

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 1 of 51

- 1- UMC Salad & Dessert Buffet
- 1- Service Notice: Duane Neumann
- 2- Keith at Harr Motors ad
- 2- KG Roundup Reschedule
- 3- Community Events
- 4- Blood Drive Ad
- 5- Truss Pros Ad
- 6- Weekly Vikings Roundup
- 7- Princess Prom
- 8- Today in Weather History
- 9- Weather Pages
- 11- Daily Devotional
- 12- 2019 Groton Events
- 13- News from the Associated Press



Service Notice:

Duane Neumann

Services for Duane Neumann, 91, of Aberdeen will be 11:00 a.m., Friday, May 3rd at St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton. Rev. Andrew Wolfram will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the funeral chapel on Thursday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Duane passed away April 27, 2019 at his home.

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 Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 2 of 51

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



hm HARR
Motors

4255 6th

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 3 of 51

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

Upcoming
**COMMUNITY
EVENTS**

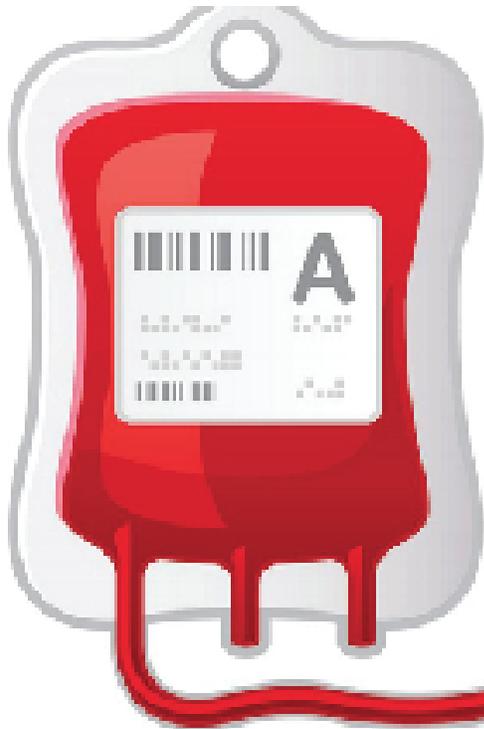
Silver Skates Annual Meeting

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.



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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 6 of 51

Weekly Vikings Roundup

NFL Draft Edition

By Jordan Wright

The Minnesota Vikings had quite a haul this past weekend, drafting 12 players while also adding a few undrafted free agents once the draft was over. Because there is so much content to get through, I will be breaking the draft recap into two parts. Today we will cover the first three rounds, since those players will have the biggest impact on the team, and next week we will dive into the remaining players the Vikings acquired. Just a note, I will be using the draft guide that was done by Jordan Reid – it is a phenomenal resource and if anyone would like more information, I highly encourage you to purchase a copy for yourself. The guide is only \$10, and all the proceeds are going to a great cause.

The first round of the NFL draft couldn't have gone any better for the Vikings. When the Vikings picked at number 18, there had only been two offensive linemen taken, so the Vikings basically had their pick of the litter. I thought the Vikings might go offensive tackle, which would have forced Riley Reiff to move inside and play guard, but the Vikings had other options in mind. For the second time in three years, the Vikings drafted the best center in the draft – Pat Elflein in 2017, and Garrett Bradbury this year.

Garrett Bradbury, the center from N.C. State, was Reid's highest graded interior lineman in the draft. Here is a snippet of what Reid said about Bradbury: "Best suited in a zone blocking scheme, his quickness and smarts are ideal in the middle. Because of his frame and lack of strength overall, he will have occasional issues with power and re-anchoring. On perimeter runs and runs designed to stretch defenses laterally, he will excel. A true character and locker room builder, Bradbury's a very safe pick, that has the upside of being one of the higher end starters in the league."

In the second round, there were some good players who fell out of the first round and I thought the Vikings might look to move up to get them, but instead the team decided to stand pat and let the draft fall to them. With their pick in the second round, the Vikings selected Irv Smith Jr., a tight end from Alabama. I like the player, but I am unsure about the need. The Vikings only threw to the tight end 16% of the time in 2018 (the league average is 20%), and even though Kyle Rudolph might not be elite, he was certainly not the weak link on the offense last year.

Here is what Reid had to say about Irv Smith Jr.: "Still only 20 years old, he will begin training camp as one of the younger players throughout the league. Is an immense threat as a pass catcher, but he's still finding his role and groove as a run blocker... With his potential and future outlook being so bright, it would not be surprising to see a team select him in the top-50 range and him becoming a starter."

In the third round, the Vikings went even further away from what I expected, drafting a running back to back up Dalvin Cook. With Latavius Murray gone this season, the Vikings needed a backup RB, but there were plenty of options later in the draft or even through free agency. The Vikings liked what they saw, however, and decided to draft Alexander Mattison from Boise State. Mattison was thought by many, me included, as being a 6th or 7th round pick – but the Vikings decided to take him with a premium draft selection. I'm hoping the team is right on this and didn't waste the pick.

Jordan Reid had Mattison as a 7th round prospect who runs hard but doesn't catch or pass block particularly well. This is what he said about Mattison: "Not an overly athletic type of runner, but his no holds bar and powerful running style are just a few of the traits that he hangs his hat on. Most likely projecting as a running back-by-committee type, he could prove to be an early down option for a team that selects him in the later rounds."

That is it for the first three round of the NFL draft! Make sure to check out next week's article, where we will break down the rest of the team's draft picks and I give my overall draft grade for the Vikings. If you have any questions or comments, reach out to me on Twitter (@JordanWrightNFL). Skol!

Princess Prom

Here are a couple of photos from the event - many more will follow.



Kinley Haskell escorted by Lance Haskell. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Jaeden and Kaelee Morehouse escorted by Justin Morehouse. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 8 of 51



Maryn Sombke escorted by Bryan Sombke.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Calli Wilkinson escorted by Trent Kurtz. (Photo

by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 9 of 51



Lucy Williams escorted by Chris Williams.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Aryanna Cutler escorted by Greyson Cutler.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 10 of 51

Today in Weather History

April 29, 1942: An estimated F3 tornado moved east through Marshall County, destroying almost every building on a farm northeast of Kidder. Barns were heavily damaged on two other farms. One person was reported killed, with five others injured.

1991: Southeast Bangladesh was devastated by a tropical cyclone with sustained winds of approximately 155 mph in the during the late night hours. A 20-foot storm surge inundated the offshore islands south of Chittagong and pushed water from the Bay of Bengal inland for miles. Best estimated put the loss of life from this cyclone between 135,000 and 145,000 people.

1905 - The town of Taylor, in southeastern Texas, was deluged with 2.4 inches of rain in fifteen minutes. (The Weather Channel)

1910 - The temperature at Kansas City, MO, soared to 95 degrees to establish a record for the month of April. Four days earlier the afternoon high in Kansas City was 44 degrees, following a record cold morning low of 34 degrees. (The Weather Channel) (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1963 - A tornado, as much as 100 yards in width, touched down south of Shannon, MS. The tornado destroyed twenty-seven homes along its eighteen mile path, killing three persons. Asphalt was torn from Highway 45 and thrown hundreds of yards away. Little rain or snow accompanied the tornado, so it was visible for miles. (The Weather Channel)

1973 - The Mississippi River reached a crest of 43.4 feet, breaking the previous record of 42 feet established in 1785. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm off the southeast coast of Massachusetts blanketed southern New England with heavy snow. Totals of three inches at Boston MA, 11 inches at Milton MA, and 17 inches at Worcester MA, were records for so late in the season. Princeton MA was buried under 25 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and high winds in central Texas. Baseball size hail was reported at Nixon, and wind gusts to 70 mph were reported at Cotulla. Heavy rain in Maine caused flooding along the Pemigewassett and Ammonoosuc Rivers. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

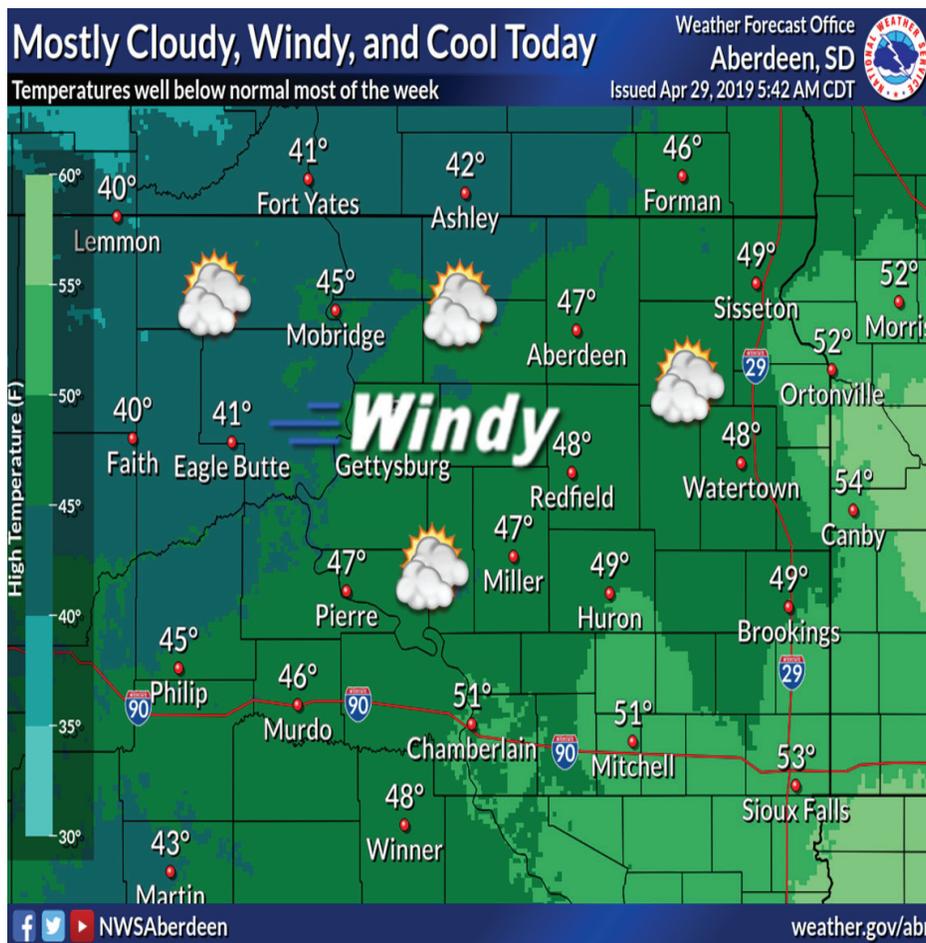
1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Arkansas, Louisiana and eastern Texas, with more than 70 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Softball size hail was reported at Palestine TX. Hail as large as tennis balls caused ten million dollars damage around Pine Bluff AR. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A storm system crossing northern New Mexico blanketed parts of the Rocky Mountain Region and the Northern High Plains with heavy snow, and produced blizzard conditions in central Montana. Much of southern Colorado was buried under one to three feet of snow. Pueblo tied an April record with 16.8 inches of snow in 24 hours. Strong canyon winds in New Mexico, enhanced by local showers, gusted to 65 mph at Albuquerque. Afternoon temperatures across the Great Plains Region ranged from the 20s in North Dakota to 107 degrees at Laredo TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 11 of 51

Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
20%		20% → 60%	50%	40%
Partly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers and Breezy	Mostly Cloudy	Slight Chance Rain/Snow then Showers Likely	Chance Rain	Chance Rain
High: 47 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 47 °F	Low: 35 °F	High: 49 °F



Published on: 04/29/2019 at 6:53AM

Low pressure will begin moving away from the region today, with cool temperatures and windy conditions on its back side. High temperatures will be well below normal, with highs only in the 40s. In fact, 40s can be expected for highs through mid-week, with more rain moving into the region late tonight and Tuesday, then again on Wednesday. There may even be a bit of snow mixed in early Tuesday morning.

