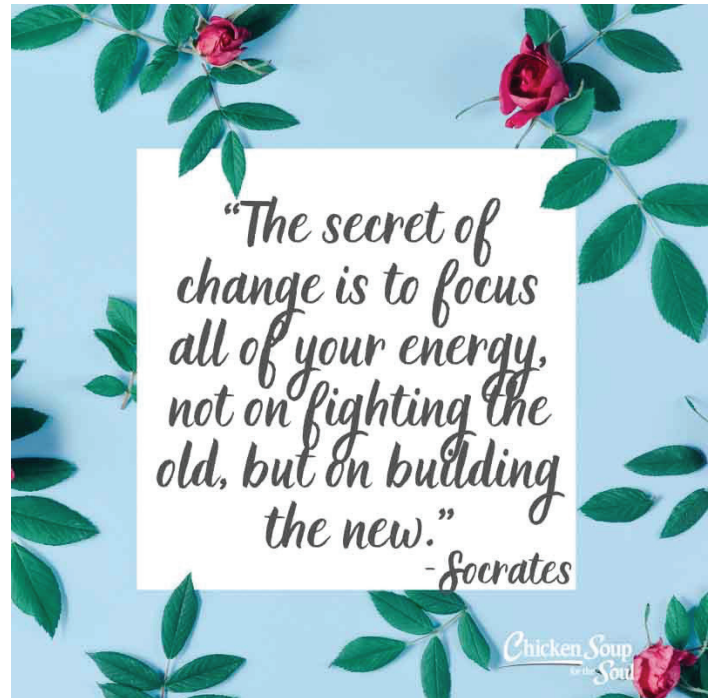


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OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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.

- 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

It will be the **COOLEST**
thing you'll see all summer!



**A robot
will serve
you your
Blizzard®!**



Friday, Aug. 16 - 1 p.m. to close

\$1 for every Blizzard® sold during this time
will be donated to the GT Robotics Club.

**When you buy a Blizzard®, the
GT Robotics robot will serve
you the Blizzard®.**

**Only at the Groton Dairy Queen
Only inside service**

Most schools support SDHSAA transgender policy

By Dana Hess
For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — While the state's activities association expects that there will again be legislation aimed at overturning or changing its transgender policy, a recent survey of member schools found that more than 80% approve of the policy.

The board of the South Dakota High School Activities Association heard the prediction about legislation and the results of the survey on Wednesday during a strategic planning and goal setting session that also served as an introduction for new board members.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos reminded board members that the association's transgender policy was in development for a year before it was adopted and has been amended several times to reflect the concerns of legislators and member schools.

When a transgender student — someone who lives life in a manner inconsistent with the sex with which they were born — applies to compete in high school athletics, they face a process that Swartos characterized as "pretty involved."

In consultation with medical and psychology professionals, the student and the school submit paperwork to SDHSAA. The association passes that material on to a hearing officer who verifies the information with the goal of determining that the applicant isn't trying to gain a competitive advantage.

"We haven't had much of an issue yet," Swartos said, noting that fewer than five students have submitted their paperwork. He said that amounts to .002% of the state's high school student population. "The schools have been very good at policing this."

According to Swartos, most of the legislative concerns expressed about the South Dakota rule are based on news out of Connecticut where some transgender runners are dominating in track and field.

Transgender policies for participating in high school sports vary by state, Swartos explained, with some having policies similar to South Dakota's and others adopting the NCAA policy of requiring hormone therapy.

A survey about the SDHSAA transgender policy garnered 128 responses from the association's 178 member schools.

Of the schools that responded, 81% said they supported the SDHSAA policy. Only 23% supported having no policy at all and 14% said that they had fielded complaints about the policy.

"The schools want us to have a statewide policy," Swartos said. "They don't want to have this fight in 178 communities."

Board member Brian Maher of Sioux Falls said the survey results show that the association is on the right path.

Maher said the data shows that member schools "want the activities association smack dab in the middle of this. "They want the guidance.

Most schools support SDHSAA transgender policy

By Dana Hess
For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — South Dakota will soon have the only state high school activities association in the nation that doesn't sanction girls' softball.

At a strategic planning and goal setting meeting on Wednesday, South Dakota High School Activities Association Executive Director Dan Swartos told the SDHSAA board of directors that Wyoming will soon sanction girls' softball, leaving South Dakota as the only state that does not.

Swartos noted that any move to sanction the sport would have to come from interest generated by member schools. He said the SDHSAA staff would be monitoring the schools' interest as a number of them already offer the sport. South Dakota is also one of three states that does not sanction boys' baseball.

In addition to girls' softball, Swartos said interest has also been shown in e-sports and girls' wrestling.

"Those are the big ones we'll be looking at in the future," Swartos predicted.

The SDHSAA office has also fielded inquiries about sanctioning ice hockey, rodeo, clay shooting sports and swimming and diving.

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August 2019 El Niño Update: Stick a fork in it

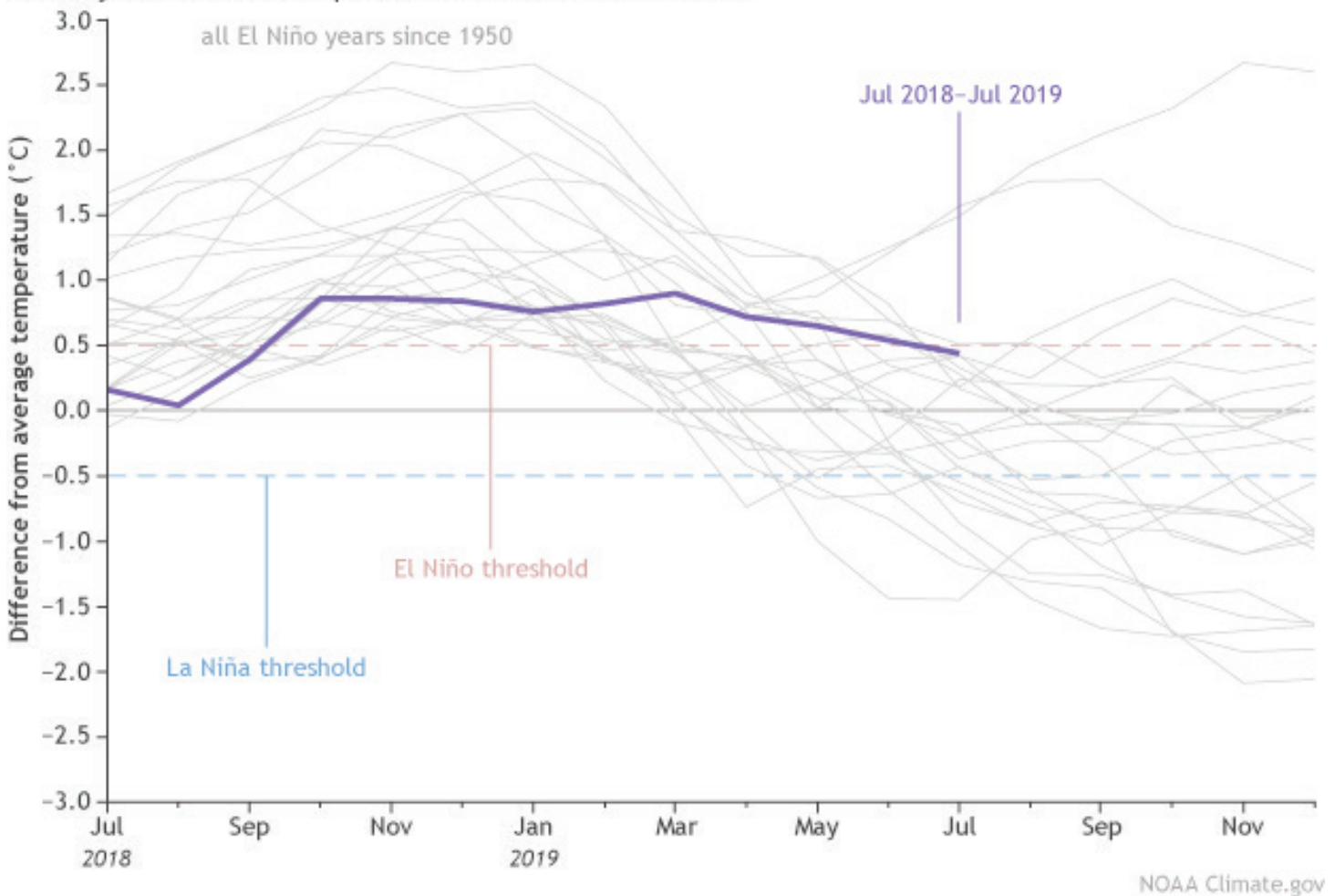
Author: Nat Johnson

The El Niño of 2019 is officially done. Near-average conditions in the tropical Pacific indicate that we have returned to ENSO-neutral conditions (neither El Niño or La Niña is present). Forecasters continue to favor ENSO-neutral (50-55% chance) through the Northern Hemisphere winter.

What's on our plate?

The July Niño3.4 index, our primary index for monitoring ENSO, was 0.4°C above the long-term average, falling below the El Niño threshold of 0.5°C for the first time since last September. In addition, tropical atmospheric conditions have trended toward neutral, as the cloudiness and rainfall over the Pacific were near average over the past month. The trade winds also have been near average lately, indicating that Walker circulation, which weakens during El Niño, has shown signs of rebounding.

Monthly sea surface temperature Niño 3.4 Index Values



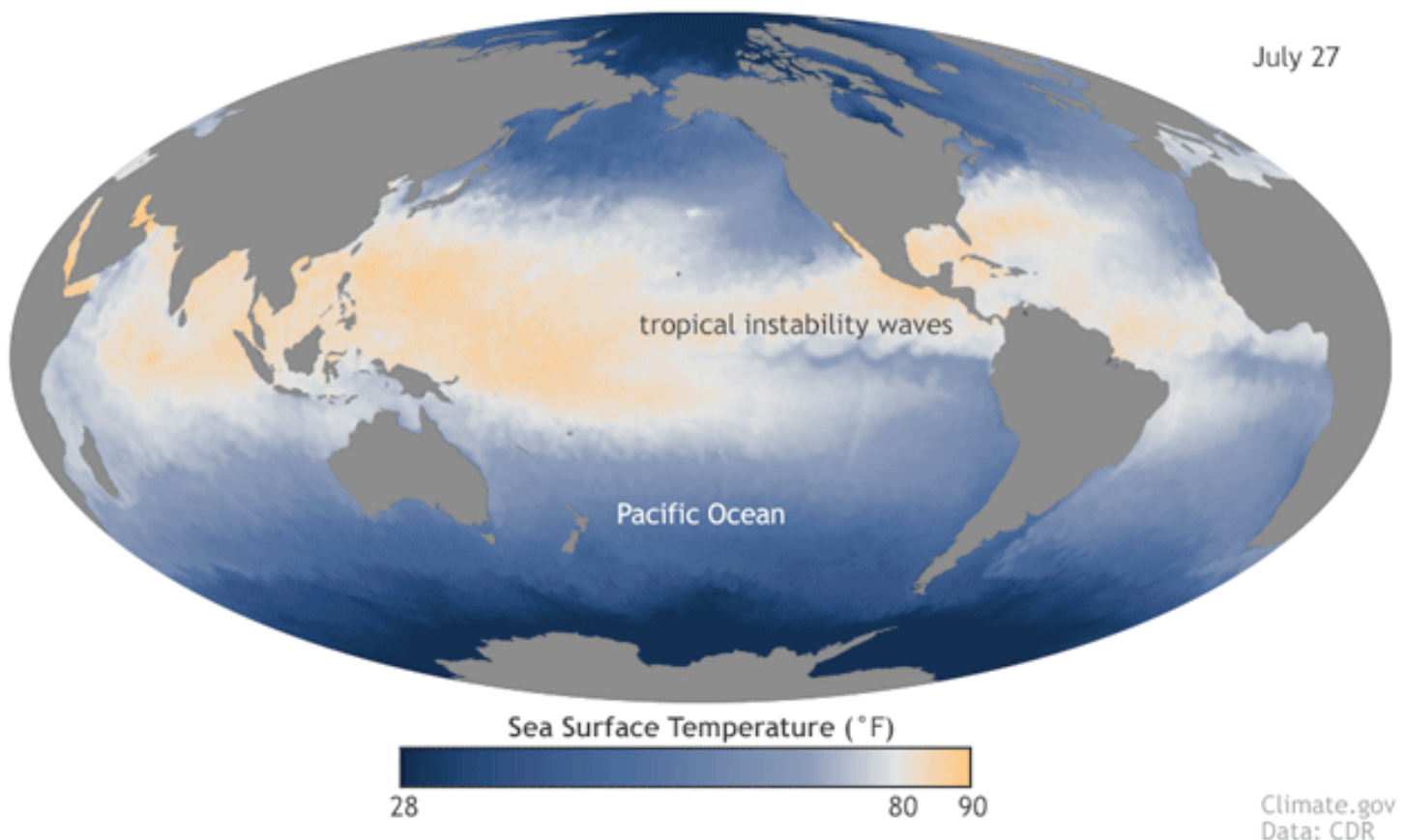
Monthly sea surface temperature in the Niño 3.4 region of the tropical Pacific for 2018–19 (purple line) and all other El Niño years since 1950. Climate.gov graph based on ERSSTv5 temperature data.

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Based on these latest indicators from the tropical ocean and atmosphere, NOAA forecasters have declared that El Niño has ended and neutral conditions have returned. Does a return to neutral mean that average weather conditions are expected to prevail around the globe? As Michelle pointed out a couple years ago, the answer is an emphatic NO. A return to neutral means that we will not get that predictable influence from El Niño or La Niña, but the atmosphere is certainly capable of wild swings without a push from either influence. Basically, ENSO-neutral means that the job of seasonal forecasters gets a bit tougher because we do not have that ENSO influence that we potentially can predict several months in advance (in a probabilistic form).

A change to neutral could also impact the Atlantic hurricane season, which typically ramps up this time of year and peaks in early-to-mid September. El Niño tends to produce hostile conditions for Atlantic hurricanes, as explained more thoroughly in Dr. Phil Klotzbach's guest post, so a return to neutral means that we will not get a decisive push from El Niño to the Atlantic. The updated NOAA Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook is now available, so be sure to check how these changing ENSO conditions and other drivers are impacting the Atlantic hurricane season.



Sea surface temperature from June 1 through July 27, 2019. The region of cool water in the tropical eastern Pacific, called the eastern Pacific cold tongue, is clearly visible along the Equator, surrounded by warmer waters to the north and south. The wavy features along the northern and southern borders between the cold tongue and the warmer waters are tropical instability waves. The waves on the north side are clearer in part due to the stronger temperature gradient on that side of the cold tongue. Map by NOAA Climate.gov from CDR data.

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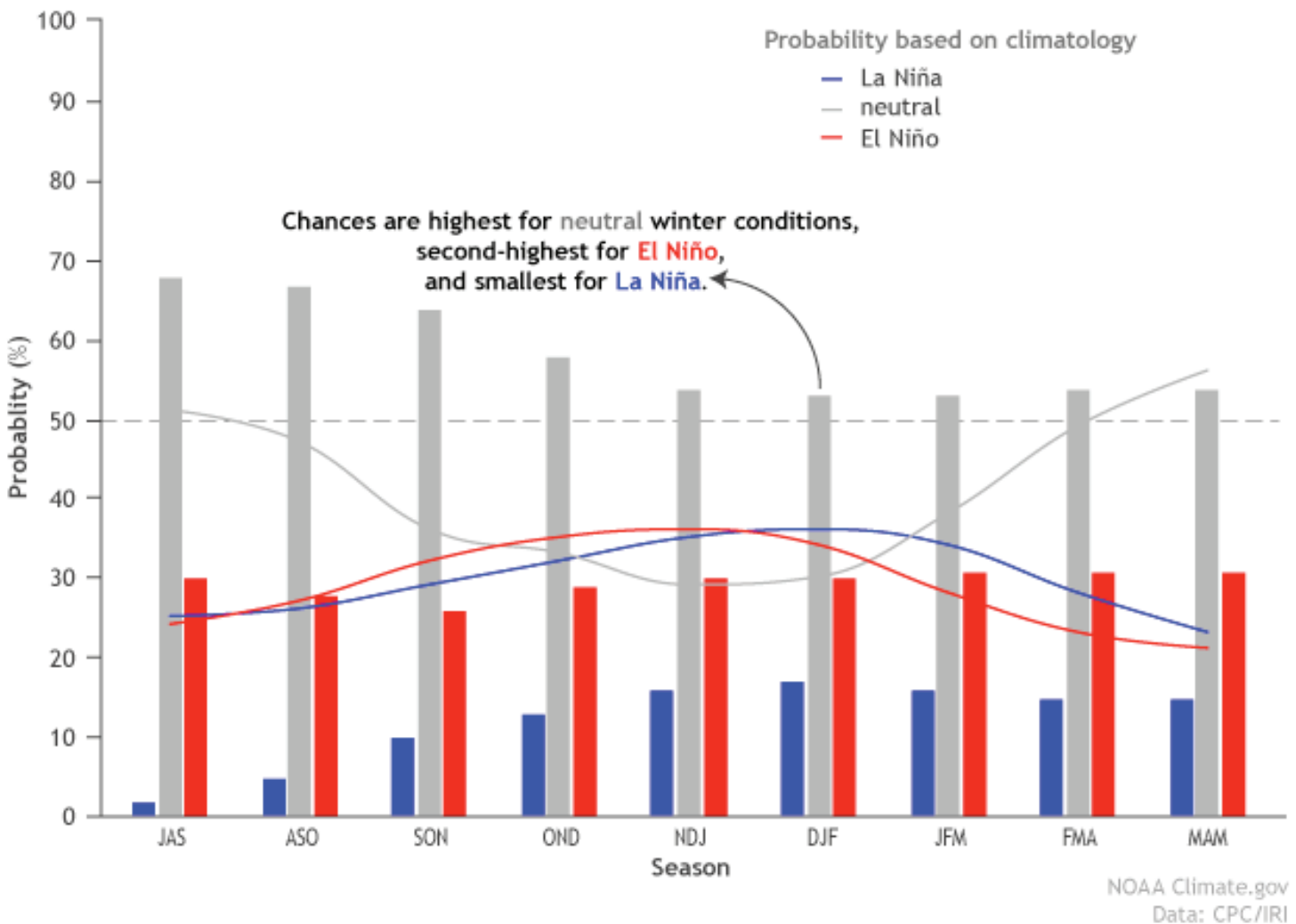
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And just to drive home that ENSO-neutral doesn't necessarily mean "bland and boring," a closer look at the weekly ocean surface temperature reveals some fascinating, wavy features over the eastern Pacific. Emily discussed these interesting features, called tropical instability waves, a few years ago. These waves can produce some dramatic week-to-week swings in the Niño3.4 index, but their effects tend to get washed out in the monthly and seasonally averaged index. That doesn't mean that these waves cannot impact ENSO – check out Emily's post to find out more!

What's on the menu?

Will ENSO-neutral conditions continue through fall and winter? Similar to last month, most of the computer models we consult predict that the ocean surface temperature in the Niño3.4 region will remain near average throughout this period. NOAA forecasters favor this outcome, predicting a 50-55% chance of neutral conditions remaining through winter.

Probability of El Niño, La Niña, or neutral from Jul-Sep 2019 through Mar-May 2020



Vertical bar histogram showing probabilities for La Niña (blue), neutral (gray), and El Niño (red) conditions for the remainder of 2019 and into early 2020. Thin lines show climatological (historical average) probabilities for these same three ENSO conditions. Figure from IRI.

