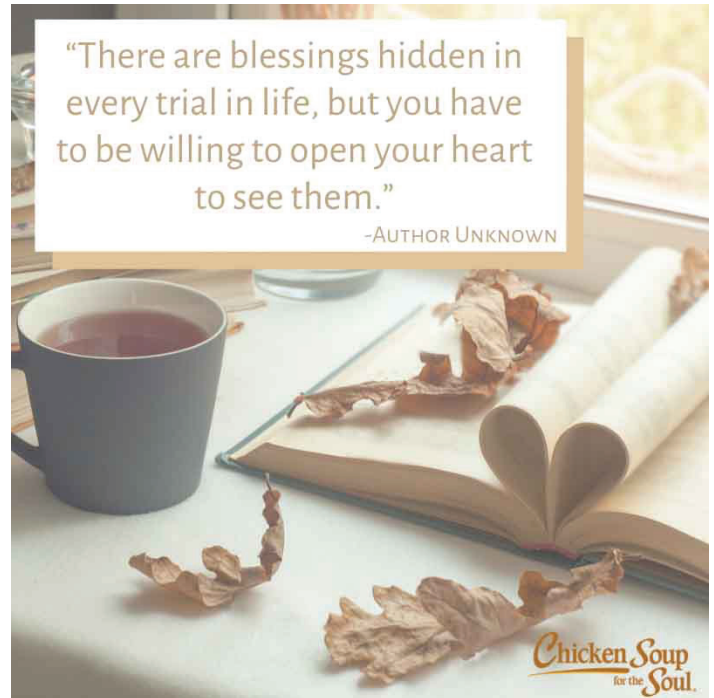


# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 1 of 67

- [1- Community Pep Rally](#)
- [2- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [3- Snow Queen Contest Coverage](#)
- [13- Volleyball Send-off Wednesday Morning](#)
- [14- Weather Pages](#)
- [17- Daily Devotional](#)
- [18- 2019 Groton Events](#)
- [19- News from the Associated Press](#)



## GHS COMMUNITY PEP RALLY

**Everyone is Invited  
To Cheer On Our Volleyball Team  
To The State Tournament!**



**Tuesday  
Nov. 19, 3 p.m.**



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 2 of 67

## Weekly Vikings Roundup By Jordan Wright

Over the last five seasons entering Sunday, there have been 99 games in which a team was trailing by 20 or more points at halftime. Those teams were 0-99. The last time the Vikings overcame a 20-point deficit was 27-years ago. Mike Zimmer is 0-8 as a head coach when trailing by 20 or more points at any point in the game. On Sunday against the Denver Broncos, the Vikings were trailing 20-0 at halftime...  
...and they won!

If you turned off your television in the middle of the game, nobody will blame you. The Vikings played perhaps the worst first half of football I have ever witnessed. The seven offensive drives in the first half ended in: punt, punt, punt, punt, fumble, fumble, punt – for a total of 37 yards. On the other side of the ball, the Vikings were allowing over six yards per play to a Broncos offense that featured a quarterback making his second career start. All in all, it was a horrible first half for the entire team.

The second half, fortunately, was much better. The offense only had four drives in the second half but found the endzone every time. The defense stiffened up and held the Broncos to four yards per play. And in the end, the Vikings managed to hold on to win 27-23.

Kirk Cousins finished the game 29/35 for 319 yards and three touchdowns. After the big win over the Cowboys last week, and the big come from behind victory on Sunday, Cousins is starting to win people over (although I'm still a little skeptical). Dalvin Cook, who entered the game leading the league in yards from scrimmage, couldn't find much running room against a stout Broncos defense. He finished with only 26 yards on 11 carries to go along with five catches for 31 yards. Bisi Johnson led the team in receptions (6) and targets (9), and Kyle Rudolph continues to get involved in the action, as he had five catches for 67 yards and a TD.

The Vikings defense almost had another loss to a team playing their backup QB. The defensive line wasn't able to generate much pressure on Sunday, and the team finished with only two sacks. The Vikings were without Linval Joseph again, and the run defense suffered as a result, giving up 124 yards on the ground. The once-feared defense should have been able to dominate this game, but ultimately, they were able to come up with a big play when they needed it the most to secure the win (more on that in a bit).

The player of the game on offense was Stefon Diggs. He was animatedly displeased in the first half, as his only catch in the first 30 minutes of play was called back because of holding on the offensive line. The Vikings made an effort to get him more involved in the second half, and he finished the game with five catches for 121 yards and a touchdown.

The player of the game on defense was Jayron Kearse. The jack-of-all-trades defensive back hadn't gotten much playing time in recent weeks, but he proved to be pivotal against the Broncos. With Anthony Harris sitting this game out, and Harrison Smith's hamstring injury mid-game, Kearse was called into extended duty. With two seconds left in the game, the Broncos were at the four-yard line and needed a touchdown to win. Jayron was able to break up the pass, sealing the Vikings win. He also corralled the interception to seal the win against the Cowboys two weeks ago. Kearse is a great player, and will likely be highly sought after this offseason.

Looking ahead, the Vikings have a bye week next. Skol!

If you have any questions or comments, reach out to me on Twitter (@JordanWrightNFL)





## Flihs, Peterson named Snow Queens

Ashley Flihs (left), daughter of Jarod and Kristie Flihs, was chosen as the 2020 Groton Area Snow Senior Snow Queen. The Junior Snow Queen is Shaylee Peterson (right), daughter of Kristi and Ben Peterson. (Photo by Paul Kosel)





## 2020 Snow Queen Event

The 2020 Snow Queen event was held Sunday evening in the Groton Area High School Gym. Pictured in back, left to right, are Marlee Tollifson, junior snow queen candidate, daughter of Travis and Debbie Kurth and Matt and Lana Tollifson; Shallyn Foertsch, junior snow queen candidate, daughter of Joe and Teri Foertsch; Anthony Schinkel, page; Kaycie Hawkins, senior Snow Queen first runner up, daughter of Lance and Kristie Hawkins; Caitlynn Barse, senior Miss Congenitally, daughter of Chris and Pam Barse; Brodyn DeHoet, page; Gracie Traphagen, junior Snow Queen candidate; daughter of Trent and Heather Traphagen; Brooke Gengerke, junior Snow Queen First Runner Up, daughter of Collin and Deb Gengerke; Elliana Weismantel, junior Snow Queen candidate, daughter of Marty and Amy Weismantel; and Jacelynne Gleason, senior Snow Queen second runner-up, daughter of Edward and Angela Gleason; in front, left to right, are Snow Prince Colton Pullan, son of Jason and Dannielle Pullan; Senior Snow Queen Ashley Flihs, daughter of Jarod and Kristi Flihs; Junior Snow Queen Shaylee Peterson, daughter of Ben and Kristi Peterson; and Snow Princess Cierra Lier, daughter of Nicholas Sauer and Jayde Lier. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 5 of 67



**The 2019 Snow Queens came back to help crown the new Snow Queens. They are Stella Meier, 2019 Junior Snow Queen, and Cassandra Townsend, 2019 Senior Snow Queen.** (Photo

lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



**Anna Bisbee performed during the junior division of the talent show. She sang, "Don't Rain on My Parade."** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 6 of 67



**Camryn Kurtz sang, "Feeling Good" in the junior division of the talent contest. Kurtz won the division.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



**Julianna Kosel sang, "Temporary Home" during the senior division of the talent contest.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 7 of 67



**Alexis Hanten won the senior talent contest with her singing of, "Dream a Little Dream."**

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



**Madeline Schuelke sang, "I Love Play Rehearsal" during the senior talent contest.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



**April Abeln was the Mystery Snowman. Jordan Kjellsen was the master of ceremonies. Roger Rix was the snowman escort.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 8 of 67



**With the advent of cell phones, everyone now gets into the action of taking photos.** (Photo by

Paul Kosel)



**Michelle Muilenberg has been assisting with the Snow Queen Festival for eight years. However, this year, she took it upon herself to organize the event. The event used to be run by the Groton Kiwanis Club and they disbanded this summer. When asked why she undertook such a big task, she said, "I guess because "No" is not in my vocabulary." Michelle is pictured in the middle with the Snow Queens Ashley Flihs and Shaylee Peterson.** (Photo by Paul

Kosel)



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 9 of 67



**Michelle Muilenberg goes over the program details with Emma Davies and Breslyn Jeschke.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

**Michelle Muilenberg talks with Lee Iverson about running the spot light.** The other spot light operator was Joe Gleason. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 10 of 67



**The Snow Queen Committee had a lot of extra help this year, including students from the school who helped with the sundae serving.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 11 of 67



**Roger Rix was the Frosty Escort this year.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 12 of 67



**Anthony Schinkel and Brodyn DeHoet were the pages for this year.**






(Photo by Paul Kosel)





# Broton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 14 of 67

Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
Slight Chance Rain	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Rain/Snow	Chance Rain/Snow
<b>High: 51 °F</b>	<b>Low: 29 °F</b>	<b>High: 45 °F</b>	<b>Low: 31 °F</b>	<b>High: 39 °F</b>


## Warm and Windy Today




46 to 58°

≡ **Windy**


Strongest winds W of the James River Valley:  
Northwest 20 to 30 mph, with gusts near 40 mph.

Decreasing clouds over  
central South Dakota,  
otherwise a  
**chance of rain over**  
E SD & W MN



<b>Tonight</b> 28 to 34° 	<b>Tuesday</b> 42 to 53° 	<b>Tuesday Night</b> 28 to 35° 
--	--	--

Isolated snow along the  
ND/SD border



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

[www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)

Published on: 11/18/2019 at 1:24AM

GRAPHIC CREATED:  
11/18/2019 6:20 AM

Warm and windy conditions will be the theme today. Temperatures will be 10 to 15 degrees above average for this time of year. The strongest winds are expected this afternoon, west of the James River Valley, out of the northwest at 20 to 30 mph with gusts nearing 40 mph. Farther to the east, light rain will remain over northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota this afternoon. The next chance of precipitation will arrive Tuesday night along the North Dakota and South Dakota border.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 15 of 67

## Today in Weather History

November 18, 1985: Snowfall of 3-8 inches fell over western, central and northern South Dakota, with the most significant amount of 8 inches at Huron in Beadle County and White River in Mellette County. Strong winds exceeding 40 mph over the area produced near-blizzard conditions at times, with considerable blowing and drifting snow. Additional storm total snowfall amounts included; 6.0 inches in Murdo; 5.5 inches at Gettysburg, 5.0 inches near Stephan, in Eureka, and 12SSW of Harrold; and 4.0 inches in McLaughlin.

November 18, 1992: Three to eleven inches of snow fell in the northeast third of South Dakota and into west central Minnesota from the 18th into the 19th. Storm total snowfall amounts included; 11.0 inches in Browns Valley and near Bryant, 9 inches near Sisseton, Summit and Wheaton MN, 8 inches near Victor and Wilmot, 7.9 inches at Artichoke Lake MN, and 7.0 inches in Clear Lake.

1421: The notorious St. Elizabeth's flood occurred during the night of November 18, to November 19 in what is now known as the Netherlands. A strong storm on the North Sea coast caused several dikes to break allowing the lower lands to flood. Some villages around Dordrecht were lost, causing an estimated 6,000 casualties.

1929: A magnitude 7.2 earthquake off the coast of the Grand Banks, Newfoundland caused a submarine landslide that triggered a tsunami that killed people on the Burin Peninsula of Newfoundland. The under-sea landslide damaged several miles of transatlantic telegraph cables, resulting in much of the \$400,000 in damage. South Carolina and Portugal felt this tsunami.

1873 - A severe storm raged from Georgia to Nova Scotia causing great losses to fishing fleets along the coast. In Maine, the barometric pressure reached 28.49 inches at Portland. (David Ludlum)

1955 - An early season cold snap finally came to an end. Helena, MT, experienced 138 consecutive hours of subzero temperatures, including a reading of 29 below zero, which surpassed by seven degrees their previous record for the month of November. Missoula MT broke their November record by 12 degrees with a reading of 23 below zero, and Salt Lake City UT smashed their previous November record of zero with a reading of 14 below. Heavy snow in the Great Basin closed Donner Pass CA, and total crop damage from the cold wave amounted to eleven million dollars. (David Ludlum)

1957 - A tornado, 100 yards in width, travelled a nearly straight as an arrow 27-mile path from near Rosa AL to near Albertville AL, killing three persons. A home in the Susan Moore community in Blount County was picked up and dropped 500 feet away killing one person. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - The first of two successive snowstorms struck the northeastern U.S. The storm produced up to 20 inches of snow in southern New Hampshire. Two days later a second storm produced up to 30 inches of snow in northern Maine. (Storm Data)

1987 - It was a windy day across parts of the nation. Gale force winds whipped the Great Lakes Region. Winds gusting to 80 mph in western New York State damaged buildings and flipped over flatbed trailers at Churchville. In Montana, high winds in the Upper Yellowstone Valley gusted to 64 mph at Livingston. Strong Santa Ana winds buffeted the mountains and valleys of southern California. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a warm front drenched Little Rock AR with 7.01 inches of rain, smashing their previous record for the date of 1.91 inches. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A second surge of arctic air brought record cold to parts of the north central U.S. Eleven cities in the Upper Midwest reported record low temperatures for the date, including Rochester MN with a reading of 4 degrees below zero. Strong winds ushering the arctic air into the north central U.S. produced squalls in the Lower Great Lakes Region. Snowfall totals in northern Ohio ranged up to twenty inches in Ashatabula County and Geauga County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)





# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 17 of 67



## NOW OR NEVER!

In 1874 Elisha Gray did something that no one else had ever done. He unveiled a machine that transmitted musical notes over a telegraph wire. The audience was fascinated with the sounds. Proudly he said, "If music, why not words?"

Immediately the New York Times predicted a "Talking Machine," and people expressed a great interest in wanting one.

Gray did nothing with his "machine" for two months. One day he decided to go to the patent office with a drawing. After presenting it to one of the officials, he learned that Alexander Graham Bell had presented an identical sketch two hours earlier.

Gray did not fail. He hesitated. His loss was tremendous and cost him much.

Salvation is God's free gift to everyone who accepts Christ. But like Gray, many put off making a decision to become a Christian until it is too late. Everyone wants to believe there will always be another tomorrow because there was a yesterday. Not true!

Prayer: We pray, Father, for those who need to accept Christ as Savior today! May they realize that "now is the day of salvation" and accept Your offer. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 18 of 67

## 2019 Groton SD Community Events

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

## 2020 Groton SD Community Events

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



## News from the Associated Press

### **Seized placenta to be used in South Dakota rape case**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A placenta sample taken from an abortion clinic without a warrant will be used as evidence in a statutory rape trial in South Dakota.

The Rapid City Journal reports the South Dakota Supreme Court said last month that it would not hear the case, clearing the way for the evidence to be used.

A Rapid City girl mentioned while getting an abortion in Denver in 2018 that she was 15 when she became pregnant by her 25-year-old boyfriend. The clinic told Denver police, who turned over a placenta sample to a Rapid City detective.

DNA testing showed that the boyfriend, Nathan Hankins, couldn't be excluded as the father. He was charged in September with fourth-degree rape.

Hankins has pleaded not guilty and is scheduled for trial on Jan. 28.

### **Sioux Falls woman sentenced on child porn charges**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls woman has been sentenced for receiving and distributing child pornography.

Forty-nine-year-old Sharon Dvorak was sentenced Friday to time served and five years of supervised release.

Dvorak was indicted by a federal grand jury in March for distribution and receipt of child pornography in 2018. She pleaded guilty in August.

The U.S. Attorney's Office says the maximum penalty for the federal charge was up to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

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### **Missouri River water pipeline to Rapid City pegged at \$1.87B**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A university researcher says it might someday be necessary to pipe Missouri River water to Rapid City.

The Rapid City Journal reports Kurt Katzenstein presented his findings to the West Dakota Water Development District last week. Katzenstein is an associate professor of geology and geological engineering at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology.

He says the 171-mile pipeline could cost up to \$1.87 billion, making it a long-term idea that could require funding from Congress.

Katzenstein says projections indicate that the Rapid City area could have enough water from local sources to sustainably meet demand for the next 100 years if average precipitation levels prevail.

But he says the day will come when local water supplies are insufficient.

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

### **Hong Kong police battle protesters in university siege**

By **KEN MORITSUGU** Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — As night fell in Hong Kong, police tightened a siege Monday at a university campus as hundreds of anti-government protesters trapped inside sought to escape.

Protesters advanced on the police from outside the cordon, while others emerged from the campus, their trademark umbrellas at the fore. Police in some places swooped in to subdue protesters and make arrests.

It wasn't clear if any of those inside Hong Kong Polytechnic University escaped.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 20 of 67

Hong Kong's work week started with multiple protests that disrupted traffic, and schools remained closed because of safety concerns. There was a temporary lull in the pitched battles for control of the Polytechnic campus as the emphasis shifted from battering the protesters with tear gas and water cannons to waiting for them to come out.

For days, protesters have fortified the campus to keep police from getting in. Cornered by authorities, they were trying to get out.

Officers repelled one attempt Monday morning with tear gas, driving a few hundred protesters back onto the campus.

The give-and-take has played out repeatedly during the city's months of anti-government unrest. The protesters want to avoid arrest. The police want to pick up as many as they can.

"These rioters, they are also criminals. They have to face the consequences of their acts," said Cheuk Hau-yip, the commander of Kowloon West district, where Polytechnic is located.

"Other than coming out to surrender, I don't see, at the moment, there's any viable option for them," he said.

Cheuk said police have the ability and resolve to end the standoff peacefully so protesters should not "try their luck."

Protesters won on a legal front when the high court struck down a mask ban imposed by the government last month. The court said it did not consider anti-mask laws unconstitutional in general, but in this case, the law infringed on fundamental rights further than was reasonably necessary.

Many protesters wear masks to shield their identities from surveillance cameras that could be used to arrest and prosecute them. The ban has been widely ignored, and police have charged protesters with wearing masks.

The protests started peacefully in early June, sparked by proposed legislation that would have allowed criminal suspects to be extradited to the mainland. But by the time the bill was withdrawn, the protests had hardened and broadened into a resistance movement against the territory's government and Beijing.

Activists see the extradition bill as an example of Hong Kong's eroding autonomy under Beijing's rule since the 1997 handover from colonial power Britain.

The head of a nationalistic Chinese newspaper said Hong Kong police should use snipers to fire live ammunition at violent protesters.

"If the rioters are killed, the police should not have to bear legal responsibility," Global Times editor Hu Xijin wrote on his Weibo social media account.

Anti-government protesters barricaded themselves inside Polytechnic last week. Police surrounded the area Sunday night and began moving in after issuing an ultimatum for people to leave the area. The crowd wore raincoats and carried umbrellas to shield themselves from police water cannons.

Riot officers broke in one entrance before dawn as fires raged inside and outside the school, but they didn't appear to get very far. Fiery explosions occurred as protesters responded with gasoline bombs. Police, who have warned that everyone in the area could be charged with rioting, reportedly made a handful of arrests.

At daybreak, protesters remained in control of most of the campus. In one outdoor area, some demonstrators made gasoline bombs while others dozed while wearing gas masks. Two walked about with bows and quivers of arrows, while many stared at their smartphones.

"We are exhausted because we were up since 5 a.m. yesterday," said a protester who gave only his first name, Matthew. "We are desperate because our supplies are running low."

A lull settled on the area as the president of the university said in a video message that police have agreed to suspend their use of force.

Jin-Guang Teng said police would allow protesters to leave and he would accompany them to the police station to ensure their cases would be processed fairly.

"I hope that you will accept the proposed temporary suspension of force and leave the campus in a peaceful manner," he said.

It seemed unlikely the protesters would accept the offer given that they would all likely be arrested.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 21 of 67

A few hundred streamed out of the campus about 8:15 a.m. in an apparent bid to escape, but they were driven back by police tear gas. Some wearing gas masks calmly picked up smoking tear gas canisters and dropped them into heavy-duty bags, but the protesters decided to retreat with a phalanx of officers lined up across the road in the distance.

Police have set up a dragnet around the campus to try to arrest protesters, who typically try to melt away after blocking traffic or causing other disruption before police run in to grab as many as they can.

Other protesters blocked a major road not far from the Polytechnic campus to distract police and help those inside the campus escape.

They tossed paving stones onto stretches of Nathan Road as police chased them with tear gas.

An injured woman arrested at a Nathan Road intersection for participating in an unlawful assembly escaped after protesters stopped her ambulance and hurled rocks and bricks inside.

One police officer fired three warning shots, a statement on the police Facebook page said.

Police issued a "wanted" notice for the 20-year-old woman and said anyone who aided her could be charged with assisting an offender, which can be punished by up to 10 years in prison.

The road closure added to transport woes during the morning commute, with several train stations still closed because of damage by protesters last week and a section of one line closed completely near Polytechnic.

The Education Bureau announced that classes from kindergarten to high school would be suspended for the sixth straight day Tuesday because of safety concerns. Most classes are expected to resume Wednesday, except for kindergarten and classes for the disabled, which are suspended until Sunday, the bureau said.

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Associated Press journalist Dake Kang contributed to this report.

