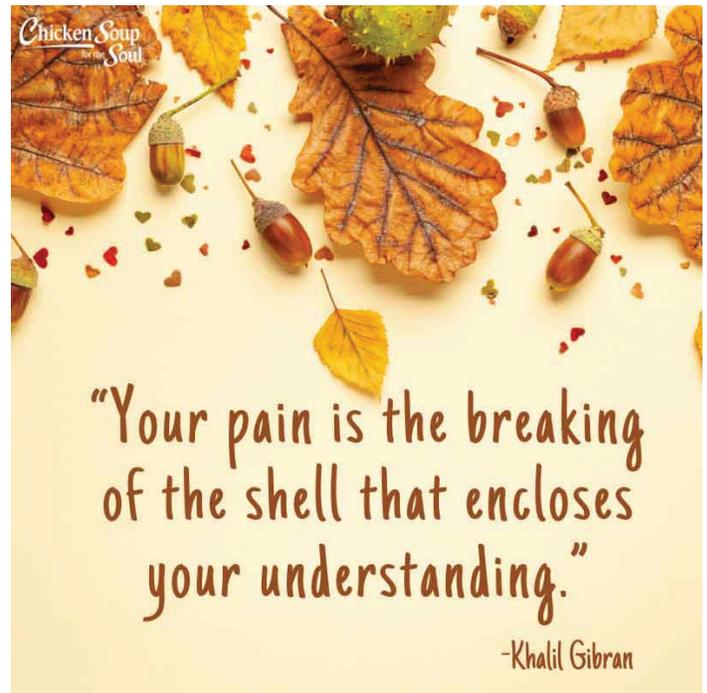


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- [2- What I do during the Livestreaming](#)
- [4- Photo of the White-Out](#)
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- [6- World of Experience: The Heartaches of upgrading](#)
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Death Notice: Douglas Neumann

Douglas Neumann, 58, of Arizona and formerly of Groton passed away November 7, 2019 at his home in Arizona City, Arizona. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Volleyball SoDak 16

Groton Area vs. Pine Ridge
Tuesday, Nov. 12, 6 p.m.
Ft. Pierre (Parkview Gym)

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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While I'm doing the play-by-play on GDILIVE.COM, I'm also trying to keep stats and a running score of the games. I thought I would share my working copy that I had for the Region 1A Volleyball Match with Milbank. Below is the running score. Where you see an S - that is a Serving Error. The points on each side of the final score indicate how many of those points were earned. Circled scores are ties. If the lead had switched hands, there would be an asterisk with each lead change.

RIA - Milbank

1	0	23	9	16	12	8	7
2	0	24	9	16	13	9	7
3	0	24	10	17	13	9	8
3	1	(19) 25	10 (S)	17	14	(9)	(9)
4	1	1	0	18	14	(S) 10	9
5	1	2	1	18	15	11	9
6	1	3	1	18	16	12	9
7	1	4	1	19	16	12	10
8	2	4	2	19	17	13	10
9	2	5	2	19	18	13	11
10	2	4	3	20	18	13	11
11	2	5	3	21	18	(S) 14	11
12	2	5	4	M time		15	11
M time		6	4	22	18	15	12
13	2	6	5	22	19	(S) 16	12
13	3	7	5	23	19	16	13
14	3	8	5	24	19	16	14
14	4	8	5	(17) 25	19 (S)	17	14
15	4	8	6 (S)	1	0	17	15
16	4	9	6	2	0	18	15
16	5	10	6	2	1	19	15
17	5	M time		3	1	20	15
1000 warm		11	6	3	2	21	15
18	5	12	6	4	2	22	15
18	6	12	7 (S)	4	3	23	15
19	6	13	7	5	3	23	16
19	7	13	8	6	3	23	17
19	8	13	9	7	3	24	17
20	8	14	9	8	3	(17) 25	17 (17)
21	8	14	10	8	4		
21	9	15	11	8	5		
22	9	16	11	8	6		

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OPPONENT		VOLLEYBALL STA			
PLAYER	AGE	HITS	SETS	R	
Maizahn	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	1 6 1 11 16 21	
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Roses	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	1 6 1 11 16 21	
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SETTERS:				
PLAYER	ACE	HITS	SETS	R
Glover	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	1 6 11 16 21
Flinn	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	1 6 11 16 21

The sheet on the left is the scoring for Groton Area. I quickly jot down the name once they score the first point, either a kill, ace serve or a block. And yes, it's even color coded and that's how I get the stats for each game off of one sheet. Milbank's stat sheet is in the bottom. So trying to keep tabs on all of this - there is always room for error, of course!

Milbank Bulldogs				
No.	Name	Ht.	Pos.	Grade
2	Cassidy Christians	5'4	DS	12
3	Jessica Van Peurse	5'4	S/DS	11
4	Casie Jones	5'2	DS	11
5	Hallie Schulte	5'6	L	9
6	Averie Engebretson	5'6	OH/S	9
8	Tracy Pillatzki	5'6	MH/OH	12
9	Madi Thue	5'8	OH/MH	11
10	Siri Bien	5'7	MH	11
11	Amy Nelson	5'5	S	12
12	Elsie Rogers	5'8	MH	12
14	Shelby Lee	5'5	RH	11
15	Casside Seezs	5'7	MH	9
16	Jaecy Engebretson	5'9	OH/S	12

Head Coach: Nancy Hoeke

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In between scores, I quickly texted Michelle Muilenberg asking if she could get a photo of the Groton crowd in their "White-Outs." Thanks Michelle for the photo!

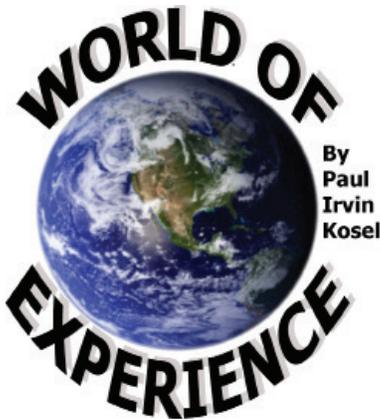
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A surprise pep rally was held Thursday afternoon. The senior parents performed the GHS student body. The fathers, pictured above, were called "Poison" and mothers, pictured below, were the Senior Six." The pep rally was recorded and the video is available in the 397news.com video archives under the Volleyball Section. These images were lifted from the video.





The heartaches of upgrading

My iMac had been recently running very slow so I thought I would make a quick chat to Apple support to see if they had a software diagnosis program. The gentleman was very nice and said they could fix the problem. He had me look at the activity monitor and send him a snapshot. He looked at it and noticed a program using 99.5 percent of the CPU's power. He said no app should take more than 70 percent. So he had to delete the file.

The file was deleted and all looked fine - for a bit. Then it revived itself and soon, it had repopulated back to 99.5 percent of the CPU power. The technician said it was a malicious file and the only way to delete it was to upgrade the newest version of the MAC operating system, which is now known as Catalina.

Well, that took several hours to get it up and going. It did take care of the malicious file, but it also took care of some of my main programs. One of them is the date import utility which brings in my video files from SD Card

and merges the two or three files usually created into one single file. It would no longer work. And my working copy of the Adobe Photoshop also died so I had to subscribe to the cloud version of the program.

So this morning, I called Canon support to see if there had been a work-around. The bad news - Nope. In fact, that application is made by a third party and they were no longer supporting the data import utility at all. The Canon technician asked how big my SD Cards I was using in the camera. I said 32GB and 64GB. Then I really had him stumped because with the larger 64GB SD Card, it should create one single file instead of two or more smaller files. It was something he was going to research for me. I was also the first one to call in about the Catalina issue. He said when Apple makes operating system updates, they never tell anyone about the changes so companies like Adobe and many others have to scramble to get their programs to run on the new operating system. And some programs simply go away. Like my Data Import Utility. After we talked further, we do have a couple of options. Something I can work on in my spare time!

The iMac that I'm using is a 2013 model and it's about also to the end of its rope for getting updates. Eventually, that too, will not be able to keep up with the times. It's been six years since I last updated my computer and I guess it's time for the next move.

Yes, updates and upgrades are necessary, sometimes, they're not what you expect in the end and, us, the customers, have to deal with the fallouts.

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Groton Post No. 39 American Legion



Annual



Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 9, 2019

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away

FREE ADMISSION

**DOOR
PRIZE!**

Lunch served
by Auxiliary



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Today



Mostly Cloudy

High: 45 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 20 °F

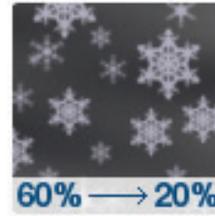
Sunday



Snow Likely

High: 24 °F

Sunday
Night



60% → 20%

Snow Likely
then Slight
Chance Snow

Low: 7 °F

Veterans
Day



Mostly Sunny

High: 16 °F

Today

 Mild!

Highs 37-67°



**Tonight/
Sunday**



Cold

1-3" Snow, mainly
central South
Dakota

 National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD   Updated: 11/9/2019 2:39 AM Central

Published on: 11/08/2019 at 9:41PM

A mild and dry day is expected region-wide. However, an arctic front will move in tonight, and spread across the entire region on Sunday. Much colder air, and snow, will move into the area. For tonight through Sunday, anywhere from 1 to 3 inches of accumulation is possible, especially for parts of central/western South Dakota.

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Today in Weather History

November 9, 1977: An intense early winter storm moved northeast from Colorado to Iowa during the morning of November 9th, and then to Lake Superior by the morning of November 10th. In most areas, the precipitation began late on the 8th as rain with temperatures in the 50s, changing to snow early on Wednesday the 9th, with the storm continuing through Thursday the 10th. In west central Minnesota, some freezing rain also occurred before it changed to all snow. As the storm intensified, the winds in the eastern half of South Dakota increased with some gusts as high as 60-70 miles per hour with widespread visibilities reduced to zero in blowing snow. In west central Minnesota, north to northwest winds of 60 to 80 mph reduced visibility to zero and piled snow into eight-foot drifts. The temperature dropped rapidly into the 20s. Many roads throughout the eastern part of South Dakota and west central Minnesota were blocked, and the heavy wet snow immobilized snow plows. Many cars and trucks were snowbound on the roads and highways. Approximately 100 cars and trucks were stalled on Interstate 90, east of Murdo. Near Fergus Falls in western Minnesota, two trucks loaded with turkeys became stuck, and half the birds were frozen. Many schools were closed on the 9th and 10th. Snowfall amounts in the eastern half of the state were greater than four inches. A band of heavy snow, ten inches or more, extended from Bridgewater to Howard to Clear Lake into parts of west central Minnesota. The high winds also destroyed a 1400-foot TV tower at Garden City. There was some loss of the corn crop. Sunflowers comprised the greatest loss because they had not been completely harvested. Reports of livestock losses were minimal. Some storm total snowfall amounts include; 15 inches in Watertown; 14 inches in Sisseton; 12 inches in Clear Lake and Wheaton; 10.5 inches in Castlewood; and 9 inches near Raymond and Bryant.

1864: On Election Night, a violent tornado strikes a ferry on Mississippi River near Chester, Illinois blowing away all but the hull. The boiler and engines are found up the bluff. Half of Chester was destroyed, and twenty die during the storm.

1913: The Great Lakes Storm of 1913 was a blizzard with hurricane-force winds that devastated the Great Lakes Region, sinking as many as 19 ships and stranded 19 others. This storm would be the deadliest and most destructive natural disaster ever to hit the Great Lakes.

1926: An estimated F3 to F4 tornado tore through La Plata, Maryland, killing 14 individuals at a small school. This storm caused 17 deaths and injured 65 others.

