

Groton Daily Independent

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CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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



Thursday, July 18

5:00 p.m.: Junior Legion hosts Aberdeen, (DH)

6:00 p.m.: U8 Pee Wees vs. Jacobson at manor Park, (DH) (B)

6:00 p.m.: T-Ball Scrimmage (both)

July 19-21

State Junior Teener Tournament in Elkton

Friday, July 19

6:00 p.m.: Junior Legion at Faulkton, (DH)

Sunday, July 21

1:00 p.m.: Groton 2 Amateurs host Redfield

4:00 p.m.: Locke Electric Amateurs at Northville

Monday, July 22

5:00 p.m.: Junior Legion at Aberdeen, (DH)

South Dakota again receives highest ratings under IDEA

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota has received the highest rating possible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, for both Parts B and C for the most recent reporting year of federal fiscal year 2017. The state is one of only 14 across the country to meet the requirements and purposes of IDEA under both Parts B and C, according to information released recently from the U.S. Department of Education.

IDEA Part B measures and reports the effectiveness of special education services at the preschool and K-12 levels, while Part C refers to the state's Birth to Three program, which provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers ages birth to three years with developmental delays.

Under Part B, federal fiscal year 2017 marks the fourth year in a row that South Dakota "meets requirements," which is the highest rating a state can receive. Under Part C, this is the second year that South Dakota has been determined to "meet requirements."

States must receive a rating of 80 percent or higher to receive the "meets requirements" determination. In federal fiscal year 2017, South Dakota received 89.58% for Part B and 81.25% for Part C.

"I commend the dedication of families, service providers and school districts in providing high quality services to infants, toddlers and students with disabilities. These results for our state's youth are cause for celebration," said South Dakota Secretary of Education Dr. Ben Jones.

IDEA requires each state to develop a State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report that evaluates the state's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of the IDEA and describes how the state will improve its implementation.

The Part B and Part C SPP/APRs include indicators that measure child and family results and other indicators that measure compliance with the requirements of the IDEA. Since 2015, Part B and Part C SPP/APRs have included a State Systemic Improvement Plan through which each state focuses its efforts on improving a state-selected child or family outcome through implementation of an evidence-based practice.

IDEA details four categories for determinations:

- Meets the requirements and purposes of IDEA
- Needs assistance in implementing the requirements of IDEA
- Needs intervention in implementing the requirements of IDEA
- Needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of IDEA

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Sisseton 8 - 10 Groton Post 39

📍 Home 🏠 Non-League 📅 Wednesday July 17, 2019

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
SSST	1	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	8	14	1
GRTN	1	4	0	2	1	0	1	1	X	10	15	0

BATTING

Sisseton	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
T Peterson (C	2	2	1	0	3	1	3
K Piharski (...	3	1	2	1	0	0	1
Nielsen (SS,...	5	1	2	1	0	1	1
H Ryan (3B	3	1	1	0	2	0	3
B Steen (LF	4	1	1	1	0	2	2
J German (1B	4	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kirk (CF	5	0	3	2	0	0	3
K Metz (DH,...	4	0	1	0	0	1	4
C Huber (RF	5	0	1	0	0	3	4
I Grimm (P	2	1	1	0	0	1	1
Totals	37	8	14	6	6	10	12

2B: K Piharski, Kirk, **TB:** K Piharski 3, B Steen, H Ryan, Kirk 4, T Peterson, Nielsen 2, C Huber, I Grimm, K Metz, J German, **CS:** K Piharski, **HBP:** K Piharski 2, B Steen, K Metz, **SB:** K Piharski, T Peterson 2, K Metz, **LOB:** 12

PITCHING

Sisseton	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
I Grimm	5.0	9	8	5	1	1	0
Nielsen	3.0	6	2	2	0	2	1
Totals	8.0	15	10	7	1	3	1

P-S: Nielsen 37-29, I Grimm 76-49, **HBP:** I Grimm 2, **BF:** Nielsen 13, I Grimm 27

Groton Post 39	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
D Shabazz (...	4	4	4	0	0	0	0
K Blackmun...	5	2	2	1	0	0	2
A Morris (3...	4	0	3	2	1	0	1
W Locke (C,...	5	0	1	1	0	0	4
C Larson (SS	3	1	1	0	0	0	1
A Jones (P,...	4	1	1	0	0	1	2
P Johnson (...	4	2	2	3	0	1	1
R Thurston...	4	0	1	1	0	0	0
G Schroede...	4	0	0	0	0	1	2
Totals	37	10	15	8	1	3	6

2B: K Blackmun, W Locke, A Morris, D Shabazz 2, **3B:** P Johnson, **HR:** P Johnson, **TB:** K Blackmun 3, C Larson, W Locke 2, A Morris 4, R Thurston, P Johnson 7, D Shabazz 6, A Jones, **HBP:** C Larson, D Shabazz, **SB:** K Blackmun 2, D Shabazz 2, **LOB:** 6

Groton Post 39	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
A Jones	5.0	8	2	1	3	3	0
K Blackmun	1.0	3	5	5	2	2	0
W Locke	3.0	3	1	0	1	5	0
Totals	9.0	14	8	6	6	10	0

P-S: K Blackmun 37-16, W Locke 46-31, A Jones 95-54, **HBP:** K Blackmun 2, W Locke, A Jones, **BF:** K Blackmun 9, W Locke 13, A Jones 25

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Position available for full-time Police Officer

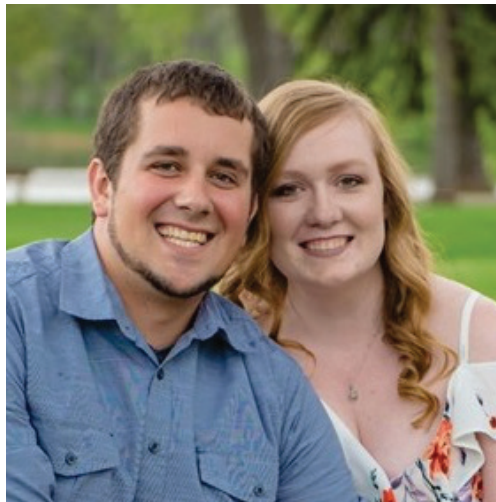
"Position available for full-time Police Officer. Experience and SD Certification preferred. Salary negotiable DOE. Please send application and resume to the City of Groton, PO Box 587 Groton, SD 57445. This position is open until filled. Applications may be found at <https://city.grotonsd.gov/forms/ApplicationForCityEmployee.pdf> For more information, please call 605-397-8422 Equal opportunity employer."

(0704.0710)



2 bedroom apt
\$750/month plus utilities
attached garage
major appliances furnished

480-980-8513
or
605-397-7118



Geist Bridal Shower

Please join us for a
bridal shower honoring
Andee Geist,
Bride-to-be of Kody Conlon
Saturday, July 27th, at 1 pm
Aberdeen Senior Citizens Center
1303 7th Ave SE
Aberdeen, SD

The couple is registered at Target, on Amazon.com, and Lori's Pharmacy

The Groton Area School District is hiring for the 2019-2020 School Year.

MS/HS Administrative Assistant/Study Hall Supervisor

Yearbook Advisor

Assistant Boys Basketball Coach

Applications are available at www.grotonrea.com under the employment tab. Contact Joe Schwan, Superintendent with questions at 605-397-2351.

Applications should be sent to
Groton Area School District
Joe Schwan, Superintendent
PO Box 410
Groton, SD 57445

The Groton Area School District is an Equal Opportunity Employer.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

GROTON C & MA CHURCH

706 N. MAIN

JULY 21 – JULY 25

FOR AGES 3 THROUGH GRADE 6

6:15 – 8:30 PM

QUESTIONS? CALL JANA 397-7471

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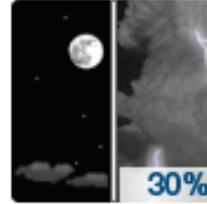
Today

Tonight

Friday

Friday
Night

Saturday



Sunny then
Chance
Showers

Chance
Showers then
Partly Cloudy

Mostly Sunny

Mostly Clear
then Chance
T-storms

Chance
T-storms

High: 91 °F

Low: 67 °F

High: 85 °F

Low: 63 °F

High: 82 °F

MARGINAL RISK of Severe T-Storms

WHAT

Isolated severe storms possible. The strongest storms could produce **hail up to quarter size and wind gusts up to 60 mph.**

WHERE

Across western and central South Dakota, including Mobridge, Pierre, Faulkton and Miller.

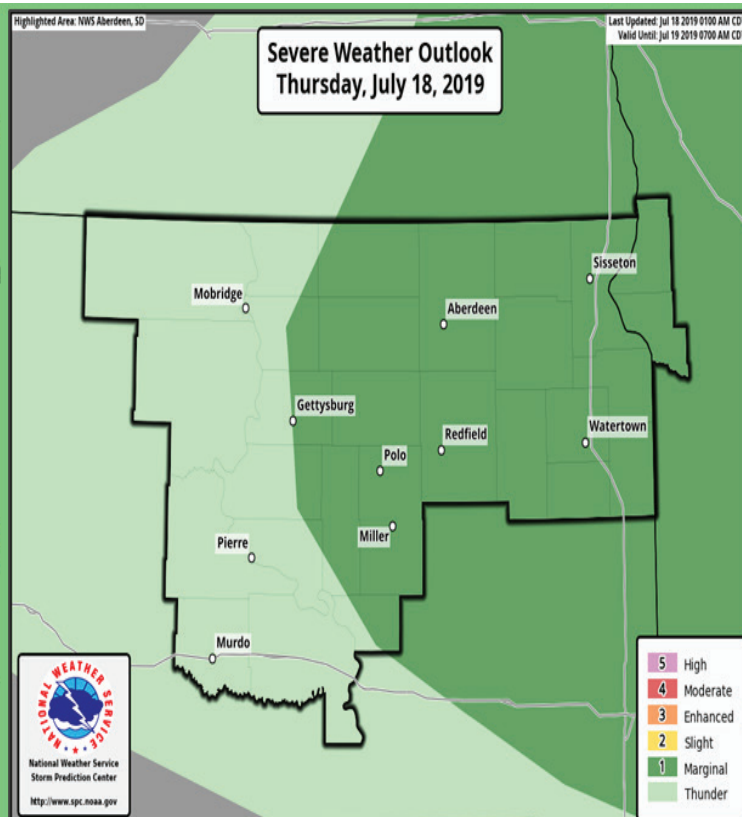
WHEN

This afternoon through tonight. **The highest risk period will be from 1 pm – 9 pm.** Another round of storms possible very late tonight.

ACTION

Monitor the weather and have a plan of action if severe weather approaches your area.

ISSUED: 5:21 AM - Thursday, July 18, 2019



Published on: 07/18/2019 at 1:26AM

A broad area of low pressure over the region will bring isolated to scattered showers and thunderstorms this afternoon and evening. Friday will see drier conditions for most of the area before showers and thunderstorms move back in Friday night. Temperatures will soar into the 90s today before cooling off a bit on Friday.

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Today in Weather History

July 18, 1883: An estimated F3 tornado moved southeast from south of Redfield to north of Hitchcock, to 6 miles southeast of Crandon in Spink County. At least one farm house was destroyed and swept away. Three people were killed on one farm.

July 18, 1986: In the afternoon, an F2 tornado that touched down in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis became one of the most observed and photographed tornadoes ever. The detailed coverage included video from a Minnesota DOT traffic camera and a remarkable aerial video taken from a helicopter by a television camera crew. The tornado began in Brooklyn Park and moved slowly northeast, causing light to moderate damage. It then turned east and slowed as it crossed the Mississippi River. Also on this day, an F2 tornado touched down two miles southeast of Bryant, in Hamlin County. This tornado traveled near Dolph Creek and moved east along the creek to the Lake Norden area. The tornado damaged many trees and destroyed a barn. A second F2 tornado touched down three miles west of Toronto and moved southeast. The tornado destroyed a barn, silo, and six other buildings and caused extensive damage to farm equipment on a farm one mile south and a half mile west Astoria.

July 18, 2008: Severe thunderstorms developed across parts of central and north-central South Dakota bringing large hail up to the size of golf balls and damaging winds to near 80 mph. Some tree, vehicle, and building damage occurred with some of the storms. Eighty mph winds or higher brought down many branches along with some trees in Fort Pierre. Power was cut off for parts of Fort Pierre when branches fell on power lines. Several truck trailers and feed silos were tipped onto their sides by the high winds. Also, some buildings were damaged. A loaded train was pushed down the tracks almost a quarter of a mile by the strong winds. Seventy mph winds or greater brought down many tree branches along with some trees in Pierre. There were power outages in Pierre along with some buildings receiving damage. Damaging thunderstorm winds also downed six power poles between Sully Buttes and Onida knocking power out to over 800 homes in and around Onida.

64: The great fire of Rome breaks out and destroys much of the city on this day. Despite the well-known stories, there is no evidence that the Roman emperor, Nero, either started the fire or played the fiddle while it burned. The fire began in the slums of a district south of the legendary Palatine Hill. The area's homes burned very quickly, and the fire spread north, fueled by high winds.

1996: A massive rainstorm in north central and northeast Illinois led to widespread flooding. Aurora reported 16.94 inches of rain, establishing a state record for the most rain in a single day. Other heavy totals included 13.60 inches at Joliet, 9.24 inches in Wheaton, 8.09 inches in DeKalb, and 7.82 inches at Elgin. This event is often called "the second most damaging weather disaster in Illinois History."

