

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Nov. 22, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 144 ~ 1 of 68

STATE VOLLEYBALL COVERAGE

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“ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS
FORGIVE OURSELVES
WHOLLY AND COMPLETELY
FOR EVER THINKING THAT
WE ARE NOT GOOD
ENOUGH!”

JODI AMAN

Chicken Soup
for the Soul



Groton Area prepares to take its first ever steps onto the floor of a State Volleyball Tournament.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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McCook Central/Montrose hands Groton Area first state tourney loss

Groton Area's state volleyball premier was set back by McCook Central/Montrose as the Fighting Cougars posted a 3-1 win over the Lady Tigers.

The State A Volleyball Tournament is being played at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center in Rapid City.

McCook Central/Montrose jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the first set. The Tigers closed to within one several times but was unable to tie the game. McM upped its lead to eight at 20-12 before going on to a 25-17 first set win.

Coach Chelsea Hanson said, "I think we had some first set jitters but even then we told the girls that we aren't playing our best and we're still in the game so go out and compete and they did."

Groton Area scored the first point in the second set before the Fighting Cougars took a 5-2 lead. Groton Area scored four straight points as Nicole Marzahn hit the game tying kill at five. Marzahn would later tie the game at 7 with a termination, but McM would not give up its lead. The Fighting Cougars then scored four straight to take an 11-7 lead. Groton Area would rally for seven straight points with Kenzie McInerney having two kills and Marzahn and Eliza Wanner adding a kill each during the rally. The Tigers took a 14-11 lead and from there, the Tigers were not going to be denied the win and posted a 25-19 second set win. Marzahn had four kills, an ace serve and a block in the second set. Indigo Rogers and Kenzie McInerney each had two kills, Stella Meier and Eliza Wanner each had a kill and Payton Colestock had an ace serve.

Groton Area jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the third set, but McM would score nine straight points to take a 9-3 lead. Groton Area closed to within one at 12-12 with an ace serve by Kaylin Kucker, but then McM would score six straight to take a 19-12 lead and would go on to win, 25-16. Marzahn had five kills in that set, Wanner would have a pair of kills while Madeline Fliehs and Kaylin Kucker would each have a kill and Colestock had an ace serve.

"Hanson said, MCM was a great team and did a good job keeping us out of system so we couldn't run our offense like we were used to and that was one thing we haven't had to do much this season, but every game here we will have to get better and try our best to control the ball well."

McCook Central/Montrose jumped out to a 5-0 lead in the third set. The Tigers would close to within two at 6-4 and it was still just a three-point margin at 10-7. Then the Fighting Cougars would score five straight points to take a 17-9 lead. Groton Area would close to within three late in the set at 20-17, 21-18, 22-19, 23-20 and 24-21 but McM would finish off the set with a 25-21 win. In the fourth set, Marzahn had five kills, Payton Colestock had four ace serves, Rogers and Wanner each had two kills and Fliehs had one.

For the match, Nicole Marzahn had 15 kills, nine digs, two ace serves and one block. Eliza Wanner had 15 digs and nine kills. Indigo Rogers had six kills, two digs, one assist and one block. Madeline Fliehs had three kills and two digs. Tady Glover had 16 digs and three assists. Payton Colestock had six ace serves, four digs and three assists. Kenzie McInerney had two kills and a block. Stella Meier had two kills and one dig. Kaylin Kucker had 28 assists and one kill.

Aleah Ries led McCook Central/Montrose with 16 kills while Maleah Gordon and Abigail Van Ruler each had 13 kills.

"We've had a lot of fun here this week so far," Hanson said. "We didn't win but we competed well and had our opportunities to win and that's all we can ask for day in and day out!"

Groton Area will play Madison today at 2:45 MT (3:45 for you folks back home!). "Madison is a good team with strong hitters and big blockers, they will earn points and we will earn ours," Hanson said. "If we compete like we did tonight we will be in every game. The girls are really enjoying being in this environment together and it's fun to be a part of!"