## **AP Explains: Iran gas price protests quickly turn violent**

**By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press**

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Protests over gasoline prices have swept across some 100 cities and towns in Iran, turning violent faster than widespread economic protests in 2017 and rallies over the country's disputed 2009 presidential election.

The scale of the unrest that began on Friday remains unclear as authorities have shut down the internet across this nation of 80 million people.

Prior to that, online videos purported to show people abandoning their cars on major highways and marching on city centers. Demonstrations devolved into violence as rioters set fire to gas stations, attacked banks and robbed stores.

While sparked by President Hassan Rouhani's decision to raise government-set gasoline prices, the protests take root in decades-old economic problems, exacerbated by the U.S. pullout of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers and re-imposed economic sanctions.

And though some protest chants directly challenge Iran's Shiite theocracy, its government has the manpower — and experience — to quickly put down demonstrations.

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### PUTTING OUT FIRE WITH GASOLINE

For Iranians, cheap gasoline is practically considered a birthright. Iran holds the world's fourth-largest crude oil reserves. As jobs remain scarce, many Iranians work as informal taxi drivers. But subsidizing prices both benefited Iran's wealthy and spurred gasoline smuggling to neighboring countries.

The International Energy Agency estimates that Iran spent more than any other nation in the world to subsidize fossil-fuel costs in 2018 — \$69 billion in total. Over \$26 billion went toward oil subsidies, the IEA said.

Previous pushes to cut the subsidies sparked protests, so Rouhani's government changed prices early Friday — at the start of the weekend in Iran — with no warning. The new prices are seeing consumers pay 13 cents a liter (49 cents a gallon) on their first 60 liters a month. After that, they pay 26 cents a liter

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 22 of 67

(98 cents a gallon).

Even with those hikes, Iran remains one of the cheapest places in the world to buy gasoline. A gallon of regular unleaded gasoline costs on average \$2.59 in the U.S., according to AAA.

## DEMONSTRATIONS QUICKLY ESCALATE IN IRAN

Since the price hike, demonstrators have abandoned cars along major highways and joined mass protests in the capital, Tehran, and elsewhere. Some protests turned violent, with demonstrators setting fires as gunfire rang out.

It remains to be seen how many people were arrested, injured or killed. Iranian authorities on Sunday raised the official death toll in the violence to at least three. However, that figure may be low. Videos from the protests have shown people gravely wounded.

The semiofficial Fars news agency, close to the country's Revolutionary Guard, reported Sunday that demonstrators had ransacked some 100 banks and stores in the country. Authorities arrested some 1,000 people, Fars reported, citing unnamed security officials for the information.

## COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

Part of the reason it remains difficult to know what's happening in Iran is because authorities have shut down access to the internet. Since late Saturday night, access went from worse to nonexistent across the nation. That stopped the spread of online videos of the demonstrations and affected the ability of protesters to share information.

The group NetBlocks, which monitors worldwide internet access, said connectivity had fallen to just 7% of ordinary levels. It called Iran's shutdown the most severe "in terms of its technical complexity and breadth." The internet firm Oracle called it "the largest internet shutdown ever observed in Iran." Some local websites, like those of state media outlets, remains accessible, but Iran's window to the outside world largely has closed. The Trump administration has criticized the shutdown.

## ECONOMIC WOES

Iran has suffered economic problems since its 1979 Islamic Revolution cut off its decades-long relationship with the U.S. Its eight-year war with Iraq in the 1980s followed, further straining the economy. While its oil industry remains a lifeline for government revenues, sanctions have long affected its ability to work on improvements and upgrades to keep production high.

The collapse of the nuclear deal has exacerbated those problems ever since President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord over a year ago. The Iranian rial, which traded at 32,000 to \$1 at the time of the accord, now trades around 123,000 to \$1. That has destroyed people's savings, forcing them to invest in physical assets or real estate. Iran has since begun breaking terms of the deal as it tries to force Europe to come up with a way to allow it to sell crude oil abroad despite American sanctions.

## CRACKDOWN LOOMS

It appears that Iran's government is preparing to crackdown on the demonstrators. State television has begun airing segments focusing on violent attacks in the protests.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made a point to refer to "thugs" in comments he made Sunday to try to calm the public.

Iranian authorities have had much experience in dealing with public unrest, whether in student protests that swept Iran in 1999, the Green Movement demonstrations that followed widespread allegations of vote rigging in Iran's 2009 presidential election or the economic protests that began at the end of 2017.

Online videos showed uniformed police officers trying to talk crowds into dispersing. Later, anti-riot police entered the streets. Plainclothes security forces, wielding bats and clubs, have been seen on the streets of Tehran. Videos also showed the motorcycle-riding members of the Basij, the all-volunteer arm of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.



Because of that, the U.S.-based private intelligence firm Stratfor notes Iran has developed tools like security force crackdowns and information control. "This makes it unlikely that the fuel protests will grow to the point of upending the Iranian political environment," it said.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP](http://www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP).

## Buttigieg touts military service, wary of overstating role

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

MASON CITY, Iowa (AP) — Pete Buttigieg strides past an oversized photograph of himself dressed in fatigues, the Afghan horizon behind him, as he enters a Des Moines arena for an Iowa Democratic Party gala.

In his first Iowa television ad, he holds a rifle and points it toward the rubble at his feet, introducing himself, "As a veteran ... ."

Like candidates from the time of George Washington, the South Bend, Indiana, mayor is leaning hard on his seven-month deployment as an intelligence officer in Afghanistan as a powerful credential. As he does, he walks a narrow path between giving his wartime service its due and overstating it.

He is careful not to call himself a combat veteran even as he notes the danger he faced. One of his former competitors for the Democratic nomination, Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, has drawn a sharp contrast between his four combat tours in Iraq and Buttigieg's service. And a former commanding officer, who said he thinks Buttigieg would be within his rights to say he is a combat veteran, nonetheless questions the use of a rifle in his ads.

As support for his campaign grows, Buttigieg can expect more intense scrutiny of his military record in a political climate where military service is far from sacred, as past attacks on the records of Republican John McCain and Democrat John Kerry show.

Buttigieg addressed the subject with reporters during a recent bus tour in northern Iowa. "It kind of felt like combat when the rocket alarm went off. But I don't feel prepared to use that term for myself."

Buttigieg and Rep. Tulsi Gabbard are the only Democratic candidates with military experience. He would not only be the first Democratic president to have served in the armed forces since Jimmy Carter, he would be the first veteran of a post-9/11 war.

He volunteered for service and was quickly recognized for his intellect. Retired Col. Guy Hollingsworth chose Buttigieg as the lead analyst tracking the flow of money to terrorist cells in Afghanistan, information that would inform combat operations.

Though more of Buttigieg's time in Afghanistan was spent working in a secured intelligence office as an officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve, his dozens of trips outside U.S./NATO headquarters in the fortified Green Zone make him a combat veteran in the eyes of Hollingsworth, Buttigieg's commanding officer.

During these movements, Buttigieg, in body armor and an M4 rifle nearby, would typically drive a team of officials, navigating an armored SUV through Kabul's chaotic streets.

"That is the definition, going down range into a combat zone," Hollingsworth said. "He is a combat veteran."

Kabul's streets possessed threats such as crowds that could turn aggressive toward a vehicle found to contain U.S. military or parked vehicles that could hide improvised explosive devices.

"Anytime somebody would go in a vehicle and drive, no matter how close it would be — even six city blocks away — over there, that's a life-or-death situation," said retired Col. Paul Karweik, who succeeded Hollingsworth as Buttigieg's commanding officer.

But Buttigieg never fired his weapon nor was he fired on, criteria for the Combat Action Badge, which is Karweik's definition of a combat veteran and the one Buttigieg observes.

That doesn't mean Buttigieg holds back while campaigning in emphasizing the more dangerous aspects of his time in the war zone to distinguish himself subtly from his top-tier Democratic rivals and directly with President Donald Trump.

"I don't have to throw myself a military parade to see what a convoy looks like, because I was driving in

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 24 of 67

one around Afghanistan right about the time this president was taping season seven of 'Celebrity Apprentice,'" Buttigieg told Iowa Democrats at the state party's marquee fundraiser in Des Moines this month.

Buttigieg also often notes he has "seen worse incoming than a misspelled tweet." There were sporadic, often inaccurate, but sometimes deadly rocket attacks when he was stationed at Bagram Air Force Base before being transferred to Kabul.

He weaves his experience into campaign events with voters, especially when it reinforces his proposal to ban assault weapons.

"This is definitely not the sense of peace and security I thought I was protecting when I was carrying one of these damn things around a war zone," Buttigieg told voters in Charles City, Iowa, this month.

And while Buttigieg says he relishes the chance to compare records with the Republican president, who received five draft deferments during the Vietnam War, there are warning signs for Buttigieg of overplaying his service.

Moulton, who left the race in September, pointedly noted his four deployments to Iraq as a Marine combat officer was a better test of leadership than Buttigieg's.

"It's good that Mayor Pete served, but there's a world of difference between driving a Chevy Suburban in Kabul, where plenty of foreigners walk around without a problem, and closing on the enemy in combat," Moulton told the Washington Examiner in September. Moulton declined to be interviewed for this report.

Though Buttigieg's commanding officers say he accurately describes his service, he could face questions. "It boils down to a bit of semantics," Hollingsworth said.

A combat convoy is defined as two or more vehicles moving together in unprotected space, not necessarily a long string of vehicles towing heavy weapons.

"Pete's statement would be accurate in the strict sense," Hollingsworth said. "I might question the quote of 'driving in one around Afghanistan.' That implies something most likely bigger than what his assignment required under my command time, but I recognize his intent."

Hollingsworth also said Buttigieg might face questions about whether the image of him holding the rifle suggests to the viewer he was engaged in exchange of hostile fire.

"If I were writing his bio ad, I wouldn't start with that," Hollingsworth said. "The bulk of his time was not strapping on all kinds of weapons of war and taking your chances."

Buttigieg dismissed whether the picture embellished his real mission. It was taken when he and a handful of others were on a hike within the Green Zone, he said.

"If you're watching closely, you'll notice I'm not wearing body armor," he told The Associated Press. "It was manageable risk, but you still wanted to have your weapon."

Distinctions such as these have begun stirring Republican critics on social media to cast doubt on Buttigieg's credibility.

They are reminiscent of Trump's 2015 criticism of McCain's capture as a Navy pilot during the Vietnam War, which showed the president's willingness to challenge even valorous service.

In the fall of 2004, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, a political group that was by law allowed to raise unlimited sums from undisclosed donors, challenged Kerry's version of events from 1969 that had earned the Navy veteran a Silver Star. Kerry's campaign opted not to respond to the ads, as to not legitimize them, a decision the Massachusetts senator later suggested was a key to his loss to Republican President George W. Bush.

Candidates must abandon the idea that their service can inoculate them from attacks and should prepare early a strategy to confront them aggressively, said David Wade, Kerry's campaign spokesman and longtime adviser.

"Bottom line, if it's a character issue, you have to match dollar-for-dollar on advertising," Wade said.

## **Pelosi invites Trump to testify as new witnesses prepare**

**By JILL COLVIN Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi invited President Donald Trump to testify in front of investigators in the House impeachment inquiry ahead of a week that will see several key



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 25 of 67

witnesses appear publicly.

Pushing back against accusations from the president that the process has been stacked against him, Pelosi said Trump is welcome to appear or answer questions in writing, if he chooses.

"If he has information that is exculpatory, that means ex, taking away, culpable, blame, then we look forward to seeing it," she said in an interview that aired Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation." Trump "could come right before the committee and talk, speak all the truth that he wants if he wants," she said.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer echoed that suggestion.

"If Donald Trump doesn't agree with what he's hearing, doesn't like what he's hearing, he shouldn't tweet. He should come to the committee and testify under oath. And he should allow all those around him to come to the committee and testify under oath," Schumer told reporters. He said the White House's insistence on blocking witnesses from cooperating begs the question: "What is he hiding?"

The comments come as the House Intelligence Committee prepares for a second week of public hearings as part of its inquiry, including with the man who is arguably the most important witness. Gordon Sondland, Trump's ambassador to the European Union, is among the only people interviewed to date who had direct conversations with the Republican president about the situation because the White House has blocked others from cooperating with what it dismisses as a sham investigation. And testimony suggests he was intimately involved in discussions that are at the heart of the investigation into whether Trump held up U.S. military aid to Ukraine to try to pressure the country's president to announce an investigation into Democrats, including former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading 2020 candidate, and Biden's son Hunter.

Multiple witnesses overheard a phone call in which Trump and Sondland reportedly discussed efforts to push for the investigations. In private testimony to impeachment investigators made public Saturday, Tim Morrison, a former National Security Council aide and longtime Republican defense hawk, said Sondland told him he was discussing Ukraine matters directly with Trump.

Morrison said Sondland and Trump had spoken approximately five times between July 15 and Sept. 11 — the weeks that \$391 million in U.S. assistance was withheld from Ukraine before it was released.

And he recounted that Sondland told a top Ukrainian official in a meeting that the vital U.S. military assistance might be freed up if the country's top prosecutor "would go to the mike and announce that he was opening the Burisma investigation." Burisma is the gas company that hired Hunter Biden.

Morrison's testimony contradicted much of what Sondland told congressional investigators during his own closed-door deposition, which the ambassador later amended.

Trump has said he has no recollection of the overheard call and has suggested he barely knew Sondland, a wealthy donor to his 2016 campaign. But Democrats are hoping he sheds new light on the discussions.

"I'm not going to try to prejudge his testimony," Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., said on "Fox News Sunday." But he suggested, "it was not lost on Ambassador Sondland what happened to the president's close associate Roger Stone for lying to Congress, to Michael Cohen for lying to Congress. My guess is that Ambassador Sondland is going to do his level best to tell the truth, because otherwise he may have a very unpleasant legal future in front of him."

The committee also will be interviewing a long list of others. On Tuesday, it'll hear from Morrison along with Jennifer Williams, an aide to Vice President Mike Pence, Alexander Vindman, the director for European affairs at the National Security Council, and Kurt Volker, the former U.S. special envoy to Ukraine.

On Wednesday the committee will hear from Sondland in addition to Laura Cooper, a deputy assistant secretary of defense, and David Hale, a State Department official. And on Thursday, Fiona Hill, a former top NSC staffer for Europe and Russia, will appear.

Trump, meanwhile, continued to tweet and retweet a steady stream of commentary from supporters as he bashed "The Crazy, Do Nothing Democrats" for "turning Impeachment into a routine partisan weapon."

"That is very bad for our Country, and not what the Founders had in mind!!!!" he wrote.

He also tweeted a doctored video exchange between Rep. Adam Schiff, the Democratic chairman of the Intelligence Committee, and Republican Rep. Jim Jordan, in which Schiff said he did not know the identity of the whistleblower whose complaint triggered the inquiry. The clip has been altered to show Schiff

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 26 of 67

wearing a referee's uniform and loudly blowing a whistle.

In her CBS interview, Pelosi vowed to protect the whistleblower, whom Trump has said should be forced to come forward despite longstanding whistleblower protections.

"I will make sure he does not intimidate the whistleblower," Pelosi said.

Trump has been under fire for his treatment of one of the witnesses, the former ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, whom Trump criticized by tweet as she was testifying last week.

That attack prompted accusations of witness intimidation from Democrats and even some criticism from Republicans, who have been largely united in their defense of Trump

"I think, along with most people, I find the president's tweet generally unfortunate," said Ohio Republican Rep. Mike Turner on CNN's "State of the Union."

Still, he insisted that tweets were "certainly not impeachable and it's certainly not criminal. And it's certainly not witness intimidation," even if Yovanovitch said she felt intimidated by the attacks.

Rep. Chris Stewart, R-Utah, said Trump "communicates in ways that sometimes I wouldn't," but dismissed the significance of the attacks.

"If your basis for impeachment is going to include a tweet, that shows how weak the evidence for that impeachment is," he said on ABC's "This Week."

And the backlash didn't stop Trump from lashing out at yet another witness, this time Pence aide Williams. He directed her in a Sunday tweet to "meet with the other Never Trumpers, who I don't know & mostly never even heard of, & work out a better presidential attack!"

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Associated Press writer Hope Yen contributed to this report.

## **AP Exclusive: Climate said to imperil 60% of Superfund sites**

**By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — At least 60 percent of U.S. Superfund sites are in areas vulnerable to flooding or other worsening disasters of climate change, and the Trump administration's reluctance to directly acknowledge global warming is deterring efforts to safeguard them, a congressional watchdog agency says.

In a report being released Monday, the Government Accountability Office called on Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler to state directly that dealing with the rising risks of seas, storms or wildfires breaching Superfund sites under climate change is part of the agency's mission.

The findings in the report, obtained by The Associated Press, emphasize the challenges for government agencies under President Donald Trump, who frequently mocks scientists' urgent warnings on global heating. Wheeler's highest-profile public remarks on the matter came in a March CBS interview, when he called global heating "an important change" but not one of the agency's most pressing problems.

"Most of the threats from climate change are 50 to 75 years out," Wheeler said then, rejecting conclusions by scientists that damage to climate from fossil fuel emissions already is making natural disasters fiercer and more frequent.

Largely avoiding the words "climate change," the agency in a formal response rejected the GAO finding that the agency was making a mistake by not spelling out that hardening Superfund sites against a worsening climate was part and parcel of the EPA's mission.

The EPA believes "the Superfund program's existing processes and resources adequately ensure that risks and any adverse effects of severe weather events, that may increase in intensity, duration, or frequency, are woven into risk assessments," assistant EPA administrator Peter Wright wrote the GAO in response.

GAO investigators looked at 1,571 Superfund sites, contaminated locations that, according to the EPA website, exist nationally due to hazardous waste being dumped, left out in the open or otherwise improperly managed. That number does not include Superfund sites owned by the Defense Department and other federal agencies.

At least 945 of them are in areas that scientists have identified as at greater risk of floods, storm surge from major hurricanes, wildfires or sea-level rise of 3 feet (0.9 meters) or more, the GAO says.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 27 of 67

Broken down, that includes 783 Superfund sites at greater risk of flooding under climate change, 234 Superfund sites at high or very high risk from wildfires and 187 sites vulnerable to storm surge from any Category 4 or 5 hurricane, the researchers said.

Senate Democrats asked for the review of how ready EPA's Superfund program is for climate change.

Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware, the senior Democrat on the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee, urged the agency to follow the GAO's recommendations.

"By refusing to address the worsening impacts of climate change – from flooding to wildfires to more frequent extreme weather events – at our nation's Superfund sites, this EPA is putting public health at risk," Carper said.

GAO investigators cited California's 150-year-old Iron Mountain mine, where Superfund operators daily prevent tons of toxic sludge from pouring into the Sacramento River system, source of one-fifth of the state's water.

Scientists say that the state's increasing, and increasingly intense, wildfires are a sign of what the country will be seeing as the climate deteriorates. One major wildfire last year overran the Iron Mountain Superfund site, nearly destroying its water-treatment system and risking a massive, poisonous explosion if flames reached the heart of the mine, the GAO said. Firefighters used special gear to stop the flames. Operators of the Superfund site have since swapped out PCB pipes carrying away the toxic waste for flame-resistant steel ones.

And east of Houston along the San Jacinto River, record rains under Hurricane Harvey in 2017 again dissolved part of a temporary cap on a 40-acre (16-hectare) Superfund site, exposing contaminated material. EPA testing there afterward found dioxin at more than 2,000 times the maximum recommended level.

When it comes to climate change, Superfund sites in that coastal part of Texas "are incredibly vulnerable," said Jackie Young, head of the Texas Health and Environment Alliance advocacy group. While the EPA has since directed that the toxic waste at the damaged site be moved to higher ground, other Superfund sites in the area are still at risk, Young said.

"It's highly unacceptable that our communities and our first responders" in hurricanes and other disasters "may be exposed to contaminants someone left decades prior," Young said Friday.

The EPA's current five-year strategic plan does not include goals or strategies for handling growing risks under climate change, the GAO report said. The most recent previous five-year plan, under President Barack Obama's administration, listed addressing climate change as one of four main strategic goals for the agency and specifically addressed climate change's impact for Superfund sites, the investigators said.

A GAO review of climate-change-minded planning for keeping the arsenic, mercury, PCBs and other dangerous waste at Superfund sites away from the public and environment found big differences among the 10 EPA regions nationally.

Officials at four EPA regions were able point to changes they'd made at specific Superfund sites to try to adapt to climate change, the report said. At the country's other EPA regions, however, EPA officials said they had not looked at climate-change projection for flooding or rainfall to gauge risks at Superfund sites, investigators said.

In the EPA region covering Texas and four other south-central states — a region that includes the Gulf of Mexico and Houston and other oil and petrochemical hubs frequently battered by hurricanes — officials "told us that they do not include potential impacts of climate change effects or changes in the frequency of natural disasters into their assessments," the GAO investigators wrote.

In the Great Lakes states, meanwhile, regional EPA officials "told us that they do not have any formal direction on how to address risks from climate change and are waiting for EPA headquarters to provide information on how to do so," the report said.

