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Chicken Soup
for the Soul

Things that were
hard to bear
are **sweet**
to remember.

-Seneca

Upcoming COMMUNITY EVENTS

Swimming Pool Hours

Open Swim Daily: 1 p.m. to 4:50 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 8:50 p.m.

Fun Night is every Friday from 6:30 p.m. to 8:50 p.m.

Adult Water Aerobics: Monday through Thursday: 8 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. to 6:15 pm

Adult Lap Swim: Monday through Friday: 7 a.m. to 8 a.m.; Monday through Thursday: 5:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.; Friday-Sunday: 4:50 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Swimming Lessons: First Session: June 17-27

Friday, May 31

- 5:30 p.m.: U12 Midgets host Backous, (DH)
- 5:30 p.m.: Junior Teeners host Northville, (DH)
- 5:30 p.m.: U10 Pee Wees host Warner, (DH)
- (W,B)
- 6:00 p.m.: Legion at Sisseton, (DH)

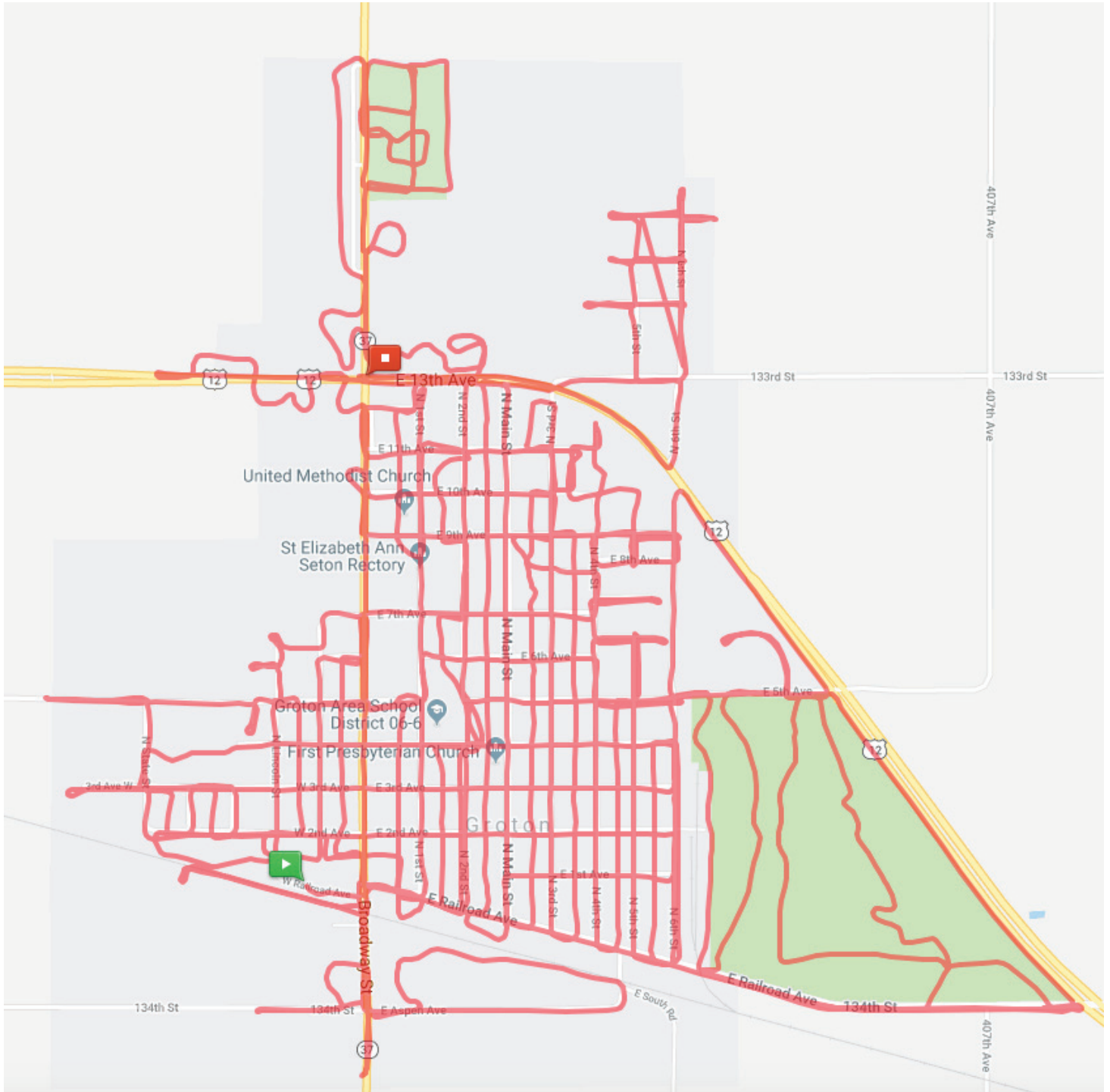
OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Adult Mosquito Control was done last night.
The route was 42 miles. 15 gallons of Evolver 4x4 was used.
The air temperature was 68 degrees at the completion of the control.
Wind was West to Southwest 4-6 mph.



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Josie LaMee escorting Shantel Mehlhaff.

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

We do apologize that we missed the above photo in our prom photo feature.

Head men's basketball coach Paul Sather steps down, accepts position at UND

Aberdeen, S.D. – Northern State University Director of Athletics, Josh Moon announced today that Paul Sather will step down from his position with the Wolves to accept the head coaching role at the University of North Dakota. Sather has led the Wolves the past nine seasons, compiling a record of 188-89 at Northern State.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for Paul and his family," said NSU President Dr. Tim Downs. "Coach has done an amazing job with our program, and we cannot thank him and his family enough for their dedication to Northern. Paul knows how to build a program of responsible and hardworking student-athletes that work together as a team. He will continue to do great things, and for that, we'll always be proud."

"We want to thank Paul for the amazing job he did bringing NSU basketball back to the top of the NSIC and re-establishing it as one of the best programs in the country," noted Moon. "He deserves this great opportunity at UND and we wish him and his wonderful family all the best moving forward."

"I want to thank Northern State University for bringing me back nine years ago to lead the men's basketball program," explained Sather. "There is no possible way to thank everyone because the list of people that have helped Wolves basketball and supported our teams is way too long... making this decision to leave very difficult for my family and I. I would like to first thank Dr. Tim Downs, Josh Moon, and his staff for their incredible leadership and vision. Their tireless work and support gave us the resources needed to run a program in a way that gave our student-athletes a tremendous experience."

"I would also like to thank our basketball staff, past and present. The passion and purpose you provided over the years helped build our program into a national contender...something we all can be proud of. I'd like to thank all of the players that have played for me over the past nine years and before I arrived. The Wolves basketball family is strong, and will continue to be long after I leave. I have loved every minute of it. Lastly, thanks to Wolves Nation. We have the best fans in D2, and one of the most passionate fan-bases in the nation. Thanks for your support, through the good times and the bad, it's been an unreal ride!"

A 1996 graduate of Northern State University, Sather returned to his alma mater in 2010-11 to lead the program. In those nine years, Sather and the Wolves won back-to-back NSIC Conference and Tournament Championships in 2017-18 and 2018-19. In addition, 18 student-athletes were named to the NSIC All-Conference teams, while Sather was named the back-to-back Northern Sun Coach of the Year. Sather led the team throughout their historic run to the NCAA National Championship game in 2018, with the Wolves finishing as the NCAA National Finalist after falling to Ferris State. He was honored as the NABC Region Coach of the Year that season and the Wolves broke the single season school record for wins going 36-6.

Mood added, "This job is one of the best in country, and we are confident that we will be able to quickly find the next leader of Wolves basketball as we look to continue to elevate this program to even greater heights."

The Northern State basketball camps scheduled for June 3-6, June 24-27, and June 28-29 will continue as scheduled. For more information on the Wolves summer camp options or to register please click [HERE](#).

A national search will begin immediately for Sather's replacement.

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

Another Challenge: Finding the Right Follow-Up Care after Hospitalization

By Trudy Lieberman, Rural Health News Service

If ever there were a weak link in hospital care, it's what happens when you or a loved one leaves the hospital. It's becoming clear that the process known as discharge planning is deficient, can be harmful, and sometimes results in a patient's decline.

One in five patients across the country needs further care after discharge from a hospital, according to a series of four reports published by the United Hospital Fund in New York City. That's a lot of people, and many times their families don't know where to turn for help. The Fund reported that hospitals themselves sometimes prove to be of little assistance.

Patients are being sent not only to nursing homes but also to long-term acute care facilities (LTACs) s)), a relatively new type of facility that treats sicker patients for an average of at least 25 days for recovery, or to sub-acute facilities, home care agencies or rehabilitation centers with little input from their families and little explanation of what these facilities can do.

How many families have ever heard of an LTAC, for instance? Mine never had, and neither had I when I found myself transferred to one early in 2018 after a long hospital stay necessitated by a series of ailments caused by what seemed to be a simple infection.

When my daughter called facilities in Manhattan – where we live – looking for care, most wouldn't even take her calls. "I called around and realized you cannot find a place on your own," she said. "That's not how this works."

Too often families find that hospitals limit the options for them. The United Hospital Fund found that even though hospital staff stressed patient choice, patients and their families actually had little choice.

One woman sent me a tweet not long ago saying that a VA hospital gave her father and his family "zero" time to make a choice. Instead they were given the names of three facilities, "all one star," she said. Presumably she was referring to a ranking from the federal government's Nursing Home Compare website that rates the country's nursing homes. "We had to fight daily for basic human needs to be met," she told me.

David Lipshutz, associate director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy, told me hospitals have electronic systems and share profiles of patients they are about to discharge with prospective recovery facilities. "They shop the patient around and say, 'This is the facility to go to.'"

If hospitals are hitting the limits of what Medicare will pay for a patient's care, they have a great incentive for moving people out. To them it doesn't matter if a patient is moved to another state, as I was, or to another town. Either one can make it difficult for family to visit and keep an eye on the care, which is all-important.

The Hospital Fund also noted that legal safeguards don't go far enough to protect patients and help

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their families and care givers choose high quality options. That means hospitals are not giving enough good information to families, already stressed by the illness of a loved one.

Even if a hospital recommended the Nursing Home Compare website, families often found the site lacking information about services families needed. Hospital staff did not have or provide information about the quality of care or a facility's relevance to the patient's needs.

In the end, when families did have a choice, location and transportation were key to their decision, the Fund reported. In the absence of any other compelling information about a facility, who wouldn't select a place where you could easily visit your relative?

But even if a family did make an informed choice, if their preferred facility did not have a bed available, they had to go elsewhere. The hospital made the decision.

Because the system is such a mess, it's hard to give good advice to families. But there are a couple things I can suggest.

Medicare requires a discharge notice, which sets out a patient's appeal rights and procedures, to be given no later than two days after a person is admitted to a hospital. Some are given at admission, usually a time of confusion, and the explanation of rights is likely to be overlooked. Be aware of it, though, and read it carefully. You may need to rely on it if you think a relative needs to stay longer in the hospital.

And for all families who need more care after a hospital stay, the https://www.medicareadvocacy.org/medicare-info/discharge-planning/#hospital_discharge website of the Center for Medicare Advocacy has loads of information.

What has been your experience with hospital discharge planning? Write to Trudy at trudy.lieberman@gmail.com.

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Today in Weather History

May 31, 1960: A late evening thunderstorm cut a path of destruction, principally from high winds from Beadle County, northeast to Roberts and Grant Counties. Twelve head of cattle electrocuted for a downed high tensions wire occurred at Wolsey. Winds with gusts of 65 to 75 mph were observed at Huron and Watertown. A grain elevator tipped over, and a windmill was destroyed near Willow Lake. A Steel corn crib was blown over at Hayti and damaged occurred to other farm buildings and implements.

1830: Shelbyville, Tennessee was turned into "a heap of ruins" as a tornado moved east through the center of the town. This tornado destroyed 15 homes and 38 businesses along with churches and other public buildings. Losses were estimated to be as high as \$100,000. A book was said to be carried seven miles away.

1889: The Johnstown, Pennsylvania disaster occurred, the worst flood tragedy in U.S. history. Heavy rains collapsed the South Fork Dam sending a thirty-foot wall of water rushing down the already flooded Conemaugh Valley. The wall of water, traveling as fast as twenty-two feet per second, swept away all structures, objects, and people. The flood killed around 2100 people.

2013: The 2nd of the top 10 weather events for 2013 was EL Reno, Oklahoma tornado of May 31, 2013. Part of the multi-day storm outbreak caused \$2 billion in damage. The EF3 that traveled through the western suburbs of Oklahoma City was the largest tornado ever observed with a width of 2.6 miles. It took eight lives including four tornado chasers.

