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Reconstruction of I-29 North of Sisseton to Begin

WATERTOWN, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Transportation says a project to reconstruct Interstate 29 from just north of Sisseton to the North Dakota border will begin in the southbound lanes on Tuesday, May 7, depending on weather.

Traffic will be placed in a two-way configuration in the northbound lanes with a reduced speed limit to 65 mph and a 12-foot width restriction.

Work on the project includes overlaying the existing pavement and improving bridge decks and guardrails.

The prime contractor on this \$17 million project is Reede Construction of Aberdeen and is scheduled to be complete by November.

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

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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SDPB Invites Public to Preview Documentary in Aberdeen

Vanished South Dakota visits SD's once-thriving towns

Vermillion, SD (May 2, 2019) — The public is invited to a preview screening of SDPB's new documentary *Vanished South Dakota: Towns of Yesterday*, Thursday, May 23, at 7pm, at Presentation College's Wein Gallery, Southeast Building, 1500 N. Main Street, Aberdeen. The event is free and open to the public.

The 30-minute screening features a Q&A with SDPB videographer/editor Krystal Schoenbauer & Sherri Rawstern, Dacotah Prairie Museum's Curator of Education and Brown County historian.

About *Vanished South Dakota: Towns of Yesterday*

Set to premiere August 2019, this thought-provoking documentary visits remnants of once-thriving towns to discover what led to the birth, boom, and demise of formerly prosperous communities throughout the state. Includes intimate interviews with historians, town elders and people whose lives have intersected with these now-lost centers of community life in South Dakota. More information: SDPB.org/Vanished/

Currently on Exhibit at Wein Gallery, Presentation College, Aberdeen

Prairie Gleanings: Watercolors by Judy Thompson. An internationally recognized artist, Thompson, of Orange City, Iowa, paints the people and places of the Great Plains. The exhibition includes two artworks commissioned by South Dakota Historical Society Press, including "Silver Lake Reflections," cover art for *Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography* of Laura Ingalls Wilder.

*Product Price — Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes, freight, setup and handling charges may be additional and may vary. Models subject to limited availability. Specifications and programs are subject to change without notice. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications. †† As rated by Kohler, all power levels are stated in gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1940 as rated by engine manufacturer. **See your local Cub Cadet Independent Dealer for warranty details. © 2018 Cub Cadet3PV_Q_ECOMMERCE

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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.

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Today in Weather History

May 3, 1895: A tornado moved northeast from 3 miles northwest of Redfield through Ashton. It was estimated to be on the ground for about 5 miles. Several homes were unroofed and barns destroyed. Tornadoes were spotted in Minnehaha and Bon Homme Counties in South Dakota.

May 3, 1907: The low temperature at Watertown fell to 16 degrees, making this coldest May temperature ever recorded Watertown.

May 3, 1960: Late season snowfall of 3 to 7 inches covered Perkins, Corson, and Campbell Counties. Lemmon reported 7 inches, and 6 miles SE of McIntosh had 6.5 inches. Main roads were very slippery and some rural roads impassable for about one day.

May 3, 1999: Two to four inches of rain fell across southeastern Dewey County causing flash flooding south of La Plant, mainly on Willow Creek. As a result of the flash flooding, several roads were underwater. Highway 212 south of La Plant was flooded for a few hours along with Highway 8, 15 miles south of La Plant. The flash flooding resulted in some road and bridge damage.

May 3, 2002: With low humidity, dry vegetation, and increasing South winds, embers from a day old controlled burn initiated a large grassland fire in the early afternoon hours west of Claremont. South winds of 30 to 40 mph gusting to 50 mph caused the fire to spread quickly. The fire extended to 4 miles wide and spread 4 miles north before it was contained late in the evening. Many trees along with a mobile home, an abandoned house, and an old barn burned. Seven miles of road had to be closed due to poor visibility from smoke. Eleven fire departments with nearly 150 firefighters extinguished the fire. The fire was completely put out during the afternoon hours of the 4th. This fire was one of the largest grassland fires in Brown County history.

1761: Large tornadoes swept through the harbor at Charleston, South Carolina when a British fleet of 40 sails was at anchor. The tornadoes raised a wave 12 feet high, leaving many vessels on their beam ends. Four people drowned.




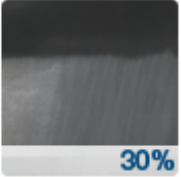

1868: A tornado traveled 15 miles across Warren and Knox Counties, northwest of Galesburg, Illinois. The small town of Ionia, in Warren County, was destroyed. 16 homes and two churches in the city were leveled, along with 30 homes elsewhere. The tornado killed six people and injured 40 others. Many of the casualties occurred during a church service when the church roof was torn off and dropped onto the congregation.

1895: In Sioux County, Iowa an exceptionally violent tornado, at times 1,000 yards wide packing winds estimated at over 250 mph moved from three miles north of Ireton to two miles southwest of Hull hitting four schools. Two school houses several miles apart were leveled, killing teachers and students. Sibling teachers were killed at two different schools. Adjoining farms were also destroyed with several deaths in homes.

1999: There were 63 tornadoes in Oklahoma, making this the worst outbreak ever to strike the state. In Central Oklahoma alone, eight individual supercell thunderstorms produced 57 tornadoes. Bridge Creek, Moore and southern parts of the Oklahoma City Metro area were hit the hardest. When it was near Moore, Oklahoma, a truck-mounted Doppler radar measured a wind speed of 318 mph, the highest ever observed in a tornado. Forecasters at the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, OK were faced with the unprecedented situation of a major tornado on the ground threatening their location. As a major F5 tornado was approaching the Oklahoma City metro area from the southwest, the SPC notified its backup, the Air Force Weather Agency at Offutt AFB in Omaha, Nebraska that they might have to assume operational responsibility if the tornado approached Norman. The storm remained several miles west of the facility but was visible from the SPC roof. Damage from this single tornado was around one billion dollars, making it the most costly tornado in history. Estimated damage from the entire tornado outbreak was \$1.485 billion, making this the most expensive tornado outbreak ever. 2,314 homes were destroyed, and another 7,428 were damaged. To the north in Kansas, an F4 tornado tracked 24 miles through Sumner and Sedgwick Counties, killing 6, injuring 154, and causing \$146 million in damages. Haysville and Wichita suffered severe damage. A total of 8,480 buildings and homes were damaged or destroyed with, 109 destroyed.

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Partly Sunny and Breezy then Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Chance Showers	Partly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers
High: 65 °F	Low: 41 °F	High: 67 °F	Low: 38 °F	High: 57 °F

NWS ABERDEEN

WARMING & DRYING

TODAY Isolated Rain Showers over far eastern SD and western MN  HIGHS: 60 to 65°	SATURDAY Becoming Partly Cloudy  HIGHS: 63 to 72° coolest near the ND border
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NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
Aberdeen, SD 5/3/2019 3:20 AM

WEATHER.GOV/ABR

Published on: 05/03/2019 at 4:26AM

Warming and drying into Saturday. Isolated rain showers, and even a couple of rumbles of thunder, will linger over far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota today. Temperatures in the low 60s today will fall to around 40 degrees tonight, and rebound into the low 60s to low 70s Saturday.

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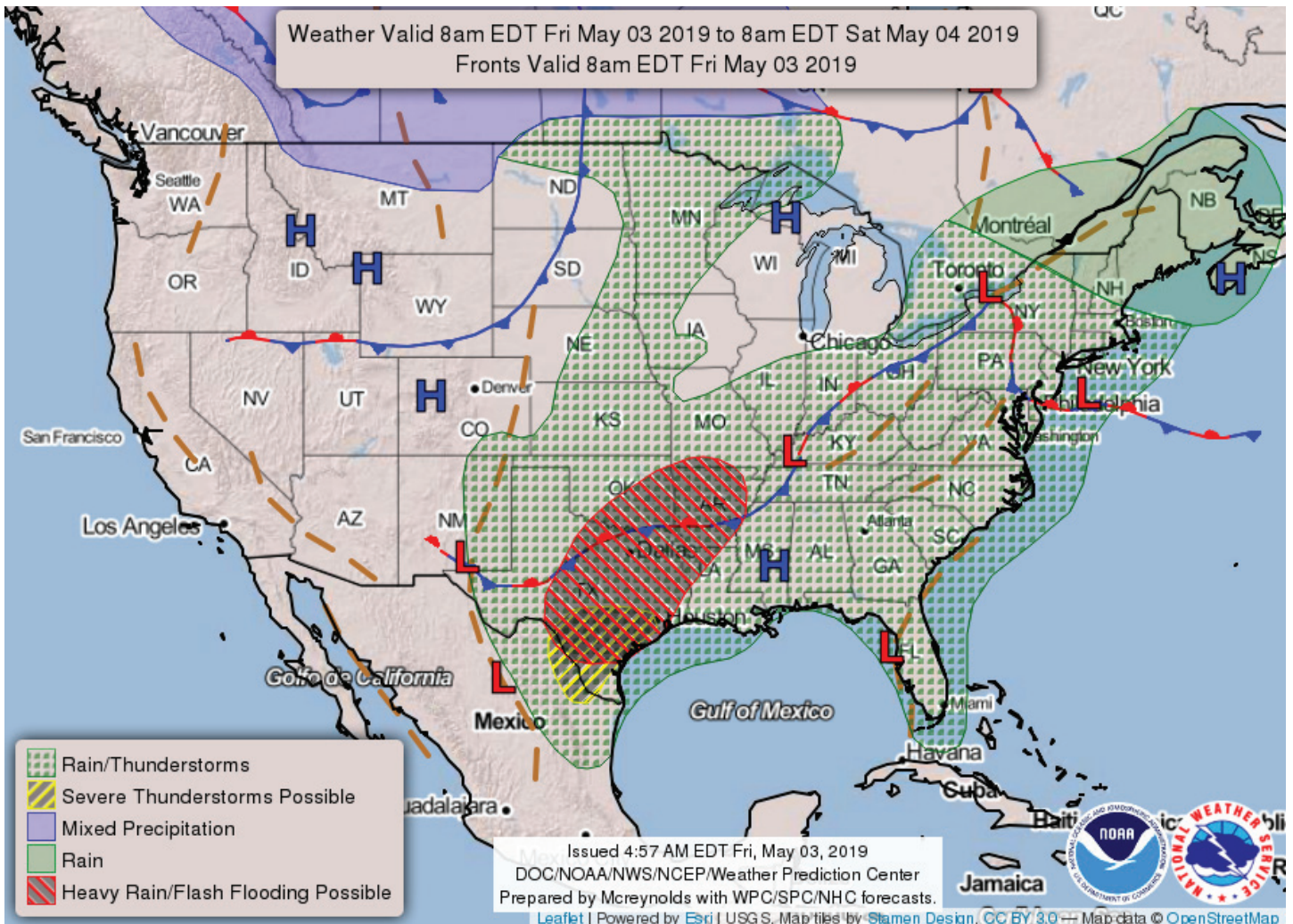
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 58 °F at 6:07 PM
Low Outside Temp: 30 °F at 6:27 AM
High Gust: 16 mph at 2:21 PM
Precip: 0.01

Today's Info

Record High: 90° in 1952
Record Low: 13° in 2005
Average High: 65°F
Average Low: 39°F
Average Precip in May.: 0.20
Precip to date in May.: 0.26
Average Precip to date: 4.23
Precip Year to Date: 4.95
Sunset Tonight: 8:43 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:18 a.m.





DECISIONS! DECISIONS! DECISIONS!

Even before getting out of bed this morning, I had to make a decision: Would I hit the snooze button and rest a little longer or would I turn off the alarm and start my day? It is not possible to go for any length of time without having to make a decision. And although all of us are making decisions most of the time, we rarely take time to think about our decision making process.

Every decision we make affects our lives one way or another. Some decisions last a life time and can bring joy and satisfaction or sorrow and guilt. Some can be changed immediately if we see things going in the wrong direction. Others engulf us and seem to squeeze the life out of us. Often we want to blame others for our decisions, but ultimately, we are accountable for every one.

Solomon provided us with excellent decision making advice: For lack of guidance a nation falls; but victory is won through many advisors. What applies to a nation also applies to an individual. Gathering information from a variety of reliable people will provide guidance, insight and direction and lead to the best decision.

In this verse, an uncommon word is used: guidance. It refers to the tackle or the ropes that enable a ship to stay on course. People are much like ships: where there is no guidance even the shortest journey can be disastrous. Learning the ropes that come from Gods wisdom will lead us through the charted course that God has laid out for us before the foundation of the world.

No wonder He is called the Wonderful Counselor!

Prayer: Father, may we always seek Your guidance for each decision we make in life. May we always look to You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 11:14 For lack of guidance a nation falls; but victory is won through many advisors.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

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

Tribe says South Dakota governor not welcome on reservation

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON** Associated Press

A Native American tribe has told South Dakota's Republican Gov. Kristi Noem she's not welcome on one of largest reservations in the country after she led efforts to pass a state law targeting demonstrations such as those in neighboring North Dakota that plagued the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

"I am hereby notifying you that you are not welcome to visit our homelands," Oglala Sioux President Julian Bear Runner said in a letter to Noem following a 17-0 Tribal Council vote on Wednesday approving the action. He told Noem that if she ignores the directive "we will have no choice but to banish you" from the the Pine Ridge reservation.

Banishment is a formal tribal process in which a person can be barred permanently from the reservation. Violations can result in fines or even jail time, but Bear Runner spokesman Chase Iron Eyes said the tribe's goal is to show its unhappiness with Noem and that "no one wants to go through the steps to actually banish a sitting governor."

"The notion of banishment has not been considered by the Tribal Council," he said. "'The president just wanted to make the letter as clear as possible as to what the options might be."

Noem traveled to the reservation in late March after she activated National Guard soldiers to help with the tribe's flood response — a trip Iron Eyes said was welcomed by the tribe. However, he said she has made at least one and possibly two trips since without notifying the tribal government, presumably to speak with reservation residents about the laws.

A statement issued by Noem's spokeswoman Thursday said "It's unfortunate that the governor was welcomed by Oglala Sioux's leadership when resources were needed during the storms, but communication has been cut off when she has tried to directly interact with members of the Pine Ridge community.

"The governor will continue working to engage with tribal members, stay in contact with tribal leadership, and maintain her efforts to build relationships with the tribes," spokeswoman Kristin Wileman said.

Legislation that Noem and GOP leaders pushed through in a matter of days in March allows officials to pursue money from demonstrators who engage in "riot boosting," or encouraging violence during a riot.

Activists and American Indian tribes plan on-the-ground protests against the Keystone XL pipeline if it's built, similar to protests against the Dakota Access pipeline in North Dakota in 2016 and 2017. Those demonstrations, in which American Indians played a key role, resulted in 761 arrests over six months and cost the state \$38 million.

Noem has said the South Dakota law is meant to address problems caused by "out-of-state rioters funded by out-of-state interests." The American Civil Liberties Union and tribes contend the law stifles free speech, and the ACLU is suing Noem, Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg and a county sheriff in federal court on behalf of activists.

The Oglala Sioux is not a party to the suit but says in a statement, "the Governor has been asked not to set foot upon a swath of land the size of Delaware and Rhode Island combined."

TransCanada Corp.'s planned Keystone XL pipeline would move Canadian crude through Montana and South Dakota to Nebraska, where it would connect with lines to Gulf Coast refineries. The \$8 billion project has the backing of President Donald Trump but is being fought in the courts by opponents.

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

South Dakota inmates meet potential employers at job fair

SPRINGFIELD, S.D. (AP) — About 150 inmates at South Dakota's prison in Springfield took the opportunity to prepare for life after prison at a job fair this week.

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Ernesto DiFabio was among the men who met with roughly 20 employers at Mike Durfee State Prison on April 29, the Argus Leader reported.

DiFabio, who graduated from the prison's automotive vocational program, earned an Occupational Safety and Health Administration certification while behind bars. Through the program, he learned how to change a car's oil and replace vehicle parts.