1913 - The freshwater fury, a rapidly deepening cyclone, caused unpredicted gales on the Great Lakes. Eight large ore carriers on Lake Erie sank drowning 270 sailors. Cleveland OH reported 17.4 inches of snow in 24 hours, and a total of 22.2 inches, both all-time records for that location. During the storm, winds at Cleveland averaged 50 mph, with gusts to 79 mph. The storm produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Buffalo NY, and buried Pickens WV under three feet of snow. (9th-11th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1982 - Seven tornadoes touched down in southern California, three of which began as waterspouts. The waterspouts moved ashore at Point Mugu, Malibu, and Long Beach. The Long Beach tornado traveled inland ten miles causing much damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Showers and gusty winds associated with a cold front helped extinguish forest fires in the Appalachian Region and clear out smoke in the eastern U.S. Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains from eastern Texas to the Tennessee Valley. Longview TX received 3.12 inches of rain, including two inches in two hours, Tupelo MS was soaked with 2.80 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a strong cold front produced severe weather from eastern Oklahoma to central Indiana. Hail more than two inches in diameter was reported around Tulsa OK. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - High winds prevailed along the eastern slopes of the Rockies from the afternoon of the 8th into the early morning hours of the 9th. Winds of 50 to 80 mph prevailed across the northwest chinook area of Wyoming, with gusts to 100 mph. Winds in Colorado gusted to 97 mph at Fritz Peak (located near Rollinsville) the evening of the 8th, and early in the morning on the 9th, gusted to 78 mph west of Fort Collins. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

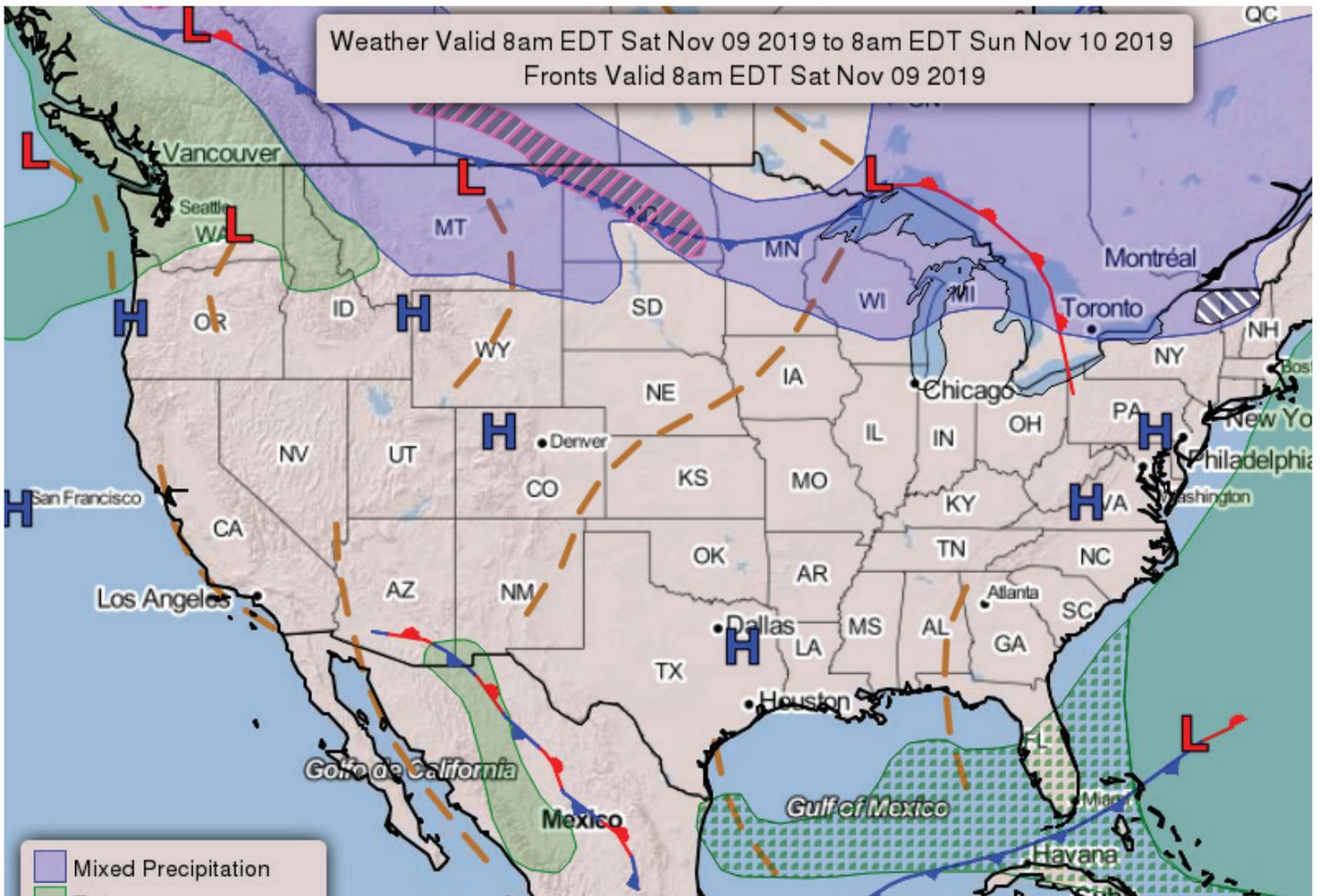
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 40 °F at 4:21 PM
Low Temp: 18 °F at 12:00 AM
Wind: 14 mph at 10:23 AM
Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 70° in 1903
Record Low: 0° in 2018, 1966
Average High: 44°F
Average Low: 22°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.24
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 20.71
Precip Year to Date: 26.57
Sunset Tonight: 5:11 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:25 a.m.



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GIVE THEM A PUSH!

While a teenager, Jean Nidetch enjoyed walking through a park near her home. Day after day she saw children sitting in swings as mothers enjoyed themselves talking and laughing. While the mothers seemed to be enjoying one another, the children appeared to be neglected. One day she started to push them gently. Then she taught them how to pull on the ropes to set their swings in motion. Soon the children were able to swing on their own and enjoy themselves while their mothers visited.

It brought her much satisfaction to see the children having so much fun. It was from that experience that she found her role in life. She once said, "My role in life is giving others a push." Ms. Nidetch went on to become the founder of Weight Watchers.

One day Andrew found his brother Peter and gave him a "push" toward the Lord. It took someone's "push" for Peter to become a powerful leader. We must always look for opportunities to "push" people toward our Savior and Lord.

Prayer: Father, may we constantly look for ways to "give others a push" toward Jesus. May we constantly search for ways to bring people closer to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: John 1:34-43 Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ").

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 09/07/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/08/2019 Sunflower Classic at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12/2019 St. John's Lutheran Luncheon
- 09/20/2019 Presbyterian Luncheon
- 09/28/2019 Granary Living History Fall Festival
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/31/2019 Trunk or Treat/Halloween on Main (Halloween)
- 11/09/2019 Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/07/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Holiday Party
- 12/07/2019 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- Bingo: every Wednesday at the Legion Post #39

2020 Groton SD Community Events

- 01/26/2020 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 04/04/2020 Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt, 10 a.m. Sharp (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 05/02/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
Groton Hosting State B American Legion Baseball Tournament
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest
- 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/14/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)

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News from the Associated Press

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL

All Nations Conference

Championship

Crow Creek 74, Lower Brule 39

Class 11AAA Semifinal

Brandon Valley 52, Sioux Falls Washington 13

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 24, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 21

Class 11AA Semifinal

Brookings 36, Huron 7

Pierre 57, Mitchell 7

Class 11A Semifinal

Canton 27, Tea Area 20

Lennox 34, West Central 33

Class 11B Semifinal

Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 42, McCook Central/Montrose 0

Winner 38, Webster 27

Class 9AA Semifinal

Bon Homme 26, Deuel 6

Viborg-Hurley 32, Lemmon/McIntosh 26

Class 9A Semifinal

Britton-Hecla 14, Gregory 8

Canistota-Freeman 56, Sully Buttes 22

Class 9B Semifinal

Colman-Egan 46, Wolsey-Wessington 36

Herreid/Selby Area 54, Harding County 32

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

03-04-10-39-58, Mega Ball: 14, Megaplier: 3

(three, four, ten, thirty-nine, fifty-eight; Mega Ball: fourteen; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$145 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$50 million

Hagedorn scores 24 to carry South Dakota past Pacific 72-62

HONOLULU (AP) — Tyler Hagedorn had 24 points as South Dakota got past Pacific 72-62 on Friday.

Stanley Umude had 17 points for South Dakota (1-0).

Justin Moore had 16 points for the Tigers (1-1). Jahliil Tripp added 13 points and seven rebounds. Daniss Jenkins had 10 points.

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Amari McCray, whose 14.0 points per game coming into the matchup led the Tigers, failed to make a shot (0 of 5).

South Dakota takes on Hawaii on the road on Sunday. Pacific takes on Florida A&M on Sunday.

South Dakota hunting licenses sales drop by 26,000

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Officials say South Dakota has sold nearly 26,000 fewer hunting licenses this year, which has cost the state more than \$1 million in lost revenue.

State Department of Game, Fish and Parks official Heather Villa told the Rapid City Journal that the long winter, flooding and a decline in the pheasant population could be to blame. However, she acknowledged that the drop in license sales could also be a continuation of a decades-long decline in hunting, trapping and fishing.

The department generally gets about half its budget from license revenue, and it adopted a resolution last month to examine the recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters, anglers and trappers.

Gov. Kristi Noem has created a live-trap giveaway and set a bounty on certain predators to encourage hunting.

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

Some 300 gather to mourn teen killed in crash

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Several hundred people gathered for a candlelight vigil in Sioux Falls to mourn the death of a high school freshman killed in an interstate crash and pray for the recovery of a second teen who was seriously injured.

High school students, adults and younger children gathered in freezing temperatures on a football field outside the Sanford Pentagon arena Thursday night to remember 15-year-old Barry Grieve, who died in a rollover crash on Interstate 229 Tuesday night.

Another freshman at Lincoln High School, 16-year-old Mhiretab Tsegaye, is hospitalized with life-threatening injuries.

The Argus Leader reports Lincoln teacher Xavier Pastrano it's something that they won't get over, but it's something that will take time to get through.

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

Death penalty off the table in Rapid City murder

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Pennington County prosecutors say they won't seek the death penalty in a first-degree murder case involving a woman who was struck and killed in a Walmart parking lot in Rapid City.

Forty-eight-year-old Rochelle Seminole is charged in the crash last May that took the life of 37-year-old Kimberly Clifford. Seminole was back in a 7th Circuit courtroom Thursday.

KOTA-TV reports Chief Deputy State's Attorney Lara Roetzel says the case simply doesn't meet the mitigating and aggravating circumstances required for the death penalty in South Dakota.

If Seminole is convicted on the murder charge she would receive a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole.

Witnesses told police they saw Seminole and Clifford fighting in the parking lot before Seminole hit or attempted to hit Clifford with a SUV and then backed up before plowing into the woman.

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

Was Trump call with Ukraine 'perfect'? GOP has many answers

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans have no unified argument in the impeachment inquiry of Donald Trump, in large part because they can't agree on how best to defend the president — or for some, if they should.

That would require a level of consensus that Trump's call with the Ukraine president was "perfect," as he insists. Or it would take a measure of GOP independence from Trump to suggest there may be a need to investigate.

Instead, it's every Republican for himself or herself.

Utah Sen. Mitt Romney says the president's actions toward Ukraine are "troubling." Other Republicans say the behavior may raise concerns, but it's not impeachable.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham calls the whole impeachment inquiry "B.S."

The result is a mishmash of GOP commentary spilling from Capitol Hill that may shield lawmakers, for now, from risky political choices, but leaves them with a disjointed defense of Trump as impeachment hearings push into the public realm this coming week.

"It's not good," said veteran GOP strategist Alex Conant. "Normally you want to establish the facts, get them out on their own terms, and build a message around that strategy. They're not doing any of that."

He added: "It's hard to rally people to your side without a coherent and sustainable message."

Early on, as the White House ceded the PR strategy to the president, Republicans in the House and Senate parted ways as they confronted the political threat posed by the Democrats' impeachment investigation.

As far back as mid-October, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., gathered his GOP colleagues in private and offered them advice on impeachment.

McConnell told Republican senators their best bet was to calibrate their own message about the impeachment inquiry to fit their political situation, according to two people familiar with the private meeting who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door session.

With a Power Point presentation, McConnell outlined the process ahead if the investigation moves to a vote in the House and trial in the Senate. But when it came time to broach what Republicans should say about impeachment, McConnell showed a preference for saying as little about it as possible.

McConnell suggested a couple of options. Senators could say they disagreed with the House process, he said, or they could simply say that as potential jurors in an eventual impeachment trial they wouldn't discuss it, according to the people familiar with the meeting.

It was the kind of political advice one would expect from the risk-averse leader as he tries to insulate his 53-seat GOP majority, including several senators up for reelection in 2020 in states such as Maine and Colorado where voters are split on Trump.

"That's what a good leader does — gives them the flexibility they need to respond. My problem is, given how egregious the president's conduct is, he's given them a pass," said Jim Manley, a veteran Democratic strategist.

"Most of these folks have got to know that what the president's doing is wrong, but they've made a cold-hearted, political decision right now it's best to stick with the president," he said.

At its core, the impeachment inquiry is based on what Democrats say is an improper quid pro quo — a "shakedown" — that Trump engaged in during his July 25 phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

According to a White House rough transcript of the call and testimony from several government officials, Trump was withholding needed military aid the East European ally as he wanted Zelenskyy to investigate Trump's potential 2020 rival, Joe Biden, as well 2016 U.S. election interference.

In the House, where congressional district boundary lines have been drawn in a way that leaves Republicans barely exposed to voters with centrist or left-leaning views, GOP leaders are mounting a more fulsome, if shifting, defense of Trump.

GOP leader Kevin McCarthy of California says the president did nothing wrong on the call with Zelenskyy, and Trump's top allies in the House, including Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, the top Republican on a committee

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conducting the impeachment inquiry, are leading the daily arguments against Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and the Democrats.

Jordan is seen as the "chief messenger" for Republicans, said one senior House GOP aide who was not authorized to publicly discuss the strategy and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The House Republican message against impeachment has four distinct parts, according to this aide: The transcript of Trump's call with Zelenskiy shows the president did nothing wrong; several key witnesses testified that they don't have firsthand knowledge of what transpired; the Ukrainians didn't know the military aid was being upheld until it was publicly reported; and eventually the U.S. agreed to send the money to Ukraine.

It's a message being reinforced daily in the media by Jordan and other Trump surrogates, including Reps. Mark Meadows, R-N.C. and Lee Zeldin, R-N.Y., who are also part of the inquiry panels, the person said.

What goes without saying, though, is that few Republicans lawmakers are willing to say the call was "perfect" or that there was "no quid pro quo," as Trump insists.

More often, they say a little of this, a little of that.