1889 - The Johnstown disaster occurred, the worst flood tragedy in U.S. history. Heavy rains collapsed the South Fork Dam sending a thirty foot wall of water rushing down the already flooded Conemaugh Valley. The wall of water, traveling as fast as twenty-two feet per second, swept away all structures, objects and people. 2100 persons perished in the flood. (David Ludlum)

1941 - Thunderstorms deluged Burlington KS with 12.59 inches of rain to establish a 24 hour rainfall record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - Severe thunderstorms spawned forty-one tornadoes across the Lower Great Lakes Region and southeastern Ontario which killed 74 persons. (Storm Data)

1987 - Thunderstorms in New England produced wind gusts up to 90 mph at Worcester, MA, and Northboro, MA, and hail an inch and a half in diameter at Williston, VT. Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the northeastern U.S. The afternoon high of 94 degrees at Portland, ME, was a record for the month of May. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)


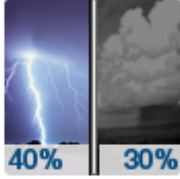



1988 - Hot and humid weather prevailed in the eastern U.S. Thirteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date. Cape Hatteras, NC, reported their first ninety degree day in May in 115 years of records. "Dust buster" thunderstorms in northwest Texas drenched Amarillo with more than three inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather and torrential rains in northern Indiana, northern Ohio and southern Lower Michigan. Saint John IND was drenched with four inches of rain in two hours, and Woodland MI was deluged with two inches in twenty minutes. Pittsburgh PA reported a record 6.55 inches of rain for the month of May, with measurable rain reported on twenty-five days during the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing along a warm front produced severe weather from northwest Texas to southeastern Louisiana. The thunderstorms spawned sixteen tornadoes, including thirteen in northwest Texas. One tornado hit the town of Spearman, TX, causing more than a million dollars damage, and seven other tornadoes were reported within twenty-five miles of Spearman. Thunderstorms over northwest Texas also produced baseball size hail at Monahans, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Paducah. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Sunny then Chance Showers	Chance T-storms then Chance Showers	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 86 °F	Low: 50 °F	High: 70 °F	Low: 47 °F	High: 73 °F

Marginal Risk

of severe thunderstorms Friday

① 2 3 4 5

Hazards

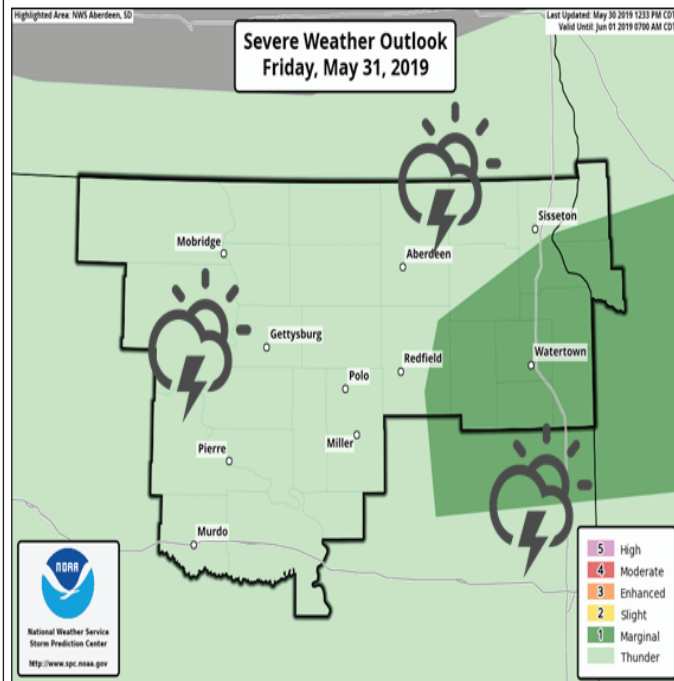
Thunderstorms, a few strong to severe, have the potential to produce lightning, hail to quarter size and wind gusts to 60 mph

Timing

Storms will fire Friday afternoon and spread southeast through the evening hours

Some Cities at Risk

Watertown, Ortonville, Milbank, Clark, Clear Lake, Castlewood



ISSUED: 4:11 PM - Thursday, May 30, 2019

Published on: 05/30/2019 at 5:13PM

Thunderstorms develop once again Friday and could be strong to severe in a few cases mainly across east central South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Highs Friday in the 80s, and smoky skies will persist. Cooler for the weekend and dry.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 89 °F at 6:16 PM

Low Temp: 55 °F at 4:46 AM

Wind: 17 mph at 7:01 PM

Day Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 100° in 1934

Record Low: 23° in 1897

Average High: 73°F

Average Low: 49°F

Average Precip in May.: 3.01

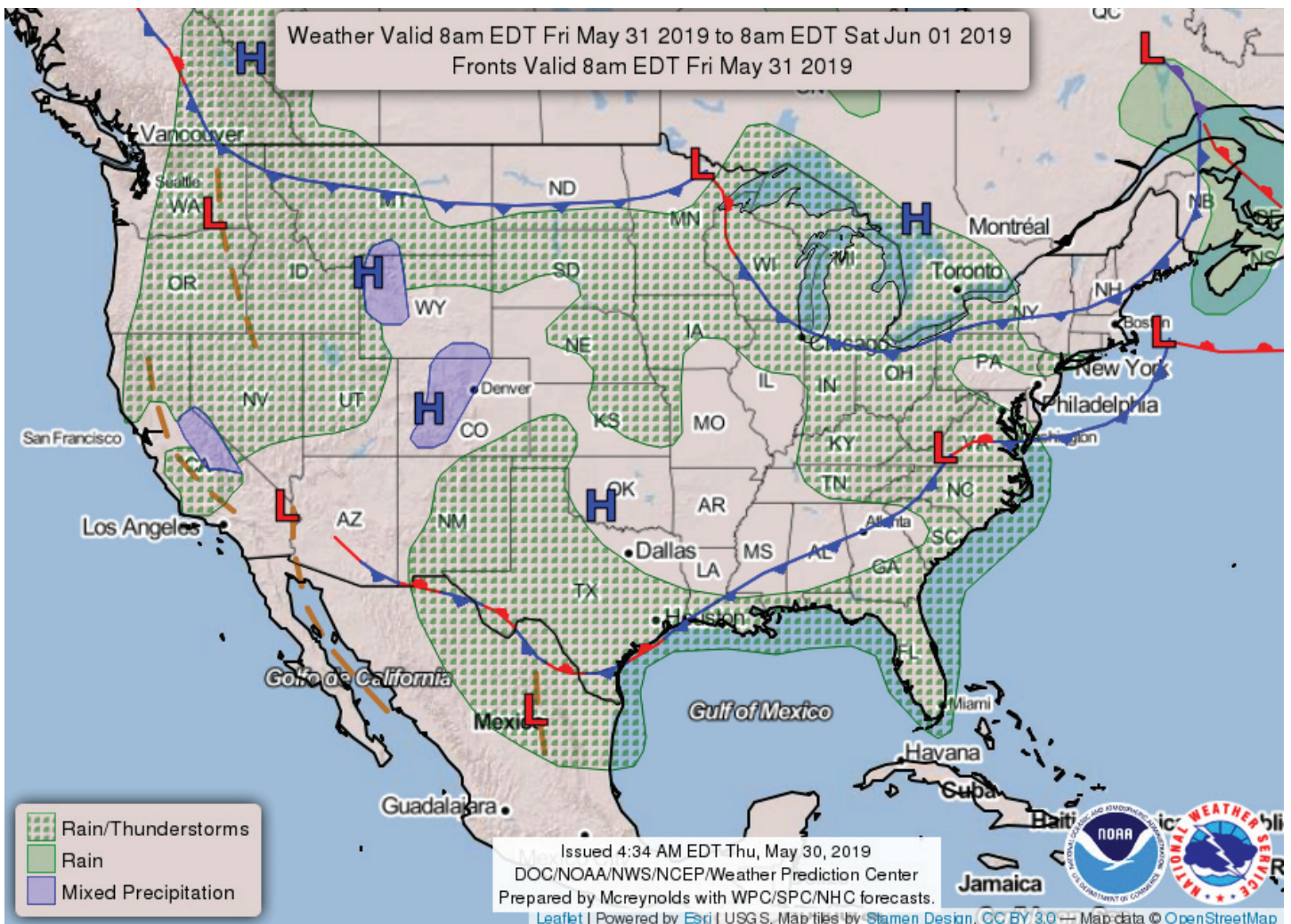
Precip to date in May.: 3.26

Average Precip to date: 7.04

Precip Year to Date: 7.97

Sunset Tonight: 9:14 p.m.

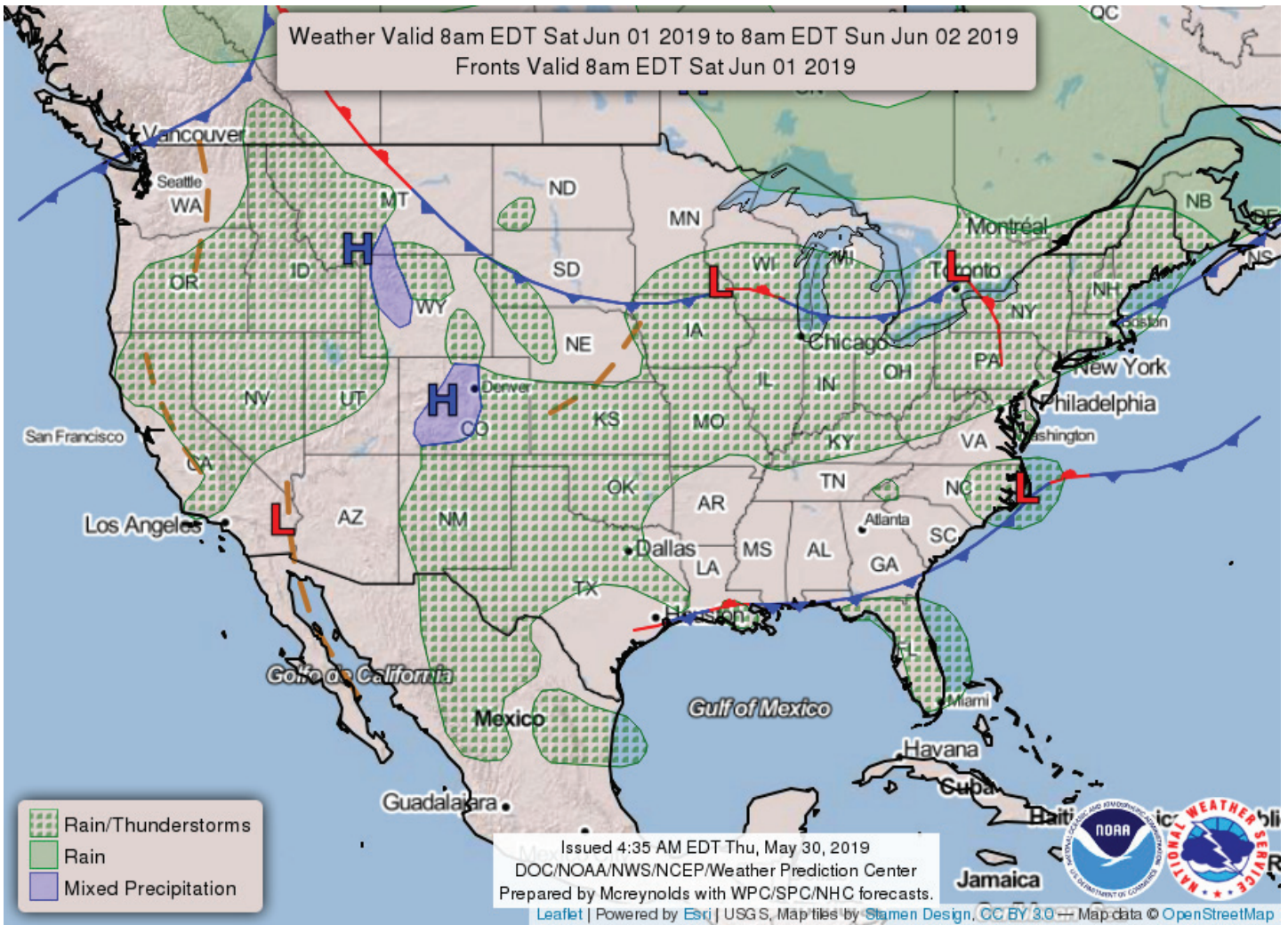
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49 a.m.



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Tomorrow's Weather Map



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LOOKING GOOD!

What is in our hearts is there because we allow it to come in and find a place to live. And, whatever is in our hearts will profoundly affect our lives and control our destiny. If it is in our hearts, it is there because we want it there, and it will have a direct impact on our lives.

Within three verses, Solomon describes three different kinds of hearts and the effect they have on our lives. A happy heart makes a cheerful face. So, no matter what is going on in the life of a person who has a happy heart, we will see a cheerful face that automatically brings a ray of sunshine into our lives. Their inside may be filled with clouds and rain, sickness and suffering, but their hope in God's goodness and grace will not suppress the happiness He brings into their lives.

People with discerning hearts are known for the knowledge they possess. They are driven by a desire to know and to share what they understand. They realize that their knowledge is a gift from God, given from Him, to help others. It is not to be hoarded in our heads, but to be given away as freely and generously as it was received.

A cheerful heart is found in one who chooses to take control of life rather than to have life control them. Its taking every gift God gives us and using it as a reason to have a celebration with Him as the guest of honor. A cheerful heart flows from an attitude of joy and peace because God is in here and will never leave me nor forsake me. His being in here is a cause for a joy that can be seen out there and bring His blessings to others.

Prayer: Father, do something special within each of us that will bring joy to our hearts and smiles to others! May we spread the joy we have in You with others. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 15:13 A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.

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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)

News from the Associated Press

South Dakota man sentenced to life for child's murder

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Dell Rapids man has been sentenced to life in prison for killing his 18-month-old stepson.

Thirty-nine-year-old Keith Cornett received the mandatory life sentence Thursday after pleading guilty earlier to second-degree murder in the December 2016 beating death.

Cornett entered an Alford plea, meaning he doesn't admit to causing the child's injuries but acknowledging he could be found guilty at trial. In exchange for his plea, prosecutors agreed to drop several charges, including one for first-degree murder that made Cornett eligible for the death penalty.

The Argus Leader reports the boy's grandfather, Richard Wigton, said in court there are "monsters in this world," and he told Cornett, "You are the foulest of them all."

An autopsy found six blows to the child's head, as well as bite marks.

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

Cattle disease found in South Dakota herd

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A disease that can cause cows to abort has been found in a cattle herd in southwestern South Dakota.

The South Dakota Animal Industry Board said Thursday that two bulls from a beef cattle herd in Oglala Lakota County have tested positive for the parasite-borne disease known as trich.

The board is working with the herd owner and their veterinarians to develop a management plan to control the disease, which is transmitted between cows and bulls during breeding and can cause early term abortions.

Producers often are unaware of the problem until the disease is established. Signs include a higher-than-expected number of non-pregnant and late-calving cows.

To prevent herds from becoming infected, producers should only purchase and use virgin bulls for breeding. Non-virgin bulls should be tested for trich prior to breeding.

Growing sinkhole opens in front of Rapid City home

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A growing sinkhole has opened in front of a house in Rapid City. As of Thursday, the sinkhole was 40 feet (12 meters) deep and an estimated 25 feet (7.6 meters) across. City officials say the sinkhole continues to erode, but no one has been hurt. The Rapid City Journal reports the gaping hole in the ground is closing the road to traffic and disrupting gas service for some residents. The sinkhole was first reported by the homeowner Thursday morning. No evacuations are planned.

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

District apologizes for taking eagle feather from student

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota school district has apologized to a Native American student who was told he couldn't wear an eagle feather during his graduation.

Brookings School District Superintendent Klint Willert released a statement Tuesday apologizing for the events that led to Miles Livermont having his eagle feather taken from him at the May 26 ceremony. The move violated state law.

Willert said the district will work to ensure that students can express pride in their tribal heritage at future graduations, the Argus Leader reported.

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Livermont said the principal at Brookings High School, Paul von Fischer, told him he couldn't wear the feather attached to his graduation cap because district rules banned alterations to the ceremonial caps and gowns. Under state law, any person can wear "traditional tribal regalia or objects of cultural significance at a school honoring or graduation ceremony."

In Native American culture, eagle feathers are presented to those who've achieved something worthy of recognition, said Livermont's mother, Tasiyagnunpa Livermont Barondeau.

Barondeau said von Fischer took the feather from her son, and it was then passed to several people before a security guard returned it to the family. Barondeau gave the feather back to Livermont before he crossed the stage to receive his diploma.

She said it's a violation of federal law for anyone other than Native Americans to possess an eagle feather.

Barondeau said she shared her son's story on Monday in an online petition that called on the district to pass a policy that recognizes the state's law regarding tribal regalia. The petition also requested that the district work with Native American students, parents and organizations to prevent any future issues.