Groton Daily Independent

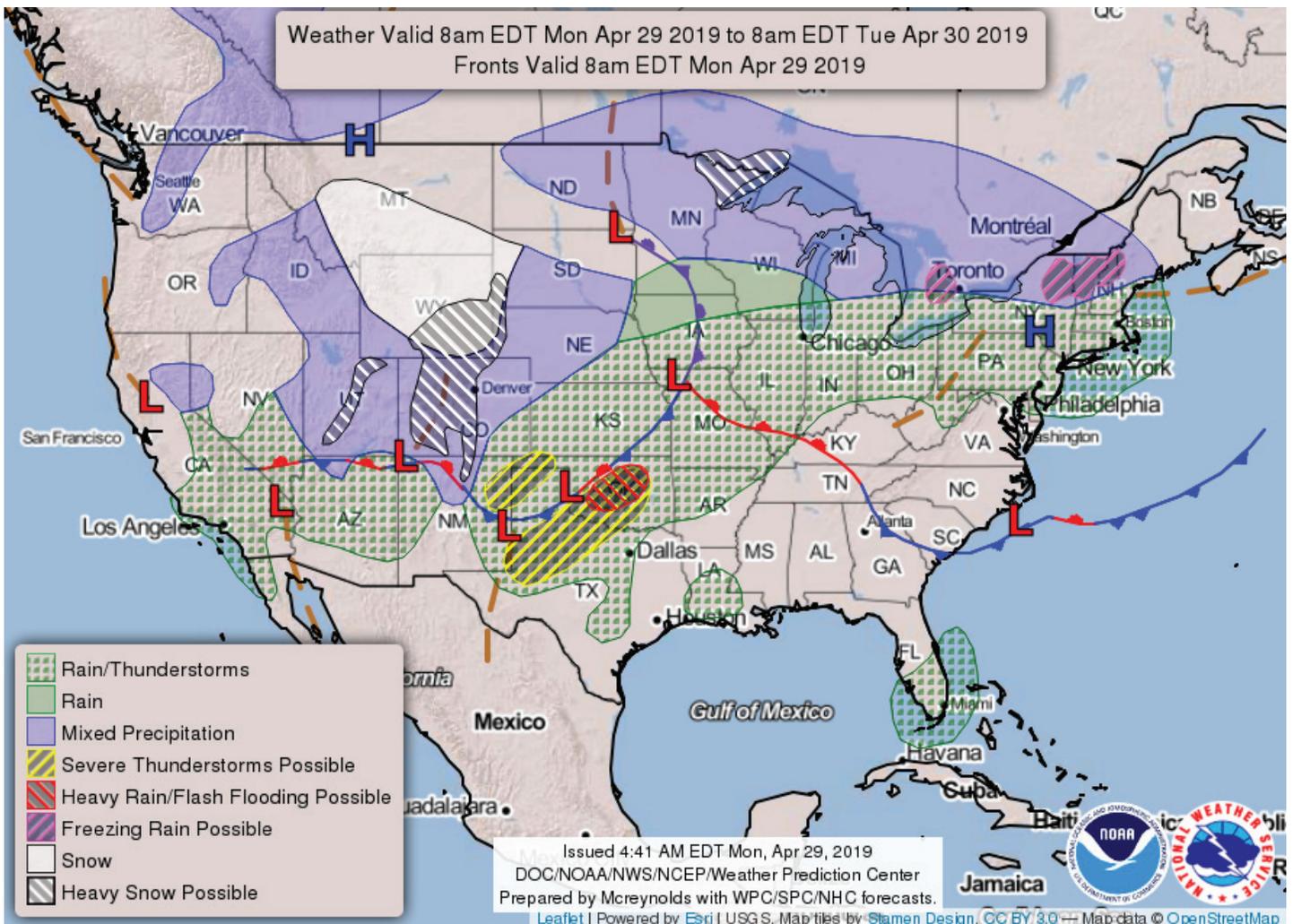
Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 12 of 51

Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 48 °F at 3:27 PM
Low Outside Temp: 37 °F at 3:11 AM
High Gust: 36 mph at 2:18 PM
Precip: 0.04

Today's Info

Record High: 92° in 1934
Record Low: 16° in 1966
Average High: 64°F
Average Low: 38°F
Average Precip in April.: 1.68
Precip to date in April.: 1.49
Average Precip to date: 3.86
Precip Year to Date: 4.53
Sunset Tonight: 8:38 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:24 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 13 of 51



A SURE SIGN OF WISDOM

Dr. Guido, she said rather timidly, how do you see yourself? All of the teachers we have are different. But tell us, what makes you different from all of the others?

My first thought was to explain how my world view differed from most other professors because of my faith in Christ. That would have been a safe, standard answer. But I wanted to say something that made the way I taught distinct from other professors. As I reflected on the importance of her question, I realized how critical my answer would be.

After a few moments, God brought a word to my mind that I had never associated with teaching before. I looked at the young lady and said, I see my role as being similar to the role of a midwife. I believe that it is my responsibility to bring in to your life, and the lives of others, what God has planted or will plant within you. My role is to work with God to bring what He plants in your head and heart to life, and to prepare you for the life He has for you.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives, wrote Solomon. What we do in our relationships with others is a matter of life and death. We are responsible, with the opportunities and guidance that God gives us, to bring others into a saving relationship with Him. We are to use whatever gifts, talents, skills, influence or position God has given us to bring His message of life to others.

A tree of life will grow in the life of one who has been redeemed by Christ. And, that tree will also bear fruit and bring the tree of life to others by its fruit. By this we will be known.

Prayer: Lord, we plant seeds continually by what we do and what we say. May we constantly plant Your seeds, bring life and near fruit wherever we go. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 14 of 51

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

Corrections officials say minimum security inmate missing

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Corrections says a minimum security inmate is missing.

Officials say 33-year-old Robert White Plume-Janis left a service job site in Rapid City Sunday evening without permission.

The inmate was being held by the state for robbery and possession of a firearm by a felon.

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

By **SETH TUPPER** Rapid City Journal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 16 of 51

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Efforts to safeguard Ellsworth at the local level coalesced into the Ellsworth Development Authority,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 17 of 51

which was created in 2009.

Mark Merchen, now a business consultant in Rapid City, was working for West River Electric Association in 2005 and was representing the association on the board of a community improvement initiative known as Black Hills Vision. When Ellsworth was put on the BRAC list, then-Gov. Rounds asked Black Hills Vision to formulate a "Plan B" for the base's land, buildings and infrastructure in case it closed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 18 of 51

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

A degree of certainty was added to that expectation with the Air Force's March 27 announcement that Ellsworth is the preferred base to receive the first B-21s. The selection was made by outgoing Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson, whose previous job was president of the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology in Rapid City.

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

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

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

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

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

Sioux Falls churches help schools cover transportation costs

By SHELLY CONLON Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — About three years ago, Sioux Falls resident Megan Tuve's transmission went out on her car.

A single mom of two at the time, her focus was on keeping a roof over their heads and food on the table. She couldn't afford to spend anything beyond her basic needs, especially on unexpected car trouble, she said.

A check from her sons' principal to a local auto mechanic would change that and start a connection with Garfield Elementary that would bring Tuve's family a sense of stability she said she hadn't felt in years, the Argus Leader reported.

The check didn't come from Principal Kristin Skogstad herself, though. Instead, it came from a family fund Skogstad helped grow over the last three years with a group of community partners willing to stand in the gaps for a school with the highest mobility rate of students in the Sioux Falls School District.

Tuve has also received diapers for her 1-year-old daughter, clothes and a listening ear for the challenges of being a single parent.

"I would be totally devastated and lost in life without this school," Tuve said. "They're always here to help, no matter if it's a big issue or small issue. They're not afraid to help."

Garfield's parent-teacher group fizzled out a few years ago, and when Skogstad began sharing the needs of her students with local surrounding churches, two congregations stepped up in response.

Since then, the funds have been spent on everything from warm coats in the winter, to book orders, to paying for a diabetic student's extra insulin pen to keep at school, to mentorships and to taxi rides for students who have no other way to get to and from school.

And it's all for the sake of making sure Skogstad's most vulnerable have some place they can call home, she said.

"Every school in Sioux Falls right now is growing and changing, because our community is growing and changing," Skogstad said. "It's a wonderful place to be, but the core of Sioux Falls — I don't know if people understand some of the problems you see in a bigger community are starting to happen here."

Garfield has about 470 students, and with one of the larger attendance zones in the district, more than

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 19 of 51

half qualify for busing, Skogstad said.

More than 25% of Garfield Elementary's students have experienced at least one transfer in or out of the campus, district data shows. And the school often hosts children living with other relatives, in nearby hotels or Children's Inn, the local domestic violence shelter, Skogstad said.

"We want to say yes to every need there is, but we really try to focus on those that are going to impact the whole child because we want to meet their academic and social needs at school," she said. "That ability to help with transportation has made an impact for students who might not be able to get here consistently."

At least eight other Sioux Falls elementary schools heavily rely on outside community partnerships, district spokeswoman Carly Uthe said. The rest have PTAs or PTOs or some type of other community partnership, she said.

And most recently, a united group of churches have created a local effort hope to low-income and struggling families by partnering with local schools. So far the group, Empower Sioux Falls, which started a couple years ago, has partnered with nine elementary schools and one middle school so far, said Brian Stroh, an Empower representative and executive pastor at Hillcrest Church.

One of the goals is to eventually partner with every school in the district and serve in similar capacity to those partnered with Garfield, though some of the churches have already been connected with their schools for years, Stroh said. Hillcrest has been partnered with Cleveland Elementary for about 10 years, and the church budgets thousands into its finances for Cleveland every year, he said.

"When we started with Cleveland, we were doing nothing in the community," Stroh said. "We asked ourselves in the leadership of the church, 'If we were to stop being a church, would anyone notice or anyone care outside of ourselves?' We had to say no."

It's a similar philosophy that's encouraged pastors and members at The Point is to Serve church and Trinity Baptist Church to serve at Garfield.

The job wasn't to instill religious ideals in classrooms or advocate for certain beliefs, church members said. It was to simply be the in-between for a district busting at the seams and teachers and students who needed a little additional help, they said.

In fact, representatives at both churches partnered with Garfield didn't know their donations were being used for transportation.

"And we don't even need to know that," said Allen Kjesbo, lead pastor at The Point is to Serve. "We serve at Garfield with no control. We give Kristin the check, and say, 'May God bless you.' They don't need to give us reports about what they do."

The church has a responsibility, he said, to offer a helping hand now as Sioux Falls grows, prepares to open more schools and welcomes new students by caring for the small, every day crises now in a community that's becoming more urbanized, instead of being reactionary to a possible system crisis later.

Even if Sioux Falls doesn't grow, issues surrounding families in need aren't going to disappear, Superintendent Brian Maher said.

"Any of our critical friends, those folks who are coming in and helping us — whether it's a church, Citi Bank, whoever — what we're really trying to do is align all of our systems of support," Maher said. "And that's best figured out at the building level."

Maher has seen the churches give what he called "phenomenal" help in his four years as head of the largest school district in the state and called them great partners who are helping curb social issues within the community. There's never been a conflict of church and state, and he called the partnerships "giving in its purest form."

"I tell people all the time that we're a reflection of our community," Maher said. "What's happening in our public schools is happening in our community."

And as he looks down the road, past the year 2021 or 2022 when the district opens its new high school and middle school campuses, Maher said the only ask from the community is to keep offering an extended hand.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 20 of 51

"We just did a big ask in terms of providing more space," Maher said. "And we've done a big ask before. I think about what the city has provided us for school resource officers. Thirty years ago, who would've thought about that? I think there are a lot of things community-wise that happen in our school systems, but what's harder to see are all of the partners we have."

Traci Jensen, a social worker and the district's homeless liaison, works with about 1,000 Sioux Falls students each year who experience homelessness, those who often have the highest mobility rates, she said.

She's been with the district for 13 years, and regularly sees how a lack of a home campus or lack of stability at school can interrupt a student's ability to learn. If students are moving from school to school, they can lose potentially anywhere from three to six months of education, she said.

The No. 1 way to end generational poverty is education, and promoting educational stability is what the district is all about, she said. For every student the district is able to assist in providing that school stability, the action makes a lifelong impression on that child, she said, and it shows when students show up to school more often or when teachers notice more smiles in the kids who didn't have to change schools.

"There are different ways you can measure it, but can you actually measure it? Probably not," Jensen said. "But it's definitely very meaningful when our community and our schools surround our students and our families to support them."

Back at Garfield, life without the help she gets from Garfield would be 10 times worse, Tuve said as she sat in Skogstad office recently to talk about her children.

Her oldest son is now 12, and her middle child is in fifth grade. In the time since her eldest started at Garfield, her family has moved at least four or five times, she said.

And for a while, as Tuve handled transition after transition, she was afraid of reaching out. She was afraid of judgment and struggled to figure out how to get her oldest son to enjoy school, she said.

Mornings were spent screaming and fighting with her oldest to get him out the door, but the minute he arrived at Garfield, his attitude changed, Tuve said.

"Out of all four of my mom's kids, I'm the only one who graduated high school," Tuve said. "Education is so important to me, and Garfield helps instill that in these kids. What's your motto, Mrs. Skogstad?"

"Every student, every day," Skogsted replied.

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

South Dakota trying to plug 40 abandoned gas wells

BUFFALO, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota environmental regulators are trying to figure out how to plug portions of 40 orphaned natural gas wells belonging to a company the state has already fined \$15.5 million for abandoning them.

Houston-based Spyglass Cedar Creek drilled the wells in 2006 near Buffalo but the work fell idle as the company's prospects disintegrated amid lawsuits, a lender's bankruptcy, and falling natural gas prices. The company initially said it had \$22 million in financing.