1889 - A cloudburst in West Virginia along the small creeks in Wirt County, Jackson County and Wood County claimed twenty lives. Rockport, WV, reported nineteen inches of rain in two hours and ten minutes that Thursday evening. Tygart Creek rose 22 feet in one hour, and villages were swept away on Tygart, Slate, Tucker, and Sandy Creeks. (The Weather Channel)

1942 - A record deluge occurred at Smethport in northern Pennsylvania, with 30.7 inches in just six hours. The downpours and resultant flooding in Pennsylvania were devastating. (David Ludlum)

1986 - One of the most photo-genic tornadoes touched down in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis, MN, during the late afternoon. The very slow moving tornado actually appeared live on the evening news by way of an aerial video taken by the KARE-TV helicopter crew. The tornado, unlike most, was quite the prima donna, staying visible to tens of thousands of persons for thirty minutes. It was moderate in intensity, with winds of 113-157 mph, and caused 650 thousand dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1987 - Cool weather prevailed in the western U.S. Seven cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Alamosa, CO, with a reading of 38 degrees. The low of 52 degrees at Bakersfield, CA, was a record for July. Up to eight inches of snow covered the Northern Sierra Nevada Range of California from a storm the previous day. During that storm, winds gusting to 52 mph at Slide Mountain, NV, produced a wind chill reading of 20 degrees below zero. Susanville, CA, reached 17 degrees that previous day, Blue Canyon, CA, dipped to a July record of 36 degrees, and the high of 44 degrees at Klamath Falls, OR, smashed their previous record for July by ten degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 86 °F at 6:28 PM

Low Temp: 68 °F at 5:26 AM

Wind: 23 mph at 6:44 AM

Day Rain: Another 0.30 this morning

Record High: 106° in 1936

Record Low: 40° in 1915

Average High: 84°F

Average Low: 60°F

Average Precip in July.: 1.78

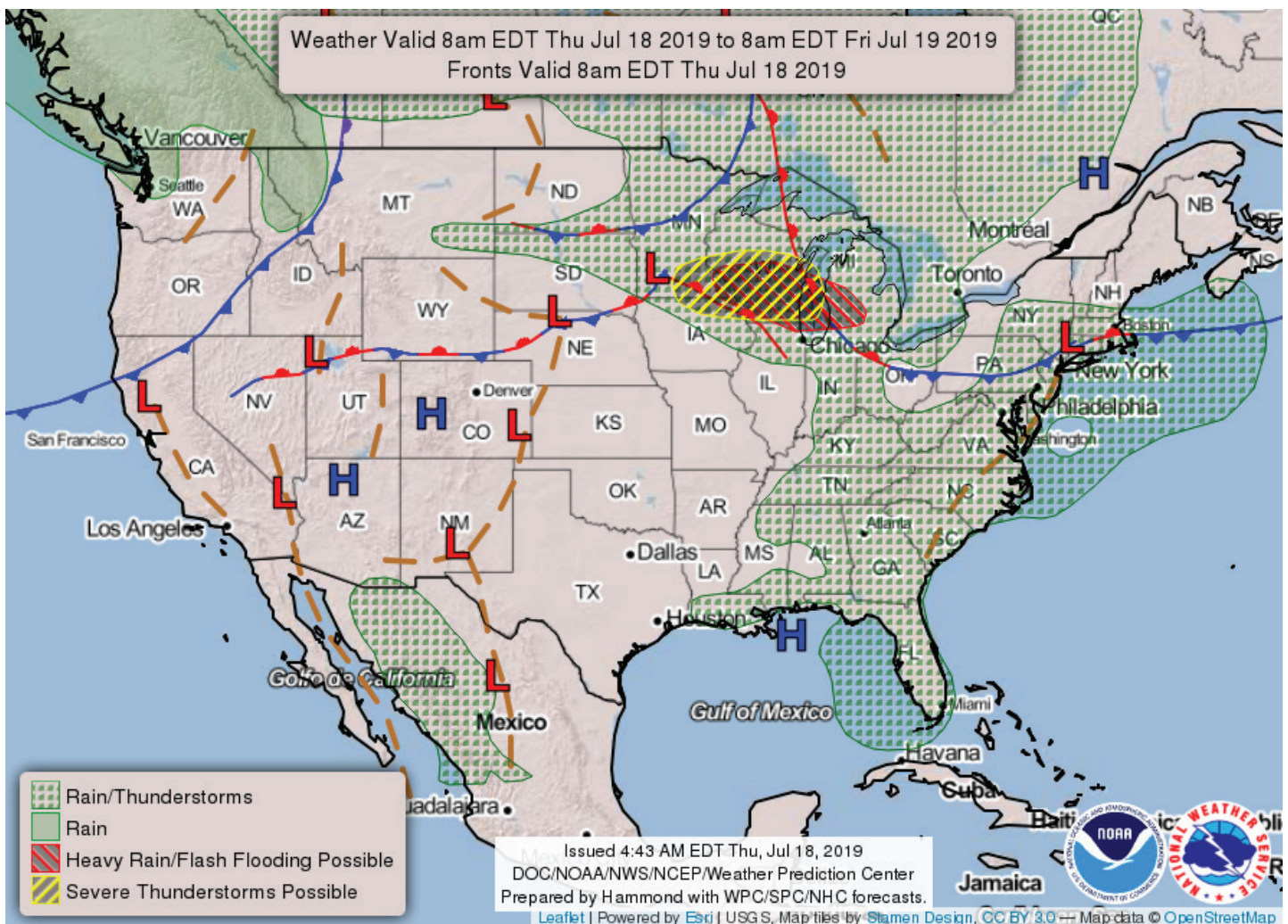
Precip to date in July.: 2.09

Average Precip to date: 12.62

Precip Year to Date: 14.81

Sunset Tonight: 9:17 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:03 a.m.



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WATCH WHERE YOU WALK!

Years ago, while marching with my high school band, I was more into my music than I was into following my director. We were to march to the goal line on the football field, make a right turn, and then exit the field. One hundred and eleven musicians followed the directions perfectly. One tuba player kept marching into the end zone, alone, embarrassed, and lost. I was that tuba player.

Everyone needs the Director to be their guide and guard. If we choose otherwise we will end up in an end zone - alone, embarrassed, and eternally lost. The alternative?

A persons steps are ordered by the Lord. How then can anyone understand their own way? asks Solomon. Perhaps he was going through a difficult period in his life and he recalled a bit of advice from his father, King David: The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in Him, wrote his Dad. He may have been facing a decision about his future and was struggling to know which path God would have him take. It may have been a family problem or issues with his staff. Wherever he was in his walk with God, he realized the importance of seeking His wisdom.

God has a plan for each of us, and He wants us to follow Him and fulfill that plan. However, He also has given us the freedom to make the ultimate decision: Will we seek His guidance and His will, or choose to go our own way? And, if we seek it, will we know it when we see it?

Again, we turn to the heart of Proverbs: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. When we, in humility, bow before Him in complete surrender, seek His will in prayer and study His Word, and ask for the counsel of fellow believers, we can be assured that He will bring His light to our path and protect our every step. Then, we will know it when we see it!

Knock, seek, listen, wait, watch, talk with others, and be faithful to Him. He will appear!

Prayer: How foolish we are, Lord, when we do not wait for and trust You. You have our best interests at heart. May we wait patiently as we seek Your guidance. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 20:24 A persons steps are ordered by the Lord. How then can anyone understand their own way?

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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

- 04/4/2020 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 05/2/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS 6/8-10/2020
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show 7/12/2020
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest 10/10/2020

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

04-09-24-25-32

(four, nine, twenty-four, twenty-five, thirty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$28,000

Lotto America

04-07-17-19-44, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 2

(four, seven, seventeen, nineteen, forty-four; Star Ball: seven; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.05 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$154 million

Powerball

19-43-47-60-68, Powerball: 10, Power Play: 2

(nineteen, forty-three, forty-seven, sixty, sixty-eight; Powerball: ten; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$40 million

Army corps opens Fort Peck spillway as reservoir level rises

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has partially opened two of the Fort Peck Dam's spillway gates to relieve the rising water level in the reservoir.

The Billings Gazette reports Fort Peck had been holding back water on the upper Missouri River because of this year's flooding downstream in South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas.

The water in the dam had reached an elevation of nearly 2,247 feet (685 meters), with the top of the gates at 2,250 feet (686 meters).

Opening the gates on Monday brings the amount of water moving through the dam to 15,000 cubic feet per second (425 cubic meters per second). The corps' Darin McMurry says that will likely be the level through August.

Last year's peak releases from Fort Peck dam were 20,000 cubic feet per second (566 cubic meters per second).

Information from: The Billings Gazette, <http://www.billingsgazette.com>

Minnesota, South Dakota cities wait on shrimp farm proposal

LUVERNE, Minn. (AP) — Officials in Madison, South Dakota, and Luverne, Minnesota, are wondering what happens now that a company reversed its decision to build a shrimp farm in Luverne but scrapped a construction timeline to instead build the project in Madison.

Tru Shrimp had planned to build a multi-million-dollar shrimp production facility in Luverne, in southwestern Minnesota.

But in January, the Minnesota-based company told Luverne officials it was building in South Dakota instead. Tru Shrimp executives said they recently discovered a Minnesota environmental rule about water discharge that could have delayed construction by one to three years.

Company executives joined then-South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard to announce that Madison, South Dakota, would be the site of the company's first plant. State and local officials in South Dakota committed \$6.5 million in taxpayer dollars for a low-interest loan for the Tru Shrimp project this winter, including \$5.5

million directly from the governor's Future Fund.

"Nothing was communicated to us that it was a concern," Luverne Mayor Pat Baustian said. "That's what I guess is most disheartening to everybody on the council and myself."

Tru Shrimp recently missed its planned construction date in Madison and has yet to set a new timeline. Tru Shrimp executives initially planned to begin construction in June. The company has said it remains committed to building in the South Dakota town, located about 52 miles (84 kilometers) northwest of Luverne.

"We continue our focused efforts to raise the capital required to build in Madison," Tru Shrimp sales and marketing director Jamie Brink-Thordson said in a statement to the Argus Leader .

The head of the South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development, Steve Westra, who started in January after Daugaard left office, expressed confidence in Tru Shrimp.

"While the project delay is unfortunate, we realize changes in large real estate development projects are not uncommon," Westra said in a statement. "Big projects take time, especially ones involving new industries. We remain confident this will be a big success for the Madison area."

Baustian, the Luverne mayor, has promised to continue to work with the Balaton, Minnesota-based company. The Minnesota city still has two massive industrial park parcels, specifically developed for Tru Shrimp's operations, and plans to make \$14 million in improvements to the city's wastewater facility. Those parcels are still empty and on hold for Tru Shrimp.

In her statement, Tru Shrimp's Brink-Thordson said the company is still targeting Luverne for a facility. But Baustian said he has not heard what the company's intentions are for Luverne.

"It's kind of disheartening after everything we went through to make that happen," the mayor said.

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

Accused killer returns home, despite bond violation

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man accused of killing a teenager last year is back home despite violating terms of his bond.

Max Pfeiffer is charged with first-degree manslaughter in the June 2018 shooting death of 19-year-old Ty Scott in Keystone. Pfeiffer is on an electronic monitor, but was arrested recently for failing to keep the device charged and not notifying law enforcement.

KOTA-TV reports both Pfeiffer and his parents testified in court Tuesday about their trouble maintaining the charge on the monitor because they live in a secluded area and struggle with cell service.

The state asked the judge to keep Pfeiffer in jail because of the bond violation. Judge Jeffrey Connolly said though Pfeiffer did violate his bond condition, the defendant actively tried to maintain the agreement.

Information from: KOTA-TV, <http://www.kotatv.com>

Powerful storms causing damage in southeastern South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Powerful thunderstorms that blew through southeastern South Dakota damaged farm buildings and trees and cut power to hundreds.

The National Weather Service issued a tornado warning early Wednesday that included the cities of Armour, Parkston, Tripp, Delmont, Alcester and Wakonda. Other areas were under severe thunderstorm warnings.

The National Weather Service has reports of damage to grain bins and trees in the Parkston area, but it's not yet known if that damage was the result of a tornado. The Argus Leader reports an outbuilding north of Armour and east of Corsica was completely destroyed.

Xcel Energy says a tree fell on a power line knocking out service to about 660 customers in Lennox. Power was restored several hours later.

There are no reports of injuries associated with the storms.

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

3 teens accused of trashing police interview rooms

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Three teenage boys are accused of trashing two Sioux Falls police station interview rooms while they were investigated for firing a gun.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens says the boys, ages 16 and 17, destroyed the rooms by throwing tables and chairs and ripping soundproof material from the walls Monday. They're also accused of spitting at and kicking officers.

Clemens says one of the boys accidentally fired a handgun at a duplex shortly after midnight Monday. No one was injured. An adult later called police and turned the gun over to officers. Police say the found another gun on one of the other teens.

Clemens says damage to the police rooms is estimated at \$500.

Trump slams 4 congresswomen; crowd chants, 'Send her back!'

By DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

GREENVILLE, N.C. (AP) — Going after four Democratic congresswomen one by one, a combative President Donald Trump turned his campaign rally into an extended dissection of the liberal views of the women of color, deriding them for what he painted as extreme positions and suggesting they just get out.

"Tonight I have a suggestion for the hate-filled extremists who are constantly trying to tear our country down," Trump told the crowd in North Carolina, a swing state he won in 2016 and wants to claim again in 2020. "They never have anything good to say. That's why I say, 'Hey if you don't like it, let 'em leave, let 'em leave.'"

