

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 1 of 46

- [1- City Help Wanted](#)
- [2- Tonight on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [3- Thinking About Health Column](#)
- [5- Obit: Iva Aeilts](#)
- [5- Bowling Scores](#)
- [6- Weather Pages](#)
- [9- Daily Devotional](#)
- [10- 2019 Groton Events](#)
- [11- News from the Associated Press](#)



Upcoming COMMUNITY EVENTS

Thursday, Oct. 24

7 p.m.: First Round Football Playoffs - Groton Area at Webster Area

Friday, Oct. 25

Volleyball hosting Milbank (C/JV matches start at 6 p.m. followed by the varsity match)

Saturday, Oct. 26

State Cross Country Meet at Huron
ACT Testing at GHS, 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Applications will be accepted for skating rink manager and attendants for the City of Groton. Contact City Hall 397-8422 for an application or print one online at <http://city.grotonsd.gov/>. EOE.

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

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 2 of 46



*Good Luck
Groton Area Football Team
in the Playoffs*



Photo by J. Simon Photography

Groton Area Tigers

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Grade
1	Colby Merkel	WR/DB	5'8	160	12
3	Thomas Cranford	WR/DB	6'0	180	12
5	Pierce Kettering	RB/LB	5'9	160	10
6	Jonathan Doeden	RB/LB	6'2	190	12
7	Kayde Stange	WR/DB	6'1	185	12
8	Paxton Bonn	TE/DE	6'2	180	11
11	Cole Simon	WR/DB	5'7	150	9
12	Ethan Gengerke	QB/DB	6'1	160	9
15	Jacob Lewandowski	WR/DB	5'9	160	9
17	Andrew Marzahn	RB/DB	6'0	165	9
18	Austin Jones	TE/DE	6'0	190	12
20	Kaden Kurtz	QB/LB	5'10	175	10
21	Chandler Larson	WR/DB	6'0	170	11
24	Jackson Cogley	RB/LB	6'0	170	10
25	Jordan Bjerke	TE/LB	6'0	170	10
26	Hunter Schaller	Kicker	5'10	165	12
32	Peyton Johnson	WR/DE	6'2	190	12
33	Darien Shabazz	RB/LB	5'10	180	12
34	Brody DeHoet	WR/DE	6'4	210	12
35	Cole Bisbee	TE/LB	5'9	165	9
42	Marcos Garcia	WR/DB	6'0	165	10
44	Tate Larson	TE/DE	6'1	180	9
50	Aeyden Johnson	OL/DL	5'9	180	9
51	Seth Johnson	OL/LB	5'10	170	10
52	Evan Nehls	OL/DE	5'10	180	10
53	Caleb Hanten	OL/DL	5'8	165	9
54	Grady O'Neill	OL/DL	6'2	230	12
55	Adrian Knutson	OL/DL	5'10	240	11
56	Garret Schroeder	OL/DL	6'0	185	12
57	Caleb Furney	OL/DL	5'10	205	11
58	Trey Johnson	OL/DL	5'10	250	10
59	Alex Morris	OL/DL	6'0	220	11
60	Tanner McGannon	OL/DL	5'8	165	9
62	Trey Gengerke	OL/LB	6'1	190	11
64	Kale Pharis	OL/DL	6'0	225	11
65	Ryder Daly	OL/DL	5'9	240	10
66	Danny Feist	OL/DL	5'10	190	9
68	Kaleb Antonsen	OL/DL	5'10	175	9
72	Tristan Traphagen	OL/DL	6'3	240	11
74	Jamesen Stange	OL/DE	5'10	185	12

Head Coach: Shaun Wanner
 Asst. Coaches: Travis Kurth, Seth Erickson, Dalton Locke, Lance Hawkins, Ryan Scepaniak
 Managers: Lee Iverson, Douglas Heminger, Brooke Gengerke, Alexa Herr
 Statisticians: Tom Woods, Ryland Strom
 Cheerleaders: Indigo Rogers, Ashley Flichs, Chloe Daly, Tiara DeHoet, Megan Flichs, Trinity Smith
 Cheer Coach: Aubray Harry/Joellen Miller
 Superintendent: Joe Schwan
 Principal: Kiersten Sombke
 Ath. Director: Brian Dolan
 School Colors: Black/Gold
 School Song: Fight On

The following Businesses Wish The Tigers Good Luck and are also sponsoring the Livestream of the game at Webster on

GDILIVE.COM

**Groton Area at Webster Area
Thursday, Oct. 24 at 7p.m.**

- Aberdeen Chrysler Center
- Bahr Spray Foam
- BaseKamp Lodge
- BDM Rural Water
- BK Custom T's & More
- Blocker Construction
- Doug Abeln Seed Company
- Groton American Legion Post #39
- Groton Chiropractic Clinic
- Groton Daily Independent
- Groton Dairy Queen
- Jark Real Estate
- John Sieh Agency
- Jungle Lanes & Lounge
- Lori's Pharmacy
- McGannon Plumbing, Heating and Cooling
- Mike-N-Jo's Body-N-Glass
- Milbrandt Enterprises
- Northeast Chiropractic Clinic
- Olde Bank Cafe 'n More
- Olson Development
- Professional Management Services
- S & S Lumber & Hardware Hank
- Tyson DeHoet Trucking

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

Be Wary of the Complex Pros and Cons of Medicare Plans

By Trudy Lieberman, Community Health News Service

Along with crunchy leaves and pumpkins, fall brings a slew of advertising for insurance plans that fill the gaps in Medicare coverage.

Misleading and confusing messages continue to reach beneficiaries and those nearing Medicare age. To take myself as an example, I've received an invitation to a Medicare Advantage plan informational meeting. I've gotten a solicitation from my physician's medical group offering a "zero-cost, no obligation way to review coverage" online or over the phone. The "review" is likely to bring a sales pitch for a plan.

A mailer from another plan offered "a friendly, money-saving Medicare Advantage Plan" that seemed to promise the moon: savings of up to \$2,380 a year, maximum dental coverage of \$1,500, and a \$750 hearing aid allowance, a drop in the proverbial bucket considering the average cost of two hearing aids is about \$4,500. One seller seemed to think I was on both Medicare and Medicaid and pitched a "special needs plan." Since I wasn't a candidate for such an arrangement, was the insurer trying to get in the door to sell a regular Medicare Advantage plan?

Too many people fall for those kinds of pitches. Shopping to cover the gaps in Medicare is a task no one should take lightly. The stakes are too high.

Medicare is a fine program, but it was never meant to cover everything. It's based on the old Blue Cross model of insurance common in the 1960s where the company paid 80 percent of the medical bill and the patient paid 20 percent. An industry selling Medigap policies sprang up to cover the 20 percent, and deceptive sales practices plagued the business for years.

Congress ended that and standardized the coverage into 10 plans (11 today, including a high-deductible plan) that give people a broad choice for covering what Medicare does not pay. If people bought Plan F or Plan C as their supplemental insurance, they were pretty much covered for most illnesses.

Beginning next year, however, new Medicare beneficiaries – those who turn 65 on or after January 1, 2020 – won't be allowed to buy Plan F or C. Congress wants more beneficiaries in Medicare Advantage plans, so it eliminated the option to buy the most comprehensive plans. Lawmakers wanted seniors to pay more for their care.

They can still buy Plan G, which offers the same protection as F except that it doesn't cover the Medicare Part B deductible, which is \$183 next year. People already on Medicare can still buy Plans F or C.

The goal is to push more people into Medicare Advantage plans, a private alternative that is a step toward privatizing the entire program. To move the process along, the government has overpaid insurers to provide the care, which enables them to offer inducements to join. Considering that about one-third of Medicare beneficiaries have moved to MA plans, that strategy seems to be successful.

But does it come at a cost?

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 4 of 46

Serious questions have arisen about the overpayments the government has made using taxpayer dollars, overpayments that allow plans to offer gym memberships and even Apple Watches, monitoring devices, to new enrollees as one plan is doing. In September six Democratic senators wrote to Medicare noting that taxpayers have overpaid MA plans more than \$30 billion over the last three years and that Medicare has "taken little to no action to correct" the overbilling and overpayments.

Even more troubling, the letter also says that several other government agencies such as the Office of the Inspector General have raised "serious concerns" about MA plans that fail to meet the needs of older adults and those with disabilities.

The letter raises questions about the kind of care beneficiaries are actually receiving and notes that Medicare's own audits have found "widespread and persistent Medicare Advantage performance problems related to denials of care and payment" that "threaten the health and safety of their members."

Those are government watchdogs raising a red flag about problems getting care when you're really sick and need good insurance.

Medicare Advantage plan advisers note that traditional Medicare does not put a limit on the amount a beneficiary must pay out of pocket each year while MA plans do – \$6,700 for in-network providers and \$10,000 for those out of network. They usually don't mention that a good Medigap policy will cover those amounts, but the premiums may be higher than for an MA plan heavily subsidized by the government.

The trade-off becomes what it does with all insurance: pay now in the form of higher premiums or pay later in the form of higher expenses if the worst happens.

Insurers seldom mention that tough trade-off when they host those informational meetings for shoppers.

The Life of Iva Aeilts



Iva Mae Aeilts, 94, passed away Oct. 22, 2019, at Abbot-Northwestern Hospital with her family at her side. You might say that Iva Mae, as a follower of Jesus, got promoted on Tuesday.

She was born to the late Glenn and Verna Carson, Feb. 23, 1925, on a farm outside of Langford, S.D. Iva graduated from Langford High School in 1943 and attended business college in Aberdeen. She worked as switchboard operator at St. Luke's Hospital and as a secretary at the Dakota Farmer Magazine, both in Aberdeen.

Iva Mae married Samuel Aeilts in 1951. They started their family on a farm southwest of Britton, SD and moved in 1959 to the town of Britton before relocating to Groton, SD in 1960. They called Groton home for over 50 years.

Iva is survived by her three children: David (Nanci) Aeilts of Bloomington; Jane (Ken) Burg of Minneapolis, Minn.; and Nancy (Doug) Piper of Bloomington, Minn. She is also survived by 5 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren and her brother

Raymond (Joanne) Carson of Yankton, S.D. Iva was preceded in death by her loving husband, her parents and 3 brothers.

Iva Mae was an accomplished wife and mother who loved to talk about the lives of her children. In later years, she enjoyed watching cloud formations, petting dogs, and drinking "a good cup of coffee." Every Wednesday morning, for over 50 years, Iva met with the same neighborhood women for coffee in each other's homes. She loved being an active member of the Presbyterian Church in Groton, and later at Westside Wesleyan in Bristol and Christian and Missionary Alliance in Groton.

Iva was well-known for her delicious rhubarb pies, for her hospitality, and for sewing 100s of sequins on skating costumes. She taught her children to sing hymns of faith, which influence their lives to this day.

Iva Mae's memorial service will be held on Saturday, Oct. 26, 2019 at 2:00 p.m. at the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Groton, S.D. Burial will take place in Groton Union Cemetery.

Groton Coffee Cup

Oct. 22 Team Standings: Biker Chix 19, James Valley 16, Kens 11, Ten Pins 10.

High Games: Joyce Walter 190, Kens 184, Sam Bahr 177.

High Series: Joyce Walter 522, Vickie Kramp 459, Nancy Radke 446.

Conde National

Oct. 21 Team Standings: Mets 21, Braves 15½, Pirates 14½, Cubs 14, Tigers 10, Giants 9.

Men's High Games: Topper Tastad 189, Troy Lindberg 185, Tim Olson 179.

Men's High Series: Topper Tastad 506, Troy Lindberg 500, Tim Olson 492.

Women's High Games: Nancy Radke 178, 169, 160; Vickie Kramp 172; Joyce Walter 159.

Women's High Series: Nancy Radke 507, Joyce Walter 443, Vickie Kramp 441.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 6 of 46

Today



Increasing Clouds

High: 46 °F

Tonight



Decreasing Clouds

Low: 28 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 56 °F

Friday Night



Clear

Low: 38 °F

Saturday



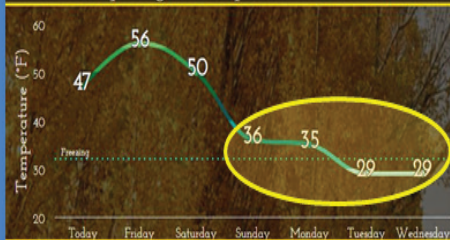
Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance Rain

High: 52 °F

Very Below Normal Cold Is Coming Next Week

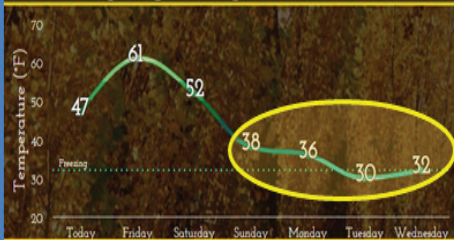
Normal Highs Are Low To Mid 50s!!!

7 Day High Temperature Forecast



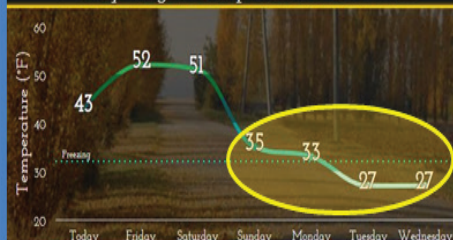
Aberdeen, SD

7 Day High Temperature Forecast



Pierre, SD

7 Day High Temperature Forecast



Watertown, SD



Aberdeen, SD

National Weather Service

Updated: 10/24/2019 4:07 AM Central

Published on: 10/24/2019 at 12:13AM

Temperatures are forecast to fall to well below normal levels next week. Get ready!

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 7 of 46

Today in Weather History

October 24, 1989: A storm in the western U.S. produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains around Lake Tahoe, with 21 inches reported at Donner Summit. Thunderstorms in northern California produced 3.36 inches of rain at Redding to establish a 24 hour record for October, and bring their rainfall total for the month to a record 5.11 inches. Chiefly "Indian Summer" type weather prevailed across the rest of the nation. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 70s and 80s. Record highs included 74 degrees at International Falls, Minnesota and 86 degrees at Yankton, South Dakota. Record highs also occurred across parts of central and northeast South Dakota. The record highs were 80 degrees at Mobridge and Sisseton, 83 degrees at Aberdeen, and 84 degrees at Pierre.

1878: The Gale of 1878 was an intense Category 2 hurricane that was active between October 18 and October 25. It caused extensive damage from Cuba to New England. Believed to be the strongest storm to hit the Washington - Baltimore region since hurricane records began in 1851.

1785 - A four day rain swelled the Merrimack River in New Hampshire and Massachusetts to the greatest height of record causing extensive damage to bridges and mills. (David Ludlum)

1878 - A hurricane produced widespread damage across North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. At Philadelphia PA, the hurricane was the worst of record. (David Ludlum)

1937 - A snow squall in Buffalo NY tied up traffic in six inches of slush. (David Ludlum)

1947 - The Bar Harbor holocaust occurred in Maine when forest fires consumed homes and a medical research institute. The fires claimed 17 lives, and caused thirty million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1951 - Sacramento, CA, reported a barometric pressure of 29.42 inches, to establish a record for October. (The Weather Channel)

1969 - Unseasonably cold air gripped the northeastern U.S. Lows of 10 degrees at Concord, NH, and 6 degrees at Albany NY established October records. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Snow fell across northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin overnight, with five inches reported at Poplar Lake MN and Gunflint Trail MN. Thunderstorm rains caused flash flooding in south central Arizona, with street flooding reported around Las Vegas NV. Strong northwesterly winds gusting to 50 mph downed some trees and power lines in western Pennsylvania and the northern panhandle of West Virginia. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds circulating around a deep low pressure centered produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region, with six inches reported at Ironwood MI. Wind gusts to 80 mph were reported at State College PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A storm in the western U.S. produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains around Lake Tahoe, with 21 inches reported at Donner Summit. Thunderstorms in northern California produced 3.36 inches of rain at Redding to establish a 24 hour record for October, and bring their rainfall total for the month to a record 5.11 inches. Chiefly "Indian Summer" type weather prevailed across the rest of the nation. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 70s and 80s. Record highs included 74 degrees at International Falls MN, and 86 degrees at Yankton SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005 - Hurricane Wilma reached the U.S. coastline near Everglades City in Florida with maximum sustained winds near 120 mph. The hurricane accelerated across south Florida and the Miami/Fort Lauderdale area, exiting the coast later the same day. There were 10 fatalities in Florida, and nearly 6 million people lost power, the most widespread power outage in Florida history. Preliminary estimates of insured losses in Florida were over \$6 billion, while uninsured losses were over \$12 billion.