The South Dakota Board of Minerals and Environment revoked the company's permits in January and state officials estimate it will cost \$887,700 to plug the wells. The Rapid City Journal reports Sunday that getting money from the Houston company could prove challenging because Spyglass was unable to post \$200,000 earlier this year to keep its permits.

Last month, regulators levied the \$15.5 million fine against Spyglass, imposing the maximum civil penalty of \$500 per well, per day for violations regarding the wells' conditions.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said during a meeting with regulators March 21 that plugging some of the wells would be a precautionary measure. The agency said there is no environmental threat and no potential for groundwater contamination.

"But the department's biggest concern is human health and safety in the event of future gas leaks," Mike Lees, a DENR official, said during the March 21 meeting, according to the minutes. To help fund the plugging of some of the wells from Spyglass, the agency has proposed using a \$130,000 bond from a failed oil-well project near Wasta. The plan would be to focus on the highest-priority wells.

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

South Dakota seeks input on Palisades State Park expansion

GARRETSON, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota officials are seeking public input to direct the layout and use of a project to expand Palisades State Park near Sioux Falls.

The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks met with Garretson residents and local officials Wednesday about their concerns and opinions on the expansion plan near the town, the Argus Leader reported. The department wants to double the 157-acre (64-hectare) park's footprint, as well as add 70 campgrounds, new amenities and recreational uses.

Palisades State Park, just 20 miles northeast of Sioux Falls, is one of the smallest but busiest state parks, with more than 90,000 visitors each year.

"This is an opportunity for the entire state of South Dakota and visitors who come here to really benefit from it," said Jeff VanMeeteren, a regional park supervisor for the department. "It's such a small park. We desperately needed new space."

The park features cliffs and rock formations, attracting campers, hikers, rock climbers, kayakers and canoers to the destination.

Some residents at the recent public input meeting suggested a bike trail running through the park, connecting to Garretson.

Shannon Nordstrom, the town's school board president, said the trail could bring Garretson residents to the park and visitors to the town.

"When you've got these two places so close as a community, you want to make sure you tie them together," Nordstrom said.

The park's current entrance runs along the south side of Garretson, but the department is considering moving the entrance since there's a housing development underway nearby.

VanMeeteren said the department is open to all ideas on how to layout the park, such as designating a new entrance and exit or having two entrances.

"I'm very grateful for people willing to work with us," VanMeeteren said. "They all caught the vision we want to do."

The department plans to solidify its expansion plans next year.

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

Authorities look at synagogue suspect's social media posts

By **AMY TAXIN** and **CHRISTOPHER WEBER** Associated Press

POWAY, Calif. (AP) — Eight-year-old Noya Dahan had finished praying and gone to play with other children at her Southern California synagogue when gunshots rang out. Her uncle grabbed her and the other children, leading them outside to safety as her leg bled from a shrapnel wound.

"I was scared, really, really scared," said Noya, recalling how the group of children cried out of fear after a gunman entered Chabad of Poway on Saturday morning and started shooting. "I didn't see my dad. I thought he was dead."

The onslaught on the last day of Passover, a Jewish holiday celebrating freedom, wounded Dahan, her uncle Almog Peretz and the congregation's rabbi. The attack killed beloved congregant Lori Kaye, 60.

Authorities said the 19-year-old gunman opened fire as about 100 people were worshipping exactly six months after a mass shooting in a Pittsburgh synagogue.

Rabbi Yishoel Goldstein said he was preparing for a service and heard a loud sound, turned around and saw a young man wearing sunglasses standing in front of him with a rifle.

"I couldn't see his eyes. I couldn't see his soul," Goldstein said. He raised his hands and lost one of his

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 22 of 51

fingers in the shooting.

And then, Goldstein said, "miraculously the gun jammed."

In the moments that followed, Goldstein said he wrapped his bloodied hand in a prayer shawl and addressed congregants gathered outside the building, vowing to stay strong in the face of the deadly attack targeting his community.

"We are a Jewish nation that will stand tall. We will not let anyone take us down. Terrorism like this will not take us down," Goldstein recalled telling the community.

Authorities said suspect John T. Earnest, who had no previous contact with law enforcement, may face a hate crime charge in addition to homicide charges when he's arraigned later this week. He was being held without bail, and it was unclear if he had an attorney.

Police searched Earnest's house and said he was also being investigated in connection with an arson attack on a mosque in nearby Escondido, California, on March 24.

There were indications an AR-type assault weapon might have malfunctioned after the gunman fired numerous rounds inside, San Diego County Sheriff William Gore said. An off-duty Border Patrol agent fired at the shooter as he fled, missing him but striking the getaway vehicle, the sheriff said.

Shortly after fleeing, Earnest called 911 to report the shooting, San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit said. When an officer reached him on a roadway, "the suspect pulled over, jumped out of his car with his hands up and was immediately taken into custody," he said.

Goldstein described Kaye as a pioneering founding member of the congregation and said he was heartbroken by her death. He said the attack could have harmed many more people had the shooter turned toward the sanctuary where so many were praying.

"Lori took the bullet for all of us," the rabbi said, his hands wrapped in bandages. "She didn't deserve to die."

He said that Kaye's physician husband was called to tend to a wounded worshipper and fainted when he realized it was his wife.

Friends described Kaye as giving, warm and attentive to community members on their birthdays and when they were sick. A wife and mother, she loved gardening and made delicious challah for her family and friends, said Roneet Lev, 55.

When the gunfire erupted, another worshipper, Shimon Abitbul, said he immediately placed his 2-year-old grandson on the floor and waited for a break in the shooting to grab the boy and sprint away.

Abitbul, who was visiting from Israel and staying with his daughter and her family in Southern California, said he was still coming to grips with the carnage.

"All of us are human beings," he said. "It doesn't matter if you are Jews or Christians or Muslims."

Peretz, who was wounded in the leg, said he turned around after hearing gunfire and saw the shooter standing by the door. He grabbed his niece by the hand and carried out another child.

He then saw a group of children and got them running, "I tell them, 'go this way, go this way,'" said



Noya Dahan, 8, rides on the shoulders of her father, Israel Dahan, at a candlelight vigil held for victims of the Chabad of Poway synagogue shooting, Sunday, April 28, 2019, in Poway, Calif. A man opened fire Saturday inside the synagogue near San Diego as worshippers celebrated the last day of a major Jewish holiday. Noya Dahan was injured in the attack. (AP Photo/Denis Poroy)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 23 of 51

Peretz, who is visiting from Israel.

Gore said authorities were reviewing Earnest's social media posts, including what he described as a "manifesto." There was no known threat after Earnest was arrested, but authorities boosted patrols at places of worship Saturday and again on Sunday as a precaution, police said.

A person identifying himself as John Earnest posted an anti-Jewish screed online about an hour before the attack. The poster described himself as a nursing school student and praised the suspects accused of carrying out deadly attacks on mosques in New Zealand last month that killed 50 and at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue on Oct. 27, in which 11 people were killed.

"It was a hate crime, no doubt about it," national security adviser John Bolton said on "Fox News Sunday." He said investigators have not seen any connection between the suspect and other extremist groups.

California State University, San Marcos, confirmed that Earnest was a student who was on the dean's list and said the school was "dismayed and disheartened" that he was suspected in "this despicable act."

Goldstein said President Donald Trump called him to share condolences on behalf of the American people.

The White House acknowledged the call. "The President expressed his love for the Jewish people and the entire community of Poway," Deputy Press Secretary Judd Deere said in a statement.

On Sunday night, hundreds of people gathered at a park for a vigil to honor the victims.

People at the community park near Chabad synagogue in Poway held candles and listened to prayer in Hebrew. Leaders asked community members to do acts of kindness to remember Kaye.

Poway Mayor Steve Vaus said he would stand with the community, and Rabbi Goldstein said seeing the crowd come together provided consolation.

"What happened to us, happened to all of us," Goldstein said.

Weber reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Elliot Spagat in Poway and Daisy Nguyen in San Francisco contributed to this report.

Afghan leader holds council to set agenda for Taliban talks

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghanistan's president opened a grand council on Monday of more than 3,200 Afghans seeking to agree on a common approach to peace talks with the Taliban, but the gathering may further aggravate divisions within the U.S.-backed government.

President Ashraf Ghani hopes to showcase unity at the four-day meeting — known as Loya Jirga — that brings together politicians, tribal elders, many prominent figures and others.

But Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, his partner in a unity government brokered by the United States after a bitterly disputed election in 2014, heads a list of no-shows.

Former President Hamid Karzai, who also is not attending, told The Associated Press on Monday that holding the council at this time risks "delaying and causing an impediment to the peace process." He also voiced concern that by sidelining his chief executive, Ghani could trigger suspicion that personal ambitions may have partly driven him to hold the Loya Jirga now.

"We are all here to talk about the framework of peace talks with the Taliban ... reaching a sustainable peace is very important to us," said Ghani in his welcome address to delegates.

Waving a copy of Afghanistan's constitution, Ghani lauded it as the most Islamic of constitutions — an apparent message to the Taliban who have suggested they want to negotiate articles within the charter, without specifying.

In several rounds of talks with the Taliban, U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has narrowed the gaps on a deal under which U.S. forces would withdraw in return for guarantees that Afghanistan not revert to a haven for international terrorists. But Khalilzad has struggled to get Afghans to agree on a roadmap for the country's future.

The Taliban have refused to directly talk to Kabul representatives, viewing the government as a U.S.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 24 of 51

puppet.

Ahead of the council, Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center, said that "if Abdullah and his supporters don't attend, there's going to be a glaring absence of key stakeholders that will diminish the event's credibility in a big way."

"Given all the divides in Afghanistan, there is as much of a need for reconciliation within Afghanistan as there is for reconciliation with the Taliban," he added.

The latest attempt at Afghan-to-Afghan talks — scheduled in Qatar earlier this month and intended to include the Taliban, Kabul government representatives, the opposition and other prominent figures — collapsed as the two sides were unable to agree on the participants.

Karzai urged the U.S. to do more to press all sides to the table. "We are in a great hurry for peace."

The Loya Jirga, a deeply-rooted tradition aimed at building consensus among Afghanistan's various ethnic groups, tribes and factions, was intended to strengthen Ghani's hand but risks being seen as just a gathering of loyalists.

The Americans appear increasingly impatient with Ghani, with Khalilzad tweeting his frustration after the Qatar talks fell apart. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Ghani to urge him to join the talks in Doha, where the Taliban maintain an office.

Even Pakistan, which the U.S. and Afghanistan regularly accuse of aiding insurgents, issued a statement saying talks were the only path to peace in Afghanistan. It promised not to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs and even condemned the Taliban's recent announcement of the start of their annual spring offensive.

"The so called offensives are condemnable and will undermine the peace process. It is not right to seek an edge in dialogue through coercion." Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan said. "Pakistan will not be party to any internal conflict in Afghanistan anymore."

Over the weekend, Khalilzad tweeted his approval of Khan's statement. The U.S. envoy recently met with representatives of China and Russia, saying there is an "emerging international consensus on the U.S. approach to end the war and assurances terrorism never again emanates from Afghanistan."

The State Department said the U.S., Russia and China called for intra-Afghan talks, urged a cease-fire and supported "an orderly and responsible withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan as part of the overall peace process."

The statement also said the Taliban have agreed to fight Islamic State militants in Afghanistan and sever ties with al-Qaida, the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement and other militant groups. It said the Taliban have promised to "ensure the areas they control will not be used to threaten any other country" and called on the insurgents "to prevent terrorist recruiting, training, and fundraising, and expel any known terrorists."

The Taliban effectively control nearly half of Afghanistan and have continued to carry out daily attacks



Delegates attend the first day of the Afghan Loya Jirga meeting in Kabul, Afghanistan, Monday, April 29, 2019. Afghanistan's president Ashraf Ghani opened the Loya Jirga grand council on Monday with more than 3,200 prominent Afghans attending to seek an agreed common approach for future peace talks with the Taliban, but the gathering may further aggravate divisions within the U.S.-backed government. (AP Photo/Rahmat Gul)

despite their talks with Khalilzad. They have also refused to agree to any cease-fire before international troops withdraw.

A Taliban official familiar with the talks said the two sides are still haggling over a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, with the Taliban demanding six months and the U.S. seeking 18 months. The Taliban official spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the media.

But even as Khalilzad nears an agreement with the Taliban, he appears increasingly at odds with Kabul. During a visit to Washington last month, Ghani's national security adviser, Hamdullah Mohib, accused Khalilzad of personal ambitions and sidelining the government.

Ordinary Afghans, who have endured decades of war, express frustration with both sides.

Hajji Sher Aga, who owns a gas station near Kabul, complained about the lack of security and lawlessness. He blamed widespread government corruption and said peace with the Taliban was the only answer. "The Taliban are also Afghan," said Hajji Noor Aga, one of his workers.

