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It's Finally Back!

OPEN: 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.



August 5-18

State "B" Amateur Tournament at Mitchell

August 9-11

State Junior Legion Tourney in Groton

Aug. 12 First allowable day for FB/Golf practice

Aug. 15 First allowable day for C-C/VB practice

Aug. 20 Faculty Inservice

Aug. 20 Open House / Picnic (5-7:30)

Aug. 21 Faculty Inservice

Aug. 22 1st Day of School

We need our farmers.

We need them physically strong. We need them mentally strong.

Northeastern Mental Health Center is now offering counseling services for farmers and their families-**at no cost.**

With the current state of the industry, we understand that farm families can feel overwhelmed in times of stress, instability, and uncertainty.

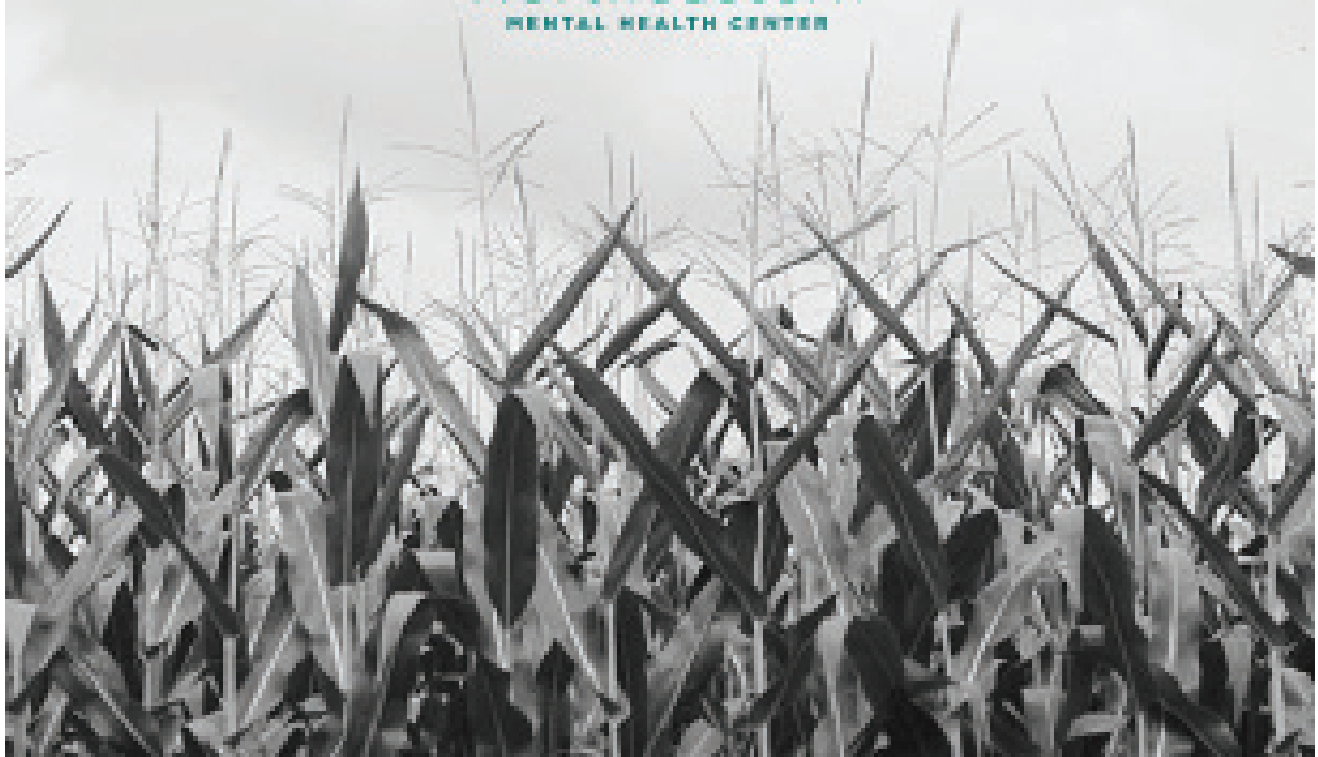
We're here to help.

Call 605-225-1010 for more information.

Northeastern Mental Health Center services the counties of Brown, Campbell, Day, Edmunds, Faulk, Marshall, McPherson, Potter, Spink and Walworth.



Northeastern
MENTAL HEALTH CENTER



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State Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament Aug. 9-11 at Locke-Karst Field in Groton

Winner/Colome Post #169



Front left to right: Jeremiah Lee, Austin Wheadon, Aaron Gilchrist, Jesse Colson, Jacob Beckers, Evan Farner, and Adam Bohnet.

Back row left to right: Coach Shane Phillips, Zach Bohnet, Bosten Morehart, Landon Thieman, Ashton Klein, Kameron Meiners, Joey Cole, Owen Duffy, and Coach Nick Lantz.

Not pictured are Aaron and Owen Monk.

Winner/Colome Post #169

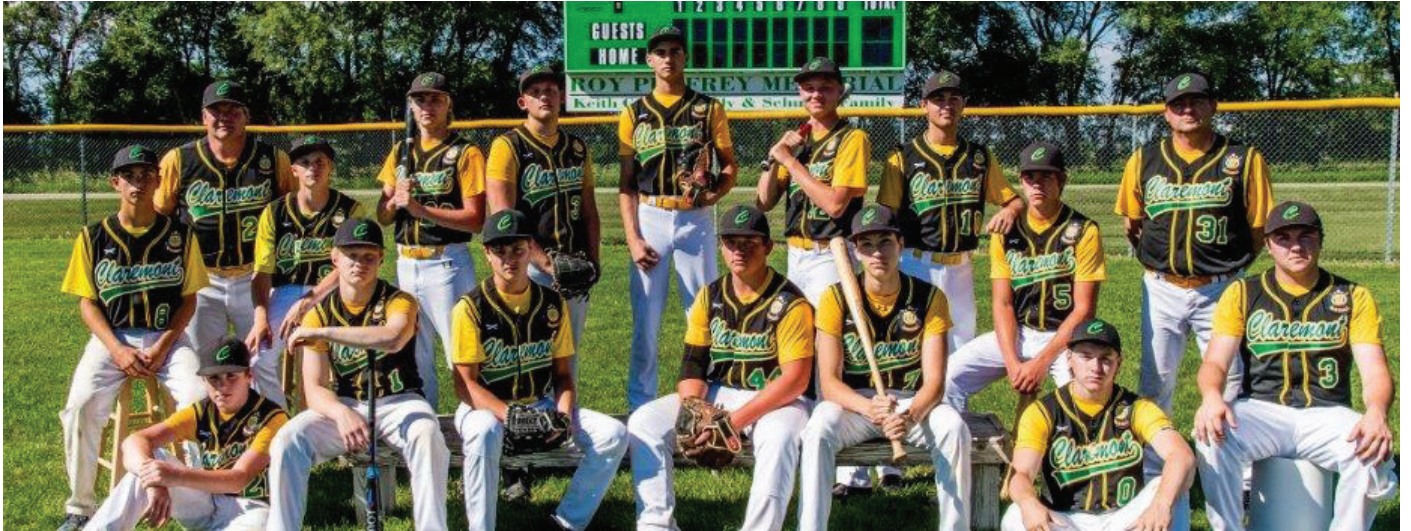
Jersey#	Name	Yr. Graduate	Position	Bat/Throw
17	Jesse Colson	2021	P/2B	R/R
21	Adam Bohnet	2022	LF/CF	R/R
22	Aaron Gilchrist	2021	P/SS	R/R
23	Evan Farner	2021	P/2B	R/R
28	Kameron Meiners	2020	P/3B	R/R
29	Owen Duffy	2021	LF/C	R/R
32	Austin Wheadon	2021	LF/RF	R/R
33	Jeremiah Lee	2021	RF/LF	R/R
34	Aaron Monk	2022	RF/2B	R/R
36	Landon Thieman	2021	CF/LF	R/R
38	Jacob Beckers	2020	P/SS	R/R
39	Zach Bohnet	2021	1B/RF	R/L
43	Bosten Morehart	2021	3B/RF	R/R
45	Owen Monk	2022	RF/LF	R/R
50	Ashton Klein	2022	C/RF	L/R
52	Joey Cole	2022	P/SS	R/R

Coach: Shane Phillips

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Claremont/Britton Post #262



Back row:l-r Aden Godel, Coach Mike Frey, Cody Blanchard, Ben Gustafson, Bryce Peterson, Zander Widener, Kade Larson, Colin Frey, Austen Wieser, Coach Joe Gustafson

Front row:l-r Jesse Keough, Benton West, Kash Cutler, Jordan Dawson, Nico Alvarez, Conner Smith, Coach Dylan Frey

Not pictured: Boston Marlow, Danny Feist, Cole Bisbee and Will Cutler

Claremont/Britton Jr. Legion Post 262

Jersey#	Name	Yr. Graduate	Position	Bat/Throw
0	Connor Smith	2021	3B / P	R / R
1	Benton West	2021	C / P	R / R
4	Cody Blanchard	2020	2B / C	R / R
5	Austen Wieser	2021	P / OF	R / R
7	Nico Alvarez	2020	OF / P	R / R
8	Aden Godel	2022	OF / 2B	R / R
9	Kash Cutler	2022	OF	R / R
10	Colin Frey	2021	P / SS	R / R
12	Kade Larson	2021	OF	R / R
14	Boston Marlow	2020	2B	R / R
18	Zander Widener	2021	OF / P	R / R
20	Ben Gustafson	2022	1B / OF	R / R
21	Jesse Keough	2023	OF / C	R / R
22	Cole Bisbee	2023	OF	R / R
32	William Cutler	2022	3B / P	R / R
37	Bryce Peterson	2021	1B	R / R
40	Danny Feist	2022	3B / P	R / R
44	Jordan Dawson	2022	3B / OF	R / R

Coaches: Mike Frey, Joe Gustafson and Dylan Frey



**2019 South Dakota
American Legion
State Class "B" Jr. Baseball
Tournament
August 9-11, 2019
Locke-Karst Field
Groton, SD**

1B Champion: Groton
1B 2nd: Claremont/Britton
1B 3rd: Elk Point/Jefferson
1B 4th: Lennox
2B Champion: Wagner
2B 2nd: Winner/Colome
2B 3rd: W.I.N.
2B 4th: Redfield

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

The Vikings have entered the second week of training camp, and their first preseason game is right around the corner. Before we get into a gameday preview, let's check out what's happened this past week in Vikings' land.

In last week's article, I told you the Vikings cut two players (Roc Thomas, Micah Abernathy) and replaced them with a running back (De'Angelo Henderson) and an offensive guard (Tiano Pupungatoa). As is life when you're a player on the fringe of an NFL roster, Pupungatoa has already been cut in favor of a different offensive lineman. The Vikings replaced him with guard Tyler Catalina who had previously played with Kirk Cousins in Washington.

The Vikings also made a roster move in the defensive secondary. Because of the suspension of Holton Hill and with Mike Hughes still rehabbing from his knee injury he sustained last season, the Vikings wanted to get more experience in the secondary. The team had been working out veteran cornerbacks all week, finally landing on Bene Benwikere. To make room for Benwikere, the Vikings released undrafted rookie cornerback Terrence Alexander.

In injury related news, the Vikings may have lost a backup offensive tackle. Aviante Collins, who spent most of last season on injured reserve because of a torn bicep, went down in a goal line practice last week. The severity of the injury isn't known, but he was down on the ground for five minutes holding his knee, until finally being carted off the field. He wasn't going to be a starter this year, but his injury will deplete the Vikings' depth at a position that needs to take a big step forward this season.

Game preview

The Minnesota Vikings will have their first preseason game of the season on August 9, 2019. The game will be in New Orleans and will start at 7:00pm (CT). Since this is the first preseason game of the year, the starters will only play a series or two. Instead, this is the first opportunity for those players fighting for a roster spot to prove under the bright lights that they are ready to contribute to a team with Super Bowl aspirations.

The first preseason game is usually one of the most active, because the players haven't been able to put the pads on and really hit anybody in months – so expect lots of hitting, and don't be surprised if a fight or two breaks out. It also doesn't help that these two teams have some bad blood between them, which started in 2009 with the bountygate scandal, and carried over into the Minneapolis miracle in the playoffs a couple years ago. However, Mike Zimmer doesn't tolerate players who can't control their emotions, so expect the fights to be broken up quickly.

One thing to keep an eye on is how often coaches are throwing the challenge flag this preseason. The NFL is experimenting with a few new rule changes, with the most impactful giving coaches an opportunity to challenge pass interference calls. To get a good understanding of the rule change, Mike Zimmer will likely be throwing a ton of flags – hopefully with his usual gusto.

Final prediction – Vikings win 29-24. Skol!

Are you excited for the Vikings' first preseason game? What will you be watching for? Reach out to me on Twitter and let me know! (@JordanWrightNFL)

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Today



Increasing
Clouds

High: 88 °F

Tonight



30%
Chance
T-storms then
Partly Cloudy

Low: 62 °F

Wednesday



Sunny

High: 79 °F

Wednesday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 55 °F

Thursday



Sunny

High: 77 °F

SLIGHT RISK OF SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

WHAT

Main threat from storms is for large hail and strong winds.

WHERE

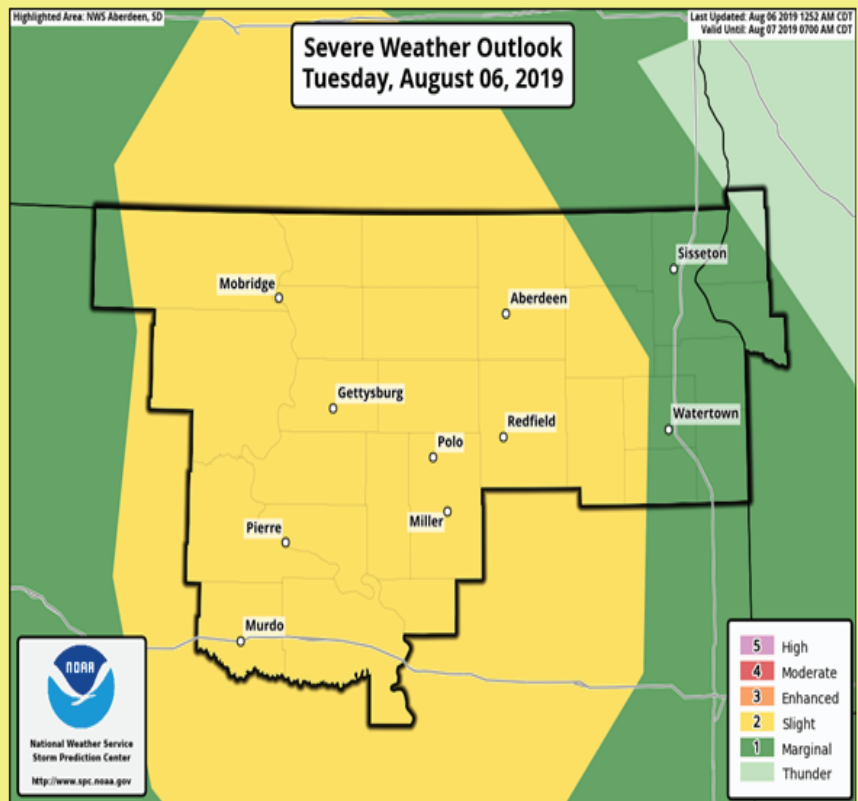
Storm coverage will be scattered across central SD into the James Valley.

WHEN

After 4 pm through the evening hours. Storms more likely to start in the central Dakotas before moving south and east

ACTION

Pay close attention to the weather and be prepared to seek shelter if necessary.



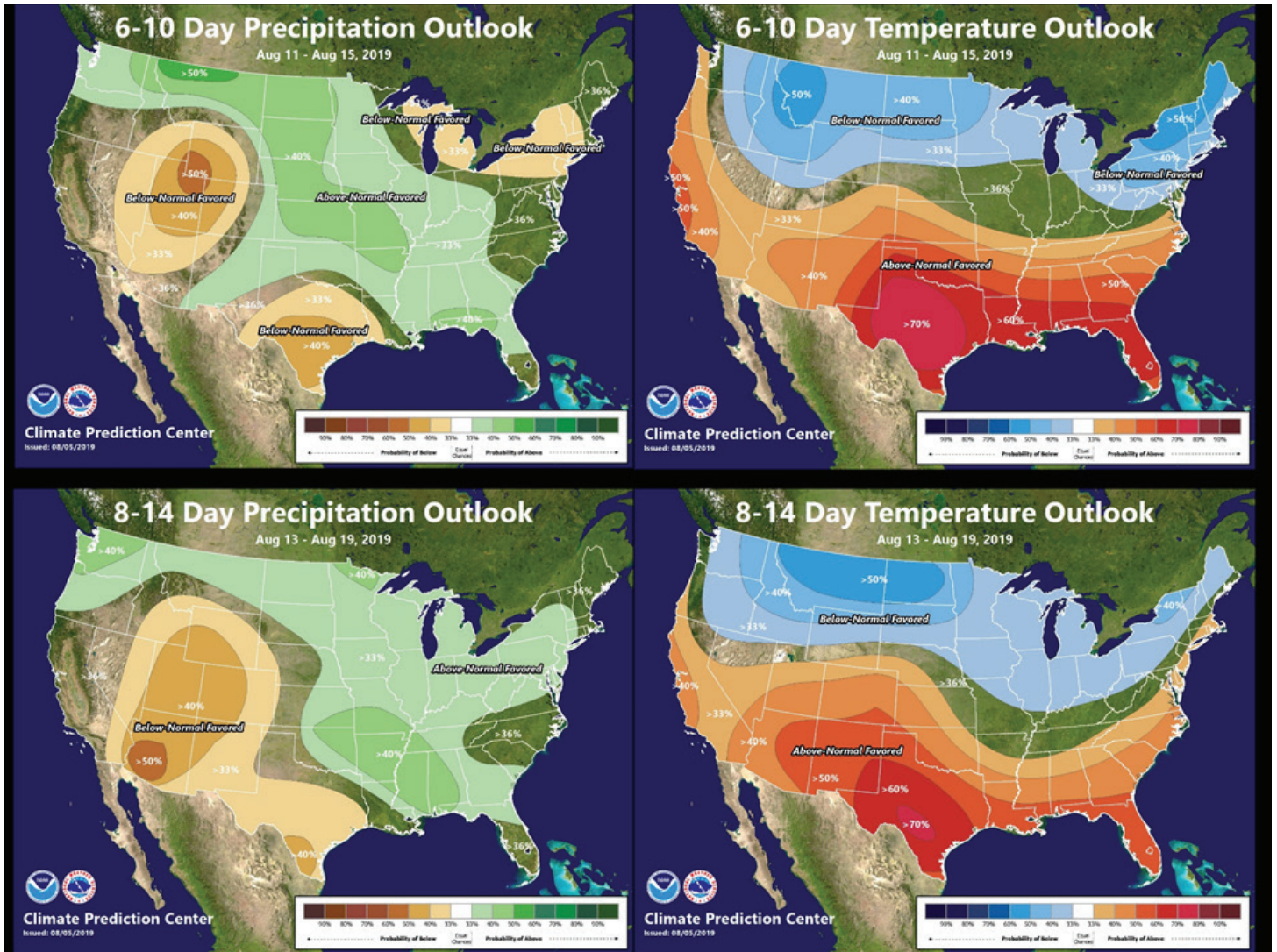
ISSUED: 4:51 AM - Tuesday, August 06, 2019

Published on: 08/06/2019 at 12:52AM

A frontal boundary across the Missouri valley this afternoon will be the focus for storm development, with the threat for severe weather. The boundary and storms will move south and east through the afternoon and evening. The main threat will be for large hail and strong winds.