"I'm not happy that my son and I were forced into the corner like this," she said. "Our family is committed to not letting it go until they have policy changes, and they have at least the basics of what our petition outlines."

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

Northern State's Sather to coach University of North Dakota

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — A coach at a small-college basketball program in South Dakota will take over at Division I University of North Dakota.

North Dakota announced Friday that Northern State coach Paul Sather would succeed Brian Jones, who stepped down after 13 years with the Fighting Hawks.

Sather went 162-82 in nine years at Northern State, which is in Aberdeen, South Dakota. He led the Wolves to the NCAA Division II title game two years ago, when they came within a missed buzzer-beater of winning the championship.

The Princeton, Minnesota, native was named the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference coach of the year the last two seasons.

Sather also coached at Black Hills State for five years. He guided that program to the NAIA Final Four and a school-record 30 wins in 2008-09.

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

Rapid City teacher accused of abusing student

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City teacher has been arrested and accused of abusing a disabled student.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office says 25-year-old Shea Lindsey was arrested Thursday on child abuse charges. Authorities say they began an investigation into the alleged abuse May 14, but did not specify what they believe happened. The alleged victim is a male student, whose age was not given.

Lindsey is a teacher at East Middle School. The school district placed Lindsey on administrative leave when the investigation began.

The teacher is expected to appear in court Friday morning.

Trump unhappy with special counsel comments on obstruction

By DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump angrily assailed special counsel Robert Mueller's motives on Thursday, a day after Mueller bluntly rebuffed Trump's repeated claims that the Russia investigation

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had cleared him of obstructing justice.

The president also offered mixed messages on Russia's efforts to help him defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 campaign. Early in the day, Trump tweeted he had "nothing to do with Russia helping me get elected." That was the first time he seemed to acknowledge that Russia tried to help his campaign. Then on the White House South Lawn, Trump told reporters: "Russia did not help me get elected. You know who got me elected? You know who got me elected? I got me elected. Russia didn't help me at all."

Mueller's report said Russia interfered in the election in hopes of getting Trump elected, but his findings and intelligence officials have stopped short of saying the efforts contributed to Trump's victory.

Trump's 20-minute eruption underscored that he remains deeply distressed over the probe that has shadowed his presidency for nearly two years, even after Mueller announced his resignation and the closure of his office. Democrats are mulling the possibility of impeachment proceedings.

Trump insisted that he's been tough on Russia and that Moscow would have preferred Clinton as president. But that's not what Russian President Vladimir Putin has said. When asked last year in Helsinki whether he wanted Trump to become president, Putin replied: "Yes, I did."

On Wednesday, Mueller, in his first public remarks on the Russia investigation, pointedly rejected Trump's claims — repeated almost daily — that the special counsel's investigation cleared him of criminal activity and was a "witch hunt." Mueller emphasized that he had not exonerated Trump on the question of whether he obstructed justice, but said charging Trump with any crime was "not an option" because of Justice Department rules.

"If we had had confidence that the president clearly did not commit a crime, we would have said so," Mueller declared.

Attorney General William Barr, however, said Mueller could have reached a decision on whether Trump obstructed justice. Barr said in an interview with "CBS This Morning" that though Justice Department rules prevent the indictment of a sitting president, Mueller nonetheless could have decided whether Trump had committed a crime.

Trump repeated his baseless claims that Mueller is "conflicted," contending that Mueller, who served as FBI director under President George W. Bush, wanted his old job back, but that he had told him no. He said Mueller, a Republican, was "a true never Trumper" and "didn't get a job that he wanted very badly."

Mueller had been considered for the FBI director position shortly before being named as special counsel. But then-White House chief strategist Steve Bannon has said that while the White House had invited Mueller to speak to the president about the FBI and thought about asking him to become director again, Mueller did not come in looking for a job.

Trump also said Mueller should have investigated law enforcement officials who the president claims tried to undermine him. Mueller's mandate, however, was to investigate Russian election interference, possible coordination with the Trump campaign and any obstruction of that investigation.

Among those whom Trump says Mueller should have investigated were members of the special counsel's own team, including Peter Strzok, a former FBI agent who helped lead the investigation and exchanged anti-Trump text messages during the 2016 election with ex-FBI lawyer Lisa Page.

Strzok was removed from Mueller's investigative team following the discovery of the texts and later was fired from the FBI. Page has left the bureau. Strzok told Congress that there was "no conspiracy" at the FBI to prevent Trump from becoming president.

Trump, asked about impeachment by Congress, called it a "dirty word" and said he couldn't imagine the courts allowing him to be impeached. "I don't think so because there's no crime," he said.

Mueller made clear that his team never considered indicting Trump because the Justice Department prohibits the prosecution of a sitting president. He and others have indicated that the next move, if any, is up to Congress, which has the power of impeachment. Trump has blocked House committees' subpoenas and other efforts to dig into the Trump-Russia issue, insisting Mueller's report has settled everything.

contributed to this report.

8 are great: National Spelling Bee ends with 'octo-champs'

By BEN NUCKOLS Associated Press

OXON HILL, Md. (AP) — The Scripps National Spelling Bee was broken Thursday night, brought to its knees by eight spellers who were too poised, too prepared and too savvy for any word thrown their way.

Faced with a dwindling word list and a group of spellers that showed no weakness, Scripps gave up and declared them co-champions, the most extraordinary ending in the 94-year history of the competition.

The eight co-champions spelled the final 47 words correctly in their historic walk-off victory, going through five consecutive perfect rounds.

"Champion spellers, we are now in uncharted territory," bee pronouncer Jacques Bailly told them in announcing the decision to allow up to eight winners. "We do have plenty of words remaining on our list. But we will soon run out of words that will possibly challenge you, the most phenomenal collection of super spellers in the history of this competition."

He wasn't lying. The bee held three more rounds after that, and no one missed a word or even appeared to struggle.

The winners, who dubbed themselves "octo-champs," were: Rishik Gandhasri, Erin Howard, Saketh Sundar, Shruthika Padhy, Sohun Sukhatankar, Abhijay Kodali, Christopher Serrao and Rohan Raja.

Although the bee had decided to split the first- and second-place money in the event of a tie, those plans were quickly scuttled and each speller was given the full \$50,000 cash prize.

From 2014-2016, the bee ended with co-champions. In 2017 and last year, the bee had a written tie-breaker test of spelling and vocabulary that would be used to identify a single champion if necessary. It didn't turn out to be needed, and bee officials decided the test was too burdensome and got rid of it.

The warning signs of a logjam at the top came earlier Thursday, when the early final rounds, designed to narrow the field from 50 spellers to about a dozen, took 5½ hours and still brought a robust group of 16 kids to the finals.

The bee's rules called for no more than three spellers to share the title. The possibility of four or more winners wasn't considered before Thursday. Paige Kimble, the bee's executive director, said bee officials developed a contingency plan for multiple champions after gauging the spellers' performance in the earlier final rounds.

"When we began to comprehend the mettle of our finalists, we began to think about what could possibly happen this evening," Kimble said. "We went into the evening with the plan that we executed on this evening."

Each winner got a chance to celebrate individually upon completing his or her final word, although some were more demonstrative than others. Shruthika, a 13-year-old from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, was staggering to the microphone before her last few words, and after her final word she wobbled back to her chair and wearily shook the hands of her co-champions.

Sohun, a 13-year-old from Dallas, spoke for the group about how they were all satisfied with the result.

"Spellers improve. It's natural and the rate at which people are improving is amazing," said Sohun, a previous winner of both the North South Foundation spelling bee and the South Asian Spelling Bee. "Everyone learns, everyone gets so much better."

But there were murmurs of discontent.

Naysa Modi, last year's runner-up who surprisingly missed out on the finals as a result of her score on the preliminary written test, was in tears as the confetti fell.

"I'm really disappointed that I missed finals by a whisker. And to rub salt in the wound even further, I knew every single word that they asked today since this morning," Naysa said in a text message. "However, I feel that all eight champions deserved it and I'd like to congratulate them."

And the consensus among spelling experts in the crowd is that Scripps didn't nearly exhaust the words in the dictionary that can challenge the best spellers.

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"This would never happen at my bee," said Rahul Walia, founder of the South Asian Spelling Bee, where Sohun defeated Abhijay for the title last year. "They need to use harder words. The words are available."

The majority of the spellers had personal coaches, and 13 of the 16 used word lists and study materials compiled by ex-spellers Shobha Dasari and her younger brother, Shourav. Shobha, who's 18 and will go to Stanford in the fall, said the proliferation of private coaches and online study guides has simplified speller preparation, but she still gave credit to the champions.

"The kids still have to put in the work," Shobha said.

Follow Ben Nuckols at <https://twitter.com/APBenNuckols>

Trump promise of new Mexican tariffs brings protests

By JILL COLVIN and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a surprise announcement that could derail a major trade deal, President Donald Trump has announced that he is placing a 5% tariff on all Mexican imports, effective June 10, to pressure the country to do more to crack down on the surge of Central American migrants trying to cross the U.S. border.

He said the percentage will gradually increase — up to 25% — "until the Illegal Immigration problem is remedied."

The decision showed the administration going to new lengths, and looking for new levers, to pressure Mexico to take action — even if those risk upending other policy priorities, like the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, a trade deal that is the cornerstone of Trump's legislative agenda and seen as beneficial to his reelection effort. It also risks further damaging the already strained relationship between the U.S. and Mexico, two countries whose economics are deeply intertwined.

Trump made the announcement by tweet after telling reporters earlier Thursday that he was planning "a major statement" that would be his "biggest" so far on the border.

"On June 10th, the United States will impose a 5% Tariff on all goods coming into our Country from Mexico, until such time as illegal migrants coming through Mexico, and into our Country, STOP," he wrote. "The Tariff will gradually increase until the Illegal Immigration problem is remedied."

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador responded in a public letter late Thursday, telling Trump that "social problems are not solved with duties or coercive measures" and alluded to the United States' history as a nation of immigrants. "The Statue of Liberty is not an empty symbol," he wrote. He also said he was dispatching his foreign relations secretary to Washington on Friday to try to negotiate a solution.

In his growing fury over an increase in border crossings that he has likened to an "invasion," Trump has blamed Mexico for failing to stop the flow of asylum seekers from countries like El Salvador and Honduras who pass through its territory. And he has been itching to take increasingly radical, headline-grabbing action on the issue, which he sees as critical to his 2020 campaign because it energizes his base.

But the sudden tariff threat comes at a peculiar time, given how hard the administration has been pushing for passage of the USMCA, which would update the North American Free Trade Agreement. It comes less than two weeks after Trump lifted import taxes on Mexican and Canadian steel and aluminum, a move that seemed to clear an obstacle to its passage, and the same day that both Trump and López Obrador began the process of seeking ratification. The deal needs approval from lawmakers in all three countries before it takes effect.

"The tariffs certainly put the USMCA on ice," said Gary Hufbauer, an expert in trade law at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, who panned the move but said Trump does have the legal authority to impose the tariffs under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act by citing a national emergency.

"The drama is legal, but it's preposterous," he said.

Daniel Ujczko, a U.S.-based international trade lawyer, said the threat would likely slow the deal's progress in Mexico and put U.S. lawmakers who want to vote "yes" in a difficult position because companies in their districts will end up paying the tariffs.

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Still, Ujczko and others wondered whether Trump — who has a habit of creating problems and then claiming credit when he rushes in to solve them — would go through with the threat.

“This seems more theater and tactics than a strategy to solve the migration crisis and rebalance North American trade,” Ujczko said.

It wouldn't be the first time Trump has punted on an immigration threat. In late March, Trump threatened to shut the entire U.S.-Mexico border if Mexico didn't immediately halt illegal immigration. Just a few days later, he backed off the threat, saying he was pleased with steps Mexico had taken in recent days. It was unclear, however, what Mexico had changed.

Indeed, on a briefing call with reporters Thursday evening, administration officials said Mexico could prevent the tariffs from kicking in by securing their southern border with Guatemala and entering into a “safe third country agreement” that would make it difficult for those who enter Mexico from other countries to claim asylum in the U.S.

“We're going to judge success here by the number of people crossing the border and that number needs to start coming down immediately, in a significant and substantial number,” said acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney.

He also insisted that tariffs were “completely” separate from the USMCA because one pertained to immigration and the other trade.

Still the threat drew a withering response from Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley, a usual Trump ally, who slammed it as “a misuse of presidential tariff authority” that would burden American consumers and “seriously jeopardize passage of USMCA.”

Mulvaney said the White House had briefed a number of Republicans on the plan and acknowledged that some — particularly in the Senate — had raised concerns about the president invoking such powers.

The threat comes at a time when Mexico has already been stepping up its efforts to crack down on migrants, carrying out raids and detaining thousands of people traveling through the country en route to the U.S.

The crumbling city of Tapachula, near the Guatemalan border, has become the epicenter of the crack-downs, with thousands of migrants stranded because the Mexican government isn't providing them visas to travel. In addition, the Mexican government has allowed the U.S. to send back hundreds of asylum seekers from Central America and other countries, forcing them to wait out their cases in Mexico.

But that hasn't satisfied Trump, whose White House laid out an escalating schedule of tariff increases if his demands are not met: 10% on July 1, 15% on Aug. 1, 20% on Sept. 1 and 25% on Oct. 1.

After that, the White House said, “tariffs will permanently remain at the 25% level unless and until Mexico substantially stops the illegal inflow of aliens coming through its territory.”

Associated Press writer Kevin Freking and Paul Wiseman in Washington and Maria Verza in Mexico City contributed to this report.

Follow Colvin and Long on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/colvinj> and <https://twitter.com/ctlong1>

Raptors take NBA Finals opener, beat Warriors 118-109

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

TORONTO (AP) — The first NBA Finals game outside the U.S. was a party 24 years in the making.

Then Pascal Siakam and the Raptors really gave Toronto something to celebrate.

Siakam scored a playoff career-high 32 points and the Raptors made a smashing NBA Finals debut, beating the Golden State Warriors 118-109 on Thursday night.

The Raptors hardly looked like newcomers to the NBA's biggest stage, controlling the action most of the way against a Golden State team beginning its fifth straight NBA Finals appearance.

“I think we did pretty good job at home,” Siakam said. “The fans are amazing, man. I just want to say that. From coming out for warmup to the end of the game, it was just the support and then going crazy.”

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I've never seen anything like that."

Kawhi Leonard added 23 points and Marc Gasol had 20 for the Raptors, who weren't in awe of the setting or their opponents who had played 22 NBA Finals games in the last four years.

"We know that they're human. They're a great basketball team, talented players, high basketball-IQ players," Leonard said. "You just got to go out there and compete, take the challenge."

Stephen Curry scored 34 points and Klay Thompson had 21 for the Warriors, who had won all four Game 1s in the last four years. All those had come at home, but this time Golden State doesn't have home-court — or home country — advantage.