DiFabio said he can't wait to earn a paycheck. He's scheduled to be released in about two months, and already has an interview scheduled.

Monica Wepking, the prison's workforce development instructor, said more than 90% of vocational program graduates find a job after being released.

The prison offers vocational programs in welding, auto body, auto mechanic and construction technology, as well as plumbing and electrical apprenticeships.

Inmates in the automotive program, like DiFabio, help repair and maintain state fleet vehicles. Those in the construction technology program build cabins and ticket booths for the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. The welding program makes picnic tables and uses scrap metal to build dog houses, which are then donated to nonprofits.

Roughly 8% of the program graduates return to prison, which is well below the general prison population's recidivism rate of 30%, Wepking said.

"Any time you help someone become educated and then trained, it's going to help them in life," Wepking said. "That's what we strive for."

Wendy Sommervold, a human resources manager for manufacturing company Masaba in Vermillion, visited the medium-security prison for the job fair this week. She said she also attended the job fair last year, and hired an inmate to work on the assembly line.

"Everybody should get a second chance," she said. "These guys can get the skill set we're looking for."

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

Social Services head DeSautel quits soon after appointment

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's secretary of Social Services is quitting just months after being appointed.

Gov. Kristi Noem announced Wednesday that Greg DeSautel is resigning effective May 22.

DeSautel said in a statement via the governor's office that he had decided to return to medical work, describing it as his "strongest passion."

Noem announced DeSautel's appointment in January. He was working at the time as an ear, nose and throat doctor at Sanford Health, and had long taught medicine at the University of South Dakota.

DeSautel was overseeing an agency with a budget of about \$43.5 million.

Man killed in Kingsbury County crash from Michigan

ARLINGTON, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol says the man who died when a pickup truck and van collided in Kingsbury County over the weekend was from Michigan.

The patrol says the pickup driven by a 15-year-old boy was westbound on Highway 14 Saturday afternoon when it crossed the center line and hit the eastbound van head on.

The van driver, 29-year-old Jeffery Demers, of Auburn Hills, Michigan, died at the scene. The teenage driver was not seriously injured.

Legislator says she was threatened not to run against Rounds

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota state legislator claims she was threatened not to run for a U.S. Senate seat by U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson. The congressman says he was just trying to be politically helpful.

Republican Rep. Scyller Borglum sent a news release and posted a Facebook video this week about a

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"DC-style ambush" at a Lincoln Day dinner last weekend. Borglum says Johnson, a Republican, threatened her not to challenge U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds next year. Borglum has made no announcement about plans to seek a higher office.

Johnson says he's baffled by Borglum's reaction to their conversation, which he described as friendly. He says he didn't threaten Borglum or her political future or tell her not to challenge Rounds.

Borglum says the state's Republican "establishment" is more concerned about its future plans than helping her improve as a legislator.

Strong cyclone lashes east India, impacts Asian subcontinent

KOLKATA, India (AP) — Cyclone Fani tore through India's eastern coast on Friday as a grade 5 storm, lashing beaches with rain and winds gusting up to 205 kilometers (127 miles) per hour and affecting weather as far away as Mount Everest as it approached the former imperial capital of Kolkata.

The India Meteorological Department said the "extremely severe" cyclone in the Bay of Bengal hit the coastal state of Odisha around 8 a.m., with weather impacted across the Asian subcontinent.

Dust storms were forecast in the desert state of Rajasthan bordering Pakistan, heat waves in the coastal state of Maharashtra on the Arabian Sea, heavy rain in the northeastern states bordering China and snowfall in the Himalayas.

Around 1.2 million people were evacuated from low-lying areas of Odisha and moved to nearly 4,000 shelters, according to India's National Disaster Response Force. Indian officials put the navy, air force, army and coast guard on high alert. Odisha Special Relief Commissioner Bishnupada Sethi said the evacuation effort was unprecedented in India.

By Friday afternoon, Fani had weakened to a "very severe" storm as it hovered over coastal Odisha and was forecast to move north-northeast toward the Indian state of West Bengal by Friday evening.

In Bhubaneswar, a city in Odisha famous for an 11th-century Hindu temple, palm trees whipped back and forth like mops across skies made opaque by gusts of rain.

It is a "very, very scary feeling," said Tanmay Das, a 40-year-old resident, who described "the sound of wind as if it will blow you away."

Most of the area's thatched-roof houses were destroyed, and there was no electricity.

The national highway to Puri, a popular tourist beach city with other significant Hindu antiquities, was littered with fallen trees and electricity poles, making it impassable. A special train ran Thursday to evacuate tourists from the city.

The airport in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, closed from 3 p.m. Friday to Saturday morning, and rail lines were closed.

At least 200 trains were canceled across India.

The storm hit in the middle of India's six-week general election, with rain forecast in Kolkata forcing political parties to cancel campaign events.

The National Disaster Response Force dispatched 54 rescue and relief teams of doctors, engineers and deep-sea divers to flood-prone areas along the coast and as far afield as Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a group of islands that comprise a union territory about 1,300 kilometers (840 miles) east of mainland India in the Bay of Bengal.

Up to four inches (10 centimeters) of rain were expected in much of Sri Lanka, the island nation off the eastern tip of India.

More than 2,300 kilometers (1,430 miles) away on Mount Everest, some mountaineers and Sherpa guides were descending to lower camps as weather worsened at higher elevations. The government issued a warning that heavy snowfall was expected in the higher mountain areas with rain and storms lower down, and asked trekking agencies to take tourists to safety.

Hundreds of climbers, their guides, cooks and porters huddled at the Everest base camp, according to Pemba Sherpa of Xtreme Climbers Trek, who said weather and visibility was poor. May is the best month to climb the 8,850-foot (29,035-foot) Everest when Nepal experiences a few windows of good weather to

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scale the peak.

"It is still the beginning of the month, so there is no reason for climbers to worry" that weather from the cyclone will cost them their chance to reach the summit, Sherpa said.

On India's cyclone scale, Fani is the second-most severe, equivalent to a Category 3 hurricane.

Its timing is unusual, according to data from the Meteorological Department. Most extremely severe cyclones hit India's east coast in the post-monsoon season. Over roughly half a century, 23, or nearly 60% of the cyclones, to hit India were observed between October and December.

Because Fani spent 10 days gathering strength over the sea, it delivered a huge blow when it made landfall.

Some of the deadliest tropical cyclones on record have occurred in the Bay of Bengal. A 1999 "super" cyclone killed around 10,000 people and devastated large parts of Odisha. Due to improved forecasts and better coordinated disaster management, the death toll from Cyclone Phailin, an equally intense storm that hit in 2013, was less than 50, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

The 1999 super cyclone reached wind speeds of 260-280 kph (161-173 mph), said India Meteorological Department scientist Mrutyunjay Mohapatra.

"This is not as bad," he said.

"Apart from these winds which may cause damage in terms of uprooting small trees in West Bengal and some big trees in Odisha and extensive damage to thatched houses and mud houses ... (and) disruption of power and telecommunication lines," Mohapatra said, "it can also impact the rail and road traffic and also air traffic for some time."

Sethi, the special commissioner in Odisha, said communications were disrupted in some areas, but no deaths or injuries had been reported.

In the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh just south of Odisha, Fani topped electricity poles and uprooted others, leaving them in sharp angles. In the Srikakulam district, where around 20,000 people were evacuated, thatched-roof houses collapsed and fishing boats left unmoored on beaches were sliced into shards.

The district experienced wind speeds of 140 kph (87 mph) and received heavy rains but no loss of life or major damage was reported, district collector J. Niwas said.

Authorities in Bangladesh evacuated about 400,000 people and took them to cyclone shelters — decades-old, raised concrete structures — as the weather office forecast that the storm would cross the country's vast southwestern coastal region by midnight.

The world's largest mangrove forest, Sundarbans, is located in the region.

Shah Kamal, a Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief official, said Friday in the capital, Dhaka, that members of the navy and coast guard, as well as police and volunteers, were working around the clock to help with evacuations and stocking emergency supplies of dry food and medicine.

"But I think we will not be affected severely given the weakening force of the cyclone Fani," he said.

Operations of water vessels in Bangladesh, which is crisscrossed by about 130 rivers, were suspended since Thursday.

Local media reports said at least 10 villages had been inundated with water in coastal Patuakhali district in southern Bangladesh after flood embankments were breached by the force of the cyclone.

Authorities also halted activities at Chittagong Seaport, which handles 80% of the country's overseas trade.

Aid agencies warned that more than 1 million Rohingya from Myanmar living at refugee camps near the coastal district of Cox's Bazar were at risk. Hillol Sobhan, local communications director for the aid group Care, said it had emergency supplies for refugees.

Police used hand-held microphones to clear people off a beach in Cox's Bazar and hoisted red flags near the choppy sea.

Associated Press writers Emily Schmall in New Delhi, Omer Farooq in Hyderabad, India, Julhas Alam in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Binaj Gurubacharya in Kathmandu, Nepal, contributed to this report.

Vietnamese woman accused in Kim Jong Nam's killing released

KAJANG, Malaysia (AP) — A Vietnamese woman who was tried in the killing of the estranged half brother of North Korea's leader was released from a Malaysian prison and planned to fly home later Friday, her lawyer said.

Doan Thi Huong's release likely closes the case, since four North Koreans named as co-conspirators in the 2017 slaying are not in custody. Malaysian officials never officially accused North Korea and made it clear they didn't want the trial politicized.

Vietnamese Embassy translator Maridam Yacfar told reporters at the prison outside Kuala Lumpur that Huong looked happy but couldn't give further details.

Huong was the last suspect in custody after the Malaysian attorney general's stunning decision in March to drop a murder case against her co-defendant, Indonesian Siti Aisyah, following high-level lobbying from Jakarta. Huong sought to be acquitted after Aisyah was freed, but prosecutors rejected her request. Aisyah returned home to Indonesia.

The two women were charged with colluding with the four North Koreans to murder Kim Jong Nam, leader Kim Jong Un's half brother, with VX nerve agent. The women smeared the substance on his face in the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on Feb. 13, 2017, and have said they thought they were taking part in a harmless prank for a TV show.

Huong's lawyer, Hisyam Teh Poh Teik, said Huong was taken by immigration officials to their office to sort out her travel documents and would be sent to the airport to catch a flight later Friday.

Huong, 30, pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of causing injury last month after prosecutors dropped a murder charge against her. She was sentenced to 40 months in prison from the day of her arrest and was released early for good behavior.

Hisyam told reporters at the airport that "the case has come to a complete end" because prosecutors didn't file any appeal of the sentence given Huong.

Hisyam said he and two other defense lawyers would be on the same flight as Huong because they will give a final briefing on the case to the Vietnam Bar Federation, which had hired them. He read out a letter of gratitude written by Huong.

She thanked the Malaysian and Vietnamese governments and "everybody who prayed for me in church and at home as well," he said.

"Thank you Lord Jesus for he loves me so much. I am very happy and thank you all a lot. I love you all," she scribbled in the letter shown to reporters.

There was no sign of Huong at the airport and lawyers said she was likely to be escorted straight to the plane.

Hisyam earlier told The Associated Press that Huong was "smiling from ear to ear" when he met her at the prison on Thursday and that she looked forward to meeting her family and friends.

After her sentencing last month, Huong said she wants to "sing and act" when she returns to Vietnam.

The High Court judge last August had found there was enough evidence to infer that Aisyah, Huong and the four North Koreans engaged in a "well-planned conspiracy" to kill Kim and had called on the two women to present their defense.

The four North Koreans fled Malaysia the day Kim was killed.

Lawyers for the women have said that they were pawns in a political assassination with clear links to the North Korean Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, and that the prosecution failed to show the women had any intention to kill. Intent to kill is crucial to a murder charge under Malaysian law.

Kim Jong Nam was the eldest son in the current generation of North Korea's ruling family. He had been living abroad for years but could have been seen as a threat to Kim Jong Un's rule.

What's next for Venezuela after days of tumult?

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — After days of upheaval, Venezuela is sinking back into political stalemate.

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In the fourth month of their standoff, President Nicolás Maduro and opposition leader Juan Guaidó are unable to deliver a knock-out blow as Venezuela spirals deeper into neglect, isolation and desperation. Abrupt shifts or behind-the-scenes power plays can't be ruled out, but there is a sense that the two camps are entrenched — too strong to be dislodged, too weak for clear-cut victory.

So what's next?

The opposition and its chief patron, the United States, emerged with fewer options after Guaidó, leader of the opposition-controlled National Assembly, stood Tuesday outside a military base and urged the armed forces to overthrow Maduro. The plan collapsed. Venezuela's military commander instead pledged loyalty to Maduro, and four people died in clashes between protesters and police after the opposition's risky bid for control.

The streets of Caracas were calm on Thursday after the violence of the previous two days. Guaidó's new plan is to build toward a general strike, though the date is not fixed and how effective that would be in a country with a shattered economy and an exhausted population is open to question.

One Venezuela expert said the opposition and the U.S. now have the hard task of devising a new way forward after seeing a small contingent of security forces join Guaidó outside the military base, but no sign that any other military units had heeded the call to rebel.

"You only get to play this card once, and now that it's been played it's hard to see what else can be done," said Fernando Cutz, who until April 2018 led U.S. policy on Venezuela at the National Security Council under both Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

At the same time, Maduro's government is under massive strain, loathed by much of the population as it attempts to steer a decaying nation. The fact that it has not yet moved to arrest Guaidó after accusing him of trying to stage a coup suggests it is not confident enough to do so and is wary about any increase in diplomatic and economic pressure from the U.S. and dozens of other nations that say Guaidó is Venezuela's rightful president.

Any attempt to detain Guaidó would be "highly inflammatory," said Eileen Gavin, senior Latin America analyst at Verisk Maplecroft, a global risk consultancy.

"From Maduro's perspective, it might be better to simply dismiss Guaidó as a mere nuisance and a U.S. stooge, thereby undermining Guaidó's faltering movement and — once again — splintering the fractious Venezuelan opposition," Gavin said in a report.

The government has started to target people since the failed rebellion. On Thursday, Venezuela's top court ordered the arrest of Guaidó's political mentor, Leopoldo López, who took refuge in the Spanish Embassy after defying a house arrest order and joining the attempt to topple Maduro this week. The court also opened a treason investigation of Edgar Zambrano, the deputy head of the National Assembly who had joined Guaidó outside the military base in Caracas.

Some analysts believe U.S. allegations that three top Venezuelan officials had been involved in the plot against Maduro will not split his government, but tie those officials closer to him. One of the government figures, Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López, pledged loyalty to Maduro and indicated that there had been attempts to lure the military into backing the opposition.

"They try to buy us as if we were mercenaries," he said in what amounted to a warning to any would-be defectors in the military.

The United States has imposed sanctions on Venezuela's oil industry as well as on key figures in Maduro's government, which is digging in despite dire economic and humanitarian problems that have forced around 10% of Venezuelans to leave the country in recent years, creating Latin America's biggest migrant crisis.

Cutz said that while it's likely the U.S. will ramp up rhetoric against Maduro's government, it has already deployed the key weapon — oil sanctions. Its last options include the long-threatened idea of military intervention, which is unlikely, or moving onto another foreign policy priority, according to Cutz.

"It seems more like a temper tantrum than strategic thinking," he said of the bellicose rhetoric coming out of the White House. "If I'm a low-level colonel, why would I now risk my life to share secrets with the Americans if they aren't going to keep their mouths shut."

Trump has indicated that the United States is not focusing on a military option for now.

"And we're doing everything we can do, short of, you know, the ultimate," Trump said in an interview Wednesday on Fox Business Network. "There are people that would like to do — have us do the ultimate, but we are - we are - we have a lot of options open. But when we look at what's going on there, it's an incredible mess."

Trump said Maduro was "tough, but I think he's losing a lot of control."

Associated Press journalist Joshua Goodman in Caracas contributed.