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Published on: 08/05/2019 at 6:18PM

Below average temperatures and t-storms with potentially heavy rain are in the forecast this weekend. Then, the overall weather pattern stays generally wet and cool through at least the middle of August for our area. Latest Climate Prediction Center outlooks here: <https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>

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Today in Weather History

August 6, 1962: Wind damaged farm buildings and hail damaged crops over a large area. The area affected was northern Faulk, portions of Spink, Northern Clark, Codington, and Grant, along with Day County.

August 6, 1969: During the day and evening hours, two relatively large storms brought destructive weather to much of Minnesota. The northern storm area moved in from North Dakota between Fargo and Grand Forks. The southern storm rapidly developed north of Wadena. These two storms combined to cause twelve tornadoes, two vast areas of wind and hail damage, and one waterspout. The storms killed 15 people, injured 106, and caused 4.8 million dollars in property and public utility damage.

August 6, 1969: The first report of high winds was southeast of Piedmont with gusts of 65 to 70 mph estimated by a National Weather Service employee. Damage in that area included several downed trees and leveled gardens. As the storm moved east, large hail was reported. The first wind gust at Ellsworth AFB was 89 mph at 1918 MST on the northwest end of the runway. By 1925 MST, sustained winds were over 50 mph for nearly 10 minutes, and the peak gust was 114 mph. The sensor on the southeast end of the runway, 2.5 miles away, recorded a wind gust of 114 mph at 1929 MST. The damage on the base included several large trees blown over and snapped in half and roof damage to base housing units. A few tents set up on the taxiways for an air show were blown around, but not significantly damaged. A survey by base meteorologists indicated the main downburst winds hit over open prairie surrounding the runway, where there are no trees or structures. Also between 1920 and 1930 MST, a meteorology student estimated winds between 70 and 80 mph at Box Elder, where gardens were leveled, and wooden fences and roofs were damaged.

1959: Hurricane Dot crossed Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands producing sustained winds of 105 mph with gusts to 125 mph. Over 6 inches of rain fell with over 9 inches on the big island of Hawaii. The sugar cane crop on Kauai sustained \$2.7 million in damages.

1993: Virginia experienced its worst tornado outbreak ever as 18 tornadoes ripped through the state in 5 hours. The most devastating tornado caused severe damage in the historic part of Petersburg. The storm then moved on to Pocahontas Island and into Colonial Heights. There, the storm ripped apart a WalMart store, killing three people and injuring nearly 200. The F4 twister was the first known violent tornado in Virginia history. It killed a total of 4 people and injured 246 along its 12-mile path. Total damages were near \$50 million.

1890 - Thunderstorms left four inches of hail covering the ground in Adair County and Union County in Iowa. The hail drifted into six foot mounds, and in some places remained on the ground for twenty- six days. (The Weather Channel)

1918 - Unusually hot weather began to overspread the Atlantic Coast States, from the Carolinas to southern New England. The temperature soared to an all-time record high of 106 degrees at Washington D.C., and Cumberland and Keedysville hit 109 degrees to establish a state record for Maryland. Temperatures were above normal east of the Rockies that month, with readings much above normal in the Lower Missouri Valley. Omaha NE reached 110 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1959 - A bucket survey showed that thunderstorms dropped 16.70 inches of rain on parts of Decatur County IA. The total was accepted as Iowa's 24 hour rainfall record. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Evening thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 100 mph at Winner SD damaging two hundred homes. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1987 - Afternoon thunderstorms deluged Milwaukee, WI, with 6.84 inches of rain, including more than five inches in two hours, breaking all previous rainfall records for the city. Floodwaters were four feet deep at the Milwaukee County Stadium, and floodwaters filled the basement of the main terminal at the airport. Flooding caused 5.9 million dollars damage, and claimed the life of one person. Death Valley, CA, reported a morning low of 97 degrees. A midday thunderstorm deluged Birmingham AL with nearly six inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

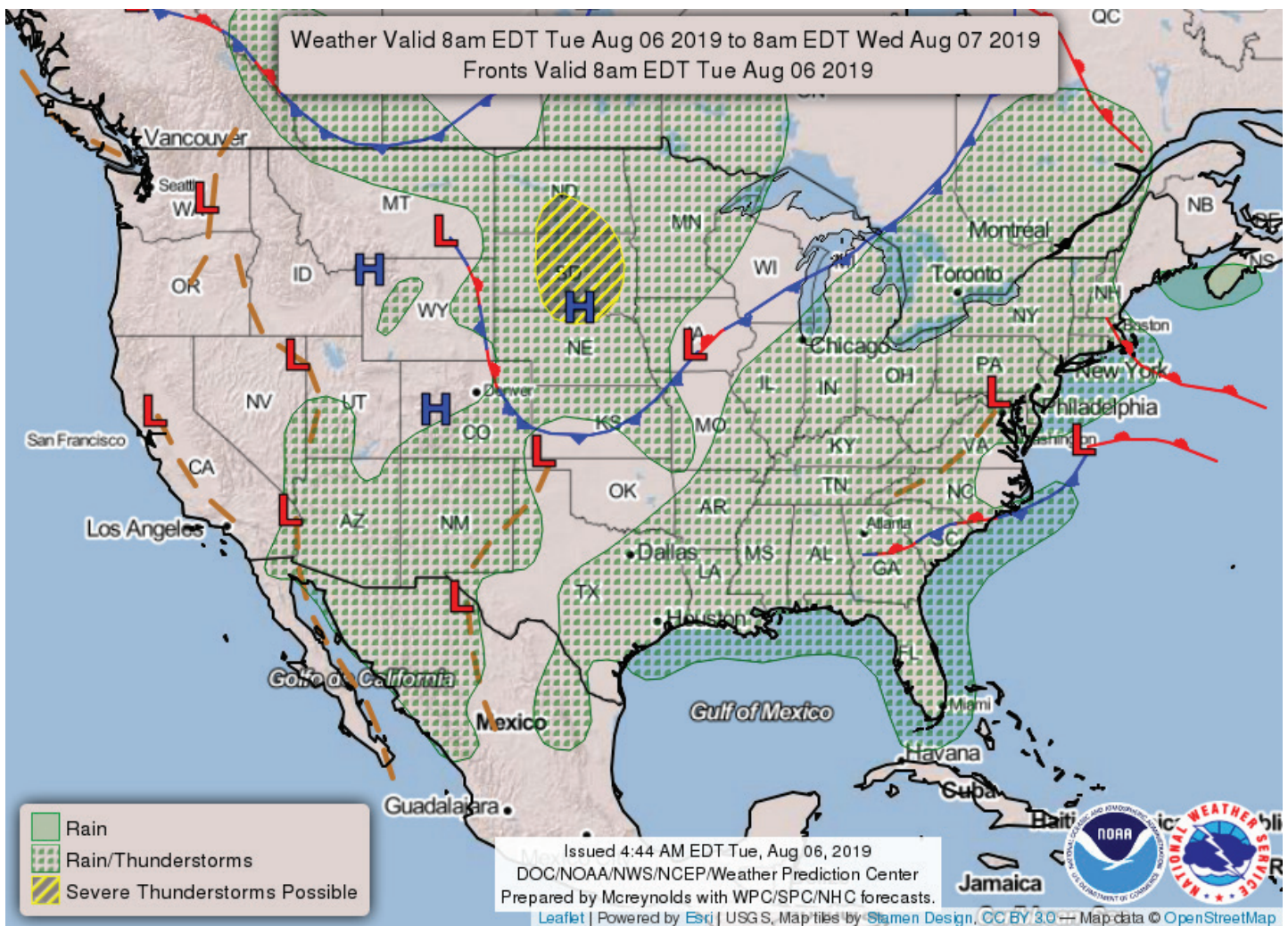
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 80 °F at 4:07 PM
Low Temp: 64 °F at 7:50 AM
Wind: 21 mph at 6:38 AM
Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 108° in 1941
Record Low: 44° in 1902
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 58°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 0.39
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.74
Average Precip to date: 14.25
Precip Year to Date: 17.33
Sunset Tonight: 8:55 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:25 a.m.



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STOP IT!

My sister, Sis, was an outstanding piano player and could imitate many pianists with her skills and talents. She also authored many hymns and gospel courses and was well-known for her talents and love for the Lord. She was part of several evangelist teams that were popular years ago. Everyone loved Sis for her music, sense of humor, and keen insights.

Whenever she became bored with someone who talked too much, she would ask politely, What would you say if you could not talk about yourself?

Her question would usually end the talkers talking and bring the conversation to an abrupt end. It would force the talker to realize what was being said and the conversation would soon end because that person had nothing worth talking about or listening to.

Without wood, a fire goes out, without gossip a quarrel dies down, said Solomon. All too often quarrels go on endlessly because those involved in the dispute are not listening to what the other person is saying. Beyond that, they usually are not listening to what they are saying, either. Neither has any idea of what they are saying to the other. So, the best way to stop a quarrel is to stop talking trash! Gossip is nothing more than rotting trash.

James offers some great advice: The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider that a great forest can be set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person

Without gossip, quarrels end, and sanity can return.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to control our tongues by filling our minds with Your teachings, our hearts with Your love, wisdom, grace, comfort, and peace to share with others. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 26:20 Without wood, a fire goes out, without gossip a quarrel dies down.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 08/07/2019 Storybook Land Theatre Performace at Granary Rural Cultural Center
- 09/07/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/08/2019 Sunflower Classic at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12/2019 St. John's Lutheran Luncheon
- 09/20/2019 Presbygerian Luncheon
- 09/28/2019 Granary Living History Fall Festival
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 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

- 01/26/2020 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 04/04/2020 Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 05/02/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
Groton Hosting State B American Legion Baseball Tournament
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest

News from the Associated Press

Medical error settlements in South Dakota jump in 2018

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An Argus Leader analysis found that medical errors by South Dakota health providers cost insurance companies more than \$3.5 million in settlement payments last year.

Cash payments on 16 malpractice claims in 2018 ranged from \$1,690 to \$850,000. The payments don't include money that might have been paid out by health providers to settle claims.

Last year's sum was a \$1,092,500 hike from the amount paid in 2017. But it was significantly less than the \$10.9 million paid in 2014.

The analysis shows that medical malpractice policies were highly profitable last year.

Last year, the largest insurance provider in the state, Minnesota-based MMIC, earned more than \$9.8 million in premiums in South Dakota and suffered losses of \$2.3 million. MMIC controls nearly 80% of the state's medical malpractice market.

South Dakota was the most profitable state for medical malpractice insurers in 2018 measured by losses to premiums earned, data from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners shows.

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

Tribe files formal request for hearing on pipeline expansion

By JAMES MacPHERSON Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Standing Rock Sioux have requested a hearing on a plan by the developer of the Dakota Access Pipeline to double the line's capacity, a move the tribe believes multiplies the risk of an oil spill.

Doubling the pipeline's capacity increases the "consequences as well as the likelihood" of an oil spill, Tribal Chairman Mike Faith said in a letter to state regulators.

Texas-based Energy Transfer announced in June it plans to expand the pipeline's capacity from more than 500,000 barrels per day to as much as 1.1 million barrels. The pipeline has been moving North Dakota oil through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois since June 2017.

The \$3.8 billion pipeline is less than a half mile from the Standing Rock Reservation, beneath a Missouri River reservoir that is the tribe's water source.

Fears of an oil spill into the river sparked massive protests in 2016 and 2017, drawing thousands of pipeline opponents to North Dakota.

The company said the expansion would help meet the growing demand for oil from North Dakota, the nation's second-biggest oil producer behind Texas.

Energy Transfer is proposing additional pumping stations in the Dakotas and Illinois. The company needs permission from the North Dakota Public Service Commission for the expansion because some of the land needed is outside of the pipeline's path.

The three-member panel agreed last month to consider a hearing on the expansion if one was formally requested. The tribe was the first to submit a request before the Friday deadline.

PSC spokeswoman Stacy Eberl said the three-member panel would evaluate requests before making a decision on whether to hold a public hearing.

Wayde Schafer, spokesman for the state's Sierra Club chapter, said his group will submit a formal request for a public hearing later this week.

"This pipeline affects a lot of people and not holding a public hearing just doesn't make any sense — it's actually idiotic given all everyone has already gone through on this," Schafer said.

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Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Aug. 4

In-city bow hunting for deer worth shot

Rapid City's urban deer program began a quarter century ago despite concerns about stray bullets and over the objections of dedicated animal lovers. It has continued to evolve, becoming widely accepted and is largely successful at controlling city deer numbers.

Today's issue is program costs — as much as \$30,000 to city taxpayers annually. A proposal going before the city council Monday would reduce the program's reliance on professional marksmen by issuing a limited number of amateur bow-hunting licenses. The idea first surfaced as a cost-saving measure about a decade ago, but it got hung up on professional vs. amateur shooters.

The concept as presented this time has merit, but should amateur hunters take on an even larger role in the future? Let's take this one step at a time.

Public requests for shooters to thin the city herd arose in the early 1990s as deer camped out on front yards in daylight and munched on expensive landscapes. The belief then was the 1988 Westberry Trails fire had opened meadows on the city's western edge, creating a grass highway into the city, allowing deer to grow accustomed to people.

Roadkill carcasses littered neighborhood yards. Pet owners worried about potential injuries from flying hooves. Demand overcame objections, and the shooting started. By the mid-2000s, the herd had been thinned to the point shooting halted. Two years later it was renewed to maintain herd equilibrium. Partnerships which use the meat to feed the poor, meanwhile, had increased the political acceptance.

Are the program's costs acceptable?

Rapid City spent about \$30,000 last winter to harvest 226 deer, or about \$130 per animal. A 170-pound deer can yield roughly 50 pounds of venison, yielding a cost of about \$2.60 per pound, provided none is contaminated. Ground chuck sells for about \$3.75 a pound. If this were purely a feed-the-poor initiative, it would be marginally successful.

As a stand-alone landscape-saving initiative, meanwhile, its returns are also limited. Deer no longer eat all of the town's unprotected vegetation, but they eat the best of it. Residents have adapted by enclosing gardens, giving up on flowers or living with the damage.

Deer as traffic hazard is another matter. Deer-vehicle collisions lead to about 200 American deaths and \$1.1 billion in property damage every year. According to an annual survey conducted by State Farm, the odds of a South Dakota driver hitting a deer are one in 75, or among the highest in the nation. The average encounter, meanwhile, results in \$4,300 damage, which gets factored into insurance costs.

That means about 11,760 South Dakotans sustained \$50 million in vehicle damage due to deer last year, and if the proportion holds, about 1,000 Rapid Citians sustained \$4.3 million in damage. Not all collisions occur inside the city, but the deer program breaks even, theoretically, by preventing seven car-deer crashes.

Altogether, the program is worth the costs.

The proposed archery program would start with 21 permits and be limited to three heavily wooded areas. It wouldn't generate a lot of revenue, and at the current rate would reduce program costs by about \$2,750. The proposal lacks clarity about how the meat would be distributed.

Arrows certainly have less range than rifle bullets, so in the proposed wooded locations, the idea has merit. To be more than a symbolic gesture, however, greater reliance on amateur bow hunters would become necessary. Would that jeopardize the current program's acceptance? It could.

On the other hand, this is a small measure. Consider it an experiment. Maybe it will succeed famously. As long as the city proceeds carefully and deliberately, it's worth a shot.

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Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, Aug. 2 **Stop pecking away at state's petition process**

South Dakota's storied tradition of citizen-led ballot measures is under fire, which we probably should have seen coming.

The state's initiative and referendum process expanded nearly 50 years ago to include constitutional amendments, allowing the power of the petition to circumvent traditional political channels.

Such bursts of direct democracy make certain folks uncomfortable, most notably Republican power brokers in Pierre. Within the GOP-controlled executive branch and Legislature, preserving a system in which policy is framed by representatives rather than pumped-up citizens is paramount.

This became evident in 2014, when the South Dakota Democratic Party and labor unions boosted South Dakota's minimum wage law as a ballot measure that was approved by 55 percent of voters.

When state legislators responded soon after by exempting workers under age 18 from the required wage, petitions were gathered to refer the law on the next ballot and succeeded with 71 percent of the vote.

The message was sent, but not fully received.

Initiated Measure 22, an overdue effort to revise lobbying and campaign finance laws while establishing a state ethics commission, had a short life span despite being approved by voters in 2016.

Republican legislators rushed to repeal the measure — some elements of which were under constitutional review — using an "emergency" clause that allowed for the reversal to take effect immediately and prevented a referendum campaign in response.

Just like that, direct democracy took a direct hit. But the battle is ongoing.