Associated Press writers Rahim Faiez and Amir Shah in Kabul, Afghanistan, contributed to this report.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. 'I WAS SCARED, REALLY, REALLY SCARED'

Noya Dahan, 8, had finished praying and gone to play with other children at her Southern California synagogue when she was wounded by a gunman.

2. SOCIALISTS SET TO REIGN IN SPAIN

The center-left Socialist party wins re-election and will try to form a government, but it will need to negotiate the support of smaller rival parties to pass legislation.

3. EASTERN SRI LANKA TENSE AFTER EASTER BOMBINGS

The scale of the explosives seized following last week's eruption of violence, as well as the continued warning of authorities that more militants remain on the loose, only add to the dread.

4. GOP'S WARNING OF SOCIALISM ISN'T RESONATING

The AP interviewed some voters in southern stretches of Colorado and most say they are more concerned with health care and living costs.

5. WHERE BIDEN PICKED FOR 1ST STUMP SPEECH

The former vice president is signaling he hopes to own what may be the 2020 election's toughest battleground.

6. AFGHAN LEADER SETTING AGENDA FOR TALIBAN TALKS



Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein, right, is hugged as he leaves a news conference at the Chabad of Poway synagogue, Sunday, April 28, 2019, in Poway, Calif. A man opened fire Saturday inside the synagogue near San Diego as worshippers celebrated the last day of a major Jewish holiday. (AP

Photo/Denis Poroy)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 26 of 51

Ashraf Ghani says a council will set the framework for peace talks with the militant group, but several leading Afghans are boycotting in a sign of discord in the government ranks.

7. LAWMAKERS DEBATE FUTURE OF STUDENT LOAN RELIEF

Legislators are debating whether to fix, expand or end a program that promised public service workers that any remaining debt on federal student loans would be erased after 10 years of payments.

8. CORRUPTION CLAIMS SEND HAWAII POWER COUPLE TO TRIAL

Honolulu's former police chief and his prosecutor wife face charges that they funded a lavish lifestyle by defrauding banks, relatives and children, AP learns.

9. UNIVERSE BELONGS TO MARVEL

"Avengers: Endgame" shatters records for the biggest opening weekend ever selling an estimated \$350 million in tickets in the U.S. and Canada, and \$1.2 billion globally.

10. PRODIGY HOOPSTER FEATURED AT TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

The new film "The Dominican Dream" helps super-hyped prep star Felipe Lopez tell his story.

Key questions and answers about Japan emperor's abdication

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's 85-year-old Emperor Akihito ends his three-decade reign on Tuesday when he abdicates to his son Crown Prince Naruhito. He'll be the first emperor to abdicate in 200 years.

Some key questions and answers about the abdication and ascension and other examples abroad:

Q. Why is Akihito abdicating, and how is it different from usual successions?

A. Akihito, citing concerns about his age and declining health, expressed in August 2016 his wish to abdicate while he is still well and capable. As a constitutionally defined symbol with no political power, Akihito sought understanding in a message to his people, and immediately won overwhelming public support, paving the way for the government's approval.

With Japan's Imperial House Law lacking a provision on abdication by a reigning emperor and virtually allowing only posthumous succession, the government enacted a one-time law to allow Akihito's abdication. Palace watchers say Akihito wanted keep the



FILE - In this Dec. 23, 2018, file photo, Japan's Emperor Akihito, right, accompanied by Crown Prince Naruhito, walks away after greeting well-wishers when they appeared on the balcony of the Imperial Palace to mark the emperor's 85th birthday in Tokyo. Akihito is ending his three-decade reign Tuesday, April 30, 2019 as he abdicates to his son, Crown Prince Naruhito, becoming the first to do so in 200 years, in a step nobody today has witnessed.

(AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko, File)

emperor's presence always visible so it won't be veiled and politically used like his father's wartime role, while others say he tried to smooth the transition for his son. Winning his abdication was part of changes Akihito has brought to the palace: He was the first emperor to marry a commoner, Empress Michiko, and

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 27 of 51

has decided to be cremated upon his death, which would break a centuries-old burial custom.

Q. Who is next in line, and who's left?

A. Naruhito, who ascends the throne on Wednesday, is the elder of Akihito's two sons. A musician and avid hiker, the 59-year-old Naruhito spent two years at Oxford and wrote a paper on the 18th century Thames River transport systems after studying history at Gakushuin University, a school formerly for aristocrats. His wife, Masako, a Harvard-educated former diplomat, is recovering from stress-induced conditions she developed after giving birth to their daughter Aiko amid pressure to produce a boy.

Aiko, 17, is barred from inheriting under Japan's male-only succession law, and the line goes to Naruhito's brother, Fumihito, better known by his childhood title, Akishino. Fumihito's 12-year-old son, Hisahito, would be next. Discussions on changing the law to allow female succession quickly ended with Hisahito's birth, but they are expected to resume, with Akihito's abdication raising concerns about the royal family's future. Most Japanese support female succession despite opposition by conservatives in the government and its ultra-right-wing supporters, who want the family to be a model for a paternalistic society.

Q. What are the procedures to abdicate?

A. Akihito will announce his abdication in a palace ritual on Tuesday evening, but technically he remains the emperor until midnight, when his era of Heisei, or "achieving peace," ends and Naruhito takes over, his Reiwa era of "beautiful harmony" beginning. On Wednesday morning, Naruhito, in his first ritual as emperor, receives the Imperial regalia, including the sword and the jewel, as proof of his ascension to the throne. Aside from government officials, only adult male royals are allowed to attend, a tradition the government stuck with despite criticisms raised by the public.

The succession not by death has spread festivity across Japan, though the rituals are off-limits to the public and traffic will be tightly controlled outside the palace. A more elaborate enthronement ceremony for Naruhito will be held in October, when he will proclaim his ascension before officials and guests from inside and outside the country.

Q. What will Akihito do after abdication?

A. Akihito will hold a new title, Emperor Emeritus, but he will be fully retired from official duties and will no longer sign documents, receive foreign dignitaries, attend government events or perform palace rituals. He won't even attend his son's succession rituals and will largely recede from public appearances.

His activities will be strictly private so as not to interfere with the serving emperor. Akihito is expected to enjoy his retirement, going to museums and concerts, or spending time on his goby research at a sea-side Imperial villa. After abdication, Akihito and Michiko will move to a temporary royal residence before eventually switching places with Naruhito after refurbishments at each place.

Q. What about abdications in other countries?

A. Japan's last abdication was about 200 years ago during the feudal Edo period, when Emperor Kokaku abdicated to his son Ninko while he ascended to a superior title. Spain's former King Juan Carlos abdicated at age 76 to King Felipe in 2014 amid scandals, and the succession laws to allow it were changed in just two weeks.

In the Netherlands in 2013, Queen Beatrix, citing old age at age 75, abdicated to her son Alexander, who became the country's first male successor in more than a century. In Belgium, the former King Albert II, then 79, abdicated to his son Philippe in 2013 due to health reasons. This year, Malaysia's King Sultan Muhammad V abruptly stepped down after just two years on the throne, the first abdication in the country's history.

Follower Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 28 of 51

GOP warning about socialism not resonating with many voters

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

ALAMOSA, Colo. (AP) — In this scruffy, high-desert town encircled by prairies and potato farms, Sen. Cory Gardner drew shouts of approval last week for his message that Democrats are shoving the country toward socialism.

“That’s not what government is or what it should be,” he told about 200 Alamosa County Republicans at a barbecue fundraiser in a National Guard armory. “We have to stand up and fight. Are you going to join me in this fight?”

For Gardner and other Republicans making the same pitch, including President Donald Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, the key question is whether it will attract moderate voters, not just their conservative stalwarts. Based on interviews with over three dozen Coloradans last week from Denver’s suburbs south to this town in the flat San Luis Valley, the argument has yet to take root, though the GOP has 18 months to sell it before Election Day 2020.

Few volunteered a drift toward socialism as a major worry, with health care and living costs cited far more frequently. Several said capitalism was too embedded in the U.S. to be truly threatened and Republicans were using socialism to stir unease with Democrats by raising the specter of the old, repressive Soviet Union and today’s chaotic Venezuela.

“They’re preying on fear,” said David Kraemer, 67, a financial adviser who’s not registered with a political party and lives in the Denver suburb of Westminster.

Yet when asked directly whether socialism was a concern, many expressed a wariness of injecting more government into people’s lives. Rather than naming policies that troubled them, many mentioned two self-proclaimed democratic socialists: Vermont independent Sen. Bernie Sanders, who’s seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, and freshman Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y. The comments suggested that Republicans might be tapping into unease over letting either party go too far.

“Checks and balances are what make this country so great,” said Steve Lajoie, 46, a self-employed carpenter from Denver and independent voter.

Gardner, 44, who’s expected to face a tough re-election fight next year, has been repeating his argument for months. He cites liberal Democrats’ “Medicare for All” bills for government-provided health care and a Green New Deal proposal for aggressively cutting carbon emissions.

Sanders has sponsored Medicare for All legislation that’s been embraced by many of his Democratic presidential rivals. Ocasio-Cortez is an architect of the Green New Deal, which remains a concept, not proposed legislation. Many Democrats, especially moderates, have kept their distance from both plans, divisions Republicans are happy to exploit.

Democrats reject the socialism assertion as a distraction from Trump’s unpopularity and the issues they



Rhett Lucero, 40, an auto body shop mechanic poses for a photo on April 24, 2019, in Pueblo, Colo. Republicans are warning that Democratic proposals aimed at providing universal health care and curbing greenhouse gas emissions show that Democrats want to turn the U.S. toward socialism. Lucero, says Democrats’ efforts to expand health coverage and curb global warming make sense. (AP Photo/Alan Fram)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 29 of 51

will emphasize, especially improving health care and protecting jobs and income. They say efforts to make health care more available and combat global warming have nothing to do with limiting individuals' rights.

Democrats note that voters gave them total control of Colorado government in November despite GOP attempts to pin the socialism label on former U.S. Rep. Jared Polis, who was elected governor. They say growing numbers of younger, urban and Hispanic residents are steadily making the state more liberal.

GOP cries of socialism are "Cold War stuff" that's irrelevant to most voters, said Morgan Carroll, chairwoman of the Colorado Democratic Party.

"I think that probably does fire up their base, but you cannot win an election in Colorado with the Republican base alone," Carroll said.

Republicans see a powerful argument in telling voters they need a GOP-controlled Senate for protection against Democrats who are coming after their current health insurance, their energy sector jobs and more.

"I think we're running to be the firewall that saves the country from socialism," McConnell, R-Ky., told reporters recently.

Republicans say the anti-socialism message will prove powerful in a state that overwhelmingly rejected a ballot initiative creating single-payer health care and where registered unaffiliated voters, often with libertarian leanings, outnumber both Democrats and Republicans.

The GOP hopes the appeal will win over suburbanites whose distaste for Trump helped Democrats capture the House in the fall. They note that public opinion polls find socialism is especially unpopular among older voters, Republicans and moderates.

Avery Jones, of Westminster, is one potential target.

"Taxes kill," said Jones, 27. While she's eager to improve her family's health coverage, she sees "some merit" to checking Democrats from pushing toward universal health care because "it would just drive up taxes."

But for every Jones, there's a Rhett Lucero. Lucero, 40, eating lunch at the Riverwalk park that winds through the city of Pueblo, says Democrats' efforts to expand health coverage and curb global warming make sense.

"It's helping each other out," said the auto body mechanic, who, like Jones, is an unaffiliated voter. "It's putting our taxes to a real good use."

Not all Democrats are dismissive of the socialism strategy.

Eva Henry, a commissioner of Adams County outside Denver, says her community's blue-collar families might buy the GOP argument if they believe Democrats' proposals would drive up taxes. "Our Democrats can vote Republican because they vote their pocketbooks," the Democrat said.

Pueblo Mayor Nicholas Gradisar said he doubts the argument will sway many Democrats but warned, "Democrats have to be wary of it and they have to respond" by telling voters the party "will give you a fair shake." Pueblo County, south of the economically surging corridor that runs from Boulder to Colorado Springs, leans Democratic but backed Trump in 2016.

Republicans, who've already cast Democrats as socialists this year with digital videos and roadside billboards, tried the theme in several states in November to little effect. It wasn't new: Actor Ronald Reagan and GOP presidential candidate Barry Goldwater castigated Medicare as socialist in the 1960s, yet it's now a cherished medical lifeline for millions of older Americans.

Republicans say this time will be different. But one Coloradan's comments suggest that past GOP warnings about Democrats may haunt Republicans.

"Every time a Democrat gets elected, they say, 'We're going to lose our guns,'" said Marc O'Leary, 48, of Westminster. "It never happens."