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Is it possible for an El Niño to end in the spring or summer only to reemerge again in the following fall? Yes, it can happen! (You can get a sense of this from close inspection of the first figure above.) We have seen this sort of situation a few times since 1950, the latest being the reemergence of El Niño in the fall of 1977. Some forecast models favor this outcome, and forecasters consider this plausible, but not the most likely outcome, predicting a 30% chance of El Niño next fall and winter.

The current forecast underscores that we don't have a sure bet this far in advance – there are many possible outcomes for the coming fall and winter. The forecast probabilities still give us useful information on what outcome is favored at this time. As conditions evolve, we will gather more information that will allow us to refine these probabilities and hopefully narrow the forecast uncertainty. You can count on us to stay on top of these developments and to give you the latest!

This ain't Mama's home cookin'!

I know what you're thinking – this blog post isn't the same sweet, tasty morsel of freshly baked ENSO goodness that Emily usually delivers to us. I feel the same way. Emily is away this week, but don't worry, she will be back soon for a post later in August. That means you'll want to check back in a few weeks to satisfy your next ENSO craving!



MS/HS ADDS COMFORT CLOSET

Photo from GHS Facebook Page

JODI SCHWAN

It can be hard for some students to show up at school ready to learn when they are pre-occupied with basic personal needs such as clean laundry, deodorant, food and basic nutrition, and soap and shampoo. We have established a new comfort closet to help provide our students with this kind of assistance.

To help, the Groton Area MS/HS will be accepting donations for the following items for both male and female students: Shampoo/Conditioner, Soap, Body Spray, Hair Ties, Deodorant, Laundry Soap (Pods), Quarters for Laundromat, Winter weather gear such as hats, gloves, and coats, new socks, new underwear, Snack-sized cracker packages, Single-serve peanut butter, Granola Bars, Toothbrushes/toothpaste.

Questions about this project should be directed to Opportunity Coordinator, Jodi Schwan at 605-397-8381 or Jodi.Schwan@k12.sd.us

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.

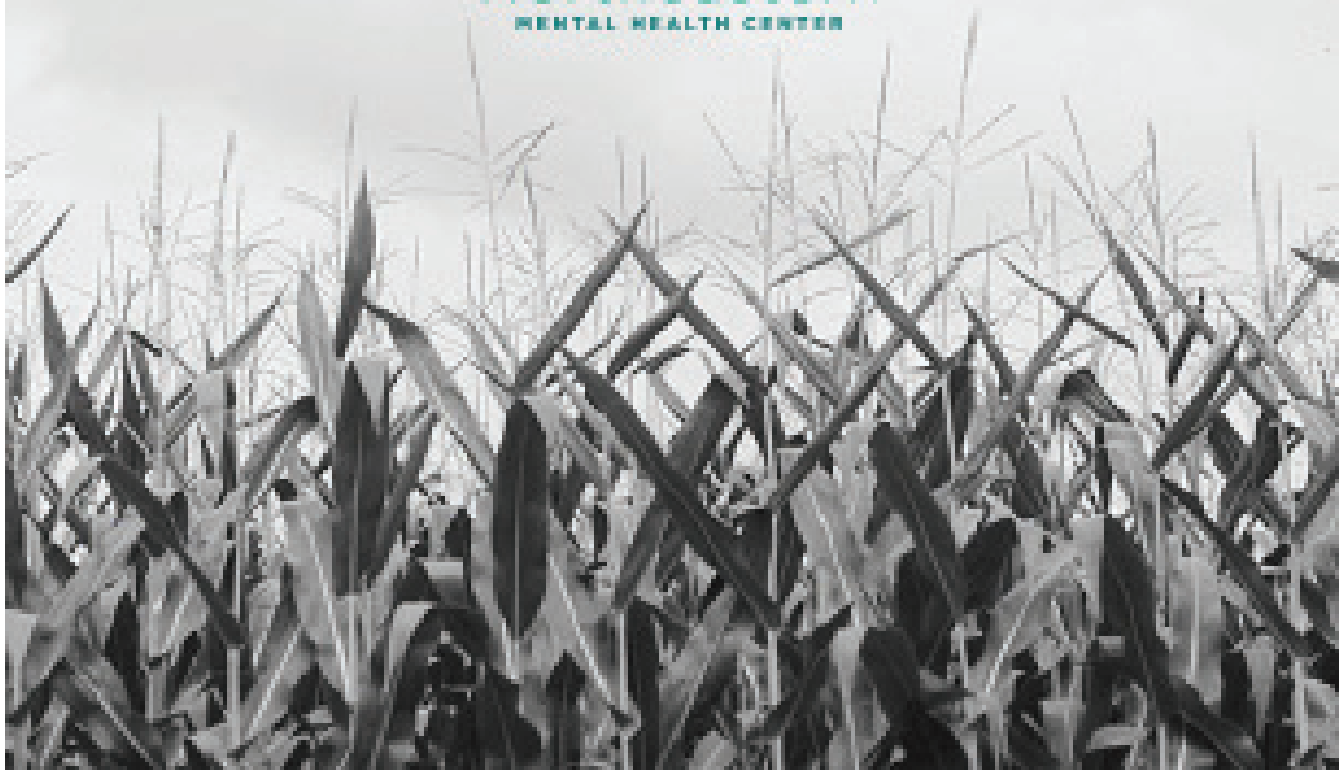
We're here to help.

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





DAMAGING DEBT: College grads stung by broken promises of federal loan forgiveness program

By: Nick Lowrey

Hundreds of South Dakota residents are caught in financial limbo wondering if the tens of thousands of dollars they owe on student debt — and which they were promised would be forgiven if they entered public-service careers — will actually ever be eliminated.

Those South Dakota residents include teachers, police officers, employees at charitable organizations and even members of the military who signed up to participate in the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. For many, their debts have grown to unmanageable levels over their years of work in relatively low-pay positions and due to entry into income-driven repayment plans.

Created in 2007 under the George W. Bush Administration, the PSLF program began as a way to encourage college graduates to pursue public service by working in government or charitable non-profits. The PSLF was supposed to forgive a person's remaining student loan balances after they made 120 qualifying monthly payments, a period spanning roughly 10 years. All 10 years had to be spent working in public service.

But the program's most compelling promise has, so far, gone largely unfulfilled. The latest data from the U.S. Department of Education, which runs the program, show that just 864 of the roughly 76,000 fully processed PSLF forgiveness applications had been approved as of March 31, 2019. That is an approval rate of less than 1.1%.

The loan forgiveness was intended to help offset lower wages typically paid to public-service employees. As of March 2019, about 2.1 million borrowers nationwide had their loans and jobs certified as eligible for PSLF. Most borrowers chose to use income-driven repayment plans that reduce monthly payments but often result in loan principals growing over time.

The failure of the PSLF program is just one element of a growing national problem in which college graduates are increasingly carrying major debt loads that inhibit home ownership, entrepreneurship and the ability to plan for a stable financial future. Nearly three-quarters of college graduates in South Dakota carry some level of college debt, with an average of more than \$30,000 owed per person and well over a billion dollars owed overall. Debt levels have increased as tuition, fees and other costs have increased and, especially in South Dakota, as tuition assistance has become more difficult to obtain. Meanwhile, college debt among recent graduates has become more difficult to pay off because wages have not kept up with rising college costs.

Experts, officials and borrowers all say confusion and miscommunication are rampant with the PSLF program. A 2017 report by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau called "Staying on Track While Giving Back," detailed numerous problems with PSLF even before any applicants applied for forgiveness. In October of that year, when the first group of PSLF eligible borrowers started applying for loan forgiveness, more than 99 percent of the applicants were denied.

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South Dakotans are among those suffering from the broken promise of the PSLF program, said Eric Olilla, executive director of the South Dakota State Employees Organization.

"I know people have been denied," Olilla said.

Many state employees were relying on PSLF for their financial wellbeing and are worried they could be left to pay what has in many cases become much larger debts than were originally taken out, Olilla said.

Problems in PSLF have led to a lawsuit filed against the Department of Education in July 2019 on behalf of eight teachers from around the country and the American Federation of Teachers. U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has called for dismantling PSLF and included a measure to do so in the department's 2020 budget request.



U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, has said he supports efforts to review PSLF but stopped short of calling for its destruction.

"I believe it's healthy to periodically review federal programs to make certain they still have merit, they're a good use of taxpayer dollars and they are working as Congress intended," Rounds said in an email response to questions posed by South Dakota News Watch. "The PSLF is no different, particularly given the program's widely reported issues approving loan forgiveness applications."

Rounds said that his office had helped at least one constituent secure loan forgiveness under PSLF in 2019 after they were wrongfully denied.

It is difficult to know how many South Dakotans are hoping to use PSLF or how many have applied and been denied loan forgiveness under the program. The Department of Education doesn't report PSLF statistics by state.

Gov. Kristi Noem told South Dakota News Watch that her staff has requested data from the federal education department about the PSLF program and how South Dakota borrowers have been affected.

The data request is an effort to "assist in the larger conversation of higher education affordability," Noem said in a statement.

"I want state employees to know that my administration is one that empowers families and takes care of its people," Noem said.

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Still, South Dakota public employees such as Jerica Slocum, who now owes the federal government \$20,000 more than she originally borrowed, are worried that they'll be stuck paying back a debt they would not have owed if not for the promise of PSLF.

"At first I really had faith in this program, but now I feel like criminal activity has been committed against me," Slocum said.



Jerica Slocum and her husband, Robert Slocum, hold their daughter, Paisley. Jerica Slocum said she borrowed about \$62,000 to get her teaching degree and has been making payments. But she and others are concerned a troubled federal loan relief program may not deliver on its promises. Sub-

mitted photo

Twice the debt and one way out

Slocum, 36, of Isabel, is using an income-driven repayment plan to make loan payments and is hoping her debt will be forgiven under the PSLF program. She graduated from Minnesota State University at Mankato in 2010 with a teaching degree and went to work in the Eagle Butte School District as a social studies teacher.

In 2013, Slocum discovered that she was eligible to participate in the PSLF program. The program seemed almost too good to be true, but she got her job certified as eligible for PSLF and consolidated her loans anyway.

"I probably would have been paying for the rest of my life. This program was kind of my saving grace," Slocum said.

Partially because South Dakota's teachers are among the lowest paid in the nation, there were a few years that Slocum didn't make enough money to be required to make any payments at all. Fedloan Servicing, which handles all PSLF approved loans, assured Slocum those zero-dollar payments counted as qualifying payments under PSLF. But none of Slocum's loan payments, so far, have counted toward her original balance.

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Slocum borrowed about \$62,000 to get her teaching degree. She admits that graduating from college took a little longer than it should have, about six years including time off to work and make money along the way. Slocum also studied abroad in Mexico and Australia. Neither program was cheap, she said, but they did make her a better teacher.

Almost 10 years after graduating and making income-based loan payments since 2011, Slocum now owes more than \$84,000.

Income-based repayment plans reduce a borrower's monthly payments based on how much money they are making, and after 20 years of payments the remaining loan balance can be wiped clean. But borrowers often see their principal loan amounts remain or even rise during that time, and then must pay income taxes on any debt that is eventually forgiven.

According to the 2017 consumer protection bureau report, the Department of Education estimates that because a typical borrower's monthly payments increase as their income increases, they will usually end up paying more than they borrowed before seeing their loan forgiven or paid off. But public employees don't typically see their incomes rise as fast as their private sector counterparts. Without PSLF, public employees would end up paying far more of their lifetime earnings toward interest on their student loans than private sector employees, the report said.

Slocum said she feels stuck in her current job and financial situation. Her loan servicer has told her on multiple occasions that taking a new job, even one that also is eligible for PSLF, could derail her chances at forgiveness because it would further complicate the paperwork and the payment tracking process.

Slocum could leave teaching, take a private sector job and stay in an income-driven repayment plan, which is supposed to lead to loan forgiveness after 20 years of payments. But if her loan is forgiven after those 20 years, she'd be taxed on the amount forgiven as if it were income. She'd also be making a \$280 payment each month for 20 years. Provided her family income doesn't change, Slocum would pay an additional \$67,200 on her loans over that period of time.

"I don't know how I'm going to climb out of this mess," Slocum said.

Paying the loan back isn't what has Slocum angry, she knew that was part of the deal. What is galling to her, Slocum said, is that the federal government made a promise and, so far, hasn't followed through on it. In the process, she's seen what she owes more than double, a situation she wouldn't have allowed to happen if not for PSLF.

"I would have planned things differently, if I had not been accepted into the program and given that hope," Slocum said.

Sketchy guidelines for lenders, borrowers

Slocum has good reason to be worried. According to a September 2018 report on PSLF from the federal Government Accountability Office, the Department of Education never published a comprehensive guide for the nine federal loan service contractors to follow when borrowers asked about PSLF. As a consequence, loan servicers often dispensed incomplete information or even misinformation.

Some borrowers weren't told about all their paperwork requirements. Other borrowers were enrolled into the wrong type of payment plan. Some weren't told that consolidating their loans would restart the

clock on the 10-year, 120-payment cycle of required payments.

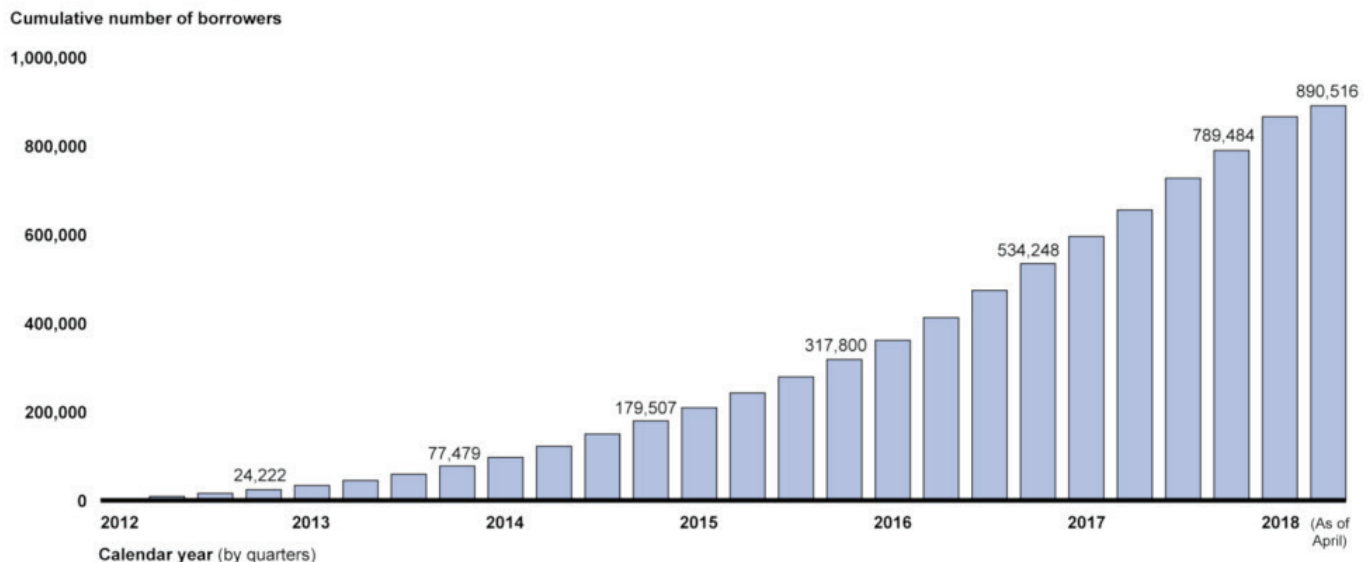
One former soldier named John Scott, whose complaint was quoted in the 2017 consumer protection bureau report, said, "I was told that none of my active military service, including deployments to Afghanistan, would count for PSLF purposes." Scott added that, "My military service, in which my leg function was sacrificed, did not count for anything [toward PSLF]. This is contrary to the alleged policy for which the PSLF program was created and it is insulting."

Scott should have been able to make PSLF qualifying payments while serving, according to the CFPB report.

To be eligible for PSLF, student borrowers must have taken loans directly from the federal government. In 2007, when the program was created, borrowers were allowed to consolidate Federal Family Education Loans — a subsidized private loan guaranteed by the federal government — into federal direct loans. Now, most student loans are taken directly from the federal government. No new federal family loans have been made since 2010.

Several types of payment plans could be used under PSLF, including the income-based, income-contingent and so-called "Pay As You Earn" plans. Several other types of payment plans, such as the graduated and extended term plans, can't be used for PSLF.

Figure 4: Cumulative Number of Borrowers Who Had Their Employment and Loans Certified as Eligible for PSLF, January 2012 to April 2018, by Quarter



Source: GAO analysis of data from the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) servicer. | GAO-18-547

Note: These borrowers voluntarily had their employment and loans certified as eligible for PSLF as an initial step towards applying for loan forgiveness.

This chart shows that as college debt has skyrocketed, an increasing number of borrowers, almost 900,000, have been certified to received loan forgiveness under the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. But despite taking jobs in the public-service fields and making payments for a decade, very few borrowers have seen any relief.

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The 2018 GAO report noted that because there wasn't a comprehensive guide to follow, customer service representatives routinely dispensed bad information to borrowers.

Staying current with PSLF program changes and progress was difficult for borrowers, too. They are required to file multiple sets of paperwork annually. If one piece of information was missing on one set of paperwork in just one year, the borrower's loan forgiveness timeline could be thrown off. And unless the borrower was paying attention, they wouldn't catch the error until applying for forgiveness. Adding to the paperwork issue was the fact that the Department of Education and loan servicers weren't giving borrowers clear information about their loans, the 2018 GAO report said.



**South Dakota Sen. Reynold Nesiba,
D-Sioux Falls**

Reynold Nesiba, a college professor and Democratic state senator from Sioux Falls, was one of the borrowers who missed his 10-year PSLF timeline. He started borrowing for college in 1984 and stopped in 1995 after earning a Ph.D. in economics from Notre Dame University. Back then, Nesiba said, he had about \$70,000 in student debt. He started working at what is now Augustana University as an economics professor in 1995 and began making payments.

"I was on an income-contingent repayment plan which allowed me to have a mortgage and get kids through elementary school and middle school, but I wasn't paying (my loans) down," Nesiba said.

When PSLF was created in 2007, Nesiba had been making payments for 12 years and still hadn't made much of a dent in what he owed. Augustana University, though, happened to be a qualified employer under PSLF, so Nesiba jumped

at the opportunity to use the program.

Nesiba consolidated his federal family loans into a federal direct loan, and then, based on poor guidance from his loan-servicer, enrolled in the wrong payment plan. He made almost two year's worth of non-qualifying payments before catching the mistake. Instead of having his loans forgiven in 2018, Nesiba's forgiveness timeline was pushed back to 2020.

Nesiba was one of the lucky borrowers. Of the more than 53,000 individuals who applied for forgiveness by the end of 2018, a total of 318 were successful, according to the Department of Education. Around 53 percent of denials were due to non-qualifying payments, meaning the borrower had made some or all of their 120 PSLF payments under the wrong payment plan and had to start over. Often, this was because the borrower's loan-servicer gave them bad information or didn't know which plans actually qualified for PSLF, the GAO report said.

In March 2018, Congress passed a law creating the Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. That program included \$350 million to forgive loans for borrowers who had been on the wrong type of payment plan.