"Our goal was to get one and it's still on the table for us," Thompson said. "So I know we'll respond like the champions we are."

Game 2 is Sunday night in Toronto, which is hosting an NBA Finals game for the first time after the Raptors entered the league as an expansion team in 1995.

The Raptors were perhaps a little jittery at the start, with Kyle Lowry firing a pass well out of bounds on their first possession.

But they quickly settled in afterward, building a 10-point lead by halftime.

Siakam then went 6 for 6 in the third quarter to keep Golden State from gaining much ground, and the Raptors kept their lead around double digits for much of the final quarter, countering every attempt the Warriors made to catch up.

"We didn't play very well tonight at all and we still had a chance the entire game," Draymond Green said. "And it was a great atmosphere. This is a team or a city, a country, that hasn't seen a finals ever here, so we expected it to be a great atmosphere and it was. But we can still play better and I know we will."

All four of the Warriors' previous finals were against LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers, and they struggled to figure out a new opponent. Toronto shot 50.6 percent from the field and the Warriors never found an answer for Siakam, the finalist for Most Improved Player who has a nice start for an NBA Finals MVP resume.

The native of Cameroon and nicknamed Spicy P was red hot, shooting 14 for 17 from the field — and he tipped in his own shot on the last of those misses with 54 seconds to play.

Fans began arriving at Jurassic Park outside the arena in the morning. There were lengthy lines at the arena entrances hours before the game, with some of the few fans who weren't wearing Raptors red sticking to their original purple uniform with the dinosaur logo.

Rapper and Raptors global ambassador Drake sat in his courtside seat wearing a Curry No. 30 jersey. That's Dell Curry, Stephen's father who finished his career with the Raptors.

The Raptors introduced Dell Curry and some of their other former players after the first quarter, a group that included perennial All-Stars such as Tracy McGrady and Chris Bosh.

But it wasn't until they got Leonard in a trade with San Antonio that Toronto was finally good enough to get to the NBA Finals.

He wasn't the dominant force he was in the first three rounds, when he averaged 31.2 points. But he had eight rebounds and five assists in his first NBA Finals game since winning MVP of the 2014 championship with the Spurs.

DeMarcus Cousins made it back from a torn left quadriceps to come off the bench in his first NBA Finals game, but the Warriors remained without Kevin Durant, the MVP of the last two NBA Finals. He traveled to Toronto but it's unclear if he'll play before the series returns to the Bay Area, with Warriors coach Steve Kerr saying he would have to go through a practice first.

The Warriors had won every game since he got hurt in the second round but sure missed him against the Raptors, who are on a roll after falling behind 2-0 to Milwaukee in the Eastern Conference finals.

TIP-INS

Warriors: Cousins finished with three points in eight minutes. ... Green had his fifth triple-double of the postseason with 10 points, 10 rebounds and assists, but shot just 2 for 9. ... Golden State had a 12-game winning streak in Game 1s snapped. ... Curry's four 3-pointers gave him a record 102 in the NBA Finals

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and he was also 14 for 14 from the free throw line.

Raptors: Danny Green went 3 for 7 from 2-point range after he was just 4 for 23 in the conference finals. ... The Raptors improved to just 4-15 in Game 1s.

DRAKE AND DRAYMOND

Green and Drake exchanged words at the end of the game, but the Warriors shot down a suggestion it was more than that.

"It wasn't really a scuffle because I didn't hit him and he didn't hit me, and I didn't push him and he didn't push me," Green said. "We talked. We barked a little bit, but I wouldn't necessarily consider that a scuffle, not really what I personally would consider a scuffle."

UP NEXT

Game 2 is Sunday night.

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

Tiananmen veterans look back on movement's mistakes, passion

By **CHRISTOPHER BODEEN** and **JOHNSON LAI** Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Wu'er Kaixi was among the most outspoken of the student leaders during the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests, famously reproaching then-Premier Li Peng at a meeting broadcast on national television.

Three decades on, he's more circumspect but remains just as harsh a critic of the Communist regime and just as committed to bringing democracy to China.

While many former leaders and participants in the protests have moved on, embracing lives and careers that have little direct relation to the movement, others remain wedded to the cause, either by vocation, through survivors' guilt or because their actions permanently put them on the wrong side of the authorities. They remain determined to keep the memories alive even as China's rulers seek to sandblast the protests and the military's bloody crackdown from history.

"Sometimes remembrance is one of the most humble forms of resistance," Wu'er Kaixi said in an interview in Taiwan, where he now lives with his wife and children.

While Wu'er Kaixi, 51, escaped abroad after the June 4 crackdown after finding himself at No. 2 on the government's most-wanted list, then-graduate student Pu Zhiqiang remained in China despite his role in the protests as a high-profile advocate of speech and press freedoms. Looking at old photos of his younger self, Pu reflects on the motivations of the protesters that were mostly pure, if somewhat naive.

"We hoped that China could change for the better," said Pu, 54. "As a 24-year-old, presented with this chance to serve society, had I not played a role at all, not made my voice heard, I would not have been able to forgive myself."

While many who took part wonder what could have been done differently to avoid the bloodshed, Feng Congde, a graduate student that year at elite Peking University, is convinced the students didn't push hard enough.

The experience of 1989 was "both positive and negative," Feng said. "But we have to learn the lesson, that even though we had these large numbers of people on the street, we didn't know what we should do. We should have asked the military to overthrow the regime."

Feng maintains that now, as back then, the regime remains resistant to reforming itself in the way that Taiwan's Nationalists evolved from an authoritarian police state into a multiparty democracy, eventually handing over power to the opposition through elections. Like many in the democratic movement, Feng idolizes Chiang Ching-kuo, the son and successor of Chiang Kai-shek, who began the process of Taiwan's democratization during the 1980s.

"I'm quite optimistic about the democratic future of China, but I have very little hope that (President and Communist Party leader) Xi Jinping can learn from Chiang Ching-kuo. I think the totalitarian (Communist Party) regime is totally different from an authoritarian regime like the (Nationalists)," Feng said.

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While few echo Feng's ruing of the lost chance of a military coup, hostility toward the regime and frustration with perceived foreign gullibility are near constants among members of the movement who remain active, especially those based abroad. Their impressions appear permanently colored by the shock, horror and disbelief they felt when the People's Liberation Army opened fire on the people they'd been charged with protecting and who'd grown to trust and revere them.

Wang Dan, 50, who was imprisoned after being named No. 1 on the most-wanted list, is among those who doesn't mince words.

"It is time for us now, for the whole democratic countries now, to re-recognize the true face of the (Communist Party) and try to learn some lessons from the Tiananmen massacre," Wang said, using another term for the crackdown of June 3-4. "This is a very important challenge for the whole world, because now China is a rising power, and seems like a threat for the democracy and freedom of the whole world."

Wu'er Kaixi is similarly scathing, deriding the regime's claims to patriotic zeal as a cover for their desire to maintain their wealth and privileges at any cost.

"Let's look at what the Chinese regime is clearly. It's a group of people who stole the position of ruling China, one of the largest counties in the world and they're taking advantage of that position to do one thing: loot," he said.

Pu, a lawyer who was disbarred for his political activism, bemoans 1989 and the years since as a lost opportunity to develop a new, possibly alternative, political class.

Tiananmen "was an excellent training opportunity for taking part in society, taking part in politics for young people of my generation," Pu said. "But the distinctive characteristic of Chinese politics — this long-term totalitarianism — is that it cannot permit a political force or political party to take organized action."

Things have grown only more difficult amid tightening social controls, making it much harder to rally forces in society to do things "either good or bad," Pu said.

Yet Wu'er Kaixi, now the honorary chairman of Reporters Without Borders at its East Asia office in Taipei, says those actions — the increasing repression borne out in policies such as the internment of 1 million or more Chinese Muslims in re-education camps — provide a constant reminder of the unchanged nature of the regime.

"The reason people still remember (1989), other than the mere importance of it, is also because the Communist Party is still conducting all of these brutal acts and atrocities within China against Uighur people, against Tibetans, Hong Kong, Macau, and even conducting threats against neighboring countries like Taiwan," he said.

"That will remind people that this regime, today's acts of this regime, is the same regime that massacred peaceful demonstrators 30 years ago," he said.

Feng, who is studying acupuncture and administers pro-democracy websites, and Wu'er Kaixi say their continued zeal for the cause is bolstered by a sense of obligation to those who fell in 1989, to see their names rehabilitated and their goal of a democratic China achieve fruition.

"So I have to live with this survivor's guilt ... but I will try to make the dream of those who fell 30 years ago come true sooner," Wu'er Kaixi said.

Pu, who continues to work as a legal adviser, said he sees his generation as a link to the past. Veterans, those around 50, are now the "backbone of society" who are obligated to pass on their experiences and ideals to a younger generation.

Apart from the leaders, who to varying degrees have had some say in how they have lived their lives since, Tiananmen left many scarred for life or saddled with criminal records that have severely restricted their choices.

Since serving a 17-year sentence for allegedly attacking martial law troops — a charge he denies — Dong Shengkun has been unable to find a steady job and is forced to live with his elderly mother while receiving the government's minimum living allowance of 1,000 yuan (\$145) per month. Though he wishes to marry his girlfriend, the government would take away even that meager stipend were he to do so due to her somewhat better financial circumstances.

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Still, Dong, who picks up odd jobs for extra income, has no regrets for having joined in the protests out of a sense of outrage and desire for change.

The 1989 movement "was about justice," Dong said.

Lai reported from Taipei, Taiwan.

Saudi King Salman urges international effort to thwart Iran

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Saudi Arabia's King Salman opened an emergency summit of Arab leaders in Islam's holiest city of Mecca on Friday with a call for the international community to use all means to confront Iran, but he also said the kingdom remains committed to peace.

King Salman delivered his remarks at Arab summits in Mecca that were hastily convened after a spike in tensions between Saudi Arabia and its rival Iran.

Tensions have also spiked between Tehran and Washington in recent weeks, with the U.S. sending an aircraft carrier and B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf. The Trump administration's taken a hard line with Iran, first withdrawing from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers last year, then imposing punishing economic sanctions on the country.

Saudi Arabia's effort to draw regional leaders to Mecca reflects the kingdom's desire to project a unified Muslim and Arab position on Iran.

Still, there were visible signs of tension and disagreement among the Arab officials gathered at the meetings, which began just before midnight on Thursday and ran into the early hours of Friday due to Ramadan, which practices include day-long fasts and extended evening prayers.

Morocco did not send its king amid a cooling of ties with Saudi Arabia, while Qatar sent its prime minister rather than its ruling emir amid a diplomatic standoff with Arab neighbors. Iraq, which lies on the fault line between Shiite Iran and the mostly Sunni Arab world, rejected the Arab League's final statement after the summit and was not a signatory to it.

All, however, condemned the alleged sabotage of four oil tankers off the coast of the United Arab Emirates and a drone attack on a key Saudi oil pipeline earlier this month.

Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of arming Yemeni rebels behind the pipeline attack. Iran denies being involved in the incidents.

In his opening remarks, King Salman called on the international community to thwart Iran's behaviors and for "using all means to stop the Iranian regime from interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, harboring global and regional terrorist entities and threatening international waterways."

He added that Saudi Arabia is keen to protect the region from the scourge of war and that its "hand remains extended for peace."

Iraq, meanwhile, struck a sharply different tone. President Barham Salih said in his remarks that Iran is a Muslim country and neighbor.

"We do not hope for its security to be targeted since we are sharing 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) of border and a number of relations," he told the gathering of Arab League heads of state.

"Honestly, the security and stability of a neighboring Islamic country is in the interest of Muslim and Arab states," he added.

Another summit in Mecca is expected on Friday, focusing largely on Palestinian statehood and independence. It will bring together leaders from the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which is headquartered in Saudi Arabia.

With a captive audience that included King Salman, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas used his speech in Mecca to slam the Trump administration's deal aimed at dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"I would like to reconfirm our absolute rejection of the American attempts to bring down international law and international legitimacy under what is called the 'Deal of the Century,'" he said, adding that it attempts to replace "land for peace" with "land for prosperity".

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Glimpses of the plan hint it will focus heavily on so-called economic peace while sidelining or ignoring the longstanding Palestinian goal of independence. The two-state solution continues to enjoy the broad support of the international community.

President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner seeks to rally Arab Gulf states to back economic initiatives for Palestinians as part of the plan next month in Bahrain.

There are diverging policy differences among once clubby Gulf Arab states toward Iran, as well. Oman, for example, has relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran and acts as a facilitator of talks.

The diplomatic standoff between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt has pushed the tiny nation closer to Iran.

Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al Thani attended the Mecca summits, marking the highest-level visit to Saudi Arabia by a Qatari official since the 2017 rift erupted.

Al Thani shook hands with his host, King Salman, but there was no eye contact with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed and no visible pleasantries with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman very quickly shook the Qatari royal's hand, but they did not appear to exchange words.

Washington has tried unsuccessfully to mediate an end to the diplomatic standoff between its Gulf Arab allies. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said Thursday the U.S. welcomes Saudi efforts to discuss Iranian threats in the region.

"Gulf unity is essential in confronting Iran, to confronting their influence, to countering terrorism writ large, and, of course, to ensuring a prosperous future for the Gulf," she said.

Upon their arrival at the airport in Saudi Arabia, leaders were shown Yemeni rebel military items, such as a destroyed drone, missiles and mortar shells used in the conflict with the Saudis. They were given a brief explanation of the weapons on display by Col. Turki al-Maliki, spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition at war in Yemen.

Meanwhile, Trump said this week the U.S. wasn't "looking to hurt Iran at all."

"We're not looking for regime change — I just want to make that clear," Trump said. "We're looking for no nuclear weapons."

Associated Press writer Matthew Lee contributed from Washington.

Louisiana's Democratic governor signs abortion ban into law

By MELINDA DESLATTE Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Louisiana's Democratic governor signed a ban on abortion as early as six weeks of pregnancy Thursday, a move that puts him squarely in line with the leaders of other conservative Southern states while provoking anger from members of his own party.

With his signature, Gov. John Bel Edwards made Louisiana the fifth state to enact a law prohibiting abortion when a fetal heartbeat is detected, joining Mississippi, Kentucky, Ohio and Georgia. Alabama's gone further, outlawing virtually all abortions.

Louisiana's law doesn't contain exceptions for pregnancies from rape or incest.

The bill's signing, however, won't limit the state's three abortion clinics anytime soon. Louisiana's law takes effect only if the law in neighboring Mississippi, which was recently blocked by a judge, is upheld by a federal appeals court.

Edwards, a Catholic running for reelection this year, didn't hold a public bill signing or issue a statement about it, instead announcing his action through his office. He had repeatedly said he intended to sign the measure, citing his faith and saying his views match those of the people in his conservative, religious state.

"This is an issue I've been consistent on forever. I am pro-life," he said earlier this month on his radio show, when asked about the bill.