Trump defends health workers' right to object to abortions

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Advancing his anti-abortion agenda, President Donald Trump moved Thursday to protect health care workers who object to procedures like abortion on moral or religious grounds.

Trump chose the National Day of Prayer to announce the new regulation.

"Just today we finalized new protections of conscience rights for physicians, pharmacists, nurses, teachers, students and faith-based charities," Trump told an interfaith audience in the White House Rose Garden. "They've been wanting to do that for a long time."

The conscience rule was a priority for religious conservatives who are a key part of Trump's political base, but some critics fear it will become a pretext for denying medical attention to LGBT people or women seeking abortions, a legal medical procedure.

In a strongly worded statement, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said, "these bigoted rules are immoral, deeply discriminatory and downright deadly, greenlighting open discrimination in health care against LGBTQ Americans and directly threatening the well-being of millions.

"Make no mistake," she added, "this is an open license to discriminate against Americans who already face serious, systemic discrimination." She said she was also addressing another pending regulation seen as undermining the rights of transgender patients. Pelosi said the Democratic-controlled House would "fight" the administration's actions.

San Francisco immediately sued the Trump administration, saying the conscience regulation will undermine access to care.

The complex rule runs more than 400 pages and requires hospitals, universities, clinics and other institutions that receive funding from federal programs such as Medicare and Medicaid to certify that they comply with some 25 federal laws protecting conscience and religious rights.

Most of these laws and provisions address medical procedures such as abortion, sterilization and assisted suicide. The ultimate penalty can be loss of federal funding for violations of conscience or religious rights, but most cases are settled by making changes in practices and procedures.

The rule makes no new law and doesn't go beyond statutes passed under administrations of both political parties, said Roger Severino, head of the office that will enforce it at the Department of Health and Human Services.

Rather, the regulation will guarantee that religious and conscience protections already on the books can't be ignored.

"We are giving these laws life with this regulation," said Severino, saying it's no different from civil rights statutes enforced in daily life through government regulation and oversight. "It makes sure Congress' protections are not merely empty words on paper."

Under the rule, clinicians and institutions would not have to provide, participate in, pay for, cover or make referrals for procedures they object to on moral or religious grounds.

This will make it "so that people do not have to shed their religious beliefs to participate in health care," said Severino, adding that "certain medical professions such as OB-GYN should not be declared pro-life-free zones."

The rule also addresses conscience protections involving so-called advance directives that detail a patient's wishes for care at the end of life.

Asserting that previous administrations have not done enough to protect conscience rights in the medical field, HHS under Trump created a new division to investigate such complaints within its Office for Civil Rights, which Severino heads.

HHS said last year the office received more than 1,300 complaints alleging discrimination in a health care setting on account of religious beliefs or conscience issues. There was only a trickle of such complaints previously, officials said, about one per year for alleged conscience violations.

Sister Carol Keehan, head of the Catholic Health Association, said her group representing church-affiliated hospitals, nursing homes and other providers will stress continued service to "all persons."

"Our mission and our ethical standards in health care are rooted in and inseparable from the Catholic Church's teachings about the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death," Keehan said in a statement. "These are the source of both the work we do and the limits on what we will do. Every individual seeking health care is welcome and will be treated with dignity and respect in our facilities."

Among religious conservatives, Family Research Council leader Tony Perkins called the regulation an answer to prayer.

"Protecting the right of all health care providers to make professional judgments based on moral convictions and ethical standards ... is necessary to ensure that access to health care is not diminished, which would occur if they were forced out of their jobs because of their ethical stances," his statement added.

But Louise Melling, deputy legal director at the American Civil Liberties Union, said the administration has opened the door to discrimination. "Religious liberty is a fundamental right, but it doesn't include the right to discriminate or harm others," she said. "Denying patients health care is not religious liberty,"

The rule takes effect 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.

Associated Press writers David Crary in New York and Janie Har in San Francisco contributed.

HHS press release: <https://tinyurl.com/yxes698g>

Barr besieged by allegations he's being Trump's protector

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General William Barr portrayed himself as an apolitical elder statesman at his confirmation hearing. He declared he'd rather resign than be asked to fire special counsel Robert Mueller without cause and insisted the prosecutor he'd known for decades would never involve himself in a witch hunt as the president claimed.

But now Barr has emerged as arguably the most divisive figure in Donald Trump's administration. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi accused him on Thursday of lying — a charge the Justice Department called reckless and false — and House Democrats are poised to hold him in contempt.

His appearance before the Senate Judiciary Committee this week accelerated calls for his resignation after he said Trump had been falsely accused and he spun politically damning episodes in Mueller's report in the president's favor.

Barr might have seemed an unlikely lightning rod given his long government career, his distance from Trump's inner circle and his age, 68, that he said made him unconcerned with political advancement. But he had telegraphed his sympathetic view of strong presidential powers — surely a useful viewpoint for Trump — in a memo to the Justice Department last year that criticized Mueller's Trump-Russia obstruction of justice investigation. His latest testimony, including that Trump's actions weren't criminal, reaffirmed that philosophy and, to critics, established Barr as the president's protector.

"We have a chief law enforcement officer who is definitely the defense lawyer for the president," Democratic Sen. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii said Thursday.

The Senate testimony was the latest episode in a turnabout in public perception for Barr, whose selection was greeted by some with high hopes that he would return the Justice Department to stability following

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two years of leadership upheaval. He replaced an attorney general, Jeff Sessions, who was ridiculed by the president and ultimately pushed out, and an acting one, Matt Whitaker, who was dismissed by Democrats as unqualified and a Trump loyalist.

It's the second time around for Barr, who was attorney general under George H.W. Bush between 1991 and 1993 and involved in some of that administration's weightiest decisions. He was Mueller's Justice Department boss back then, and at his January confirmation hearing he described the special counsel as a longtime friend and a "straight shooter" who'd be allowed to finish his Trump investigation without interference.

At the same hearing, he parried questions about his memo by saying it was written without knowing facts of the investigation. He also acknowledged constraints on presidential power, conceding that it could be a crime if a president granted a pardon in exchange for silencing someone with incriminating information. Even if most Democrats didn't support him, they didn't appear to dread his appointment.

"Confirmation hearings are easy in the sense that the smart nominee knows the right answer to all the questions, which is not to commit to anything but agree to consider everything," said Greg Brower, a former assistant director in the FBI's office of congressional affairs. "Now that he's in the middle of the aftermath of the Mueller investigation, he's obviously being pinned down to more specific answers to very specific questions, and that is obviously proving to be more problematic for him."

While House Democrats have already asked Mueller to testify, Senate Democrats, as the minority in that chamber, are more limited. They don't have the power to set hearing schedules or compel officials to appear. But they are trying to build a case in public opinion that it's Mueller, not Barr, who needs to tell the investigation story.

Testimony from Mueller is especially in demand now that his apparent rift with Barr has been exposed. It stems from Barr's decision to communicate Mueller's main conclusions of his two-year investigation in a four-page letter. The letter said Mueller had not established a criminal conspiracy between Russia and the 2016 Trump campaign and had not reached a conclusion on obstruction despite laying out evidence on both sides of that question.

The decision to avoid a determination on obstruction caught Barr by surprise, Justice Department officials said, and he and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein resolved to reach a conclusion in place of Mueller's team. They decided Mueller's evidence didn't add up to a crime, a decision that puzzled some Democrats and legal analysts given the vivid accounts of Trump's conduct in the report.

Days later, Mueller complained to Barr that his summary letter had "not fully captured the context, nature and substance" of the special counsel's work or conclusions. Barr said Wednesday his goal had been simply to release the report's bottom-line conclusions as he readied the entire document for release. Neither Barr nor Mueller went public with their conversation.

When Barr was asked weeks later at an unrelated congressional hearing about reports of discontent within the special counsel's team, he said he didn't know what those reports referred to. Pelosi said Thursday "the attorney general of the United States was not telling the truth to the Congress of the United States — that's a crime." The Justice Department vehemently denied that.

House Judiciary Democrats now are poised to hold Barr, who skipped a hearing Thursday in a dispute over its terms, in contempt after the Justice Department missed a committee deadline to provide an unredacted version of Mueller's report.

Even if Barr didn't immediately acknowledge the disconnect with Mueller, his tone about the investigation did appear to evolve.

He told lawmakers at an April 10 hearing that he believed there'd been "spying" on the Trump campaign, echoing a common Trump talking point, and committed to investigating how and why the FBI began its probe into ties between Russia and the Trump campaign.

At a news conference shortly before the release of Mueller's report last month, he repeatedly said Mueller had not found collusion between Trump aides and Russia, though the actual report pointedly noted that collusion is not a legal term. He praised the president's cooperation, though Trump declined an in-person

interview. He said Trump had a "sincere belief" that the investigation was undermining his presidency.

At Wednesday's hearing, Democrats confronted Barr with a series of episodes from Mueller's report, including the president's directive to aides to lie on his behalf and for his White House counsel to seek Mueller's ouster. But for each instance, Barr said Trump lacked the criminal intent required for obstruction and said there were alternate explanations for his behavior beyond trying to shut down the investigation.

Democrats were anything but persuaded.

"You have been very adroit and agile in your responses to questions here," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut. "But I think history will judge you harshly and maybe a bit unfairly because you seem to have been the designated fall guy for this report."

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

As coronation begins, Thai king's future plans still unclear

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Three days of elaborate centuries-old ceremonies begin Saturday for the formal coronation of Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who has been on the throne for more than two years.

What Vajiralongkorn — also known as King Rama X, the 10th king of the Chakri dynasty — will do with the power and influence the venerated status confers is still not clear.

The 66-year-old monarch has sent mixed signals. Bursts of assertiveness alternate with a seemingly hands off approach in other matters — a perception girded by the amount of time he spends at a large residence he maintains in Germany.

On Wednesday, he suddenly announced his fourth marriage, to a former flight attendant who is a commander of his security detail, and appointed her Queen Suthida. The timing of the announcement, just ahead of his coronation, suggests a fresh commitment to his royal duties.

On Thursday, the king and his new bride took part in ceremonies to pay homage to Vajiralongkorn's royal ancestors and worship deities, and on Friday he attended preparatory rituals for his coronation.

"I am excited and happy," said Chanachai Charoensue, a 55-year-old office worker who is one of the many Thais looking forward to the coronation.

"Actually, His Majesty the King has carried out his duties for a while," he said. "I know that the government will hold a ceremony befitting his royal stature. I want to witness this ceremony."

Vajiralongkorn is likely to remain burdened by old gossip about his personal life that has dogged him since returning from his education in England and Australia. Many Thais are familiar with tales about his alleged exploits while he was crown prince, even though harsh laws mandate a prison term of three to 15 years for anyone found guilty of insulting the monarchy.

Vajiralongkorn early on was pinned with the reputation of a playboy, a trait that even his own mother acknowledged. He has gone through bitter divorces with three women who have borne him seven children.

His father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej — the only monarch most Thais had known when he died in October 2016 after seven decades on the throne — won most of his countrymen's deep love and respect as an exemplar of rectitude and an avid cheerleader for his country's economic development. His three sisters are frequently engaged in public service.

"The defining years saw King Bhumibol spending large amounts of time in provincial Thailand, visiting ordinary people," said Michael Montesano, coordinator of the Thailand Studies Program at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. "We have yet to see similar behavior on the part of his heir."

Paul Chambers, a political scientist at Naraesuan University in northern Thailand, finds Vajiralongkorn's style "more hands off," even as he has brought more of Thailand's administration directly under the palace.

Vajiralongkorn's early actions as king included replacing his late father's loyalists with his own in key palace posts.

Some of those he fired were called lazy, or arrogant, and in some cases, guilty of "extremely evil behavior."

"The new king is a very decisive man, and he's a very daring man, unlike his father," asserts Sulak Si-

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varaksa, a conservative social critic. "His father was on the whole, a very quiet person, and he 'suffered fools (gladly)' around him. He knew (if) somebody cheated him and so, but he was very tolerant."

There have been suggestions that the new king's purges amount to an anti-corruption campaign.

Such a case can be made, acknowledges Montesano.

"But the same actions also appear to bespeak an interest in gaining or exerting greater control over certain institutions," Montesano said. "That possible motive must be kept in mind."

There is little question that Vajiralongkorn has tightened control over royal institutions and what amounts to political privileges.

He surprised the country's ruling junta when, "to ensure his royal powers," he requested changes to a new constitution that had already been approved in a referendum. They acquiesced.

The powers he acquired centralize royal authority in his hands and make explicit his right to intervene in government affairs, especially in times of political crisis.

Vajiralongkorn has also sought to shore up the palace's finances, previously controlled by a vast and somewhat creaky bureaucracy. The palace's fortune, estimated by sources such as Forbes magazine to be in the neighborhood of \$30 billion, is largely controlled by the Crown Property Bureau, a professionally managed holding company with large stakes in real estate, banking and industry.

Vajiralongkorn instituted changes giving him tighter control to personally manage the bureau and its holdings.

Vajiralongkorn's greatest challenge is likely to be sorting out the palace's relationship with the military.

His father Bhumibol and the army worked out a delicate balance of power, with the palace arguably holding the stronger hand, especially after a 1973 pro-democracy uprising temporarily discredited military rule. The army's declared mission of protecting the monarchy became its shield against criticism.

But as Bhumibol's health declined in the last decade and a half of his life, that balance began to shift. Now, with the army entrenched in government for five years after staging a coup in 2014, things seem to have shifted more in the military's favor.

Vajiralongkorn has supporters in the military. He was educated at military academies, took part in 1970s counterinsurgency action against the Communist Party of Thailand, and is a qualified pilot in the air force, the service he is closest to.

There are special army units directly under the palace's command, and Vajiralongkorn has augmented their strength.

"He has sought to bring more army units under his personal control," said Chambers. "Prior to his father's death, the junta leaders seemed to have acted for the ailing and aged king but they were becoming too big for their britches, so to speak. Hence the new sovereign wanted to ensure personalized monarchical control over the military."

Vajiralongkorn's actions help restore the balance of palace-barracks relations and "reflect a diminution of the army's own influence," agrees Montesano.

The relationship, however, is a two-way street. An election held in March has been widely seen as rigged through convoluted election laws to favor the military and its preferred candidate, Prayuth Chan-ocha, who led the 2014 coup and has headed the government since then.

Vajiralongkorn quickly clamped down when his older sister, Princess Ubolratana, lent her support to Prayuth's opponents by agreeing to be a candidate for prime minister. The king declared the action unconstitutional and "inappropriate" because it violated a tradition of royals staying out of politics.

On the eve of the election, he issued a statement saying people should support "good people" to prevent "bad people" from gaining power and causing chaos, words that seemed to echo the junta in its justification for staging a coup.

New political jousting may follow Vajiralongkorn's coronation within days, when election results are supposed to be certified and will almost certainly be challenged by the losers.

The Thai people, said Sulak, will probably be peaceful and "full of joy" during the coronation ceremony period.

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"But I'm not sure afterwards," he said.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. BARR BESIEGED BY ALLEGATIONS OF BEING TRUMP'S PROTECTOR

Attorney General William Barr has emerged as arguably the most divisive figure in Donald Trump's administration.

2. 2020 CAMPAIGNS GRAPPLE WITH HOW TO MANAGE CYBERSECURITY

Whether presidential campaigns have learned from the cyberattacks in the 2016 election is a critical question ahead as the 2020 election approaches.

3. WHAT'S NEXT FOR VENEZUELA AFTER DAYS OF TIMULT

President Nicolás Maduro and opposition leader Juan Guaidó are unable to deliver a knock-out blow as Venezuela spirals deeper into neglect, isolation and desperation.

4. WHERE A CYCLONE HAS MADE LANDFALL

Fani has hit India's eastern coast as a grade 5 storm, lashing the emptied beaches with rain and wind gusting up to 127 miles per hour with 1.2 million people evacuated.

5. THAI KING'S FUTURE ROLE STILL UNCLEAR

Ahead of the formal coronation of Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn, what he will do with the power and influence of his status is still not clear.