Former GOP lawmaker Mark Mickelson brought a petition in 2018 to ban out-of-state contributions to South Dakota ballot committees and got it passed, only to see it struck down earlier this year as unconstitutional. Another ballot attempt to increase the number of votes needed to approve a constitutional amendment was rebuffed by voters.

So the Legislature got busy again, passing a law last session that makes the petition-gathering process more cumbersome. It requires petition circulators to register with the secretary of state by providing personal information, including their address, occupation and contact information, in addition to paying a \$20 registration fee, while also lowering the threshold for invalidating signatures.

Political blogger and former Democratic legislative candidate Cory Heidelberger — who successfully challenged the legality of Mickelson's measure— filed a complaint in federal court asking for a permanent injunction against House Bill 1094, set to become part of the state's election laws on July 1, 2020.

State House member Jon Hansen of Dell Rapids, who sponsored the legislation, defended it by claiming it will "ensure that our initiative and referendum process will remain a grassroots process for South Dakotans only, and not for law breaking out-of-state political hacks and special interests."

Of course, such venom is reserved for organizations that threaten South Dakota's GOP super majority. It was perfectly fine for out-of-state special interest group Americans for Prosperity, backed by the Koch Brothers, to wage an aggressive battle against IM 22 to the tune of \$650,000, not to mention the steady legislative influence of far-right Christian groups such as the Family Heritage Alliance.

To be clear, if non-South Dakota political associations view our ballot process as ripe for manipulation, a little education goes a long way. Voters approved the Marsy's Law constitutional amendment in 2016 with 60 percent of the vote following an expensive advertising blitz, ignoring concerns about collateral consequences from the victims' rights legislation.

Put simply, the digital age offers little excuse for ignorance on these issues, and political engagement on the part of average citizens makes a difference. It's a reassuring concept in the face of traditional party gridlock that has rendered our system sluggish.

To portray South Dakota's ballot initiative process as a bastion of pure democracy is a bit of a stretch. But in a state controlled by a single party, it's too easy to silence opposing views and eschew constructive debate when there's no policy-making alternative to Pierre's power structure.

Allowing voices to be heard and arguing issues on their merits sounds more American than setting up

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roadblocks along the way.

Madison Daily Leader, July 29 **Legislature should review embezzlement**

The crime of embezzlement in South Dakota is lightly punished, in our opinion, and needs a review by the state Legislature.

Embezzlement is dishonestly taking money or other assets by one or more individuals to whom the assets have been entrusted.

The Rapid City Journal reported this weekend that a former secretary of the Oglala Sioux Credit and Finance Office has been sentenced to five years of probation and was ordered to pay \$42,100 in restitution to the tribe. Hernandez stole from a tribal program that provides loans and repayment plans for qualified tribal members.

Or consider a case in Sioux Falls, in which a man stole more than \$106,000 from his employer from 2009 to 2011. He wrote checks on the company account to pay his personal expenses and credit card bills.

The sentence was he had to give the money back and is on probation for four years. Really? A person can steal \$100,000 and if caught, the only real punishment is that he has to return the stolen money?

That appears to be a common sentence: probation and give the money back. It's hardly a deterrent. In many cases, the embezzler doesn't get caught at all, or it doesn't get reported to law enforcement. The worst case is that you have to give the money back.

Even egregious, large-scale thefts are lightly punished. A West River man filed 1,201 fraudulent federal income tax returns for more than \$3.6 million in false claims in South Dakota and other states between 2015 to 2018. The sentence was 6 1/2 years in prison, but the actual time served could be less than one-third of that.

The crime of embezzlement may not be violent, but stealing large amounts of money certainly hurts people. In some cases, the theft can hurt several generations of people. Perhaps children or grandchildren of a victim can't go to college, or can't start a business. Perhaps a victim won't be able to afford nursing home care.

We'd like to see the South Dakota Legislature revisit the recommended punishment for the crime of embezzlement and put some teeth in it.

Motorcyclist died of injuries suffered last month

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol says a motorcyclist has died of injuries he received in a collision with a car last month.

Keegan Werkmeister suffered significant injuries in a crash near Howard on July 18. The patrol says the 25-year-old Canova man was struck by a car at the intersection of Highways 25 and 34. Werkmeister was airlifted to a Sioux Falls hospital where he died Friday.

The Argus Leader says charges are pending against the 16-year-old driver of the car. She and a passenger were not injured.

Trump freezes Venezuelan government assets amid tensions

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration froze all Venezuelan government assets in a dramatic escalation of tensions with Nicolás Maduro that places his socialist administration alongside a short list of adversaries from Cuba, North Korea, Syria and Iran that have been targeted by such aggressive U.S. actions.

The ban, blocking American companies and individuals from doing business with Maduro's government and its top supporters, took effect immediately Monday and is the first of its kind in the Western Hemisphere in more than three decades, following an asset freeze against Gen. Manuel Noriega's government in Panama and a trade embargo on the Sandinista leadership in Nicaragua in the 1980s.

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While the order falls short of an outright trade embargo — notably, it spares Venezuela's still sizable private sector — it represents the most sweeping U.S. action to remove Maduro since the Trump administration recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's rightful leader in January. Critically, it also exposes foreign entities doing business with the Maduro government to U.S. retaliation.

"The apparent goal is to give the U.S. the ability to apply the law beyond its borders to allies of Maduro like China, Russia, Cuba, Iran and Turkey," said Russ Dallen, the Miami-based head of Caracas Capital Markets brokerage. "Should those foreign entities continue doing business with Maduro they can have their U.S. assets seized."

The executive order signed by President Donald Trump justified the move by citing Maduro's "continued usurpation of power" and human rights abuses by security forces loyal to him.

U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton hinted earlier Monday that far-reaching U.S. action was close at hand. Speaking to reporters on the eve of an international conference in Peru to show support for Guaidó, he said that the U.S. was readying measures "that will show the determination that the United States has to get a peaceful transfer of power."

Russia, which has staunchly backed Maduro, denounced the U.S. action. Konstantin Kosachev, the head of the Russian upper house's international affairs committee, said Tuesday the move amounts to "international banditry." He added in remarks carried by the state RIA Novosti news agency that it represents an "open meddling into Venezuela's internal affairs."

The measures are likely to exacerbate suffering in an already moribund economy marked by six-digit hyperinflation and a deep, multi-year contraction that surpasses that of the Great Depression in the U.S.

Previous sanctions targeting the South American nation's oil industry, the source of almost all of its export earnings, have already accelerated a crash in oil production that started with Maduro's election in 2013 following the death of his mentor Hugo Chavez.

More than 100 officials and government insiders also have had their U.S. assets frozen and blocked from doing business with Americans. As part of the executive order, Americans or U.S. companies that do business with such individuals face penalties. The same Maduro supporters will also be banned from entering the U.S.

Exceptions will be allowed for the delivery of food, medicine and clothing. Transactions with Venezuela's still sizable private sector do not appear to be affected either. It's unclear how the actions will affect American oil giant Chevron, which last month received a three-month exemption from the U.S. Treasury to allow it to continue drilling for oil with state-run oil monopoly PDVSA.

The Maduro government has yet to respond. But Guaidó celebrated the U.S. action, saying it would protect Houston-based oil company CITGO, Venezuela's most valuable overseas asset, from attempts by Maduro to mortgage its assets.

"Any individual, company, institution or nation that tries to do business with the regime will be seen by the international justice system as collaborating with and sustaining a dictatorship," Guaidó said in a series of late-night Tweets. "They will be subject to sanctions and considered an accomplice to crimes."

Geoff Ramsey, a researcher at the Washington Office on Latin America, said that the measures will aggravate a humanitarian crisis even with the exceptions in place to protect the most vulnerable as Western banks avoid processing even legitimate transactions.

"The truth is that no financial institution wants to run afoul of the Treasury Department," he said.

Instead of doubling down on the same embargo strategy that has failed for decades to produce regime change in communist Cuba, he thinks the U.S. should do more to support ongoing negotiations being sponsored by Norway between Maduro and Guaidó representatives.

Bolton and U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross are representing the United States at what host Peru has dubbed the International Conference for Democracy in Venezuela, a gathering of 59 nations that with few exceptions back Guaidó and consider Maduro's reelection last year to be fraudulent.

Moments after the executive order was announced, Bolton tweeted that he was looking ahead to what he hopes will be a "productive" day in Lima, Peru.

Goodman reported from Bogota, Colombia. Associated Press writers Franklin Briceno in Lima, Peru, and Scott Smith in Caracas, Venezuela, contributed to this report.

Ohio governor set to talk policy in wake of mass shootings

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio (AP) — Facing pressure to take action after the latest mass shooting in the U.S., Ohio's Republican governor plans to outline his proposals designed to deal with gun violence and mental health.

Gov. Mike DeWine said he'll discuss those ideas in detail on Tuesday, a little more than a day after hundreds of people chanted "Do something!" while he spoke at a vigil for nine people killed in Dayton over the weekend by a gunman with an AR-15 style gun.

The shooting outside a strip of nightclubs early Sunday and another mass shooting in El Paso, Texas, during the past weekend left a combined total of 31 people dead and more than 50 injured in less than 24 hours.

Police have said 24-year-old Connor Betts was wearing a mask and body armor when he opened fire. If all of the magazines he had with him were full, which hasn't been confirmed, he would have had a maximum of 250 rounds, said Police Chief Richard Biehl.

"To have that level of weaponry in a civilian environment is problematic," Biehl added.

Betts had no apparent criminal record as an adult and police said there was nothing that would have prevented him from buying a gun. Ohio law bars anyone convicted of a felony as an adult, or convicted of a juvenile charge that would have been a felony if they were 18 or older, from buying firearms.

Two former classmates told The Associated Press that Betts was suspended during their junior year at Bellbrook High School after a hit list was found scrawled in a school bathroom. That followed an earlier suspension after Betts came to school with a list of female students he wanted to sexually assault, according to the two classmates, a man and a woman who are both now 24 and spoke on condition of anonymity out of concern they might face harassment.

Others remembered how he tried to intimidate classmates.

"It's baffling and horrible that somebody who's been talking for 10 years about wanting to shoot people could easily, so easily, get access to a military grade weapon and that much ammo," said Hannah Shows, a former high schoolmate who remembered seeing Betts look at people and imitate shooting at them.

"He was someone who enjoyed making people afraid," she said.

Former Bellbrook High School classmate Addison Brickler rode the bus with Betts and said he taunted her regularly.

"He was the bully," Brickler told the AP. "He used to make fun of me on the bus, talk about my weight, make me feel bad about myself. He would laugh and think it was funny, joke about it. We thought it was a normal thing."

But the seemingly normal heckling turned scary one day when she said two police officers pulled Betts off their bus during her first few weeks of high school. When she arrived home that day, her mom sat her and her brother down to tell her the school principal had called — they had been named on Betts' "hit list."

Betts disappeared from the halls of Bellbrook High School. Students were offered counseling, teachers checked on kids, and extra police officers were on hand. Brickler said Betts later returned to the school.

Others that had encounters with Betts, however, painted a different picture.

Brad Howard told reporters in Bellbrook on Sunday that he knew Betts from preschool through their high school graduation.

"Connor Betts that I knew was a nice kid. The Connor Betts that I talked to, I always got along with well," Howard said.

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools wouldn't comment and refused to release information about Betts, citing legal protections for student records.

Bellbrook Police Chief Doug Doherty said he and his officers had no previous contact with Betts and

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weren't aware of any history of violence. Sugarcreek Township police said the only records they have on Betts are from a 2015 traffic citation. They noted without further explanation that Ohio law allows sealed juvenile court records to be expunged after five years or when the person involved turns 23.

Still unknown is whether Betts targeted any of the victims, including his 22-year-old sister, Megan, the youngest of the dead.

"It seems to just defy believability he would shoot his own sister, but it's also hard to believe that he didn't recognize it was his sister, so we just don't know," Biehl said.

Authorities identified the other dead as Monica Brickhouse, 39; Nicholas Cumer, 25; Derrick Fudge, 57; Thomas McNichols, 25; Lois Oglesby, 27; Saeed Saleh, 38; Logan Turner, 30; and Beatrice N. Warren-Curtis, 36.

Of the more than 30 people injured in Ohio, at least 14 had gunshot wounds; others were hurt as people fled, city officials said. Eleven remained hospitalized Monday, Fire Chief Jeffrey Payne said.

While the gunman was white and six of the nine killed were black, police said the speed of the rampage made any discrimination in the shooting seem unlikely. It all happened within 30 seconds, before police officers stationed nearby fatally shot Betts.

Any attempt to suggest a motive so early in the investigation would be irresponsible, Biehl said.

The El Paso and Dayton killings have contributed to 2019 being an especially deadly year for mass killings in the U.S.

A database by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University shows that there have been 23 mass killings so far this year, claiming the lives of 131 people. By comparison, 140 people died in mass killings in all of 2018. The database tracks every mass killing in the country dating back to 2006.

President Donald Trump said he wanted Washington to "come together" on legislation providing "strong background checks" for gun users, but he gave no details. Previous gun control measures have languished in the Republican-controlled Senate.

The Democrat-led House has passed a gun control bill that includes fixes to the nation's firearm background check system, but it has languished in the Senate.

Associated Press writers Julie Carr Smyth and Kantele Franko in Columbus, Amanda Seitz in Chicago and Robert Bumsted in Dayton contributed.

Find complete AP coverage of recent mass shootings here: <https://apnews.com/Shootings>

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. LOOKING FOR CLUES TO MASSACRES

Authorities in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio are scouring leads in a pair of weekend mass shootings that killed 31, trying to piece together the motives that led two young men to unleash violence on innocent people in crowded public places.

2. WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAID DIDN'T RALLY ALL

Donald Trump called for bipartisan solutions to the bloodshed but offered few details and faced pointed questions from Democrats about whether he had the moral authority to rally America against the spasm of violence and racism.

3. SEEKING SOLUTIONS

Facing pressure to take action after the latest mass shooting in the U.S., Ohio's Republican governor plans to outline his proposals designed to deal with gun violence and mental health.

4. WHAT IS LIKELY MISPLACED BLAME FOR SHOOTINGS

Some studies show a short-term increase in aggressive thoughts and feelings after playing video games, but nothing that rises to the level of violence.

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5. WHERE THE ARMS RACE MAY SPEED UP

China says that it "will not stand idly by" and will take countermeasures if the U.S. deploys intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific region, which Washington has said it plans to do within months.

6. A CLERGYMAN'S ABUSIVE METHODS

Disgraced ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick's letters provide visceral evidence of how he made young, vulnerable men feel special — and then allegedly took advantage of them, correspondence published by The AP shows.

7. KEEP THEM LOCKED UP

A prosecutor who helped lock up Charles Manson "family" members says the killers should never be released.

8. CARACAS FEELING THE HEAT

The Trump administration has frozen all Venezuelan government assets, placing Nicolás Maduro's socialist administration alongside a short list of adversaries from Cuba, North Korea, Syria and Iran that have been targeted by such aggressive U.S. actions.

9. LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The group behind a \$1.4 billion telescope planned for Hawaii is applying for a permit to build in Spain as ongoing protests and a human blockade prevent them from starting construction on Mauna Kea, Hawaii's highest peak that some people consider sacred.

10. WHO HAS MORE SUPER BOWL WINS IN SIGHT?

New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady agrees to a two-year, \$70 million extension through 2021 that includes an \$8 million raise in 2019.

Trump's America: Where politics dictate definition of racism

By **CLAIRE GALOFARO** and **BILL BARROW** Associated Press

ERIE, Pa. (AP) — It was the last morning of the workweek, and Scott Bremner, a popular talk-radio host here, found himself — again — in the role of accidental referee on the issue of race.

And again, the discussion was inspired by racial provocations from President Donald Trump. For one caller, critics of Trump had things upside-down.

"It has nothing to do with race, and those who suggest that it does, they are the real racists," the caller said. "We're getting angry again, and I'm telling you we're going to step up again and vote for Trump because we are not racist, Trump is not a racist and you guys are fomenting this stuff."

Before Bremner could respond, the man hung up. "Make your point and run," Bremner said. "That's a good way to have a discussion." Yet that is the way many Americans seem to be discussing the nation's roiling racial discord.

The next morning, a young man 2,000 miles (3,220 kilometers) away posted a hateful, anti-immigrant screed on the internet, walked into a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, with a gun and shot 22 people dead. By the time Bremner signed on again Monday morning, another man with a gun had stormed an entertainment district in Dayton, Ohio, killing nine, though his motive remains unknown.

Bremner's show carries just one current of the heated national debate on race that has been fanned by Trump's unrepentant use of white identity politics and inflamed by white supremacist violence like the shooting in El Paso. In interviews with The Associated Press across a half-dozen states, voters see a country riven by racial animus — better than a generation ago, but worse than before Trump's presidency, with little choice but to confront the long national struggle anew.

Months ago, Bremner, who considers himself a moderate, "a lone voice in the wilderness," wondered if Trump's comments offered an opportunity to address racism that has been long-simmering. He tried to establish whether his listeners could agree on a fundamental question: What is racism? The answer, he realized, is no, they don't even agree on that.

"One of the byproducts of having a president this polarizing, all this stuff starts to come out, which you could argue might be a good thing in the long term," Bremner said. "Will it lead us to a better day? I can't

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tell you yet.”

Racial and ethnic polarization has been a hallmark of Trump’s political rise and is central to his reelection. He’s warned of an “invasion” at the southern border, posted racist tweets about four women of color in Congress and attacked Democratic Rep. Elijah Cummings’ largely black district as a “rat and rodent infested mess.”

Trump needs to maximize support from white voters in places like Erie County, a former Democratic stronghold with a withering manufacturing industry and declining population. The county chose President Barack Obama twice, then flipped for Trump and helped narrowly deliver him the key state of Pennsylvania.

The churn over Trump’s racial polarization has largely taken shape along ideological lines: Those on the right root for him more, as those on the left see their own anger rise.

Jim Noland unfurled a Trump flag as big as a minivan in a rural town near Erie. He cheered Trump on when he tweeted about Cummings’ Baltimore-area district. Through Nolan’s lens, Trump’s message wasn’t racist, it was truth.

“Before, you just wouldn’t disagree with (Democrats) because you were afraid of being called a racist,” he said. “And now you disagree with them because their ideas are bad, and that’s enough. When they call you a racist back, you can laugh.”