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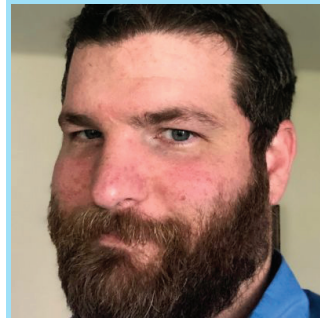
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Early in 2019, Nesiba applied for forgiveness under TEPSLF and was approved to have more than \$60,000 in outstanding balances forgiven. He joined 442 people nationwide who had been approved for forgiveness under TEPSLF as of March 31, 2019, according to the Department of Education.

"I'd been paying for 23 years before my loans were forgiven and it's just made a huge difference in my life," Nesiba said.

Still, PSLF forgiveness approval rates haven't improved much. About 1% of individuals seeking loan forgiveness under either PSLF or TEPSLF had been successful by March 31, 2019.

South Dakota News Watch has filed a request with the Department of Education under the Freedom of Information Act for the number of South Dakota residents who have had their employment certified for PSLF, how many enrollees had been approved for forgiveness and how many had been denied forgiveness. The department had not fulfilled the request by the time this story was published.



ABOUT

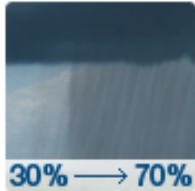
NICK LOWREY

Nick Lowrey, based in Pierre, S.D., is an investigative staff reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A South Dakotan for more than 20 years, he is a former editor of the Pierre Capital Journal.

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Today



Chance
Showers then
Showers
Likely

High: 75 °F

Tonight



Chance
Showers then
Patchy Fog

Low: 56 °F

Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 80 °F

Friday
Night



Partly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

Low: 60 °F

Saturday




Mostly Sunny
then Chance
T-storms

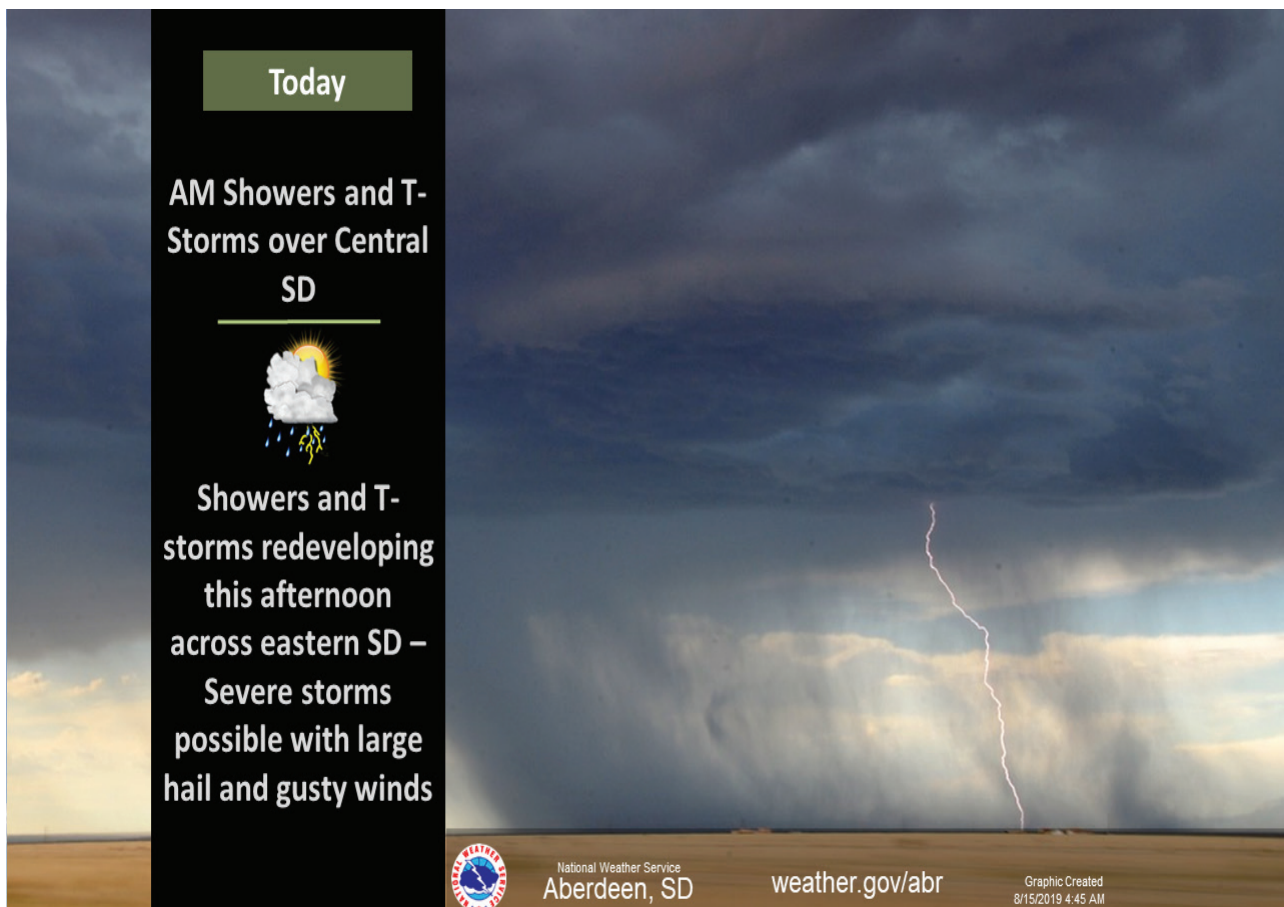
High: 77 °F

Today

AM Showers and T-Storms over Central SD



Showers and T-storms redeveloping this afternoon across eastern SD – Severe storms possible with large hail and gusty winds



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created
8/15/2019 4:45 AM

Published on: 08/15/2019 at 12:50AM

A cold front will move across the Dakotas today bringing showers and thunderstorms. Some of these may be strong to severe this afternoon and evening, especially across eastern SD and west central MN. Otherwise, cooler temperatures are expected to continue through Friday with highs only topping out in the 70s to near 80.

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Today in Weather History

August 15, 1886: A tornado moved northeast from 5 miles southwest of Newark in Marshall County, through town and into North Dakota. Only three buildings were reportedly undamaged at Newark, and a bartender at a saloon was killed. Three people died in two homes on adjoining farms 2 miles southwest of town. A saddle from a Newark stable was carried for a half mile. In North Dakota, houses and barns were damaged along the Wild River. This tornado was estimated as an F3.

August 15, 1987: On this day the largest hailstone was reported in Brown County. The size of the hailstone as 4.5 inches in diameter, and fell on the southwest corner of Warner. This storm also produced F1 tornado that touchdown about 2 miles southwest of Warner. An estimated wind gust of 60 mph was also reported about 2 miles NNW of Stratford.

August 15, 2011: Slow moving thunderstorms across parts of northern Roberts County produced anywhere from 4 to 8 inches of rainfall resulting in flash flooding. The town of New Effington was affected with many roads along with several homes flooded. Sandbagging took place to keep the water from the school. Highway 127 from New Effington to Hammer was flooded in several spots. The floodwaters remained for several days afterward with several roads flooded.

1787: Tornadoes were reported in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Wethersfield, Connecticut was hard hit by the tornado outbreak. There, a woman and her family were caught in the open. She and her son were killed. Clothes from the family farm were carried three miles away. This event is regarded to be the most significant tornado outbreak in early New England history.

1983: Hurricane Alicia formed on this day and was the costliest tropical cyclone in the Atlantic since Hurricane Agnes in 1972. It struck Galveston and Houston, Texas directly, causing \$2.6 billion (1983 USD) in damage and killing 21 people. This storm was the worst Texas hurricane since Hurricane Carla in 1961. Also, Alicia was the first billion-dollar tropical cyclone in Texas history.

1946 - Saint Louis, MO, was deluged with a record 8.78 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1967 - The sundance fire in northern Idaho was started by lightning. Winds of 50 mph carried firebrands as much as ten miles in advance to ignite new fires, and as a result, the forest fire spread twenty miles across the Selkirk Mountains in just twelve hours, burning 56,000 acres. The heat of the fire produced whirlwinds of flame with winds up to 300 mph which flung giant trees about like matchsticks. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a sharp cold front produced severe weather in the Upper Midwest during the afternoon and evening hours, with Minnesota and eastern South Dakota hardest hit. A thunderstorm in west central Minnesota spawned a tornado at Eagle Lake which killed one person and injured eight others. A thunder- storm in eastern South Dakota produced softball size hail at Warner. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty five cities in twenty states in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lamoni IA and Baltimore MD, where the mercury hit 105 degrees. Temperatures 100 degrees or above were reported in twenty-two states. Pierre SD was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 114 degrees. Bluefield WV reported eight straight days of record heat. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms in eastern New Mexico produced wind gusts to 66 mph at Clovis. Evening thunderstorms in West Texas produced baseball size hail around Hereford, Dimmitt, Ware and Dalhart. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 77 °F at 6:35 PM

Low Temp: 59 °F at 6:31 AM

Wind: 14 mph at 12:25 PM

Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 111° in 1937

Record Low: 42° in 1895

Average High: 82°F

Average Low: 57°F

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.10

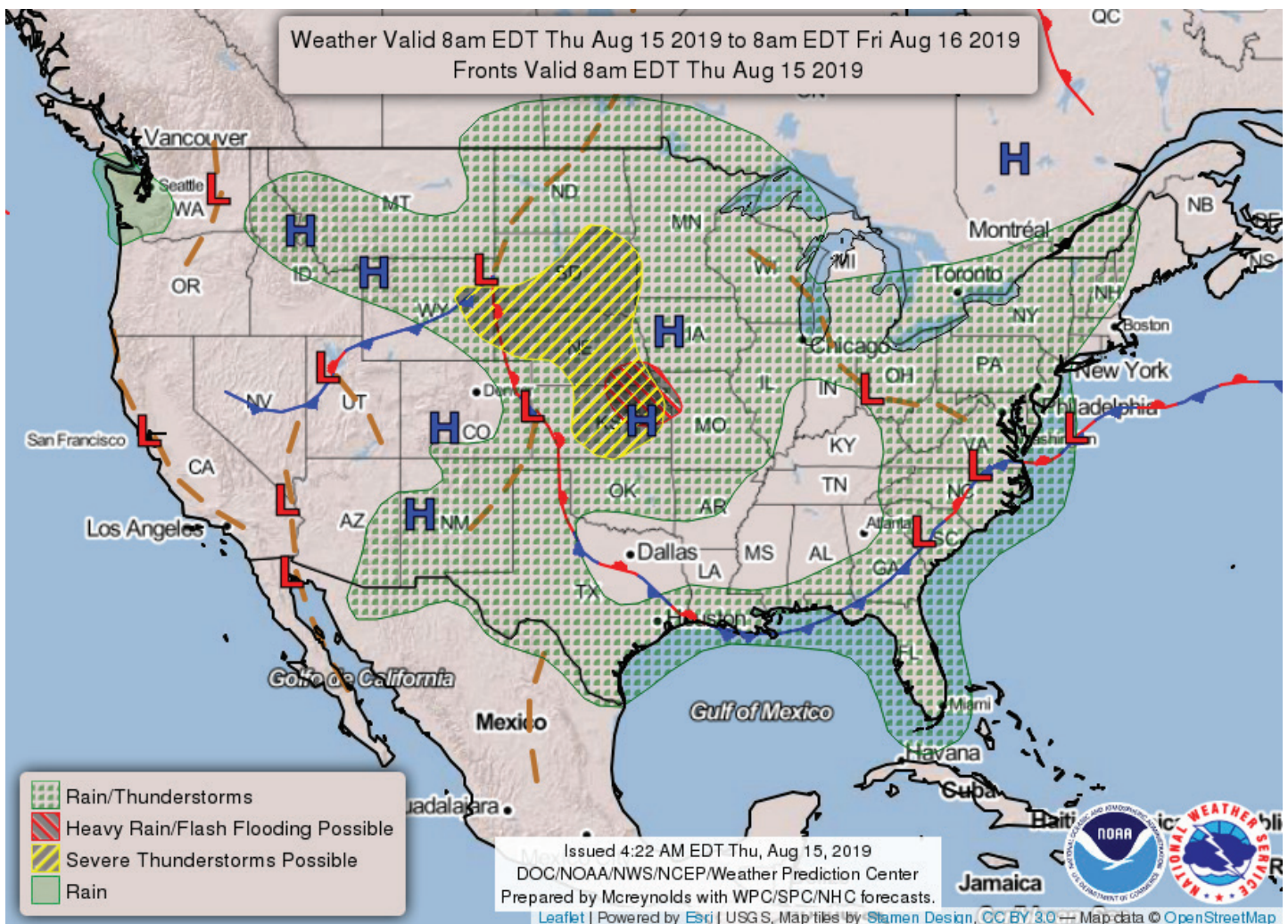
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.62

Average Precip to date: 14.96

Precip Year to Date: 18.21

Sunset Tonight: 8:41 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:35 a.m.



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THE PEACE OF A CLEAN CONSCIENCE

Gods gonna get you for that!

Every time someone did something that Brenda thought was unChristian by her standards, she would wag her finger and repeat her warning that was known by everyone on campus. Ever since she arrived with her freshman class, and now about to graduate with honors, she served with distinction as the campus conscience.

Perhaps our lives would be more Christlike if we each had our own personal conscience cop - one who would sit on our shoulder or go before us and alert or warn us before we did something sinful. Most of us can quote Pauls wise words about no temptation without Gods spirit giving us a way out. Most of us, however, think of that after we have gone astray or are overwhelmed by and submit to the temptation and then plead for grace and mercy because we are only too human and still growing in Christ. Unfortunately, that excuse works far to well!

Solomon knew the peace that can come from a clean conscience. No doubt he had a few skeletons in his closet, as we all do and wanted to share some of his self-help wisdom and insight on worry-free living. So he provides us with a warning that will work for all of us all of the time: The righteous are as bold as a lion.

The key is being righteous. Though easier said than done, we can free our minds from guilt and fear by living by and through the Word of God and in the power of Christ. We all have a past to remind us of Satans power. We also have Christ in us who can make us bold as a lion.

Prayer: Father, Your Word is available to us but will do no good until it is within us. Fill our lives with truths which enable us to be righteous and live free from sin. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 28:1b The righteous are as bold as a lion.

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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 Presbyterian 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

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News from the  Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

08-18-27-29-30

(eight, eighteen, twenty-seven, twenty-nine, thirty)

Estimated jackpot: \$67,000

Lotto America

15-21-35-45-52, Star Ball: 2, ASB: 2

(fifteen, twenty-one, thirty-five, forty-five, fifty-two; Star Ball: two; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.45 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$70 million

Powerball

10-13-30-51-69, Powerball: 10, Power Play: 2

(ten, thirteen, thirty, fifty-one, sixty-nine; Powerball: ten; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$138 million

North Dakota couple dies of CO poisoning during cycle rally

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — A man and a woman from North Dakota have died of carbon monoxide poisoning while camping during the Sturgis motorcycle rally in South Dakota.

Meade County Sheriff Ron Merwin identifies the pair as 55-year-old Daniel Baker of Arnegard, North Dakota, and 58-year-old Donna Cuccia of Turtle Lake, North Dakota.

Authorities discovered the bodies inside an enclosed trailer at a campground Monday. The Rapid City Journal reports a relative called after the couple failed to come home.

The couple had used the trailer to haul a motorcycle to the rally, then placed a mattress on the floor along with a gas-powered generator to power a cooling fan.

An Omaha, Nebraska, man also died from asphyxiation in his motor home and three motorcyclists died in crashes during the rally, which ended Sunday.

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

County commissioner banned from Yankton City Hall for a year

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota county commissioner has been banned from entering Yankton City Hall for a year.

Yankton County Commissioner Gary Swensen was sent a letter by Yankton's city attorney outlining the ban. KYNT-AM obtained a copy of the letter, dated Aug. 12.

In the letter, City Attorney Ross Den Herder says Swensen's recent social media posts are "perceived as threatening to City staff and its elected officials."

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reports Yankton Mayor Nathan Johnson appeared before the commission last week about Swensen's posting of a cartoon on social media. The cartoon shows a priest telling a woman who confessed to killing a politician that he is "here to listen to your sins, not your community service work."

Swensen has apologized for the cartoon. He did not immediately respond to requests for comment Wednesday.

Regional Health participates in national opioid research

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Regional Health is participating in a two-year study on patients' experiences with pain and their prescribed opioid use.

Researchers and physicians want to better understand a wide range of patient needs, including those in Rapid City's rural areas. Regional Health research director Roger Deraad says they have good information from certain populations regarding opioid use, but are missing data from Native Americans and rural populations.

KOTA-TV says the \$3.5 million study funded by the Food and Drug Administration will attempt to address what happens when a people get their first opioid prescription for acute pain and what leads to their next prescription.

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

Elections board backs online voter registration in 2020

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Elections Board is giving its support to a bill that would allow voters to register online.

The Argus Leader reports that the board on Tuesday agreed unanimously to back the proposal from the secretary of state's office in next year's legislative session.

The secretary of state's office also plans to seek a change to state law to remove voters' birth year from the publicly accessible voter registration files, due to identity theft concerns.

And Minnehaha County Auditor Bob Litz is seeking legislative support for a pilot project in 2020 that would audit election equipment. Litz says it would increase voter confidence in results.

"If we have a randomly selected audit that says there's a high degree of probability that the machines did it correctly, that's in addition to the results that we already have," Litz told the Elections Board.

The online registration proposal would allow people with a valid state driver's license or ID card to register online. County auditors would verify the voter's information. Right now, residents can register in person or at their county auditor's office when they get or renew a driver's license, and that would continue.

The online system would require the last five digits of a voter's Social Security number as an added layer of security.

The proposal to remove voter birth years from voter registration files comes after the Department of Homeland Security asked the state to remove it because of identity theft risk.

The audit proposal comes as South Dakota is one of just seven states that don't require any kind of audit of election equipment, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Kea Warne, who oversees the state's elections division, agreed with Litz that an audit that shows equipment was functioning correctly on Election Day would help boost public confidence.

"I think that's really key right now in our current political climate," she said.

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

Northwest Iowa sheriff's deputy dies after crash

ROCK RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — Authorities say a northwest Iowa sheriff's deputy has died following a crash in her patrol vehicle.

The Lyon County Sheriff's Department says Deputy Stephanie Schreurs died Tuesday afternoon. She was injured Friday morning when her sport utility vehicle ran off a road while entering a sharp curve. The SUV ran into a ditch, vaulted over a private driveway and rolled, coming to rest on the driver's side.

She was flown to a Sioux Falls, South Dakota, hospital.

The Iowa State Patrol is investigating the crash.

Officials say Schreurs was a 24-year-old veteran of the department.

China ambassador to UK issues warning over protest movement

HONG KONG (AP) — China's ambassador to the U.K. said Thursday the Beijing government will not "sit on its hands" if the situation in Hong Kong continues to deteriorate after more than two months of near-daily street protests.

Liu Xiaoming said extremists masquerading as pro-democracy activists are dragging Hong Kong "down a dangerous road."

He told a news conference in London that if unrest becomes "uncontrollable . the central government would not sit on its hands and watch."

"We have enough solutions and enough power within the limit of the Basic Law to quell any unrest swiftly," he said, referring to Hong Kong's mini-constitution adopted after the former British colony was handed over to China in 1997. "We hope this will end in an orderly way. In the meantime we are fully prepared for the worst."

Protests that began in early June have paralyzed parts of the territory, including its international airport, and led to hundreds of arrests.

Flights have mostly resumed after being halted by mass demonstrations and spasms of violence on Monday and Tuesday. Police made five arrests Tuesday night and 17 more on Wednesday during clashes outside police stations in the Sham Shui Po district.