Eager to rile up his base with the some of the same kind of rhetoric he targeted at minorities and women in 2016, Trump declared Wednesday night, "I think in some cases they hate our country."

Trump's jabs were aimed at the self-described "squad" of four freshmen Democrats who have garnered attention since their arrival in January for their outspoken liberal views and distaste for Trump: Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan. All were born in the U.S. except for Omar, who came to the U.S. as a child after fleeing Somalia with her family.

Taking the legislators on one at a time, Trump ticked through a laundry list of what he deemed offensive comments by each woman, mangling and misconstruing many facts along the way.

Omar came under the harshest criticism as Trump played to voters' grievances, drawing a chant from the crowd of "Send her back! Send her back!"

Trump set off a firestorm Sunday when he tweeted that the four should "go back" to their home countries — though three were born in the United States. Trump has accused them of "spewing some of the most vile, hateful and disgusting things ever said by a politician."

He expanded on his criticisms in Greenville.

Among his complaints against Tlaib, Trump correctly reported that she had referred to the president by the "F-word," adding, "That's not nice, even for me." Trump himself had unloaded a vulgarity earlier in his speech, denouncing the Russia probe of his campaign and administration as "bulls---."

As for Ocasio-Cortez, Trump fumbled over her name and declared, "I don't have time to go with three different names." He then referred to her as just "Cortez" as he challenged her complaints about dire conditions at migrant detention centers at the border.

In a lighter moment, Trump wondered if Pressley was related to Elvis Presley, then pivoted to more serious points, claiming she thought people of color should "think the same."

As for Omar, Trump unfurled a whole list of complaints, including a false accusation that she voiced pride in al-Qaida.

Before he left Washington, Trump said he has no regrets about his ongoing spat with the four. Trump told reporters he thinks he's "winning the political argument" and "winning it by a lot."

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"If people want to leave our country, they can. If they don't want to love our country, if they don't want to fight for our country, they can," Trump said. "I'll never change on that."

Trump's harsh denunciations were another sign of his willingness to exploit the nation's racial divisions heading into the 2020 campaign.

His speech was filled with Trump's trademark criticisms about the news media, which he says sides with liberals, and of special prosecutor Robert Mueller's Russia probe. Mueller had been scheduled to testify Wednesday on Capitol Hill, but it was postponed. Trump brought him up anyway.

"What happened to me with this witch hunt should never be allowed to happen to another president," he said.

He also talked about illegal immigration, a main theme of his first presidential bid that is taking center stage in his re-election campaign. He brushed off the criticism he has gotten for saying that the congresswomen should go back home.

"So controversial," he said sarcastically.

The four Democratic freshmen have portrayed the Republican president as a bully who wants to "vilify" not only immigrants but all people of color. They say they are fighting for their priorities to lower health care costs and pass a Green New Deal addressing climate change while his thundering attacks are a distraction and tear at the core of American values.

The Democratic-led U.S. House voted Tuesday to condemn Trump's "racist comments" despite near-solid GOP opposition and the president's own insistence that he doesn't have a "racist bone" in his body.

Trump hasn't shown signs of being rattled by the House rebuke and called an impeachment resolution that failed in Congress earlier Wednesday "ridiculous." The condemnation carries no legal repercussions and his latest harangues struck a chord with supporter in Greenville, whose chants of "Four more years!" and "Build that wall!" bounced off the rafters.

Vice President Mike Pence was first up after spending the day in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and visiting troops at Fort Bragg.

"North Carolina and America needs four more years," Pence said.

It was Trump's sixth visit to the state as president and his first 2020 campaign event in North Carolina, where he defeated Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Man screaming 'You die!' kills at least 23 at anime studio

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A man screaming "You die!" burst into an animation production studio in Kyoto, Japan, and set it on fire early Thursday, authorities said, killing 13 people and leaving more than 10 others presumed dead.

The blaze injured another 36 people, some of them critically, Japanese authorities said. Most were workers at Kyoto Animation, known for mega-hit stories featuring high school girls, with places featured in the stories even becoming "pilgrimage sites" for their fans.

The fire started in the three-story building in Japan's ancient capital after the suspect sprayed an unidentified liquid accelerant, Kyoto prefectural police and fire department officials said.

Thirteen were confirmed dead on the first and second floors, Kyoto fire department official Kazuhiro Hayashi said. On the third floor, more than 10 people were found unresponsive, he said. Some of them were found on the stairs, where they apparently collapsed while gasping for air and trying to go out to the roof.

Hayashi says firefighters were still searching inside the building in case anyone else was left behind.

Kyoto police said the suspect was injured and taken to a hospital for treatment. They are investigating the man, who is 41 and not a company employee, on suspicion of arson, police said.

A witness who saw the suspect being approached by police told Japanese networks that the man admitted spreading gasoline and setting a fire with a lighter. She told NHK public television that the man had burns on his arms and legs and that he was angrily complaining that something of his had been "stolen," possibly by the company. NHK footage also showed sharp knives police had collected from the scene,

though it was not clear if they belonged to the suspect.

Survivors who saw the attacker said he was not their colleague and that he was screaming "(You) die!" when he dumped the liquid and started the fire, according to Japanese media reports. They said some of the survivors got splashed with the liquid.

Kyoto Animation, better known as KyoAni, was founded in 1981 as an animation and comic book production studio, and its hits include "Lucky Star," "K-On!" and "Haruhi Suzumiya." The company does not have a major presence outside Japan, though it was hired to provide secondary animation work on a 1998 "Pokemon" feature that appeared in U.S. theaters and a "Winnie the Pooh" video.

Footage on Japan's NHK television showed gray smoke billowing from the charred building. Other footage showed windows blown off.

"There was an explosion, then I heard people shouting, some asking for help," a female witness told TBS TV. "Black smoke was rising from windows on upper floors, then there was a man struggling to crawl out of the window."

Witnesses in the neighborhood said they heard bangs coming from the building, others said they saw people coming out blackened, bleeding, walking barefoot, Kyodo News reported.

Rescue officials set up an orange tent outside the studio building to provide first aid and sort out the injured.

Fire department officials said more than 70 people were in the building at the time of the fire and many of them ran outside.

With at least 23 killed or presumed dead, the fire was the worst mass killing in Japan since a man stabbed and killed 19 people at an assisted living facility in western Tokyo in 2016.

A fire in 2001 in Tokyo's congested Kabukicho entertainment district killed 44 people in its worst known case of arson in modern times. Police never announced an arrest for setting the blaze, though five people were convicted of negligence. In 2008, 16 people died in a blaze at a movie theater in Osaka, near Kyoto.

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

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. TRUMP ATTACKS LAWMAKERS AGAIN IN NORTH CAROLINA

He turns a campaign rally into a dissection of four Democratic congresswomen of color, deriding their liberal views and repeating that they leave the country, prompting the crowd to chant "Send her back!"

2. WHAT TRUMP IS LEANING ON TO WIN IN 2020

The president places racial animus at the center of his reelection campaign, and even some of his critics believe it could deliver him a second term.

3. 'YOU DIE!'

A man burst into an animation production studio in Kyoto, Japan, and set it on fire, killing 13 people and leaving more than 10 others presumed dead.

4. MIGRANTS WAITING IN MEXICAN BORDER TOWN FEARFUL

The situation for asylum seekers and migrants is precarious in Nuevo Laredo, where organized crime is dominant and the U.S. government tells its own employees not to go.

5. WHERE SOME IN IRAN ARE TURNING

Iranians feeling the squeeze from U.S. sanctions targeting its ailing economy are increasingly employing such digital currencies as Bitcoin to make money.

6. AG BARR, COMMERCE CHIEF ROSS HELD IN CONTEMPT

The House holds both in contempt of Congress for failing to comply with subpoenas related to a decision to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census.

7. HAWAII EXPANDS POWER TO BLOCK TELESCOPE PROTESTERS

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But that didn't deter a swelling group of protesters trying to stop construction of a telescope they've spent years trying to keep off a mountain sacred to some Native Hawaiians.

8. CHINA LAUNCHING NEW STOCK MARKET

Trading starts next week in Shanghai on STAR Market for high-tech companies that play a key role in official development plans that are straining relations with Washington.

9. 'IT: CHAPTER TWO' CAST TALKS INTENSE SHOOT AT COMIC-CON

"It: Chapter Two" is not taking it easy on the grown losers' club if the new trailer is any indication, and the shoot itself doesn't sound much calmer than battling a demonic clown either.

10. RORY MCILROY OFF TO ROUGH START AT BRITISH OPEN

The four-time major champion carded a quadruple-bogey 8 on the first hole at Royal Portrush as the Open Championship returned to Irish soil for the first time in 68 years.

Trump leans on issue of race in bid for a 2nd term in 2020

By STEVE PEOPLES and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump has placed racial animus at the center of his reelection campaign, and even some of his critics believe it could deliver him a second term.

Every successful modern presidential campaign has been built on the notion of addition, winning over voters beyond core supporters. But Trump has chosen division on the belief that the polarized country he leads will simply choose sides over issues like race.

He intensified his attacks on Wednesday, blasting four young congresswomen of color during a rally in Greenville, North Carolina. The crowd responded by chanting, "Send her back!" echoing Trump's weekend tweet in which he said the lawmakers, all American citizens, should "go back" to the countries from which they came.

"I do think I am winning the political fight," Trump declared at the White House. "I think I am winning it by a lot."

Not since George Wallace's campaign in 1968 has a presidential candidate — and certainly not an incumbent president — put racial polarization at the center of his call to voters. Though Trump's comments generated outrage and even a resolution of condemnation in the House, the president and his campaign believe the strategy carries far more benefits than risks.

"Regardless of whether his tweets are racist or not — I'm not saying they are or not — he is getting the media to make these extremely liberal, socialist, foolish congresswomen the face of the Democratic Party," said Terry Sullivan, a frequent Trump critic who managed Sen. Marco Rubio's 2016 Republican presidential campaign. "What he's doing here is sad, but it's smart politics."

Still, there are clear perils to his approach.

Educated suburban voters, especially college-educated women, and minorities in key states like Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin were already threatening to revolt against the Republican president. Trump believes his inflammatory rhetoric will strengthen his support among the white working class and attract a new group of disaffected voters who fear cultural changes across America.

That approach is likely to face significant headwinds in those three key battleground states that he won by a combined 78,000 votes in 2016. Democrats will be far more aggressive in targeting female and minority voters. Most analysts agree that the potential universe of Democratic-leaning voters is larger, if they turn out. Trump is betting they will not.

The president has proved adroit at crafting a hero-villain narrative and is now focusing on Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan rather than a Democratic presidential candidate. His challenge will be whether he can drive that story line successfully for the next 16 months.

Trump told aides this week that the controversy has cemented the four progressive lawmakers as the faces of the Democratic Party, believing it has boosted his chances at reelection. Far from backing away from the comments, he and his party are now casting the minority Democratic congresswomen as the

real racists.

"They are now the top, most visible members of the House Democrats, who are now wedded to this bitterness and hate," Trump boasted on Twitter.

Trump aides and allies acknowledge that many voters may find the president's comments objectionable, but for the voters they need in 2020, it may actually be an energizing force.

Those who already believe Trump is a racist and unfit for the presidency won't vote for him in the first place. For voters in the middle, Trump's team believes they can be sufficiently scared off the progressive agenda to cast votes for Trump — or at worst, stay home in dispiritedness that neither party speaks to their issues. And for many others who didn't vote at all in 2016, there is hope that his dramatic presidency, backed by fear of Democrats' leftward lurch, will persuade them to show up at the ballot box.

Trump's allies say they think many voters, both Republican and Democratic, are cool to the "woke culture" of 2019, just as they were to the focus on political correctness in 2016.

The Pew Research Center found in May that 8 in 10 Republicans feel too many people are easily offended over language today. About 4 in 10 Democrats said the same.

"The president wasn't afraid to wade into these culture wars and he's not afraid to do so again. He'll stand up for our flag and against open borders. Patriotism will always win," said Kelly Sadler, a spokeswoman for the pro-Trump super PAC America First Policies. The group plans to spend millions over the coming year on registering likely Trump voters across six swing states.

Veering sharply away from the inclusive tone GOP leaders called for in 2012, groups charged with electing Republicans up and down the ballot in 2020 have embraced Trump's fiery style and message, which has long relied on demonizing immigrants and minorities.

Some voters may be responding.

The share of Americans who say the country's openness to people from around the world is "essential to who we are as a nation" is shrinking, according to a new Pew poll.

The poll found that 62% of Americans see openness to others around the world as essential, a number that is down 6 percentage points over the last 10 months. Nearly 6 in 10 Republicans and Republican-leaning independents said that if the United States is too open to people from around the world, "we risk losing our identity as a nation." Pollsters in both parties said that white working-class voters in particular feel left behind by the Democratic Party's focus on racial and gender equality. Trump's hard-line position on race and immigration has alienated many minority voters.

Republican pollsters suggest the president's real challenge will be in America's suburbs, where college-educated women veered sharply away from Trump's party in the 2018 midterms, giving Democrats the House majority.

"He went with racism and divisiveness before 2018 and lost 40 House seats — including in the Midwest," said Josh Schwerin, senior strategist for Priorities USA, the biggest super PAC in Democratic politics. "He has tried this. The country doesn't want to be more divided."

Miller reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Hannah Fingerhut contributed to this report from Washington.

Number of US overdose deaths appears to be falling

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. overdose deaths last year likely fell for the first time in nearly three decades, preliminary numbers suggest.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday posted data showing nearly 68,000 drug overdose deaths were reported last year. The number may go up as more investigations are completed, but the agency expects the tally will end up below 69,000.

