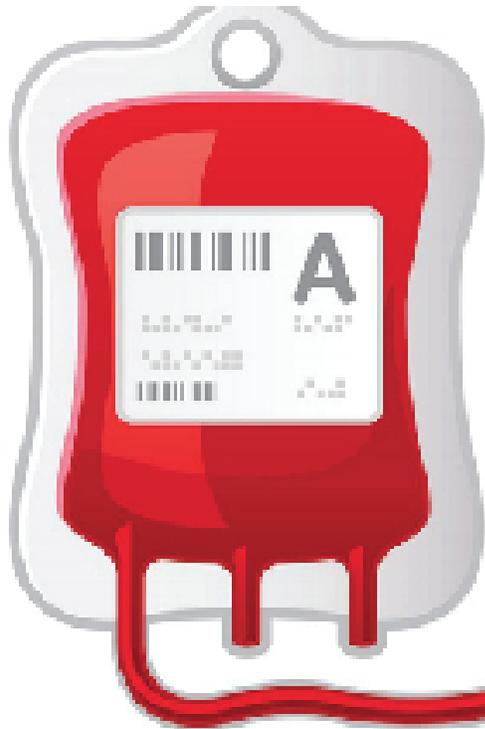
Does your child enjoy ice skating?

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>.**

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Jonathan Doeden qualifies for state in 110m Hurdles

Groton Area tracksters finally got a track meet in on Friday as the teams went to Sisseton for the first local outdoor meet of the year. Jonathan Doeden took first place in the 110m Hurdles and his time also qualified him for the state track meet with a time of 15.69. Nicole Marzahn was the high placer in the girl's division with second place in the triple jump.

Boy's Division

Team Points: 1, Morris Area/Chokio-Albert, 121; 2 (tie), Sisseton, 92.50, and Ipswich, 92.50; 4, Lisbon, 68; 5, Sri-State, 59; 6, Webster Area, 57.50; 7, Aberdeen Roncalli, 56.50; 8, Langford Area, 39.50; 9 (tie), Ortonville, 35.50, and Groton Area, 35.50; 11, Britton-Hecla, 30; 12, Hankinson, 22; 13, Frederick Area, 11; 14, Florence/Henry, 7.50; 15, Wheaton/Herman-Norcross, 7; 16, Clinton-Graceville-Beards, 6.

110m Hurdles: 1, (State Qualifier) Jonathan Doeden, 15.69; 12, Paxton Bonn, 20.16.

300m Hurdles: 4, Jonathan Doeden, 44.38.

100m Dash: 7, Jonathan Doeden, 11.85; 9, Thomas Cranford, 11.94; 29, Wyatt Hearnen, 14.13.

200m Dash: 4, Thomas Cranford, 24.39; 14, Darien Shabazz, 25.83; 24, Jackson Cogley, 27.10; 31, Wyatt Hearnen, 29.83; 34, River Pardick, 31.73.

400m Dash: 22, Mitchell Koens, 1:02.15; 26, Wyatt Hearnen, 1:04.65; 27, Jamie Ruiz de Medina, 1:05.67.

800m Run: 14, Isaac Smith, 2:29.53; 19, Mitchell Koens, 2:33.54.

1600m Run: 6, Issac Smith, 5:12.58.

4x100m Relay: 5, Groton (Darien Shabazz, Kaden Kurtz, Austin Jones, Thomas Cranford), 47.65.

4x200m Relay: 7, Groton (Darien Shabazz, Kaden Kurtz, Austin Jones, Thomas Cranford), 1:42.28.

4x400m Relay: 11, Groton (Jonathan Doeden, Austin Jones, Kaden Kurtz, Jamie Ruiz de Medina), 4:02.34.

1600m Sprint Relay: 10, Groton (Kaden Kurtz, Jackson Cogley, Cyruss DeHoet, Anthony Schinkel), 5:06.19.

4x800m Relay: 9, Groton (Isaac Smith, Anthony Schinkel, Cyruss DeHoet, Jamie Ruiz de Medina), 10:31.38.

High Jump: 7, Paxton Bonn, 5-2.

Long Jump: 11, Darien Shabazz, 18-11; 23, Paxton Bonn, 16-10.75; 28, Wyatt Hearnen, 15-01; 31, Mitchell Koens, 14-6.

Triple Jump: 9, Austin Jones, 35-10.5; 18, Paxton Bonn, 34-5; 18, Jackson Cogley, 34-5.

Discus: 7, Brodyn DeHoet, 115-5; 15, Grady O'Neill, 105-8; 19, Caleb Furney, 100-4.

Shot Put: 8, Brodyn DeHoet, 39-2.5; 21, Grady O'Neill, 35-9; 28, Caleb Furney, 33-9.5.

Girl's Division

Team Points: 1, Morris Area/Chokio-Albert 134.2; 2, Ipswich, 130.4; 3, Aberdeen Roncalli, 110; 4, Webster Area, 77; 5, Lisbon, 54.4; 6, Sisseton, 41; 7 (tie), Langford Area, 33, and Ortonville, 33; 9, Sri-State, 32; 10, Florence/Henry, 31; 11, Groton Area, 29; 12, Wheaton/Herman-Norcross, 13; 13, Frederick Area, 8, 14, Britton-Hecla, 3, 15 (tie), Hankinson and Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley w its 1 each.

100m Hurdles: 7, Payton Maine, 18.43; 14, Cassandra Townsend, 19.71.

300m Hurdles: 10, Payton Maine, 55.36; 14, Cassandra Townsend, 58.52.

100m Dash: 18, Riley Leicht, 14.55; 24, Emilie Thurston, 15.76; 25, Trista Keith, 16.36.

200m Dash: 25, Emilie Thurston, 34.01.

400m Dash: 5, Kenzie McInerney, 1:10.09; 26, Paloma Fernandez, 1:29.61.

4x100m Relay: 6, Groton (Allyssa Locke, Trista Keith, Emilie Thurston, Riley Leicht), 1:03.24.

4x200m Relay: 10, Groton (Allyssa Locke, Trista Keith, Emilie Thurston, Payton Maine), 2:10.51.

4x400m Relay: 8, Groton (Payton Maine, Cassandra Townsend, Kenzie McInerney, Allyssa Locke), 4:54.38.

High Jump: 11, Nicole Marzahn, 4-04.

Long Jump: 6, Nicole Marzahn, 14-6.25; 23, Allyssa Locke, 12-07; 29, Trista Keith, 11-00.

Triple Jump: 2, Nicole Marzahn, 31-04.5.

Discus: 4, Jennie Doeden, 101-5; 7, Taylor Holm, 88-5; 10, Kaycie Hawkins, 83-0; 24, Maddie Bjerke, 67-9.

Shot Put: 6, Jennie Doeden, 31-01.5; 10, Maddie Bjerke, 26-10.75; 12, Taylor Holm, 26-03.



Immigration debate hampers guest worker programs critical to SD businesses

By: Bart Pfankuch



Richard Greene, a hotelier who is president of the Keystone Chamber of Commerce, said there is deep concern in the tourism town this year due to difficulty some businesses have in securing guest workers to fill jobs that Americans don't want. Photo: Bart Pfankuch

The intensely partisan and politicized national debate over immigration policies has cast a cloud of uncertainty over guest worker programs that for years have helped provide employees to seasonal South Dakota businesses that cannot find enough American workers.

The viability of some businesses in the tourism, agricultural and construction industries are at stake if federal programs that bring foreign workers to South Dakota each summer are not stabilized soon.

With the unemployment rate at 2.8% in South Dakota – one of the lowest rates in the nation – hundreds of businesses and farms cannot hire enough people to get them through the summer tourism, harvest and construction seasons.

Last year, guest worker programs run by the U.S. departments of labor and state brought about 4,400 people from a variety of other countries to South Dakota to take jobs that employers cannot fill with local employees. Most visitors stay about six to 10 months and are paid a fair wage set by the federal government. The majority of guest workers arrive from Mexico, Central America and sometimes South America or Asia on temporary visas granted through the federal H-2A and H-2B seasonal employment programs.

Employers provide them housing while the workers build homes and businesses, clean hotel rooms, work in restaurants or help harvest crops.

The program has been highly successful in fulfilling critical staffing needs at businesses around the country; about 66,000 visas are granted nationally under the H-2B program each year, and 134,400 H-2A visas were granted in 2016. Sioux Falls, which had a 2.4% unemployment rate in February, was the South Dakota city with the most H-2B visas granted in 2018 with 346, followed by Custer and Arlington. Sioux Falls also led the state with 447 H-1B professional visas issued in 2018.

But staunch partisanship in Congress and a strong stance against illegal immigration by the Trump Administration have hampered efforts to reform, strengthen and streamline guest worker programs. Uncertainty over getting workers, delays in when promised workers arrive and logistical issues have reduced the effectiveness of some guest worker programs.

A resort owner in the Black Hills couldn't open her business on schedule and is turning away reservations. One South Dakota dairy operator is unable to get guest workers to keep his operation running efficiently year-round. And a Mitchell concrete company owner refuses to apply for guest workers after a bad experience with the H-2B program.

Members of the South Dakota congressional delegation are working to cut through the partisanship, educate colleagues on the need for guest workers and improve the logistics and stability of the programs. But

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several recent reform efforts have been stymied by congressional gridlock and a reluctance by the Trump Administration to prioritize improvement of legal immigration programs that aid states like South Dakota.

"It's been several years in a row that we've had this challenge," U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, a South Dakota Republican, said in an interview with News Watch. "We'd sure like to get it back to where it was a stable program and one in which people recognized the need for it and understood that this is a legal visa system that actually works and that it is not part of the illegal immigration problem."

Losing money every day

In a typical April, Dani Banks would already be making money by providing housing to the tourists who visit Mount Rushmore and the Black Hills.

Banks operates the Holy Smoke Resort, a seasonal Keystone business with 26 full-service cabins and 21 sites for recreational vehicles that is usually open from April to October.

Due to delays in getting workers under the H-2B visa program, Banks has been unable to open the resort and is losing money every day.

"We'll get open almost a month late this year," she said. "I'm not open because I can't get my cabins ready to go with just me and one employee."

For nearly two decades, Banks has used the H-2B visa program to hire up to five housekeepers from Mexico who live in RVs on her property and keep her cabins clean and ready to rent. This year, if they come, they will be paid \$10.55 an hour, a wage set by the government.

Banks has had success with the H-B2 program, but in recent years she has been anxious due to uncertainty over if and when she will get guest workers. The situation worsened a couple years ago when Congress changed the rules regarding returning workers, making it more difficult to bring back the honest, steady crew of housekeepers she has come to trust and rely upon.

"Those employees are critical and we can't run our businesses like this every year," Banks said. "You just can't do it."

Like other South Dakota employers who use guest worker programs, Banks needs foreign workers because locals aren't interested in the jobs she has open each summer.

In order to qualify to get guest workers, Banks spends about \$2,500 per employee before they begin work to pay for visa and broker fees, travel costs and to advertise for open jobs in a local newspaper and online.

In 16 years of advertising locally for housekeepers, Banks said only two people have applied. One didn't show up for the interview and the other was arrested on drug charges during the hiring process.

With uncertainty hovering over the H-2B program and the lottery-based system of connecting employers with workers, Banks expects it will only get tougher to run her business at a profit. She has already turned down some reservation requests this year.

"It's been really awful, and this is no way to run a business," she said. "At one point, we stopped taking reservations for the summer last year, and pretty doggone quick, we're going to have to close off units this year."

Banks and others who use the H-2 visa programs say they have never had a problem with guest workers leaving their work assignments or violating the terms of their visas in order to say in the country illegally.

Temporary, non-immigrant guest worker programs run by the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of State provided about 4,400 workers to South Dakota employers



Cows feed in a barn owned by dairy operator Lynn Boadwine of Baltic, who uses the H-2A guest worker visa program to bring in some foreign employees to work on his farm but is unable to use the program to fill open jobs at his large dairies. Photo: Courtesy Lynn Boadwine

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in 2018, according to federal data. The J-1, Exchange Visitor Program brought 1,517 temporary workers to the state in 2018. That year, 1,414 workers came on H-2B temporary non-agricultural visas, 863 arrived on H-2A temporary agricultural visas, 599 on H-1B temporary professional visas and 61 on permanent visas.

While the guest worker programs provide employers with some help in creating a stable workforce, they do not come close to filling the needs of employers who face worker shortages amid historically low unemployment rates.

Data from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics show that South Dakota was tied for the fifth-lowest unemployment rate in the nation at 2.8% in March, tied with Hawaii and Nebraska and behind the Great Plains states of North Dakota (tied for lowest at 2.3%) and Iowa (2.4%.) The national unemployment rate in March was 3.8%.

The low rate means people in the state's overall workforce of 464,200 typically have several options when it comes to finding a job.

In many cases, the industries that obtain workers through guest worker programs tend to be in fields that don't pay well or include job duties that may not be desirable to local workers.

In 2018, the top five industries seeking workers under the H-2B visa program were for construction laborers, cement masons and concrete finishers, maids and housekeepers, landscape workers and food preparation employees.

The top five applications for H-2A agricultural visas in 2018 were for equipment operators, construction of livestock buildings, grain workers, beekeeping and livestock handling.

Guest workers critical to agriculture

Tom Peterson, director of the South Dakota Dairy Producers, said some agricultural industries that run at full speed all year long are unable to benefit fully from guest worker programs that place a time limit on the visas.

While some dairy operators participate in the H-2A visa program, it doesn't provide them with as much help as it could, Peterson said.

"It's the only avenue, so some must utilize it, but in terms of securing a labor force, it's really a challenge for them," Peterson said. "The biggest challenge now is establishing continuity and having a workforce you can count on and know that it's going to be there long term."

Peterson said the intensity and partisanship in the ongoing immigration debate in Congress and the U.S. as a whole has hampered efforts to incorporate meaningful reform of guest worker programs that could aid South Dakota producers.

Peterson pointed to the omnibus immigration reform bill put forth in early 2018 by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte of Virginia that, among other things, would have expanded the guest worker visa program for the dairy and the meatpacking industries. The bill sought solutions for many hot-button immigration issues, including providing amnesty for some children of immigrants born in the U.S., expanding security at the border and cracking down on sanctuary cities.

But the compromise bill fizzled, and the expanded guest worker program for dairies went down with it.

"It's such a hot political issue that they gained some traction and then last summer, that in essence was killed," Peterson said. "It's hard to find an answer to such politicized issues."

Republican U.S. Sen. John Thune of South Dakota introduced a measure earlier this year to grant 2,500 more H-2B visas to states with unemployment rates of 3.5% or lower.

"This is a time-sensitive matter for employers in South Dakota to ensure they can secure temporary, supplemental workers to help with their operations," Thune said in an email to News Watch. "Without the extra labor, businesses can't run at full capacity, and some may face challenges opening at all."

So far, Thune's bill has not been acted upon.

Progress has also stalled on a congressional effort to grant H-2B visas to 30,000 more guest workers this fiscal year. More than 90,000 employers applied to get more workers under that proposal, but the effort has stalled due to delays created by the recent resignation of former Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, Rounds said.

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David Holmgren, who owns and operates four restaurants in Keystone and Hill City, has had great success using the J-1 guest worker program through the U.S. Department of State that brings foreign college students to work in his businesses during the summer high season. Photo: Bart Pfankuch

The Department of Homeland Security plays a critical role in vetting potential visa holders and in administering the visa program. In his email to News Watch, Sen. Thune said he is seeking a long-term legislative solution to fix problems with the H-2 visa programs and to remove some authority from the homeland security agency.

Rounds said fixing any problems in the guest worker programs has been slowed by the Trump Administration, which he said has not put a priority on dealing with visa and legal immigration programs.

"This could work a lot smoother than what it does, but it will require the administration to do that in a more timely basis," Rounds said. "And while we authorize it, we can't make them do it, we can direct them to do it, but they still have to actually execute it, and if it's not a priority for them, it makes it more difficult to get it done on time."

Lynn Boadwine is a prominent dairy farmer from Baltic who often struggles to find enough qualified workers. Over the years, Boadwine said he has had success with the H-2A guest worker visa program and the use of immigrant labor in general.

Boadwine has about 3,200 milking cows in two separate operations and also runs a farm.

The H-2A program helps Boadwine get workers for his seasonal "go time" on the farm, a stretch in the summer where he needs help pumping manure, harvesting alfalfa, managing his hay fields and cleaning hundreds of fans that keep his cows cool.

Boadwine is anticipating the arrival of seven to 10 H-2A guest workers in May who will make about \$14 an hour and be allowed to stay until December.

Boadwine advertises locally for open positions at the dairy but doesn't have much success.

"There's not a lot of U.S.-based employees that want to milk cows for a living," he said. "In our dairies, we milk 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It's hard work, it's rapid paced, and when we put out an advertisement, we don't have a lot of people that are interested in doing that kind of work."

But current immigration rules prevent him from obtaining guest workers for his dairy operations because existing visa programs do not allow for stays beyond one year. Of the roughly 134,400 H-2A visas granted in 2016, the average stay in the U.S. was for seven months.

Boadwine supports reform of guest worker programs to aid producers whose operations run at full speed all year long. "Somebody in Congress needs to change the rules to remove seasonality or the temporary nature of it," he said.

Boadwine uses migrant workers in his dairy who are not affiliated with any guest worker program. In doing so, he has gained a deep respect for their work ethic and an appreciation of the cultural diversity they add to his operation.

Boadwine said he once loaned \$6,000 to a Guatemalan employee who wanted to buy a corn grinder to open a tortilla shop in his home country. The man paid the money back in five months, Boadwine said.

"I can't tell you the respect I have for a lot of these migrant workers," he said. "A lot of them are just good people that are trying to make a better way for their family."

Boadwine said he supports enforcement of immigration laws and strengthening of America's border. He believes it's possible to crack down on illegal immigration while also supporting efforts to bring eager, qualified guest workers to the United States.

"There's nothing wrong with strong borders, and there's nothing wrong with a functional guest worker

program," he said. "But because of this polarization we have, we haven't reached consensus and it's difficult for politicians to deal with, and as a result, nothing changes."

Mixed results for S.D. employers

For some South Dakota employers, the paperwork, expense and government regulation over the guest worker programs aren't worth the effort.

Mike Bathke, owner of Big Dog Concrete in Mitchell, said he is almost constantly in need of qualified workers. "I was going to straight up quit the construction business because I couldn't get any help," Bathke said.

A few years ago, Bathke said he tried to alleviate his staffing shortage by entering the H-2B visa program. He paid up-front money to a broker to begin the process of bringing foreign workers to Mitchell, and he even bought and furnished a home to provide housing for the workers.

But when he missed out on that year's visa lottery and was told no workers would be coming, he was turned off from the program for good.