- Paul Kosel

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The bench gets excited after the Tigers get an ace serve. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Indigo Rogers
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Kaylin Kucker
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Kenzie McInerney
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Payton Colestock
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Grace Wambach
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Tadyn Glover
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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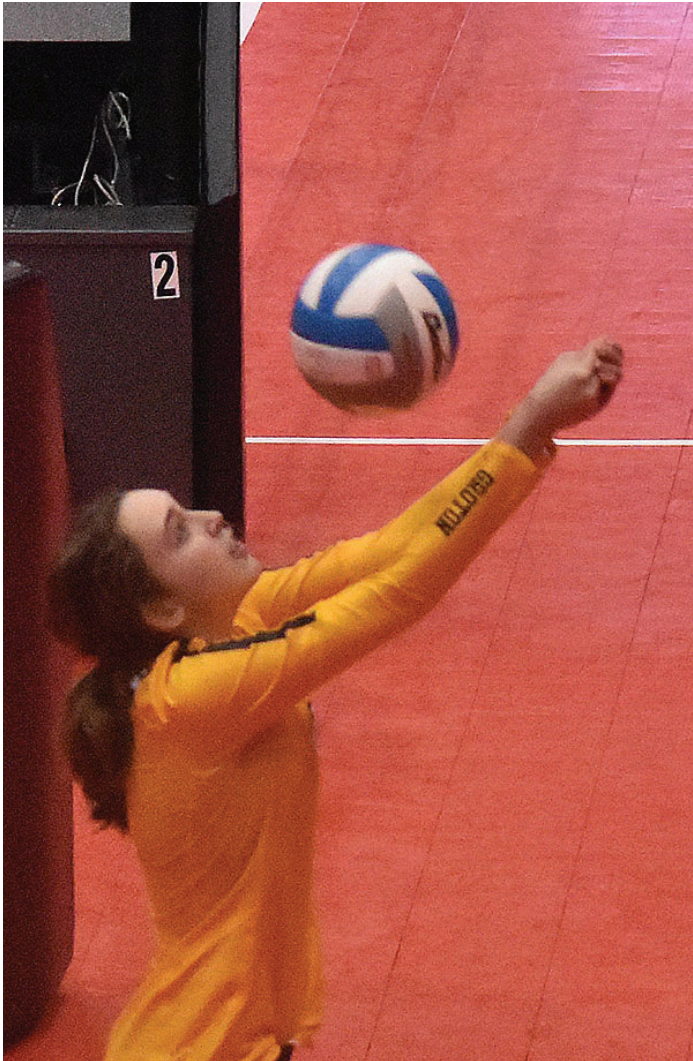
Nicole Marzahn
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Madeline Flihs
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Stella Meier
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Eliza Wanner
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Box Score Points

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Team: Groton

No	Player	SP	Attack				Pct	Ast	Serve			Def Dig	Block			Gen BHE	PTS
			K	E	TA	TA			SA	SE	RE		BS	BA	BE		
3	McInerney, Kenzie	4	2	0	2	1.000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2.5
4	Marzahn, Nicole	4	15	0	15	1.000	0	2	0	0	9	1	0	0	0	18.0	
5	Glover, Tady	4	0	0	0	.000	3	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0.0	
6	Meier, Stella	4	2	0	2	1.000	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2.0	
7	Rogers, Indigo	4	6	0	6	1.000	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	6.5	
9	Colestock, Payton	4	0	0	0	.000	3	6	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	6.0	
10	Fliehs, Madeline	4	3	0	3	1.000	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3.0	
11	Wanner, Eliza	4	9	0	9	1.000	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	9.0	
12	Kucker, Kaylin	4	1	0	1	1.000	28	2	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	3.0	
13	Wambach, Grace	2	0	0	0	.000	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.0	
TM	TEAM,	4									0						
Team Totals:			38	0	38	1.000	35	11	0	0	63	1	2	0	0	51.0	

Total Team Blocks: 2.0

Set	K	E	TA	PCT
1	0	0	0	0.000
2	0	0	0	0.000
3	0	0	0	0.000
4	0	0	0	0.000
5	0	0	0	0.000

TEAMS

Groton
McCook Central/Montrose

	1	2	3	4	Team Records:
Groton	17	25	16	21	26-8
McCook Central/Montrose	25	19	25	25	25-3

Team: McCook Central/Montrose

No	Player	SP	Attack				Pct	Ast	Serve			Def Dig	Block			Gen BHE	PTS
			K	E	TA	TA			SA	SE	RE		BS	BA	BE		
1	Knudsen, Cassy	4	0	0	0	.000	1	2	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	2.0	
4	Pulse, Jacy	4	13	0	13	1.000	0	1	0	0	9	0	2	0	0	15.0	
5	Gordon, Maleah	4	4	0	4	1.000	1	0	0	0	6	0	4	0	0	6.0	
6	Miles, Maggie	4	0	0	0	.000	2	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0.0	
7	Morrison, Riley	4	0	0	0	.000	1	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	0	0.0	
9	Ries, Aleah	4	16	0	16	1.000	1	1	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	17.0	
10	Bies, Emily	4	0	0	0	.000	40	1	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	1.0	
12	Wobig, Ashtyn	4	2	0	2	1.000	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	2.0	
15	Wegener, Sarah	1	0	0	0	.000	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	
16	Van Ruler, Abigail	4	13	0	13	1.000	0	0	0	0	3	5	2	0	0	19.0	
TM	TEAM,	4									0						
Team Totals:			48	0	48	1.000	47	5	0	0	84	5	8	0	0	62.0	