He dismissed any link between Trump’s rhetoric and the El Paso’s shooting suspect’s post. The problem was one deranged man, he said.

Lucinda Rodriguez, the daughter of a Mexican immigrant, has a colleague who was killed and a friend who was seriously wounded by the El Paso gunfire. She said the killings affirm for her a rising hatred toward Latinos. Yet Trump’s rhetoric, she said, didn’t load any gun or pull any trigger.

Infinity Tucker, an El Paso native who identifies as Afro-Latina, put it more plainly.

“He’s a grown man,” Tucker said of the 21-year-old white suspect named Patrick Crusius. “He’s able to make his own choices.”

At a vigil mourning those killed in Dayton, attendees echoed the reluctance to assign fault to the president. A 74-year-old black woman, Rickie Myles, said she’s increasingly fearful in an environment where “people spew hate” with ease. But Myles sees no way to understand his motives. “All we can do is speculate,” she said.

Away from the visceral responses of El Paso and Dayton, the response has largely cleaved along politically polarized lines.

Lucretia Hughes, a black conservative activist and former tea party leader in Georgia, points to the nation’s long history of racism and calls it “ludicrous” to blame the current flare-up on Trump. She sees a president who fights aggressively, if unconventionally, for an undervalued part of the electorate — “the real majority, the real middle class and working class” that’s made up of all races and creeds. Trump delivers a brand of populism “that isn’t about color.”

Talina Massey in New Bern, North Carolina, has little problem steering responsibility to the Oval Office and an occupant she sees as deliberately indulging the worst human instincts. Massey, who is a black 35-year-old retired Marine, said that the environment could be so toxic that ousting Trump in 2020 might not be enough to calm the water.

“It’s not a matter of party lines anymore,” Massey said. “It’s a matter of good vs. evil, the ultimate conflict.”

And it’s certainly a reminder that Trump’s approach — whether strategic or intuitive or some combination — doesn’t just energize voters inclined to his rhetoric. It emboldens his critics, particularly nonwhites, younger whites who value diversity and moderate older whites uncomfortable with Trump’s values. All of those groups will influence Election Day outcomes as much as Trump’s white base in the key states whose narrow 2016 margins delivered his Electoral College victory.

Trump “allows what’s been under the surface to bubble up,” says Catherine Meeks, a 73-year-old black woman who leads a race reconciliation ministry for the Episcopal Church in Atlanta. But long-term progress, she said, depends on whites who aren’t usually at the center of open racial conflict.

“We are still in a place where there are too many white people who think the world belongs to them,

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and they don't want to share it with anybody," she said, noting projections that the U.S. could become majority nonwhite sometime around the mid-21st century.

"I don't care if we have an amazing president, we still have this work to do, bringing along white people who feel like they're losing ground with too many black people, too many brown people."

In Cincinnati, Royce Winters, a former police officer and the director of African American ministries for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati, said the fight for equality continues. "We have to do this together," he said. "If we don't have our white friends, our white counterparts, to advocate for doing what is right, we won't get past this."

A couple of months ago, a young white man, D.J. Smith, wandered into a Democratic political meeting in Erie and said he was sorry. He voted for Trump because he'd always been Republican, hadn't paid much attention to politics and never thought much about race or privilege.

But then suddenly he did. The question presented itself at an unusual moment: He was a software engineer and dumbfounded by the repeal of net neutrality. It occurred to him suddenly that he had not needed to pay heed before because he was white and male and the country generally worked in his favor.

"I had an 'Am I the bad guy?' moment. I realized that I was, and I started to open up my eyes," the 29-year-old said. He probably made racist jokes in the past, he thought, and said insensitive things.

He was consumed by remorse for his thoughts and comments and found himself "freaking out." He quit his job. He could not conceive of going on as normal as the nation convulses, he said, and started searching for a way to help bring the county back together.

When Bremner returned to his show Monday to discuss the weekend shootings, the lights on the phones blinked red with callers.

One apologized for being emotional. The El Paso shooting suspect had used language that mirrored the president's own remarks, the caller noted. He had written that the massacre was a response to the "invasion" of immigrants coming over the southern border. At a recent rally in Florida, the president asked rhetorically how to stop migration. "Shoot them!" one person in the audience shouted. The crowd cheered; Trump chuckled.

"We're going to see more and more and more of this," Bremner's caller said. "Because they think the president is on their side, because they hear him saying the things they're thinking. So there have been plenty of red flags and plenty of warnings, and we need to wake up. When a terrorist is using the exact same language as the president, it's time to make a change."

The next caller said he disagreed.

Barrow reported from Atlanta. Associated Press writers Morgan Lee and Astrid Galván in El Paso, Texas; John Seewer in Dayton, Ohio; and Martha Waggoner in Raleigh, North Carolina, contributed to this report.

Follow the writers on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/clairegalofaro> and <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP>.

Trump vows urgent action after shootings, offers few details

By **ZEKE MILLER** and **JONATHAN LEMIRE** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Speaking out against weekend mass shootings that rocked a nation, President Donald Trump called for bipartisan solutions to the bloodshed but offered few details and faced pointed questions from Democrats about whether he had the moral authority to rally America against the spasm of violence and racism.

Trump, back at the White House on Monday after remaining largely out of view for two days at his New Jersey golf club, declared the shootings in Texas and Ohio barbaric crimes "against all humanity" and called for unity to respond to an epidemic of gun violence. He blamed mental illness and video games but made no mention of more limits on the firearms that can be sold.

Trump said he wanted legislation providing "strong background checks" for gun users, though he has reneged on previous promises along that line after mass attacks. He seemed to abandon his latest idea

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of linking gun control legislation to immigration policy just a few hours after proposing it.

"We vow to act with urgent resolve," Trump said as the death toll from the shootings in El Paso and Dayton reached 31 late Monday. His scripted remarks included a solitary denunciation of white supremacy, which he has been reluctant to criticize, and he made no mention of the anti-immigration rhetoric found in an online screed posted just before the El Paso attack that mirrored his own incendiary language. Detectives sought to determine if it was written by the man who was arrested.

The mayor of El Paso said at a news conference that Trump would visit the city Wednesday, though some local lawmakers and others signaled opposition, and the Federal Aviation Administration advised pilots of a presidential visit to Dayton.

At the White House, Trump declared, "In one voice, our nation must condemn racism, bigotry and white supremacy."

He said he had directed the FBI to examine steps to identify and address domestic terrorism. "These sinister ideologies must be defeated. Hate has no place in America," he said.

In the past, the president's calls to the nation's better angels, without renouncing his own divisive language about immigrants and political opponents, have proved fleeting. His path to the White House was built on the politics of division, and aides say he views his road to reelection as again sowing discord and unease about cultural, economic and demographic changes.

Democrats on Monday accused Trump of fostering an environment of hate that led to the shootings, and they angrily renewed their calls for his defeat next year.

"He's been racist from day one — before day one when he was questioning whether Barack Obama was born in the United States," said former Rep. Beto O'Rourke, a 2020 presidential contender who represented El Paso. "He's trafficked in this stuff from the very beginning, and we are reaping right now what he has sown and what his supporters in Congress have sown. We have to put a stop to it."

Former President Obama posted a statement in which he called for the nation to "soundly reject language coming out of the mouths of any of our leaders that feeds a climate of fear and hatred or normalizes racist statements." Obama did not mention the president by name.

Trump pointed to the media.

"Fake News has contributed greatly to the anger and rage that has built up over many years," he tweeted.

He suggested early Monday on Twitter that a background check bill could be paired with his long-sought effort to toughen the nation's immigration system. But he didn't say how or why he was connecting the issues and did not elaborate on that proposal during his 10-minute address from the Diplomatic Reception Room.

He has frequently sought to tie his immigration priorities — a border wall and transforming the legal immigration system to one that prioritizes merit over family ties — to legislation around which he perceives momentum to be building.

His latest proposals would mostly leave it to Congress, which is on recess, to sort out solutions.

Adhering to what has become a GOP talking point of blaming mental illness and not firearms for mass shootings, Trump signaled he would oppose large-scale gun control efforts pushed by Democrats, saying, "hatred pulls the trigger, not the gun."

He called for law enforcement and social media companies to do more to combat extremism and spot warning signs of violence online. He also asked for a reduction in the "glorification" of violence in American culture, including video games, though research does not link their usage to shootings.

Additionally, Trump directed the Department of Justice to seek and prioritize the enforcement of the death penalty in cases of hate crimes and mass shootings. Congress has proven unable to pass substantial gun violence legislation this session, in large part because of resistance from Republicans, particularly in the GOP-controlled Senate.

Trump himself has backed away from previous pledges to strengthen gun laws.

After other mass shootings he called for strengthening the federal background check system, and in 2018 he signed legislation to increase federal data sharing.

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In December 2018, The Trump administration banned bump stocks, the attachments that allow semi-automatic weapons to fire like machine guns and were used during the October 2017 shooting massacre in Las Vegas.

But Trump has resisted calls to toughen other gun control laws.

At a February meeting with survivors and family members of the 2018 Parkland, Florida, school shooting in which 17 people died, Trump promised to be "very strong on background checks." Trump claimed he would stand up to the gun lobby and finally get results in quelling gun violence. But he later retreated, expressing support for modest changes to the federal background check system and for arming teachers.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Monday that Trump should push the GOP-controlled Senate to take up the House's background check bills.

"It took less than three hours for the president to back off his call for stronger background check legislation," they said in a joint statement. "When he can't mention guns while talking about gun violence, it shows the president remains prisoner to the gun lobby and the NRA."

With his Monday proposals, Trump responded to the shootings with ideas that many Republicans in Congress can embrace — without confronting the gun lobby or tackling the issue of firearm accessibility that many view as a driver of gun violence.

During his White House address, he stuck to a somber tone, but advisers acknowledge that — as it did during following a similar White House address in Charlottesville's aftermath — the call for unity could easily shatter if Trump were to react negatively to cable news coverage or if the markets continued to fall amid escalating trade tensions with China.

Trump at one point in his remarks erroneously stated that the Ohio shooting had taken place in Toledo, not Dayton. It followed an error made by former Vice President Joe Biden Sunday evening, when he described shootings in "Houston" and "Michigan" before correcting himself.

AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

Authorities scour leads in mass shootings that left 31 dead

By **MATT SEDENSKY** and **ASTRID GALVAN** Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Authorities in two U.S. cities scoured leads in a pair of weekend mass shootings that killed 31, trying to piece together the motives that led two young men to unleash violence on innocent people in crowded public places.

In El Paso, Texas, the death toll crept upward Monday from the shooting two days earlier at a Walmart store, with two additional victims succumbing to injuries. Police zeroed in on a racist screed posted online before the shooting to try to link it to the suspect. In Dayton, Ohio, even more questions remained about what spurred the suspected shooter to target a popular nightlife stretch in an attack that left the suspect's sister among the dead.

The back-to-back shootings hours apart and 1,300 miles (2,092 kilometers) away from each other quickly turned political, with Washington lining up along typical party contours in response. President Donald Trump cited mental illness and video games but steered away from talk of curbing sales of guns, including the military-style weapons believed to have been used in the attacks.

As familiar post-shooting rituals played out in both cities, decades of an unmistakably American problem of gun violence ensured as many headlines as the deaths garnered, they weren't entirely shocking to a public that's grown accustomed to such bloodshed. As with a litany of other shooting sites before, stories of the goodness seen in lives cut short juxtaposed with inklings of the demented motives of the shooters, and on-scene heroics with troubling ideologies that may have sparked the bloodshed.

Equally familiar was the politicized reaction from Washington and around the country.

Trump made a vague expression of openness to new gun laws that was met with skepticism by an opposition that has heard similar talk before.

"Hate has no place in America," the president declared in a 10-minute speech from the White House

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Diplomatic Reception Room, condemning racism and rehashing national conversations on treatment for mental health, depiction of violence in the media, and discourse on the internet.

The anti-immigrant writing that police were working to link to the alleged perpetrator in the Texas shooting, 21-year-old Patrick Crusius, mirrored some of Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric. Some, like Ernesto Carrillo, whose brother-in-law Ivan Manzano was killed in the Walmart attack, said the president shares blame for inflammatory language Carrillo called a "campaign of terror."

A racist screed authorities were working to confirm was left by the alleged perpetrator in the Texas shooting, 21-year-old Patrick Crusius, mirrored some of Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric. Some, like Ernesto Carrillo, whose brother-in-law Ivan Manzano was killed in the Walmart attack, said the president shares blame for inflammatory language Carrillo called a "campaign of terror."

"His work as a generator of hate ended in this," said Carrillo, who crossed the border from Ciudad Juárez on Monday for a meeting in El Paso with Mexico's foreign minister. "Thanks to him, this is all happening."

Trump, in turn, tweeted that the media "contributed greatly to the anger and rage that has built up."

Trump suggested a bill to expand gun background checks could be combined with his long-sought effort to toughen the nation's immigration system, but gave no rationale for the pairing. Studies have repeatedly shown immigrants have a lower level of criminality than those born in the U.S., both shooting suspects were citizens, and federal officials are investigating anti-immigrant bias as a potential motive in the Texas massacre.

Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut, a leading voice on gun reform since the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in his state rattled the country with the slaughter of 20 children, immediately dismissed the president's proposal as meaningless. "Tying background checks to immigration reform is a transparent ploy to do nothing," he wrote on Twitter.

Whatever the political back-and-forth, or the re-energized presence of gun control talk on the presidential campaign trail, the very real consequences of gun violence were still being bared by victims badly injured in the two states.

In both incidents, a young white male was identified as the lone suspect. Though authorities were eyeing racism as a possible factor in Texas, where the alleged shooter has been booked on murder charges, in Ohio police said there was no indication of a similar motivation. Police in Dayton said they responded in about 30 seconds early Sunday and fatally shot 24-year-old Connor Betts. While the gunman was white and six of the nine killed were black, police said the quickness of the rampage made any discrimination in the shooting seem unlikely.

Betts' sister was also among the dead.

"It seems to just defy believability he would shoot his own sister, but it's also hard to believe that he didn't recognize it was his sister, so we just don't know," said Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine visited the scene Sunday and said policymakers must consider: "Is there anything we can do in the future to make sure something like this does not happen?"

Hours later, hundreds of people stood at a vigil and vented their frustration at the Republican governor, interrupting him with chants of "Make a change!" and "Do something!" as he talked about the victims.

"People are angry, and they're upset. They should be," said Jennifer Alfrey, 24, of Middletown, who added that she didn't agree with interrupting the vigil but understood why so many did.

In Texas, where 22 were killed, authorities said the accused shooter hailed from a Dallas suburb a 10-hour drive away. Authorities seemed to take some solace in knowing the shooter wasn't one of their own.

"It's not what we're about," El Paso Mayor Dee Margo said.

Sedensky reported from New York and can be reached at msedensky@ap.org and <https://twitter.com/sedensky>

Contributing to this report were John Seewer in Dayton, Ohio; Julie Carr Smyth and Kantele Franko in Columbus, Ohio; Cedar Attanasio and Morgan Lee in El Paso, Texas; Paul J. Weber in Austin, Texas; and

Zeke Miller and Jonathan Lemire in Washington.

China vows to counter US deployment of midrange arms in Asia

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China said Tuesday that it “will not stand idly by” and will take countermeasures if the U.S. deploys intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific region, which Washington has said it plans to do within months.

The statement from the director of the foreign ministry’s Arms Control Department, Fu Cong, follows the U.S.’s withdrawal last week from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, a move Fu said would have a “direct negative impact on the global strategic stability” as well as security in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

Fu said China was particularly concerned about announced plans to develop and test a land-based intermediate-range missile in the Asia-Pacific “sooner rather than later,” in the words of one U.S. official.

“China will not stand idly by and be forced to take countermeasures should the U.S. deploy intermediate-range ground-based missiles this part of the world,” Fu told reporters at a specially called briefing.

He also advised other nations, particularly South Korea, Japan and Australia, to “exercise prudence” and not allow the U.S. to deploy such weapons on their territory, saying that would “not serve the national security interests of these countries.”

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said in Asia over the weekend that he wanted to deploy midrange conventional missiles in the Asia-Pacific within months. Australian officials said Monday that the locations for the bases were not yet known but their country would not be one of them.

Fu also said China had no intention of joining nuclear weapons reduction talks with the U.S. and Russia, pointing to the huge gap in the size of China’s arsenal compared to those of the other two. China has an estimated 290 nuclear warheads deployed, compared to 1,600 for Russia and 1,750 for the U.S., according to the Federation of American Scientists.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has called for urgent arms control talks to prevent a chaotic arms race following the treaty’s demise. He also said Monday that Russia would only deploy new intermediate-range missiles if the U.S. does.

China has already shown “maximum restraint” in developing its arsenal and stuck to its policy that it would not be the first to use a nuclear weapon in a conflict, Fu said.

“I don’t think it is reasonable or even fair to expect China to participate in an arms reduction negotiation at this stage,” Fu said. He added that China remained committed to multilateral efforts to reduce nuclear stockpiles, such as the U.N.’s Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, although it has yet to ratify that agreement.

Fu wouldn’t elaborate on what countermeasures China was considering taking against the U.S., saying only that “everything is on the table,” although he did say China has never and would never take part in a nuclear arms race.

Nor would he say how China might retaliate against countries that hosted U.S. land-based intermediate-range missiles, although China has in past used economic means to retaliate against South Korea over its deployment of a U.S. anti-missile defense system.

Fu dismissed U.S. arguments for leaving the treaty as “pure pretext,” saying Washington was merely looking for an excuse to develop new weapons. If Washington truly believes Russia is cheating on the treaty, as it says, then the way forward is to negotiate rather than withdraw, Fu said.

Meanwhile, Washington’s argument that it is threatened by China because 80 percent or more of Chinese missiles fall into the intermediate-range category doesn’t hold up, since those missiles would be unable to reach the continental U.S.

“So the U.S. would be the least to worry if that is the case,” Fu said. “That shows that all of this is nothing but a pretext.”

Fu’s emphasis on the continental U.S. could serve to imply that the U.S. has no legitimate security inter-

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ests in Asia, and that Washington's only worry should be protecting the homeland — something President Donald Trump may be inclined to agree with, said Sam Roggeveen, director of the International Security Program at Australia's Lowy Institute.