"If I have to go that route again, I'll be straight up honest with you, I will have an auction and sell all my equipment and get out of the business," Bathke said. "I don't like the government telling me how to run my business or how much I have to pay my employees."

Bathke said he and other construction employers have a hard time finding local employees who are willing to work up to 70 hours a week pouring foundations, laying basements and finishing floors. Business is booming and at this point, with the crew he has, Bathke said he doesn't have to seek out new contracts.

Bathke, who pays up to \$19 an hour and provides full benefits, said he has about 10 employees who are from the local area but also employs four or five Hispanics who have papers to work in the United States but are not part of a visa program.

He said the word gets out among foreign workers that he pays well and provides benefits, so he is able to find non-local employees fairly easily to fill open positions. He said his foreign employees, who often don't speak English well, are excellent employees.

"The Hispanic population has been phenomenal to me," he said. "They're good workers, very loyal, show up every day and don't complain."

The potential for a prosperous high season has dimmed for some employers in Keystone, the small town at the foothills of Mount Rushmore National Memorial, which drew about 2.3 million visitors in 2017.

"I've heard a lot of fear and concern over not being able to staff for the summer because of problems with the visa programs," said Richard Greene, president of the Keystone Chamber of Commerce and manager of the Rushmore Express hotel. "We have 500 or more jobs open and we have a town of only 325 people, so a lot of the businesses really rely on bringing in that summer help."

Greene said the 190 members of the Keystone chamber share resources when possible to fill jobs during the high season. For example, hotel operators who bring in guest workers under the H-2B visa or J-1 exchange program may pay those workers in the morning and then release them to work in restaurants that need employees in the evenings.

Greene has used J-1 workers at his hotel but does not find the H-2B program workable because of logistical challenges and concerns that visas won't be available to workers who apply.

"We've tried to get them, but we've had a lot of issues in the past when they couldn't get their visas," he said. "Part of the problem is that we would love to hire people, but if they can't get their visas for whatever reason, it makes it difficult for us and for them."

"We've tried to get them, but we've had a lot of issues in the past when they couldn't get their visas," he said. "Part of the problem is that we would love to hire people, but if they can't get their visas for whatever reason, it makes it difficult for us and for them."



Keystone business owner David Holmgren showcases the backgrounds of his guest workers on video screens in his restaurants in the tourist town. Photo:

Bart Pfankuch

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Greene said H-2B workers also can't stay long enough to get him through the spring and fall tourism "shoulder" seasons.

A lack of stability in the H-2B program, Greene said, puts a burden on employers, the locals who work for them and on customers. During the summer high season, occupancy at the 84-room hotel a half-mile from Mount Rushmore can reach 95 percent.

"If you don't get the workers, you end up working extra hard and sometimes you don't get to do what you want," he said. "If you have projects or things you were planning to do workwise, you have to put those on hold because you're the only guy here who's sometimes cleaning rooms and sometimes checking people in at the front desk."

Just around the corner in Keystone, David Holmgren has found great success with the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program run by the State Department that brings college students to the United States to work and travel.

In partnership with his husband Jesus Roman, Holmgren owns and operates a Subway restaurant in Hill City and a Subway, Dairy Queen and the Holy Terror Coffee & Fudge shop in Keystone.

Holmgren has only two full-time employees, so he relies extensively on the J-1 non-immigrant Work & Travel program to provide him with employees during the high season. This year, Holmgren is hosting about 35 student workers under the program, and he promotes their presence on video screens in his restaurants that show a photo and give some background on the guest workers. About 265 of the J-1 participants will work in Keystone this summer, he said.

"There is no simple answer to this complex issue of seasonal employment, but it's very clear if we lose support of this resource in South Dakota, we will see small service retail and industry fail," Holmgren said.

ABOUT BART PFANKUCH



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

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Today in Weather History

April 27, 1968: A significant snowstorm raged over the northern Black Hills blocking many highways near Gillette and Moorcroft with an estimated three to four feet of snow. Winds in the Sturgis area were nearly 90 mph.

1898: The first Weather Bureau kite was launched in Topeka, Kansas to report daily, early morning, atmospheric observations. By year's end, 16 additional launch sites would be in operation.

1899 - A tornado struck Kirksville, MO, killing 34 persons and destroying 300 buildings. (David Ludlum)

1912: The April 27-28, 1912 outbreak was the climax of a wild, week-long period of severe weather that occurred in Oklahoma. Strong to violent tornadoes struck portions of central and north-central Oklahoma on April 20, 1912. Also, a violent tornado hit Ponca City, OK on April 25, 1912. From the 27 through the 28th, 16 tornadoes rated F2 or greater touched down in the state with 6 of them rated F4. About 40 people were killed, and the storms injured 120 people. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the NWS Office in Norman, Oklahoma.

1931: The temperature at Pahala, located on the main island of Hawaii, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record.

2003: For only the 11th time since records began in 1871, hail was observed in Key West Florida. A severe thunderstorm produced hail to 1.75 inches in diameter which easily broke the previous record of a half an inch in diameter which was set on May 10, 1961.

2011: April 27 was the single deadliest day for tornadoes since records began in 1950. The death toll from Wednesday's 199 tornadoes surpassed 300. The worst day in recorded history for storm fatalities is March 18, 1925, with 747 deaths. Of the 316 deaths reported, 313 were associated with the afternoon/evening tornadoes. In all, 31 of these tornadoes were rated as EF3 or stronger. Eleven tornadoes were rated EF4, and four were rated EF5. The average EF4 and EF5 tornado path length were 66 miles.

1931 - The temperature at Pahala, located on the main island of Hawaii, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1942 - A destructive tornado swept across Rogers County and Mayes County in Oklahoma. The tornado struck the town of Pryor killing 52 persons and causing two million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Forty-two cities in the western and south central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 87 degrees at Olympia WA was an April record, and highs of 92 degrees at Boise ID, 95 degrees at Monroe LA, and 96 degrees at Sacramento CA tied April records. (The National Weather Summary) More than 300 daily temperature records fell by the wayside during a two week long heat wave across thirty-four states in the southern and western U.S. Thirteen cities established records for the month of April. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

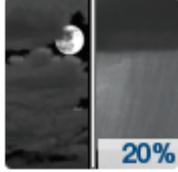
1988 - Mount Washington NH reported seven feet of snow in ten days, pushing their snowfall total for the month past the previous record of 89.3 inches set in 1975. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower and Middle Mississippi Valley to Virginia and the Carolinas. Hail up to four and a half inches in diameter caused five million dollars damage around Omaha NE. Thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes, and there were 160 other reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in eastern Texas and the Lower Mississippi Valley. Severe thunderstorms spawned thirteen tornadoes in Texas and twelve in Louisiana. A tornado southwest of Coolidge TX injured eight persons and caused more than five million dollars damage. There were also eighty-five reports of large hail and damaging winds, with baseball size hail reported at Mexia TX and Shreveport LA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) Forty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Records highs included 94 degrees at Charleston WV, 95 degrees at Baltimore MD and 96 degrees at Richmond VA. (The National Weather Summary)

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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
				
Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Showers	Breezy. Mostly Cloudy then Chance Showers	Chance Showers	Slight Chance Rain/Snow and Breezy
High: 52 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 49 °F	Low: 35 °F	High: 48 °F

It's the 27th of April, And There's Snow Falling Out Over Central South Dakota This Morning. No Joking!



US212/SD45 Miranda

SD26/SD47 North of Highmore 18 miles

US12 East of Bowdle

SD20 Tolstoy

Obs from SDDOT, Update from NWS Aberdeen, SD

Published on: 04/27/2019 at 6:36AM

Wet, accumulating snow will end this morning across portions of central and northeast South Dakota, leaving the rest of today into this evening dry. Another area of low pressure is set to move across the region later tonight through Sunday night. A few showers could develop over the forecast area in association with this next system. Otherwise, conditions should be dry until sometime Tuesday night or Wednesday when the next low pressure system is forecast to reach the northern plains. Temperatures are going to remain below normal for late April into early May.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 58 °F at 2:56 PM

Low Outside Temp: 32 °F at 6:39 AM

High Gust: 15 mph at 1:17 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 91° in 1897

Record Low: 17° in 2005

Average High: 63°F

Average Low: 37°F

Average Precip in April.: 1.50

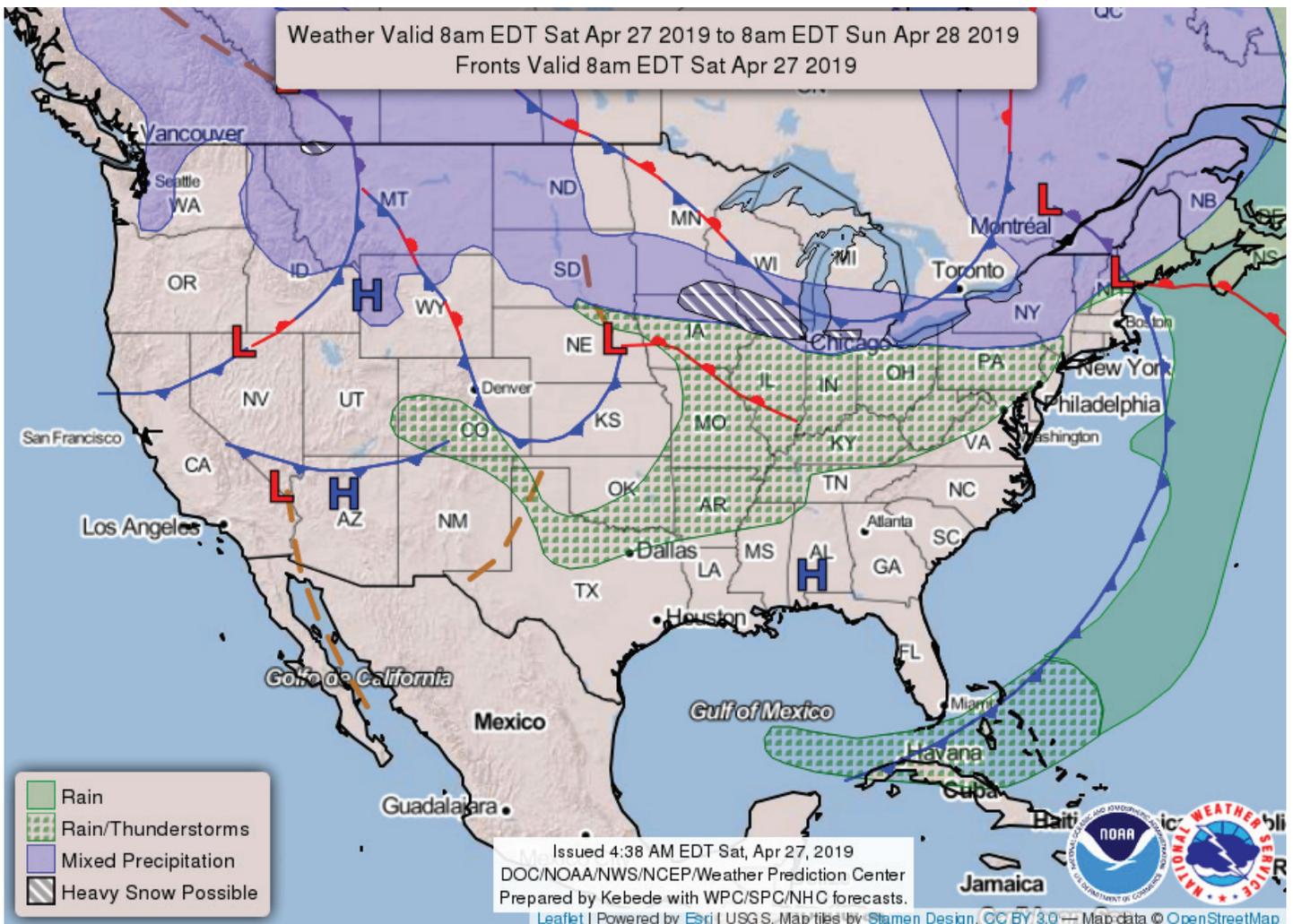
Precip to date in April.: 1.42

Average Precip to date: 3.68

Precip Year to Date: 4.46

Sunset Tonight: 8:35 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:27 a.m.



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RIGHT WAY - WRONG WAY

I may not always be right, he said as though he believed it, but Im never wrong. Never! Impressive!

We sat there wondering if he knew what he was saying, trying to convince himself of such insanity, or wanting to create fear in our hearts about his power. It really did not matter. All of us, including him, realized the folly of his speech.

However, there are many who believe as he believed: they are incapable of being wrong. They refuse to accept the counsel of anyone and after making a decision become even more resolute and stubborn. Solomon had something to say to people who hold that opinion of themselves: The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

Ultimately and finally, those who have that attitude about themselves are on a path to self-destruction. When looked at from a biblical point of view, they refuse to accept the role of sin in their lives, their need for a Savior, or the reality of Gods judgment that awaits them. Their world view is completely distorted.

The wise, however, listen to advice. Even though they may be embarrassed or disappointed when someone who loves them corrects them, or points out a flaw, they know that it is for their good. Those who listen to the advice or counsel of someone with spiritual insight and wisdom will be rewarded. Listening to and accepting the advice of our elders in Christ is the wise thing to do before making any decision.

Prayer: Lord, break the hardness of our hearts when we think we know it all. Lead us to those who are spiritually mature, love You deeply, and are biblically wise. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 12:15 The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

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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

Box Elder City Council expels alderman for alleged misdeeds

BOX ELDER, S.D. (AP) — The Box Elder City Council has expelled one of its members for alleged misuses of power, disorderly conduct and conflicts of interest.

The Sioux Falls Argus Leader reports that the council voted to remove Ward 1 Alderman Scott Allen. The council accuses Allen of engaging in threatening behavior, subjecting city officials to profanity-laced tirades, and using his public position to benefit his private business, among other alleged misdeeds.

Allen denies that he committed any offenses worthy of expulsion. He says in a statement that city officials are trying to silence his opposition to a rezoning effort he believes would be devastating for small business owners. He plans to appeal the expulsion in court.

The events leading up to the expulsion began with a grievance filed against Allen by a city employee in August 2018.

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

USD: 'Hawaiian Day' issue didn't violate student free speech

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — An investigation into a University of South Dakota student group's decision to rename their "Hawaiian Day" party to avoid backlash has found that administrators who advised the name change didn't violate the school's free speech policy.

The Argus Leader reports that University President Sheila Gestring met with a state legislative committee Wednesday about the Student Bar Association's move last month to rename its winter social event to "Beach Day."

Law school administrators suggested the theme change after receiving a student complaint that the event potentially violated the school's policy on inclusiveness. The decision came on the same day that South Dakota lawmakers killed a bill that would've mandated free speech on college campuses.

Gestring told lawmakers that a false narrative from sources outside the school overwhelmed the student group.

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

Greenpeace drops effort to move lawsuit to friendlier venue

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON** Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Greenpeace is dropping an effort to move a lawsuit alleging it conspired against the Dakota Access oil pipeline from North Dakota state court to federal court — a possibly friendlier venue to the environmental group.

Greenpeace had cited federal law dealing with court jurisdiction to try to get the state case moved to federal court, where the group had already prevailed against racketeering claims alleged by Texas-based pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners.

ETP disputed Greenpeace's argument that federal court had jurisdiction over its latest lawsuit. Greenpeace attorneys in a late Friday court filing acknowledged the company was correct and agreed to leave the lawsuit in state court.

Greenpeace maintains ETP's latest claims are a "duplicative" attack on free speech and political advocacy. "Plaintiff's relentless vendetta risks chilling the advocacy of Greenpeace and other environmental groups, and if adopted more broadly by big industry as a strategy, has more ominous implications for advocates across the political spectrum who face large corporations with deep pockets," attorney Derrick Braaten wrote in a recent filing.

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ETP alleges Greenpeace and activists conspired to use illegal and violent means such as arson, harassment and misleading information to disrupt pipeline construction and damage the company's reputation and finances, all the while using the highly publicized and prolonged protest to enrich themselves through donations.

Groups and Native American tribes that feared environmental harm from the pipeline staged large protests that resulted in 761 arrests in southern North Dakota over a six-month span beginning in late 2016. The pipeline that ETP maintains is safe began moving North Dakota oil through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois in June 2017.

ETP sued Greenpeace and others in federal court two months later, making claims under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act and under North Dakota laws. U.S. District Judge Billy Roy Wilson eventually ordered the company to amend what he criticized as a "vague" lawsuit and ultimately dismissed the case in February, saying there was no evidence of a coordinated criminal enterprise that worked to undermine ETP and the pipeline.

Wilson did not rule on the state claims, however, and ETP sued in state court a week later. Greenpeace made a technical argument for moving the dispute back to federal court. The group cited a federal law stipulating federal courts have jurisdiction over cases in which the plaintiffs and defendants are in different states. ETP attorney Lawrence Bender effectively argued that was not the case.

Braaten in court filings alleges ETP's current "convoluted suit" is really aimed at saddling Greenpeace with "extraordinary litigation costs" and silencing the group's public criticism.



FILE - In this Feb. 23, 2017 file photo, law enforcement enters the Oceti Sakowin camp to begin arresting Dakota Access oil pipeline protesters in Morton County, near Cannon Ball, N.D. Greenpeace is seeking to move a lawsuit in North Dakota state court alleging it conspired against the Dakota Access oil pipeline to federal court, where the environmental group has already prevailed against racketeering claims alleged by the pipeline's developer. Greenpeace wants a federal judge to throw out the latest claims of Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners. The company is fighting the effort, maintaining the case belongs at the state court level. (Mike McCleary/The Bismarck Tribune via AP, Pool File)

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

Sioux Falls School District sees record year for snow days

By JONATHAN ELLIS Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — It's a known fact that each new generation of Americans has it easier than previous generations.

At least, that's what older folks often say.

But when it comes to walking to school in snow, some former Sioux Falls School District students might have a claim of legitimacy on this inter-generational boast. They often did have to walk to school in more snow.

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That's because it appears that school cancelations were harder to come by 20 years ago, the Argus Leader reported.

The Argus Leader analyzed more than 20 years of school closures and historic weather data from the National Weather Service. From 1995 to 2013, the average amount of snow that Sioux Falls received on days canceled because of heavy snow was 9.2 inches. Since then, however, snow accumulations have averaged 3.7 inches on days canceled because of snow.

The numbers are based only on days canceled because of heavy snow and not for days canceled because of cold. Nor does the data include late starts or early dismissals.

The Sioux Falls School District is teetering on setting a record for snow days with the 2018-2019 school year. There have been four days called off because of cold or snow, plus three late starts and an early dismissal. Superintendent Brian Maher told the Argus Leader recently that the district would have a plan in the next couple of weeks on how to make up the lost time.

Maher added that calling off school is "polarizing" for families.