Total Team Blocks: 9.0

Set	K	E	TA	PCT
1	0	0	0	0.000
2	0	0	0	0.000
3	0	0	0	0.000
4	0	0	0	0.000
5	0	0	0	0.000

Site: RPCC, Rapid City, SD
Date: 11/21/2019
Referees: ,

Attendance: 0

Length of Match: 2:00

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The Groton Area Volleyball Team get ready for the introduction. The Groton Area student section is pictured in back left (wearing neon) with the parents filling the next section. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Assistant Coach Jenna Strom hands a ball to Coach Chelsea Hanson during warm-ups.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Coach Chelsea Hanson converses with her assistants, Jenna Strom and Sarah Schuster.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



The team celebrates after winning the second set.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Some of the students were trying to get the attention of the camera lady from South Dakota Public Broadcasting. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The players get excited after scoring a big point. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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This photo was featured on Adrenaline Volleyball facebook page.




Consolation Championship Saturday, November 23rd	Consolation Semifinals Friday, November 22nd	1st Round - Quarterfinals Thursday, November 21st	Championship Semifinals Friday, November 22nd	Championship Round Saturday, November 23rd																								
<p>Records/Seed Point Averages</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Miller</td><td>32-2</td><td>46.188</td></tr> <tr><td>Dakota Valley</td><td>29-3</td><td>45.067</td></tr> <tr><td>McCook Central/Montrose</td><td>24-3</td><td>44.840</td></tr> <tr><td>Winner</td><td>26-4</td><td>44.464</td></tr> <tr><td>Sioux Falls Christian</td><td>26-9</td><td>43.606</td></tr> <tr><td>Groton Area</td><td>26-7</td><td>43.533</td></tr> <tr><td>Madison</td><td>23-8</td><td>43.107</td></tr> <tr><td>Elk Point-Jefferson</td><td>21-12</td><td>41.533</td></tr> </table>					Miller	32-2	46.188	Dakota Valley	29-3	45.067	McCook Central/Montrose	24-3	44.840	Winner	26-4	44.464	Sioux Falls Christian	26-9	43.606	Groton Area	26-7	43.533	Madison	23-8	43.107	Elk Point-Jefferson	21-12	41.533
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<p>2019 Class A State Volleyball Tournament Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Rapid City, SD</p>																												
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<p>7th/8th Place Match</p>		<p>3rd/4th Place Match</p>																										
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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 42 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 45 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 49 °F

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Today	Saturday	Sunday
40 – 45°	45 – 55°	45 – 55°
		

Warm and Dry Weekend!

Updated: 11/22/2019 5:06AM Central

Published on: 11/22/2019 at 12:11AM

Warm and dry conditions can be expected over the next couple of days with highs reaching the 40s and 50s. Higher terrain areas of the Prairie Coteau will see gusty winds late this afternoon through the early morning hours on Saturday.

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Today in Weather History

November 21, 1985: Winds gusting to over 40 mph caused blizzard conditions over the western and central parts of South Dakota on the 21st and 22nd. In addition to the existing snow cover, 1-2 inches of new snow fell and when blown by the wind, reduced visibilities to zero at times. Many roads were drifted shut by the blowing and drifting snow in the western part of the state.

November 21, 2003: Heavy snow of 6 to 10 inches fell from the late afternoon to the late evening hours of the 21st and into the early morning hours on the 22nd. Some snowfall amounts included 4 inches in Browns Valley, 2S Ashton, and Britton; 5 inches at Timber Lake, Blunt, 6 SE McIntosh, and Pollock; 6 inches at Clark, McLaughlin, 14 NNE Isabel, 17 WSW Fort Pierre and Miller; 7 inches at Castlewood, 1 W Highmore, and 4 NW Onida; and 8 inches north of Goodwin, at Ree Heights, at Eagle Butte, and near Troy. Thirteen inches of snow fell in Watertown.