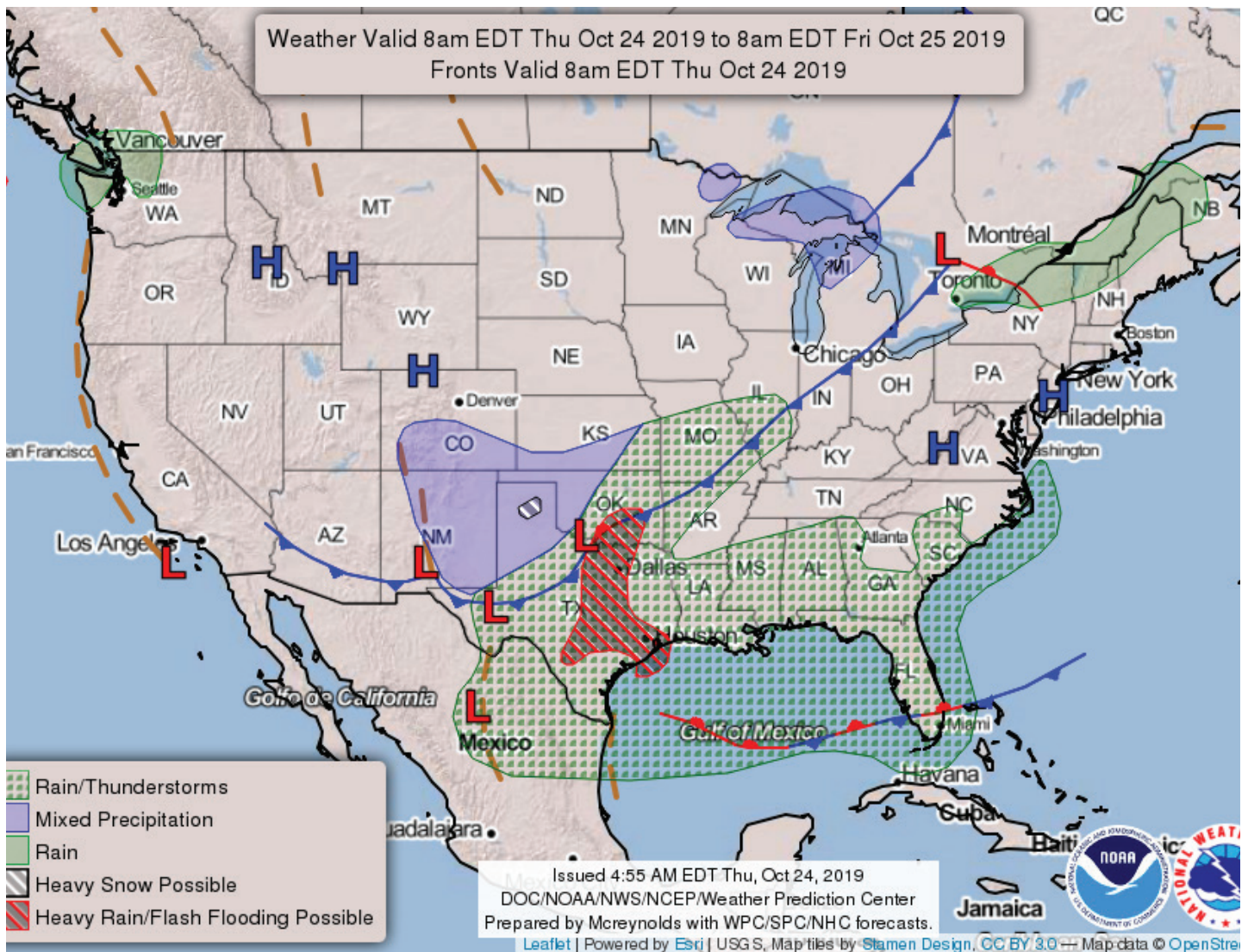
Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 8 of 46

Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 38 °F at 6:32 PM
Low Temp: 29 °F at 2:20 AM
Wind: 20 mph at 12:52 PM
Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 83° in 1989
Record Low: 6° in 1917
Average High: 54°F
Average Low: 30°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.61
Precip to date in Oct.: 1.55
Average Precip to date: 20.09
Precip Year to Date: 26.57
Sunset Tonight: 6:33 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:03 a.m.





THE SOURCE OF OUR TROUBLES

Charlie Brown was sitting on a rock with his head in his hands and his elbows on his knees. Linus seeing such a sad sight said, "Charlie Brown, do you want to know what the trouble is with you?"

"No," he answered.

Continuing, Linus said, "The trouble with you is that you don't want to know what the trouble with you is!"

That's the trouble with many of us. We really do not want to see ourselves as we are or as God sees us. He has established spiritual goals for us to achieve, and unless we are willing to see ourselves as he sees us – as we actually are - and how He would have us to be and live, we will not see our "troubles."

Moses warned Israel that God required them "to fear the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to love Him, (and) to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and to keep His commandments."

How fortunate we are that God lets us know the expectations He has for us. He has clearly and carefully described the standards and conditions for His children to follow.

There are no surprises, no hidden agendas, and no games. He is a loving God and wants us to know how He wants us to live. But, we must want to know. And, if we do want to know, we can find His ways in His Word, and then ask Him: "What is the trouble with us is?"

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for Your Word. May we study it carefully, live it consistently, and be committed to making You known. May our lives prove our love for You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Deuteronomy 10:12-16 He requires only that you fear the Lord your God, and live in a way that pleases him, and love him and serve him with all your heart and soul. And you must always obey the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 10 of 46

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

08-11-13-14-25

(eight, eleven, thirteen, fourteen, twenty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$221,000

Lotto America

09-10-15-25-34, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 3

(nine, ten, fifteen, twenty-five, thirty-four; Star Ball: ten; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$4.03 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$93 million

Powerball

05-12-50-61-69, Powerball: 23, Power Play: 2

(five, twelve, fifty, sixty-one, sixty-nine; Powerball: twenty-three; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$120 million

2 Dem party leaders step down amid financial woes

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two top officials in South Dakota's Democratic Party resigned Wednesday in the wake of a federal report that showed continuing financial problems.

Chairwoman Paula Hawks and executive director Stacey Burnette stepped down after the Federal Elections Commission report that found the party's federal campaign committee owes nearly \$47,000 and has a negative balance of more than \$8,000.

Vice Chairman Randy Seiler, who confirmed the resignations, assumes leadership of the party. The party's executive committee plans an emergency meeting Saturday in Fort Pierre.

Seiler, a former U.S. attorney who ran unsuccessfully for attorney general last year, told the Argus Leader he's not interested in taking over as chairman permanently. He said the party, which holds no statewide offices and is solidly in the minority in the Legislature, will carry on.

"The South Dakota Democratic Party is bigger than two individuals. The party represents thousands and thousands of dedicated and hardworking South Dakotans who are committed to the principles of South Dakota and the party. We're going to make sure the party continues to move forward," he said.

Hawks and Burnette had been in their jobs less than a year.

An FEC audit earlier this year of the party's finances for the years 2015 and 2016 also found several problems, including failing to disclose debts and vendor obligations. The state party has closed its offices in Sioux Falls and Rapid City with its staff working remotely.

Satellite collars will track bison movement at national park

HOT SPRINGS, S.D. (AP) — Some bison cows in Wind Cave National Park are being monitored with collars that communicate with satellites.

The Rapid City Journal reports the collars will be affixed on 10 bison during roundup, which occurs every other year.

The park's Chief of Resource Management Greg Schroeder says the collars will allow park officials to see how the bison use the park's resources, specifically water resources.

It could help officials determine if more watering areas are needed to prevent overuse and damage of

existing water supply.

Schroeder says collars will transmit daily from four locations and will be sent to park officials' emails.

Nonprofit organization Black Hills Parks & Forests Association raised money for the collars.

The park hopes to show the bison's movements to guests in the visitor center.

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

South Dakota State embracing hype of College GameDay show

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — South Dakota State coach John Stiegelmeier says his team is not shying away from the hoopla that ESPN's popular Saturday morning college football show is bringing to campus.

Stiegelmeier tells 740 The Fan in Fargo that the program is embracing College GameDay's presence for the game against rival North Dakota State. Stiegelmeier says he's taking his players to the set before Friday's practice in Brookings, South Dakota.

The unbeaten Bison are the top-ranked FCS team and the Jackrabbits are No. 3, losing only to undefeated FBS school Minnesota. Stiegelmeier says there's plenty at stake, including a conference championship and playoff seeds.

GameDay featured North Dakota State in 2013 and 2014. Bison coach Matt Entz downplayed the magnitude of Saturday's show and said his team isn't making it "any more than it is."

Noem appoints Wangsness to House seat

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem has appointed a county commissioner to represent central South Dakota in the state House during the 2020 session.

James Wangsness will take the District 23 House seat vacated by Republican Rep. John Lake who was appointed to a Senate seat following the resignation of Sen. Justin Cronin in August.

The Argus Leader says Wangsness has been a Hand County commissioner since 2013. His family owns and operates Diamond W Land and Cattle Company near Miller.

Wangsness says he looks forward to "working with other legislators to prioritize fiscal responsibility and promote economic growth for people in District 23 and across the state."

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

39 truck death victims in UK were all from China

By DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — All 39 people found dead in a container truck near an English port were Chinese citizens, British police confirmed Thursday as they pressed to investigate one of the country's deadliest cases of people smuggling.

The Essex Police force said 31 men and eight women were found dead in the truck early Wednesday at the Waterglade Industrial Park in Grays, a town 25 miles (40 kilometers) east of London. The force says one victim previously thought to be a teenager was instead a young adult woman.

The 25-year-old truck driver, who is from Northern Ireland, is being questioned on suspicion of attempted murder but has not been charged. Police in Northern Ireland have searched three properties as they sought to piece together the journey of the truck and the victims.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry posted a statement on its social media account saying that Chinese embassy employees in the U.K. were driving to the scene of the crime to aid the investigation.

Britain remains an attractive destination for immigrants, even as the U.K. is negotiating its divorce from the European Union. Upon hearing of the deaths, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson vowed in Parliament on Wednesday that people smugglers would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

The tragedy recalls the deaths of 58 people in 2000 in a truck in Dover, England, who had undertaken a

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 13 of 46

perilous, months-long journey from China's southern Fujian province and were discovered stowed away with a cargo of tomatoes after a ferry ride from Zeebrugge, the same Belgian port used in the latest tragedy.

In February 2004, 21 Chinese migrants — also from Fujian — who were working as cockle-pickers drowned when they were caught out by treacherous tides in Morecambe Bay in northwest England.

Groups of migrants have repeatedly landed on English shores using small boats for the risky Channel crossing, and migrants are sometimes found in the trunks of cars that disembark from the massive ferries that link France and England.

But Wednesday's macabre find in an industrial park was a reminder that criminal gangs are still profiting from large-scale trafficking.

The truck and the trailer with the people inside apparently took separate journeys before ending up at the industrial park. British police said they believe the container went from the port of Zeebrugge to Purfleet, England, where it arrived early Wednesday.

U.K. authorities have warned for several years that people smugglers are turning to Dutch and Belgian ports because of increased security on the busiest trade route between Calais in France and Dover in England.

Britain's National Crime Agency warned in 2016 that people smuggling using containers on ferries was "the highest-priority organized immigration crime threat." The same year, the U.K. Border Force identified Zeebrugge and the Hook of Holland in the Netherlands as key launching points for people trafficking into Britain.

Raf Casert in Brussels and Ken Moritsugu in Beijing contributed.

Rep. Elijah Cummings to lie in state at US Capitol ceremony

By **MATTHEW DALY** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The late Maryland Rep. Elijah Cummings will be remembered by congressional leaders and colleagues as he lies in state at the Capitol.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and other congressional leaders will speak at an arrival ceremony Thursday before Cummings lies in state at Statuary Hall. The public will be allowed to pay their respects to Cummings later Thursday.

Cummings, a Democrat and chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, died Oct. 17 after complications from long-standing health problems.

A wake and funeral are planned Friday in Baltimore.

A sharecropper's son, Cummings rose to become a civil rights champion, committee chairman and a leader of an impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump.

As a tribute to Cummings, no votes are scheduled Thursday in the House.

Spain exhumes late dictator Gen. Franco's remains

BY **CIARAN GILES** Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spain has exhumed the remains of Spanish dictator Gen. Francisco Franco from his grandiose mausoleum outside Madrid so he can be reburied in a small family crypt north of the capital.

The government-ordered, closed-door operation on Thursday satisfies a decades-old desire of many in Spain who considered the vainglorious mausoleum that Franco built an affront to the tens of thousands who died in Spain's Civil War and his subsequent regime and to Spain's standing as a modern democratic state.

After his coffin was extracted from under marble slabs and two tons of granite, a brief prayer was said in line with a request from Franco's family.

The dictator's body was then carried out of the mausoleum, and is to be taken by helicopter or by hearse to Mingorrubio cemetery where his wife is buried — a 57-kilometer (35-mile) drive away.

In a bid to guarantee privacy and avoid the actual exhumation operation being videoed and posted on

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 14 of 46

social media, the government banned cameras and mobile phones among the 22 Franco family members, government authorities and workers allowed into the mausoleum.

Fearing disturbances, the government banned a demonstration against the exhumation by Franco supporters at the Mingorrubio cemetery although some 400 people, some waving Franco-era flags and symbols and chanting "Viva Franco" gathered near the cemetery while police looked on.

Macarena Martínez Bordiu, a distant relative of the dictator, said she felt "outraged" with what was happening and accused the government of "desecrating a tomb."

Ex-Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero told Spanish national television that the exhumation "has great significance for our democracy. Today our democracy is more perfect."

According to the Spanish daily newspaper El Pais, it's a major moment for the country: "Spain finishes with the last major symbol of the dictatorship," it said in its main headline to its print edition Thursday.

The exhumation and reburial will not put an end to Franco's legacy on Spain's political scene, since it comes just weeks ahead of the country's Nov. 10 general election.

Franco ruled Spain between 1939 and 1975, after he and other officers led a military insurrection against the Spanish democratic government in 1936, a move that started a three-year civil war.

A staunch Catholic, he viewed the war and ensuing dictatorship as something of a religious crusade against anarchist, leftist and secular tendencies in Spain. His authoritarian rule, along with a profoundly conservative Catholic Church, ensured that Spain remained virtually isolated from political, industrial and cultural developments in Europe for nearly four decades.

The country returned to democracy three years after his death but his legacy and his place in Spanish political history still sparks rancor and passion.

For many years, thousands of people commemorated the anniversary of his Nov. 20, 1975, death in Madrid's central Plaza de Oriente esplanade and at the Valley of the Fallen mausoleum outside of the capital. And although the dictator's popularity has waned immensely, the exhumation has been criticized by Franco's relatives, Spain's three main right-wing parties and some members of the Catholic Church for opening old political wounds.

The exhumation was finally authorized by the Supreme Court in September when it dismissed a months-long legal bid by Franco's family to stop it.

The exhumation stemmed from amendments of a 2007 Historical Memory Law passed by Zapatero's government that aimed to seek redress for the estimated 100,000 victims of the civil war and the Franco era who are buried in unmarked graves, including thousands at the Valley of the Fallen. The legislation prohibited having Franco's remains in a public place that exalted him as a political figure.

Having been unable to press ahead with the exhumation last year, Spain's interim Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wanted the exhumation and the reburial completed by the Nov. 10 election, a move that opposition parties say smacks of electioneering.

AP writer Aritz Parra contributed to this story.

GOP stands by Trump, gingerly, after diplomat's testimony

By ALAN FRAM and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — They pleaded ignorance, saying they'd not read the diplomat's damning statement. They condemned the Democrats' tactics as unfair. They complained that the allegations against President Donald Trump rested on second- or third-hand evidence.

Wednesday was a day of careful counterargument by congressional Republicans, the day after America's top envoy in Ukraine gave House impeachment investigators an explosive, detailed roadmap of Trump's drive to squeeze that country's leaders for damaging information about his Democratic political rivals.

Most Republicans were still standing by Trump but in delicately calibrated ways after Tuesday's closed-door testimony by acting ambassador William Taylor. And as lawmakers struggled to balance support for Trump with uncertainty over what might still emerge, some were willing to acknowledge the strains they

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 15 of 46

were facing.

Asked if Taylor's testimony was a rough day for the White House and Republicans, No. 2 Senate GOP leader John Thune of South Dakota said, "Probably one of many."

