

Groton Daily Independent

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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**

5 - Thursday

10 a.m.: Cross Country at Redfield
6 p.m.: Volleyball hosts Britton-Hecla (JH Matches at 4 p.m., JV at 6:00 followed by Varsity)
James Valley Threshing Show, Andover
Emmanuel: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.
Breakfast: Ham Egg and Cheese Pockets
Lunch: Fish Nuggets, Batter Bite Potatoes
Senior Menu: Sweet and sour pork, steamed rice, carrot and broccoli medley, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.



6 - Friday

7 p.m.: Football at Webster
James Valley Threshing Show, Andover
C&MA: Men's Bible Study at Dairy Queen, 6:30 a.m.
Breakfast: Cereal
Lunch: Cheese Sticks with Marinara, Corn
Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, Fruited Jell-O, whole wheat bread.

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It's Volleyball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Britton-Hecla
Braves VS**



Groton Area Tigers

Thursday, Sept. 5, 2019
7:00 p.m. at Groton

It's Football Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Webster Area
Bearcats VS**



Groton Area Tigers

Friday, Sept. 6, 2019
7:00 p.m. at Webster

Sponsored By

Allied Climate Professionals
Bahr Spray Foam
BaseKamp Lodge
DeHoet Trucking
Groton Auto Works
Hanlon Brothers
John Sieh Agency
Milbrandt Enterprises
Professional Management Services

Sponsored By

Abeln Seed
Aberdeen Chrysler Center
Allied Climate Professionals
Bahr Spray Foam
BaseKamp Lodge
DeHoet Trucking
Groton Auto Works
Hanlon Brothers
John Sieh Agency
Mike-N-Jo's Body-N-Glass
Milbrandt Enterprises
Olson Development
Professional Management Services
Touchdown Sponsor: Patios Plus

Groton Senior Citizens

Groton Seniors met August 12. Fifteen members were present. President opened with the flag pledge. Lee Schinkel played, "What a friend we have in Jesus". An invitation to a card party at the Golf Course in Groton September 12. Lunch, dinner and dessert will be served. A charge of fifteen dollars. Reservations need to be made to go. Different card games are played. Meeting adjourned and cards were played. The winners of the games. Pinochle- David Kleinsassor, Whist- Darlene Fischer, and Ella Johnson, Canasta - Belinda Nelson, door prizes, Darlene Fisher, Dick Donavon and Elda Stange.

August 19 Seniors met with 17 members present. President led the flag pledge. Marilyn Thorsen and Don Darwin were chosen king and queen for Home coming parade. Cards were played. The winners of pinochle - David Kleinsassor, Canasta- Beulah Hoops and Marilyn Thorsen, Whist- Darlene Fischer and Ruby Donavon. Door prizes. Ruby Donavon, Eunice McColister, David Kleinsassor. Lunch was served by Darlene Fischer and Belinda Nelson.

August 26. Groton Seniors had the flag pledge. Darlene Fischer made the motion to have Chicken from Ken's for our September and October pot luck dinner. Bingo was played after dinner. Dick Donavon won black out. Cards were played after bingo. Left overs were served before going home. Door prizes went to Beulah Hoops, Sarge Likness and Grace Albrecht.



The students in the picture are Rebecca Hanson, Ashley Gustafson and Ady Dwight. Terry Osborne came to Langford as a guest clinician for their percussionists today. He wrote the Langford drum cadence in 1965 and was invited back to help polish it up and get it to its original version. The girls pictured are just a few of the students that he worked with. (Photo from Kelly Wieser's Facebook Page)

The author returns to polish up his drum cadence

Trevor Osborne wrote Langford's drum cadence in 1965. Over the years, it has lost a little bit of its originality. Kelly Wieser, said that she invited the author back to Langford. "I wanted him to come back and help us polish it up and get it to its original version," she said.

Osborne accepted the invitation and was there on Wednesday, Aug. 28. "I came out to listen to the summers and help get them ready for the marching season," he said. "I really enjoyed working with the drum team. They're a great bunch of kids."

Osborne retired from Langford in 1997 as the band director, the athletic director and high school principal. During the last year, Wieser came on board to be the choir director which Osborne had also done up to that point. Wieser had the opportunity to work under Osborne for that year and he said, "I felt really good handing the music reigns over to Kelly when I retired. She has really done a great job keeping up the tradition of great music in Langford.

He said that they worked on the counting and getting the cadence back in original condition. He said that he will be going back to Langford a second time to listen and to make sure the improvements are correct.

The new music room addition recently built really impressed Osborne. "The new music room is really nice. I'm impressed with it," he said.

Langford has won many award over the years and that is with the help of the community. Osborne said, "Langford is a very supportive community when it comes to school activities . . . the best!"

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Follow Us For Updates

45th Annual James Valley Threshing & Tractor Club Show

www.jamesvalleythreshers.com
jvthreshers@gmail.com

Andover, SD

September
5, 6, 7 & 8th
2019



HOME OF THE WORLD'S
ONLY CASE ROAD LOCOMOTIVE

Kevin Anderson [General Info]
(605) 281-5663
Tim Olson [Vendors]
(605) 881-5978

Charlene Voss [Golf Cart Rentals]
(605) 881-2920
Alan Dixon [Tractor Pull]
(605) 228-1823

2019 Feature: Lettered John Deere Tractors

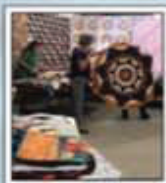
Moonlight
Steamride



Women Teaching
Women Steam



Honoring Bob
& Charlene Voss and
Family



Women's
Activities

Daily Parade 1:30 pm
Moonlight Steam Ride - Friday Evening
Antique Tractor Pull Saturday @ 10:30 am
Heritage Craft Program - Saturday @ 10:30 am
Women Teaching Women Saturday @ 11:30 am
Spark Show Saturday @ Dusk
Church Service Sunday @ 9:30 am
Steam Engine & Gas Tractor Threshing and
Plowing Daily after Parade
Lumber Sawing Daily
Kid's Tractor Pull after the Parade Sat. & Sun.



Steam Powered
Sawmill

Stationary Gas Engines • Quilt Show • Spinning & Weaving
Flea Markets • Food Concessions Daily
Antique Cars • Blacksmith Shop • Souvenir Store
Old Time Accordion Melodies by Robert Witt



Spark Show

2019 Carl M. Johnson Memorial
Free Tractor Giveaway: Oliver 60

Corn shelling demonstration
Massey Harris equipment is featured in the Toy Chest Building
Quilt program Saturday at 10:30am



Legacy Healthcare providing support for Avantara Groton

Legacy Healthcare has taken over the Groton long term care facility and according to interim administrator, Tiffany Schlomer, "they've been fantastic."

According to the Legacy website, "Legacy Healthcare is a leading provider of outstanding residential health care consulting services. Headquartered in Skokie, Illinois, we currently service 48 facilities across 4 states." Avantara Groton is part of their "collection."

There has been uncertainty among the long term care facilities across South Dakota, including the Groton facility. But things have been on the upswing.

Schlomer is a Transitional Specialist with Legacy. Her husband, Stuart, is the manager of the Oahe Hills Country Club in Mobridge. Tiffany is a licensed nursing home administrator, which, under federal law, is required to manage a long term care facility.

Legacy has already invested in the Groton facility, according to Schlomer. "I love the new IT upgrades," she said, "and new uniforms are coming." One thing about the Avantara group is that they are colored coordinated to purple and gray. There also has been a building assessment done on the needs of the facility. "Unofficially, new flooring is on the list," she said.

During the transition to Legacy, Schlomer said that there has been a lot of training and forms that need to be filled out. "We have had nothing but good things with Legacy," she said. "They answer the phone, they provide resources — they're just wonderful to work with."

Schlomer announced that Jackie Thorson has been promoted to Director of Nursing in Groton. Thorson has been working at the facility for six years.

No grass grows under Schlomer's feet even in her position in Groton. Even while the interview, she was responding to text messages, answering e-mails and setting up appointments. "It's very busy out here," she said. "The best part of this job is that I get to put a smile on someone's face and to brighten their day."

Legacy is also community orientated. Schlomer said that Legacy will be making a donation to the school and will be donating supplies as well.



Tiffany Schlomer
Interim Administrator
Avantara Groton

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.

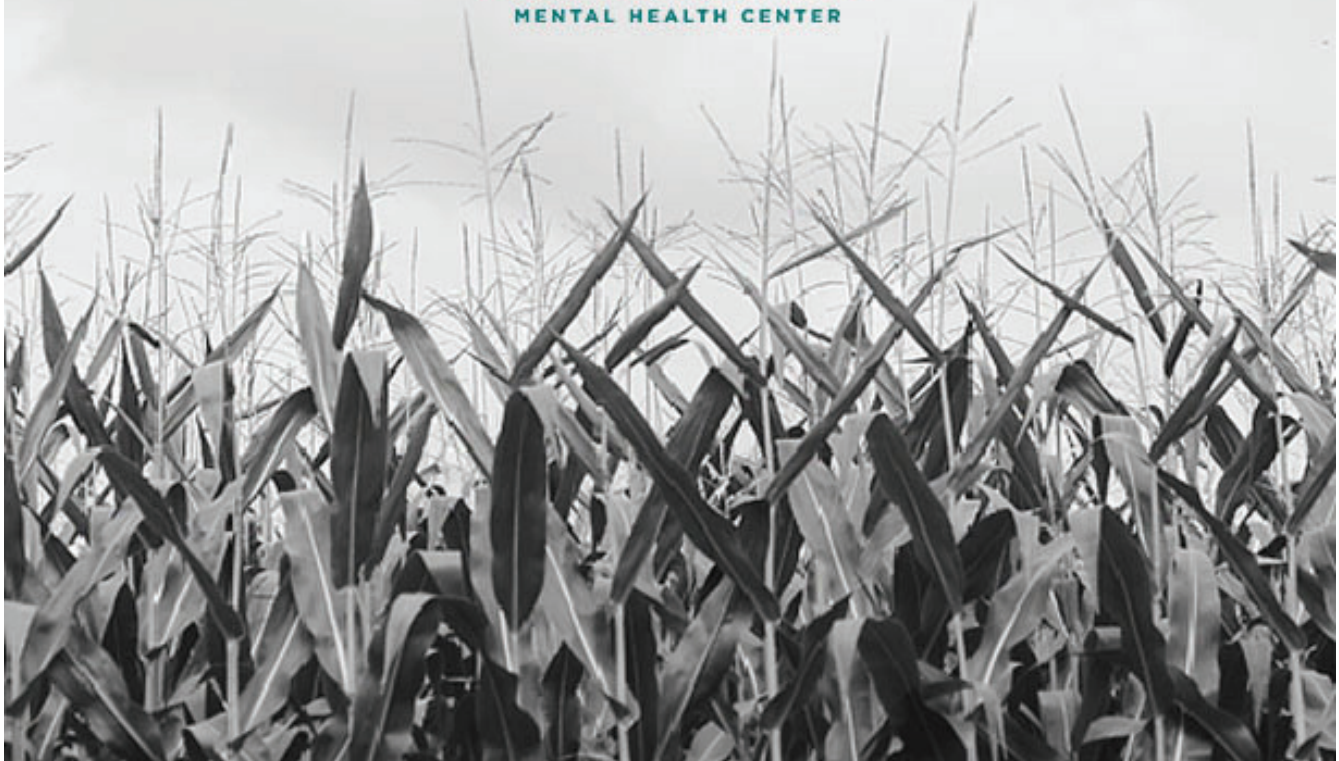
We're here to help.

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



Garcia begins as new Groton Police Officer

Tony Garcia has started as the new police officer in Groton. He officially started September 1.

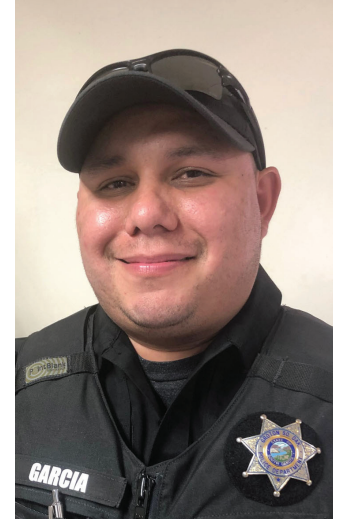
Garcia completes a circle of venue, starting in Groton in 2010, leaving in 2013 and now coming back back.

He is from Hutchinson, Minn., and served in the Army National Guard in Minnesota. We worked for a construction company out of Minnesota, building the grain silos for South Dakota Wheat Growers near Andover. He helped with the slip form for the concrete silos 140 feet in the air. He started working there around 2010 and while working there, he and his family lived in Groton. After his work on the silos, they remained in Groton where he worked at Poet. He was also a firefighter and a first responder.

"I always wanted to get into law enforcement," Garcia said. Under state law, if you have a department sponsor you, you can attend the law academy. A position opened up in Groton, but he was not offered the position at the time as he did not have any experience. The Webster Police Department hired him and they then moved to Webster in 2013. From there, he was a deputy for Marshall County, worked at the Madison Police Department as during the past four months, he was a canine officer in Flandreau with a dog named Tusox. Then the job opening in Groton came up again. "We always wanted to come back to Groton," he said. "The kids love it here - the school is great - the community has made it feel like home."

His wife, Melissa, will be a CNA at Avantara Groton. She was a CNA when they first lived in Groton when it was the Golden Living Center. Their children are Marcos, a sophomore; Nathalia, a freshman; Anthony Jr., a fifth grader; and Michael is four years old.

Garcia is also a taser instructor, a certified court translator and a certified rescue diver. "When Groton offered the job to me, I didn't think twice. It's good to be back here."



Tony Garcia
Groton Police Officer

- Paul Kosel



*Adults and Students . . . come
learn what social issues are
involving our youth
in our community.*

Solutions **to** **Social Issues**

SPONSORED BY LOCAL CHURCHES

Youth Groups Welcome ~ Large Groups please RSVP 605/377-0709

Seminars are:

September 11 at United Methodist Church:

Drugs & Alcohol

October 9 at Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance Church:

Sex Trafficking and Date Violence

November 6 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church:

Suicide and Bullying

Light Meal at 5:45 p.m. ~ Seminar begins at 6:30 p.m.

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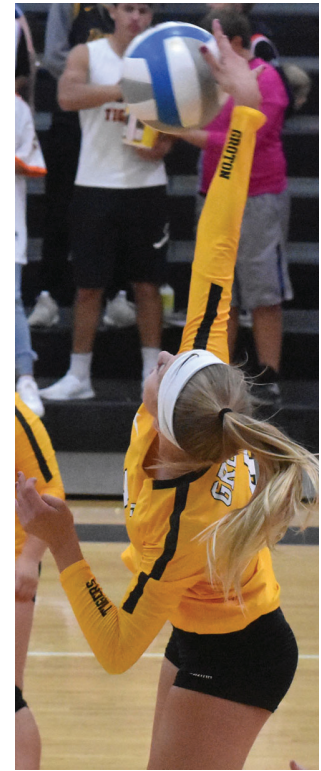
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Kaylin Kucker
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Payton Colestock
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Nicole Marzahn
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Eliza Wanner
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Photos from Ipswich Volleyball Match



Groton Area Coach Chelsea Hanson and Ipswich Coach Trent Osborne give their lineups to the officials prior to the game Tuesday in Ipswich. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Indigo Rogers
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Tadyn Glover
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Groton's Blood Drive Brings in 31 Volunteers

GROTON, SD – Groton community hosted a blood drive with Vitalant, formerly United Blood Services, on August 22 at the Community Center which helped collect a total of 33 units of blood products for patients in need.

A total of 31 individuals volunteered to donate blood and 26 individuals were able to donate at the Vitalant blood drive on August 22. A total of seven donors also came forward to donate Power Red Cells (2RBC) which collects two units of red blood cells while returning platelets, plasma and a saline solution back to the donor.

Vitalant expressed their gratitude to Kathy Sundermeyer, who coordinated the drive.

Vitalant strives to keep a 5-day supply of every blood type on the shelf at all times to be able to meet the needs of patients across the region. Donations from O-negative donors, the universal blood type, are especially important this time of year due to increased accidents and trauma cases.

Vitalant is the only blood provider to nearly 70 hospitals across the region. The blood supply is dependent on selfless donations from volunteer donors to ensure the lifesaving needs of the region are met.

About 30 percent of Vitalant's blood supply goes to cancer patients across the region and one in seven people entering the hospital will need blood. Those relying on blood in the region receive that lifesaving blood from Vitalant.

Donors can make a convenient appointment to give blood at www.bloodhero.com or by calling 877-25-VITAL. With each donation, donors receive a free total cholesterol test and earn points in Vitalant's donor rewards program. The next blood drive at this location is planned to be held on: November 14, 2019.

Blood donation takes about an hour from check-in to refreshments. Donors can save about 20 minutes by completing their Health History Questionnaire the day they donate on www.vitalant.org

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Today



Sunny

High: 85 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 53 °F

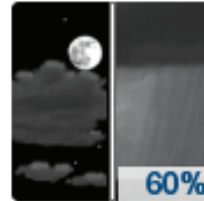
Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 78 °F

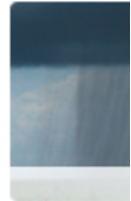
Friday
Night



Partly Cloudy
then Showers
Likely

Low: 57 °F

Saturday



Showers

High: 6

Very Warm Today-Mild Friday

Today

- Mostly Sunny, Very Warm
- Highs 80-92°F

Tonight

- Partly Cloudy
- Lows 53-60°F

Friday

- Mostly Sunny & Mild
- Highs 71-84°F

ISSUED: 3:03 AM - Thursday, September 5, 2019, National Weather Service, Aberdeen SD

Published on: 09/04/2019 at 11:04PM

Dry and very warm conditions are expected today across the region, with occasional breezy winds this afternoon. The dry conditions will continue through Friday, but with cooler temperatures.

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Today in Weather History

September 5, 1983: In the late afternoon and early evening, hail up to 2, and ½ inches in diameter pounded crops, trees, buildings, and windows resulting in extensive damage in Spink, Beadle, Turner, and Clay Counties. Trees were stripped of numerous branches broken off.

1666: The Great Fire of London started on September 2nd and continued through September 5th. The fire spread rapidly due to strong westerly winds. This fire consumed 13,200 homes, 87 parish churches, and St. Paul's Cathedral. 1929: Early season snowfall occurred in the mountains of Wyoming and the Black Hills of South Dakota on September 5th and 6th. The highest snowfall amount was 16 inches in Fox Park, Wyoming.

1933: A Category 3 hurricane made landfall on South Padre Island, Texas during the late evening hours on September 4th, or Labor Day. The storm caused 40 fatalities and nearly \$17 million in damages. With the storm making landfall during a holiday weekend, fatalities could have been much higher. The following is from the report of the official in charge at Corpus Christi, Texas: "Probably never before in the history of Texas hurricanes have such widespread and early warnings been given as were received from Washington in advance of this one. The telegram of Saturday, September 2, warning all persons to avoid inaccessible places over the weekend probably saved thousands of lives."

1950: Hurricane Easy was an erratic and unpredictable hurricane that lingered over the Tampa Bay area for days, dropping torrential rains and causing damage especially in Cedar Key, Florida where the storm eventually made landfall. This hurricane dumped 38.7 inches of rain in 24 hours in Yankeetown, a record for the U.S. at the time, and caused \$3.3 million in damage. Total rainfall amounts in Yankeetown was 45.20 inches.

1978: Tropical Depression Norman became the most recent tropical system to make landfall in California near Long Beach as an extra-tropical storm.

1996: Hurricane Fran made landfall near the tip of Cape Fear, North Carolina with maximum sustained winds near 115 mph on the evening of September 5th. Fran was responsible for 26 deaths and was at the time the most expensive natural disaster ever in North Carolina's history.