Beijing may also be saying a U.S. intermediate-range missile attack on mainland China could trigger a Chinese retaliatory strike on the continental U.S., Roggeveen said.

"It implies that the ability of either side to hit the other's homeland is a threshold or a taboo," he said.

Defense analysts have long said China's large arsenal of land-based intermediate-range missiles are intended primarily to degrade Taiwan's defenses, target Guam and other key U.S. bases in the region and deny access to the area by the U.S. Navy.

Those are typified by the advanced DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missile, capable of lofting both conventional and nuclear warheads, the latter to carry out a rapid retaliatory strike, and the DF-21D, which is built to take out an aircraft carrier.

Such weapons are undercutting regional deterrence at the same time as China is boosting its ability to strike the continental U.S. with intercontinental ballistic missiles and hypersonic glide weapons, said Collin Koh, a regional security expert at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Fu's argument "can be deemed as disingenuous," Koh said. In terms of Chinese countermeasures, China has never stopped pouring resources into its missile and other programs, so the deployment of a U.S. intermediate-range missile in the region could largely be seen as a "new pretext" for such programs, Koh said.

And while China argues its nuclear weapons are small in number and purely for defensive purposes, major technological upgrades made by Beijing offer fresh arguments for why it should be included in future treaties, he said.

The INF Treaty signed by Russia and the U.S. in 1987 expired Friday, with Washington saying it withdrew because of Russia's alleged violations of the pact. Russia denies breaching the terms. Some observers say the real reason was a perceived need to counter China's advances in missile technology and restore a balance in light of lingering questions over the effectiveness of anti-missile defense systems.

The end of the INF Treaty comes amid rising doubts about whether the two countries will extend an agreement on long-range nuclear weapons scheduled to expire in 2021 known as New START. Trump said he has been discussing a new agreement to reduce nuclear weapons with China and Russia.

"And I will tell you China was very, very excited about talking about it and so was Russia," Trump told reporters. "So I think we'll have a deal at some point."

Asked about Trump's comments, Fu said he didn't wish to contradict Trump, but repeated that China "has no interest and, frankly, we don't think we are even in a position to participate in a trilateral negotiation aimed at a nuclear arms reduction."

North Korea fires more weapons, denounces US military drills

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea continued to ramp up its weapons demonstrations by firing two presumed short-range ballistic missiles into the sea Tuesday while lashing out at the United States and South Korea for continuing military exercises that the North says could derail fragile nuclear diplomacy.

North Korea's fourth round of weapons launches in less than two weeks came amid a standstill in nuclear negotiations and after President Donald Trump repeatedly dismissed the significance of the country's recent tests despite the threat the weapons pose to allies South Korea and Japan and to U.S. bases there.

Experts say Trump's downplaying of the North's weapons display has allowed the country more room to advance its military capabilities as it attempts to build leverage ahead of negotiations, which could possibly resume sometime after the end of the allies' drills later this month.

South Korea's military alerted reporters to the launches minutes before the North's Foreign Ministry denounced Washington and Seoul over the start of their joint exercises on Monday. The ministry's statement said the drills, which North Korea sees as an invasion rehearsal, leave the country "compelled to

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develop, test and deploy the powerful physical means essential for national defense.”

The statement from an unidentified spokesperson said Pyongyang remains committed to dialogue, but it could seek a “new road” if the allies don’t change their positions.

“It is too axiomatic that a constructive dialogue cannot be expected at a time when a simulated war practice targeted at the dialogue partner is being conducted,” said the statement. “We remain unchanged in our stand to resolve the issues through dialogue. But the dynamics of dialogue will be more invisible as long as the hostile military moves continue.”

Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said the two projectiles the North flew cross-country were likely short-range ballistic missiles. They were launched early Tuesday from an area near the North’s western coast and traveled about 450 kilometers (279 miles) on an apogee of 37 kilometers (23 miles) at a maximum speed of above Mach 6.9 before landing in waters off the country’s eastern coast, the JCS said.

It said the projectiles showed similar flight characteristics to short-range missiles North Korea fired on July 25, which traveled about 600 kilometers (373 miles) during launches the North described a “solemn warning” to South Korea over its plans to continue military drills with the United States.

South Korea’s military had said the flight data of the July missiles showed similarities to the Russian-made Iskander, a solid-fuel, nuclear capable missile that is highly maneuverable and travels on lower trajectories compared to conventional ballistic weapons, improving its chances of evading missile defense systems. The North last week also conducted two test firings of what it described as a new multiple rocket launcher system.

Analysts say the new North Korean weapons, which are fired from vehicles and difficult to detect before launch, would significantly enhance its ability to strike targets in all of South Korea.

Choi Hyun-soo, spokeswoman of South Korea’s Defense Ministry, said the North’s launches go against the spirit of a bilateral military agreement reached last year to reduce conventional threats. The office of South Korean President Moon Jae-in said his chief national security adviser, Chung Eui-yong, held an emergency meeting with the country’s defense minister and spy chief on Tuesday to discuss the launches.

Japan’s defense minister, Takeshi Iwaya, said the North’s efforts to advance its missile capabilities are a serious threat to the region.

North Korea had said it will wait to see if the allied exercises take place to decide on the fate of its diplomacy with the United States and whether to continue its unilateral suspension of nuclear and long-range missile tests, which leader Kim Jong Un announced last year amid a diplomatic outreach to Washington.

South Korea’s Defense Ministry has not provided details about the drills, which were expected to be computer simulated and not involve actual combat troops and equipment.

Shin Beomchul, a senior analyst from Seoul’s Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said North Korea is trying to strengthen its bargaining position with Washington, which has so far rejected Pyongyang’s demands for sanctions relief in return for piecemeal steps toward partially surrendering its nuclear capabilities.

By demonstrating weapons that directly threaten South Korea but not the U.S. mainland or its Pacific territories, North Korea is also dialing up pressure on Seoul to coax major concessions from the Washington on behalf of Pyongyang, Shin said.

The allies have scaled down their major military exercises since last year as Trump and Kim began their nuclear summitry. But the North insists even the downsized drills violate agreements between the leaders.

The North’s recent tests have dampened the optimism that followed the third and latest summit between Trump and Kim on June 30 at the inter-Korean border. The leaders agreed to resume working-level nuclear talks, but there have been no known meetings between the two sides since then.

AP writer Mari Yamaguchi contributed from Tokyo.

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Ohio gunman's ex-classmates decry missed chances to stop him

By MICHAEL BIESECKER and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio (AP) — High school classmates of the gunman who killed nine people in Dayton, Ohio, say he was suspended years ago for compiling a "hit list" and a "rape list," and questioned how he could have been allowed to buy the military-style weapon used in this weekend's attack.

The accounts emerged after police said there was nothing in the background of 24-year-old Connor Betts that would have prevented him from purchasing an AR 15-style rifle with an extended ammunition magazine that he used to open fire outside a crowded bar early Sunday. Police on patrol in the entertainment district fatally shot him less than a minute later.

The former classmates told The Associated Press that Betts was suspended during their junior year at suburban Bellbrook High School after a hit list was found scrawled in a school bathroom. That followed an earlier suspension after Betts came to school with a list of female students he wanted to sexually assault, according to two of the classmates, a man and a woman who are both now 24 and spoke on condition of anonymity out of concern they might face harassment.

"There was a kill list and a rape list, and my name was on the rape list," said the female classmate.

A former cheerleader, the woman said she didn't really know Betts and was surprised when a police officer called her cellphone during her freshman year to tell her that her name was included on a list of potential targets.

"The officer said he wouldn't be at school for a while," she said. "But after some time passed he was back, walking the halls. They didn't give us any warning that he was returning to school."

The male classmate, who was on the track team with Betts, said Betts routinely threatened violence toward other students.

"Most people avoided him," the man said. "He would say shocking things just to get a reaction. He enjoyed making people feel scared."

Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools officials declined to comment on those accounts, only confirming that Betts attended schools in the district.

The discovery of the hit list early in 2012 sparked a police investigation and, according to a Dayton Daily News story at the time, roughly a third of 900 Bellbrook students skipped school one day out of fear of a planned attack.

Another former Bellbrook student, who also spoke on condition of anonymity due to concerns of harassment, recounted to AP that he was on a school bus when a uniformed police officer came on board, asked for Betts by name and then escorted him off.

It's not clear what became of that investigation. Police Chief Michael Brown in Sugarcreek Township, which has jurisdiction over the Bellbrook school, wouldn't answer any questions about Betts from an AP reporter Monday. Asked about a hit list in high school, the chief said "I don't know anything about that."

Later, Brown's department emailed media outlets "everything we have on Connor Betts." The file included a 2015 crash report from when Betts ran his car into a ditch and a copy of a 2012 Ohio state law that requires all sealed records of juvenile crimes to be expunged either after 5 years or on the offender's 23rd birthday. Department officials did not respond to questions about whether those records still exist.

Though Betts, who was 17 in 2012, was not named publicly by authorities as the author of the hit list, the former classmates said it was common knowledge within the school he was the one who got in trouble over the incident.

Drew Gainey was among those who went on social media Sunday to say red flags were raised about Betts' behavior years ago.

"There was an incident in high school with this shooter that should have prevented him from ever getting his hands on a weapon. This was a tragedy that was 100% avoidable," he tweeted.

Former Bellbrook Principal Chris Baker said he "would not dispute that information" when the Daily News asked him Sunday about the hit list suspension. He declined to comment further to the newspaper or the AP.

Hannah Shows, a 23-year-old former Bellbrook student, told AP on Monday that she, too, was on the

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list of girls Betts wanted to hurt after she rebuffed his advances. She remembers that he used to pretend like he had a gun and was shooting at them.

"It's baffling and horrible that somebody who's been talking for 10 years about wanting to shoot people could easily, so easily, get access to a military grade weapon and that much ammo," she said.

Betts had no apparent criminal record as an adult and it is not clear what, if any, criminal charges Betts faced when he was under 18 — especially if his records were expunged. Ohio law bars anyone convicted of a felony as an adult, or convicted of a juvenile charge that would have been a felony if they were 18 or older, from buying firearms.

"There's nothing in this individual's record that would have precluded him from getting these weapons," Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl said Sunday.

Not everyone who went to school with Betts had bad things to say.

Brad Howard told reporters in Bellbrook on Sunday that he was friends with Betts from preschool through their high school graduation.

"Connor Betts that I knew was a nice kid. The Connor Betts that I talked to, I always got along with well," Howard said.

Mike Kern, a customer at the gas station where Betts used to work in Bellbrook, said he "was the nicest kid you could imagine. ... I never heard him talk about violence, say a racist word, or anything like that."

He said they sometimes played trivia at a bar near the gas station and Betts impressed with his knowledge of current events and pop culture.

"He was real smart," Kern said. "He knew all the answers."

Biesecker reported from Washington. AP reporters Reese Dunklin in Dallas, John Seewer and Robert Bumsted in Bellbrook and Michael Kunzelman in Silver Spring, Maryland, contributed to this report.

Follow Biesecker at <http://twitter.com/mbieseck> and Smyth at <http://twitter.com/jcarrsmyth>

In slap at Maduro, US freezes Venezuela's government assets

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has frozen all Venezuelan government assets in a dramatic escalation of tensions with Nicolás Maduro.

The ban places Maduro's socialist administration alongside a short list of adversaries from Cuba, North Korea, Syria and Iran that have been targeted by such aggressive U.S. actions.

The ban blocks American companies and individuals from doing business with Maduro's government and its top supporters. It came Monday night as an executive order from President Donald Trump and takes effect immediately.

Trump's order spares Venezuela's still sizable private sector. Yet it represents the most sweeping U.S. action to remove Maduro since the Trump administration recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's rightful leader in January.

The order also exposes foreign entities doing business with the Maduro government to U.S. retaliation.

Victims of Texas, Ohio shootings included parents, students

By MORGAN LEE and AMY GUTHRIE Associated Press

Nearly 1,600 miles (2,575 kilometers) apart, the cities of El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, have been united in grief and pain by a pair of shootings that left more than 30 people dead.

In the Texas border city, a shooter who opened fire at a Walmart store left 22 people dead and some two dozen injured. Hours later, at an entertainment district in Ohio, another gunman killed nine people and injured at least 27 others.

Here are the stories of some of the victims:

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EL PASO, TEXAS

DAVID JOHNSON: FATHER WHO SAVED WIFE AND GRANDDAUGHTER

An account of self-sacrifice emerged Monday involving a grandfather who died in the mass shooting in El Paso, while his wife and granddaughter survived.

Stephanie Melendez said that her 63-year-old father, David Johnson, was shot and killed near the check-out counters at the Walmart where the attack took place. She credits Johnson with saving the life of her 9-year-old daughter and his own wife by thrusting them to the floor below a counter and out of the way of gunfire before he was killed.

"He saved them," Melendez said. "He pushed them underneath." Johnson's wife was unavailable to describe the events firsthand.

Raul Melendez believes his daughter's life was saved by the actions of Johnson, but still worries about what she may have witnessed.

"I hope she didn't get to see anything and that she's not affected later on," he said.

Raul said he blames the shooter for what happened and nothing else.

Co-workers of Johnson, a salesman, delivered flowers and food as family members gathered in mourning on Monday evening at a one-story home.

JAVIER AMIR RODRIGUEZ: HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE

Javier Amir Rodriguez, 15, was starting his sophomore year in high school when he was fatally shot at the store.

The Clint Independent School District, which identified the teen as being among the victims Monday, said he attended Horizon High School in El Paso.

The district said it had been in contact with his family and sent condolences. Valeria Chavez, a cousin of the youth, told KFOX-TV that Rodriguez was at the Walmart with an uncle who described what happened.

"He told me my cousin had made eye contact with the shooter and they were in the bank and as soon as the shooter walked in, he grabbed my cousin. He says he saw the shooter shoot him," Chavez said.

The school district said counselors would be available, and a vigil was set for Monday night at the high school's football stadium.

ARTURO BENAVIDES: EASYGOING ARMY VETERAN

Arturo Benavides, a U.S. Army veteran who retired as a bus driver a few years ago, was checking out at the Walmart store when the gunman entered.

His niece, Jacklin Luna, told the Los Angeles Times that 60-year-old Benavides was among those killed. His wife, Patricia, was sitting on a nearby bench and was pushed into a bathroom for safety, Luna said.

Benavides, who was born and raised in El Paso, had worked as a bus driver for El Paso's Sun Metro.

"I spent my childhood waking up at their house, sitting out on the front porch with him on Sunday mornings, listening to the oldies on the radio," said Luna, who described him as kind and generous.

His nephew, Ruben Rojas, said Benavides was an "easygoing" man who enjoyed watching sports and was also a good Roman Catholic who went to Mass.

IVAN MANZANO: A FRIENDLY AND PRACTICAL MAN

Ivan Manzano, who had a 5-year-old daughter and 9-year-old son, was from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and ran a business that supplies orthopedic implants.

His wife, Adriana Manzano, learned from the FBI that he was killed in the shooting in the Walmart. She traveled to the Mexican consulate in El Paso on Monday to repatriate her husband's body, and said he was known by everyone as friendly, calm — "very practical."

Adriana Manzano said she has told her children only that their father had died in an "accident," believing that giving a full explanation might generate resentments.

JORDAN ANCHONDO: 'GAVE HER LIFE' FOR HER BABY

Jordan Anchondo was among those killed in El Paso, Anchondo's sister said, and she apparently died while protecting her 2-month-old son from the hail of bullets.

Leta Jamrowski of El Paso spoke to The Associated Press as she paced a waiting room at the University

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Medical Center of El Paso, where her 2-month-old nephew was being treated for broken bones — the result of his mother's fall.

"From the baby's injuries, they said that more than likely my sister was trying to shield him," she said. "So when she got shot she was holding him and she fell on him, so that's why he broke some of his bones. So he pretty much lived because she gave her life."

Jordan, a mother of three, and Andre Anchondo had dropped off her 5-year old daughter at cheerleading practice before going to shop for school supplies Saturday at Walmart. They never returned.

ANDRE ANCHONDO: HAD TURNED HIS LIFE AROUND

Andre Anchondo — the husband of Jordan Anchondo — had recently turned his life around after struggles with drug dependence and run-ins with the law, a friend recalled.

On Sunday night, John Jamrowski, the grandfather of Jordan Anchondo, said in a text message that his family has been notified of Andre Anchondo's death.

Friend Koteiba "Koti" Azzam had fond memories of Andre Anchondo.

"I love the guy," Azzam said in a phone interview from San Marcos, Texas. "He had the character and the charisma."

Azzam said Andre Anchondo had started a business in El Paso, building things from granite and stone, and made it successful through hard work. He also was on the verge of completing a family home.

"It makes you question your faith almost," said Azzam, who is Muslim. "But God didn't have a part in it. The hands of man altered my friend's life in a drastic way."

DAYTON, OHIO

SAEED SALEH: IMMIGRANT FROM AFRICA, FATHER OF THREE

A native of East Africa who moved to the United States a few years ago, Ohio shooting victim Saeed Saleh was remembered as a "humble and quiet person" by a spokesman for his family.

Yahya Khamis, president of the Sudanese Community of Dayton, said Monday that he was speaking on behalf of Saleh's family and coordinating funeral plans for the 38-year-old. Khamis said he didn't know Saleh well but called him kindhearted.

"He was a very good guy," Khamis said.

A father of three, Saleh was originally from Eritrea in East Africa and later lived in Sudan before immigrating to the United States a few years ago, he said.

He said Saleh's friends and family were thankful for the support they had received from the Dayton community.

MONICA BRICKHOUSE: POSITIVE PERSON, SUPERVISOR

Monica Brickhouse was a Springfield, Ohio, native who was working as a recovery specialist for Anthem in Virginia Beach, according to her LinkedIn profile.

Damian Seaton, who worked with Brickhouse at a bank call center before it was closed down, remembered her as an excellent supervisor.

"She was just a very positive person," Seaton told Norfolk TV station WAVY. "You always knew when you sat with her you had an easygoing spirit, somebody who was going to help you, advise you in the right way."