6. LANDLORD WHO REFUSED TO RENT TO MUSLIM MEN SETTLES LAWSUIT

A Denver landlord who was recorded telling her tenant to find an "American person ... good like you and me" to sublease her property instead of a Muslim father and son seeking to open their second restaurant must pay the men \$675,000 under a settlement.

7. FAMILIES SUFFER IN 'LAWLESS' WORLD OF SERVICE DOGS

Federal disability law limits local training and certification requirements. As a result, experts say it's a buyer beware market.

8. WHO'S LOOKING TO REGAIN SPOTLIGHT IN CROWDED 2020 FIELD

Kamala Harris won praise from liberals for seemingly stumping Attorney General William Barr during a contentious hearing over special counsel Robert Mueller's report.

9. MICHAEL COHEN DUE TO REPORT TO FEDERAL PRISON

Trump's former lawyer and fixer is due to report Monday to the Federal Correctional Institution, Otisville to start a three-year sentence for paying hush-money to women who alleged affairs with Trump, lying to Congress and other crimes.

10. NORTH CAROLINA LAWYER NAMED MISS USA

Cheslie Kryst of Charlotte who represents prison inmates for free won the Miss USA title, describing herself as a "weird kid" with a "unibrow."

As Israeli group expands, Palestinian houses face demolition

By ISABEL DEBRE and AREEJ HAZBOUN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — For 20 years, Hala Kashour has lived with her husband in what she called "paradise," a bucolic meadow that rolls through a Palestinian neighborhood of east Jerusalem.

The coveted pasture, which Israel calls the "Peace Forest," lies in the crosshairs of a long-simmering conflict between the city government and its Palestinian residents that flared up on a recent spring morning as Kashour, 47, was jolted awake by the sound of bulldozers crushing her neighbor's house.

Some 60 houses in the grassy quarter, known to its 500 residents as Wad Yasul, are facing demolition by Israeli authorities. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court declined to hear the residents' appeal against demolition orders, saying the structures were built without required permits in a municipally designated

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green space.

"God willing, we won't be next," said Kashour, who claims she built the neighborhood's first house, a stone cottage ringed with rose bushes, on land her family has owned for 50 years.

Demolition of unauthorized Palestinian-owned structures in east Jerusalem is not unusual. The municipality contends it cracks down on zoning violations. Palestinians say it is nearly impossible to receive building permits, and that Israel is severely restricting their ability to build on land they claim for the capital of their future state.

But the Peace Forest demolitions have drawn particular attention because of accelerating construction by a nationalist Jewish organization in the same park.

With the support of Israel's Tourism Ministry, the City of David Foundation has set up lodging structures, operates a Segway tour through the woodland and is advancing plans for several tourist attractions, including a visitor center and what it bills as the country's largest zip line. The foundation said it has leased 4% of the park's total area from the government.

Although city regulations forbid construction of any kind in designated parks, the municipality confirmed it was working to alter zoning restrictions and retroactively authorize City of David's construction and facilitate its expansion.

"The City of David hasn't yet received final approval for everything, but its efforts to build up public space with sports and tourist facilities are being considered positively," said an official in the Jerusalem mayor's office, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media. "We are not eager to evict Palestinian residents in a brutal way, but we have a green light from the highest court."

Activists and Palestinian residents say the case of the Peace Forest highlights discriminatory Israeli policies that have propelled a housing crisis in overcrowded east Jerusalem.

"The government zoned this area in an intractable way to prevent Palestinian construction, and now we can see the designation being altered to serve Jewish settlement," said Aviv Tatarsky from Ir Amim, an Israeli group that advocates equality in Jerusalem.

The Supreme Court's dismissal of the case brought an end to the residents' costly decade-long legal battle to get their houses, in many cases built decades ago on inherited family land, authorized by Israel.

Structures belonging to two families were destroyed immediately following the decision, and two more homes were demolished on Tuesday. Pending demolition orders for the rest of the area can go into effect at any time, said Zyad Kawar, lawyer for the Palestinian residents.

Many residents view the park zoning as a government ploy to force Palestinians out of east Jerusalem, which Israel considers an indivisible part of its capital.

"They don't want to give us permits, that's the bottom line," said Nasser Burqan, 42, whose cousin owned a house demolished this month. "It's displacement."

Israel captured east Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 Mideast War and annexed it, a move not internationally recognized. Since then, Israel has boosted the Jewish presence there, building neighborhoods where over 200,000 Jews now live.

The Peace Forest sits in the larger Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, long a focal point of Jewish settlement for its proximity to some of the world's most sensitive religious sites in the walled Old City.

The City of David Foundation runs popular archaeological and touristic sites in and around Silwan — spots it emphasizes as centerpieces of ancient Jewish civilization. The foundation says its sites "are situated upon King David's once lost ancient capital," referring to the biblical figure who is believed to have conquered the city and established Jewish Jerusalem thousands of years ago.

In the Peace Forest, "the City of David has transformed what was once a derelict crime-ridden site" into a space used freely by the public, said the foundation's vice president, Doron Spielman. "We are confident that it too will become a major tourist attraction."

The City of David projects are not planned on the ruins of the demolished homes, and the foundation says the city's demolition plans go back long before it became involved. But critics say the demolitions on one hand, and the green light to City of David on the other, illustrate two sets of standards for Jews and

Palestinians in the city.

The organization has also drawn sharp criticism for helping to settle Jewish families in Arab neighborhoods, fueling suspicions that its tourism projects mask efforts to erase the line between east and west Jerusalem, and with it, hope for an independent Palestinian state.

The two-state dream seems more distant than ever after newly re-elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised on the campaign trail to annex West Bank settlements. He is poised to form a governing coalition with right-wing parties that reject Palestinian sovereignty.

His re-election comes a year after the Trump administration recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moved the U.S. Embassy to the city. Though Trump says his move does not determine the city's final status, it was seen by the Palestinians and others as recognizing Israel's claim to the city, including its eastern sector.

With the Trump administration providing unprecedented support for Israel, there are fears in Jerusalem that the government could step up its pressure on Palestinian residents.

"What's next? What will we do?" said Kashour, standing in her rose garden among some of the recently evicted children from the neighboring Burqan family. "I don't have anywhere else."

Facebook bans 'dangerous individuals' cited for hate speech

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — After years of pressure to crack down on hate and bigotry, Facebook has banned Louis Farrakhan, Alex Jones and other extremists, saying they violated its ban on "dangerous individuals."

The company also removed right-wing personalities Paul Nehlen, Milo Yiannopoulos, Paul Joseph Watson and Laura Loomer, along with Jones' site, Infowars, which often posts conspiracy theories. The latest bans apply to both Facebook's main service and to Instagram and extend to fan pages and other related accounts.

Decried as censorship by several of those who got the ax, the move signals a renewed effort by the social media giant to remove people and groups promoting objectionable material such as hate, racism and anti-Semitism.

Removing some of the best-known figures of the U.S. political extreme takes away an important virtual megaphone that Facebook has provided the likes of Jones, Yiannopoulos and others over the years. But it does not address what might be done with lesser known figures and those who stay on the margins of what Facebook's policies allow.

Critics praised the move but said there is more to be done on both Facebook and Instagram.

"We know that there are still white supremacists and other extremist figures who are actively using both platforms to spread their hatred and bigotry," said Keegan Hankes, senior research analyst for the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate groups in the U.S.

Dipayan Ghosh, a former Facebook executive and an internet policy expert at Harvard, said the ban isn't as big a step as Facebook appears to be painting it — it's just enforcing its existing policy.

"There will always be more purveyors of hate speech that try to come on these platforms," he said. "Will advocates have to push year after year just to get (a handful of) individuals off? At this rate it seems likely. And this doesn't address the problem of what happens at the margins."

Facebook has previously suspended Jones from its flagship service temporarily; this suspension is permanent and includes Instagram. Twitter has also banned Loomer, Jones and Yiannopoulos, though Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam long known for provocative comments widely considered anti-Semitic, still had an account Thursday. So did Watson, who rose to popularity as editor-at-large at Infowars and has nearly a million followers on the site.

Facebook said the newly banned accounts violated its policy against dangerous individuals and organizations. The company says it has always banned people or groups that proclaim a violent or hateful mission or are engaged in acts of hate or violence, regardless of political ideology.

It added that when it bans someone under this policy, the company also prohibits anyone else from

praising or supporting them.

In this case, though, the company said people can speak positively about the six banned individuals as long as what they're saying otherwise complies with Facebook policies.

For years, social media companies have been under pressure from civil rights groups and other activists to clamp down on hate speech on their services. Following the deadly white nationalist protests in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, Google, Facebook and PayPal began banishing extremist groups and individuals who identified as or supported white supremacists.

A year later, widespread bans of Jones and Infowars reflected a more aggressive enforcement of policies against hate speech. But Facebook instituted only a 30-day suspension (though Twitter banned him permanently).

It is not clear what events led to Thursday's announcement. In a statement, Facebook merely said, "The process for evaluating potential violators is extensive and it is what led us to our decision to remove these accounts today."

Last month, it extended its ban on hate speech to prohibit the promotion and support of white nationalism and white separatism. It had previously allowed such material even though it has long banned white supremacists.

Asked to comment on the bans, Yiannopoulos emailed only "You're next."

Jones reacted angrily Thursday during a live stream of his show on his Infowars website.

"They didn't just ban me. They just defamed us. Why did Zuckerberg even do this?" Jones said, referring to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

Jones called himself a victim of "racketeering" by "cartels."

"There's a new world now, man, where they're banning everybody and then they tell Congress nobody is getting banned," he said.

Watson, meanwhile, tweeted that he was not given a reason and that he "broke none of their rules."

"Hopefully, other prominent conservatives will speak out about me being banned, knowing that they are next if we don't pressure the Trump administration to take action," he wrote.

Farrakhan, Nehlen and Loomer did not immediately return messages for comment.

Harvard's Ghosh said kicking off individuals with big followings, such as Jones, goes against Facebook's commercial interest.

"As soon as they kick Alex Jones or Laura Loomer off their platform, it immediately ticks of a huge number of people," he said.

Associated Press Writers Tali Arbel in New York and Michael Kunzelman in Silver Spring, Maryland, contributed to this story.

This story has been corrected to read Charlottesville, Virginia, not South Carolina.

Baltimore shifts to new political era after mayor resigns

By DAVID McFADDEN Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — After ex-Mayor Catherine Pugh's rapid collapse amid multiple public corruption investigations, Baltimore city employees are pulling down her official portraits as the city quickly shifts into a new era with Mayor Bernard "Jack" Young at the helm.

Young, a fellow Democrat and a longtime leader of the City Council, automatically replaced Pugh after her resignation Thursday afternoon.

In a phone interview, Young told The Associated Press he's ready to make changes, and is focused on reducing eye-popping rates of violent crime and tidying up the city's streets. He aims to bring more investments and jobs, particularly to its most deeply disenfranchised neighborhoods.

Young had been Baltimore's acting leader for a month already, ever since Pugh departed on indefinite leave, saying she was physically ill and emotionally overwhelmed amid the scandal involving her self-

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published children's books.

"I'm determined to make a dent. I'm not a placeholder — I'm the mayor now. And I'm going to run the city like the mayor," Young said from Detroit, where he's attending a conference about economic development before his return to Baltimore over the weekend.

There's little expectation that Young's new administration can overcome Baltimore's chronic problems of poverty, violence and inequity as he fills out the remainder of Pugh's term. But he does have numerous political allies in Baltimore and the state's capital and there's hope he can make some advances.

Pugh's career-ending debacle is one of the weirder political scandals in recent memory. It's focused on "Healthy Holly" — a lucrative and obscure children's book series she self-published focusing on a fictitious African-American child with a laser-like focus on exercise and good nutrition. The slim illustrated books, sharing tips on nutrition and exercise, were meant to be distributed to schools and daycares. But copies are hard to find.

After Pugh's resignation, city employees began taking down Pugh's official portraits, updating websites and removing her name from government letterhead.

"She no longer has any official capacity with the city," Andre Davis, Baltimore's solicitor, told reporters before choking up a bit at his former boss's humiliating resignation from the one political post she always described as her dream job.

It's a stunning fall from grace for the 69-year-old Pugh, who rose through the Democratic ranks over many years to become the city's most powerful figure. But with federal, state and city investigators trying to unravel years' worth of tangled arrangements selling at least \$800,000 worth of her self-published children's books, Pugh finally decided that she didn't want to keep the job badly enough to remain in office amid questions focused on her murky financial dealings.

"Baltimore deserves a mayor who can move our great city forward," Pugh said in a written statement read by her lawyer, Steven Silverman. After a month of sequestering herself at home, it wasn't immediately clear whether some kind of deal was struck with federal investigators to pave the way for her resignation.

In late March, during a brief stint back at City Hall after being diagnosed with pneumonia, Pugh described her no-contract \$500,000 arrangement to sell "Healthy Holly" books to a university-based health care system as a "regrettable mistake" and offered apologies. A few days later, she announced her indefinite leave of absence hours after the state's governor requested a public corruption probe into Pugh.

Other customers included a Maryland financier who divulged that his financial firm decided to write a \$100,000 check for "Health Holly" books after she clinched the 2016 Democratic primary. He insisted he expected nothing in return. She also sold tens of thousands of books to customers including a \$4 billion hospital network she once helped oversee and health carriers with business before the city.

Pugh's resignation came exactly a week after her City Hall offices, homes and multiple other locations were raided by FBI and IRS agents and it became clear that a federal grand jury has been empaneled. She is the second mayor in less than a decade to step down because of scandal. She came to office contrasting her clean image with her main opponent, ex-mayor Sheila Dixon, who was forced to depart office in 2010 as part of a plea deal for misappropriating about \$500 in gift cards meant for needy families.

Since the book scandal erupted in late March, Pugh's fractured administration has lurched from one crisis to another and various aides have been fired or left City Hall. Young declined to say if more Pugh-era employees would soon be fired for any reason.

Pugh's resignation provides a measure of resolution after weeks of uncertainty and mounting pressure for her to step down. Maryland's Republican governor and numerous Democrats had pressed for her resignation, saying she was no longer fit to lead Baltimore.

"This was the right decision, as it was clear the mayor could no longer lead effectively," Gov. Larry Hogan said in a statement.

Georgia executes man convicted of 1994 killings of 2 women

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

JACKSON, Ga. (AP) — A man who shot and killed his ex-girlfriend and another woman nearly 25 years ago was executed Thursday evening in Georgia.

Scotty Garnell Morrow's approximate time of death was 9:38 p.m., Warden Benjamin Ford told witnesses at the state prison in Jackson. Morrow, 52, was convicted of murder in the shooting deaths of his ex-girlfriend Barbara Ann Young and her friend Tonya Woods at Young's Gainesville home in December 1994.

Strapped to a gurney before he received a lethal injection of the sedative pentobarbital, Morrow said, "I would like to give my most deepest and sincere apologies to the Woods family and the Young family," adding that he hopes they can find peace.

He also apologized to LaToya Horne, who also was shot but survived. And he apologized to his friends and family for the hurt and pain, saying, "I love you all."

A Department of Corrections imam read a prayer and finished with, "I love you, brother." Morrow responded, "I love you, too."

The inmate moved his mouth and blinked for a couple of minutes once the drug began to flow. Then he turned his head to the right, yawned and took deep breaths before becoming still.

Morrow was the first inmate put to death in Georgia this year. His execution came shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a last-hour bid to block the death sentence from being carried out.

Morrow and Young had been dating for about six months when she broke up with him in December 1994 because he had become abusive, a Georgia Supreme Court summary of the case says. He went to her house that Dec. 29 to try to win her back.

Young was in her kitchen with two of her children and two friends, Woods and Horne, when Morrow arrived. The pair argued and Woods told Morrow to leave, saying Young didn't want to be with him anymore, the summary says. Morrow yelled at Woods to be quiet, pulled a handgun from his waistband and began shooting.