Overdose deaths had been climbing each year since 1990, topping 70,000 in 2017.

The numbers were celebrated by the U.S. secretary of health and human services. "Lives are being

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saved, and we're beginning to win the fight against this crisis," Alex Azar wrote in a tweet.

But the overdose death rate is still about seven times higher than it was a generation ago.

"We're still in a pretty sad situation that we need to address," said Rebecca Haffajee, a University of Michigan researcher.

Researchers do not believe this is the start of a dramatic decline. Data from the first months of this year likely will show that the decrease is not gaining steam, said Farida Ahmad of the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

The improvement was driven by a drop in deaths from heroin and prescription painkillers. Those falls were offset somewhat by continuing growth in deaths involving a different opioid, fentanyl, as well as other drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamines. Overdose deaths often involve more than one drug.

The improvement is not uniform: Some states seem to be making dramatic progress, while deaths continue to rise in others. The preliminary CDC data suggested deaths last year were down by as many as 1,000 or more in Ohio and Pennsylvania — each seeing declines of about 20%. Meanwhile, deaths increased by about 17% in Missouri, which had more than 200 additional deaths.

It can take months for authorities to complete toxicology tests and other elements of a death investigation involving drugs. And some states report faster than others. The CDC is expected to report more complete data later this year.

The current overdose epidemic has killed more people than any other in U.S. history, and it had been on a soaring trajectory. From 2014 to 2017, overdose deaths jumped by 5,000 or more each year.

Experts trace the epidemic's origins to 1995 and the marketing of the prescription painkiller OxyContin. It was meant to be safer and more effective than other prescription opioids, but some patients got hooked and found they could crush the tablets and snort or inject them to get high.

Gradually, many turned to cheaper street drugs such as heroin and fentanyl. In 2015, heroin began causing more deaths than prescription painkillers or other drugs. In 2016, fentanyl and its close cousins became the biggest drug killer, and in 2018 they were involved in about 46% of the reported overdose deaths, according to the preliminary CDC data.

Strategies to reduce drug overdose deaths have included tougher policing, treatment program expansions, policies to limit opioid painkiller prescriptions and wider distribution of the overdose-reversing drug naloxone.

Haffajee and other researchers are trying to figure out what measures are most responsible for the slight improvement.

"It's complicated because there are so many policies going on, and as an evaluator it's very hard to separate them out and determine which is working," she said.

Valerie Hardcastle, a Northern Kentucky University administrator who oversees research and other work on local health issues, has seen the overdose epidemic play out in her region, near Cincinnati. She believes a major factor is Narcan, a nasal spray version of naloxone, that has been widely distributed through the efforts of philanthropists and local, state, and federal officials.

"It's fantastic that we have fewer deaths, don't get me wrong," she said. "But I'm not sure it's an indication that the opioid problem per se is diminishing. It's just that we have greater availability of the drugs that will keep us alive."

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

This story has been corrected to show Ahmad's first name is Farida, not Farid.

Bitcoin craze hits Iran as US sanctions squeeze weak economy

By JON GAMBRELL and AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iranians feeling the squeeze from U.S. sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic's ailing economy are increasingly turning to such digital currencies as Bitcoin to make money, prompting alarm in and out of the country.

In Iran, some government officials worry that the energy-hungry process of "mining" Bitcoin is abusing Iran's system of subsidized electricity; in the United States, some observers have warned that cryptocurrencies could be used to bypass the Trump administration's sanctions targeting Iran over its unraveling nuclear deal with world powers.

The Bitcoin craze has made the front pages of Iranian newspapers and has been discussed by some of the country's top ayatollahs, and there have been televised police raids on hidden computer farms set up to bring in money by "mining" the currency.

Like other digital currencies, Bitcoin is an alternative to money printed by sovereign governments around the world. Unlike those bills, however, cryptocurrencies are not controlled by a central bank. Bitcoin and other digital currencies like it trade globally in highly speculative markets without any backing from a physical entity.

As a result, computers around the world "mine" the data, meaning they use highly complex algorithms to verify transactions. The verified transactions, called blocks, are then added to a public record, known as the blockchain. Any time "miners" add a new block to the blockchain, they are rewarded with a payment in bitcoins.

To work, the expensive specialized computers require a lot of electricity to power their processors and to keep them cool. In Iran, "miners" have an edge because electricity is cheap thanks to longtime government subsidies. "Miners" also buy cheaper Chinese ready-made computers to do the work.

But the constant raids and authorities' conflicting statements on the issue have Bitcoin "miners" in Iran incredibly leery of being identified. Those contacted by The Associated Press refused to speak about their work or to say how much they earn from their "mining."

But they acknowledge they do this to make some money at a time when Iran's currency, the rial, tumbled from 32,000 rials to \$1 at the time of the 2015 nuclear deal, to around 120,000 rials to \$1 now.

"It is clear that here has turned into a heaven for 'miners,'" Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, Iran's minister for information and communications technology, recently told AP in an interview. "The business of 'mining' is not forbidden in law but the government and the Central Bank have ordered the Customs Bureau to ban the import of (mining machines) until new regulations are introduced."

Ali Bakhshi, the head of the Iran Electrical Industry Syndicate, said earlier this month that the country's Energy Ministry likely would boost costs for Bitcoin "miners" to 7 cents for each kilowatt of electricity they consume, a massive increase from the current half-cent but still almost half the cost of electricity in the United States, according to the semi-official Fars news agency.

Still, there are concerns, especially among Iran's religious leaders, that people might try to circumvent paying extra for the electricity as well as using digital currency to hide or move money illicitly.

Tabnak, a hard-line news website associated with a former commander of the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, quoted three ayatollahs describing Bitcoin as either problematic or "haram," meaning forbidden. Islam prescribes strict rules about finance.

But Jahromi said clerics became more receptive to the idea after his staff briefed them that Bitcoin had a value in the real world, which is required under Islamic finance. Islamic finance also prohibits gambling, the payment of interest and misleading others.

"Some of our top clerics have issued fatwas that say Bitcoin is money without a reserve, that it is rejected by Islamic and cybercurrencies are haram," Jahromi said. "When we explain to them this is not a currency but an asset, they change their mind."

Iran has tried to keep its economic situation in check by controlling foreign currency rates and cutting down on those moving their money from the rial to other currencies, including Bitcoin. Last year, the semi-

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official Mehr news agency quoted Mohammad Reza Pour-Ebrahimi, the head of the Iranian parliament's economic commission, as suggesting that about \$2.5 billion left Iran through digital currency purchases. He did not elaborate and authorities have not discussed it since.

The U.S., meanwhile, has been keeping a close watch on Iranians holding bitcoins. In November, a federal grand jury in Newark, New Jersey, accused two Iranian men of hacking and holding hostage computer systems of over 200 American entities to extort them for Bitcoin, including the cities of Newark and Atlanta.

"As Iran becomes increasingly isolated and desperate for access to U.S. dollars, it is vital that virtual currency exchanges, peer-to-peer exchangers and other providers of digital currency services harden their networks against these illicit schemes," said Sigal Mandelker, Treasury's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence.

Not so, said Jahromi.

"Cybercurrencies are effective in bypassing sanctions when it comes to small transactions, but we do not see any special impact in them as far as mega-transactions are concerned," he said. "We cannot use them to go around international monetary mechanisms."

Associated Press producers Mohammad Nasiri and Mehdi Fattahi in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

An emotional return to Irish soil for British Open

By **DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer**

PORTRUSH, Northern Ireland (AP) — Darren Clarke never hit a tee shot at Royal Portrush quite like this. The silver claret jug on display next to him, Clarke hit the opening tee shot Thursday as the British Open returned to Irish soil for the first time in 68 years. And then it got even better for Clarke, the 50-year-old from Northern Ireland who now calls Portrush home.

He holed a 15-foot putt for birdie to start his round.

Clarke won the Open in 2011 at Royal St. George's and did not hesitate when the R&A asked if he would be willing to be the first to play. He hasn't received such a hearty reception on the opening tee since The K Club in Ireland in 2006 for the Ryder Cup.

More AP golf: <https://apnews.com/apf-Golf> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Fans descend on San Diego for the 50th Comic-Con

By **LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer**

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Dust off your Captain Marvel cosplay, San Diego Comic-Con is here.

The four-and-a-half day convention kicked off Wednesday with the show room floor opening to thousands vying for exclusive merchandise, from art to toys. Later, Warner Bros. is hosting a ScareDiego event promising some hair-raising new footage from "It: Chapter Two."

"We have some exciting footage but I can't go into details," said "It" director Andy Muschietti. "But I think it's going to be worth it for the fans to go and watch."

Workers were putting the final touches on the all the branded exhibitions Wednesday evening, like the Walking Dead-themed AMC "Deadquarters" installation, while enthusiastic fans lined up outside of the convention center. A few were already in full costume, including a man in a "Stranger Things" Hawkins Police uniform and an Australian couple dressed as Marty McFly and Doc Brown, although most opted for the nerd-approved t-shirt (there were more than a few AT-AT, Jurassic Park and Laura Palmer shirts) for badge pickup.

Those in full cosplay were grateful for the cooler-than-usual temperatures.

"I would be melting," said Ana Nibbla of San Diego, who was dressed as a female Pennywise, or "Princess Pennywise" as she likes to call it.

She likes to hit the convention floor early to check out exclusives from artists who don't go to conventions often. "This is the one time a year I get to see them in person," she said.

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And although Wednesday is typically quiet, lines and big groups could be found offsite as well, including the dozens of people who'd gathered outside a Conan O'Brien taping hoping to catch the cast of "It: Chapter Two."

"This is my favorite, I'm a huge Stephen King fan," said Cheryl Dolbel from Jersey in the Channel Islands, who was wearing a t-shirt with artist drawings of both Tim Curry and Bill Skarsgård as Pennywise. "We tried to go for the taping, but we couldn't get in. We've been waiting a few hours."

She's hoping to see Skarsgård and James McAvoy and later in the week is going to visit the "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" installation.

As the week goes on, movie fans will also get a look at Paramount's "Terminator: Dark Fate" at a Hall H presentation Thursday, and on Saturday be treated to a Marvel Studios presentation with its president, Kevin Feige. Details for the Marvel show are being kept under wraps, but many expect Feige and his "special guests" will outline the plans for Phase 4 of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which could include announcements about "Black Widow," "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3," "Shang-Chi" and "The Eternals."

The movie fare is lighter than usual, however. A few of the studios have chosen to sit this year out, like Sony, which is already cleaning up at the box office with "Spider-Man: Far From Home," and Universal Pictures, which doesn't have any superheroes on its slate at all. Although Warner Bros. is coming with "It: Chapter Two," it does not have a big Hall H presentation planned for any of its DC properties like "Joker" and the Harley Quinn spinoff "Birds of Prey." And there will be no "Star Wars" news either.

"If anything, the exiting of some movie studios has made more room for TV and TV is just the best of the best right now," said Perri Nemiroff, a senior producer for Collider.com and host of the YouTube series Movie Talk.

Television enthusiasts will have their pick, whether they want one last go-around the cast of a show that's ended (like "Game of Thrones" and "Supernatural"), to check in with some old favorites ("The Walking Dead," "The Good Place," "Westworld," "Arrow," "Rick and Morty" and "Riverdale"), or get first look at a new property (such as "Snowpiercer," "Star Trek: Picard" and "The Witcher").

Occasionally this means throwing a Comic-Con newbie into the mix. HBO is bringing Lin-Manuel Miranda out for his first ever convention to promote the new show "His Dark Materials."

Last month Miranda tweeted a modest request for fans: "Be gentle, it's my first Comic-Con."

Follow AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr on Twitter: www.twitter.com/lbahr

Asylum seekers waiting in Nuevo Laredo fear lurking dangers

By **MARÍA VERZA** Associated Press

NUEVO LAREDO, Mexico (AP) — The round-faced woman from La Ceiba, Honduras, and her 5- and 12-year-old sons arrived in this city across the border from Laredo, Texas, where she had been promised a job and hoped to build a new life.

Instead they were met by unidentified men, taken to a hotel, held in a room and threatened not to try to leave while the men tried, unsuccessfully, to extort money from relatives. After three days they managed to escape when the men left the room unguarded and they took refuge in a church.

"I don't want to go out on the street. I'm afraid the same men ... will do something to me or my boys," the woman said, insisting on speaking anonymously out of fear for their safety.

As the United States tries to slow the flow of mostly Central American migrants and asylum seekers to its southern border and pressures Mexico to assist, months-long stays on the Mexican side of the frontier have become the rule for many. Their situation is especially precarious here in Tamaulipas, which is one of Mexico's most violent states and where organized crime gangs are dominant. The U.S. government tells its own employees not to set foot in nearly all parts of the state.

For the 1,800 or so asylum seekers and migrants currently stuck in Nuevo Laredo hoping for a chance at refuge in the United States, fear is palpable and stories of harrowing experiences are common.

The Mexican government announced plans Wednesday to spend millions of dollars to improve migrant

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shelters and detention centers that house families, but in southern Mexico, far from the U.S. border.

The Honduran woman fled her home country due to threats she had received as a government worker. She sought asylum in southern Mexico, but the documents related to that claim were stolen along with her phone in a previous kidnapping attempt when men hustled the family into a van as they were walking down a street. They got away when the vehicle approached a checkpoint and they were abruptly shoved out the door.

Now she finds herself in Nuevo Laredo and wants to try for asylum in the United States, but she is worried by a new U.S. policy this week that would make it harder for people like her to claim refuge. Even if she does try, once her name reaches the front of the long waiting list she stands to be promptly sent back to Mexico to wait for a U.S. court date months down the line — Nuevo Laredo recently became the fourth city to receive asylum seekers returned across the border under a U.S. program known informally as “remain in Mexico.”