Louisiana legislators overwhelmingly supported the ban, with a 79-23 House vote and 31-5 Senate vote. Lawmakers in conservative states across the nation are striking at the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 Roe

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v. Wade decision that legalized abortion nationally. Abortion opponents are pushing new restrictions on the procedure in hopes that a case will make its way to the high court and two new conservative justices appointed by President Donald Trump could help overturn Roe.

None of the abortion bans enacted this year has taken effect, and all are expected to face legal challenges that will delay any enforcement of the prohibitions against the procedure.

Opponents of the so-called heartbeat bills said they would effectively eliminate abortion as an option before many women realize they are pregnant and would violate constitutional privacy protections. Several hundred pink-clad Planned Parenthood supporters filled the Louisiana Capitol to protest the ban ahead of Thursday's bill signing.

"The unprecedented and extreme attacks on abortion we're seeing across the country, including here in Louisiana, are dangerous to patient health and wellbeing," Petrice Sams-Abiodun, with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, said in a statement.

Louisiana's law includes an exception from the abortion ban to prevent the pregnant woman's death or "a serious risk of the substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function" — or if the pregnancy is deemed "medically futile." But it does not include an exception for a pregnancy caused by rape or incest, drawing criticism that the law forces continued trauma on women who have been victimized.

Under the bill, a doctor who violates the prohibition could face a prison sentence of up to two years, along with medical license revocation.

The abortion-rights debates that divide state Capitols across the nation cause fewer ripples in the Louisiana Legislature. It is one of the country's most staunchly anti-abortion states, with a law on the books that immediately outlaws abortion if Roe v. Wade is ever overturned.

Louisiana's latest abortion ban won support from many Democrats and was sponsored by Democratic Sen. John Milkovich. And the governor won some GOP praise for his position.

"While Gov. Edwards and I disagree on a lot of things, I'm proud that he stands for life," Republican Rep. Julie Emerson said.

Although Edwards is a rarity in the national Democratic Party, he ran as an anti-abortion candidate. In his 2015 campaign, Edwards had a prominent TV ad that showed his wife, Donna, describing being advised to have an abortion because of their daughter's spinal birth defect. The Edwardses refused, and the ad showed a grown-up Samantha.

The bill signing by Edwards, who faces two Republicans on the ballot this fall, is expected to help shore up his position with some voters at home, even if it puts him at odds with national Democratic Party leaders and donors.

Still, the governor faced an outcry of anger on social media from Democrats who objected to his support for the abortion ban.

The chair of Louisiana's Democratic Party, Sen. Karen Carter Peterson, has been regularly slamming the bill. She's posted opposition messages on Twitter, including after the bill signing: "Embarrassing! Apologies to LA women, particularly for the disrespect to women victimized by rape or incest." But she hasn't directly criticized Edwards by name, and the party is supporting him for reelection.

Senate Bill 184: www.legis.la.gov

Follow Melinda Deslatte on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/melindadeslatte>

Military judge frees Navy SEAL in advance of murder trial

By **JULIE WATSON** and **BRIAN MELLEY** Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A decorated Navy SEAL facing a murder trial in the death of an Islamic State prisoner was freed from custody Thursday after a military judge cited interference by prosecutors.

The unexpected move drew gasps in a San Diego courtroom after lawyers for Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher presented evidence to get the case dismissed because of prosecutorial misconduct.

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The judge has not ruled yet on whether to throw out the case or remove prosecutors for launching an unusual effort to track emails sent to defense lawyers and a journalist to find the source of news leaks in the politically charged case. That hearing continues Friday.

The judge, Capt. Aaron Rugh, said he was freeing Gallagher as a remedy for prosecutors interfering with his Sixth Amendment right to counsel.

Gallagher's wife, Andrea, who has led a campaign to free her husband, put her hands to her face and burst into tears.

"I feel like it's a small victory on the way to the larger victory," Andrea Gallagher said outside court while her husband stood quietly by her side in his Navy whites. "He's now free because of the misconduct by these prosecutors."

He declined to comment.

A spokesman for the Navy prosecutors wouldn't comment on Gallagher's freedom or developments at the hearing.

Defense attorney Tim Parlatore had accused prosecutors of a "rogue, relentless, and unlawful cyber campaign" that may have violated attorney-client privilege and hurt Gallagher's ability to get a fair trial.

Evidence at the hearing showed prosecutors had enlisted a Naval Criminal Investigative Service intelligence specialist to conduct criminal background checks on three civilian lawyers, including Parlatore, and a journalist with the Navy Times who has broken several stories based on leaked documents.

The defense said most of the articles based on leaks have been favorable to the prosecution, yet the investigation did not target prosecutors or NCIS investigators.

Efforts to get the case thrown out come as President Donald Trump considers pardoning several service members accused of war crimes, including Gallagher. Gallagher faces trial June 10.

Trump previously got Gallagher removed from the brig and transferred to better custody conditions at a Navy hospital.

During the hearing Thursday, Rugh indicated he was kept in the dark by prosecutors about the email monitoring.

Rugh said prosecutors told him privately they planned to embed code in what he believed to be a court document to help them find the source of leaks. But he said he didn't have the power to authorize such an investigative tool, and wasn't told they planned to plant the code in emails sent to defense lawyers or a journalist.

Rugh said he thought prosecutors were coordinating the investigation with the U.S. attorney's office in San Diego. Rugh said he wasn't aware that a federal prosecutor told the military prosecutor to make sure they had the judge's approval before launching the tracking effort.

Parlatore withdrew his motion to have the judge removed from the case after learning he had not authorized the scheme.

The lead prosecutor downplayed the move at a related hearing earlier in the day. Cmdr. Christopher Czaplak said the code embedded in the email recorded nothing more than where and when messages were opened by recipients.

Gallagher has pleaded not guilty to murder in the death of an injured teenage militant in Iraq in 2017 and attempted murder for allegedly picking off civilians from a sniper's perch.

His platoon supervisor, Lt. Jacob Portier, is fighting charges of conduct unbecoming an officer for allegedly conducting Gallagher's re-enlistment ceremony next to the militant's corpse.

Czaplak said the tracking ended May 10 after he was confronted by defense lawyers who discovered the code in an unusual logo of an American flag with a bald eagle perched on the scales of justice beneath Czaplak's signature.

Czaplak acknowledged the effort in a closed-door hearing three weeks ago. He disclosed no other details at the time.

On Thursday, Czaplak said the emails were similar to what marketers use to see when an email is opened and what device was used to open it.

"It's still a web bug and it's still unethical" countered defense lawyer Jeremiah J. Sullivan III, who represents Portier.

The judge in Portier's case, Capt. Jonathan Stephens, said from what he had seen the tracking effort wasn't able to view the contents of any emails.

Several experts testified that the code embedded in a signature line in the emails collected information on internet protocol addresses and could tell what web browser was being used, the duration it was open and could see if the message had been forwarded. But the information couldn't generally be used to identify a specific person or capture content.

Josiah Roloff, a data forensics examiner from Spokane, Washington, said the code is typically used by marketing companies and he's seen it used in undercover investigations. But he said he's never seen it used to target defense lawyers.

Melley reported from Los Angeles.

This story has been corrected to reflect that the intelligence specialist who conducted background checks worked for Naval Criminal Investigative Service, not the Navy.

R. Kelly charged with 11 new sex-related counts in Chicago

By **MICHAEL TARM** and **HERBERT G. McCANN** Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Prosecutors charged R&B singer R. Kelly on Thursday with 11 new sex-related counts involving one of the women who accused him of sexually abusing her when she was underage, including counts that carry a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison, making them the most serious he faces.

Cook County prosecutors charged the Grammy award-winning singer with four counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault, two counts of criminal sexual assault by force, two counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse and three counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse against a victim who was at least age 13 and under 17 at the time.

The four aggravated criminal sexual assault counts carry maximum terms of 30 years in prison. Kelly is due in court to hear the new charges next Thursday.

Kelly was already facing 10 counts of aggravated sexual abuse involving four women over roughly a 10-year period that started in the late 1990s. Three of the women were minors when the alleged abuse occurred.

The new charges pertain to a single victim, identified in the court filing by the initials "J.P." Prosecutors didn't specify in the filing if she is the same person as one of the original four accusers who was also identified as "J.P."

R. Kelly's lawyer, Steve Greenberg, told The Associated Press the 11 sex-related counts "are not really new."

"They are the same conduct, just charged differently," Greenberg said. "Same alleged victim, same timeframe, same facts."

Greenberg has long said Kelly expected to prevail at trial and in his comments Thursday, he said he expects the "same results."

Kelly pleaded not guilty to the original charges and denied any wrongdoing after his February arrest. He has been free since Feb. 25, when a suburban Chicago woman posted \$100,000 bond, or 10% of the \$1 million bond the judge set in his case.

According to the new court filing, the first eight counts are from encounters that allegedly occurred between Jan. 1 and Jan. 31, 2010. Three others pertain to alleged encounters between May 1, 2009, and Jan. 31, 2010.

Among other things, prosecutors allege that Kelly used force or threatened to do so to pressure the accuser into sex or to perform oral sex on him. She was underage at the time, extending the statute of limitations for bringing charges to 20 years from her 18th birthday, they wrote.

Kelly doesn't face federal charges, but attorney Michael Avenatti told the AP on Thursday that he expects the singer to face "serious federal charges" in the coming weeks.

Avenatti, who says he represents three Kelly victims, two parents and two whistleblowers, said he has provided "significant evidence" against Kelly to federal prosecutors in multiple U.S. attorneys' offices. He said he and his clients have been cooperating with prosecutors "for the better part of four months."

Greenberg said if Kelly ever does face federal charges, "we will deal with it." But he said Avenatti isn't a credible source for how the matter is unfolding.

"This man is accused of repeatedly stealing from his clients ... to fund an opulent lifestyle he hadn't earned," Greenberg said.

Avenatti, who said after Kelly's arrest that he had turned over video to prosecutors showing Kelly having sex with an underage girl, faces federal charges, including ones accusing him of trying to shake down Nike and cheating his most famous client, porn star Stormy Daniels, out of \$300,000.

Associated Press writers Jim Mustian in New York and Caryn Rousseau in Chicago contributed to this report.

Check out all of the AP's complete coverage of the investigation into R. Kelly.

To impeach or not? Pelosi balances competing calls

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi still isn't ready to impeach President Donald Trump. Even after special counsel Robert Mueller essentially called on Congress to pick up where his investigation left off, Pelosi isn't budging. Scores of her Democratic lawmakers do want to start impeachment proceedings. Outside groups say it's time. But Pelosi is carrying on as she has since taking the speaker's gavel in January, promising the House will methodically pursue its investigations of Trump -- wherever they lead.

This is Pelosi's balancing act: toggling between mounting pressure from other Democrats and her own political instincts. She's sticking with her plans for a more measured, "ironclad" investigation that makes it clear to Americans the choices ahead. It's uncharted territory for the speaker, and this Congress, with both high risks and possible rewards ahead of the 2020 election.

Trump declared his own challenge on Thursday. He called impeachment a "dirty, filthy, disgusting word" and said courts would never allow it.

"Many constituents want to impeach the president," Pelosi acknowledged shortly after Mueller's remarks Wednesday. "But we want to do what is right and what gets results."

Her calculus is political as well as practical, knowing that even if Democrats in the House have the votes to approve articles of impeachment, the Republican majority in the Senate is hardly likely to vote to convict him. Opinion polling does not favor impeachment, and a full-blown but failed effort might well help the president win re-election. Rather than go it alone, she is urging Democrats to build the case so the public is with them, whatever they decide.

"Nothing is off the table," Pelosi said, "but we do want to make such a compelling case, such an ironclad case."

It has been this way for weeks. As more and more Democratic lawmakers -- and presidential candidates -- call for impeachment proceedings, Pelosi is urging restraint. Those around her say she's feeling no pressure.

On Wednesday, many Democrats took Mueller's words as an invitation to impeach.

Mueller told the country, as he said in his 448-page report last month, that while charging the president with obstructing justice was "not an option" under Department of Justice guidelines, he also did not exonerate Trump.

Instead, Mueller said, "the Constitution requires a process other than the criminal justice system to formally accuse a sitting President of wrongdoing." Without saying the word, Mueller was pointing to impeachment.

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More presidential hopefuls -- Cory Booker, Kirsten Gillibrand and John Hickenlooper -- quickly called for impeachment proceedings. Half the Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee want an inquiry. And dozens of other House Democrats, not just the liberal left flank, are on board.

At a town hall meeting that night, Rep. Pramila Jayapal told voters in Seattle, said the road ahead "weighs on me." She is among those who want formal impeachment proceedings.

"Not everybody in the caucus is there yet, that is why Speaker Pelosi has a difficult role and she has been trying to figure out exactly how we will move forward," she told the audience. "The more the president obstructed justice ... the more certain we are going to be headed in a direction that I think many of us have already come out for -- and that is an impeachment inquiry."

More joined Thursday, including Rep. Greg Stanton, a freshman congressman from Arizona who said, "This conclusion will be unpopular with some, but it is the right thing to do."

At a town hall in Henderson, Nevada, presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders, who favors impeachment, said, "Nancy Pelosi does not have an easy job."

But this isn't entirely new for her.

She witnessed the efforts to impeach Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton and, as speaker a decade ago, tamped down cries to impeach George W. Bush over the Iraq War.

Also, the voices for impeachment make up just a slim fraction of the broader Democratic majority in the House. Many of the others represent more conservative districts and face re-election where Trump has significant support.

Back home during a visit to a supermarket in Peoria, Illinois, Rep. Cheri Bustos fielded questions on health care and other issues, an aide said — but impeachment didn't come up.

Most of Pelosi's top lieutenants are following her lead.

Rep. Adam Schiff, chairman of the House intelligence committee, said Thursday in California he's not urging impeachment yet, "though the president seems to be doing everything in his power to get me there."

Schiff warned that impeachment is not a "cure all." He said, "Impeachment doesn't remove this president. There is only one way to remove this president, and that's by voting him out of office."

Six committees in the House are pushing ahead with investigations of Trump's actions -- his business dealings, his actions during the Russia probe, his running of the government -- and many of their inquiries are moving into legal battles where, so far, courts are siding with Congress against blocking efforts.

At the same time, the House is trying on other fronts to hold Attorney General William Barr and others in contempt of Congress for failing to comply with subpoena requests for documents and testimony. The actions will test the Supreme Court's decision, some 100 years ago that Congress has an oversight role as part of the nation's system of checks and balances, in ways that could set precedent for years to come.

One Democrat on the Judiciary panel, Val Demings of Florida, a former police chief who favors opening an impeachment proceeding, explained in an earlier interview, that she and others are "just trying to figure it out."

"During the civil rights movement I'm sure the time probably wasn't right politically, but we did in our hearts what we knew was right," she said.