2017: Hurricane Irma became a category 5 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 185 mph. This made Irma the strongest hurricane ever observed in the open Atlantic Ocean, and one of only 5 hurricanes with measured winds of 185 MPH or higher in the entire Atlantic basin.

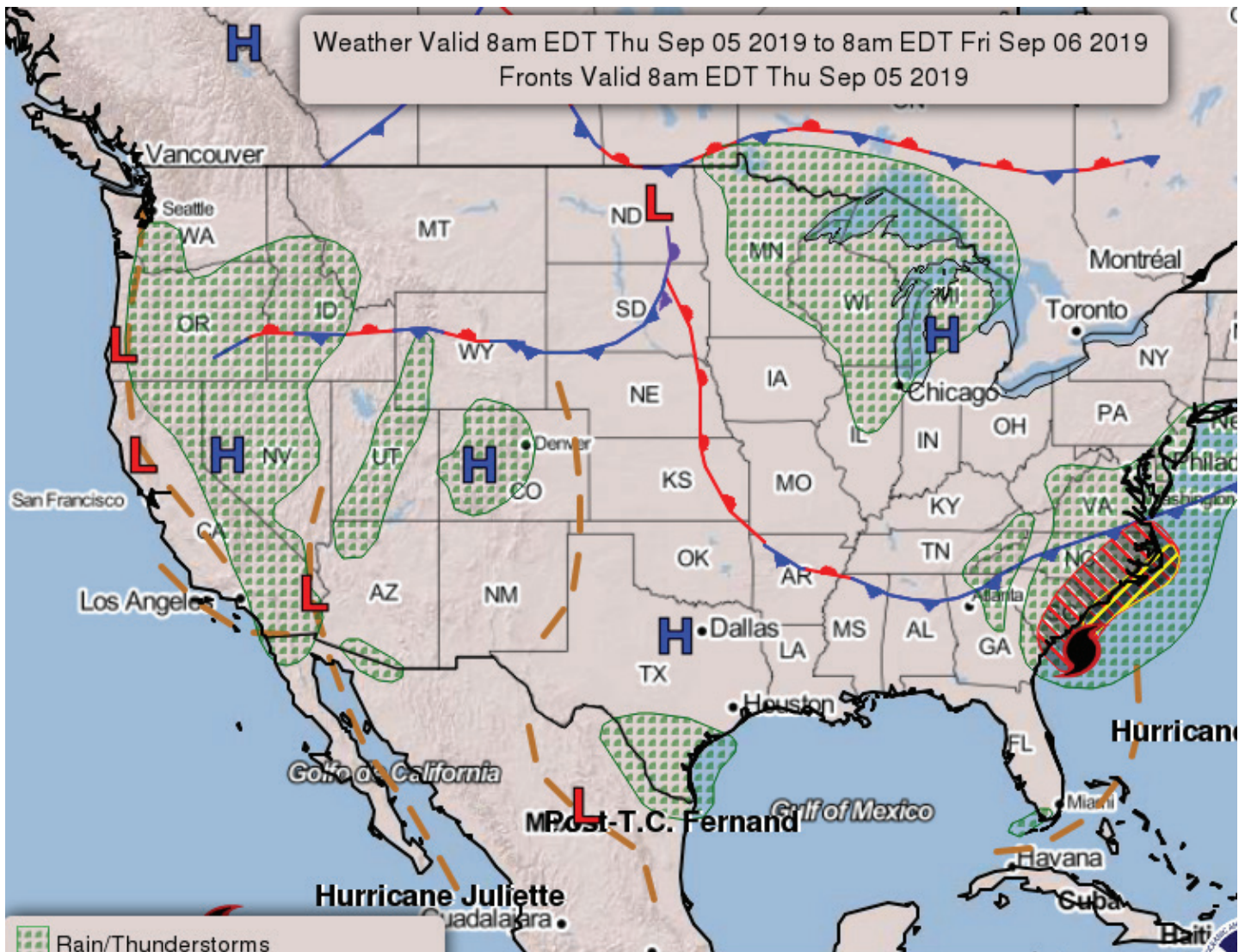
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 78 °F at 4:44 PM
Low Temp: 47 °F at 6:38 AM
Wind: 17 mph at 5:44 PM
Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 102° in 1945
Record Low: 32° in 1962, 1896
Average High: 77°F
Average Low: 50°F
Average Precip in Sept.: 0.30
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 16.59
Precip Year to Date: 19.76
Sunset Tonight: 8:04 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:01 a.m.





ANOTHER GREY HAIR

A father said to his son, When you cause problems and are disobedient, you add another grey hair to my head.

Wow, said the son in amazement, you must have treated your dad horribly! Grandpas hair is completely grey! What did you do to him?

Gods Word demands that children honor and obey their parents. But there is also a distinction between obeying and honoring parents.

Obeying means that children are to do what they are told to do as long as it is legal, proper, and ethical. Honoring, on the other hand, means giving respect, love and admiration.

Children cannot be expected to obey their parents if it means disobeying God. Neither are they to be submissive to parents who are controlling and demeaning when they are mature. As long as children accept the support of their parents, they must comply with the expectations made by their parents if the expectations of their parents are in keeping with Gods Word.

But honoring and loving parents may sometimes be more difficult than obeying them. It is always important for parents and children to remember that respect, which leads to giving and receiving honor and love, flows in both directions. If there is thoughtfulness and kindness, patience and gentleness, goodness and happiness in the home, honor and love will be normal and natural.

Prayer: Father, family life is difficult. When You are the focus of a family, all can live in love, hope, and harmony. We pray that families will invite You in as a member .In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Ephesians 6:2 Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 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, 10 a.m. Sharp (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, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 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, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest
- 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/14/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)

News from the Associated Press

Man shot by deputy competent for trial on assault charges

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A judge has ruled a Sioux Falls man shot by a sheriff's deputy is competent to proceed with assault charges against him.

Authorities say George Rinzy Jr. charged at a deputy with a knife before he was shot last May in the Minnehaha County Jail parking lot. Rinzy was hospitalized for two days before he was transferred to the jail.

Rinzy's attorneys requested a competency evaluation on his behalf. Prosecutor Mandi Mowery argued in court Wednesday that Rinzy may have mental health issues, but he's able to understand court proceedings.

Judge Timothy Tucker agreed.

The Argus Leader reports Rinzy is charged with aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer, among other counts. He's scheduled to go to trial on Sept. 16.

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

06-08-12-15-25

(six, eight, twelve, fifteen, twenty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$104,000

Lotto America

13-25-35-37-45, Star Ball: 5, ASB: 3

(thirteen, twenty-five, thirty-five, thirty-seven, forty-five; Star Ball: five; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.75 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$139 million

Powerball

04-08-30-52-59, Powerball: 2, Power Play: 10

(four, eight, thirty, fifty-two, fifty-nine; Powerball: two; Power Play: ten)

Estimated jackpot: \$80 million

Tribal leaders seek accurate census counts on reservations

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota tribal leaders gathered Tuesday to map out a campaign to help ensure their reservations aren't shortchanged in the 2020 census.

Standing Rock Sioux Chairman Mike Faith told the group during a tribal summit at United Tribes Technical College that his tribe has allocated \$50,000 "for the purpose of helping get a true count." The money will be used for advertising about the upcoming survey, the Bismarck Tribune reported.

Faith said accurate numbers are important to get funding for road repairs, health, housing and schools, among other things. "We depend on that financial assistance," he said.

In addition to helping to determine federal spending, census numbers are used to determine seats in Congress and statehouses. Faith said he hopes the 2020 census numbers will be used for the redistricting of state representatives and senators. The Standing Rock Tribe has only one district in the Legislature.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated American Indians and Alaska Natives were undercounted by 4.9% in the 2010 census.

Tribal leaders and others said there challenges in getting an accurate census count in Indian Country,

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including the remoteness of reservations. Some of the tribal members aren't helping their own cause, mainly because they are worried that the government is going to use the numbers against them, said Wayne Ducheneaux II, executive director of the Minnesota-based Native Governance Center.

Ducheneaux, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, recalled how in 2010 census workers visited a hotel he was working at on the reservation and shared stories about some residents releasing their dogs to attack them.

"No one is going to use that information to hurt you; it's only going to be used to help you," Ducheneaux said, adding that census surveys are kept confidential under federal law.

North Dakota officials earlier this year created a task force to assist with planning for the upcoming census. Officials say missing someone in the census can result in losing about \$19,000 in federal funding. The Complete Count Task Force, formed through an executive order signed by Gov. Doug Burgum, includes a tribal subcommittee.

Students return to school in tornado-damaged town

BURKE, S.D. (AP) — Students are finally returning to school in a South Dakota town that was torn apart by a tornado early last month.

The Burke School District welcomed students back Wednesday after delaying the start of classes by two weeks as it dealt with heavy damage to part of its campus. The elementary side of the school building fared pretty well, but some of the middle and high school rooms were destroyed when winds of up to 100 mph (160 kph) blew through the town where a lumberyard was destroyed, a civic center was mangled and two people were injured on Aug. 6 .

"Everything might not be just perfect right away, but we're ready," Superintendent Erik Person said. "Teachers are excited to see the kids back. The kids are excited to be back. If everyone comes in with the right attitude, we'll have a heck of a school year, because we're ready and the kids are ready."

For now, band and music classes will be held at the town's churches. Administrative offices have been moved to a local hospital. And volleyball players will use the courts at a school district 30 minutes away, according to the Argus Leader .

The district will be back in its building completely by next school year, Person said. In the meantime, the district has enough resources to get the year going, and Person isn't yet sure what other support is needed.

"Thank you for all the kindness and support we've gotten," Person said. "Beyond that, we're going to be OK. This is just kind of the way things work. You're faced with adversity, and you lean on the people close to you - friends, neighbors and so forth - and you go to work and put it back together. And it kind of ends up OK."

Officials will be weighing upgrades and additions as they develop a master plan to tie everything together, he said.

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

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

Rapid City Journal, Aug. 30

Central States Fair continues to do us proud

The lop-eared rabbits have returned to familiar cages. The fattened pygmy goats that competed to lick toddlers' palms have too. The German tent settled onto crushed grass after the last tuba notes and laughter faded.

Over its two-weekend run, the Central States Fair spun teens, flung fur, kicked dirt, and gathered western farm folk from near and yonder. City dwellers reconnected to agricultural roots while nibbling corn dogs and funnel cakes amid earthy smells.

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The fair appeals to every real or wannabe country kid who ever jumped from the back of a pickup, de-tasseled corn, did chores or modeled cowboy hats. It helps keep alive the skills and values that mattered here a century ago. Many people coming to the fair can still saddle a stallion, steady a nervous steer or muck out a stall.

For 10 days the grandstands served as the center of the western South Dakota agricultural universe. Rodeo reigned. Crews, including volunteers, reset the grand stage daily, making it ready for motocross, then demolition derby, then concerts, then the big rodeo.

The cream puffs were a big hit again, as were kids vying for state champion mutton buster.

A variety of 4-H talents, wares and livestock made proud debuts. People learned how to become better gardeners, spin yarns — real and figurative — and can pickles. Quarters and rings flew before carnies. Dollars dropped into tills. Smiles spread. The midway remains the surest way to burn a \$50 bill.

It doesn't just happen. A party for 120,000-plus visitors takes a dedicated team to plan and problem solve. Buildings and grounds must be maintained and improved throughout the year. The county, Central States Fair Inc. and the Central States Fair Foundation all do their parts. Fair General Manager Ron Jeffries deserves the lion's share of credit.

Agriculture is South Dakota's leading industry, with a \$17 billion dollar impact on the state's economy. The Central States Fair by extension has a big impact on the local economy. Rural folk fill hotels and restaurants. They buy bridles and appliances.

More than just another economic stimulant, however, the fair is a rural end-of-summer tradition. Kids, parents and grandparents stroll the dirt together, stepping over snaking power conduits, just as earlier generations did. Lessons in responsibility arrive even as youthful independence extends.

The nighttime blur of green and purple lights on the towering Ferris wheel also signals a pending return to school for kids. For farmers it's the last big party before harvest.

The Central States Fair remains a strong part of this community. Over the years it has come to engender a good mix of ag and entertainment. Its competitive venues range from those offering top prize money to simple bragging rights.

We tip our hats to all of the competitors, winners all. We tip our hats to all who came and enjoyed. We had ourselves a fair. It was a grand old time.

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Sept. 4

It's vital to get a handle on vaping

There's something nervous, mysterious and quite possibly unhealthy in the air.

The popularity of electronic cigarettes — known as e-cigarettes, in a practice referred to as vaping — has grown dramatically in recent years across all age groups, including teenagers. Seen by many as a substitute for smoking tobacco, vaping has become a genuine craze.

But the safety of vaping remains a huge unknown.

A story in Saturday's Press & Dakotan explored both the rise in the usage of e-cigarettes as well as the growing concerns about health issues.

Meanwhile, The Associated Press reported last week that an outbreak of critical lung disease among teens and young adults "is forcing federal agencies to grapple with a vast, nearly unregulated market of nicotine- and marijuana-based vaping products." The number of cases, which rose over the weekend, stands at more than 215 in 25 states, including one confirmed death. And physicians say they aren't really sure what they are dealing with, other than that the common denominator seems to be the use of e-cigarettes.

Currently, these products aren't even subject to "truth in advertising" regulations until next year, which makes whatever claims are made about their contents and safety potentially suspect.

As a result, despite the spike in lung cases there have been no recalls issued, nor has there been official federal information released about what elements in e-cigarettes might be causing the illnesses.

Vaping's popularity is skyrocketing, especially among younger users. According to a survey from the National Institutes of Health, the number of U.S. high school seniors who say they have vaped nicotine in

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the last 30 days has nearly doubled (11% to 21 since 2017, which is "the largest increase ever recorded for any substance in the survey's 43-year history," according to the Vox news website. The number of high school seniors who vaped in general during the previous 30 days had reached an even higher rate (27%).

One reason vaping is popular is the problematic fact that it's easy to disguise the e-cigarettes themselves, which can be passed off as thumb drives or other small, seemingly innocent electronic devices. As a result, e-cigarettes can be used in schools under a cloak of deception.

Also, the product has been increasingly marketed to younger users with the expansion of sweet and fruity flavors.

On Sunday, The New York Times ran a story on the mysterious illnesses, quoting one doctor who referred to the situation as an "epidemic." The article noted, "Patients, mostly otherwise healthy and in their late teens and 20s, are showing up with severe shortness of breath, often after suffering for several days with vomiting, fever and fatigue. Some have wound up in the intensive care unit or on a ventilator for weeks."

It has also been reported that many of the respiratory cases have involved e-cigarette products containing THC, which is found in marijuana.

Warnings are also circulating about bootleg vaping products, which can be altered in unknown ways and/or with unknown elements.

Because of the popularity of e-cigarettes, it's important for agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to become more vigorously involved with these products.

The CDC, at least, appears to be taking some action. Over the holiday weekend, the agency issued a health alert headlined "Severe Pulmonary Disease Associated with Using E-Cigarette Products," in which it warned that e-cigarettes contain several harmful products, including heavy metals (such as lead), nicotine, organic compounds and cancer-causing chemicals.

The issues of better understanding and oversight must be tackled by federal agencies sooner rather than later. The soaring popularity of these products — as well as their promotion as being a safe, healthy smoking "alternative" — makes it imperative to determine the risks and to determine guidelines. This must be a public health priority.

Madison Daily Leader, Sept. 3 **An unknown man helped define Sioux Falls**

A man who helped create the modern-day Sioux Falls died last week. And you may not have heard his name before.

Jeff Hazard was a principal at Koch Hazard, one of the leading architecture firms in South Dakota. His commitment to design and architecture left an extraordinary stamp on Sioux Falls, the state and, yes, Madison.

Consider the projects he's been involved with in the last three decades: the Washington Pavilion, the Denny Sanford Premier Center, Cherapa Place, the Performing Arts Center at South Dakota State University, the Museum of Visual Materials, the renovation of the Sioux Falls airport and many more.

No architect works alone, of course, and Hazard had a deep and talented staff at Koch Hazard. Many other people worked on all the projects listed above and below. But almost everyone in that industry credits him with the vision, integrity and humanity to make those projects what they are today.

Koch Hazard also put an imprint on Madison. At Dakota State University, the renovation of the Tunheim Classroom Building, the upgrade of Beadle Hall, a master plan for the campus and the construction of the Karl E. Mundt Library were all Koch Hazard projects. (The Mundt library was designed and built before Jeff Hazard joined the firm, but his father Bob was involved, along with Ralph Koch.)

The Heartland Consumers Power District headquarters in Madison was a Koch Hazard project, as was the Trinity Lutheran Church expansion, as well as the Maroney Rural Learning Center in Howard.

We don't often think about the architects behind great buildings; perhaps we think of the occupants of the building or the contractor or the people who paid for it. But we recognize the role good design plays

in all of these, making it work for the tenant, contractor and those who financed it.
We appreciate the contribution Jeff Hazard made to our part of South Dakota.

Police seek warrant in fatal hit-and-run crash in Rapid City

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City police have targeted a suspect in last year's hit-and-run crash that killed a one-year-old girl.

Authorities say the 37-year-old man was speeding before hitting two cars at a Rapid City intersection Oct. 5, 2019. Mackayla Dillion, riding in one of the cars that was struck, died. Two adults in her vehicle suffered serious injuries.

The Rapid City Journal reports police say they identified a suspect using surveillance video, forensic evidence analysis and witness interviews. Investigators are seeking a warrant to arrest the suspect on possible manslaughter and hit-and-run charges.

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

Analysis: Black votes will define electability for Democrats

By ERRIN HAINES AP National Writer

For all the strategic calculations, sophisticated voter targeting and relentless talk about electability in Iowa and New Hampshire, the Democratic presidential nomination will be determined by a decidedly different group: black voters.

African Americans will watch as mostly white voters in the first two contests express preferences and winnow the field — then they will almost certainly anoint the winner.

So far, that helps explain the front-running status of former Vice President Joe Biden. He has name recognition, a relationship with America's first black president and a decadeslong Democratic resume. Black voters have long been at the foundation of his support — his home state of Delaware, where he served as a U.S. senator for nearly four decades, is 38 percent black — and until another presidential candidate proves that he or she can beat him, he is likely to maintain that support.

In the 2008 campaign, Hillary Clinton held a strong lead among black voters over Barack Obama until he stunned her by winning the Iowa caucuses and proved to black voters that he was acceptable to a broad spectrum of Democrats. Those same voters returned to Clinton in 2016.

This cycle, many black voters are also making a pragmatic choice — driven as much or more by who can defeat President Donald Trump as the issues they care about — and sitting back to see which candidate white voters are comfortable with before deciding whom they will back.

At the same time, the early courtship of black voters, overt and subtle, is part of a primary within the primary that includes detailed plans on issues like criminal justice reform, reparations, maternal mortality among black women, voter suppression and systemic racism.

"As black voters and movers and drivers of national politics, our self-image and awareness of our power and influence is evolving," said Aimee Allison, founder of the She the People network, which hosted the first presidential forum aimed specifically at female voters of color.

Trump appealed to black voters during the 2016 campaign by saying "What the hell do you have to lose?" and ended up with only 8 percent of the black vote. But the Republican president again is saying he will try to win over black voters, frequently citing low unemployment and his own success in signing criminal justice legislation. So far, there is no evidence to suggest that he will succeed.

But the first test of the decisiveness of black voters will come in the primaries. African Americans make up roughly 13 percent of the U.S. population but 24 percent of the Democratic primary electorate. That number is more formidable in the early primary state of South Carolina, where black voters are two-thirds of primary voters, and in other early voting states like Georgia, Alabama and Virginia.

Biden reminded black reporters in a recent roundtable that his strength is not just with working class

whites, but with the black voters he's known for more than half a century in politics.