1992: The November 21st – 23rd tornado outbreak was the 3rd largest outbreak in recorded history and one of the longest continuous outbreaks ever recorded. There was no break in tornado activity from 1:30 pm on the 21st when the tornadoes started in Texas until 7:30 am on the 23rd when the last tornadoes lifted in North Carolina. On this date, severe thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes within 70 minutes in the Houston metro area in Texas. At one time, there were three on the ground in Harris County. The strongest, an F4, tracked 20 miles through the eastern suburbs of Houston destroying 200 homes and damaging 1,000 more. In total, 23 tornadoes struck Mississippi and Alabama. An F4 tornado killed 12 people on a 128-mile track through 7 Mississippi counties. The deadliest tornado of 1992, an F4 tornado killed 12 people on a 128-mile path through 7 counties in Mississippi, one of the bodies was blown a quarter mile into a tree.

1798 - A four day storm was in progress in the northeastern U.S. The storm dropped a foot of snow on New York City and New Haven, and as much as three feet in Maine and New Hampshire. The snowstorm ushered in a long and severe winter, in some places the ground remained covered with snow until the following May. (David Ludlum)

1967 - Excessive rains in southern California caused the most severe flooding and the most damaging mud slides in 33 years. Downtown Los Angeles received eight inches of rain, and 14 inches fell in the mountains. (David Ludlum)

1985 - Hurricane Kate made landfall during the evening hours near Mexico Beach, FL. Wind gusts to 100 mph were reported at Cape San Blas FL. It was the latest known hurricane to hit the U.S. so far north. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Squalls in the Lower Great Lakes Region and the Upper Ohio Valley produced 14 inches of snow at Snowshoe WV, and nearly eight inches at Syracuse NY. Eleven cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Record lows included 21 degrees at Pinson AL, 9 degrees at Syracuse NY, and 8 degrees at Binghamton NY. Gale force winds lash the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast, and the strong northwesterly winds produced wind chill readings as cold as 30 degrees below zero. Winds gusting to 60 mph at Trumansburg NY toppled a chimney onto a nearby truck. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - High winds accompanied rain and snow in the northeastern U.S. Caribou ME received eight inches of snow in six hours, and Fort Kent ME was blanketed with a total of fourteen inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The storm which produced thunderstorms and high winds in the northeastern U.S. the previous day, produced snow and high winds in New England, with blizzard conditions reported in Maine. Winds gusted to 55 mph at Boston MA, and reached 58 mph at Augusta ME, and hurricane force winds were reported off the coast of Maine. Snowfall totals ranged up to 18 inches at Vanceboro ME, with 17 inches at South Lincoln VT. There were thirty-five storm-related injuries in Maine. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 33 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 17 °F at 9:31 PM