"Obviously, we have a lot of incoming right now," Thune said. "That's the nature of the beast."

White House officials, who have been treating unified Republican support for Trump as a given, have grown increasingly fearful of defections in a potential impeachment vote by the Democratic House and even in an eventual trial in the Republican Senate.

While officials don't believe there will be enough votes to remove the Republican president, as Democrats hope, the West Wing believes more must be done to shore up party support to avoid embarrassment and genuine political peril.

Some Trump allies also believe the White House must directly address the increasingly troubling revelations. They note that as more Trump appointees offer disparaging information to Congress, he will have increasing difficulty arguing simply that he is the target of a new "witch hunt."

Several of these concerned supporters spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the growing private worries.

White House officials said they have added a regular call with select GOP lawmakers to discuss impeachment strategy, plus more meetings with Republicans at the White House and Camp David. They said communications teams from the White House and Congress coordinate three times a week with phone calls.

But there still are complaints from Capitol Hill about a lack of a sophisticated messaging strategy.

Two GOP aides, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal tactics, said White House coordination has been insufficient. They cited a lack of daily emails or White House briefings of reporters from which lawmakers could take a daily messaging cue.

Via tweet, Trump has asserted that witnesses haven't said the Ukrainians were aware that military aid was being withheld, thus clearing him of accusations that he was insisting on a trade-off for political dirt.

"You can't have a quid pro quo with no quo," he quoted Rep. John Ratcliffe, R-Texas, as telling Fox News.

However, The Associated Press and others have reported that Ukrainian leaders were indeed aware of the threat of losing aid that Ukraine needed to counter Russian military efforts. Closed-door testimony has shown that new Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy was worried that a White House meeting he desired with Trump was in jeopardy.

Trump lashed out Wednesday at critical members of his own party, tweeting, "Never Trumper Republicans" are "in certain ways worse and more dangerous for our Country than the Do Nothing Democrats."

"They are human scum!" he fumed.

Reports of Taylor's testimony led most newscasts, websites and newspapers late Tuesday and Wednesday. But underscoring the desire of Republicans to avoid focusing on the allegations about Trump's actions, many asserted ignorance of what Taylor had said.

"I didn't see it, I didn't hear it and I'm not going to take a third-party description of it," said Sen. Jim Risch of Idaho.

Taylor detailed conversations in which he said administration officials told him Trump was conditioning Ukrainian military aid and an Oval Office visit coveted by Zelenskiy on Ukraine probing Democrat Joe Biden and his son and allegations of interference in the 2016 election.

Taylor is a career diplomat who has served overseas for presidents of both major political parties. Under Trump, he was appointed to take charge of the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv earlier this year after Trump had the ambassador removed.

Former Ohio Gov. John Kasich, who challenged Trump for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, called Taylor's testimony "just very devastating."

Kasich, also a nine-term congressman, said he has noticed "a couple cracks" in the Republican wall that's stood up for Trump and against impeachment.

"There's no surprise in the fact, in an era of tribalism, that there is sort of a solid wall, (a wall) that appears to be getting weaker, in a way," he said. "This is serious stuff."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 16 of 46

The GOP drew more attention to the secrecy on Wednesday when around two dozen House Republicans not directly involved in the investigation barged into a deposition of a Defense Department official. The move delayed the day's interview by five hours and drew a slap from Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, who called the tactic "nuts."

Much of the House inquiry has unfolded behind the closed doors of secure offices in the Capitol Visitors Center. Alongside the Democrats, GOP members of the three House committees heading the investigation have been in the room as diplomats and other officials have testified. Democrats have said they expect to hold public hearings later in the process.

One administration official said Trump was aware of and encouraged the House effort to object to the secrecy of the impeachment proceedings Wednesday. That official was not authorized to discuss the issue by name and commented only on condition of anonymity.

In Taylor's 15-page opening statement obtained by the AP and other news organizations, the diplomat named administration officials who he said told him Trump had demanded of the Ukrainians an investigation of Burisma, a Ukrainian gas company that once employed the son of former Vice President Biden. The elder Biden is running for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.

Trump also wanted Ukraine to probe a conspiracy theory about a Democratic computer server that was hacked during the 2016 presidential election.

Trump has also complained repeatedly about the House process. He has used that argument to justify his order for administration officials not to comply with requests for documents and interviews.

Some continue to show up — under House subpoena. Yet Trump's officials, sticking to their guns, are counting on his complaints to resonate with voters next year.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington and Julie Carr Smyth in Columbus, Ohio, contributed to this report.

Ukrainian leader felt Trump pressure before taking office

By **DESMOND BUTLER** and **MICHAEL BIESECKER** Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — More than two months before the phone call that launched the impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump, Ukraine's newly elected leader was already worried about pressure from the U.S. president to investigate his Democratic rival Joe Biden.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy gathered a small group of advisers on May 7 in Kyiv for a meeting that was supposed to be about his nation's energy needs. Instead, the group spent most of the three-hour discussion talking about how to navigate the insistence from Trump and his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani for a probe and how to avoid becoming entangled in the American elections, according to three people familiar with the details of the meeting.

They spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because of the diplomatic sensitivity of the issue, which has roiled U.S.-Ukrainian relations.

The meeting came before Zelenskyy was inaugurated but about two weeks after Trump called to offer his congratulations on the night of the Ukrainian leader's April 21 election.

The full details of what the two leaders discussed in that Easter Sunday phone call have never been publicly disclosed, and it is not clear whether Trump explicitly asked for an investigation of the Bidens.

The three people's recollections differ on whether Zelenskyy specifically cited that first call with Trump as the source of his unease. But their accounts all show the Ukrainian president-elect was wary of Trump's push for an investigation into the former vice president and his son Hunter's business dealings.

Either way, the newly elected leader of a country wedged between Russia and the U.S.-aligned NATO democracies knew early on that vital military support might depend on whether he was willing to choose a side in an American political tussle. A former comedian who won office on promises to clean up corruption, Zelenskyy's first major foreign policy test came not from his enemy Russia, but rather from the country's most important ally, the United States.

The May 7 meeting included two of his top aides, Andriy Yermak and Andriy Bogdan, the people said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 17 of 46

Also in the room was Andriy Kobolyev, head of the state-owned natural gas company Naftogaz, and Amos Hochstein, an American who sits on the Ukrainian company's supervisory board. Hochstein is a former diplomat who advised Biden on Ukraine matters during the Obama administration.

Zelenskiy's office in Kyiv did not respond to messages on Wednesday seeking comment. The White House would not comment on whether Trump demanded an investigation in the April 21 call.

The White House has offered only a bare-bones public readout on the April call, saying Trump urged Zelenskiy and the Ukrainian people to implement reforms, increase prosperity and "root out corruption." In the intervening months, Trump and his proxies have frequently used the word "corruption" to reference the monthslong efforts to get the Ukrainians to investigate Democrats.

Trump has said he would release a transcript of the first call, but the White House had no comment Wednesday on when, or if, that might happen.

After news broke that a White House whistleblower had filed a complaint about his July 25 call with Zelenskiy, Trump said the conversation was "perfect" and that he had asked his Ukrainian counterpart to do "whatever he can in terms of corruption because the corruption is massive."

During the call, Trump asked Zelenskiy for "a favor," requesting an investigation into a conspiracy theory related to a Democratic computer server hacked during the 2016 election campaign. Trump also pushed Zelenskiy to investigate Biden and his son. Trump then advised Zelenskiy that Giuliani and Attorney General Bill Barr would be contacting him about the request, according to a summary of the call released by the White House.

Within days, Giuliani flew to Madrid to meet privately with Yermak, Zelenskiy's aide who was in the May 7 meeting.

Trump has denied that an investigation of Biden was a condition for releasing military aid as a quid pro quo. But on Tuesday, the senior U.S. diplomat in Ukraine at the time, Ambassador William Taylor, starkly contradicted the president, saying that Trump had demanded that everything Zelenskiy wanted, including the aid and a White House meeting, was conditional on a public vow that he would open an investigation.

Taylor also detailed multiple previously undisclosed diplomatic interactions between Trump's envoys and senior Ukrainian officials in which the president's demand to investigate the Bidens in exchange for American aid was clear.

The continued flow of high-tech U.S. weaponry is seen as essential to the survival of the Ukrainian government, which has been mired in a long-running war with Russian-backed separatists in the east of the country. In 2014, masked Russian troops took control of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. Russia later annexed it, provoking Western sanctions against Moscow.

In a joint Sept. 25 news conference with Trump at the United Nations in New York, Zelenskiy denied he felt pressured to investigate the Bidens.

"I'm sorry, but I don't want to be involved, to democratic, open elections of U.S.A.," the Ukrainian leader said. "We had, I think, good phone call. It was normal. We spoke about many things, and I think, and you read it, that nobody push it. Push me."

Trump then chimed in: "In other words, no pressure."

Before Zelenskiy was elected, however, a public campaign to initiate investigations into the Bidens was already underway.

For weeks, conservative media outlets in the U.S. had trumpeted unfounded accusations that Biden, the Obama administration's top envoy to the war-torn former Soviet republic, had sought the removal of the country's top prosecutor in order to stymie an investigation in Burisma, a Ukrainian energy company that later hired his son to serve on its board.

Both Trump and Giuliani made public comments and tweets referencing the Biden accusations, with the president's lawyer suggesting in a Fox News interview on April 7 that the U.S. Justice Department should investigate the matter.

One day before Zelenskiy's May 7 meeting with his advisers, the U.S. State Department recalled Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, a career diplomat with a reputation for combating corruption. Yovanovitch had

been the target of a sustained yearlong smear campaign by Giuliani and his associates.

When Trump called Zelenskyy on July 25 to congratulate the Ukrainian president on "a great victory" after his Servant of the People party won control of Ukrainian parliament, Zelenskyy downplayed his discomfort.

"The first time, you called me to congratulate me when I won my presidential election, and the second time you are now calling me when my party won the parliamentary election," Zelenskyy said, according to the rough transcript. "I think I should run more often so you can call me more often, and we can talk over the phone more often."

Biesecker reported from Washington.

Follow Associated Press investigative reporters Desmond Butler at <http://twitter.com/desmondbutler> and Michael Biesecker at <http://twitter.com/mbieseck>

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Chaotic scene as Republicans disrupt impeachment deposition

By **MICHAEL BALSAMO** and **MARY CLARE JALONICK** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans briefly brought the Democrat-led impeachment investigation to a halt when around two dozen GOP House members stormed into a closed-door deposition with a Defense Department official. Democrats said the move compromised national security because some of the Republicans took electronic devices into a secure room.

The protest by Republican lawmakers on Wednesday captured national attention, drawing the focus away from the testimony of a top U.S. diplomat who told lawmakers just a day earlier that he was told President Donald Trump was withholding military aid from Ukraine unless the country's president pledged to investigate Democrats.

The maneuver delayed a deposition with Laura Cooper, a senior Defense Department official who oversees Ukraine policy, until midafternoon. The interview began roughly five hours behind schedule, after a security check by Capitol officials, and ended after roughly four hours.

As a series of diplomats have been interviewed in the impeachment probe, many Republicans have been silent on the president's conduct. But they have been outspoken about their disdain for Democrats and the impeachment process, saying it is unfair to them even though they have been in the room questioning witnesses and hearing the testimony.

"The members have just had it, and they want to be able to see and represent their constituents and find out what's going on," said Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, the top Republican on the House Oversight and Reform panel. That committee is one of three leading the investigation, and its members are allowed into the closed-door hearings.

Lawmakers described a chaotic scene. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., said she had just walked into the room when the Republican lawmakers blew past Capitol police officers and Democratic staffers. The staff member who was checking identification at the entrance was "basically overcome" by the Republicans, she said.

"Literally some of them were just screaming about the president and what we're doing to him and that we have nothing and just all things that were supportive of the president," Wasserman Schultz said.

Later when the deposition began, Cooper answered questions from lawmakers and staffers in response to a subpoena, an official working on the impeachment inquiry said. She explained to lawmakers the process of distributing military aid and was asked whether the appropriate steps were followed on Ukraine, according to a person familiar with the interview.

The official working on the impeachment inquiry and the person familiar with the interview spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door testimony.

"The president's allies in Congress are trying to make it even more difficult for these witnesses to coop-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 19 of 46

erate," said Adam Schiff, the chairman of the House intelligence committee.

Democrats deny that Republicans are being treated unfairly, noting they have had equal time to question witnesses and full access to the meetings. Schiff says closed-door hearings are necessary to prevent witnesses from concealing the truth and has promised to release the transcripts when it will not affect the investigation.

They also said the Republicans — several of whom do not sit on one of the three committees — compromised security at Wednesday's closed-door deposition. The interviews are being held in what is called a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, or SCIF, which is a secure room where members can hear classified information.

Several lawmakers leaving the facility said that some of the Republicans had their cellphones, even though electronics are not allowed. All members of Congress are familiar with the protocol of the SCIF, since they are often invited to classified briefings, and there are several such rooms around the Capitol.

Several Republicans appeared to be tweeting from the secure room. North Carolina Rep. Mark Walker tweeted: "UPDATE: We are in the SCIF and every GOP Member is quietly listening."

Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., who chairs the House Homeland Security Committee, alleged that Republicans "intentionally brought their electronic devices" into the secure area, violating congressional rules and the oath they take to gain access to classified information.

The "unprecedented breach of security raises serious concerns" for committee chairs who maintain secure facilities in the Capitol, Thompson wrote in a letter to the House sergeant at arms asking for action to be taken against members of Congress involved in the breach.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., criticized his Republican colleagues for the tactic, calling them "nuts" to make a "run on the SCIF."

"That's not the way to do it," he said. Graham later tweeted that he initially believed Republicans had taken the room by force and that it was actually a "peaceful protest," adding his House GOP colleagues had "good reason to be upset."

The Republicans who took part in the protest were unbowed. Rep. Steve Scalise, the No. 2 House Republican, said Democrats are running a "Soviet-style process" that should "not be allowed in the United States of America."

"We're not going to be bullied," he said.

The standoff came the day after William Taylor testified that he was told Trump withheld military aid to Ukraine until the country's president went public with a promise to investigate Democrats. Trump wanted to put Ukraine's leader "in a public box," Taylor recalled.

Democratic Rep. Ted Lieu of California said Republicans did not want to hear from Cooper because they were "freaked out" by that testimony.

"They know more facts are going to be delivered that are absolutely damning to the president of the United States," Lieu said.

Associated Press writers Alan Fram, Robert Burns and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. REPUBLICANS DISRUPT IMPEACHMENT DEPOSITION

Democrats say the move compromised national security as some lawmakers brought electronic devices into a secure room where a Defense Department official was being questioned.

2. UKRAINIAN LEADER FELT TRUMP PRESSURE BEFORE TAKING OFFICE

More than two months before the phone call that launched the impeachment inquiry, Volodymyr Zelenskyy was already worried about pressure from the U.S. president to investigate Joe Biden, AP learns.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 20 of 46

3. TRUMP'S 'SUCCESS' IN SYRIA CEDES REGION TO RUSSIA

With Syria, Trump gets his campaign bumper-sticker moment on "endless wars" while ceding Middle East influence to Vladimir Putin.

4. REPORTS: DOZENS OF DEAD FOUND IN TRUCK WERE FROM CHINA

Police raid two addresses in Northern Ireland and question a truck driver as officers investigate the deaths of 39 people found in a truck container at an industrial park in southeastern England.

5. CALIFORNIA UTILITY BEGINS ANOTHER BLACKOUT

Dangerously windy weather sweeping through the state brings power outages to Northern California as Pacific Gas & Electric stages blackouts designed to prevent catastrophic wildfires.

6. SPAIN BEGINS EXHUMING LATE DICTATOR'S REMAINS

The remains of Gen. Francisco Franco are being extracted from his grandiose mausoleum outside Madrid so he can be reburied in a small family crypt elsewhere.

7. WHERE A MARIJUANA FIGHT IS BREWING

Colleges are becoming a battleground in the conflict between federal and state cannabis laws, as schools fear losing federal funding.

8. COMMEMORATIONS FOR ELIJAH CUMMINGS CONTINUE

The late Maryland lawmaker will be remembered by congressional leaders and colleagues as he lies in state at the Capitol.

9. SEA URCHIN EXPLOSION DISRUPTS ECOSYSTEM

Tens of millions of voracious purple sea urchins that have already chomped their way through towering underwater kelp forests in California are spreading north to Oregon.