He shot Woods in the abdomen, severing her spine, the summary says. He also shot Horne in the arm.

Young fled the kitchen and Morrow followed her to her bedroom, where he beat her and then followed her back into the hall, grabbed her by the hair and fatally shot her in the head, according to the summary. Young's 5-year-old son, hiding in a nearby bedroom, saw Morrow shoot his mother.

Morrow then returned to the kitchen, fired a fatal shot under Woods' chin and shot Horne in the face and arm before leaving the home. Young and Woods died of their injuries. Horne was severely wounded but was able to seek help.

Arrested within hours, Morrow confessed to shooting the women. At trial, he admitted that he began shooting because he wanted Woods "to shut up."

Morrow's attorneys had said he saw his mother severely beaten and was, himself, repeatedly raped and beaten as a child. The lingering effects from that abuse left him unable to properly process and express his emotions, they said.

When Woods told him Young had just been using him for money and companionship while her "real man" was in prison, he snapped, his lawyers have said.

Morrow was convicted on two counts of malice murder, among other charges, in June 1999. A state court overturned his death sentence in February 2011, finding that his trial lawyers didn't do enough to investigate and present mitigating evidence during the sentencing phase of trial. But the Georgia Supreme Court reinstated the death sentence later that year.

His state and federal appeals were exhausted in February when the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear his case.

The State Board of Pardons and Paroles, the only authority in Georgia that can commute a death sentence, rejected Morrow's request for clemency following a closed-door hearing Wednesday. Morrow's lawyers had described him in the clemency petition as rehabilitated and a model prisoner on death row, a mentor to other prisoners and a help to guards. They said he felt great remorse for the pain and loss

he caused the Woods and Young families.

"Mr. Morrow's acts of violence were aberrations in a life otherwise characterized by kindness and compassion and the man he became in December of 1994 bears no resemblance to the man he was before and the man he has worked to be since," his lawyers wrote in the clemency petition.

Corrections officials said Morrow received visits Thursday from one friend, 10 family members, two clergy members and four attorneys.

Peter Mayhew, Chewbacca in the 'Star Wars' films, dies at 74

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Peter Mayhew, the towering actor who donned a huge, furry costume to give life to the rugged-and-beloved character of Chewbacca in the original "Star Wars" trilogy and two other films, has died, his family said Thursday.

Mayhew died at his home in north Texas on Tuesday, according to a family statement. He was 74. No cause was given.

As Chewbacca, known to his friends as Chewie, the 7-foot-3 Mayhew was a fierce warrior with a soft heart, loyal sidekick to Harrison Ford's Han Solo, and co-pilot of the Millennium Falcon.

Mayhew went on to appear as the Wookiee in the 2005 prequel "Revenge of the Sith" and shared the part in 2015's "The Force Awakens" with actor Joonas Suotamo, who took over the role in subsequent films.

"Peter Mayhew was a kind and gentle man, possessed of great dignity and noble character," Ford said in a statement Thursday. "These aspects of his own personality, plus his wit and grace, he brought to Chewbacca. We were partners in film and friends in life for over 30 years and I loved him... My thoughts are with his dear wife Angie and his children. Rest easy, my dear friend."

Mayhew defined the incredibly well-known Wookiee and became a world-famous actor for most of his life without speaking a word or even making a sound — Chewbacca's famous roar was the creation of sound designers.

"He put his heart and soul into the role of Chewbacca and it showed in every frame of the films," the family statement said. "But, to him, the 'Star Wars' family meant so much more to him than a role in a film."

Mark Hamill, who played Luke Skywalker alongside Mayhew, wrote on Twitter that he was "the gentlest of giants — A big man with an even bigger heart who never failed to make me smile & a loyal friend who I loved dearly. I'm grateful for the memories we shared & I'm a better man for just having known him."

Born and raised in England, Mayhew had appeared in just one film and was working as a hospital orderly in London when George Lucas, who shot the first film in England, found him and cast him in 1977's "Star Wars."

Lucas chose quickly when he saw Mayhew, who liked to say all he had to do to land the role was stand up.

"Peter was a wonderful man," Lucas said in a statement Thursday. "He was the closest any human being could be to a Wookiee: big heart, gentle nature ... and I learned to always let him win. He was a good friend and I'm saddened by his passing."

From then on, "Star Wars" would become Mayhew's life. He made constant appearances in the costume in commercials, on TV specials and at public events. The frizzy long hair he had most of his adult life made those who saw him in real life believe he was Chewbacca, along with his stature.

His height, the result of a genetic disorder known as Marfan syndrome, was the source of constant health complications late in his life. He had respiratory problems, his speech grew limited and he often had to use scooters and wheelchairs instead of walking.

His family said his fighting through that to play the role one last time in "The Force Awakens" was a triumph.

Even after he retired, Mayhew served as an adviser to his successor Suotamo, a former Finnish basketball player who told The Associated Press last year that Mayhew put him through "Wookiee boot camp" before he played the role in "Solo."

Mayhew spent much of the last decades of his life in the United States, and he became a U.S. citizen

in 2005.

The 200-plus-year-old character whose suit has been compared to an ape, a bear, and Bigfoot, and wore a bandolier with ammunition for his laser rifle, was considered by many to be one of the hokier elements in the original "Star Wars," something out of a more low-budget sci-fi offering.

The films themselves seemed to acknowledge this.

"Will somebody get this big walking carpet out of my way?!" Carrie Fisher, as Princess Leia, says in the original "Star Wars." It was one of the big laugh lines of the film, as was Ford calling Chewie a "fuzzball" in "The Empire Strikes Back."

But Chewbacca would become as enduring an element of the "Star Wars" galaxy as any other character, his roar — which according to the Atlantic magazine was made up of field recordings of bears, lions, badgers and other animals — as famous as any sound in the universe.

"Chewbacca was an important part of the success of the films we made together," Ford said in his statement.

Mayhew is the third major member of the original cast to die in recent years. Fisher and R2-D2 actor Kenny Baker died in 2016.

Mayhew's family said he was active with various nonprofit groups and established the Peter Mayhew Foundation, which is devoted to alleviating disease, pain, suffering and the financial toll from traumatic events. The family asked that in lieu of flowers, friends and fans donate to the foundation.

Mayhew is survived by his wife, Angie, and three children. A private service will be held June 29, followed by a public memorial in early December at a Los Angeles "Star Wars" convention.

Follow Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton> .

Pharmaceutical exec guilty of bribing doctors to push opioid

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A pharmaceutical company founder accused of paying doctors millions in bribes to prescribe a highly addictive fentanyl spray was convicted Thursday in a case that exposed such marketing tactics as using a stripper-turned-sales-rep to give a physician a lap dance.

John Kapoor, the 76-year-old former chairman of Insys Therapeutics, was found guilty of racketeering conspiracy after 15 days of jury deliberations. Four ex-employees of the Chandler, Arizona-based company, including the former exotic dancer, were also convicted.

Some of the most sensational evidence in the months-long federal trial included a video of employees dancing and rapping around an executive dressed as a giant bottle of the powerful spray Subsys, and testimony about how the company made a habit of hiring attractive women as sales representatives.

Federal prosecutors portrayed the case as part of the government's effort to go after those it views as responsible for fueling the nation's deadly opioid crisis.

"This is a landmark prosecution that vindicated the public's interest in stanching the flow of opioids into our homes and streets," Massachusetts U.S. Attorney Andrew Lelling said in a statement.

The convictions could embolden federal authorities to bring more cases against top executives of opioid manufacturers, said Andrew Kolodny, co-director of opioid policy research at Brandeis University's Heller School for Social Policy and Management.

"Paying a fine or even civil litigation is inadequate if we want to deter corporations from killing people in their pursuit of profit," Kolodny said.

Opioid overdoses claimed nearly 400,000 lives in the U.S. between 1999 and 2017, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. An estimated 2 million people are addicted to the drugs, which include both prescription painkillers such as OxyContin and illegal drugs such as heroin.

Kapoor and the others were accused of scheming to bribe doctors across the U.S. to boost sales of Subsys and misleading insurers to get payment approved for the drug, which is meant for cancer patients in severe pain and can cost as much as \$19,000 a month, according to prosecutors. The bribes were paid in

the form of fees for sham speaking engagements that were billed as educational opportunities for other doctors.

The charges carry up to 20 years in prison.

"We will continue the fight to clear Dr. Kapoor's name," defense attorney Beth Wilkinson said in a statement. She said the long deliberations prove it was "far from an open-and-shut case."

A former sales representative testified that regional sales manager Sunrise Lee once gave a lap dance at a Chicago nightclub to a doctor whom Insys was pushing to write more prescriptions. Lee's lawyer said she will challenge the verdict.

Jurors also watched the rap video, which was shown at a national meeting in 2015 to motivate sales reps to push doctors to prescribe higher doses of the drug. At the end of the video, the person dressed up as the bottle takes off his costume and is revealed to be then-vice president of sales, Alec Burlakoff.

Burlakoff pleaded guilty and testified against Kapoor. Burlakoff told the jury that he met Lee at the strip club where she worked and recruited her to join the company despite her lack of pharmaceutical industry experience because he believed she would be willing to help carry out the plan to pay off doctors.

A former CEO of the company, Michael Babich, also pleaded guilty and testified against his colleagues. He said Insys recruited sales reps who were "easy on the eyes" because doctors didn't want an "unattractive person to walk in their door."

Kapoor's attorney sought to shift the blame onto Burlakoff, who she said was cutting side deals with doctors. Wilkinson argued that Burlakoff and Babich were lying about Kapoor in an attempt to save themselves.

Kapoor's lawyers also argued that prosecutors were unfairly blaming Insys for fueling the drug crisis, noting that the drug makes up a tiny fraction of the prescription opioid market.

Several doctors have been convicted in other cases of participating in a kickback scheme. A number of states have sued the Insys, which also agreed last year to pay \$150 million to settle a federal investigation into inappropriate sales.

Insys said in an emailed statement that the "the actions of a select few former employees" are not indicative of the company's work today.

Follow Alanna Durkin Richer at <http://www.twitter.com/aedurkinricher>

Synagogue didn't get to fund security upgrades before attack

By **JULIE WATSON** and **DON THOMPSON** Associated Press

POWAY, Calif. (AP) — Leaders at a Southern California synagogue knew they needed to increase security around their front door a year before a gunman walked through it and opened fire.

The Chabad of Poway synagogue sought a \$150,000 federal grant to install gates and more secure doors, but it took nearly a year for the application to be approved and the money to be distributed. It was awarded in late March.

"Obviously, we did not have a chance to start using the funds yet," rabbi Simcha Backman told The Associated Press.

Backman, who oversees security grants for the 207 Chabad institutions across California, wouldn't give details on the planned enhancements or speculate whether they might have changed the outcome of Saturday's attack.

The gunman killed a woman and wounded an 8-year-old girl, her uncle and Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein, who was leading the service on the last day of Passover, a major Jewish holiday. Goldstein, who lost a finger, joined President Donald Trump on Thursday for the National Day of Prayer.

Republican state Sen. Brian Jones, whose district includes the synagogue near San Diego, said he wants to find a way to shorten the time it takes for security grant money to get to organizations.

"Can we remove some bureaucratic steps here to help these organizations get these improvements done quicker?" he said.

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The Poway synagogue doesn't have security guards. But rabbis of California's Chabad organization began asking members who were trained law enforcement professionals to carry their weapons at services after a gunman massacred 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh last October.

Goldstein also applied for a concealed carry permit, and the congregation received training from the city of Poway on responding to an active shooter.

Houses of worship, like all institutions open to the public, face a balancing act in providing security while maintaining a welcoming atmosphere, said Jesus Villahermosa, a former law enforcement officer in Washington state who teaches classes nationwide on deterring and reacting to active shooters.

"All the mechanical security in the world isn't going to change that anyone in America can walk into any place in America and open fire," he said. "It's difficult because I don't think there is a perfect solution."

Even installing metal detectors merely makes those gathered there the potential initial target, he said.

Villahermosa said synagogue leaders were wise to ask officers to come armed, but layers of security would be best, including professional armed guards at entrances, embedded in the congregation and at the front of the worship area.

On Saturday, an off-duty Border Patrol agent who attends the synagogue fired at the gunman as he fled, hitting his vehicle. The 19-year-old suspect, John T. Earnest, has pleaded not guilty to murder and attempted murder charges.

The synagogue was built two decades ago with security features including video surveillance, but leaders started beefing up those measures in 2010. They received and spent money from a \$75,000 grant earmarked for a security assessment, 16 cameras, fencing and lighting, according to records reviewed by AP. One camera showed the gunman fumbling with his rifle before fleeing.

The synagogue applied for another grant in May 2018 to upgrade those cameras and add other enhancements.

While the synagogue got approval in September, a workshop on the required documents wasn't held until late October and the synagogue submitted its first documents in early February, said Brad Alexander, a spokesman for the California Office of Emergency Services, which administers the program for the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The state then requested additional information before awarding the money on March 22.

New FEMA rules allow the grants to be spent on security guards, and state officials said recipients can seek a modification to existing grants to use the money that way. Backman said the synagogue is considering it and will find money to hire guards even if the government does not fund them.

Gov. Gavin Newsom is backing legislation that would change a similar state grant program to allow money for guards, citing the increase in hate crimes against Jews and other religious and racial minorities. He said institutions should decide whether those guards are armed.

In response to the increase in mass shootings, states from Florida to Texas are considering measures that would allow people to be armed in places of worship and study.

Newsom announced Monday that he was budgeting \$15 million to increase security for religious institutions and other vulnerable nonprofits. Last year, the program got \$500,000.

Democratic Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel, vice chairman of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus, said lawmakers will have more control over how quickly the state money gets to institutions at risk of hate-motivated violence.

"Obviously, there's every reason in the world to get those funds out as quickly as possible," he said.

Jewish-affiliated organizations in California received 79% of the 264 nonprofit security grants awarded under the federal and state programs since 2012. The remaining 21% went to institutions serving other faiths, hospitals, Planned Parenthood chapters, domestic violence shelters, museums and a university.

The goal is to help any at-risk institution, though Jewish organizations could be more aware of the program, Gabriel said.

"There's a real sense of vulnerability right now in the Jewish community," he said.

Government help with security makes sense because millions of Americans attend places of worship, Backman said.

"I understand the concern for separation of church and state, but this is not about the government supporting one religious institution over another," the rabbi said. "It's about the government protecting its citizens."

Thompson reported from Sacramento. Associated Press writer Adam Beam in Sacramento contributed to this story.

Trump Fed choice Stephen Moore withdraws amid controversy

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stephen Moore, a conservative commentator whom President Donald Trump had tapped for the Federal Reserve board, withdrew from consideration Thursday after losing Republican support in the Senate, largely over his past inflammatory writings about women.

Trump tweeted the news of Moore's withdrawal, only hours after Moore had told two news organizations that he was still seeking the board seat and still had the White House's support.

The president announced otherwise Thursday afternoon on Twitter.

"Steve won the battle of ideas including Tax Cuts and deregulation which have produced non-inflationary prosperity for all Americans," Trump said. "I've asked Steve to work with me toward future economic growth in our Country."

In a note to Trump that he released later, Moore said the "unrelenting attacks on my character have become untenable for me and my family and three more months of this would be too hard on us."

"I am always at your disposal," he concluded.

Speaking later to Fox Business Network, Moore offered a combative defense of his candidacy for the Fed. "It was very disappointing that this couldn't go forward," he said.

Numerous Republican senators had said they objected to Moore's disparaging past writings about women or had sidestepped questions about whether they would back him. In recent weeks, Moore said he regretted the writings and said they had been meant as humor columns.

The Senate's second-ranking Republican, Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, had said Wednesday that Moore "has issues" in the Senate, which must confirm any nominees for the Fed's board.

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., said it was "hard to look past" Moore's previous statements, while Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., said his comments were a topic on which she would have questioned him.

In 2000, in a column for the Washington Times, Moore wondered why women "showed up in droves in tight skirts" at college parties if "they were so oppressed and offended by drunken, lustful frat boys."