The profile said she received an associate's degree from College for America at Southern New Hampshire University in 2017 and volunteered for Toys for Tots. Friend Brittany Hart wrote on Facebook that Brickhouse and another victim, Beatrice Warren-Curtis, "checked in on my family and made your love for my family known."

Brickhouse was also part of Two Good Girls, an event planning and catering business, according to her Facebook page.

MEGAN BETTS: GUNMAN'S SISTER WAS ARTISTIC, POLITE

A classmate remembered Ohio shooting victim Megan Betts, the sister of the gunman, as "artistic, polite" and someone who "loved going to band class."

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Addison Brickler, 23, rode the bus to school with Connor and Megan Betts. Megan would sit with her friend on the bus every day, Brickler said.

"She always had a smile on her face," Brickler said.

"It's harder for me to wrap my head around why he would do this to someone, his sister."

NICHOLAS CUMER: HELPED CANCER PATIENTS

Nicholas Cumer, a graduate student in the master of cancer care program at Saint Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania, was among those killed in the Dayton shooting early Sunday.

"Nicholas was dedicated to caring for others," university President Malachi Van Tassell said in a statement.

The family released a statement through a relative saying they are "heartbroken by the loss of our Nicholas" and asking for privacy.

Cumer had been in Dayton as part of his internship program with the Maple Tree Cancer Alliance, which strives to improve the quality of life for those with cancer through exercise, nutrition and faith.

"He was well liked and respected by everyone on our team, and we all will miss him very much," the organization said in a statement. Cumer was a week away from completing his internship.

Van Tassell said a Mass in Cumer's memory will be arranged on campus this week.

LOIS OGLESBY: NURSING STUDENT WHO WANTED TO CARE FOR CHILDREN

Lois Oglesby, 27, was in nursing school and looked forward to a career that would make the most of her love for children, her cousin said. She was also the mother of a newborn and had an older daughter.

Derasha Merrett told the Dayton Daily News that she was up feeding her own newborn when a friend called her at 3 a.m. Sunday to tell her, through sobs, that Oglesby had died in the Dayton shooting.

"She was a wonderful mother, a wonderful person," Merrett said. "I have cried so much, I can't cry anymore."

Merrett said she and her cousin grew up in the same church and that Oglesby worked at her children's day care center.

"We all grew up in this little town," Merrett said. "We're all family."

LOGAN TURNER: 'GENEROUS AND LOVING,' HAD JUST TURNED 30

Just days past his 30th birthday, Logan Turner was "very generous and loving and the world's best son," mother Danita Turner told the Dayton Daily News.

"Everyone loved Logan," she said. "He was a happy-go-lucky guy."

Turner said her son was out with a few friends when he was shot just outside a bar in Dayton's historic Oregon District.

Turner had a degree from Sinclair Community College and went on to earn an engineering degree from the University of Toledo, his mother said. He also attended Wright State University for a while, according to Seth Bauguess, spokesman for the university in Dayton.

Turner's mother said he had recently started working as a machinist at a company in Springboro.

Lee reported from El Paso. Guthrie reported from Mexico City. AP reporters Jamie Stengle in Dallas; Andrew Selsky in Salem, Oregon; Lisa Cornwell in Cincinnati, Ohio; Becky Bohrer in Juneau, Alaska; and Jay Reeves in Birmingham, Alabama, contributed to this report.

Asian stocks follow Wall Street lower as trade war worsens

By **JOE McDONALD** AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stocks followed Wall Street lower on Tuesday after China let its currency sink and halted purchases of U.S. farm goods, fueling fears Beijing's trade war with President Donald Trump will harm the global economy.

China's main index lost 2.5% and Tokyo fell 2%. Markets in Hong Kong, Sydney and Seoul also retreated.

Beijing allowed its yuan to fall past the politically sensitive level of seven to the dollar on Monday following Trump's threat last week to extend punitive tariffs to an additional \$300 billion of Chinese imports. Also, the Ministry of Commerce announced it was suspending promised purchases of American farm products.

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On Tuesday, the yuan fell further to 7.052 to the dollar in early trading. That came after the U.S. Treasury Department officially labeled Beijing a currency manipulator, a status that opens the way to possible additional sanctions.

"Equities are slumping. They will slump more. Bond yields are tumbling. They will tumble far more," said Rabobank in a report.

"Worry about global trade flows, as a stronger USD rumbles through the real economy and U.S.-China divorce smashes supply chains," the bank said.

The Shanghai Composite Index fell to 2,749.85 and Tokyo's Nikkei 225 retreated to 20,299.69. Hong Kong's Hang Seng gave up 2.2% to 25,560.68 and Seoul's Kospi shed 0.5% to 1,937.92.

Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 retreated 2.6% to 6,468.30 and markets in Taiwan, New Zealand and Southeast Asia also declined.

On Wall Street, stocks suffered their biggest loss since December.

Investors already were unnerved about a cooling global economy and falling U.S. corporate profits.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index dropped 3% to 2,844.74. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 2.9% to 25,717.74, and the Nasdaq composite fell 3.5% to 7,726.04.

The sell-off began Monday in Asia, where indexes lost more than 1%, and intensified as it swept westward through Europe to the Americas. Investors in search of safety herded into U.S. government bonds, which sent yields plunging.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to its lowest level since 2016, down to 1.72% from 1.85% late Friday. The yield on the two-year note sank to 1.58% from 1.71%. Both are unusually large moves.

Technology stocks bore the brunt of Monday's selling. Apple slid 5.2%. It not only depends on Chinese factories to assemble its iPhones, but China is also the only country aside from the United States that accounts for more than 10% of its sales.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 32 cents to \$55.01 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell 97 cents on Monday to close at \$54.69. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 43 cents to \$60.24 per barrel in London. It dropped \$1.92 the previous session to \$59.81.

CURRENCY: The dollar gained to 106.15 yen from Monday's 106.15 yen. The euro strengthened to \$1.1229 from \$1.1204.

5 months on, Christchurch attacker influences others

By KRISTEN GELINEAU Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — The attack on a Texas Walmart that left 22 people dead bore all the classic hallmarks of America's cycle of mass shootings: A lone shooter. Multiple casualties. A white male accused of the crime.

But it also revealed a newer, emerging pattern: emboldened white supremacy. A racist diatribe published to the online message board 8chan. And apparent inspiration drawn from the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque attacks earlier this year.

The El Paso massacre is the latest attack in which the gunman appears to have praised the March 15 shootings in Christchurch, where an Australian white supremacist is charged with killing 51 worshippers at two mosques.

Authorities are investigating the possibility that Saturday's shooting in El Paso was a hate crime, and are working to determine whether a racist, anti-immigrant screed posted to the 8chan board shortly beforehand was written by the man arrested in the attack. Though he was targeting Latinos rather than Muslims, the first sentence of the online rant expressed support for the Christchurch shooter.

For decades, mass shootings have been viewed through the prism of the lethal 1999 attack on Columbine High School in Colorado by two of its students. Columbine acted as an inspiration and symbol for lone shooters for years to come. But Christchurch seems to be gaining ground as a political symbol, as the racist views espoused by the man charged with the killings, Brenton Tarrant, continue to resonate with white supremacists half a world away.

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"Christchurch was a symbol from the moment that Brenton Tarrant's manifesto appeared online," said Michele Grossman, a professor and research chair in diversity and community resilience at Deakin University in Australia.

The difference between Christchurch and Columbine — and the shootings each may have inspired — can be seen in the attacks' respective targets, Grossman said. The Columbine shootings were indiscriminate; in his journal before the attack, shooter Eric Harris wrote about wanting to kill humanity. The Christchurch attack had a very specific target: Muslims.

"Christchurch, looking at the manifesto, is about immediately an 'us and them' proposition: Our lands will never be their lands, they are invading us, they're trying to conquer us, and we have to fight back," Grossman said.

These recent attacks, she says, were designed to incite even more violence. "You might say that this is part and parcel of an effort to spearhead a revolutionary uprising to inspire people to say, 'If I can do this, you can do this, too,'" Grossman said.

That concern is especially intense in Christchurch. Muti Bari was not surprised when word of the Texas massacre reached New Zealand.

Bari has lived in fear of another attack ever since the day at Linwood mosque when he hid in a bathroom as the gunman slaughtered people a few feet away. When the police arrived, Bari had to jump over the bodies of his fellow worshippers to get out.

"The ideology exists, and we know that. And it's just unfortunate that people are acting as copycats now," Bari said. "That's a concern, obviously, for every Muslim living in the West."

He added: "We feel it — that it can happen anytime, anywhere."

Given how high profile and recent the Christchurch attack was, it's not surprising that it might be referenced by the El Paso shooter, said Jacinta Carroll, director of national security policy at the Australian National University. Terrorists, she says, try to justify their actions through references that build a narrative for their views or actions.

Paul Spoonley, who has researched white supremacist groups in New Zealand and is writing a book on the subject, said Norway's Anders Breivik is the mass killer who established the model for the type of attack seen in Christchurch.

Breivik, a right-wing extremist, killed 77 people in a 2011 bomb-and-shooting rampage. Each of the recent attacks has similar elements such as a manifesto and social-media use during the event, he said, and the actions are those of lone shooters with little or no contact with the organized far right.

"Christchurch is now part of the vocabulary and a reference point amongst hate groups, especially white supremacists," Spoonley said by email.

On Monday, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was asked about concerns that the Christchurch attacks are starting to be remembered as a symbol for violent white nationalists around the world. She said any effort to prevent such spread of hate has to be a cooperative one.

"What I want to make sure . is that we do what we can to create a regulatory environment where we do not see violent extremism, and violence, and terrorism circulated online," she said. "But New Zealand can't do that alone. These are international platforms."

By posting a 74-page document on 8chan before the mosque attacks, the accused Christchurch gunman clearly tried to ensure his rampage — and his use of a conspiracy theory that contends elites are plotting to replace whites with nonwhite immigrants — would echo widely.

On Monday, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg visited Christchurch and laid a wreath at a memorial outside the Al Noor mosque, where 42 worshippers died. While there, Stoltenberg spoke about links between attacks in Christchurch, El Paso and Norway.

"These attacks are committed by lone wolves, but they are at the same time connected," Stoltenberg said, adding: "I think it highlights that we have to fight terrorism in many different ways with many different tools."

Tofazzal Alam, who was at the Linwood mosque when the attack began, has tried to avoid news of

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mass shootings ever since. Every new attack sends him right back to the horror he endured on March 15. So hearing that the El Paso shooter may have been sympathetic to the white supremacist who attacked Christchurch was particularly painful.

"We want peace all over the world," he said. "Whether it's New Zealand or Australia or the U.S. or Canada, we want peace."

"I saw the disaster happening to us. It should not be happening to anybody at all."

Associated Press reporter Nick Perry in Wellington, New Zealand, contributed to this report.

Still blocked from Hawaii peak, telescope seeks Spain permit

By **JOSEPH WILSON** and **CALEB JONES** Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — The group behind a \$1.4 billion telescope planned for Hawaii is applying for a permit to build in Spain as ongoing protests and a human blockade prevent them from starting construction on Mauna Kea, Hawaii's highest peak that some people consider sacred.

The plan to start construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope on the Big Island has been thwarted for more than three weeks by a group of Native Hawaiian activists who say the construction will further desecrate a mountain that already has more than a dozen observatories.

Thirty Meter Telescope Executive Director Ed Stone said in a statement Monday that the group still wants to break ground on Mauna Kea, but they need to have a backup plan.

"We continue to follow the process to allow for TMT to be constructed at the 'plan B' site in (Spain) should it not be possible to build in Hawaii," Stone said. "Mauna Kea remains the preferred site."

The development bolsters the Native Hawaiian activists, who say they will not budge until the project moves elsewhere.

Protest leaders, who say they are not against science or astronomy, told The Associated Press that the Spain permit is a positive development, but it's not enough for them to end their blockade of Mauna Kea's access road, where more than 2,000 people have gathered at times.

"There's lots of good science to be done from the Canary Islands," said Kealoha Pisciotta, who has helped organize the protest on Mauna Kea. It would "be a win for everyone."

But she said there is no trust between the activists, who call themselves protectors of the mountain, and telescope officials.

Kaho'okahi Kanuha, another protest leader who has been arrested several times trying to block construction, said he hopes officials make the "right decision" and move the project to the Canary Islands.

"We remain committed to protecting Mauna Kea from further desecration, no matter how long it takes," he said.

Canary Islands Astrophysics Institute Director Rafael Rebolo told the AP on Monday that he received a letter from the head of the Thirty Meter Telescope saying its board recently decided "to proceed with the request to seek a building permit" for the island of La Palma.

"We are observing what is happening in Hawaii with the maximum respect," said Rebolo, the point man for the alternative site in Spain's Canary Islands.

"Our position is that we are here if the TMT project needs us," he said in a telephone interview.

After years of protests and contentious legal battles, the Hawaii Supreme Court last year ruled the telescope permits were legal, clearing the way for the construction to proceed.

Separately, the state Department of Land and Natural Resources granted a two-year extension to the deadline for starting construction last week. The new deadline is Sept. 26, 2021.

In October 2016, Thirty Meter Telescope officials first announced the backup location in the Canary Islands — Roque de los Muchachos Observatory on La Palma.

Rebolo said local officials who would have jurisdiction over a La Palma building permit for the new telescope solidly back the project and that the observatory site has already passed environmental impact evaluations.

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"Our mountains are not sacred," he added.

Scientists selected Mauna Kea's summit for the giant telescope because the weather and air conditions there are among the best in the world for viewing the skies. The telescope would give researchers a view back to the deepest reaches of our universe and allow them to examine the time immediately following the Big Bang.

Once built, scientists are expected to use the telescope to explore fundamental questions about the universe, including whether there's life outside our solar system and how stars and galaxies formed. The large size of the telescope's mirror means it would collect more light, allowing it to see faint, far-away objects such as stars and galaxies.

Big Island Mayor Harry Kim, whom Hawaii's governor tasked with finding common ground among Native Hawaiian leaders, protesters and telescope stakeholders, said it would be a loss for his island and the state if the telescope was built in Spain.

"I thought this could be a good thing for Hawaii if done the right way," Kim said.

But the mayor also acknowledged that injustices against the Native Hawaiian community need to be addressed. "Part of the right way is a recognition of wrongs of past," he said.

The mayor said his responsibility is to find a better way forward that addresses the many complicated issues involved with the battle over the telescope, including the economics for the Big Island.

"If this opportunity is lost, and I do mean it, there will be a sadness on my part," Kim said. "Not only because of science and education and opportunity, part of my responsibility is to try to find ways to make a better economic base for this island."

He said he doesn't want his county's entire economy to be based on tourism like it is on the other islands in Hawaii.

On "Maui, Kauai, and Oahu, the vast, vast majority of those people on those islands and counties can no longer own a home because of what has happened economically," he said.

The telescope "was one of the ways — besides agriculture, beside where we develop resorts and how we develop resorts — of my long-range viewpoint of what would be better for this island."

A spokeswoman with Gov. David Ige's office was not immediately able to respond to a request for comment.

Last week, Spain's science minister, Pedro Duque, reiterated the government's full support for the Canary Islands as a Plan B site for the telescope and said the country is well-prepared to host it.

"We have all the necessary plans at all levels — the people, the speed, the systems, absolutely everything is ready if they want to come," Duque said.

The Canary Islands archipelago, located west of Morocco in the eastern Atlantic Ocean, is already home to several powerful telescopes. The Roque de los Muchachos Observatory hosts more than 20.

Jones reported from Honolulu. Associated Press writer Jennifer Sinco Kelleher in Honolulu contributed to this report.

Lashing back, China lets yuan drop, halts US farm purchases

By **PAUL WISEMAN** and **JOE McDONALD** AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — China decided Monday to meet President Donald Trump's latest tariff threat with defiance, letting its currency drop to an 11-year low and halting purchases of U.S. farm products.

The moves, which came four days after Trump threatened more taxes on Chinese imports, knocked stock markets worldwide into a tailspin. On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down more than 850 points by mid-afternoon.

Earlier, stocks tumbled from Shanghai to London on fears the escalation in U.S.-China trade tension will drag down a global economy that is already weakening.

Raising worries that China will wield its currency as a weapon in a trade war, Beijing let the Chinese yuan weaken to the politically sensitive level of seven to the U.S. dollar for the first time since February 2008.

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After financial markets closed Monday, the U.S. Treasury Department announced that it was labeling China a currency manipulator for the first time since 1994.

Also Monday, China's official Xinhua news agency reported that Chinese companies have stopped buying U.S. farm products — a direct shot at Trump supporters in rural America.

Together, the currency devaluation and suspension of farm purchases suggest that China has decided to stand tough, rather than cave in Trump's threats.

"The Chinese side won't submit to the US," tweeted Hu Xijin, editor-in-chief of China's hardline Global Times newspaper.

The weaker yuan makes Chinese exports less expensive in foreign markets. It also helps offset the impact of U.S. tariffs on Chinese products.

The Chinese currency hit 7.0391 to the dollar by late afternoon, making one yuan worth 14.2 cents. The level of seven to the dollar has no economic significance but carries significant symbolic weight.

"The thought of a currency war is crossing more than a few traders' minds," Stephen Innes of VM Markets said in a report.

Trump promptly took to Twitter to denounce the move as "currency manipulation." He added, "This is a major violation which will greatly weaken China over time."

China's central bank blamed the yuan's drop on "trade protectionism" — an apparent reference to Trump's threat last Thursday to impose tariffs Sept. 1 on the \$300 billion in Chinese imports to the United States in addition to the \$250 billion he's already targeted.

The U.S. and China are engaged in a bitter dispute over allegations that Beijing steals trade secrets and pressures foreign companies to hand over technology as part of an aggressive campaign to make Chinese companies world leaders in advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

The weakness of the yuan, also known as the renminbi, or "people's money," is among U.S. grievances against Beijing. American officials complain that a weak yuan gives Chinese exporters an unfair price edge in foreign markets and helps swell the massive U.S. trade deficit with China.

The U.S. Treasury Department declined in May to label China a currency manipulator but urged Beijing to take steps "to avoid a persistently weak currency" and warned that it would be watching closely.