10. NATIONALS TAKE CONTROL OF WORLD SERIES

Stephen Strasburg finally delivers on the biggest stage of his career as Washington routs Houston 12-3 to take a 2-0 lead in the Series.

Analysis: Trump's 'success' in Syria cedes region to Russia

By **AAMER MADHANI** and **ROBERT BURNS** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump declared success in Syria and created a bumper-sticker moment to illustrate his campaign promise to put a stop to American involvement in "endless wars."

But with his abrupt withdrawal from what he called "bloodstained sand," the Republican president ceded American influence over a huge swath of the region to rivals and may have spun the Middle East into a new season of uncertainty.

In remarks at the White House, Trump made the case that American administrations before him wasted too much money and blood on sectarian and tribal fighting in which the U.S. had no place meddling.

"We have spent \$8 trillion on wars in the Middle East, never really wanting to win those wars," Trump said Wednesday. "But after all that money was spent, and all those lives lost, the young men and women, gravely wounded so many, the Middle East is less safe, less stable and less secure than before these conflicts began."

But analysts and lawmakers said Trump declared victory for a crisis along the border of Turkey and Syria that was arguably of his own making, while underplaying the reality that he has strengthened the hand of Russia.

Critics also say the move will roll back advances made by U.S.-led forces in the fight against the Islamic State group. The president also still has work to do to repair the political damage he's done within his own base among those who say he abandoned the Kurds, longtime U.S. allies who fought side-by-side with American forces to beat back the IS group in northeast Syria.

The president's declaration of success came a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reached a deal on divvying up control of an area along the Turkey-Syria border.

Turkey is to get sole control over areas of the Syrian border captured in its invasion. Turkish, Russian

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 21 of 46

and Syrian government forces would oversee the rest of the border region. And America's former allies, the Kurdish fighters, are looking to Russia and Syria to preserve some pieces of Syrian Kurdish autonomy in the region.

"The only question remaining is whether President Trump is acting directly at the behest of Russian and Turkish leaders, or whether he is willfully blind to his own failures," said Sen. Bob Menendez, the top-ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The president punched back at his skeptics.

"The job of our military is not to police the world," Trump said. "Other nations must step up and do their fair share. That hasn't taken place. Today's breakthrough is a critical step in that direction."

This is the newest version of an old Trump gripe about a penny-pinching Europe that leaves the bill for their American friends. But in this particular case, it seems he is making a virtue of having ceded political and military influence in the Middle East to Russia.

By implicitly applauding Russia for partnering with Turkey to patrol a portion of the Syrian border, Trump seemed to endorse Moscow's ambition to gain greater influence in Syria.

In doing so, the president is turning upside-down Washington's previous effort to limit Russia's sway in the only Middle Eastern country in which it has a permanent military presence. The Pentagon during the Obama years refused to cooperate with Russia after it intervened militarily in Syria in support of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

"The U.S. has essentially ceded its influence and power in Syria to the Russians, the Turks and the Iranians," said Seth Jones, a counterterrorism expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "I think the biggest single issue long-term is the major great power in the region is not the United States — it is the Russians."

Trump's own Pentagon chief, Mark Esper, recently bemoaned what he suggested was Turkey's turn away from the West in favor of closer relations with Russia.

"The arc of their behavior over the past several years has been terrible," Esper said of the Turks in an Oct. 13 Fox News interview. "I mean, they are spinning out of the Western orbit, if you will. We see them purchasing Russian arms, cuddling up to President Putin. We see them doing all these things that, frankly, concern us."

Trump also seems to have let slide Turkey's defiance last summer of Washington's insistence that it drop plans to purchase a sophisticated Russian air defense system that is incompatible with NATO, of which Turkey is a long-standing member. That arms purchase was supposed to trigger U.S. economic sanctions against Turkey, but no such penalties were enacted.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said the U.S. military's partnership with Syrian Democratic Forces was fundamental to preventing the IS group from reemerging in the region.

"I do not trust or believe that Turkey, Russia or Assad have the capability or the desire to protect America from radical Islamic threats like ISIS," said Graham, a Trump supporter who has been critical of the Syria withdrawal.

The crisis began earlier in October when Trump ordered the bulk of the approximately 1,000 U.S. troops in Syria to withdraw after Erdogan told Trump in a phone call that Turkish forces were set to invade northeastern Syria. Turkey's goal was to push back the Kurdish fighters. Turkey views the Kurds as terrorists and an ever-present threat along its southern border with Syria.

Trump announced sanctions against Turkey last week following its military assault on the Kurds. But on Wednesday, he confirmed that they would not be imposed after Ankara agreed to a permanent cease-fire with the Kurds.

But even Trump seemed to question the durability of the peace.

"You would also define the word 'permanent' in that part of the world as somewhat questionable. We all understand that. But I do believe it will be permanent," Trump said.

As Trump declared victory, some complained that Trump let Turkey off the hook without consequence.

"It's unthinkable that Turkey would not suffer consequences for malevolent behavior which was contrary

to the interests of the United States and our friends," Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said in a tweet.

But Trump sloughed off criticism from those who say he abdicated American responsibility in one of the world's most complicated neighborhoods.

"The same people that I watched and read — giving me and the United States advice — were the people that I have been watching and reading for many years," Trump said. "They are the ones that got us into the Middle East mess but never had the vision or the courage to get us out. They just talk."

And for Trump, getting out — however messy it may look — is all that matters.

Associated Press writers Shelley Adler and Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Madhani covers the White House for The Associated Press. Burns has been covering the U.S. military and national security for The Associated Press since 1990.

Dubai loosens liquor laws as UAE alcohol sales suffer drop

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Dubai has loosened its liquor laws to allow tourists to purchase alcohol in state-controlled stores, previously only accessible to license-holding residents, as the United Arab Emirates saw the first drop in alcohol sales by volume in a decade.

The new laws, which also let visitors to skyscraper-studded Dubai obtain liquor permits themselves for the first time, come amid a widening economic downturn affecting this oil-rich nation on the Arabian Peninsula.

However, the laws also close a long-standing legal conundrum facing imbibing tourists who travel here. Throwing back shots, sipping a beer or indulging in a Champagne-soaked brunch in this city-state technically remains illegal without a drinker holding a permit, though no bartender ever asks to see one before pouring a drink.

"The United Arab Emirates is facing tough challenges, as changes in both consumers' buying behavior and demographics started to have an effect," the market research firm Euromonitor International said in a recent report.

Dubai, home to the long-haul carrier Emirates, draws visitors from around the world to the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, as well as to resorts on beaches along the Persian Gulf. Tourists wander through kilometers (miles) of air-conditioned malls, travel by SUVs into its rolling deserts and enjoy its many restaurants.

Many also have a drink while here. The United Arab Emirates dominates other countries around the Mideast when it comes to drinking, with a per-capita alcohol consumption of 3.8 liters (1 gallon) per person per year, according to the World Health Organization. That's even with Sharjah, one of the UAE's seven emirates, banning alcohol.

Alcohol means big business, especially for the state. There's a 50% import tax on a bottle of alcohol, as well as an additional 30% tax in Dubai on buying from liquor stores. Dubai Duty Free, which is also government owned, sold over \$2 billion of goods last year alone to those passing through its airport terminals, including 9 million cans of beer, 3 million whiskey bottles and 1.5 million bottles of wine. Duty-free sales, while limited, never required an alcohol license.

The country's two major liquor store chains are Maritime and Mercantile International, a subsidiary of the government-owned Emirates airline, and African & Eastern. African & Eastern, which did not respond to a request for comment, is believed to be at least partially held by the state or affiliated firms.

Bars and nightclubs in Dubai are almost entirely limited to operating inside of or connected to hotels — even drink receipts at the Dubai International Airport show up as coming from a hotel attached to the airport. But even with those restrictions, alcohol-serving establishments always seem full on Thursday nights, the start of the Emirati weekend.

Slowly, however, that has begun to change. Lower global energy prices, a 30% drop in Dubai's real estate market value and trade war fears have seen employers in the city-state shed jobs. Parking lots don't

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 23 of 46

appear quite as full as they once were as sale signs plaster shop windows.

That downturn appears to have even extended to alcohol. Overall sales of alcohol dropped to 161.5 million liters (42.6 million gallons) in 2018, down from 163.7 million liters (43.2 million gallons) in 2017, according to Euromonitor. However, tourism helped keep retail prices high overall as some consumers also sought higher-priced liquors, it said.

"Travel and tourism will continue to play an important role in the development of alcoholic drinks in the United Arab Emirates, at least until Expo 2020," Euromonitor said, referring to Dubai's hosting of the world's fair next year. "After Expo 2020, sales will be more influenced by in-country demographics and dynamics."

The hereditarily ruled government's Dubai Media Office and the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing did not respond to requests for comment on the new license program.

However, thinking about tourists, authorities have taken steps in recent years to loosen drinking regulations. In 2016, Dubai eased rules prohibiting day-time alcohol sales during the holy month of Ramadan, when observant Muslims fast from dawn to dusk and abstain from anything perceived as sinful behavior. In the next few years, the Islamic lunar calendar will draw Ramadan closer to early spring and winter months, a tourist-packed time in the city before the heat takes hold.

The new procedure on alcohol permits allows tourists to obtain one for free at either African & Eastern or MMI stores after showing their passports and signing a pledge that they aren't Muslim and will follow local law.

The process finally ends the Catch-22 that tourists here found themselves in if they drank. Local newspaper stories involving alcohol and mayhem routinely included police charging tourists for drinking without a license when they wouldn't be able to legally register for one.

Meanwhile, driving after consuming any amount of alcohol remains illegal as does drinking in public. Recently published guidelines say any alcohol purchased in stores can only be drunk "within your hotel room/apartment."

A longtime critic of Dubai's legal system says the new laws can mislead tourists about glitzy Dubai's still-stringent laws on drinking.

"What the new law does is create potential revenue through the granting of licenses, and further mislead people into thinking that they can buy and consume alcohol without any risks," said Radha Stirling of the for-hire advocacy group Detained in Dubai. "But the same risks remain as before."

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP.

Is boom, then slump, behind fiery Latin American protests?

By **MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN** and **LUIS ANDRES HENAO** Associated Press

Chile is one of the richest countries in the region. Haiti is the poorest. Ecuador has a centrist government. Bolivia's is socialist.

Yet, from Port-au-Prince to Santiago, furious demonstrators were marching this week to demand fundamental change, part of a wave of often-violent protests that has set tires, government offices, trains and metro stations ablaze across Latin America and the Caribbean.

What's driving the protests thousands of miles apart, across countries with profoundly different politics, economies, cultures and histories? One important factor: Despite their differences, the countries hit by fiery protests this month saw often-dizzying commodity-driven growth in the first decade of this century, followed by a slump or stall as prices dropped for key exports. Even Haiti, its own economy largely stagnant, saw billions in aid from oil-rich Venezuela flood in, then disappear.

That pattern of boom then slackening is a dangerous one for less-than-agile leaders. It expands the middle class, creating citizens who feel entitled to receive more from their governments, and empowered to demand it. And it sharpens the sense of unfairness for those left out of the boom, who see neighbors prospering while they stand still or slide backward.

Chile, the world's largest copper producer, boomed from 2000 to 2014 before growth dropped off. The

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 24 of 46

average Chilean still earns roughly \$560 to \$700 a month, income that makes it hard for many to pay their bills. Then, last week, an independent panel implemented a 4-cent subway fare increase that the Chilean government initially said was needed to cope with rising oil prices and a weaker local currency.

For thousands of Chileans, it was a final indignity after years of struggling as the country prospered. Clashes wracked Chile for a sixth day Wednesday, with the death toll at 18 in an upheaval that has almost paralyzed a country long seen as an oasis of stability.

"People went out to protest because they feel the government cares more about the wealthy, and that social programs help the very poor but the rest of the population is left to care for themselves," said Patricio Navia, an adjunct assistant professor at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at New York University. "They are not poor enough to get government subsidies, nor rich enough to get government tax credits. They revolted to make their voice heard."

Marta Lagos, the Santiago, Chile-based director of the polling firm Latinobarometro, said Chile's growth rates hid the over-concentration of wealth in the hands of the elite.

Like Chile, oil-rich Ecuador saw a steep rise in GDP as oil topped \$100 a barrel and President Rafael Correa built multi-lane highways, airports and universities. Then oil slumped, leaving Ecuador with billions in debt and a steep annual budget shortfall.

Correa's successor, Lenín Moreno, took out a three-year \$4.2 billion IMF credit line and this month announced a \$1.3 billion austerity package that included the elimination of fuel subsidies and a resulting sharp rise in gasoline and diesel prices. That sent Ecuadorians to the streets, led by the country's well-organized, mostly rural indigenous peoples, many of whom are subsistence farmers who saw little to no benefit from the boom years.

As a law professor, Mariana Yumbay is better off than most people in Ecuador's mountainous Bolivar province, who raise corn and potato or herds of cattle, pigs and sheep. Even as Ecuador prospered under Correa, indigenous farmers in Bolivar depended on rainfall because they have no irrigation networks, she said. More than 40 percent of children are malnourished and many people live on about \$30 a month.

"Unfortunately the state hasn't had a policy of steering economic resources to pull indigenous people and farmers out of poverty," Yumbay, 46, said this month as she protested outside Ecuador's National Assembly.

Moreno ended the protests by agreeing to restore the subsidies, a solution that analysts said left him weakened and facing the same economic troubles that loomed before nearly two weeks of often-violent protests.

Haiti was worse off than any other country in the region at the start of the new century but saw an infusion of billions of dollars in highly subsidized oil from Venezuela starting in 2009. Another factor: the flood of international aid after the country's devastating 2010 earthquake.

When oil slumped and Venezuela's economy collapsed, the subsidized fuel ended, and the already-impoorished island suffered regular gasoline shortages. Investigations by Haiti's Senate and a federal auditor alleged that government officials had embezzled and misappropriated billions in proceeds from the Venezuelan program known as Petrocaribe.

Fueled partly by a group of internet-savvy young Haitians known as the Petrocaribe Challengers, street protests erupted that organizers say won't stop until President Jovenel Moise leaves office.

In Bolivia, President Evo Morales has had 14 years of low inflation and strong GDP growth of 4% a year on average, thanks largely to earnings during the commodities-boom years. In recent years, the country's income from natural gas sales has been dropping due to falling prices, drops in reserves and less demand from Brazil and Argentina. Experts say the economy is looking increasingly fragile. Against that backdrop, the popularity he won for his economic management and infrastructure investment has been weakened by corruption scandals in his administration and his insistence on seeking re-election despite losing a referendum on the issue.

After allegations of fraud in the Sunday election, protests multiplied across Bolivia outside vote-counting centers this week. Rioting was reported in at least six of Bolivia's nine regions and in the national capital of La Paz, police used tear gas in attempts to quell fighting between supporters of Morales and opponent Carlos Mesa outside a vote-counting center. Protesters threw firecrackers and stones.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 25 of 46

Morales' opponents burned election offices and ballots in several cities and called for a strike on Wednesday, Morales said his opponents are trying to stage a coup.

Associated Press writer Michael Weissenstein reported this story from Havana and AP writer Luis Andres Henao reported from Buenos Aires, Argentina. AP writers Eva Vergara in Santiago, Chile, and Carlos Valdez and Paola Flores in La Paz, Bolivia, contributed to this report.

Michael Weissenstein on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/mweissenstein>

AP Explains: A look at Franco and why he is being exhumed

By CIARÁN GILES Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — The body of dictator Gen. Francisco Franco is being exhumed Thursday from the grandiose mausoleum at the Valley of the Fallen before being transferred to a more discreet, private resting place.

The much-criticized operation fulfills a decades-old desire of many in Spain who considered Franco's mausoleum an affront to his victims and to Spain's standing as a modern democratic state.

The exhumation and reburial will not put an end to Franco's legacy on the contemporary Spanish political scene, particularly as it comes just weeks ahead of a Nov. 10 general election that is certain to see Spain's main parties of the left and right battling it out once again.

WHO WAS FRANCO?

Franco ruled Spain between 1939 and 1975, after he and other officers led a military insurrection against the Spanish democratic government in 1936, a move that started a three-year civil war. A staunch Catholic, he viewed the war and ensuing dictatorship as something of a religious crusade against anarchist, leftist and secular tendencies in Spain. His authoritarian rule, along with a profoundly conservative Catholic Church, ensured that Spain remained virtually isolated from political, industrial and cultural developments in Europe for nearly four decades.

The country returned to democracy three years after his death but his legacy and his place in Spanish political history still sparks rancor and passion.