## 10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

### 1. WHO DEMOCRATS INVITED TO TESTIFY IN THE IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY

As hearings enter a second critical week House Speaker Nancy Pelosi says President Trump is welcome to appear or answer questions in writing, if he chooses.

### 2. HONG KONG POLICE BATTLE PROTESTERS TRAPPED ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Using tear gas and batons police fought off demonstrators trying to escape arrest after taking over a university and have called on them to surrender and face justice.

### 3. 10 SHOT, 4 FATALLY AT BACKYARD PARTY IN CALIFORNIA

Police say suspects sneaked into a Fresno yard filled with people watching a football game and began firing.

### 4. WHAT IS IMPERILING 60% OF US SUPERFUND SITES

A congressional watchdog says the U.S. Superfund sites are vulnerable to flooding or other worsening disasters of climate change, the AP finds.

### 5. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CAREFUL NOT TO OVERSTATE MILITARY SERVICE

Democrat Pete Buttigieg is leaning hard on his seven-month deployment as an intelligence officer in Afghanistan as a powerful credential but does not call himself a combat veteran.

### 6. WHO IS FEELING THE HEAT IN LEBANON

Hezbollah built a reputation in Lebanon as a champion of the poor and defender of the country against Israel's powerful military but now many protesters put the group into the ruling class they're revolting against.

### 7. WHAT PROMPTED SAMOA TO CLOSE ALL SCHOOLS

A measles outbreak that has killed 6 people so far has led to a state of emergency, a ban on children from public gatherings and a mandate that everybody get vaccinated.

### 8. 'THIS IS A CLIMATE EMERGENCY'

Venetians are unhappy with record-breaking flooding, environmental and safety threats from cruise ship traffic and the burden on services from over-tourism.

### 9. WHERE WOMEN ARE FORCED TO GIVE BIRTH IN DESPERATE CONDITIONS

A 72-year-old grandmother in Zimbabwe with no formal training is helping women deliver during the southern African country's worst economic crisis in more than a decade.

### 10. TODD GURLEY DELIVERS BEST GAME OF SEASON IN RAMS' WIN OVER BEARS

The All-Pro running back had a season-high 133 scrimmage yards and scored a touchdown to lead Los Angeles to a 17-7 victory over Chicago.

## 4 dead, 6 wounded in California football party shooting

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — Four people were killed and six more wounded when "unknown suspects" sneaked into a backyard filled with people at a party in central California and fired into the crowd, police said.

The shooting took place about 6 p.m. on the Fresno's southeast side, where people were gathered to watch a football game, Fresno Police Lt. Bill Dooley said.

Deputy Chief Michael Reid told the Fresno Bee and the KSEE/KGPE TV stations that a total of 10 people were shot, with three found dead in the backyard. A fourth person died at the hospital. Six others are expected to survive and are recovering at the hospital.

All the victims were Asian men ranging from ages 25 to 35, Reid said.

"What we do know is that this was a gathering, a family and friend gathering in the backyard," Dooley said. "Everyone was watching football this evening when unknown suspects approached the residence, snuck into the backyard and opened fire."

The victims were taken to Community Regional Medical Center in critical condition, and some are now stable, the TV stations reported.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 29 of 67

About 35 people were at the party when the shooting began, Reid said.

"Thank God that no kids were hurt," he said.

No one is in custody in connection with the shooting. Police said there was no immediate indication that the victims knew the shooter or shooters.

Police were going door-to-door in search of surveillance video that might help them track down the suspects. The shooting took place about a half-mile from the city's airport.

Agents from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives field office in San Francisco were responding to the shooting, the Bee reported.

It was at least the second fatal gun attack Sunday in southeast Fresno, the Bee reported. A man in his 20s was shot to death early Sunday at a home in another part of the city. Police have not said whether the incidents could be connected.

Sunday's shootings in Fresno also come on the heels of at least two mass shootings in California. On Thursday, a 16-year-old student at a Southern California high school shot and killed two classmates and wounded three other teens before shooting himself in the head. He died the next day. And on Saturday, police in San Diego said a husband shot and killed his wife and three of their sons before killing himself. A fourth son wounded in the shooting was on life support Sunday, family members said.

## No training, no gloves: Zimbabwe's desperate childbirths

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — When her contractions became unbearably painful, 18-year-old Perseverance Kanyoza rushed to a maternity hospital in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. But the doors were closed amid a weeklong strike by public health workers. With no money for private care, panic set in.

A hospital guard directed her to a tiny apartment in the poor suburb of Mbare nearby. The midwife: a grandmother with no formal training and claiming to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Thirteen hours later, Kanyoza gave birth to a healthy baby girl.

"It was a miracle," she told The Associated Press with a beaming smile. "I feared for the worst. I didn't know what to do after finding the hospital closed."

Her baby was one of dozens delivered in the past week alone with the help of 72-year-old Esther Zinyoro Gwena. She has become a local hero as the southern African country's worst economic crisis in more than a decade is forcing desperate women to seek out traditional birth attendants who often deliver babies using their bare hands with no sterilization or post-natal care.

Some worried Zimbabweans say Gwena's work only highlights the collapse of a health sector once regarded as one of the best in Africa. Doctors have been on strike for more than two months, seeking better pay than the roughly \$100 they receive a month, and nurses and midwives in Harare walked off the job two weeks ago.

Since then, Gwena said, she has delivered more than 100 babies and no mothers have died. She doesn't charge for her services and helping stranded pregnant women is her concern.

"I never trained as a midwife. I started by befriending pregnant women at the church and then eight years ago I just started delivering babies. It is the holy spirit," she said.

"I have had no rest since the nurses' strike started. The work is becoming too much for one person. I am even losing weight," Gwena said.

She said she has been delivering up to 20 babies a day in her two-room apartment.

When the AP visited on Saturday, four pregnant women writhed in pain while sitting on blankets on the floor in the tiny living room-turned-maternity ward.

The bedroom is now the "recovery room" where several women holding newborn babies huddled on Gwena's small bed.

"They need the bed more," she said. "I rarely get time to sleep, they are always coming in ... in the middle of the night."

Neighbors, relatives of the pregnant women and some of Gwena's children, who help clean the blood,



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 30 of 67

fetch water from a nearby well and cook, sat on a bench. Others stood in the packed room.

"Make way, another one is coming," one woman shouted. A heavily pregnant young woman walked in carrying a small plastic bucket, blanket and bag.

Less than two hours later, the number of pregnant women had swelled to 10, their bags piled in a corner. More stood in line in the hallway outside.

"I was apprehensive," said Grace Musariri, one of the women in line. "But I have already seen four women leaving with their babies in the few hours I was here. The fear is gone."

The makeshift maternity ward contained little but boxes of cotton and gloves donated by President Emmerson Mnangagwa's wife, Auxillia, who visited on Friday after Gwena's story made headlines in Zimbabwe's state media.

Before her visit "I used my bare hands," Gwena said. She asks women to bring their own razor blades, cord clamps and other items.

"My biggest challenges are space, water and protective clothing. I need help, and fast," she told a team of senior health officials who visited on Saturday.

She told them she had delivered 15 babies overnight and seven more before lunchtime.

One birth caused a brief scare. The baby popped out but seemed lifeless. Some in the room held their breath. Others screamed and the mother began to cry.

Gwena splashed water on the baby's forehead and the child let out a cry.

"She is so big," one woman exclaimed, joining others in cleaning a pool of blood from plastic that would be reused later.

The city's health director, Dr. Prosper Chonzi, said such home childbirth services are becoming rampant.

"Throughout Harare there are a lot of traditional birth attendants," he said. "If you go to our clinics right now they are empty. Where are these women going to? They are now coming to deliver here. There are no follow-ups when these women have delivered. It's really worrying."

Chonzi said hygienic conditions such as water availability, infection prevention and disposal of placentas were a worry.

"There is no proper management of blood and blood products," he said. "After birth, what happens? There are certain processes that need to happen during labor and after labor both to the mother and to the child. These are now missed opportunities." Those include helping to prevent HIV transmission from mother to child.

The health director added, "I am really depressed, to say the least. Something needs to be done. This is not the way to deliver health services in an urban, local authority." He told Gwena he would put in a word with his bosses to provide her with more gloves, cord clamps, sterile linens and other items.

The pregnant women flooding Gwena's apartment are happy to receive any assistance as state-provided services either become unavailable or sharply deteriorate.

"Both my child and I could have died had it not been for Gogo (grandmother)," said Kanyoza, the new mother, making her way home.

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## In the House impeachment drama, Russia still plays big role

By **AAMER MADHANI** and **ANDREW TAYLOR** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For all the talk about Ukraine in the House impeachment inquiry, there's a character standing just off-stage with a dominant role in this tale of international intrigue: Russia.

As has so often been the case since President Donald Trump took office, Moscow provides the mood music for the unfolding political drama.

"With you, Mr. President, all roads lead to Putin," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared last week, and not for the first time.

The impeachment investigation is centered on allegations that Trump tried to pressure Ukraine's new

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 31 of 67

leader over the summer to dig up dirt on Trump political rival Joe Biden, holding up U.S. military aid to the Eastern European nation as leverage.

In her testimony before the House impeachment panel last week, diplomat Marie Yovanovitch suggested that the president's actions played into the hands of Vladimir Putin, whose government has backed separatists in a five-year-old war in eastern Ukraine.

Yovanovitch, a 33-year veteran of the State Department known for fighting corruption in Ukraine and elsewhere, was ousted from her position as ambassador to Ukraine after Trump and his allies began attacking her and claimed she was bad-mouthing the president.

Her ouster, she and several Democratic lawmakers argued, ultimately benefitted Putin.

"How is it that foreign corrupt interests can manipulate our government?" Yovanovitch asked House investigators. "Which country's interests are served when the very corrupt behavior we've been criticizing is allowed to prevail? Such conduct undermines the U.S., exposes our friends and widens the playing field for autocrats like President Putin."

After two days of public testimony and the release of thousands of pages of transcripts from witnesses who've met with investigators behind closed doors, Democratic and Republican lawmakers seem further entrenched in their partisan corners about whether the president abused his powers.

Trump asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to do him a "favor" and investigate Biden and his son Hunter's business dealings in Ukraine. At the same time, Ukraine was awaiting nearly \$400 million in U.S. military aid.

While Democrats say the request to investigate the Bidens represented a quid pro quo, Trump insists he was within his rights to ask the country to look into corruption. Democrats, trying to make their accusations more understandable, have now settled on framing the president's actions as a matter of bribery, which, as Pelosi noted, is mentioned in the Constitution.

Hunter Biden served on the board of a Ukrainian gas company at the same time his father was leading the Obama administration's diplomatic dealings with Kyiv. Though the timing raised concerns among anti-corruption advocates, there has been no evidence of wrongdoing by either the former vice president or his son.

Trump has dismissed the impeachment proceedings as a "joke" that deny him and Republican lawmakers due process.

A key ally on Capitol Hill, Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Calif., casts the impeachment inquiry as a continuation of the Democrats' "spectacular implosion of their Russia hoax."

"In the blink of an eye, we're asked to simply forget about Democrats on this committee falsely claiming they had more than circumstantial evidence of collusion between President Trump and Russians," Nunes said.

Democrats, for their part, are trying to brighten the spotlight on their theory that Trump is doing the bidding of Putin.

Russia, a historic adversary of the United States, has too often emerged as a benefactor of Trump's actions, says Rep. Ted Lieu, a California Democrat.

In his July call with Zelenskyy, Trump pushed discredited information that hackers in Ukraine — rather than Russia — interfered in the 2016 elections.

Last month, Trump abruptly moved U.S. Special Forces from northern Syria at Turkey's urging and as result created a security vacuum for Russia to fill.

Trump has also repeatedly disparaged and even suggested withdrawing from NATO, the military alliance that has served as a deterrent to Soviet and Russia aggression since it was formed after World War II.

"It's clear that the Trump administration foreign policy is chaotic and incoherent with one exception: Many of his actions benefit Russia," Lieu said.

Both in open hearings and closed-door testimony, Democrats have sought to highlight concerns that Trump's foreign policy frequently benefits Russia.

The concerns about Moscow linger even after special counsel Robert Mueller's nearly two-year investi-

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 32 of 67

gation into Russian interference in the 2016 election dogged Trump for much of his first term and led to the conviction of five campaign advisers or close associates of the president.

Mueller, a former FBI director, did not clear Trump of wrongdoing when he ended the probe nor did he allege the president committed misconduct.

"If Putin doesn't have something on him, he's doing all this for some bizarre reason," said Rep. Mike Quigley, an Illinois Democrat who sits on the House Intelligence Committee.

In her testimony before impeachment investigators last month, Fiona Hill, until July the Russia analyst on the National Security Council, delivered an impassioned warning that the United States' faltering resistance to conspiracy theories and corruption represents a self-inflicted crisis and renders the country vulnerable to its enemies.

"The Russians, you know, can't basically exploit cleavages if there are not cleavages," she said. "The Russians can't exploit corruption if there's not corruption. They can't exploit alternative narratives if those alternative narratives are not out there and getting credence. What the Russians do is they exploit things that already exist."

Other witnesses, including Deputy Secretary of State George Kent and Ambassador William Taylor, the acting chief Ukraine envoy, also testified that Russia was the chief beneficiary of Trump's decision to hold up military aid to Ukraine.

"Our holding up of security systems that would go to a country that is fighting aggression from Russia for no good policy reason, no good substantive reason, no good national security reason is wrong," said Taylor.

U.S. diplomats also worried that the hold on the security assistance would undercut Zelenskiy, whom they viewed as a reformer in a nation that has repeatedly endured tumult spurred by endemic corruption.

"I think the signal that there is controversy and question about the U.S. support of Ukraine sends the signal to Vladimir Putin that he can leverage that as he seeks to negotiate with not only Ukraine but other countries," Kent said.

## Gurley, Brown help Rams ground out 17-7 win over Bears

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Todd Gurley was told by Rams coach Sean McVay before Sunday night's game against the Chicago Bears that he was going to be a focal point of Los Angeles' offense.

Gurley rose to the occasion and delivered his best game of the season.

The All-Pro running back had a season-high 133 scrimmage yards and scored a touchdown to lead the Rams to a 17-7 victory to help them keep pace in the NFC playoff race.

"We had a bunch of guys down and I was able to step up," Gurley said. "It felt like the old Todd. I was glad I was able to go out there and take advantage of what I got."

On a night when the Rams were missing two of their starting receivers and had a reworked offensive line, McVay reined things in. Los Angeles (6-4) ran it on 65.4% of its plays (34 of 52). That is the highest run percentage in McVay's three seasons as coach and only the fourth time they have gone to ground more than 60% of the time.

Gurley led the way with a season-high 25 carries. His 97 rushing yards also tied for his most this year.

"What I loved the most about what Todd did was after we put the first carry on the ground he didn't flinch," McVay said. "He came back, had some good, tough, physical runs, made some good catches out of the backfield and he was a big-time contributor tonight."

Jared Goff was 11 of 18 for 173 yards and an interception with many of his completions coming off play action.

The Bears (4-6) ran 22 more plays than the Rams but averaged only 3.6 yards. Mitchell Trubisky was 24 of 43 for 190 yards with a touchdown and interception. Trubisky injured his right hip on the last drive of the first half but didn't come out until late in the fourth quarter, when Chase Daniel came in.

"I was just all arm in the second half pretty much," Trubisky said. "Just trying to fight through the pain and trying to make the throws. I still felt like I was still putting the ball in some pretty good spots. Just



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 33 of 67

couldn't move around or couldn't buy time."

Gurley came in averaging 53.5 rushing yards per game, but had 63 in the first half, including three carries of 10 yards or more. After Greg Zuerlein opened the scoring with a 38-yard field goal early in the second quarter, Gurley put the Rams up 10-0 with 3:28 remaining on a 1-yard drive up the middle.

Gurley's TD was set up when Goff connected with Cooper Kupp for a 50-yard gain. Kupp beat Buster Skrine up the left sideline and hauled in the pass at the 15 before he fumbled going out of bounds at the 1. It appeared as if Kupp might have fumbled it at the pylon, which would have been a Chicago touchback.

"When we're at our best is when we're running the ball well. There have been games when we haven't and we've overcome it and thrown it but that's not usually how we want to do it," Goff said.

After Tarik Cohen's third-quarter touchdown catch brought Chicago to 10-7, the Rams put it out of reach with 3:35 remaining in the fourth quarter on Malcolm Brown's 5-yard run.

Chicago got to 10-7 on its first drive of the second half when Trubisky connected with Cohen for a 12-yard score. Cohen beat linebacker Cory Littleton in single coverage to score his third touchdown of the season.

## WALKING THE LINE

Goff's 11 completions and 18 attempts were career lows when starting a game, but the game plan was effective. Chicago's Khalil Mack was held without a tackle or sack.

A lot of credit goes to the reworked offensive line. Left tackle Andrew Whitworth was the only constant with Austin Blythe moving from left guard to center. Austin Corbett, who was acquired last month from Cleveland, got his first Rams start at left guard with rookies David Edwards and Bobby Evans on the right side. Edwards got his fourth start at guard and Evans his first at tackle.

"It's a testament to those guys how much they prepared," Whitworth said. "You put four new guys at four new spots in the NFL and you lose 50-0. These guys came out and executed. That's what good teams do and that's what we've got to do more of."

## MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

The Bears drove inside the Rams 35 on their first three series but had nothing to show for it. Eddy Piñeiro missed 48- and 47-yard field goal attempts and Chicago turned it over on downs on the second series.

"We've been struggling with drives, getting going, and we finally get a couple first downs," Bears coach Matt Nagy said. "And now it might not sound great, but we were in position to kick a field goal to start the game and we missed it. And those are the ones I really wish we could have."

Piñeiro began the season 9 of 10 on field goals but has missed three straight and four of his last seven. Nagy said after the game that he continues to have faith in his kicker.

## INACTIVE

Rams: WR Robert Woods was listed as a surprise inactive before the game due to a personal issue. Woods is second on the team in receptions (45) and had seven catches for 61 yards in last year's game at Chicago. Brandin Cooks (concussion) also was inactive,

Bears: RT Bobby Massie suffered a back injury during the second half. He didn't return.

## UP NEXT

Bears: Host the New York Giants (2-8) next Sunday.

Rams: Host the Baltimore Ravens (8-2) next Monday night.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## Venice's dwindling population faces mounting woes

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — One of only four oar makers for Venice's famed gondoliers, Paolo Brandolisio wades through his ground-floor workshop for the third time in a week of record-breaking floods, despairing of any help from national or local institutions.

"If these phenomena continue to repeat themselves, you have to think about how to defend yourself," he says. "Because the defenses that the politicians have made don't seem to be nearly enough."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 34 of 67

"You have to think of yourself," he repeats.

Venetians are fed up with what they see as inadequate responses to the city's mounting problems: record-breaking flooding, environmental and safety threats from cruise ship traffic and the burden on services from over-tourism.

They feel largely left to their own devices, with ever-fewer Venetians living in the historic part of the city to defend its interests and keep it from becoming mainly a tourist domain.

The historic flooding this week — marked by three floods over 1.5 meters (nearly 5 feet) and the highest in 53 years at 1.87 meters (6 feet, 1 inch) — has sharpened calls to create an administration that recognizes the uniqueness of Venice, for both its concentration of treasures and its increasing vulnerability.

Flood damage has been estimated at hundreds of millions of euros (dollars), but the true scope will only become clear with time. Architectural masterpieces like St. Mark's Cathedral still need to be fully inspected and damaged manuscripts from the Music Conservatory library treated by experts — not to mention the personal losses suffered by thousands of residents and businesses.

"I feel ashamed," said Fabio Moretti, the president of Venice's historic Academy of Fine Arts that was once presided over by Tiepolo and Canova. "These places are left in our custody. They don't belong to us. They belong to humanity. It is a heritage that needs to be preserved."

The frustration goes far beyond the failure to complete and activate 78 underwater barriers that were designed to prevent just the kind of damage that Venice has endured this week. With the system not yet completed or even partially tested after 16 years of work and 5 billion euros (\$5.5 billion) invested, many are skeptical it will even work.

"This is a climate emergency. This is sick governance of the city," said Jane Da Mosto, an environmental scientist and executive director of the NGO "We Are Here Venice," whose aim it is to keep Venice a living city as opposed to a museum or theme park.

Brandolisio, the oar builder, sees systemic lapses in the official response, including the failure of local authorities to organize services immediately for those in need, an absence filled by volunteers. That included both a network of students who helped clear out waterlogged property for those in need and professionals like water-taxi drivers who offered transport during the emergency.

For now, he is taking matters into his own hands.

To protect his bottega where he not only makes oars but carves ornamental oar posts for gondolas or as sculpture, Brandolisio said he will have to consider raising the floor by at least 20 centimeters and buying a pump — precautions he never previously deemed necessary.

"I think I will lose at least two or three weeks of work," he said. "I will have to dry everything. Lots of things fell into the water, so I need to clean all the tools that can get rusty. I need to take care of wood that got wet, which I can't use because it cannot be glued."

At the public level, proposals for better administering the city including granting some level of autonomy to Venice, already enjoyed by some Italian regions like Trentino-Alto-Adige with its German-speaking minority, or offering tax breaks to encourage Venice's repopulation.