"There are perfectly appropriate quid pro quos and there are inappropriate quid pro quos," offered Sen. John Kennedy, R-La. "Just saying that there is a quid pro quo, at least based on my analysis of the evidence that I've seen so far, is a red herring."

Associated Press video journalists Padmananda Rama and Dan Huff in Washington contributed to this report.

Pot or not? Busts highlight growing confusion over hemp

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The CBD craze is leaving the war on drugs a bit dazed and confused.

The extract that's been showing up in everything from candy to coffee is legally derived from hemp plants, which look and smell an awful lot like that other cannabis — marijuana. They're so similar, police officers and the field tests they use on suspected drugs sometimes can't tell the difference.

Case in point, New York City police boasted on social media this week about what seemed like a significant drug bust: 106 pounds (48 kilograms) of funky, green plants that officers thought sure seemed like marijuana.

But the Vermont farm that grew the plants and the Brooklyn CBD shop that ordered them insisted they're actually industrial hemp, and perfectly legal. And, they said, they have paperwork to prove it.

Nevertheless, when the shop's owner brother went to the police station to straighten things out, he was arrested. Police said a field test had come back positive for marijuana.

Shop owner Oren Levy said that's likely because hemp often tests positive for a permissible, trace amount of THC, or tetrahydrocannabinol, which is the chemical in cannabis that causes people to get high.

Field tests used by law enforcement officers can detect THC but aren't sophisticated enough to specify whether a shipment is legal hemp or low-grade illegal pot, and drug-sniffing dogs will alert on both.

"He was a hungry cop. He thought he had the bust of the day," said Levy, whose Green Angel CBD NYC sells oils, teas and other products containing the extract. He said he fears the seizure could force him out of business.

CBD, or cannabidiol, is also found in marijuana but does not have a psychoactive effect. Some people say it provides them with pain and anxiety relief.

"I can't believe I'm going through this for a legal business," Levy said. "I can't believe my poor brother got locked up."

Oren and Ronen Levy are not alone.

Since the U.S. government removed industrial hemp last year from the list of illegal drugs, a number of similar cases have cropped up across the country.

In July, a man who said he was delivering 300 pounds (136 kilograms) of hemp to a Minnesota CBD-oil

processing company was arrested in South Dakota after authorities there said it tested positive for THC. The substance "looked and smelled like raw marijuana," a state trooper said.

In January, Idaho authorities arrested a truck driver and seized nearly 7,000 pounds (3,175 kilograms) of what they believed to be marijuana, even though the company shipping the material said accompanying paperwork made clear it was industrial hemp.

At least two other truckers and two security guards involved in transporting industrial hemp have been arrested and charged with felony drug trafficking. In May, the U.S. Agriculture Department sent a memorandum instructing states not to block the transportation of hemp that contains 0.3% or less THC.

The Nov. 2 Brooklyn bust that landed Ronen Levy in handcuffs stemmed from a tip from a FedEx worker who suspected the load of plants on their way from Fox Holler Farms in Fair Haven, Vermont, to Levy's shop were marijuana, New York City police said.

"We got information about a large package of drugs. We got it in here. We field tested it as marijuana, called the individual in. He was placed under arrest," said NYPD Chief of Department Terence Monahan.

"It is currently at the lab at this point to make a final determination, was it hemp?" Monahan said. "The individual had no bill of lading justifying its delivery."

Ronen Levy, who runs his own CBD business catering to pets, pleaded not guilty to multiple counts of felony criminal possession of marijuana. He was released on his own recognizance and is due back in court on Nov. 19.

The police department drew attention to the bust by posting pictures on its official Facebook and Twitter accounts showing the officers in a room full of the seized plants. Oren Levy and the farm fought back with posts of their own.

Fox Holler Farms said in a statement posted on its Facebook page that the shipment bound for Levy's shop was fully compliant with Vermont, New York and federal laws.

The farm's lawyer, Timothy Fair, said that before the hemp shipment left Vermont, it was tested at FedEx's request by a local police department. The level of THC was less than half the allowable threshold, he said.

A FedEx spokeswoman said even if the plants were hemp, they should not have been shipped using its service. The company's service guide lists hemp plants, leaves, oil and CBD derived from hemp among its prohibited items.

Oren Levy said he would've gone to the police station himself but couldn't because he was recovering from a recent surgery. Soon enough, Oren Levy said, Ronen texted him: "I think I'm getting arrested."

"They treated him like a drug dealer," Oren Levy said. "He's never been to jail in his whole life. He still hasn't slept. He's paranoid."

Jennifer Peltz in New York and Wilson Ring in Montpelier, Vermont contributed reporting.

Follow Michael Sisak at twitter.com/mikesisak

Iraqi forces capture major Baghdad bridges from protesters

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi security forces cleared three flashpoint bridges in Baghdad of anti-government protesters on Saturday, using stun grenades and tear gas amid heavy clashes, while three more protesters were killed in the southern city of Basra overnight.

Mass protests erupted in Baghdad and across southern Iraq last month, calling for the overhaul of the political system established after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

The demonstrations and a heavy-handed security response have resulted so far in more than 250 deaths.

In the capital, demonstrators were pushed back under clouds of tear gas from the Sinak bridge to the nearby Khilani square, where 35 people were wounded, according to medical officials who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations. Security forces moved on to regain control of two other bridges nearby, Ahrar and Shuhada.

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The bridges span the Tigris and give access to the heavily fortified Green Zone, the seat of government. Protesters have tried to force their way across on an almost daily basis.

The day before, authorities found a bomb under the Sinak bridge, and carried out a controlled explosion of it, according to state television.

In the southern city of Basra, three more protesters were killed overnight, raising to eight death toll since Thursday. Clashes with security forces also led to wounded in other parts of southern Iraq, including the city of Nasiriyah, according to security officials.

The demonstrators complain of widespread corruption, lack of job opportunities and poor basic services, including regular power cuts, despite Iraq's vast oil reserves. They have rejected government proposals for limited economic reforms, and instead called on the country's political leadership to resign, including Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi.

"We consider the peaceful protests of our people as among the most important events since 2003," Abdul-Mahdi said in a statement Saturday that vowed to meet the protesters' demands for wide-ranging reforms. He added that electoral reforms would be put forward soon along with "an important government reshuffle" in response to the protests against the sectarian system imposed in 2003, though the statement didn't provide further details.

The prime minister also acknowledged that the state had blocked the internet in the country.

Shortly after the statement's release, internet on the cellular telephones resumed for half an hour before it was cut again.

Netblocks, a group that monitors worldwide internet access, reported a major shutdown by Iraqi authorities as of Monday, with usage in Baghdad and southern Iraq dropping to 19% of normal levels. It said the internet was partially restored early Tuesday, but that "some networks are still offline and social media and messaging apps remain blocked or degraded."

Authorities shut down internet access and blocked social media sites several times during the protests in October, but Netblocks said the latest shutdown was the most severe yet.

30 years after the Berlin Wall, Cyprus' division endures

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — As the world commemorates 30 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the bullet-riddled sandstone walls of abandoned, crumbling homes and concrete machine gun nests dotting Cyprus' no man's land serve as a jarring reminder of another divided capital — the world's last — on Europe's southeastern frontier.

The United Nations-controlled buffer zone that slices across the bustling, medieval center of Nicosia is the most visible scar of this Mediterranean island nation's 45-year ethnic division, brought about in 1974 when Turkey invaded in the wake of a coup mounted by supporters of union with Greece.

Reminiscent of Cold War tensions, Greek Cypriot conscripts still man guard posts on the internationally recognized southern side, opposite Turkish and Turkish Cypriot soldiers looking out from their positions on the island's northern breakaway part.

Although Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, only its southern part enjoys full membership benefits.

The buffer zone mostly traverses mountains and farmland along its 180-kilometer (120 mile) length, but it's at its narrowest along the tight, winding streets of Nicosia where it separates opposing soldiers by only a few meters at some points.

Inside the city, the dividing line isn't so much a single wall in Berlin's mold, but rather a patchwork of concrete-filled oil barrels, barbed wire-topped fences and a network of sentry posts built up over decades.

The closest point between the two sides was for 25 years a stretch of road that United Nations peacekeepers had dubbed "Spear Alley." Only about three meters (10 feet) of road separated armed soldiers crouched behind the sandbagged windows of what were once stately mansions built at the turn of the previous century.

It was that proximity that gave the spot its name, as opposing soldiers at times when tensions still ran

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high would attach their bayonets to sticks and jab at each other, or hurl objects ranging from Molotov cocktails to urine-filled bottles. Soldiers' deaths resulted in a 1989 deal for a mutual pullback from the spot.

What's most striking within the buffer zone is the stillness of the place and the range of wildlife that can be encountered, such as a rare species of barn owl that has been allowed to multiply unmolested by human habitation. That stillness is juxtaposed with the bustle of daily life literally a stone's throw away.

"Our military peacekeepers play a vital role in liaising on a daily basis with the opposing forces to prevent tensions from arising and becoming international security insurgencies," said Aleem Siddique, spokesman for the U.N. peacekeeping force.

"Our U.N. police officers liaise with the police authorities on both sides of the island to maintain law and order within the buffer zone. And probably most importantly, our civilian staff are the ones that help bridge the divide to bring the communities together."

For decades, there was virtually no physical contact between north and south. That ended in 2003 when a political thaw between the sides resulted in the opening of the first of nine crossing points across the buffer zone, and there are efforts to open even more.

The crossings underscore the gravity of this ongoing conflict, but at the same time throw into question the dividing line's reason for being.

The political complexities of Cyprus' division have defied the efforts of five U.N. Secretaries-General and a slew of his special advisers in mediating a reunification agreement.

The latest failed bid occurred in 2017 during high-level talks at a Swiss resort that also brought together the diplomats of Cyprus' 'guarantors' — Greece, Turkey and Britain.

Officials have been trying to pick up the pieces from that effort and get the two sides talking again. U.N. Chief Antonio Guterres will hold talks with the island's Greek Cypriot president and the leader of the Turkish Cypriots later this month to scope out changes for a resumption of peace talks. That meeting will take place in — where else? — Berlin.

Trump's sports kick is about politics, but fans have a say

By **DEB RIECHMANN** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is on a sports kick.

He's attended a World Series game, hosted the champion Washington Nationals, gone to New York for a mixed martial arts tournament and gotten in some chilly rounds of golf. And on Saturday, he planned to be at the college football showdown between No. 1 LSU and No. 2 Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Trump's re-election campaign has made the most of sporting events by airing a pricey television ad during the World Series.

Trump attended Game 5 of the series and days later brought the Nationals to the White House. He had a close-up seat for the Ultimate Fighting Championship at Madison Square Garden. Next month, Trump might flip a coin again at the Army-Navy game in Philadelphia, continuing a presidential tradition dating to President Theodore Roosevelt. In January 2018, Trump attended the Alabama-Georgia national title game in Atlanta.

Presidents have long used sporting events to woo support, but these events also are a venue for fans to express their own political leanings.

Both loud boos and cheers could be heard as Trump took his seat ahead of the recent pay-per-view UFC title match. That greeting was warmer than the reception Trump received at the World Series at Nationals Park, when he was roundly booed and became the target of a "Lock him up!" chant.

He's headed to friendlier turf for Saturday's big game.

"I love Alabama," Trump said Friday. "I'm going to go watch a very good football game, which is tomorrow with LSU, and it's going to be great"

Still, even in Alabama, where he won 63% of the vote in 2016, the president generated some controversy. Alabama's student government association has warned students against being disruptive, but says their First Amendment rights will not be muzzled.

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"Regardless of your political views, that's pretty cool, having the president at the game," said LSU quarterback Joe Burrow.

Alabama wide receiver Henry Ruggs III said, "Just for him even wanting to come to this game, it just shows, like I said, the magnitude of the game."

For Trump, the game is both football and politics.

He's been studiously neutral in the Alabama-LSU matchup.

Trump has been enthusiastically supporting Republican businessman Eddie Rispone's effort to unseat Louisiana's incumbent Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards in the last governor's race of the year. The gubernatorial runoff election in Louisiana offers Trump an opportunity to pick up a win in a rare Democratic-held governor's seat in the Deep South. He attended a rally in Monroe, Louisiana on Wednesday and he'll be back in the state this coming week, two days before Louisiana voters head to polls.

"This Saturday, I'm going to be at a certain game. Let's see, it's LSU versus a pretty good team from Alabama," Trump said in Monroe. "I hear you have a great quarterback. We're going to see. But I'm actually going to the game. I said 'That's the game I want to go to.' That will be tremendous. Two great teams."

The game comes two days after Trump's former attorney general, Jeff Sessions, announced he is going to run again for his old Senate seat from Alabama. Sessions was the first senator to back Trump's upstart campaign and worked to champion conservative causes as attorney general, but the president has never forgiven Sessions for withdrawing from overseeing the Russia investigation led by former special counsel Robert Mueller.

Trump said Friday he won't campaign against Sessions, but his weekend trip south could give him an opportunity to weigh in on the Senate race.

Some examples of presidents as football fans:

—President William Howard Taft attended the LSU-Sewanee game in October 1909 in New Orleans.

—President John F. Kennedy went to the Alabama-Oklahoma game on New Year's Day in 1963 in Miami.

—In December 1969, President Richard Nixon was at Razorback Stadium in Fayetteville, Arkansas, to watch Texas play Arkansas.