“I don’t want to be here,” the woman said of her uncertain future, one of her sons clinging to her at all times. “I don’t know, I don’t know,” she sobbed.

She spent all day Wednesday at a shelter in Nuevo Laredo, afraid to even venture out to the local migration office to try to replace her Mexican asylum documents.

Nor has she filed a police report about the kidnapping. “How am I going to report it? If they find out, they’ll kill me,” she said.

Migrant advocacy groups have criticized the U.S. decision to return asylum seekers to Mexico under the policy that began in January, and particularly its rollout to Tamaulipas.

“Forcing them to remain in Nuevo Laredo is an inhumane policy,” Doctors Without Borders said in a statement. “It is putting them in the hands of organized crime, where being a migrant is synonymous with being merchandise.”

The group said 45% of migrants to whom it provided health or psychological care in the first five months of the year suffered some kind of violence while waiting to cross into the United States.

“Most of our patients don’t go out on the streets because the risk of kidnapping is imminent,” it added.

Gledis Neira, a 52-year-old Cuban, arrived in Mexico on June 4 and a week later at a municipal shelter in Nuevo Laredo. It wasn’t long before three friends, also Cubans, were pulled from a taxi, robbed and threatened with a baseball bat.

Another day a woman came to the shelter saying she was looking to offer work to “girls who knew how to dance, preferably Cubans.” Someone questioned whether it was safe after the woman refused to offer details on the supposed job, and nobody went with her.

“I came to understand the fear in Nuevo Laredo. ... The (shelter) guards themselves were telling us to watch out for ourselves,” Neira said.

The U.S. State Department warns U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to Tamaulipas due to widespread crime and kidnapping, and the state’s highways are the scene of all sorts of smuggling. On Wednesday, 112 Central Americans were rescued from an overcrowded tractor-trailer.

Drug gangs and splinter groups have long fought for control. And Nuevo Laredo is considered a “crown jewel” for smugglers with its bridge crossings handling over 60 percent of Mexico’s exports to the United States.

Currently the Northeast cartel is in charge, ruling through threats, disappearances, kidnappings and killings. Nuevo Laredo registered 144 violent homicides through the first five months of this year, and there are 20 open kidnapping investigations.

Mexican officials fear a possible repeat of a 2010 massacre of 72 migrants in the Tamaulipas town of San Fernando, and want at all costs to avoid that.

On Tuesday, dozens of people who were returned from the United States to Nuevo Laredo were put on a bus bound for the city of Monterrey. Most had crossed illegally, unlike others who waited weeks to file U.S. asylum claims and so far are being sent back to Nuevo Laredo.

“We are focusing on transferring them to the safest places possible, so that they are not exposed to

extortions, to risks, dangers," Maximiliano Reyes, assistant foreign relations secretary, said Wednesday. He added that officials were examining the possibility of converting a military base in the nearby town of Colombia into a migrant reception center.

Some asylum seekers said arriving at the U.S. border initially seemed like a victory, but being sent back to Mexico sapped them of hope.

Doris Villegas cried as she recalled the bakery that she, her husband and their two teen children left back home in crisis-stricken Venezuela, and the family's hopes for a stable life in the United States.

They waited 50 days in Nuevo Laredo before they were able to apply for refuge, and then were promptly sent back to wait for a Sept. 19 hearing. Now they are running out of money and don't know what they will do.

"Go out into the streets and look for work?" Villegas said. "I don't dare."

Associated Press writer Alfredo Peña in Ciudad Victoria, Mexico, contributed to this report.

US heat wave just warming up for long and scorching weekend

By COREY WILLIAMS and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — The heat wave that has been roasting much of the U.S. in recent days is just getting warmed up, with temperatures expected to soar to dangerous levels through the weekend.

Communities are preparing by offering buildings as cooling centers and asking residents to check in on relatives and neighbors. Officials also are concerned about smog, which is exacerbated by the heat and makes it more difficult for certain people to breathe, including the very young, the elderly and people with asthma or lung diseases.

More than 100 local heat records are expected to fall Saturday, according to the National Weather Service. Most won't be record-daily highs but record-high nighttime lows, and that lack of cooling can be dangerous, meteorologists say. Temperatures in parts of the East won't drop below the mid- to upper-70s or even 80 degrees (26.7 Celsius) at night, he said.

The heat wave will likely be "short and searing," said Greg Carbin, forecast branch chief for the weather service's Weather Prediction Center.

A high pressure system stretching from coast-to-coast is keeping the heat turned on. The heat and humidity are made to feel worse by the large amount of moisture in the air coming from the Gulf of Mexico, much of it left over from Hurricane Barry.

The heat index, which is what the temperature feels like, should hit 110 (43.3 Celsius) in Washington, D.C., on Saturday and 109 (42.8 Celsius) in Chicago and Detroit on Friday, said Jeff Masters, meteorology director of Weather Underground. Wednesday marked Washington's seventh straight day with temperatures of at least 90 degrees (32.2 Celsius), and that streak was expected to last for another five days.

An experimental weather service forecast projects that nearly 100 local records will be broken Thursday and Friday in Texas, Oklahoma, parts of the Midwest and a large swath of the East Coast. On Saturday, 101 records could fall in an area stretching from Texas to Iowa and east to Maine and Florida, according to projections.

Deloris Knight said she will keep the heat out of her eastside Detroit home by keeping her doors and curtains closed while running the small window air conditioner in her living room.

"We have a couple of big fans. We have ceiling fans," Knight, 63, said Wednesday while enjoying temperatures in the mid-80s (about 29 degrees Celsius) from her front porch. "I keep lemonade and gallons of frozen water in the refrigerator. At night, we're in the house."

Even that may not provide enough relief for some, especially for young children, the elderly or people with certain chronic illnesses.

The Environmental Protection Agency's live air quality tracker reported that the air was "unhealthy" Wednesday for sensitive groups in a stretch of the East Coast from Baltimore to Bridgeport, Connecticut, including Philadelphia and New York City.

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Such heat can be deadly. Over three days in July 1995, more than 700 people died during a heat wave in Chicago as temperatures rose above 97 degrees (36.1 Celsius). Many of the dead were poor, elderly and lived alone.

"Daytime hours when the sun is out is clearly our highest risk periods," said Dr. Michael Kaufmann, EMS medical director with the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. "We're not expecting the drops in temperature at night — or the humidity — that we often realize when the sun goes down."

Roger Axe, who heads the emergency management agency in Indiana's Greene County, said he has asked churches and other organizations to open their doors as "possible lifesaving cooling centers."

Officials in the Detroit suburb of Westland will keep the police station lobby and one of its fire stations open around the clock. The Chicago suburb of Orland Park also opened its police station as its primary 24-hour cooling center.

Kelly Boeckman, 31, and Taylor Knoll, 28, met Wednesday morning — when the heat was still bearable — to chat at a patio table in downtown Jefferson City, Missouri. Both have young children and said they are careful to keep them hydrated and protected from the heat.

"We definitely aren't doing outside activities for the afternoon and evening, even though they want to sometimes," said Boeckman, who has 6-year-old twins and a 3 year old. They're "playing early, (getting) lots of water and hydration, (and) staying in the shade when we are outside."

Steve Owen, a 54-year-old bus driver from Roeland Park, Kansas, dumped water on his head to stay cool Wednesday while waiting to pick up a day care group from the local pool.

"I'm usually revived and feeling much better," he said after drenching himself. "That usually gets me through."

The heat also can take a toll on pets and other animals. Officials at the Brookfield Zoo near Chicago have spent the past few days preparing.

Blocks of ice weighing about 300 pounds (136 kilograms) were being trucked in for the polar and grizzly bears, and the zoo planned to give ice cubes to the reindeer. Additional animals were being given access to indoor quarters starting Thursday.

"The welfare of the animals is our top priority," said zoo spokeswoman Sondra Katzen.

The same is true at the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, where some animals have cooling stations in their enclosures and space off-exhibit where they can go to cool down, said general curator Dave Bernier.

"I don't expect it to be much change in attendance," he said. "Once they decide they want to go to the zoo on the weekend, that's usually where they go."

Science Writer Seth Borenstein reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Summer Ballentine in Jefferson City, Missouri, and Heather Hollingsworth in Roeland Park, Kansas, contributed to this report.

Jury deliberates death penalty in Chinese scholar's slaying

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

PEORIA, Ill. (AP) — Jurors began deliberating but didn't reach a decision Wednesday on whether a former University of Illinois doctoral student should be put to death for the brutal slaying of a scholar from China he abducted at a bus stop.

Brent Christensen's attorney, Elisabeth Pollock, teared up earlier in the day during closing arguments in the penalty phase in U.S. District Court in Peoria, at one point walking behind her 30-year-old client and putting her hands on his shoulders.

"He is a whole person," she said, looking across the room at jurors. "He is not just the worst thing he ever did."

Pollock sought to humanize Christensen, telling jurors how he once bought a stuffed toy his sister wanted using his allowance money.

Prosecutors reminded jurors of a secret FBI recording in which Christensen laughed as he described luring 26-year-old Yingying Zhang into his car as she was running late to sign an apartment lease in 2017.

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He raped, choked and stabbed her as she fought back, then beat her to death with a bat and cut off her head. Her body was never found.

"Evil does exist," prosecutor Eugene Miller told jurors. "What the defendant did was evil."

All 12 jurors must agree to impose the death penalty. If even one opposes execution, the 30-year-old would be sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Pollock told jurors that Christensen did kill Zhang, something the defense admitted at the outset of his trial last month. She said Christensen — a native of Stevens Point, Wisconsin, whose undergraduate degree was in physics and math — would die in prison whether by natural causes or lethal injection.

"He is leaving prison in a casket. The only question is when," she said.

The same jurors took less than 90 minutes to convict Christensen at the trial last month.

Deliberations during the current penalty stage have already lasted longer and could potentially take days, with a complicated series of difficult questions jurors must answer, including whether Christensen displayed unique cruelty in how he killed Zhang or whether he exhibited redeeming qualities in his life.

Jurors began deliberating Wednesday afternoon and within just a few hours sent a note to the judge asking about the order they should consider those factors. Judge James Shadid sent a note back saying they should consult the written instructions. After three hours, the judge excused jurors for the day. They'll return Thursday morning.

In his closing, prosecutor James Nelson at one point held up the bat Christensen used to kill Zhang. He told jurors the slaying of Zhang, who Christensen didn't know, was part of the fulfillment of Christensen's fantasy to become infamous as a killer.

"The defendant killed Yingying for sport," he said, adding that death was the only just punishment for a crime so "horrific."

Prosecutors said Christensen likely forced the 5-foot-4 Zhang into a 6-foot-long duffel bag to carry her up to his apartment in Urbana, Champaign's sister city 140 miles (225 kilometers) southwest of Chicago.

Nelson reminded jurors of testimony about how Christensen was in awe at how Zhang resisted. He thought she was dead at one point and stabbed her in the neck, only for her to grab the knife, Nelson said. "She just wouldn't die," Christensen was recorded saying. He decapitated Zhang to ensure she was dead.

Raising his voice and pointing at Christensen at the defense table, Nelson said: "She didn't want that man to be the last man she saw on earth. ... He erased her from this earth."

Jurors shouldn't be swayed by defense photographs and videos showing Christensen as an outwardly sweet, kind child, Nelson added.

"Sometimes innocent children grow up to be cruel," he said.

Christensen never publicly revealed what he did with Zhang's remains. He declined to testify during the penalty phase, when he could have explained how he disposed of the body.

But his lawyer, Pollock, did apologize on his behalf, at one point saying "I'm sorry" to Zhang's father on a front bench.

Christensen's father and mother were also in court, several times shedding tears as lawyers spoke of their son.

The defense listed 49 mitigating factors they say should weigh in favor of a life prison sentence, including that he had no prior criminal record, sought treatment for homicidal fantasies before killing Zhang and that his parents would suffer if he's put to death.

Prosecutors say the aggravating factors include that Christensen killed Zhang in a "heinous, cruel and depraved" manner, that he took advantage of her small stature to kill her and that the killing devastated her family.

Illinois abolished the death penalty in 2011, but Christensen was prosecuted under federal law, which allows for it. If he is sentenced to death, a long appeals process is expected before he would be executed by lethal injection in Indiana.

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US Air Force warns against joke event to 'storm Area 51'

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The U.S. Air Force has warned people against participating in an internet joke suggesting a large crowd of people "storm Area 51," the top-secret Cold War test site in the Nevada desert.

A prank event on Facebook that's attracted more than 1 million interested people suggests that a mass of people attempt to run into the mysterious site at 3 a.m. on Sept. 20.

The site is part of the vast Nevada Test and Training Range and has become the center of UFO conspiracy theories.

The Facebook event jokes "they can't stop all of us" and "Let's see them aliens."

Nellis Air Force Base said in a statement that the Air Force is aware of the Facebook posting and says "any attempt to illegally access the area is highly discouraged."

The Air Force says it does not discuss its security measures and that the test and training range provides "flexible, realistic and multidimensional battlespace" for testing and "advanced training in support of U.S. national interests."

After decades of government officials refusing to acknowledge Area 51, the CIA released declassified documents in 2013 referring to the 8,000-square mile (20,700-sq. kilometer) installation by name and locating it on a map near the dry Groom Lake bed.

The base has been a testing ground for a host of top-secret aircraft, including the U-2 in the 1950s and later the B-2 stealth bomber.