Just 53,000 people live in the historic part of the city that tourists know as Venice, down by a third from a generation ago and dropping by about 1,000 people a year. The population of the lagoon islands — including glass-making Murano and the Lido beach destination — is just under 30,000, and dwindling too.

That means fewer people watching the neighborhood, monitoring for public maintenance issues or neighbors in need. Many leave because of the increased expense or the daily difficulties in living in a city of canals, which can make even a simple errand a minor odyssey.

Activists also say local politicians are more beholden to the city's mainland population, which has jumped to 180,000 people not directly affected, for the most part, by the same issues as the lagoon dwellers.

They are pushing for passage of a referendum on Dec. 1 that would give the historic center and islands their own administration, separate from that serving more populous Mestre and the industrial port of Marghera. Those areas were annexed to Venice by the Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, and not necessarily a natural fit.

"It is precisely because we also have a climate emergency that this kind of thing is more important," Da Mosto said.

"The only thing we can do for the climate is to prepare. That requires appropriate policies and investments and responsible engineering. And because the political context of Venice is so wrong, Venice doesn't have a chance at the moment."

## **AP FACT CHECK: Trump's attack on diplomat, impeachment myths** **By HOPE YEN and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Truth was lost in the first round of historic impeachment hearings as President Donald Trump launched a tweet attack on a senior U.S. diplomat that distorted reality and Republicans cried foul, claiming improper stifling of questioning that wasn't so.

Over two days, the hearings by the House Intelligence Committee featured statements at odds with known facts.

Reacting to testimony from former U.S. ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, Trump in a few choice words portrayed her as a wrecking ball in every country where she served U.S. interests. Her long diplomatic career had spanned danger zones and emerging democracies.

The tweet jolted hearings where Yovanovitch was already testifying to the personal threat she has been feeling from the president.

Each day, the committee's top Republican put forth the provocative claim that Democrats went on a hunt for naked pictures of Trump in a flailing attempt to come up with dirt on him. The lawmaker didn't tell the story straight.

And in a ploy drawing applause from the White House, Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York accused Democrats of improperly stifling her questioning. Actually, it was she who spoke out of turn.

A look at some of the claims, heading into round 2 of the hearings:

YOVANOVITCH

TRUMP: "Everywhere Marie Yovanovitch went turned bad. She started off in Somalia, how did that go?" — tweet Friday.

THE FACTS: The notion that countries "turned bad" when Yovanovitch went to them has no credence.

Yovanovitch served as a low-level diplomat in Somalia in her first foreign tour after joining the foreign service in her 20s. She had nothing to do with the 1984 famine that preceded her arrival in Somalia and contributed to that country's unraveling, nor anything to do with the government's collapse and the onset of anarchy after she left.

"I don't think I have such powers," she said pointedly when asked about Trump's tweet during Friday's hearing.

Of the seven countries where Yovanovitch served, five were designated hardship posts. In that sense, they were "bad" before she got there.

Mogadishu, Somalia, was her first tour after she joined the foreign service in 1986. She was a general-services officer with little clout, before she moved to other countries in increasingly senior positions.

The Somali civil war began in earnest in 1988, leading to a collapse in law and order by 1990, the overthrow of the government in 1991 and eventually to the ill-starred, U.S.-led U.N. peacekeeping intervention in 1992.

By then, she had moved on. After several years in Somalia, she went to Uzbekistan to help open the post-Soviet-era U.S. Embassy in Tashkent.

After a series of promotions from both Republican and Democratic administrations, Yovanovitch worked from 2001 to 2004 as the U.S. deputy chief of mission in Ukraine before being named ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, then to Armenia. She returned to Ukraine after President Barack Obama nominated her to be U.S. ambassador in 2016.

TRUMP: "Then fast forward to Ukraine, where the new Ukrainian President spoke unfavorably about her



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 36 of 67

in my second phone call with him. It is a U.S. President's absolute right to appoint ambassadors." — tweet Friday.

THE FACTS: His description of appointment powers is problematic — ambassadors must be confirmed by the Senate. But he's correct that Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy criticized Yovanovitch in his July 25 phone call with Trump.

He did so after Trump called Yovanovitch "bad news."

"It was great that you were the first one who told me that she was a bad ambassador because I agree with you 100%," said the eager-to-please Zelenskiy, according to the rough White House transcript.

Trump followed up by saying, "Well, she's going to go through some things."

Yovanovitch testified that she took those remarks, made two months after she had left the post, as a threat against her by the president.

On Trump's other point, presidents do not have the "absolute right" to put ambassadors on the job. The Senate must approve them. But presidents can fire them at will.

## WITNESS QUESTIONING

REP. DEVIN NUNES, addressing House intelligence chairman Adam Schiff: "You're gagging the young lady from New York?" — hearing Friday.

STEFANIK: "Once again, Adam Schiff flat out REFUSES to let duly elected Members of Congress ask questions to the witness, simply because we are Republicans. His behavior is unacceptable and he continues to abuse his Chairmanship." — tweet Friday.

TRUMP CAMPAIGN: "Nevertheless, she persisted!" — tweet Friday.

THE FACTS: Schiff did not improperly silence Stefanik. Republicans were the ones in violation of rules voted upon by the House when Stefanik prematurely began her questioning.

Under the rules approved last month, Schiff and Nunes, the top Republican on the committee, each had 45 minutes to pose questions themselves or designate their staff attorneys to do so. Lawmakers on the committees would then have five minutes each to ask questions, alternating between Republicans and Democrats.

When Schiff halted Stefanik's questioning, it was when Nunes wrongly attempted to yield some of his time for her to question Yovanovitch. Stefanik later proceeded with questioning during her allotted time.

Nunes had diligently followed House rules during Wednesday's hearing, sharing his time with his committee counsel, Steve Castor.

The outburst on Friday, however, gave Republicans a nationally televised opening to falsely accuse Schiff, Trump's nemesis, of treating a female lawmaker unfairly.

## IMPEACHMENT

NUNES: "When you find yourself on the phone like the Democrats did with Russian pranksters offering you nude pictures of Trump and after you ordered your staff to follow up and get the photos, as the Democrats also did, then it might be time to ask yourself if you've gone out too far on a limb." — from opening statement Friday.

NUNES on Democrats: "In the blink of an eye, we're asked to simply ... forget about them trying to obtain nude pictures of Trump from Russian pranksters who pretended to be Ukrainian officials." — from opening statement Wednesday.

THE FACTS: His assertion that Democrats were hunting down nude photos of Trump is misleading.

Nunes' oft-made claim refers to a 2017 phone call that Schiff, D-Calif., took from Russian pranksters who claimed to be a member of Ukraine's parliament. The pranksters said they had "compromising materials" on Trump, including "pictures of naked Trump" from his 2013 visit to Moscow, along with information and recordings on questionable conversations.

While Schiff told the pranksters the information was helpful, his questions focused on the audio recordings and the nature of the meetings, not the prospect of nude photos. Schiff made clear he would be referring the matter to the FBI to investigate.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 37 of 67

"I'll be in touch with the FBI about this," said Schiff, now chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. "We would welcome a chance to get copies of those recordings, so we will try to work with the FBI to figure out, along with your staff, how we can obtain copies."

His office later told The Atlantic magazine it had alerted U.S. law enforcement both before and after the call and had conveyed the view the offer was probably bogus.

**WHITE HOUSE:** "Don't rely on second, third, and fourth-hand accounts. Read the transcript for yourself." — tweet Wednesday.

**NUNES:** "They saw us sit through hours of hearsay testimony about conversations that two diplomats, who'd never spoken to the President, heard second-hand, third-hand, and fourth-hand from other people—in other words, rumors. The problem of trying to overthrow a president based on this type of evidence is obvious." — hearing Friday.

**STEPHANIE GRISHAM,** White House press secretary: "Dems star witnesses can't provide any first hand knowledge." — tweet Wednesday.

**THE FACTS:** The White House and GOP allies are incorrect in suggesting the impeachment inquiry is based purely on secondhand and thirdhand information. Many allegations have been corroborated by witnesses with firsthand knowledge, some of whom are scheduled to testify this week.

It is true that William Taylor, the highest-ranking U.S. official in Ukraine, who testified Wednesday, was not on the call at the center of the whistleblower complaint and that his account relies in great part on what he learned from other witnesses. Even the most sensational aspect of his testimony — that Trump spoke with Gordon Sondland, U.S. ambassador to the European Union, about investigations into Democrat Joe Biden and Biden's son Hunter one day after Trump's call with Zelenskiy — was based on what Taylor learned from staff.

But key elements of Taylor's account have been subsequently confirmed by Sondland, including in an addendum Sondland filed after his closed-door congressional testimony. In addition, text messages of Taylor's discussions with Sondland and Kurt Volker, another U.S. envoy, lay out the contours of a quid pro quo.

Yovanovitch, who testified Friday, was ousted from her position before Trump's July 25 call with Ukraine's leader. But Trump had brought her up during that call in which he called her "bad news" and praised a Ukrainian prosecutor unhappy with her efforts to root out corruption in the country.

Both Sondland and Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, a top Trump national security adviser who listened in on Trump's call, are scheduled to appear before the House committee this coming week.

The White House has tried to prevent those closer to Trump from appearing before the House committee, including acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and former national security adviser John Bolton.

More broadly, the rough transcript of the July 25 phone call between Trump and Ukraine's leader does not clear Trump. It is largely in sync with the whistleblower's complaint and the words of a succession of career civil servants and Trump political appointees brought before Congress.

Together they stitched an account that shows Trump pressing for a political favor from a foreign leader and, as key testimony has it, conditioning military aid on getting what he wanted.

## WHISTLEBLOWER

**SCHIFF,** the committee chairman, responding to Nunes' claim that the Democrat knows the identity of the whistleblower and that Schiff's staff has spoken with the whistleblower: "That's a false statement. I do not know the identity of the whistleblower." — hearing Wednesday.

**THE FACTS:** Nunes is correct about one part of that statement: Schiff's staff has been in touch with the whistleblower.

Schiff may not know the whistleblower's identity himself, but someone on his committee staff very well could.

Schiff wrongly stated in September that his committee had not communicated with the whistleblower before that official's complaint was filed.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 38 of 67

Schiff spokesman Patrick Boland said the whistleblower contacted the committee for guidance, speaking to an aide who counseled the official to contact the inspector general and get his own counsel.

NUNES: "The whistleblower was acknowledged to have a bias against President Trump." — hearing Wednesday.

THE FACTS: That may or may not be so. Whatever the whistleblower's political beliefs, though, the whistleblower's complaint was deemed credible by the inspector general who received it.

Moreover, the July 25 phone conversation described by the whistleblower closely tracked the account later released by the White House.

It was during that call that Trump pressed Zelenskiy to investigate Democrats, along with Joe and Hunter Biden, as a "favor."

## UKRAINE

NUNES: "The Democrats cooperated in Ukrainian election meddling. ... Officials showed a surprising lack of interest in the indications of Ukrainian election meddling that deeply concerned the president at whose pleasure they serve." — hearing Wednesday.

THE FACTS: The theory that Ukrainians interfered in the U.S. election and that Democrats cooperated in that effort is unsubstantiated. If U.S. officials showed a lack of interest in pursuing the matter, it's because they considered it "fiction," as one put it.

Trump himself was told by his officials that the theory was "completely debunked" long before the president pressed Ukraine to investigate it anyway, according to Tom Bossert, Trump's first homeland security adviser. In testimony at the closed-door hearings that preceded Wednesday's public session, Fiona Hill, former special assistant to Trump on the National Security Council, said it was bogus.

"It is a fiction that the Ukrainian government was launching an effort to upend our election," Hill testified. "I'm extremely concerned that this is a rabbit hole that we're all going to go down in between now and the 2020 election, and it will be to all of our detriment."

Broadly, the theory contends that a hack of the Democratic National Committee in 2016 was a setup designed to cast blame on Russia but actually cooked up by or with the help of Ukrainians. But the evidence points conclusively to Russia, not Ukraine.

Based on a security firm's findings that Russian agents had broken into the Democrats' network and stolen emails, as well as other evidence, special counsel Robert Mueller indicted 12 members of Russia's military intelligence agency. He also concluded that their operation sought to help Trump's candidacy, not Democrat Hillary Clinton's, as the conspiracy theorists and Trump have it.

REP. JIM JORDAN, R-Ohio, on why the hold on military aid to Ukraine doesn't amount to a quid pro quo: "Zelenskiy had to commit to an investigation of the Bidens before the aid got released. And the aid got released, and he didn't commit to an investigation." — hearing Wednesday.

THE FACTS: It's true that the aid was released without Trump's demand for a Ukrainian probe of the Bidens being met. But Jordan and other Republicans who made this point ignored a key detail about the failure of the this-for-that deal to be consummated: The administration got caught holding up the aid to Ukraine.

According to the hearing, the aid that Congress had approved months earlier and Trump had frozen was finally freed Sept. 11.

That was days after congressional committees had begun looking into the matter, aware that the assistance had been sidelined and that a whistleblower had a complaint in motion.

The fact that this episode was coming to light also got Zelenskiy off the hook from having to decide between announcing the investigation Trump wanted or defying the U.S. president.

According to testimony to the committee, Zelenskiy was planning to go on CNN to announce the probe — satisfying Trump's wish to have him commit to one publicly — when the disclosure of the pressure



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 39 of 67

campaign by Trump and his underlings relieved him of that need.

**NUNES:** "The president approved the supply of weapons to Ukraine, unlike the previous administration, which provided blankets as defense against invading Russians." — hearing Wednesday.

**THE FACTS:** He's exaggerating the disparity in aid given to Ukraine by the Obama and Trump administrations.

While the Obama administration refused to provide Ukraine with lethal weapons in 2014 to fight Russian-backed separatists, it offered a range of other military and security aid — not just "blankets."

By March 2015, the Obama administration had provided more than \$120 million in security aid for Ukraine and promised \$75 million worth of equipment, including counter-mortar radars, night vision devices and medical supplies, according to the Defense Department. The U.S. also pledged 230 Humvee vehicles.

The U.S. aid offer came after Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2014 annexed Crimea and provided support for separatists in eastern cities near Russia's border.

Ultimately between 2014 and 2016, the Obama administration committed more than \$600 million in security aid to Ukraine.

In the last year of the Obama administration, the U.S. established the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which provided U.S. military equipment and training to help defend Ukraine against Russian aggression. From 2016 to 2019, Congress appropriated \$850 million for this initiative.

The Trump administration in 2017 agreed to provide lethal aid to Ukraine, later committing to sell \$47 million in Javelin anti-tank missiles.

Associated Press writers Matthew Lee, Lynn Berry and Eric Tucker in Washington and Andrew Meldrum in Johannesburg, South Africa, contributed to this report.

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## Weary Democratic voters balk at new presidential candidates

By **STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer**

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — The number of Democrats running for president is growing as the first votes of the primary approach. And voters have a clear message: stop.

Former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick roiled the race last week by launching a surprise bid. New York billionaire Michael Bloomberg is likely to do the same in the coming days.

The late entries, less than 80 days before Iowa's kickoff caucuses, have exposed a fresh gulf in a party already plagued by divisions. On one side: anxious establishment leaders and donors, who are increasingly concerned about the direction of the race and welcome new candidates. On the other: many rank-and-file voters and local officials across early voting Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina, who are drowning in candidates and say they're more than satisfied with their current options.

"They need to sit down. We've got enough Democrats running," said Debra Tyus, a 63-year-old Democrat from Walterboro, South Carolina.

In New Hampshire, 75-year-old undecided Democrat Thea Lahti said it's "awfully late" in the process and fears that adding more candidates is "further splintering the field."

And in Iowa, state Rep. Jennifer Konfrst said she hasn't spoken to a single Democrat who felt the current field wasn't good enough.

"The more common refrain revolves around having too many great candidates already," said Konfrst, a first-term lawmaker who's backing Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey. "I struggle to see what more candidates bring to the conversation that isn't already here."

Before Patrick's announcement, at least 16 high-profile Democrats were running for president. The field spans multiple generations, racial backgrounds, political ideologies and levels of experience.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 40 of 67

There are still so many candidates, in fact, that they can't all debate together. The Democratic National Committee implemented a system of rising donor and polling thresholds to make the numbers manageable, although last month's debate featured 12 candidates, and a group of 10 will share the stage this week.

Despite the extraordinary options, establishment-minded Democrats have become increasingly concerned about the direction of the race, seizing on what they see as former Vice President Joe Biden's lackluster candidacy and fears that leading progressives Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders are too liberal.

Underlying their concerns is an almost desperate urgency shared by much of the Democratic Party to find a surefire nominee to deny Trump a second term. After almost a year of campaigning, virtually all the candidates face lingering questions about their political liabilities.

Former President Barack Obama sought to calm establishment anxiety at a weekend donor conference when he reminded attendees of his own turbulent primary battle against Hillary Clinton in 2008. Yet he also seemed to reinforce concerns about the more liberal candidates in the race, warning that "the average American doesn't think we have to completely tear down the system and remake it."

Obama and Patrick have long been friends. They spoke privately in the days before the former Massachusetts governor launched, just as Obama did with several other candidates earlier in the year. Far from dissuading Patrick from running, the former president shared "great insights about his own experiences and about his experience with some of the other candidates and what he thought the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign, of my campaign, might be," Patrick said late last week.

Patrick campaign manager Abe Rakov insisted that deep uncertainty across the electorate and the absence of clear front-runners creates an opening for new candidates.

"When we're at this point in the process and voters still haven't made up their minds, there's an opportunity for someone with a different story and a different background to come in and make their case," said Rakov, who most recently worked for Beto O'Rourke's failed presidential campaign. "If it was obvious this was a two-person race, it probably would be too late for someone to get in. But it's not. This is a wide-open race."

Having launched his campaign in New Hampshire late last week, Patrick is scheduled to make his inaugural Iowa appearance on Monday, followed by a Tuesday appearance in South Carolina.

A Bloomberg announcement is expected this week as well.

Should he run, the former New York mayor is planning to bypass the early states altogether and focus instead on the group of so-called Super Tuesday states holding primary contests on the first Tuesday in March. While Patrick may struggle to raise the resources to launch a robust multistate effort in the short term, Bloomberg has a net worth of more than \$50 billion, and he's expressed a willingness to spend whatever's necessary to win.

Bloomberg senior adviser Howard Wolfson said he's aware that many voters and early state officials are pushing back against new candidates.

"I hear it, I respect it, but we do not believe that the current field is particularly well-positioned to take on Donald Trump in November, and we do believe that Mike would be the best candidate to do that," Wolfson said. "There will be a burden on us to convince people of that. And that is not a burden that we will likely be successful in overcoming on Day 1, but certainly it's one in which we hope to be successful in overcoming as the possible campaign commences."

As Wolfson notes, persuading voters to welcome new faces to a race already bursting with high-profile Democrats will not be easy.

In July, the Pew Research Center found that roughly two-thirds of Democratic and Democratic-leaning registered voters had an excellent or good impression of the Democratic presidential candidates as a group. That's dramatically higher than ahead of the 2016 presidential primary between Clinton and Bernie Sanders, when only about half of Democrats had a positive impression of the field.

Voters' level of satisfaction actually increased earlier in the month, according to a Monmouth University poll, which found that 74% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning voters were satisfied with the field; just 16% said they would like someone else to run.

Still, establishment-minded donors have become increasingly worried about their party's top-tier can-

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 41 of 67

didates.

Robert Zimmerman, a New York-based donor and member of the Democratic National Committee, said that cocktail parties have essentially turned into therapy sessions for nervous Democrats in recent weeks. He noted, however, that most voters on the ground where it matters most are pleased with the current field.

"We need more Democrats in the field like Tom Brady needs more Super Bowl rings," said Zimmerman, a fan of the lowly New York Jets.

Former Democratic National Committee Chairman Don Fowler, who is based in South Carolina, worries that the sheer number of candidates still in the race will allow a less-than-desirable nominee to emerge, much in the same way Trump captured the GOP nomination in 2016 because the more experienced candidates sliced up the establishment vote.

"We've got too many candidates," he said. "No more."

That's not to say that all primary voters are completely closed off. While polls show that most are satisfied with the current field, they also suggest that most voters haven't yet settled on one candidate.

In New Hampshire, 65-year-old independent Carol Maraldo said that the 2020 primary is already confusing because it's so crowded.

"Adding more people adds to the confusion," she said, even as she entertained the possibility of a new candidate. If it's "somebody that would be that perfect person, I'd be all for it."

Associated Press writer Hunter Woodall in Manchester, New Hampshire, contributed to this report.

## Lebanese protests test Hezbollah's role as Shiites' champion

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **MARIAM FAM** Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Young men chanting the "people want to bring down the regime" gathered outside the office of Lebanese legislator Mohammed Raad, the powerful head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc. One shirtless man grabbed a metal rod and swung it at the sign bearing Raad's name, knocking it out of place as others cheered.

It was a rare scene in the southern market town of Nabatiyeh, a Hezbollah stronghold. The protests engulfing Lebanon have united many across sectarian lines and shattered taboos, with some taking aim at leaders from their own sects, illustrating a new, unfamiliar challenge posed to the militant group.