With Mueller now unlikely to testify before Congress, Democrats are being denied a star witness who could focus Americans' attention in a high-profile way.

Billionaire Tom Steyer, a leading impeachment advocate, says time is narrowing for Pelosi to launch impeachment hearings before the 2020 political campaign.

For so long, Democrats were waiting for Mueller's report. Now, Steyer said Mueller has spoken and provided them the way forward. Rather than being risky, Steyer said in an interview Thursday, the politics are on the side for impeachment.

"Justin Amash got a standing ovation," he said, referring to the Michigan Republican who broke ranks with the GOP and joined calls for impeachment. "Americans like truth tellers. Americans like people who stand up for their values."

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington and Michelle Price in Henderson, Nev., contributed to this report.

Follow Lisa Mascaro on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/lisamascaro>

Soggy fields leave Midwestern farmers with few good answers

By **SCOTT McFETRIDGE** Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Between the country's trade dispute with China and the seemingly endless storms that have drenched the central U.S., Iowa farmer Robb Ewoldt has had plenty of time to think about whether it's too late to plant this season, how much federal aid he might get if he does or whether to skip it altogether and opt for an insurance payment.

Instead of driving his tractor, he's driving a truck these days to earn a living while wondering how long it will be before he can return to his fields.

"Sometimes I think, what the heck am I doing farming?" he said recently by phone while returning home after hauling a shipment of dry ice to Chicago. "When you owe the bank money, you do some pretty crazy stuff."

Ewoldt is one of thousands of Midwestern farmers facing such decisions as they endure a spring like no other. It started with poor corn and soybean prices falling even further as the U.S. and China imposed new tariffs, and was compounded by torrential rain and flooding that has made planting impossible and killed off crops that were just starting to emerge.

Conscious that the trade dispute was devastating American farmers, President Donald Trump promised \$16 billion in aid — an increase over last year's \$11 billion in aid — but the promise has only added to farmers' confusion about how to approach this strange spring.

That's because details about how much money farmers would receive won't be released until later, to avoid influencing what crops they decide to plant. While there's a rationale behind keeping the aid details secret, it adds another layer of uncertainty for farmers already guessing about the weather, future crop prices and how much they would get in insurance payments if they don't plant a crop.

"It's a take what you can get and keep moving year," said Todd Hubbs, an agricultural economist at the University of Illinois. "Depending on how the payments and everything break out, each farm is different."

In the 18 states that grow most of the nation's corn, only 58% of the crop had been planted as of last week — a far cry from the 90% that would ordinarily be planted by that point. In states that grow nearly all of the soybeans, less than half of the normal crop had been planted. Farmers have even taken to Twitter — creating a #noplant19 hashtag — to commiserate and share photos of their swamped fields.

For Jeff Jorgenson, it's an all-consuming question of how much of his roughly 3,000 acres (1,214 hectares) of southwestern Iowa land he can profitably farm. About a quarter of it can't be farmed due to Missouri River flooding, and much of his remaining property has been inundated with rain and water from the neighboring Nishnabotna River.

Navigating muddy roads in his pickup truck this week, he tried to figure out whether it would be worth pumping water off his land or whether that would even be possible. Normally it wouldn't be worth the effort, but with the prospect that the Midwest's miserable weather will reduce the nation's fall harvest, corn and soybean prices have started to rise and planting every acre possible has become more attractive than settling for insurance that would pay roughly half the revenue of a normal crop.

Jorgenson, 44, said it's a puzzle trying to figure out how much land should remain unplanted and eligible for insurance payments, how much should be planted, how much money in federal aid will be available and whether those funding sources will be enough to cover his operating loan.

"Honestly, 24 hours a day, this is all you can think about," he said.

Since Bob Worth started farming in 1970, this is the first year he's opted not to plant on most of his 2,300 acres (931 hectares) near the southwestern Minnesota community of Lake Benton. It was a difficult choice, but one Worth said he felt obligated to make given the ducks that are swimming where his corn and soybeans should be growing.

"I'm not going to try to destroy my ground to get a crop in," he said, noting that planting equipment would rut and compact his land.

Despite insurance payments he will receive, Worth, 66, said he'll need to refinance loans and lose some of the equity has built up on land that has been in his family for generations.

The deadline for not planting and taking an insurance payment without a penalty varies depending on the state and crop, but the decision time has either passed or is approaching. Hubbs, the Illinois economist, said choosing to opt out, especially when prices are rising, is agonizing for farmers but may be the right choice because of the risk of a poor harvest when planting late in soggy ground and the possibility that the farmer won't be able to harvest the crop before the weather turns cold.

Hubbs said planting late won't work out for many farmers unless summer and fall weather conditions are nearly perfect — a scenario that he said seems hard to imagine, given that "storms just keep firing up and moving through."

Chad Hart, an agricultural economist at Iowa State University, said he worries that the federal aid Trump announced will encourage some farmers who would normally forgo a crop to instead risk planting on wet land. That's a tough decision for individuals, but collectively it could reduce the supply of corn and soybeans and lead to higher prices.

"We've been stuck in a pattern of overproduction, and this could change that," Hart said.

Ewoldt, who farms on about 1,100 acres (445 hectares) he rents from relatives near the Mississippi River outside Davenport, said he hopes he can figure out what's best for his farm and his family. Ewoldt, 47, said he's good at producing a crop but that figuring out what to do in the coming weeks seems like guesswork.

"You're trying to do the algebra equations and figure things out, but you have too many unknowns right now," he said. "Nobody has a clue what we're doing."

Associated Press writer David Pitt contributed to this report.

Follow Scott McFetridge on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/smfetridge>

Former US Sen. Thad Cochran, 'Quiet Persuader,' dies at 81

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — In the Washington political scene of bombast and big egos, Republican Thad Cochran of Mississippi wielded power with a quiet, gentlemanly demeanor.

He played piano in his Capitol Hill office and dashed off handwritten notes of thanks or congratulations to constituents. The white conservative reared in the segregationist the Deep South hired African American staff members, supported historically black universities and received support from black voters who provided a crucial margin for victory in his final campaign. As a leader on agriculture and budget issues, he steered billions of dollars to his home state.

Cochran died Thursday at age 81, just over a year after retiring.

"I'm optimistic about the future of our great nation," a notably feeble Cochran had said during his farewell speech on the Senate floor in March 2018. He was the 10th longest-serving U.S. senator.

He served 45 years in Washington, with the first six years in the House and the rest in the Senate. He became known the "Quiet Persuader," cultivating loyalty and respect from his staff and from politicians inside and outside his home state.

Cochran, who served in the Navy, died at a veterans' nursing home in Oxford, Mississippi, said his final chief of staff, Brad White.

"I've never known a more powerful man, nor a more humble man — a true Southern gentleman that loved the great state of Mississippi," White said.

President Donald Trump said on Twitter, "He was a real Senator with incredible values — even flew back to Senate from Mississippi for important Healthcare Vote when he was desperately ill."

Cochran was an attorney in private practice when he was elected to the U.S. House in 1972. Winning a

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Senate seat in 1978, he became the first Republican since Reconstruction to win statewide office in Mississippi.

He led the Appropriations Committee in 2005-06, channeling more than \$100 billion to Mississippi and other Gulf Coast states for Hurricane Katrina recovery after the 2005 storm, and regained the committee chairmanship in January 2015, when the GOP again took control of the Senate.

Cochran won reelection in 2014, but announced in 2018 that he was retiring because of his health.

Republican U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi said Thursday that Cochran was "a dear personal friend for decades."

"Thad Cochran was a giant in the United States Senate and one of the greatest champions Mississippi has ever known," said Wicker, who has served in the Senate since 2007.

"When Thad Cochran left the Senate, I was reminded of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who wrote, 'Lives of great men all remind us we can make our lives sublime, and departing leave behind us footprints on the sands of time,' Wicker said.

Cochran was a big practitioner of earmarks — home-state goodies such as highway projects, economic development grants and university research dollars.

GOP leaders banned earmarking, but Cochran backed Navy shipbuilding efforts in 2015. Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, which makes Navy ships, has long been one of Mississippi's largest private employers.

Known for working across party lines, Cochran traveled the globe with Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont.

"I have never had a closer friend in the Senate," said Leahy, who has served since 1975 and is vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

Cochran struggled in 2014 amid a Republican primary challenge from state Sen. Chris McDaniel, a tea party favorite who had financial support from libertarian-leaning national groups that criticized Cochran as a big spender.

Cochran ran that year in part because Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and other establishment Republicans wanted to continue having pragmatic Southerners in the Senate and to put McDaniel and those like him at a disadvantage.

The campaign turned ugly when McDaniel's supporters photographed Cochran's bedridden wife, without permission, in the nursing home where she had lived a dozen years with dementia. Images of Rose Cochran were posted briefly online in a video that suggested Cochran was having an inappropriate relationship with one of his longtime staff members, Kay Webber — an accusation that Cochran denied.

Weeks after four men were arrested and charged in the photo case, Cochran placed second, behind McDaniel, in a three-person Republican primary. During a runoff campaign, Cochran sought support from a wide variety of voters, including African Americans who traditionally vote Democratic. Cochran defeated McDaniel in the runoff and won the November 2014 general election.

Rose Cochran died in December 2014.

On May 23, 2015, Thad Cochran married Webber in a small ceremony in Gulfport, Mississippi.

McConnell noted Thursday that Cochran hired the first African American staff member to work in a Mississippi congressional office since Reconstruction, and that he was an advocate for historically black colleges and universities.

"Sen. Cochran ... believed deeply in equality and human dignity," McConnell said. "And on a personal level, Thad's generous and respectful spirit left a positive impact on everyone who knew him and everyone whom he served."

When Cochran retired, Republican Gov. Phil Bryant appointed the state's Republican Agriculture Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith to temporarily succeed him. Hyde-Smith was inaugurated in April 2018, then won a special election in November to complete the six-year term that expires in January 2021.

Associated Press reporter Andrew Taylor in Washington contributed to this story.

Trump says not involved with keeping McCain ship out of view

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

President Donald Trump and his acting defense secretary distanced themselves Thursday from an order to keep a warship rededicated in honor of the late Sen. John McCain, a Trump thorn, out of sight during the commander in chief's recent visit to Japan.

The Pentagon's acting chief, Patrick Shanahan, said he never authorized attempts to make sure Trump would not see the USS John S. McCain at its homeport in Japan and would have his chief of staff investigate. Trump said he was not involved in the matter.

Trump, who long feuded with McCain, told reporters at the White House that he "was not a big fan" of the Arizona Republican and onetime presidential nominee "in any way, shape or form." But, Trump added, "I would never do a thing like that."

"Now, somebody did it because they thought I didn't like him, OK? And they were well-meaning, I will say," he said, while insisting he was kept in the dark.

The order that a Navy destroyer be kept out of sight reflected what appeared to be an extraordinary White House effort to avoid offending an unpredictable president known for holding a grudge, including a particularly bitter one against McCain.

Three U.S. officials confirmed to The Associated Press that the White House told the Navy to keep the warship named for McCain, his father and his grandfather out of Trump's sight during Trump's visit Tuesday to a base outside Tokyo.

The Wall Street Journal first reported that a U.S. Indo-Pacific Command official wrote an email to Navy and Air Force officials about Trump's Memorial Day weekend visit, including instructions for preparations for the USS Wasp, where he was to speak.

"USS John McCain needs to be out of sight," according to the email, obtained by the Journal and whose existence was confirmed to the AP by the three U.S. officials. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss private email correspondence.

When a Navy commander expressed surprise at the instruction, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command official answered, "First I heard of it as well," the Journal reported. The official said he would talk to the White House Military Office to get more information about the directive, the newspaper reported.

Trump tweeted late Wednesday that he "was not informed about anything having to do with the Navy Ship USS John S. McCain during my recent visit to Japan."

Still, he added Thursday that he "was very, very angry with McCain because he killed health care. I was not a big fan of John McCain in any way, shape or form."

As a senator, McCain broke with the president in key areas. He incensed Trump with his thumbs-down vote foiling the effort to repeal President Barack Obama's health care law. Trump also mocked McCain's military service, which included years of imprisonment and torture during the Vietnam War.

The warship, commissioned in 1994, was originally named for the senator's father and grandfather, both Navy admirals named John Sidney McCain. Last year, the Navy rededicated the ship to honor the senator as well.

Shanahan told reporters in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Thursday that he had been unaware of the request about the USS John S. McCain.

"I never authorized, I never approved any action around the movement or activities regarding that ship," Shanahan said. He said the military "needs to do their job" and stay out of politics.

The Journal, citing photos it reviewed, reported that a tarp was placed over the USS John S. McCain's name before Trump's arrival and that sailors were instructed to remove any coverings from the ship that included its name.

Asked if the tarp was meant to block Trump's view of the ship, the officials said the tarp had been placed on the ship for maintenance and removed for the visit. Navy Cdr. Clay Doss, spokesman for U.S. 7th Fleet, told the AP that the tarp was on the ship on Friday but was removed by Saturday morning, the day Trump arrived in Japan.

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"All ships remained in normal configuration during the President's visit," he said.

Two U.S. officials told AP that all the ships in the harbor were lined up for Trump's visit, and they were visible from the USS Wasp. The officials said most of their names probably could not be seen since they were side by side but that the name of the USS John S. McCain could be seen from the pier.

Rear Adm. Charlie Brown, Navy public affairs officer, tweeted Wednesday night: "The name of USS John S. McCain was not obscured during the POTUS visit to Yokosuka on Memorial Day. The Navy is proud of that ship, its crew, its namesake and its heritage." POTUS stands for president of the United States.

A paint barge was in front of the USS John S. McCain on Saturday morning when 7th Fleet officials walked the pier to see how everything looked for the visit. The barge was then ordered to be moved and was gone by the time Trump arrived, the officials said.

The Journal reported that sailors on the USS John S. McCain, who usually wear hats with the ship's name on it, were given the day off when Trump visited.

Two U.S. officials told the AP that sailors on the USS John S. McCain were not told to stay away but that many were away for the long weekend. The officials also said that about 800 sailors from more than 20 ships and Navy commands were on the USS Wasp during the president's visit, and all wore the same Navy hat that has no logo, rather than wearing individual ship or command hats.

Trump was not welcome at McCain's funeral and raised the White House's U.S. flag back to full-staff shortly after McCain's death last August, despite U.S. Flag Code stating that it should remain at half-staff for another day. The flag returned to half-staff later in the day.

McCain's daughter Meghan tweeted Wednesday that Trump will "always be deeply threatened by the greatness of my dad's incredible life."

She added, "There is a lot of criticism of how much I speak about my dad, but nine months since he passed, Trump won't let him RIP. So I have to stand up for him.

"It makes my grief unbearable."

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Oregon, awash in marijuana, takes steps to curb production

By **ANDREW SELSKY** Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Oregon is awash in pot, glutted with so much legal weed that if growing were to stop today, it could take more than six years by one estimate to smoke or eat it all.