Protesters displayed laser pointers and burned spirit paper in recognition of the lunar calendar's traditional Hungry Ghost Festival, but police spokesman Tse Chun-chung said some also used catapults to fire metal balls and marbles at police. Officers responded with tear gas and "minimal use of force," he said.

Police were also maintaining airport checkpoints and restricting access to those with travel documents, Tse said at a daily news briefing. While acknowledging some complaints about the use of tear gas and other aggressive police tactics in residential areas, Tse said police never wish to take such measures, and do so only when "appropriate."

"We hope everybody will join us in restoring and order in society," Tse said.

This week's clashes highlighted the hardening positions of pro-democracy protesters and the authorities, which show no sign of abating as long as the government continues to refuse calls for dialogue. Along with scrapping the extradition legislation, under which criminal suspects could be tried in mainland China, and critics say, face torture and an unfair justice, protesters are demanding an investigation into alleged police abuses and other steps, with some calling also for the resignation of Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

That's also having an effect on what is already a difficult economic situation for the financial services and export hub, with the forecast for economic growth for the year downgraded from 1% to 0%, city Financial Secretary Paul Chan announced Thursday.

"Domestically, the recent social incidents have hit the retail trade, restaurants and tourism, adding a further blow to an already weak economy, and also affected the international image of Hong Kong," Chan said.

A total of 29 countries have issued travel safety alerts for Hong Kong, while international credit rating agencies have also expressed concern about the situation in the territory, he said.

"The incentives of tourists traveling to Hong Kong and of businessmen abroad operating business and investing in Hong Kong have been affected," Chan said.

While the movement's supporters plan street protests for the weekend, it's unclear what their next move is.

More than 700 protesters have been arrested since protests began in the territory of 7.5 million in early June. Police and the government have pledged to bring all "culprits" to justice and to take "relentless enforcement action to bring the persons involved to justice."

Hong Kong airline Cathay Pacific said it had canceled 272 flights, affecting more than 55,000 passengers, and had fired two pilots in an apparent response to their involvement in activity related to the pro-democracy protests. They included one pilot who is "currently involved in legal proceedings." The airline said earlier this week one of its pilots has been charged with rioting after being arrested during a protest.

It said the second fired pilot "misused company information," but gave no other details. The Hong Kong Free Press reported the pilot posted a photo of a cockpit screen on an online forum used by protesters.

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The protests and airport disruptions are being fed in large part by frustrations among many Hong Kong residents over what they see as an increasing erosion of the freedoms they were promised in 1997 when Communist Party-ruled mainland China took over the former British colony under the framework of "one country, two systems."

China began by censoring all news of the protests, but has in recent days taken to denigrating the protesters as criminals being manipulated by the U.S., Taiwan and other unnamed foreign powers.

However, while human rights groups, foreign governments and many members of the U.S. Congress have expressed concern over the events in Hong Kong, President Donald Trump has taken an almost cavalier attitude, calling the protests "riots" and saying they were solely a Chinese affair.

On Thursday, Trump tweeted that he knew Chinese leader Xi Jinping "very well."

"He is a great leader who very much has the respect of his people. He is also a good man in a 'tough business,'" Trump tweeted. "I have ZERO doubt that if President Xi wants to quickly and humanely solve the Hong Kong problem, he can do it. Personal meeting?"

In a possibly hopeful sign for the opposition, a leader of an earlier protest movement imprisoned on public disorder charges was released on bail Thursday.

Benny Tai was sentenced to 16 months in April as one of nine leaders put on trial for their part in a 2014 drive for universal suffrage known as the Umbrella Movement. He was allowed to return home on \$12,755 bail but was barred from leaving Hong Kong and will have his appeal heard in late February, according to the court.

The 2014 movement fizzled, its demands ignored by Hong Kong's Beijing-backed administration and its leaders arrested. However, it laid the groundwork for the new protest movement that began in June with mass opposition to extradition legislation but has since encompassed more sweeping democratic demands.

Associated Press writer Jill Lawless in London contributed to this report.

US move halts release of Iranian tanker held in Gibraltar

By ARITZ PARRA and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — The United States moved on Thursday to halt the release of an Iranian supertanker detained in Gibraltar for breaching international sanctions on oil shipments, thwarting efforts by authorities in London and the British overseas territory to defuse tensions with Tehran.

The Gibraltar government confirmed earlier media reports that the U.S. Department of Justice had sought to extend the detention of the oil tanker Grace 1, prompting the Supreme Court in the territory to adjourn a scheduled decision on whether to release the ship until later in the day.

"The U.S. Department of Justice has applied to seize the Grace 1 on a number of allegations, which are now being considered," the Gibraltar government said in a statement, adding that the matter would be reviewed by the court at 4 p.m. local time.

The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Britain's Foreign Office said in a statement that the "investigations conducted around the Grace 1 are a matter for the government of Gibraltar" and that it could not comment further as the investigation was ongoing.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Downing Street office said that Iran was discussed during the U.K. leader's meeting with Donald Trump's national security adviser John Bolton earlier in the week, though no details were released on the talks.

While there was no immediate reaction from Tehran, the U.S. move likely will further stir tensions in the Persian Gulf.

The detention of the Grace 1 saw Iran seize the British-flagged oil tanker Stena Impero, which remains held by the Islamic Republic. Analysts had hoped the release of the Grace 1 by Gibraltar would see the Stena Impero similarly released.

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In past weeks, the Persian Gulf region has seen six attacks on oil tankers that the U.S. has blamed on Iran and the downing of a U.S. surveillance drone by Iranian forces. Iran has denied being behind the tanker attacks.

Iran also has seized other oil tankers.

The Grace 1, carrying 2.1 million barrels of Iranian crude oil, was seized last month in a British Royal Navy operation off Gibraltar. The vessel was suspected of violating European Union sanctions on oil shipments to Syria, and its seizure deepened international tensions in the Persian Gulf. Iran called the seizure by Gibraltar an "act of piracy."

The Gibraltar government had said it was seeking to "de-escalate" the situation over the Grace 1.

Signaling preparations for the expected release of the ship, the captain, an Indian national, and three officers of the Grace 1 had been released from detention, a Gibraltar government spokesman told The Associated Press. The spokesman was not authorized to be identified by name in the media.

The whereabouts of the released crew, none of whom are Iranian, were not immediately known. The crew of the Grace 1 includes sailors from India, Pakistan and Ukraine, according to Iranian state television.

As speculation mounted over the Grace 1's release, a lawyer representing the territory's General Attorney Michael Llamas announced during a Thursday morning hearing at the Gibraltar Supreme Court that the U.S. had moved at the eleventh hour.

Speaking in court, Chief Justice Anthony Dudley said that were it not for the U.S. move, "the ship would have sailed," the Gibraltar Chronicle reported.

This is the second time the Trump administration has moved to seize a ship in recent months. In May, the Justice Department announced that it had seized a North Korean cargo ship used to supply coal to the isolated nation in violation of international sanctions.

At the time, U.S. officials said the ship, the Wise Honest, was one of North Korea's largest bulk carriers and for several years had been used to deliver Russian coal to North Korea.

Tensions have escalated in the region since President Donald Trump over a year ago unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. The decision stopped billions of dollars' worth of business deals, largely halted the sale of Iran's crude oil internationally and sharply depreciated Iran's currency, the rial.

In recent weeks, Iran has begun to step away from the nuclear deal by increasing its production and enrichment of uranium. It has threatened to take further steps in early September if Europe can't help it sell its oil abroad.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Jill Lawless and Danica Kirka in London, Eric Tucker in Washington and Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

Philadelphia gunman in custody after hourslong standoff

By **CHRISTINA PACIOLLA** and **CLAUDIA LAUER** Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A gunman who opened fire on police Wednesday as they were serving a drug warrant in Philadelphia, wounding six officers and triggering a standoff that extended into the night, is in police custody, authorities said.

Philadelphia police Sgt. Eric Gripp said early Thursday morning that the man was taken into custody after an hourslong standoff with police.

The shooting began around 4:30 p.m. as officers went to a home in a north Philadelphia neighborhood of brick and stone rowhomes to serve a narcotics warrant in an operation "that went awry almost immediately," Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross said.

Many officers "had to escape through windows and doors to get (away) from a barrage of bullets," Ross said.

The six officers who were struck by gunfire have been released from hospitals, Gripp said.

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Two other officers were trapped inside the house for about five hours after the shooting broke out but were freed by a SWAT team well after darkness fell on the residential neighborhood. Three people who officers had taken into custody in the house before the shooting started were also safely evacuated, police said.

"It's nothing short of a miracle that we don't have multiple officers killed today," Ross said.

Police implored the gunman to surrender, at one point patching in his lawyer on the phone with him to try to persuade him to give up, Ross said.

"We're doing everything within our power to get him to come out," Ross said during the standoff. "He has the highest assurance he's not going to be harmed when he comes out."

Temple University locked down part of its campus, and several children and staff were trapped for some time in a nearby day care.

Police tried to push crowds of onlookers and residents back from the scene. In police radio broadcasts, officers could be heard calling for backup as reports of officers getting shot poured in.

"I was just coming off the train and I was walking upstairs and there were people running back downstairs who said that there was someone up there shooting cops," said Abdul Rahman Muhammad, 21, an off-duty medic. "There was just a lot of screaming and chaos."

Dozens of officers on foot lined the streets. Others were in cars and some on horses.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said its agents responded to the scene to assist Philadelphia police.

President Donald Trump and Attorney General William Barr were briefed on the shooting, officials said.

Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney said he was thankful that officers' injuries weren't life-threatening.

"I'm a little angry about someone having all that weaponry and all that firepower, but we'll get to that another day," Kenney said.

Associated Press writers Ron Todt in Philadelphia, Michael Balsamo in Washington, Caleb Jones in Honolulu and Michael Rubinkam in Allentown, Pennsylvania, contributed to this report.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. LONG STANDOFF IN PHILLY ENDS

A gunman who opened fire on police as they were serving a drug warrant in Philadelphia, wounding six officers and triggering an hourslong standoff, is in police custody.

2. US SEEKS SEIZURE OF IRANIAN TANKER IN GIBRALTAR

A newspaper says that the U.S. Department of Justice has moved to halt the release of Iranian tanker held in the British overseas territory over an oil shipment to Syria.

3. MANY IN INDIA APPROVE MODI'S MOVE

The prime minister's unprecedented clampdown on Kashmir — India's only Muslim-majority state — to near-totalitarian levels is backed by his Hindu nationalist supporters and also some in the opposition camp.

4. WHERE 'TRUMPGRET' IS REAL

Not all are feeling the prosperity in New Hampshire, and when the tumult of his presidency is thrown in, the state's flinty voters may not be receptive to his appeals.

5. EPSTEIN'S CARIBBEAN ISLANDS A CURIOSITY AFTER HIS DEATH

Tourists and locals alike are powering up boats to take a closer look at a place nicknamed "Pedophile Island" that lies just off the southeast coast of St. Thomas.

6. 23 INJURED IN RUSSIAN PLANE'S EMERGENCY LANDING

The Ural Airlines A321 carrying 226 passengers lands in a field outside of one of Moscow's airports after colliding with a flock of birds.

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7. CHINA UPS ANTE IN TRADE WAR

Beijing warns to retaliate if Washington goes ahead with planned Sept. 1 tariff hikes on additional Chinese imports.

8. DEMOCRATIC FIELD NARROWS

John Hickenlooper, a moderate and former Colorado governor, will drop out of the presidential primary, AP learns.

9. CLIMATE CHANGE THREATENS US WEST RIVER DESPITE WET WINTER

A wet winter likely will fend off mandated water shortages for states in the U.S. West that rely on the Colorado River but won't erase the impact of climate change.

10. WHAT'S COMING TO TIFFANY

The upscale chain launches its first comprehensive jewelry collection for men in October, tapping into a trend popularized by the likes of Jay-Z and John Mayer.

India's PM uses Independence Day to defend Kashmir changes

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and EMILY SCHMALL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi defended his government's controversial measure to strip the disputed Kashmir region of its statehood and special constitutional provisions in an Independence Day speech Thursday, as about 7 million Kashmiris stayed indoors for the 11th day of an unprecedented security lockdown and communications blackout.

In his live address from the capital's Mughal-era Red Fort, Modi said that Kashmir's previous status — some political autonomy and a ban on outsiders buying land and taking public sector jobs in the Muslim-majority Himalayan region — had fueled a movement for separatism and was unjust for Kashmiri women, because the law said that they lost their inheritance rights if marrying a person from outside the region.

"The old arrangement in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh encouraged corruption, nepotism but there was injustice when it came to rights of women, children, Dalits, tribal communities," Modi said in the speech marking 72 years since India achieved independence from British rule.

A lockdown in Indian-administered Kashmir has been in place since Aug. 4, just before a presidential order to subsume the Muslim-majority region into India's federal government by revoking Article 370 of the constitution and downgrading the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories. A new law allows anyone to buy land there, which some Kashmiris fear could change the region's culture and demographics. Critics have likened it to Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories.

India's foreign ministry officials have said Kashmir is returning to normalcy, but The Associated Press and other news organizations operating in the region describe the severe constraints, including the suspension of internet, cellphone and landline services and steel and barbed-wire street blockades.

On the first Independence Day since the revocation of Kashmir's special status, the security restrictions in Srinagar were even more stringent. More than a dozen Hindu activists were detained as they tried to march to the city center to celebrate, according to police officials speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to reporters.

In Pakistan, which shares divided Kashmir and has fought two wars with India over the region, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi described Modi as a key hurdle to peace and a resumption of dialogue between the rivals.

When asked whether the U.N. Security Council will be meeting on Friday to discuss Kashmir, Qureshi told Geo News TV station that according to his information, New Delhi was using diplomatic channels to oppose any such session.

Pakistanis and residents of Pakistani-administered Kashmir on Thursday observed "the Black Day" in solidarity with Kashmiris in the Indian-controlled portion.

While daily protests have erupted in Indian-administered Kashmir, Modi has received widespread public support in other parts of the country.

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"Article 370 should have been removed a long time ago, but better late than never," Amarjeet Singh, a businessman from New Delhi, said outside the Red Fort as India finalized preparations on Wednesday.

"It is good. Everyone will be benefited by this, because every common man will be able to work there and start business there," Singh said.

On Thursday, turning to his agenda to make India a \$5 trillion economy in the next five years, Modi said that the changes in Kashmir will help the region contribute more to India's development.

"In the last 70 years we became a 2 trillion-dollar economy, but in the last five years, we added 1 trillion dollars to the economy. This gives me the confidence of becoming a \$5 trillion economy in the coming years," Modi said.

The prime minister, whose Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party won a landslide victory in general elections in May, also announced the creation of a new Chief of Defense Staff to coordinate the country's security operations.

He also made a pitch for restructuring India's electoral system so that state and lower house of Parliament elections are held simultaneously rather than on separate timetables.

Associated Press writers Aijaz Hussain in Srinagar, India, Mariya Amrayeva in New Delhi and Ahmed Munir in Islamabad contributed to this report.

Trump's New Hampshire struggle: Voters feeling 'Trumpgret'

By HUNTER WOODALL Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — When Chad Johansen voted for Donald Trump in 2016, he hoped he was picking someone who could help small-business owners compete with bigger companies. But that hasn't happened, and now the 26-year-old owner of NH iPhone Repair feels what he calls "Trumpgret."

The Republican president has done little to address health care issues for a small employer, he said, and the Manchester man remains on edge about how Trump's tariffs could affect his business, which employs fewer than 10 people. Beyond that, he said, unrelenting news about bigotry and racism in the Trump administration is "a turnoff."

"The president's supposed to be the face of the United States of America," said Johansen, who voted for Democrat Barack Obama in 2012. "And supposed to make everyone be proud to be an American and stand up for everyone who is an American. And I don't feel that President Trump's doing that. I feel like it's chaos."

That sentiment is concerning for Trump as he travels to New Hampshire on Thursday for a reelection rally. The state, which he lost by about 2,700 votes in 2016, is doing well economically, at least when using broad measures. But beneath the top-line data are clear signs that the prosperity is being unevenly shared, and when the tumult of the Trump presidency is added to the mix, the state's flinty voters may not be receptive to his appeals.

Trouble in the bond market on Wednesday raised fresh concerns about a recession on the horizon.

An August University of New Hampshire Survey Center poll found that 42% of New Hampshire adults approve of Trump while 53% disapprove. The poll also showed that 49% approve of Trump's handling of the economy and 44% disapprove.

How New Hampshire receives the president on Thursday will offer a fresh test of whether people will give credit to Trump for the state's economy, base their decision on social issues or make their vote a referendum on the president's character.

"I'm not sure any great tax policy that Trump has envisioned or created has helped it," said Tom Rath, a longtime Republican National Convention delegate and former New Hampshire attorney general who backed Republican John Kasich for president in 2016. "I think the climate is good. We're flourishing in large part because Massachusetts is flourishing."

At 2.4%, New Hampshire's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for May was among the lowest in the

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nation. But wage growth is significantly below national gains. Average hourly earnings rose a scant 1.1% in New Hampshire in 2018, lagging the 3% gain nationwide, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In other ways, like the home ownership rate — first in the nation — and median household income — seventh in the U.S. — census data shows the state is thriving.

Ahead of the president's visit, his campaign held an event in Bedford, New Hampshire, on Tuesday to applaud the success of the economy under Trump, singling out the low unemployment rate. Joblessness in New Hampshire was also relatively low at the end of the Obama administration, a sign that Trump inherited an improving economy.

Much of Trump's rhetoric in 2016 was designed to appeal to Midwestern swing states where a platform of raising tariffs, protecting workers and restricting immigration resonated, Dartmouth College political scientist Dean Lacy said.

New Hampshire transitioned faster than Rust Belt states as it went from a manufacturing economy to a high-tech economy in the 1980s and 1990s, Lacy said.

"(Trump) doesn't have an economic strategy that's designed to win New Hampshire," Lacy said. "But also one that's not going to necessarily lose New Hampshire."

New Hampshire's four Electoral College votes are far below that of key swing states like Florida, Wisconsin and Michigan, but its influence can prove powerful in close election years like 2000, when George W. Bush's victory in the state gave him the edge needed to win the White House.

David Bates, a 26-year-old construction worker, said there has been "remarkable growth under President Trump." And when it comes to that growth, Trump should "at least partially, definitely," get credit.

And Robert Burrows, a 34-year-old tire technician, sees a raise and a competing job offer as evidence that the "awesome" economy has helped him.

"Trump isn't somebody I'd want to marry to my sister or my mother," said Burrows, who originally supported Republican Ben Carson in 2016. "However, that's not what I want him in office for."

Others feel the economic boasting that can sometimes be a trademark of Trump and his allies is undeserved.

"I don't see where he's helped me," Gary West, a 71-year-old retired steel fabricator who now works as a school bus driver. "Maybe the guy that's got a million dollars he's helped. But I don't feel like he's helped me at all."

For all the credit to go to Trump "doesn't make any sense," said Amanda Gunter, a 34-year-old New Hampshire Democrat, who worries that the economy she describes as "doing well" could help Trump win another term in White House.

"I also think that we're in a bubble," Gunter said. "And I think it's going to burst because I know Trump is rolling back regulations and that has me concerned. I also think the economy was doing well when Obama was in office. And I think that our good economy is because of things that Obama did, not Trump."

The economy may also not have the same draw for voters as it has had in the past.

Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, who is running for reelection in 2020, described the New Hampshire economy as "going well" in a recent interview. But she said that while Trump has "talked about the importance of the economy," the top concern Shaheen said she hears from people in New Hampshire is based around health care.