District spokeswoman Carly Uthe said there has not been a policy change in recent years regarding closures.

"As a district, our decision whether or not to hold school has always, and will always, be based on what is going to be the safest for our students given the current weather conditions at the time," she said in an email.

Of course, predicting the weather is always a gamble, and school officials like to make decisions before school is in session.

In 2000, then Superintendent Jack Keegan weighed closing school as a heavy snow storm was forecast for Sioux Falls. In the end, the city got a small amount of ice, but the snow sailed past Sioux Falls, falling elsewhere.

Keegan had enough time to call a late start as opposed to canceling school.

So for older students who remember trudging to school through snow, wondering why it wasn't canceled, it's true: You did have to go to school in the snow.

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

09-17-23-30-46, Mega Ball: 10, Megaplier: 4

(nine, seventeen, twenty-three, thirty, forty-six; Mega Ball: ten; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$212 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$166 million

Maine latest to ditch Columbus Day, honor Native Americans

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) — Maine joined a small but growing number of states on Friday that have renamed Columbus Day to honor indigenous people as part of a movement to recognize the dark side of colonialism in the Americas.

Several cities and a handful of states have made some move to celebrate Native Americans on the federal holiday dedicated to the 15th century explorer Christopher Columbus, and the movement appears to be gaining momentum: Just this year, New Mexico's governor signed such a law, Vermont's effort awaits the governor's signature, and similar bills are pending in Kansas and Massachusetts. Maine's governor, Janet

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Mills, signed a law Friday to change the name of the October holiday to Indigenous Peoples' Day.

"There is power in a name and who we choose to honor," Mills said.

Native American tribes and others say celebrating the explorer ignores the effect that the European arrival in the Americas had on the native peoples, who suffered violence, disease, enslavement, racism and exploitation at the hands of the settlers.

South Dakota became the first state to replace Columbus Day with a day recognizing Native Americans in 1990, and the National Congress of American Indians and tribal leaders say they're now finding more support for the decades-old idea amid rising public awareness of those atrocities.

With Maine's move, there are now five states that permanently honor indigenous people instead on the federal holiday, according to a tally by The Associated Press, and governors in four other states regularly issue proclamations honoring Native Americans on Columbus Day. Few of those states previously recognized the federal Columbus Day holiday, which fewer than half of states recognize.

"We're at a point where indigenous people and other marginalized groups have been just trying to survive for so long," said Maulian Dana, tribal ambassador for the Penobscot Nation, who traveled to Maine's Statehouse for the signing ceremony Friday.

Now, she said: "We've been able to lift ourselves up a little bit and work with state and federal government to get to an elevated place."

Columbus is widely recognized as opening the Americas to European colonization, though he never set foot on what is now the continental U.S., says historian Jim Loewen, who wrote "Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong."

Countries throughout the Americas mark his 1492 arrival in the Western Hemisphere, and Italian-American groups have long defended the holiday to celebrate their heritage and acknowledge the discrimination Italian immigrants faced.

"They should have a day of their own," Jim DiBiase of the Italian Heritage Center in Portland said of Native Americans, while acknowledging Columbus's legacy. "It shouldn't have to be on the shoulders of Columbus Day."

Some have sought compromise: This week, Oklahoma's Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt — the nation's first governor enrolled as a member of a Native American tribe — signed a law to dedicate the October holiday to both Columbus and indigenous people. At least four states honor Native Americans on another day.

Others have argued that erasing Columbus isn't the answer either, noting that the history of European colonization and its effect of the indigenous people needs to be taught.

"We're not going to forget about Columbus," Loewen said. "The question that people miss is: is there a



FILE - This Aug. 27, 2017 file photo shows the Christopher Columbus statue at Manhattan's Columbus Circle in New York. Maine Gov. Janet Mills signed a bill on Friday, April 26, 2019, changing Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day in the state. Vermont is also poised to act on a similar bill as several states have done away with celebrating the explorer in deference to Native Americans, though the federal Columbus Day holiday remains. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews, File)

difference between honoring and remembering?"

Associated Press writer Lisa Rathke in Montpelier, Vermont, contributed to this report.

South Dakota church to shutter after 134 years

BRISTOL, S.D. (AP) — A church that's operated in a rural northeastern South Dakota city for 134 years is preparing to open its doors to parishioners for the last time.

St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Bristol will hold its last Mass on Saturday, Aberdeen American News reported.

Rev. Michael Kelly serves the parish community of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Groton. But he's been commuting to St. Anthony's to take care of the Bristol church since 2011.

Kelly said St. Anthony's decided to leave the church that year and let the community decide when to tear it down. The Bristol church built in 1885 is slated to be demolished in June, he said.

"Out of Rome, the decree says you cannot have a church be sold for anything other than a worship space," Kelly said.

The church's diocese, the Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls, has seen 14 churches host their final Masses in the past five years, said spokesman Jerome Klein. The dioceses had 24 mergers in 2014.

St. Anthony's parishioners will now have to drive for up to 45 minutes to find the closest Catholic church in either Groton or Webster, Kelly said.

He expects the final Mass to be "a little emotional."

Kelly hopes for "a beautiful ceremony for remembering and thanksgiving for all that was done here."

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

Rapper caught with marijuana edibles won't serve jail time

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A judge says a rapper arrested in Sioux Falls in 2017 after marijuana edibles were found in his carry-on bag can avoid jail time if he stays out of further legal trouble.

Chief Keef, whose legal name is Keith Cozart, pleaded no contest Friday to possession of a controlled substance. The plea isn't an admission of guilt but is treated as such for sentencing purposes.

Judge Jon Sogn gave Chief Keef a suspended imposition of sentence, which means that no conviction will be entered if he keeps a clean record for one year. Other charges, including possession of marijuana, were dismissed.

The rapper performed in Sioux Falls in June 2017 and was leaving when airport security found the edibles. Chief Keef, a Chicago native, lives in Los Angeles.

Dog teams to search for missing South Dakota girl

ROCKERVILLE, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are bringing in dog teams from four states this weekend as they continue searching for a 9-year-old girl who went missing in the Black Hills area nearly three months ago.

Serenity Dennard ran away from the Black Hills Children's Home on Feb. 3. Numerous searches have been conducted since then.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office says dog teams are coming from the Northern Black Hills, Wyoming, Montana and Colorado. They plan to search Saturday and Sunday. About 30 people will be involved.

The search changed from a rescue to a recovery effort not long after the girl went missing. The sheriff's office said Serenity likely wouldn't have survived if she was outside in subzero temperatures.

Missing state prison inmate in Yankton caught in Sioux Falls

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A state prison inmate at the Yankton Community Work Center who was placed on escape status has been apprehended.

State corrections officials say Matthew Weddell failed to report to his community service job site in Yankton on April 13. He was arrested in Sioux Falls on Thursday.

The 38-year-old Weddell is serving sentences from Stanley County for grand theft and failure to appear. He also faces new charges in Sioux Falls.

Yankton man pleads not guilty to murder in April 6 shooting

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A Yankton man accused of killing another man after a fight inside a city restaurant has pleaded not guilty to murder.

Twenty-two-year-old Jameson Mitchell is accused of fatally shooting Lucas Smith in an alley on April 6. The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reports that he entered his plea Thursday and is to stand trial in late August.

The potential punishments for conviction are life imprisonment or the death penalty. Deputy State's Attorney Erich Johnke was granted another month to determine whether the prosecution will seek the death penalty if Mitchell is convicted.

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

Sioux Falls woman pleads guilty in boyfriend's death

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls woman accused of driving away after her boyfriend fell off the hood of her vehicle and later died has pleaded guilty to manslaughter.

The plea by 44-year-old Jayme Knudson Thursday afternoon cancels her trial set for next month. The Argus Leader says Knudson answered "yes" when Judge Susan Sabers asked her if her reckless behavior caused Erik Lunstra's death and whether she had ingested methamphetamine that day.

The 46-year-old Lunstra died of his injuries on Sept. 10, 2018, two days after he fell from Knudson's vehicle.

Second-degree manslaughter carries a maximum 10 years in prison.

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

Oliver North says he won't serve 2nd term as NRA president

By LISA MARIE PANE Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Retired Lt. Col. Oliver North said Saturday that he will not serve a second term as the president of the National Rifle Association amid inner turmoil in the gun-rights group.

In a statement read to members of the group Saturday, North said he believes a committee should be set up to review the NRA's finances. North was not present at the meeting when the statement was read by Richard Childress, the NRA's first vice president.

"There is a clear crisis and it needs to be dealt with" if the NRA is to survive, North's statement said.

His announcement came after an effort by some members to force out top executive Wayne LaPierre, who has long been the public face of the group.

LaPierre sent a letter to board members Thursday saying that North was trying to push him out by threatening to release "damaging" information about him to the board.

North, best known for his role in the Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s, is nearing the end of his first one-year term. His announcement that he will not serve a second two-year term is a clear sign that his efforts to force out LaPierre have failed.

LaPierre got two standing ovations from the crowd of more than 1,000 NRA members before giving a

scheduled speech after North's announcement. He began by using standard NRA talking points, going after the mainstream media and lawmakers who seek to restrict gun rights. He did not mention his feud with North.

"Our enemies have sunk to new lows," LaPierre said, blasting Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York, where regulators have scrutinized NRA operations.

The NRA has sued the state, claiming its rights under the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment are being violated. In an unusual pairing, the American Civil Union has joined the NRA in its fight.

NRA officials are concerned that regulators in New York — where its charter was filed — are attempting to strip the group of its nonprofit status.

LaPierre told the crowd that efforts to strip away the Second Amendment right to bear arms will fail.

"We won't accept it. We will resist it. We won't give an inch," he said.



In this Friday, April 26, 2019 photo, National Rifle Association President Col. Oliver North speaks at the National Rifle Association Institute for Legislative Action Leadership Forum in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. On Saturday, North announced that he will not serve a second term as the president of the NRA amid inner turmoil in the gun-rights group. (AP Photo/Michael Conroy)

Sri Lanka militants set off bombs during raid, killing 15

By JON GAMBRELL and BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI Associated Press

AMPARA, Sri Lanka (AP) — Militants linked to Easter suicide bombings opened fire and set off explosives during a raid by Sri Lankan security forces on a house in the country's east, leaving behind a grisly discovery Saturday: 15 bodies, including six children.

The gunbattle that began Friday night and the carnage that followed come amid widespread fear of more attacks as officials hunt for militants with explosives believed to still be at large after the coordinated bombings of churches and luxury hotels that killed more than 250 people last weekend.

Raids and police curfews have shut down areas of eastern Sri Lanka, and Catholic leaders have canceled Sunday Masses indefinitely. Officials also urged Muslims to stay home for prayers in an extraordinary call by the clergy to curtail worship.

The government on Saturday also formally banned two extremist groups purportedly linked to the attacks, allowing officials to confiscate their property, presidential spokesman Dharmasri Ekanayake said.

The U.S. Department of State, citing terror groups plotting more possible attacks, urged Americans to reconsider travel to Sri Lanka and ordered the school-age children of government workers to leave the country. The U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka has previously warned the public to stay away from places of worship over the weekend, a stark alert underlining that authorities believe some attackers remain at large.

The gunfight Friday came after police tipped off soldiers about a suspected safe house near the town of Sammanthurai in Sri Lanka's Ampara District, where authorities said the militants set off three explosions and opened fire.

Police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekara said some of the dead likely were militants who blew themselves up in suicide bombings. Earlier, the military said at least one civilian had been killed in the attack.

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A girl and a woman survived the explosion at the suspected safe house but were critically injured and being treated at a hospital, Gunasekara said.

Photographs taken by The Associated Press show the charred remains of one child and the body of another wearing a green T-shirt with the words "good boy" written on the back. The bodies of an adult woman and man were found after the explosion with their clothes burned off.

Meanwhile, the military said security forces had recovered explosives, detonators, "suicide kits," military uniforms and Islamic State group flags in the ongoing raids.

Gunasekara said officers acting on information from intelligence officials also found 150 sticks of blasting gelatin and 100,000 small metal balls, as well as a van and clothing suspected of being used by those involved in the Easter attacks. Suicide bomb vests

often are packed with such balls to increase the shrapnel in the explosion, making them even deadlier.

Fear of more attacks has led to increased security at churches, shrines, temples and mosques across the multiethnic island nation of 21 million off the southern coast of India.

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, the archbishop of Colombo, told reporters Friday that church officials had seen a leaked security document describing Roman Catholic churches and other denominations as a major target. He asked the faithful across Sri Lanka to stay home for their own safety.

"We don't want repetitions," Ranjith said.

It was an extraordinary request for a Catholic clergyman to make, as churches often remain a refuge. Giovanni Maria Vian, a church historian and emeritus editor of the Vatican newspaper, said he believed it was the first time the church had canceled Masses across a country for security reasons.

In Galle Face, a normally crowded ocean side park in Colombo near some of the hotels that were bombed, only a few people could be seen Saturday. Kiosks were closed and traffic was lighter than usual, with security officials blocking streets and checking vehicles at barricades.

Yashwant Kumar Singh, 23, a worker from India, said he wants to go back to his homeland because he fears another attack. "If it only happened on one day, then that wouldn't have been so difficult, but bombs are going off here every day. That is why there is an atmosphere of fear. We are feeling very scared," he said.

Meanwhile, cleaning crews worked at St. Anthony's Shrine in Colombo, the capital, where broken glass still littered a blood-stained floor, the remnants of one of the Easter attacks. They collected debris, tossing it into a truck parked outside as a heavy contingent of security forces stood guard.

Authorities told Muslims to worship at home rather than attend communal Friday prayers that are the most important religious service of the week, but several mosques held services anyway. At a mosque in Colombo, police armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles stood guard outside for hundreds of worshippers.

The Easter attackers are "not Muslims. This is not Islam. This is an animal," said Akurana Muhandramlage Jamaldeen Mohamed Jayfer, the chairman of the mosque. "We don't have a word (strong enough) to curse them."



A Sri Lankan soldier cleans the face of a girl after she was found at the site of an explosion and a gun-battle in Kalmunai, eastern Sri Lanka, Saturday, April 27, 2019. Militants linked to Easter suicide bombings opened fire and set off explosives during a raid by Sri Lankan security forces on a house in the country's east. (AP Photo/Achala Upendra)

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There were also reports by some Muslims of harassment because of their religion.

A local television channel showed people on a bus asking a Muslim woman wearing a traditional burqa to either remove it or leave the bus. She later left the bus.

Abdul Azeez Abdul Sattar, 63, an auto-rickshaw driver, said a man in his neighborhood refused to hire him, telling him, "You are a terrorist; you have a bomb. I won't take your auto."

There were several armed police officers guarding the Holy Cross Church in Gampaha, a predominantly Buddhist town.

"People are shocked, because this came years after the war ended, and after all these years, we have been living in peace," said Pradeep Kumara, 36, a clerk at a private company, referring to Sri Lanka's long civil war, which ended in 2009. "This has disrupted our work, and our ordinary and normal life. We don't want to go back to that troublesome period."

Sri Lanka's government, crippled from a long political crisis between the president and prime minister last year, promised swift action to capture militants still at large. President Maithripala Sirisena said about 140 people had been identified as having links to the Islamic State group.

A "major search operation has been undertaken," Sirisena said. "Every household in the country will be checked."

On Friday, police confirmed that the leader of the local militant group blamed for the attack, Mohamed Zahran, died in the suicide bombing at the Shangri-La Hotel, one of six hotels and churches attacked. Zahran appeared in an Islamic State video claiming responsibility for the coordinated assault, and authorities in both Sri Lanka and Australia confirmed links between IS and the attack.

Mallawarachi reported from Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Associated Press journalists Rishabh Jain, Emily Schmall and Foster Klug in Colombo, Sri Lanka, contributed to this report.

Juul nicotine hit may be 'Worst for kids, best for smokers'

By **MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — She tried gums, patches and various electronic cigarettes to quit smoking. What finally worked for Chantel Williams was a small, reusable e-cigarette called Juul that packs a big nicotine punch.

"I look better. I feel better and I don't smell. It's fantastic," said Williams of Portland, Oregon, who smoked for decades.

That nicotine hit and its easy-to-inhale vapor is one reason why Juul is so popular — and so feared.

"That's the trouble with Juul: It's probably the worst for kids but it might be the best for adult smokers," said Dr. Nancy Rigotti, a tobacco treatment specialist at Harvard Medical School.

The brainchild of two Stanford University design students, Juul launched in 2015 and quickly leapfrogged over its competitors to become the top-selling e-cigarette in the U.S. Today, the privately held company controls nearly three-quarters of the \$3.7 billion-dollar retail market for e-cigarettes, spawning dozens of copycat brands along the way.

With Juul's rise came an explosion of underage vaping, alarming public health officials and lawmakers. Last year, 1 in 5 U.S. high school students reported vaping in the previous month, according to a government survey.

Juul and other pod-based vaping devices can be used discreetly, without the smoke, odor or throat irritation that deterred some teenagers from smoking. E-cigarettes typically heat a solution containing nicotine into a vapor, and health experts say the addictive chemical is harmful to developing brains. Recent research published shows some teenagers aren't even aware they are inhaling nicotine when using Juul and similar e-cigarettes.

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Proposals to keep e-cigarettes away from teenagers include banning flavored solutions, restricting where they can be sold and raising the purchase age to 21, which some states have done.

Less attention has been paid to Juul's quick, powerful buzz.

Abbey Solomon first began seeing Juul around the house when her son Jack was in 8th grade.

Like many parents, she didn't initially recognize the small, rechargeable device, which resembles a flash drive, as an e-cigarette. But as parents and teachers began sounding the alarm, she started confiscating Juul and its color-coded flavor pods from her son and his friends.

Last year, Jack, 16, became an unlikely spokesman for the anti-vaping movement, appearing in a viral video, "Juulers against Juul" to push for tougher restrictions to protect kids.

In the video, he says teenagers will often leave school to get their Juul fix. "It shouldn't happen," he said. "But kids are very addicted to these e-cigarettes and need this stuff to be satisfied."

Jack himself hasn't been able to quit, his mother says. When she tried to make him stop, "he was moody, he was complaining, he wasn't sleeping," says Solomon, of Scarsdale, New York. "He was miserable because he was going through nicotine withdrawal. He was addicted."

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has the power to cap nicotine levels in e-cigarettes, but hasn't proposed any such standard. For cigarettes, there's no limit on nicotine, although the FDA has taken preliminary steps toward reducing levels to help smokers quit. Limiting nicotine in e-cigarettes could have unintended consequences, including making the products less satisfying for smokers trying to switch.

Juul declined interviews for this story, but said in a statement that its product is formulated to "mimic the experience of a cigarette." Its goal is to offer smokers an alternative to tobacco-burning cigarettes, the company said. Under pressure from regulators, Juul voluntarily shut down its Facebook and Instagram accounts and pulled several flavors out of stores last November.