He also said women should not cover basketball games on television unless they wore revealing clothes.

"The only thing less funny than some of Mr. Moore's tasteless, offensive, sexist 'jokes' was the idea that President Trump would even consider him for a seat on the Federal Reserve," Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., the top Senate Democrat, said in a statement. "Now President Trump must nominate two serious candidates who will strengthen our economy."

Yet finding someone who fits the mold Trump seems to be seeking in a Fed governor is problematic. The president appears to be aiming for a reliable political ally who will push the Fed to cut short-term interest rates. Most traditional right-leaning economists, though, have pushed for higher interest rates for most of the past decade. Any, like Moore, who have reversed themselves to embrace the dovish approach favored by Trump might have a hard time winning Senate support.

Trump had also named Herman Cain, a former presidential candidate and business executive, for a second open seat on the Fed's board. But Cain withdrew last week after coming under renewed scrutiny for allegations of sexual harassment and infidelity which first surfaced during the campaign.

Some experts say that David Beckworth, a research fellow at George Mason University's Mercatus Center, might fit what Trump is seeking — a right-of-center economist who has pushed for low rates for most of the past decade.

Beckworth has declined to comment.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, suggested that Moore's defeat reflected the proper functioning of the political system and the key role of the news media in illuminating Moore's written commentaries.

"This is an example of the system working as it should," Jamieson said in an interview. "Republicans spoke up."

As an adviser to Trump's presidential campaign, Moore helped design the 2017 tax cuts. Yet his candidacy immediately met widespread skepticism about whether he was qualified for a Fed board position and concerns about his background as a highly politicized commentator on economic issues.

He had called for the Fed to raise rates in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, just when the central bank and other agencies were cutting rates or taking emergency actions to help resuscitate the economy and the banking system. After Trump's election, Moore reversed course and argued for rate cuts even though the economy was much healthier by then.

Sung Won Sohn, a finance and economics professor at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, said Thursday that he thought Moore's withdrawal was a positive development for the Fed.

"The most important asset a central bank has is its reputation and credibility," Sohn said. He contended that putting Moore on the Fed board would have imperiled those standards.

After Trump named Moore as a potential nominee in late March, Gregory Mankiw, a Harvard professor who was a top adviser to President George W. Bush, observed that Moore "does not have the intellectual gravitas for this important job" and urged the Senate to keep him off the Fed.

Moore has argued that the Fed should follow changes in the prices of commodities, such as oil or farm goods, and raise rates if those prices rose, to stem inflation. Yet that approach would have caused the Fed to raise rates in 2008 as oil prices spiked, which would have worsened the Great Recession.

AP Business Writers Martin Crutsinger and Marcy Gordon contributed to this report.

Barr skips House hearing; Pelosi accuses him of lying

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General William Barr skipped a House hearing Thursday on special counsel Robert Mueller's Trump-Russia report, escalating an already acrimonious battle between Democrats and President Donald Trump's Justice Department. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Barr had already lied to Congress in other testimony and called that a "crime."

Democrats raised the prospect of holding Barr in contempt after the department also missed the House Judiciary Committee deadline to provide it with a full, unredacted version of Mueller's report and its underlying evidence. Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler of New York said that if the attorney general doesn't provide the committee "with the information it demands and the respect that it deserves, Mr. Barr's moment of accountability will come soon enough."

Barr's decision to avoid the hearing, made after a disagreement with the committee over questioning, and the Democratic pushback brought both sides closer to a court battle — one that could pit Trump against House Democrats well into the 2020 campaign season. The standoff further heightened tensions sparked by Trump's refusal to comply with House investigations, with some senior Democrats hinting that a continued blockade could nudge them closer to impeachment.

Nadler said he wouldn't immediately issue a subpoena for Barr's testimony but would first focus on getting the full Mueller report, likely including a vote holding Barr in contempt of Congress.

With Barr absent, Democrats convened a short hearing that included an empty chair with a place card set for Barr. Shortly afterward, Pelosi increased the tensions further. In a reference to the attorney general's testimony last month, Pelosi said Barr "was not telling the truth to the Congress of the United States — that's a crime."

At a hearing on April 9, Florida Rep. Charlie Crist asked Barr about reports that members of Mueller's team believed he had failed to adequately portray their findings in a four-page memo that was released

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before the full report.

Crist asked at the hearing, "Do you know what they are referencing with that?" Barr responded, "No, I don't," and went on to say Mueller's team probably wanted "more put out" about what they had found.

Democrats have raised questions about that testimony since it was revealed this week that Mueller had written Barr two weeks earlier, on March 27, complaining that the attorney general's memo "did not fully capture the context, nature and substance" of his work.

Barr said Wednesday his answer was not misleading because he had been in touch with Mueller, rather than members of his team, and that the concerns were mostly about process and not substance. Within minutes of Pelosi's comments, Justice Department Spokeswoman Kerri Kupec called her words "reckless, irresponsible and false."

Pelosi also said the administration's refusal to respect subpoenas by a House committee is "very, very serious" and noted that ignoring congressional subpoenas was one of the articles of impeachment against former President Richard Nixon.

As Democrats portrayed Barr as untruthful, they sought to speak to Mueller. Nadler said the panel hoped the special counsel would appear before the committee on May 15 and the panel was "firming up the date." It wasn't clear whether Barr would eventually negotiate an appearance with the House panel.

While a contempt vote would make a strong statement, it is unlikely to force the Justice Department to hand over the report. A vote of the full House on contempt would send a criminal referral to the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia — a Justice Department official who is likely to defend the administration's interests. But even if the U.S. attorney declines to prosecute, Democrats could pursue other avenues in court or even issue fines against witnesses who fail to appear.

"In the past they had a House jail," said Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., a member of the Judiciary panel. "I don't think we're going to go that far, but courts have upheld that."

At Barr's no-show hearing, Democratic members of the committee had fun with the spectacle, passing around fried chicken and placing a prop chicken by Barr's unused microphone to underscore their contention that he was afraid to appear. One lawmaker jokingly looked under the desk to make sure Barr wasn't there.

Republicans were not amused by the antics or Nadler's tough talk.

"The reason Bill Barr isn't here today is because the Democrats decided they didn't want him here today," said the top Republican on the panel, Georgia Rep. Doug Collins. Nadler had demanded that staff attorneys, in addition to lawmakers, be allowed to question Barr. Barr said he wouldn't attend under that condition.

The attorney general's cancellation meant he would avoid another round of sharp questioning after testifying Wednesday before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Democrats on the panel contended that Barr was protecting Trump after he assessed Mueller's report on his own in the early memo and declared there wasn't enough evidence that the president had committed obstruction of justice. Mueller didn't charge Trump with obstruction but wrote that he couldn't exonerate him, either.

Barr strongly defended himself against those criticisms and also Mueller's, saying at one point that Mueller's March letter to him was "snitty."

The attorney general's confrontational approach is in line with the White House, which argued in an April 19 letter that Trump has the right to instruct advisers not to testify before congressional oversight probes. The letter from White House legal counsel Emmet Flood to Barr, which was obtained by The Associated Press on Thursday, argues that Trump would, if necessary, assert executive privilege to prevent advisers from testifying.

Trump has vowed to battle "all of the subpoenas" as multiple committees have sought to speak with administration officials or obtain documents relevant to his policies and finances. The president, his business and his administration have already filed lawsuits to prevent the turning over of Trump's financial records and have declined to comply with a deadline to provide his tax returns.

Trump signaled Thursday that he would not allow aides, including former White House counsel Don McGahn, to testify before Congress, telling Fox News: "They've testified for many hours, all of them. I would say, it's done."

He insisted he provided "total transparency," to Mueller, and said Democrats "shouldn't be looking any-

more. It's done."

Democrats have signaled they won't back down and will take steps — including in court — to get the White House to comply.

But advisers to the president have suggested that any legal fight, even one that ends in defeat, would likely extend well into the 2020 campaign and allow them to portray the probes as political.

In the April letter, Flood blasted the Mueller report as defective and political. He called the 448-page report a "prosecutorial curiosity — part 'truth commission' report and part law school exam paper."

Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire, Alan Fram, Michael Balsamo, Eric Tucker, Laurie Kellman, Jill Colvin and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

Car-sharing apps' rising US popularity fuels tax debate

By **JONATHAN J. COOPER** Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — When Chris Williamson was in the market for a new family car, a timely ad and conversations with a co-worker convinced him to try something out of the ordinary. He bought a BMW 3 Series convertible and covers the payments by renting it to strangers on a peer-to-peer car sharing app called Turo.

It allows his family of seven to have a nicer car, essentially for free.

"It's great to have that little bit of extra income and not have to worry about the car payments," said Williamson, a teacher from the Phoenix area.

But his customers and others using car-sharing apps around the United States get their rentals tax-free. That's made them a target for rental car companies, airport authorities and local governments. They say users of the upstart apps should pay the same taxes and fees that come with traditional rental cars.

At stake is hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue that cities and airports count on to pay for stadiums and convention centers or to fund police, fire and other general operations.

"These companies are very sophisticated, technology-savvy companies that have hundreds of millions of dollars invested in each of them," said Ray Wagner, senior vice president for government relations at Enterprise Holdings, parent of the nation's largest car-rental firm. "They should be expected to comply with the same rules as a small, mom and pop rental car company located in rural Arizona."

Turo says Enterprise is trying to stifle competition.

Car-sharing companies including Turo and GetAround function like Airbnb for vehicles, allowing people to rent out their cars when they're not using them. Founded about a decade ago, they've taken off recently with the help of millions of dollars from venture capital firms and other investors.

That's put them in conflict with the \$42 billion-per-year rental car industry and the tourism and government agencies that tax it and regulate safety and consumer protections.

The battle is heating up in some three dozen state legislatures as well as the courts and offices of local tax authorities. Barraged with lobbying from both sides, lawmakers are grappling with how to regulate an emerging industry without destroying it — a repeat of recent fights between the taxi industry and Uber and Lyft, and between hotels and Airbnb.

"The tragedy would be if we snuffed out something like this in its infancy that has a lot of great potential," said Arizona Rep. Travis Grantham, a Republican who has introduced legislation backed by Turo that would exempt car-sharing from all rental car taxes except the standard sales taxes.

Tourism taxes have long been popular with politicians who can use surcharges on hotel rooms and rental cars — paid largely by visitors who vote elsewhere — to raise money for local priorities.

Forty-four states levy excise taxes on rental cars — on top of the standard sales tax, if one applies — and most allow local governments to levy their own as well, according to a March study by the Tax Foundation, a conservative think tank. Airports often add surcharges to pay for sprawling rental-car facilities.

Taxes, fees and surcharges can add as much as 30 percent to the cost of renting a car while generating millions of dollars.

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In metropolitan Phoenix, the baseball league that draws fans to 10 stadiums for spring training every March could see a sharp decrease in revenue as the new platform for car rental grows, said its president, Jeff Meyer. Rental car taxes help cover debt payments for some of the Cactus League's facilities and for the Arizona Cardinals football stadium.

California, Oregon and Washington passed legislation on car-sharing years before the industry took off, and Maryland did so last year. Bills governing the practice have been introduced in more than 30 other states, with the fight especially contentious in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico and Ohio.

Turo also is fighting in court with Los Angeles and San Francisco airport authorities, which contend the company should pay fees. Meanwhile, Chicago tax authorities wrote that car-sharing is subject to rental car taxes in response to questions from an Enterprise lawyer, according to a letter provided by the company.

In Arizona, Enterprise is backing legislation that would tax car-sharing like rental cars and require them to enter agreements with airports to use their facilities, while Turo supports a proposal that would exempt car-sharing companies from most taxes.

In Ohio, a detailed package of new regulations on car-sharing companies was tucked into the House version of the state transportation budget. It came as the Columbus Regional Airport Authority broke ground on a new \$140 million car rental facility that relies on a steady stream of car rental user fees.

The peer-to-peer companies won a temporary reprieve last month, when the provision was dropped from the bill. But Ohio Sen. Bob Peterson, the No. 2 Republican, said he anticipates a stand-alone regulatory bill will be introduced soon.

"I think everybody was agreed this is a new industry that needs some more regulation," Peterson said.

Both sides portray their position as a matter of fairness.

Those supporting stricter regulations say people who rent out their cars for profit should not only pay the taxes but meet the safety and transparency requirements that go with renting a car.

"The goal is leveling the playing field," said Arizona Rep. David Livingston, a Republican who is sponsoring legislation to treat car-sharing firms like rental car companies. "You want all these companies operating with the same type of rules and regulations so they can compete and the best one wins, whoever that is."

Turo's lobbyists point to the billions of dollars car-rental firms save on taxes. Most states charge no sales tax for vehicles sold exclusively for rental, and allow those companies to pass along vehicle licensing fees to customers.

Turo asks why its users should pay rental taxes if they're not exempt from other vehicle taxes that benefit rental car companies.

"Our host community is individuals that are just trying to offset the cost of a car," said Steve Webb, the company's vice president of communications. "And Enterprise is this \$24 billion Goliath that is using their political connections to stifle innovation."

Turo says more than 95% of Turo's 197,000 "hosts" share three or fewer cars on the platform. But some of the company's 350,000 listed vehicles are owned by people who rent out small fleets.

Wagner, the Enterprise executive, calls it a "politically motivated fiction" for Turo to focus on taxes paid by people who occasionally list their car.

For Williamson, the Phoenix teacher who rents his BMW through Turo, the prospect of his customers having to take on those taxes and surcharges is concerning. The people who rent his BMW are looking to splurge. He also sometimes rents his family's Honda Pilot SUV.

"Any time you start to creep the price up for anything, you're going to get people who say, 'Oh, I guess we won't take the convertible this weekend. We'll just take whatever Hertz has on special,'" he said.

Associated Press writer Julie Carr Smyth in Columbus, Ohio, contributed to this report.

With Trump rollback, school lunch could get more white bread
By CANDICE CHOI AP Food & Health Writer

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NEW YORK (AP) — Is white bread about to make a comeback on school lunch menus?

After complaints about taste and costs, the Trump administration rolled back a rule that required foods like pasta and bread be made with whole grains. The cafeteria directors who lobbied for the change say they just want greater flexibility to serve foods like white bread — which are more processed and have less fiber — when whole grains don't work.

In Vermont, the relaxed rule means white rice will be served with beans again. In Oregon, macaroni and cheese may return. And in South Dakota, students may notice a change with their soup.

"The staff asked right away, 'Oh my God, can we go back to the other saltines?'" said Gay Anderson, a school lunch director and president of the School Nutrition Association, which represents cafeteria operators and suppliers like Domino's and Kellogg.

The rollback addresses rules on grains, milk and salt championed by former first lady Michelle Obama.

Since 2014, schools had been required to serve only whole grain versions of food as part of the national school lunch program, a critical source of free and reduced-price meals for millions of children. The idea is that whole grains would be more nourishing and help cultivate healthy habits amid alarming obesity rates.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest, which is among the parties suing over the rollback, notes the standards were based on the government's own dietary guidelines and that most schools were successfully meeting them.

But cafeteria operators said costs were higher, cooking was more difficult and students were throwing away more food. The School Nutrition Association said it's more important that children who rely on the lunches eat something, and that the rule ignored cultural preferences, such as for flour tortillas in the Southwest or for white rice among Asian students.

To ease the transition to whole grains, the U.S. Department of Agriculture let schools apply for temporary waivers to serve select dishes that didn't meet the whole-grain rule. For the last school year, it said about 20 percent of districts asked permission to serve refined grains that are enriched to add back some nutrients.

Among the frequently waived foods were pasta, pizza, tortillas and biscuits, which one Georgia lunch official joked affects the "tests scores of rednecks," according to records obtained by The Associated Press from state agencies. Other waived foods included beignets, cinnamon rolls, corn dogs, sugar cookies and Pop Tarts.

One district requested a waiver for croissants because it said students don't like the whole-grain version.