"The economy and jobs are always important," Shaheen said. "But people can't feel secure about the future of their families, even though they have a good job, if they're worried about whether they're going to have health care when they need it."

Gino Brogna, a 57-year-old chef manager, described himself as a Republican "by nature," though he isn't "solely stuck to it." He didn't like Democrat Hillary Clinton and recalls feeling as though his 2016 vote for Trump was "something that was necessary."

It doesn't feel necessary for him again.

"I don't think that he's true to his word on a lot of things," Brogna said of Trump. "I wouldn't vote for him again. That's not going to happen."

AP Economics Writer Josh Boak and AP Polling Editor Emily Swanson contributed to this report.

AP source: John Hickenlooper to end 2020 presidential bid

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — John Hickenlooper will drop out of the Democratic presidential primary on Thursday, according to a Democrat close to him.

The former two-term Colorado governor, who ran as a moderate warning of the perils of extreme partisanship, struggled with fundraising and low polling numbers. His planned departure from the 2020 race was confirmed Wednesday night by a Democrat who wasn't authorized to speak publicly before the announcement and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity.

Hickenlooper, 67, is not expected to announce a decision Thursday on whether he will run for Senate in Colorado, though he has been discussing the possibility with advisers. Republican Sen. Cory Gardner, up for reelection in 2020, is considered one of the most vulnerable senators in the country because of Colorado's shift to the left.

Hickenlooper became a political giant in Colorado for his quirky, consensus-driven and unscripted approach to politics. He once jumped out of a plane to sell a ballot measure to increase state spending and won two statewide elections in a purple state during Republican wave years. He was previously the mayor of Denver.

He launched his longshot White House bid in March, promising to unite the country. Instead, he quickly became a political punch line.

Shortly before taking his first trip to Iowa as a candidate, Hickenlooper, who became a multimillionaire founding a series of brewpubs, balked at calling himself a capitalist on national television. Then, at a CNN town hall, he recounted how he once took his mother to see a pornographic movie. With the campaign struggling to raise money, his staff urged Hickenlooper to instead challenge Gardner. But Hickenlooper stayed in and hired another group of staffers in a last-ditch effort to turn around his campaign.

Positioning himself as a common-sense candidate who couldn't be labeled a socialist by Republicans, Hickenlooper couldn't make his voice heard in the crowded Democratic presidential field of about two dozen candidates. It didn't help that, by Hickenlooper's own admission, he's a mediocre debater and erratic public speaker. In the end, he couldn't even scrape together enough money for many of his trademark quirky ads, only launching one in which avid beer drinkers toast Hickenlooper by comparing him to favorite brews.

Hickenlooper softened his denials of interest in the Senate in recent weeks as his campaign finances dwindled and pressure increased from other Democrats. He started telling people he'd make a decision by the end of this week.

It's unclear whether Hickenlooper plans to run against Gardner, whom national Democrats have urged him to take on since last year. He's repeatedly said he's not interested in the Senate and prefers an executive position.

But if Hickenlooper did run against Gardner, he'd first have to get through another crowded Democratic primary field. Numerous Colorado Democrats have launched primary bids for Gardner's seat, and many have indicated they'd stay in the race, even if Hickenlooper enters the contest.

Hickenlooper isn't the first Democratic hopeful to end his 2020 presidential bid. U.S. Rep. Eric Swalwell of California announced his departure in July.

AP Washington Bureau Chief Julie Pace contributed to this report from Washington.

Global stocks lower after US falls on recession fear

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Global stock markets were mostly lower Thursday after Wall Street fell on mounting fears of a possible recession.

Benchmarks in London, Tokyo and Sydney declined while Shanghai closed higher after spending most of the day in negative territory. Frankfurt was unchanged.

U.S. investors dumped stocks Wednesday, sending the Dow Jones Industrial Average into its biggest one-day drop of the year, after the yield on 10-year Treasury bonds crossed a threshold that has correctly predicted many past recessions.

That erased the previous day's gains from a rally that began after President Donald Trump delayed tariffs on about \$160 billion in Chinese goods due to take effect on Sept. 1.

"The countdown to a recession has just started," Hussein Sayed of FXTM said in a report.

Weak economic data from Germany and China added to signals of a global slowdown.

In early trading, London's FTSE 100 was down 0.3% at 7,122.66 while Frankfurt's DAX was unchanged at 11,493.92. France's CAC 40 was flat at 5,253.02.

On Wall Street, futures for the Standard & Poor's 500 Index and the Dow were up 0.5%.

In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index gained 0.2% to 2,815.80 while Tokyo's Nikkei 225 lost 1.2% to 20,405.65. Hong Kong's Hang Seng closed up 0.8% at 25,495.46.

Australia's S&P-ASX 200 fell 2.8% to 6,408.10. Markets in Taiwan, New Zealand and Southeast Asia also retreated.

Markets in South Korea and India were closed for a holiday.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 fell 2.9% on Wednesday and the Dow sank 800.49 points, or 3%. The Nasdaq composite also lost 3%.

Investors have been plowing money into the safety of U.S. government bonds for months amid growing anxiety that weakness in the global economy could sap American growth.

Uncertainty about the U.S.-Chinese tariff war has spurred a return of volatility to the stock market in August. The Dow has dropped more than 5% and the S&P 500 is down more than 4%.

Traders tend to shift money to the safety of U.S. government bonds when they're fearful of an economic slowdown. That causes the market price to rise and yields — the difference between the current price and the payout when the bond matures — to shrink.

When the yield on longer-term Treasuries falls below that of shorter-term issues, economists call that an "inverted yield curve." It suggests bond investors expect growth to slow so much that the Federal Reserve feels compelled to cut short-term interest rates to support the economy.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury dropped from 2.02% on July 31 to below 1.60%. On Wednesday, it briefly fell below the two-year Treasury's yield for the first time since 2007.

Each of the last five times the two-year and 10-year Treasury yields have inverted, a recession has followed.

AUSTRALIAN JOBS: Australia added a stronger-than-expected 41,000 jobs in July, rebounding from the previous month's contraction. Unemployment held steady at 5.2%.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude lost 9 cents to \$55.14 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell \$1.82 on Wednesday to close at \$55.23. Brent crude, used to price international oils, fell 23 cents to \$59.25 per barrel in London. It lost \$1.82 the previous session to \$59.48.

CURRENCY: The dollar gained to 106.23 yen from Wednesday's 105.86 yen. The euro edged up to \$1.1150 from \$1.1138.

London teen lost at Malaysian resort died from ulcer bleed

SEREMBAN, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian police said Thursday there were no signs of foul play in the death of a 15-year-old London girl who mysteriously disappeared from a nature resort, with an autopsy showing she succumbed to intestinal bleeding due to starvation and stress.

Nora Anne Quoirin's body was discovered Tuesday beside a small stream about 2.5 kilometers (1.6 miles) from the Dusun eco-resort after she disappeared from her family's resort cottage on Aug. 4.

Negeri Sembilan state police chief Mohamad Mat Yusop said the autopsy found no evidence the teenager had been abducted or raped. She was estimated to have been dead two or three days and not more than four when her naked body was found, he said.

"For the time being, there is no element of abduction or kidnapping," he told a news conference at a police station.

"The cause of death was upper gastrointestinal bleeding due to duodenal ulcer, complicated with perforation... it could be due to a lack of food for a long period of time and due to prolonged stress," he said.

Mohamad said there were also some bruises on the girl's legs but wouldn't cause her death. Samples taken from her body will be sent to the chemistry department for further analysis, he said.

The girl's family can take her body back to their country if they wish, he added.

Quoirin's family has said she wasn't independent and wouldn't wander off alone as she had learning and physical disabilities. Police believe she climbed out through an open window in the living room of the cottage but said they were investigated all aspects including possible criminal elements.

Police from Ireland, France and the U.K. are in Malaysia to assist in the investigation. The girl's mother is from Ireland and her father is French, but the family has lived in London for 20 years.

The Paris prosecutor's office on Wednesday said it has opened a preliminary investigation into the girl's death, on potential charges of kidnapping and sequestration. The prosecutor's office wouldn't elaborate. French authorities often open such investigations when French citizens are victims or otherwise involved in suspected crimes abroad.

Quoirin's family arrived Aug. 3 for a two-week stay at the Dusun, a small resort located in a durian orchard next to a forest reserve 63 kilometers (39 miles) south of Kuala Lumpur.

Her family on Wednesday thanked the more than 350 people who helped search for the girl and said that their hearts were broken.

"Nóra is at the heart of our family. She is the truest, most precious girl and we love her infinitely. The cruelty of her being taken away is unbearable," the family said in a brief statement issued by the Lucie Blackman Trust, a charity that helps families of Britons in crisis overseas.

Trump suggests trade deal can wait for Hong Kong resolution

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump suggested Wednesday that trade talks with China can wait until tensions in Hong Kong have eased, tweeting: "Of course China wants to make a deal. Let them work humanely with Hong Kong first!"

Trump also praised Chinese President Xi Jinping, calling him a "great leader" and saying he could quickly resolve the unrest in Hong Kong if he wanted to. "I have ZERO doubt that if President Xi wants to quickly and humanely solve the Hong Kong problem, he can do it. Personal meeting?" Trump tweeted.

Trump has previously said little about the protests in the semi-autonomous Chinese city, except to make it clear he believes that Hong Kong and China need to "deal with that themselves." He has urged the two sides to exercise caution and voiced hopes that the situation will be resolved peacefully.

His more extensive comments Wednesday came as U.S. stock markets tumbled, in part because of uncertainty over Trump's trade standoff with Beijing. Investors have also been rattled about the widespread protests in Hong Kong. Flights resumed at Hong Kong's airport after two days of disruptions that descended into clashes with police.

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While Trump has been reticent to take sides, some Republican and Democratic members of Congress have voiced their support for the protesters. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, for example, issued a statement last week saying that "dreams of freedom, justice and democracy can never be extinguished by injustice and intimidation."

The demonstrations are against what many Hong Kong residents see as an increasing erosion of the freedoms they were promised in 1997 when Communist Party-ruled mainland China took over what had been a British colony.

Trump said he knows Xi well and called him a "great leader who very much has the respect of his people."

Trump also voiced optimism about the off-again, on-again trade negotiations with China. Administration officials publicly and privately have voiced beliefs that a trade deal is still a ways off even as the president voices frustration about the lack of progress. Unhappy with the pace of negotiations, Trump announced two weeks ago that the U.S. would apply 10% tariffs on about \$300 billion in Chinese imports, beginning Sept. 1. But the administration moved Tuesday to delay the tariffs on a wide range of Chinese-made products, including cellphones, laptop computers, some toys, computer monitors, shoes and clothing. And it's removing other items from the list based "on health, safety, national security and other factors."

Trump tweeted that delaying the tariffs would help China more than the U.S. "The American consumer is fine with or without the September date, but much good will come from the short deferral to December."

AP Explains: Is the US economy nearing a recession?

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Financial markets are flashing a key warning sign of a recession, and the global economy is weakening as the U.S.-China trade war intensifies.

All of which is heightening fear about the U.S. economy and about whether the 10-year expansion, the longest on record, is nearing an end.

On Wednesday, a rare realignment in interest rates intensified those worries: The yield on the benchmark 10-year U.S. Treasury note briefly fell below the yield on the 2-year Treasury for the first time since 2007.

Normally, investors earn higher interest on longer-term bonds than on short-term ones. Put another way, the government will usually pay more to investors who are willing to lend their money for longer periods.

So when that equation reverses itself — when longer-term Treasuries pay less than shorter-term ones — economists call it an "inverted yield curve." An inverted curve suggests that bond investors expect growth to slow so much that the Federal Reserve will soon feel compelled to slash short-term rates to try to support the economy.

In short, it's a sign of economic pessimism. Inverted curves are, in fact, remarkably reliable harbingers of recessions: They have occurred before each of the past five downturns.

The inversion sent stocks plunging Wednesday, with the Dow Jones tumbling 800 points, or 3%. Still, an inversion says little about timing of a forthcoming recession. On average, an inversion occurs roughly two years before a downturn.

SO ARE WE NEARING A RECESSION?

Many economists worry that recession odds are rising. Julia Coronado, chief economist at MacroPolicy Perspectives, sees a 40% probability of a downturn within the next 12 months, up from 30% last month.

Those concerns stem in part from the U.S.-China trade war, which appears to have discouraged many businesses from expanding and investing in new buildings and equipment. It is also harming Germany's export-led economy, which shrank in the second quarter. A chaotic British exit from the European Union looms this fall. Japan and South Korea are also engaged in a trade fight.

And the Trump administration has essentially acknowledged that its planned 10% tariffs on \$300 billion of mostly consumer goods from China would hurt U.S. shoppers. That's because many retailers would raise prices to account for the higher tariffs on Chinese imports they would have to pay.

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On Tuesday, Trump said he would delay, from Sept. 1 to Dec. 15, the tax on more than half those imports to avoid raising prices for holiday shoppers.

Still, for now, most economic signs appear solid. Employers are adding jobs at a steady pace, the unemployment rate remains near a 50-year low and consumers are optimistic.

"I wouldn't forecast a recession just on the yield curve," said Eric Winograd, senior economist at AllianceBernstein. "I would want to see other signals that point to that, but we're not seeing them right now."

WHAT IS A RECESSION?

One rule of thumb is that a recession occurs when gross domestic product, the broadest measure of U.S. growth, contracts for two straight quarters.

But that's not the official definition. The National Bureau of Economic Research, a private organization of economists that formally defines recessions, say they occur when there is: "a significant decline in economic activity" lasting for more than "a few months," reflected in a range of economic data, including GDP, incomes and jobs.

The bureau makes its determination retroactively. So the economy can actually be in recession for some time before it is officially declared so. The bureau, for example, declared in November 2008 that the Great Recession had begun 11 months earlier.

WHAT DO ECONOMISTS WATCH FOR SIGNS OF A RECESSION?

The most commonly cited indicator of a weakening economy is weekly first-time applications for unemployment benefits. People are eligible for the benefits if they've been laid off or have lost a job through no fault of their own. So a rising pace of applications suggests that companies are cutting jobs.

Last week, first-time applications amounted to 209,000, a very low level historically.

The Institute for Supply Management's survey of manufacturers is another important gauge. Lately, it is showing that factory activity has been slowing and is near the level that indicates it is shrinking. Manufacturing makes up a relatively small part of the economy but is more sensitive to downturns than services. That's because people cut back on car-buying and other large purchases when they feel economically squeezed.

HOW SEVERE MIGHT A RECESSION BE?

If there is one anytime soon, it's hard to tell how long or deep it will be. But many economists think it might be relatively mild. That's because American households are in stronger financial shape than before the Great Recession. Mortgages and household debts, as a percentage of overall incomes, are lower. And ultra-low interest rates make it easier for consumers to stay current on their debts.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH MY FINANCES IF A RECESSION IS COMING?

Since it's hard to know when or if a recession will occur, most experts advise against drastic moves, such as rashly selling stock holdings or postponing major purchases that you can otherwise afford.

Generally, it makes sense to do what most personal finance experts typically recommend: Pay off credit card and other high-interest debt and make sure you have a cushion of savings.

The irony is that such advice, if widely adopted, could make a recession more likely as millions of consumers collectively pull back on spending. Companies' reluctance to invest amid the uncertainty of the trade war, has already slowed growth.

"We could end up talking ourselves into a recession," said Jay Bryson, global economist for Wells Fargo.

AP Business Writer Bani Sapiro contributed to this report.

Gunman wounds at least 6 Philadelphia police; 2 others freed

By **CHRISTINA PACIOLLA** and **CLAUDIA LAUER** Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — At least one gunman opened fire on police Wednesday as they were serving a drug warrant in Philadelphia, wounding six officers and triggering a standoff that extended into the night, authorities said.

Two other officers were trapped inside the house for about five hours after the shooting broke out but were freed by a SWAT team well after darkness fell on the residential neighborhood.

None of the officers sustained life-threatening injuries and they've been released from the hospital, Philadelphia police Sgt. Eric Gripp said.

"It's nothing short of a miracle that we don't have multiple officers killed today," said Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross as officers continued their standoff with the gunman.

The shooting began around 4:30 p.m. as officers went to a home in a north Philadelphia neighborhood of brick and stone rowhomes to serve a narcotics warrant in an operation "that went awry almost immediately," Ross said.

"I was just coming off the train and I was walking upstairs and there were people running back downstairs who said that there was someone up there shooting cops," said Abdul Rahman Muhammad, 21, an off-duty medic. "There was just a lot of screaming and chaos."

Many officers "had to escape through windows and doors to get (away) from a barrage of bullets," Ross said.

Shots were still being fired three hours later, police said, and officers returned fire.

Around 9:30 p.m., police said, a SWAT team freed the two officers who had been trapped inside, along with three people that officers took into custody before the shooting as part of the drug warrant. But the gunman remained barricaded.

Police were imploring him to surrender, at one point patching in his lawyer on the phone with him to try to persuade him to give up, Ross said.

"We're doing everything within our power to get him to come out," Ross said, adding: "He has the highest assurance he's not going to be harmed when he comes out."

Temple University locked down part of its campus, and several children and staff were trapped for some time in a nearby day care.

Police tried to push crowds of onlookers and residents back from the scene. In police radio broadcasts, officers could be heard calling for backup as reports of officers getting shot poured in.

Dozens of officers on foot lined the streets. Others were in cars and some on horses.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said its agents responded to the scene to assist Philadelphia police.

President Donald Trump and Attorney General William Barr were briefed on the shooting, officials said.

Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney said he was thankful that officers' injuries weren't life-threatening.

"I'm a little angry about someone having all that weaponry and all that firepower, but we'll get to that another day," Kenney said.

Associated Press writers Ron Todt in Philadelphia, Michael Balsamo in Washington, Caleb Jones in Honolulu and Michael Rubinkam in Allentown, Pennsylvania, contributed to this report.

Kashmiri reporter finds fear, chaos in locked-down hometown

By **SHEIKH SAALIQ** Associated Press

BARAMULLA, India (AP) — My car moved within a column of Indian army vehicles and a cloud of dust. On a normal day, it would have been a smooth journey from the airport in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, to my family home in the northern town of Baramulla.

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But life is very different in the Kashmir Valley these days. The part that India controls is now under an unprecedented security crackdown to prevent an uprising after the central government in New Delhi unexpectedly stripped the region's special constitutional status, the last vestige of real autonomy for the predominantly Muslim region that is claimed by both India and Pakistan.

Hundreds of Indian soldiers, armed with automatic rifles, patrol the Srinagar-Baramulla highway, a 35-mile (56-kilometer) -long road that connects the region's main city with its northern towns. Civilian traffic is sporadic. Shops are shuttered. Army trucks gather speed along the road. And spools of concertina wire block the streets that branch off the highway, forcing residents to remain indoors.

The Indian-controlled part of Kashmir is under lockdown.

I first returned to Kashmir last week on a reporting trip when Parliament revoked the region's special status. My second trip was more personal. I was going home to see my relatives on the Eid al-Adha holiday after not having talked to them for days amid a shutdown of phone and internet service.

The trip from Srinagar airport to Baramulla was filled with fear and a strange sense of homecoming. There was hardly any traffic on the highway. Every 10-15 minutes, Indian soldiers stopped vehicles and frisked travelers.

Most of the roads I crossed were strewn with debris — a sign of the population's anger. The streets were almost deserted and the mood among the people somber. Under the simmering crisis, ordinary Kashmiris were caught in tumult and waiting to see what happens.