Company critics say Juul's nicotine level may be excessive and should be getting far more scrutiny.

"I think there's a real question of how addictive these products need to be," said Robin Koval, CEO of the Truth Initiative, a nonprofit anti-smoking education group.

Juul sells two formulas for most of its flavor pods. One contains 59 milligrams of nicotine per milliliter of liquid, or roughly three times what can be sold to consumers in Europe, where Juul sells a 20-milligram version of its pods. Juul's lower-nicotine U.S. version contains 35 milligrams of nicotine per milliliter, which still exceeds the European limit.

Britain and other nations have had success promoting e-cigarettes as a lower-risk alternative to smokers, without seeing a surge in underage vaping. But they also have tighter regulations, including strict limits on advertising.

Juul, like all e-cigarettes in the U.S., has not been approved to help smokers quit. The FDA isn't expected to begin reviewing the contents and health effects of e-cigarettes for at least two more years.



Chantel Williams vapes from a Juul pen in Vancouver, Wash., Tuesday, April 16, 2019. She tried gums, patches and various electronic cigarettes to quit smoking. What finally worked for Williams was the small, reusable e-cigarette that has a strong nicotine punch. (AP Photo/Craig Mitchell/lyer)

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While calling underage vaping a “mounting epidemic of youth addiction,” recently departed FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb stressed the importance of keeping e-cigarettes available for adult smokers trying to quit. The FDA and most experts agree that e-cigarettes are probably less harmful than traditional cigarettes because they don’t produce all of the cancer-causing byproducts of burning tobacco.

Meanwhile, the vaping industry appears to be following Juul’s lead.

Stanford researchers have identified 39 U.S. devices mimicking Juul’s pod-based design and 71 brands selling similar high-nicotine solutions.

Juul has published little peer-reviewed research, and only in the last year have independent researchers begun studying its formula. The company says each of its full-strength pods delivers about as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes. But experts note that usage varies widely; some people may vape one pod a day, others one pod a week.

Most researchers have focused on a more objective measure: the potency of Juul’s nicotine formula, or e-liquid.

Researchers at Portland State University analyzed the concentration of Juul’s full-strength pod against nine other nicotine formulas on the market in 2017. Juul’s nicotine level dwarfed its competitors, in some cases by twentyfold.

Regular cigarettes and older e-cigarettes mainly contain nicotine in its freebase form, which becomes increasingly harsh on the throat at higher levels. Juul’s innovation was to convert the nicotine to its salt form by combining it with an acid. The result is a mild vapor that allows even a novice to inhale large doses of nicotine.

David Peyton, a chemistry professor at Portland State who co-authored the paper, says Juul’s popularity is due to a combination of its formulation, flavors and marketing efforts.

“It’s very powerful and very attractive,” Peyton said.

Adult smokers want something that “will deliver this hit and relieve their nicotine craving as fast as possible,” said Dr. Maciej Goniewicz, a toxicologist at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, New York.

That’s what attracted Chantel Williams to Juul. The 46-year-old social media manager said she began smoking in grade school. She tried to quit beginning in 2005, using nicotine gum, patches and eventually e-cigarettes. Refillable vaping devices were “too much work,” she said. And other brands didn’t have the immediacy of a cigarette like Juul.

“You just grab it and you’re taken care of it,” she said.

Follow Matthew Perrone on Twitter: @AP_FDWriter

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Democrats candidates vying to show solidarity with workers

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Six Democratic presidential candidates are promoting their solidarity with workers and focusing on wages and other issues of importance to labor as they hope to win support from one of the country’s major unions.

A forum Saturday organized by the liberal Center for American Progress Action Fund and the Service Employees International Union comes as union leaders and their backers worry that 2020 field of at least 20 Democratic contenders is not spending enough time on bread-and-butter concerns.

For example, several candidates this past week debated whether criminals in prison should have the chance to win back their right to vote. It’s the type of issue that some labor leaders worry has nothing to do with the economic issues that typically motivate working-class voters. That concern is helping propel former Vice President Joe Biden’s newly launched campaign.

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Biden's first public event is Monday at a union hall in Pittsburgh where he is expected to pick up the endorsement of the International Association of Fire Fighters.

Labor is a pillar of the Democratic Party, but many white working-class voters and union members in swing states backed Republican Donald Trump in 2016. Democrats are working to win back those voters in the next presidential election, but party leaders and union members are telling candidates that they need to talk about issues that matter to working families.

"I don't think you can ever have enough" discussion of those issues, former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., told reporters Thursday.

He said that despite record-low unemployment, "we have so many people unemployed or underemployed." He hoped candidate at Saturday's event focused on ways to deal with automation and a skills gap between what employers want and what job candidates know.

Much of the Democratic conversation has centered on liberal idea such as "Medicare for All" and the Green New Deal climate change plan. But some of the White House contenders speaking in Las Vegas have made concerted union appeals.

Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar told airline and rail workers at a union convention in Las Vegas this month that she would enforce prevailing wage laws.

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren joined striking Stop & Shop workers on a picket line in New Hampshire this month. California Sen. Kamala Harris hired a top SEIU official for her campaign.

Others scheduled to speak at the forum are former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke, former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper and former Obama housing chief Julian Castro.

The SEIU, one of the country's largest unions, has about 2 million members. The union said it would consider endorsing a candidate who commits to making it easier for workers to join a union, supports a \$15 minimum wage and goes beyond walking a picket line with workers by shadowing them at work.

The union's president, Mary Kay Henry, said the union has no timeline for an endorsement but does not expect one soon. Henry said the candidates have discussed fragments of the issues faced by working people, such as affordable child care or health care, but generally have not focused on "a comprehensive set of actions that we think the next president can take that would commit to ending poverty wage work in this nation."

Henry said that includes discussions about "unrigging the rules" of the economy, holding corporations accountable and strengthening unions.

"You can't really make progress or have the power to improve kitchen-table issues like wages, affordable health care, affordable child care and a secure retirement unless we figure out a way for millions more people to get a seat at the table and be able to bargain," she said.



Democratic presidential candidate and former Texas congressman Beto O'Rourke speaks at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, during a campaign stop Friday, April 26, 2019, in Las Vegas. (AP Photo/John Locher)

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's torrent of twisted claims on Russia

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russia keeps reverberating even with special counsel Robert Mueller's report now part of history.

As much as President Donald Trump says he wants the United States to move on, he's found it hard to turn away himself, as seen in a torrent of tweets and remarks railing against Democrats, trashing Mueller and painting his own actions in a saintly light.

There is little truth to be found in these statements.

A review of a week of Russia-heavy rhetoric from Trump and his team, also touching on the census and the economy:

RUSSIA

TRUMP: "No Collusion, No Obstruction - there has NEVER been a President who has been more transparent. Millions of pages of documents were given to the Mueller Angry Dems, plus I allowed everyone to testify, including W.H. counsel." — tweet Wednesday.

ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM BARR: "The White House fully cooperated with the special counsel's investigation, providing unfettered access to campaign and White House documents, directing senior aides to testify freely, and asserting no privilege claims." — remarks at the Justice Department on April 18.

THE FACTS: It's a huge stretch for them to cast the White House as being "fully" cooperative and open in the investigation into Moscow's interference in the 2016 U.S. election and the Trump campaign's relationship with Russian figures.

Trump declined to sit for an interview with Mueller's team, gave written answers that investigators described as "inadequate" and "incomplete," said more than 30 times that he could not remember something he was asked about in writing, and — according to the report — tried to get aides to fire Mueller or otherwise shut or limit the inquiry.

In the end, the Mueller report found no criminal conspiracy between the Trump campaign and Russia but left open the question of whether Trump obstructed justice.

Also on the matter of transparency, Trump is an outlier among presidents in refusing to release his tax returns. Providing tax information as a candidate in 2016 and as president is something party nominees have traditionally done for half a century.

TRUMP: "In the 'old days' if you were President and you had a good economy, you were basically immune from criticism. Remember, 'It's the economy stupid.' Today I have, as President, perhaps the greatest economy in history." — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: You can assume many previous presidents would beg to disagree that a good economy shielded them from criticism.

Under President Bill Clinton, whose top campaign staffer James Carville coined the phrase "the economy,



President Donald Trump speaks during his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Friday, April 26, 2019. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

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stupid" to underscore what the campaign should be about, the unemployment rate fell to 3.8% and the nation's economy grew 4% or more for four straight years.

Yet Clinton was under independent counsel investigation for all but one year of his presidency, 1993. The House impeached him in December 1998, at the height of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, though the Senate acquitted him in February 1999. In January 1998, Hillary Clinton alleged a "vast right-wing conspiracy" to take down her husband, a widely mocked complaint about the relentless criticism the Clintons faced from the right (which extended to ridicule over the title of Hillary Clinton's 1996 book, "It Takes a Village.")

Under President Ronald Reagan, the economy expanded 3.5% or more for six years in a row, with growth rocketing to 7.2% in 1984. Yet Reagan was dogged in his second term by the Iran-Contra investigation, which focused on covert arm sales to Iran that financed aid to Nicaraguan rebels.

Both presidents saw much faster growth than Trump has presided over, despite Trump's faulty claim to have "perhaps the greatest economy in history." Growth reached 2.9% last year, the best in four years, but far below the levels achieved under Clinton or Reagan. The unemployment rate touched 3.7% last September and November, the lowest in five decades, but just one-tenth of a percentage point below the 3.8% in April 2000 under Clinton.

TRUMP: "Mueller was NOT fired and was respectfully allowed to finish his work on what I, and many others, say was an illegal investigation (there was no crime), headed by a Trump hater who was highly conflicted." — tweet Thursday.

THE FACTS: Trump is wrong to suggest that the FBI acted illegally by investigating him. The FBI does not need to know if or have evidence that a crime occurred before it begins an investigation.

Many investigations that are properly conducted ultimately don't find evidence of any crime. The FBI is empowered to open an investigation if there's information it has received or uncovered that leads the bureau to think it might encounter a crime. Apart from that, the investigation into the Trump campaign was initially a counterintelligence investigation rather than a strictly criminal one, as agents sought to understand whether and why Russia was meddling in the 2016 election.

Trump also makes a baseless charge that Mueller was "highly conflicted." Mueller, a longtime Republican, was cleared by the Justice Department's ethics experts to lead the Russia investigation. Nothing in the public record makes him a "Trump hater."

According to the special counsel's report, when Trump previously complained privately to aides that Mueller would not be objective, the advisers, including then-White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, then-White House counsel Don McGahn and Reince Priebus, chief of staff at the time, rejected those complaints as not representing "true conflicts." Bannon also called the claims "ridiculous."

TRUMP: "I DID NOTHING WRONG. If the partisan Dems ever tried to Impeach, I would first head to the U.S. Supreme Court." — tweet Wednesday.

THE FACTS: He'd have a tough hearing at the Supreme Court. Justices ruled 9-0 in 1993 that the Constitution grants sole power of impeachment to the House and Senate, not the judiciary.

Under the principle of separation of powers, Congress is a co-equal branch of government to the executive branch and judiciary. The House is afforded power to impeach a president by bringing formal charges and the Senate convenes the trial, with two-thirds of senators needed to convict and remove a president from office. The Constitution does not provide a role for the judiciary in the impeachment process, other than the chief justice of the United States presiding over the Senate trial.

In its 1993 ruling, the Supreme Court said framers of the Constitution didn't intend for the court to have the power to review impeachment proceedings because they involve political questions that shouldn't be resolved in the courts.

KELLYANNE CONWAY, White House counselor, saying there's no need for Congress to continue investigating with the Mueller probe concluded: "We all know if Director Mueller and his investigators wanted to or felt that it was right to indict they would have done that. He had every opportunity to indict and declined

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to indict. Investigators investigate and they decide to indict, they refer indictment or they decline indictment. That's the way the process works." — remarks Wednesday to reporters.

THE FACTS: That's not how Mueller's process worked. According to the report, Mueller's team declined to "make a traditional prosecutorial judgment" on whether to indict — that is, do what prosecutors typically do, as Conway describes it — because of a Justice Department legal opinion that said sitting presidents shouldn't be indicted. "Fairness concerns counseled against potentially reaching that judgment when no charges can be brought," the report states.

As a result, the report factually laid out instances in which Trump might have obstructed justice, leaving it open for Congress to take up the matter or for prosecutors to do so once Trump leaves office. Mueller's team wrote that its investigation was conducted "in order to preserve the evidence when memories were fresh" and documentary material available.

"Accordingly, while this report does not conclude that the President committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him," the report states.

HOGAN GIDLEY, White House deputy press secretary: "He's already denounced, multiple times, Russian involvement." — remarks Tuesday to reporters.

THE FACTS: Trump has had it both ways, at times criticizing that involvement but more often equivocating, and long after U.S. intelligence agencies and other parts of his administration became convinced of Russian meddling. "Every time he sees me, he says, 'I didn't do that,'" Trump said of Putin in November 2017. "I really believe that when he tells me that, he means it." In February 2018, he tweeted: "I never said Russia did not meddle in the election, I said 'it may be Russia, or China or another country or group, or it may be a 400 pound genius sitting in bed and playing with his computer.'"

Now he's assailed the report by Mueller, whose investigation fleshed out the audacious Russian effort to shape the election in favor of Trump and resulted in indictments against 25 Russians accused either of hacking Democratic email accounts or sowing discord in America through social media, as well as Trump associates.

TRUMP: "Isn't it amazing that the people who were closest to me, by far, and knew the Campaign better than anyone, were never even called to testify before Mueller. The reason is that the 18 Angry Democrats knew they would all say 'NO COLLUSION' and only very good things!" — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: Trump's wrong to suggest that the people "closest" to him weren't called to testify before Mueller's team.

Plenty of people close to him, including in his own family, interviewed with the special counsel's investigators or were at least asked to appear. And of those who did, some said not very good things about their interactions with the president.

Among the advisers and aides who spoke with Mueller was McGahn, who extensively detailed Trump's outrage at the investigation and his efforts to curtail it. McGahn told Mueller's team how Trump called him at home and urged him to press the Justice Department to fire the special counsel, then told him to deny that the entire episode had taken place once it became public.

Mueller also interviewed Priebus, Bannon, former White House chief of staff John Kelly, former White House communications director Hope Hicks and White House press secretary Sarah Sanders.

Michael Cohen, Trump's former personal lawyer who once said he was so close to the president that he'd "take a bullet" for him, also cooperated with Mueller and delivered unflattering details.

Mueller certainly wanted to hear from Trump's family too, even if not all relatives were eager to cooperate. His eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., declined to be voluntarily interviewed by investigators, according to Mueller's report. Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, spoke multiple times to Mueller's team. One of the president's daughters, Ivanka Trump, provided information through an attorney.

GIDLEY: "It was Barack Obama who leaned over to Dmitry Medvedev in the Oval Office and said, 'Listen,

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we'll have more flexibility when the election's over." — remarks Tuesday.

THE FACTS: First, the conversation was in South Korea, not the Oval Office. Gidley accurately recounted the gist of what Obama was heard telling the Russian president on a microphone they didn't know was on. But Gidley did not explain the context of the remark.

Obama was suggesting he would have more flexibility postelection to address Russia's concerns about a NATO missile defense system in Europe. The conversation with Medvedev, who was soon succeeded by Vladimir Putin, had nothing to do with Russian meddling that would be exposed in the U.S. election four years away.

CENSUS

TRUMP: "The American people deserve to know who is in this Country. Yesterday, the Supreme Court took up the Census Citizenship question, a really big deal." — tweet Wednesday.

GIDLEY, when asked whether Trump believes an accurate census count isn't necessary: "He wants to know who's in this country. I think as a sovereign nation we have that right. It's been a question that's been on the census for decades." — remarks Tuesday.

THE FACTS: Not since 1950 has the census collected citizenship data from the whole population.

Moreover, Trump's position that asking a citizenship question in the census is needed to "know who is in this country" ignores the judgment of the Census Bureau's own researchers, who say that it would not result in the most accurate possible count of the U.S. population. The question is already asked in other government surveys.

According to January 2018 calculations by the Census Bureau, adding the question to the once-a-decade survey form would cause lower response rates among Hispanics and noncitizens. The government would have to spend at least \$27.5 million for additional phone calls, home visits and other follow-up efforts to reach them.

Federal judges in California, Maryland and New York have blocked the administration from going forward with a citizenship question after crediting the analysis of agency experts. The experts said millions would go uncounted because Hispanics and immigrants might be reluctant to say if they or others in their households are not citizens.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has argued that a citizenship question is needed to help the government better comply with the Voting Rights Act. But the Justice Department has been enforcing the 1965 law, which was passed to help protect minority groups' political rights, with citizenship data already available from other government surveys.

The count goes to the heart of the U.S. political system, determining the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House and how the electoral votes that decide presidential elections are distributed. It also shapes how 300 federal programs distribute more than \$800 billion a year to local communities.

ECONOMY

TRUMP retweet of RONNA MCDANIEL, Republican National Committee chairwoman: "If Joe Biden wants to keep score: In 8 years, Biden & Obama had a net loss of 193,000 manufacturing jobs. In just over 2 years, @realDonaldTrump has created 453,000 manufacturing jobs." — tweet Thursday.

THE FACTS: McDaniel is right but presents a misleading portrait of economic growth during Barack Obama's presidency, with Biden serving as vice president.

Obama's eight years in office began with the final five months of the 17-month Great Recession, which began under his predecessor and included some of the worst stretches of job loss since World War II.

Manufacturing jobs bottomed out in February 2010, then grew steadily for the next six years before declining during Obama's last year in office. Still, during that stretch the economy added 915,000 manufacturing jobs.

Associated Press writers Christopher Rugaber, Eric Tucker and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

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Seeds of hate in Sri Lanka: Fiery leader, wealthy followers

By FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

NEGOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — An impatient little girl in a pretty dress pulls on the hand of a man, possibly her grandfather, as they cross a brick courtyard outside St. Sebastian's Church on Easter Sunday. Directly in her path a slightly built, bearded man, bent beneath the weight of a large backpack, slows down so he doesn't bump into the girl, his fingers seeming to touch her hair for just an instant as she passes.

And then, CCTV cameras show, they both go about their day, the girl continuing across the courtyard, the man with the pack marching with purpose toward the main church building — a common, almost mundane interaction made chilling only by what happens next.

The man walks into the church packed with worshippers, a ceiling fan whirring above, and, according to authorities, detonates the bomb in his bag, part of a coordinated set of attacks on churches and luxury hotels

across Sri Lanka that killed more than 250 people. Officials are now hunting for clues that might explain how a little-known Islamic radical group went from defacing Buddhist statues and posting online screeds to pulling off one of the most stunning and brutal attacks in recent years.