For many years, thousands of people commemorated the anniversary of his Nov. 20, 1975 death in Madrid's central Plaza de Oriente esplanade and at the Valley of the Fallen mausoleum. And although the dictator's popularity has waned immensely, the exhumation has been criticized by Franco's relatives, Spain's three main right-wing parties and some members of the Catholic Church for opening old political wounds.

WHY NOW?

The procedure was finally authorized by the Supreme Court in September when it dismissed a months-long legal bid by Franco's family to stop it.

The exhumation stemmed from amendments of a 2007 Historical Memory Law that aimed to seek redress for the estimated 100,000 victims of the civil war and the Franco era who are buried in unmarked graves, including thousands at the Valley of the Fallen. The legislation prohibited having Franco's remains in a public place that exalted him as a political figure.

Having been unable to press ahead with the move last year, Spain's interim Socialist government of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wants the exhumation and reburial completed by next month's election, a move opposition parties said smacked of electioneering.

WHO CAN ATTEND?

While the Spanish and international press along with many others were keen to attend the exhumation, the Spanish government insisted it would be a private affair. The plan is for 22 family members, including Franco's seven grandchildren, to be allowed inside the mausoleum but just two will witness the exhumation.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 26 of 46

tion along with Spanish Justice Minister Dolores Delgado and a handful of officials.

Relatives will then carry the coffin with Franco's body through the mausoleum for some 300 meters before exiting onto a square where the cameras of Spain's national television channel will broadcast its placing in a hearse that will bring it to one of two waiting helicopters. If weather conditions do not permit safe flying, the hearse will continue the journey by road under heavy security.

Once at the Mingorrubio cemetery, there will be a private service held at the family crypt, conducted by two priests chosen by Franco's descendants. One of them is Ramon Tejero, son of a Spanish Civil Guard colonel who attempted a coup d'état in 1981.

The media will be able to gather outside, where Franco supporters have called for protests.

WHO WILL FRANCO REST ALONGSIDE?

Franco's relatives wanted to rebury him in Madrid's city-center Almudena Cathedral, where they have a grave slot. But the government, fearing it could become another pilgrimage site for fascists, insisted he be taken to the Mingorrubio cemetery where his wife, Carmen, is buried in a family crypt. The cemetery is close to the El Pardo palace, once Franco's official residence.

The Mingorrubio site, much more modest than the Valley of the Fallen whose granite cross can be seen from miles around, is also the burial site for other right-wing figures, such as Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo and several ministers from the Franco regime.

POLITICAL IMPACT

In normal times, the exhumation of Franco's remains would almost certainly boost the Socialist party's ratings, especially in the run-up to a general election. But the operation coincided with developments in a secessionist conflict in the northeastern region of Catalonia, which saw the sentencing of 12 former politicians and activists that sparked a week of protests and riots in Barcelona, Spain's second city and the Catalan capital.

Sánchez has been accused of going too easy on the pro-independence movement to curry parliamentary support. Both the Catalan issue and the Franco exhumation have breathed fresh life into Spanish nationalism and potentially right-wing parties at the election.

AP writer Aritz Parra contributed to this story.

This story corrects first name of priest conducting service to Ramon, sted Antonio, in 12th paragraph.

Strasburg stars as Nats rout Astros 12-3 for 2-0 Series lead

By KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Stephen Strasburg's time had come.

Famously held out of the postseason seven years ago, Strasburg delivered on the biggest stage of all Wednesday night.

The right-hander outpitched fellow ace Justin Verlander, overcoming a shaky start to help the Washington Nationals beat the Houston Astros 12-3 for a commanding 2-0 lead in the World Series.

Strasburg went six innings to earn the win — and a group hug in the dugout when he was done on the mound.

"They keep squeezing me a little harder every time," he said. "That's OK."

Kurt Suzuki hit a tiebreaking homer in what became a messy six-run seventh, and the Nationals headed back home needing two wins in three potential games in Washington to claim their first championship.

Adam Eaton paraded around the bases pointing to the Houston crowd after a late home run as the Nationals won their eighth in a row. They've won 18 of 20 overall dating back to the regular season, with the last two over AL Cy Young Award favorites Gerrit Cole and Verlander.

Game 3 is Friday night when Aníbal Sánchez opposes Houston's Zack Greinke in the first World Series

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 27 of 46

game in the nation's capital since 1933.

"Probably going to be a little frigid, might be a little cold, so bring your jackets and your beanies," said slugger Anthony Rendon, who hit a two-run double in the first inning.

The 31-year-old Strasburg had waited years for this chance. Back in 2012, he was about two years removed from Tommy John surgery when Nationals brass decided protecting his elbow was more important than pitching him in the playoffs, so he was shut down late in a season full of promise.

Making his Series debut, Strasburg allowed a two-run homer to Alex Bregman in the first before throwing five shutout innings to improve to 4-0 this postseason. He allowed seven hits and struck out seven.

Nationals manager Dave Martinez was asked what's made Strasburg so good this October.

"One, he has the confidence to do it and two, he's become a premier pitcher, a big-game pitcher," Martinez said. "He doesn't get rattled."

Verlander, so good in the regular season, fell to 0-5 in six World Series starts. He gave up seven hits and four runs, and was lifted after walking a batter following Suzuki's home run.

Verlander led the majors with 21 wins this season and struck out a career-high 300 to reach 3,000 in his career. He has a World Series ring, MVP and Cy Young Award trophies, and three no-hitters to his name.

He fanned six to become the career leader in postseason strikeouts with 202 — another impressive statistic on a stellar resume that's still missing that elusive World Series win.

"Obviously it's magnified in the World Series when you're not clicking on all cylinders," Verlander said.

Their wins against Houston's best pitchers turned the underdog Nationals into heavy favorites to take the title.

Only three of the previous 25 teams to lose the first two games at home under the 2-3-2 format have come back to win the Series. No one has done it since the 1996 New York Yankees.

"I wish I was a betting man, but I'm not," Martinez said. "I don't really believe in that stuff. ... We're here because the boys never gave up."

Long after most players had left the field and only a handful of Nationals were left, a small but boisterous crowd of Washington fans assembled behind their dugout. The red-clad group cheered and waved their hands as players ascended the dugout stairs, finishing up an out-of-town party they hope to continue at home on Friday.

But the Astros insist the tough start hasn't dampened their confidence.

"We have a really good team," manager AJ Hinch said. "Clearly, the Nats have outplayed us — bottom line. They came into our building and played two really good games. We're going to have to try to sleep off the latter third of this game."

Added shortstop Carlos Correa on digging out of the early hole: "If there is a team out there that can do it, it's us."

Things went wrong immediately for Verlander when he walked leadoff man Trea Turner on four pitches. Eaton, who homered in the eighth, singled before Rendon, the Houston native who said he'd certainly have 100 friends and family members at Minute Maid Park for each game, knocked a ball off the wall in left field to put the Nationals up 2-0.

"This is my city. I love Houston," Rendon said. "We were going to try to just steal one game and we just happened to steal two, and we've got to take care of business at home."

Verlander got his 200th postseason strikeout when he fanned Victor Robles in the second. The eight-time All-Star passed John Smoltz, who had 199 and was in the TV booth for Fox to see his record fall.

Verlander and Strasburg both settled in after early wobbles, until Houston fell apart in the seventh.

Suzuki sent Verlander's 100th pitch sailing above the seats in left field to start the inning. Ryan Pressly, who left Game 6 of the ALCS with a knee injury, took over and didn't look right from the start.

He walked Turner before Hinch called for his first intentional walk of the season when he gave Juan Soto a free pass to load the bases with two outs. Howie Kendrick, Asdrúbal Cabrera and Ryan Zimmerman followed with successive singles to bust it open, putting the Nationals up 8-2. As those hits were piling up and run after run crossed the plate, many in the stunned sellout crowd of 43,357 began streaming for the exits.

Hinch was asked what happened in the seventh.

"Where would you like me to start?" he said.

Michael A. Taylor padded the lead further with a solo homer off Chris Devenski in the ninth.

The only time Strasburg was under any real duress after the first inning came when Yuli Gurriel doubled with one out in the sixth before the Nationals intentionally walked Yordan Álvarez. The slumping Correa hit a weak fly ball before rookie pinch-hitter Kyle Tucker struck out, allowing Strasburg to wriggle out of the jam and end his solid night.

UP NEXT

Sánchez has made two sharp starts this postseason and took a no-hitter into the eighth inning in Game 1 of the NLCS against St. Louis.

Greinke, acquired from Arizona at the July 31 trade deadline, is 0-2 with a 6.43 ERA in three October outings.

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

Sea urchin explosion off California, Oregon decimates kelp

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and TERENCE CHEA Associated Press

NEWPORT, Ore. (AP) — Tens of millions of voracious purple sea urchins that have already chomped their way through towering underwater kelp forests in California are spreading north to Oregon, sending the delicate marine ecosystem off the shore into such disarray that other critical species are starving to death.

A recent count found 350 million purple sea urchins on one Oregon reef alone — a more than 10,000% increase since 2014. And in Northern California, 90% of the giant bull kelp forests have been devoured by the urchins, perhaps never to return.

Vast "urchin barrens" — stretches of denuded seafloor dotted with nothing but hundreds of the spiny orbs — have spread to coastal Oregon, where kelp forests were once so thick it was impossible to navigate some areas by boat.

The underwater annihilation is killing off important fisheries for red abalone and red sea urchins and creating such havoc that scientists in California are partnering with a private business to collect the overabundant purple urchins and "ranch" them in a controlled environment for ultimate sale to a global seafood market.

"We're in uncharted territory," said Scott Groth, a shellfish scientist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. "You can't just go out and smash them. There's too many. I don't know what we can do."

The explosion of purple sea urchins is the latest symptom of a Pacific Northwest marine ecosystem that's out of whack.

Kelp has been struggling because of warmer-than-usual waters in the Pacific Ocean. And, in 2013, a mysterious disease began wiping out tens of millions of starfish, including a species called the sunflower sea star that is the only real predator of the ultra-hardy purple urchin. Around the same time, the purple urchins had two excellent breeding years — and with no predators, those gametes grew up and are now eating everything in sight.

"You can imagine all of these small urchins growing up, each one of them looking for food, desperate for food. They're literally starving out there," said Steven Rumrill, lead shellfish expert at Oregon's wildlife agency. "I've seen some big-scale fluctuations in the populations of sea stars and urchins, but never on this magnitude."

Scientists are not yet sure if climate change is responsible for the sea urchin explosion, but they suspect it plays a role in the cascade of events that allowed the purple urchins to boom. And kelp, already under siege from warming waters, is not as resilient as it once was, said Norah Eddy, an associate director at the Nature Conservancy California's oceans program.

"We're going to see climate change as a big driver of changes in kelp forest as we move forward, and we are already seeing that," said Eddy, who is leading an effort to use drones to map and monitor Northern California's last remaining kelp forests.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 29 of 46

The devastation is also economic: Until now, red abalone and red sea urchins, a larger and meatier species of urchin, supported a thriving commercial fishery in both states. But 96% of red abalone have disappeared from California's northern coast as the number of purple sea urchins increased sixfold, according to a study released this week by the University of California, Davis.

Last year, California closed its red abalone fishery, which poured an estimated \$44 million into the coastal economy per year, and Oregon suspended permits for its 300 abalone divers for three years. The commercial harvest of red sea urchins in California and Oregon also has taken a massive hit.

"That's a huge economic loss for our small coastal communities," said Cynthia Catton, a research associate with the University of California, Davis Bodega Marine Lab. "In California, there were 30,000 to 40,000 participants in (the abalone) fishery every year for decades, and for the first time ever that fishery had to close."

And while the purple urchins have eaten themselves into starvation as well, unlike other kelp-dependent creatures, the species can go into a dormant state, stop reproducing and live for years with no food.

That means the only way to restore the kelp is to remove or destroy the purple urchins. Scientists estimate that in Oregon alone, it would take 15 to 20 years to remove all 100 million pounds (45 million kilograms) of purple urchins recently surveyed on just one large reef.

While urchins are in starvation mode, the edible part — known as roe — shrivels, making them commercially worthless.

Against this backdrop, conservationists, commercial urchin harvesters, scientists and private interests are coming together with an unusual plan: Pay underemployed red sea urchin divers to collect the shriveled, but living, purple sea urchins and transfer them to carefully tended urchin "ranches" to be fattened up for sale to seafood markets around the world.

One company, Urchinomics, is already working on urchin ranching projects in Japan, Canada and California and sees a future where the overwhelming demand for wild urchin roe is replaced by a taste for human-raised purple urchins collected from the seafloor, allowing kelp forests to rebound.

"We're turning an ecological problem into an ecological opportunity and an economic opportunity," said Brian Takeda, the Urchinomics CEO. "It's the first time we've ever had an economic incentive to get these destructive urchins out of the water."

In Oregon, red urchin divers are a tiny artisanal collective, but they are also exploring ways to try to turn the glut of destructive purple urchins to their advantage. Oregon's urchin fishery had a boom year last year, when red urchins were scarce in California but before their purple cousins had spread north. Now, they too are hurting.

Rumrill, the shellfish expert from Oregon, supports efforts to harvest excess urchins but strikes a less optimistic note when it comes to saving the kelp.

"That's a promising technique. But we shouldn't fool ourselves into thinking that we're going to solve this large-scale ecological problem, this literal perfect storm of events, by eating our way out," he said. "It's just too big a problem."

Chea reported from Mendocino County, California.

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>.

North Korea urges US to act wisely through year-end deadline

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Thursday accused U.S. officials of maintaining hostility against Pyongyang despite a "special" relationship between leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump and urged Washington to act "wisely" through the end of the year.

The statement issued by Foreign Ministry adviser Kim Kye Gwan was clearly referring to an end-of-year deadline set by Kim Jong Un for the Trump administration to offer mutually acceptable terms for a deal

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 30 of 46

to salvage their diplomacy.

"Contrary to the political judgment and intention of President Trump, Washington political circles and DPRK policy makers of the U.S. administration are hostile to the DPRK for no reason, preoccupied with the Cold War mentality and ideological prejudice," Kim Kye Gwan said in the statement, referring to North Korea by its formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "We want to see how wisely the U.S. will pass the end of the year."

Nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang have faltered after the collapse of a February summit between Kim Jong Un and Trump where the U.S. side rejected North Korean demands for broad sanctions relief in exchange for a piecemeal deal toward partially surrendering its nuclear capabilities.

The North made a series of short-range missile tests while Kim Jong Un said he would "wait with patience until the end of the year for the United States to come up with a courageous decision."

Washington and Pyongyang resumed working-level discussion in Sweden earlier this month, but the meeting broke down amid acrimony with the North Koreans calling the talks "sickening" and accusing the Americans of maintaining an "old stance and attitude."

The North has since threatened to resume nuclear and long-range missile tests it suspended last year while pursuing diplomacy with the United States, while Kim Jong Un vowed to overcome U.S.-led international sanctions he said has both pained and infuriated his people.

Kim Kye Gwan said Kim Jong Un considers his relationship with Trump as "special" and that trust between the leaders was still intact.

"I sincerely hope that a motive force to overcome all the obstacles between the DPRK and the U.S. and to advance the bilateral relations in the better direction will be provided on the basis of the close relationship," Kim Kye Gwan said.

In his mid-70s, Kim Kye Gwan is a veteran diplomat who led the North Korean delegation at much of the now-dormant six-nation nuclear disarmament talks held in Beijing in 2003-2008.

The North Korean statement came after Trump during a Cabinet meeting on Monday said he continues to have a good relationship with the North Korean leader and claimed that the United States might have gone to war with the North if it were not for his presidency.

"I like Kim, he likes me," Trump said. "We get along. I respect him, he respects me."

When asked about Kim Kye Gwan's comments during a news conference, South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said it was encouraging that the leaders of North Korea and the United States are expressing mutual trust and that Seoul hopes for the nuclear talks to produce substantial results.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in lobbied hard for the revival of nuclear diplomacy between Washington and Pyongyang, but the North in recent months has suspended virtually all dialogue and cooperation with the South amid the stalemate in nuclear negotiations. Pyongyang has demanded Seoul break away from Washington and restart inter-Korean economic activities held back by U.S.-led sanctions against the North.

Kim Jong Un has signed vague statements calling for the "complete denuclearization" of the peninsula in his meetings with Trump and Moon. But the North's hardball attitude in past months have raised doubts on whether Kim Jong Un would ever voluntarily give away his nukes he may see as his strongest guarantee of survival.