Church urges more vigorous crackdown on Sri Lankan militants

By KRISHAN FRANCIS Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka urged the government on Monday to crack down on Islamic extremists with more vigor “as if on war footing” in the aftermath of the Easter bombings.

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, the archbishop of Colombo, said the church may not be able to stop people from taking the law into their own hands unless the government conducts a more thorough investigation and does more to prevent further attacks.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the Easter attacks, which killed more than 250 people, and investigators are looking into the extent of the extremist group’s involvement with the local radicalized Muslims who carried out the suicide bombings.

The cardinal said he is not satisfied with how the government has conducted its investigations so far. “All the security forces should be involved and function as if on war footing,” Ranjith told reporters.

“I want to state that we may not be able to keep people under control in the absence of a stronger security program,” he said. “We can’t forever give them false promises and keep them calm.” He urged the government “to implement a proper program in order that the people don’t take the law into their own hands.”

Ranjith, however, said the church assures Muslims that it will not allow any revenge attacks against them. He also said church services would be held this coming Sunday after necessary precautions are taken. The number of Masses will be reduced at every church, with police and parish committees entrusted with the task of looking out for strangers.

Churches were shut across the nation on Sunday, a week after the bombings, for fear of another attack by Islamic State group-linked militants. Sri Lanka’s Catholics celebrated Mass in their homes as Ranjith presided over a televised service.

The closing of the churches came after local officials and the U.S. Embassy in Colombo warned that more militants remained on the loose with explosives.

Even though all of the island nation’s schools are to reopen May 6, Ranjith said Catholic schools could be kept closed after that date if the church is not satisfied with security.

Meanwhile, the government banned all kinds of face coverings that may conceal people’s identities. The emergency law, which took effect Monday, prevents Muslim women from veiling their faces.

The decision came after the Cabinet had proposed laws on face veils at a recent meeting. It had deferred the matter until talks with Islamic clerics could be held, on the advice of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

The Easter attacks were carried out by seven suicide bombers who blew themselves up targeting three churches and three luxury hotels. Two other suicide bombers died triggering blasts, one to avoid capture by the police and another at an inn where he was staying.



Sri Lankan policemen and a Naval soldier stand guard at a Check point in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Monday, April 29, 2019. The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka says the government should crack down on Islamic extremists with more vigor “as if on war footing” in the aftermath of the Easter bombings. (AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena)

On Monday, President Maithripala Sirisena appointed former army commander Shantha Kottegoda as the top official in the defense ministry after requesting the resignation of his predecessor, Hemasiri Fernando, for intelligence failures that led to the bomb attacks.

The government is accused of not having acting on near- specific information from a foreign intelligence agency over several weeks on an imminent attack.

Socialists top the polls in Spain, but no majority

By BARRY HATTON Associated Press

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — Spain's third parliamentary election in less than four years did little to dispel uncertainty over the political future of the eurozone's fourth largest economy.

The center-left Socialist party won re-election in Sunday's ballot, collecting nearly 29% of votes, and will try to form a government. It would be one of only a handful of socialist governments in the European Union.

But with only 123 seats in the 350-seat Congress of Deputies, Spain's parliament, it needs to negotiate the support of smaller rival parties to pass legislation.

"Forming a government will be far from straightforward," Antonio Barroso, an analyst with the London-based Teneo Intelligence consultancy firm, said in a commentary Monday.

Even an alliance with the far-left, anti-austerity party United We Can wouldn't give the Socialists the key number of 176 seats.

That means incumbent prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, will need to barter with smaller parties to enact his administration's ambitions and stay in power for the four-year mandate.

Spain's political landscape has fragmented in recent years, after decades in which the Socialist party and the conservative Popular Party took turns in power.

Forging cross-party alliances has proved difficult for political negotiators and has unsettled Spanish governments. In 2015, a splintered parliamentary outcome from a general election led to inconclusive negotiations and a repeat election the following year.

"The country has endured an excessive amount of instability," La Vanguardia newspaper said in an editorial Monday. "That is never good. And it's even worse when the European Union has the same problem, due to Brexit and the rise of populism."

The Socialist party, which came to power last June in a minority government, gained a lot of political credit by increasing its number of seats from 84 to 123.

The center-right Citizens party, which has in many aspects been hostile to the Socialists' political agenda, shot from 32 to 57 seats, while the Popular Party lost more than half of its parliamentary representation as it fell to 66 seats.

Adding to the parliamentary makeover, the far-right Vox party claimed 10% of the vote and 24 seats. It is the first time since the 1980s that a far-right party will sit in the national parliament.



Spain's Prime Minister and Socialist Party leader Pedro Sanchez gestures to supporters outside the party headquarters following the general election in Madrid, Spain, Sunday, April 28, 2019. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangué)

In all, five parties got more than 20 seats.

Another unpredictable path that Sánchez could consider is to seek the support of secessionists in Catalonia.

The unflinching demands of separatists for that wealthy region's independence brought in 2017 Spain's worst constitutional crisis in decades, and the price of their support may be too high for Sánchez.

Amid all the party-political considerations, the new government faces the daunting task of cutting chronic unemployment and keeping the public pension system from collapse. The Spanish jobless rate in February was almost 14% — compared with an average of just under 8% for eurozone countries.

No immediate progress on forming a government is likely. Spain is due to elect regional and local governments, as well as its European Parliament deputies, in four weeks' time in what will be another test of political strength.

Lawmakers debate future of loan relief for public workers

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

In 2007, the U.S. government made a promise to public service workers: Make 10 years of payments on their federal student loans and any remaining debt would be erased. But officials have largely failed to deliver.

And that's left lawmakers questioning whether to end the program or try to fix it.

The Trump administration and some Republican legislators see it as a lost cause, arguing that the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program is misguided and has proved too complicated for borrowers to navigate.

But a group of Democrats is pushing to salvage the program, blaming its failure on poor management by the Education Department. The group, which includes six 2020 presidential contenders, proposed a new bill this month that would simplify the rules and expand the offer to a wider swath of borrowers.

"Millions of teachers, social workers, members of the military, nurses, public defenders and countless others have been denied the support they have earned," said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., one of the bill's sponsors and a Democratic presidential candidate. "It's time for Congress to fix this program and create a fairer and simpler process for public servants seeking loan forgiveness."

Signed into law under President George W. Bush, the program is meant to help college graduates who pursue jobs that often pay modest salaries but serve a greater good, such as careers in teaching, the military or with nonprofit groups. But turmoil has been mounting around the program since last year, when the Education Department revealed that 99% of borrowers who applied for loan discharges had



FILE - In this Wednesday, April 10, 2019, file photo, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos testifies before the House Education and Labor Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington. A political battle is reheating over a federal program that was designed to cancel student loans for certain public workers but has largely failed to deliver that promise. The program, Public Service Loan Forgiveness, promises to erase federal student loans for public workers who make 10 years of payments while working for approved employers. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta, File)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 33 of 51

been rejected. As of December, just 338 public workers had been granted loan forgiveness out of nearly 54,000 applicants, according to recently released department data .

Most have been denied because they didn't meet narrow eligibility requirements. Broadly, the program promises to forgive federal loans for public workers who make 120 monthly payments while working for approved employers. But there are caveats: It applies only to certain types of federal loans, for example, and only for borrowers who opted into certain repayment plans.

Thousands of borrowers have said those details were never made clear to them, and many have reported that they were misled by loan servicing companies hired by the government. A scathing 2018 report from the Government Accountability Office concluded that the Education Department had failed to issue clear information to borrowers or loan servicers.

So far, a relatively small number of borrowers have asked for loan cancellations — the window for applications began in October 2017 — but there's evidence that many more are on the way. Education Department data show that nearly 1 million borrowers have taken the initial steps to have their loan payments counted for the program.

John DeGennaro, a 64-year-old English professor, recently applied for loan cancellation for the sixth time; his previous requests were rejected over problems with his paperwork.

"I checked off all the right boxes, I made the 120 payments and then I sent it in, and it started this circus," said DeGennaro, of Encinitas, California. "Every time I sent something, there would be something else that wasn't my error. It started to become absurd."

He's still awaiting a decision on his latest application. Meantime he's stuck with \$14,000 in federal student loans that he says he can't pay off with his income as an adjunct at two local colleges.

Seeking a temporary fix, Congress last year approved \$700 million to erase loans for borrowers who were rejected because they entered into the wrong repayment plan. But Democrats say the Education Department has failed to implement even that stopgap measure.

An April 15 letter from Senate Democrats says the department has continued to send borrowers misleading information about eligibility and has taken an "unnecessarily restrictive approach" to the rules. The letter asks that Education Department officials be ordered in the 2020 budget to notify borrowers who might be eligible for loan relief.

Other Democrats have used congressional hearings to rebuke Education Secretary Betsy DeVos over her handling of the program. At a March budget hearing, Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., asked DeVos if she's really interested in helping borrowers or if she's out to serve "the powerful financial companies profiting off of this malfeasance and incompetence."

DeVos in turn blames Congress for creating a program with such puzzling rules, but she also opposes the offer on principle. "We don't think one type of a job, one type of role, should be incentivized over another," she said at a House hearing this month.

President Donald Trump's 2020 budget proposal asks Congress to eliminate the program, starting with borrowers who take out new loans after July 1, 2020. It argues that the benefit "is not only complicated for borrowers to navigate, but it also inefficiently targets subsidies only to those borrowers in public service jobs."

House Republicans similarly tried to end the program in a bill that failed in the last session of Congress. Some cite the cost, which some federal estimates peg at \$22 billion over the next decade, although just \$21 million in loans have been discharged so far.

A spokesman for Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., the top Republican on the Senate education committee, said the program will be discussed as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, a federal law that governs much of higher education.

Spokesman Taylor Haulsee said Alexander "believes that Congress should maintain but repair and improve the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program so it is easier to understand and operate, and better targeted at occupations taxpayers actually want to subsidize with their generosity."

The bill proposed by Senate Democrats would expand loan forgiveness to all types of federal student

loans and all types of federal repayment options. It would also allow borrowers to get half of their loan balance forgiven after five years, and simplify the application process.

Along with Gillibrand, the 13 senators backing the proposal include Democratic presidential contenders Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, Kamala Harris of California and Cory Booker of New Jersey, along with Bernie Sanders from Vermont, who is independent.

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

Biden heads to Pennsylvania to pitch rebuilding middle class

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — By picking Pennsylvania for his first campaign speech of the presidential race, Joe Biden is signaling he hopes to own what may be the 2020 election's toughest battleground.

Planting a flag in Pennsylvania makes sense for the longtime former senator from Delaware: He was born in Pennsylvania, has numerous ties to it and is using his deep inroads with influential state party figures to his advantage in the primary.

For Democrats it's a late primary state that may have little value in the nomination. But Donald Trump's campaign is already mapping out a strategy to win Pennsylvania a second time, and the Republican won't easily cede a state that forms the core of his likeliest path back to 270 electoral votes.

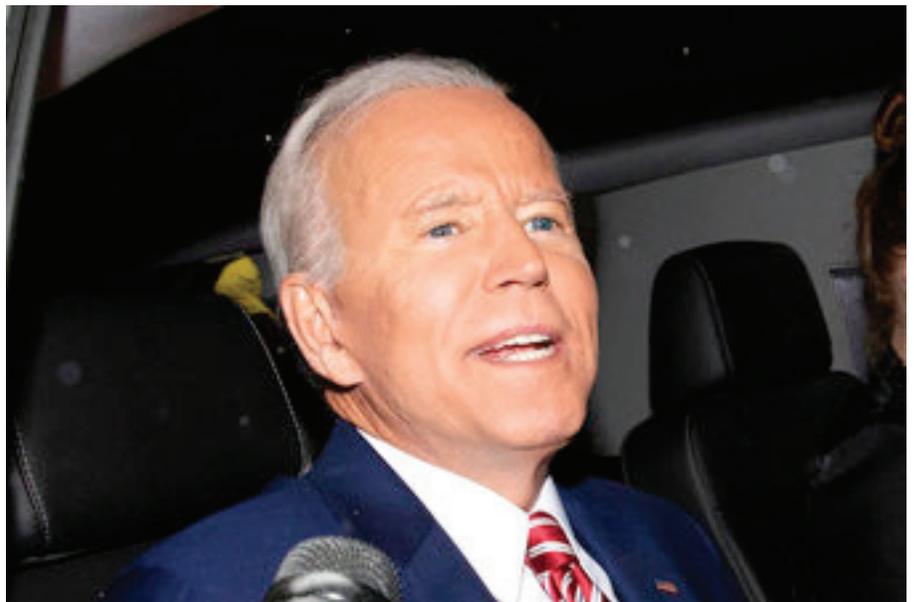
"It is early in the game, but I just think this imperative in 2020 is such that we have to start early," said Pennsylvania's Democratic Sen. Bob Casey, who is endorsing the former vice president. Pennsylvania is "so big and it's so consequential that it's going to take time to make the case here."