—President Bill Clinton watched Arkansas play Louisiana Tech in September 1997 at War Memorial Stadium in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Harris, Warren compete for support from black female voters

By ERRIN HAINES AP National Writer

Kamala Harris got a much needed boost this past week when the California senator picked up the endorsement of Higher Heights, the country's largest political organization aimed at electing black women.

But Elizabeth Warren would not be outdone. A day after Harris' announcement, the Massachusetts senator won the backing of more than 100 black female activists. She also picked up the coveted endorsement of Rep. Ayanna Pressley, a black woman from her home state and the only member of the so-called squad of progressive lawmakers not to side with presidential candidate Bernie Sanders.

The dueling endorsements signal an emerging battle between Warren and Harris for the support of black women, who are the Democratic Party's most loyal and consistent voters. Both White House hopefuls are struggling with black voters, who have sided with Joe Biden by large margins. But as the election moves into a critical phase with just months before voting begins, the announcements this week highlight the contrasting styles of the surging progressive firebrand and the lone black woman in the Democratic field.

"We're still on a long road, and black women are still shopping," said Higher Heights co-founder Glynda Carr. Harris is "exactly what our organization was built on, to be able to help support and invest in qualified black women to run for offices at all levels. At the end of the day, even if she ends up not being your top choice, black women should be celebrating this moment."

Both candidates are expected to keep up their outreach in the weeks ahead. Warren will deliver a speech about the legacy of black female workers at historically black Clark Atlanta University later this month. Around the same time, Harris also plans to participate in a South Carolina town hall with Higher Heights.

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They've both courted black women almost since the beginning of their campaigns.

When Harris launched her presidential bid on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, many observers assumed her bona fides as a graduate of historically black Howard University and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha — the nation's oldest black sorority — would give her an advantage among the throng of candidates. Many young black women were especially excited about her candidacy. But that hasn't yet translated into support as Harris falls in the polls.

In a call with reporters this week, Harris acknowledged the campaign still has work to do to win black women.

"I am fully aware that we are asking people to believe in something that they've not seen before," Harris said. "This is the challenge I've faced in every office I've run for."

Marcia Fudge, a Democratic congresswoman from Ohio and a Harris surrogate, said the senator is running a campaign of belief that is common for black women.

"We kind of get counted out an awful lot," Fudge said. "Our culture just is not a very trusting culture. We have to convince black women, in particular, that if we support her, we can win. Black women want to support another woman. She's the only other choice. If they believe Kamala is not viable, (Warren) is the fallback position."

Warren began attracting attention from black women this spring after announcing her plan to address racial disparities in maternal mortality at a town hall for female voters of color. At a campaign stop this week at North Carolina A&T University — another HBCU — she was the guest on political strategist Angela Rye's podcast. Pressley also joined her for the event.

As a white woman, Warren, however, faced skepticism from black activists.

"We have experiences on the day-to-day that remind us that white women are likely to throw us under the bus if it means protecting themselves," said Angela Peoples, the director of the organizing group Black Womxn For. She was photographed during the 2017 Women's March sucking a lollipop and holding a sign that read: "Don't Forget White Women Voted For Trump."

But Warren's policy proposals were getting attention. Leslie Mac, another activist involved in organizing this week's endorsement of Warren, said her group text chat with black girlfriends began buzzing about Warren over the summer.

"There was literally that question of 'Have y'all been looking at Elizabeth Warren?'" Mac recalled. "Is she for real? If we wanted to meet with her, would she come?"

Warren met with the activists at the Netroots conference in July. Sitting across the table from Warren, they questioned her candidly on her policies and, more fundamentally, whether they could trust her to advocate for them. The senator ultimately committed to several requests from the group to address inequality and promote diversity in her would-be administration.

Mac said her decision to back Warren came down to choosing a candidate who is "organizable and that can be held accountable."

"She has strong plans that will positively affect the material lives of black people," Mac said. "I can appreciate the work Sen. Harris has done in her career and campaign and also feel that she is not the candidate for me."

Charlene Carruthers said despite also being a black woman, Harris was never on her radar because she doesn't view the California Democrat's record or platform as progressive, but said her presence in the race could be a conflict for black women weighing whether to support Warren.

"There is a recognition that her candidacy is important, significant and it matters," said Carruthers, a Chicago-based activist who led a roundtable with Warren and activists in the city earlier this year. "Should (Harris) win the primary, we're in a much different conversation."

Iran says case open on ex-FBI agent missing there on CIA job

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

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DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran is acknowledging for the first time it has an open case before its Revolutionary Court over the 2007 disappearance of a former FBI agent on an unauthorized CIA mission to the country, renewing questions over what happened to him.

In a filing to the United Nations, Iran said the case over Robert Levinson was “on going,” without elaborating.

It wasn't immediately clear how long the case had been open, nor the circumstances by which it started. However, it comes amid a renewed push to find him with an offer of \$20 million for information from the Trump administration amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. over Tehran's collapsing nuclear deal with world powers. That's in addition to \$5 million earlier offered by the FBI.

The Associated Press on Saturday obtained the text of Iran's filing to the U.N.'s Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

“According to the last statement of Tehran's Justice Department, Mr. Robert Alan Levinson has an on going case in the Public Prosecution and Revolutionary Court of Tehran,” the filing said.

It did not elaborate. Iran's Revolutionary Court typically handles espionage cases and others involving smuggling, blasphemy and attempts to overthrow its Islamic government. Westerners and Iranian dual nationals with ties to the West often find themselves tried and convicted in closed-door trials in these courts, only later to be used as bargaining chips in negotiations.

Iran's mission to the U.N. did not immediately respond to a request for comment, and its state media has not acknowledged the case. The U.S. State Department did not respond to a request for comment about Iran's acknowledgement.

The Washington Post first reported on the ongoing case.

Levinson disappeared from Iran's Kish Island on March 9, 2007. For years, U.S. officials would only say that Levinson, a meticulous FBI investigator credited with busting Russian and Italian mobsters, was working for a private firm on his trip.

In December 2013, the AP revealed Levinson in fact had been on a mission for CIA analysts who had no authority to run spy operations. Levinson's family had received a \$2.5 million annuity from the CIA in order to stop a lawsuit revealing details of his work, while the agency forced out three veteran analysts and disciplined seven others.

Since his disappearance, the only photos and video of Levinson emerged in 2010 and 2011. He appeared gaunt and bearded with long hair, and was wearing an orange jumpsuit similar to those worn by detainees at the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay.

The video, with a Pashtun wedding song popular in Afghanistan playing in the background, showed Levinson complaining of poor health.

Rumors about him have circulated for years, with one account claiming he was locked up in a Tehran prison run by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and U.S. officials suggesting he may not be in Iran at all. Dawud Salahuddin, an American fugitive living in Iran who is wanted for the assassination of a former Iranian diplomat in Maryland in 1980, is the last known person to have seen Levinson before his disappearance. Iran has offered a series of contradictory statements about Levinson in the time since. It asked the U.N. group to close its investigation into Levinson in February, saying “no proof has been presented by the claimant in this case to prove the presence of the aforesaid in Iran's detention centres.”

What You Need to Know: Mulvaney seeks to join lawsuit

WASHINGTON (AP) — For only the fourth time in U.S. history, the House of Representatives has started a presidential impeachment inquiry. House committees are trying to determine whether President Donald Trump violated his oath of office by asking Ukraine to investigate political rival Joe Biden and his family and to investigate the country's involvement in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

A quick summary of the latest news and what's to come:

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

— Investigators in the inquiry on Friday released hundreds of pages of testimony from Fiona Hill, a former

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White House Russia adviser, and Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, an Army officer assigned to the National Security Council. Both testified they were concerned Trump was inappropriately pressuring Ukraine to investigate Democrats.

— Ivanka Trump told The Associated Press Friday that the identity of whistleblower is “not particularly relevant” and “shouldn’t be a substantive part of the conversation.” The whistleblower sparked the inquiry into Trump’s efforts to pressure Ukraine to investigate former vice president Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden.

— John Bolton, Trump’s former national security adviser, was aware of “many relevant meetings and conversations” related to the Ukraine pressure campaign that House impeachment investigators have not yet learned about, his attorney Charles Cooper wrote in a letter to the House general counsel. Cooper wants a federal judge to determine whether Bolton and his former deputy, Charles Kupperman, can be compelled to testify against the White House wishes.

— Acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and Office of Management and Budget associate director Marky Sandy defied House investigator subpoenas and were no-shows for their scheduled depositions. Mulvaney has asked to join a lawsuit brought by another of the president’s advisers challenging a congressional subpoena. That suit, filed by former deputy national security adviser Charles Kupperman, asks a court to decide which of two directives Kupperman must follow — one from Congress ordering him to testify, the other from the White House telling him not to. A lawyer for Mulvaney says his case presents the same legal issues as Kupperman’s and that he is a closer and even more senior adviser to the president than Kupperman was.

WHAT’S NEXT

Investigators are preparing to start public hearings next week. House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff said three State Department witnesses will appear in two hearings next Wednesday and Friday: U.S. ambassador to Ukraine Bill Taylor, career department official George Kent and Marie Yovanovitch, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. Yovanovitch was ousted in May on Trump’s orders and Taylor replaced her; both have testified about their concerns with the administration’s policy on Ukraine.

NUMBERS THAT MATTER

This week, a dozen Trump administration figures, including high-profile names like Mulvaney and Bolton, declined to appear before the Democratic-led panel. Democrats are wrapping up the closed-door portion of the proceedings.

WORTH WATCHING

First daughter and presidential aide Ivanka Trump granted a rare interview to The Associated Press while on a trip to Morocco. She questioned the motives of the anonymous whistleblower whose allegations touched off the Trump impeachment inquiry and suggested that former Vice President Joe Biden profited from his time in public service: <http://apne.ws/dSkeyf0>

WORTH READING

The House committees probing Trump’s Ukraine dealings released transcripts of the depositions of Vindman and Hill.

Vindman transcript: <http://apne.ws/hOMTyHP>

Hill transcript: <http://apne.ws/ShWUXZO>

Previously released transcripts:

State Department official George Kent: <http://apne.ws/gX69QfC>

Amb. William Taylor, who is scheduled to testify at an open hearing next Wednesday: <http://apne.ws/vtAi9aX>

Gordon Sondland, U.S. ambassador to the European Union: <http://apne.ws/8NmIA02>

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Kurt Volker, former U.S. envoy to Ukraine: <http://apne.ws/rTdEmG4>
Michael McKinley, former adviser to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo: <http://apne.ws/PrBMFaM>
Marie Yovanovitch, former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, also scheduled to testify at an open hearing next week: <http://apne.ws/mBvxghb>

Germany, allies mark 30 years since Berlin Wall fell

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany marked the 30th anniversary Saturday of the opening of the Berlin Wall, a pivotal moment in the events that brought down Communism in eastern Europe.

Leaders from Germany, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic attended a ceremony at Bernauer Strasse — where one of the last parts of the Berlin Wall remains — before placing roses in gaps in the once-fearsome barrier that divided the city for 28 years.

Axel Klausmeier, head of the Berlin Wall memorial site, recalled the images of delirious Berliners from East and West crying tears of joy as they hugged each other on the evening of Nov. 9, 1989 .

Klausmeier paid tribute to the peaceful protesters in East Germany and neighboring Warsaw Pact countries who took to the streets demanding freedom and democracy, and to then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of reforms.

The protests and a stream of people fleeing East Germany piled pressure on the country's Communist government to open its borders to the West and ultimately end the nation's post-war division.

Thirty years on, Germany has become the most powerful economic and political force on the continent, but there remain deep misgivings among some in the country about how the transition from socialism to capitalism was managed.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel acknowledged this in a recent interview with daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung, saying that "with some things, where one might have thought that East and West would have aligned, one can see today that it might rather take half a century or more."

Speaking at a memorial service in a small chapel near where the Wall once stood, Merkel commemorated those who were killed or imprisoned for trying to flee from East to West Germany and insisted that the fight for freedom worldwide isn't over.

"The Berlin Wall, ladies and gentlemen, is history and it teaches us: No wall that keeps people out and restricts freedom is so high or so wide that it can't be broken down," she said.

Merkel also recalled that Nov. 9 remains a fraught date in German history, as it also marks the anniversary of the so-called Night of Broken Glass, an anti-Jewish pogrom in 1938 that foreshadowed the Nazi's Holocaust.

Light installations, concerts and public debates were planned throughout the city and other parts of Germany to mark the fall of the Wall, including a concert at Berlin's iconic Brandenburg Gate.

Follow AP's coverage of the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall at <https://www.apnews.com/FalloftheBerlinWall>

Global debate gets underway over married Catholic priests

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany's Catholics reacted enthusiastically when bishops from across the Amazon called for the ordination of married men as priests to address the clergy shortage in that region. Such reforms have been pushed for decades by many German bishops and lay groups who hope it can lead to the liberalization of centuries of Roman Catholic tradition.

There is resistance elsewhere for the proposal, however, with the conservative Catholic establishment making sure its voice is heard as Pope Francis prepares his own document — expected by year's end — that could determine whether married priests and female deacons eventually become a reality in the Amazon.

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Bishop Franz-Josef Bode from Osnabrueck, Germany, welcomed the proposals and suggested that a European synod similar to last month's assembly by the Amazon bishops could be a useful way to address pressing issues on the continent.