But secrecy surrounding the site has fueled conspiracy theories among UFO enthusiasts and sprouted a small, alien-themed tourist industry in surrounding desert communities, including alien-themed cafes, an alien-themed motel and an alien-themed brothel.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump goes after Omar at rally

By HOPE YEN and AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday misrepresented words from Rep. Ilhan Omar to make her sound like an al-Qaida sympathizer and exaggerated the performance of the economy under his watch.

A look at claims from his rally in North Carolina:

OMAR

TRUMP quotes Omar as saying: "You don't say 'America' with this intensity. You say 'al-Qaida,' it makes you proud. Al-Qaida makes you proud. You don't speak that way about America."

THE FACTS: This is not at all what the Minnesota Democrat said. She did not voice pride in the terrorist group.

Trump is referring to an interview Omar gave in 2013. In it, she talked about studying terrorism history or theory under a professor who dramatically pronounced the names of terrorist groups, as if to emphasize their evil nature.

"The thing that was interesting in the class was every time the professor said 'al-Qaida,' he sort of like — his shoulders went up" and he used a menacing, intense tone, she said. Her point was that the professor was subtly rousing suspicions of Muslims with his theatrical presentation, while pronouncing "America" without the intensity he afforded the names of terrorist groups.

At no point did she say "al-Qaida" should be uttered with intensity or pride and that "America" shouldn't.

Trump is continuing to assail Omar and three other liberal Democratic women of color, challenging their loyalty to the U.S. The House rebuked him Tuesday for his "racist comments."

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP: "We are offering plans up to 60 percent cheaper than Obamacare."

THE FACTS: The bargain health insurance plans Trump talks about are cheaper because they skimp on

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benefits such as maternity or prescription drug coverage and do not guarantee coverage of pre-existing conditions.

The short-term plans the Trump administration began offering last year on the federal insurance marketplace provide up to 12 months of coverage and can be renewed for up to 36 months.

Premiums for the plans are about one-third the cost of fuller insurance coverage. The health plan offerings are intended for people who want an individual health insurance policy but make too much money to qualify for subsidies under the Affordable Care Act.

The Trump administration introduced the short-term plans, which undermine how "Obamacare" is supposed to work, after failing to repeal much of President Barack Obama's health care law.

TRUMP: "Patients with preexisting conditions are protected by Republicans much more so than protected by Democrats, who will never be able to pull it off."

THE FACTS: Democrats did pull it off. Obama's health care law, the Affordable Care Act, requires insurers to take all applicants, regardless of medical history, and charge the same standard premiums to healthy people and those who had medical problems before or when they signed up.

The Trump administration is pressing in court for full repeal of "Obamacare."

Trump and other Republicans say they'll have a plan to preserve protections for people with pre-existing conditions, but the White House has provided no details.

ECONOMY

TRUMP: "We have the strongest economy in history."

THE FACTS: The economy is not the strongest in the country's history. It expanded at an annual rate of 3.1% in the first quarter of this year. That growth was the highest in just four years for the first quarter.

In the late 1990s, growth topped 4% for four straight years, a level it has not yet reached on an annual basis under Trump. Growth even reached 7.2% in 1984.

In fact, there are some signs that growth is slowing, partly because of Trump's trade fights with China and Europe. Factory activity has decelerated for three straight months as global growth has slowed and companies are reining in their spending on large equipment.

Most economists forecast the economy will expand at just a 2% annual rate in the April-June period.

Trump is pushing the Federal Reserve chairman, Jerome Powell, to cut short-term interest rates to shore up the economy. That isn't something a president would do during the strongest economy in history.

Economists mostly expect the Fed will cut rates, either at its next meeting in July or in September. Lower rates make it easier for people to borrow and buy new homes and cars.

The economy is now in its 121st month of growth, making it the longest expansion in history. Most of that took place under Obama.

The economy grew 2.9% in 2018 — the same pace it reached in 2015 under Obama — and simply hasn't hit historically high growth rates.

TRUMP: "The lowest unemployment numbers ever."

THE FACTS: Again, not so.

The 3.7% unemployment rate in the latest report is not the best in history. It's near the lowest level in 50 years, when it was 3.5%. The U.S. also had lower rates than now in the early 1950s. And during three years of World War II, the annual rate was under 2%.

TRUMP: "The best unemployment in our history. And likewise, women, 74 years. ... I'm sorry, women, I let you down, it's not in our history but we're going to be there very soon."

THE FACTS: No, the jobless rate for women of 3.1% in April was the lowest in 66 years, not 74, and it has since increased to 3.3% in June. The data only go back 71 years, so 74 years isn't a possibility.

Seitz reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Christopher Rugaber and Calvin Woodward con-

tributed to this report.

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Netflix's 2Q dud rattles investors as competition heats up

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Netflix's video streaming service suffered a dramatic slowdown in growth during its traditionally sluggish spring season, a drop-off coming as the company boosts its prices and girds for even stiffer competition.

The service picked up 2.7 million worldwide subscribers for the April-June period. That's far below Netflix's forecast of 5 million subscribers. The second-quarter letdown announced Wednesday comes after Netflix attracted nearly 10 million subscribers during the first three months of the year, more than any other quarter since the debut of its video streaming service 12 years ago.

The slowdown rattled investors already wondering how Netflix might fare against a new wave of competition coming this fall when both Walt Disney Co. and Apple plan to launch their own video streaming services.

After the second-quarter numbers came out, Netflix's stock plunged 12% in extending trading. If that sell-off is replicated in Thursday's regular trading session, it will be the largest decline in Netflix's stock price in three years and wipe out \$18 billion in shareholder wealth.

Netflix ended June with 151.6 million worldwide subscribers, far more than a current crop of video streaming rivals that includes Amazon and Hulu.

Signaling it expects to regain some momentum this summer, the company projected it will add 7 million subscribers from July through September. The optimism stems in part from the immense popularity of "Stranger Things," whose third season attracted record viewership after its July 4 release.

But the battle for viewers' attention and dollars is about to get much tougher. Besides the Disney and Apple, AT&T will also join the fray next year with HBO Max and NBC is expanding into video streaming, too.

"I think our position is excellent," Netflix CEO Reed Hastings said during a Wednesday webcast. "We're building amazing capacity for content. Our product has never been in better shape."

Netflix traced the second-quarter's slow subscriber growth primarily to a recent round of prices increase, including hikes of 13% to 18% in its biggest market, in the U.S. That pushed the price of its most popular U.S. plan to \$13 per month, testing the bounds of how much some consumers are willing to pay for a service that started out at \$8 per month for the same level of service. Disney is already planning to undercut Netflix by charging just \$7 per month for its new service.

Some U.S. households decided Netflix is no longer worth it at the higher price, causing the company to end June with 120,000 fewer subscribers in the country than it had at the end of March. Hastings brushed off the disappointing second quarter as an aberration and predicted Netflix's subscriber growth this year will surpass the 28.6 million customers who were added last year.

But the increasingly crowded video streaming field has led to questions whether Netflix will be able to maintain the rapid rate of subscriber growth that has made its stock as one of Wall Street's premier performers during the past decade.

A \$10,000 investment in Netflix at the end of 2009 would have been worth \$460,000 at the end of Wednesday's regular trading session.

Netflix also needs more customers to help cover the costs of all the exclusive TV series and movies that it keeps adding to its line-up to stand out for the rest of the crowd. The Los Gatos, California, company so far has been borrowing heavily to finance a highly acclaimed slate of programming that garnered 117 Emmy nominations, second only to HBO's 137 nominations among all networks.

Selling ads would help Netflix bring in more revenue, but the company's management on Wednesday reiterated the service will continue to remain commercial free.

For now, Netflix is still burning through more cash than it is bringing in. In the second quarter, it registered a negative cash flow of \$594 million and expects to accumulate a negative cash flow of \$3.5 billion for the entire year.

Part of that outgoing money will go toward the development of more original shows to replace some of the programming that it has been licensing from Disney, AT&T and NBC, all of which are reclaiming the rights for their own streaming services. The losses include "Friends" and "The Office," long-defunct series that still remain among the most-watched shows on Netflix.

But Netflix still posts profits due to the way entertainment companies are allowed to account for their programming costs. In the most recent quarter, Netflix earned nearly \$271 million, a 30% drop from the same time last year. Revenue climbed 26% from last year to \$4.9 billion.

House blocks maverick Democrat's Trump impeachment effort

By ALAN FRAM and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House easily killed a maverick Democrat's effort Wednesday to impeach President Donald Trump for his recent racial insults against lawmakers of color, a vote that provided an early snapshot of just how divided Democrats are over ousting him as the 2020 presidential and congressional campaigns rev up.

Democrats leaned against the resolution by Texas Rep. Al Green by 137-95. That showed that so far, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has successfully prevented a Democratic stampede toward impeachment before additional evidence is developed that could win over a public that's so far skeptical about ousting Trump.

Even so, the roll call underscored that the number of liberal Democrats open to impeachment remains substantial and may be growing. About two dozen more conversions would split the party's 235-member caucus in half over an issue that could potentially dominate next year's elections. Until now, just over 80 Democrats had publicly said they were open to starting an inquiry over removing Trump.

"There's a lot of grief, from a lot of different quarters," Green, speaking to reporters after the vote, said of the reaction he received from colleagues. "But sometimes you just have to take a stand."

Democrats voting in favor of the impeachment resolution included some of the party's most outspoken freshmen, like Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, but were mostly veteran liberals, including leaders of House Democrats' black, Hispanic and progressive caucuses. With party leaders looking to give the effort as little oxygen as possible, there was no debate.

As some Democrats feared, the measure's lopsided 332-95 defeat — the House's first vote on removing Trump since Democrats took control of the chamber this year — opened the door for him to claim vindication.

"You see the overwhelming vote against impeachment and that's the end of it," Trump told reporters as he arrived in North Carolina for a campaign rally. He called the effort the "most ridiculous project I've ever been involved in."

Green's resolution didn't mention special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into whether Trump's 2016 campaign conspired with Russia to influence that year's congressional election or whether the president obstructed Mueller's probe. That inquiry and the questions it raised over Trump's actions have been the main reasons some Democrats have backed impeachment.

Pelosi, D-Calif., told reporters that six House committees are investigating Trump, adding, "That is the serious path we're on."

Mueller is scheduled to testify next week to two House committees.

Democrats rejected Trump's claim that the vote showed he'd been absolved of anything.

"It's not vindication," said Rep. Donna Shalala, D-Fla. "It's that we believe in an orderly process. We're putting our faith in the Judiciary Committee and the hearing they're going to hold."

Every voting Republican favored derailing Green's measure.

With Democrats preparing to defend their House majority in next year's elections, Green's measure forced those in tight districts to choose between upsetting liberals eager to remove Trump and moderates

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leery of that. Democrats owe their House majority to 39 challengers who won in 2018 in what had been GOP-held districts, places where centrist constituents often predominate.

"It's not ideal for a lot of people to have to take that vote right now," one of them, Rep. Katie Hill, D-Calif., said of impeachment. She said "if and when" the House votes on impeaching Trump, it should happen when "we can make sure our constituents understand and can get behind" the move.

Recent polling has shown solid majorities of the public oppose impeachment. Even if the Democratic-run House would vote to impeach Trump, the equivalent of filing formal charges, a trial by the Republican-led Senate would all but certainly acquit him, keeping him in office.

Trump is "unfit to be President, unfit to represent the American values of decency and morality, respectability and civility, honesty and propriety, reputability and integrity, is unfit to defend the ideals that have made America great, unfit to defend liberty and justice for all," Green's resolution said.

The measure cites Trump's recent "racist" comments imploring Democratic congresswomen of color to go back to their native countries. The House voted Tuesday largely along party lines to condemn those statements. His targets were Ocasio-Cortez and Reps. Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan.

All are American and all but Omar were born in the U.S. They've also been among the party's most outspoken advocates of impeachment, and all backed Green's measure.

Mueller's 448-page report detailed episodes in which Trump tried to influence his investigation. Mueller said he could not exonerate Trump on obstruction and indicated in a May news conference that it was up to Congress to decide what to do.

Some Democrats are frustrated with the slow pace of their party's investigations of the president, and impeachment supporters say it would accelerate House probes and bolster their arguments in court. The White House has blocked several witnesses from answering questions.

Efforts by party leaders to dissuade Green from forcing the divisive roll call fell flat, as they did when he forced votes on similar impeachment resolutions in 2017 and 2018.

Associated Press writer Deb Reichmann contributed from Greenville, North Carolina.

House holds 2 Trump officials in contempt in census dispute

By **MATTHEW DALY** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democratic-controlled House voted Wednesday to hold two top Trump administration officials in contempt of Congress for failing to comply with subpoenas related to a decision to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census.

The House voted, 230-198, to hold Attorney General William Barr and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross in criminal contempt. The vote, a political blow to the Trump administration, is largely symbolic because the Justice Department is unlikely to prosecute the two men.

The action marks an escalation of Democratic efforts to use their House majority to aggressively investigate the inner workings of the Trump administration.

Four Democrats opposed the contempt measure: Reps. Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey, Anthony Brindisi of New York, Conor Lamb of Pennsylvania and Jared Golden of Maine. All but Lamb are in their first term and all represent swing districts. Independent Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan, a former Republican, supported the contempt measure.

President Donald Trump abandoned the citizenship question last week after the Supreme Court said the administration's justification for the question "seems to have been contrived." Trump directed agencies to try to compile the information using existing databases.

The White House called the vote "ridiculous" and "yet another lawless attempt to harass the president and his administration."