Biden's planned speech to an organized labor crowd Monday in Pittsburgh comes days after he announced his candidacy and promptly went to a fundraiser in Philadelphia organized by the area's prominent Democrats. In Pittsburgh, he'll receive the endorsement of the International Association of Fire Fighters and speak about rebuilding the middle class.

No other primary candidate is from Pennsylvania, and it will be the last of the delegate-rich states to vote, except perhaps for New Jersey. It's received limited attention from Biden's rivals .

Among those who have come, former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders each held a well-attended rally in recent weeks, and Sanders made the case for why he can beat Trump in Pennsylvania.

Several others have nibbled around the edges, attending private fundraisers in Philadelphia or doing a low-key meet-and-greet. Sen. Kamala Harris of California and Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts,



Former Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden is shown after appearing on ABC's "The View", Friday, April 26, 2019 in New York. Biden says he has no plans to limit himself to one term if he's elected president in 2020. (AP Photo/Eduardo Munoz Alvarez)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 35 of 51

like Biden, campaigned last year for Casey.

But in the general election, Pennsylvania is tied with Illinois for the nation's fifth-biggest Electoral College prize. And the "blue wall" states of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan that unexpectedly tipped to Trump over Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election may have supplanted Florida and Ohio as the nation's premier presidential battlegrounds.

As Biden prepared to announce his campaign last week, top Trump campaign officials were meeting Pennsylvania's GOP brass two blocks from the state Capitol.

Undoubtedly on their minds is an avalanche of losses, both statewide and in the suburbs of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, since 2016. Their meeting Wednesday emphasized unity, and national officials encouraged the state Republican Party to step up its field and fundraising operation, according to a person familiar with the meeting who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe it. Republicans said the Trump campaign and the Republican National Committee would soon have similar meetings with other target states.

For Democrats, Pennsylvania is an outsized electoral prize: Harry S. Truman in 1948 was the last Democratic presidential candidate to lose Pennsylvania but win the election, and Trump's victory in the state was a shock to their system.

Trump became the first Republican presidential nominee to win Pennsylvania since 1988, even though he didn't necessarily need Pennsylvania to secure the White House. In any case, Republicans have proved repeatedly they can win the presidency without Pennsylvania, as George W. Bush did twice.

"Clearly Pennsylvania is in the top tier of states that we want to win," said the state's Republican Party chairman, Val DiGiorgio. Trump took the state by less than 1 percentage point, and this time some Republicans are pushing for him to make a strong pitch to Philadelphia and its suburbs, where voters rejected Trump in huge numbers and have since rejected Republicans in historic fashion. "The question is, how do we get suburban voters back into the fold?" DiGiorgio said.

Biden's supporters see in him a candidate who can stanch the massive losses in the rest of Pennsylvania that delivered victory to Trump and flipped some traditionally Democratic counties far from Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

Biden begins with some advantages, at least among Democrats.

He is backed by influential Philadelphia Democrats who nicknamed him "Pennsylvania's third senator" when they routinely went to him for help that they might not get from the state's two Republican senators.

"He was our senator, we adopted him," quipped Bob Brady, Philadelphia's longtime Democratic Party chairman.

Biden routinely reminds audiences that he was born in northeastern Pennsylvania and spent his boyhood there, a normally Democratic-leaning area where Trump performed particularly well.

In Pittsburgh on Monday, Biden is returning to a city where he has come to be a regular in the Labor Day parade.

"On a national level, nobody has made more visits here than Joe Biden," said Darrin Kelly, president of the Pittsburgh-area branch of the AFL-CIO. "Nobody has called Pittsburgh home more than him."

Associated Press writer Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Marc Levy on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/timelywriter> .

Police: 8 shot, 1 fatally, in latest Baltimore shooting

BALTIMORE (AP) — A gunman fired indiscriminately into a crowd that had gathered for Sunday afternoon cookouts along a west Baltimore street, killing a man and wounding seven other people, authorities and reports said.

Police Commissioner Michael Harrison said the gunfire erupted after 5 p.m. on a block in the city's western district of brick row homes. Harrison said a man approached a crowd on foot and began firing in what he called "a very tragic, very cowardly shooting." Speaking at the scene afterward, Harrison said the shooting appeared "extremely targeted," but he didn't provide a possible motive.

The shooting comes roughly six weeks after Harrison's swearing-in last month as Baltimore police commissioner, when he promised to make the city safer and lead the department through sweeping reforms required by a federal consent

decree. It's a daunting task in one of the country's poorest major cities where there were more than 300 homicides in each of the past two years. Harrison is the city's 14th police leader since the mid-1990s.

The commissioner said there were two cookouts taking place on opposite sides of the street Sunday, and that shell casings were found in two different locations, indicating that there may have been a second gunman, or someone firing back at the first shooter, who fled on foot. It was unclear whether the cookouts were related, Harrison said.

One man who was shot collapsed behind a Baptist church nearby and was pronounced dead at the scene. Harrison said initially that six others had been wounded and were taken to hospitals, but he didn't release their names or their conditions. A police statement later said a man was killed, but didn't give his age. It said five of the survivors were men ranging in ages from 27 to 58, as well as a 30-year-old woman.

A police spokeswoman later Sunday evening was cited by The Baltimore Sun as saying an eighth victim, a man with a gunshot wound to the leg, went to a hospital. The report did not elaborate.

"It wasn't anything dealing with the church. I want to make that very clear," acting mayor Jack Young said. Harrison and Young, in appearance with reporters, urged members of the public to help investigators with any information as to who took part or a motive.

"Someone knows something," Young said. "These things ... they don't happen by happenstance. People know who's doing these shootings."

The Baltimore Sun reported that bullet casings were found scattered on the ground near grills, and a table still had items on it that appeared to be left from a cookout. Police officers could be seen after the shooting placing small orange evidence markers on the ground, just feet from a barber shop.

Meanwhile, Harrison said authorities were seeking witnesses among the many present Sunday as they begin to try to piece together details of what happened.

Baltimore has been plagued by drug-fueled violence for decades and it has long been considered one of the nation's most violent big cities. The corrosive impact of the drug trade and a sea of illegal guns continue to spawn a depressing recurrence of tit-for-tat turf wars and retaliatory attacks in swaths of the city, particularly in the deeply disenfranchised areas of West Baltimore.



Police work near the scene where authorities say several people were shot, at least one fatally, Sunday, April 28, 2019, in Baltimore. (AP Photo/Steve Ruark)

While city leaders continue a perennial quest to remake the city in the eyes of potential investors and visitors, Baltimore has been in the throes of a worrying increase of violent crime since 2015, when the homicide rate spiked after the city's worst rioting in decades following the death of young black man in police custody.

Seattle college says student was among those killed by crane

By LISA BAUMANN and RACHEL D'ORO Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Officials in Washington state on Monday are expected to release the identities of the four people killed when a construction crane fell from a Seattle building.

The King County Medical Examiner's office has said it would release the names of the female and three males who died Saturday afternoon when the crane crashed onto one of Seattle's busiest streets.

On Sunday, Seattle Pacific University said in a statement that a freshman student was among those killed when the crane fell from a building under construction on Google's new Seattle campus onto Mercer Street. Sarah Wong was a freshman who intended to major in nursing and lived on campus, the university said in a statement.

Wong was in a car when the crane fell, the university said.

All four people had died by the time firefighters arrived Saturday afternoon, Fire Chief Harold Scoggins said. Two were ironworkers who had been inside the crane while the other two were inside a car, Fire Department spokesman Lance Garland said.

"While we grieve the sudden and tragic loss of our precious student, we draw comfort from each other," Seattle Pacific's statement said. "We ask that the community join us in praying for Sarah's family and friends during this difficult time."

The crane struck six cars and also injured four people.

Frank Kuin, a Montreal-based journalist, was in a Seattle hotel lobby when he heard a "big bang" and felt the floor shake. He said he initially thought there had been an earthquake. Then he saw motorists leaving their cars on a nearby off ramp and running toward something.

Kuin followed them around a corner and saw a chunk of the crane lying on top of cars, including three that were crushed.

"To imagine what happened to those people who just happened to be driving by was quite shocking," said Kuin, who later took photographs of the scene from his fifth-floor hotel room.

Officials do not yet know the cause of the collapse.

Washington state labor investigators were at the scene of the collapse Sunday, trying to piece together what happened, said Tim Church, a spokesman for the Washington Department of Labor & Industries.

"It's a very detailed process," he said. "It will actually be months before we have anything regarding the



Fire and police crew members work to clear the scene where a construction crane fell from a building on Google's new Seattle campus crashing down onto one of the city's busiest streets and killing multiple people on Saturday, April 27, 2019. (AP Photo/Frank Kuin)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 38 of 51

cause.”

Church said the agency has formally opened an investigation into four companies — general contractor GLY, Northwest Tower Crane Service Inc., Omega Rigging and Machinery Moving Inc. and Morrow Equipment Co. LLC. Church said he didn’t know where the companies are based.

The tower crane was being disassembled when it fell from the building, Church said.

A stretch of Mercer Street remained closed Sunday.

Of the injured, a 28-year-old man remained hospitalized in satisfactory condition Sunday at Harborview Medical Center. A mother and her infant were released from the hospital Saturday. The fourth person was treated at the scene and released.

The deadly collapse is sure to bring scrutiny about the safety of the dozens of cranes that dot the city’s skyline. With Amazon, Google and other tech companies increasing their hiring in Seattle, the city has more cranes building office towers and apartment buildings than any other in the United States. As of January, there were about 60 construction cranes in Seattle.

On Saturday, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan said the city had a good track record with crane safety but that officials would conduct a review.

A line of showers moved over Seattle just about the time the crane fell, the National Weather Service said. An observation station on nearby Lake Union showed winds kicked up with gusts of up to 23 mph at 3:28 p.m., just about the time the crane fell.

The office building the crane fell from was badly damaged, with several of its windows smashed.

A Google spokesperson said in a statement Saturday that the company was saddened to learn of the accident and that they were in communication with Vulcan, the real estate firm that is managing the site and working with authorities.

A crane collapsed in the Seattle suburb of Bellevue in 2006, damaging three neighboring buildings and killing a Microsoft attorney who was sitting in his living room. The state Department of Labor and Industries cited two companies for workplace-safety violations after an investigation that found a flawed design for the crane’s base.

Rachel D’Oro reported from Anchorage, Alaska.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump’s misleading rhetoric on immigrants

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is spreading misleading rhetoric about illegal immigration.

At a Wisconsin rally, he suggested he’s launched his plan to transport immigrants in the U.S. illegally to sanctuary cities in mass numbers — “my sick idea,” as he proudly called it. There’s no evidence that’s happening.

He’s also giving a confused outlook on the U.S. population growth, alternating between assertions that the country is too full to accept any more migrants and that it needs more migrants to fill jobs.

In the meantime, Russia kept reverberating over the past week, even with special counsel Robert Mueller’s report now part of history.

As much as 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.

A review of rhetoric from Trump and his team, also touching on health care, the economy and the census:
IMMIGRATION

TRUMP: “Last month alone, 100,000 illegal immigrants arrived in our borders, placing a massive strain on communities and schools and hospitals and public resources, like nobody’s ever seen before. Now we’re sending many of them to sanctuary cities. Thank you very much. ... I’m proud to tell you that was my sick idea.” — Green Bay, Wisconsin, rally Saturday.

THE FACTS: There’s no evidence a mass transfer to sanctuary cities is underway. He proposed the idea

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 39 of 51

in part to punish Democratic congressional foes for inaction on the border, but his Homeland Security officials rejected the plan as unworkable.

Trump said this month he was "strongly considering" the proposal, hours after White House and Homeland Security officials had insisted the idea had been eschewed twice.

Sanctuary cities are places where local authorities do not cooperate with immigration officials, denying information or resources that would help them round up for deportation people living in the country illegally.

By all signs, federal officials considered the president's words little more than bluster. His comments to the Wisconsin crowd appeared to be bluster, too.

People with knowledge of the discussions say White House staff discussed the idea with the Department of Homeland Security in November and February, but it was judged too costly and a misuse of money. The people were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

TRUMP on U.S. population: "We need people to come in." — rally.

TRUMP: "We have companies pouring in. The problem is we need workers." — Fox Business interview Sunday.

THE FACTS: His position is a flip from earlier this month, when he declared the U.S. to be "full" in light of the overwhelmed southern border.

In an April 7 tweet, he threatened to shut down the border unless Mexico apprehended all immigrants who crossed illegally. But it turns out the U.S. is only "full" in terms of the people Trump doesn't want.

Immigrants as a whole make up a greater percentage of the total U.S. population than they did back in 1970, having grown from less than 5 percent of the population to more than 13 percent now. In 2030, it's projected that immigrants will become the primary driver for U.S. population growth, overtaking U.S. births.