North Korea for decades has been pushing a concept of denuclearization that bears no resemblance to the American definition, with Pyongyang vowing to pursue nuclear development until the United States removes its troops and the nuclear umbrella defending South Korea and Japan.

Asian shares mixed as earnings drive modest Wall St gains

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Asian shares were mixed on Thursday after U.S. stock indexes eked out tiny gains in a wobbly day of trading as investors reviewed another set of mixed company earnings.

Japan's Nikkei 225 advanced 0.6% to 22,763.93 and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong climbed 0.4% to

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 31 of 46

26,682.41. The Shanghai Composite index slipped 0.2% to 2,935.25 and the Kospi in South Korea also fell 0.2%, to 2,076.63 after GDP data came in lower than expected. India's Sensex gained 0.4% to 39,223.01. Shares rose in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

A preliminary measure of manufacturing for Japan, the Jibun Flash Manufacturing purchasing managers' index was at its lowest level in more than three years, 48.5 and below the 50 level that marks the break between expansion and contraction.

While it's still early in this earnings season, traders are trying to gauge how much the U.S. trade war with China and a slowdown in global economic growth is hurting corporate America.

Some of the companies' earnings topped analysts' expectations. Others put traders in a selling mood after warning that the slowing global economy and trade tensions are hitting their profits.

"With the US-China trade talks quiet for now, U.S. earnings have driven volatility and market direction this week," Jeffrey Halley of Oanda said in a commentary.

The lack of direction in earnings Wednesday was reflected in the market, which spent most of the day wavering between tiny gains and losses.

"Fewer than a quarter of the companies have reported, so there's a lot more to come," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA. "But the results have been mixed so far, even with the bar being set as low as it was."

The S&P 500 rose 0.3%, to 3,004.52. The benchmark index had been down about 0.2% before recovering toward the end of the day.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average also rebounded from a midday drop, gaining 0.2%, to 26,833.95.

The Nasdaq composite added 0.2%, to 8,119.79. The Russell 2000 index of smaller companies picked up 0.1% to 1,552.86.

Analysts are still forecasting the S&P 500 index will end up showing a drop in earnings per share from a year earlier.

If they're right, it would be the first time that earnings have fallen for three straight quarters since 2015-16, according to FactSet.

The weakest results are expected to come from companies that rely on the strength of the global economy, which has been slowing amid trade wars. Raw-material producers, technology companies and energy stocks are predicted to report drops of 10% or more, according to FactSet.

Analysts are forecasting stronger growth for communications companies and businesses that sell to consumers, which have been the strongest part of the economy.

One worrisome sign is that estimates for 2020 corporate earnings growth have been mostly reduced since the end of last month, Stovall said.

"There's so much uncertainty out there right now," he said. "The US-China trade relations, whether that is likely to see improvement, and what kind of an impact Europe could experience when Britain does finally leave the EU."

Boeing rose 1% after it said its 737 Max airplane may return to service by the end of the year and that it will gradually increase 737 production by late 2020. That helped make up for its weaker-than-expected profit for the latest quarter.

On the losing end was Texas Instruments, which said its customers have become far more cautious than they were even 90 days ago, with trade tensions a big factor. It lost 7.5%.

Several big companies are scheduled to report quarterly results on Thursday, including American Airlines Group, Amazon and Visa.

Benchmark U.S. crude oil lost 46 cents to \$55.51 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It rose \$1.49 to settle at \$55.97 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude oil, the international standard, gave up 35 cents to \$60.82. It gained \$1.47 to close at \$61.17 a barrel.

The dollar fell to 108.62 Japanese yen from 108.68 yen on Wednesday. The euro strengthened to \$1.1137 from \$1.1131.

AP Business writers Alex Veiga and Stan Choe contributed.

Protests rage in Chile despite president's reform promise

By EVA VERGARA Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Tens of thousands of protesters swarmed Chile's capital setting up fiery barricades and clashing with riot police Wednesday, as an apology and promises of economic reform from President Sebastián Piñera failed to calm unrest and rioting that has led to at least 18 deaths.

Trade unionists in the world's top copper-producing country joined demonstrators in a general strike.

The movement started with anger at a small rise in subway fares, but blew up last week into protests demanding improvements in education, health care and wages in one of Latin America's wealthiest, but most unequal nations.

Many protesters in Santiago waved the national flag and shouted: "Chile has woken up!"

Police responded to stone-throwing demonstrators by spraying water cannons and firing rubber bullets and tear gas. Similar scenes were repeated in towns and cities all along the long, narrow South American country of 18 million people.

Millions of students were still unable to attend classes, several subway stations were shut and long lines wound from gas stations and supermarkets after many stores were torched or destroyed.

The unrest erupted last week when students began to jump subway station turnstiles to protest a 4-cent subway fare rise that the Chilean government said was needed to cope with rising oil prices and a weaker currency.

Most of the protests have been peaceful with demonstrators of all ages banging pots to demand reforms. But the unrest also involved riots, arson and looting that have wracked Chile for six days, nearly paralyzing a country long seen as an oasis of stability.

"Today we're protesting all of our discontent against these politicians who have been fooling us. The raise in the subway fare was just the straw that broke the camel's back," said Italo Tarsetti, a taekwondo teacher standing among demonstrators honking horns and banging on pots, a common form of protest in Latin America.

Faced with the mounting unrest, Piñera on Tuesday night announced economic reforms that include increases in the minimum wage and lowest state pensions. But many said the 69-year-old billionaire businessman reacted late and the announcement failed to calm anger in the streets.

"These measures are absurd. It's handing out crumbs to the people," said Magdalena Bravo, a demonstrator who said she had lost her job as a school teacher.

"There are many reasons why I have joined these protests," she said. "The inequality is tremendous. There are families of five, six people living with miserable salaries."

The protests have divided Chileans. Many want a reduction of Chile's sharp inequality, a wider distribution of its copper wealth and major changes in taxes and education reform, but they condemn the destruction.

"You don't know what can happen to you," said retiree Magaly Munoz. "I understand that people are dissatisfied, but they can't break into your home and loot businesses. I can't support that."

Human rights groups expressed concerns about how security forces have handled the protests after the government declared a state of emergency and a curfew in some areas of the country. It was the first such state of emergency — other than for natural disasters — imposed since Chile returned to democracy in 1990 following a bloody 17-year dictatorship.

"We're worried," José Miguel Vivanco, Americas director at Human Rights Watch, told The Associated Press. "The images that we've received from credible sources, trustworthy sources, show that there has been an excess of force both by police as well as some soldiers."

About 20,000 soldiers are patrolling the streets, nearly 200 people have been injured and some 5,000 have been arrested.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights also criticized what it said is excessive use of force by security forces as well as the "violent acts committed by civilians" in the protests. It called for dialogue to hear "people's legitimate demands."

Lawmaker Camila Vallejo, a former leader in mass student protests demanding free education, joined a

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 33 of 46

march to Congress calling for authorities to lift a curfew being enforced by the military.

For many people, the sight of soldiers on the streets brings back bad memories of Gen. Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, when about 40,000 people were killed, tortured or imprisoned for political reasons.

Still, many have defied the curfew.

"People are no longer afraid to face the military. They lost the fear," said Angélica Salazar, who works at a pizzeria.

After the protests erupted, Piñera declared a state of emergency and rolled back the subway hike.

He said Chile is "at war," but took a more conciliatory tone after being criticized for the comment. He also has apologized for the failures of his and previous governments on the left and right to curb inequality.

The economic agenda he announced Tuesday night calls for increasing the lowest monthly pensions from \$151 to \$181, raising the monthly minimum wage from \$413 to \$481 and rescinding a 92% rise in electricity rates scheduled to take effect next month. It would also increase taxes for anyone earning more than \$11,000 a month.

Many Chileans feel left out of the country's economic gains. Education and medicines are costly, water has been privatized since the dictatorship, state pensions are low and many families live on just \$550 to \$700 a month in earnings.

"Piñera's more conciliatory tone is a step in the right direction, but the proposal on its own is unlikely to suffice," said Jenny Pribble, associate professor of political science at the University of Richmond.

She said that while it would boost pensions and set a minimum income, the package doesn't address the structure of the country's health and pension systems.

"This is a point of concern for the protesters and the president must signal that he is open to a social dialogue that would, at a minimum, debate the possibility of abandoning the privatized logic," she said.

Associated Press journalists Paul Byrne and Luis Andres Henao in Buenos Aires, Argentina, contributed to this report.

What impeachment? All calm as Melania Trump visits Capitol

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Melania Trump was an island of calm in a sea of impeachment chaos Wednesday, choosing to make her first solo trip to Capitol Hill as her husband's party reckoned with his conduct and rumbled with House Democrats.

As President Donald Trump faced the most peril of his presidency, Mrs. Trump took her seat in a paneled Senate parlor under George Washington's portrait to discuss opioid policy with members of the House and Senate. The lawmakers, almost all Republicans, stretched out around her at a table shaped like a "U" for the rare chance to speak on-camera about something other than impeachment.

Mrs. Trump, wearing a camel-colored pant suit, exchanged thanks with members of the administration and lawmakers on the first anniversary of a law that helps fight opioid addiction.

"We're celebrating," said Alex Azar, Trump's secretary of health and human services.

In that, the Mansfield Room was like a bubble. All around it, tension crackled through the small city of Capitol Hill, one day after diplomat William Taylor described the president's effort to withhold military aid to Ukraine unless its president publicly agreed to investigate Democrats. The account undermined Trump's insistence that there was no quid pro quo, a stance that many Republicans had repeated in their defense of the president.

Mrs. Trump's event got underway as a different scene unfolded across the Capitol complex and deep in its bowels. About two dozen House Republicans tried to barge into the secure briefing room where three committees were hearing testimony from witnesses on Trump's pressure on Ukraine. The legislators, not members of those committees, loudly complained that too many Republicans were kept out and brought the day's proceedings to a halt, at least temporarily.

Back in the Senate, reporters chased Republicans to gauge whether Taylor's testimony had changed

their view of Trump's conduct.

Mrs. Trump could have canceled her event just off the Senate floor. Instead, she arrived with a retinue of administration officials, including Azar and White House senior adviser Kellyanne Conway.

In brief remarks, Mrs. Trump said the law enacted a year ago, called the SUPPORT Act, is compatible with her childhood initiative, Be Best. Both, she said, focus on children affected by the opioid crisis.

"Because of the SUPPORT Act, we are able to look at ways to reduce opioid use during pregnancy and recognize early childhood issues related to substance abuse," she said.

On the way out, Mrs. Trump ignored questions about how the impeachment inquiry was affecting her family.

Associated Press Writer Mike Balsamo contributed to this report.

California utility begins another blackout amid fire fears

By JOCELYN GECKER, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

Lights went out across large portions of Northern California on Wednesday, as the state's largest utility began its second massive blackout in two weeks, citing the return of dangerous fire weather. Pacific Gas & Electric Co. said the rolling blackouts that initially stretched from the Sierra foothills to north of the San Francisco Bay Area would ultimately impact a half-million people — or nearly 180,000 customers — in 17 counties. The outages will last about 48 hours, the utility said, but its seven-day forecast shows an elevated likelihood of a shut-off across a much larger portion of Northern California for the weekend, when heavy winds are expected to return. Southern California Edison said it could cut power Thursday to more than 308,000 customers in seven counties, and San Diego Gas & Electric was warning of power shutoffs to about 24,000 customers. Two weeks ago, a PG&E blackout affected nearly 2 million people, prompting feelings of frustration and resignation among some residents and business owners and renewing rushes to stock up on batteries and other emergency supplies. Sonoma County Supervisor James Gore said PG&E was better this time about getting information to people who would be affected, but he was still astonished by the need to resort to largescale blackouts. "I am a big believer in shutdowns to prevent fires. But the thing that erodes public trust is when it doesn't make sense," he said. "You say, 'God, I know if we can put a man on the moon ... we can manage a (power) grid.'" The Santa Rosa Fire Department said it was getting multiple reports of outages and urged residents on Twitter to drive carefully, since traffic signals would go dark. With winds forecast to top 60 mph (97 kph), utilities worried branches and debris could be thrown into power lines or topple them, sparking wildfires. PG&E cut power across northern and central areas of the state in rolling blackouts from Oct. 9-12, paralyzing parts of the region in what was the largest deliberate blackout to prevent wildfires in state history. Schools and universities canceled classes and many businesses were forced to close. California Gov. Gavin sent a sharply worded letter Tuesday to Bill Johnson, PG&E's CEO, blaming the unprecedented mass outage earlier this month on the company's failure to maintain and upgrade its equipment. "I believe the unacceptable scope and duration of the previous outage - deliberately forcing 735,000 customers to endure power outages - was the direct result of decades of PG&E prioritizing profit over public safety," Newsom wrote, referring to the number of businesses and households affected, not the total number of people. PG&E said the shutdowns are not about money. The only goal "is to prevent a catastrophic wildfire," Johnson said in a Tuesday briefing. —Associated Press Writer Janie Har contributed to this report.

Rose McGowan sues alleging intimidation by Weinstein, others

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Actress Rose McGowan filed a federal lawsuit Wednesday alleging that Harvey Weinstein and two of his former attorneys engaged in racketeering to silence her and derail her career before she accused him of rape.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 35 of 46

The suit filed in Los Angeles names as defendants Weinstein, attorneys David Boies and Lisa Bloom and their law firms, and Black Cube, an Israeli intelligence firm hired by Weinstein.

The lawsuit alleges that the defendants conspired to defraud, smear and marginalize McGowan as she was preparing to name Weinstein during the run-up to the explosion of the #MeToo movement late in 2017. The suit comes on the heels of a pair of recent books that detail Weinstein and his team's efforts to keep his accusers quiet.

"Harvey Weinstein was able to perpetrate and cover up decades of violence and control over women because he had a sophisticated team working on his behalf to systematically silence and discredit his victims," McGowan said in a statement. "My life was upended by their actions, and I refuse to be intimidated any longer."

Weinstein's attorney Phyllis Kupferstein said McGowan is "a publicity seeker looking for money" and her suit is meritless.

"From the moment she sought a \$6 million dollar payout in return for not making these baseless allegations, which we rejected at the time, we knew that she was waiting for an opportune time such as this to begin her suit," Kupferstein said.

Emails seeking comment from the other defendants were not immediately returned.

McGowan, 46, known for her role in the "Scream" movie franchise, was one of the earliest and one of the most prominent of dozens of women to accuse Weinstein of sexual misconduct, making her a major figure in the #MeToo movement.

McGowan had been tweeting in 2017 that she was preparing to name her rapist in a forthcoming memoir, "Brave," which was published the following year.

The lawsuit alleges that the defendants used spies posing as women's rights advocates and journalists to obtain a copy of the memoir, illegally recorded her conversations, and smeared her to those in the entertainment industry who were working on projects with her.

Hers is one of several lawsuits, along with criminal charges, against Weinstein stemming from the sexual misconduct allegations, including a defamation suit from actress Ashley Judd.

But McGowan's lawsuit goes further than most in including the team around Weinstein, alleging that they illegally conspired to intimidate her, other victims, and journalists attempting to tell their stories.

"Weinstein enlisted others — including his co-Defendants in this case — as co-conspirators, all working with a single mission: to protect Weinstein's reputation, suppress negative information about him, and silence and discredit his accusers," the lawsuit states.

The lawsuit heavily cites and repeats stories detailed in the recently released books "Catch and Kill" by New Yorker writer Ronan Farrow, and "She Said" by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey.

Both books delve in to the work done for Weinstein by Boies and Bloom, two of the most prominent and visible attorneys in the nation, who both faced heated criticism for representing the movie mogul.

Boies is best known for defending Al Gore during the disputed 2000 presidential election. Bloom, like her mother and fellow attorney Gloria Allred, is primarily known as a women's rights attorney who often represents women in sexual harassment and assault cases.

The lawsuit alleges that Bloom approached McGowan and Farrow as an ally in an attempt to get them to back off Weinstein, without revealing that she was working for him to revive his reputation.

Bloom's attorney, Eric M. George, said in a statement that it "is inexcusable that Ms. McGowan chose to include my client in her lawsuit. Facts matter. There is simply no credible factual or legal basis for her claims against my client."

An email to Boies seeking comment was not immediately returned.

The suit seeks both compensatory and punitive damages to be determined at trial, and an injunction forbidding further misconduct toward McGowan.

"McGowan has suffered tremendously from Defendants' conspiracy and lies," the suit states. "Her book sales suffered; her expenses mounted; her job opportunities vanished; and her emotional health cratered. She has experienced trauma and depression from defendants' actions, and the deep betrayal will have life-long effects."