Now, the state is looking to curb production.

Five years after voters legalized recreational marijuana, lawmakers are moving to give the Oregon Liquor Control Commission more leeway to deny new pot-growing licenses based on supply and demand.

The bill, which passed the Senate and is now before the House, is aimed not just at reducing the huge surplus but at preventing diversion of unsold legal marijuana into the black market and forestalling a crackdown by federal prosecutors.

"The harsh reality is we have too much product on the market," said Democratic Gov. Kate Brown, who intends to sign the bill if it wins final passage as expected.

Supply is running twice as high as demand, meaning that the surplus from last year's harvest alone could amount to roughly 2.3 million pounds of marijuana, by the liquor commission's figures. That's the equivalent of over 1 billion joints.

Oregon has one of the highest such imbalances among the 10 states that have legalized recreational marijuana since 2012, in part because it had a big head start in the weed business.

With its moist climate and rich soil, Oregon has a long history of pot growing. When it became legal, many outlaw growers went legitimate, and others jumped into the business, too.

They are now all cultivating weed in a multitude of fields, greenhouses and converted factories, with 1,123 active producer licenses issued by the OLLC over the past three years.

The legislation could be a lifeline to some cannabis businesses that are being squeezed by market forces.

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Retail prices in Oregon for legal pot have plummeted from more than \$10 per gram in October 2016 to less than \$5 last December. At the same time, smaller marijuana businesses are feeling competition from bigger, richer players, some from out of state.

Officials worry that some license holders will become so desperate they will divert their product into the black market rather than see it go unsold.

"We're a very young industry," said Margo Lucas, a marijuana grower and vendor in the Willamette Valley who is hoping the measure will give her business breathing room.

She noted that growers can't seek federal bankruptcy protection — pot is still illegal under federal law, and banks avoid the industry — and that many owners have taken out personal loans to finance their businesses.

"So when we go out of business, we're going to go down hard," Lucas said. "Many of us will lose our homes. ... You're going to have a lot of entrepreneurs in this state that are pretty unhappy with the way that this ends if we don't get some support with this bill."

Opponents say the proposed law will drive growers who are denied licenses into the illegal market, if they're not there already.

"This current track seems like a giant step backwards toward prohibition, which has always been a disaster," Blake Runckel, of Portland, told lawmakers in written testimony.

As of January, Oregon's recreational pot market had an estimated 6½ years' worth of supply, according to an OLCC study .

To prevent excess pot that is still in leaf form from spoiling, processors are converting some into concentrates and edible products, which have longer shelf life, OLCC spokesman Mark Pettinger said.

U.S. Justice Department officials have said they won't interfere in states' legal marijuana businesses as long as the pot isn't smuggled into other states and other standards are met. Oregon officials want to let federal authorities know they're doing everything they can to accomplish that.

The bill to curtail production could "keep the feds off our back," Rob Bovett, legal counsel for the Association of Oregon Counties, told lawmakers.

Oregon puts no cap on the number of licenses that can be issued. Last June, the OLCC stopped accepting applications so it could process a monthslong backlog. But under current law, it has no specific authority to say no to otherwise qualified applicants, Pettinger said.

The longer-term hope is that the federal government will allow interstate commerce of marijuana, which would provide a major outlet for Oregon's renowned cannabis.

"We will kind of be like what bourbon is to Kentucky," said state Sen. Floyd Prozanski.

Follow Andrew Selsky on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/andrewselsky>

Find complete AP marijuana coverage here: <https://apnews.com/Marijuana>

Lawsuit calls Mississippi's way of choosing governors racist

By **EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS** and **DAVID A. LIEB** Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — In 1890, as white politicians across the South cracked down on the black population with Jim Crow laws, Mississippi inserted into its constitution an unusually high bar for getting elected governor or winning any other statewide office.

The provision, which remains in force to this day, says candidates must win not only a majority of the popular vote — that is, more than 50% — but also a majority of the state's 122 House districts.

On Thursday, more than a century later, four black Mississippians sued in federal court to put an end to what they say is a racially discriminatory system, unique in the U.S. and aimed at thwarting the election of African Americans.

"The scheme has its basis in racism — an 1890 post-Reconstruction attempt to keep African Americans out of statewide office," said former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, the first black person to hold that

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position. He added: "In the 21st century, it's finally time to say that this provision should be struck down."

Holder is chairman of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, whose affiliated foundation is providing financial and legal backing for the lawsuit.

Under the Mississippi provision, if no candidate wins the required majorities, the election is decided by the Mississippi House.

It's not one of those dusty segregation-era provisions that have remained on the books, forgotten and unused. It was invoked in 1999, when the House chose between two white candidates who were the top vote-getters in a four-person race for governor.

"This is not a theoretical thing," Holder said. "We have seen no statewide African American elected to office since this was enacted, in spite of the fact that Mississippi has the highest percentage of African Americans of any state in the country."

The lawsuit asks a judge to prohibit Mississippi from using the procedure in this year's elections. It does not suggest an alternative, but Holder said Mississippi could simply be ordered to do what most states do — "count all the votes and the person who gets the greatest number of votes wins."

Mississippi Republican House Speaker Philip Gunn, who is named as a defendant in the lawsuit, declined to comment.

The longtime chairman of the state House Elections Committee, Republican Rep. Bill Denny, said that during his 32 years in office, there has been no serious effort to change Mississippi's method of electing statewide officials.

"I'm comfortable with it," Denny said.

It was put in place as white politicians sought to suppress black voting power that emerged during Reconstruction and propelled some black candidates to statewide office.

The lawsuit cites comments at the time by the president of Mississippi's constitutional convention, who asserted that black control of government "meant economic and moral ruin" and that the state had an "over generous" number of black voters.

The case is part of an effort by Holder's organization to influence the election of the politicians who will oversee congressional redistricting in Mississippi after the 2020 census. Some African American candidates are running for governor and other statewide offices this year.

The lawsuit notes that black voters are highly concentrated in certain Mississippi House districts and constitute a majority of the voting-age population in 42 of them. Mississippi's white residents overwhelmingly vote Republican, while its black residents overwhelmingly cast their ballots for Democrats. About 38% of the state is black.

Because of the racially polarized and concentrated voting, a candidate preferred by white voters could win a majority of the House districts without winning the statewide vote, the lawsuit says. Yet it asserts that a candidate preferred by black voters would have to get more than 55% of the popular vote to meet the House-district requirement.

To date, no Mississippi candidate who won the most votes for a statewide office has been prevented from taking office because of the other requirements.

Marvin King, an associate professor at the University of Mississippi who focuses on African American politics, said that if the lawsuit succeeds, it is unlikely to lead to more statewide victories by Democrats or black candidates.

"The racial polarization in Mississippi is just so high," he said.

African American candidates have faced other hurdles in Mississippi politics over the years. After Reconstruction, extremely few blacks were registered to vote until the mid-1960s because of poll taxes and deadly violence.

The lawsuit says just four states — Arizona, Georgia, Mississippi and Vermont — require a candidate for governor to win a majority of the popular vote. Arizona and Georgia have runoffs if needed, while in Vermont, the House and Senate decide the winner.

The four plaintiffs in the lawsuit include two retired political science professors.

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Lieb reported from Jefferson City, Missouri. Follow Emily Wagster Pettus at <http://twitter.com/EWagsterPettus> and David A. Lieb at <http://twitter.com/DavidALieb> .

Iraqi city of Kirkuk rocked by 6 blasts; at least 4 killed

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — A series of explosions shook the center of the northern city of Kirkuk Thursday, killing at least four people and wounding 23, Iraqi security officials said.

The six blasts went off in quick succession after iftar, the meal that breaks daylong fasting during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, when streets are typically crowded with shoppers and people out having dinner. They struck in the center of the city in a commercial area that has several malls, cafes and restaurants, sending people fleeing in panic.

The nature of the blasts was not immediately clear, but the officials said they appeared to be improvised explosive devices. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Iraq declared victory against the Islamic State group in 2017, but the group continues to carry out attacks through sleeper cells, particularly in the country's north.

There was no immediate responsibility claim, but the head of Kirkuk security operations Saad Harbya, speaking on the Kurdish Rudaw TV, blamed IS. The group has claimed several attacks recently around the city, some of them targeting security forces.

Kirkuk is an oil city disputed by Irbil-based Kurdish regional government and Baghdad.

Why the US economy may have already peaked for the year

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Enjoy it while it lasts.

The U.S. economy grew at a solid 3.1% annual rate in the January-March quarter — a pace that will likely prove to be the high-water mark for the year before growth weakens in the coming months.

That's the assessment widely shared by economists in light of the rising threats facing the U.S. economy, from a raging trade war to more cautious spending by consumers and businesses to a global slowdown. Their collective forecast is that last year's 2.9% growth — the fastest year of expansion since 2015 — will be followed by a more tepid 2.3% gain this year.

That pace would roughly match the average annual growth since the current expansion began in 2009. In two months, it will become the longest post-recession recovery on record. But it has also been the slowest since World War II.

The Trump administration, defying the assessments of mainstream economists, insists that its program of tax cuts, regulatory reform and tougher enforcement of trade deals will produce dramatically higher annual growth above 3% for the next six years.

Here are three key reasons why economists think growth has peaked for the year:

A PENDULUM SWINGS BACK

Half the 3.1% growth rate in the January-March quarter that the government reported Thursday was due to two temporary factors: A surge in business efforts to restock shelves. And a big narrowing in the trade deficit.

In the calculations that produce the nation's gross domestic product, a widening trade deficit subtracts from growth. By contrast, a narrowing trade deficit, like the one last quarter, raises growth. Yet economists predict that the pendulum will swing back to a wider trade gap in the current April-June quarter. That's because neither a sharp drop in imports nor a big surge in exports in the first quarter is expected to persist.

For that reason, analysts foresee second-quarter growth slowing to around a 1.5 percent annual rate — just about half the first-quarter figure.

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FADING STIMULUS

President Donald Trump's signature domestic achievement was the passage of a \$1.5 trillion tax cut in December 2017. Billions in additional spending for domestic and military programs that Congress approved in early 2018 also delivered a stimulative lift to the economy.

The tax cuts allowed companies, which received a major portion of the bounty, to spend more on plants and equipment. Business investment grew sharply as a result. So did stock buybacks, which helped boost the stock market.

And for households, tax cuts began showing up in paychecks early last year in the form of lower withholding amounts, leaving consumers with more money to spend. Consumer spending, which accounts for about two-thirds of economic activity, averaged a sizzling 3.3% annual rate over the final three quarters of 2018.

But the initial surge from the tax cuts and the increased government spending are waning now. That's a major reason why economists think growth this year will slow to a modest 2.3% annual pace, in line with the pattern of the past decade.

AN OMINOUS TRADE WAR

A return to a 2.3% growth rate, while slower than last year, would still likely leave the economy with enough steam to keep unemployment, already near a 50-year low, at a healthy level. What concerns economists is that some further shock might significantly slow growth.

Analysts are warily monitoring an array of risks, from disruptions resulting from a British exit from the European Union to weakening manufacturing and retail industries to jitters over congressional investigations into Trump's presidency.

But the gravest perceived threat may be the escalating trade war between the United States and China, the world's two largest economies. Stock markets have been falling since talks broke off this month and the Trump administration announced that it was boosting tariffs on \$250 billion in Chinese goods. Beijing vowed to retaliate against U.S. products as it has done with previous Trump tariffs.

For economists, the concern is that the disruptions in trade could become severe enough to trigger a recession in an already weakening economy.

"If the trade war escalates, that could cause unemployment to start to rise and that could cause consumers to cut back on their spending, which would then prompt businesses to cut back," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's. "Then the recession risks become very high."

Yet Zandi said he thought that risk could fade if the United States and China can at least declare a truce in their trade war, which would keep punitive tariffs from widening further.

Economists are watching for such an outcome, with Trump and President Xi Jinping set to meet on the sidelines of a Group of 20 major nations' summit next month in Japan.

Netanyahu's future clouded by rivalry with former ally

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's complicated relationship with an angry former protege has sent Israeli politics into uncharted waters.

By triggering an early election, Avigdor Lieberman has raised questions about the political future of the long-ruling prime minister who is bracing for expected criminal charges in a corruption case.

He also has emerged as a feared kingmaker who could continue to threaten Netanyahu.

"They've been going at each other for years," said Reuven Hazan, a professor in the political science department at Hebrew University.

In coalition negotiations over the years, he said that Lieberman has seemingly enjoyed dragging out talks "until the last minute."

The latest showdown, in which Lieberman blocked Netanyahu from forming a coalition government, was the culmination of years of up-and-down relations between student and mentor. It ended in a vote early

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Thursday morning that dissolved parliament less than two months after elections and triggered another national vote in September.

In a further embarrassment to the infuriated Netanyahu, it happened just as President Donald Trump's Mideast team was arriving to promote a peace initiative. A lengthy Israeli election campaign adds even more uncertainty to the U.S. plan.

The rivals continued to exchange insults Thursday, with Lieberman accusing Netanyahu of creating a "cult of personality" and the prime minister accusing Lieberman of being a "serial toppler" of governments.

Lieberman, a 60-year-old former nightclub bouncer, immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet republic of Moldova in the 1970s.

He got his start in politics as an aide to Netanyahu, serving as his chief of staff during his first term as prime minister in the late 1990s. He quickly resigned, however, to protest concessions Netanyahu made to the Palestinians and launched a new party, Yisrael Beitenu, appealing primarily to fellow Soviet immigrants.

That set the stage for one of the longest and strangest relationships in Israeli politics. While the U.S.-educated Netanyahu has cultivated an image as a telegenic and worldly statesman, Lieberman speaks in a dour, Russian-accented monotone. While Netanyahu presents himself as a leader, Lieberman is seen as a master backroom operator.

The sharp-tongued Lieberman has been the source of countless controversies. He has referred to Arab lawmakers as terrorist "collaborators," calling for them to face the death penalty, and he led a failed attempt to require Arab citizens to take a loyalty oath. He has infuriated Egypt, a key ally, by suggesting that Israel bomb Egypt's Aswan Dam, and again by saying angrily that its then-President Hosni Mubarak could "go to hell."

Yet he has proven to be a valuable ally to Netanyahu, briefly merging their parties earlier this decade. He has used his influence to secure top posts, including foreign minister and defense minister, but also has feuded with him. He resigned as defense minister last year, accusing Netanyahu of being too weak toward Gaza militants.

"Lieberman is very astute," said Ashley Perry, a former adviser. "He is a chess player literally and figuratively as he thinks long term and he sees the situation long term."

Perry said that despite Lieberman's reputation as a polarizing figure, he has enjoyed strong working relationships across the political map.

After the April 9 election, Netanyahu appeared to be a lock for a fourth consecutive term and fifth overall, with his Likud party and religious and nationalist allies controlling a solid 65-seat majority in the 120-seat parliament.