"After all this time, they think they have a sense of what my character is and who I am, warts and all," Biden said. "I'll be surprised if you find any African Americans that think I'm not in on the deal, that I'm not who I say I am ... I've never, ever, ever in my entire life been in circumstances where I've ever felt uncomfortable being in the black community."

He acknowledged that his familiarity is no assurance of success. And he noted that black voters may ultimately prefer black candidates like Sens. Kamala Harris of California or Cory Booker of New Jersey. First, though, one of them would have to prove to black voters that they were viable alternatives.

Black voters can be decisive not only in determining the Democrats' nominee but also the ultimate winner. While Democrats have peaked in recent cycles with white voters at around 40 percent, black voters have been their most loyal constituency.

But in 2016, a drop-off among black voters had consequences. Black voter turnout dropped from 65.3 percent in 2012 to 59.6 percent, and Hillary Clinton received 89 percent of the black vote, compared with 93 percent for Barack Obama in 2012 and 95 percent in 2008.

"It comes down to a strategy decision that campaigns have to make: Do they believe that the way to win the White House is to win white voters, or do they believe that the way to White House is to mobilize voters of color?" said Leah Daughtry, who recently hosted a 2020 Democratic forum for black faith voters in Atlanta.

"Is there a strategy that allows you to do both? Perhaps," Daughtry said. "But one is a sure bet. If you get us to the polls, we are most likely to vote Democrat. If you get white folks to the polls, you don't know what they're going to do."

In the past, Biden would have been a prohibitive favorite, said LaTosha Brown, co-founder of Black Voters Matter. But black voters are demanding that candidates deliver on their priorities in a way they haven't done in recent history.

"Black folks are looking to figure out who white voters are going to align with, but I don't think that's the driver that it has been in the past," she continued. "Black voters, like white voters, are increasingly frustrated with the process. No longer is it good enough to choose between the devil or the witch."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Errin Haines is national writer on race and ethnicity for The Associated Press. Follow her work on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/emarvelous> .

Australia faces opioid crisis as companies push drugs abroad

By KRISTEN GELINEAU Associated Press

BLACK RIVER, Australia (AP) — The coroner's sense of futility was clear, as he investigated the death of yet another Australian killed by prescription opioids.

Coroners nationwide have long urged officials to address Australia's ballooning opioid addiction, and to create a tracking system to stop people from collecting multiple prescriptions from multiple doctors. Yet even as thousands died, the coroners' pleas were met largely with silence.

"For what it is worth, I add my voice to the chorus pleading for urgency," Western Australia coroner Barry King wrote in his report, delivered in May.

Half a world away, Australia has failed to heed the lessons of the United States, and is now facing skyrocketing rates of opioid prescriptions and related deaths. Drug companies facing scrutiny for their aggressive marketing of opioids in America have turned their focus abroad, working around marketing regulations to push the painkillers in other countries. And as with the U.S., Australia's government has also been slow to respond to years of warnings from worried health experts.

In dozens of interviews, doctors, researchers and Australians whose lives have been upended by opioids described a plight that now stretches from coast to coast. Australia's death rate from opioids has more than doubled in just over a decade. And health experts worry that without urgent action, Australia is on track for an even steeper spike in deaths like those seen in America, where the epidemic has left 400,000 dead.

"If only Australia could understand how quickly this can get out of hand. We're not immune to it," says

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Jasmin Raggam, whose brother Jon died in 2014 of an opioid overdose and whose brother-in-law is now addicted to the opioid OxyContin. "I was screaming from the mountaintops after Jon died and I'd started doing my research. And it was like I'm screaming and nobody wants to hear me."

On an island off the coast of Tasmania, Dr. Bastian Seidel and his colleagues are immersed in what he calls a "nightmare scenario." Two years ago, when he was president of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Seidel dubbed Australia's opioid problem a "national emergency." Today, he wonders if anyone was listening.

"It's depressing at times to see how we, as practitioners, literally messed up our communities," he says. "It's our signature on the scripts. ... But the pressure being put on by the drug companies, by certain health sectors — that's the situation that we are facing now."

Australia knows the extent of the problem, he says. The country knows addiction is devastating its communities. And yet, he says, nobody is doing anything.

"Unfortunately, in Australia, we've followed the bad example of the U.S.," he says. "And now we have the same problem."

AUSTRALIA'S OPIOID ADDICTION

Opioids were once reserved for treating pain that was short-term, terminal or related to cancer. But in the 1990s, pharmaceutical companies began aggressively marketing them for chronic pain.

Starting in 2000, Australia began approving and subsidizing certain opioids for use in chronic, non-cancer pain. Those approvals coincided with a spike in opioid consumption, which nearly quadrupled between 1990 and 2014, says Sydney University researcher Emily Karangas.

Dr. Jennifer Stevens, a pain specialist, saw the surge with startling clarity while working at St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney.

A few years ago, a pharmacist at the hospital told her they needed to hire an extra person just to handle all the prescriptions they were handing out for Endone, a brand of oxycodone. Stevens discovered that the hospital's Endone prescriptions had increased 500 percent in 8 years, with no decrease in other opioids dispensed. Further study revealed that 10 percent of patients were still taking opioids three months after surgery, even though the drugs are generally only recommended for short-term use.

"We were just pumping this stuff out into our local community, thinking that that had no consequences," says Stevens, a vocal advocate for changing opioid prescribing practices. "And now, of course, we realize that it does have huge consequences."

Just like in the U.S., as opioid prescriptions rose, so did fatal overdoses. Opioid-related deaths jumped from 439 in 2006 to 1,119 in 2016 -- a rise of 2.2 to 4.7 deaths per 100,000 people, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Most of those deaths were related to prescription opioids, rather than illegal opioids such as heroin.

More than 3 million Australians - an eighth of the country's population - are getting at least one opioid prescription a year, according to the latest data.

The numbers and the warnings may have been glossed over partly because of Australia's piecemeal system of data collection and reporting, says Dr. Christian Rowan, an addiction specialist in the state of Queensland. Data is reported by various states, coroners and agencies, and often includes only prescriptions filled through the government-subsidized drug system and not private prescriptions.

"Because it's fragmented, people haven't had a line of sight as to what's happening," he says.

Australia's government insists it is now taking the problem seriously. The opioid codeine, which used to be available over the counter, was restricted to prescription-only in 2018. And last month, the country's drug regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration, announced tougher opioid regulations, including restricting the use of fentanyl patches to patients with cancer, in palliative care, or under "exceptional circumstances."

"I can't speak for the past," says Greg Hunt, who became the federal Health Minister in 2017. "I can speak for my watch and my time where this has been one of my absolute priorities, which is why we've

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taken such strong steps. ... My focus has been to make sure that we don't have an American-style crisis."

But for Sue Fisher, whose 21-year-old son Matthew died in 2010 of an overdose, it's too little, too late. The crisis is here, along with what she calls a "crisis of ignorance."

"We're living in a country that is oblivious to what's going on," she says. "Why aren't we learning from America's mistakes? Why don't we learn?"

THE DRUG COMPANIES

When Rustie Lassam thinks of the drug companies that pumped opioids into Australia's market, she thinks of her infant son's agonized wails as he went through withdrawal.

For years, doctors had told her that opioids would help her back pain, which led to an all-consuming addiction. During her pregnancy, she swallowed nine high-dose OxyContin tablets every day. So when she thinks about the way pharmaceutical companies have marketed those drugs to doctors, she weeps with rage and grief.

"If only they knew what addiction did to people, how really it affects us to the very core of who we are," she says. "And there they are, making all this money off the back of my broken life."

In the U.S., drug companies such as OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma are facing more than 2,000 lawsuits accusing them of overstating the benefits of opioids, downplaying their addictiveness and encouraging doctors to prescribe the drugs to more patients in higher amounts.

In Australia, pharmaceutical companies by law cannot directly advertise to consumers, but are free to market the drugs to medical professionals. And they have done so, aggressively and effectively, by sponsoring swanky conferences, running doctors' training seminars, funding research papers, giving money to pain advocacy groups and meeting with doctors to push the drugs for chronic pain.

"If the relevant governing bodies had ensured that the way the product was being marketed to doctors especially was different, I don't necessarily think we would see what we're seeing now," says Bee Mohamed, who until recently was the CEO of ScriptWise, a group devoted to reducing prescription drug deaths in Australia. "We're trying to undo ten years of what marketing has unfortunately done."

Mundipharma, the international arm of Purdue, has received particular criticism for its marketing tactics in Australia. In 2018, addiction specialist Dr. Simon Holliday filed a complaint against the company over a marketing pamphlet for its drug Targin, a painkiller designed to prevent the constipation that is common with other opioids.

The brochure cited 2009 guidance from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners that says weak opioids are less effective than strong ones. But in a statement, the doctors' group said the ad was misleading and that Mundipharma appeared to have deliberately ignored its updated clinical guidelines.

Holliday filed a complaint with Medicines Australia, the pharmaceutical industry's regulator. But membership to Medicines Australia is not mandatory, and Mundipharma declined to participate in the complaints process because it had dropped out as a member.

Holliday then went to the Therapeutic Goods Administration. He got nowhere. So he wrote to Hunt, the health minister, and other lawmakers. He received no response.

In a statement to The Associated Press, Mundipharma said that the guidelines it referenced were current at the time the pamphlet was in circulation. "The material was balanced, accurate, fully supported by the product information, consistent with the approved indication, and contained adequate safety information," the company said.

This year, Mundipharma has faced scrutiny over a promotional campaign that critics say violates the spirit of Australia's law banning drug marketing to consumers.

The campaign, which encouraged people suffering painkiller-induced constipation to talk to their doctors, never mentions Targin by name, because it legally can't. But the advertising agency Mundipharma hired described on its website how they worked around that regulation, by using print, radio and online ads to target regions where pain medication use was high. Google search data showed that people looking for information on constipation from painkillers used terms like "blocked up," so the agency used the phrase "blocked pipes."

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In a statement, Mundipharma said the campaign was a "disease awareness initiative" that did not violate the spirit of any law and did not market any medication.

In an interview, Hunt said he has asked the country's drug regulator, the TGA, to investigate both marketing campaigns, along with some of Mundipharma's other activities in Australia. Among those activities: the company's "Pain Management Master Classes" for doctors. The classes, which have provided training to more than 5,000 doctors in Australia, have been praised by some as helpful for physicians seeking guidance on treating complex pain, and condemned by others as a conflict of interest, given they are run by a company that sells painkillers.

Mundipharma said the classes cover non-opioid treatment options and "strongly emphasize" that opioids are only appropriate after a comprehensive assessment.

Stevens, the Sydney pain specialist, has pushed back against several drug companies over their marketing tactics. A couple years ago, she says, Mundipharma was marketing Targin to surgeons at her hospital, reassuring them that they could prescribe higher doses. Unlike pain specialists, surgeons are generally not well-educated on the intricacies of opioids, she says.

Stevens complained to Mundipharma and they stopped the practice. She says they have become much more cooperative since.

"Marketing, on the whole, is very clever and very successful — otherwise it wouldn't be done," she says. "We love a freebie. ... We're no different from other members of the population. It's just that we are targeted more."

In a statement, Mundipharma said it strictly adheres to the Medicines Australia code of conduct and has always been transparent about the risks associated with opioids. Still, in a submission last year to the TGA as it considered tougher restrictions on opioids, Mundipharma appeared to minimize the severity of Australia's problem.

"We acknowledge that there is an issue associated with opioid misuse," the company wrote. "However to describe the Australian situation as a 'crisis' is alarmist and risks stigmatizing patients who have a legitimate need for opioid analgesics to manage their pain."

HOW THE GOVERNMENT FELL SHORT

David Tonkin blames his son's death on a system that allowed him to see 24 doctors and get 23 different medications from 16 pharmacies — all in the space of six months. Between January and July 2014 alone, Matthew Tonkin got 27 prescriptions just for oxycodone.

The addiction that ultimately ended Matthew's life began in 2012, after he was injured while serving with the Australian army in Afghanistan. When the 22-year-old arrived on leave at his father's home in the western Australian city of Perth, he held up a stack of OxyContin pill strips. The drugs had been prescribed to him by American doctors in Afghanistan for his injured hip and ankle.

"Look, Dad," he said. "The Yanks really know how to look after you."

Matthew was 14 kilograms (30 pounds) lighter than the last time his father had seen him. He was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder from the horrors of Afghanistan, including the death of his best friend, a fellow soldier. He was also suffering from a growing addiction to opioids. The addiction escalated after the army sent him to recover in Queensland, where doctors put him on an opioid called tramadol.

Matthew soon discovered how easy it was to get whatever prescriptions he wanted. He forged his doctor's signature. He told one doctor he'd knocked a bottle of pills into the toilet and needed more.

In August 2013, another doctor prescribed him more oxycodone after Matthew said he was suffering from PTSD and hip pain.

A few weeks later, Matthew had his first oxycodone overdose. A few months after that, he was discharged from the army.

One doctor called a hotline for medical professionals to report Matthew's apparent misuse of prescription drugs. But when Matthew moved back to Perth to live with David, doctors there had no way of knowing his drug use had been flagged in Queensland.

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He hopped around clinics collecting prescriptions for opioids. The doctors were largely oblivious to what he was doing because Australia has no national, real-time prescription tracking system.

David begged Matthew's doctors and pharmacists to stop giving him OxyContin. Matthew just went to other doctors.

At a solemn gathering to honor military personnel on April 25, 2014, two of Matthew's friends had to hold him upright.

Back at home after the service, David told Matthew to hand over his pills. Matthew shoved David across the kitchen into the cupboard. Then he pinned his father to the floor and began to choke him.

David thought he was going to die.

Matthew eventually let go and both men went to the hospital for treatment. Two days later, Matthew called his father. "Do you still love me, Dad?" he asked.

And of course, he did. So David kept trying to save him, right up until July 3, 2014, when he returned home from a walk and realized Matthew hadn't come out of his room all morning.

The night before, Matthew had been sick. David had cleaned the vomit off his son's bedroom floor and changed his sheets. Matthew took a shower, thanked his father and climbed into bed.

David walked into his son's room. "Time to get up, mate."

There was no answer.

David placed a hand on Matthew. His body was warm. But he had no pulse.

David called for an ambulance and started CPR. As he pumped his son's chest, the dispatcher counted out the beats.

One. Two. Three. Four.

Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

Five. Six. Seven. Eight.

Nothing.

WARNINGS IGNORED

The conclusion from King, the coroner, was blunt: Had a prescription tracking system been in place, Matthew would not have been given the oxycodone that killed him.

King's findings on Matthew's death were delivered at least a dozen years after the first coroners' reports began warning of a growing opioid problem. As early as 2007, a coroner had suggested that someone look into why the opioid prescription rate on the island of Tasmania was so high.

Two states — Tasmania and Victoria — developed their own prescription tracking systems, but they only monitor opioid prescriptions within their respective states, and neither is currently mandatory.

The development of a national system has been mired in bureaucratic delays. In 2017, the government committed 16 million Australian dollars (US\$11 million) to creating one, and Hunt, the health minister, later said it would be ready by the end of 2018. It has yet to be rolled out.

In an interview, Hunt blamed the delay on the states. The national framework is ready, he said, but the states must connect to it.

In March 2019, New South Wales coroner Harriet Grahame warned that Australia's opioid deaths could reach many thousands over the next five years.

"We appear to have few coordinated strategies to address this problem," Grahame wrote in a report. "Lowering the rate of opioid overdose is clearly achievable but it will require a government willing to listen to health experts and to act decisively on their advice."

After Matthew died, and for years to come, David would suddenly awaken at 10 p.m. — the same time that Matthew used to call from Afghanistan. Now, instead of his son's voice, there is only silence.

THE POOR PAY THE PRICE

From her home in rural northwest Tasmania, 51-year-old Carmall Casey seethes over a system she says pushed her and so many others into addiction. It is a system that has made opioids the cheap and easy alternative for Australians, particularly the poor.

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"I became an addict without knowing," Casey says.

Here in Tasmania, there are echoes of American Appalachia — in the rural towns, the poverty and the cascade of lives torn apart by pills that promised to take away the pain but in the end created more.

This is Australia's poorest state, and like Appalachia, it is the country's epicenter for opioids. Tasmania has the nation's highest rate of opioid packs sold per person — 2.7 each. One region has the highest number of government-subsidized opioid prescriptions in Australia: more than 110,000 for every 100,000 people.

Ten years ago, while working as a dairy farmer, Casey jumped off a truck and felt her knees give way. An operation provided temporary relief, but the pain came back. She was told she had osteoarthritis.

A doctor prescribed her opioids to ease her pain. When she stuck the first patch on her skin, it felt like heaven.

But the agony eventually returned, so the doctor upped the dosage. The side effects were hell — depression, anxiety, panic attacks. And her pain got worse.

Desperate, she saw other doctors. They sent her away with more prescriptions for more opioids: fentanyl, codeine, oxycodone, tramadol, buprenorphine, tapentadol, Targin.

An estimated 20% of Australians suffer chronic pain. But in poor, rural areas, access to pain specialists can be logistically and financially difficult. Wait lists are long, and a few sessions with a physiotherapist can cost hundreds of dollars. Under the government-subsidized prescription benefit plan, a pack of opioids costs as little as AU\$6.50 (\$4.50.)

Dr. Tim Andrewartha, a general practitioner in northwest Tasmania, says giving a patient with chronic pain a drug for quick comfort can be tempting, when the alternative may be a years-long wait to see a specialist.

"As a medical practice, we're just falling short in terms of acknowledging the lack of evidence that these drugs have for chronic, long-term use," he says.

Casey couldn't afford private health insurance, so finding a surgeon who would treat the cause of her pain was a struggle. She drove ten hours roundtrip to meet a surgeon in the capital, Hobart, only to be told the wait list for the operation was two years.

While taking a truck driving course, she injured her shoulder and began the same carousel of fruitless doctors' appointments.

She tried to quit the painkillers. She returned them to the pharmacy and dumped them down the sink. She suffered through the nightmares and shakes of withdrawal. But eventually, the pain would grow unbearable, so she'd take the drugs again.

She lost her farm. Even worse, she says, she lost her daughter.

She made bad choices on the drugs, she admits now. She was living with a volatile man who began to bully Sarah, so she sent her daughter, then 14, to live with her father. It's a decision that tore them apart, and still tears Casey apart today.

One day, she scrawled her anguish on a tattered envelope. "Imagine having a toothache for weeks, months 1 year, 2 years, 3, 4, and it's still aching now ... the pain eats away at you, the drugs send you crazy," she wrote.

In June, she told herself: Enough. She returned the remaining pills to her pharmacist.

She found a surgeon who took her seriously. And she got an appointment with a physiotherapist who is teaching her exercises to manage her pain.

On a recent afternoon, she rifles through a box of medicine in her kitchen. Suddenly, she freezes. Tucked inside is an old pack of tapentadol that she thought she'd thrown away. She washes the pills down the kitchen sink.

She doesn't know what she'll do when the pain returns. But she says she will never return to opioids.

"I'm not going back," she says and begins to weep. "I'm not."

The AP's reporting on the global opioid crisis is supported by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. The Global Opioids project can be seen here. <https://www.apnews.com/GlobalOpioids>

Military base cuts affect schools, target ranges, more

By **ANDREW TAYLOR** and **LOLITA C. BALDOR** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon will cut funding from military projects like schools, target ranges and maintenance facilities to pay for the construction of 175 miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border, diverting a total \$3.6 billion to President Donald Trump's long-promised barrier.

Projects in 23 states, 19 countries and three U.S. territories would be stalled or killed by the plan, though just \$1.1 billion in cuts would strike the continental U.S., according to a list released Wednesday by the Pentagon. Almost \$700 million would come from projects in U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico, with another \$1.8 billion coming from projects on overseas bases.

Trump's move would take the biggest step yet in delivering on his promise to build a wall to block immigrants from entering the country illegally. But it may come at the expense of projects that the Pentagon acknowledged may be difficult to fund anew. Capitol Hill Democrats, outraged over Trump's use of an emergency order for the wall, promised they won't approve money to revive them.