Wind: 29 mph at 1:32 AM

Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 66° in 1904

Record Low: -14° in 1895

Average High: 35°F

Average Low: 16°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.55

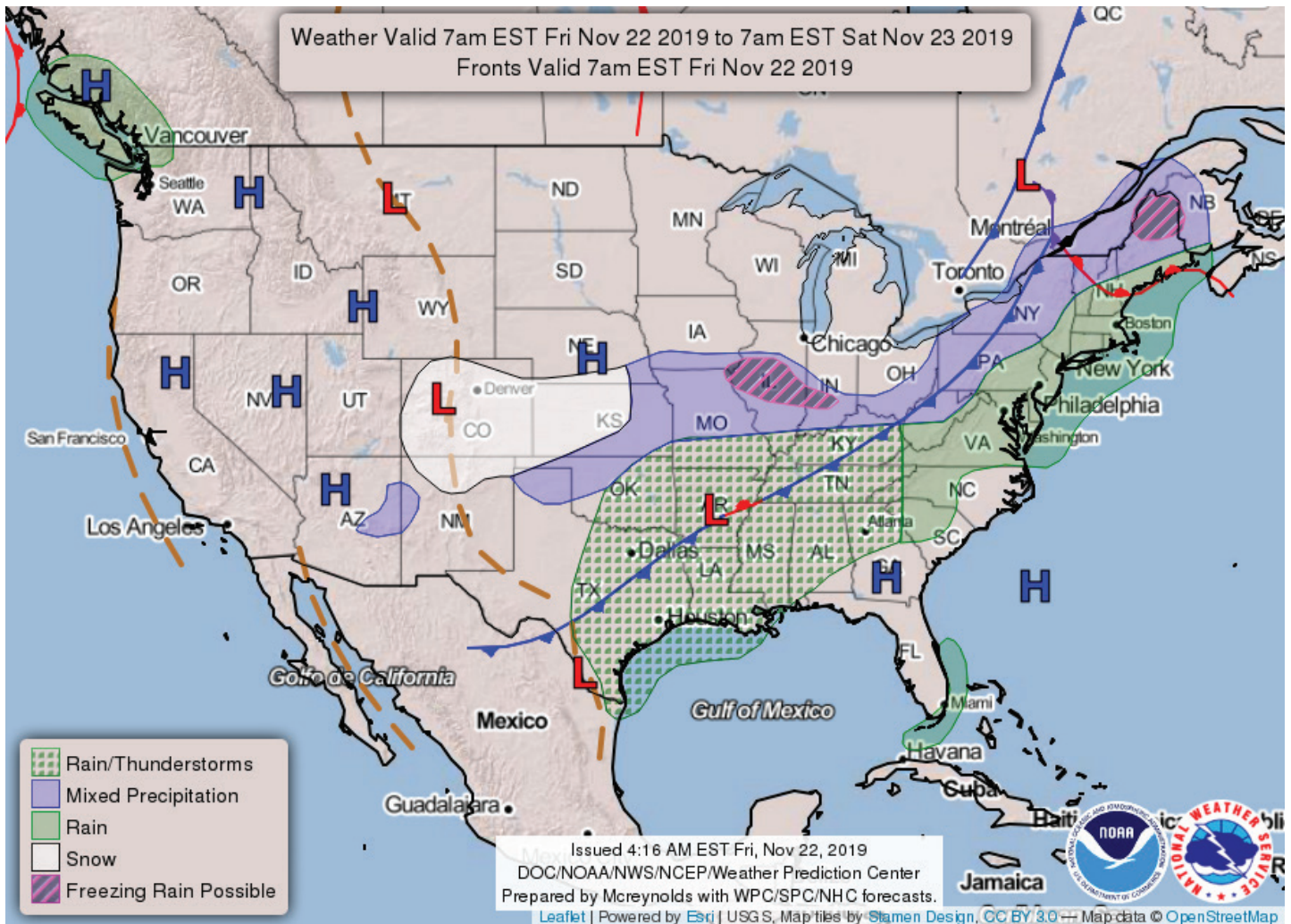
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.38

Average Precip to date: 21.02

Precip Year to Date: 26.95

Sunset Tonight: 4:57 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:43 a.m.



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SHARE AND SUCCEED

Disheartened by the lack of opportunities for work in Cuba, a refugee made his way to America. He submitted one application after another only to have it rejected because he could not speak English.

Finally, in desperation he tried once again at a Pizza Hut, but with little hope. He was rejected and felt defeated. Then, while eating a piece of their pizza, he noticed a sign that announced their need for a dishwasher. Expecting nothing in return, he went into the kitchen and began to wash dishes. The owners were so pleased with his work that they offered him a permanent job, and he began a successful career with the company. Years later he became an owner, and one day sold his Pizza Hut franchises for \$125 million.

Education and talent are no guarantee of success. Paul writes, "Do what is good" and do not "get discouraged and give up for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time." We must always be sensitive to the needs of others and have a willingness to help anyone in need. Sharing another's burden and meeting the needs of others always honors God. What we do for others will not go unnoticed by Him.

Prayer: Father, open our eyes to see and ears to hear the needs of others. When others need our help, may we reach out and respond with Your love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Galatians 6:9-10 So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

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

2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

Pine Ridge man pleads not guilty to suffocating baby son

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A father has pleaded not guilty to involuntary manslaughter in federal court in South Dakota after he was accused of smothering his baby while the two slept together.

Prosecutors say 42-year-old John Jealous of Him Sr. was under the influence of drugs and alcohol when he rolled on top of his 8-month-old son last August at their home near Pine Ridge. The father also pleaded not guilty to a state felony child abuse charge Thursday in Rapid City.

The charges against Jealous of Him say he failed to provide proper care for his son, subsequently fatally suffocating the baby.

The Rapid City Journal says the manslaughter charge carries a maximum eight years in prison upon conviction and 15 years for the child abuse charge.

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

Botched surgery lawsuits settled in South Dakota

ARMOUR, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota judge has signed off on the settlement of three dozen lawsuits accusing a doctor of performing unnecessary surgeries and botching many of them, leaving patients maimed or dead.

Judge Bruce Anderson on Thursday in Douglas County dismissed the 36 lawsuits against Dr. Allen Sossan and the two Yankton hospitals where he worked, Lewis & Clark Specialty Hospital and Avera Sacred Heart. An attorney for the plaintiffs says the terms of the settlements could not be disclosed.

The Argus Leader reports the lawsuits say Sossan performed surgeries from 2008 to 2012 on patients that other doctors complained were unnecessary. Many patients were worse off than before their procedures and some died.