Iranian-backed Hezbollah built a reputation among supporters as a champion of the poor and a defender of Lebanon against Israel's much more powerful military. It and its Shiite ally, the Amal party, have enjoyed overwhelming backing among the Shiite community since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war, making them a political powerhouse that, along with allies, has dominated recent governments.

But now many protesters group Hezbollah into the ruling class they are revolting against, blaming it for wrecking the economy with years of corruption and mismanagement.

Protesters want that entire political elite out. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and Amal's chief, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, have not been spared.

"All of them means all of them, and Nasrallah is one of them," protesters have chanted at some Beirut rallies. The demonstrations that erupted Oct. 17 spread throughout the country, including predominantly Shiite areas in the south and the eastern Bekaa Valley.

"The heavy participation of the Shiites ... posed a main challenge: that there's a large number from the sect that doesn't accept the current situation," said Hilal Khashan, professor of political science at the American University of Beirut. "That's why there was a swift and decisive decision to nip this in the bud."

In several instances, men suspected of being Hezbollah and Amal supporters beat up protesters and destroyed their tents. Some of those who had criticized Nasrallah and Berri on social media appeared in videos, after apparently being beaten, to apologize for what they did.

Amal denied any link to those behind the beatings, saying in a statement that they should be arrested and that they violated the movement's belief in freedom of opinion.

Hezbollah has survived many threats over the past years, including charges by a U.N.-backed tribunal



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 42 of 67

for the killing of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005 — an accusation Hezbollah strongly denies — a ruinous war with Israel in 2006 and the war in neighboring Syria, where Hezbollah has sent thousands of fighters to back President Bashar Assad, losing an estimated 2,000 men.

But now Hezbollah is being “attacked by the very constituency they purport to speak for,” Heiko Wimmen of the International Crisis Group said.

Hezbollah is “on the defensive for having become part of the ruling elite, which is clearly a disconcerting experience for the leadership,” he said, though he noted anger is far stronger at Amal, whose leader Berri has been directly entrenched in politics for decades.

Hassan, a protester from the southern city of Tyre, said he supports Hezbollah’s “resistance” against Israel, calling it a “red line” that must not be undermined. But its other policies are a different story.

“The party ... has been silent about the symbols of corruption with the logic that we don’t want a civil war, but these policies have hurt the south,” he said, asking to be identified by one name, citing security reasons.

Protesters in Nabatiyeh have joined those elsewhere in the country in banging pots and pans in protest; some cried “Against poverty and against hunger, the people are all in pain,” according to videos posted online.

An activist from Nabatiyeh, who asked to be identified only as Abdel-Jaleel, distanced protesters from those who attacked the Hezbollah lawmaker’s office in the town, whom he called “troublemakers.” But he said the demand for change — despite support for the “resistance” — was real among a new generation growing up to find little jobs or hope.

Hezbollah has sought to show it’s sensitive to the complaints. Last week, Nasrallah said in a speech that authorities investigating corruption should start with looking at Hezbollah members. “Begin with us,” he said.

Hezbollah’s popularity has also stemmed from a vast array of services, through education, health and social networks. It says it’s still able to maintain that network despite intensified sanctions by Washington, which designates Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

Wimmen, like other observers, says Hezbollah is strong enough to survive because its base is largely cohesive and “the resistance narrative still works.”

But it can’t ignore the alienation over economic woes, he said, and it is “short on solutions.”

Nasrallah has tried to walk a fine line. In speeches, he expressed sympathy for protesters’ demands but also accused foreign powers of exploiting them to undermine his group and warned against dragging the country into civil war. Some of the Shiites who initially joined demonstrations have stayed away after the speeches.

Hardcore Hezbollah supporters and some officials contend that the U.S., some Arab Gulf states and other rival nations are trying to take advantage of the protests to undermine the group.

Senior Hezbollah official Sheikh Ali Daamouh said the group differentiates between protesters’ legitimate demands and those with agendas who “want to take advantage of the protests to achieve political goals that are not in Lebanon’s interest.”

Hezbollah’s core supporters will stick by it, but the group risks “potentially losing the Shiite community’s absolute representation,” said Joe Macaron of the Arab Center Washington DC.

On a recent day when the AP visited Hezbollah’s southern Beirut stronghold of Dahiyeh — accompanied by a Hezbollah guide — there was no sign of the turmoil and paralysis gripping the rest of the country. Streets teemed with cars, a man in a uniform picked up trash as men and women, some in overflowing black abayas, others in jeans, passed by.

But there is sympathy for some of the protesters’ complaints.

“There are legislators who are stealing, there are officials who are stealing. People will rise against you,” one resident, Ali Sharafeddine said, even as he expressed respect for Nasrallah and Berri.

Mohamed Harb said he understood all too well the economic hardships driving protesters. Everything has become expensive, he said. Working at a hospital, he recently took a second job selling vegetables and still struggles to make ends meet.

But he remains unequivocal in his support for Hezbollah and Nasrallah.

"Hezbollah means everything to me," he said. Of Nasrallah "tells us to go die, we go die."

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

## Ford Mustang SUV starts a blitz of new electric vehicles

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP) — Ford is unveiling its first all-electric SUV, marking the start of an avalanche of battery-powered vehicles coming from mainstream and luxury automakers during the next two years that industry analysts say will boost electric vehicle sales.

The "Mustang Mach E," which will go 230 miles to more 300 miles per charge depending on how it's equipped, was unveiled Sunday night ahead of the Los Angeles Auto Show press days.

There are 18 now for sale in the U.S., and IHS Markit expects that to grow to 80 in 2022, including pickup trucks and SUVs that are in the heart of the American market. Yet last year, pure electric vehicles made up only 1.5% of new vehicle sales worldwide, and the consulting firm LMC Automotive predicts that will rise to 2.2% this year. In the U.S., electric vehicles were only 1.2% of sales in 2018, and it's expected to be about the same this year.

But automakers see opportunity for growth, and with electric vehicles getting 250 miles or more on a single charge, worries about running out of juice on a daily commute are gone. Because of the added models and increased range, LMC predicts that they will make up 17% of global sales and 7% of U.S. sales in 2030.

First-generation electric vehicles, which mainly were retrofitted versions of existing models designed to meet government fuel economy standards, didn't sell well largely because they couldn't travel more than 100 miles between charges. But now, many can go beyond the distance people drive in one day with plenty of cushion.

"Seeing 250 miles as a real thing has been kind of a game changer in the electric car market," said Jake Fisher, director of auto testing for Consumer Reports. "There haven't been a lot of choices for a vehicle that really could take the place of a mainstream vehicle. It's a whole different animal now."

Stephanie Brinley, principal auto analyst for IHS Markit, said electric vehicle choices may expand before consumer demand does, but eventually people will buy them.

"The increased number of models with an electric drivetrain will contribute to an increase in sales in the U.S.," she said. "However, there is likely to be a period where the number of options will increase faster than demand and sales for each will be relatively low," she said.

While many electrics coming in the next few years are from luxury brands, mainstream brands like Ford, Chevrolet and Toyota also have them on the production schedule. Brands that have announced new models that will go on sale in the next few years include Mercedes-Benz, Audi, Cadillac, Byton, Rivian, Bollinger, Kia, Faraday Future, Volkswagen, Mazda, Tesla, Aston Martin, Polestar, and Volvo, according to the Edmunds.com auto pricing site. Edmunds provides content to The Associated Press.

Ford and General Motors have announced plans for all-electric pickups that will compete against gas and diesel trucks that are the top sellers in the U.S.

For Ford, executives realized in 2017 that they had to offer something more exciting for the first of a new generation of electric vehicles. The company last year it promised six battery electric vehicles by 2022. It also has partnerships with VW and startup Rivian to build more.

To sell them, Ford decided to go to the company's strengths: Pickup trucks, commercial vans and the high-performance Mustang.

"There are going to be plenty of BEV (battery electric) SUVs on the market. Some will have big batteries and double motors and be pretty fast. Some will look really good," said Jason Castriota, the company's brand director for electric vehicles. "No one can combine all those elements and create something that will cut right through the clutter," he said. "Mustang is power."

The five-passenger Mach E sort of resembles a Mustang, and Ford says it comes close to matching the car's performance. Engineers say the base model will have a range of about 230 miles (370 kilometers) per charge, with a long-range option of more than 300 miles (483 kilometers). The base version is expected to go from zero to 60 mph (96.6 kph) in a little over six seconds, Ford said, while the performance GT version will do it in about 3.5 seconds.

The base version is rear-wheel-drive, with all-wheel-drive options. It has the Mustang pony badge on the front and rear, a long hood and a fastback look at the rear. Yet designers preserved rear-seat headroom with a blacked-out glass roof. The Mustang team set up the Mach E's chassis tuning, which determines its handling. Designers also copied the Mustang's triple tail lights.

U.S. orders are being taken now, and the SUV will reach showrooms next fall. The base model will start just under \$44,000, with the GT starting around \$65,000. Ford buyers are still eligible for a \$7,500 federal tax credit, which is being phased out at Tesla and General Motors.

Ford has deal with Electrify America and others for a national network that includes over 12,000 charging stations and 35,000 plugs, so EV owners can go on longer trips.

The company also will have 2,100 of its U.S. dealerships certified to service electric vehicles.

## Bloomberg apologizes for 'stop-and-frisk' police practice

By **BRIAN SLODYKO** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michael Bloomberg on Sunday apologized for his longstanding support of the controversial "stop-and-frisk" police strategy ahead of a potential Democratic presidential run, a practice that he embraced as New York's mayor and continued to defend despite its disproportionate impact on people of color.

Addressing a black church in Brooklyn, Bloomberg said he was "sorry" and acknowledged it often led to the detention of blacks and Latinos.

"I can't change history," Bloomberg told the congregation. "However today, I want you to know that I realize back then I was wrong."

Bloomberg's reversal is notable for someone who is often reluctant to admit wrongdoing. It's also a recognition that if he's to compete for the Democratic presidential nomination, he'll have to win support from black voters. And his record on stop-and-frisk is a glaring vulnerability that could hobble his potential candidacy if he doesn't express contrition.

The apology, however, was received skeptically by many prominent activists who noted that it was made as he is taking steps to enter the race.

"It is convenient that Bloomberg suddenly apologizes but has done nothing to undo the immense damage he has caused on countless lives," said activist DeRay Mckesson. "His apology is not accepted."

Stop-and-frisk gave police wide authority to detain people they suspected of committing a crime, and Bloomberg aggressively pursued the tactic when he first took over as mayor in 2002. Under the program, New York City police officers made it a routine practice to stop and search multitudes of mostly black and Hispanic men to see if they were carrying weapons.

Police claimed that people were only targeted if officers had a reasonable suspicion that they were breaking the law. But while the searches did lead to weapons being confiscated, the overwhelming majority of people who were detained and frisked were let go because they hadn't done anything wrong.

Many men found the encounters humiliating and degrading, and statistics showed that minorities were far more likely to be subjected to such a search.

"Under Bloomberg, NYPD increased stop and frisk from 100,000 stops to nearly 700,000 stops per year. 90% of those impacted were people of color — overwhelmingly black and brown men," black activist and data scientist Samuel Sinyangwe tweeted on Sunday. "Bloomberg personally has the money to begin paying reparations for this harm. 'Sorry' isn't enough."

Bloomberg is not the first Democrat aiming to unseat President Donald Trump next year who has sought to atone for past positions on matters that deeply impacted people of color.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 45 of 67

Before he entered the race, former Vice President Joe Biden apologized for his role in the passage of a crime bill that imposed stiffer sentences on those convicted of crack cocaine possession — a law that has disproportionately affected the black community. Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, too, said he was “not happy” that he voted for the “terrible” 1994 legislation. And Pete Buttigieg apologized for his handling of race as mayor of South Bend, Indiana, a city with a history of segregation where decades of simmering tension erupted this summer when a white police officer shot and killed a black man.

Deval Patrick, the former Massachusetts governor who just entered the Democratic race and was campaigning Sunday in Nevada, was asked for his reaction to Bloomberg’s apology. He replied, “Good.”

Sen. Cory Booker, who was at the same Nevada rally, had a similarly positive but brief reaction to Bloomberg’s reversal on stop and frisk, saying, “I’m happy he did.” Julian Castro, the former Housing and Urban Development secretary and presidential candidate, said: “It’s interesting timing that the mayor would apologize for that now. That was a wrong policy. I guess it’s better late than never. People will have to judge whether they believe his apology.”

Rev. Al Sharpton applauded Bloomberg for reversing his stance, though he added that he would have to “wait and see whether it was politically motivated.”

“As one who helped lead countless demonstrations, marches and rallies to amplify the racial impact that was had on the Black and Brown community from stop-and-frisk policing, I am glad to see Mr. Bloomberg now admit that the policy was wrong,” Sharpton said. “It will take more than one speech for people to forgive and forget a policy that so negatively impacted entire communities.”

On Sunday, Bloomberg sought to contextualize his embrace of stop-and-frisk. Though crime had fallen sharply when he took office, he said there were still 650 murders in the city in 2001. Most were young black and Hispanic men. Meanwhile, relations between police and communities of color were at a nadir.

“I was not going to accept that — and I didn’t,” Bloomberg said. “I was determined to improve police-community relations while at the same time reducing crime even further.”

But the practice had unforeseen consequences, he acknowledged.

“The fact is, far too many innocent people were being stopped while we tried to do that. The overwhelming majority of them were black and Latino,” he said. “That may have included, I’m sorry to say, some of you here today. Perhaps yourself or your children, or your grandchildren, or your neighbors, or your relatives.”

Yet as recent as this year, he defended his handling of it.

“The murder rate in New York City went from 650 a year to 300 a year when I left,” he said in January. He said most police departments do the same thing, “they just don’t report it or use the terminology.”

Ultimately, a federal judge found in 2013 that stop-and-frisk intentionally and systematically violated the civil rights of tens of thousands of people by wrongly targeting black and Hispanic men. Bloomberg blasted the ruling at the time, calling it a “dangerous decision made by a judge who I think does not understand how policing works and what is compliant with the U.S. Constitution.”

Bloomberg’s successor, Mayor Bill de Blasio made ending the practice a centerpiece of his first run for office. In a campaign-defining ad, his son Dante, who is biracial, made the case that de Blasio “would end the stop-and-frisk era that unfairly targets people of color.”

Bloomberg told the congregation Sunday that stop-and-frisk eroded trust in the police department and left a blight on his legacy.

“The erosion of trust bothered me — deeply. And it still bothers me,” he said. “And I want to earn it back.”

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Associated Press writers Errin Haines in Philadelphia, Deepti Hajela in New York and Michelle Price in Las Vegas contributed to this report.

## Iran’s top leader warns ‘thugs’ as protests reach 100 cities

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran’s supreme leader on Sunday cautiously backed the government’s decision to raise gasoline prices by 50% after days of widespread protests, calling those who at-

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 46 of 67

tacked public property during demonstrations “thugs” and signaling that a potential crackdown loomed.

The government shut down internet access across the nation of 80 million people to staunch demonstrations that took place in a reported 100 cities and towns. That made it increasingly difficult to gauge whether unrest continued. Images published by state and semiofficial media showed the scale of the damage in images of burned gas stations and banks, torched vehicles and roadways littered with debris.

Since the price hike, demonstrators have abandoned cars along major highways and joined mass protests in the capital, Tehran, and elsewhere. Some protests turned violent, with demonstrators setting fires as gunfire rang out.

It remains to be seen how many people were arrested, injured or killed. Videos from the protests have shown people gravely wounded.

Iranian authorities on Sunday raised the official death toll in the violence to at least three. Attackers targeting a police station in the western city of Kermanshah on Saturday killed an officer, the state-run IRNA news agency reported Sunday. A lawmaker said another person was killed in a suburb of Tehran. Earlier, one man was reported killed Friday in Sirjan, a city some 800 kilometers (500 miles) southeast of Tehran.

In an address aired Sunday by state television, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said “some lost their lives and some places were destroyed,” without elaborating. He called the protesters “thugs” who had been pushed into violence by counterrevolutionaries and foreign enemies of Iran.

Khamenei specifically named those aligned with the family of Iran’s late shah, ousted 40 years ago, and an exile group called the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq. The MEK calls for the overthrow of Iran’s government and enjoys the support of President Donald Trump’s personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani.

“Setting a bank on fire is not an act done by the people. This is what thugs do,” Khamenei said.

The supreme leader carefully backed the decision of Iran’s relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani and others to raise gasoline prices. While Khamenei dictates the country’s nuclear policy amid tensions with the U.S. over its unraveling 2015 accord with world powers, he made a point to say he wasn’t an “expert” on the gasoline subsidies.

Khamenei ordered security forces “to implement their tasks” and for Iran’s citizens to keep clear of violent demonstrators. Iran’s Intelligence Ministry said the “key perpetrators of the past two days’ riot have been identified and proper action is ongoing.”

That seemed to indicate a crackdown could be looming. Economic protests in late 2017 into 2018, as well as those surrounding its disputed 2009 presidential election, were met with a heavy reaction by the police and the Basij, the all-volunteer force of Iran’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

The semiofficial Fars news agency, close to the Guard, put the total number of protesters at over 87,000, saying demonstrators ransacked some 100 banks and stores in the country. Authorities arrested some 1,000 people, Fars reported, citing unnamed security officials for the information.

The protests have put renewed pressure on Iran’s government as it struggles to overcome the U.S. sanctions that have strangled the economy since Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the nuclear deal over a year ago.

While representing a political risk for Rouhani ahead of February parliamentary elections, the demonstrations also show widespread anger among the Iranian people, who have seen their savings evaporate amid scarce jobs and the collapse of the national currency, the rial.

Cheap gasoline is practically considered a birthright in Iran, home to the world’s fourth-largest crude oil reserves despite decades of economic woes since its 1979 Islamic Revolution. Gasoline in the country remains among the cheapest in the world, with the new prices jumping 50% to a minimum of 15,000 rials per liter. That’s 13 cents a liter, or about 50 cents a gallon. A gallon of regular gasoline in the U.S. costs \$2.60 by comparison.

Iranian internet access saw disruptions and outages Friday night into Saturday, according to the group NetBlocks, which monitors worldwide internet access. By Saturday night, connectivity had fallen to just 7% of ordinary levels. It was mostly unchanged on Sunday.

NetBlocks called it the most severe shutdown the group had tracked in any country “in terms of its

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 47 of 67

technical complexity and breadth." On Twitter, NetBlocks said the disruption constituted "a severe violation" of Iranians' "basic rights and liberties."

The internet firm Oracle called it "the largest internet shutdown ever observed in Iran."

The semiofficial ISNA news agency reported Sunday that Iran's Supreme National Security Council ordered a "restriction of access" to the internet nationwide, without elaborating.

In a statement issued Sunday, the Trump administration condemned "the lethal force and severe communications restrictions used against demonstrators."

"Tehran has fanatically pursued nuclear weapons and missile programs, and supported terrorism, turning a proud nation into another cautionary tale of what happens when a ruling class abandons its people and embarks on a crusade for personal power and riches," the White House statement said.

In Dubai, the new U.S. ambassador to the United Arab Emirates told The Associated Press that America was "not advocating regime change. We are going to let the Iranian people decide for themselves their future."

"They are frustrated. They want freedom," Ambassador John Rakolta said at the Dubai Airshow. "These developments that you see right now are their own people telling them, 'We need change and to sit down with the American government.'"

Associated Press Writer Aya Batrawy in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

## 3rd record tide enters Venice as Italy hit with snow, rain

By COLLEEN BARRY and LUCA BRUNO Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — Venice was hit Sunday by a record third exceptional tide in the same week while other parts of Italy struggled with a series of weather woes, from rain-swollen rivers to high winds to an out-of-season avalanche.

Stores and museums in Venice were mostly closed in the hardest-hit area around St. Mark's Square, but tourists donned high rubber boots or even hip waders to witness and photograph the spectacle.

Most were disappointed when officials closed the historic square as winds rippled across the rising waters. The doors of the famed St. Mark's Basilica were securely shut to the public, and authorities took precautions — stacking sandbags in canal-side windows — to prevent salt-laden water from entering the crypt again.

Venice's Tide Office said the peak tide of 1.5 meters (nearly 5 feet) hit just after 1 p.m. but a weather front off the coast blocked southerly winds from the Adriatic Sea from pushing the tide to the predicted level of 1.6 meters (5 feet, 2 inches). By early evening, the level was less than a meter (three feet).

Still it marked the third time since Tuesday night's 1.87-meter flood — the worst in 53 years — that water levels in Venice had topped 1.5 meters. Since records began in 1872, that level had never been reached even twice in one year, let alone three times in one week.

While Venetians had a bit of relief, days of heavy rainfall and snowfall elsewhere in Italy swelled rivers to worrisome levels, triggered an avalanche in the Alps and saw dramatic rescues of people unable to flee rising waters.

In Venice, many store owners in the swanky area around St. Mark's completely emptied their shops, while others put their wares as high as possible and counted on automatic pumping systems to keep the water at bay. In one luxury boutique, employees used water vacuums and big squeegee mops to keep the brackish lagoon waters from advancing.