He told the Osnabrueck Diocese paper Kirchenbote that while the Amazon Synod's recommendations would not be transferable one-to-one in Europe, they might show the way forward to a similar type of priesthood in Germany that allows for combining work and family.

"Regarding the role of women in our societal and ecclesiastical situation, the recommendations are a tail wind for our efforts so far," Bode said.

A powerful lay organization, the Central Committee of German Catholics, or ZdK, stressed that its congregations also are concerned about such problems.

"The question of whether we still have enough priests who live in celibacy and can fulfill all the tasks needed in the community is one that needs to be asked in Germany as well," ZdK Vice President Karin Kortmann told The Associated Press on Friday.

"It's right to ask how we can open offices within the church without jeopardizing the basic principles," Kortmann said. "It is also a question of credibility that we discuss women's access to all offices within the church."

The ZdK will take part in the two-year "synodal path" meetings with the German Bishops Conference that holds its first plenary session in January in Frankfurt. It is widely expected to push for married priests and the ordination of women, among other reforms.

Vicar generals from 10 German archdioceses sent a letter Tuesday to the bishops conference and the ZdK, saying they also consider "fundamental reforms of the church in Germany to be urgently necessary, indeed essential."

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the archbishop of Munich and chairman of the bishops conference, expressed support for the Amazon Synod's proposal, but stopped short of calling for a global recognition of married priests. In a statement after it ended, Marx tried to dampen expectations among German Catholics by saying "the synod was not about the abolishment of celibacy, that's not going to happen."

The Catholic Church already allows for married priests in Eastern Rite churches and in cases where married Anglican, Lutheran or other Protestant priests have converted to Catholicism. But if Francis accepts the synod's proposal, it would mark a first for the Latin Rite church in a millennium and could help the church compete with evangelical and Protestant churches that are gaining converts, especially in South America.

The synod's proposals have not been universally embraced outside the region.

Some key cardinals at the Vatican and elsewhere have voiced opposition, warning that married priests in the Amazon would create far-reaching, negative effects on the priesthood elsewhere for the 1.2 billion-member church, while also opening the door to an even greater problem: What to do about divorced priests.

Most of these critics are from the hierarchy's conservative camp that has grown bolder in voicing skepticism or outright opposition to Francis. They form part of the high-level criticism that is buffeting the papacy over issues such as the clerical sexual abuse scandal, allegations of financial improprieties in the Holy See and doctrinal concerns.

Perhaps the most surprising critic was Cardinal Marc Ouellet, head of the Vatican's powerful bishops office and a top adviser to Francis. Ouellet, considered a possible papal contender, published a book on the eve of the Amazon Synod affirming the value of the celibate priesthood and expressing skepticism that married priests would solve its clergy shortage.

A more predictable "no" came from Cardinal Robert Sarah, an arch-conservative from Guinea whom Francis has kept on at the Vatican's liturgy office despite sharp ideological differences. He also published a book on the eve of the synod lamenting the "dark night" of crisis for the church, citing the sexual abuse scandal as well as overall doubt about Catholic doctrine and morals, and insisting on the value of priestly celibacy.

"I often hear people say that (celibacy) is only a question of historical discipline. I think that that is wrong. Celibacy reveals the very essence of the Christian priesthood. To speak about it as a secondary reality is

hurtful to all the priests of the world," he said.

Outside the Vatican, Cardinal Camillo Ruini — a conservative who was St. John Paul II's vicar for Rome and head of the Italian bishops conference — also criticized the proposal and said he "hopes and prays that the pope ... doesn't confirm it."

Ruini acknowledged the priest shortage in the Amazon and said the proposal was understandable, "but I think it's the wrong choice," he told *Corriere della Sera*. "The celibacy of priests is a great sign of total dedication to God in the service of your brothers, especially in an eroticized context like today's."

Ruini also suggested married priests would inevitably lead to divorced priests.

"Today marriage is profoundly in crisis: Married priests and their wives would be exposed to the effects of this crisis, and their human and spiritual condition wouldn't be able to avoid it," he said.

Most U.S. bishops have so far avoided emphatic pronouncements about the synod.

One of the more outspoken is Bishop Richard Stika of Knoxville, Tennessee, who says celibacy "is a living gift of a man to the church and should be the norm."

In an interview with the AP, Stika said there are practical reasons for excluding married priests, at least in the U.S. Many dioceses are struggling financially and would be hard-pressed to support a household that included a priest's wife and children, he said. It might also limit a bishop's ability to transfer priests with a family.

"I know the pressures of being a celibate priest," Stika said. "If you then have a family of six, your primary vocation should be to your family, not your parish."

Brazilian Bishop Mário Antônio da Silva of the Amazonian diocese of Roraima, who attended the synod, said married priests and ordained women are needed in the Amazon.

"I defend celibacy for those who feel the priestly calling. But I also say: We need new collaborators in our communities," Da Silva told the AP. "The ordination of married men meets this need, so I'm in favor."

He suggested the concept might eventually spread beyond the Amazon.

"It's a process that must advance for the maturity of our church," Da Silva said, "not just in the Amazon, but who knows, maybe in other parts of the church, in our continent, and the whole world."

"We want Pope Francis to help us move forward with this," he said.

Associated Press writers Nicole Winfield in Vatican City, David Crary in New York and Luis Andres Henao in Buenos Aires, Argentina, contributed.

Hopes of young Lebanese to escape sectarianism put to test

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Singer Tania Saleh grew up amid a civil war that robbed her of her childhood, of her friends and neighbors and of the Lebanon she so loved. For years, she has sung the pains of sectarian schisms.

"You Lebanese have created 10 or 12 gods ... You divided me. You aggravated me. You parceled me out and you became divided," one of her songs says, imagining a conversation with God. "He who wants to pray ... must understand that God, the creator, has not made one sect better than the other."

Based on a poem written in 1975, the year the war broke out, the lyrics still felt searing and relevant enough for Saleh to add to an album in 2017.

Now, the 50-year-old hopes younger Lebanese can make her country dance to a different tune, one that transcends sectarian divisions. She is inspired by the mosaic of protesters who have come together in the past weeks from across the religious, political and geographic spectrum, united in disdain for a political class they say has cheated them of a decent future.

"The new generation is not like us," she said. "We have seen too many tragedies and so we are scared."

The demonstrators have provided those eager to see the country move past its sectarian legacy with a glimpse of what can be. But Saleh says she has no illusions about how long that path will be. Those aspirations are increasingly being put to the test by a system that delicately balances among 18 officially recognized sectarian groups.

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The system is locked into the country's politics. The posts of the president, prime minister and parliament speaker are given to the biggest communities — Maronite Christian, Sunni Muslim and Shiite Muslim. Most political parties are explicitly based on sect, and politicians pass out patronage and jobs to their communities.

It is also engrained in society, where many fear domination by other sects and one sect's gain can be seen as another's loss.

Looming over everything is the fear new violence might erupt if anyone wrecks the balance.

That threat resonates less with a generation that has little or no memory of a war that ended in 1990. The protests erupted over proposed new taxes but snowballed into calls for the entire political elite to go. For them, sectarian power-sharing is bound together with corruption and mismanagement that has impoverished them and left infrastructure so decrepit that power outages hit every day.

Hiba Farhat, a 31-year-old Shiite protester, said politicians pit sects against each other so "people would say, 'Ok, I accept corruption and I accept this leader; I just need him to protect me from the other sect.'"

Slogans like "the era of sects has ended" and "a revolution against fear" are scrawled in graffiti and proclaimed on banners. At a recent protest, demonstrators poured into Beirut squares in response to calls to keep unified.

Wearing a flowing black robe and a light-colored scarf framing her face, 25-year-old Huda Wissam smiled and swayed to the tunes of national songs as others rhythmically stomped their feet. With her was her 15-year-old brother and 20-year-old sister.

"I am veiled and when I see a Christian smiling at me, I get reassured that we have shed off sectarianism," said Wissam, a Sunni Muslim. "The challenge is for us all to remain together, Christian, Muslim, Shiite or Sunni ... then we will succeed."

Her father, she said, wanted her to stay out of protests, warning, "This will lead to a civil war."

"He doesn't want his children to become victims for something that won't happen. He has given up, but we won't," she said. "I don't want to wait until I am my parents' age and then there would be nothing I can do."

On a recent night, a small group of protesters sat on a sidewalk by the bell tower of a church in the northern Beirut suburb of Jal el-Deeb and took stock of how far they have come.

"The grudges that they have planted in us, our generation has put an end to them. I no longer feel sectarianism. Lebanon comes first," Charbel Elie, 32, told the group.

He wanted to know what the protesters had gained.

"Today, we don't ask what sect you belong to and what area you're from," and fear of criticizing leaders has been broken, replied Nayla Geagea, an activist and lawyer. She walked them through constitutional steps to forming a new government.

A 75-year-old man in the circle spoke up to say he had no questions but wanted to apologize to the younger generation for the country they were inheriting.

"We will fix it, uncle," someone yelled.

But protesters have had to keep sectarianism from fragmenting their own ranks. Geagea pointed out that when the prime minister stepped down — one of the demands of protesters — some made it look like the demonstrators were targeting his Sunni community. "We have to defeat this rhetoric," she said.

Amid grumbling over roadblocks and fears of economic collapse, men shouting Shiite religious slogans and chants in support of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah confronted protesters in one instance.

Some Shiites who initially joined demonstrations have stayed away after Nasrallah — even as he expressed sympathy for protesters' demands — accused foreign powers of exploiting them to undermine Hezbollah and warned against dragging the country into civil war.

Tensions between opposing Christian factions have also run high. Some supporters of President Michel Aoun accuse rivals from the rightwing Lebanese Forces movement of seeking to topple him. The two sides fought each other brutally in the final years of the civil war.

Aoun backers held a demonstration to support him and the president has called for unity. "The sectar-

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ian system will not get toppled through protests," said one of them, 27-year-old Elias Khoury. "It will get toppled when the hearts, not the laws, change."

The two are tangled together — a social mentality clinging to sect and a political class whose power depends on sectarianism.

"When you ask for the dismantling of the political sectarian system ... you're basically asking the current political elite to commit group suicide. They're not going to do that," said Maha Yahya, director of the Carnegie Middle East Center.

The young "want basic, fundamental rights and for them they really have nothing to lose," she said. "They recognize that this system hasn't worked for their parents; it is not working for them."

Saleh, the singer, said she takes hope from a generation she feels is not as sectarian. Her son, she said, doesn't care to know the faith of his schoolmates.

Just like her art, her life has been colored by Lebanon's intricacies.

Her world changed at only six. The civil war broke out and school friends and neighbors started disappearing. The Christians fled to other areas. Born to a Sunni father and a Shiite mother, Saleh would go out sometimes with a cross dangling around her neck, a statement of defiance to the fighters who stole the normalcy of her life.

The war pitted Palestinians against Lebanese, Christians against Muslims, Christians against Christians and every other combination possible.

As battles raged, Saleh and her family left too, again and again and again. They bounced from home to home, escaped briefly to Kuwait. These memories are seared in her mind. Her mother begging armed men to let them drive through. Listening every day in Kuwait to iconic Lebanese singer Fairouz belt out "I love you, oh Lebanon."

"There is no hope for me to enjoy a proper country," Saleh said. "But the hope is for our kids and grand-kids. Let them start now better than waiting for when it's too late."

Associated Press writer Zeina Karam in Beirut contributed.

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Trump tried hard to win Ukraine Biden probes, officials say

By **LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and ZEKE J. MILLER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There was no hinting around, it was a straight-out trade, two key White House officials told impeachment investigators. If Ukraine's new leader wanted an Oval Office welcome from Donald Trump — and he did — he would have to open a public probe into the president's Democratic foe Joe Biden and his son.

"There was no ambiguity," said Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, an Army officer assigned to the National Security Council, recounting an extraordinary day of meetings at the White House last summer.

According to transcripts released Friday in the House Democrats' impeachment inquiry, Vindman and Fiona Hill, a former White House Russia adviser, both gave firsthand descriptions of scenes central to the congressional probe.

Vindman testified that Gordon Sondland, a Trump donor serving as ambassador to the European Union, told the visiting officials that if they hoped to win that coveted face-to-face meeting, "the Ukrainians would have to deliver an investigation into the Bidens."

The Bidens? the House questioners pressed. In the White House Ward Room he mentioned the word "Bidens"?

"To the best of my recollection, yes," Vindman testified. "My visceral reaction to what was being called for suggested that it was explicit."

In another episode that day at the White House, Hill testified that Trump's national security adviser John

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Bolton "immediately stiffened" as Sondland "blurted out" that he had worked out with Trump's acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney just that trade — the Ukrainians' probe for an Oval Office welcome.

"Well, we have an agreement with the chief of staff for a meeting if these investigations in the energy sector start," Hill recalled -- a reference to the firm, Burisma, where Biden's son was on the board.

Then Bolton then abruptly ended the meeting.

Pressed on how it came to be that Sondland, a wealthy businessman who has become a key figure in the impeachment probe played such a pivotal role in Ukraine policy, Hill testified she was dismayed by the idea.

"He said he was in charge of Ukraine," Hill recalled.

She testified that she challenged the new ambassador to the point of being admittedly "rude" to him. "Who says you're in charge of Ukraine?" she said.

"The president," he replied.