Sossan fled the U.S. in 2015 for his native Iran after he was accused of lying on his medical license application.

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

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

Volleyball

Class AA

State Quarterfinal

Huron def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-22, 14-25, 23-25, 25-19, 15-11

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-17, 25-17, 25-16

Sioux Falls Washington def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-6, 16-25, 25-22, 25-17

Watertown def. Harrisburg, 25-23, 25-10, 25-21

Class A

State Quarterfinal

Dakota Valley def. Madison, 25-23, 25-23, 25-16

McCook Central/Montrose def. Groton Area, 25-17, 19-25, 25-16, 25-21

Miller def. Elk Point-Jefferson, 25-20, 25-12, 25-20

Sioux Falls Christian def. Winner, 25-12, 21-25, 25-12, 16-25, 15-10

Class B

State Quarterfinal

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Burke def. Ethan, 25-20, 25-15, 26-24
Faulkton def. Chester, 25-19, 21-25, 11-25, 25-22, 17-15
Northwestern def. Bridgewater-Emery, 25-10, 25-13, 25-10
Warner def. Faith, 25-18, 25-20, 25-14

No. 14 Arizona pulls away late to beat South Dakota St 71-64

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — After making basketball look easy for the first four games of the season, Arizona's star freshman trio of Nico Mannion, Zeke Nnaji and Josh Green wasn't quite as dominant Thursday night.

But with about a minute left and the game still in doubt, the 6-foot-3 Mannion shook a defender, drove down the center of the lane and threw down a spectacular dunk over South Dakota State's defense.

It might have been the lone moment of basketball beauty from the 14th-ranked Wildcats all night.

But it was enough for a hard-fought 71-64 victory over South Dakota State.

"We don't want to have a loss to wake us up," Arizona senior Chase Jeter said. "Coming out and having to battle against a team like South Dakota State just lets us know that every team is going to compete, we have to be ready for every opponent and treat every game the same."

Arizona (5-0) trailed for much of the first half and by three at halftime. The Wildcats finally pushed ahead 40-39 with 14:28 left when Green made a 15-foot jumper.

The basket was part of a 12-0 run that put the Wildcats ahead 46-39, and they wouldn't trail again. Green led Arizona with 15 points but shot just 4 of 13 from the field, including 0 of 4 from 3-point range. Mannion added 14 points, including the final dunk that jolted the McKale Center crowd out of the seats.

"You don't really feel like the game's almost over," Mannion said. "I was just trying to play until the final whistle."

Nnaji added 12 points on 4-of-5 shooting.

Arizona shot just 3 of 17 from 3-point range. Wildcats coach Sean Miller said his team was "very fortunate to win" and that his team took a lot of rushed shots that weren't necessary.

He was particularly upset that the offense failed to regularly get the ball to the 6-foot-11 Nnaji, who was leading the nation in field goal percentage coming into Thursday after making 33 of 39 (85 percent) shots.

"If you lead the nation in anything, you are outstanding," Miller said. "Zeke Nnaji has proven that when he gets the ball, especially around the rim, great things happen."

Douglas Wilson led South Dakota State (4-3) with 15 points. Brandon Key added 13 and Matt Dentlinger had 11.

Things didn't go to Arizona's plan early as South Dakota State jumped out to an early 24-14 lead following Noah Friedel's 3-pointer. The Jackrabbits gave up a few buckets before another push, and Wilson's spectacular alley-oop dunk on Dentlinger's pass made it 28-18 with 5:59 left in the first half.

South Dakota State led 32-29 at halftime. Wilson had 13 points in the first half, shooting 4 of 6 from the field and 5 of 5 on free throws.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

South Dakota State nearly pulled off the upset even without playing its best game.

First-year coach Eric Henderson said the Jackrabbits left "a lot of things on the table" after turning the ball over 21 times and committing 26 fouls.

"We're going to battle, we're going to compete," Henderson said. "We've gone to places like this and won before. We're not really in awe of the moment. I'm not really into moral victories, but I am proud of our guys and how they competed."

NOBODY'S PERFECT

It took a while, but Nnaji finally missed a shot.

The freshman grabbed an offensive rebound in the second half and missed the put-back to miss for the first time in nearly three games. Over the past three games, he's still shooting 19 of 20 (95 percent) from the field.

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BIG PICTURE

South Dakota State: The two-time defending Summit League regular-season champions are rebuilding after losing most of their roster from last year, but the new group showed plenty of potential.