The Associated Press generally does not name people who say they are victims of sexual assault, unless they speak publicly as McGowan has done.

Weinstein, 67, is scheduled for trial in January on charges alleging that he raped an unidentified woman in his New York City hotel room in 2013 and performed a forcible sex act on a different woman in 2006. The former movie mogul has denied all allegations of non-consensual sex.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton> .

Syria's Assad gets a prize with US withdrawal, Russia deal

By ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Once again, Syrian President Bashar Assad has snapped up a prize from world powers that have been maneuvering in his country's multi-front wars. Without firing a shot, his forces are returning to towns and villages in northeastern Syria where they haven't set foot for years.

Assad was handed one victory first by U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw American troops from northeastern Syria, analysts said. Then he got another from a deal struck between Turkey and Russia, Damascus' ally.

Abandoned by U.S. forces and staring down the barrel of a Turkish invasion, Kurdish fighters had no option but to turn to Assad's government and to Russia for protection from their No. 1 enemy.

For once, the interests of Damascus, Moscow and Ankara came into alignment. Turkey decided it was better having Assad's forces along the border, being helped by Russia, than to have the frontier populated by Kurdish-led fighters, whom it considers to be terrorists.

On Tuesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan struck a deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin that allows Syrian troops to move back into a large part of the territory and ensure Kurdish fighters stay out.

The Kurds once hoped an alliance with Washington would strengthen their ambitions for autonomy, but now they are left hoping they can extract concessions from Moscow and Damascus to keep at least some aspects of their self-rule.

Turkey, which had backed rebels trying to oust Assad, has now implicitly given the Syrian leader "de facto recognition," said Lina Khatib, head of the Middle East and North Africa program at Chatham House.

"Assad and Russia see this recognition as the beginning of international community normalization with the Assad regime, and as such an indication of their victory in the war," she said.

It's a method that Assad has used successfully before, positioning himself as the lesser of two evils in the eyes of those who might want him gone. Throughout Syria's civil war, he has presented the conflict as a choice between him and jihadis. Fear of the extremists watered down enthusiasm in Washington and other Western governments for fully backing the rebels.

"Assad has been benefiting from two narratives: shaping the Syrian uprising as a regional war and reminding that there is no viable alternative to his rule," said Joe Macaron, a resident fellow at the Arab Center in Washington D.C.

Trump's "America First" policy, with its sometimes chaotic and impulsive shifts, has been a godsend for Assad.

Last year, Trump called Assad an "animal" following a suspected chemical weapons attack near Damascus, carrying out limited airstrikes as punishment.

But the U.S. president has repeatedly said he's not interested in removing Assad from power or keeping American troops involved in "endless wars" in the region's "blood-soaked sands." He has welcomed having Russia and Assad's government fill the void.

Backing from Russia and Iran also has enabled Assad to simply outlast his opponents. With the help of Russian airstrikes since 2015, the Syrian military has recaptured town after town from the rebels. Abandoned and exhausted, the insurgents have repeatedly submitted to deals with Assad that allowed them to leave their besieged enclaves with safe passage to the north.

But the Russian-Turkish agreement is not all good news for Assad.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 37 of 46

It allows Turkey to keep control over a significant chunk of northeastern Syria, a belt of land 120 kilometers (75 miles) wide and 30 kilometers (19 miles) deep that it captured in its invasion. Turkey already holds a larger piece of the border in the northwest, captured in previous incursions.

Syrian forces will move into the rest of the border zone. But in a strip immediately at the border, Russian and Turkish forces will hold joint patrols, with only Syrian "border guards" in place, suggesting a presence in limited numbers.

Elsewhere, a large wedge of eastern Syria remains in the hands of the Kurdish-led fighters. That includes the bulk of Syria's oil fields, depriving Damascus of control over a crucial resource and giving the Kurds a major bargaining chip. Trump has said some U.S. troops will remain there to help Kurds "secure" the oil fields.

"Given where the regime was a few months ago, the regime is expanding its control," Macaron said, but it has to live with its opponents' presence on its soil and with Russia preventing any confrontation with them.

Politically, Tuesday's images of the leaders of Turkey and Russia poring over maps and drawing up the future of northern Syria illustrated just how irrelevant Damascus is when it comes to negotiations.

Perhaps intentionally, Assad for the first time visited areas captured from rebels in Idlib province, the last enclave they held in Syria. State TV showed Assad greeting military commanders and watching troops fire artillery. He talked of rallying "popular resistance" against Turkey "to expel the invader sooner or later."

But the new agreement almost certainly made Syrian military action against Turkish forces impossible.

More likely, Assad will wait them out and maneuver for an opportunity to regain the rest of the land.

A political bargain that achieves that somewhere down the line is not completely far-fetched. Assad and Erdogan once had a close working relationship. In 2004, Assad became the first Syrian president to visit Ankara, helping overcome decades of animosity over territorial disputes, water resources and Damascus' support at the time for Kurdish separatists in Turkey.

Erdogan then switched sides and backed the rebels in Syria's civil war. In recent years, however, he has been more concerned with recruiting rebel factions to fight the Kurds. Last year, Ankara signaled it would consider working with Assad once again if he won free and fair elections.

Now Turkey is entrusting the border in part to Assad.

Other countries similarly have concluded they have no other choice.

Calls have increased from Arab countries to readmit Syria to the Arab League. The United Arab Emirates reopened an embassy in Damascus, the most significant Arab overture yet toward the Assad government, almost certainly coordinated with Saudi Arabia. Bahrain followed suit the next day,

The Sunni Muslim Gulf countries hope to curb their Shiite-led foe, Iran, which saw its influence expand rapidly in Syria's war.

"Assad will use the developments in northeast Syria to continue to pursue his strategy of presenting himself as the winning de facto authority in Syria who the international community has no choice but to cooperate with against extremist groups," Khatib said.

Zuckerberg defends Facebook's currency plans before Congress

By **MARCY GORDON, BARBARA ORTUTAY and KEN SWEET AP Business Writers**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg endured hours of prickly questioning from lawmakers Wednesday as he defended the company's new globally ambitious project to create a digital currency while also dealing with widening scrutiny from U.S. regulators.

Representatives also grilled Zuckerberg on Facebook's track record on civil rights, hate speech, privacy and misinformation — not surprising given the litany of scandals Facebook has been dealing with over the past two years.

The House Financial Services Committee's immediate focus was Facebook's plans for the currency, to be called Libra. Zuckerberg took pains to reassure lawmakers that his company won't move forward with Libra without explicit approval from all U.S. financial regulators.

Still, many members of the panel appeared unconvinced.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 38 of 46

Rep. Maxine Waters, the California Democrat who chairs the panel, said the Libra project and the digital wallet that would be used with it, Calibra, "raise many concerns relating to privacy, trading risks, discrimination ... national security, monetary policy and the stability of the global financial system."

Furthermore, Waters told Zuckerberg, "You have opened up a discussion about whether Facebook should be broken up."

The social media giant has sparked public and official anger at every turn, from its alleged anticompetitive behavior to its shift into messaging services that allow encrypted conversations, to its refusal to take down phony political ads or doctored videos.

The breakup specter — the worst-case scenario for Facebook and other tech behemoths — has been raised by prominent politicians, notably Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a leading Democratic presidential candidate.

The Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission, the House Judiciary antitrust subcommittee and attorneys general in several states are all conducting investigations of Facebook and other tech giants amid accusations that they abuse their market power to crush competition.

Zuckerberg was on the defensive at the hearing, his first testimony to Congress since April 2018, parrying criticism but also acknowledging lapses. He conceded at one point that the Libra project is "risky," acknowledging several high-profile companies such as Visa, MasterCard and PayPal had signed on as partners in the currency's governing association but have recently bailed.

Under continued criticism of Facebook's handling of hate speech and potential incitements to violence on its site, he said, "We're not perfect. We make a lot of mistakes."

Trust was a central theme of the hearing. Given Facebook's history, "why should Congress, regulators and the public trust you to create what amounts to the world's largest bank, what really amounts to a shadow sovereign government?" asked Rep. Madeleine Dean, a Democrat from Pennsylvania.

Responded Zuckerberg: "Well, congresswoman, we are not creating a bank. We are helping an organization create a payment system."

Zuckerberg held up China as a strong reason for encouraging innovation as embodied in the Libra project. "While we debate these issues, the rest of the world isn't waiting," he said. "China is moving quickly to launch similar ideas in the coming months."

Facebook also has cited competition from China as a compelling argument against breaking up the company.

Zuckerberg's China statements found a ready echo from some Republicans on the committee, such as Rep. Patrick McHenry of North Carolina, who stepped up to defend the Libra project and urge lawmakers not to put "innovation on trial."

But Democrats, in a rare tilt, allied themselves with President Donald Trump and his Treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, who have publicly criticized the Libra plan. Mnuchin and other regulators, including Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, have warned that the digital currency could be used for illicit activity such as money laundering or drug trafficking.

Zuckerberg touted his optimistic vision of Libra and what it could mean for people around the world who don't have access to bank accounts.

A bulk of the hearing also focused on Facebook's record on diversity and civil rights. Rep. Joyce Beatty, a Democrat from Ohio and vice chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, lambasted Zuckerberg over his company's track record on both.

Demanding yes or no answers, Beatty asked Zuckerberg, for instance, how many of Facebook's stable of big law firms are minority or woman-owned or how many women or minority partners work on the company's cases.

She told Zuckerberg Facebook works with civil rights groups only because of "the number of lawsuits you've had."

A subdued-looking Zuckerberg didn't get in much in the way of answers. Beatty finished by calling Facebook's conduct "appalling and disgusting" and told Zuckerberg that "you have ruined the lives of many people, discriminated against them."

Ortutay reported from San Francisco and Sweet reported from New York.

Most states not giving driver's license data to Washington

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — An effort by the U.S. Census Bureau to collect state driver's license records as part of President Donald Trump's order to gather citizenship information has been a bust so far.

As of Wednesday, the vast majority of state motor vehicle agencies had not agreed to share their records with the bureau, according to an Associated Press survey of the 50 states. The effort over the past couple of months has alarmed civil rights groups, which see it as part of a backdoor move by the Trump administration to reduce the political power of minorities.

In August, the bureau began requesting five years' worth of driver's license records, promising the information would be kept confidential. The effort began after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the Trump's administration plan to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census, and the president instead ordered citizenship data compiled through federal and state administrative records.

At least 13 states have refused to share the driver's license data, 17 are still deciding what to do, and 17 haven't yet received a request, according to the AP survey. Three states didn't respond to multiple AP queries.

Republican and Democratic states alike have said no, citing privacy concerns and prohibitions in state law. "Philosophically, we believe the information in the database doesn't belong to us. It belongs to the people who it pertains to," Maine Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap said. "It's not ours to give away."

Two of the biggest states, California and New York, haven't received requests yet. Three more of the top five most populous states — Texas, Florida and Pennsylvania — are deciding how to respond.

Census Bureau officials had no immediate comment.

Many states got calls or emails similar to one from a Census Bureau official asking an Arkansas Driver Services official if she had time to discuss the bureau's "new and exciting project."

Scott Hardin, a spokesman for the Arkansas agency, said: "We are currently working to determine whether the requested information is eligible for release."

Utah officials turned down the request because state law says personal data can be shared only for public safety reasons, said Marissa Cote, a spokeswoman for the Department of Public Safety in the Republican-leaning state.

Democratic-leaning Nevada also declined.

"We value our residents' privacy and hesitate to release records in bulk," said Kevin Malone, a spokesman for the motor vehicle agency.

States that haven't decided how to respond said they were researching the legal and privacy implications. In issuing driver's licenses, most states require documents such as a birth certificate that would reflect citizenship or require that recipients be either citizens or in the U.S. legally.

The American Civil Liberties Union has urged states to turn the Census Bureau down.

The ACLU and other civil rights groups say the requests are part of an overall strategy by the Trump administration to encourage states to use counts of citizens only, as opposed to total population, when redrawing state and local electoral districts. Such a move could make districts older, whiter and more Republican.

"This endeavor appears to be part of a scheme motivated by an unconstitutional discriminatory purpose to dilute the political power of communities of color," said Dale Ho, director of the ACLU's Voting Rights Project.

The Census Bureau said in its requests that the driver's license records would be used, in part, to help build a statistical model for calculating the number of citizens and noncitizens in the U.S.

Even though the president's order requires collecting the citizenship information, Census Bureau officials are concerned that it could hinder efforts to get people to participate in the 2020 census. The bureau's

own research showed adding a citizenship question to the 2020 questionnaire would have reduced participation, making for a less accurate count.

Civil rights groups say driver's license records do a poor job of showing if a person is a citizen.

They point to what happened earlier this year when Texas' election chief gave prosecutors a list of 95,000 potential noncitizens on the state's voter rolls. The list was drawn up with the help of motor vehicle records. But it turned out that many of those people had become citizens before casting their ballots.

The battle over whether citizen-only counts can be used for congressional reapportionment or redistricting at the state and local levels is being waged in federal courtrooms in Alabama and Maryland.

It has been longstanding practice in the U.S. to include immigrants living in the country illegally in census counts, which are also used to allocate billions of dollars in federal spending.

Associated Press writers Grant Schulte in Lincoln, Nebraska; Andrew Demillo in Little Rock, Arkansas; Lindsay Whitehurst in Salt Lake City; Michelle Price in Las Vegas; and David Sharp in Portland, Maine, contributed to this report.

Pennsylvania's gas politics churn as Trump embraces industry

By MARC LEVY and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — President Donald Trump promoted his support for the natural gas industry Wednesday, making clear on his second visit to Pennsylvania in the past three months that he sees his pro-industry policies as a boost to his chances of winning the battleground state in 2020.

As some of his leading Democratic opponents call for a fracking ban, Trump has been eager to cut a contrast, touting his support for a sector he says brings economic benefits to rural pockets and jobs to construction union workers.

But pipeline politics might not be so clear-cut.

In the suburbs that might be key to his path to victory, Pennsylvania voters have shown a growing opposition to the drilling and massive pipelines required to move its product across the state. Candidates in state and local races are increasingly hardening their stances on the industry. National polling shows growing skepticism of fracking, the process used in extraction.

While the issue is unlikely to be the one that turns a race already dominated by Trump's strong personality, a looming impeachment fight and accusations of racism, Trump's eagerness to promote the industry underscores his tight focus on shoring up his base of rural voters, even at the risk of alienating others.

"Today, I'm proud to declare that I've delivered on every single promise I made to this conference three years ago and much, much more," Trump said at an energy conference in Pittsburgh, a corporate hub of activity in the Marcellus Shale, the nation's most prolific natural gas reservoir.

Trump reminded the audience that he overturned the Clean Power Plan, put forward by his predecessor, former President Barack Obama, to fight climate change.

"Sounds nice but it wasn't nice," Trump, a climate change skeptic, said of the plan. "It was a disaster."

The president also highlighted his decision to pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate agreement, a multinational pact designed to reduce the emission of gases that contribute to global warming.

Trump has argued that the agreement entered into during the Obama years would have restricted the U.S. but allowed foreign producers to "pollute with impunity."

"My job is to represent the people of Pittsburgh, not the people of Paris," the president said as the audience cheered.

Addressing the Pittsburgh conference gave Trump the ability to pitch to an industry and a region — western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio and West Virginia — that help make up "what some would call his base," said Dave Spigelmyer, president of the Marcellus Shale Coalition, a trade group that's co-sponsoring the event.

"The president certainly recognizes what a critical role this country is playing in energy, and that this state and region are playing in energy," Spigelmyer said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 41 of 46

Several Democratic presidential candidates are taking their own political risks on the issue. Backed by environmentalists on the left, some candidates— including Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren — have broken from the party's past support for fracking to call for a nationwide ban. More centrist candidates, including former Vice President Joe Biden, have declined to go that far.

Trump's visit Wednesday followed an August rally at a massive ethane refinery being built northwest of Pittsburgh.

"This would have never happened without me and us," Trump said.

In 2016, Trump eked out a win in Pennsylvania — the first Republican presidential candidate to capture it since 1988 — by piling up support with Pennsylvania's rural areas and working-class whites.

Philadelphia's moderate suburbs, meanwhile, turned decisively against him. Some party officials have fretted that Trump will need to improve his suburban performance in 2020 to win Pennsylvania a second time.

The 350-mile (560-kilometer) Mariner East pipeline route traverses those suburbs, close to schools, ballfields and senior care facilities. The spread of drilling, compressor stations and pipelines has changed neighborhoods — and opinions.