The Justice and Commerce departments have produced more than 31,000 pages of documents to the

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House regarding the census issue, and senior officials from both agencies, including Ross, have spoken on the record about the matter, the White House said, adding that Democrats continue to demand documents that the White House contends are subject to executive privilege.

"House Democrats know they have no legal right to these documents, but their shameful and cynical politics know no bounds," White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in a statement.

Democratic Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, said the contempt vote was an important step to assert Congress' constitutional authority to serve as a check on executive power.

"Holding any secretary in criminal contempt of Congress is a serious and sober matter — one that I have done everything in my power to avoid," Cummings said during House debate. "But in the case of the attorney general and Secretary Ross, they blatantly obstructed our ability to do congressional oversight into the real reason Secretary Ross was trying for the first time in 70 years to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census."

While Ross and other officials have claimed the sole reason they wanted to add the citizenship question was to enforce the Voting Rights Act, "we now know that claim was nothing but a pretext," Cummings said. "The Supreme Court said that."

At the direction of Barr and Ross, "the departments of Justice and Commerce have been engaged in a campaign to subvert our laws and the process Congress put in place to maintain the integrity of the census," Cummings said.

The contempt resolution "is about protecting our democracy, protecting the integrity of this body. It's bigger than the census," he said.

Ross called the vote a public relations "stunt" that further demonstrates Democrats' "unending quest to generate headlines instead of operating in good faith with our department."

Democrats prefer to "play political games rather than help lead the country" and "have made every attempt to ascribe evil motivations to everyday functions of government," Ross said.

Ross told the oversight committee that the March 2018 decision to add the question was based on a Justice Department request to help enforce the Voting Rights Act.

Democrats disputed that, citing documents unearthed last month suggesting that a push to draw legislative districts in overtly partisan and racist ways was the real reason the administration wanted to include the question.

Democrats feared that adding the question would reduce participation in immigrant-heavy communities and result in a severe undercount of minority voters. They have pressed for specific documents to determine Ross' motivation and contend the administration has declined to provide the material despite repeated requests.

"The real issue we should be debating" is why Democrats are afraid to ask how many citizens live in the United States, said Rep. James Comer, R-Ky. Contrary to Democrats' claims, Ross and other officials have cooperated with the oversight panel and provided thousands of documents, Comer said.

"If the Democrats can't impeach President Trump, they will instead hold his Cabinet in contempt of Congress," he said. "This is just another episode in political theater."

In a letter late Wednesday to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Barr and Ross asked Democrats to postpone the vote, saying they have shown a "clear record of cooperation" with Congress. The contempt vote "is both unnecessarily undermining" relations between the two branches and "degrading" Congress' "own institutional integrity," they wrote.

Trump has pledged to "fight all the subpoenas" issued by Congress and says he won't work on legislative priorities, such as infrastructure, until Congress halts investigations of his administration.

Data show many companies contributed to US opioid crisis

By **GEOFF MULVIHILL** and **MATTHEW PERRONE** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The maker of OxyContin has been cast as the chief villain in the nation's opioid crisis. But newly released government figures suggest Purdue Pharma had plenty of help in flooding the U.S. with billions of pills even as overdose deaths were accelerating.

Records kept by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration show that 76 billion oxycodone and hydrocodone pills — the vast majority of them generics, not brand names — were shipped to U.S. pharmacies from 2006 to 2012.

The annual number swelled by more than 50 percent during that period of time even as the body count climbed. The powerful painkillers flowed faster even after Purdue Pharma was fined \$635 million for falsely marketing OxyContin as less addictive than other opioids.

"I think the scale of this is stunning," Keith Humphreys, a Stanford University professor who researches opioids, said in an interview.

He also noted that the data shows that the places that received the most drugs per capita are the ones with the most overdoses per capita: "It really looks like wherever you spread the most gas, you get the most fires."

At the same time, the data illustrates how complicated it could be for the courts to figure out who should be held accountable for the public health disaster. More than 2,000 state, local and tribal governments have sued members of the drug industry in the biggest and possibly most complicated litigation of its kind ever in the U.S.

A federal judge who is overseeing most of the cases and pushing for a settlement ruled this week that detailed drug-shipment data compiled by the DEA should be made public over the industry's objections.

The judge has not allowed the release of information from 2013 and 2014. But the material unsealed constitutes the most comprehensive picture yet of how the crisis unfolded.

The Washington Post, which along with HD Media, the owner of newspapers in West Virginia, went to court to seek the information, was first to publish the data.

Prescription and illegal opioids such as heroin and fentanyl have been factors in more than 430,000 deaths in the U.S. since 2000, according to the CDC. From 2006 to 2012, annual opioid deaths rose from under 18,000 a year to more than 23,000. During that time, prescription drugs were cited as factors in just under half the deaths.

Since then, overall opioid deaths in the U.S. have doubled, though on Wednesday the CDC reported that drug overdose deaths of all kinds probably fell last year for the first time in nearly three decades.

The newly released information shows in detail the flow of drugs from manufacturers to communities.

West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and Nevada all received more than 50 pills for every man, woman and child each year. Several areas in the Appalachian region were shipped an average of well over 100 pills per person per year.

"It's like being on the front lines of a war every day," said Joe Engle, sheriff of Perry County, Kentucky, which received 175 pills per person per year. "Our people here in eastern Kentucky have been taken advantage of by these pharmaceutical companies. It's one of the worst things you can do to a society, to a people. And we're suffering."

Nearly every state has filed a lawsuit, and most of them have focused on Purdue and members of the Sackler family, who own the Stamford, Connecticut-based company and are major philanthropists whose donations to museums and universities have now come under scrutiny. Many local governments have also sued other drugmakers, distribution companies and pharmacies.

The lawsuits say that with the introduction of OxyContin, a time-released opioid, in 1995, Purdue created a new playbook to push the use of opioids for more patients and in higher doses.

But Purdue points out, accurately, that the company produced only a small fraction of the nation's opioids — about 3% between 2006 and 2012, according to the data. Three companies — SpecGX, Par Pharmaceutical and Activis Pharma — that sold lower-priced generic drugs, including versions of OxyContin,

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combined to make 90% of the pills.

The three companies say that they didn't market the drugs and were just meeting the demand of prescriptions filled out by doctors — and that they didn't produce more than the DEA allowed.

Perry Rowthron, a former Connecticut deputy attorney general, said those factors could make it hard to blame those generic manufacturers.

"It's always been the view that branded manufacturers created the demand that is now being met by generics," he said.

As for the distributors, they contend they functioned as a delivery service and keep federal authorities apprised of the quantities of drugs being shipped.

Four companies — McKesson Corp., Walgreens, Cardinal Health and AmerisourceBergen — each distributed more than 10% of the opioids sent to pharmacies. McKesson distributed more than 18% of the nation's opioids from 2006 to 2012 — the most of any company — but said it didn't push sales.

"Any suggestion that McKesson influenced the volume of opioids prescribed or consumed in this country would reflect a misunderstanding of our role as a distributor," a spokeswoman said via email.

The figures are from the DEA's Automation of Reports and Consolidated Orders System, or ARCOS. The DEA agreed to provide the ARCOS data to lawyers in the opioid litigation but pushed judges to keep it from being made public.

Dr. Joshua Sharfstein of Johns Hopkins University said the lack of transparency around the prescribing data probably slowed the federal response to the opioid epidemic.

"To a certain extent, no agency really felt responsible and had access to the data in real-time to see what was happening," he said.

DEA officials declined to comment on the litigation but said the agency is working to ensure patients have access to the medications they need, while also policing excessive drug shipments.

Elizabeth Burch, a law professor at the University of Georgia, called the release a "game-changer" in the legal cases.

"Making it public shows the vast disparity between say, Mingo County, West Virginia (with 203.5 pills per person per year) and Hooker County, Nebraska (with 0 pills per person per year)," she said in an email.

She said the information could help the hardest-hit places get a bigger piece of any settlement reached.

Yale law professor Abbe Gluck said the drug distribution details are already being used by the parties negotiating settlements, so their impact could be minimal there.

"On the other hand," she said in an email, "releasing the data feeds the public's hunger for knowledge and accountability and so may put additional pressure on the defendant companies."

Mulvihill reported from Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

Associated Press writers Mike Balsamo in Washington, D.C., and Claire Galofaro in Louisville, Kentucky, contributed to this report.

Follow Mulvihill at <http://www.twitter.com/geoffmulvihill> and Perrone at http://www.twitter.com/AP_FDArriter

Sanders defends 'Medicare for All' after criticism by Biden

By JUANA SUMMERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bernie Sanders vigorously defended his signature "Medicare for All" proposal Wednesday after criticism from his 2020 rival Joe Biden and called on his fellow Democratic presidential candidates to join him in refusing to accept contributions from the health care industry.

Saying he wanted to address "some of the half-truths" and "outright lies" about his single-payer health care plan, Sanders insisted that coverage for seniors would increase and that Americans would be able to choose their own doctors and clinics without worrying whether their health care provider is in network.

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He also tried to ease fears that his proposal was too radical and said a big change was needed to improve health care in the country.

"Now is not the time for tinkering around the edges," the Vermont senator said in an apparent swipe at Biden's plan to expand the Affordable Care Act.

Sanders' speech at George Washington University came as he is seeking to breathe new life into his campaign ahead of the second presidential debate later this month. He has slipped in some public polling and has been out-raised by several of his rivals, including Biden.

Despite not mentioning Biden or any of his Democratic rivals by name, Sanders drew sharp contrasts in the speech between himself and the former vice president as the question of how to best provide health care for Americans has become an animating focus of the presidential race. Biden released his own health care plan on Monday, and the two campaigns have engaged in an increasingly bitter dispute over the issue.

Biden has warned that it would be dangerous to eliminate the Affordable Care Act, implemented when he was vice president in the Obama administration, and replace it with Medicare for All. While Sanders' plan would eliminate most private insurance, Biden's would create a public option that would allow people to sign up for a government-run health system like Medicare if they were unhappy with private insurance.

"Medicare goes away as you know it. All the Medicare you have is gone. It's a new Medicare system," Biden said this week at a presidential candidate forum held by the AARP. "It may be as good, you may like it as well, it may or may not, but the transition of dropping 300 million people on a totally new plan, I think is a little risky at this point."

On Wednesday, Sanders countered, "When our opponents talk about destabilization of the current system, they forget to tell you that the current system is already disrupting and destabilizing millions of people's lives."

And in challenging his 2020 rivals to avoid taking money from the health care industry, Sanders said any candidate who refused to take that pledge "should explain to the American people why those corporate interest and their donations are a good investment for the health care industry."

Nine years after the Affordable Care Act was passed, Americans are still more likely to support than oppose the law, 48% to 30%, according to an April poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, though a sizable share doesn't take either side. Views of a single-payer health care system, in which all Americans would get their insurance from one government plan, are mixed: More Americans favor than oppose single-payer, 42% to 31%, and an additional 25% say they hold neither opinion. The public is even more supportive of a government health insurance plan that can be bought instead of a private insurance plan: 53% express support, compared with just 17% who oppose; 29% are neither in favor nor opposed.

A central question in the debate over Medicare for All is how the cost of such a plan would be covered. Sanders has said taxes would increase on middle-income earners. California Sen. Kamala Harris, who supports Medicare for All, told CNN this week that she wasn't "prepared to engage" in such tax hikes.

The roaring health care debate also is likely to further draw in the full Democratic field. Beyond Harris, several other leading 2020 candidates, including Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, support Medicare for All. However, some other Democratic hopefuls have warned that the party is moving too far left and have supported a more centrist approach.

Among them is Colorado Sen. Michael Bennet, who prefers a public option for health coverage that could be included in the current structure of the Affordable Care Act.

While campaigning in Iowa, Bennet said that Democrats would "never unify around Medicare for All," but that plans like his could bring the party together and notch wins in states like Colorado.

"If you're gonna stand up and commit the Democratic Party to taking away from 180 million people, you'd better be clear on what the nuances are because when you're running against Donald Trump, it's going to be too late," he said.

Associated Press writers Elana Schor and Hannah Fingerhut in Washington contributed to this report.

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Washington talks could soon yield spending, debt deal

By **ANDREW TAYLOR** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Washington negotiators are closing in on a budget and debt deal that would stave off the chance of a government shutdown this fall and allow Congress to speed through legislation to increase the government's borrowing cap.

The emerging two-year framework would satisfy demands for an outline to guide congressional work on more than \$1.3 trillion in agency operating budgets. It would still need to be fleshed out in follow-up legislation, and puts off battles over political land mines like immigration and President Donald Trump's unfulfilled promises of a border wall.

Obstacles remain and conservative forces inside the White House are resisting a quick deal and want more concessions from Pelosi, who says a deal is needed this week in order to ensure it passes before the summer recess.

The chief advocates of the deal include House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., along with top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer of New York. Many House conservatives are likely to oppose it as spending too much on Democratic domestic initiatives and ignoring budget deficits estimated at \$1 trillion. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, focused chiefly on the need to increase the debt limit, is the chief negotiator for the Trump administration.

Pelosi and Schumer spoke with Mnuchin on Wednesday, and the talks have gotten down to timing issues. Pelosi told reporters that "if we're really going to do this by next Thursday before we leave we have to have some agreement this week."

"I am genuinely optimistic," said House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., a key Pelosi ally who is keeping a close watch on the talks.

Also driving the negotiations is the threat of cuts averaging 10% to agency accounts, reversing recent gains for the Pentagon and hard-won increases in domestic programs favored by Democrats. Those cuts are the final leftovers of a failed 2011 budget and debt deal negotiated by former President Barack Obama and then-Speaker John Boehner that used the threat of the automatic cuts to try to prompt additional progress on the deficit. Instead, lawmakers have acted three times to stop the cuts.