A senior defense official told reporters the Pentagon is having conversations with members of Congress to urge them to restore the funding. The official agreed that the department has "a lot of work ahead of us," considering that Congress has given no guarantee it will provide money for the defunded projects. The official was not authorized to discuss the details publicly so spoke on condition of anonymity.

In addition, new stretches of fencing proposed along the Rio Grande and through a wildlife refuge in Arizona promise to ignite legal battles that could delay the wall projects as well.

The military base projects facing the chopping block tend to address less urgent needs like new parking at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, and a variety of small arms ranges at bases in Wisconsin and Oklahoma. But a "cyber ops facility" in Hampton, Virginia, and the expansion of a missile defense field at Fort Greeley, Alaska, face the ax, too.

Trump has so far succeeded in building replacement barriers within the 654 miles of fencing built during the Obama and Bush administrations. The funding shift will allow for about 115 miles of new pedestrian fencing in areas where there isn't any now.

"The wall is being built. It's going up rapidly," Trump said Wednesday. "And we think by the end of next year, which will be sometime right after the election actually, but we think we're going to have close to 500 miles of wall, which will be complete."

New stretches of fencing are sure to spark legal battles with angry landowners and environmentalists. The Pentagon plan also fuels the persistent controversy between the Trump administration and Congress over immigration policies and the funding of the border wall.

"It doesn't take any input from the local communities. It will take away from the private property rights," said Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas. "We are going to do everything we can to stop the president."

Cuellar suggested Democrats will look at a must-pass funding bill this month — required to prevent a government shutdown Oct. 1 — to try to take on Trump. But a more likely venue for the battle could be ongoing House-Senate negotiations over the annual Pentagon policy measure.

Lawmakers who refused earlier this year to approve nearly \$6 billion for the wall must now decide if they will restore the projects that are being used to provide the money.

"To pay for his xenophobic border wall boondoggle, President Trump is about to weaken our national security by stealing billions of dollars from our military," said Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., who chairs a key military construction panel. "The House of Representatives will not backfill any projects he steals from today."

One of the Senate's most endangered Republicans in the 2020 election, Arizona Sen. Martha McSally, reported that her state is getting nicked for just \$30 million from a project that was being delayed anyway. Georgia, where two potentially competitive Senate races loom next year, would be spared entirely, though powerful Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., himself facing re-election, would lose a \$63 million middle school at Fort Campbell.

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"We need to secure our border and protect our military; we can and should do both," McSally said. "I went to the mat to fight for Arizona projects and succeeded."

Elaine McCusker, the Pentagon comptroller, said the now-unfunded projects are not being canceled. Instead, the Pentagon is saying the military projects are being "deferred."

Congress approved \$1.375 billion for wall construction in this year's budget, same as the previous year and far less than the \$5.7 billion that the White House sought. Trump grudgingly accepted the money to end a 35-day government shutdown in February but simultaneously declared a national emergency to take money from other government accounts, identifying up to \$8.1 billion for wall construction.

The transferred funds include \$600 million from the Treasury Department's asset forfeiture fund, \$2.5 billion from Defense Department counterdrug activities and now the \$3.6 billion pot for military housing construction announced Tuesday.

The Pentagon reviewed the list of military projects and said none that provided housing or critical infrastructure for troops would be affected, in the wake of recent scandals over poor living quarters for service members in several parts of the country. Defense officials also said they would focus on projects set to begin in 2020 and beyond, with the hope that the money could eventually be restored by Congress.

The government will spend the military housing money on 11 wall projects in California, Arizona and Texas, the administration said in a filing Tuesday in a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union. The most expensive is for 52 miles (84 kilometers) in Laredo, Texas, at a cost of \$1.27 billion.

The Laredo project and one in El Centro, California, are on private property, which would require purchase or confiscation, according to the court filing. Two projects in Arizona are on land overseen by the Navy and will be the first to be built, no earlier than Oct. 3. Seven are at least partly on federal land overseen by the Interior Department, including a 31-mile stretch through the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona, a major wilderness area.

The 175 miles (282 kilometers) covered by the Pentagon funding represents just a fraction of the 1,954-mile (3,145-kilometer) U.S.-Mexico border.

Associated Press writer Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

'He groped me': Singer says opera's Domingo grabbed breast

By JOCELYN GECKER and JOCELYN NOVECK Associated Press

The glittering production was a high point of the Washington Opera's 1999-2000 season: Jules Massenet's "Le Cid," about a legendary Spanish conqueror, starring a tenor legendary in his own right — Plácido Domingo, then the company's artistic director.

The opera, also being filmed for broadcast on public television, was unquestionably a career break for a 28-year-old singer named Angela Turner Wilson, who'd been cast as the second female lead and was singled out for praise in reviews. "I knew this was the start of big things for me," she says now.

But one evening before a performance, she said, she and Domingo were having their makeup done together when he rose from his chair, stood behind her and put his hands on her shoulders. As she looked at him in the mirror, he suddenly slipped his hands under her bra straps, she said, then reached down into her robe and grabbed her bare breast.

"It hurt," she told The Associated Press. "It was not gentle. He groped me hard." She said Domingo then turned and walked away, leaving her stunned and humiliated.

Wilson, now 48 and a college voice teacher in the Dallas area, was one of 11 women to come forward after an Aug. 13 AP story in which numerous women accused the long-married, Spanish-born superstar of sexual harassment or inappropriate, sexually charged behavior and of sometimes damaging their careers if they rejected him.

In the weeks since that story was published, the women have shared new stories about encounters with Domingo, currently the general director of Los Angeles Opera, that they said included unwanted touching, persistent requests for private get-togethers, late-night phone calls and sudden attempts to kiss them on

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the lips.

Several additional backstage employees described for the AP how they strove to shield young women from the star as administrators looked the other way.

Taken together, their stories reinforce a picture of an industry in which Domingo's behavior was an open secret and young women were left to fend for themselves in the workplace.

Domingo's spokeswoman issued a statement disputing the allegations but provided no specifics.

"The ongoing campaign by the AP to denigrate Placido Domingo is not only inaccurate but unethical. These new claims are riddled with inconsistencies and, as with the first story, in many ways, simply incorrect," spokeswoman Nancy Seltzer said. "Due to an ongoing investigation, we will not comment on specifics, but we strongly dispute the misleading picture that the AP is attempting to paint of Mr. Domingo."

Wilson said she was spurred to come forward after the 78-year-old Domingo's reaction to the AP's initial story, in which he said he believed his actions "were always welcomed and consensual" and added that "the rules and standards by which we are — and should be — measured against today are very different than they were in the past."

Wilson rejects the idea that such behavior has ever been acceptable.

"What woman would ever want him to grab their breast? And it hurt," she said. "Then I had to go on stage and act like I was in love with him."

Melinda McLain, who was the production coordinator at LA Opera for its inaugural season in 1986-87 and also worked at the Houston Grand Opera with Domingo, told the AP she made it a point not to put Domingo in rehearsal rooms alone with young female singers, even if he specifically requested it, and also tried to supply him with male dressers.

"We created these elaborate schemes for keeping him away from particular singers," McLain said. "I never would have sent any woman of any sort into his dressing room."

McLain said another strategy was to invite Domingo's wife, Marta, to attend company parties "because if Marta was around, he behaves."

Several people who have worked in the costume department of the LA Opera, where Domingo has served in various capacities since the 1980s, said his backstage behavior was common knowledge and that management had been aware of it for years. One employee said her colleagues tried to steer clear of sending women into fittings with Domingo as recently as the 2016-2017 season.

"I was told by my direct boss that they avoided sending any sort of attractive young woman into a fitting with him because of his behavior," said one employee who requested anonymity because she is still in the opera industry and fears repercussions. She said Domingo was known for "getting too close, hugging, kissing, touching and being physically affectionate."

Another costume employee described narrowly avoiding a wet kiss on the lips from Domingo by turning her head at the last minute so it landed on the side of her mouth. She said she reported it to a supervisor who told her to avoid being alone with Domingo.

The need for women to come up with their own avoidance strategies just to get their jobs done is a classic example of a sexually hostile work environment, a key legal component of sexual harassment, experts note.

The LA Opera has hired outside counsel to investigate the allegations in the initial AP story.

Wilson was the only new accuser to speak to the AP on the record. The others requested anonymity because they still work in the industry and said they feared recriminations in a world long dominated by Domingo and other powerful men.

One established soprano said she feared not only for herself but for her husband, who also works in opera. Others spoke of wanting to protect an art form that is struggling to remain relevant in the U.S. And some said vocal support for Domingo in Europe — and skepticism of the women's accusations — has made them more fearful of coming forward publicly.

Domingo's sometimes brazen backstage pursuits were an open topic of discussion, according to a number of singers and others in the industry.

One former LA Opera staffer said Domingo once backed her up against a wall, grasped her hand and

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whispered into her ear as her male boss looked on awkwardly. Someone should have told Domingo it was inappropriate, she said, "but it shouldn't be the girl in the hallway on a headset trying to do her job."

The employee said wardrobe staff had a joke about spraying female singers "with tenor spray, like bug spray, to keep the tenors off you."

Some of the women told the AP that avoidance strategies included asking Domingo about his grandchildren to distract him and giggling awkwardly and pretending they didn't quite understand when he asked for their phone numbers or suggested they meet somewhere.

Baritone Robert Gardner said he was surprised the star's behavior hadn't become public sooner "given his reputation inside the industry."

Gardner contacted the AP to say he witnessed Domingo's behavior with mezzo-soprano Patricia Wulf, who previously was the only accuser willing to be identified by name. Wulf worked with Domingo and Gardner in 1998 at Washington Opera, where the legend also served as general director, and the baritone confirmed that the star persistently propositioned her.

"I saw him positioning himself and maneuvering around rehearsal rooms and in the hallway to get close to her, and she was clearly avoiding him," Gardner said.

Wulf told the AP that Domingo would confront her night after night when they performed together with the same whispered question, uttered very close to her face: "Patricia, do you have to go home tonight?"

Though she strenuously tried to avoid him, she said his pursuit seemingly had no bounds and that she feared leaving her dressing room if he was in the hallway. Though Domingo did not physically touch her, she said there was no mistaking his intentions.

Both Wulf and Angela Turner Wilson said they did not report the star's behavior to management, fearing they wouldn't be believed and that they would be the ones penalized.

Wilson told the AP she was aware of Domingo's reputation by her third season at Washington Opera, but wanted to believe his interest was professional when he began to single her out in the fall of 1999. She said he would sit by her during rehearsal breaks for "Le Cid" and talk to her, telling her "I adore you, Angela." But it soon became clear his interest was not entirely in her singing, she said.

There were frequent invitations, Wilson said — to come to his apartment to watch a video of a role he wanted her to sing. To go to dinner. Just the two of them.

"I would say 'No, maestro.' I said that a lot. I felt like if I put 'maestro' on it, it would still be respectful," she said.

"I stuck to no — 'No, I won't meet you. No, I won't go with you upstairs to your apartment. No, no, no.'"

Not long after performances started Oct. 30, she said he came to her dressing room and entered without knocking, saying he wanted to wish her a good show. Then, she said, he added: "I need a kiss. It's a demanding role. I need a kiss for strength."

Wilson said she declined, again reminding him she was married, but he continued to insist.

"I remember thinking 'I have to get to the door,'" she said. "I started to open the door and he slammed the door with his foot and his hand and kept his hand on the door and he said, 'I need that kiss.' And he wouldn't let me out."

"I said, 'I'll make you a deal. You can kiss my cheek.' So he kissed me on my cheek. And then he left. And it scared me so badly. I went back to my dressing table and was shaking. I remember thinking, 'Now I'm in trouble. How am I going to manage him now?'"

For the rest of the run, she said, "I would lock my dressing room door. My dresser would tell me if he was outside. She would tell me if he was in the hall and if it was safe."

Later in the show's November run, Wilson said she was scheduled to have her makeup done alongside Domingo, which "I thought was strange. ... Usually, big stars, especially headliners, get their makeup done in their dressing room." But she said she was reassured by the fact that the makeup person was also present and the door to the room was open.

She said that when Domingo first placed his hands on her shoulders, it merely seemed friendly.

"I didn't think I was in jeopardy," she said. "We were having a friendly conversation. ... It just came out

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of nowhere. It wasn't like he was complimenting me or seducing me or anything, where I would think I need to be on guard."

She said that after he grabbed her breast, she cried out in pain and asked the makeup person, "Did you see that?" Reached by the AP, the makeup artist said he did not recall the incident and did not want to comment further on the record.

She said she called her husband and her parents that night — and also the night he tried to kiss her — and all three confirmed to the AP that she was upset and in tears when she related to them what happened.

Wilson provided the AP with copies of a journal she kept at the time that notes rehearsals for "Le Cid" began Oct. 4, 1999. In an entry a month later, she wrote that Domingo "has told me several times how happy he was with my singing," but also "he hits on me all the time." She added, "Please God don't let it get any worse."

The next season, she said she had three roles but that Domingo barely talked to her or acknowledged her. Though she won the company's prestigious Artist of the Year award that season, in 2000, she said the Washington Opera never again hired her, which she attributes to her interactions with Domingo.

"Anybody who gets 'singer of the year' at that company or any company looks at it as a ticket to a relationship with that company," she said. "It's saying you have done good work and deserve to come back. It's not usually a farewell."

Her career lasted another decade before she switched mainly to teaching. She sang three seasons at the New York City Opera and at other venues around the country, including the Dallas Opera and Boston Lyric Opera. She also performed at a state dinner at the White House during the Clinton administration and at the opening of George W. Bush's presidential library.

A number of the women who criticized Domingo's behavior also expressed a lingering admiration for the star, calling him charismatic and generous, with a knack for remembering everyone's name, and someone who has made indelible contributions to the industry.

Wilson said she realizes it's hard for many among his legions of admirers to come to terms with stories of his sexually aggressive actions.

"It would be hard as a fan to justify or rationalize how somebody so charming and generous in so many ways could be this person," she said.

For years, Wilson said she remained silent about her experiences with Domingo "because I felt that nobody else would say anything." But when she read the initial AP story, she said she realized something could be done.

"I know if I miss this opportunity and move on in silence, I will feel 20 times worse," she said. "It's a big burden to carry around through your life. And every time another #MeToo story comes out, I go into a dark place, and I'm tired of it."

She said she also came forward for the sake of the young women she now teaches as the chair of a university voice department.

"The music, the art, is so wonderful," she said, "and I wish the business could at least have the integrity to give these young women a fair shot."

Contact Associated Press writer Jocelyn Gecker via Twitter: <https://twitter.com/jgecker>

Johnson calls opponents cowardly for blocking election bid

By JILL LAWLESS and GREGORY KATZ Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prime Minister Boris Johnson accused Britain's main opposition leader on Thursday of trying to dodge an election, after rebellious lawmakers rejected the U.K. leader's call to trigger a snap poll and moved to block his plan to leave the European Union next month without a divorce deal.

Johnson remained determined to secure an election as the only way out of Britain's years-long Brexit impasse. His office said he would argue in a speech later that politicians must "go back to the people and give them the opportunity to decide what they want."

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Johnson called Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn's refusal to endorse an election a "cowardly insult to democracy."

Johnson's determination to lead Britain out of the EU on Oct. 31 come hell or high water is facing strong opposition from lawmakers, including members of his own Conservative Party who oppose to a no-deal Brexit.

On Thursday, the prime minister's brother, Jo Johnson, quit the government, saying he could no longer endure the conflict "between family loyalty and the national interest."

Jo Johnson has served as an education minister in his older brother's government, despite his opposition to leaving the EU without a divorce deal. He said Thursday that he would step down from Parliament, the latest in a string of resignations by Conservative moderates opposed to the government's hard-Brexit stance.

Boris Johnson became prime minister in July by promising to complete Brexit and break the impasse that has paralyzed the country's politics since voters decided in June 2016 to leave the bloc, and which brought down his predecessor, Theresa May.

But after just six weeks in office, his plans to lead the U.K. out of the EU are in crisis. He is caught between the EU, which refuses to renegotiate the deal it struck with May, and a majority of British lawmakers opposed to leaving without an agreement. Most economists say a no-deal Brexit would cause severe economic disruption and plunge the U.K. into recession.

Johnson's solution — though a risky one — is to seek an election that could shake up Parliament and produce a less troublesome crop of lawmakers.

On Wednesday, the prime minister asked Parliament to back an Oct. 15 election, after lawmakers moved to block his plan to leave the EU on Oct. 31, even if there is no withdrawal agreement to pave the way.

But Parliament turned down his motion. Johnson needed the support of two-thirds of the 650 lawmakers in the House of Commons to trigger an election — a total of 434 — but got just 298, with 56 voting no and the rest abstaining.

British prime ministers used to be able to call elections at will, but under 2011 legislation fixing elections at five-year intervals, they now need the support of lawmakers to hold an early poll.

Corbyn said Labour, the biggest opposition party, would only vote for an early election if the prospect of a no-deal Brexit was taken off the table.

Labour economy spokesman John McDonnell said the party wanted an election but was still deciding on whether to seek one before the Oct. 31 Brexit deadline, or to wait until Parliament had secured a delay to Britain's departure from the bloc.

"The problem that we have got is that we cannot at the moment have any confidence in Boris Johnson abiding by any commitment or deal that we could construct," he told the BBC.

"That's the truth of it. So, we are now consulting about whether it's better to go long, therefore, rather than to go short."

Opposition lawmakers, supported by rebels in Johnson's Conservative Party, are attempting to pass a bill that would block a no-deal Brexit on Oct. 31, compelling the prime minister to seek a three-month delay to Britain's departure if no exit deal has been agreed by late October.

Johnson accused the opposition of trying to "overturn the biggest democratic vote in our history," referring to the outcome of the 2016 referendum to leave the EU.

The bill was approved by the House of Commons on Wednesday, but faced trouble in Parliament's upper chamber, the House of Lords, where pro-Brexit members planned to defeat it by filibustering — talking until time ran out.

But early Thursday, the Lords agreed to allow the bill to pass through the chamber by Friday, allowing it to become law early next week. Johnson plans to suspend Parliament at some point next week until Oct. 14.

Johnson also faces several legal challenges to his push to leave the EU come what may.

On Thursday transparency campaigner Gina Miller, who won a ruling in the Supreme Court in 2017 that stopped the government from triggering the countdown to Brexit without a vote in Parliament, was bringing a challenge at the High Court to Johnson's plan to suspend Parliament.

Miller, who is supported in her claim by Labour and the governments of Scotland and Wales, argues that

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sending lawmakers home at a crucial time for Britain is unlawful.

"We say that what prime minister is not entitled to do is to close Parliament for five weeks at such a critical time without justification," her lawyer, David Pannick, told the hearing.

Follow AP's full coverage of Brexit and British politics at: <https://www.apnews.com/Brexit>

A rescue, a reunion and a rush to help in Dorian's aftermath

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN Associated Press

ABACO, Bahamas (AP) — When Hurricane Dorian hit Sylvia Cottis' home at a beach club in the Bahamas, the fearsome Category 5 storm blew out the supposedly hurricane-proof windows, turning the glass into razor-sharp shrapnel that opened a wide gash on her knee.

Then the 89-year-old woman and her caretaker settled in to wait for help, and conditions soon worsened. The house became flooded with sewage after the septic tank overflowed with floodwater. They could not flush the toilet without using water from a pool. Surrounded by wet belongings and filth, Cottis spent the days sitting in her wheelchair and the nights sleeping in a metal lawn lounge.

Five agonizing days passed. Then on Wednesday, a neighbor and his friend at last pried open the home's jammed door with a screwdriver to check on Cottis and 58-year-old Kathryn Cartwright. By then, her gash had become infected and swollen.