"Plus they are 20 cents more per serving," the district said.

Then in December, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said the USDA was going back to the old standard: At least half of grain foods must be rich in whole grains. The agency said that does away with the red tape of making schools get waivers, and gives schools more flexibility to offer wholesome meals that also reduce food waste.

Whitney Ellersick, a school lunch director in Portland, Oregon, said the change means her district will no longer need a waiver for its lasagna. But she was surprised by the extent of the rollback.

"I was a little shocked to see it go to 50 percent," Ellersick said.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest said the USDA's rollback may be halting progress made by schools, which could be tempted to bring back more refined grains that cost less or are easier to make. Already, the group notes the USDA defines "whole grain rich" as being half whole grain, meaning there's built-in wiggle room to make bread and pasta students won't mind.

Bettina Elias Siegel of The Lunch Tray website also noted a recent USDA report that found that "plate waste" was comparable before and after the rules were implemented in 2014, undermining arguments they were prompting students to throw away more food.

The report also found that students took advantage of lunches more often in schools with healthier lunches.

The American Heart Association likewise criticized the decision to relax the rules and called on school districts to stick to the previous standards, which also included stricter rules on salt and milk. Among the districts that plan to do so is Boston, where fifth grader Trinity Wilson likes the brown rice.

She said it's healthier than white rice. "I know that because my mom told me," Wilson said.

But some school lunch officials say the rollback could help smaller districts that don't have access to as many products. In Arkansas, students in the Magnet Cove district accepted whole-grain Pop Tarts and other changes, officials say, but still prefer the old noodles, biscuits and rolls.

"They're tastier, softer and fluffier," said Danny Thomas, the district's superintendent.

In Burlington, Vermont, white rice and beans can return to menus. Doug Davis, the district's food director and incoming president of the School Nutrition Association, said it's a healthy dish that students will actually eat.

To avoid buying two types of rice, Davis said white rice will likely also be used in stir fries and soups. He plans to stick mostly to whole grains, but he appreciates not having to.

Whole-grain pasta isn't ideal for mac and cheese, Davis noted.

"Would we make a change on that? I don't know," he said.

Follow Candice Choi at www.twitter.com/candicechoi

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Secluded Baltimore mayor resigns amid scandal

By DAVID McFADDEN Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Baltimore's mayor resigned under pressure Thursday amid a flurry of investigations into whether she arranged bulk sales of her self-published children's books to disguise hundreds of thousands of dollars in kickbacks.

Mayor Catherine Pugh's resignation came exactly a week after her City Hall offices, homes and multiple other locations were raided by FBI and IRS agents. She is the second mayor in less than a decade to step down because of scandal. She came to office contrasting her clean image with her main opponent, ex-mayor Sheila Dixon, who was forced to depart office in 2010 as part of a plea deal for misappropriating about \$500 in gift cards meant for needy families.

"I am sorry for the harm that I have caused to the image of the city of Baltimore and the credibility of the office of the mayor," Pugh said in a written statement read by her lawyer, Steven Silverman.

A federal grand jury has been empaneled and state and local inquiries are also underway into the roughly \$800,000 Pugh made over the years in exchange for her "Healthy Holly" paperbacks about health and nutrition. She hasn't been charged with any crime.

Since the book scandal erupted in late March, Pugh's fractured administration has lurched from one crisis to another and various aides have been fired or left City Hall.

Her resignation provides a measure of resolution after weeks of uncertainty and mounting pressure for her to step down. Maryland's Republican governor and numerous Democrats had pressed for her resignation, saying she was no longer fit to lead Baltimore.

"This was the right decision, as it was clear the mayor could no longer lead effectively," Gov. Larry Hogan said in a statement Thursday afternoon. "Baltimore City can now begin to move forward."

Now that Pugh has resigned, acting Mayor Bernard "Jack" Young automatically becomes the permanent mayor and will not need to be sworn in. Young, a Democrat and longtime City Council member, is currently in Detroit for a conference about economic development and will return to Baltimore over the weekend.

In a statement, Young thanked the thousands of city employees who came to work each day under uncertain circumstances for weeks.

"Although I understand that this ordeal has caused real pain for many Baltimoreans, I promise that we will emerge from it more committed than ever to building a stronger Baltimore," he said.

Young declined to comment further when approached by Associated Press reporters at the Detroit conference.

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Citing deteriorating health following a bout of pneumonia, Pugh took a paid leave on April 1 and hasn't been seen in public since. The 69-year-old abruptly retreated to her home the same day that Hogan asked the state prosecutor to investigate public corruption accusations against her.

In recent days, Silverman had repeatedly gone in and out of Pugh's city home to discuss "options" with her while also asserting that she was so fragile physically and mentally that she was unable to make "major decisions." Last week, Silverman had told reporters that she might be "lucid" enough to make a decision this week.

At issue for multiple investigators are questionable financial arrangements she negotiated over years selling her hard-to-find "Healthy Holly" books. The books were meant to be provided to schools and day care centers, but it's unclear where tens of thousands of copies ended up.

Hogan has called the accusations against Pugh "deeply disturbing," and the state's accountant described the book-selling arrangements as "brazen, cartoonish corruption." The City Council called for Pugh's immediate resignation, as did numerous state lawmakers and an influential business group, among others.

The scandal erupted when it came to light that the University of Maryland Medical System, one of the state's largest private employers, paid Pugh \$500,000 for 100,000 copies of her children's books. There was no contract behind the deal and the hospital network described some of the purchases as "grants" in federal filings.

Before she became mayor, Pugh once sat on a state Senate committee that funded the major health network. She started serving on the system's board in 2001. Pugh was not the only one who benefited: Roughly one-third of the system's board members received compensation through the medical system's arrangements with their businesses. As she became the public face of the scandal, however, she stepped down from the board and returned her most recent \$100,000 payment.

Pressure on Pugh to resign ratcheted up dramatically after Kaiser Permanente disclosed that it paid her limited liability company about \$114,000 between 2015 and 2018 for roughly 20,000 copies of her illustrated books. Pugh became Baltimore's mayor in 2016. The next year, Baltimore's spending board, which is controlled by the mayor, awarded a \$48 million contract to the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States Inc. When asked who Kaiser bought the books from, company spokesman Scott Lusk said: "We purchased the books from Healthy Holly, LLC." That is Pugh's company.

Others then came forward, including Maryland financier J.P. Grant. He acknowledged writing a roughly \$100,000 check to buy Pugh's "Health Holly" books but insisted he expected nothing in return.

At a rambling news conference days before retreating from public view, Pugh described her book deal worth \$500,000 with the university-based health care system as a "regrettable mistake." She has not publicly addressed the other lucrative arrangements that have come to light.

Associated Press writer Corey Williams and photographer Carlos Osorio contributed to this story from Detroit.

Beyond Meat fattens up as shares more than double in IPO

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Investors have a big appetite for fake meat.

The shares of Beyond Meat, the purveyor of plant-based burgers and sausages, more than doubled Thursday in its Nasdaq debut. It's the first pure-play maker of vegan "meat" to go public, according to Renaissance Capital, which researches and tracks IPOs.

Beyond Meat raised about \$240 million selling 9.6 million shares at \$25 each. Those shares rose 163% to close at \$65.75.

The 10-year-old company has attracted celebrity investors like Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and actor Leonardo DiCaprio and buzz for placing its products in burger joints like Carl's Jr. It sells to 30,000 grocery stores, restaurants and schools in the U.S., Canada, Italy, the United Kingdom and Israel.

Beyond Meat CEO Ethan Brown said the IPO timing is right because the company wants to expand over-

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seas. He also wants consumers to be able to buy shares since they have fueled the company's growth. "It really is a wonderful feeling to be able to welcome people in who have helped this brand," Brown told The Associated Press.

Still, Beyond Meat has never made an annual profit, losing \$30 million last year. It's also facing serious competition from other "new meat" companies like Impossible Foods and traditional players like Tyson Foods Inc. Tyson recently sold a stake in Beyond Meat because it plans to develop its own alternative meat.

The IPO comes amid growing consumer interest in plant-based foods for their presumed health and environmental benefits. U.S. sales of plant-based meats jumped 42% between March 2016 and March 2019 to a total of \$888 million, according to Nielsen. Traditional meat sales rose 1% to \$85 billion in that same time frame.

The trend is a global one. U.K. sales of meat alternatives jumped 18% over the last year, while sales of traditional meat and poultry slid 2%.

Demand is expected to continue to grow. Euromonitor, a consulting firm, predicts worldwide sales of meat substitutes will grow 22% by 2023 to a total of \$22.9 billion.

Even Burger King has recognized the appeal. Earlier this week, the fast food chain announced that it would start testing the Impossible Whopper, made with a plant-based burger from Impossible Foods, in additional markets after its monthlong test in St. Louis proved successful. Meanwhile, Ikea says it's working on developing a plant-based Swedish meatball, which it says it plans to test with customers early next year.

Brown says Beyond Meat's ingredient list — it only uses natural ingredients that haven't been genetically modified and doesn't use soy — sets it apart from competitors. Its products are made from pea protein, canola oil, potato starch and other plant-based ingredients. Its burgers "bleed" with beet juice; its sausages are colored with fruit juice.

Unlike competitors, Beyond Meat products have also been sold in the meat section of groceries since 2016. That has broadened their appeal beyond vegetarians. Beyond Meat says a 26-week study last spring showed that 93% of Kroger customers who bought its burgers also bought animal meat during the same period.

In a 2016 taste test, Consumer Reports said the texture of the Beyond Burger was similar to ground beef, but it didn't match up in flavor. The magazine's conclusion: It might not be the best burger you've ever tried, but it's pretty tasty on a bun with lots of toppings.

As for health benefits, the results are mixed. A four-ounce 92% lean burger from Laura's Lean Beef has higher fat and cholesterol than a Beyond Meat burger, but Beyond Meat's burger has higher sodium and carbohydrates and slightly less protein. The lean beef burger is 160 calories; a Beyond Meat burger is 270 calories.

Brown says Beyond Meat is working on reducing sodium, which is a natural byproduct of its manufacturing process. But he also points out that red meat and processed meat have been classified as possible carcinogens by the World Health Organization.

Beyond Meat also costs more. For \$5.99, consumers can get two 4-ounce patties of Beyond Burger or four 4-ounce patties of Laura's Lean Beef.

Brown said Beyond Meat has a five-year goal of getting at least one product — most likely beef — to cost less than the animal version. He expects the supply chain will grow as sales expand, which will lower the cost of raw ingredients like peas.

But Beyond Meat touts environmental benefits as well. The company says a plant-based burger takes 99% less water and 93% less land to produce than a beef burger, and generates 90% fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

Beyond Meat was founded in 2009 by Brown, a former clean energy executive. Brown's family part-owned a Maryland dairy farm, so as a child, Brown spent weekends and summers on the farm. As he grew older, he began to question whether people really needed animals to produce meat.

Brown teamed up with two professors from the University of Missouri, Fu-hung Hsieh and Harold Huff, who had been developing soy-based chicken since the 1980s. By 2013, Beyond Meat was selling plant-

based chicken strips nationwide at Whole Foods. (The company discontinued chicken earlier this year but says it's working on a better recipe.)

For investors, the stock is not without risk. Amid its annual losses, Beyond Meat must also continue to spend heavily on research and development. The El Segundo, California-based company employs 63 scientists, engineers, researchers, technicians and chefs at its 30,000-square-foot lab. It also has manufacturing facilities in Columbia, Missouri.

Renaissance Capital, which has researched the company, says investors will likely tolerate the losses because the business is growing so quickly. Beyond Meat's net revenue was \$87.9 million last year, 170% higher than 2017.

In documents filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, Beyond Meat says it will invest \$40 million to \$50 million in current and new manufacturing facilities and spend \$50 million to \$60 million on product development and sales. The rest will be used to pay down debt and fund operations.

Trump easing offshore drilling safety rules from Deepwater

By JANET McCONNAUGHEY and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

PORT FOURCHON, La. (AP) — The Trump administration moved Thursday to give oil and gas companies more flexibility in meeting safety requirements imposed after the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon explosion, which killed nearly a dozen people and was the worst offshore oil disaster in U.S. history.

The revised rules, which govern safety standards at offshore wells, come as the administration pushes to expand drilling off the U.S. coast, although court challenges and opposition from many coastal states have slowed its efforts.

The new safety changes were sought by the industry but fiercely challenged by environmentalists.

Interior Secretary David Bernhardt said in a statement the administration was acting to eliminate "unnecessary regulatory burdens while maintaining safety and environmental protection offshore."

Officials picked Louisiana's Port Fourchon, a hub for drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, to announce the changes. Port workers in hard hats and reflective safety vests applauded speakers' calls for easing regulations.

"We're more open to invention," Scott Angelle, a safety regulator at the Interior Department, told the crowd. "We tell them what to do," he said. "How they do it is up to them."

Officials estimate the Trump administration revisions will save the oil industry over \$1.5 billion over the next 10 years.

Governors and lawmakers from both Republican- and Democratic-led states have fought the Trump administration's plans for expanded offshore drilling. And a federal judge ruled last month that President Donald Trump had exceeded his authority when he ordered that the Arctic and parts of the Atlantic be opened to oil and gas development.

Eleven people died in April 2010 when the Deepwater Horizon exploded, ultimately releasing more than 3 million barrels of crude into the Gulf of Mexico. Crews finally capped the well in July 2010, three months after it began gushing oil from the bottom of the sea in a spectacle captured live on video.

Conservation groups say the toll to wildlife included more than 1 million dead birds, and the government declared a fisheries disaster. BP says its costs in the blowout and spill continue to mount, and have topped \$60 billion.

The explosion prompted a major overhaul of the agency that oversees offshore drilling, as investigators concluded regulators were too cozy with industry. The explosion and resulting oil spill also focused attention on blowout preventers, devices intended to monitor and control oil and gas wells to prevent uncontrolled release of crude oil or natural gas from a well.

In the aftermath, the Obama administration imposed more precise operating requirements for offshore crews in tracking pressure in underwater wells, more real-time monitoring by oil companies and more rigorous inspections of blowout preventers on the offshore facilities, among other measures.

Vuong Vo, 31, who traveled to Port Fourchon from New Orleans for a kayaking tournament, said his father, a shrimper, was left with permanent skin and nasal problems after a few months working on the

cleanup after Deepwater Horizon.

"It takes one accident to affect so many people," he said.

The Trump administration and oil industry say the revised rule preserves 80 percent of the Obama-era regulation.

Erik Milito, a vice president of the American Petroleum Institute, said the slate of safety measures adopted under the Obama administration was "simply too prescriptive, curtails innovation and can make it hard for the company to move forward."

"We haven't identified anything in the rule that's taking a step backward on safety," Milito said, referring to the Trump administration revisions, which take effect 60 days after they are published in the Federal Register.

BP declined comment on the new rules.

Donald Boesch, a marine scientist on the presidential commission that investigated the Deepwater Horizon disaster, said even with the new changes, "we're still better off probably than we were before the blowout" in terms of offshore drilling safety.

"But I'm not convinced we're safer than we were two years ago," Boesch said.

As far as giving the industry more discretion in how it complies with the post-Deepwater Horizon safety rules, "That's what we thought before the BP blowout," Boesch said. "We let the industry decide and what happened was people took chances. That's the reason why we need hard and fast standards."

Courtney Kemp Robertson's husband, Roy Wyatt Kemp, died during the Deepwater Horizon blowout, but she said Thursday that she continues to advocate for the oil industry, where many of her family members and friends work. She said she hadn't seen the specific changes the Trump administration announced, but "As long as our men are safe, as long as the companies are not making shortcuts and costing people their lives by doing so I'm all for it."

She said just having more regulations doesn't mean companies or bosses won't pressure workers to cut corners.

"It's not the fact that we need to have more (regulations). It's the fact that we need to have the ones that we do have enforced," she said.

Knickmeyer reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Matthew Brown in Billings, Montana; Matthew Daly in Washington and Rebecca Santana in New Orleans contributed to this report.