"It's absolutely traumatic and I don't say that to exaggerate or cry wolf," said Carrie Gross, referring to the project that runs through backyards in her middle-class Philadelphia suburb of Uwchlan Township. "It's devastated my neighborhood."

Houses in the area there were built some 30 years after workers laid an oil pipeline to carry oil from a Philadelphia-area refinery. Now, the pipeline and others laid along the same route carry highly volatile natural gas liquids — ethane, butane and propane — from western Pennsylvania's drilling fields to the renovated refinery, much of it for export to Europe.

The project has drawn more than \$13 million in fines — primarily for polluting waterways from spills of drilling fluid and construction methods not approved by state regulators — and several temporary shut-down orders by state agencies.

Neighbors worry that a single leak would level the entire neighborhood. Warning signs stand perhaps 100 feet (30 meters) from a "Watch Children" sign, and the sound of clanging echoes throughout the neighborhood.

Industry officials embrace Trump as someone who understands the importance of natural gas to the nation's economy, consumers and national security, and Trump's administration has undoubtedly been good for the industry.

His appointees have moved to relax methane pollution standards, expand extraction on federal lands, boost the export of liquefied natural gas and restrict the ability of states to use federal permitting authority to block pipelines.

The industry has strong allies in organized labor that have seen a huge influx of work across the state while the plentiful fuel is heating more homes and feeding more power plants.

Still, an Associated Press-NORC poll in August found only 22% of Americans support increasing fracking while 45% oppose it. In 2014, just 31% registered opposition.

The number of Democrats in the state Legislature who oppose fracking is growing, and Democrats who dominate statewide offices have used the industry as a punching bag.

Trump, meanwhile, used his speech Wednesday to tell workers that "many politicians in our country are targeting your industry and your jobs for literally total destruction."

He said Democratic policies on fossil fuel production would result in massive layoffs and exploding energy prices, adding, "Our vision is the exact opposite of what they want to do."

Once a registered Republican, Gross says her experience with Mariner East has transformed her worldview.

The 37-year-old now backs candidates with the strongest stance on the climate. She voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016, the first time she strayed from a Republican presidential candidate, although she didn't feel strongly about that decision, she said.

She does now.

"Bernie's probably the best because he's anti-fracking," Gross said. "And Elizabeth Warren has come out

in support, so she's probably second."

Other residents in the neighborhood are not necessarily as resolute as Gross. Some who live a stone's throw from the pipeline say it hasn't affected them. Some said that it had changed their political views, albeit in subtler ways, or that it might in the future.

Some said they felt abandoned by both Democrats and Republicans.

Levy reported from Exton, Pa.

Follow Marc Levy on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/timelywriter> and Darlene Superville at [https://www/twitter.com/dsupervilleap](https://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap)

Biden: Trump has 'no idea' about working-class struggles

By BILL BARROW and MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

SCRANTON, Pa. (AP) — Joe Biden cast President Donald Trump on Wednesday as a fraudulent populist whose tax policies, economic stewardship and erratic leadership have hurt U.S. workers and betrayed voters in the critical battleground state of Pennsylvania.

After scrapping with fellow Democrats for weeks, Biden returned to his hometown of Scranton to focus on his ultimate foe: Trump. The former vice president sought to dent Trump's argument that regardless of what working people may think about him personally, the actions of his administration have helped them.

"This administration has no idea what hard-working, decent, ordinary Americans are going through," Biden said of middle-class struggle in a growing but uneven economy.

"Go back to your old neighborhoods and ask them how they're doing," Biden said, lamenting that the rising cost of health care, college and housing deny the "breathing room" that should define middle-class security. "Too many middle-class and working-class folks can't look their kids in the eye any longer and say it's going to be OK and mean it."

Trump appeared later in the day in Pittsburgh, at the opposite end of the state, but made no mention of Biden.

The speech, which was billed as an economic policy address, is the type of forum where Biden often has his strongest moments in a campaign that has contended with verbal missteps and inconsistent debate performances. But it's becoming increasingly difficult for Biden or any other Democratic White House hopefuls to compete with the daily cacophony of Washington as Trump rails against the House impeachment inquiry.

Biden was reminded of that on the eve of his speech. On the same day that a top U.S. diplomat offered damning testimony against the president, Trump scrambled the conversation by saying Democrats are effectively "lynching" him. When Biden's campaign joined the resulting chorus of critics, the president's re-election campaign revived a 1998 video of then-Sen. Biden using the same "lynching" metaphor when discussing impeachment proceedings against President Bill Clinton. Biden tweeted an apology for his choice of words Tuesday night, but made no mention of the matter Wednesday in Scranton.

Instead, he highlighted his plans on a host of issues, including repealing Republican tax cuts, taking action on climate change, strengthening gun regulations, spending more on education and expanding government health insurance.

The visit is an early effort to block a Trump victory in Pennsylvania next year and narrow his path to re-election. The president won the state by about 44,000 votes in 2016, taking a state that had sided with Democrats in presidential races since 1988. Reclaiming Pennsylvania, along with Michigan and Wisconsin, would put the eventual Democratic nominee on track to winning the White House.

Biden recalled stories from his childhood in Scranton, including his father's "long walk" up the stairs of their home to tell 10-year-old "Joey" that the family had to move to Delaware because the elder Biden had lost his job.

Turning to Trump, he said, "I think the longest walk his father ever made was to drop off \$400 million in

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 43 of 46

his trust account," Biden said. It was a reference to reports that Fred Trump steered hundreds of millions of dollars to his son as the future president built his real estate and promotions business.

Biden argues that he's the Democrat best positioned to defeat Trump by reassembling President Barack Obama's winning coalition to reclaim some working-class whites who sided with Trump while also reversing Democrats' decline from 2012 among non-white voters in cities like Philadelphia, Detroit and Milwaukee.

For his part, Trump takes credit for an economy that has continued a steady upward trend since the recovery from the 2008 crash began during Obama's administration. Trump touts a 50-year low in unemployment, but the reality is more complicated, with ever-widening income inequality, a rising national debt and the uncertainty of Trump's multi-front trade wars.

Still, Americans' assessment of how Trump handles the economy has been consistently higher than his overall job approval rating.

Biden railed against escalating corporate profits and salaries for CEOs. He held up the decades after World War II, when wage increases reflected the rise in U.S. productivity, in contrast to the last 40 years, when inflation-adjusted wages remained relatively flat for all but the highest wage-earners, and the investment class amassed fortunes reminiscent of the Gilded Age.

That span covers nearly all of Biden's career as a U.S. senator and vice president.

In using the economy as an argument against Trump, Biden also indirectly highlighted differences with progressive Democratic rivals Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders.

Biden touted tax changes that would treat capital gains on investments essentially as wages — a move that would bring tax increases for the wealthiest Americans. That's short of Warren's proposed direct tax on personal net worth exceeding \$50 million and Sanders' tax on Wall Street transactions.

Biden also pitched his public option health insurance plan as competition against private insurers. Warren and Sanders want single-payer government insurance to supplant private insurance altogether. Biden called for tuition-free two-year college and technical training. Warren and Sanders want to extend the taxpayer investment to all four-year public schools.

Even as Biden knocked corporate excess Wednesday, he slipped in a caveat: "I think corporations can do a lot of good things."

For at least one member of the hometown crowd, Biden struck the right notes.

"All these young people want drastic change," said Elaine Sparko, a 65-year-old retired teacher who came to hear Biden. "I think he is a person who could stand toe to toe with Trump. I think we need a moderate."

Barrow reported from Atlanta.

Follow the reporters on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> and <https://twitter.com/MichaelRubinkam>.

Google claims breakthrough in blazingly fast computing

By RACHEL LERMAN and MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writers

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Google announced Wednesday it has achieved a breakthrough in quantum computing, saying it has developed an experimental processor that took just minutes to complete a calculation that would take the world's best supercomputer thousands of years.

The feat could open the door someday to machines so blazingly fast that they could revolutionize such tasks as finding new medicines, developing vastly smarter artificial intelligence systems and, most ominously, cracking the encryption that protects some of the world's most closely guarded secrets.

Such practical uses are still probably decades away, scientists said. But the latest findings, published in the scientific journal *Nature*, show that "quantum speedup is achievable in a real-world system and is not precluded by any hidden physical laws," the researchers wrote.

Big tech companies including Microsoft, IBM and Intel are avidly pursuing quantum computing, a new and somewhat bewildering technology for vastly sped-up information processing.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 44 of 46

While conventional computing relies on bits, or pieces of data that bear either a one or zero, quantum computing employs quantum bits, or qubits, that contain values of one and zero simultaneously.

But quantum computing requires placing the fragile and volatile qubits in colder-than-outer-space-refrigerators to control them.

Google's quantum processor looks like an upside-down garbage can, out of which comes a series of tubes used to conduct signals to a chip. The whole thing is stored in a cool chamber to protect the chip.

Google said that its quantum processor, called Sycamore, finished a calculation in 3 minutes, 20 seconds — and that it would take the world's fastest supercomputer 10,000 years to do the same thing.

The calculation was a random sampling problem, similar to looking at the various combinations that could come from dice or a gambling machine. It has little practical value, other than to test how well the processor works.

"The more interesting milestone will be a useful application," said Chris Monroe, a University of Maryland physicist who is also the founder of quantum startup IonQ.

Google's findings, however, faced pushback from other industry researchers. A version of Google's paper leaked online last month.

IBM took issue with Google's claim that it had achieved "quantum supremacy," or the point when a quantum computer can perform a calculation that a traditional computer can't complete within its lifetime.

IBM researchers said that its IBM-developed supercomputer, called Summit, could actually do the calculation in 2.5 days.

Google disputed IBM's claims.

Whether or not Google achieved "quantum supremacy," the research suggests the field is maturing.

"The quantum supremacy milestone allegedly achieved by Google is a pivotal step in the quest for practical quantum computers," John Preskill, the Caltech professor who coined the term "quantum supremacy," wrote in a column after the paper was leaked.

It means quantum computing research can enter a new stage, he wrote, though a significant effect on society "may still be decades away."

One feared outcome — though experts said it is a long way off — is a computer powerful enough to break today's best cryptography.

Quantum computers might also one day lead to the development of better artificial intelligence systems to guide financial portfolios, crop yields or transportation routes.

The promise of such applications has attracted interest from the U.S., China and other governments. President Donald Trump last year signed a measure to spend more than \$1.2 billion over five years for quantum research across the federal government.

O'Brien reported from Providence, Rhode Island.

European lawmakers vote to strengthen bee protection

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Parliament on Wednesday blocked a diluted proposal by the 28-nation bloc's executive arm on protecting bees from pesticides, arguing it didn't go far enough.

European lawmakers adopted a resolution urging the European Commission to "table new legislation based on the latest scientific and technical knowledge."

They said the Commission weakened its initial proposal due to the opposition of 16 member states which did not want provisions in the draft on how pesticides should be tested to protect bees from chronic exposure.

European lawmakers said the Commission only kept provisions protecting bees from acute exposure.

The Commission's draft, they said, "remains silent on chronic toxicity to honeybees, as well as on toxicity to bumble bees and solitary bees."

In their resolution adopted by 533 votes to 67 with 100 abstentions, they noted that the Commission's

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 45 of 46

text "would not change the level of protection" already in place and asked the Commission to come up with new proposals.

Over recent years, there's been an alarming drop in bee populations, which has stoked fears of an ensuing impact on crop production given the central role of bees.

According to figures released by the European Parliament, about 84% of crop species and 78% of wild flowers across the EU depend to some extent on animal pollination, and almost 15 billion euros (\$16.5 billion) of the bloc's annual agricultural output "is directly attributed to insect pollinators."

Last year, the EU banned three prevalent neonicotinoid pesticides on all crops grown outdoors after scientific evidence showed their risks.

Greenpeace praised the vote against the Commission's proposal.

"The new Parliament has shown that it's serious about protecting Europe's threatened pollinators," said Greenpeace EU food policy director, Franziska Achterberg.

She said the incoming European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and her team can, like the Parliament, pass "their first green test" and "protect bees from dangerous pesticides."

The Commission decided earlier this week not to renew its approval for a fourth neonicotinoid pesticide known as thiacloprid.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Oct. 24, the 297th day of 2019. There are 68 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 24, 1940, the 40-hour work week went into effect under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

On this date:

In 1861, the first transcontinental telegraph message was sent by Chief Justice Stephen J. Field of California from San Francisco to President Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C., over a line built by the Western Union Telegraph Co.

In 1931, the George Washington Bridge, connecting New York and New Jersey, was officially dedicated (it opened to traffic the next day).

In 1945, the United Nations officially came into existence as its charter took effect.

In 1962, a naval quarantine of Cuba ordered by President John F. Kennedy went into effect during the missile crisis.

In 1972, Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson, who'd broken Major League Baseball's color barrier in 1947, died in Stamford, Connecticut, at age 53.

In 1989, former television evangelist Jim Bakker (BAY'-kur) was sentenced by a judge in Charlotte, N.C., to 45 years in prison for fraud and conspiracy. (The sentence was later reduced to eight years; it was further reduced to four for good behavior.)

In 1991, "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry died in Santa Monica, California, at age 70.

In 1992, the Toronto Blue Jays became the first non-U.S. team to win the World Series as they defeated the Atlanta Braves, 4-3, in Game 6.

In 1997, in Arlington, Virginia, former NBC sportscaster Marv Albert was spared a jail sentence after a grudging courtroom apology to the woman he'd bitten during a sexual romp.

In 2002, authorities apprehended Army veteran John Allen Muhammad and teenager Lee Boyd Malvo near Myersville, Maryland, in the Washington-area sniper attacks. (Malvo was later sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole; Muhammad was sentenced to death and executed in 2009.)

In 2005, civil rights icon Rosa Parks died in Detroit at age 92.

In 2008, singer-actress Jennifer Hudson's mother and brother were found slain in their Chicago home; the body of her 7-year-old nephew was found three days later. (Hudson's estranged brother-in-law was convicted of the murders and sentenced to life in prison.)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 115 ~ 46 of 46

Ten years ago: Pakistani officials announced that their soldiers had captured Kotkai, the strategically located hometown of Pakistan's Taliban chief, Hakimullah Mehsud (hah-kee-MUH'-lah meh-SOOD'), and one of his top deputies, after fierce fighting.

Five years ago: Jaylen Fryberg, a student at Marysville-Pilchuck High School in Washington state, fatally shot four friends he had invited to lunch and wounded a fifth teen before killing himself. A coordinated militant assault on an army checkpoint in the Sinai Peninsula killed 31 Egyptian troops. Actress Marcia Strassman, who'd played Gabe Kaplan's wife, Julie, on the 1970s sitcom "Welcome Back, Kotter," died in Sherman Oaks, California, at age 66.

One year ago: Authorities said they had intercepted pipe bombs packed with shards of glass that had been sent to several prominent Democrats, including Hillary Clinton and former President Barack Obama; none of the bombs went off, and nobody was hurt. Saudi Arabia's crown prince told a business forum in his country that the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi (jah-MAHL' khahr-SHOHK'-jee) at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul was "heinous" and "painful to all Saudis;" some business leaders had pulled out of the conference after Turkish reports said a member of the prince's entourage was involved in the killing of Khashoggi, a critic of the Saudi royal family.

Today's Birthdays: Rock musician Bill Wyman is 83. Actor F. Murray Abraham is 80. Movie director-screenwriter David S. Ward is 74. Actor Kevin Kline is 72. Former NAACP President Kweisi Mfume (kwah-EE'-see oom-FOO'-may) is 71. Country musician Billy Thomas (Terry McBride and the Ride) is 66. Actor Doug Davidson is 65. Actor B.D. Wong is 59. Actor Zahn McClarnon is 53. Singer Michael Trent (Americana duo Shovels & Rope) is 42. Rock musician Ben Gillies (Silverchair) is 40. Singer-actress Monica Arnold is 39. Actress-comedian Casey Wilson is 39. R&B singer and actress Adrienne Bailon Houghton (3lw) is 36. Actor Tim Pocock is 34. R&B singer-rapper-actor Drake is 33. Actress Shenae Grimes is 30. Actress Eliza Taylor is 30. Actor Ashton Sanders (Film: "Moonlight") is 24. Olympic gold medal gymnast Kyla Ross is 23. Actor Hudson Yang is 16.

Thought for Today: "Seek not the favor of the multitude; it is seldom got by honest and lawful means. But seek the testimony of the few; and number not voices, but weigh them." — Immanuel Kant, German philosopher (1724-1804).

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