They were two of the thousands of desperate people seeking help in Dorian's aftermath. The storm's devastation came into sharper focus as the death toll climbed to 20 and many people emerged from shelters to check on their homes. They confronted a muddy, debris-strewn landscape across Abaco and Grand Bahama islands, which are known for their marinas, golf courses and all-inclusive resorts.

Meanwhile, the now-distant Dorian regained strength as it pushed up the southeastern U.S. coast as a Category 3 hurricane, menacing Georgia and the Carolinas after millions of people were warned to clear out.

For days, the hurricane had pounded the Bahamas with winds up to 185 mph (295 kph) and torrential rains, swamping neighborhoods in brown floodwaters and destroying or severely damaging, by one estimate, nearly half the homes in Abaco and Grand Bahama, which have 70,000 residents.

The Bahamian government sent hundreds of police and marines into the stricken islands, along with doctors, nurses and other health care workers. The U.S. Coast Guard, Britain's Royal Navy and relief organizations including the United Nations and the Red Cross joined the burgeoning effort to rush food and medicine to survivors and lift the most desperate people to safety by helicopter.

At Cottis' home, the two women heard helicopters overhead and cars driving past, but the weather and massive flooding prevented any assistance.

"I can't leave her here too long," said Cartwright, who was also worried about her children, a son and a daughter, whom she had not heard from since the storm. She alternated between making light remarks and bursting into tears. She apologized for the house being a mess.

Help finally arrived in the form of neighbor Ben Allen, a 40-year-old construction worker and maintenance man, who showed up with a minivan to take Cottis to get medical attention. Cottis clutched a white tissue in her hand as she struggled to stand up and nearly fell over when the group tried to get her into the vehicle, which had a partially collapsed roof and was filled with wet cardboard.

"OK, Miss Sylvia, you gotta do your magic now," Cartwright said as she helped her inside.

Once everyone was in, the minivan sped past broken cell towers, snapped power lines, trees stripped of their leaves and 30- to 40-foot boats thrown on top of buildings. Metal shutters were ripped off their frames and hurled into stores.

Allen took in the devastated scenery as he drove.

"Abaco is no more," he said. Exactly a week ago, it was "the most beautiful place you wanted to be."

During the ride, Cartwright pointed out businesses she knew and homes that once belonged to her friends. Then she fell silent. "Oh, my father, look at everything."

Cartwright, still preoccupied with her children, said, "I just want to see my son tonight."

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At that moment, the van drove through a pool of water, and a car coming the opposite way slowed down on the two-lane road. All of a sudden, Cartwright screamed, "That's my son! That's my son!"

She hustled out of the car and swept the 29-year-old marine welder and father of two into her arms as she cried. She had not known until that moment if he was alive. Her son, Carlton Nixon, informed her that "the babies are OK," but that his daughter needed to be taken off of Abaco. As they hugged and talked, cars started piling up on both sides and drivers began to honk. Cartwright and her son made plans to see each other later and went their separate ways.

The beat-up van continued to Marsh Harbor Healthcare Center, the island's main hospital where several hundred people are now living temporarily. Small children played outside amid coils of downed power lines while homeless families rested on the hospital's lawn.

Inside, people crammed into the entrances, the hallways, the waiting room. Small children slept sprawled out on sheets and unfurled sleeping bags while toddlers in diapers stood in a portable playpen in the hospital's driveway.

Medical staff soon welcomed Miss Sylvia. She was rolled into the emergency room and then disappeared behind a door.

By 5 a.m. EDT Thursday, Dorian had still-dangerous 115 mph (175 kph) wind and was scraping the Carolinas with the potential for over a foot of rain in some spots by Friday. Forecasters warned of a life-threatening storm surge along the coasts. The storm was centered about 80 miles (130 kilometers) south-southeast of Charleston, South Carolina, moving north at 8 mph (13 kph). Hurricane-force winds extended up to 60 miles (110 kilometers) from its center, and tropical storm-force winds reached out 195 miles (315 kilometers).

The U.S. mainland recorded its first death in connection with the hurricane, that of an 85-year-old man in North Carolina who fell off a ladder while preparing his home for the storm. Dorian was also blamed for one death in Puerto Rico.

Back in the Bahamas, many people were just grateful to see another day.

Kevie Thomas, a manager at a beach club who lived near Cottis' home, smiled brightly as she walked to the club's mostly intact offices, which she said would become an arrival point for insurance adjusters.

"If you're alive, to me that's important. How can you be upset? It's material things," she said.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. BATTERED BAHAMAS IN NEED AFTER DEATH AND DESTRUCTION

Thousands of desperate hurricane survivors in the island nation are seeking help in Dorian's aftermath as the death toll reaches 20.

2. STRENGTHENING DORIAN RAKING SOUTHEAST

The Category 3 hurricane leaves tens of thousands without power as it threatens to inundate low-lying coasts from Georgia to Virginia with a life-threatening storm surge.

3. BREXIT PLANS IN CRISIS, JOHNSON PUSHES FOR NEW ELECTIONS

The embattled prime minister, having lost three critical votes in two days, is looking for new ways to bring about a national election after rebellious British lawmakers reject his call to trigger a snap poll.

4. AUSTRALIA FACING OWN OPIOIDS CRISIS

Like America before it, the country is facing a rising painkilling problem as drug companies aggressively market the drugs abroad and warnings are ignored, AP reports.

5. MORE WOMEN SAY PLACIDO DOMINGO HARASSED THEM

Eleven more women have come forward to say that the opera star groped, harassed them or behaved inappropriately, AP learns.

6. 'I WAKE UP AND CRY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT'

In Syria's 8-year-old civil war, more than 100,000 people have been detained, abducted or gone missing,

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according to the U.N.

7. FALSE CLAIMS BLUR LINE BETWEEN MASS SHOOTINGS, POLITICS

False claims on social media following a mass shooting in West Texas are early signs of online mischief ahead of the 2020 election.

8. WHO WILL LIKELY DETERMINE DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE

African Americans will watch as mostly white voters in Iowa and New Hampshire express preferences and winnow the field — then they will almost certainly anoint the winner.

9. FARMERS HOPE TRUMP DELIVERS ON TRADE DEAL WITH JAPAN

American farmers watch anxiously as competitors Canada, Mexico and Australia use free trade agreements to make inroads into Japan.

10. WHERE NFL FANS GET PREGAME FIX

After early cynicism, "Fox NFL Sunday" — now in its 26th year — has been inducted into the National Association of Broadcasting's Hall of Fame.

Dorian, back to a Category 3 hurricane, creeps up US coast

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Hurricane Dorian, back to a Category 3 storm, began raking the Southeast U.S. seaboard early Thursday and left tens of thousands without power as it threatened to inundate low-lying coasts from Georgia to Virginia with a life-threatening storm surge after its deadly mauling of the Bahamas.

Dorian squatted over the island nation as its strongest hurricane on record, leaving widespread devastation and at least 20 people dead. But it weakened substantially in the days since, dropping from a Category 5 to a Category 2 storm before increasing again late Wednesday. Dorian could maintain this intensity for several days before gradually weakening through Saturday, according to the National Hurricane Center.

As of early Thursday more than 68,700 customers in Charleston County and over 15,200 in Beaufort County were without power, according to Dominion Energy. Berkeley Electric Cooperative reports another 12,600 lost electricity in Charleston County.

Duke Energy in a news release Wednesday said it expected the storm to cause 700,000 outages in the Carolinas and that it brought in resources from 23 states and Canada to respond "as soon as it was safe to do so."

More than 1,500 people sought refuge in 28 shelters in South Carolina, where sheets of rain began falling late Wednesday in the historic port city of Charleston, located on a peninsula prone to flooding. As Dorian crept dangerously closer, winds picked up sending rain sheets sideways, thunder boomed in the night sky and power flickered on and off in places.

Dorian remained a force to be reckoned with, its swirling circle of winds and rain wrapped around a large, gaping eye visible on photos taken from space. At 5 a.m. EDT Thursday the distinct eye of the hurricane churned about 80 miles (130 kilometers) south of Charleston, moving north at 8 mph (13 kph) off the coast with dangerously high winds of 115 mph (185 kph) extending about 60 miles (95 kilometers) outward.

In Charleston's downtown, stores and restaurants were boarded up with wood and corrugated metal and about 830,000 people were under mandatory evacuation orders on the South Carolina coast. A flood chart posted by the National Weather Service projected a combined high tide and storm surge around Charleston Harbor of 10.3 feet (3.1 meters); the record, 12.5 feet (4 meters), was set by Hugo in 1989.

The Charleston County Emergency Operations Center advised early Thursday that all bridges were a Code Yellow due to 35 mph (56 kph) winds. It said high-profile vehicles such as box trucks and tractor trailers should not travel the bridges and that the public should use extreme caution.

Hundreds of shelter animals from coastal South Carolina arrived in Delaware ahead of the storm. The News Journal of Wilmington reports nearly 200 animals were airlifted early Tuesday from shelters at risk of flooding. About 150 other animals were expected to arrive that night via land transport. WDBJ-TV reports

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more than 50 animals from North Carolina were shipped to Virginia and may be available for adoption as early as this weekend.

Hundreds of thousands also were ordered off the Georgia coast. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said "we are very worried, especially about the barrier islands getting cut off."

Dorian's approach left the cobblestone streets of Savannah, Georgia's downtown historic district largely deserted. But there were still places to find a hurricane party. More than 30 people gathered at Pinkie Master's Lounge on Wednesday evening, even as wind gusts bent tree tops in Savannah — nearly 20 miles (32 kilometers) inland.

In North Carolina, where authorities said an 85-year-old man died after falling from a ladder while preparing his home for Dorian, Gov. Roy Cooper warned of a coming storm surge and flash flooding from heavy rains. The Outer Banks barrier islands were particularly exposed.

In Florida, initially projected to take a direct hit, there was widespread relief Wednesday after Dorian passed by from a relatively safe distance offshore. Orlando's international airport reopened, as did Walt Disney World and Universal. But one Florida resident had died while preparing for the storm, a 56-year-old man who was knocked to the ground from a tree Monday evening as he trimmed limbs with a chainsaw in an Orlando suburb.

The Navy ordered ships at its huge base in Norfolk, Virginia, to head to sea for safety, and warplanes at Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, Virginia, were being moved inland. The commander of the Navy Region Mid-Atlantic issued an emergency evacuation order for military personnel and their dependents in five North Carolina counties.

The acting administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Peter Gaynor, said 4,000 federal responders; 6,000 National Guard members; and 40,000 utility workers were on standby.

"We are ready to go," Gaynor said. "We'll follow Dorian up the coast until it is not a threat."

Associated Press reporters Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia; Gary Robertson in Raleigh, North Carolina, Jeffrey Collins in Carolina Beach, North Carolina; Jay Reeves in Birmingham, Alabama; Michael Schneider in Orlando, Florida, David Fischer in Miami, and Meg Kinnard in Charleston, South Carolina, contributed to this report.

False claims blur line between mass shootings, 2020 politics

By **WILL WEISSERT** and **AMANDA SEITZ** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Minutes after media outlets identified the gunman who killed seven people in West Texas, a Twitter account that appears to have been computer-generated began spreading baseless information linking the shooter to Democratic presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke.

"The Odessa Shooter's name is Seth Ator, a Democrat Socialist who had a Beto sticker on his truck," said the post, which also appeared on Facebook.

No such sticker was found on either of the vehicles, one a stolen mail truck, that Ator used during his rampage, according to Sgt. Oscar Villarreal, a Texas Department of Public Safety spokesman.

Still, the groundless conjecture after the shooting was spread by thousands online and even retweeted by Anthony Shaffer, a former Defense Intelligence Agency officer and a member of President Donald Trump's 2020 campaign advisory board. Shaffer didn't respond to questions about the claim.

The breakneck speed of the misinformation — and just how far it spread — illustrates an eagerness to blame such events on political ideologies, regardless of whether the facts support that. It's also an early indication of how difficult it will be for campaigns to combat virulent falsehoods ahead of a 2020 presidential campaign that could be full of them.

Social media users are unlikely to take the time to research misinformation they encounter online. And even when campaigns try to stamp out potential misinformation, voters might not see or believe the corrections, said Rita Kirk, a communications professor at Southern Methodist University.

"A whole lot of people are just living their lives. They don't have time to go and fact-check a statement,"

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Kirk said. "Truth has been the victim of social media campaigns."

O'Rourke's campaign, which is based in El Paso, home of a mass shooting last month, first received word of misinformation about the candidate early Monday morning from the Democratic National Committee. The campaign then watched the message spread for hours, eventually becoming Google's second-highest trending search query related to O'Rourke in a week.

The DNC monitors for such activity, as well as providing resources for campaigns that want to report or respond to online misinformation as part of the party's larger educational and guidance efforts.

"This kind of thing is a reality that social media has created," said Daniel Wessel, a DNC spokesman. "We all have to stay vigilant in order to combat it."

The first tweet linking O'Rourke to the Odessa shooter appears to have come in shortly after 1 p.m. Central time on Sunday from an account with bot-like tendencies, said Nir Hauser, the chief technology officer for VineSight, which tracks viral misinformation trending online.

Twitter suspended the offending account by Wednesday but by then the claim was widely shared on social media. Twitter did not respond to a request for comment.

Shaffer was among those who retweeted it, adding: "It sounds again like the 'system' failed — Seth Ator had a criminal record and was a @BetoORourke supporter ... this supports my belief that Progressives should be prohibited from owning or having access to weapons — they clearly cannot be trusted with this responsibility."

In the days since the shooting, the claim has continued to morph into new status updates and posts on social media. Some Facebook users posted a picture of a white truck with a "Beto 2020" sticker on the back window, saying it belonged to Ator.

That image actually came from an online retailer who sells campaign decals. Its owner, Stacy Pyle, said via email that the photo originated from her Etsy store website. But she said she did not sell any version of that decal and had "no clue" the image was being used to spread misinformation.

Unproven statements that the shooter was a "registered Democrat" also spread quickly on social media hours after the rampage. Texas voting records list the 36-year-old Ator registered as an unaffiliated voter in 2012, his most recent record.

Jen O'Malley Dillon, O'Rourke's campaign manager, on Twitter described the bumper sticker claim as a "completely false rumor" but acknowledged that the campaign could do comparatively little to squash it and instead implored social media giants to act.

"These companies claim to be powerless to stop false stories like these from spreading — but their employees are the most sophisticated engineers on the planet, capable of rooting out all kinds of nefarious content," O'Malley Dillon said in a statement to The Associated Press. "They refuse to act on this because they're afraid of the political consequences."

Shaffer didn't answer a message on Twitter, and Trump's reelection campaign did not respond to messages asking if he had specific information on the Odessa shooter being an O'Rourke supporter.

Some mass shootings have had political connections. For example, police say the shooter suspected of killing 22 people at an El Paso Walmart confessed to targeting people of Mexican descent and is believed to have written an anti-Hispanic rant before gunning down mostly Latino shoppers. The same screed reiterated some of Trump's anti-immigrant and anti-Hispanic language.

When 66-year-old James Hodgkinson opened fire on Republican members of Congress during a 2017 baseball practice, police did not provide a motive but said he was "angered by" Trump's election.

In recent months, however, social media users have rushed to mistakenly link shooters and politics in cases where ideology was not believed to play a role.

Some Facebook and Twitter users attempted to suggest a motive for the mass shooting in Dayton, Ohio, last month by highlighting tweets from an account that appeared to belong to the shooter, which bemoaned Trump's election and supported Democratic Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, also a presidential candidate.

Authorities have not established a political connection to the shooter's apparent motive, but that didn't stop the posts from spreading or Trump from repeatedly noting the shooter's apparent political leanings.

In June, when 20-year-old Brandon Webber was fatally shot by U.S. marshals during an attempted arrest in Memphis, social media users erroneously circulated a photo of a man wearing a Trump shirt to claim he was the officer responsible for killing Webber. The image was actually a truck driver who frequently posts videos on YouTube. U.S. marshals have not named the officers involved in the incident.

Such inaccurate claims are successful because people want to believe they don't share similarities with a shooter, said Kirk, the communications professor.

"We never want to see somebody that commits those kind of atrocities to be like us," Kirk said. "In this political climate, where there's so much of 'us versus them,' it continues to make a huge divide in our culture."

Seitz reported from Chicago.

Caught in limbo, families of Syria's missing cling to hope

By **BASSEM MROUE** Associated Press

HOMS, Syria (AP) — Six months after he was snatched from a road in central Syria, Iyad Suleiman was allowed by his kidnapers to make a Skype video call home. His children were startled at how he looked — skinny and exhausted, with a long beard. He told his wife to keep talking with his captors and Syrian officials to win his freedom.

That two-minute call in September 2013 was the last Suleiman's family saw of him. Soon after, his captors ended contact. Ever since, his wife and children have lived in an agonizing limbo, not knowing if he is alive or dead.

"I think of him all day. I wake up and cry in the middle of the night. I don't know what happens to me," Suleiman's 11-year-old son, Yacoub, said, bursting into tears.

Suleiman, a member of Syria's parliament at the time, was kidnapped by militants from the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front and vanished into the opposition-held territories in northwest Syria.

In Syria's 8-year-old civil war, more than 100,000 people have been detained, abducted or gone missing, according to the U.N. The large majority of those were "forcibly disappeared" by the government, which has targeted opponents for arrest throughout the war, starting with its crackdown on protests that erupted in 2011. Many are believed to have gone into government prisons where rights groups say torture is pervasive.

A smaller number from the government side, like Suleiman, were taken captive by opposition forces in a war that became brutally sectarian over time.

And tens of thousands more have likely vanished into mass graves, most of them victims of the Islamic State group during its 2014-2018 rule over northern and eastern Syria. Those victims come from all sides in the conflict, including government soldiers, opposition fighters, Kurdish militiamen and civilians.

"All Syrians, no matter their affiliations, are touched by this issue," said U.N. special envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen.

In her home city of Homs, Suleiman's wife, Suzan, choked back tears as she recounted her husband's abduction. On March 11, 2013, he was returning home from the town of Palmyra, where he had gone to try and broker a local reconciliation; he passed the nearby village of Furqlus and disappeared. Suleiman and his family belong to Syria's Alawite minority, a bedrock of support for President Bashar Assad, also an Alawite.

Suzan, a schoolteacher, was pregnant at the time.

Three days later, Suleiman's kidnapers, from the Nusra Front, called his family. They put him on the phone and demanded ransom. Suleiman's brothers and brothers-in-law went to hand over payment at a site near Palmyra. But when the militants wouldn't let them talk to Suleiman first, they turned around, fearing it was a trap to kidnap them as well.

Over the next months, the kidnapers sent names of militants held by the government, demanding a swap. Each time, the government refused. Once, the authorities did seem ready for a trade, even telling

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Suzan that her husband would be back with her within days. But in the end nothing happened, and the officials gave no explanation.

American freelance photojournalist Matthew Schrier, who was snatched by al-Qaida militants on the last day of 2012, crossed paths with Suleiman during this time.

Schrier told The Associated Press that they were together more than two months and became friends, held first in the basement of a villa, then in a children's hospital in Aleppo used as a prison. They spent long hours playing chess, using a cloth as a board and crumpled-up aluminum foil for pieces, or talking about everything from politics and religion to their families.

Schrier said they were not physically abused, though he has said he was tortured later in his imprisonment. But conditions were difficult, at times cramped with two dozen other prisoners, mostly government soldiers or allied militiamen. Their complex was hit several times by government forces, and fighting between Nusra Front and rivals erupted right outside, he said.

Eventually, Schrier was moved to another prison. In July 2013, he managed to escape, squeezing out a window.

Schrier maintains contact with Suleiman's family. He said he doesn't like to speculate about his fate. "When I was gone everybody thought I was dead. Look what happened. I popped up and I was alive."

"I tell myself that he's still around somewhere," he said.

Answers come only slowly, if at all, to families of the missing, even as Syria's war shifts and changes, with the Islamic State group losing all its lands and the government clawing back most — but not all — territory once held by opposition factions.