As Israeli group expands, Palestinian houses face demolition

By ISABEL DEBRE and AREEJ HAZBOUN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — For 20 years, Hala Kashour has lived with her husband in what she called "paradise," a bucolic meadow that rolls through a Palestinian neighborhood of east Jerusalem.

The coveted pasture, which Israel calls the "Peace Forest," lies in the crosshairs of a long-simmering conflict between the city government and its Palestinian residents that flared up on a recent spring morning as Kashour, 47, was jolted awake by the sound of bulldozers crushing her neighbor's house.

Some 60 houses in the grassy quarter, known to its 500 residents as Wad Yasul, are facing demolition by Israeli authorities. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court declined to hear the residents' appeal against demolition orders, saying the structures were built without required permits in a municipally designated green space.

"God willing, we won't be next," said Kashour, who claims she built the neighborhood's first house, a stone cottage ringed with rose bushes, on land her family has owned for 50 years.

Demolition of unauthorized Palestinian-owned structures in east Jerusalem is not unusual. The municipality contends it cracks down on zoning violations. Palestinians say it is nearly impossible to receive building permits, and that Israel is severely restricting their ability to build on land they claim for the capital of their future state.

But the Peace Forest demolitions have drawn particular attention because of accelerating construction

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by a nationalist Jewish organization in the same park.

With the support of Israel's Tourism Ministry, the City of David Foundation has set up lodging structures, operates a Segway tour through the woodland and is advancing plans for several tourist attractions, including a visitor center and what it bills as the country's largest zip line. The foundation said it has leased 4% of the park's total area from the government.

Although city regulations forbid construction of any kind in designated parks, the municipality confirmed it was working to alter zoning restrictions and retroactively authorize City of David's construction and facilitate its expansion.

"The City of David hasn't yet received final approval for everything, but its efforts to build up public space with sports and tourist facilities are being considered positively," said an official in the Jerusalem mayor's office, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media. "We are not eager to evict Palestinian residents in a brutal way, but we have a green light from the highest court."

Activists and Palestinian residents say the case of the Peace Forest highlights discriminatory Israeli policies that have propelled a housing crisis in overcrowded east Jerusalem.

"The government zoned this area in an intractable way to prevent Palestinian construction, and now we can see the designation being altered to serve Jewish settlement," said Aviv Tatarsky from Ir Amim, an Israeli group that advocates equality in Jerusalem.

The Supreme Court's dismissal of the case brought an end to the residents' costly decade-long legal battle to get their houses, in many cases built decades ago on inherited family land, authorized by Israel.

Structures belonging to two families were destroyed immediately following the decision, and two more homes were demolished on Tuesday. Pending demolition orders for the rest of the area can go into effect at any time, said Zyad Kawar, lawyer for the Palestinian residents.

Many residents view the park zoning as a government ploy to force Palestinians out of east Jerusalem, which Israel considers an indivisible part of its capital.

"They don't want to give us permits, that's the bottom line," said Nasser Burqan, 42, whose cousin owned a house demolished this month. "It's displacement."

Israel captured east Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 Mideast War and annexed it, a move not internationally recognized. Since then, Israel has boosted the Jewish presence there, building neighborhoods where over 200,000 Jews now live.

The Peace Forest sits in the larger Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, long a focal point of Jewish settlement for its proximity to some of the world's most sensitive religious sites in the walled Old City.

The City of David Foundation runs popular archaeological and touristic sites in and around Silwan — spots it emphasizes as centerpieces of ancient Jewish civilization. The foundation says its sites "are situated upon King David's once lost ancient capital," referring to the biblical figure who is believed to have conquered the city and established Jewish Jerusalem thousands of years ago.

In the Peace Forest, "the City of David has transformed what was once a derelict crime-ridden site" into a space used freely by the public, said the foundation's vice president, Doron Spielman. "We are confident that it too will become a major tourist attraction."

The City of David projects are not planned on the ruins of the demolished homes, and the foundation says the city's demolition plans go back long before it became involved. But critics say the demolitions on one hand, and the green light to City of David on the other, illustrate two sets of standards for Jews and Palestinians in the city.

The organization has also drawn sharp criticism for helping to settle Jewish families in Arab neighborhoods, fueling suspicions that its tourism projects mask efforts to erase the line between east and west Jerusalem, and with it, hope for an independent Palestinian state.

The two-state dream seems more distant than ever after newly re-elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised on the campaign trail to annex West Bank settlements. He is poised to form a governing coalition with right-wing parties that reject Palestinian sovereignty.

His re-election comes a year after the Trump administration recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and

moved the U.S. Embassy to the city. Though Trump says his move does not determine the city's final status, it was seen by the Palestinians and others as recognizing Israel's claim to the city, including its eastern sector.

With the Trump administration providing unprecedented support for Israel, there are fears in Jerusalem that the government could step up its pressure on Palestinian residents.

"What's next? What will we do?" said Kashour, standing in her rose garden among some of the recently evicted children from the neighboring Burqan family. "I don't have anywhere else."

In 'lawless' world of service dogs, many families suffer

By ALLEN G. BREED AP National Writer

APEX, N.C. (AP) — All the counseling, therapy and medication did little to ease 9-year-old Sobie Cummings' crippling anxiety and feelings of isolation. A psychiatrist suggested that a service dog might help.

To Glenn and Rachel Cummings, Mark Mathis seemed like a dream come true. His kennel, Ry-Con Service Dogs, was just a couple of hours away, and he, too, had a child with autism. But what clinched the decision were Mathis' credentials.

"In 2013, Mark was certified as a NC state approved service dog trainer with a specialty in autism service dogs for children," stated an online brochure.

Ten months and \$14,500 later, the family brought their "savior" home. But when they opened the front door, Okami broke from Glenn Cummings' grasp and began mauling one of the family's elderly dogs — all as Sobie watched.

It was only after they had returned Okami that the family learned that Mathis wasn't a state-certified dog trainer. In fact, no state has such a certification.

The service dog industry — particularly in the field of "psychiatric" service dogs for people with autism and post-traumatic stress disorder — has exploded in recent years. But a near complete absence of regulation and oversight has left needy, desperate families vulnerable to incompetence and fraud.

"It is a lawless area. The Wild West," says David Favre, a law professor at Michigan State University and editor of its Animal Legal and Historical Center website.

Properly training a service dog can take up to 1 ½ years and cost upward of \$50,000. But the Americans with Disabilities Act does not require that a service dog be professionally trained.

"So it's a very broad, wide-open barn door," says Lynette Hart, a professor of veterinary medicine at the University of California, Davis, who studies the industry.

Two years ago, Noelle's Dogs Four Hope of Colorado Springs agreed to surrender its license after state inspectors confirmed the placement of sick, poorly trained, aggressive dogs.

And last year, Virginia's attorney general filed suit against Service Dogs by Warren Retrievers Inc., which advertises dogs trained to help people suffering from diabetes, PTSD, seizure disorders and autism. The lawsuit alleges that the diabetes alert dogs, for which Warren charged up to \$27,000, were "little more than incredibly expensive pets."

Attorneys for owner Charles D. Warren Jr. say the state's case is based on the complaints of "a few disgruntled and fanatical consumers" who "cannot be satisfied and refuse all attempts at accommodation and reason." A trial date has not been scheduled.

Authorities in North Carolina are now investigating Mathis.

The biotech engineer and his wife founded the nonprofit after their older son, who is autistic, was successfully paired with a service dog. In a May 2017 news release, Mathis claimed that Ry-Con — based in Apex, southwest of Raleigh — was the largest provider of autism service dogs on the East Coast and boasted a "100% success rate."

For Rachel Cummings, that state certification "was huge." She and her husband contacted Ry-Con in July 2017. Within days, Mathis called to say he had the perfect dog for Sobie, although he'd not yet met her.

The International Association of Assistance Dog Partners says a service animal must respond to basic commands — "Sit, Stay, Come, Down, Heel" — and be able to work without exhibiting "aggressive behavior

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toward people or other animals.”

But during training trips to local stores, Okami pulled at her leash and refused to lie down. At a mall, the dog growled and lunged at people and defecated in a hallway. Still, Okami “graduated” last May; the family brought her home Mother’s Day weekend.

Cummings says her two dogs were lying in the front hall when Okami attacked, unprovoked. When Mathis refused to refund their money, they sued. And then last November, he emailed clients announcing he was closing down, saying the operation was no longer sustainable. The following day, he filed for bankruptcy protection.

Not long after, complaints began pouring into state Attorney General Josh Stein’s office — more than four dozen in all.

Nancy Evans says her 19-year-old daughter, Katie, had waited over a year for her dog, Bailey. But when they got home to Toronto, the dog showed extreme aggression toward Katie’s older brother. About five weeks after giving up Bailey, Katie committed suicide, and her mother blames the loss of the dog.

Mathis accuses clients of breaking their contracts, falling behind on payments or misrepresenting conditions in their homes. In an email to The Associated Press, he insisted that his troubles all stemmed from recent financial issues.

“This is ... certainly not a willful act or scam,” he wrote.

Stein, however, alleges that Mathis falsified medical records and breeder information, and contends he may have “siphoned” as much as \$240,000 of the nonprofit’s money for personal expenses.

Rachel Cummings says the experience left Sobie, now 11, with PTSD.

“Her life is not what it was,” her mother says. “The light’s not back in her eyes yet.”

As for Okami, Mathis sold her to another family — with similar results. They have also filed a complaint.

Follow Breed at <https://twitter.com/AllenGBreed>

Asian markets mixed following losses on Wall Street

By ANNABELLE LIANG Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Benchmarks in Asia were mixed with thin trading on Friday after a discouraging day on Wall Street. News reports highlighting obstacles in the way of a China-U.S. trade deal also weighed on sentiment.

The Kospi in South Korea dropped 0.6% to 2,199.58 while Australia’s S&P ASX 200 was 0.1% higher at 6,345.80. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng lost 0.2% to 29,875.50. Stocks rose in Taiwan but fell in Singapore and Indonesia. Markets in Japan and mainland China were closed.

U.S. website Politico, citing a representative of a lobbying group for American businesses, reported that the deal may not see China putting a commitment to cut back on state subsidies in writing. Global Times, a Chinese tabloid, noted that there were fewer details from recent negotiations in Beijing. But there was an overall consensus that both countries would ink a deal at some point.

On Thursday, losses by energy, technology and communications stocks handed Wall Street its second straight loss.

The broad S&P S&P 500 index fell 0.2% to 2,917.52 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.5% to 26,307.79. The tech-heavy Nasdaq composite was down 0.2% at 8,036.77. The Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks edged 0.4% higher to 1,582.65.

Traders are still mulling over recent comments by U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, who said the central bank was “comfortable” with its current policy stance. This was taken to mean that the Fed was not likely to cut interest rates this year despite low inflation.

“Asia is unlikely to look past Wall Street’s performance overnight for initial direction,” Jeffrey Halley of OANDA said in a commentary.

“And with post-Fed position unwinding in full swing, non-farm payrolls tonight and the upcoming weekend, traders in Asia could decide discretion is the better part of valor and lighten long equity positions as

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well," he added.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude shed 8 cents to \$61.73 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It sank \$1.79 to settle at \$61.81 per barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 23 cents to \$70.52 per barrel. It gave up \$1.43 to close at \$70.75 per barrel in the previous session.

CURRENCIES: The dollar eased to 111.49 Japanese yen from 111.51 yen late Thursday. The euro fell to \$1.1173 from \$1.1176.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, May 3, the 123rd day of 2019. There are 242 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On May 3, 1937, Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel, "Gone with the Wind."

On this date:

In 1469, political theorist Niccolo Machiavelli was born in Florence, Italy.

In 1802, Washington, D.C. was incorporated as a city.

In 1913, Clorox had its beginnings as five entrepreneurs agreed to set up a liquid bleach factory in Oakland, Calif.

In 1916, Irish nationalists Padraic Pearse, Thomas Clarke and Thomas MacDonagh were executed by a British firing squad; they were among 16 people put to death for their roles in the Easter Rising.

In 1948, the Supreme Court, in Shelley v. Kraemer, ruled that covenants prohibiting the sale of real estate to blacks or members of other racial groups were legally unenforceable.

In 1952, the Kentucky Derby was televised nationally for the first time on CBS; the winner was Hill Gail, ridden by Eddie Arcaro.

In 1960, the Harvey Schmidt-Tom Jones musical "The Fantasticks" began a nearly 42-year run at New York's Sullivan Street Playhouse.

In 1978, spam email was born as Gary Thuerk (thurk), a marketing executive for the Digital Equipment Corp. of Maynard, Massachusetts, transmitted an unsolicited sales pitch for a new line of computers to 400 prospective customers on ARPANET, a precursor to the internet; the stunt generated some business, as well as complaints. "Sun Day" took place on a Wednesday as thousands of people extolling the virtues of solar energy held events across the country.

In 1979, Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher was chosen to become Britain's first female prime minister as the Tories ousted the incumbent Labour government in parliamentary elections.

In 1986, in NASA's first post-Challenger launch, an unmanned Delta rocket lost power in its main engine shortly after liftoff, forcing safety officers to destroy it by remote control.

In 1999, some 70 tornadoes roared across Oklahoma and Kansas, killing 46 people and injuring hundreds.

In 2007, British girl Madeleine McCann vanished during a family vacation in Portugal nine days before her fourth birthday; her disappearance remains unsolved.

Ten years ago: Mexican President Felipe Calderon told state television a nationwide shutdown and an aggressive informational campaign appeared to have helped curtail an outbreak of swine flu in Mexico. Ricardo Martinelli won Panama's presidential election.

Five years ago: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, during a visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, said the U.S. was ready to help increase its ties with Africa, but that nations across the continent needed to take stronger steps to ensure security and democracy for its people. California Chrome pulled away down the stretch for a dominant win at the 140th Kentucky Derby. Floyd Mayweather Jr. retained his welterweight title with a majority decision over Marcos Maidana in Las Vegas.

One year ago: President Donald Trump insisted that his reimbursement of a 2016 hush payment to porn actress Stormy Daniels had nothing to do with his election campaign. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey signed a

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plan to give striking teachers pay raises totaling 20 percent, ending a six-day walkout. In a reversal. House Speaker Paul Ryan announced that the chaplain of the House of Representatives would stay in his job; Ryan had sparked an uproar when he asked the Rev. Patrick Conroy to resign and said he was dissatisfied with Conroy's pastoral care to lawmakers. A federal grand jury in Detroit indicted former Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn on charges stemming from the company's diesel emissions cheating scandal. (Under Germany's constitution, he could not be extradited to the U.S. to face charges.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Alex Cord is 86. Singer Frankie Valli is 85. Former Idaho Gov. Butch Otter is 77. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, is 76. Sports announcer Greg Gumbel is 73. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., is 70. Pop singer Mary Hopkin is 69. Singer Christopher Cross is 68. Country musician Cactus Moser (Highway 101) is 62. Rock musician David Ball (Soft Cell) is 60. Former Sen. David Vitter, R-La., is 58. Country singer Shane Minor is 51. Actress Amy Ryan is 51. Actor Bobby Cannavale (ka-nuh-VAL'-ee) is 49. Music and film producer-actor Damon Dash is 48. Country musician John Driskell Hopkins (Zac Brown Band) is 48. Country-rock musician John Neff is 48. Country singer Brad Martin is 46. TV personality Willie Geist (TV: "Today") is 44. Actress Christina Hendricks is 44. Actor Dule (doo-LAY') Hill is 44. Country singer Eric Church is 42. Actress Tanya Wright is 41. Dancer Cheryl Burke is 35. Soul singer Michael Kiwanuka is 32. Actress Jill Berard is 29. Actress Zoe De Grand Maison is 24. Rapper Desiigner (cq) is 22.

Thought for Today: "Hatred is gained as much by good works as by evil." — Niccolo Machiavelli, Italian political philosopher (born this date in 1469, died 1527).