From a copper factory outside Colombo, the capital, where the bombs may have been put together, to a respected spice merchant's luxury compound in the city where his two wealthy, radicalized sons reportedly planned their parts in the bombings, to a hothead mastermind who seems to have sharpened his building hatred with help from the Islamic State group — a picture of a determined local militant cell that suddenly went global is slowly emerging from the immediate aftermath of grief and confusion. The details are from Sri Lankan authorities speaking to The Associated Press and local media, and from video of the attacks.

As the bombers' motivations and backgrounds come into focus, Sri Lanka, which dealt with homegrown terror of a much different sort during a nearly three-decade civil war, is struggling to understand how a sliver of local Muslims broke off from what had been a relatively inclusive form of the religion for years and apparently joined an international militant network whose brand is mass murder on a spectacular scale.

THE SPICE BROTHERS

It doesn't look much like a militant lair: The three-story villa's smooth, well-maintained exterior rises up behind a solid white wall in a quiet, leafy neighborhood, wood-framed glass doors opening up on spacious



This undated image posted by the Islamic State group's Amaq news agency on Tuesday, April 23, 2019, purports to show Mohammed Zahran, a.k.a. Zahran Hashmi, center, the man Sri Lanka says led the Easter attack that killed over 300 people, as well as other attackers. Sri Lankan authorities have blamed the militant Muslim group National Thowfeek Jamaath for the attack. The Islamic State group released the photo Tuesday to assert its claim on the assault. (Amaq

news agency via AP)

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balconies flanked by pillars, a BMW parked outside.

But it was inside this home that the sons of a wealthy, well-connected — and now arrested — pepper and cinnamon merchant, Mohammad Yusuf Ibrahim, may have planned their deadly parts in the bombings. And it was here that, as the police closed in after the men's alleged suicide attacks, the wife of one of the brothers reportedly blew up herself, her children and several police officers.

At a copper factory that has been linked in local media to the family, conspirators may have packed scraps of metal into the bombs used in the attacks.

Some of the attackers reportedly worked out at a local gym ahead of the attacks. They played soccer. They bought a car in a suburb of Colombo.

The developing portrait of the attackers is both maddeningly incomplete and unsettling. These men appeared to be well-educated — one, for instance, reportedly studied in the United Kingdom and Australia — well-connected, with apparent links in some cases to the nation's business and political elite, and financially stable.

So how could some of Sri Lanka's most well-off citizens fall prey to virulent extremism?

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe offered this not altogether satisfying explanation: "They were too educated and, therefore, they were misled."

THE MASTERMIND

He stands in a long black robe, surrounded by other purported bombers, the only one with his face uncovered by a scarf. Clutching an assault rifle in one hand, he lifts the index finger of the other in an apparent militant salute and pledges allegiance to the Islamic State group, which distributed the video it says shows the attackers it had sponsored.

The man appears to be Mohamed Zahran, who officials say was the attackers' ringleader, and who was only recently confirmed by officials to have died in one of the suicide missions.

Zahran has been affiliated with a group called National Towheed Jamaat, which has been known for several years because of his incendiary online speeches lashing out against all non-Muslims and calling for their elimination. The group has also reportedly vandalized Buddhist statues.

In 2014, a group that called itself the "Peace Loving Moderate Muslims in Sri Lanka" published a newspaper commentary that said National Towheed Jamaat was "fast becoming a cancer" within Sri Lanka's Muslim community and warned that the group was making mosque attendance compulsory, forcing a strict implementation of Islamic law and making women cover their faces and wear long robes.

THE OUTSIDE HELP

Easter Sunday again. Another CCTV camera, another man carrying a too-large backpack. This time at a luxury hotel. He enters the restaurant and pauses, awkwardly, among the tables.

The world has zeroed in on what officials say happens next — the carnage and the misery — but police have been trying to answer another very specific mystery: How did this tiny, little-known Sri Lankan group suddenly orchestrate a large-scale, nearly simultaneous suicide bombing attack against busy churches and hotels across the country?

The right people had to be recruited and trained in bomb-making. Safe houses had to be found, the targets scouted. Someone had to make sure the bombers got where they needed without blowing themselves up at the wrong time or getting stopped by police.

It is the kind of sophisticated operation that strongly points to local extremists being groomed by foreigners.

The choice of targets — Christians and foreigners — also suggests outside assistance. A strictly home-grown Islamic extremist attack would have likely targeted majority Buddhists because of anger over ultranationalist mob attacks on Muslims in past years.

The Islamic State group claimed quick responsibility for the attack. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced later that there was confirmation that the attackers were supported by the group.

Police say the attackers got some of their weapons training overseas, and Sri Lankan President Maithripala

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Sirisena said some 140 people in Sri Lanka have been identified as having links to IS.

"This is another experience for us. Not that we are strangers to terrorism, but this is global terrorism, so we have to ensure that we root this out," Prime Minister Wickremesinghe said.

THE SEEDS OF HATE

The Easter bombings may have seemed sudden, but experts point to a long period of gradual radicalization among some Sri Lankan Muslims.

Muslims in the country were once a "model community" that supported the government in the fight against the Tamil Tiger rebels in the civil war that ended in 2009, terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna said. It was only after the 2001 attacks in the United States and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Iraq, he said, that radical preachers began coming to Sri Lanka, often from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and extremists began more regularly posting online hate.

"This type of Islam started to replace the local and traditional type, which is a very beautiful form of Islam because it accommodated other religions. There had been space for other religious groups to operate, but the type that came from the Middle East was very hard line, more political, more anti-Western," he said.

Now, he said, "The floodgates have been opened."

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Trump's executive privilege strategy could mean messy fight

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Since George Washington's time, presidents have used executive privilege to resist congressional inquiries in the name of protecting the confidentiality of their decision-making.

President Donald Trump threatened this past week to broadly assert executive privilege to block a number of current and former aides from testifying, including some who have cooperated with special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. It's a strategy that could lead to a messy, protracted legal fight, but even if the White House is eventually defeated in court, the president and his allies could have the chance to run out the clock to the 2020 election.

"This is all about delaying things. The strategy of every administration is to drag it out," said the University of Virginia's Saikrishna Prakash, an expert on presidential power.

Trump in recent days has complained about House Democrats stepping up their investigations in the aftermath



In this April 18, 2018, photo, the White House in Washington. President Donald Trump is threatening to broadly assert executive privilege to block a series of current and former aides from testifying before Congress, including some who already cooperated with the special counsel's Russia probe. It's a strategy that could yield a messy, drawn-out legal fight.(AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

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of the special counsel's probe , which ended last month without concluding the president colluded with Russia or obstructed justice.

"With all of this transparency, we finished 'no collusion, no obstruction,'" Trump told reporters at the White House on Friday. "Then I get out, the first the day they're saying, 'Let's do it again.' And I said, 'That's enough.'"

"So, if I'm guilty of anything, it's that I've been a great president and the Democrats don't like it, which is a shame," he said.

Executive privilege is the president's power to keep information from the courts, Congress and the public to protect the confidentiality of the Oval Office decision-making process.

The privilege to withhold documents and prohibit aides from testifying rests on the proposition that the president has an almost unparalleled need to protect the confidentiality of candid advice that goes into presidential judgments. There is no reference to executive privilege in the Constitution, but the Supreme Court has held that it derives from the president's ability to carry out the duties the commander in chief holds under the Constitution.

It has become a flashpoint after Trump's administration signaled it was considering invoking the privilege to block Congress' attempt to subpoena former White House counsel Don McGahn, an important figure in the Mueller investigation, to appear and provide documents.

That reflects a shift in legal tactics for Trump's lawyers. At first, they cooperated with Mueller's 22-month investigation, encouraging officials to testify and turning over more than a million documents. But starting last spring, the White House took a far more adversarial approach, publicly questioning the investigation's integrity and resisting some requests.

Advisers to the president, trying to depict the Democrats as guilty of partisan-fueled overreach, want to snarl the congressional investigations. They believe a drawn-out court fight could tire voters' patience and shift public opinion their way. While they are hopeful that the courts support them, a legal battle that ends in defeat could stretch close to the 2020 election and make it easier for Republicans to claim the other party was predominantly interested in playing politics.

The haste with which House Democrats have issued subpoenas and promise more is itself a reflection that time is on Trump's side, not Congress', Prakash said. "The speed with which we've come to an impasse is different" from past fights over documents and testimony that involved at least a semblance of negotiations, he said.

Courts have not had much to say about executive privilege. But in the 1974 case over President Richard Nixon's refusal to release Oval Office recordings as part of the Watergate investigation, the Supreme Court held that the privilege is not absolute. In other words, the case for turning over documents or allowing testimony may be more compelling than arguments for withholding them. In that context, the court ruled 8-0 that Nixon had to turn over the tapes.

When it came to the Watergate tapes, the Supreme Court said it had the final word, and lower courts have occasionally weighed in to resolve other disputes. But courts also have made clear they prefer that the White House and Congress resolve their disagreements without judicial intervention, when possible.

Court fights over documents and testimony can take years to resolve.

One potential roadblock for the White House: Trump already allowed McGahn to talk to Mueller's team, and Attorney General William Barr has said the president did not invoke executive privilege to prevent release of any part of Mueller's report.

"In view of that, the White House has waived a good portion of any privilege it might claim," said Steven Schwinn, a constitutional law professor at the John Marshall Law School in Chicago.

Trump seems to be arguing that the risk that McGahn might reveal the substance of high-level conversations he had with the president or other high-level advisers is sufficiently high to keep him out of the witness chair in a House hearing, Schwinn said.

"But that's not the way privileges work," he said. "You don't prevent someone from testifying entirely just because you think one of their answers may raise executive communications. You raise a privilege in

response to a question.”

Recent presidents have leaned on the approach. President George W. Bush used it to shield some sensitive information from Congress after the Sept. 11 attacks. The Clinton administration used it to try to keep private Hillary Clinton’s answers during the Monica Lewinsky investigation.

Over just the past few days, the Trump White House has thrown up a series of hurdles for congressional investigators:

—the Trump Organization sued the chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee to stop his efforts to obtain the company’s financial records.

—Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin blew past Tuesday’s House deadline to turn over the president’s tax returns, saying he will decide next month.

—the administration instructed its former personnel security director, Carl Kline, not to testify before Congress over how some West Wing aides, including Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, obtained security clearances. That led the House to hold Kline in contempt.

One potential problem Schwinn identified is a lack of clarity in the White House’s claims that Trump aides, including Stephen Miller, Trump’s top immigration policy adviser, should not cooperate with Congress.

“In a regular administration, we expect the White House to make aggressive constitutional arguments,” Schwinn said. “But what President Trump is doing is something different. He’s making these assertions that are both overly broad, even ridiculously broad, and in a slippery way so that we can’t get our arms around what he is asserting.”

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire> and Sherman at <http://twitter.com/@shermancourt>

GOP “seawall”? Ohio’s congressional map under fire in court

By DAN SEWELL Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — The Nagels’ home is a house divided.

Mindy Nagel usually votes Democratic, while husband Tom usually goes Republican. But that’s only part of it — their bedroom is in Ohio’s 2nd congressional district, while their garage is in the 1st.

They say they’ve voted in both districts within the last three years. They were in House 1 until Ohio lost two seats in Congress because of U.S. population shifts recorded in the 2010 census. Republican-controlled redistricting followed for the 2012 elections, and the Nagels started voting in House 2, held by Republican Brad Wenstrup.

Until 2018, when the ballots at their polling place were again for House 1, Republican Steve Chabot’s seat, the Nagels said.

Confused? The Nagels were, too.

What didn’t change is that they — and everyone else in Democrat-dominated Cincinnati — have a Republican representative in Congress. Redistricting yielded a statewide map that has produced both an unbending 12-4 Republican advantage in the traditional swing state’s delegation, and an ongoing court battle that could affect the 2020 U.S. elections.

As a Democrat in a city that similarly votes blue, Mindy Nagel sees the map as absurdly unfair.

“It’s so clear that they (Republican mapmakers) wanted to divide up the city of Cincinnati so we wouldn’t have a Democratic congressman,” the 39-year-old physical therapist said, sitting in her living room that straddles districts in the College Hill neighborhood.

A three-judge panel could rule soon on arguments made by voter rights and Democratic Party groups in a March federal trial that Ohio’s map is unconstitutionally partisan, violating voters’ rights to democratically choose their representatives. Whatever the panel’s decision, the case will likely be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which is already considering challenges to congressional maps in North Carolina, drawn

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by Republicans, and Maryland, drawn by Democrats.

In a case similar to Ohio's, a three-judge panel ruled Thursday that Michigan's congressional and legislative maps are unconstitutionally gerrymandered, and ordered the state Legislature to redraw some districts for 2020. The judges wrote that GOP mapmakers in 2011 drew maps with the goal of ensuring "durable majorities" for Republicans. An appeal is likely.

In the Ohio case, defense attorneys pointed out the map will change again after the 2020 census, and that Ohio voters have already passed a bipartisan ballot initiative to reform the mapmaking process.

"Anyone who thinks that federal courts can fix political polarization by injecting themselves into the most highly political disputes in the nation is sadly mistaken," attorney Phil Strach said in the Cincinnati trial, which ran on an accelerated schedule.

Attorneys for the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups, however, say voters shouldn't have to wait until after 2020 for fair districts.

Newly competitive congressional races would likely energize Democrats in 2020 as they try to win back Ohio's 18 electoral votes in the presidential race — Republican Donald Trump carried Ohio in 2016, after Democrat Barack Obama twice won the state.

Congressional Democrats nationwide had a good year in 2018, gaining 40 seats. But Republicans held fast with 75% of Ohio's House seats, despite winning only 52% of Ohio's congressional vote total.

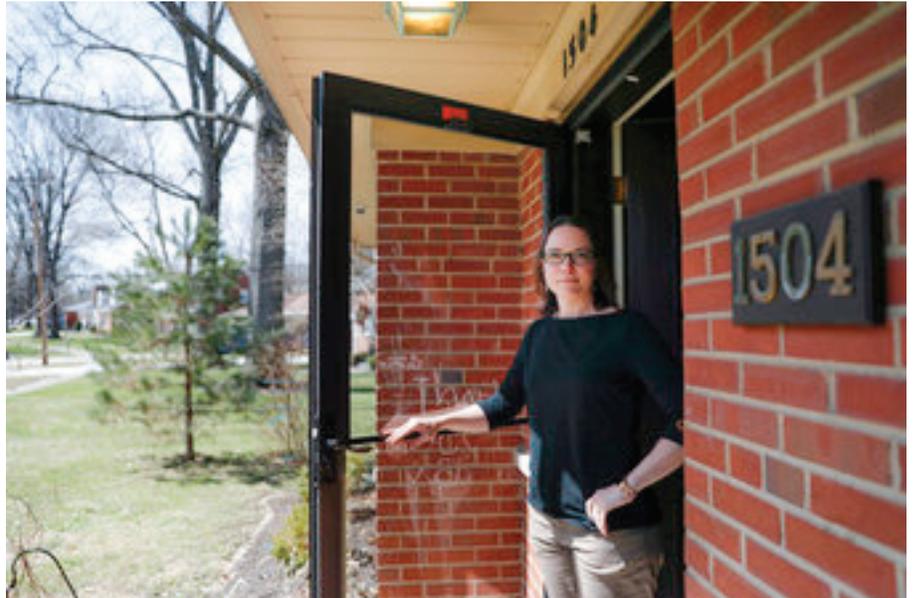
"Not a single seat has changed hands," said David Niven, a University of Cincinnati political scientist who testified for those challenging Ohio's map. "Not a single seat. The point of this map was to build a seawall against the storm, and it has held."

Attorneys for Republican state officials and House members countered that the map had Democrats' input and some bipartisan support.

"This is called democracy in action," Strach, based in Raleigh, North Carolina, told the judges. He said "incumbency protection" gives all Ohioans more clout in Washington as representatives build seniority. As for oddly shaped districts, the defense said keeping district populations even trumps neatly drawn boundaries.

Longtime Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur has held onto the redrawn northern Ohio district dubbed "the Snake by the Lake" for its shape. She testified that splitting communities to create safe seats "has hurt America" by making House members less responsive to minority-party constituents and less willing to seek bipartisan compromise in Washington.

Critics of the existing map also say dividing communities into districts with unclear boundaries leads to confusion among voters — and even poll workers. Sherry Poland, director of Hamilton County's board of elections, said its records show the Nagels' voting precinct hasn't changed, though she acknowledged "rare" cases in which voters have been redirected since the map changed.



Mindy Nagel poses for a photograph at the threshold of her home, Monday, April 1, 2019, in Cincinnati. Mindy usually votes Democratic; while husband Tom usually goes Republican. But that's only part of it: their bedroom is in Ohio's 1st congressional district while their garage is in the 2nd. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

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In Franklin County, which includes the state capital Columbus, elections board spokesman Aaron Sellers said nearly 2,700 voters' House districts were corrected in 2018, after a review found some weren't voting in the right district. Columbus is divided into three districts, with two held by Republicans.

Kenny Burck, 71, a Republican in a northwest Cincinnati suburb, said he expected to be in Chabot's westside Cincinnati-based district, House 1, "forever." But "to get the numbers right, they had to carve us out and put us on the other side into the east," he said.

So he now he's represented by Wenstrup, which is OK by him, although he agrees redistricting produced "some strange lines."

First elected in 1994, Chabot himself is a key beneficiary of the remapping. He has expressed gratitude to mapmakers for adding the Republican-dominated Warren County to his district.

"It's a gift to have Warren County and Hamilton County. And the city of Cincinnati, as far as I'm concerned," Chabot recently said, after a town hall meeting in Harrison Township, west of Cincinnati.

He insisted the districts are fairly drawn, and benefit Cincinnati by giving residents of the one city two representatives in Congress. He said the lawsuit was "wasting ... the court's time."

Mindy Nagel disagrees: "In a healthy democracy, voters choose their representatives. Our representatives are choosing their voters."

She got another reminder of her home's unclear political terrain after querying Chabot's office about a pending bill this week. She received an automatically generated response: "It appears that you live outside of" House 1. The official www.house.gov site places the Nagel home back in House 2.

Associated Press journalist Angie Wang in Cincinnati contributed to this report.

Follow Dan Sewell at <https://www.twitter.com/dansewell> .

NFL aerial circus makes for 2nd round of DBs, WRs

By **BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — So you want proof the NFL is an aerial circus? Try the second round of the draft. And some of the third.

Of Friday night's first 32 picks, 11 were defensive backs charged with holding down pass catchers, of which seven were chosen. Plus another seven offensive linemen charged with protecting the guys who throw the ball.

Only one of those, Drew Lock of Missouri, was taken in Round 2, going to Denver 42nd overall after the Broncos traded up with Cincinnati to get Lock. Some projections had him going in the opening round.