Venice's mayor has put the flooding damage at hundreds of millions of euros and Italian officials have declared a state of emergency for the area. They say Venice is both sinking into the mud and facing rising sea levels due to climate change.

Luca D'Acunto and his girlfriend Giovanna Maglietta surveyed the rising water from a bridge, wondering how to reach their nearby hotel in their colorful yet inadequate rubber boots.

"We made the reservation this week before the floods and had paid already, so we came," said D'Acunto, a 28-year-old from Naples. "Instead of a romantic trip, we'll have an adventurous one."



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 48 of 67

Most museums were closed as a precaution, but the Correr Museum, which overlooks St. Mark's Square and explores the art and history of Venice, remained open. Tourists enjoyed a Venetian Spritz — a colorful aperitif with an Italian bitter and Prosecco — as the waters rose.

Officials said 280 civil protection volunteers were deployed to assist as needed. Young Venetian volunteers in rubber boots have also showed up at key sites, including the city's Music Conservatory, to help save precious manuscripts from the invading salt water.

The flooding has raised renewed debates about the city's Moses flood defense project, a corruption-riddled underwater barrier system that is still not operational after more than 16 years of construction and at least 5 billion euros (€5.5 billion) of public funding. It was supposed to be working by 2011.

Floods were also hitting other parts of Italy on Sunday.

In Pisa, famed for its Leaning Tower, workers sandbagged the road along the rising Arno River, which authorities said had reached the highest level there and in another Tuscan city, Florence, since 1992.

"I ask citizens to go home and stay there," Pisa Mayor Michele Conti, said in an appeal on state TV. He said bridges were being closed as a precaution in case the Arno overran its banks. Pisa's offices and stores were ordered shuttered until midday Monday.

The Arno also surged through the heart of historic Florence, reaching a level near the Uffizi Galleries that was described as the highest in some 20 years. In 24 hours, 6.26 centimeters (2.5 inches) of rain had fallen in Florence, which was whipped by winds as high as 76 kilometers per hour (42 mph).

A popular Florence tourist attraction, the Boboli Gardens, was closed as a precaution for fear of falling trees. Near the Tuscan town of Cecina, 500 people were evacuated when a local river swelled to the top of its banks.

Elsewhere in Tuscany, 2,000 people were ordered evacuated in Grosseto as the Ombrone river swelled dangerously. Near Grosseto, firefighters rescued a man clinging to a tree as floodwaters surrounded him.

In the countryside outside of Bologna, in the central-north Emilia Romagna region, an elderly couple was plucked to safety by a helicopter when the Idice river overran its banks.

In Italy's mountainous Alto Adige, or South Tyrol region, a mid-autumn snowstorm triggered power outages and blocked roads in several Alpine valleys. The mayor of Val Martello, Georg Altstaetter, told state TV that an avalanche had damaged two houses but caused no injuries. Other homes were evacuated as a precaution in the town, which was left without electricity.

The region's governor told people to stay home so crews could clear snow-clogged roads.

A windstorm overnight in the Rome area toppled scores of trees, with two falling on cars, severely injuring a motorist.

Some politicians lamented that the drama over Venice's high tides was eclipsing the needs of other areas.

In Matera, a once-impoverished southern town that has experienced a renaissance through tourism, heavy rain sent torrents of mud racing through its streets last week, ruining shops and lodging.

"There are no minor-league regions," said Luigi Di Maio, a populist who leads the 5-Star Movement, the government's main party.

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Frances D'Emilio contributed from Rome.

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## HP rejects takeover offer from Xerox

By SARAH SKIDMORE SELL AP Business Writer

HP Inc. says its board has rejected a roughly \$33.5 billion takeover offer from Xerox.

The Palo Alto, California-based company said Sunday that the cash and stock deal undervalues its business and its board cited concerns about "outsized" debt levels should the companies combine.

HP, which makes computers and printers, said it recognizes the potential benefits of consolidation and remains open to exploring other options to combine with Xerox Holdings Corp.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 49 of 67

Both companies have faced difficulties as the demand for printed documents and ink have waned. Xerox offered earlier this month to give HP shareholders \$17 in cash and a fractional share of Xerox stock for each share they held in HP. They put the total value of the deal at \$33.5 billion. If the deal had been completed, HP shareholders would own approximately 48% of the combined company.

HP rejected the offer, saying that it has "great confidence" in its ability to deliver long-term value. Its board also said it had "significant questions" about the trajectory of Xerox's business and prospects, particularly given a recent decline in its revenue.

A representative for Xerox, which is based in Norwalk, Connecticut, could not be reached immediately for comment.

## 2019 Takeaways: Suburb shift, high turnout and 'Socialism!'

By **BILL BARROW** and **MELINDA DESLATTE** Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Odd-year elections in Louisiana, Kentucky and Virginia have let Democrats expand their footprint in Southern states where Republicans dominated not long ago.

Those outcomes hardly predict national 2020 results: President Donald Trump isn't suddenly at risk of losing Louisiana because Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards got re-elected Saturday. And the story wasn't all good for Democrats: They came up short in Mississippi, where Republicans won the governorship and picked up the last remaining statewide office that had been held by a Democrat.

But there are lessons for Democrats and Republicans as the political focus shifts to presidential and congressional elections next November.

**TRUMP ERA TURNOUT IS UNIFORMLY HIGH, BUT DEMS ARE BENEFITING MORE**

Huge turnouts started with Virginia's statewide elections in 2017 and continued through the 2018 midterms and the 2019 odd-year slate. More than 1.5 million Louisianans voted Saturday, an increase of about 385,000 votes over the 2015 governor's race.

Edwards' 40,000-vote victory margin can be attributed to his uptick of support in East Baton Rouge and Orleans Parishes — two of the most concentrated centers of the state's black population, and home to many of the college-educated white women who have trended away from Republicans in the Trump era. Edwards got about 66,000 more votes out of those parishes Saturday than in 2015.

"The motivating factor that Trump is in the African American communities and in the suburbs among white and black women is strong," said Bob Mann, a Louisiana State University professor and former aide to many Democratic elected officials.

Mary-Patricia Wray, a political consultant for Edwards' 2015 race, said the re-election campaign made a concerted outreach to local black leaders and their constituents: "It's maybe something that's a very simple concept, but it's something that Democrats got really wrong in 2016."

In Mississippi, though, Democrats had little shot in the governor's race since nominee Jim Hood failed to generate the enthusiasm that Edwards managed in Louisiana.

**THE SUBURBAN SHIFT IS EVERYWHERE**

Suburban New Orleans isn't the same as suburban Philadelphia, Chicago or Los Angeles, metro areas that fueled Democrats' midterm House takeover. And John Bel Edwards — an anti-abortion Catholic and gun-loving West Point graduate — wouldn't top Democrats' ticket in many states. But like more conventional Democrats elsewhere, Edwards benefited from a suburban shift.

He won Jefferson Parish, the most populous of the suburban New Orleans parishes, with nearly 60% of the vote. Still, it's hard to measure Edwards' crossover appeal. He got about 98% percent of Hillary Clinton's Jefferson Parish vote total (73,670) against Trump. Republican Eddie Rispone managed just 54% of Trump's 100,398.

Likewise, Andy Beshear posted stark shifts over Republican incumbent Matt Bevin in Louisville suburbs and metro Lexington in winning the Kentucky governor's race. The trend even showed up in Republicans' unusually slim victory in the Mississippi governor's race, with Democrats narrowing the usual GOP advantage outside Jackson and south of Memphis, Tennessee.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 50 of 67

Republican states won't flip because of the trend. But Virginia illustrates what happens when the suburbs move in a state that's already a battleground: Democrats in January will control both the executive and legislative branches in Richmond for the first time in more than 20 years.

Republican pollster Whit Ayres noted that governor's race for both parties can buck usual partisan leanings. (Massachusetts and Maryland have popular Republican governors.) "That said," Ayres explained, "the basic trends with Republicans' increasing strength in rural areas and small towns and Democrats' increasing strength in urban and suburban areas is a very consistent trend, and frankly a very concerning trend if you're a Republican."

## DEMOCRATS CAN WIN TALKING HEALTH CARE

Louisiana's Edwards and Kentucky's Beshear avoided delving directly into the Democratic presidential primary split between progressives advocating a single-payer government insurance system ("Medicare for All") and those wanting to add a government insurance plan to the Affordable Care Act exchanges (the "public option" plan).

But they didn't run away from health care entirely. Edwards' campaigned as the governor who extended health insurance to 450,000 Louisianans by expanding Medicaid under the 2010 health care law, just as he promised upon first running in 2015. Beshear ran against a Republican incumbent, Matt Bevin, who tried to dismantle the Medicaid expansion that Beshear's father oversaw after the Affordable Care Act passed.

Neither Democrat played up the Affordable Care Act link. But they didn't have to. They effectively took a center-left, mainstream liberal position to expand coverage within the existing system. And voters rewarded them for it — or at least didn't punish them.

The approach aligns them with most of the House freshmen who helped Democrats flip more than three dozen GOP-held seats in 2018 after Republicans spent eight years trying to gut the 2010 overhaul.

"Health care is kind of the Holy Grail of politics right now," said Zac McCrary, Edwards' lead pollster. "It enthralls the Democratic base. It can persuade independents." But the way Democrats talk about it matters, McCrary said: "Strengthening, protecting, improving the ACA, that's a much better battleground than scrapping the ACA and starting from scratch."

## GOP'S 'SOCIALISM!' AND 'RADICAL' ATTACKS DON'T HAVE TO STICK

Republicans tried to cast Edwards as "radical" and in the only debate, Rispono tried to make hay of Edwards' support for Clinton in 2016. "The point is when we get the next wacko, the socialist out there that we have running for president, he's going to support that person over Donald Trump again," Rispono said.

But Edwards withstood the attacks — including ads and mail pieces trying to associate him with national Democrats unpopular in Louisiana. He touted his own brand as a former Army Ranger, family man, devout Catholic, avid outdoorsman.

"You're not talking about me. You're talking about some generic Democrat that's in your mind," he shot back at Rispono.

But, pollster McCrary said, Edwards didn't run from being a Democrat. "He ran TV adds talking about schools and education, and not a single one talking about abortion or guns," McCrary said. "Voters were comfortable with who he is, and they listened to him when he focused on Democratic issues that resonate with voters everywhere, even in the Deep South."

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Barrow reported from Atlanta.

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

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This story has been corrected to show that Andy Beshear is Kentucky's governor-elect, correcting first name.

## Kyle Busch leads Gibbs trio to win 2nd NASCAR championship

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 51 of 67

HOMESTEAD, Fla. (AP) — Kyle Busch casually collected the championship flag from his team and did a slow, subdued celebratory lap. The most polarizing driver in NASCAR had just won his second Cup title and wanted to soak in the moment with his true fans.

He didn't do his customary bow to the crowd, asked NASCAR for permission to take his 4-year-old son along for the ride to victory lane, and when the duo finally got there it was then that Busch remembered he'd just won both Sunday's season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway and his second NASCAR title.

"I do remember taking the white flag and crossing underneath that — I had some tears rolling down my eyes for the last lap and I was just like, 'Come on, man, we've still got to finish this damn thing. Don't be such a siss,'" Busch said. "Emotions were starting to set in. I probably didn't know where the hell my mind was at. I knew we had won and won big and were being a big more subdued about it."

Busch emerged from the Joe Gibbs Racing juggernaut as NASCAR's latest champion, winning his second title Sunday after teammates Denny Hamlin and Martin Truex Jr. were slowed by pit-road gaffes. He snapped a 21-race losing streak and beat Hamlin, Truex and rival Kevin Harvick for the Cup.

Busch joined seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson as the only active drivers with multiple titles. He's the 16th driver in NASCAR history to win multiple championships, and one of only five to win titles in both the Cup Series and the second-tier Xfinity Series.

The No. 18 crew climbed the pit wall and handed Busch the championship flag for his post-race celebration, and he was met on the frontstretch by son Brexton, who immediately asked: "Dad, are you going to throw me in the air again?" about their celebratory tradition. He also asked to join his father for the final ride into victory lane.

Busch had raced for a second championship in each of the last three seasons and fell short a year ago in part because of his crew's own pit error. This time, it was Truex and Hamlin bitten by silly mistakes. Truex dominated early but fell a lap back after his crew put tires on the wrong side of his Toyota.

"You've got to be perfect, one mistake probably cost us the championship," Truex said. "I've never had that happen. I don't even know what to say. It doesn't drive good with the left front on the right front, though, I can tell you that. It's very tight."

Hamlin fell out of contention when an aggressive aerodynamic gamble backfired because a large piece of tape placed across the front of his car caused his engine to overheat. Hamlin had to make an unscheduled pit stop to remove the tape.

Truex recovered to finish second, but Hamlin didn't have enough time to overcome the miscue and was a disappointing 10th.

"I feel like I did all I could. I don't feel I could have done a better job. I didn't leave anything out there," Hamlin said. "I was thinking we got a chance and it just didn't work out. We got a little aggressive there and it cost us."

Harvick, the only Ford driver in the championship field, never had anything on long runs for the Gibbs cars and finished fourth.

"On the restarts I could do what I wanted to do and hold them off for 15 or 20 laps," Harvick said. "This race has come down to that every year. You kind of play toward that and they were quite a bit better than us on the long run. We had a really good car for those first 15 to 20 laps on the restarts and had a lot of speed, we just never got to try to race for it there."

The finale pitted a trio of Toyota drivers from Hall of Fame owner Gibbs against Harvick, the hand-picked driver of former Gibbs protege Tony Stewart at Stewart-Haas Racing. The Gibbs group had the edge based on its tremendous season — Busch's win was the 19th out of 36 races for the organization — and the trio insisted it would continue its note-sharing all weekend.

Las Vegas couldn't chose a title favorite and the four had essentially even odds at the start of the race, even though Busch was probably the least likely contender of the group. Although he won the regular season crown, his last Cup win was at Pocono in June, his playoffs leading into Homestead had been mediocre at best and his mood soured with every missed victory lane.

"We had a cold spell there. It's been well documented," crew chief Adam Stevens said. "Quite a few ques-

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 52 of 67

tions about it. We're in such a unique situation, as a competitive team that runs up front with the goal of winning the championship every year, everything we do is to make that happen, right? To win the regular season points championship, then try to maintain that and get to Homestead, that's what it's all about."

Hamlin, Harvick and Truex had all won playoff races, and Hamlin's win at Phoenix last week gave him all the momentum. But with friend and fan Michael Jordan in attendance, Hamlin failed to win his first championship in his third try. Hamlin is the only driver in the final four without a Cup title.

"Our year was fantastic in every way you can think of, and it just didn't pan out in one race in our favor," said Hamlin, who won the Daytona 500 and five other races a year removed from a winless season.

Busch, ironically, had one of his worst races in the pits in last year's finale as his front-tire changer had hiccups on two stops. But he was flawless Sunday night and led a race-high 120 laps.

"Everybody always says you never give up. We're no different. We just do what we can do each and every week," Busch said. "Sometimes we may not be the best, sometimes we may not have the right track position. We had a really good car and I could race around and move around. That's what's so special about Homestead Miami Speedway, is the ability to put on a show.

"I felt like we did that there racing those guys. I know it kind of dulled out toward the end. It was exciting enough from my seat. It was a lot of fun to cap off such an amazing year."

Busch gave Gibbs his fifth Cup title and bookended a season in which the Gibbs cars opened the year 1-2-3 at the Daytona 500. Gibbs this entire year has been mourning the death of his son, JGR co-chairman J.D. Gibbs, and the organization promoted a "Do it for J.D." theme the entire weekend.

The season ended with a 1-2-3 finish in the finale as it was Busch, Truex and Erik Jones across the finish line for Gibbs.

"I know J.D. was looking down on us all year long," Busch said. "I mean, damn, what a season Joe Gibbs Racing put together."

Busch gave Toyota its third drivers' championship in five seasons.

More AP auto racing: <https://apnews.com/apf-AutoRacing> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Hong Kong police storm university held by protesters

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Police breached a Hong Kong university campus held by protesters early Monday after an all-night siege that included firing repeated barrages of tear gas and water cannons.

Anti-government protesters have barricaded themselves inside Hong Kong Polytechnic University for days. Police surrounded the area Sunday night and began moving in after issuing an ultimatum for people to leave the area. The crowd wore raincoats and carried umbrellas to shield themselves.

Riot officers broke in one entrance before dawn as fires raged inside and outside the school, but they didn't appear to get very far. Fiery explosions could be seen as protesters responded with gasoline bombs. Police, who have warned that everyone in the area could be charged with rioting, reportedly made a handful of arrests.

At daybreak, protesters remained in control of most of the campus. In one outdoor area, some demonstrators made gasoline bombs while others dozed while wearing gas masks. Two walked about with bows and quivers of arrows, while many stared at their smartphones.

A lull settled on the area as the president of the university said in a video message that that police have agreed to suspend their use of force.

Jin-Guang Teng said police would allow protesters to leave and he would accompany them to the police station to ensure their cases would be processed fairly.

"I hope that you will accept the proposed temporary suspension of force and leave the campus in a peaceful manner," he said.

It seemed unlikely the protesters would accept the offer given that they would all likely be arrested.

A few hundred streamed out of the campus about 8:15 a.m. in an apparent bid to escape, but they were

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 53 of 67

driven back by police tear gas. Some wearing gas masks calmly picked up smoking tear gas canisters and dropped them into heavy-duty bags, but the protesters decided to retreat with a phalanx of officers lined up across the road in the distance.

On Sunday, protesters used bows and arrows, and one arrow struck a media liaison officer in the calf. Photos on the department's Facebook page show the arrow sticking out of the back of the officer's leg through his pants.

As riot police moved in from all sides, some protesters retreated inside the university. Others set fires on bridges leading to it.

A huge blaze burned along much of a long footbridge that connects a train station to the campus over the approach to the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, a major road under Hong Kong's harbor that has been blocked by protesters for days.

The use of bows and arrows and gasoline bombs was a sharp escalation of violence by the protesters, who are trying to keep the pressure on Hong Kong leaders, who have rejected most of their demands.

The protests started peacefully in early June, sparked by proposed legislation that would have criminal suspects to be extradited to the mainland. But by the time the bill was withdrawn, the protests had hardened and broadened into a resistance movement against the territory's government and Beijing.

Activists see the extradition bill as an example of Hong Kong's eroding autonomy under Beijing rule since the 1997 handover from colonial power Britain.

Several hundred people formed a human chain Sunday in central Hong Kong in a peaceful rally in support of the movement.

Azaze Chung, a university student, said the government should respond to the protesters' demands, not just use force against them.

Police and protesters faced off all day outside Polytechnic after a pitched battle the previous night in which the two sides exchanged tear gas and gasoline bombs that left fires blazing in the street.

A large group of people arrived Sunday morning to try to clean up the road but were warned away by protesters. Riot police shot several volleys of tear gas at the protesters, who sheltered behind a wall of umbrellas and threw gasoline bombs into nearby bushes and trees, setting them on fire.

The protesters held their ground for most of the day, as water cannon trucks drove over bricks and nails strewn by protesters to spray them at close range — some with water dyed blue to help police identify protesters afterward.

Protesters began retreating into the university near sunset, fearing they would be trapped as police approached from other directions. The protesters barricaded the entrances to the campus and set up narrow access control points.

They are the holdouts from larger groups that occupied several major campuses for much of last week.

Another group threw bricks in the street to block a main thoroughfare in the Mongkok district, as police fired tear gas to try to disperse them. The disruption to Nathan Road traffic may have been an attempt to distract police during the standoff at Polytechnic.

Opposition lawmakers criticized the Chinese military for joining a cleanup to remove debris from streets near Hong Kong Baptist University on Saturday.

Dozens of Chinese troops, dressed in black shorts and olive drab T-shirts, ran out in loose formation and picked up paving stones, rocks and other obstacles that had cluttered the street.

The Chinese military is allowed in Hong Kong to help maintain public order, but only at the request of the Hong Kong government. The government said that it had not requested the military's assistance, describing it as a voluntary community activity.

The Education Bureau announced that classes from kindergarten to high school would be suspended again on Monday because of safety concerns. Classes have been canceled since Thursday, after the bureau came under criticism for not doing so earlier.

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Associated Press journalist Dake Kang contributed to this report.



## **Terry O'Neill, whose images captured '60s London, dies at 81**

LONDON (AP) — British photographer Terry O'Neill, whose images captured London's Swinging '60s and who created iconic portraits of Elton John, Brigitte Bardot and Winston Churchill, has died at age 81.

O'Neill died Saturday at his home in London following a long battle with cancer, according to Iconic Images, the agency that represented O'Neill.

"Terry was a class act, quick witted and filled with charm," the agency said in a statement posted to its website. "Anyone who was lucky enough to know or work with him can attest to his generosity and modesty. As one of the most iconic photographers of the last 60 years, his legendary pictures will forever remain imprinted in our memories as well as in our hearts and minds."

Born in London in 1938, O'Neill was working as a photographer for an airline at Heathrow Airport when he snapped a picture of a well-dressed man sleeping on a bench. The man turned out to be the British home secretary, and O'Neill was hired by a London newspaper.