Some of those whose relatives were taken by the government have received partial answers. Authorities last year began issuing death certificates for thousands of detainees. Some had died as long as six years ago. Still, authorities have returned no bodies, leaving some with lingering doubts over their loved ones' fates.

At the same time, authorities are trying to build a mechanism to deal with the unknown dead who arise from Syria's many killing zones. Syrian officials have been compiling a database of unidentified dead found in areas under state control, which families can search through for missing loved ones.

When an unidentified body is found, forensic experts photograph the face and body or take DNA samples, said Zaher Hajo, of Syria's General Commission of Forensic Medicine. The information is kept with the number of the grave where the body is buried.

Over the past years, authorities have been able to help identify 1,670 bodies, Hajo said, though he would not say how large the database was.

The majority come from mass graves in territory liberated from the Islamic State group. In eastern Syria, once the heartland of IS rule, Kurdish-led authorities have similarly been compiling their own databases as they extract bodies from mass graves in the city of Raqqa.

In the meantime, families desperately seek any scrap of information.

After the final Skype call, Suleiman's family heard from released prisoners that he was given to another Islamic militant faction, Ahrar al-Sham. Years have passed with no further news, even as government forces retook all of Aleppo and now wage a campaign against the rebels' last stronghold, centered on Idlib province.

Prisoner exchanges between the government and insurgents continue to take place. In the most recent, just over a dozen from each side were freed in Aleppo in late July. Suzan contacts anyone released to see if they saw or heard of her husband.

The kidnapers "never said that they eliminated him, so we are living on hope," she said. Every year on Oct. 1, the family celebrates Suleiman's birthday.

The family stopped receiving Suleiman's salary when his four-year term in parliament ended in 2016, since he is not counted as a "martyr," whose families go on receiving their salaries for life.

Suzan said she tries to give their children as normal a life as possible. The youngest, Youssef, born seven months after his father's kidnapping, always asks when he is coming back, Suzan said.

Their eldest, 14-year-old Engi, described how, in that brief Skype call six years ago, she and her younger

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brother Yacoub told their father all about the new school year.

"Even among the harshest people there are emotions. If they have some emotions, they should send him back to us," she said.

Yacoub burst into sobs. When his father returns, he said, "I will not leave him for a moment."

Associated Press writers Josef Federman in Amman, Jordan, and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Asian shares rise amid optimism about Hong Kong, Brexit

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were mostly higher Thursday amid encouraging global developments, including British lawmakers seeking a less chaotic exit from the European Union and easing political tensions in Hong Kong.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 2.3% to 21,131.08 in morning trading. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 added 1.0% to 6,618.40, while South Korea's Kospi gained 1.2% to 2,013.04. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was up nearly 0.4% at 26,620.94, while the Shanghai Composite rose 1.6% to 3,004.54.

Shares rallied on Wall Street, reversing Tuesday's losses, when disappointing U.S. manufacturing data and an escalation in the ongoing trade war between the U.S. and China led to a sell-off that ended a three-day winning streak for the market.

The S&P 500 gained 31.51 points, or 1.1%, to 2,937.78. The Dow Jones Industrial Average 237.45 points, or 0.9%, to 26,355.47. The Nasdaq, which is heavily weighted with technology stocks, climbed 102.72 points, or 1.3%, to 7,976.88. The Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks picked up 12.47 points, or 0.8%, to 1,484.76.

Investors have been worried that the trade war and a slowing global economy could tip the U.S. into a recession. But traders set aside those concerns Wednesday, focusing instead on geopolitical developments.

In Hong Kong, the government withdrew an extradition bill that had set off three months of protests.

In Europe, Britain's parliament took a big step toward passing a law that could stop Prime Minister Boris Johnson's plan to pull out of the EU on Oct. 31 with or without a withdrawal agreement. Leaving the EU without a deal that covers trade and other issues could result in economic chaos for Britain and complicate trade with member nations in the EU.

The lingering trade conflict between Washington and Beijing has roiled markets this summer. The economic uncertainty has also become a drag on companies.

On Sunday, the conflict escalated as the U.S. imposed a 15% tariff on about \$112 billion of Chinese products. China responded by charging tariffs of 10% and 5% on a list of American goods.

The escalation had been expected since early August when the U.S. announced plans for the new tariff measures, prompting China to retaliate.

China's Commerce Ministry announced Thursday that talks with the United States on ending their tariff war will take place in early October in Washington, later than previously planned.

Some analysts warned against too much optimism.

"While a drop in geopolitical risk premium comes as a welcome relief, but with the omnipresent trade war clouds looming ominously over the market threatening to come thundering down at any time, the air remains thick with caution," said Stephen Innes, Asian Pacific market strategist with AxiTrader.

ENERGY:

Benchmark crude oil edged up 12 cents to \$56.38 a barrel. It rose \$2.32 to settle at \$56.26 a barrel Wednesday. Brent crude oil, the international standard, gained 17 cents to \$60.87 a barrel.

CURRENCIES:

The dollar rose to 106.63 Japanese yen from 106.21 yen on Wednesday. The euro strengthened to \$1.1032 from \$1.1009.

AP Business Writers Damian J. Troise and Alex Veiga contributed to this report.

US farmers hope Trump delivers on trade deal with Japan

By KEVIN FREKING and PAUL WISEMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — American farmers have not only endured retaliatory tariffs from China and other nations, they've watched as most of their top foreign competitors used free trade agreements to make inroads into Japan, a historically protectionist market with nearly 127 million consumers.

Now they're wondering if the coming U.S.-Japan trade deal that President Donald Trump is showcasing will be as strong for farmers as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which was negotiated under President Barack Obama and ditched by Trump as soon as he took office.

When Trump bailed on TPP, competitors such as Canada, Mexico and Australia forged ahead with a revamped version of the trade deal. Not wanting to be left out, the European Union reached its own free trade agreement with Japan. Both agreements went into effect at the beginning of this year.

The result: Top foreign competitors to American farmers get a pricing advantage after taking into account the 38.5% import tax that is applied to American beef, the 20% tariff applied to American ground pork and the 40% duty applied to some cheeses.

The changes have contributed to a new trade landscape that saw U.S. farm exports to Japan drop 2% to \$6.5 billion in the first six months of this year compared with the same period last year, according to the Agriculture Department.

"We've taken a temporary step backward because our competitors have had better access than us," said Nick Giordano, a vice president at the National Pork Producers Council.

Giordano is hopeful that dynamic will change soon. The president, in need of some wins on the trade front, has said the U.S. and Japan have agreed in principle on a new trade pact that the two parties hope to make official later this month.

Trump announced the agreement a couple of days after he raised retaliatory tariffs on China and ordered American companies to consider alternatives to doing business there, moves that contributed to significant drops in the financial markets.

"We've agreed to every point, and now we're papering it and we'll be signing it at a formal ceremony," Trump said.

Trade talks involving the Trump administration tend to be subject to fits and starts. Farm groups are hoping for no setbacks.

"Japan is very important to us," Giordano said, calling it pork producers' largest-value market year in and year out. He added: "We're losing sales to our EU and TPP competitors. So we're just really real eager to get back to a level playing field there and this deal is going to do it."

For all of Trump's criticism of Obama's TPP, it's unclear whether Trump will be able to secure better terms than the ones farmers would have gained under Obama. The American Farm Bureau Federation had projected that TPP would have increased net farm income by \$4.4 billion annually.

Japanese officials are optimistic the two sides can reach a deal in time for the U.N. General Assembly later this month in New York. They are hoping for an agreement that gives Japan relief from the import taxes Trump slapped last year on foreign steel and aluminum and from the tariffs he's threatened to impose on auto imports. In return, American farmers would get the kind of increased access to the Japanese market they would have received under TPP.

U.S. beef has continued to enjoy strong sales in Japan this year. Kent Bacus of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association said a drought in Australia is limiting that nation's ability to export more beef. Still, he said the tariff paid for Australian beef, now at 26.6% versus 38.5% for U.S. beef, is going to encourage Japanese importers to look at other sources, including Canada, New Zealand and Mexico.

"Essentially, we're living on borrowed time," Bacus said.

Groups representing wheat and dairy farmers offered similar assessments that they too could soon expect to lose market share if the U.S. doesn't get the same terms from Japan as do top foreign competi-

tors. They're hoping that once an agreement with the Japanese is signed, it will go into effect without the need for congressional approval. They don't want to wait months, if not years, for a congressional vote.

"We really get our bell rung if we have to wait and compete at a disadvantage for the next couple years in the Japanese market," Giordano said.

Democratic candidates focus on climate change in town halls

By ELANA SCHOR and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top Democratic presidential contenders talked tough Wednesday on cutting climate-damaging emissions from oil, gas and coal, turning their focus to global warming in a marathon evening of town halls that gave the candidates a chance to distinguish themselves on a topic of growing importance to their party's liberal base.

The lengthy climate conversations promised to hand Republicans ammunition for next year's general election fight by emphasizing one common element in the Democrats' climate change plans: their overwhelming — and overwhelmingly costly — scope. But the 10 Democrats who participated in the seven-hour series of climate change forums on CNN didn't shy away from making sweeping promises to reshape the American economy in service of what their party's grassroots supporters see as the paramount goal of averting global warming's most devastating effects.

"We have a moral responsibility to act and act boldly. And to do that, yes, it is going to be expensive," said Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who billed his \$16 trillion climate change plan as a necessary response to scientists' calls for dramatic cuts to carbon emissions.

Former Vice President Joe Biden took a more pragmatic view than Sanders, even as he defended his own climate proposal as "aggressive enough" to meet the challenge. Biden, who has held an early lead in the Democratic primary, has pledged to regulate the oilfield production method known as hydraulic fracturing — though not abolish it, as some rivals have — and said Wednesday that he doubted an outright ban could be feasible.

After facing sharp questions about his plans to attend a Thursday fundraiser hosted by the co-founder of a natural gas company, Biden defended his decision as consistent with a pledge he signed to turn away any contributions from fossil fuel executives or lobbyists. The energy investor in question, his former aide Andrew Goldman, is described in a company press release as "a long-term investor in the liquefied natural gas sector."

California Sen. Kamala Harris vowed that, as president, she would ban hydraulic fracturing, also called fracking, and take other steps to cut fossil fuel emissions, regardless of whether Republicans cooperated. Harris said she would eliminate the Senate filibuster, if necessary, to get liberal Democrats' sweeping Green New Deal proposal passed with a simple majority vote — a significant move from a candidate who had previously stopped short of a pledge to change congressional procedure.

In targeting oil and gas and coal production, "this is a fight against powerful interests," Harris said. "It's lead, follow or get out of the way ... starting with Donald Trump."

Sanders declined to support a full end to the filibuster, asserting that he could get climate change legislation through Congress without needing to eliminate the Senate's 60-vote requirement for many bills by using a procedural maneuver that the GOP most recently used in 2017 to pass massive tax legislation.

All 10 candidates have proposed plans starting at \$1 trillion for investment and research designed to wean the U.S. economy off oil, gas and coal by mid-century, with varying focuses on sharp emissions cuts and technological solutions, among other measures. Former Housing Secretary Julián Castro led off the town halls, defending his own decision to stop short of endorsing a national fracking ban by saying that natural gas — some of it from fracking — had served as a bridge while the economy moves to renewable energy sources like solar and wind.

He cited the extreme weather over the summer to illustrate the urgency of the moment.

"We see that now with Hurricane Dorian," said Castro, who joined Biden, New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker and Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar in calling for regulating but not completely ending fracking. "The Arctic

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ice caps melting. The Amazon on fire.”

Trump began tweeting almost as soon as the forums kicked off, calling Democrats’ proposals to address climate change unnecessary and costly.

“The Democrats’ destructive “environmental” proposals will raise your energy bill and prices at the pump,” Trump warned.

Candidates suggested, at turns throughout the night, an array of smaller-scale ideas to limit emissions — from banning plastic straws to adjusting dietary guidelines to washing clothes in cold water. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, for her part, brushed aside questions about those lifestyle changes by noting that the resulting public debate is “what the fossil fuel industry wants us” to engage in while they remain considerable contributors to carbon emissions.

The candidates also differed on the issue of nuclear power, which currently generates an estimated one-fifth of U.S. electricity. Warren said she would seek to gradually phase the nation away from nuclear power if she’s elected. Sanders would seek to eliminate it outright, while Biden’s and Booker’s plans leave room for nuclear to remain a power-generation option.

“People who think that we can get there without nuclear being part of the blend just aren’t looking at the facts,” Booker said.

Pete Buttigieg spoke broadly about addressing climate change not just as an economic issue but also as a moral and national security imperative. The Afghanistan War veteran proposed that the military should be “leading the way” in solving the issue, by making sure bases are carbon neutral and by purchasing zero-emissions vehicles, among other things.

Democrats spent the run-up to the town halls burnishing their environmental credentials, with five candidates releasing in-depth proposals to slash carbon emissions. Sanders went further, challenging his rivals for the party’s presidential nomination to join him in supporting a full ban on fracking, which is strongly opposed by most environmentalists who view it as an unmanageable risk to local water and air quality as well as the broader climate.

Associated Press writer Alexandra Jaffe in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this report.

Hurricane death toll climbs to 20 in devastated Bahamas

By **MARKO ÁLVAREZ, DÁNICA COTO and MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN** Associated Press

FREEPORT, Bahamas (AP) — The ground crunched under Greg Alem’s feet on Wednesday as he walked over the ruins of his home, laid waste by Hurricane Dorian. He touched a splintered beam of wood and pointed to the fallen trees, overcome by memories.

“We planted those trees ourselves. Everything has a memory, you know,” he said. “It’s so, so sad. ... In the Bible there is a person called Job, and I feel like Job right now. He’s lost everything, but his faith kept him strong.”

The devastation wrought by Dorian — and the terror it inflicted during its day-and-a-half mauling of the Bahamas — came into focus Wednesday as the passing of the storm revealed a muddy, debris-strewn landscape of smashed and flooded-out homes on Abaco and Grand Bahama islands. The official death toll from the strongest hurricane on record ever to hit the country jumped to 20, and there was little doubt it would climb higher.

With a now-distant Dorian pushing its way up the Southeastern U.S. coast, menacing Georgia and the Carolinas, many people living in the Bahamas were in shock as they slowly came out of shelters and checked on their homes.

In one community, George Bolter stood in the bright sunshine and surveyed the ruins of what was once his home. He picked at the debris, trying to find something, anything, salvageable. A couple of walls were the only thing left.

“I have lost everything,” he said. “I have lost all my baby’s clothes, my son’s clothes. We have nowhere to stay, nowhere to live. Everything is gone.”

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The Bahamian government sent hundreds of police officers and marines into the stricken islands, along with doctors, nurses and other health care workers, in an effort to reach drenched and stunned victims and take the full measure of the disaster.

"There are many in Grand Bahama who are suffering," Prime Minister Hubert Minnis said at a news conference. "We know there are many Bahamians that are in need of help. I want to assure you that more help is on the way."

He thanked the international community for its response, especially the U.S. government for what he called their "exceptional assistance."

The U.S. Coast Guard, Britain's Royal Navy and relief organizations including the United Nations and the Red Cross joined the burgeoning effort to rush food and medicine to survivors and lift the most desperate people to safety by helicopter. The U.S. government also dispatched urban search-and-rescue teams.

Londa Sawyer stepped off a helicopter in Nassau, the capital, with her two children and two dogs after being rescued from Marsh Harbor in the Abaco islands.

"I'm just thankful I'm alive," she said. "The Lord saved me."

Sawyer said that her home was completely flooded and that she and her family fled to a friend's home, where the water came up to the second floor and carried them up to within a few feet of the roof. She said she and her children and the dogs were floating on a mattress for about half an hour until the water began receding.

Sandra Cooke, who lives in Nassau, said her sister-in-law was trapped under her roof for 17 hours in the Abaco islands and wrapped herself in a shower curtain as she waited.

"The dog laid on top of her to keep her warm until the neighbors could come to help," she said. "All of my family lives in Marsh Harbor, and everybody lost everything. Not one of them have a home to live anymore."

The storm pounded the Bahamas with Category 5 winds up to 185 mph (295 kph) and torrential rains, swamping neighborhoods in brown floodwaters and destroying or severely damaging, by one estimate, nearly half the homes in Abaco and Grand Bahama, which have 70,000 residents and are known for their marinas, golf courses and all-inclusive resorts.

Bahamian Health Minister Duane Sands said 17 of the dead were from the Abaco islands and three from Grand Bahama. He said he could not release further details because the government still had to contact family members.

Some people in the Abaco islands complained that they had not seen any aid except for medical supplies for the main hospital, where hundreds of people were temporarily living as they awaited help.

By late Wednesday, Dorian has crept back up to Category 3 force with 115 mph (185 kph) winds and was pushing toward a brush with the Carolinas — with a direct hit on the outer banks possible. An estimated 3 million people in Florida, Georgia and North and South Carolina had been warned to clear out, and highways leading inland were turned into one-way evacuation routes.

At 11 p.m. EDT, Dorian was centered about 105 miles (170 kilometers) south of Charleston, South Carolina, moving north at 7 mph (11 kph). Hurricane-force winds extended outward up to 60 miles (100 kilometers) from its center.

Forecasters said there was the danger of life-threatening floods as storm surge moves inland from the coastline, as well as the potential for over a foot of rain in some spots.

"Hurricane Dorian has its sights set on North Carolina," Gov. Roy Cooper said. "We will be ready."

As the threat to Florida eased and the danger shifted farther up the coast, Orlando's airport reopened, along with Walt Disney World and Universal. To the north, ships at the big Norfolk, Virginia, naval base were ordered to head out to sea for safety, and warplanes at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia were sent inland.

The U.S. mainland recorded its first death in connection with the hurricane, that of an 85-year-old man in North Carolina who fell off a ladder while preparing his home for the storm. Dorian was also blamed for one death in Puerto Rico.

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On Tybee Island, Georgia, Debbie and Tony Pagan stacked their beds and couches atop other furniture and covered their doors with plastic wrap and sandbags before evacuating. Their home flooded during both Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and Irma in 2017.

"It's a terrible way to live," Debbie Pagan said. "We have the whole month of September and October to go. How would you like to be living on pins and needles?"

Another Tybee islander, Sandy Cason, said: "The uncertainty and the unknown are the worst part. Just not knowing what's going to be here when you get back."

Along King Street in historic Charleston, South Carolina, dozens of shops and restaurants typically bustling with tourists were boarded up, plywood and corrugated metal over windows and doors, as the flood-prone downtown area braced for high water.

Mark Russell, an Army veteran who has lived in South Carolina much of his life, went to a hurricane shelter right away. As for those who hesitated to do so, he said: "If they go through it one time, maybe they'll understand."

Coto reported from San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Weissenstein from Nassau, Bahamas. AP writers Tim Ayles in Freeport; Russ Bynum in Georgia; and Seth Borenstein in Washington contributed to this report.

2 Texas cities seek comfort from football after shootings

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

Far more than the final score will be on the line as two grief-stricken cities shaken by mass shootings weeks apart turn to the proud Texas tradition of high school football as part of the healing process.

Perhaps no team symbolizes this rite of fall in the state more than the Permian High School Panthers, which are hosting the game Thursday night in Odessa against the Franklin High School Cougars from El Paso. The Panthers' 1988 team was immortalized in H.G. Bissinger's book "Friday Night Lights," which inspired a movie and television show by the same name.

"It's football in West Texas. But there's something larger that's going on at this game as far as this is about community, about healing, comfort and just solidarity with each other," said Julie Gray, an executive board member for Permian's football booster club.

A gunman on Saturday killed seven people and injured around two dozen others as he went on an hour-long rampage from Midland to Odessa, firing at random before being killed by police outside a movie theater. In El Paso four weeks earlier, a gunman opened fire at a Walmart, killing 22 people before being taken into custody.