Arizona: The Wildcats finally faced some adversity after mostly breezing through their nonconference schedule. The test wasn't a bad thing considering the Wildcats have games against Baylor and Gonzaga in the coming weeks.

"Tonight we almost learned the hard way," Miller said. "We have to play smarter."

UP NEXT

South Dakota State hosts Mississippi Valley on Sunday.

Arizona hosts Long Beach State on Sunday.

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Sen. Rounds does not support rescinding Wounded Knee medals

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds says he does not support revoking the Medals of Honor given to the U.S. soldiers who participated in the Wounded Knee massacre.

Rounds said Thursday he believes that what happened at Wounded Knee was a massacre, not a battle. But the Republican senator said at this point, "we're now guessing" about what individual soldiers did.

The Argus Leader reports Rounds said he talked with living recipients of Medals of Honor while making his decision.

Medals of Honor were given to 20 soldiers from the 7th Cavalry Regiment for participating in the Dec. 29, 1890, massacre on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation near Wounded Knee Creek. An estimated 250 Native Americans were killed, many of whom were women and children.

Native American groups have called for years for the Medals of Honor to be rescinded.

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

Survey of bankers shows rural economy growing in November

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A new survey of bankers suggests the economy continues growing in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states, but the ongoing trade disputes continue to hurt the outlook for more growth.

The Rural Mainstreet survey's overall index improved to 54.2 in November from October's 51.4. Any score above 50 suggests a growing economy, while a score below 50 indicates a shrinking economy.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey, says bankers still have a weak outlook for the region because of the ongoing trade war with China.

The confidence index for the region remained in negative territory at 44.4 in November even though it was higher than October's 36.5.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

Idaho sports company sentenced for defrauding Oglala Sioux

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Executives of an Idaho company that claimed to help schools fund athletic programs have been sentenced for taking thousands of dollars from the Oglala Sioux Tribe in South Dakota.

The owner of All Around Sports LLC and two of his supervisors were sentenced Monday in U.S. District Court.

Company owner Christopher Hoshaw of Meridian, Idaho, was sentenced to one year of home detention.

Sales manager Calvin Pelichet of Boise, Idaho, was sentenced to two years in federal prison. Kristin DeBoer of Caldwell, Idaho, was sentenced to four months of home detention.

All Around Sports was sentenced to three years of probation.

Hoshaw, Pelichet and All Around Sports also were ordered to pay restitution of more than \$157,000 to two Alaskan Native entities.

The Argus Leader reports the cases were brought through the U.S. Attorney's Office Guardians Project, which fights financial crimes against tribes.

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

South Dakota group upset Minnesota agency won meth campaign

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Add South Dakota ad agencies to the chorus unhappy with a state anti-meth campaign that included the provocative tagline, "Meth: We're on it."

The South Dakota Advertising Federation is upset that the account went to a Minnesota ad agency. In a statement Wednesday, the federation says nine in-state agencies bid on the contract and the money could have stayed in South Dakota.

The state is paying Broadhead, a Minneapolis agency, almost \$700,000 for its work.

The federation didn't directly criticize the campaign, which drew ridicule on social media, but said in its statement that the in-state agencies "could have delivered a message by South Dakotans that resonates with South Dakota."

It also described the state's meth problem as "a serious, real and devastating epidemic" that called for a campaign "that should not be taken lightly."

Executive director Maggie Saugstad said Thursday that South Dakota has enough talent to produce a campaign that fits with the character of the state.

"There's so much controversy about how the message was delivered that we've lost the actual message in the process," she said.

Gov. Kristi Noem has called the ads a success. She says the campaign was intended to be "provocative" and the Minneapolis agency chosen because it proposed ads that go beyond typical drug awareness campaigns.

AP FACT CHECK: Leaders' questionable claims in U.K. election

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Claims of ruinous spending sprees and twisted truths are flying in during campaigning for Britain's Dec. 12 election, in which all 650 seats in the House of Commons are up for grabs. The main parties are touting ambitious spending plans while warning of the alleged economic damage that would be wrought by their rivals.

Here's how some of the statements made by Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson and opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn stack up with the facts:

JEREMY CORBYN, speaking to Johnson in a Nov. 19 debate: "You're going to sell our National Health Service to the United States and big pharma."

THE FACTS: It's an overstatement to say the state-funded National Health Service as a whole would be up for sale, as Labour has alleged will happen if Johnson's Conservatives win the election and try to strike a post-Brexit trade deal with the U.S. The vast majority of doctors, nurses and other staff are paid out of the public purse and there is little chance this will change.