The hundreds of pages of transcripts showed the investigation's deep reach into the White House ahead of next week's public hearings.

Vindman alerted superiors about the meeting he described and also after he listened to the July phone call in which Trump personally appealed to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to investigate Biden and an outlier theory of Ukrainian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

A whistleblower's complaint about that call triggered the impeachment probe, which also focuses on allegations that Trump was holding up military aid to Ukraine, which fears aggression by its neighbor Russia, until he got a public declaration of the Ukrainian investigation.

Both officials are among nearly a dozen who have testified behind closed doors so far, and both said they were not the whistleblower.

Trump insisted earlier Friday he has not been damaged by testimony, and he and fellow Republicans complain the witnesses generally are relying on secondhand accounts of central events.

Speaking to reporters as he left on a campaign trip, Trump said he was "not concerned about anything" that has been disclosed so far.

He also distanced himself from Sondland, whom he praised last month as "a really good man and great American."

"I hardly know the gentleman," he said.

Despite Trump's dismissive comments, the new testimony, particularly the day of meetings July 10 at the White House, has become pivotal. It puts Mulvaney more directly involved in the shadow diplomacy being run through Rudy Giuliani, the president's personal attorney, and implemented by Sondland.

After Bolton left the one meeting, he told Hill to follow the group into the next and report back to him.

She testified that at the second White House meeting, Sondland "as I came in, was talking about how he had an agreement with Chief of Staff Mulvaney for a meeting with the Ukrainians if they were going to go forward with investigations." She said she heard Sondland mention Burisma.

When she relayed what she heard back to Bolton, he called it a "drug deal" and told her to report it to the National Security Council lead counsel, John Eisenberg.

She testified:

"This is a direct quote from Ambassador Bolton: 'You go and tell Eisenberg that I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this, and you go and tell him what you've heard and what I've said.'"

Republican Rep. John Ratcliffe, a Texas Republican, sought to portray Trump's request for a favor in his phone call with the Ukrainian president as falling short of a demand.

But Vindman disagreed.

"When the president of the United States makes a request for a favor, it certainly seems, I would take it as a demand," he retorted.

Vindman, a veteran of the Iraq War, then added: "This was about getting a White House meeting. It was a demand for him to fulfill this particular prerequisite in order to get the meeting."

Vindman also said he wanted to amend the White House's rough transcript of the call in three places, notably by filling in the ellipses when Trump was discussing CrowdStrike, the security firm that's central to

the alternative theory of 2016 election interference and a server storing Hillary Clinton's emails.

Vindman heard Trump say about CrowdStrike, "They say you have it."

He also wanted to substitute "Burisma" at a point where the transcript says that Zelenskiy tells Trump that Ukraine will look into "the company that you mentioned." And Vindman wanted to add that Trump said, "there are recordings" of Biden, referring to a speech the then-vice president gave about rooting out corruption in Ukraine.

Vindman took his concerns about the call to the NSC's lead counsel — and about Sondland's comments at the White House to his twin brother, Eugene, an ethics lawyer at the National Security Council.

At one point in Vindman's testimony, his lawyer objected to questions from Republicans he believed were intended to draw out the identity of the whistleblower who filed the initial complaint.

Michael Volkov said his client would not answer questions about how many people he had told about his concerns.

Pressed repeatedly, Volkov said, "He tells you he's not the whistleblower, OK? He says he feels uncomfortable about it. Try and respect his feelings at this point."

A person, presumably a Republican, identified only as "voice" interjects: "We're uncomfortable impeaching the president."

Associated Press writers Colleen Long, Mike Balsamo, Matthew Lee, , Matthew Daly, Laurie Kellman and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Trump pushes back on reports US will remove China tariffs

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday dismissed a Chinese official's assertion that his administration has agreed to roll back some of the higher tariffs it's imposed on Chinese goods.

The Chinese official said Thursday that the two sides had agreed to a phased cancellation of their tariff hikes as part of an emerging agreement.

Trump's pushback suggested that negotiations haven't progressed as far as hoped as the world's two biggest economies struggle to negotiate an end to their trade war, which has hurt both economies.

"They'd like to have a rollback," Trump told reporters at the White House, referring to the Chinese. "I haven't agreed to anything."

The two sides have been working on an initial "Phase 1" deal that was announced Oct. 12 but that still isn't final.

Financial markets in the U.S. and globally rallied Thursday at the prospect of an agreement to wind down the U.S.-China trade fight, but then stumbled Friday on Trump's comments before eking out small gains. The Dow Jones Industrial Average finished up 6.44 points, or less than 0.1%, after shedding as many as 96 points earlier in the day.

Trump repeated his claims that China wants a deal more than the United States and that the United States benefits from extra tariff revenue. The president says the tariffs are paid by China, but studies conducted since the duties were imposed find that Americans businesses and consumers are paying them.

"Frankly, they want to make a deal a lot more than I do," Trump said. "I'm very happy right now. We're taking in billions of dollars."

A private sector source with knowledge of the talks said Thursday that the United States had agreed to suspend the duties Trump threatened to impose December 15th on about \$160 billion of Chinese imports as part of the agreement. But there is dissension in the White House about whether and by how much to roll back 15% duties on another \$112 billion of goods imposed Sept. 1.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow also told Bloomberg News Thursday that if a deal were reached, it would include reduced tariffs.

"The White House never speaks with one voice," Mary Lovely, a trade economist at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said Thursday.

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Despite Trump's cavalier comments, analysts say the administration has plenty of incentives to reach a deal soon. Trump said last month that the "Phase 1" pact would include the purchase of tens of billions of dollars of U.S. farm products by China, which would benefit farm states, many of which supported Trump in 2016.

The tariffs imposed in September covered clothes, toys, and shoes, raising prices for many widely used consumer goods.

And the Dec. 15 tariffs would mostly hit popular consumer products such as smart phones and laptops. Not only would that also raise consumer costs, but those tariffs would affect many products designed by U.S. companies, for which China gets relatively little of the economic benefit.

"The December tariff round would largely hit products designed and marketed by multinational firms, mostly with components from the United States and its allies, and assembled in non-Chinese-owned factories," Lovely wrote on the Peterson Institute's website .

The trade war stems from the Trump administration's complaints that China is seeking to unfairly boost its high-tech industries by stealing U.S. technology or forcing American companies to share it as a condition of doing business there. Most business groups and China trade experts agree that China has violated trade rules and have largely supported the administration's tougher line.

Still, the tariffs have hurt both countries' economies. China's growth slowed to an annual rate of 6% last month, a healthy pace for more advanced economies but China's slowest in three decades.

In the United States, businesses are dealing with the tariffs' higher costs and are uncertain about their international supply chains. They have responded by cutting their investment spending in new plants and equipment for two straight quarters. That's lowered U.S. economic growth to 1.9% at an annual rate in the July-September quarter from 3.1% in the first three months of this year.

A report released Wednesday by a trade group opposed to the duties found that Americans paid \$7.1 billion in tariffs in September, a record high for a single month.

Once a "Phase 1" deal is reached, the two sides will still need to decide where the two leaders — Trump and China's Xi Jinping — will sign the pact. Trump said Friday that they could hold a summit in Iowa or elsewhere in U.S. "farm country."

AP Writer Aamer Madhani contributed to this report.

Vanna White hosts 'Wheel of Fortune' after Sajak has surgery

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Wheel of Fortune" host Pat Sajak had to have emergency surgery, and his long-time co-host Vanna White will fill in for him while he recovers.

The show said in a statement that Thursday's taping was canceled as the 73-year-old Sajak underwent successful surgery to correct a blocked intestine.

The 62-year-old White stepped in as host when taping resumed Friday for episodes that will air starting Dec. 9.

The statement says Sajak is resting comfortably and looking forward to returning but does not say how long he is expected to be out or how long White will act as host.

Sajak and White have co-hosted the show since the early 1980s.

She filled in for him once before for one segment of the show, when Sajak had laryngitis in 1996.

Bloomberg to pass on Iowa, NH, focus on Super Tuesday states

By JULIE PACE and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michael Bloomberg plans to skip early voting states like Iowa and New Hampshire if he launches a presidential bid and instead focus his efforts on the crush of states that vote on Super Tuesday and beyond. It's a strategy that acknowledges the limitations of entering the race at this late stage and the opportunities afforded by the billionaire's vast personal wealth.

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Bloomberg adviser Howard Wolfson says other candidates already have a big head start in the first four states to vote — Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina — and Bloomberg needs to be realistic about where he can make up ground.

"If we run, we are confident we can win in states voting on Super Tuesday and beyond, where we will start on an even footing," Wolfson said. Nearly a quarter of primary delegates up for grabs in the March 3 Super Tuesday contests.

Bloomberg qualified Friday to get on the ballot in Alabama, one of the Super Tuesday states. His team is also making plans to file in Arkansas, which has a Tuesday deadline.

Bloomberg's candidacy has the potential to upend the Democratic race less than three months before primary voting begins. The billionaire businessman initially ruled out a 2020 run, but began to reconsider in recent weeks, citing concerns about the ability of the current crop of contenders to defeat President Donald Trump.

Bloomberg himself has called prominent Democrats to alert them to his likely run, and his staff is scrambling to meet fast-approaching primary filing deadlines.

Among those Bloomberg has reached out to: Tom Vilsack, the former Iowa governor who remains popular in the state. Vilsack told The Associated Press that Bloomberg called him Thursday evening and left a voicemail indicating he plans to run.

"He is in," Vilsack said of Bloomberg's message.

Despite the outreach to Vilsack, advisers say Bloomberg would not make a serious play for votes in Iowa and the other early states. Other candidates in the crowded field have spent months courting voters there and building campaign operations.

The early states offer just a small percentage of the delegates needed to clinch the Democratic nomination. But victories there typically give candidates crucial momentum that helps carry them into bigger states with more delegates on the line.

Bloomberg is calculating that he could build an advantage in those states now with his ability to quickly pour money into staff, television advertising and other campaign operations while other candidates are competing elsewhere.

Bill Carrick, a veteran Democratic strategist based in Los Angeles, said he doesn't think skipping the early voting states is ever a viable strategy.

"I don't think you can just hopscotch around the calendar to suit your own political purposes," Carrick said. "You skip the early states, you're going to have a difficult time. I don't see any evidence that strategy ever works."

Officials in Iowa and New Hampshire said they were disappointed in Bloomberg's decision. New Hampshire Democratic Party Chair Ray Buckley said it was unfortunate that Bloomberg won't "be tested the same way that the other Democratic candidates have been and will be."

Bloomberg has spent the past few weeks talking with prominent Democrats about the state of the race, expressing concerns about the steadiness of former Vice President Joe Biden's campaign and the rise of liberal Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, according to people with knowledge of those discussions who spoke on condition of anonymity to relay details of private conversations.

Biden, campaigning in New Hampshire on Friday, welcomed Bloomberg to the race.

"Michael's a solid guy, and let's see where it goes," he told reporters. "I have no problem with him getting in the race."

Bloomberg's moves come as the Democratic race enters a crucial phase. Biden's front-runner status has been vigorously challenged by Warren and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who are flush with cash from small-dollar donors. But both are viewed by some Democrats as too liberal to win in a general election faceoff with Trump.

Trump told reporters Friday that Bloomberg might well spend "a lot of money" but "doesn't have the magic to do well." Trump suggested he'd easily beat the former mayor and fellow billionaire.

"Little Michael will fail," Trump said at the White House, adding, "There is nobody I'd rather run against

than Little Michael, that I can tell you.”

Despite a historically large field, some Democrats anxious about defeating Trump have been looking for other options. Former Attorney General Eric Holder and former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick have quietly had conversations with supporters urging them to consider a run, but neither appears likely to get in the race.

Bloomberg, a Republican-turned-independent who registered as a Democrat last year, has flirted with a presidential run before but ultimately backed down, including in 2016. He endorsed Hillary Clinton in that race and, in a speech at the Democratic Party convention, pummeled Trump as a con who has oversold his business successes.

Bloomberg instead plunged his efforts and his money into gun control advocacy and climate change initiatives. He again looked seriously at a presidential bid earlier this year, traveling to early voting states and conducting extensive polling, but decided not to run in part because of Biden’s perceived strength.

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin in Washington; Alexandra Jaffe and Kathleen Ronayne in Des Moines, Iowa; Michelle R. Smith in Providence, R.I.; and Nicholas Riccardi in Denver contributed to this report.

Facebook is deleting the name of the potential whistleblower

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Facebook says it is deleting the name of the person who has been identified in conservative circles as the whistleblower who triggered a congressional impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump’s actions.

The company said Friday that mention of the potential whistleblower’s name violates Facebook’s “coordinating harm policy,” which prohibits material that could identify a “witness, informant, or activist.”

Facebook says it is removing mentions of the alleged whistleblower’s name and will revisit this decision if the name is widely published in the media or used by public figures in debate. The policy is not new. Facebook says it has been applying it to the whistleblower case and removing the person’s name for a few days.

On Twitter, though, the alleged whistleblower’s name was circulating widely on Friday. The company does not have a policy against identifying whistleblowers by name and is not removing the posts.

Some of the stories identifying the person came from the conservative news site Breitbart, which Facebook counts as one of its news partners in a newly launched news section on its app. However, the company said it was also removing identifying posts on the whistleblower from Breitbart.