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP: "The Republicans are always going to protect pre-existing conditions." — Wisconsin rally.

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

Trump and other Republicans say they'll have a plan to preserve those safeguards, but the White House has provided no details.

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



President Donald Trump speaks during a Make America Great Again rally on Saturday, April 27, 2019, in Green Bay, Wis. (William Glasheen/The Post-Crescent via AP)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 40 of 51

RUSSIA

TRUMP, calling Mueller's probe a "witchhunt": It's "the greatest political hoax in American history." — Wisconsin rally.

THE FACTS: A two-year investigation that produced guilty pleas, convictions and criminal charges against Russian intelligence officers and others with ties to the Kremlin, as well as Trump associates, is demonstrably not a hoax.

All told, Mueller charged 34 people, including the president's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, his first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, and three Russian companies. Twenty-five Russians were indicted on charges related to election interference, accused either of hacking Democratic email accounts during the campaign or of orchestrating a social media campaign that spread disinformation on the internet.

Five Trump aides pleaded guilty and agreed to cooperate with Mueller, and a sixth, longtime confidant Roger Stone, is awaiting trial on charges he lied to Congress and engaged in witness tampering.

Mueller's report concluded that Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election was "sweeping and systematic." Ultimately, Mueller did not find a criminal conspiracy between Russia and the Trump campaign. But the special counsel didn't render judgment on whether Trump obstructed justice, saying his investigators found evidence on both sides.

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, 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.")

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 41 of 51

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 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 then-chief of staff Reince Priebus, 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 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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 42 of 51

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 has 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 on April 22.

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, 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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 43 of 51

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.

Associated Press writers Colleen Long, Christopher Rugaber, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Chad Day, Eric Tucker and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

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New group launches to harness political power of women

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three of the nation's most influential activists are launching an organization that aims to harness the political power of women to influence elections and shape local and national policy priorities.

Dubbed Supermajority, the organization is the creation of Cecile Richards, the former head of Planned Parenthood; Alicia Garza, co-founder of Black Lives Matter; and Ai-jen Poo, executive director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance. The group, which describes itself as multiracial and intergenerational, has a goal of training and mobilizing 2 million women over the next year to become organizers and political leaders in their communities.

The effort comes at a moment when women have emerged as perhaps the most powerful force in politics.

Millions of women marched in cities across America to protest President Donald Trump's election. Women also comprise the majority of the electorate in the 2018 midterm elections, sending a historic number of

female candidates to Congress and helping Democrats retake control of the House. A record number of women are also seeking the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, including four senators.

Richards, who has long been a force in Democratic politics, said women "feel newly empowered and frankly motivated to take action, including so many women who never thought themselves as an activist before."

Richards, Garza and Poo spent the past year traveling the country talking to women about how to harness their activism. They found that despite increased energy, many women find getting involved in politics intimidating and are unclear about how to do more than just march or protest.

"Women are mad as hell and we've been in resistance mode for two years," Garza said. "Now it's time to equip people."

Supermajority isn't expected to endorse individual candidates. But the group will help educate women about candidates' positions on issues including pay equity and affordable child care and push politicians to adopt an agenda akin to what Richards called a "women's new deal."

The effort will be aided by Libby Chamberlain and Courtney Tunis, co-founders of the Facebook group Pantsuit Nation, which was started in the closing weeks of the 2016 election for supporters of Hillary Clinton. The online community now has more than 3.5 million female members.

Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>



FILE - In this Jan. 21, 2017, file photo, President Planned Parenthood Federation of America Cecile Richards speak to the crowd during the women's march rally in Washington. Richards and two other women of the nation's most influential activists are launching a new organization that aims to harness the political power of women to influence elections and shape local and national policy priorities. (AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana, File)

Photo/Jose Luis Magana, File)

Richard Lugar, who helped in securing Soviet arsenal, dies

By TOM DAVIES Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Richard Lugar worked to alert Americans about the threat of terrorism years before "weapons of mass destruction" became a common phrase following the Sept. 11 attacks.

The longtime Republican senator from Indiana helped start a program that destroyed thousands of former Soviet nuclear and chemical weapons after the Cold War ended — then warned during a short-lived 1996 run for president about the danger of such devices falling into the hands of terrorists.

"Every stockpile represents a theft opportunity for terrorists and a temptation for security personnel who might seek to profit by selling weapons on the black market," Lugar said in 2005. "We do not want the question posed the day after an attack on an American military base."

The soft-spoken and thoughtful former Rhodes Scholar was a leading Republican voice on foreign policy matters during his 36 years in the U.S. Senate, but whose reputation of working with Democrats ultimately cost him the office in 2012. He died Sunday at age 87 at a hospital in Virginia, where he was

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 45 of 51

being treated for a rare neurological disorder called chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy, or CIPD, the Lugar Center in Washington said in a statement.

Lugar's long popularity in Indiana gave him the freedom to concentrate largely on foreign policy and national security matters — a focus highlighted by his collaboration with Democratic Sen. Sam Nunn on a program under which the United States paid to dismantle and secure thousands of nuclear warheads and missiles in the former Soviet states after the Cold War ended.

Lugar served for decades on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, twice as chairman, where he helped steer arms reduction pacts for the presidential administrations of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, supported an expansion of NATO and favored aid to Nicaragua's Contra rebels.

"Lugar was a leader not only in the Senate but also on the world stage, where he worked tirelessly to bring pressure to end apartheid in South Africa and enforce treaties that destroyed Soviet weapons of mass destruction," Vice President Mike Pence, a former governor of Indiana, said in a statement.

Another former governor, Purdue University President Mitch Daniels, who spent more than a decade as chief of staff to Lugar, said, "The world is safer from nuclear danger because of him. And so many of us, while falling far short of the standards he set, are vastly better people because of him."

Lugar tried to translate his foreign policy expertise into a 1996 presidential run, where his slogan was "nuclear security and fiscal sanity." But his campaign for the GOP nomination went badly from the start. His kickoff rally began just hours after the 1995 bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building, and he struggled to build name recognition and support.

"He is not, nor does he try to be, a good ol' boy," Rex Early, a former state Republican chairman who worked on many of Lugar's campaigns, said during the presidential run. "He is not a back-pounder and doesn't tell funny jokes and have a beer with the boys."

Lugar tried to counter questions about his demeanor, contending that the presidency is "serious business. The presidency is not entertainment." He chafed at criticism that he was too straight, too smart, too dull.

"I don't know what that means," he said. "Is it better to have someone stupid? Or mediocre? Or halfway there?"

He withdrew a year into the race after failing to win a single convention delegate, but not before foreshadowing the threat of terrorism that would become all too real on Sept. 11, 2001. Three of his television ads depicted mushroom clouds and warned of the growing danger of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorist groups.

Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb directed flags across Indiana to be flown at half-staff to honor Lugar until his funeral, which had not yet been announced. He called Lugar "an always faithful servant to the highest ideals in every walk of his incredible life."

Lugar's time as a Washington foreign policy expert was the highlight of a political career that began with his election to the Indianapolis school board in the early 1960s. City GOP leaders encouraged him to run for mayor in 1967.



FILE - In a March 23, 2016 file photo, former U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar talks with reporters before going to Carter Hall for the "Civility in American Politics" program with former Rep. Lee Hamilton at the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville, Ind. ¶ Former Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar, a Republican foreign policy sage known for leading efforts to help the former Soviet states dismantle and secure much of their nuclear arsenal, died Sunday, April 28, 2019 at the Inova Fairfax Heart and Vascular Institute in Virginia. He was 87. (Daniel R. Patmore/Evansville Courier & Press via AP, File)

Press via AP, File)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 46 of 51

He spent eight years at the city's helm, leading the unification of Indianapolis and its suburban communities in Marion County, which solidified the city's tax base and added so many Republican voters that Democrats weren't able to win the mayor's office again for more than 30 years. He was referred to as "Richard Nixon's favorite mayor" for backing the move of federal programs to local governments. He also started efforts to revive the city's downtown with construction of Market Square Arena, which in turn helped bring the Indiana Pacers into the NBA and spurred Indianapolis' development as a sports city.

He first ran for Senate in 1974, narrowly losing to Sen. Birch Bayh in a Democratic landslide after the Watergate scandal. He ran again two years later and easily unseated three-term Democratic Sen. Vance Hartke, launching a 36-year Capitol Hill career that made him Indiana's longest-serving senator.

He built a reputation as someone willing to work across the aisle and showed he could buck his party, notably with two major disagreements with President Ronald Reagan.

In 1986, Reagan was inclined to accept the rigged election that would have kept Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos in office. But Lugar went to the islands as an election observer and said Reagan was misinformed. Lugar's stand shifted U.S. support to the ultimate winner, Corazon Aquino, bringing down Marcos.

In another break with Reagan, Lugar pushed through Congress — over the president's veto — the economic sanctions that Nelson Mandela said played a crucial role in overthrowing white minority rule in South Africa.

His foreign policy work didn't sit well with everyone. Sen. Jesse Helms ousted him as the top Republican on the foreign relations committee in 1986 as being "too internationalist."

At home, Lugar remained the Indiana GOP's most popular figure, trouncing opponents with at least two-thirds of the vote in four straight elections. Democrats considered him so invincible that they didn't nominate a challenger in 2006.

He was the top Republican on the Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee when he first worked with Obama, taking the then-Illinois senator with him to Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan in 2005 to visit weapon dismantlement sites. He then co-sponsored 2007 legislation with Obama on eliminating stockpiles of shoulder-fired missiles.

Obama frequently cited his work with Lugar during the 2008 presidential campaign as evidence of his bipartisanship and foreign policy experience. Lugar endorsed John McCain but didn't distance himself from Obama at the time, saying "I'm pleased that we had the association that Sen. Obama described."

That changed by Lugar's 2012 re-election campaign. His tea party-backed challenger, Richard Mourdock, maintained that, "Lugar has clearly lost his way on issues like our raising the debt limit, wasteful earmark spending and massive bailouts of private companies at taxpayer expense."

The attacks on his conservatism — combined with voter wariness about his age and long Washington tenure and questions about him not owning a home in Indiana since the late 1970s — led to Lugar's first defeat since 1974, as Mourdock grabbed 60 percent of the GOP primary vote.

In conceding defeat, Lugar said he knew some of his positions had been considered "heretical" by some, including his opposition to a ban on earmarks and support for immigration reform.

After Lugar's defeat, Nunn, the Democratic senator with whom he worked on nuclear disarmament, suggested that many people may have misinterpreted Lugar's positions as they accused him of being too liberal.

"Dick Lugar never compromised his principles in anything we did together, nor did I," Nunn said at the time. "We found ways to work together because we examined the facts and let the facts have a bearing on the conclusions, and I'm afraid in today's political world too often people start with the conclusions and then hunt facts to justify them."

The Nunn-Lugar program led to about 7,600 Soviet nuclear warheads being deactivated and the destruction of more than 900 intercontinental ballistic missiles by the time Lugar left office, according to U.S. military figures. The program is credited with removing all nuclear weapons from the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus.

Born April 4, 1932, in Indianapolis, Lugar became an Eagle Scout and graduated at the top of his classes

at both Indianapolis Shortridge High School and at Denison University in Ohio. At Denison, he met his future wife, Charlene. They married in 1956 and had four sons.

He was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, and in 1956 he became a Navy officer, spending time as an intelligence aide for the chief of naval operations. He moved back to Indianapolis in 1960 to help run the family's food machinery manufacturing business.

Associated Press writer Ken Kusmer contributed to this report.

This story has been updated to correct Lugar's stance on earmarks.

'Avengers: Endgame' obliterates records with \$1.2B opening

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The universe belongs to Marvel. "Avengers: Endgame" shattered the record for biggest opening weekend with an estimated \$350 million in ticket sales domestically and \$1.2 billion globally, reaching a new pinnacle in the blockbuster era that the comic-book studio has come to dominate.

The "Avengers" finale far exceeded even its own gargantuan expectations, according to studio estimates Sunday. The movie had been forecast to open between \$260 million and \$300 million in U.S. and Canadian theaters, but moviegoers turned out in such droves that "Endgame" blew past the previous record of \$257.7 million, set last year by "Avengers: Infinity War" when it narrowly surpassed "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" (\$248 million or about \$266 million in inflation adjusted dollars.)

"Endgame" was just as enormous overseas. Worldwide, it obliterated the previous record of \$640.5 million, also set by "Infinity War." ("Infinity War" didn't open in China, the world's second largest movie market, until two weeks after its debut.) "Endgame" set a new weekend record in China, too, where it made \$330.5 million.

In one fell swoop, "Endgame" has already made more than movies like "Skyfall," "Aquaman" and "The Dark Knight Rises" grossed in their entire runs, not accounting for inflation.