China's central bank sets the exchange rate each morning and allows the yuan to fluctuate by 2% against the dollar during the day. The central bank can buy or sell currency — or order commercial banks to do so — to dampen price movements.

It appears "the currency is now also considered part of the arsenal to be drawn upon," Robert Carnell of ING said in a report. He said Monday's move might be part of "a concerted series of steps aimed at pushing back at the latest U.S. tariffs."

Until now, economists had expected the People's Bank of China, the Chinese central bank, to intervene and put a floor under the currency if it threatened to breach the seven-to-the-dollar level.

A central bank statement Monday blamed "unilateralism and trade protectionism measures," a reference to Trump's tariff hikes. But it tried to play down the significance of "breaking seven."

"It is normal to rise and fall," the statement said. It promised to "maintain stable operation of the foreign exchange market."

Chinese leaders have promised to avoid "competitive devaluation" to boost exports by making them less expensive abroad — a pledge the central bank governor, Yi Gang, affirmed in March. But regulators are trying to make the state-controlled exchange rate more responsive to market forces, which are pulling the yuan lower, partly on fears Trump's tariffs will weaken the Chinese economy.

The yuan has lost 5% since February.

Globally, a weaker yuan might lead to more volatility in currency markets and pressure for the dollar to strengthen, Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics said in a report. That would be "unwelcome in Washington," where Trump has threatened to weaken the dollar to boost exports.

A weaker dollar "would be bad news" for Europe and Japan, hurting demand for their exports at a time of cooling economic growth, Kuijs said.

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The Chinese central bank tried to discourage speculation last August by imposing a requirement that traders post deposits for contracts to buy or sell yuan. That allows trading to continue but raises the cost.

Beijing imposed similar controls in October 2015 after a change in the exchange rate mechanism prompted markets to bet the yuan would fall. The currency temporarily steadied but fell the following year.

The Chinese are well aware of the pain the trade war is causing American farmers, a loyal part of Trump's political base. Their retaliatory tariffs on \$110 billion in U.S. products targeted soybeans and other key agricultural products. To ease the pain in rural America, Trump has rolled out two packages of farm aid worth a combined \$27 billion.

Monday's Xinhua report said that Beijing would "not rule out the possibility of levying additional tariffs" on U.S. farm imports. Xinhua said Trump's plan to tax another \$300 billion in Chinese imports "seriously violated" a cease-fire agreed to in June by Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Joe McDonald reported from Beijing

AP researcher Yu Bing in Beijing contributed to this report.

US Treasury Department labels China a currency manipulator

By PAUL WISEMAN and MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Treasury Department labeled China a currency manipulator Monday after Beijing pushed down the value of its yuan in a dramatic escalation of the trade conflict between the world's two biggest economies.

The decision, which came hours after President Donald Trump accused China of unfairly devaluing its currency, marks a reversal for Treasury: In May, it had declined to sanction China for manipulating its currency.

The U.S. had not put China on the currency blacklist since 1994.

The designation could pave the way for more U.S. sanctions against China.

Earlier Monday, China had allowed its currency to weaken to an 11-year low, a move that gives its exporters a price edge in world markets and eases some of the damage from U.S. tariffs on Chinese products.

Trump had gone on Twitter to denounce China's move as "currency manipulation." He added, "This is a major violation which will greatly weaken China over time."

In a statement, Treasury said it would work with the International Monetary Fund "to eliminate the unfair competitive advantage created by China's latest actions."

The move was unexpected.

"This is an extraordinary action of hostility against a major trading partner, with little economic basis and again driven mostly by presidential whims," said Cornell University economist Eswar Prasad, former head of the China division at the International Monetary Fund. "The timing and apparent logic for Treasury's designation of China as a currency manipulator reeks of arbitrariness and retaliation, and will inflict further damage on an already wounded relationship between China and the U.S."

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump had accused China of manipulating its currency to gain trade advantages against the United States and had promised to brand China a currency manipulator as soon as he took office.

However, Trump's Treasury Department, which issues a report on currency manipulation every six months, has issued five reports since Trump took office, the most recent in May, in which Treasury said China did not meet the criteria to be labeled a currency manipulator.

The Treasury announcement, which came late Monday after the U.S. stock market had suffered its worst day this year, provided few details on the reasons for the abrupt change.

The statement did say that China's explanations for its recent currency moves were implausible and "confirm that the purpose of China's currency devaluation is to gain unfair competitive advantage in international trade."

China's central bank sets the exchange rate each morning and allows the yuan to fluctuate by 2% against the dollar during the day. The central bank can buy or sell currency — or order commercial banks to do

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so — to dampen price movements.

Because the Chinese government sets the exchange rate, said Joseph Gagnon, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, the Trump administration views China's currency policy this way: "Any move is a move they want. Therefore, a move down is a manipulation."

China's central bank blamed the yuan's drop on "trade protectionism" — an apparent reference to Trump's threat last Thursday to impose tariffs Sept. 1 on the \$300 billion in Chinese imports to the United States in addition to the \$250 billion he's already targeted.

For more than a year, the U.S. and China have been locked in a trade war over allegations that Beijing steals trade secrets and pressures foreign companies to hand over technology.

AP Business Writer Marcy Gordon contributed to this report.

Online providers knock 8chan offline after mass shooting

By FRANK BAJAK AP Cybersecurity Writer

BOSTON (AP) — The online message board 8chan was effectively knocked offline Monday after two companies cut off vital technical services following the mass shooting in El Paso, Texas, whose perpetrator was linked to the site. 8chan is known for trafficking in anonymous hate speech and incitement of hate crimes.

A racist "manifesto" posted to the site is believed to have been written by the suspect in a Saturday's killing of 22 people in El Paso, Texas. If it was, it would be the third known instance of a shooter posting to the site before going on a rampage, following mass shootings at two New Zealand mosques in the spring, and another at a California synagogue.

Late Sunday, the security company Cloudflare announced it was cutting off the message board, which has a history of use by violent extremists, for being "a cesspool of hate."

8chan quickly found a new online host: Sammamish, Washington-based Epik.com, whose site declares it "the Swiss bank of domains." Epik provides similar support for Gab.com, another social media site frequented by white supremacists that doesn't ban hate speech.

Gab is where the man accused of massacring 11 people last October in a Pittsburgh synagogue posted anti-Semitic vitriol. Epik also owns the security company BitMitigate, whose clients include the Daily Stormer, a neo-Nazi and white supremacist site.

Like Cloudflare, BitMitigate protects web sites from denial-of-service attacks that can make them unreachable — the kind of online armor that contentious message boards require to survive.

But on Monday, London-based Voxility, a provider of network hardware and services, upended both Epik and BitMitigate by terminating its contract with the companies, said Maria Sirbu, the company's vice president of business development.

"We have made the connection that at least two or three of the latest mass shooting in the U.S. were connected with these guys," Sirbu said. "At some point, somebody needed to make the decision on where the limit is between what is illegal and what is freedom of speech and today it had to be us."

In the absence of regulation, it falls on internet services companies in the United States to ban online speech deemed unacceptable.

Neither 8chan nor Daily Stormer were reachable on Monday afternoon, when the person identifying themselves as 8chan's administrator tweeted that "strategies are being developed to bring services back online."

Two weeks ago, Voxility informed the Daily Stormer that it was in violation of the company's abuse policies and then cut off its service for a day, said Sirbu, who said her company has 20 data centers worldwide and operates in 80 countries.

Service was restored after the objectionable content was removed. But it became clear to Voxility after the El Paso shooting "that these guys were not going to stop," Sirbu said. "We will not renew services for these guys and will ensure that they don't return to Voxility under false names."

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Neither 8chan nor Epik.com representatives could immediately be reached for comment despite attempts via email and LinkedIn.

On Sunday, Cloudflare CEO Matthew Prince wrote in a blog post that the suspect in El Paso “appears to have been inspired” by discussions on 8chan.

He said a suspect in an earlier shooting at a synagogue in Poway, California, also posted a “hate-filled ‘open letter’” on 8chan, as did the mosque attacker in Christchurch, New Zealand.

“8chan has repeatedly proven itself to be a cesspool of hate,” wrote Prince. “They have proven themselves to be lawless and that lawlessness has caused multiple tragic deaths.”

With the big social networks doing a better job of moderating hate speech, incitement to violence and harassment, extreme speech is gravitating to smaller websites that are often little more than message boards — sites teenagers routinely make in their bedrooms, said Joan Donovan, the director of the technology and social change project at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government.

Services like Cloudflare or BitMitigate are necessary to keep extremist-tolerant message boards like 8chan online because they typically attract hostile traffic from hacktivists aimed at overwhelming the sites and making them unreachable.

But without them, it’s difficult for any site of consequence to survive.

“We’re not going to get rid of message boards,” said Donovan. “But we stifle the spread and the impact of these manifestos by refusing to let them elevate to the level of mainstream media.”

Two years ago, Cloudflare terminated service to the Daily Stormer, which on Sunday Prince lamented as “still available and still disgusting.”

“They have bragged that they have more readers than ever,” he said. “They are no longer Cloudflare’s problem, but they remain the Internet’s problem.”

In the absence of laws regulating hate speech and incitement to violence online, Donovan said, it’s going to be up to local jurisdictions — and internet service companies— to crack down on forums.

Otherwise, people such as Epik.com CEO Robert Monster of Bellevue, can continue to support them.

In November, Monster defended in a blog post his company’s decision to host Gab.com after its previous domain host, GoDaddy, dropped it.

Puerto Ricans await court decision on potential new governor

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico’s Supreme Court on Monday agreed to rule on a lawsuit that the island’s Senate filed in a bid to oust a veteran politician recently sworn in as the island’s governor.

The court gave all parties until Tuesday at noon to file all necessary paperwork, noting that no extensions will be awarded.

The lawsuit seeks a preliminary injunction ordering Pedro Pierluisi to cease his functions immediately and also asks that the court declare unconstitutional a 2005 law that says a secretary of state does not have to be approved by both the House and Senate if he or she has to step in as governor.

“I want to put an end to this, but I want to do it correctly,” Senate President Thomas Rivera Schatz said during a special session in which he stated he would let the court decide the outcome, adding that Pierluisi only had five of 15 votes needed from the Senate for his earlier nomination as secretary of state.

It is unclear how quickly the Supreme Court might rule or whether it would hold a hearing or simply issue a written opinion. The announcement comes as Puerto Ricans who successfully ousted the previous governor from office following nearly two weeks of protests await yet another twist in what is a deepening constitutional crisis.

Aurea Costa, a 48-year-old cook from the northern town of Caguas, said she supports Pierluisi as governor.

“They should give him a chance to do something for the island,” she said, adding that people will not tolerate more government corruption. “The people will go out and protest.”

Constitutional attorney Carlos Ramos told The Associated Press that there is no deadline for the local Supreme Court to make a decision, and it cannot be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court because the issue

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deals strictly with Puerto Rico's constitutional law. He added that the island's Supreme Court rarely holds hearings and that at least five of the nine judges have to agree in order to declare a law unconstitutional.

If the court finds in favor of the Senate, Justice Secretary Wanda Vázquez would become governor, Ramos said, adding that it's unclear whether Pierluisi could remain as secretary of state or whether he would be stripped of all positions.

"That's a very technical issue," he said.

Pierluisi was named secretary of state, the next in line to be governor, in a recess appointment last week. The island's House of Representatives then confirmed him to the position in a 26-to-21 vote on Friday, a move he argues makes him the replacement for Gov. Ricardo Rosselló.

However, the Senate had not yet voted on the appointment, and while it was expected to do so on Monday afternoon, Schatz said there would be no vote.

Pierluisi said in a statement that there is no time to lose.

"Although it is regrettable that this matter has to be elucidated in our courts, I hope that it will be treated with the greatest urgency and diligence for the good of the people of Puerto Rico," he said.

The Supreme Court's announcement means that a hearing scheduled for early Monday evening by the Superior Court of San Juan has been cancelled. The Senate originally filed the lawsuit late Sunday with the Superior Court of San Juan but then asked the Supreme Court on Monday to take the case.

Rosselló formally resigned on Aug. 2 following nearly two weeks of popular protests amid anger over corruption, mismanagement of funds and a leaked obscenity-laced chat in which he and 11 other men made fun of women, gay people and victims of Hurricane Maria, among others.

Puerto Rico's constitution says that the secretary of state has to be approved by both the House and Senate, and that the secretary of state is next in line if the governor steps down. One amendment, however, states that a secretary of state in line to become governor does not have to be approved by both chambers. Legal experts, however, question the amendment's validity and believe Pierluisi must be confirmed by both chambers because the amendment contradicts the intent of the constitution and its statement of motives.

Pierluisi has said the upcoming Senate vote is a moot point because he already is governor, but then on Monday he issued a statement saying he would respect the outcome of their vote.

"The only thing I ask of Senators is that before they make a decision they listen to the people, to whom we are indebted," he said.

If the Senate votes against his appointment as secretary of state, Pierluisi has said he would step down and hand the governorship to the justice secretary, the next in line under the constitution.

Pierluisi has said he spoke by phone on Saturday with Rivera, who is running for governor in the 2020 general election. The Senate president said he has doubts about Pierluisi and insists that a Senate confirmation is necessary.

Further complicating the situation was a lawsuit filed Monday in Puerto Rico's Supreme Court by Carmen Yulín Cruz, mayor of the Puerto Rican capital of San Juan. The lawsuit questions whether Pierluisi had the right to be sworn in on Friday.

The crisis could now drag on for days or even weeks, with legal experts saying Puerto Rico's Supreme Court will likely issue the final decision if the Senate does not approve of Pierluisi as secretary of state and he declines to relinquish his position. A well-respected attorneys' organization has accused Pierluisi of "hijacking" the constitution.

Those who oppose Pierluisi said having him as governor represents a serious conflict of interest because he worked for a firm that represented a federal control board overseeing the island's finances amid a 13-year recession.

During his public hearing on Friday, Pierluisi said he is against several austerity measures sought by the board as Puerto Rico struggles to recover from Hurricane María, including laying off public employees and eliminating a Christmas bonus. But Pierluisi's brother-in-law is chairman of the board that Congress created to oversee the restructuring of some of the more than \$70 billion in public debt after Puerto Rico

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declared a form of bankruptcy.

Pierluisi previously was Puerto Rico's representative in Congress from 2009 to 2017 and then ran against Rosselló in the 2016 primaries and lost. He also served as justice secretary under Rosselló's father, Pedro Rosselló, when he was governor.

Associated Press reporter Mariela Santos contributed to this report.

Fire risks rise in previously too-wet-to-burn US Northwest

By TOM JAMES Associated Press

ISSAQUAH, Wash. (AP) — Nestled in the foothills of Washington's Cascade Mountains, the bustling Seattle suburb of Issaquah seems an unlikely candidate for anxiety over wildfires.

The region, famous for its rainfall, has long escaped major burns even as global warming has driven an increase in the size and number of wildfires elsewhere in the American West.

But according to experts, previously too-wet-to-burn parts of the Pacific Northwest face an increasing risk of significant wildfires due to changes in its climate driven by the same phenomenon: Global warming is bringing higher temperatures, lower humidity and longer stretches of drought.

And the region is uniquely exposed to the threat, with property owners who are often less prepared for fire than those in drier places and more homes tucked along forests than any other western state.

In Issaquah and towns like it across the region, that takes a shape familiar from recent destructive California wildfires: heavy vegetation that spills into backyards, often pressing against houses in neighborhoods built along mountains, with strong seasonal winds and few roads leading out.

"The only thing that's keeping it from going off like a nuclear bomb is the weather," said Chris Dicus, a professor at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo and head of the Association for Fire Ecology, a national group that studies wildfire and includes experts from the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Geological Survey.

With historically short summers, the swath of densely forested coastal territory stretching from northwestern Oregon to British Columbia has long been cloaked in a protective veil of moisture, making even medium-sized fires relatively rare. So-called "megafires" — enveloping hundreds of thousands of acres and even generating their own weather — have occurred only at century-plus intervals.

But global warming is changing the region's seasons. A national climate assessment prepared by 13 federal agencies and released in 2018 said the Pacific Northwest had warmed nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit since 1900 and that trend would continue into the century, leading to warmer winters and less mountain snowpack.

Experts say these long-term changes create a special risk in Pacific Northwest forests: Even a modest increase in contributing factors, like days without rain, could make them much more prone to burning.

"It's a couple of degrees difference. It's a couple of weeks' difference," said Michael Medler, a fire scientist and chair of the environmental studies department at Western Washington University. "Those are the kinds of changes that amount to taking a forest and pushing it over the edge."

Exactly when any one part of the region will reach that point is hard to predict, and researchers stressed that unknowns exist in modeling fire in woods that have burned so infrequently. But all pointed to changes already beginning to take place.

This year's fire danger, for instance, reached above-normal levels in the region a full three months earlier than at any time in more than 10 years, driven partly by an abnormally dry winter.

And fire counts are up: As of late June, western Oregon forests have seen double the average number of fire starts from the previous decade — 48 compared with 20. Western Washington saw an even larger increase, with 194 starts compared with an average of 74.

Even the region around Astoria, Oregon, which frequently gets 100-plus rainy days per year, making it one of the wettest parts of the state, has seen a dozen small fires in 2018 and 2019, according to data from the Oregon Department of Forestry. That compares with an average of just two per year over the

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previous decade.

Last year, 40% of Washington's wildfires were on its wetter western side, according to Janet Pearce, a spokeswoman for that state's natural resources agency.

"That was alarming and a first for us," she said in an email.

The risk is amplified by development patterns throughout the Pacific Northwest, where experts say the long gaps between major fires have created a perception of the forest as being too wet to burn.

In part due to that perception, the region boasts some of the West's most concentrated forest-edge development.

A 2013 survey of development within 550 yards (500 meters) of forestlands found that just six counties along the foothills of Washington's Cascade mountains host more homes in such zones than all of California.

Together, western Washington and the northwest corner of Oregon contained roughly 1,400 square miles (3,626 square kilometers) of forest-edge development — nearly as much as California, Colorado and Montana combined, according to the report by Headwaters Economics, a nonprofit land management research group.

Ray Rasker, who heads the group, cautioned the report was narrower than others, which count development up to 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) from any type of wildland. And the results don't necessarily translate to the Northwest being at higher overall risk, Rasker said, because other types of wild areas are more prone to burning than mature forests.