In a statement, Twitter said it prohibits the sharing of “personally identifiable information about any individual, including the alleged whistleblower.” But the company’s policy on such information does not consider a person’s name to be private information, a category that does include details such as a person’s address, contact information or medical records.

This is not the first time Twitter and Facebook diverged on important policies. Last week, Twitter said it is banning all political ads from its service, in sharp contrast to Facebook, which continues to defend running paid political ads, even false ones, as a free speech priority.

U.S. whistleblower laws exist to protect the identity and careers of people who bring forward accusations of wrongdoing by government officials. Lawmakers in both parties have historically backed those protections.

The Associated Press typically does not reveal the identity of whistleblowers.

So far, President Donald Trump has avoided identifying the whistleblower by name. Exposing whistleblowers can be dicey, even for a president. For one thing, doing so could be a violation of federal law.

While there’s little chance Trump could face charges, revealing the name could give Democrats more impeachment fodder. It could also prompt a backlash among some Senate Republicans who have long defended whistleblowers.

Amid all this, a false claim about the identity of the whistleblower has also been circulating online. Falsely

captioned photos of former White House staffer David Edelman circulated widely on Twitter, Facebook and Reddit this week as social media users tried to unmask the whistleblower.

They were possibly inspired by posts and stories shared by conservative outlets and the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., that claimed to reveal the person's identity.

Friends, family support Twitter employee charged in spy case

By STEFANIE DAZIO and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Family and friends of a former Twitter employee accused of spying for Saudi Arabia call him a dedicated husband and father who has overcome recent mental health struggles, according to letters of support filed to federal court.

Ahmad Abouammo, a U.S. citizen and a media partnership manager for Twitter's Middle East region, is charged with acting as an agent of Saudi Arabia without registering with the U.S. government.

The case marks the first time the kingdom, long linked to the U.S. through its massive oil reserves and regional security arrangements, has been accused of spying in America.

The seven letters — four from family members, including Abouammo's wife, and three from former co-workers — were filed Thursday ahead of the hearing. The letters paint a portrait of a kind, caring man who is needed at home to support his family and friends.

Roy Abdo, who worked with Abouammo at the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, urged the court to double check the facts.

"Knowing Ahmad's personality, work ethics, and having worked with him on a personal level for over two years, something seems not right about this," Abdo wrote.

Judge Paula L. McCandlis on Friday ordered Abouammo released on bail with GPS monitoring, a mental health evaluation and travel restrictions. His release was then at least temporarily put on hold because federal prosecutors said they planned to file an appeal Friday afternoon.

Abouammo's attorney Christopher Black said during the hearing that Abouammo's wife, sister, uncle and a good friend were in court and that Abouammo is not a flight risk because he has no assets, is deeply in debt and surrendered his passports to agents last year.

Prosecutors allege Abouammo and another former Twitter employee, Saudi citizen Ali Alzabarah, were rewarded by Saudi royal officials with a designer watch and tens of thousands of dollars funneled into secret bank accounts.

Alzabarah and a third suspect, a Saudi named Ahmed Almutairi who worked as a social media adviser for the Saudi royal family and acted as an intermediary with the Twitter employees, are believed to be in Saudi Arabia. Both are wanted by the FBI.

The federal complaint, unsealed Wednesday in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, detailed a coordinated effort by Saudi government officials to recruit Twitter employees to look up the private data of accounts, including email addresses linked to the accounts and internet protocol addresses that can give up a user's location.

The accounts included those of a popular critic of the government with more than 1 million followers and a news personality. Neither was named.

Twitter said Wednesday it cooperated in a U.S. investigation of two former employees accused of accessing personal account information on behalf of the Saudi government.

The San Francisco-based social media company said in a statement it recognizes "the length bad actors will go to try and undermine" its service, and that there are tools in place to protect users with sensitive accounts.

A senior Saudi official in Washington said Thursday that "we expect all our citizens to abide by the laws of the countries in which they live." The official spoke with reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss issues sensitive to the government.

On LinkedIn, Abouammo lists his present work as a digital consultant with "Cyrcl," which Washington state records show was dissolved in 2017, as well as a co-founder of a "new startup that will redefine social."

He has previously worked at Amazon and Middle East Broadcasting Networks, both companies confirmed. However, the titles he listed on LinkedIn for those jobs did not match their records. His website states he is finishing a master's degree in management from Harvard University, which did not immediately confirm if he was enrolled.

In her letter to the court, Abouammo's wife, Zeina, called her husband "my backbone, my rock, and my companion." They have been married for 10 years and have three children together.

Zeina Abouammo wrote that they both suffered from mental health issues over the last year, "yet he was always strong and helpful." The allegations date back to 2014.

Abouammo's sister Amani said her brother helped her escape an abusive marriage and has taken care of her daughter, who has multiple disabilities.

"Ahmad is genuine, family guy, and generous," his cousin Rabih Abouammo wrote. "There is no way that he would jeopardize all of (this) for anything, he doesn't even need to."

Another former co-worker at the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Shirine Hossaini, told The Associated Press he was a "really sweet, happy, very thoughtful, really trustworthy" man who was not political.

"I find it really hard to believe Ahmad would be a part of that," she said. "I can't imagine anybody changing like that. That's a big shift if it's all true."

Dazio reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Lisa Baumann in Seattle and Ben Fox in Washington contributed.

US officials identify 'strong culprit' in vaping illnesses

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. health officials announced a breakthrough Friday into the cause of a mysterious outbreak of vaping illnesses, reporting they have a "very strong culprit."

The same chemical compound was found in fluid taken from the lungs of 29 patients across the country, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. The compound — vitamin E acetate — was previously found in liquid from electronic cigarettes and other vaping devices used by many of those who got sick.

But this is the first time they've found a common suspect in the damaged lungs of patients, officials said. "We are in a better place in terms of having one very strong culprit," said the CDC's Dr. Anne Schuchat.

Agency officials cautioned they cannot rule out all other toxic substances, and it may take animal studies to clearly show vitamin E acetate causes the lung damage that's been seen.

More than 2,000 Americans who vape have gotten sick since March, many of them teen and young adults, and at least 40 people have died. The bulk of the cases occurred in August and September but new cases are still being reported.

Vitamin E acetate has only recently been used as a thickener in vaping fluid, particularly in black market vape cartridges. While vitamin E is safe as a vitamin pill or to use on the skin, inhaling oily droplets of it can be harmful. It's sticky and stays in the lungs — the CDC's Dr. Jim Pirkle likened it to honey.

Many who got sick said they had vaped liquids that contain THC, the high-inducing part of marijuana, with many saying they got them from friends or bought them on the black market.

E-cigarettes and other vaping devices heat a liquid into an inhalable vapor. Most products contained nicotine, but THC vaping has been growing more common.

Pirkle said thickeners like vitamin E acetate probably would not be routinely added to nicotine liquids, which need to be more watery for vaping.

Juul Labs, maker of the top-selling brand of e-cigarette, issued a statement after the CDC announcement, noting that its nicotine products do not contain THC or any vitamin E compounds.

Symptoms of the vaping illness include trouble breathing, chest pain, fatigue and vomiting. Imaging tests show lung injuries and doctors can't find infections or other causes.

About two months ago, New York drew attention to vitamin E acetate when the state's public health lab discovered it in samples of vaping products from sick patients. In some instances, it made up more than

half of the liquid in the cartridges.

The chemical has shown up in tests in other labs, too, including a U.S. Food and Drug Administration lab in Cincinnati that found vitamin E acetate in half of the more than 400 THC samples.

For the latest test, the CDC used fluid extracted from the lungs of 29 patients in 10 states, including two who died. Lab workers looked for a range of substances that had been found in various vaping devices, including nicotine, THC and other marijuana components, plant oils, mineral oil and cutting agents used on the black market.

It was an exhaustive list of more than 1,000, said Pirkle, who oversees agency's chemical analysis labs.

The one substance that came up in all 29 was vitamin E acetate.

"To me what's important here is both what they found, and what they didn't find" said Scott Becker, head of the Association of Public Health Laboratories. "This was the only thing they found."

Portland State University's Robert Strongin, who's researched e-cigarettes, welcomed the CDC report but cautioned it doesn't mean other ingredients in vaping products are safe. "They still could cause long-term harm," he said.

The CDC's Pirkle said animal testing is now a priority and might produce results within a year.

"We really need the animal study to nail down cause and effect," he said.

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

Trump launches black outreach effort for 2020

By JILL COLVIN, ERRIN HAINES and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — During the 2016 campaign, candidate Donald Trump stood in front of largely white crowds and asked black voters to consider, "What the hell do you have to lose?"

Trump offered that same message Friday as he launched a black voters coalition in Atlanta, Georgia. While Trump's campaign had said his message would focus on his record and gains for black Americans under his watch, Trump instead spent most of his time demonizing Democrats and appearing to try to pit minority voters against immigrants.

"The Democrats have let you down," Trump told the crowd of several hundred supporters, including several who wore red "BLACK LIVES MAGA" hats. "They've dismissed you. They've hurt you. They've sabotaged you for far too long."

Trump spoke at the launch of a new "Black Voices for Trump" outreach initiative dedicated to "recruiting and activating Black Americans in support of President Trump," according to the campaign.

Trump predicted he would win reelection in 2020 with "a groundswell of support from hardworking African American patriots."

Such prediction have been met with skepticism from critics, however, given Trump's consistently dismal approval rating with black voters.

Trump has spent much of the last four years engaged in racially charged attacks, going after minority members of Congress, claiming "no human being" would want to live in "rodent infested," majority-minority Baltimore and insisting there were "very fine people on both sides" of the deadly Charlottesville protest against white supremacists.

Shortly after landing in Georgia on Friday, Trump retweeted a call from one black supporter for submissions for a "#MAGACHALLENGE" competition featuring Trump-friendly rap songs. Trump said he would be announcing the winners and inviting them to the White House to meet with him and perform.

"I think black Americans are not the audience for these outreach efforts," said Theodore Johnson, a senior fellow at the Brennan Center for Justice who is an expert in race and politics. While Trump might be able to maintain the low level of black support he received in 2016, or perhaps expand it by 1 or 2 points, Johnson sees little evidence the president can change many minds.

"I think this is not going to move the needle at all," he said.

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Before launching the new effort, Trump met with supporters at a fundraiser that was expected to raise about \$3.5 million for a joint committee benefiting the Republican National Committee, the Trump campaign and the campaign of Sen. David Perdue, R-Ga. Nearby, a small group of protesters chanted, "Lock him up!"

Scores of protesters also gathered outside the convention center where Trump was speaking, chanting, "Impeach and remove."

Carl Dix, of the group Refuse Fascism, said he thought the launch was aimed at trying to send a message to Trump's white supporters that he's "not a racist. I've got black friends."

In 2016, 6% of black voters supported Trump, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of people who participated in its polls and were confirmed to have voted. There is no indication his support is growing. Polling shows that African Americans continue to be overwhelmingly negative in their assessments of the president's performance, with his approval hovering around 1 in 10 over the course of his presidency, according to Gallup.

Yet Trump's campaign dismissed the numbers, insisting the campaign has seen favorable movement and arguing the president can increase his margins with black voters by bringing new people into the fold.

"The polls have never been favorable for Trump, and the only poll that matters is on Election Day," said senior campaign adviser Katrina Pierson.

The campaign has launched similar coalitions for women, Latinos and veterans.

Darrell Scott, a black Ohio pastor and a longtime supporter of the president who is co-chair of the new coalition and spoke at Friday's event, said that in 2015 and 2016, supporters trying to sell Trump to black voters could only point forward to things they anticipated from Trump.

"Now that it's 2020, we're able to point backwards and to some very definitive accomplishments that the president has done," Scott said. "He delivered on promises he didn't even make."

During his remarks, Trump pointed to passage of bipartisan criminal justice reform legislation, which Trump signed into law last year, along with his ongoing support for opportunity zones in urban areas and new investments in historically black colleges.

"I don't know anyone who's done that kind of work outside of the president on attacking those big issues or trying to stop drugs from coming into the neighborhood and, at the same time, giving people second chances," said Ja'Ron Smith, deputy assistant to the president and one of the White House's few minority high-ranked officials.

He also pointed to a series of economic gains, including the fact that black unemployment hit a record low last year, with fewer blacks living in poverty. But Trump and his campaign also have a tendency to exaggerate the gains, giving Trump credit for trends that were years in the making, seizing on momentary upticks, cherry-picking favorable statistics and ignoring more troubling ones, such as black homeownership and net worth.

But Trump also worked to demonize the Democratic Party.

"For decades, the Democrats have taken African American voters totally for granted," Trump said claiming, "They didn't do anything for you."

"The betrayal of the black community" by Democrats is "unbelievable," he told them, adding, "It's amazing you've stayed so long, to be honest."

Trump also tried to pit the black community against immigrants, saying Democrats care more for people who have entered the U.S. illegally than African Americans. He wrongly claimed that Democrats had shut down the government last year to secure benefits for illegal immigrants and said they have never done anything similar for the African American community.

A September AP-NORC poll found that only roughly 3 in 10 Americans say the things Trump has done as president have been good for African Americans. And just 4% of African Americans said they think Trump's actions have had a positive impact on African Americans in general, while 81% said they think they've been bad.

Yet even if he can't win over black voters, some suspect that's not the point. As long as the campaign can keep on-the-fence voters from casting their ballots for the eventual Democratic nominee, the campaign will be helping Trump inch closer to a second victory.