"Certainly. It certainly does," Lock said when asked about being even more motivated to prove himself now that he slipped so far; the previous quarterback selected was Dwayne Haskins at 15th.

"I know the kind of player I am. I know the kind of player I'm going to be. This adds a little chip to the shoulder bigger than the one that's already on there."

Many players might have that outlook, thinking they belonged in the opening round. Such as tackle Jawaan Taylor of Florida and guard Cody Ford of Oklahoma, who were on hand for the draft and had to wait much longer than other prospects.

"It was a little devastating," Taylor said of being ignored Thursday before the Jaguars grabbed him. "I just have so much confidence in myself and I have high expectations for myself. I feel like I have something to prove ... so I'm just looking forward to seeing what happens next."

As is Ford, who now belongs to Buffalo, which like Jacksonville traded up for the blocker.

"I came back tonight because last night was a terrible disappointment," Ford explained. "I've worked so hard to walk across that stage, I didn't want to leave and regret not being able to do that opportunity."

The defensive big guys dominated the opening round, then there was much more of a mix on Friday. Again, the SEC had the most picks with 13 in the second round, another six in the third, on top of the nine the previous night.

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"In the SEC, I had 35 career starts," Taylor said. "I left a year early, but I feel like I was ready and prepared to play in the NFL because I played against a lot of great competition. Definitely playing at Florida, playing in such a great conference, prepared me for this role."

The second round began with cornerbacks Byron Murphy of Washington and Rock Ya-Sin of Temple going to Arizona and Indianapolis respectively.

A bit later, that run continued with Central Michigan's Sean Bunting, Clemson's Trayvon Mullen, Vanderbilt's JoeJuan Williams, LSU's Greedy Williams — at one point considered the top defensive back in this crop — and Utah safety Marquise Blair.

It didn't subside until safety Juan Thornhill of Virginia went to the Chiefs on the penultimate selection in the second round.

One spot later, Seattle moved up for Mississippi WR DK Metcalf, who was rated by some the best wide-out in this group.

Arizona finally pulled off the trade of QB Josh Rosen, expendable because the Cardinals took Oklahoma's Kyler Murray to start proceedings on Thursday night. Miami sent the 62nd overall spot to the desert for Rosen, a first-rounder a year ago.

The Cardinals opted for UMass receiver Andy Isabella with that pick.

Other than Lock, the only quarterback chosen Friday was West Virginia's highly productive Will Grier to Carolina at No. 100, two spots from the end of the night.

Teams began branching out in the third round — the final four rounds will take place Saturday — with running backs getting some attention. But not too many: four, making for a measly six overall. Alabama's Josh Jacobs went in the opening round, and teammate Damien Harris did so in the third. Penn State's Miles Sanders was the only RB drafted in Round 2, by Philadelphia.

Still available are North Carolina State quarterback Ryan Finley, and All-Americans tackle Mitch Hyatt of Clemson, guards Beau Benzschawel of Wisconsin and Bunchy Stallings of Kentucky, linebacker Ben Burr-Kirven of Washington, and safety Deionte Thompson of Alabama.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Biden entry sparks a sharper edge to Democratic race

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As she campaigned through Iowa this week, Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts didn't hesitate to jab the newest contender in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary: Joe Biden.

"Our disagreement is a matter of public record," Warren said, referring to Biden's past support of a massive bankruptcy overhaul. "Joe Biden was on the side of the credit card companies."

The early days of the 2020 Democratic primary have been defined by order, amicable disagreement and an overwhelming focus on defeating President Donald Trump.

No more.

Biden's campaign launch on Thursday ushered in a new phase in the nominating contest. With the field largely set, the leading candidates have begun to turn on one another, raising the prospect of an ugly fight for the future of the party that could have lasting consequences for Democrats' quest to reclaim the White House.

Progressive groups aligned with Warren and Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont took aim at Biden, portraying him as out of step with today's Democratic Party. They railed against his connections to big corporations, his past support for a "grand bargain" that would have cut Social Security and Medicare, and his support for a 1994 crime bill that disproportionately hurt minorities.

"For numerous reasons, Joe Biden is the least electable Democrat that we could possibly nominate," said Adam Green, co-founder of the liberal group known as the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, which has long supported Warren's presidential ambitions. "We're in a new moment. This is not Joe Biden's moment."

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Sanders' campaign manager slapped at the former vice president in a fundraising message titled "Joe Biden."

"Not only are we taking on a political and corporate establishment that will do and spend whatever it takes to stop us, but we are running against a record number of candidates at the same time," Faiz Shakir wrote. He added: "There are a lot of candidates in this race right now. But there is only one Bernie Sanders."

Biden's campaign said Friday it raised \$6.3 million in the first 24 hours since announcing, narrowly besting Sanders' first-day haul.

Desperate to deny Trump a second term, Democrats can ill afford any lasting divisions that could depress turnout come November 2020.

The early infighting has already caught the attention of party leaders

like Democratic National Committee member Robert Zimmerman, of New York, who helped raise money for former President Barack Obama and Biden in years past.

"The No. 1 issue that I've seen across the country is Democrats staying focused on beating Donald Trump. I demand that Democrats remain positive with each other," Zimmerman said. "Any Democrat who tries to build their message by maligning or attacking personally their opponent is going to disqualify themselves."

Yet the battle lines are quickly hardening. With emboldened liberals on one side, pro-Biden establishment leaders in Congress and labor unions are lining up on the other.

Biden, who served in the Senate for nearly four decades, won immediate endorsements from Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware and Sen. Doug Jones of Alabama, while Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California had already declared her support. None of the other 2020 contenders has the endorsement of more than one U.S. senator.

The largest firefighters union in the country, the International Association of Firefighters, was also preparing to endorse Biden. Group leaders have said they would be "investing" heavily in his campaign.

Biden himself took an indirect swipe at his Democratic competitors earlier in the month as he defended his liberal bona fides: "The definition of 'progressive' now seems to be changing. And that is, Are you a socialist?" he said. Sanders, who is Biden's closest competitor in recent polls, describes himself as a democratic socialist.

The establishment support lining up behind Biden could embolden his critics on the left.

Prominent black Democrats seized on the 1994 crime bill, which Biden helped craft and is now blamed for creating an environment of mass incarceration that disproportionately hurt people of color.

"So @JoeBiden you were the author of the 94 Crime Bill, it's champion, and #1 cheerleader," tweeted Bakari Sellers, a former South Carolina state Democratic elected official and prominent African American voice on television. "This bill has led to mass incarceration and specifically targeted black and brown people. What are your plans to unravel the damage you helped to cause?"

Of course, there's time for Biden to win over the critics. Primary voting begins in roughly nine months, and the general election isn't until November 2020.

Some of Biden's liberal attackers indicated they would support him over Trump should Biden win the nomination. In a nod to his opponents, he also hired former Sanders' aide, Symone Sanders, to serve as



This image released by ABC shows Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, center, with co-hosts, Ana Navarro, left, and Sunny Hostin during an appearance on "The View," Friday, April 26, 2019. (Lorenzo Bevilaqua/ABC via AP)

a senior campaign strategist.

Biden and his wife "are a class act," tweeted Symone Sanders, who isn't related to Bernie Sanders. "Over the course of this campaign, Vice President Biden is going to make his case to the American (people). He won't always be perfect, but I believe he will get it right."

Associated Press writer Alexandra Jaffe in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this report.

Cyprus protest vigil held for officer's 7 assumed victims

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Hundreds of people turned up for a protest vigil outside Cyprus' presidential palace Friday to mourn seven women and girls who police say a military officer confessed to killing and to question if authorities failed to adequately investigate when foreign workers were reported missing.

The protest's organizer used a bullhorn to read out the victims' names as well as those of other missing women, and others at the memorial shouted "Where are they?" in response. Some participants held placards decrying "sexist, misogynist and racist" attitudes about women who work as housekeepers or in low-paying service jobs.

In a poignant moment, a group of tearful Filipino women held lighted candles and bowed their heads in prayer for the three women and one child of Filipino descent who are believed to be among the victims. A

35-year-old Cypriot National Guard captain is in custody facing multiple homicide charges.

"I felt obliged to do something for these women, all the missing women, all the killed women," protest organizer Maria Mappouridou said. "I think deep down, all that we want, what everybody wants, is justice."

Federation of Filipino Organizations in Cyprus chair Ester Beatty said she hoped the event, and the tragedy of the deaths, raise public awareness about migrant workers.

"Right now, it's really difficult for us to accept what has happened, what is going on. Beatty said. "We still need a lot of answers."

Beatty's group held a silent prayer vigil last Sunday, a week after the discovery of a Filipino woman's body in an abandoned mineshaft triggered the investigation that led to the captain's arrest. Police identified her as Mary Rose Tiburcio, 38.

Tiburcio and her 6-year-old daughter had been missing since May of last year. Investigators zeroed in on the captain as a suspect and arrested him after scouring Tiburcio's online messages.

While investigating her death and searching for Tiburcio's daughter, police found another body in the flooded mineshaft 32 kilometers (20 miles) west of the capital, Nicosia. Cypriot media have identified the victim as 28-year-old Arian Palanas Lozano, also from the Philippines.



Women from the Philippines react, outside of the presidential palace in Nicosia, Cyprus, Friday, April 26, 2019. Up to 1,000 people turned out in front of Cyprus' presidential palace to remember the five foreign women and 2 girls that a military officer has confessed to killing in what police are again calling "an unprecedented crime." (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)

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Investigators now think the missing 6-year-old was killed, too. On Thursday, the suspect told them while under questioning about four more victims and gave directions to a military firing range.

The body of a woman, who according to the suspect was of Nepalese or Indian descent, was found buried there.

From the suspect's statements and information from the investigation, Cypriot police think the other three victims they know about so far are a 31-year-old Filipino woman who has been missing since December 2017, Maricar Valtez Arquiola, and a Romanian mother and daughter.

Cypriot media identified the mother as Livia Florentina Bunea, 36, and her 8-year-old daughter as Elena Natalia Bunea. The two are believed to have been missing since September 2016.

Police said the suspect will appear in court Saturday for another custody hearing. He can't be named because he hasn't been charged with any crimes yet.

The scale of the ones he allegedly committed has horrified people in Cyprus, a small nation with a population of just over a million people where multiple slayings are rare.

President Nicos Anastasiades said Friday that he shared the public's revulsion at "murders that appear to have selectively targeted foreign women who are in our country to work."

"Such instincts are contrary to our culture's traditions and values," Anastasiades said in a statement from China, where he was on an official visit.

Cyprus police have faced criticism from immigrant rights activists who said they didn't act quickly enough to locate the victims. The country has 80 unsolved missing person cases, going back to 1990.

Police chief Zacharias Chrysostomou said a three-member panel has been assigned to review whether officers followed correct protocols in their handling of recent cases.

As the president spoke, investigators intensified the search for bodies of victims at the firing range, a reservoir and a man-made lake near the abandoned copper pyrite mine.

Five British law enforcement officials — including a coroner, a psychiatrist and investigators who specialize in multiple homicides — were coming to Cyprus to help with the investigation.

On Friday, police spokesman Andreas Angelides again defended how the force dealt with missing person reports. He said investigations would have been more effective if lawmakers had taken the department's recommendation to give law enforcement agencies legal authority to access a missing person's personal data, telephone records and emails.

Trump's 'exoneration' tour: What to Watch

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Political nerds, start your streaming devices. You've got a big Saturday night of programming ahead.

First, President Donald Trump rolls out his "complete and total exoneration" tour in battleground Wisconsin, his first campaign rally since the release of the Mueller report and an early look at his 2020 re-election strategy.

Next up is the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner, which strained what remained of civility between the press corps and the administration a year ago and now is designed to be a decidedly more scholarly affair.

"Boring" is how Trump describes it, one reason why he's never attended the event as president. But the dinner is apparently interesting — and politically profitable — enough for Trump that he's mocked it from the rally pulpit the past two years.

Here's a look at what to watch from Trump's rally at 8 p.m. EDT and the correspondents' dinner at 9:30 p.m. EDT, both expected to be carried by C-SPAN:

THE STATE OF THINGS

On the night of the press dinner in 2017, Trump mused from a rally stage in Harrisburg, Pa., that he might consider attending the event the next year. It was not to be.

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Ditto in 2018, from the dais in Michigan.

But Trump said no thanks for the third time.

"The dinner is so boring and so negative that we're going to hold a very positive rally instead," he said earlier this month. Trump also told members of his administration not to attend.

"Boring" isn't what the correspondents' association is aiming for. But the organizers are shifting the tone this year after a sharply anti-Trump comic, Michelle Wolf, delivered a performance last time that some thought was too harsh against White House press secretary Sarah Sanders, who was seated onstage at the time.

Instead, the featured speaker will be historian Ron Chernow, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author. Chernow, like many of his fellow historians, strongly opposed Trump's candidacy in 2016 and labeled him a "demagogue."

Association President Olivier Knox said in a statement: "We're looking forward to an enjoyable evening of celebrating the First Amendment and



FILE - In this March 28, 2019, file photo, President Donald Trump speaks during a rally in Grand Rapids, Mich. Political nerds, start your streaming devices. You've got a big Saturday night of programming ahead. President Donald Trump rolls out his "complete and total exoneration" tour in battleground Wisconsin, his first campaign rally since the release of the Mueller report and an early look at his 2020 re-election strategy.(AP Photo/Paul Sancya, File)

great journalists past, present, and future."

'A BIG ONE'

The release of the redacted Mueller report seemed to have infused Trump, at first, with triumph. He declared America "the greatest place on Earth," and tweeted: "No Collusion, No Obstruction, Complete and Total EXONERATION." He promised the Saturday rally in Wisconsin would be "a big one" and began testing messages and slogans in a possible preview for the rest of his 2020 re-election bid.

The special counsel found no evidence that Trump or his campaign conspired with Russia to influence the 2016 presidential election. But it did reveal details of the president's efforts to thwart the investigation, fire Mueller and get other people to lie for him. Democrats are agitating for more investigations and a few want to begin impeachment proceedings. Trump vowed to not let any aides testify to Congress. He turned some of his anger on The New York Times, suggesting they "get down on their knees & beg forgiveness."

POST-MUELLER MESSAGE

Trump's darker tone signals an approach to the rally that's different from the "positive" plans he had described. Trump has issued clues to his approach all week, including a trimmed-for-Twitter version of the Mueller report's findings:

"NO C O R O!" That's shorthand for "no collusion or obstruction." In fact, Mueller did not make a recommendation on obstruction, instead laying out what many Democrats see as a road map of evidence and anecdotes to build their own case.

Look, too, for Trump to describe the Mueller investigation as an attempt to destabilize the administra-

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tion. On Friday, speaking to the National Rifle Association in Indianapolis, Trump said his political enemies “tried for a coup, didn’t work out so well. And I didn’t need a gun for that one, did I?”

The friendly audience applauded the quip, but Trump wasn’t done. He said he’s seen “corruption at the highest levels. A disgrace. Spying. Surveillance trying for an overthrow.”

The 2020 presidential campaign — and his need to energize his core supporters and convince wobblers to vote for him again — is very much on his mind.

“You better get out there and vote,” he told the NRA. “It seems like it’s a long ways away. It’s not.”

WHY WISCONSIN (and MICHIGAN)?

The numbers tell the story of how Trump’s rally at the Resch Center in Green Bay is designed to reach two states that he swiped for Republicans in 2016 after solid Democratic wins since the Reagan Administration.

In Wisconsin, Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton by less than 1 percentage point. But the rally is in Brown County, which Trump won by more than 10 percentage points.

And the Green Bay media market stretches to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where Trump won by tenths of a percentage point.

The Resch Center seats as many as 10,500 people, according to its website, creating the potential for the crowded visual Trump loves.

BERNIE, TROLLING

Sen. Bernie Sanders isn’t expected to campaign in Wisconsin on Saturday, his campaign says. But his supporters, like other Democrats in the race, are determined not to take the state for granted as many believe Clinton did.

Earlier in the week, Sanders supporters took out a front-page ad that ran in Friday’s Green Bay Press-Gazette that says Trump “lied to Wisconsin voters” about bringing back jobs amid layoffs at big companies.

The ad also promotes 52 Sanders campaign “organizing events” around the state on the day Trump speaks.

Associated Press writers Juana Summers and Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin, contributed to this report. Follow Kellman on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman>

Over 1,000 quarantined in measles scare at LA universities

By JOHN ROGERS Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — More than 1,000 students and staff members at two Los Angeles universities were quarantined on campus or sent home this week in one of the most sweeping efforts yet by public health authorities to contain the spread of measles in the U.S., where cases have reached a 25-year high .

By Friday afternoon, two days after Los Angeles County ordered the precautions, about 325 of those affected had been cleared to return after proving their immunity to the disease, through either medical records or tests, health officials said.

The action at the University of California, Los Angeles, and California State University, Los Angeles — which together have more than 65,000 students — reflected the seriousness with which public health officials are taking the nation’s outbreak.

“Measles actually kills people, so we have to take that really seriously,” said Dr. Armand Dorian, chief medical officer at USC Verdugo Hills Hospital.

Those under the quarantine were instructed to stay at home and avoid contact with others. They also were barred from traveling by public transportation, including planes, trains, buses or taxis. If they must travel for an emergency, they were told to notify public health officials first.

“This is a legally binding order,” the county’s public health director, Dr. Barbara Ferrer, told reporters.

Anyone who violates it could be prosecuted, she said, but added that it appears everyone is cooperating so far. She didn’t describe what penalties those who don’t could face.

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The number of measles cases in the U.S. has climbed to nearly 700 this year, including five in Los Angeles County and 38 altogether in California. The surge is blamed largely on parents not getting their children vaccinated because of misinformation about the supposed dangers.

Still, several students at Cal State-LA were shocked that their campus could be hit by a measles outbreak.

"When they were like measles, I was like, 'What? Where did that come from,'" said Sergio Dula, a communications major.

Eden Guerra, a kinesiology major, was surprised classes weren't canceled, noting, "This is like serious, like it's life, you know."

Cal State-LA reported 875 students, staff, faculty and visitors were placed under quarantine after possibly being exposed to measles earlier this month. About 250 had been cleared by Friday after proving they are immune to the disease.

At UCLA, 129 students and faculty were quarantined. All but 46 had been cleared by Friday.

Cal State-LA is primarily a commuter school, while many UCLA students live on campus. Some UCLA students were provided a quarantine area to stay in, university officials said, though they gave no details. Only one person remained there Friday.

Those covered by the quarantine were singled out based on their possible exposure to either an infected UCLA student who had attended classes in two buildings on three days earlier this month, or a person with measles who visited a Cal State-LA library on April 11, officials said.