David Byrd, president of the El Paso team's booster club, said they plan to bring a banner to present to the Permian team to show their solidarity.

"Just a show of unity that we're there for them — we're going through the same thing," Byrd said.

Franklin's coach, Daren Walker, said, "We just want to support their community like everybody supported ours."

High school football games are often how communities come together in Texas. Experts say that for those hurting, it can help to attend the events they normally would, both by preserving some semblance of normalcy and to find comfort through shared grief.

"People get together at those times and they share. They strengthen each other. They support each other. They help each other," said Dr. Carol North, a crisis psychiatrist at UT Southwestern's O'Donnell Brain Institute in Dallas. "... It's trying to wrap your mind around these horrible events."

Counselors and therapy dogs have spread out at the schools in Ector County Independent School District in Odessa this week. Nancy Vanley, the district's executive director of guidance and counseling, said that students across the district have a wide range of trauma. Some are related to those killed or injured. Some were at the theater when the gunman was killed. Others were traumatized from watching the coverage on television.

One of those killed was 15-year-old Leilah Hernandez, who attended the district's Odessa High School.

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She was shot while walking out of a car dealership.

The Ector County school district says that at the game Thursday it will give El Paso a banner, and there will be a minute of silence and a minute of applause for first responders, in addition to a "special surprise" at the end of the band's halftime performance. Odessa High School, where Hernandez attended, has a game Friday. The district says there will be a moment of silence and special musical numbers as part of the pregame ceremony.

"We're communities and we're binding together and we're assisting each other, and we can still have competition and you can still have life," Vanley said. "You can still keep that normalcy going."

Damian Christian, a Permian senior whose school activities include band, choir and playing the school mascot, said the shooter's path on Saturday came within blocks of his house.

He said the theme of the skit at their pep rally will be that love conquers all and that the band's halftime performance will "touch hearts."

"I think it's going to be a very uplifting moment for both communities — both El Paso and Odessa. Seeing how we both experienced the same thing I see us both kind of lifting each other up," Christian said.

'Can't feel my heart:' IG says separated kids traumatized

By COLLEEN LONG, MARTHA MENDOZA and GARANCE BURKE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Separated from his father at the U.S.-Mexico border last year, the little boy, about 7 or 8, was under the delusion that his dad had been killed. And he thought he was next.

Other children believed their parents had abandoned them. And some suffered physical symptoms because of their mental trauma, clinicians reported to investigators with a government watchdog.

"You get a lot of 'my chest hurts,' even though everything is fine" medically, a clinician told investigators. The children would describe emotional symptoms: "Every heartbeat hurts," or "I can't feel my heart."

Children separated during the Trump administration's "zero tolerance policy" last year, many already distressed in their home countries or by their journey, showed more fear, feelings of abandonment and post-traumatic stress symptoms than children who were not separated, according to a report Wednesday from the inspector general's office in the Department of Health and Human Services.

The chaotic reunification process only added to their ordeal.

Some cried inconsolably. Some were angry and confused. "Other children expressed feelings of fear or guilt and became concerned for their parents' welfare," according to the report.

The child who believed his father was killed "ultimately required emergency psychiatric care to address his mental health distress," a program director told investigators.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story is part of an ongoing joint investigation between The Associated Press and the PBS series "Frontline" on the treatment of migrant children, which includes an upcoming film.

Child psychiatrist Dr. Gilbert Kliman, who interviewed dozens of migrant children in shelters after zero-tolerance took effect, told the PBS series "Frontline" and The Associated Press that the kids can move on with their lives after reunifying with parents but may never get over it.

As children they have night terrors, separation anxiety, trouble concentrating. As they become adults, they face greater risks of mental and physical challenges, from depression to cancer.

Among the separated children, he foresees "an epidemic of physical, psychosomatic health problems that are costly to society as well as to the individual child grown up. I call it a vast, cruel experiment on the backs of children."

The AP obtained a copy of the report in advance of the official release, the first substantial accounting by a government agency on how family separation under the Trump policy has affected the mental health of children. It was based on interviews with about 100 mental health clinicians who had regular interactions with children but did not directly address the quality of the care the children did receive.

"Facilities reported that addressing the needs of separated children was particularly challenging, because

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these children exhibited more fear, feelings of abandonment and post-traumatic stress than children who were not separated," said Deputy Inspector General Ann Maxwell. "Separated children are also younger than the teenagers facilities were used to caring for."

A second report Wednesday by the watchdog found that thousands of childcare workers were given direct access to migrant children before completing required background and fingerprint checks.

The report covers a period last year when facilities were overwhelmed by the policy under which at least 2,500 children were separated from their parents. They stayed behind in border custody while their parents were taken to federal court for criminal proceedings. Children held longer than 72 hours were transferred into HHS custody and placed in shelters that have traditionally cared for children who crossed the border alone.

Migrant children stay in the shelters, run by government-funded organizations, until released to a sponsor, usually a parent or close relative.

The watchdog said the longer children were in custody, the more their mental health deteriorated, and it recommended minimizing that time. It also suggested creating better mental health care options and hiring more trained staff.

The Administration for Children and Families, the HHS division that manages children, concurred with the recommendations and said it had already begun implementing them, including hiring a board-certified child, adolescent and adult psychiatrist to serve as a mental health team leader.

Department Assistant Secretary Lynn Johnson said in a letter to the watchdog that the average length of stay is much shorter now and noted the report was not a clinical review of treatment.

She wrote that "significant factors" beyond the agency's control contributed to "the issues identified in the report." Those included a surge in children at the border, the children's unique mental health needs and a shortage of qualified bilingual clinicians, especially in rural areas.

She said that efforts were made to bring in more medical health professionals, but "adverse media coverage and negative public perception ... have hampered efforts to expand."

After a federal judge ordered the children reunified with their parents, guidance on how to do it kept changing and that led to further anxiety and distress, according to the report.

In one case, a child was moved from a Florida facility to Texas to be reunited with her father. After the child made several trips to the detention center, she was returned to the Florida facility "in shambles," without ever seeing him.

Investigators visited 45 facilities in 10 states during August and September of 2018, interviewing about mental health clinicians.

During the interviews, there were almost 9,000 children in shelters; nearly 85% were 13-17 in age, 13% were 6-12 and 2% were infants to age 5.

At a minimum, each child in government custody is to receive one counseling session per week, plus two group sessions to discuss issues.

But the report found that mental health staff were overwhelmed. Usually there is one mental health clinician for 12 children, but during the period investigators studied, there were more than 25 children for one clinician.

A second Office of Inspector General report found 31 of the 45 facilities reviewed had hired case managers who did not meet Office of Refugee Resettlement requirements, including many without the required education. In addition, the review found 28 of the 45 facilities didn't have enough mental health workers.

That meant some children didn't receive proper treatment, the report found. And some children who suffered more severe illnesses — self-harming, suicidal behavior or actual suicide attempts — were not transferred quickly enough to residential treatment centers.

During a time when sponsors had to be fingerprinted, children were held in facilities for as long as 93 days. The fingerprints were sent to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and some people in the United States illegally were arrested. Advocates said many potential sponsors feared coming to get the children while the policy was in effect.

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After it was scrapped in March, the average stay dropped to 58 days and was 48 days in April.

The report also addressed the question of whether children were being given psychotropic medications after media reports described the practice. The report found the instances were minimal; about 300 children overall between May and July of 2018 were prescribed antidepressants. Staff described some concerns that dosages or types of medication may not have been right.

In the second report, only four of the 45 shelters reviewed by the U.S. Health and Human Services inspector general met all staff screening requirements.

Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, said children deserve compassionate care.

"Grantees and contractors that fail to ensure their employees are checked appropriately should not be allowed to care for these children," said Portman.

Federal investigators also found some shelters relying on employees to report their own criminal histories. A background check found one employee — who "self-certified" that she had no history for crimes involving child abuse — had a third-degree child neglect felony on her record.

HHS Assistant Secretary Johnson said the agency has rescinded background check waivers at non-emergency shelters and is committed to ensuring care providers in residential settings have completed all screenings before working with children.

Burke and Mendoza reported from San Francisco.

Michigan to become 1st state to ban flavored e-cigarettes

By DAVID EGGERT Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer moved Wednesday to make her state the first to ban flavored electronic cigarettes, accusing companies of using candy flavors and deceptive advertising to "hook children on nicotine."

The Democrat ordered the state health department to issue emergency rules that will prohibit the sale of flavored nicotine vaping products, including to adults, and the misleading marketing of e-cigarettes. Retailers will have 30 days to comply with the rules once they're filed in coming weeks. The rules will almost certainly be challenged in court.

New York last November began taking steps to bar the sale of flavored e-cigarettes but withdrew proposed rules, and legislators rejected Gov. Andrew Cuomo's budget proposal to clarify the state health department's authority to limit sales.

The federal government and states ban the sale of vaping products to minors, yet government survey figures show that last year, one in five U.S. high school students reported vaping in the previous month. Top government health officials, including the surgeon general, have flagged the trend as an epidemic.

"This is a health crisis that we're confronting, and it would never be permitted if it was cigarettes. We're letting these companies target our kids, appeal to our kids and deceive our children," Whitmer told reporters. Michigan's chief medical executive determined that youth vaping constitutes a public health emergency.

As of last week, 215 possible cases of severe pulmonary disease associated with the use of e-cigarettes had been reported by 25 states, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Michigan officials are investigating six such cases. At least two deaths in the U.S. have been linked to vaping, one announced in Illinois last month and another in Oregon announced this week. The Oregon death is the first linked by health officials to a product purchased at a marijuana dispensary.

Whitmer's move drew praise from public health advocates, school groups and Democratic lawmakers, but criticism from organizations that advocate for vaping and some Republicans in the GOP-led Legislature.

"This shameless attempt at backdoor prohibition will close down several hundred Michigan small businesses and could send tens of thousands of ex-smokers back to deadly combustible cigarettes," said Gregory Conley, president of the American Vaping Association. "These businesses and their customers will not go down without a fight. We look forward to supporting the lawsuits that now appear necessary to protect the right of adults to access these harm reduction products."

He said the ban would create a "massive" black market. He blamed the recent spate of illnesses on illegal vape pens that contain THC, the compound that gives marijuana its high.

Health experts say nicotine is harmful to developing brains, and some researchers worry addicted teens will eventually switch from vaping to smoking.

The rise in teen vaping has been driven mainly by flavored cartridge-based products such as Juul. The odorless devices can be used discreetly in bathrooms, hallways and even classrooms.

Juul's executives have disputed allegations that they have marketed their products to teens, declaring that they have taken unprecedented steps to combat underage use of its e-cigarettes.

Nearly 80% of underage teenagers who use e-cigarettes and other tobacco products cited flavors when asked why they took up the habit, according to government research.

Battery-powered e-cigarettes, which have grown into a more than \$6 billion-a-year industry, typically heat a flavored nicotine solution into an inhalable aerosol. Juul controls roughly three-quarters of the U.S. retail market.

It's unclear what percentage of the market may be affected by the ban, which would not apply to tobacco-flavored products. Conley said more than half of vaping products are sold in vape shops, online or from other locations that are largely untracked, unlike those purchased at gas stations and convenience stores.

He estimated that nearly every Michigan vaping shop, however, would lose at least 90% of its sales.

State Rep. Beau LaFave, a Republican from Iron Mountain, criticized the governor's decision, which came three months after she signed laws barring minors from using e-cigarettes.

"That's an infringement on adults," he said. "This has nothing to do with children. This is only about Gov. Whitmer taking her liberal beliefs and feeling that she knows better than everybody else, and they can't make the decision for themselves."

Whitmer defended her order, saying it is important to not only enforce the existing e-cigarette ban against minors but also to remove the flavored products from commerce entirely. Companies flavor their e-cigarettes like bubblegum, fruit loops cereal and apple juice, she said, to get kids addicted — "creating consumers for them so they can make money at the risk of children's health."

Most experts agree the aerosol is less harmful than cigarette smoke because it does not contain most of the cancer-causing byproducts of burning tobacco. But there is virtually no research on the long-term effects of the vaping chemicals, some of which are toxic.

Several national health groups, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association, backed Michigan's planned ban and renewed calls for the Food and Drug Administration to prohibit the sale of thousands of flavored vaping products nationwide.

AP Health Writer Matthew Perrone in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Eggert on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/DavidEggert00>

Probe to find cause of boat fire could lead to criminal case

By **BRIAN MELLEY** Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The captain and crew who leapt from a burning dive boat off Southern California saved themselves as 34 people perished below deck.

Whether their escape from the *Conception* before dawn Monday was the only viable option, an act of cowardice or even a crime has yet to be determined. While the old saw about the captain going down with his ship is more an antiquated notion, there are laws to punish a ship's master who shirks his duty to safely evacuate passengers.

The responsibilities of captain and crew are broadly defined, said professor Martin J. Davies, who is the maritime law director at Tulane University. With passengers, their duty is take reasonable care in all the circumstances, which is dependent on those circumstances.

If that captain made no attempt to save passengers trapped in a burning boat that would be a violation

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of his duty. But it wouldn't necessarily be wrong if the crew decided there was nothing they could do to help the passengers in the berth and abandoned ship to seek help from a boat nearby.

"The notion of the captain always goes down with the ship is consistent with that only because the captain is expected to stay there and do something if that's going to help," Davies said. "The idea that the captain is actually supposed to die along with everyone else is not any kind of a legal requirement."

While authorities have said they view the disaster as an accident, prosecutors from the U.S. attorney's office in Los Angeles and the Santa Barbara County district attorney's office are taking part in the investigation.

Whether anyone is criminally charged will depend on the conclusions of a multi-agency investigation on land and sea into the cause of the fire. Investigators interviewed the captain and crew members Wednesday, but wouldn't reveal any of what they learned.

Few details have emerged about what happened before the breathless captain made a mayday call at 3:15 a.m. Monday as he was apparently being overwhelmed by smoke on the boat. Passengers would have been sleeping at the time while the boat was anchored just off Santa Cruz Island.

Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown said fire above deck blocked the one stairway and an emergency exit hatch where 33 passengers and one crew member were sleeping in bunks. It's not known if any alarm sounded or what the people below deck may have done to try to escape.

Finding the cause of the fire could be difficult with the boat largely destroyed and sitting upside down in 60 feet (18 meters) of water. Other items that could provide valuable clues could have been carried away by the tides or destroyed in the fire that burned so hot DNA was needed to identify the dead.

"All of that will be a very large hurdle to overcome," said George Zeitler, a former Coast Guard inspector, who runs his own marine investigation firm.

Investigators will want to produce a timeline of the ship's final voyage from the moment it pulled from a Santa Barbara dock early Saturday morning until the crew jumped overboard, experts said. They will look at the ship's layout and whether the bunk room below deck was too cramped and had enough exits, review maintenance records, even study photos and videos from people who have been on the boat to look for valuable evidence.

While lawsuits are almost a guarantee with such a high death toll, it's not clear if any crime was committed, experts said.

Under federal law, a captain or crew member can be sentenced to up to 10 years in prison if misconduct, negligence or inattention to duty leads to a death. The law can also be extended to a boat owner or charterer who engages in "fraud, neglect, connivance, misconduct, or violation of law" that takes a life.

Some high-profile boating disasters have sent ship captains to prison for failing to perform their duties.

Capt. Francesco Schettino was sentenced to 16 years in an Italian prison for abandoning ship and other crimes when he fled in a lifeboat after the Costa Concordia ran aground off Tuscany in 2012 and killed 32 people. He refused an order from the Italian Coast Guard to return to the listing ship.

The Conception, owned by Truth Aquatics, was being chartered for three days by a commercial dive outfit based in Santa Cruz to explore the rugged Channel Islands, sometimes referred to as the Galapagos of North America, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) south of Santa Barbara.

Coast Guard records show fire safety violations on the Conception in 2014 and 2016 were quickly fixed. There were no deficiencies found in February or August 2018 inspections.

The five survivors were all crew members, including the captain. They apparently jumped from the bow, where the stairway led to the sleeping quarters in the berth, and swam to the stern, where they took a dinghy to a nearby boat.

Attorney Gordon Carey, who practices maritime law, said the captain and crew should have done what they could to put out the fire, but not to the point of losing their own lives.

"They may have an obligation to put themselves at risk, but they don't have an obligation to commit suicide and certain death to save the passengers," he said.

Carey, who is not a criminal lawyer, said it's possible the owner of the boat or captain could face charges

for being criminally negligent for behavior reckless they should know peoples' lives would be at risk.

Carey has been scuba diving for 50 years and has been on many long-distance voyages to exotic dive spots around the world. He said he's never been on a boat where the passengers slept below deck and he questioned why so many were crammed in a space toward the bow with only one staircase and one emergency hatch.

He said an owner or captain has to anticipate the normal range of risks — from collision to a breach of the hull to high seas to fire.

"If you have either designed or put into place an operation that, knowing the risks that are there, and fire is certainly one of them, that put people in a serious risk of dying, I guess that sort of rises to the level of what I would consider involuntary manslaughter," Carey said. "It's behaving recklessly in the face of known danger."

Don Barthelmess, a former commercial diver who has been on the Conception many times for fun and with classes he taught at Santa Barbara City College, said Truth Aquatics and its crews are industry leaders.

"For people to point fingers at this point, it's just irresponsible," he said, noting that authorities have said the captain stayed to help the Coast Guard after he and the crew were rescued.

Barthelmess said he listened to the mayday calls and heard the "panic" in the voice of "Captain Jerry," who has not been publicly identified.

"That crew would do everything humanly possible to save people if they could have," he said. "My heart just bleeds for Jerry and the crew. ... They're going to live with this for the rest of their lives."

Associated Press Writer Stefanie Dazio in Santa Barbara contributed to this report.

Hong Kong withdraws extradition bill that sparked protests

By KATIE TAM Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam withdrew the extradition bill that sparked months of demonstrations, bowing to one of the protesters' demands in the hope of ending the increasingly violent unrest.

But activists rejected Wednesday's move as insufficient and vowed not to yield until the government accepts other demands including an independent investigation into alleged police brutality against protesters, the unconditional release of those detained and democracy.

The bill would have allowed Hong Kong residents to be sent to mainland China for trials. It has prompted massive protests since June that have disrupted transportation links around the city and at its international airport.

Lam said the government would not accept the other demands, and instead named two new members to a police watchdog agency investigating police misconduct.

"The government will formally withdraw the bill in order to fully allay public concerns," she said in a recorded television message.

Lam said the persistent violence is damaging the rule of law and that challenges to the "one country, two systems" framework under which the former British colony returned to Chinese control in 1997 had put Hong Kong in a "highly vulnerable and dangerous situation."

"Our foremost priority now is to end violence, to safeguard the rule of law and to restore order and safety in society," she added, vowing to "strictly enforce the law against all violent and illegal acts."

Lam said it was clear that public frustration has gone far beyond the bill and that her government will seek a dialogue with aggrieved groups to address their discontent. She said she will also invite community leaders, professionals and academics to examine and advise the government on how to resolve deep-seated problems in the society.

"Let's replace conflicts with conversations, and let's look for solutions," she said.

Some lawmakers and activists said the move was too little, too late.

A youth activist who identified herself only as Chan and wore a helmet and scarf to shield her identity

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told a news conference that protesters "would not back down, not even one step" until their other demands are met.

"If Carrie Lam had withdrawn the bill two months ago, that would have been a quick fix but to apply a bandage onto rotten flesh, that simply won't cut it," she said.

Prominent youth activist Joshua Wong said the government in Beijing hopes to cool the protests ahead of China's National Day on Oct. 1.

"I hope the people in China can understand that democracy, freedom and human rights are universal values that Hong Kong people are fighting for," he told journalists before a forum in Taipei, Taiwan, where he is visiting.

"We will continue to fight for it. I hope there is one day that Hong Kong and even China would become a place where people can enjoy democracy and freedom."