"We will fight India," said Firdous Ahmad Naqash, 19, on a road that leads to Sopore, a northern town where anti-India feelings run deep.

Muzaffar Teli, a 56-year-old man sitting next to him, echoed his words.

"Him and me, we will together fight India now," he said.

Kashmiris fear the move to put their region under greater control from New Delhi will change its demographics and cultural identity. India said its decision would free the troubled region from separatism.

Rebels have been fighting Indian rule for decades. Some 70,000 people have died in clashes between militants and civilian protesters and Indian security forces since 1989. Most Kashmiris want either independence or a merger with Pakistan.

The nuclear-armed rivals have fought two wars over Kashmir. The first ended in 1948 with the region divided and a promise of a U.N.-sponsored referendum that was never held.

Conversations with residents, many of whom spoke anonymously for fear of being arrested by Indian authorities, often ended with a deep sigh or a burst of anger.

"It's all black and white now. It's them (India) versus us," said Masarat Jan, her daughter clinging to her tightly as they maneuvered around concertina wire.

"She is an asthma patient," Jan said, referring to her daughter. "How will we get her the medicine she needs if these restrictions continue?"

At home, things weren't good. My mother, who is diabetic, was running out of insulin and clinics were out of stock. A doctor promised that he will try to get some from Srinagar if he could get to the city.

My family told me an elderly neighbor had died, but he had been buried quickly and no mourners were allowed to attend his funeral.

They have stopped watching the news, what little there is. They said Indian news channels were pushing the central government's narrative by only showing images from places that were relatively calm.

I didn't want to watch the news either. As fear, anger and ambiguity about what's next dominate life in Kashmir, most people are anxious to get out of their homes and talk to their loved ones.

Security lockdowns and information blackouts are nothing new in Kashmir, where mass uprisings against Indian rule in 2008, 2010 and 2016 led to the deaths of more than 300 people in clashes. This month, however, marked the first time that landline phones were cut.

On Eid al-Adha, the biggest Islamic festival, Indian forces patrolled the streets but there was no traffic. People weren't allowed to congregate to offer their prayers and the day passed quietly.

But a cloud of anger hovered throughout.

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Kashmir is once again at a fragile moment, where the slightest spark can ignite unrest.

When they are not busy talking about "haalat" — or "the situation" — residents are exchanging the names of locations on the cusp of a bigger uprising.

Amid the tension, some dark humor emerged. One man joked about the uselessness of his cellphone, saying it was only good for throwing it at a bored soldier in the street.

Authorities in Baramulla carried out a spree of arrests, including political activists, former protesters and some stone-throwers. But they also arrested intellectuals and lawyers, according to several families I spoke to who described midnight raids. Because of the communication embargo, my calls from Delhi seeking comment from authorities didn't go through.

Hardly any news emerged from Kashmir, except for some reports in Srinagar, where most of the media are staying. Authorities allowed some locals to use a cellphone to talk briefly to loved ones outside the region. But there was no word on what was happening in volatile south Kashmir.

Out of the total 256 rebels slain in 2018, south Kashmir recorded the highest number, with 127 militants killed. The region has emerged as a hub of militancy since rebel commander Burhan Wani was killed in 2016.

The crackdown has made the work of journalists especially hard, with communications down and movement restricted.

Arjumand Dar, 17, decried the government making a decision "without consulting the people of the region."

In Baramulla's Old Town neighborhood, once a hotbed of rebel activity, one man stood on a historic bridge over the Jhelum River and said the central government in New Delhi is mistaken if it thinks people will carry on without protesting.

"India has to leave Kashmir," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he feared reprisals.

Amid the lack of communications, what little information leaks out often starts as gossip and then becomes a plausible rumor.

Many people told me they are prepared for the worst.

Sheikh Saaliq is an Associated Press reporter based in New Delhi.

Biographer: Statue poem embraces migrants from 'all places'

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

Long before a Trump administration official suggested the poem inscribed on the Statue of Liberty welcomed only people from Europe, the words captured America's promise to newcomers at a time when the nation was also seeking to exclude many immigrants from landing on its shores.

A biographer of poet Emma Lazarus on Wednesday challenged the comment by the acting director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, explaining that Lazarus' words were her way of urging Americans "to embrace the poor and destitute of all places and origins."

Lazarus wrote "The New Colossus" in 1883, one year after Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned laborers from China. The poem is best known for its line about welcoming "your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

Beginning in the 1930s, supporters of immigration began using the poem to bolster their cause. Biographer Esther Schor said Lazarus was "deeply involved" in refugee causes.

Ken Cuccinelli suggested Tuesday in an interview with NPR that the line should be changed to "give me your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet and who will not become a public charge."

He spoke a day after the administration announced it would move to deny green cards to many migrants who use Medicaid, food stamps, housing vouchers or other forms of public assistance, under existing rules that require people trying to gain legal status to prove they would not be a "public charge," or burden to the government. Those rules would exempt active-duty military members, refugees or asylum seekers.

Cuccinelli, who has said his family is of Irish and Italian origin, told CNN that the poem referred "to people coming from Europe where they had class-based societies."

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Immigrants from around the world rejected that assertion. The poem itself says of the statue, "From her beacon-hand glows world-wide welcome."

"European immigrants are so offended that we would be in a more privileged position or looked upon more favorably because of that," said Fiona McEntee, a native of Ireland who settled in the U.S. in 2005 and is now an immigration lawyer based in Chicago. "I just think of the Irish immigrants that came over back in the 1800s, early 1900s. That's really similar to a lot of the immigrants today."

As tourists sailed and walked around the statue on Wednesday, Primoz Bedenk, an entrepreneur from Slovenia said Lazarus' poem was "not meant to exclude or select certain people."

"From the first day, they were words that welcomed everyone, not just those who suit today's establishment," Bedenk said.

The administration, which has made curbing immigration one of its top priorities, has challenged the poem before. Two years ago, senior Trump adviser Stephen Miller, in defending a proposal to favor English-speaking immigrants, argued that the poem is "not actually part of the original statue" because it was not inscribed in the base until 1903, 17 years after the monument was unveiled.

Decades after ships stopped arriving at Ellis Island within sight of the statue, immigrants say it is still a powerful symbol in their countries of origin.

"It tells everyone around the world to come to the United States with the possibility of building a better life," said Seydi Sarr, a 44-year-old naturalized immigrant from Senegal. "That's the dream the United States is selling. I didn't have a dream of being here, but when the opportunity came I said, 'Yes, that allows me to move up.'"

Sarr is an immigrant-rights and community organizer in Detroit. She said the Trump administration has made it clear where the U.S. stands on immigration and people of color.

"Finally, someone accepts that immigration is white and the privilege of immigration is white," she said. "The president already has echoed that sentiment. He already said he'd rather have immigrants from Norway. Their white privilege has advantages. The man (Cuccinelli) just said it."

The statue was originally conceived by a Frenchman as a gift to the U.S. for abolishing slavery in 1865. But people of color have long struggled with whether the statue's promise included them. The Cleveland Gazette, a black newspaper, editorialized in 1886, during a time of state-sanctioned racial discrimination, that the statue's torch "should not be lighted until this country becomes a free one in reality."

Julieta Garibay came to the U.S. from Mexico when she was 12. Her family settled in Austin, Texas. She remembers learning Lazarus' poem and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. But she also remembers being mocked for her accent and being called an anti-Mexican slur.

"From very early on, I knew I was not from this country," said Garibay, now a naturalized U.S. citizen and organizer for the immigrant advocacy group United We Dream.

Nerveine Ouida left Egypt in 2012, sought asylum in the U.S. and is now an American citizen who lives outside Houston. She said that she understood why the government might want to limit protections for people who use public benefits, though she supported providing help to refugees and asylum seekers who need it.

"Liberty means that you need still to have some rules to protect your own country," she said. "Making rules about who goes in, who comes out, this is not against liberty. This is to protect the people who are living here."

Merchant reported from Houston. Associated Press writers Jesse J. Holland in Washington, Corey Williams in Detroit and Verena Dobnik, Hillel Italie and Matt Sedensky in New York contributed to this report.

For inmates like Epstein, suicide watch is meant to be short

By LARRY NEUMEISTER AND MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Suicide is such a constant concern at federal jails that guards have ready access to “the stick,” a wooden pole with a sharpened blade at the end that’s used to cut down inmates if they try to hang themselves with bedsheets.

That’s believed to be exactly how Jeffrey Epstein took his life Saturday at the Metropolitan Correctional Center’s Special Housing Unit after a possible previous attempt, and less than two weeks after he had been taken off suicide watch, in which the lights are left on all night, inmates are not allowed bedsheets, and they are monitored round-the-clock by someone making notes every 15 minutes.

For all the talk from politicians and conspiracy theorists that Epstein should have remained under such scrutiny behind bars, prison experts say suicide watch is intended for only short periods because it puts too much stress on the staff and inmate alike.

“It’s just not humane to keep them on those restrictions indefinitely,” said Lindsay Hayes, a nationally recognized expert on inmate suicide prevention and a project director for the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives. “Many times, suicidal inmates will deny they’re suicidal so they can get their clothes and privileges back.”

The 66-year-old Epstein was awaiting trial on charges of sexually abusing dozens of underage girls when he killed himself, taking his life amid a cascading series of breakdowns at the MCC’s Special Housing Unit, a chronically overcrowded, understaffed lockup-within-a-lockup that has held some of the world’s most notorious terrorists, drug lords, sex traffickers and swindlers. The SHU can hold several dozen inmates at once.

Inmates say the unit — pronounced the “shoe” for short — is a soul-crushing high-rise gulag in the heart of lower Manhattan, with one prisoner once calling its constant noise, sewage leaks, mold, rodents and roaches “a stinking pond of depression whirling in an arc of madness.”

“It’s a place of torture. It’s terrifying,” said Sabrina Shroff, a federal public defender who has represented inmates in the unit facing terrorism charges.

Keeping the MCC’s inmates from killing themselves is complicated by staffing shortages so severe that correctional officers often work so many overtime shifts in a row that they don’t even go home, and employees who have other jobs in the jail are often pulled in to do the work of guards.

Of the two guards responsible for Epstein on the night of his suicide, one was working a fifth straight day of overtime and another was on mandatory overtime. Federal investigators are looking into whether the guards were sleeping on the job and falsified log entries to show they checked on inmates every half-hour as required.

In the meantime, the warden has been removed and the two guards have been placed on leave.

It’s not known exactly how many inmates have taken their own lives over the years at MCC, but federal Bureau of Prisons figures show at least 124 killed themselves in the agency’s prisons and jails between fiscal years 2010 and 2016. There was no breakdown on how many were on suicide watch.

Getting on suicide watch requires a determination by the institution’s suicide prevention coordinator, usually its chief psychologist, that a person may be in imminent danger of suicide.

Hayes said it is not unusual for inmates on suicide watch to be taken off after a few days, because the conditions are so oppressive. Often their clothes and bed linens are taken away, and they are issued heavy, rip- and fold-resistant smocks and blankets to reduce the risk of hanging.

They are typically provided only finger foods so they do not have to be given utensils. Visits and phone calls are curtailed, and the inmates are often confined to their cells for up to 23 hours a day, unable to shower or exercise.

Typically no cameras are trained on inmates on suicide watch because of federal guidelines restricting such monitoring in areas where prisoners are likely to be naked. But a guard or specially trained inmate watches from a chair outside the cell, taking notes on what the prisoner is doing.

Guidelines say inmates are removed from suicide watch only when they are deemed no longer an im-

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minent risk for suicide and only after face-to-face evaluation by the chief psychologist or a doctoral-level psychologist.

In Epstein's case, he was put on suicide watch after he was found on the floor of his cell with bruises on his neck July 23. By August, he was returned to a SHU cell, able to meet with his lawyers for up to 12 hours a day.

Inmates in SHU are typically paired with a cellmate and checked on by guards every half-hour. They are provided a mattress, blankets, a pillow and sheets, normal prison clothing, regular meals and access to a wash basin and toilet. Epstein had a cellmate for a while but was alone after the cellmate was transferred out.

Jack Donson, a retired treatment specialist who worked for the Bureau of Prisons for more than two decades, disputed any notion that Epstein was removed from suicide watch prematurely.

If anything, he said, Epstein spent more time on it than is typical: "It was really at least double what the agency policy suggests."

Associated Press writers Jim Mustian and Michael R. Sisak in New York contributed to this report. Bie-secker reported from Washington.

Over 400 sex abuse suits filed as litigation window opens

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The Roman Catholic Church, the Boy Scouts, schools and hospitals, the late financier Jeffrey Epstein are some of the targets named in a flurry of sex abuse lawsuits filed Wednesday in New York as the state began accepting cases once blocked by the statute of limitations.

Hundreds of lawsuits were filed as plaintiffs rushed to take advantage of the one-year litigation window, created by state lawmakers this year to give people who say they were victims a second chance to sue over abuse that, in many cases, happened decades ago.

Those suing Wednesday include a woman who says she was raped by Epstein as a teenager in 2002. She filed against Epstein's estate and three of his associates. Similar lawsuits from other women who say they were abused by Epstein are expected.

Other suits filed Wednesday include one from 45 former Rockefeller University Hospital patients who say a renowned endocrinologist molested hundreds of boys over more than three decades.

Hundreds of others sued the Catholic Church or one of its several New York dioceses. Among them is Peter Vajda, who said a religious brother molested him when he attended a Catholic boarding school in the Bronx in the early 1950s.

"Now it's their turn. Now it's their time," said Vajda, now 75 and a Georgia resident. "And I want them to get everything they deserve in the way of punishment."

Another suit filed Wednesday accused former Albany Bishop Howard Hubbard, who retired in 2014, of sexually abusing a 16-year-old boy in the 1990s.

An attorney for Hubbard, 80, denied the claim.

In yet another complaint, a man who has accused ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of molesting him in the 1960s and 70s in New York and New Jersey says the church failed to stop the abuse.

McCarrick, the former archbishop of Newark and Washington, D.C., was defrocked by Pope Francis in February after a church investigation determined he sexually abused minors as well as adult seminarians. McCarrick's misconduct was reported to some U.S. and Vatican higher-ups, but he nevertheless remained an influential cardinal until his downfall last year.

Now 89, McCarrick has denied the allegations made by James Grein, the son of close family friends McCarrick baptized. Grein has told Vatican investigators that McCarrick began abusing him at age 11, sometimes during confession.

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In all, 427 sex abuse lawsuits were filed by 5 p.m. Wednesday across New York. Some of the cases have one plaintiff, while others include several dozen.

The state's statute of limitations had been among the nation's most restrictive before state lawmakers extended it earlier this year for new cases. The Child Victims Act gives victims until age 55 to file lawsuits and until age 28 to seek criminal charges, compared with 23 under the old statute.

That law, which passed following more than a decade of debate in Albany, also created the litigation window.

"This is a momentous time for courageous survivors who have waited so long for justice in New York," said Jeff Anderson, an attorney whose firm, New York-based Jeff Anderson & Associates, filed molestation lawsuits Wednesday on behalf of hundreds of clients.

Institutions that have long cared for children — such as the Catholic Church and the Boy Scouts, as well as private and public schools and hospitals — are girding for what could be a devastating financial blow. A similar law passed in 2002 in California resulted in Catholic dioceses there paying \$1.2 billion in legal settlements.

A compensation fund for sexual abuse victims set up by the New York Archdiocese in 2016 has paid out \$65 million to 323 people, the archdiocese says. Those victims have waived their right to file lawsuits. The archdiocese is also suing more than two dozen insurance companies in an effort to compel them to cover abuse claims, anticipating that insurers won't pay the claims filed during the litigation window.

The leaders of the Catholic diocese covering Long Island have been working "for months with financial and legal experts to prepare for this day," according to a statement, which added that parish donations aren't being used to fund victim compensation.

"Our Church continues to suffer as a result of past sins of sexual abuse of minors," said Bishop John Barres of the Diocese of Rockville Centre. "Victim survivors of abuse and their families also continue to carry the terrible effects of that abuse."

Brian Toale, one of those who pushed lawmakers to approve the litigation window, said the lawsuits are as much about empowering victims as financial compensation. Toale, 66, said he was molested by an employee at a Catholic high school he attended on Long Island.

Toale's suit against the Catholic Church was filed early Wednesday.

"Every time a survivor comes forward, there's another survivor who finds the strength," Toale said.

Advocates, mental health experts and victims themselves say it can take years for victims to speak out, worried they won't be believed or overcome by shame or fear.

"We only get one childhood, one adolescence," said Jack Traub, 55, of Staten Island, who says a doctor at Rockefeller University Hospital molested him 45 years ago. As a result of the trauma, he said he has struggled to maintain relationships "I can't go back. It is what it is."

The doctor, Reginald Archibald, has been accused of molesting hundreds of child patients over a 30-year period. Rockefeller conducted an internal investigation that found Archibald, who died in 2007, "engaged in acts of sexual misconduct and sexual abuse toward many of his patients."

"We profoundly apologize to his patients who experienced pain and suffering as a result of his reprehensible conduct," the hospital said in a statement.

AP Analysis: Moving to make immigration whiter, wealthier

By ZEKE MILLER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is on a course to remake the face of immigration in America in ways that would turn it whiter and wealthier.

It is a dramatic editing of the American catechism welcoming "your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free," inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, to "your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet and will not become a public charge."

The administration official who offered that rewrite, Ken Cuccinelli, acting director of U.S. Citizenship

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and Immigration Services, affirmed on Wednesday that his words were intentional, including his added notion that the poem was written for Europeans. He said in a statement that his agency "is tasked with enforcing the law, not a poem."

It's another defiant step in President Donald Trump's long march to change the way the nation thinks about immigrants, an approach he hopes will win over enough voters to earn him a second term. He's added another layer of certainty that the 2020 campaign will be deeply rooted in a cultural battle over national identity.

But he faces an accompanying danger that his hard line will further energize Democrats, alienate suburban women and prompt a swell of newly registered Latino voters. Democrats have been quick to charge that the enforcement pivot the administration announced on Monday — to block many legal immigrants who receive public benefits from being granted green cards — was rooted in sowing racial animus.

"This administration finally admitted what we've known all along: They think the Statue of Liberty only applies to white people," tweeted former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke, a Democratic presidential candidate.

The president and his aides "have further stained this country's tradition as a beacon of hope for immigrants," said Hispanic Federation President José Calderón. "Shame on them."

Depending on how the new "public charge" rules are applied, experts say that changes intended to predict whether applicants are likely to use public benefits could dramatically alter the makeup of immigrants eligible for green cards or permanent residency in the U.S. by taking into account their incomes, ages and employment histories.

According to a study by the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute, the rules would likely reduce immigration from Mexico and Central America, while increasing it from other regions, especially Europe. The income standards, in particular, could lead to reduced rates for Mexican, Central American, Caribbean, African and Asian applicants. Canadian and Austrian applicants could likely benefit, as could applicants from non-white countries like India and Japan.

The study also found the new rules would have put most recent legal permanent residents at risk of denial, with 69 percent of the past five years' green card recipients displaying at least one of the "negative factors" identified by the government. The rules are also likely to make it harder for the parents of U.S. citizens to join their children in the country because they're more likely to be older, not working and facing health challenges.

"America's always been a path to success for millions of people and now America wants to make it so that it's a path only for those who have already succeeded," said Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, a policy analyst at the American Immigration Council.

Trump rose to the White House fanning unease about an increasingly diverse nation, where demographic and immigration trends are projected to make whites a minority in less than two decades. As Trump told it, immigrants were stealing his supporters' jobs and driving down their wages, denying working class whites opportunities for success.