Those possibly exposed at Cal State-LA were located by tracking the records of people working in the library and those who logged on to its computers during the four hours the infected student was there.

Given the amount of time a person can remain contagious, officials said the quarantine would end at UCLA on Tuesday and at Cal State-LA on Thursday.

Around the country, lawmakers in California, New York, Washington state and Oregon have responded to the outbreak by moving to crack down on exemptions to vaccinating children. On Friday, President Donald Trump urged everyone to get vaccinated.

Most of the cases are centered in two ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities in New York — one in Brooklyn, the other in suburban Rockland County.

In Rockland County, officials declared a state of emergency and at one point tried to bar unvaccinated children from schools and other public places, but a judge overturned the order.

Authorities ordered mandatory vaccinations earlier their month in the affected Brooklyn neighborhoods and threatened fines of \$1,000. City officials said earlier this week that 12 people had been issued summonses.



Los Angeles County Department of Public Health experts, Muntu Davis, Health Officer, left, and Director Dr. Barbara Ferrer answer questions regarding the measles response and the quarantine orders during a news conference in Los Angeles Friday, April 26, 2019. Hundreds of students and staff members at two Los Angeles universities were sent home this week in one of the most sweeping efforts yet to contain the spread of measles in the United States, where cases have reached a 25-year high. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

Measles usually causes fever, runny nose and an all-over rash but in a small number of cases can lead to deadly complications such as pneumonia and swelling of the brain.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 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.

Health officials at a news conference repeatedly urged people who haven't been exposed to measles to get vaccinated, saying the vaccine is safe and effective.

"Ninety percent of people who are not immunized or haven't had measles before, when they're exposed to measles are likely to get measles," Ferrer said.

Associated Press Writers Krysta Fauria and John Antczak contributed to this report.

Hours after mass escape, migrants chant for food, freedom

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

TAPACHULA, Mexico (AP) — About 600 mostly Cuban migrants who were part of a mass escape from a southern Mexico immigration detention center a day earlier remained at large Friday evening, immigration authorities said.

Mexico's National Immigration Institute said in a statement that rather than the 1,300 escapees it reported Thursday night, only 645 migrants had actually fled. It said only 35 of those who escaped had returned without explaining why it had lowered its figures.

The center was holding 1,745 people at the time, nearly double its capacity, the statement said.

The escape began with Cuban migrants escaping their holding area into an area reserved for women, who were mostly Honduran. That caused a commotion and migrants gained access to other parts of the detention center before eventually making it to the main entrance. Immigration agents were unarmed and unable to intervene.

Hours after the mass escape, throngs of detained migrants raised their fists in the air Friday and chanted "We want food! We want out!"

It was the largest mass escape from a Mexican immigration center in memory and the latest example of how the government has become overloaded by a flood of Central American, Cuban and Haitian immigrants.

Residents of Tapachula, a city on Mexico's southern border with Guatemala, reported seeing hundreds of migrants running through the streets late Thursday, some only half dressed, some cramming themselves into passing minivans to escape.

Those with family members inside the Siglo XXI detention center said the escape arose from a dispute over food and sleeping space, both of which were in short supply in the overcrowded center. Authorities



A Federal Police officer stands guard outside an immigration detention center in Tapachula, Chiapas state, Mexico, late Thursday, April 25, 2019. A large group of mainly Cuban migrants escaped on foot from the immigration detention center on Mexico's southern border in the largest mass escape in recent memory. Later, about half of the group returned voluntarily. (AP Photo/Moises Castillo)

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said Friday the Siglo XXI center was holding 1,745 migrants at the time of the escape. The facility was built to hold fewer than 1,000 people.

Laisel Gómez Cabrera, a Cuban who now lives in Texas, was worried about his wife, Anisleidys Sosa Almeida, who has been held at the center for weeks.

On Friday, Gómez Cabrera stood outside the station — as he has most days since his wife was detained — trying to get information about her. He said there had been a fight at the facility prior to the escape, and it was provoked by overcrowding.

“They made it so they had to fight among themselves for a place to lie down, to get a little bit of food,” Gómez Cabrera said.

A distraught Raisa Torres Espinosa was waiting for news of her daughter, Cynthia Barbara, 21, who was being held at the center along with her husband. Both left Cuba recently, traveling through Panama and then overland to Mexico, where they were detained.

Torres Espinosa said her daughter had told her conditions at Siglo XXI, which means “21st century” in Spanish, were “very bad” and had worsened in the last week.

“This week they have put 20 busloads of migrants, all of them, in there,” she said, motioning toward the metal gates.

Gómez Cabrera said she suspected authorities may have opened the gates Thursday night to let migrants flee as a way of reducing pressure on the system, knowing that those who left would no longer be allowed to apply for any kind of humanitarian visa, asylum or residence permit in Mexico.

“All the ones who left are going to get put on a red list,” Gómez Cabrera said. “If they catch them again, they are going to be subject to automatic deportation.”

Buses arrived Thursday and Friday apparently to take women and children out of the overcrowded facility.

But while conditions may improve somewhat, the prospect of deportation drives the Cuban families to despair.

Carlos Labada, another Cuban who lives in the United States, said his father, mother and younger sister are all being held at the center.

“The girl is subjected to psychological torture. Every day (authorities) tell her, ‘We’re going to deport you, we’re going to deport you,’” Labada said. “It would be like a living death” to be sent back to the island, he said.

Other Cubans said the government would deny work and education opportunities to those sent back.

In January 2017, the outgoing administration of U.S. President Barack Obama scrapped longstanding rules under which Cubans who reached American soil were automatically allowed to apply to remain. The end of the so-called wet-foot, dry-foot policy means U.S. immigration authorities now treat Cubans more like immigrants from other countries, although Cubans still are more likely to be granted asylum.

Cubans also still retain the right to apply for residency after a year in the U.S., a privilege other nationalities do not receive.

Sunday Mass canceled across Sri Lanka a week after bombings

By EMILY SCHMALL, JON GAMBRELL and BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Catholic leaders canceled Sunday Masses indefinitely across Sri Lanka and officials urged Muslims to stay home for Friday prayers in an extraordinary call by the clergy to curtail worship as fear of more attacks plagued the island nation after the deadly suicide bombings on Easter.

Shops were closed, streets were empty and heavy security patrols continued across the country despite police saying the alleged mastermind of the attacks that killed over 250 people had died in one of the suicide blasts.

Those Sri Lankans who did venture out spoke about the fear encompassing daily life at a level unseen since a long civil war ended a decade ago. Many are angry that the government, paralyzed by internal disputes, hadn’t acted on intelligence obtained weeks before Easter that warned of the attacks.

On Friday night, Sri Lanka’s military said its soldiers in the eastern part of the country engaged in a gun-

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battle with suspects believed to be linked to the attacks, and police announced a 24-hour curfew until further notice in the Muslim-dominated area where the shooting took place.

Continuing government confusion in its investigation — from drastically lowering the death toll to misidentifying a Brown University student as a militant — only added to the public's worries.

"Everyone is nervous," said Abdullah Mohammed, a 48-year-old Muslim in Colombo. "Not just the Muslims. Buddhists, Christians, Hindus — everybody's nervous."

Officials from the police to the prime minister say militants remain on the loose and have access to explosives. That has led to increased security at shrines, churches, temples and mosques across the multi-ethnic country of 21 million off the southern coast of India.

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith told journalists that church officials had seen a leaked security document describing Roman Catholic churches and other denominations as a major target. Ranjith, who is the archbishop of Colombo, asked the faithful across Sri Lanka to stay home for their own safety.

"We don't want repetitions," Ranjith said.

It was an extraordinary request for a Catholic clergyman to make, as churches often remain a refuge. It came on the day that priests allowed journalists inside one of the bombed churches, St. Anthony's Shrine in Colombo, where broken glass littered a blood-stained floor. Giovanni Maria Vian, a church historian and emeritus editor of the Vatican newspaper, said he believed it was the first time the church had canceled Masses across a country for security reasons.

The U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka also warned the public to stay away from places of worship over the weekend, a stark alert underlining that authorities believe that attackers remain at large.

Authorities told Muslims to worship at home rather than attend communal Friday prayers that are the most important religious service of the week, but several mosques held services anyway. At a mosque in Colombo, police armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles stood guard outside for hundreds of worshippers as the imam inside and others wept while praying to Allah to help their country.

The Easter attackers are "not Muslims. This is not Islam. This is an animal," said Akurana Muhandramlage Jamaldeen Mohamed Jayfer, the chairman of the mosque. "We don't have a word (strong enough) to curse them."

Sri Lanka's government, crippled from a long political crisis between the president and prime minister last year, promised swift action to capture militants still at large. President Maithripala Sirisena said about 140 people had been identified as having links to the Islamic State group.



A Sri Lankan soldier stands guard at the damaged St. Anthony's Church or Shrine in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Friday, April 26, 2019. Priests have allowed journalists inside St. Anthony's Church in Sri Lanka for the first time since it was targeted in a series of Islamic State-claimed suicide bombings that killed over 250 people. Broken glass littered the sanctuary's damaged pews and blood stained the floor. Shoes left by panicked worshippers remained in the darkened church, and broken bottles of holy water lay on the floor. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

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A "major search operation has been undertaken," Sirisena said. "Every household in the country will be checked."

On Friday night, soldiers raiding a house in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province fought a gunbattle with suspected militants linked to the bombings, said military spokesman Brig. Sumith Atapattu. After a couple of hours, he said soldiers were "engaged in a clearing operation," adding that some casualties were possible.

In the same area, police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekara said officers acting on information from intelligence officials found 150 sticks of blasting gelatin and 100,000 small metal balls, as well as a van and clothing suspected to be used by those involved in the Easter attack. Suicide bomb vests often are packed with such balls to increase the shrapnel in the explosion, making them even deadlier.

Earlier Friday, police confirmed the militant group's leader, Mohamed Zahran, died in the suicide bombing at the Shangri-La Hotel, one of six hotels and churches attacked. Zahran appeared in an Islamic State video claiming responsibility for the coordinated assault, and authorities in both Sri Lanka and Australia confirmed links between IS and the attack.

Police said investigators had determined that the assailants' military training was provided by someone they called "Army Mohideen," and that weapons training had taken place overseas and at locations in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province.

Police said they arrested the operator of a copper factory who had helped Mohideen make improvised explosive devices and purchase empty cartridges sold by the Sri Lankan military as scrap copper.

On Thursday night, Sri Lanka's Health Ministry drastically reduced its estimated death toll from the bombings. A statement said "approximately" 253 people had been killed, nearly one-third lower than an earlier police estimate of 359 dead.

The discrepancy was not immediately explained, but it fit a pattern of confused reports by Sri Lankan officials that have muddled the investigation. On Friday, police apologized to a Brown University student and a human rights activist after they posted her picture to Twitter and erroneously identified her as a wanted militant. The police then deleted their Twitter account.

Associated Press writers Krishan Francis in Colombo and Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia, contributed to this report.

Police: Army vet drove into people thinking they were Muslim

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — An Iraq War veteran deliberately drove into a group of pedestrians because he thought some of the people were Muslim, California authorities said Friday.

Isaiah Joel Peoples, 34, faces eight counts of attempted murder for injuring eight people, including four who remain hospitalized. The most seriously injured is a 13-year-old Sunnyvale girl of South Asian descent who is in a coma with severe brain trauma.

"New evidence shows that the defendant intentionally targeted the victims based on their race and his belief that they were of the Muslim faith," Sunnyvale police chief Phan Ngo said.

Peoples appeared briefly in Santa Clara County Superior Court on Friday. He did not enter a plea and is being held without bail.

The former U.S. Army sharpshooter experienced post-traumatic stress disorder after serving in Iraq, his family said. Peoples' attorney, Chuck Smith, said Friday that the crash was in no way deliberate.

Smith said after the hearing that they do not dispute what happened, but that his client's mental state is the issue.

"He served our country, honorably and admirably, and he's led an otherwise blameless life," Smith said, "So there's no explanation for this other than his service, the things he saw and what happened to him mentally while serving our country."

Peoples was on his way to a Bible class Tuesday in the Silicon Valley suburb of Sunnyvale when he told investigators he intentionally drove into a group of men, women and children, police said. The 13-year-

old girl was hit along with her father and brother, who had minor injuries.

Jay Boyarsky, chief assistant district attorney for Santa Clara, said the charges carry a sentence of life in prison. He said they will file hate crime allegations if warranted.

"There is very appalling and disturbing evidence that at least one or two of these victims were targeted based on the defendant's view of what their race or religion may have been," he said.

Three adults also remain hospitalized with injuries that include broken limbs.

Peoples showed no remorse after his car plowed at high speed into a group of people in a crosswalk before hitting a tree, Ngo said.

Witness Don Draper said he marched over to Peoples' car after he crashed, and he found the driver muttering over and over, "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus."

But Ngo said that "he did not behave in any manner that would be considered bizarre," when taken into custody.

Family and friends described Peoples as quiet and polite and expressed shock at his involvement. His mother, Leevell Peoples of Sacramento, said her son had "a bad episode" with PTSD in 2015, for which he was hospitalized.

Peoples was deployed to Iraq in 2005 and 2006.

Peoples was honorably discharged from the Army, and police were investigating the PTSD report, Ngo said. Peoples had no criminal record and owned one weapon, a disassembled and inoperable shotgun that was in the trunk of his vehicle, according to the police chief.

Associated Press writer Juliet Williams in San Francisco contributed to this report.



Isaiah J. Peoples appears for his arraignment in Santa Clara County Superior Court as his lawyer, Chuck Smith, stands at his side on Friday, April 26, 2019, in San Jose, Calif. The former U.S. Army sharpshooter Peoples is charged with eight counts of attempted murder after authorities say he deliberately plowed his car into pedestrians Tuesday.

(Jim Gensheimer/San Francisco Chronicle via AP, Pool)

New York Archdiocese names 120 priests accused of sex abuse

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — At least 120 priests accused of sexually abusing a child or having child pornography have worked in the Archdiocese of New York, the archdiocese said Friday in releasing a list of names that includes bishops, high school teachers, a scouting chaplain and a notorious cardinal.

The release, from the nation's second-largest Roman Catholic archdiocese, follows more than 120 such disclosures from other dioceses around the country as the church reckons with demands for transparency about sex abuse by clergy.

In a letter to church members, Cardinal Timothy Dolan said he realizes "the shame that has come upon our church due to the sexual abuse of minors." He asked forgiveness "for the failings of those clergy" who betrayed the trust invested in them to protect young people.

"It is my heartfelt prayer that together we as a family of faith may be healed," Dolan added.

Church abuse watchdogs and lawyers for abuse accusers said the release of the list was a positive step, but some of them saw it as incomplete.

It doesn't include accused members of religious orders who worked in the archdiocese's churches and schools, though some orders have released their own lists. Nor does it list priests who were ordained else-

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where and later served in New York.

And there are no details on accused priests' past assignments or the allegations against them, although some have emerged in news accounts, lawsuits and criminal cases.

"It's certainly a good thing that they've come out with the list," said Terry McKiernan of Bishop Accountability, a watchdog group. But "do they still not see that this very, very reluctant way of offering information about the crisis is the wrong way for them?"

Archdiocese spokesman Joseph Zwilling said that "the important thing is that we have released all of the names of priests that have a credible and substantiated charge brought against them," plus those awaiting a church determination on allegations, and those newly accused through an archdiocese-run compensation process.

The program has paid out \$65 million to over 350 people in the past three years.

The list includes priests ordained between 1908 and 1988. Many have died, and the archdiocese said none is currently working in the ministry.

Most of the alleged abuse happened in the 1970s, '80s and early '90s, but there have been two credible allegations of sex abuse by active clergy since 2002, according to the archdiocese. It said authorities were alerted about both those cases.

Some priests on the list were convicted of sex crimes, including the late Rev. Edward Pipala, who served seven years in federal prison after admitting in 1993 to taking at least 11 boys across state lines for illicit sex.

The list also includes once-high-ranking church officials.

Former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was ordained in New York, became archbishop of Washington and one of the most visible church officials in the U.S.

Then, in February, he became the first cardinal defrocked in the sex abuse scandal of recent years. An internal church investigation had found him guilty. McCarrick's lawyer declined to comment Friday.

Bishop John Jenik was removed from his public duties in November after being accused of inappropriate behavior with a teenage boy in the 1980s — an accusation he denies. The Vatican is reviewing the matter.

Bishop James McCarthy resigned in 2002 after the archdiocese was alerted about his affairs with women, which he acknowledged. He mentioned starting a relationship with a woman when she was around 21 years old, but some questions were later raised about whether she'd been underage.

No charges were filed, and the church hasn't made a determination. A message was left Friday evening at a possible phone number for McCarthy.

Others were school leaders and teachers, deacons, parish priests, and clerics who worked with charities and youth groups.

One served as a Catholic Youth Organization director in New York and as national chaplain of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting in the 1970s, when he allegedly abused a boy at a summer camp,



This Sunday, Aug. 30, 2015 file photo shows the newly renovated and cleaned facade of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. The Archdiocese of New York says at least 120 priests accused of sexually abusing a child or having child pornography have worked there over decades. The nation's second-largest archdiocese released a list of names on Friday, April 26, 2019. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer, File)

according to news accounts. The priest died in 1984, over two decades before the allegations became publicly known.

Based at St. Patrick's Cathedral, the New York Archdiocese includes parts of New York City and several counties north of the city. The only U.S. archdiocese with more Catholics is that of Los Angeles.

Police look at brakes after truck rams into cars, killing 4

By P. SOLOMON BANDA and COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

LAKEWOOD, Colo. (AP) — Four people died after a semitruck hauling lumber lost control and plowed into vehicles on a crowded highway near Denver, triggering explosions and a fire so intense that it melted the roadway and metal off cars, authorities said Friday.

"It was crash, crash, crash and explosion, explosion, explosion," said John Romero, a spokesman for the Lakewood, Colorado, police department, describing the 28-vehicle chain reaction of blasts from ruptured gas tanks.

The truck driver, Rogel Lazaro Aguilera-Mederos, 23, of Houston, was arrested on suspicion of vehicular homicide as police investigate how the crash happened Thursday on Interstate 70.

Six people were taken to hospitals with injuries, but their conditions were unclear Friday.

"There is just a bunch of debris from this crash that took place. The carnage was significant, just unbelievable," said another department spokesman, Ty Countryman.

Officials say Aguilera-Mederos, who sustained minor injuries, was headed down a hill when he lost control and slammed into traffic slowed because of a crash ahead of them involving a school bus and a tractor-trailer.

At a hospital, Leslie Maddox told Denver news station KUSA-TV that her car was among those tangled in the crash. She was receiving treatment for a broken arm and nose and credited two bystanders with preventing further injuries by pulling her from her car after the crash.