In the early 1960s he photographed the Beatles during the recording of their first hit single, and he captured the image of former Prime Minister Winston Churchill clutching a cigar as he was carried to an ambulance after a 1962 hospital stay.

O'Neill later said that when photographing the Beatles he placed John Lennon in the foreground because he thought that "it was obvious John was the one with the personality."

Soon O'Neill was photographing the hottest stars of the mid and late '60s: Bardot, Raquel Welch, Michael Caine, Steve McQueen, Diana Ross and Audrey Hepburn.

He photographed many other big names over the course of a career that spanned decades, including model Kate Moss, Queen Elizabeth II, singers David Bowie and Amy Winehouse and former first lady Laura Bush.

O'Neill's photos of Elton John remain among his most recognizable. One shows the singer, exuberant and sparkling in a sequined baseball uniform, with an audience of thousands in the background.

"He was brilliant, funny and I absolutely loved his company," John tweeted Sunday.

Another iconic O'Neill photo, this one from 1977, depicted actress Faye Dunaway lounging poolside the morning after winning a best actress Oscar for her performance in "Network," the statuette sitting on a table and newspapers strewn on the ground.

O'Neill was married to Dunaway for three years in the 1980s. According to British newspaper The Guardian, the couple had a son. O'Neill later married Laraine Ashton, a modelling industry executive.

In an interview with the Guardian last year, O'Neill discussed how he viewed his past photos.

"The perfectionist in me always left me thinking I could have taken a better shot. But now when I look at photos of all the icons I've shot — like Mandela, Sir Winston Churchill and Sinatra — the memories come flooding back and I think: 'Yeah, I did all right.'"

## **Kanye West talks about serving God during visit with Osteen**

**By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press**

HOUSTON (AP) — Rapper Kanye West told parishioners at Joel Osteen's Houston megachurch on Sunday that his recent spiritual awakening has made him realize he's no longer in the service to fame and money but "in service to God."

West spoke to a packed crowd of about 16,000 people at Lakewood Church's 11 a.m. service during an interview with Osteen from the stage. West told the parishioners about his recent conversion to Christianity and how God has been guiding him.

"I know that God has been calling me for a long time and the devil has been distracting me for a long time," West said. He added that at his lowest point, when he was hospitalized in 2016 after a "mental breakdown," God "was there with me, sending me visions and inspiring me."

Last month, West released "Jesus is King," a Gospel-themed album that's been described as Christian rap.

The rapper's wife, Kim Kardashian West, and their daughter, North West, joined him at the church. They

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 55 of 67

sat in the front row of the cavernous arena, the former Compaq Center, which was once the home of the Houston Rockets. Many of the parishioners seated around West took photos of him with their cellphones.

"This is like the Super Bowl today," said Amy Holmes, who was visiting from New Orleans with her husband and decided to attend.

West also was scheduled to perform in the evening at Lakewood with his "Sunday Service," a church-like concert featuring a choir. Tickets for the free concert were distributed through Ticketmaster and sold out within minutes Saturday, though some people have been reselling them for hundreds of dollars.

West has been traveling around the U.S. holding his "Sunday Service" concerts since January, including at the Coachella festival, an outdoor shopping center in Salt Lake City and at an Atlanta-area megachurch.

On Friday, he and his choir performed for inmates at the Harris County Jail in Houston.

During Sunday morning's appearance, West touched on a variety of topics in what he called his "streams of consciousness," including religion, the perils of fame and money, going to church as a child, strip clubs and the devil.

"The only superstar is Jesus," West said as the crowd applauded loudly.

But West's trademark boastfulness hasn't completely disappeared.

"Now the greatest artist that God has every created is now working for him," West said.

After the service, Osteen told reporters he was excited that West was "using his influence for the Lord."

"We come from different backgrounds. Styles are different. But we're still brothers in Christ. We're all on the same team," Osteen said.

Jose Gonzalez, a 25-year-old who attended the service, said he believes West's religious conversion to be sincere.

"I don't see why it would not be genuine. Especially with someone with his platform that talks about God and love and unity, it can get really shut down unfairly," said Gonzalez.

When asked what advice he had for people, West told reporters, "Every single millisecond be in service to God."

West and his wife are among the celebrities who have expressed support for Texas death row inmate Rodney Reed, who received an execution stay on Friday. Reed's supporters said new evidence raises serious doubt about his guilt in a 1996 killing.

On Friday, Kim Kardashian West traveled to death row in Livingston, Texas, and visited Reed.

Lakewood Church, where more than 43,000 people attend services each week, has become the largest church in the U.S.

Osteen's weekly television program is viewed by more than 13 million households in the U.S. and millions others in more than 100 nations around the world.

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Follow Juan A. Lozano on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/juanlozano70>

## Migrants stuck in lawless limbo within sight of America

By **MARIA VERZA** Associated Press

NUEVO LAREDO, Mexico (AP) — The gangsters trawling Nuevo Laredo know just what they're looking for: men and women missing their shoelaces.

Those are migrants who made it to the United States to ask for asylum, only to be taken into custody and stripped of their laces — to keep them from hurting themselves. And then they were thrust into danger, sent back to the lawless border state of Tamaulipas.

In years past, migrants moved quickly through this violent territory on their way to the United States. Now, due to Trump administration policies, they remain there for weeks and sometimes months as they await their U.S. court dates, often in the hands of the gangsters who hold the area in a vise-like grip.

Here, migrants in limbo are prey, and a boon to smugglers.

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This story is part of an occasional series, "Outsourcing Migrants," produced with the support of the

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 56 of 67

Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

They recount harrowing stories of robbery, extortion by criminals and crooked officials, and kidnappings by competing cartels. They tell of being captured by armed bandits who demand a ransom: They can pay for illegal passage to the border, or merely for their freedom, but either way they must pay.

And then they might be nabbed again by another gang. Or, desperate not to return to the homes they fled in the first place, they might willingly pay smugglers again.

That's what a 32-year-old Honduran accountant was contemplating. She had twice paid coyotes to help her cross into the U.S. only to be returned. Most recently, in September, she was sent back across the bridge from Brownsville to Matamoros.

Now, biding her time with her daughter in the city of Monterrey, she said one thing is for sure: "We are a little gold mine for the criminals."

Tamaulipas used to be a crossroads. Its dangers are well known; the U.S. has warned its citizens to stay away, assigning it the same alert level as war-torn countries such as Afghanistan and Syria.

Whenever possible, migrants heading north immediately crossed the river to Texas or presented themselves at a U.S. port of entry to file an asylum claim, which would allow them to stay in the U.S. while their cases played out.

But the U.S. has set limits on applicants for asylum, slowing the number to a mere trickle, while the policy known colloquially as "Remain in Mexico," has meant the return of more than 55,000 asylum-seekers to the country while their requests meander through backlogged courts.

The Mexican government is ill-prepared to handle the influx along the border, especially in Tamaulipas, where it has been arranging bus rides south to the relative safety of the northern city of Monterrey or all the way to the Guatemala border, citing security concerns — tacit acknowledgement, some analysts say, of the state of anarchy.

The gangs have adapted quickly to the new reality of masses of vulnerable people parking in the heart of their fiefdom, experts say, treating the travelers, often families with young children, like ATMs, ramping up kidnapping, extortion, and illegal crossings to extract money and fuel their empires.

"There's probably nothing worse you could do in terms of overall security along the border," said Jeremy Slack, a geographer at the University of Texas at El Paso who studies the border region, crime and migration in Mexico. "I mean, it really is like the nightmare scenario."

Yohan, a 31-year-old Nicaraguan security guard, trudged back across the border bridge from Laredo, Texas, in July with his wife and two children in tow, clutching a plastic case full of documents including one with a court date to return and make their asylum claim to a U.S. immigration judge two months later.

Penniless, with little more than a cellphone, the family was entering Nuevo Laredo, dominated by the Northeast cartel, a splinter of the brutal and once-powerful Zetas gang.

This is the way he tells the story now, in an interview at a nonprofit in Monterrey that provides the family with shelter and food:

The plan was to call and ask help from the only people they knew in the area — the "coyotes," or people smugglers, who earlier helped them cross the Rio Grande on an inflatable raft and had treated them well. Only that was in Ciudad Miguel Aleman, about a two-hour drive south parallel to the river.

On their way to the bus station, two strange men stopped Yohan while another group grabbed his loved ones. At least one of them had a gun. They were hustled into a van, relieved of their belongings and told they had a choice: Pay thousands of dollars for their freedom, or for another illegal crossing.

All along the border, there have abuses and crimes against migrants by Mexican organized crime, which has long profited off them. But Tamaulipas is especially troubling. It is both the location of most illegal crossings, and the state where the United States has returned the most asylum seekers — 20,700 through Nuevo Laredo and Matamoros as of early October.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 57 of 67

The Mexico City-based Institute for Women in Migration, which tracks kidnappings of migrants and asylum-seekers, has documented 212 abductions in the state from mid-July through Oct. 15. And that's surely an undercount.

Of the documented kidnappings in Tamaulipas, 197 occurred in Nuevo Laredo, a city of about 500,000 whose international bridges fuel the trade economy.

Yohan's family was among them.

They had left Esteli in northwestern Nicaragua over three months earlier after armed, government-aligned civilian militias learned that Yohan had witnessed the killing of a government opponent, he said. They followed him and painted death threats on the walls of their home.

He is identified only by his middle name, because he and others quoted in this story fear for their lives and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Yohan borrowed against his mother's house to pay smugglers \$18,000 for the family's trip. But he had not bargained on the closed door at the border, or the ordeal in Nuevo Laredo, and his bankroll was depleted.

The men who grabbed the family "told us they were from the cartel, that they were not kidnappers, that their job was to get people across and that they would take us to the smuggler to explain," Yohan said. Then they connected a cable to his cellphone to download its contents.

Yohan's first instinct was to give the passphrase that his previous smugglers used to identify "their" migrants. "That doesn't mean anything to us,' one of them told me," Yohan said — this lot belonged to a different group.

Gangs in Tamaulipas have fragmented in the last decade and now cartel cells there operate on a franchise model, with contacts across Mexico and Central America, said Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, a political scientist specializing in organized crime, immigration, border security and human trafficking at George Mason University.

"They are contractors. They provide a service, control the territory, operate safe houses and charge for all that," she said.

Yohan's family was held in a series of what appeared to be private homes or offices, along with a family from El Salvador, two Cubans and two Mexicans. Everyone slept on the floor.

One captor, a 16-year-old, told him, "We have 15 smugglers, the cartel brings the people to us here and we take them across paying the cartel for the river crossing."

The gang had been hiring lately: "Since the United States is deporting so many through here, we are capturing them and that has meant more work," the teen told him. "We're saturated."

Initially the captors demanded \$16,000. They gave Yohan and his wife a list of names and accounts; relatives were supposed to deposit \$450 into each one without using companies seen as traceable by authorities.

But they were able to scrape together just \$3,000, and that angered the gangsters.

"I'm going to give you to the cartel," one shouted.

Then Yohan's son came down with the mumps. The family got the captors to provide a bit of extra milk for him in exchange for his daughter's little gold ring, but the boy wasn't getting better and they abruptly released the family.

"They told us that the cartel doesn't allow them to hold sick children," Yohan said.

This is a matter of business, not humanity: A dead child could bring attention from the media, and then authorities, says George Mason's Correa-Cabrera.

After 14 days captive and before leaving the safe house, Yohan was given a code phrase: "We already passed through the office, checking." Only hours later they would need to use it. Arriving at the bus station, a group of strange men tried to grab them. Yohan spoke the six words in Spanish, and they were let go, and they went on to Monterrey.

On Sept. 22, Yohan's family returned to Nuevo Laredo for their court date, bringing with them a report on the family's kidnapping. Though U.S. law allows at-risk people to stay, they were sent back to the parking lot of a Mexican immigration facility, surrounded by seedy cantinas and watching eyes.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 58 of 67

Mexican authorities organized bus transportation for those who wanted to return to their home countries. The family did not intend to go back to Nicaragua, so they asked the driver to leave them in Monterrey where they would await the next hearing.

After they were under way, the driver demanded \$200. They couldn't pay, so he dumped them about 60 miles (100 kilometers) from the city at 1 a.m., along with four others.

Unlike other border cities such as Tijuana or Ciudad Juarez, migrants and asylum seekers are rarely seen on the streets in Nuevo Laredo. Fear keeps them in hiding, and safety isn't a sure thing even inside shelters. This summer pastor Aarón Méndez was abducted from the shelter he ran. He has not been heard from since.

Nor is it safe on the streets going to and from the station. A couple of months after Méndez disappeared, gunmen intercepted some people who were helping migrants make those trips; those being transported were taken away, and the helpers were told they would be killed if they persisted.

Kennji Kizuka, a researcher for New York-based Human Rights First, told of one woman who crossed into the U.S. for a hearing date, where she had to surrender her phone. While she was incommunicado for hours, calls were placed to relatives in the United States claiming she had been kidnapped and aggressively demanding a ransom.

"It's clear that they have a very sophisticated system to target people," Kizuka said.

In another instance, Kizuka said, cartel members were in the Nuevo Laredo office of Mexican migration, openly abducting asylum seekers who had just been sent back from the United States.

One woman hid in the bathroom with her daughter and called a local pastor for help; he tried to drive them away, but they were blocked by cartel members blocks way. The two were taken from the car and held by the gangsters, though they eventually were released unharmed.

A spokesperson for the Mexican foreign affairs secretary declined comment on allegations that Mexico cannot guarantee safety for immigrants returned from U.S.

U.S. Border Patrol officials said recently they are continuing to send asylum seekers back over the border, and that includes Nuevo Laredo. The number of people returned there has been reduced recently, but that was related to a decrease in migrants arriving at the border — and not violence in Tamaulipas.

In an interview, Brian Hastings, Border Patrol chief of law enforcement operations, told AP that officials didn't see a "threat to that population" in Tamaulipas and "there was basically a small war between the cartel and the state police" there.

But the numbers indicate the danger is real.

As of August, Human Rights First had tabulated 100 violent crimes against returnees. By October, after it rolled out to Tamaulipas, that had more than tripled to 340. Most involved kidnapping and extortion. Kizuka said the danger is even greater than the numbers reflect because they are based solely on accounts his organization or reporters have been able to document.

Of dozens of people interviewed by AP who said they had been victimized in Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa, Matamoros and Monterrey, just one had filed a police report.

Kidnappings of migrants are not a new phenomenon. According to Mexico's National Human Rights Commission, in just six months in 2009 nearly 10,000 migrants were abducted while passing through the country.

Back then the cartels were splintering amid a government policy targeting their top bosses, leading them to fight among themselves in the people-smuggling business to fill two needs: money and labor. Kidnapped migrants generally were told they could avoid being killed by either paying ransom or working for the cartel.

Tamaulipas became a bloody emblem of the problem in 2010 when 72 migrants were found slain at a ranch in San Fernando, and a year later when the bodies of 193 migrants were found in the same area in clandestine mass graves — apparently murdered by a cartel to damage a rival's people-smuggling business.

Raymundo Ramos of the Nuevo Laredo Human Rights Committee said gangs today are more interested in squeezing cash from migrants: "They have to recover a lot of the money lost in those wars."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 59 of 67

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has acknowledged that another massacre or escalation of violence is a major fear and has deployed more than 25,000 troops and National Guard agents to police people-trafficking in border regions and along smuggling routes. But all the accounts of violence in this account took place after that deployment.

Reynosa, a factory city of about 650,000, is the largest in Tamaulipas and home to some of the worst drug war violence. It's also a key part of the migratory route and one of the busiest crossing points along with Ciudad Miguel Aleman.

Disputed by rival gangs, Reynosa has the feel of a place with invisible fences demarcating their territories, and numerous migrants said they had to pay to get past checkpoints at the main entrances to the city.

Lawyer and human rights worker Fortino López Balcázar said the gangs first took control of the river, attacking and beating migrants. Then they started grabbing them from bus stations, and then from the streets.

The airport is also tightly controlled.

A 46-year-old teacher from Havana recalled arriving with her 16-year-old son Aug. 13 by plane from Mexico City with the phone number for a taxi driver, provided by a lawyer who arranged their trip. As they drove into Reynosa, two other taxis cut the vehicle off. Two men got in, took away her cellphone and money and whisked them to a home that was under construction.

The lawyer "sold us out," the woman said.

That night they were moved to a thicket near the Rio Grande where they were held captive in an outdoor camp for a week with dozens of others. They met another group of Cubans, who were also abducted shortly after flying into Reynosa: Several taxi and vans brazenly intercepted them in broad daylight, bringing traffic to a halt.

"It was as if we were terrorists and the FBI had swooped down on us," one of the men said. He speculated they may have been betrayed by an airport immigration agent with whom they had argued over their travel documents.

López Obrador's government has said the National Immigration Institute is one of Mexico's most corrupt agencies. In early 2019 the institute announced the firing of more than 500 workers nationwide. According to a person with knowledge of the purge, Tamaulipas was one of four states where the most firings took place. Some worked in airports, others in the city of Reynosa.

In February the institute's deputy delegate to the city was fired and accused of charging detained migrants over \$3,000 to avoid deportation. Later new complaints surfaced of people being shaken down for \$1,500 to be put at the top of wait lists to present claims in the United States.

At the riverside camp, the Cuban teacher was introduced to its "commander" who demanded "rent" and a fine for not traveling with a guide. The ransom was set at \$1,000.

Previously the Cuban woman's only exposure to the world of organized crime came from movies she watched on the illegal satellite TV hookup that caused her to run afoul of authorities back home. Now, they were witnessing things both terrifying and hard to understand.

There was the time a man tried to suffocate another with a plastic bag, or when the kidnappers, some barely in their teens, beat a "coyote" for working for a rival outfit. From what she was able to understand from the shouting, he had been kidnapped along with clients he was guiding and they wanted him to switch loyalties.

The captors at the thicket referred to themselves as "the corporation," the teacher said. People came and went, some delivered by men in uniforms who may or may not have been police.

Edith Garrido, a nun who works at the Casa del Migrante shelter in Reynosa, said both crooked officers and criminals dressed as police — known as "black cops" or "the clones" — are mixed up in the racket, making the rounds of safe houses to buy and sell kidnap victims.

"They say 'give me 10, 15, 25.' They tell them they are going to take them to a safer place, and they give them to the highest bidder," Garrido explained. "A migrant is money for them, not a person."



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 60 of 67

The captors let the Cubans use their cellphones for a few hours to coordinate ransom payments with relatives, always small amounts to different bank accounts. Weeping, the teacher recalled how her 25-year-old daughter in Cuba had to pawn all her belongings.

After the ransom came through, the captors took her picture and she, her son and another woman were put in a taxi and driven off. The cabbie stopped the car along a highway, took her cellphone and said they could go.

She and her son now await their immigration court date in Reynosa, where she has found temporary construction work to pay for rent and food.

There's not enough space for everyone at the shelters, so many rent rooms, and that demand has pushed prices up. It can range from \$35 per person per month for a spot in a cramped five-person bedroom in a seedy area, to \$300-\$500 for a more secure home.

But nowhere is truly safe. Last month a family from El Salvador missed their turn to present themselves for U.S. asylum after a shootout erupted in the streets and they were afraid to leave their home.

Garrido said some pay protection fees so they are not bothered in their homes, while others rent directly from the gangs.

"So one way or another," she said, "they make money."

Associated Press writers Peter Orsi in Mexico City and Colleen Long in Washington contributed to this report.

## UK media: Prince Andrew's sex claims rebuttal a PR disaster

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British media on Sunday slammed Prince Andrew's effort to rebut claims that he had sex with a teenager who says she was trafficked by Jeffrey Epstein, branding his televised interview a complete public relations disaster.

In a rare interview with BBC Newsnight that was broadcast late Saturday, Andrew categorically denied having sex with the woman, Virginia Roberts Giuffre. But Britain's newspapers and social media commentators criticized him for defending his friendship with Epstein and for failing to show empathy for the convicted sex-offender's victims.

"I expected a train wreck," said Charlie Proctor, editor of the Royal Central website, which covers the British monarchy. "That was a plane crashing into an oil tanker, causing a tsunami, triggering a nuclear explosion-level bad."

Giuffre has said Epstein forced her to have sex with Andrew in 2001, when she was 17. She says Epstein flew her around the world on private planes to have sex with powerful men, and that she had sexual encounters with Andrew in London, New York and in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The BBC's Emily Maitlis grilled Andrew on the details of an alleged encounter in March of that year, when Giuffre says she dined with the prince in London, danced with him at the Tramp nightclub, then had sex with him at a house in the tony London neighborhood of Belgravia.

"I can absolutely categorically tell you it never happened," Andrew said.

The 59-year-old prince said he had "no recollection" of ever meeting Giuffre, adding that there are "a number of things that are wrong" with her account. He also suggested that a picture showing him with his arm around the teenage Giuffre may have been faked.

There was no immediate comment from Giuffre's representative about the prince's interview.

Giuffre had recently challenged the British royal to speak out, telling reporters in New York "he knows exactly what he's done."

"And the answer is nothing," Andrew told the BBC.