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"I do think the main objective is to discourage turnout," said Johnson. "I absolutely think this is about creating doubt in black voters' minds about the Democratic nominee" so people feel like "there's almost no one worth voting for."

And he said fears were growing it might work.

"There is a pretty tangible fear among black Americans that Trump is going to win again because black turnout won't be enough to mute the white turnout," Johnson said. "There's a sense that in 2020 he's going to win again."

Haines reported from Philadelphia and Colvin from Washington. Associated Press writer Hannah Fingerhut in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Colvin and Haines on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/colvinj> and <https://twitter.com/emaravelous>

Mercury putting on rare show Monday, parading across the sun

By **MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Mercury is putting on a rare celestial show next week, parading across the sun in view of most of the world.

The solar system's smallest, innermost planet will resemble a tiny black dot Monday as it passes directly between Earth and the sun. It begins at 7:35 a.m. EST.

The entire 5 ½-hour event will be visible, weather permitting, in the eastern U.S. and Canada, and all Central and South America. The rest of North America, Europe and Africa will catch part of the action. Asia and Australia will miss out.

Unlike its 2016 transit, Mercury will score a near bull's-eye this time, passing practically dead center in front of our star.

Mercury's next transit isn't until 2032, and North America won't get another viewing opportunity until 2049. Earthlings get treated to just 13 or 14 Mercury transits a century.

You'll need proper eye protection for Monday's spectacle: Telescopes or binoculars with solar filters are recommended. There's no harm in pulling out the eclipse glasses from the total solar eclipse across the U.S. two years ago, but it would take "exceptional vision" to spot minuscule Mercury, said NASA solar astrophysicist Alex Young.

Mercury is 3,000 miles (4,800 kilometers) in diameter, compared with the sun's 864,000 miles (1.4 million kilometers.)

During its 2012 transit of the sun, larger and closer Venus was barely detectable by Young with his solar-viewing glasses.

"That's really close to the limit of what you can see," he said earlier this week. "So Mercury's going to probably be too small."

Venus transits are much rarer. The next one isn't until 2117.

Mercury will cut a diagonal path left to right across the sun on Monday, entering at bottom left (around the 8 hour mark on a clock) and exiting top right (around the 2 hour mark).

Although the trek will appear slow, Mercury will zoom across the sun at roughly 150,000 mph (241,000 kph).

NASA will broadcast the transit as seen from the orbiting Solar Dynamics Observatory, with only a brief lag. Scientists will use the transit to fine-tune telescopes, especially those in space that cannot be adjusted by hand, according to Young.

It's this kind of transit that allows scientists to discover alien worlds. Periodic, fleeting dips of starlight indicate an orbiting planet.

"Transits are a visible demonstration of how the planets move around the sun, and everyone with access to the right equipment should take a look," Mike Cruise, president of the Royal Astronomical Society, said in a statement from England.

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

ABC cancels 'Fresh Off the Boat,' sets finale for February

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — ABC's "Fresh Off the Boat," the first network TV comedy in two decades to focus on an Asian American family, is coming to an end after six seasons.

The network said Friday that the sitcom starring Randall Park and Constance Wu will wrap with an hour-long finale on Feb. 21, making this a truncated last season.

The show about a couple and their three children in 1990s Florida is based on chef Eddie Huang's memoir of the same name.

In a statement, ABC Entertainment president Karey Burke lauded the show as "game-changing" with its focus on an Asian American family.

While the TV industry has gradually embraced diversity, it's been slow to include characters of Asian descent in the mix. Comedian Margaret Cho's "All-American Girl" ended in 1995 after one season.

A possible spinoff with characters to be introduced on "Fresh Off the Boat" is being considered. It would focus on an Indian family whose daughter is one of Eddie's (Hudson Yang) classmates.

Wu, who starred in "Crazy Rich Asians," apologized earlier this year for a Twitter outburst lamenting the show's renewal this season.

She said it was an emotional reaction to having to pass on a passion project because it conflicted with "Fresh Off the Boat."

The comedy that airs at 8:30 p.m. EST Friday is averaging 3.1 million weekly viewers for the season to date, making it No. 69 out of about 80 network programs. Its direct competition includes CBS' "Hawaii Five-0," which is drawing nearly triple the audience and ranks 26th for the season so far, according to Nielsen.

Lynn Elber is at lelber@ap.org and on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/lynnelber>

Bacteria that killed 3 infants traced to hospital equipment

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

A Pennsylvania hospital said Friday it has discovered the source of a waterborne germ that sickened at least eight premature infants, killing three.

Geisinger Medical Center in Danville said the process it was using to prepare donor breast milk led to the deadly outbreak in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit.

Infection control specialists used DNA testing to trace the *Pseudomonas* bacterium to equipment used to measure and administer donor breast milk. Geisinger said it has since switched to using single-use equipment. Hospital officials stressed the milk itself was not the source of the exposure.

"We have had no new cases of infants becoming ill from *pseudomonas* in the NICU since making this change," Dr. Edward Hartle, Geisinger's executive vice president and chief medical officer, said in a statement.

Pseudomonas bacteria are common and often harmless but can pose a health risk in fragile patients.

Geisinger, which operates one of Pennsylvania's largest health networks, has been sending very premature newborns and some expectant mothers to other facilities while it investigated the outbreak. The hospital said it will continue doing so as it consults with state health officials on when it can resume normal operations.

"We would like to extend our sincere apologies to the families who have been affected by this incident. We know that the public holds us to the highest standards, and we will continue to strive to live up to those expectations as we have throughout our history, constantly improving on what we do and how we

do it," Hartle said.

The parents of one of the newborns who died at Geisinger filed suit last month, alleging that hospital officials failed to protect their son from the lethal bacterial infection that had already killed two other premature babies.

Their attorney, Matt Casey — who also represents the family of the second baby who died in the bacterial outbreak — said his investigation has revealed earlier *Pseudomonas* infections in the Geisinger NICU, and at least one baby died. But he said he does not yet know whether those earlier infections were the result of a problem with the hospital's breast milk equipment.

"A key aspect is to determine whether this was an ongoing problem there. We now have additional work to determine whether these infection control procedures were deficient for a period of time longer than Geisinger's statement suggests," he said.

A hospital spokesman declined comment on Casey's contention about the earlier infections, citing the pending lawsuit.

Trump to pursue higher sales age for e-cigarettes

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday his administration will pursue raising the age to purchase electronic cigarettes from 18 to 21 in its upcoming plans to combat youth vaping.

Trump told reporters his administration will release its final plans for restricting e-cigarettes next week but provided few other details.

"We have to take care of our kids, most importantly, so we're going to have an age limit of 21 or so," said Trump, speaking outside the White House.

Currently the minimum age to purchase any tobacco or vaping product is 18, under federal law. But more than one third of U.S. states have already raised their sales age to 21.

A federal law raising the purchase age would require congressional action.

Administration officials were widely expected to release plans this week for removing virtually all flavored e-cigarettes from the market. Those products are blamed for soaring rates of underage use by U.S. teenagers.

However, no details have yet appeared, leading vaping critics to worry that the administration is backing away from its original plan.

Trump resisted any specifics on the scope of the restrictions.

"We're talking about the age, we're talking about flavors, we're also talking about keeping people working — there are some pretty good aspects," Trump said.

E-cigarettes have been sold in the U.S. for more than a decade and are often pitched as a lower-risk option for smokers. But there is little research on their long-term health effects.

In a separate event Friday, Joe Grogan, a top policy adviser to Trump, said the White House believes e-cigarettes are "a viable alternative to combustible cigarettes." He suggested the administration's decision on vaping would reflect that potential benefit.

"We really want to make sure we're data driven on this and striking the right balance between adult choice and protecting kids," Grogan told reporters.

Underage vaping has reached what health officials call epidemic levels. In the latest government survey, 1 in 4 high school students reported using e-cigarettes in the previous month.

Fruit, candy, dessert and other sweet vaping flavors have been targeted because of their appeal to underage users.

On Thursday, Juul Labs, the nation's largest e-cigarette maker, announced it would voluntarily pull its mint-flavored e-cigarettes from the market. That decision followed new research that Juul's mint is the top choice for many high school students who vape.

With the removal of mint, Juul only sells two flavors: tobacco and menthol.

Vaping critics say menthol must be a part of the flavor ban to prevent teens who currently use mint

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from switching over.

Juul and other tobacco companies have lobbied in support a federal "Tobacco 21" law to reverse teen use of both e-cigarettes and traditional tobacco products. The effort also has broad bipartisan support in Congress, including a bill introduced by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

The logic for hiking the purchase age for cigarettes and other products is clear: most underage teens who use e-cigarettes or tobacco get it from older friends. Raising the minimum age to 21 is expected to limit the supply of those products in U.S. schools.

Delaying access to cigarettes is also expected to produce major downstream health benefits, with one government-funded report estimating nearly 250,000 fewer deaths due to tobacco over several decades.

Still, anti-tobacco groups have insisted that any "Tobacco 21" law must be accompanied by a ban on flavors, which they say are the primary reason that young people use e-cigarettes.

Follow Matthew Perrone on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AP_FDAAwriter

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 9, the 313th day of 2019. There are 52 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 9, 1620, the passengers and crew of the Mayflower sighted Cape Cod.

On this date:

In 1872, fire destroyed nearly 800 buildings in Boston.

In 1938, Nazis looted and burned synagogues as well as Jewish-owned stores and houses in Germany and Austria in a pogrom or deliberate persecution that became known as "Kristallnacht."

In 1961, U.S. Air Force Maj. Robert M. White became the first pilot to fly an X-15 rocket plane at six times the speed of sound. The Beatles' future manager, Brian Epstein, first saw the group perform at The Cavern Club in Liverpool, England.

In 1965, the great Northeast blackout began as a series of power failures lasting up to 13 1/2 hours, leaving 30 million people in seven states and part of Canada without electricity.

In 1970, former French President Charles de Gaulle died at age 79.

In 1976, the U.N. General Assembly approved resolutions condemning apartheid in South Africa, including one characterizing the white-ruled government as "illegitimate."

In 1989, communist East Germany threw open its borders, allowing citizens to travel freely to the West; joyous Germans danced atop the Berlin Wall.

In 1999, with fireworks, concerts and a huge party at the landmark Brandenburg Gate, Germany celebrated the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In 2000, George W. Bush's lead over Al Gore in all-or-nothing Florida slipped beneath 300 votes in a suspense-filled recount, as Democrats threw the presidential election to the courts, claiming "an injustice unparalleled in our history."

In 2005, three suicide bombers carried out nearly simultaneous attacks on three U.S.-based hotels in Amman, Jordan, killing 60 victims and wounding hundreds.

In 2007, President Gen. Pervez Musharraf (pur-VEHZ' moo-SHAH'-ruhv) of Pakistan placed opposition leader Benazir Bhutto (BEN'-uh-zeer BOO'-toh) under house arrest for a day, and rounded up thousands of her supporters to block a mass rally against his emergency rule.

In 2011, after 46 seasons as Penn State's head football coach and a record 409 victories, Joe Paterno was fired along with the university president, Graham Spanier, over their handling of child sex abuse allegations against former assistant coach Jerry Sandusky.

Ten years ago: The Dow Jones industrial average rose 203.52, or 2 percent, to 10,226.94, its highest finish since Oct. 3, 2008, as a falling dollar boosted prices for gold, oil and other commodities. Germany

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celebrated the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Five years ago: The citizens of Berlin released almost 7,000 balloons into the night sky, many carrying messages of hope to mark the 25th anniversary since the fall of the wall that had once divided their city.

One year ago: President Donald Trump issued an order to deny asylum to migrants who enter the country illegally; a divided Supreme Court in December said the administration could not begin enforcing the ban. Trump arrived in Paris for events marking the 100th anniversary of the armistice that ended World War I; he immediately took a poke at his French host by tweeting that President Emmanuel Macron had made an "insulting" proposal to build up Europe's military. A federal judge blocked a permit for construction of the Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada and ordered officials to conduct a new environmental review; President Trump later issued a new permit for the project, a move that was challenged in court.

Today's Birthdays: Baseball Hall of Famer Whitey Herzog is 88. Baseball Hall of Famer Bob Gibson is 84. Actor Charlie Robinson is 74. Movie director Bille August is 71. Actor Robert David Hall is 71. Actor Lou Ferrigno is 68. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, is 67. Gospel singer Donnie McClurkin is 60. Rock musician Dee Plakas (L7) is 59. Actress Ion Overman is 50. Rapper Pepa (Salt-N-Pepa) is 50. Rapper Scarface (Geto Boys) is 49. Blues singer Susan Tedeschi (teh-DEHS'-kee) is 49. Actor Jason Antoon is 48. Actor Eric Dane is 47. Singer Nick Lachey (98 Degrees) is 46. Country musician Barry Knox (Parmalee) is 42. Rhythm-and-blues singer Sisqo (Dru Hill) is 41. Country singer Corey Smith is 40. Country singer Chris Lane is 35. Actress Emily Tyra is 32. Actress Nikki Blonsky is 31. Actress-model Analeigh (AH'-nuh-lee) Tipton is 31.

Thought for Today: "We must be free not because we claim freedom, but because we practice it." — William Faulkner, American author (1897-1962).

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