The talks have so far been insulated from Washington's ongoing maelstrom and the already raging presidential campaign. It is not a done deal yet. Both sides worry that Trump could still reject it. But the forces aligned in the talks are powerful and all sides want to deal with the politically toxic debt limit issue without a high-wire act that could cause markets to shudder. Failure to increase the government's \$22 trillion debt cap would spark an unprecedented crisis in which the government couldn't borrow enough cash to pay all of its bills.

The talks have been going for weeks, but took on new urgency as deficit estimates worsened, creating an unacceptable risk of default in early-to-mid September. At the same time, the Senate Appropriations Committee, stacked with loyalists to McConnell, is aching to start advancing its 12 annual spending bills. The House has passed most of its bills using significantly higher spending figures than what it's likely to end up with under the emerging agreement. Each has been slapped with a Trump veto threat.

Among the loose ends, and they could be significant, is the issue of how much in accompanying spending cuts should be paired with the short-term spending increases. Past deals have had these so-called offsets, often relying on quick moneymakers like sales from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve or extending small cuts to Medicare providers, but only \$60 billion or so is available now.

While Democrats sound optimistic, some GOP factions are dreading the deal, which melds a toxic mix of debt, spending and \$1 trillion-plus budget deficits for conservatives to digest. Republicans warn that Trump won't sign anything that doesn't enjoy widespread GOP support, but the alternative is to run the government on auto-pilot, a prospect that alarms the Pentagon and its allies.

"When you have divided government you have to make compromises. Neither side gets 100% of what

they want," said Sen. David Perdue, R-Ga. "There's enough in there it satisfied the needs of both parties trying to get this done. The alternative is so draconian."

Prosecutors drop groping case against Kevin Spacey

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Prosecutors dropped a case Wednesday accusing Kevin Spacey of groping a young man at a resort island bar in 2016 after the accuser refused to testify about a missing cellphone the defense says contains information supporting the actor's claims of innocence.

Spacey was charged with indecent assault and battery last year in the only criminal case that has been brought against the actor since his career collapsed amid a slew of sexual misconduct allegations. The two-time Oscar winner was among the earliest and biggest names to be ensnared in the #MeToo movement against sexual assault and harassment that swept across the entertainment and other industries.

Spacey denies groping the man, whose mother first went public with the allegations in 2017.

A phone message seeking comment was left with Spacey's lawyer.

The actor's accuser was ordered to take the stand earlier this month after he said he lost the cellphone he used the night of the alleged groping. The defense said it needed the phone to recover deleted text messages it says would help Spacey's case.

The man denied deleting messages or manipulating screenshots of conversations he provided to investigators. But when he was pressed by the defense about whether he knew that altering evidence is a crime, he invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination, and the judge said his testimony would be stricken from the record.

The judge then questioned how prosecutors would be able to bring Spacey to trial if the accuser continued to refuse to testify, and prosecutors told the judge they needed time to decide how to proceed.

On Wednesday, Cape and Island District Attorney Michael O'Keefe said in court documents that they were dropping the charge "due to an unavailability of the complaining witness."

Prosecutors said in an emailed statement that they met with the man and his lawyer Sunday and told him that if he wouldn't testify in further proceedings, they couldn't move forward with the case. The man "elected not to waive his right under the Fifth Amendment," prosecutors said.

Prosecutors said they could further pursue the case and grant the accuser immunity but then they would need more than his uncorroborated testimony.

Furthermore, "a grant of immunity compromises the witness to a degree which, in a case where the credibility of the witness is paramount, makes the further prosecution untenable," they said.

Mitchell Garabedian, a lawyer for the accuser, said in email that the man and his family "have shown an enormous amount of courage under difficult circumstances." Garabedian said he had no further comment.

The hearing at which the accuser testified came days after the man abruptly dropped a lawsuit he had just recently filed against the actor that sought damages for "severe and permanent mental distress and emotional injuries." The suit was dismissed "with prejudice," meaning it cannot be refiled.

The man did not receive a settlement to drop the civil case, his mother said. His lawyer said he dropped it because he was emotionally overwhelmed and wanted only "one roller coaster ride at a time" and so chose to focus on the criminal case.

The man's mother, former Boston TV anchor Heather Unruh, alleged in 2017 that Spacey got her son drunk and sexually assaulted him at the Club Car, a bar on Nantucket where the teen worked as a busboy.

The man told police he went over to talk to Spacey after his shift because he wanted to get a picture with the former "House of Cards" star. He said Spacey bought him several drinks and tried to persuade him to come home with him before unzipping the man's pants and groping him for about three minutes.

Unruh's son told police he tried to move Spacey's hands, but the groping continued, and he didn't know what to do because he didn't want to get in trouble for drinking because he was underage. The man said he fled when Spacey went to the bathroom.

Shortly after Spacey was charged, he posted a video on YouTube in the voice of his "House of Cards"

character who was killed off after the sexual misconduct allegations emerged, saying "I'm certainly not going to pay the price for the thing I didn't do."

Spacey has faced several other accusations.

His first accuser, actor Anthony Rapp, said Spacey climbed on top of him on a bed when Rapp was 14 and Spacey 26. Spacey said he did not remember such an encounter but apologized if the allegations were true.

The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they are the victims of sexual assault unless they identify themselves publicly. Rapp has; Unruh's son has not.

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

Asian stocks follow Wall Street lower on trade war fears

By **JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stock markets on Thursday followed Wall Street lower after President Donald Trump reignited trade fears by saying he could impose more tariffs on Chinese imports.

Benchmarks in Shanghai, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Sydney all declined. Oil rebounded from the previous day's losses.

Trump alarmed investors by saying he had \$325 billion of Chinese imports available for additional tariffs "if we want." That shook markets that had been reassured by Trump's agreement with Chinese President Xi Jinping in June to hold off on new trade penalties while they resume negotiations.

The Chinese government warned tariff hikes would "create a new obstacle" in talks on ending their bruising fight over Beijing's technology ambitions.

Trump's comment "cast a dark cloud over lingering concerns on trade talk progress," said Mizuho bank analysts in a report.

The Shanghai Composite Index lost 0.6% to 2,913.49 and Tokyo's Nikkei 225 tumbled 1.6% to 21,128.12. Hong Kong's Hang Seng retreated 0.4% to 28,465.17 and Seoul's Kospi was 0.2% lower at 2,066.94.

Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 shed 0.3% to 6,655.60 and Taiwan and Southeast Asian markets also retreated. New Zealand gained.

On Wall Street, stocks extended their losses into a second day as railroad operator CSX had its biggest drop in 11 years, pulling other industrial companies down with it. CSX plunged 10.3% after saying it expects this year's revenue to decline as much as 2%, after previously saying it expected growth.

Banks fell as investors worried lower interest rates will hurt profits. Investors expect the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates for the first time in a decade at their next policy meeting in two weeks.

Corporate earnings reports are getting into full swing this week, and investors have been mostly cautious in their assessments of them. Earnings are still expected to decline for S&P 500 companies in the second quarter.

JAPANESE TRADE: Japan's June exports declined 6.8% from a year earlier. Imports fell 5.2%. For the first six months of this year, Japanese exports slipped 4.7% while imports edged down 1.1%.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude gained 1 cent to \$56.79 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell 84 cents on Wednesday to close at \$56.78. Brent crude, used to price international oils, advanced 17 cents to \$63.83 in London. It lost 69 cents the previous session to \$63.66.

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CURRENCY: The dollar declined to 107.73 yen from Wednesday's 107.97 yen. The euro gained to \$1.1239 from \$1.1226.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 18, the 199th day of 2019. There are 166 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 18, 1969, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., left a party on Chappaquiddick (chap-uh-KWIH'-dihk) Island near Martha's Vineyard with Mary Jo Kopechne (koh-PEHK'-nee), 28; some time later, Kennedy's car went off a bridge into the water. Kennedy was able to escape, but Kopechne drowned.

On this date:

In A.D. 64, the Great Fire of Rome began, consuming most of the city for about a week. (Some blamed the fire on Emperor Nero, who in turn blamed Christians.)

In 1863, during the Civil War, Union troops spearheaded by the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, made up of black soldiers, charged Confederate-held Fort Wagner on Morris Island, S.C. The Confederates were able to repel the Northerners, who suffered heavy losses; the 54th's commander, Col. Robert Gould Shaw, was among those who were killed.

In 1918, South African anti-apartheid leader and president Nelson Mandela was born in the village of Mvezo.

In 1940, the Democratic National Convention at Chicago Stadium nominated President Franklin D. Roosevelt (who was monitoring the proceedings at the White House) for an unprecedented third term in office; earlier in the day, Eleanor Roosevelt spoke to the convention, becoming the first presidential spouse to address such a gathering.

In 1944, Hideki Tojo was removed as Japanese premier and war minister because of setbacks suffered by his country in World War II. American forces in France captured the Normandy town of St. Lo.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed a Presidential Succession Act which placed the speaker of the House and the Senate president pro tempore next in the line of succession after the vice president.

In 1984, gunman James Huberty opened fire at a McDonald's in San Ysidro (ee-SEE'-droh), California, killing 21 people before being shot dead by police. Walter F. Mondale won the Democratic presidential nomination in San Francisco.

In 1986, the world got its first look at the wreckage of the RMS Titanic resting on the ocean floor as videotape of the British luxury liner, which sank in 1912, was released by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

In 1989, actress Rebecca Schaeffer, 21, was shot to death at her Los Angeles home by obsessed fan Robert Bardo, who was later sentenced to life in prison.

In 1990, Dr. Karl Menninger, the dominant figure in American psychiatry for six decades, died in Topeka, Kansas, four days short of his 97th birthday.

In 1994, a bomb hidden in a van destroyed a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 85. Tutsi rebels declared an end to Rwanda's 14-week-old civil war.

In 2013, once the very symbol of American industrial might, Detroit became the biggest U.S. city to file for bankruptcy, its finances ravaged and its neighborhoods hollowed out by a long, slow decline in population and auto manufacturing.

Ten years ago: The Taliban posted a video of an American soldier who'd gone missing June 30, 2009 from his base in eastern Afghanistan and was later confirmed to have been captured; in the recording, the soldier (later identified as Pfc. Bowe Bergdahl) said he was "scared I won't be able to go home." (Bergdahl was released in 2014; he was later given a dishonorable discharge and fined \$1,000 on charges of desertion and misbehavior.)

Five years ago: The United Nations Security Council held an emergency meeting a day after the down-

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ing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 with the loss of all 298 people on board, demanding that pro-Russia rebels who controlled the eastern Ukraine crash site give immediate, unfettered access to independent investigators. The Obama administration announced it was reopening the Eastern Seaboard to offshore oil and gas exploration.

One year ago: The 12 Thai youth soccer teammates and their coach who were trapped in a flooded cave for more than two weeks were released from the hospital. FBI Director Christopher Wray said Russia was continuing to use fake news, propaganda and covert operations to sow discord in the United States. European regulators fined Google a record \$5 billion for forcing cellphone makers that use the company's Android operating system to install Google's search and browser apps. California's Supreme Court decided that a measure to divide the state into three parts would not appear on the November ballot. California's Highway 1 near Big Sur reopened, 14 months after it was blocked by a massive landslide.

Today's Birthdays: Skating champion and commentator Dick Button is 90. Olympic gold medal figure skater Tenley Albright is 84. Movie director Paul Verhoeven is 81. Musician Brian Auger is 80. Singer Dion DiMucci is 80. Actor James Brolin is 79. Baseball Hall of Famer Joe Torre is 79. Singer Martha Reeves is 78. Pop-rock musician Wally Bryson (The Raspberries) is 70. Country-rock singer Craig Fuller (Pure Prairie League) is 70. Business mogul Richard Branson is 69. Actress Margo Martindale is 68. Singer Ricky Skaggs is 65. Actress Audrey Landers is 63. World Golf Hall of Famer Nick Faldo is 62. Rock musician Nigel Twist (The Alarm) is 61. Actress Anne-Marie Johnson is 59. Actress Elizabeth McGovern is 58. Rock musician John Hermann (Widespread Panic) is 57. Rock musician Jack Irons is 57. Talk show host-actress Wendy Williams is 55. Actor Vin Diesel is 52. Actor Grant Bowler is 51. Retired NBA All-Star Penny Hardaway is 48. Bluegrass musician Jesse Brock (The Gibson Brothers) is 47. Alt-country singer Elizabeth Cook is 47. Actor Eddie Matos is 47. Dance music singer-songwriter M.I.A. is 44. Rock musician Daron Malakian (System of a Down; Scars on Broadway) is 44. Actress Elsa Pataky ("The Fast and the Furious" films) is 43. Rock musician Tony Fagenson (formerly with Eve 6) is 41. Movie director Jared Hess is 40. Actor Jason Weaver is 40. Actress Kristen Bell is 39. Actor Michiel Huisman (MIHK'-heel HOWS'-man) is 38. Rock singer Ryan Cabrera is 37. Actress Priyanka Chopra is 37. Christian-rock musician Aaron Gillespie (Underoath) is 36. Actor Chace Crawford is 34. Actor James Norton is 34. Musician Paul Kowert (Punch Brothers) is 33. Actor Travis Milne is 33. Bluegrass musician Joe Dean Jr. (formerly with Dailey & Vincent) is 30.

Thought for Today: "Kindnesses are easily forgotten; but injuries! what worthy man does not keep those in mind?" — William Makepeace Thackeray, English author (born this date in 1811, died 1863).