The New York medical examiner ruled Epstein's death a suicide last summer. He had been in prison awaiting trial on federal sex-trafficking charges, which he had denied. Years earlier, Epstein pleaded guilty to state charges in Florida of solicitation of prostitution involving a minor.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 61 of 67

While Andrew defended his friendship with Epstein prior to the Florida case, he said he regretted staying at the financier's home in Manhattan after Epstein's conviction.

"That's the bit, that ... I kick myself for, on a daily basis, because it was not something that was becoming of a member of the royal family. And we try and uphold the highest standards and practices and I let the side down, simple as that," he said.

He claimed an alleged encounter with Giuffre in London couldn't have occurred on the date reported because he had taken his daughter Princess Beatrice to a party at a Pizza Express restaurant in the London suburb of Woking that day.

Andrew also disputed the details of Giuffre's account, including her statement that he sweated heavily when they danced at the London nightclub. He said that was factually impossible because he had a medical condition at the time that meant he didn't sweat. The prince said the condition stemmed from an "overdose of adrenaline" during his time as a helicopter pilot during the 1982 Falklands War.

Those statements attracted ridicule on social media, with one commenter adding a giant slice of pizza to a photo of the prince and Epstein walking through New York's Central Park. Others shared a photo of the prince sweating profusely.

One Twitter user captured the reaction of many by posting a video of a man pouring gasoline on a fire under the headline, "#Prince Andrew."

But it was his failure to show compassion for Epstein's victims that earned Andrew the most scorn.

"Astonished nation watches prince squirm," the Mail on Sunday said in a front-page headline. "Many viewers shocked by 'total lack of empathy.'"

Andrew's decision to grant an interview that went into forensic detail about his well-documented ties to a sex offender was a high-stakes gamble in a country where royals traditionally don't submit to such questioning. When royals speak at all, they usually offer carefully considered comments about charitable works.

But if Andrew thought the gamble would draw a line under the affair, he is mistaken, said Kate Williams, a specialist in royal history at Reading University. Williams said that no amount of charity work is going to address the harm done in the interview.

"The Royal Household today will be in damage-control mode, trying to work out how to minimize the damage that has come from this," she said. "He has to go. Simply, last night was really a burning of the bridges, I think, for Prince Andrew."

Queen Elizabeth II's second son, who is eighth in line to the throne, did have some defenders.

His ex-wife, Sarah Ferguson, said before the BBC interview that it "is so rare to meet people that are able to speak from their hearts with honesty and pure real truth."

"Andrew is a true and real gentleman and is stoically steadfast to not only his duty but also his kindness and goodness," she said.

The prince didn't rule out cooperating with the ongoing U.S. investigation into Epstein's associates, saying he would follow his lawyers' advice. Giuffre's lawyers have said they also want to depose Andrew.

"If push came to shove and the legal advice was to do so, then I would be duty bound to do so," Andrew said.

That concession may not be enough to counter the damage done by the interview.

"I have never seen anything so disastrous. For any students of PR, that is how not to do it," crisis consultant Mark Borkowski told Britain's Press Association. "It was like watching a man in quicksand and, unfortunately, I don't think anyone would have thrown him a line to get him out."

Jim Mustian in New York contributed.

## AP Top 25: Georgia edges past Alabama to No. 4; OU up to 8

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Georgia edged past Alabama to No. 4 in The Associated Press college football poll after the Bulldogs had

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 62 of 67

a quality road victory and the Crimson Tide lost star quarterback Tua Tagovailoa for the season.

LSU remained No. 1 in the AP Top 25 presented by Regions Bank, receiving 54 first-place votes. No. 2 Ohio State (five first-place votes) and No. 3 Clemson (three first-place votes) maintained their spots. Georgia moved up one place after winning 21-14 at Auburn.

The Crimson Tide beat Mississippi State 38-7 on Saturday, but Tagovailoa dislocated his right hip while being tackled late in the second quarter and is done for the year. Alabama fell a spot to fifth.

Minnesota and Baylor both lost for the first time and dropped in the rankings. The 11th-ranked Gophers slipped four spots after losing at Iowa. No. 13 Baylor dropped one after blowing a 28-3 lead at home to Oklahoma.

Iowa jumped four to No. 19 and Oklahoma moved up two spots to No. 8.

## POLL POINTS

There is more separation at the top of college football this season than last. At this point in 2018, the AP Top 25 had:

- Four unbeaten teams.
- Eight one-loss teams.
- Three two-loss teams.
- Eight three-loss teams.
- Two four-loss teams.

The latest poll has:

- Three unbeaten teams.
- 13 one-loss teams.
- Four two-loss teams.
- Five three-loss teams.

## TOP-FIVE TIDE

Alabama extended its record for consecutive weeks in the top five of the AP poll to 67, dating back to Nov. 8, 2015. The second-longest streak of top-five appearances is Miami, which had 55 from Oct. 8, 2000-Oct. 26, 2003.

Breakdown of the streak:

- No. 1 — 49.
- No. 2 — 12.
- No. 3 — 2.
- No. 4 — 2.
- No. 5 — 2.

## IN

— No. 23 Appalachian State moved into the rankings for the second time this season.  
— No. 24 Texas A&M returned to the Top 25. The Aggies started the season in No. 12, but losses to Clemson, Auburn and Alabama dropped them out. A&M has won four straight.

— No. 25 Virginia Tech is ranked for the first time this season. It has been quite a bounce-back for the Hokies, who suffered their worst home loss in decades against Duke in September but have won five of six since.

## OUT

- Navy was bounced after being routed at Notre Dame.
- Texas fell out of the rankings again after a last-second loss to Iowa State.
- Indiana lasted one week in the rankings after a 25-year absence. The Hoosiers lost at Penn State.

## CONFERENCE CALL

Big Ten — 6 (Nos. 2, 9, 11, 12, 14, 19).

SEC — 6 (Nos. 1, 4, 5, 10, 16, 24).

American — 3 (Nos. 17, 18, 21).

Big 12 — 3 (Nos. 8, 13, 22).

ACC — 2 (Nos. 3, 25).



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 63 of 67

Pac 12 — 2 (Nos. 6, 7).

Mountain West — 1 (No. 20).

Sun Belt — 1 (No. 23).

Independent — 1 (No. 15).

RANKED vs. RANKED

No. 9 Penn State at No. 2 Ohio State. The Buckeyes have been rolling, but they still have their heaviest lifting to do.

No. 24 Texas A&M at No. 4 Georgia. The Aggies are positioned to complicate things in the SEC, with the Bulldogs this week and LSU next.

Follow Ralph D. Russo at <https://twitter.com/ralphDrussoAP> and listen at <http://www.westwoodonepodcasts.com/pods/ap-top-25-college-football-podcast/>

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/APTop25CollegeFootballPoll> and <https://apnews.com/Collegefootball> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## Illegal pot farms on public land create environmental hazard

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Two months after two men were arrested at an illicit marijuana farm on public land deep in the Northern California wilderness, authorities are assessing the environmental impact and cleanup costs at the site where trees were clear-cut, waterways were diverted, and the ground was littered with open containers of fertilizer and rodenticide.

A group including U.S. Forest Service rangers, local law enforcement, scientists and conservationists hiked into the so-called trespass grow where nearly 9,000 cannabis plants were illegally cultivated on national forest land in the region known as the Emerald Triangle, for the marijuana that has been produced there for decades.

Authorities allege members of an international drug trafficking ring set up camp at the site as far back as 2015.

When deputies raided the remote clearing in the woods Sept. 9, they found hundreds of pounds of harvested marijuana, thousands of pounds of trash and more than 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) of plastic irrigation piping, according to the Trinity County Sheriff's Office. They also discovered bottles of carbofuran, a banned neurotoxicant used to kill rodents that also has been linked to the deaths of spotted owls, fish and mountain lions. A quarter-teaspoon can kill a 300-pound (136-kilogram) bear.

The case highlights some of the growing pains California has faced since kicking off broad legal sales in 2018. Its legal marijuana market has grown to more than \$3 billion but remains dwarfed by a thriving illegal market, which rakes in nearly \$9 billion annually. Limited resources mean officials can't keep up with all the illegal sites that are remnants of the outlaw era, when much of the pot for the U.S. black market came from the Emerald Triangle.

Experts say illegal sites like the one found in the Shasta Trinity National Forest, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) from the Oregon line, siphon valuable water, pollute legal downstream grows and funnel potentially tainted cannabis onto the streets.

"These places are toxic garbage dumps. Food containers attract wildlife, and the chemicals kill the animals long after the sites are abandoned," said Rich McIntyre, director of the Cannabis Removal on Public Lands (CROP) Project, which is dedicated to restoring criminal grow sites on state and federal property in California. "We think there's a public health time bomb ticking."

CROP is a coalition of conservation organizations, tribes, elected officials, law enforcement agencies and federal land managers. Also lending its support is the legal cannabis industry, which says it's being undercut by the criminal market. Officials estimate that up to 70% of California's illicit pot comes from trespass grows mostly on public land.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 64 of 67

"We see illegal grows as undermining the legal cultivators and manufacturers" by reducing tax revenue, said Lindsay Robinson, executive director of the California Cannabis Industry Association, a trade group. "We're seeing untested and unregulated cannabis flooding the market."

Black market marijuana is potentially dangerous because traces of the toxic chemicals used at grow sites are often found in the plants, she said.

"If you have an illicit grow upstream from you, and you're legal, that could end up tainting your product and prevent it from entering the market," Robinson said.

CROP estimates that 9 billion gallons (34 billion liters) of water are diverted to trespass grows in California each year — a yearly supply for a city of 35,000 homes.

"In a state like California where water battles and drought are a way of life, that number is shocking," McIntyre said. More than 60% of California's water comes from national forest land.

Authorities in 2018 made dozens of arrests at trespass grows while seizing hundreds of thousands of pot plants along with cash and guns. Criminal growers often use powerful firearms to protect their operation, McIntyre said.

"There are stories of people — hunters, fishermen, hikers — who find themselves down the barrel of an AK-47" after stumbling on illegal grow sites, he said.

The toxic chemicals were cleared from the Shasta site Oct. 16, and a "decommissioning" cleanup — removing everything brought in by growers — should happen within a year. The goal is to restore illegal grows to pristine condition complete with reseeding and replanting, but that plan lacks funding.

CROP is lobbying for federal and state money to clean and reclaim an estimated 2,000 sites, a process it says could take seven to 10 years.

It's also pushing to increase the number of U.S. Forest Service rangers in California's national forests. Reclaiming each site costs an average of \$40,000, requiring trained crews, law enforcement resources and often National Guard air support to remove tons of materials from remote areas, the group said.

The group has a supporter in Democratic U.S. Congressman Jared Huffman, whose Northern California district includes huge swaths of state and federal property.

"We've seen firsthand how illegal grow operations threaten visitors to our public lands, steal water and contaminate streams, and kill wildlife on a landscape scale," Huffman said in a statement. He's introduced legislation that would identify the problem of trespass grows, expand land protections and free up funds to address it.

CROP is also pushing lawmakers to increase penalties for anyone who brings toxic chemicals to public lands. U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott said last year that federal authorities are concentrating their efforts on hazardous illegal grows.

Nine of every 10 illegal marijuana farms raided in California in 2018 contained traces of carbofuran, researchers at the Integral Ecology Research Center in northwestern California said last year.

That was a jump from chemicals found at about 75% of illegal growing operations discovered on public land in 2017, and it was six times as high as in 2012.

## Census counting of prisoners becomes partisan battleground

By IVAN MORENO Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — When the U.S. Census Bureau counts residents of Milwaukee's poorest neighborhoods next year, a significant portion of their population will be missing: prisoners.

For these predominantly black areas, with incarceration rates among the highest in the nation, the government's longstanding policy to count inmates as residents of the prison where they are held diminishes their political power back home.

"When you undercount people for the census, they end up losing in that community dollars that could go toward services that can help remediate poverty," said state Rep. David Bowen, a Milwaukee Democrat co-sponsoring legislation to end what critics call prison gerrymandering.

Democrats argue the system shifts resources from traditionally liberal urban centers — home to many

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 65 of 67

inmates who are disproportionately black and Hispanic — to rural, white, Republican-leaning areas where prisons are usually located.

“It’s really artificially shifting money ... based on something that isn’t reality,” said U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, a Wisconsin Democrat who is co-sponsoring legislation in Congress to change the census policy.

Republicans, however, argue that towns with prisons need federal money for the additional costs they bring, such as medical care, law enforcement and road maintenance.

“There are a lot of costs. It’s not all peaches and cream having a prison in your community,” said Arizona state Rep. T.J. Shope, a Republican who represents the town of Florence, where prisoners represent about two-thirds of the population of 30,000.

Although the Census Bureau has counted inmates as prison residents since 1850, states control redistricting and can move those populations to their home counties for that purpose or not include inmates at all when maps are drawn. Some states controlled by Democrats are passing laws to prohibit using prison populations to draw legislative maps. Washington and Nevada this year became the fifth and sixth states to pass laws since 2010 banning using prisoners for redistricting, joining New York, Maryland, California and Delaware.

Nine other states, including Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, have similar proposals pending. Connecticut, which has the fifth-highest incarceration rate for black men, argues in a federal lawsuit that using prisoners for redistricting purposes — and putting them in districts where they didn’t live before incarceration — violates the one-person, one-vote requirement of the 14th Amendment. A federal appeals court in September allowed the lawsuit to proceed.

The Census Bureau’s policy pertaining to prisoners didn’t get much attention until recent decades because the population wasn’t large enough to alter representation, but now the U.S. imprisons more people than any other nation.

The way inmates are counted impacts the distribution of dollars and heightens political jostling over representation in legislative districts and local offices — even though prisoners can’t even vote in most states.

“The rural counties benefit tremendously off of the back of individuals who are incarcerated in those regions,” said Jerome Dillard, the state director of Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing, a Milwaukee-based advocacy group that, among other things, wants to restore voting rights to former prisoners.

Dillard, 65, said he was in prison in Wisconsin from 1992 to 1996 for using a fake Social Security number to open a bank account. He said prisoners often know nothing of the community where they’re counted and never benefit from services available to permanent residents.

Meanwhile, the districts that inmates call home diminish in size and political representation.

An April study from two Villanova University professors illustrates this.

Professors Briana Remster and Rory Kramer counted more than 100,000 black inmates as residents of Philadelphia, where they were from, rather than in Pennsylvania prisons. Their finding: The city would have gained at least one majority-minority state legislative district.

Wisconsin’s prison population is smaller than Pennsylvania’s but the effects of using prisoners in redistricting are still apparent.

Wisconsin state prisons confined about 23,500 black men as of August, including 7,800 from Milwaukee — a Democratic stronghold.

State legislative District 53, about 90 minutes northwest of Milwaukee, has a large black population — larger than 74 other state districts, at least on paper. But of the 2,784 African-Americans in the district in the last census, almost 80 percent were incarcerated, according to the Prison Policy Initiative, a nonprofit that wants to end using prisoners for redistricting.

“What we see is that you’re kind of padding the numbers, you’re allowing certain districts to have a particular voting power when they don’t actually have that population,” said Rep. David Crowley, a Milwaukee Democrat co-sponsoring the bill to count prisoners where they last lived.

Crowley said most prisoners aren’t serving long sentences; nearly 65 percent are expected to return home within five years, meaning the effect of the census count — undertaken every 10 years — will persist even after they’re back home, he said.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 66 of 67

But Shope, the Arizona lawmaker, compared counting inmates as part of legislative districts to counting people in the country illegally.

"I don't consider it a problem," Shope said. "The census is a snapshot, a snapshot in time on one day, and we count inmates where they are currently housed the same way we count undocumented residents where they're currently residing."

The Census Bureau is not changing its current policy to count prisoners as prison residents, though it has opened the matter up for discussion. In a response to public comments on the issue, the bureau said the practice is consistent with how the agency has long defined what a person's "usual residence," is, meaning "where a person lives and sleeps most of the time, which is not always the same as their legal residence." The decision came despite nearly 78,000 public comments in 2016 favoring counting inmates at their pre-prison address. Four commenters favored keeping the current policy.

But the Census Bureau said that since some states are considering whether to change where they count prisoners, states in 2021 can request a special dataset that will list prisoners at their pre-prison address for redistricting purposes.

Democrats hope Wisconsin seeks that data, but they face long odds in the state Legislature, where majority Republicans withstood years of litigation over accusations that they gerrymandered legislative districts in their favor in 2011.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, a Republican, said he opposes the bill to change how prisoners are counted. "I think the system has worked well as it is," Vos said.

Bowen disagrees. He said Wisconsin needs to come to terms with its history.

"When you are growing up in areas that have been, you know, that have been on the receiving end of oppression and plunder, of decades of resources being taken from those communities," he said, "it really means that we should be advocating to right that wrong."

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Associated Press writer Scott Bauer contributed to this report.

## Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Nov. 18, the 322nd day of 2019. There are 43 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 18, 1987, the congressional Iran-Contra committees issued their final report, saying President Ronald Reagan bore "ultimate responsibility" for wrongdoing by his aides.

On this date:

In 1865, Mark Twain's first literary success, the original version of his short story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," was first published in the New York Saturday Press under the title "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog."

In 1883, the United States and Canada adopted a system of Standard Time zones.

In 1916, the World War I Battle of the Somme pitting British and French forces against German troops ended inconclusively after 4 1/2 months of bloodshed.

In 1959, "Ben-Hur," the Biblical-era spectacle starring Charlton Heston, had its world premiere in New York.

In 1963, the Bell System introduced the first commercial touch-tone telephone system in Carnegie and Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

In 1976, Spain's parliament approved a bill to establish a democracy after 37 years of dictatorship.

In 1978, U.S. Rep. Leo J. Ryan, D-Calif., and four others were killed in Jonestown, Guyana, by members of the Peoples Temple; the killings were followed by a night of mass murder and suicide by more than 900 cult members.

In 1987, a fire at London King's Cross railway station claimed 31 lives.

In 1991, Shiite (SHEE'-eyet) Muslim kidnappers in Lebanon freed Anglican Church envoy Terry Waite and

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Nov. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 140 ~ 67 of 67

Thomas Sutherland, the American dean of agriculture at the American University of Beirut.

In 1999, 12 people were killed when a bonfire under construction at Texas A-and-M University collapsed. A jury in Jasper, Texas, convicted Shawn Allen Berry of murder for his role in the dragging death of James Byrd Jr., but spared him the death penalty.

In 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled 4-to-3 that the state constitution guaranteed gay couples the right to marry.

In 2004, Britain outlawed fox hunting in England and Wales.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama visited the Great Wall of China, which he described as "magical," before heading to Seoul, South Korea, for the final stop of his eight-day Asia tour. Two days before turning 92, Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., set a record for longest-serving lawmaker in congressional history at 56 years, 320 days. (That record was broken in 2013 by U.S. Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich.)

Five years ago: Several feet of lake-effect snow paralyzed the Buffalo, New York, area on a wintry day when temperatures fell to freezing or below in all 50 states. Israel vowed harsh retaliation for a Palestinian attack on a synagogue in Jerusalem that left five people dead.

One year ago: Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson conceded his bitterly-close re-election bid to Republican Rick Scott, after a bruising recount left Nelson thousands of votes short of the outgoing governor. Finland's president said he wasn't sure where President Donald Trump got the idea that raking was part of Finland's routine for managing its forests; Trump had told reporters a day earlier that wildfires weren't a problem in Finland because crews "spend a lot of time on raking and cleaning" forest floors. For the first time since 1996, Army made it into the Associated Press Top 25 college football poll, achieving a No. 23 ranking.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Brenda Vaccaro is 80. Author-poet Margaret Atwood is 80. Actress Linda Evans is 77. Actress Susan Sullivan is 77. Country singer Jacky Ward is 73. Actor Jameson Parker is 72. Actress-singer Andrea Marcovici is 71. Rock musician Herman Rarebell is 70. Singer Graham Parker is 69. Actor Delroy Lindo is 67. Comedian Kevin Nealon is 66. Pro Football Hall of Fame quarterback Warren Moon is 63. Actor Oscar Nunez is 61. Actress Elizabeth Perkins is 59. Singer Kim Wilde is 59. Actor Tim Guinee is 57. Rock musician Kirk Hammett (Metallica) is 57. Rock singer Tim DeLaughter (dee-LAW'-ter) is 54. Actor Romany Malco is 51. Actor Owen Wilson is 51. Actor Dan Bakkedahl is 51. Singer Duncan Sheik is 50. Actor Mike Epps is 49. Actress Peta Wilson is 49. Actress Chloe Sevigny (SEH'-ven-ee) is 45. Country singer Jessi Alexander is 43. Actor Steven Pasquale is 43. Rock musician Alberto Bof (Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real) is 42. Rapper Fabolous is 42. Actor-director Nate Parker is 40. Rapper Mike Jones is 39. Actress Mekia Cox is 38. Actress-comedian Nasim Pedrad (nah-SEEM' peh-DRAHD') is 38. Actress Allison Tolman is 38. Actress Christina Vidal is 38. Actor Damon Wayans Jr. is 37. Country singer TJ Osborne (Brothers Osborne) is 35. Fashion designer Christian Siriano is 34. Actor Nathan Kress is 27.

Thought for Today: "Few people can see genius in someone who has offended them." — Robertson Davies, Canadian author (1913-1995).

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