Pro-democracy lawmaker Claudia Mo mocked Lam's bid to seek dialogue to address public grievances.

"She has been fast asleep these three months, this is just absurd," Mo said. "The scars and wounds are still bleeding, and she thinks she can just use some garden hose to put out the hill fire."

Pro-establishment lawmaker Starry Lee, however, urged protesters to accept the government's olive branch so the city can move forward.

The Hong Kong stock market soared 4%, boosted by reports of the bill's withdrawal.

Lam, who was elected as the city's chief executive by a pro-Beijing committee of Hong Kong elites, has come under withering criticism for pushing the extradition bill. Many in Hong Kong see it as an example of the city's eroding autonomy since the former British colony returned to Chinese control in 1997.

Clashes between police and protesters have become increasingly violent, with demonstrators throwing gasoline bombs and rods at officers in protests last weekend. Authorities in turn have employed water cannons, tear gas, rubber bullets and batons.

The mostly young protesters say a degree of violence is necessary to get the government's attention after peaceful rallies were futile. Chinese officials have warned that Beijing will "not sit idly by" if the situation worsens.

The prolonged protests have hurt Hong Kong's economy amid a slowdown in the Chinese economy and its trade war with the United States.

Hong Kong and foreign companies have also been under intense pressure to support China's ruling Communist Party against the protesters.

Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways said its chairman, John Slosar, resigned Wednesday, less than a month after its CEO, Rupert Hogg, stepped down following pressure by Beijing over participation by some of the carrier's employees in protests.

Associated Press journalists Joe McDonald in Beijing, Eileen Ng in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Johnson Lai in Taipei, Taiwan, contributed to this report.

YouTube to pay \$170M fine after violating kids' privacy law

By RACHEL LERMAN and MARCY GORDON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Google will pay \$170 million to settle allegations its YouTube video service collected personal data on children without their parents' consent.

The company agreed to work with video creators to label material aimed at kids and said it will limit data collection when users view such videos, regardless of their age.

Some lawmakers and children's advocacy groups, however, complained that the settlement terms aren't strong enough to rein in a company whose parent, Alphabet, made a profit of \$30.7 billion last year on revenue of \$136.8 billion, mostly from targeted ads.

Google will pay \$136 million to the Federal Trade Commission and \$34 million to New York state, which had a similar investigation. The fine is the largest the FTC has levied against Google, but it's tiny compared with the \$5 billion fine against Facebook this year for privacy violations.

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YouTube “baited kids with nursery rhymes, cartoons, and more to feed its massively profitable behavioral advertising business,” Democratic Commissioner Rohit Chopra said in a tweet. “It was lucrative, and it was illegal.”

The federal government has increased scrutiny of big tech companies in the past two years — especially questioning how the tech giants collect and use personal information from their billions of customers. Many of the huge Silicon Valley companies are also under antitrust investigations aimed at determining whether the companies have unlawfully stifled competition.

Kids under 13 are protected by a 1998 federal law that requires parental consent before companies can collect and share their personal information.

Tech companies typically skirt that by banning kids under 13 entirely, though such bans are rarely enforced. In YouTube’s lengthy terms of service, those who are under 13 are simply asked, “please do not use the Service.”

Yet many popular YouTube channels feature cartoons or sing-a-longs made for children. According to the FTC, YouTube assigned ratings to its video channels and even had a “Y” category directed at kids ages 7 or under, but YouTube targeted ads to those kids just as they would adults.

The FTC’s complaint includes as evidence Google presentations describing YouTube to toy companies Mattel and Hasbro as the “new Saturday Morning Cartoons” and the “#1 website regularly visited by kids.”

“YouTube touted its popularity with children to prospective corporate clients,” FTC Chairman Joe Simons said. But when it came to complying with the law, he said, “the company refused to acknowledge that portions of its platform were clearly directed to kids.”

According to the settlement, Google and YouTube will get “verifiable” consent from parents before they collect or use personal information from children. The company also agreed not to use data collected from children before.

YouTube has its own service for children, YouTube Kids. The kids-focused service already requires parental consent and uses simple math problems to ensure that kids aren’t signing in on their own.

YouTube Kids does not target ads based on viewer interests the way the main YouTube service does. But the children’s version does track information about what kids are watching in order to recommend videos. It also collects personally identifying device information.

On Wednesday, Google said that starting early next year, YouTube will also limit personalized ads on its main service for videos meant for kids. Google is relying on video creators to label such items, but will employ artificial intelligence to help.

YouTube won’t seek parental consent there, however, even on videos intended for children. YouTube is avoiding that precaution by instead turning off any personal tracking on those videos, saying it will collect only what is needed to make the service work. For such videos, YouTube also won’t offer features like comments and notifications.

Videos made for kids will still feature ads — just not the targeted, personal ads that generally bring in the most money for video creators.

“I think there has been a general anxiety of the kids and family community of creators on YouTube for quite some time,” said Chris Williams, CEO and founder of pocket.watch, a studio that works with many popular YouTube child stars, including Ryan ToysReview.

Pocket.watch helps YouTube stars expand beyond the streaming site and find new lines of business, from consumer products to network TV shows. Williams expects that business to become more important. But YouTube will still be the big way to build an audience, he said.

“It represents a part of the puzzle for your brand growth, a big one,” he said.

The settlement now needs to be approved by a federal court in Washington. As with the Facebook settlement, the FTC vote was 3-2, with both Democrats opposing it as too weak.

Sen. Edward Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, said the settlement won’t turn YouTube into a safe place for children and “makes clear that this FTC stands for ‘Forgetting Teens and Children.’”

A coalition of advocacy groups that helped trigger the investigation said the outcome will reduce behav-

ioral advertising targeting children.

Jeff Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy, said the settlement "finally forced Google to confront its longstanding lie that it wasn't targeting children on YouTube."

But he said the "paltry" fine signals that politically powerful corporations can break the law without serious consequences.

Other critics, including dissenting Democratic Commissioner Rebecca Slaughter, said too much responsibility was being placed on video creators to classify their own content as kid-oriented, and thus limited to less-lucrative ads. They say that potentially allows Google to turn a blind eye as some try to cheat the system to make more money through ad revenue sharing.

Andrew Smith, the FTC's consumer protection director, acknowledged that concern as valid, but said YouTube "has strong incentives to police its platform" to avoid further action.

Google is already under a 2011 agreement with the FTC that barred it from misrepresenting its privacy policy and subjected the company to 20 years of regular, independent privacy audits. Google was fined \$22.5 million in 2012 for violating that settlement when the FTC found it improperly used tracking cookies on Apple's Safari browser.

Lerman reported from San Francisco. AP Technology Writers Matt O'Brien in Providence, Rhode Island, and Mae Anderson and Tali Arbel in New York contributed to this report.

Cowboys, Elliott agree on \$90 million deal that ends holdout

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Pro Football Writer

FRISCO, Texas (AP) — Ezekiel Elliott was finishing the early stretching at the first practice since ending his long holdout with the Dallas Cowboys when the star running back was called to the front of the group.

Cheers rose from teammates Wednesday before Elliott led a brief set of jumping jacks to get the workout moving again.

The two-time NFL rushing champion is back with the Cowboys thanks to a new \$90 million, six-year extension that makes Elliott the highest-paid player at his position — and just in time for the regular season. Dallas hosts the New York Giants on Sunday.

"It was really hard. Super hard," Elliott said of an absence that was in its 41st day, covering all of training camp and the preseason, when the final breakthrough came before dawn the day of the most important practice so far leading to the opener for the defending NFC East champs.

Elliott said the support from teammates on display for reporters was the same thing he was getting behind the scenes since the Cowboys flew to California for camp without him July 25.

"Calls, texts," Elliott said. "I mean, one of my teammates told me don't come back without a deal. I mean, just support like that from this group of guys meant everything. It definitely would have been harder if things were the opposite."

Elliott will get \$50 million guaranteed. The \$15 million-per-year average on the extension surpasses the \$14.4 million Todd Gurley got from the Los Angeles Rams last summer. Gurley's guarantee was \$45 million.

The stalemate with the two-time Pro Bowler came with the Cowboys holding high expectations coming off their first playoff win with Elliott and quarterback Dak Prescott. They have won two NFC East titles in three seasons together.

"Guys were just excited to see him," center Travis Frederick said. "It was less about, 'Thank God you're here, thank God you got your deal done' and more about, 'Man, I've missed you. I haven't seen you in a month.'"

"Like one of your brothers has shipped off to do a semester abroad and then all of a sudden comes back. It's just a good, reuniting feeling."

Elliott held out with two years left on his rookie contract, at \$3.9 million this season and \$9.1 million in 2020. The fourth overall pick in the 2016 draft wanted to be the highest-paid back after getting those two rushing titles in only three years.

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Now the 24-year-old is, with a contract that totals \$103 million over eight seasons.

"I'm \$100 million lighter as of this morning," owner Jerry Jones said on CNBC in New York, where he and his son, executive vice president Stephen Jones, rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange. "Zeke has been arguably our best player. We're glad to get him booked in."

Even when he was suspended for six games over domestic violence allegations in 2017, Elliott still had the best per-game rushing average in the league. He's the fifth back since the 1970 merger to win at least two rushing titles his first three seasons.

But the off-field issues were part of the backdrop as the impasse dragged on, although Jerry Jones, also the team's general manager, said more than once he didn't consider Elliott's personal problems to be factors for a new contract.

Jones jokingly said "Zeke who?" in response to a question from a reporter after a second straight solid preseason showing from rookie fourth-round pick Tony Pollard in Hawaii. Pollard would have started against the Giants if Elliott hadn't signed.

A few days later, though, Jones sternly said he had earned the right to joke about Elliott after the 2016 All-Pro's representatives took offense to the remark. The owner strongly supported Elliott during a court fight over the suspension.

"I mean, that's so far behind us," Elliott said of Jones' tongue-in-cheek remark. "We signed a deal, so there's no point in talking about that other stuff."

As the regular season drew closer, Jones took an increasingly hardline stance publicly, finally calling out Elliott during his radio show last week for not honoring his existing contract.

But Elliott's agent, Rocky Arceneaux, told reporters the sides were close to a deal after Elliott landed at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport on Tuesday. Elliott spent almost the entire holdout trying to stay in shape in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

"Just not being here," Elliott said of the toughest part of his absence. "I was where I was, I was isolated. I ate about the same food every day. Things got old real quick. It was mentally draining."

The same food? "Habanero shrimp. Grilled wings. Chicken Caesar salad," he said with a smile.

Elliott wasted little time having an impact after rising to stardom at Ohio State. He won the rushing title as a rookie while Prescott earned NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year honors after Dallas won a franchise-record 11 straight games and was the top seed in the NFC.

The Cowboys lost to Aaron Rodgers and Green Bay in the divisional round, then missed the playoffs in 2017 after losing their first three games during Elliott's midseason suspension.

With a boost from the in-season trade for receiver Amari Cooper last season, Prescott and Elliott got a wild-card win over Seattle. The Cowboys then lost to the Los Angeles Rams, falling to 0-6 in the divisional round since the last of five Super Bowl titles to finish the 1995 season.

Elliott's absence wasn't unusual in one sense — he didn't play a snap in the preseason last year either. But this was the first time he missed any practices in the summer. Elliott, who has averaged 22 carries and 102 yards per game, expects to handle his usual load against the Giants.

"Everybody loves Zeke," coach Jason Garrett said. "He brings great energy and juice, so we're excited to have him back. The guys, I think, have handled any situation and all situations really well this offseason, whether it's the business side of football, injuries, whatever it is."

The most pressing issue on the business side is settled.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Pope on critics: It's 'an honor if the Americans attack me'

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ABOARD THE PAPAL PLANE (AP) — Pope Francis acknowledged his growing opposition within the conservative right-wing of the U.S. Catholic Church and said in off-hand remarks aboard the papal plane Wednesday it is "an honor if the Americans attack me."

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Francis commented on critics of his papacy when he received a copy of a new book about his detractors in the United States, "How America Wants to Change the Pope." Author Nicholas Seneze, who covers the Vatican for the French Catholic newspaper La Croix, presented it to Francis on a flight to southern Africa.

The plane landed in Maputo, Mozambique late in the afternoon. Francis is on a trip this that also takes him to Madagascar and Mauritius.

In his book, Seneze charts the fierce criticism of Francis among American conservatives who loathe his outreach to migrants and China, his denunciation of free-market capitalism, his environmental concerns and his relaxation of church rules on the death penalty and sacraments for civilly remarried Catholics. Some have gone so far as to accuse Francis of heresy.

The pope's most outspoken conservative critics in the U.S. include Cardinal Raymond Burke, who Francis ousted as a Vatican supreme court justice, and former White House adviser Steve Bannon. Well-funded, right-wing Catholic media amplified their disapproval. Wealthy Catholics are putting money behind initiatives to discredit Francis' allies with the goal of electing a conservative, doctrine-minded churchman as the next pope.

In presenting the book to Francis, Seneze explained that he had wanted to show Francis' problems with the U.S. church and how Francis had responded with "spiritual weapons."

"For me, it's an honor if the Americans attack me," Francis quipped. As he handed the book to an aide, the pope added "This is a bombshell."

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni sought to clarify the pope's comments afterward, stressing they came in an "informal context" and that Francis always welcomes criticism.

"The pope wanted to say that he always considers criticism an honor, particularly when it comes from authoritative thinkers, and in this case from an important country," Bruni said.

Francis' fraught relations with the U.S. church hierarchy has escalated in the last year following published accusations by a former Vatican ambassador that Francis had followed others in turning a blind eye to the sexual misconduct of an American prelate, now-former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick.

A church investigation determined McCarrick sexually abused minors and adult seminarians, and Francis defrocked him in February. McCarrick's penchant for bedding seminarians was an open secret within some church circles since at least 2000.

The former Vatican ambassador, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, blamed the scandal on Francis and called for him to resign in an unprecedented attack. Vigano accused Francis of having rehabilitated McCarrick from secret sanctions Pope Benedict XVI imposed but never fully enforced.

The archbishop had ties to the well-funded right-wing of the U.S. church, and clergy and lay people latched onto Vigano's accusations. They questioned his commitment to fighting clergy sexual abuse, although allegations against McCarrick first arrived in the Vatican during the papacy of St. John Paul II.

Seneze, whose book was published in France on Wednesday, said he wanted to use the publication of Vigano's claims as a starting point even though criticism of Francis' papacy has earlier roots, including teaching documents about the environment and the injustices of the global economy.

History's first Latin American pope had his own qualms about the U.S. church leadership, which veered to the right during the conservative papacies of John Paul and Benedict, and focused on fighting culture war battles over abortion and gay rights.

Relations took a nosedive in the aftermath of the Vigano affair, when several U.S. bishops vouched for Vigano's integrity and demanded the Vatican respond to his allegations. Even the head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, called for a full Vatican investigation.

To date, the Vatican hasn't released a promised report into the scandal.

The U.S. conference lost further esteem in Rome when it tried late last year to outmaneuver the Holy See into accepting new accountability norms that the Holy See said were legally problematic. Eventually the U.S. conference adopted revised norms in June.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Sept. 5, the 248th day of 2019. There are 117 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 5, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford escaped an attempt on his life by Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a disciple of Charles Manson, in Sacramento, California.

On this date:

In 1774, the first Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia.

In 1864, voters in Louisiana approved a new state constitution abolishing slavery.

In 1882, the nation's first Labor Day was celebrated with a parade in New York. (Although Labor Day now takes place on the first Monday of September, this first celebration occurred on a Tuesday.)

In 1939, four days after war had broken out in Europe, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a proclamation declaring U.S. neutrality in the conflict.

In 1960, at the Rome Olympics, American boxer Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) defeated Zbigniew Pietrzykowski (zuh-BIG'-nee-ehf pee-eh-t-chah-KAHF'-skee) of Poland to win the light-heavyweight gold medal; Wilma Rudolph of the United States won the second of her three gold medals with the 200-meter sprint.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed legislation making aircraft hijackings a federal crime.

In 1972, the Palestinian group Black September attacked the Israeli Olympic delegation at the Munich Games; 11 Israelis, five guerrillas and a police officer were killed in the resulting siege.

In 1984, the space shuttle Discovery ended its inaugural flight as it landed at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

In 1986, four hijackers who had seized a Pan Am jumbo jet on the ground in Karachi, Pakistan, opened fire when the lights inside the plane failed; a total of 20 people were killed before Pakistani commandos stormed the jetliner.

In 1991, the 35th annual Naval Aviation Symposium held by the Tailhook Association opened in Las Vegas. (The gathering was marred by reports that dozens of people, most of them women, were sexually assaulted or otherwise harassed during the meeting.)

In 1997, breaking the royal reticence over the death of Princess Diana, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II delivered a televised address in which she called her former daughter-in-law "a remarkable person." Mother Teresa died in Calcutta, India, at age 87; conductor Sir Georg Solti (johrj SHOL'-tee) died in France at age 84.

In 2017, President Donald Trump announced that he was phasing out the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program protecting young immigrants who were brought to the country illegally, but said he was giving Congress six months to come up with an alternative. (The Supreme Court is expected to decide by June 2020 whether Trump can terminate the program.) Hurricane Irma strengthened to a Category 5 storm as it approached the northeast Caribbean on a path toward the United States.

Ten years ago: Top finance officials from rich and developing countries agreed during a meeting in London to curb hefty bankers' bonuses and maintain stimulus measures such as extra government spending and low interest rates to boost the global economy.

Five years ago: The U.S. and 10 of its key allies, meeting in Wales, agreed that the Islamic State group was a significant threat to NATO countries and that they would take on the militants by squeezing their financial resources and going after them with military might. Ukraine, Russia and Kremlin-backed separatists signed a cease-fire after five months of bloodshed. Former CBS News and CNN correspondent Bruce Morton, 83, died in Washington.

One year ago: The New York Times published an opinion piece from an anonymous senior administration official claiming to be part of an internal "resistance" working to thwart President Donald Trump's "worst inclinations;" Trump responded that if such a "gutless" person exists, "the Times must, for National Security purposes, turn him/her over to the government at once!" At the second day of his confirmation hearing, Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh rejected repeated efforts by Democrats to get him to

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reveal his views about a president pardoning himself or being forced to testify in a criminal case. Britain charged two men it identified as Russian military intelligence officers with the nerve-agent poisoning of double agent Sergei Skripal. Republican Jon Kyl of Arizona was sworn in to fill the Senate seat left open by the death of John McCain.

Today's Birthdays: Former Federal Reserve Board chairman Paul A. Volcker is 92. Comedian-actor Bob Neuhart is 90. Actress-singer Carol Lawrence is 87. Actress Lucille Soong is 84. Former NFL All-Pro quarterback and college football Hall of Famer Billy Kilmer is 80. Actor William Devane is 80. Actor George Lazenby is 80. Actress Raquel Welch is 79. Movie director Werner Herzog is 77. Singer Al Stewart is 74. Actor-director Dennis Dugan is 73. College Football Hall of Famer Jerry LeVias is 73. Singer Loudon Wainwright III is 73. Soul/rock musician Mel Collins is 72. "Cathy" cartoonist Cathy Guisewite (GYZ'-wyt) is 69. Actor Michael Keaton is 68. Country musician Jamie Oldaker (The Tractors) is 68. Actress Debbie Turner-Larson (Marta in "The Sound of Music") is 63. Actress Kristian Alfonso is 56. Rhythm-and-blues singer Terry Ellis is 56. Rock musician Brad Wilk is 51. TV personality Dweezil Zappa is 50. Actress Rose McGowan is 46. Actress Carice Van Houten is 43. Rock musician Kyle O'Quin (Portugal. The Man) is 34. Actor Andrew Ducote is 33. Olympic gold medal figure skater Yuna Kim is 29. Actor Skandar Keynes is 28.

Thought for Today: "If moderation is a fault, then indifference is a crime." — Jack Kerouac, American novelist (1922-1969).

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