Alan Horn, Disney chairman, credited Marvel Studios and its president, Kevin Feige, for challenging "notions of what is possible at the movie theater."

"This weekend's monumental success is a testament to the world they've envisioned, the talent involved, and their collective passion, matched by the irrepressible enthusiasm of fans around the world," Horn said in a statement.

To accommodate demand, the Walt Disney Co. released "Endgame" in more theaters — 4,662 in the U.S. and Canada — than any opening before. Advance ticketing services set new records. Early ticket buyers



Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige, from left, poses with members of the cast of "Avengers: End Game," Chris Hemsworth, Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr., Scarlett Johansson, Jeremy Renner and Mark Ruffalo at a hand and footprint ceremony at the TCL Chinese Theatre on Tuesday, April 23, 2019, in Los Angeles. (Photo by Willy Sanjuan/Invision/AP)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 48 of 51

crashed AMC's website. And starting Thursday, some theaters even stayed open 72 hours straight.

"We've got some really tired staff," said John Fithian, president and chief executive of the National Association of Theater Owners. "I talked to an exhibitor in Kansas who said, 'I've never sold out a 7 a.m. show on Saturday morning before,' and they were doing it all across their circuit."

Not working in the film's favor was its lengthy running time: 181 minutes. But theaters kept added thousands of showings for "Endgame" to get it on more screens than any movie before to satiate the frenzy around "Endgame." Joe and Anthony Russo's film ties together the "Avengers" storyline as well as the previous 21 releases of the Marvel "cinematic universe," begun with 2008's "Iron Man."

For an industry dogged by uncertainty over the growing role of streaming, the weekend was a mammoth display of the movie theater's lucrative potency. Fithian called it possibly "the most significant moment in the modern history of the movie business."

"We're looking at more than 30 million American and more than 100 million global guests that experienced 'Endgame' on the big screen in one weekend," Fithian said. "The numbers are just staggering."

Further boosting the results for "Endgame" were good reviews; it currently ranks as 96% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes, the best rating for any Marvel movie aside from "Black Panther." Audiences gave the film an A-plus CinemaScore.

Single-handedly, "Endgame" led the overall weekend at the domestic box office to a record \$400 million in ticket sales, according to Comscore. "Endgame" accounted for a staggering 88% of those tickets. The film's grosses were aided by 3-D screenings (a record \$540 million in global ticket sales) and IMAX screenings (a company record \$91.5 million).

"Our partners in exhibition have done a great job with us on this film. As they saw the need, they opened up screens," said Cathleen Taft, distribution chief for Disney. "While there may have been a concern — Is there going to be enough seats available? — I think that exhibition met that demand and rose to the occasion."

But if there was any shadow to the weekend for the theatrical business, it was in just how reliant theaters have grown on one studio: Disney.

Disney now holds all but one of the top 12 box-office openings of all time. (Universal's "Jurassic World" is the lone exception.) The studio is poised for a record-breaking year, with releases including "Aladdin," "Toy Story 4," "The Lion King," "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" and "Frozen 2" on the horizon.

Following its acquisition of 20th Century Fox, Disney is expected to account for at least 40% of domestic box-office revenue in 2019, a new record of market share. The company's "Captain Marvel" — positioned as a kind of Marvel lead-in to "Endgame" — also rose to No. 2 on the weekend, eight weeks after it opened. (The 22 films of Marvel's "cinematic universe" have collectively earned \$19.9 billion at the box office.)

Yet theater owners regularly speak of a "halo effect" around a movie like "Endgame." Such sensations draw in new moviegoers and expose millions to a barrage of movie trailers.

"This has got to be the biggest weekend in popcorn history," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for Comscore. "Think of the gallons of soda and the hot dogs sold. This is going to continue all week and beyond. This is going to have long-term playability for sure."

An enormous hit was much needed for a box office that, coming into the weekend, was lagging 16% of the pace of last year's ticket sales, according to Comscore. "Endgame" moved the needle to negative 13.3% but the boost was less significant since "Infinity War" opened on the same weekend in 2018.

No other new wide release dared to open against "Endgame." Warner Bros.' "The Curse of La Llorona," last week's top movie, slid to third with \$7.5 million.

The guessing game will now shift to just how much higher "Endgame" can go. Given its start, it's likely to rival the top three worldwide grossers: "The Force Awakens" (\$2.068 billion in 2015), "Titanic" (\$2.187 billion in 1997) and "Avatar" (\$2.788 in 2009).

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Where available, the latest international numbers for Friday through Sunday are also included.

1. "Avengers: Endgame," \$350 million (\$859 million international).

2. "Captain Marvel," \$8.1 million.
3. "The Curse of La Llorona," \$7.5 million.
4. "Breakthrough," \$6.3 million.
5. "Shazam!" \$5.5 million.
6. "Little," \$3.4 million.
7. "Dumbo," \$3.2 million.
8. "Pet Sematary," \$1.3 million.
9. "Us," \$1.1 million.
10. "Penguins," \$1.1 million.

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

This story has been updated to correct that Disney is releasing "Toy Story 4," not "Toy Story 2."

This story has been updated to correct that the runtime of "Avengers: Endgame" is 181 minutes, not 161 minutes.

IMF: Mideast economies face volatile politics, oil prices

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Political uncertainty and volatile oil prices are weighing heavily on economic growth in the Middle East this year, according to a new report released Monday by the International Monetary Fund.

The report, which looks at the economies of 23 countries spanning North Africa, the Levant, the Persian Gulf, but also Djibouti, Somalia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, predicts that overall growth across these nations is expected to slowdown from close to 2% last year to about 1.5% in 2019.

Inflation is expected to remain unchanged at close to 10%.

A closer look, however, shows sharp variations from country to country.

Iran, for example, is expected to be among the hardest hit this year. The IMF expects a 6% retraction in economic growth in 2019 — and that does not factor in the recent announcement by the U.S. that waivers on Iranian oil exports will expire next week, further deepening Iran's economic recession. Last year, Iran's economy retracted by nearly 4% and inflation remains high.

"The removal of waiver will affect more the recession," said Jihad Azour, the IMF's Mideast and Central



FILE - In this Nov. 13, 2018 file photo, Jihad Azour, the International Monetary Fund's Mideast and Central Asia department director, gives a press conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. In a new outlook report issued Monday, April 29, 2019, the IMF said that political uncertainty and volatile oil prices are weighing heavily on economic growth in the Middle East this year. A closer look, however, shows sharp variations from country to country. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili, File)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 50 of 51

Asia department director. "A negative growth of 6% has an impact on poverty, social protection and also on jobs."

Azour said one of the most pressing issues facing Iran with the impact of U.S. sanctions is the need to align the official currency exchange rates for the Iranian rial with black market rates.

Wealthy Gulf Arab oil exporters face their own sets of challenges, namely diversifying their economies away from reliance on oil exports for revenue in the face of sharp ebbs and flows in prices over the past six months.

The international lender said the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar will also need to create 1 million new jobs annually for at least the next five years just to keep unemployment rates from climbing.

For these countries, overall economic growth is expected to remain basically unchanged at around 2% in 2019. Specifically, non-oil growth is projected to pick up slightly from last year at closer to 3% in 2019, although fiscal deficits will also expand somewhat from last year.

More specifically, Saudi Arabia's economic growth is expected to slow down from 2.2% in 2018 to 1.8% this year.

For oil importing countries like Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and others in the region, inflation overall is expected to remain mostly unchanged at around 10% and growth is expected to slow from just over 4% last year to 3.6% in 2019. That average is mainly driven by Pakistan, where economic growth is expected to slow from about 5% last year to close to 3% this year.

Meanwhile, protests in Algeria and Sudan, conflicts in Libya, Syria and Yemen, tensions between India and Pakistan and shaky peace talks in Afghanistan "may increase investors' perception of risk for the whole region, leading to capital outflows and exchange rate pressure," the IMF noted.

"This may feed back into further oil price volatility and regional uncertainty," the report said.

Oil prices climbed above \$80 a barrel in October, then fell below \$50 a barrel in January. The IMF is factoring an average of around \$65 a barrel in the medium term. The organization says swings in oil prices are being impacted by global trade tensions, U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil exports and oil production cuts by OPEC and other oil producing nations.

The unrest in countries like Algeria and Sudan is heavily rooted in economic discontent over unemployment, corruption and poor public services.

For oil importing countries, unemployment remains stubbornly high at close to 25% among young people, the IMF said.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, April 29, the 119th day of 2019. There are 246 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 29, 1992, a jury in Simi Valley, California, acquitted four Los Angeles police officers of almost all state charges in the videotaped beating of motorist Rodney King; the verdicts were followed by rioting in Los Angeles resulting in 55 deaths.

On this date:

In 1429, Joan of Arc entered the besieged city of Orleans to lead a French victory over the English.

In 1861, the Maryland House of Delegates voted 53-13 against seceding from the Union. In Montgomery, Alabama, President Jefferson Davis asked the Confederate Congress for the authority to wage war.

In 1916, the Easter Rising in Dublin collapsed as Irish nationalists surrendered to British authorities.

In 1945, during World War II, American soldiers liberated the Dachau (DAH'-khow) concentration camp. Adolf Hitler married Eva Braun inside his "Fuehrerbunker" and designated Adm. Karl Doenitz (DUHR'-nihtz) president.

In 1946, 28 former Japanese officials went on trial in Tokyo as war criminals; seven ended up being

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, April 29, 2019 ~ Vol. 27 - No. 293 ~ 51 of 51

sentenced to death.

In 1957, the SM-1, the first military nuclear power plant, was dedicated at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

In 1967, Aretha Franklin's cover of Otis Redding's "Respect" was released as a single by Atlantic Records.

In 1968, the counterculture rock musical "Hair" heralding the "Age of Aquarius" opened at Broadway's Biltmore Theater following limited engagements off-Broadway, beginning a run of 1,750 performances.

In 1991, a cyclone began striking the South Asian country of Bangladesh; it ended up killing more than 138,000 people, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In 2000, Tens of thousands of angry Cuban-Americans marched peacefully through Miami's Little Havana, protesting the raid in which armed federal agents yanked 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez from the home of relatives.

In 2008, Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama denounced his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, for what he termed "divisive and destructive" remarks on race.

In 2011, Britain's Prince William and Kate Middleton were married in an opulent ceremony at London's Westminster Abbey.

Ten years ago: During a prime-time news conference marking his 100th day in office, President Barack Obama said that waterboarding authorized by former President George W. Bush was torture and that the information it gained from terror suspects could have been obtained by other means. The World Health Organization raised its alert level for swine flu to its next-to-highest notch. Twin car bombs ravaged a popular shopping area in Baghdad's biggest Shiite district, killing at least 51 people.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama ended a four-country swing through Asia and headed for home from the Philippines. Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling was banned for life by the NBA in response to racist comments he'd made in an audio recording. A botched execution using a disputed new drug combination left Oklahoma death row inmate Clayton Lockett writhing and clenching his teeth on the gurney, leading prison officials to halt the proceedings before his death from a heart attack. British actor Bob Hoskins, 71, died in London.

One year ago: Central Americans who traveled in a caravan to the U.S. border, hoping to turn themselves in and ask for asylum, were stalled at the border as U.S. immigration officials announced that the San Diego crossing was already at capacity. T-Mobile and Sprint reached a \$26.5 billion merger agreement that would reduce the U.S. wireless industry to three major players. (The deal is awaiting the approval of federal regulators.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Keith Baxter is 86. Conductor Zubin Mehta is 83. Disgraced financier Bernard Madoff is 81. Pop singer Bob Miranda (The Happenings) is 77. Country singer Duane Allen (The Oak Ridge Boys) is 76. Singer Tommy James is 72. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., is 69. Movie director Phillip Noyce is 69. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld is 65. Actor Leslie Jordan is 64. Actress Kate Mulgrew is 64. Actor Daniel Day-Lewis is 62. Actress Michelle Pfeiffer is 61. Actress Eve Plumb is 61. Rock musician Phil King is 59. Country singer Stephanie Bentley is 56. Actor Vincent Ventresca is 53. Singer Carnie Wilson (Wilson Phillips) is 51. Actor Paul Adelstein is 50. Actress Uma Thurman is 49. International Tennis Hall of Famer Andre Agassi is 49. Rapper Master P is 49. Actor Darby Stanchfield is 48. Country singer James Bonamy is 47. Gospel/rhythm-and-blues singer Erica Campbell (Mary Mary) is 47. Rock musician Mike Hogan (The Cranberries) is 46. Actor Tyler Labine is 41. Actress Megan Boone is 36. Actress-model Taylor Cole is 35. Actor Zane Carney is 34. Pop singer Amy Heidemann (Karmin) is 33. Pop singer Foxes is 30. Actress Grace Kaufman is 17.

Thought for Today: "An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you know and what you don't." — Anatole France, French author and critic (1844-1924).