Immigrants were effective scapegoats, especially in towns in the industrial heartland and other economically depressed areas of the country still reeling from job losses as the rest of the country was experiencing an economic recovery. And Trump has continued to push that message.

His administration has tried to severely limit the number of migrants claiming asylum in the U.S. and has dramatically reduced refugee admissions — with further reductions possible next month when refugee limits for next year are unveiled. He has also endorsed legislation that would slash legal immigration rates, while at the same time pushing for a wholesale overhaul of the kinds of immigrants who should be permitted, favoring those with certain skills and high-wage job offers over those with family ties to the U.S.

Blunted by Democrats in Congress, he has turned to administrative action, with mixed results withstanding legal challenges.

In addition to the changes he's made and proposed, Trump has spoken disparagingly about immigration from majority black and Hispanic countries, including calling Mexican immigrants rapists and criminals when he launched his 2016 campaign. Last year, he privately branded Central American and African nations as "shithole" countries and he suggested the U.S. take in more immigrants from European countries

like predominantly white Norway.

Immigration official Cuccinelli seemed to limit the reach of the Statue of Liberty poem in an interview with CNN on Tuesday night. He said it was referring to "people coming from Europe where they had class-based societies where people were considered wretched if they weren't in the right class."

His own agency seems to like the original. In its "citizen almanac" for distribution to new Americans, the agency applauds the poem as a beacon for "the millions of immigrants who came to America in search of freedom and opportunity."

Follow Colvin and Miller on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@ZekeJMiller> and <http://twitter.com/@ColvinJ>

EDITOR'S NOTE — Zeke Miller and Jill Colvin cover the White House for The Associated Press.

Vaping companies sue to delay US review of e-cigarettes

By **MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — A vaping industry group sued the U.S. government on Wednesday to delay an upcoming review of thousands of e-cigarettes on the market.

The legal challenge by the Vapor Technology Association is the latest hurdle in the Food and Drug Administration's yearslong effort to regulate the multibillion-dollar vaping industry, which includes makers and retailers of e-cigarette devices and flavored solutions.

The vaping group argued that the latest deadline of next May to submit products for review could wipe out many of the smaller companies. The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Kentucky.

E-cigarettes first appeared in the U.S. more than a decade ago and have grown in popularity despite little research on their long-term effects, including whether they can help smokers quit cigarettes.

In recent years, health authorities have warned of an epidemic of vaping by underage teenagers, particularly the leading brand Juul, known for its high nicotine content and easy-to-conceal device, which resembles a flash drive.

Nicotine is what makes both cigarettes and e-cigarettes addictive, and health experts say the chemical is harmful to developing brains.

San Francisco-based Juul is among 800 member companies of the vaping association.

The 2009 law that gave the FDA power over the traditional tobacco products did not mention e-cigarettes. And it wasn't until 2016 that the agency expanded its own regulations to include the devices. But since then FDA regulators have repeatedly pushed back the timeline, at one point until 2022, to begin review the legions of vaping products that have come to market.

Frustrated by the delays, anti-tobacco groups including the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids sued the FDA to speed up the process. In June, a federal judge sided with the groups and set a deadline of next May for all companies to submit their products for federal review. The FDA has until next month to appeal the decision.

The vapor group's lawsuit said the FDA has now set five different deadlines.

"It is time for FDA to stop moving the goalposts and changing the rules in the middle of the game to the detriment of our manufacturers and small businesses," said Tony Abboud, the group's executive director, in a statement.

Vaping executives have long said that most companies will not be able to afford to conduct large, expensive studies needed for FDA review. Only products that meet FDA standards would be permitted to be sold.

The FDA declined to comment on the lawsuit.

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Retailers wrestle with a volatile trade policy with China

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Lance Rutenberg knows too well how fast President Donald Trump's China trade policies can change.

As president and CEO of American Textile Co., he and his team spent weeks on a comprehensive study analyzing how a 10% tariff set for Sept. 1 would affect their business, which makes thousands of bedding items for hundreds of retailers.

Then on Tuesday, Rutenberg learned the tariffs on his type of goods would be delayed until the holidays. And while the news brought momentary relief, he's still trying to sort out what it all means.

"Everybody is in a confused state," Rutenberg said. "We are not afraid of challenges. But it's hard to address challenges when you have no ability to predict them or anticipate them. This constant uncertainty is a terrible burden to navigate."

Welcome to the world of Trump's tariff wars with China, which can turn everything upside-down with just a presidential tweet.

Trying to run a business when the administration's trade policy continues to shift almost daily has been difficult, and many retailers and consumer product makers like American Textile say they're devoting so much time adjusting to each whim that they can't focus on other areas like developing innovative products.

Items targeted for tariffs pop up on one list, only to be dropped months later or vice versa. Meanwhile, businesses are left to change their supply network modeling as often as weekly instead of semi-annually or annually, says Fred Baumann, global group vice president at JDA, a technology company that works with retailers on their sourcing network.

Company executives also complain that it's hard to offer financial forecasts, which in turn makes it more difficult to get loans.

"It's very frustrating," said David French, senior vice president of government relations at the National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group. "Retailers want to get back to competing and driving customers to their stores. Retailers want to be investing to become better retailers, not moving around their supply chain that is subject to a presidential tweet."

Trump has already imposed 25% tariffs on \$250 billion in Chinese imports. The 10% tariffs on about another \$300 billion would extend import taxes to just about everything China ships to the United States.

The new tariffs are likely to be a game changer: The earlier ones were designed to limit the impact on consumers by targeting industrial goods. The next ones, which target items such as toys and clothing, will hit families in the pocketbook.

Mindful that the latest round of tariffs would raise consumer prices during the crucial holiday shopping season, the administration delayed nearly 60% of them until Dec. 15.

Businesses say they spent hours culling through the lists to see which items were delayed and which weren't. Meanwhile, analysts will be dissecting comments by retailers over the next couple of weeks when they report fiscal second-quarter earnings to see how the tariffs have been playing out.

Many have not incorporated the last round of tariffs into their financial guidance given the uncertainty. But Macy's raised a red flag Wednesday when it said shoppers don't have an appetite for higher prices in a ballooning trade war.

The department store chain was forced to raise prices on some luggage, housewares and furniture to offset the costs of the 25% tariff implemented in May and its CEO Jeff Gennette says the retailer is working hard to offset the looming costs of tariffs on shoes and clothing.

Jay Foreman, CEO of Basic Fun, based in Boca Raton, Florida, said that if the 10% tariffs had kicked in in September as previously planned, he would have had to raise prices as well as lay off workers. He also had letters of intent to buy two companies and wasn't sure if he would have to postpone the acquisitions.

Now with the December delay, he has a little bit more time to work with retailers to negotiate prices for next spring. But he says it's taking a lot of time out of his schedule to innovate.

Joseph Shamie, president of Delta Children, a New York-based maker of children's cribs and other baby furniture, said he had already negotiated the costs that retailers, factories as well as his own company

would absorb to offset the 10% tariffs he thought would happen this fall. Now, he will have to renegotiate. "We really thought it would go away," Shamie said. "Maybe we were naive."

AP Economics Writer Paul Wiseman in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Anne D'Innocenzio: <http://twitter.com/ADInnocenzio>

Privacy questions as humans reviewed user audio at Facebook

By MAE ANDERSON and RACHEL LERMAN AP Technology Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook has paid contractors to transcribe audio clips from users of its Messenger service, raising privacy concerns for a company with a history of privacy lapses.

The practice was, until recently, common in the tech industry. Companies say the use of humans helps improve their services. But users aren't typically aware that humans and not just computers are reviewing audio.

Transcriptions done by humans raise bigger concerns because of the potential of rogue employees or contractors leaking details. The practice at Google emerged after some of its Dutch language audio snippets were leaked. More than 1,000 recordings were obtained by Belgian broadcaster VRT NWS, which noted that some contained sensitive personal conversations — as well as information that identified the person speaking.

"We feel we have some control over machines," said Jamie Winterton, director of strategy at Arizona State University's Global Security Initiative. "You have no control over humans that way. There's no way once a human knows something to drag that piece of data to the recycling bin."

Jeffrey Chester, executive director for the Center for Digital Democracy privacy-advocacy group, said it's bad enough that Facebook uses artificial intelligence as part of its data-monitoring activities. He said the use of humans as well is "even more alarming."

Tim Bjarin, tech columnist and president of Creative Strategies, said it's a bigger problem when humans use the information beyond its intended purpose.

Facebook said audio snippets reviewed by contractors were masked so as not to reveal anyone's identity. It said it stopped the practice a week ago. The development was reported earlier by Bloomberg.

Google said it suspended doing this worldwide while it investigates the Dutch leaks. Apple has also suspended its use of humans for the Siri digital assistant, though it plans to bring them back after seeking explicit permission from users. Amazon said it still uses humans, but users can decline, or opt out, of the human transcriptions.

A report from tech news site Motherboard last week said Microsoft also uses human transcribers with some Skype conversations and commands spoken to Microsoft's digital assistant, Cortana. Microsoft said in a statement that it has safeguards such as stripping identifying data and requiring non-disclosure agreements with contractors and their employees. Yet details leaked to Motherboard.

After the Motherboard report, Microsoft said it "could do a better job" explaining that humans listen to the conversations. It updated its frequently asked questions for Skype to say that using the translation service "may include transcription of audio recordings by Microsoft employees and vendors."

It makes sense to use human transcribers to train artificial intelligence systems, Winterton said. But the issue is that companies are leading people to believe that only machines are listening to audio, causing miscommunication and distrust, she said.

"Communicating to users through your privacy policy is legal but not ethical," she said.

The companies' privacy policies — usually long, dense documents — often permit the use of customer data to improve products and services, but the language can be opaque.

"We collect the content, communications and other information you provide when you use our Products, including when you sign up for an account, create or share content, and message or communicate

with others," Facebook's data-use policy reads . It does not mention audio or voice specifically or using transcribers.

Bajarin said tech companies need to use multiple methods to refine artificial intelligence software, as digital voice assistants and voice-to-text technology are still new. But he said being more clear about the human involvement is "the very least" companies could do.

"They should be very clear on what their policies are and if consumer messages or whatever it is are going to be seen," he said. "If humans are part of the process for analysis that needs to be stated as well."

Irish data-protection regulators say they're seeking more details from Facebook to assess compliance with European data regulations. The agency's statement says it's also had "ongoing engagement with Google, Apple and Microsoft" over the issue, though Amazon wasn't mentioned.

Facebook is already under scrutiny for a variety of other ways it has misused user data. It agreed to a \$5 billion fine to settle a U.S. Federal Trade Commission probe of its privacy practices.

___ Lerman reported from San Francisco.

Ex-Blackwater contractor sentenced to life in Iraq shootings

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former Blackwater security contractor was sentenced Wednesday to life in prison for his role in the 2007 shooting of unarmed civilians in Iraq that left 14 people dead.

Federal judge Royce Lamberth issued the sentence after a succession of friends and relatives requested leniency for Nicholas Slatten, who was found guilty of first-degree murder by a jury in December.

Prosecutors charged that Slatten, 35, was the first to fire shots in the September 2007 massacre of Iraqi civilians at a crowded traffic circle in Baghdad. In all, 10 men, two women and two boys, ages 9 and 11, were killed.

The defense had argued that Slatten and other Blackwater contractors opened fire only after they saw what they mistakenly thought was a potential suicide car bomber moving quickly toward their convoy.

Defense attorney Dane Butswinkas described Slatten as "a person of high integrity" whose family members had served in the U.S. military for four generations.

Several of Slatten's supporters openly accused prosecutors of scapegoating an innocent man in order to placate Iraqi public opinion. The shootings strained U.S.-Iraqi relations and focused intense international scrutiny on the extensive use of private military contractors in Iraq.

In 2014, a jury convicted Slatten and three other contractors — Paul Alvin Slough, Evan Shawn Liberty and Dustin Laurent Heard— who were part of a four-vehicle convoy that was protecting State Department personnel in the area. An appeals court overturned that conviction, saying Slatten should have been tried separately from the three other men.

Slatten, of Sparta, Tennessee, was retried last summer, but a mistrial was declared after the jury couldn't reach a unanimous verdict. A subsequent jury convicted him of murder in December 2018.

Slatten's father, Darrell, paused in addressing the judge to speak directly to his son, who sat largely impassive in a beige prison jumpsuit.

"Nick, please accept my apology for what your country has done to you," he said. "We will fight until hell freezes over to correct this travesty of justice."

Slatten himself told the judge that he was a victim of an "unjust prosecution" and that government lawyers cared more about producing a conviction than uncovering the truth of what happened in Baghdad 12 years ago.

"This is a miscarriage of justice and it will not stand," he said.

But Judge Lamberth, in issuing the life sentence, dismissed much of the family's claims that Slatten was a scapegoat for international political considerations.

"The jury got it exactly right," he said. "This was murder."

___ This story has been updated to correct the last name of the judge on second reference.

Government moves toward easing drive-time rules for truckers

By RICHARD LARDNER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration took a key step Wednesday toward relaxing federal rules that govern the length of time truck drivers can spend behind the wheel, a move long sought by the trucking industry but opposed by safety advocates who warn it could lead to more highway crashes.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, an agency of the Transportation Department, issued proposed changes to the “hours of service” rules, which dictate breaks truckers are required to take, and their time on and off duty.

“It puts a little more power back in the hands of the drivers and motor carriers,” said Raymond Martinez, head of the federal safety agency. Martinez said the agency listened to drivers and their calls for safer and more flexible rules.

But highway safety groups have warned that putting the revisions into place would dangerously weaken the regulations.

“The agency is offering flexibility without regard for the fact that it could be exploited by the worst actors in the industry, including drivers who will operate while fatigued and motor carriers who will coerce them to do so,” said Harry Adler, executive director of the Truck Safety Coalition.

There were 4,657 large trucks involved in fatal crashes in 2017, a 10% increase from the year before, according to a May report issued by the agency. Sixty of the truckers in these accidents were identified as “asleep or fatigued,” although the National Transportation Safety Board has said this type of driver impairment is likely underreported on police crash forms.

Trade groups that represented truck drivers and motor carriers have pushed for years for less rigid hours of service rules, arguing that the regulations were too rigid and out of step with the daily realities confronting most truck drivers. They found a supporter in President Donald Trump, who has made rolling back layers of regulatory oversight a priority.

“To me, having the flexibility is huge,” said Terry Button, a hay farmer from upstate New York who owns his truck and has logged about 4 million miles since he started driving in 1976. “It’s good that the government finally took the time to listen to the people who do the job.” Button spoke to The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The existing regulations limit long-haul truckers to 11 hours of driving time within a 14-hour on-duty window. Drivers must have had 10 consecutive hours off duty before the on-duty clock starts anew. A driver who is going to be driving for more than eight hours must take a 30-minute off-duty break before hitting the eight-hour mark.

Under the proposed revisions, truckers could take a break while they are on duty but not driving. Drivers have complained that long waits for cargo to be loaded or unloaded keep them idle yet they are still required to take an off-duty break, even if they do not need to rest or cannot find suitable parking for a big rig.

The administration also is proposing to allow drivers to “pause” the 14-hour driving window for an off-duty break of up to three hours, provided the trucker still takes the 10 consecutive hours off duty at the end of the work shift.

Short-haul drivers are exempt from logging their time electronically if they meet certain criteria that include starting and returning to the same location within 12 consecutive hours and not exceeding a 100-mile radius. The proposal would extend the on-duty period to 14 hours and increase the distance limit to 150 miles.

Eric Teoh, a senior statistician with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, had urged against lengthening the short-haul work period. In a letter sent to Martinez and the agency last year, Teoh said that a recent Institute study showed that interstate truck drivers operating under the short-haul exemption had a crash risk 383% higher than those not using the exemption.

The powerful American Trucking Associations, whose members include the nation’s largest motor carriers and truck manufacturing companies, said in a statement that the revisions maintain the “core principles”

of the regulations.

A group representing independent truck drivers hailed the "common-sense approach" that will make it easier for truckers to avoid heavy traffic, bad weather and other adverse situations.

"Truckers have families and want to get home safely just like everyone else. They are the most knowledgeable, highway safety advocates and the agency's proposal, overall, recognizes that fact," said Todd Spencer, president of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association.

The organization Spencer heads and a grassroots group called TruckerNation.org last year petitioned the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to amend the hours of service rules.

The proposal will be published in the Federal Register next and be open for public comment for 45 days. Martinez said he couldn't say when a final rule would be issued and take effect but he described what the agency issued Wednesday as a critical step in the process.

Follow Richard Lardner on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/rplardner>

European theaters mostly wait-and-see on Domingo accusations

BY COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — While two U.S. opera houses immediately canceled performances by famed tenor Placido Domingo following sexual harassment allegations, European opera houses are taking stances ranging from supportive to wait-and-see.

The Philadelphia Orchestra and San Francisco Opera immediately announced they would cancel upcoming performances featuring the star and the Los Angeles Opera opened an investigation following an Associated Press story in which numerous women accused the opera legend of sexual harassment and inappropriate behavior spanning decades.

In Europe, there were no immediate cancellations of the 78-year-old Domingo's performances and even some words of support for the star. Opera world officials noted that no charges had been brought against Domingo and no formal judicial investigations were underway that might provide legal underpinning to cancel any contractual obligations.

The stark differences in the levels of urgency in the responses underline the differences in the footing of the #MeToo movement on both sides of the Atlantic.

Opera houses in the United States might consider the possibility of damaging protests outside their venues if they maintained the scheduled performances. But, in Europe Domingo's status as one of the most popular and influential figures in the opera world could trigger a backlash against venues if performances were canceled without due process, said one opera official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of lack of authorization to discuss personnel matters.

"Some attitudes, seen in hindsight, risk being misunderstood," cultural journalist Leonetta Bentivoglio wrote Wednesday in the Italian newspaper La Repubblica. "That he was a Don Juan was something everyone knew, and in the promiscuous theater world he is not alone. We must add that his charm has always attracted a crowd of women, and often it was he who had to defend himself."

Bentivoglio recalled an incident at a Paris hotel during Domingo's "Three Tenors" heyday with Luciano Pavarotti and Jose Carreras, when he asked journalists to pretend to accompany him in the elevator "to escape to his room without being followed by some beautiful young women," who were in pursuit.

"These are difficult stories to tell in the slippery era of #MeToo," she wrote.

Nineteen of the singer's 24 engagements through November 2020 are on European stages, according to his website. Upcoming performances in Salzburg, Milan, London, Zurich, Cologne, Hamburg and Geneva were still on but some venues said they would monitor the investigation in Los Angeles, where Domingo has been general director since 2003 and previously was artistic director. Other venues postponed comment, citing the summer holiday.

Domingo received support from the Salzburg Festival in Austria, his next scheduled performance on

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Aug. 31, as well as from some singers who have shared the stage with him.

Salzburg Festival president Helga Rabl-Stadler, who said she has known Domingo for 25 years and has long appreciated both his "artistic competence" and "appreciative treatment of all festival employees," said "it would be factually wrong and morally irresponsible to make irreversible judgments at this point."

The Hamburg opera house in Germany also said Domingo's Nov. 27 appearance there was still on, citing the lack of any legal action against the tenor.

"As a public institution we neither tolerate nor trivialize sexual assaults, but we are also bound by the principles of the rule of law in our actions. Valid contracts with the concert promoter exist for the appearance of Plácido Domingo," the opera house said in a statement. "Subject to further developments, the concert will therefore take place as planned."