But while officials in California and other states have begun reforming forest-edge building and landscaping rules, such codes are still rare in the Northwest, and virtually none apply to houses already built, said Tim Ingalsbee, who heads Firefighters United for Safety Ethics and Ecology, an Oregon-based nonprofit that works to update building codes.

"The western slopes of the Cascades and the Northwest are just woefully unprepared," Ingalsbee said.

When wildfires penetrate neighborhoods, they become much harder to fight.

Fires that did that last year in California destroyed homes and killed residents in cities including Redding, where the Carr fire destroyed over 1,000 homes and forced the evacuation of 38,000, and Paradise, where the Camp fire killed more than 80 people and burned 14,000 homes.

Medler, of Western Washington University, pointed to sprawl radiating from cities in the Northwest's coastal corridor — such as Seattle — toward the Cascade mountains, which define the region's eastern edge and stretch from Canada into Oregon.

"The ones that keep me awake at night are places like Issaquah," said Medler.

The similarities between Paradise before the 2018 Camp fire and present-day Issaquah — a bustling suburban city of 39,000 less than half an hour from Seattle's downtown — are noticeable.

Both are tucked into foothills. Both feature neighborhoods surrounded by dense forests, some with only a single road leading in or out. And while not as frequent as the seasonal winds that fanned the Camp Fire, the Cascades are also prone to similar strong winds.

The California fires were "absolutely" a wake-up call, said Rich Burke, deputy fire chief with the Eastside Fire Department, which oversees fire protection in Issaquah and the surrounding area.

Wildfire-oriented setbacks and less-flammable materials still aren't written into building codes on the city's edges. But Burke said the department now fields frequent calls from homeowners concerned about wildfire protections, hosts preparedness trainings and has four wildland fire engines of its own.

Still, a neighborhood less than a mile from the city's center reveals what Medler describes as a classic Northwest scene: branches of towering conifers brushing against dozens of wood-sided homes.

Jason Ritchie owns a home just north of Issaquah, in neighboring Sammamish, and said a 2015 fire in the woods beside his property drove home the risks.

"It grew so fast," Ritchie said. "Had the wind been blowing from the north to the south, it would have engulfed the neighborhood very, very quickly."

The neighborhood features many houses built steps from the woods' edge but only two main routes out, a risk that wasn't at the front of Ritchie's mind when he bought his home.

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"If one of those roads gets blocked, we are in a heap of trouble," he said.

Questions remain about wildfire risks in previously wet forests, in part because they have burned so infrequently, said Crystal Raymond, a fire ecologist with the University of Washington's Climate Impact Group. A lack of data makes it difficult to predict exactly how many additional days of summer or drought the region's forests will tolerate before the risks increase, said Raymond and others.

But experts broadly agreed: The Pacific Northwest's wet climate is changing in ways that will make its forests more likely to burn.

"On the west side, there's a perception that fire doesn't happen here — maybe up on the mountains, but not here," Ingalsbee said. "That was then. This is now."

Follow reporter Tom James on Twitter at @TomJames206

GateHouse, Gannett to merge for \$1.4B, build newspaper giant

By TALI ARBEL AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Two of the largest U.S. newspaper companies have agreed to combine for roughly \$1.4 billion, creating a new industry giant that hopes to manage the crisis of print's decline through sheer size.

GateHouse Media, a fast-growing chain backed by an investment firm, is buying USA Today owner Gannett, promising to speed up a digital transformation as readers shift online. The companies say they are committed to "journalistic excellence" — while also cutting \$300 million in costs every year.

The resulting company would be the largest U.S. newspaper company by far, with a print circulation of 8.7 million, 7 million more than the new No. 2, McClatchy, according to media expert Ken Doctor.

Local papers, faced with the complex and expensive process of building digital businesses to replace declines in print ads and circulation, have been consolidating madly in recent years. Although papers with national readerships like The New York Times and The Washington Post have had success adding digital subscribers, local papers with local readerships find it much more difficult. Hundreds of such papers have closed, and newsrooms have slashed jobs.

According to a study by the University of North Carolina, the U.S. has lost almost 1,800 local newspapers since 2004. Newsroom employment fell by a quarter from 2008 to 2018, according to Pew Research, and layoffs have continued this year.

Both GateHouse and Gannett are known as buyers of other papers. Bulking up lets companies cut costs — via newsroom layoffs and other measures — and centralize operations. The combined company would have more than 260 daily papers in the U.S. along with more than 300 weeklies.

Those cuts could give the owners "a cushion of time" to figure out how to improve their digital businesses, longtime industry analyst Rick Edmonds of the Poynter Institute wrote Sunday.

But it's no panacea. "I don't think, just by these companies merging, they're going to somehow magically find a new business model, make everything all right and produce robust journalism at a local level," Butler University journalism professor Nancy Whitmore said. Still, a bigger, combined newspaper company could sell more national ads and boost their ad revenue, she said.

GateHouse's owner, New Media, is taking on new debt to get the deal done — a \$1.8 billion loan from private equity firm Apollo Global Management. That will have to be paid back.

"We've been hearing for years and years about the glories of cost efficiencies," said Northeastern University professor Dan Kennedy, a proponent of local ownership for media outlets. But it's unclear, based on past media mergers, whether those savings will benefit the papers, its employees or their readers, he said.

He wonders whether combined companies make more or fewer cuts than they would have if they had remained separate.

Several experts said they do not expect the Justice Department to have an issue with the deal, as the two companies have papers in different markets. The companies expect it to close this year.

The combined company would take the Gannett name and keep its headquarters in Gannett's current home of McLean, Virginia. GateHouse's owner New Media is buying Gannett Co. for \$12.06 a share in cash

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and stock.

Consolidation is nothing new to either company. Gannett's last big U.S. print purchase was in 2016, when it bought papers in the Journal Media Group chain for \$280 million, including the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and The Commercial Appeal in Memphis. Gannett also owns dailies in major cities such as the Detroit Free Press and Arizona Republic.

Its more recent merger efforts have been unsuccessful. It failed in an unsolicited bid for newspaper chain Tribune. Gannett then fended off an unwanted bid by MNG Enterprises, better known as Digital First Media, a hedge-fund backed media group with a slash-and-burn reputation for cutting jobs and letting papers wither.

GateHouse, a little-known name to U.S. readers, is also controlled by an investment company, but it doesn't have the same scalding reputation as Digital First. It is owned by the publicly traded New Media Investment Group, which is managed by investment firm Fortress Investment Group. Fortress, in turn, is owned by Japanese tech giant SoftBank. Gannett and New Media said Monday that Fortress will no longer manage New Media after 2021.

GateHouse has grown quickly in recent years, and its buying spree includes the Palm Beach Post, bought last year for \$49 million, and the Austin American-Statesman, on which it spent \$47.5 million. It publishes 154 daily newspapers, most in small- and mid-sized towns.

Gannett shares added 29 cents, or 2.7%, to close at \$11.04. New Media stock lost 81 cents, or 7.6%, to \$9.89.

AP Business Writer Mae Anderson contributed to this story.

Latest GOP retirement highlights party's growing peril in TX

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Monday's announcement that yet another Republican congressman is retiring highlights the GOP's growing struggle to win the House majority next year and the shifting political leanings of Texas, the nation's second-largest state.

Democrats' burgeoning prospects in Texas, which has a deep-red pedigree, are widely attributed to two factors. One is the state's growing populations of Hispanics and of moderate voters in communities ringing cities like Dallas, Houston and Austin, the other is the polarizing rhetoric of President Donald Trump.

"Trump has really turned out to be an accelerant for energizing young voters and voters of color," said Democratic pollster Zac McCrary, whose clients include MJ Hegar, a Democratic contender for challenging GOP Sen. John Cornyn next year. "And again at the same time, Trump has so deeply alienated suburban white voters in numbers that are mind-boggling."

Yet the arc of the state's demographic and political changes is such that Trump remains the favorite to win the state's coveted 38 electoral votes next year. And Cornyn, a three-term Senate veteran who's raised a daunting cache of campaign money and has plans to raise more, may prove difficult for Democrats to topple.

Rep. Kenny Marchant, an eight-term lawmaker from the Dallas-Fort Worth suburbs, said Monday he won't seek re-election in 2020. That made him the 11th GOP representative to so far say he'll step aside — compared to just three Democrats — and the seventh in just two weeks.

Marchant is the fourth Texas Republican to say he's heading home. Of that group, he's the third whose district now seems in play for Democrats, who see the state as fertile ground for building their House majority.

While Republican presidential candidates have carried Texas in every election since 1980, Trump won the state in 2016 by just 9 percentage points. That was the first time the GOP candidate won by less than double digits since 1996, though it was a large enough advantage that it could be hard for Democrats to overcome just four years later.

Democrats' hopes were fanned further by then-Rep. Beto O'Rourke, who missed defeating GOP Sen.

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Ted Cruz by only 3 percentage points last year. He would have been the first Democrat to win statewide office there since 1994.

While O'Rourke spent a record \$80 million in his unsuccessful Senate campaign — Cruz spent \$46 million — part of the explanation for his strong showing was the state's changing population.

As its residents have risen in number to around 29 million, second only to California, its non-Hispanic white and black populations have grown more slowly than its Hispanic residents.

That's been coupled with growth in Texas's suburbs, which both sides agree are shifting toward Democrats. That's consistent with a national trend that helped cost Republicans House control last year and helped Democrats unseat two GOP incumbents in the Dallas and Houston suburbs.

Illustrating the trend, Dallas County outside the city of Dallas grew by 11.5 percent from 2010 to 2018 to 2.6 million people, according to Census Bureau figures. Harris County outside Houston grew by nearly 15 percent and Bexar County outside San Antonio grew by almost 16 percent over the same period.

"You can win suburban seats in Texas as a Republican, you can win suburban seats anywhere as a Republican," said GOP pollster Glen Bolger. "It's just harder and you have to be better prepared, raise more money and be more aggressive. These are no longer handed to you on a silver platter."

Marchant, 68, gave no specific reason for his retirement in a written statement, saying "It is time."

He was re-elected last year by a mere 3 percentage points after winning by 17 percentage points in 2016 and by 33 percentage points in 2014. He'd raised nearly \$750,000 so far this year and had nearly \$2.2 million cash on hand — far surpassing potential challengers and giving no hint he would step aside.

Democrats control the House by 235-197, with two vacancies and one independent. A party will need at least 218 seats to win the majority.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, House Democrats' political organization, is mockingly calling the Texas lawmakers' retirements "Texodus" and months ago opened a campaign office in Austin, the state's capital.

They are targeting three other Texas Republicans elected from suburban districts last year by 4 percentage points or less: veteran Reps. Michael McCaul and John Carter and freshman Chip Roy.

Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., who leads the National Republican Congressional Committee, said of Marchant's departure, "This is a Republican seat and will remain a Republican seat in 2020."

Cornyn has raised more than \$10 million this year, far outpacing potential challengers so far. Democrats say he's the type of long-term establishment figure who is ripe for defeat, while Republicans say he's a proven statewide winner who lacks Cruz' polarizing persona that turns off moderate voters.

AP reporter Clarice Silber contributed from Austin, Texas.

Putin urges arms talks with US after nuclear pact demise

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday that Russia would only deploy new intermediate-range missiles if the United States does and called for urgent arms control talks to prevent a chaotic arms race following the demise of a key nuclear pact.

Putin made his statements after the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty ended Friday, with the U.S. announcing its intention to test and deploy weapons previously banned by the 1987 accord.

Washington said it withdrew because of Russia's alleged violations of the pact; Russia denies breaching the terms of the treaty.

Putin condemned the U.S. exit from the treaty "in a unilateral way and under a far-fetched reason," saying that it "seriously exacerbated the situation in the world and raised fundamental risks for all."

He said in a statement that Russia will carefully monitor Washington's actions and respond in kind if it sees that the U.S. is developing and deploying new intermediate-range missiles.

The INF Treaty, which was signed by U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, banned the production, testing and deployment of land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range

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of 500 to 5,500 kilometers (310 to 3,410 miles). Such weapons were seen as particularly destabilizing because of shorter time they take to reach targets compared to intercontinental ballistic missiles, raising the likelihood of a nuclear conflict over a false launch alert.

"If we receive reliable information that the U.S. has completed the development and launched production of the relevant systems, Russia will have to engage in full-scale development of similar missiles," Putin said.

The U.S. has accused Russia of developing and deploying a cruise missile that violated provisions of the pact. Russia has denied the breach, and, in its turn, accused the U.S. of violations.

Putin noted that Russia for now will rely on its existing air-launched X-101 and Kinzhal missiles and the Kalibr missiles carried by submarines and navy ships, as well as prospective weapons, including the Zircon hypersonic missiles, to ensure its security.

He also reaffirmed Moscow's earlier pledge not to deploy intermediate-range weapons until the U.S. places them near Russia's borders.

"Our actions related to the development, production and deployment of ground-based intermediate-range missiles will be exclusively reciprocal and mirrored," he said. "We will not deploy them until the U.S.-made intermediate-range missiles are deployed" in areas where they may threaten Russia.

A senior Russian lawmaker noted in comments carried by Russian news agencies that Putin's statement was a warning to nations that agree to house American missiles.

"Those words were addressed to the U.S. allies," Konstantin Kosachev, the head of the foreign affairs committee in the upper house of Russia's parliament. "Those who would host the missiles would automatically and voluntarily make themselves targets for nuclear weapons."

Putin also emphasized that the U.S. exit from the INF could pave the way for the demise of other arms control pacts and trigger an all-out arms race.

"In order to avoid chaos without any rules, restrictions and laws, it's necessary to weigh all the dangerous consequences and start a serious dialogue without any ambiguities," Putin said. "Russia considers it necessary to resume full-fledged talks on strategic stability and security without any delay."

Matthew Bodner in Moscow contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 6, the 218th day of 2019. There are 147 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 6, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act.

On this date:

In 1806, the Holy Roman Empire went out of existence as Emperor Francis II abdicated.

In 1809, one of the leading literary figures of the Victorian era, poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson, was born in Somersby, Lincolnshire, England.

In 1890, Cy Young gained the first of his 511 major league victories as he pitched the Cleveland Spiders to a win over the Chicago Colts (however, the score is a matter of dispute, with some sources saying 6-1, and others saying 8-1).

In 1911, actress-comedian Lucille Ball was born in Jamestown, New York.

In 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war against Russia and Serbia declared war against Germany.

In 1926, Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel, arriving in Kingsdown, England, from France in 14 1/2 hours.

In 1942, Queen Wilhemina of the Netherlands became the first reigning queen to address a joint meeting of Congress, telling lawmakers that despite Nazi occupation, her people's motto remained, "No surrender."

In 1945, during World War II, the U.S. B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay dropped an atomic bomb code-named "Little Boy" on Hiroshima, Japan, resulting in an estimated 140,000 deaths. (Three days later, the

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United States exploded a nuclear device over Nagasaki; five days after that, Imperial Japan surrendered.)

In 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Gherman Titov became the second man to orbit Earth as he flew aboard Vostok 2; his call sign, "Eagle," prompted his famous declaration: "I am Eagle!"

In 1978, Pope Paul VI died at Castel Gandolfo at age 80.

In 1986, William J. Schroeder (SHRAY'-dur) died at Humana Hospital-Audubon in Louisville, Kentucky, after living 620 days with the Jarvik 7 artificial heart.

In 1991, the World Wide Web made its public debut as a means of accessing webpages over the Internet. TV newsman Harry Reasoner died in Norwalk, Connecticut, at age 68.

In 2013, U.S. Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan went on trial at Fort Hood, Texas, charged with killing 13 people and wounding 32 others in a 2009 attack. (Hasan, who admitted carrying out the attack, was convicted and sentenced to death.)

Ten years ago: Sonia Sotomayor was confirmed as the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice by a Senate vote of 68-31. John Hughes, 59, Hollywood's youth movie director of the 1980s and '90s, died in New York City.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama closed a three-day U.S.-Africa summit in Washington which brought together leaders from more than 50 African nations. Michael Worthington was put to death by the state of Missouri for raping and killing college student Melinda "Mindy" Griffin in 1995, making him the first U.S. prisoner executed since a lethal injection in Arizona the previous month in which an inmate took nearly two hours to die.

One year ago: Twin Northern California wildfires grew to become the largest wildfire in state history, burning more than 440 square miles north of San Francisco. A set of U.S. sanctions against Iran that had been eased by the Obama administration under the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal went back into effect. Former Nevada governor and U.S. senator Paul Laxalt, who was a close ally to Ronald Reagan, died at the age of 96.

Today's Birthdays: Children's performer Ella Jenkins is 95. Actor-director Peter Bonerz is 81. Actress Louise Sorel is 79. Actor Michael Anderson Jr. is 76. Actor Ray Buktenica is 76. Actor Dorian Harewood is 69. Actress Catherine Hicks is 68. Rock singer Pat MacDonald (Timbuk 3) is 67. Country musician Mark DuFresne (Confederate Railroad) is 66. Actress Stephanie Kramer is 63. Actress Faith Prince is 62. Rhythm-and-blues singer Randy DeBarge is 61. Actor Leland Orser is 59. Actress Michelle Yeoh (yoh) is 57. Country singers Patsy and Peggy Lynn are 55. Basketball Hall of Famer David Robinson is 54. Actor Jeremy Ratchford is 54. Actor Benito Martinez is 51. Country singer Lisa Stewart is 51. Movie writer-director M. Night Shyamalan (SHAH'-mah-lahn) is 49. Actress Merrin Dungey is 48. Singer Geri Halliwell Horner is 47. Actor Jason O'Mara is 47. Singer-actor David Campbell is 46. Actress Vera Farmiga is 46. Actress Ever (cq) Caradine is 45. Actress Soleil (soh-LAY') Moon Frye is 43. Actress Melissa George is 43. Rock singer Travis McCoy (Gym Class Heroes) is 38. Actor Leslie Odom Jr. is 38. Actress Romola Garai is 37. Rock musician Eric Roberts (Gym Class Heroes) is 35.

Thought for Today: "If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it. The more things you do, the more you can do." — Lucille Ball, American actress-comedian (born this date in 1911, died 1989).