"I'm lucky to be alive," Maddox said.

There is no indication the crash was intentional or that drugs or alcohol were a factor, Countryman said, with investigators looking at whether the brakes on Aguilera-Mederos' truck were working.

Interstate 70 is Colorado's vital east-west highway that connects the mountains with the plains, and traffic has grown worse as the state's population has boomed.

The crash happened just after the highway descends from the Rocky Mountains, where signs warn drivers to check that their brakes are cool and working after traveling down the steep grades. There are also ramps on hills off the sides of the highway for trucks that lose their brakes so drivers can exit and slow down.



Workers clear debris from the eastbound lanes of Interstate 70 on Friday, April 26, 2019, in Lakewood, Colo., a deadly pileup involving semi-truck hauling lumber on Thursday. Lakewood police spokesman John Romero described it as a chain reaction of crashes and explosions from ruptured gas tanks. "It was crash, crash, crash and explosion, explosion, explosion," he said. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

Workers cleared the burned and mangled wreckage from the highway and worked quickly to replace the top layer of burned pavement Friday. A burned tractor-trailer was barely recognizable as it was hauled away except for its size and its smokestack.

Aguilera-Mederos was scheduled to make his first court appearance Saturday to be advised of his rights. A judge also may consider bond. There was no information on whether he is represented by an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Prosecutors have not filed formal charges, said Pam Russell, a spokeswoman for the Jefferson County district attorney's office.

Federal agencies are monitoring the investigation. The National Transportation Safety Board said its teams get involved when the agency sees an opportunity to issue new traffic safety recommendations.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, which regulates and provides safety oversight for large trucks and buses, said it is working with state and local authorities to assist in any way it can.

Slevin reported from Denver. Associated Press writer Kathleen Foody in Denver contributed.

Outlook for the US economy and stock market brightens

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and STAN CHOE AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The worries that hung ominously over the U.S. economy early this year appear to have lifted. And that sunnier picture has helped bolster confidence in the stock market — driving the benchmark S&P 500 index to another record high Friday.

The latest dose of encouragement came in a report Friday that the U.S. economy grew much faster than expected in the January-March quarter, suggesting that the nearly decade-long expansion still has a ways to go.

Other recent signs have fed a growing view among many analysts that the economy faces little risk of slipping into a recession anytime soon as some had feared when the year began. Retail sales jumped in March. And with hiring solid and wages rising at a decent pace, consumer spending will likely strengthen in the coming months.

In Friday's report, the government said the economy grew at a 3.2% annual rate in the first quarter. That's much better than the 1% or below rate that was forecast in the early weeks of 2019.

Though the economy is widely expected to slow in the current quarter to a roughly 2% rate or less, such a pace would still produce annual growth for the first half of the year of roughly 2.5%. That would be a solid gain. And it would be in line with the modest but steady growth that has prevailed for most of the expansion.

It's also a far brighter scenario than the one envisioned late last year and early this year. A 35-day partial shutdown of the government remained in effect through most of January. Global growth was sputtering



FILE - In this March 6, 2019, file photo, container ships docked at the Port of Oakland wait to be unloaded in Oakland, Calif. The U.S. economy shook off fears of a sharp slowdown in the first quarter of the year and grew at a solid pace, suggesting the nearly decade-long expansion still has a ways to go. (AP Photo/Ben Margot, File)

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in the midst of the U.S.-China trade war. Stocks plummeted in December as the Federal Reserve raised short-term interest rates for the eighth time in nine quarters and signaled that further tightening was likely. Mortgage rates rose, discouraging many would-be home buyers.

American households also cut back: Retailers' sales were weak in January and February, adding to the bleak outlook.

Share prices, though, began to rebound in January, after the Fed signaled that it had put any further rate increases on hold, likely for the rest of the year. That emboldened investors, who have become increasingly confident that the economy will avoid the worst-case scenario of a recession.

After falling nearly 20% at the end of last year, the S&P 500 has now recouped all its losses since late September. Though few Americans have substantial stock holdings, rising share prices can help boost consumer confidence.

Economists cautioned that first quarter growth was driven mostly by several temporary factors that should reverse themselves in coming months. Retailers and other companies, for example, sharply increased the stockpiles of goods in their warehouses and on store shelves. Those additions added nearly 0.7 percentage point to the quarter's growth figure. And the trade deficit narrowed sharply, adding an additional percentage point.

"We know this is not going to be sustainable," said Joe Brusuelas, chief economist at RSM, a tax consulting firm.

Businesses won't likely order as many new goods as they wait for consumer spending to reduce their stockpiles. That will probably restrain growth. And the improvement in the trade deficit last quarter occurred partly because imports fell sharply after many companies ramped up their buying from China last year in advance of potential tariff increases the Trump administration had scheduled for Jan. 1.

The White House ended up delaying those tariffs. As imports return to normal, the trade deficit will likely widen again.

Exports also rose in the January-March period, with China stepping up its purchases of U.S. goods, which some economists attributed to a temporary goodwill gesture by Beijing amid high-stakes trade talks between the two countries. Those negotiations are ongoing.

State and local government spending also rose last quarter, mostly to build more highways, which added 0.4 percentage point to growth and may also prove short-lived.

"Taking out the over-sized boosts from net trade, inventories and highways investment, which will all be reversed in the coming quarters, growth was only around 1%," said Paul Ashworth, an economist at Capital Economics. "Under those circumstances, we continue to expect that GDP growth will slow this year."

Larry Kudlow, head of President Donald Trump's National Economic Council, said the administration is sticking by its estimate that growth will top 3% for all of 2019. He argued that low unemployment and solid wage gains will lift consumer spending, thereby boosting auto and home sales.

"I think the prosperity cycle is intact," Kudlow told CNBC. "I think the Trump policies are working to rebuild America."

Whether the stock market can continue to march ahead — without additional evidence of corporate or economic strength — is far from clear.

"It's important to note investors already knew the U.S. economy was the strongest in the world," said Alec Young, managing director of global markets research at FTSE Russell.

Companies are in the midst of reporting how much profit they made in the first three months of 2019, and investors aren't expecting much. Analysts are forecasting the first drop in earnings for S&P 500 companies since the spring 2016.

But many companies have so far reported results that were better than Wall Street expected. That's crucial because stock prices tend to track profit growth over the long term.

Choe reported from New York. AP Economics Writer Martin Crutsinger contributed to this report.

New study says universe expanding faster and is younger

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The universe is expanding faster than it used to, meaning it's about a billion years younger than we thought, a new study by a Nobel Prize winner says. And that's sending a shudder through the world of physics, making astronomers re-think some of its most basic concepts.

At issue is a number called the Hubble constant, a calculation for how fast the universe is expanding. Some scientists call it the most important number in cosmology, the study of the origin and development of the universe.

Using NASA's Hubble Space Telescope, Johns Hopkins University astronomer Adam Riess concluded in this week's *Astrophysical Journal* that the figure is 9% higher than the previous calculation, which was based on studying leftovers from the Big Bang.

The trouble is, Riess and others think both calculations are correct.

Confused? That's OK, so are the experts.

They find the conflict so confounding that they are talking about coming up with "new physics," incorporating perhaps some yet-to-be-discovered particle or other cosmic "fudge factors" like dark energy or dark matter.

"It's looking more and more like we're going to need something new to explain this," said Riess, who won the 2011 Nobel in physics.

NASA astrophysicist John Mather, another Nobel winner, said this leaves two obvious options: "1. We're making mistakes we can't find yet. 2. Nature has something we can't find yet."

Even with the discovery, life continues on Earth the way it always has. But to astrophysicists trying to get a handle on our place in this expanding universe, this is a cosmic concern.

NEW MEASUREMENTS

To come up with his measurement of the Hubble constant, Riess looked to some not-so-distant stars.

Riess observed 70 Cepheid stars — stars that pulse at a well-observed rate — calculated their distance and rate, and then compared them with a certain type of supernovae that are used as measuring sticks. It took about two years for the Hubble telescope to make these measurements, but eventually Riess calculated an expansion rate of 74.

Using that 74 figure means the universe is somewhere between 12.5 billion and 13 billion years old. That's much younger than the established estimates of 13.6 billion to 13.8 billion.

"Hey, it's good news. Everybody likes to look younger," Riess said.

THE OLD MEASUREMENT

In 2013, the European Planck satellite helped scientists come up with a much slower expansion rate of about 67, but that was done in an entirely different, more complicated and less direct way and by looking at a much earlier time, when the universe was just a toddler.



This image made from a composite of September 2003 - January 2004 photos captured by the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope shows nearly 10,000 galaxies in the deepest visible-light image of the cosmos, cutting across billions of light-years. In research released on Friday, April 26, 2019, Nobel winning astronomer Adam Riess calculates the cosmos is between 12.5 and 13.0 billion years old - about 1 billion years younger than previous estimates. (NASA, ESA, S. Beckwith (STScI), HUDF Team via AP)

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The Planck team studied background radiation from a time just 370,000 years after the Big Bang. By examining cold and hot spots in that radiation, scientists figured out how big the spots were, which helped them determine how far away they were looking.

That team then fed those calculations into the standard model that astronomers use for the universe — based on Einstein's general relativity, among other things — factored in the known acceleration of the universe and came up with the smaller expansion rate. The end result: a 13.8-billion-year-old universe.

Riess calculated the odds that the disparity between the two calculations was an accident at 1 in 100,000.

FUDGE FACTORS

While there is a chance either the Riess team or the Planck team is off, astronomers are talking about both being right.

Both calculations make sense and "nobody can find anything wrong at this point," said distinguished University of Chicago astrophysicist Wendy Freedman. Other outside experts praised both teams' research.

If that's the case, astrophysicists need to make adjustments in Einstein's general relativity theory.

"You need to add something into the universe that we don't know about," said Chris Burns, an astrophysicist at the Carnegie Institution for Science. "That always makes you kind of uneasy."

In the past, astronomers added hard-to-fathom dark energy and dark matter to explain why calculations didn't add up, borrowing from a once-discarded Einstein theory. Now they're saying they need to do something similar again.

It could be there's an extra "turbocharge" from a past odd pulse of dark energy — an unseen expansion force that fits well in Einstein's theories — that caused the speeded-up expansion, Riess said.

Or there could be a new particle of matter that hasn't been discovered, Burns said.

"We have this dark sector that already has two ingredients, and maybe we're discovering a third," said Planck team member Lloyd Knox of the University of California, Davis. "That's a scary prospect. Are we just going to always be introducing fudge factors?"

A THIRD APPROACH

Astronomers at the University of Chicago, led by Freedman, spent five years looking at different stars than Riess to come up with a third calculation of the expansion rate. They just submitted their work to the same journal. Freedman wouldn't reveal her number but said it is between the two other figures.

Twenty years ago, Freedman was part of similar debate about the Hubble constant, when there were few measurements to work with.

"It's an exciting journey to try to understand what the origin of the universe is," she said.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter: @borenbears .

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Plan with LGBT bans OK'd by United Methodist judicial panel

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The United Methodist Church's judicial council on Friday upheld major portions of a new plan that strengthens bans on same-sex marriage and ordination of LGBT pastors.

Conservatives welcomed the decision and said key elements of the policy, called the Traditional Plan, could begin taking effect in January. Among liberal and centrist opponents of the plan, there was dismay; one group, Reconciling Ministries Network, called for an upsurge of resistance.

The Traditional Plan was adopted in February on 438-384 vote by delegates at a special UMC conference in St. Louis. Most U.S.-based delegates opposed that plan and preferred LGBT-inclusive options, but they were outvoted by U.S. conservatives who teamed with most of the delegates from Methodist strongholds in Africa and the Philippines.

The nine-member judicial council, at the close of a four-day meeting in Evanston, Illinois, ruled that

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some aspects of the Traditional Plan — mostly related to enforcement of its rules — were unconstitutional under church law. But the council upheld the bulk of the plan, clearing the way for its implementation in January.

The Rev. Tom Lambrecht, general manager of the conservative Methodist magazine Good News, hailed the council's ruling as a "strong affirmation" of the Traditional Plan's core elements.

He suggested that Methodists opposed to the plan should start negotiating to leave the UMC and form a new denomination that would allow them to adopt LGBT-inclusive policies.

Opponents of the Traditional Plan will have a chance to overturn it at the UMC's next general conference in May 2020. But Lambrecht said he agreed with other analysts who predict the UMC's conservative bloc will be even stronger then.

An alliance of Traditional Plan opponents, calling themselves UMC-Next, has been holding meetings to discuss the best path forward for those who share their views.

Its leaders say one option would be for centrists and liberals to leave en masse to form a new denomination. Under another option, opponents of the Traditional Plan would stay in the UMC and resist from within, eventually convincing conservatives that they should be the faction that departs.

Lambrecht dismissed that possibility.

"We're not leaving," he said.

Formed in a merger in 1968, the United Methodist Church claims about 12.6 million members worldwide, including nearly 7 million in the United States. It is the largest mainline Protestant denomination in the U.S.

While other mainline denominations have embraced gay-friendly practices, the UMC still bans them, though acts of defiance by pro-LGBT clergy members have multiplied. Many have officiated same-sex weddings; others have come out from the pulpit.

Enforcement of the bans has been inconsistent; the Traditional Plan aspires to beef up discipline against those engaged in defiance.

Under rules upheld by the judicial council, bishops are prohibited from ordaining "self-avowed homosexuals," while clerics who perform same-sex weddings could be suspended without pay for a first offense and ousted from the ministry for a second offense.

Under the ruling, individual churches could disaffiliate with the UMC if two-thirds of the church community agrees, and if the church meets certain financial requirements.

The Reconciling Ministries Network, which supports LGBT inclusion, called its supporters "to repeatedly state your dissent, to support the work of resistance by United Methodist seminaries, to continue to write open letters and visibly be in solidarity with those on the margins."

"We call upon the Church to repent of the sin of homophobia," it said. "Now is the time to rise and resist."

Many Traditional Plan opponents already are expressing their dissatisfaction. Some churches have raised rainbow flags in a show of LGBT solidarity; some are withholding dues payments to the UNC administra-



FILE - In this April 19, 2019 file photo, a gay pride rainbow flag flies along with the U.S. flag in front of the Asbury United Methodist Church in Prairie Village, Kan. On Friday, April 26, 2019, the United Methodist Church's judicial council upheld the legality of major portions of a new plan that strengthens the denomination's bans on same-sex marriage and ordination of LGBT pastors. (AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)

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tion in protest.

The Human Rights Campaign, a national LGBTQ-rights group, said the judicial council's ruling "is deeply disappointing for countless LGBTQ Methodists, including young people and their families, who are yearning for a welcoming church family."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, April 27, the 117th day of 2019. There are 248 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 27, 1978, 51 construction workers plunged to their deaths when a scaffold inside a cooling tower at the Pleasants Power Station site in West Virginia fell 168 feet to the ground.

On this date:

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was killed by natives in the Philippines.

In 1791, the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel Morse, was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

In 1865, the steamer Sultana, carrying freed Union prisoners of war, exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee; death toll estimates vary from 1,500 to 2,000.

In 1941, German forces occupied Athens during World War II.

In 1950, Britain formally recognized the state of Israel.

In 1965, broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow died in Pawling, New York, two days after turning 57.

In 1968, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president, less than a month after President Lyndon B. Johnson said he would not run for re-election.

In 1978, convicted Watergate defendant John D. Ehrlichman was released from an Arizona prison after serving 18 months.

In 1982, the trial of John W. Hinckley Jr., who shot four people, including President Ronald Reagan, began in Washington. (The trial ended with Hinckley's acquittal by reason of insanity.)

In 1992, the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was proclaimed in Belgrade by the republic of Serbia and its lone ally, Montenegro. Russia and 12 other former Soviet republics won entry into the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Betty Boothroyd became the first female Speaker of Britain's House of Commons.

In 2006, construction began on the 1,776-foot Freedom Tower at the site of the World Trade Center in New York City.

In 2011, powerful tornadoes raked the South and Midwest; according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, more than 120 twisters resulted in 316 deaths.

Ten years ago: A 23-month-old Mexico City toddler died at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, becoming the first swine-flu death on U.S. soil. A strong earthquake struck central Mexico, rattling nerves among residents already tense from a swine flu outbreak. One of President Barack Obama's Air Force One jets, a Boeing 747, and an F-16 fighter jet panicked New Yorkers as they circled over lower Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty for what turned out to be a photo op. General Motors announced plans to cut 21,000 hourly jobs and scrap the Pontiac brand.

Five years ago: Two 20th-century popes who'd changed the course of the Roman Catholic church become saints as Pope Francis honored John XXIII and John Paul II; Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI joined him in the first celebration of Mass by a serving and retired pontiff in the church's 2,000-year history. In a rare acknowledgement, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called the Nazi Holocaust "the most heinous crime" of modern history. A tornado tore through parts of Arkansas, killing 16 people. Lydia Ko birdied the final hole for her third LPGA Tour victory and first as a professional in the inaugural Swinging Skirts LPGA Classic, three days after celebrating her 17th birthday.

One year ago: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made history by crossing over to South Korea to meet with President Moon Jae-in; it was the first time a member of the Kim dynasty had set foot on southern

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soil since the end of the Korean War in 1953. The Republican-led House Intelligence Committee released a lengthy report concluding that it found no evidence that Donald Trump's campaign colluded with Russia in the 2016 presidential campaign. The members of the Swedish pop supergroup ABBA announced that they had recorded new material for the first time in 35 years, with two new songs.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Anouk Aimee is 87. Rock musician Jim Keltner is 77. Rock singer Kate Pierson (The B-52's) is 71. Rhythm-and-blues singer Herbie Murrell (The Stylistics) is 70. Actor Douglas Sheehan is 70. Rock musician Ace Frehley is 68. West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice is 68. Pop singer Sheena Easton is 60. Actor James Le Gros (groh) is 57. Rock musician Rob Squires (Big Head Todd and the Monsters) is 54. Singer Mica (MEE'-shah) Paris is 50. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., is 50. Actor David Lascher is 47. Actress Maura West is 47. Actress Sally Hawkins is 43. Rock singer Jim James (My Morning Jacket) is 41. Rock musician Patrick Hallahan (My Morning Jacket) is 41. Rock singer-musician Travis Meeks (Days of the New) is 40. Neo-soul musician Joseph Pope III (Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats) is 40. Country musician John Osborne (Brothers Osborne) is 37. Actor Francis Capra is 36. Actress Ari Graynor is 36. Rock singer-musician Patrick Stump (Fall Out Boy) is 35. Actress Sheila Vand is 34. Actress Jenna Coleman is 33. Pop singer Nick Noonan (Karmin) is 33. Actor William Moseley is 32. Actress Emily Rios is 30. Singer Allison Iraheta is 27.

Thought for Today: "The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it." — Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965).