Domingo did not respond to detailed questions from the AP about specific incidents, but issued a statement calling the allegations "deeply troubling, and as presented, inaccurate."

"I believed that all of my interactions and relationships were always welcomed and consensual. People who know me or who have worked with me know that I am not someone who would intentionally harm, offend, or embarrass anyone," the statement said. "However, I recognize that the rules and standards by which we are — and should be — measured against today are very different than they were in the past. I am blessed and privileged to have had a more than 50-year career in opera and will hold myself to the highest standards."

Domingo has a reputation for making the rounds of offices when he arrives at theaters to greet employees and workers at every level — a characteristic that has helped make him beloved in a world full of demanding divas and divos. He also founded the Operalia world opera contest, an event attracting 1,000 applicants each year that has helped launch careers for the last 26 years.

Three Spanish sopranos have come to his defense, saying that they have never experienced the sort of behavior described in the AP story, which included accusations that he put his hand down one woman's skirt and forced wet kisses on three others. All of the allegations were related to incidents in the United States, spanning two decades beginning in the late 1980s.

Spain's Europa Press news agency on Wednesday quoted Spanish soprano Davinia Rodriguez as saying she "never felt the least indication of what they accuse the maestro of," adding that Domingo had always shown her and theater workers "the maximum of respect, with the humbleness and generosity that characterizes him."

Fellow Spanish soprano Pilar Jurado said that Domingo had always behaved "as a perfect gentleman" with her and Spanish soprano Ainhoa Arteta expressed shock at the allegations, saying she considered Domingo and his wife to be family.

"I have no idea if he might have flirted and scored. That sort of thing went on before and still does now, but I know he is not a harasser, I'd put my hand in the fire on it," Arteta told the Spanish daily El Pais.

Associated Press writers Ciaran Giles in Madrid, David Rising in Berlin, Jamey Keaten in Geneva and Jill Lawless in London contributed to this report.

Trump official: Statue of Liberty's poem is about Europeans

By ZEKE MILLER and ASHLEY THOMAS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A top Trump administration official says the famous inscription on the Statue of Liberty, welcoming "huddled masses" of immigrants to American shores, was referring to "people coming from Europe" and that the nation is looking to receive migrants "who can stand on their own two feet."

The comments on Tuesday from Ken Cuccinelli, the acting director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, came a day after the Trump administration announced it would seek to deny green cards to migrants who seek Medicaid, food stamps, housing vouchers or other forms of public assistance. The move, and Cuccinelli's defense, prompted an outcry from Democrats and immigration advocates who said the

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policy would favor wealthier immigrants and disadvantage those from poorer countries in Latin America and Africa.

"This administration finally admitted what we've known all along: They think the Statue of Liberty only applies to white people," tweeted former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke, a Democratic presidential candidate.

The administration's proposed policy shift comes as President Donald Trump is leaning more heavily into the restrictive immigration policies that have energized his core supporters and were central to his 2016 victory. He has also spoken disparagingly about immigration from majority black and Hispanic countries, including calling Mexican immigrants rapists and criminals when he launched his 2016 campaign. Last year, he privately branded Central American and African nations as "shithole" countries and he suggested the U.S. take in more immigrants from European countries like predominantly white Norway.

Cuccinelli said in an interview with CNN on Tuesday night that the Emma Lazarus poem emblazoned on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty referred to "people coming from Europe where they had class based societies where people were considered wretched if they weren't in the right class."

Lazarus' poem, written in 1883 to raise money to construct the Statue of Liberty's pedestal and cast in bronze beneath the monument in 1903, served as a beacon to millions of immigrants who crossed past as they first entered the U.S. in New York Harbor. It reads, "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore."

Cuccinelli was asked earlier Tuesday on NPR whether the words "give me your tired, your poor" were part of the American ethos. Cuccinelli responded: "They certainly are. Give me your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet and who will not become a public charge."

Cuccinelli was a failed Republican candidate for governor in 2013 after serving as the state's attorney general. He backed Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas for president in 2016 and for a time was a harsh critic of Trump.

He is one of a slew of immigration hardliners brought in by Trump to implement the president's policies. He was appointed to the post in June in a temporary capacity, which doesn't require Senate confirmation.

Trump, asked Tuesday about Cuccinelli's comments on NPR, appeared to back him up.

"I don't think it's fair to have the American taxpayer paying for people to come into the United States," Trump told reporters before boarding Air Force One for Pennsylvania. "I think we're doing it right."

Immigrant rights groups strongly criticized the Trump administration's new rules for immigrants receiving public assistance, warning that the changes would scare immigrants away from asking for needed help. And they voiced concern that officials were being given too much authority to decide whether someone is likely to need public assistance in the future.

Another Democratic presidential candidate, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, also condemned Cuccinelli's comments.

"Our values are etched in stone on the Statue of Liberty. They will not be replaced," she tweeted. "And I will fight for those values and for our immigrant communities."

Flooded Mississippi a threat as hurricane season heats up

By JEFF MARTIN and JANET McCONNAUGHEY Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The river that drains much of the flood-soaked United States is still running higher than normal, menacing New Orleans in multiple ways just as the hurricane season intensifies.

For months now, a massive volume of water has been pushing against the levees keeping a city mostly below sea level from being inundated. The Mississippi River ran past New Orleans at more than 11 feet (3.4 meters) above sea level for a record 292 days, dropping below that height only Monday.

"The big threat is water getting through or underneath," said Nicholas Pinter, an expert on river dynamics and flood risks who's studied levee breaches across the nation. "The longer the duration, the greater the threat."

Locals walked up levees from Baton Rouge to New Orleans to see the river for themselves as Tropical

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Storm Barry briefly menaced Louisiana last month, but the real damage runs underneath, experts say: All that rushing floodwater can scour levees along their foundations, causing damage in places that can't easily be seen.

"That ultimately could undermine the levee as well and cause a breach or a failure," said Cassandra Rutherford, assistant professor of geotechnical engineering at Iowa State University.

The federal agency that maintains the levees is aware of the risks. But Ricky Boyett, spokesman for the New Orleans office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said the corps is confident that South Louisiana river levees are in great condition, with improvements made since 2011.

"If there's a silver lining going into hurricane season with the river this high for this long, we're entering the hurricane season having done 200 inspections of the levee since February," Boyett said.

Inspectors were looking for parked barges, stuck debris or other potential trouble, such as tire ruts or damage from feral hogs on grassy surfaces. They also looked for water seeping through, and for sand boils — spots where water tunneling below a levee seems to bubble out of the ground.

Concrete mats armor underwater areas likely to be eaten away by the river's current, Boyett said. Sand boils get ringed with sandbags until the water pressure on both sides equalizes, stopping the flow. And because some permanent repairs can't be made during high water, dangerous seepage gets stopgap coverage: About 63,000 large sandbags have been used since March on one 300-foot-long (91.5-meter-long) seepage area upriver of Baton Rouge, he said.

Even so, experts who study flowing water say there's a risk the river could rise above the tops of some levees in the New Orleans area, if a hurricane pushes enough storm surge up the swollen river. The city's levees held the river back in the great flood of 1927 and haven't been topped since then, Boyett said.

A Category 4 hurricane striking the Louisiana coastline can produce a 20-foot (6.1-meter) storm surge, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration says. However, that surge's size at New Orleans, more than 100 winding river miles up from the coast, would be reduced by the Big Muddy's push seaward.

The levees range in height from 20 to 25 feet (6 to 7.5 meters). While river levels are finally falling, the National Weather Service projects the Mississippi will remain above average at New Orleans as hurricane season heats up.

"We really have a heightened concern this year," said Scott Hagen, of Louisiana State University's Center for Coastal Resiliency.

For most of the past three decades, the Mississippi has run about 3 to 5 feet (1 to 1.5 meters) high in mid-August at New Orleans' Carrollton gauge. The last time it was this high was 11.4 feet (3.5 meters) in August 2015, a year when no significant tropical weather reached Louisiana's coast. It was 12.2 feet (3.7 meters) in 1993, another year Louisiana's coast escaped harm.

When Katrina formed as a tropical storm in the Bahamas on Aug. 24, 2005, the river stage in New Orleans was just 2.44 feet (0.74 meters) above sea level. It rose to 3.6 feet (1.1 meters) the day before Katrina devastated the city in 2005.

Katrina knocked out an automatic station that would have measured peak surge at the river's mouth, but an analysis by the Federal Emergency Management Agency indicates the surge reached nearly 28 feet at Pass Christian, Mississippi. Surge pushed the Mississippi River up to 11.6 feet (3.5 meters) at New Orleans — not a threatening height with the river low. But surge from the brackish lakes to the city's north and east reached 19 feet (5.8 meters), overtopping or breaching those levees and flooding 80% of the city with water as much as 20 feet (6.1 meters) deep in places.

"I would assume major problems on the river if we had a high river with a Katrina event," said Jeffrey Graschel, with the National Weather Service's Lower Mississippi River Forecast Center.

The vast majority of the \$14.6 billion spent on flood controls as a result of Katrina went not to the river levees, but to shore up and block areas that failed.

The possibility of a punishing storm surge meeting a swollen Mississippi in New Orleans is a different threat, one that could become more common as the planet warms, spawning longer-lasting floods and earlier hurricanes.

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Barry was the first hurricane to menace when the river was as high as it was in July, Boyett said.

In 1929, the year construction started on the spillway that caps the river's height at New Orleans, the Mississippi topped at 19.99 feet (6.1 meters) in June, Boyett said. But that year saw only five Atlantic tropical systems, with two hurricanes in the Gulf, National Hurricane Center data show — and both stayed away from Louisiana. NOAA forecasters now expect 10 to 17 named storms this year, including five to nine hurricanes.

Opening spillways upriver from New Orleans can't fix this, because they were designed to keep water flowing at a manageable rate, not to quickly drop river levels, which could cause mudslides when levees don't dry out as fast as the water falls, Boyett said.

The changing climate means this problem could become an annual threat.

"Flooding is never a one-time thing. We're just waiting for the next one," said Pinter, an associate director of the University of California Davis Center for Watershed Sciences. "Given model predictions for climate change and rising sea levels and suggestions that hurricanes are maybe getting more intense, it's something we have to keep an eye on."

Martin reported from Atlanta.

Mysterious missile explosion in Russia raises questions

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A deadly explosion at a naval weapons testing range in northwestern Russia. A brief spike in radiation levels. An evacuation order issued, then rescinded, for a nearby village.

Last week's mysterious accident on the White Sea, along with changing or contradictory information from Russian authorities, has led to speculation about what happened and what type of weapon was involved, and has even raised comparisons to the 1986 disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

What is known and unknown about the Aug. 8 incident in the Russian region of Arkhangelsk:

THE SECRET TESTING RANGE

A testing range was set up near the village of Nyonoksa, about 1,000 kilometers (615 miles) north of Moscow on the White Sea in 1954, when the Soviet Union's missile program was still in its nascent phase. It has served as the main ground for testing a variety of missiles used by the Soviet and then Russian navy ever since.

They included anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles of various types, as well as intercontinental ballistic missiles intended for the nation's nuclear submarines.

The authorities have routinely closed various parts of the White Sea's Dvina Bay to navigation during missile tests, and the approximately 500 residents of Nyonoksa have regularly been asked to temporarily leave their homes, usually for a few hours at a time, apparently as a routine precaution during military activity.

The area has been off-limits to the outsiders, but tourists who ask for advance permission have been allowed to visit Nyonoksa, the site of a beautiful 18th century wooden church.

The village is connected by rail to Severodvinsk, a city of 183,000 people about 30 kilometers (19 miles) to the east.

THE EXPLOSION

First word of the explosion came from the Russian Defense Ministry, which initially said the Aug. 8 blast of a liquid-propellant rocket engine killed two people and injured six others. It said in a statement that no radiation had been released, although the city administration in Severodvinsk reported a brief rise in radiation levels — a contradiction that recalled Soviet-era cover-ups of disasters like Chernobyl.

Two days later, Russia's state-controlled nuclear agency Rosatom acknowledged that the explosion occurred on an offshore platform during tests of a "nuclear isotope power source," and that it killed five nuclear engineers and injured three others. It's still not clear whether those casualties were in addition to the earlier dead and injured.

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Russian authorities then closed part of Dvina Bay to shipping for a month, an apparent attempt to keep outsiders from seeing an operation to recover the missile debris.

On Monday, the five engineers were buried in Sarov, a city that hosts Russia's main nuclear weapons research center.

THE RADIATION

The city administration in Severodvinsk, which has a huge shipyard that builds nuclear submarines, said the radiation levels there rose to 2 microsieverts per hour — approximately 20 times the area's average reading — for about 30 minutes on Aug. 8. It then returned to the area's average natural level of 0.1 microsieverts per hour.

Emergency officials issued a warning to all workers to stay indoors and close the windows. Frightened residents rushed to buy iodine, which can help reduce risks from exposure to radiation.

A later report from Russia's state weather and environmental monitoring agency said the peak radiation reading in Severodvinsk on Aug. 8 was 1.78 microsieverts per hour in just one neighborhood — about 16 times the average. Peak readings in other parts of Severodvinsk varied between 0.45 and 1.33 microsieverts per hour. It said that radiation levels fell back to normal after 2½ hours.

The brief increase in radiation didn't pose any health dangers, authorities said. The recorded peak levels were indeed lower than the cosmic radiation that plane passengers are exposed to on longer flights or doses that patients get during some medical scans.

The authorities haven't registered any increase in radiation since then. Local emergency officials also said ground samples from around the area revealed no trace of radioactive contamination.

On Monday, Nyonoksa residents were asked to leave the village for several hours, causing new worries. The order was quickly rescinded by the military, who said they canceled the activities at the range that had warranted the initial evacuation order.

Arkhangelsk region Gov. Igor Orlov said, "There is no evacuation," and he claimed that some reports about the incident sought to sow panic.

THE MYSTERY MISSILE

Neither the Defense Ministry nor Rosatom identified the type of weapon that exploded during the test.

But Rosatom's statement said the explosion occurred during tests of a "nuclear isotope power source," which led observers to conclude it was the "Burevestnik" or "Storm Petrel," a nuclear-powered cruise missile. NATO has code-named the missile "Skyfall."

The missile was first revealed by Russian President Vladimir Putin in his 2018 state-of-the-nation address, along with other doomsday weapons.

President Donald Trump backed that theory Monday, tweeting, "The Russian 'Skyfall' explosion has people worried about the air around the facility, and far beyond. Not good!" Trump added that "the United States is learning much from the failed missile explosion in Russia. We have similar, though more advanced, technology."

Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union worked on nuclear-powered missiles in the 1960s, but they abandoned such designs as too unstable and dangerous to operate.

When he spoke about the prospective nuclear-powered cruise missile, Putin claimed it will have an unlimited range, allowing it to circle the globe undetected by missile defense systems. He said the missile had successfully undergone the first tests, but many observers have remained skeptical, arguing that such a weapon could be very difficult to handle and pose a threat to the environment.

Some media reports indicated that previous tests of the Burevestnik had been conducted on the barren Arctic archipelago of Novaya Zemlya and the Kapustin Yar testing range in southern Russia.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Aug. 15, the 227th day of 2019. There are 138 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 15, 1971, President Richard Nixon announced a 90-day freeze on wages, prices and rents.

On this date:

In 1483, the Sistine Chapel was consecrated by Pope Sixtus IV.

In 1888, T.E. Lawrence, the British soldier who gained fame as "Lawrence of Arabia," was born in Tremadoc, Wales.

In 1935, humorist Will Rogers and aviator Wiley Post were killed when their airplane crashed near Point Barrow in the Alaska Territory.

In 1944, during World War II, Allied forces landed in southern France in Operation Dragoon.

In 1945, in a pre-recorded radio address, Japan's Emperor Hirohito announced that his country had accepted terms of surrender for ending World War II.

In 1947, India became independent after some 200 years of British rule.

In 1961, as workers began constructing a Berlin Wall made of concrete, East German soldier Conrad Schumann leapt to freedom over a tangle of barbed wire in a scene captured in a famous photograph.

In 1965, the Beatles played to a crowd of more than 55,000 at New York's Shea Stadium.

In 1969, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair opened in upstate New York.

In 1995, the Justice Department agreed to pay \$3.1 million to white separatist Randy Weaver and his family to settle their claims over the killing of Weaver's wife and son during a 1992 siege by federal agents at Ruby Ridge, Idaho.

In 1998, 29 people were killed by a car bomb that tore apart the center of Omagh, Northern Ireland; a splinter group calling itself the Real IRA claimed responsibility.

In 2017, President Donald Trump, who'd faced harsh criticism for initially blaming the deadly weekend violence in Charlottesville, Virginia on "many sides," told reporters that there were "very fine people on both sides" of the confrontation and that groups protesting against the white supremacists were "also very violent." (In between those statements, at the urging of aides, Trump had offered a more direct condemnation of white supremacists.)

Ten years ago: U.S. Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., visiting Myanmar, was able to secure the release of John Yet-taw, an American imprisoned for swimming to the home of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. A wedding tent fire in Kuwait claimed the lives of 55 women and children.

Five years ago: Texas Gov. Rick Perry was indicted by a grand jury for allegedly abusing the powers of his office by carrying out a threat to veto funding for state prosecutors investigating public corruption. (A coercion charge was tossed on appeal before Texas' highest criminal court voided the abuse of power charge in February 2016.)

One year ago: President Donald Trump revoked the security clearance of ex-CIA Director John Brennan in an unprecedented act of retribution against a vocal critic; Trump later told The Wall Street Journal that Brennan was among those he held responsible for the Russia investigation. In a speech blasting Trump and his "Make America Great Again" slogan, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said America "was never that great," and wouldn't be great until all Americans share true equality. (Cuomo would later say that his words had been "inartful," and that "America has always been great.") A suicide bomber struck a private education center in a Shiite neighborhood of the Afghan capital, killing 34 young men and women; the Islamic State group claimed responsibility.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Abby Dalton is 87. Actress Lori Nelson is 86. Civil rights activist Vernon Jordan is 84. Actor Jim Dale is 84. Actress Pat Priest is 83. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer is 81. U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., is 81. Musician Pete York (Spencer Davis Group) is 77. Author-journalist Linda Ellerbee is 75. Songwriter Jimmy Webb is 73. Rock singer-musician Tom Johnston (The Doobie Broth-

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ers) is 71. Actress Phyllis Smith is 70. Britain's Princess Anne is 69. Actress Tess Harper is 69. Actor Larry Mathews is 64. Actor Zeljko Ivanek is 62. Actor-comedian Rondell Sheridan is 61. Rock singer-musician Matt Johnson (The The) is 58. Movie director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu is 56. Philanthropist Melinda Gates is 55. Country singer Angela Rae (Wild Horses) is 53. Actor Peter Hermann is 52. Actress Debra Messing is 51. Actor Anthony Anderson is 49. Actor Ben Affleck is 47. Singer Mikey Graham (Boyzone) is 47. Actress Natasha Henstridge is 45. Actress Nicole Paggi is 42. Christian rock musician Tim Foreman (Switchfoot) is 41. Actress Emily Kinney is 35. Figure skater Jennifer Kirk is 35. Latin pop singer Belinda (cq) is 30. Actress Courtney Hope is 30. Rock singer Joe Jonas (The Jonas Brothers) is 30. Actor-singer Carlos PenaVega is 30. Actress Jennifer Lawrence is 29. Rap DJ Smoove da General (Cali Swag District) is 29.

Thought for Today: "Life has taught me to think, but thinking has not taught me how to live." — Alexander Herzen, Russian author (1812-1870).