But during six weeks of negotiations, Lieberman drove a tough bargain in a dispute over Israel's military draft law. Unable to secure Lieberman's support, Netanyahu was left one seat short of a majority and was forced to push for the new election.

Lieberman appeared to be motivated by both political and personal reasons.

Though a staunch hard liner toward the Palestinians, Lieberman also champions a secular agenda and has pledged to confront ultra-Orthodox influence over the country's secular majority. The dispute with Netanyahu focused on draft exemptions for ultra-Orthodox men, a sore spot among secular Jews who are required to serve.

As his core immigrant constituency grows older or integrates into Israeli society, Lieberman has sought to appeal to hard-line secular Israelis and rebrand his fast-shrinking party. Yisrael Beitenu won just five seats in the April election, down from 15 a decade ago.

Hazan, the political scientist, said Lieberman realized during the campaign that the issue of secular rights was a winning one.

"There's nothing you can give him that is going to get him any further with his voter base. What he decided is to cut Netanyahu down to size," he said.

But the collapse of the new parliament also unleashed deep personal animosity. At a news conference Thursday, Netanyahu accused Lieberman of betraying the public to save his party from extinction. "Lieber-

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man is the national toppler. He is a serial toppler of right-wing governments," he said.

Earlier Thursday, Lieberman said the issue had nothing to do with political ideology.

"This is about a cult of personality," he said.

The new election campaign has suddenly made the long-dominant Netanyahu appear vulnerable. Israel's attorney general already has recommended that Netanyahu be charged with bribery and fraud in a series of corruption scandals, subject to a hearing scheduled in October.

With an election coming just weeks before the hearing, the corruption case is sure to be a key issue. And if Netanyahu wins, the corruption case will complicate his efforts to form a coalition, with his hopes shrinking for passing legislation granting him immunity.

For now, Netanyahu will continue to lead in a weakened capacity, as he has done since December, when he declared the previous election.

Throughout this period, Netanyahu has maintained a tough policy toward Iranian troops and their Hezbollah allies in neighboring Syria and has managed sporadic flare-ups of fighting in Gaza.

He tried to portray a business-as-usual image on Thursday, boasting to reporters about a series of meetings with U.S. officials, including presidential adviser Jared Kushner.

But as the U.S. promises to roll out a peace plan at an economic conference in Bahrain next month, it will likely be difficult for him to make any sweeping concessions.

Despite their tense relationship, Netanyahu and Lieberman could still find themselves together after the September election. Lieberman said he would not back opposition leader Benny Gantz as prime minister. That could mean another round of tense negotiations between the old rivals.

Perry, the former adviser, said if Likud emerges as the largest party in September, he thinks Lieberman will again recommend Netanyahu as prime minister and be ready to negotiate.

"What would be the reaction to that remains an open question," he said.

Cemeteries and family memories stand in border wall's way

By **NOMAAN MERCHANT** Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Texas (AP) — On a muggy, mosquito-filled evening near the U.S.-Mexico border, the threat of President Donald Trump's border wall brought together a large group of family members at two historic cemeteries that are part of their ancestral land.

The group swapped stories about family lore and examined the gravestones of their forefathers, some of whom fought in World War II and Vietnam. One man, 80 years old, leaned for support against his father's headstone, placed there in 1965.

Under current plans for the border wall, one of the 19th century cemeteries could be lost entirely. Some graves would have to be exhumed; others without a headstone might be paved over.

The people who would lose land have hired lawyers and been staging protests. They're determined to fight in court to tie up construction and to explain to the rest of the U.S. the hidden costs of a border wall.

"We feel on some level helpless because we're working against the government," said Sylvia Ramirez, who organized the gathering at the cemeteries recently and has led her family's fight to save them. "We know we're a small voice, but we're a voice nonetheless."

In Texas, construction could begin any day on walls that would also cut through national wildlife refuges; farmland that grows onions, cantaloupes, and corn; and properties that date back to when the border itself was created.

Congress agreed last year to fund 33 miles (53 kilometers) of new walls and fencing in South Texas's Rio Grande Valley, accompanied by an enforcement zone of roads, cameras, and lighting. Lawmakers have since gotten the Department of Homeland Security to exempt the National Butterfly Center and the 19th century La Lomita chapel, but they have not stopped construction on other private land.

A federal judge last week ruled that Trump couldn't use Defense Department money his administration shifted to wall construction when it declared a national emergency in February. But that also won't halt the Texas projects because they're funded with a different pot of money.

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The Rio Grande Valley is the busiest corridor on the southwest border for illegal crossings. The Border Patrol says it needs more barriers to stop criminals and drug traffickers.

But the wall cannot be built immediately next to the river due to treaties intended to prevent the U.S. from pushing floodwaters into Mexico. It will instead be built on a U.S. levee that runs one mile or more away from the river in some parts, creating what is often called a "no man's land" because it will be south of the wall but still in the United States.

Ohio State University-Newark geographer Kenneth Madsen calculated that the U.S. will have blocked off about 68 square miles (175 square kilometers) of land in South Texas once it builds all projects already funded. That's an area about the size of Washington, D.C.

Many families in the Rio Grande Valley — a majority Latino and Democratic-leaning region in a state dominated by Republicans — can trace their roots back to when their land was part of Mexico.

Adelina Yarrito, 62, tapped her left forearm with two fingers on her right hand to explain why she thought their land was under threat.

"The difference is the color of skin," she said. "We're Hispanic."

Nathaniel Jackson set up his ranch here in 1857, nine years after the Rio Grande became the border following the Mexican American War. Jackson was a Union supporter who married a black woman and helped runaway slaves escape to Mexico, which outlawed slavery more than three decades before the U.S. did.

The Eli Jackson Cemetery — named for one of Jackson's sons — begins at the edge of the levee. It would be swallowed almost entirely by the enforcement zone the government plans to install.

The nearby Jackson Ranch cemetery is slightly farther away, as is a chapel dating back to 1874 that family members say was the home of the first Protestant church in the Rio Grande Valley. The government's current plans would leave the cemetery adjacent to the enforcement zone.

Alicia Jackson Flores, 68, walks through the cemeteries to examine headstones, some of which have broken or fallen over. She wears a wide-brimmed hat to shield her eyes from the sunset.

She bends slightly to read each of the headstones, some inscribed in English and others in Spanish.

One headstone is inscribed: "Pvt. Abraham Rutledge, Texas Partisan Rangers, CSA." Rutledge was a soldier in the Confederate army during the Civil War. He was also the son-in-law of Nathaniel Jackson.

Rutledge is believed to have been buried in the cemetery, though the family doesn't know exactly where. A Confederate heritage group asked for permission to install the marker several years ago.

Even though he fought for slavery, "he's a part of the Jackson family," Flores said.

After a discussion about their ancestors, the discussion shifted to the wall.

Sanjuanita Salinas admitted an unpopular opinion among the group: She supports the wall because she's worried about drug trafficking.

"They do cross," the 68-year-old Salinas told the group. "They do bring drugs."

Flores cut in. "Do you feel threatened?"

"Honey, I don't trust them," Salinas replied. "They'll kill you. They'll kill their own mother."

But Salinas said she also opposed taking the cemetery to build the wall.

"You don't disturb the dead," she said.

To seize the property under its power of eminent domain, the U.S. government still has to offer to buy the land and sue the family if it refuses to sell. According to Sylvia Ramirez, the government has not addressed whether it would pay for the potential exhumation of graves.

As the sun set, the dozen or so family members gathered to take a group photo. One person wrote everyone's names in a small notebook afterward so she could tag them in a Facebook photo.

Ramiro Ramirez, Sylvia Ramirez's brother, held his 2-year-old grandson, Liam. He let Liam ring the bell inside the chapel, just as his grandmother had let him do 60 or so years earlier.

Ramiro and Sylvia already have their plots chosen, their names inscribed on a gray family headstone.

"The concern for us, especially those of us who are older, is what's going to happen to the cemetery," Sylvia Ramirez said. "We know what we can try to do while we're still alive."

Asian shares mixed, trade worries continue on Trump tariffs

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were mixed Friday as trade worries continued after President Donald Trump announced additional tariffs on imports from Mexico.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 dipped 0.7% in early trading to 20,796.38, while Australia's S&P/ASX 200 inched down 0.1% to 6,383.70. South Korea's Kospi gained 0.4% to 2,046.56. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was little changed but up by less than 0.1% to 27,115.53, and the Shanghai Composite gained 0.3% to 2,914.46.

Major U.S. stock indexes capped a day of listless trading with modest gains Thursday, snapping the market's two-day losing streak.

The S&P 500 index rose 5.84 points, or 0.2%, to 2,788.86. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 43.47 points, or 0.2%, to 25,169.88. The Nasdaq composite added 20.41 points, or 0.3%, to 7,567.72. The Russell 2000 index of smaller companies fell 4.42 points, or 0.3%, to 1,485.53.

Trump announced a new 5% tariff on all Mexican goods Thursday to halt the flow of migrants into the U.S. The tariff, to be effective June 10, would increase each month if Trump is not satisfied by Mexico's efforts on border security.

"Early expectations for the temporary relief on Wall Street to spread to Asia markets into Friday had once again been derailed with more confrontation trade policies out of the U.S., one to throw markets into a risk-off mode again," says Jingyi Pan, market strategist at IG in Singapore.

Trade concerns are likely to continue through late June, when U.S. and Chinese leaders will have an opportunity to meet at the G20 summit in Japan.

In early May the U.S. and China concluded their 11th round of trade talks with no agreement. The U.S. then more than doubled duties on \$200 billion in Chinese imports, and China responded by raising its own tariffs.

ENERGY:

Benchmark U.S. crude fell 50 cents to \$56.09 a barrel. It skidded 3.8% to settle at \$56.59 a barrel Thursday. Brent crude oil, the international standard, slipped 51 cents to \$64.82 per barrel.

CURRENCIES:

The dollar rose to 109.55 Japanese yen from 109.69 yen on Thursday. The euro strengthened to \$1.1135 from \$1.1138.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, May 31, the 151st day of 2019. There are 214 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 31, 1962, former Nazi official Adolf Eichmann was hanged in Israel a few minutes before midnight for his role in the Holocaust.

On this date:

In 1669, English diarist Samuel Pepys (peeps) wrote the final entry of his journal, blaming his failing eyesight for his inability to continue.

In 1859, the Big Ben clock tower in London went into operation, chiming for the first time.

In 1889, some 2,200 people in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, perished when the South Fork Dam collapsed, sending 20 million tons of water rushing through the town.

In 1916, during World War I, British and German fleets fought the naval Battle of Jutland off Denmark; there was no clear-cut victor, although the British suffered heavier losses.

In 1921, a race riot erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, as white mobs began looting and leveling the affluent black district of Greenwood over reports a black man had assaulted a white woman in an elevator; hundreds are believed to have died.

In 1949, former State Department official and accused spy Alger Hiss went on trial in New York, charged

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with perjury (the jury deadlocked, but Hiss was convicted in a second trial).

In 1970, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake in Peru claimed an estimated 67,000 lives.

In 1977, the Trans-Alaska oil pipeline, three years in the making despite objections from environmentalists and Alaska Natives, was completed. (The first oil began flowing through the pipeline 20 days later.)

In 1985, 88 people were killed, more than 1,000 injured, when 41 tornadoes swept through parts of Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York and Ontario, Canada, during an 8-hour period.

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush welcomed Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev to Washington for a summit meeting. The situation comedy "Seinfeld" began airing as a regular series on NBC.

In 1994, the United States announced it was no longer aiming long-range nuclear missiles at targets in the former Soviet Union.

In 2005, breaking a silence of 30 years, former FBI official W. Mark Felt stepped forward as "Deep Throat," the secret Washington Post source during the Watergate scandal.

Ten years ago: Dr. George Tiller, a rare provider of late-term abortions, was shot and killed in a Wichita, Kansas, church. (Gunman Scott Roeder was later convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole for 50 years.) Millvina Dean, the last survivor of the 1912 sinking of the RMS Titanic, died in Southampton, England at 97.

Five years ago: Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the only American soldier held prisoner in Afghanistan, was freed by the Taliban in exchange for five Afghan detainees from the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. (Bergdahl, who'd gone missing in June 2009, later pleaded guilty to endangering his comrades by walking away from his post in Afghanistan; his sentence included a dishonorable discharge, a reduction in rank and a fine, but no prison time.) A private Gulfstream IV jet went off a runway and crashed while trying to take off from Hanscom Field in Bedford, Massachusetts, killing Philadelphia Inquirer co-owner Lewis Katz and six other people.

One year ago: The Trump administration imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum from Europe, Mexico and Canada in a move that drew immediate vows of retaliation. Western Europe got its first populist government as Italy's anti-establishment 5-Star Movement and the right-wing League formed a governing coalition. Comedian Samantha Bee apologized to Ivanka Trump and to her viewers for using an expletive to describe the president's daughter on Bee's TBS show "Full Frontal." President Donald Trump pardoned conservative commentator Dinesh D'Souza, who had pleaded guilty to campaign finance fraud; Trump said D'Souza had been "treated very unfairly by our government." The Golden State Warriors won Game 1 of the NBA finals over the Cleveland Cavaliers in overtime; Cleveland's J.R. Smith inexplicably failed to take a go-ahead shot after a missed free-throw as time ran out in regulation.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-director Clint Eastwood is 89. Singer Peter Yarrow is 81. Humanitarian Terry Waite is 80. Singer-musician Augie Meyers is 79. Actress Sharon Gless is 76. Football Hall of Famer Joe Namath is 76. Broadcast journalist/commentator Bernard Goldberg is 74. Actor Tom Berenger is 69. Actor Gregory Harrison is 69. Actor Kyle Secor is 62. Actress Roma Maffia (ma-FEE'-uh) is 61. Comedian Chris Elliott is 59. Actress Lea Thompson is 58. Singer Corey Hart is 57. Actor Hugh Dillon is 56. Rapper DMC is 55. Actress Brooke Shields is 54. Country musician Ed Adkins (The Derailers) is 52. TV host Phil Keoghan is 52. Jazz musician Christian McBride is 47. Actress Archie Panjabi is 47. Actress Merle Dandridge (TV: "Greenleaf") is 44. Actor Colin Farrell is 43. Rock musician Scott Klopfenstein (Reel Big Fish) is 42. Actor Eric Christian Olsen is 42. Rock musician Andy Hurley (Fall Out Boy) is 39. Country singer Casey James (TV: "American Idol") is 37. Actor Jonathan Tucker is 37. Rapper Waka Flocka Flame is 33. Actor Curtis Williams Jr. is 32. Pop singer Normani Hamilton (Fifth Harmony) is 23.

Thought for Today: "They that approve a private opinion, call it opinion; but they that dislike it, heresy; and yet heresy signifies no more than private opinion." — Thomas Hobbes, English political philosopher (1588-1679).