Labour is, however, correct to say the service, which provides free health care to all Britons, could be a bargaining chip in U.S.-U.K. trade talks. At present, the NHS often can negotiate low prices from drug companies because it is so big. The U.S. could try to demand during trade talks that Britain pay American pharma firms more for drugs. Medicines became a big issue in negotiations on a revamped North American free trade deal, as the U.S. pushed for a ban on Mexico and Canada developing generic versions of U.S.-patented drugs.

Some services provided by the NHS are already performed by private companies. The government says

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payments to private companies made up 7.3% of public health spending in England in 2018-19, though some health charities say that the true figure is probably higher.

U.S. firms can currently bid for contracts if they have European subsidiaries. A future government could increase the amount of private-sector involvement or let U.S. companies bid directly. This wouldn't amount to "selling off" the NHS since British taxpayers would still be footing the bill.

BORIS JOHNSON, speaking at a factory Nov. 13: "With every month of pointless delay (to Brexit) ... it's costing this country an extra billion pounds a month."

THE FACTS: The claim is not true. Britain's scheduled departure from the European Union was delayed from Oct. 31 to Jan. 31 after lawmakers became deadlocked on the departure terms. Johnson, who blames Parliament for the failure to leave on time, has repeatedly said that the three-month delay means Britain has to pay the bloc an extra 1 billion pounds (\$1.3 billion) a month.

Britain paid the EU just over a billion a month in gross terms last year, but that fell to about 740 million pounds a month once payments back to the U.K. from the bloc were deducted.

And, even if the U.K. had left the bloc on Oct. 31, it would still be paying the same amount. The divorce deal negotiated by Johnson commits to making the same payments during a transition period lasting at least until the end of 2020.

Even though it is inflated, the 1 billion a month figure is lower than the 350 million pounds a week that Johnson claimed Britain paid the EU during the 2016 EU membership referendum campaign. That misleading figure was infamously emblazoned on the side of a "leave" campaign bus.

JEREMY CORBYN, in Labour's election manifesto: "Labour will deliver free full-fiber broadband to all by 2030."

THE FACTS: Experts say the scale of the project is extremely ambitious, and the cost estimate is disputed. Labour is promising that if it wins the election it will give free, fast internet access through fiber-optic cables to all British homes and businesses by 2030, at a cost of 20.3 billion pounds.

That figure for setting up the network comes from a study consultancy Frontier Economics carried out for the British government last year, and is based on a completion date of 2033, three years after Labour's proposed deadline.

Others have come up with higher estimates. BT chief executive Philip Jansen estimated a nationwide fiber-optic network would cost as much as 100 billion pounds once operating costs are factored in.

Labour says operating costs will be paid for by tax on multinational firms operating in the U.K. The party initially said operating costs would come to 230 million pounds a year, but now acknowledges the amount could be as much as 579 million pounds a year.

The project's cost also doesn't include the price of buying BT's internet arm, which Labour proposes to nationalize as part of its plan.

BORIS JOHNSON, speaking to business leaders Nov. 18: "(Labour) would wreck this economy with a 1.2 trillion pound spending splurge."

THE FACTS: This is an overestimate.

The Conservatives claim Labour's policies would cost 1.2 trillion pounds — \$1.55 trillion — over five years. The figure was arrived at by adding together estimates of the cost of everything pledged by Labour during the 2017 election as well as policies adopted by the party at its annual conference this year.

Some of the calculations seem unreasonably high. The Conservatives say Labour's pledge to reduce the working week from 40 hours to 32 would cost the government 17 billion pounds a year in extra public sector wages, for a total of 85 billion over five years. But Labour says the policy would be brought in "within a decade," not implemented immediately.

And several of the policies included in the 1.2 trillion total are not in Labour's election platform, which was released Thursday. An earlier Labour proposal to abolish all private schools, which the Tories say would

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cost 35 billion pounds as state schools had to take on thousands more pupils, has become a promise to close such schools' tax loopholes.

The Conservatives also said Labour would spend 4.5 billion pounds on piloting a plan to give everyone a universal basic income plan, but the manifesto only says a Labour government would "explore" the idea.

Find AP Fact Checks at <http://apne.ws/2kbx8bd>

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

Parents of late US hostage chasing North Korean assets

By **KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The parents of a former U.S. hostage who died after being released from North Korea in a coma in 2017 say they are committed to finding and shutting down illicit North Korean business assets around the world in efforts to hold its government accountable for widespread human rights abuses.

In a news conference in Seoul on Friday, Fred and Cindy Warmbier also called for the Trump administration to raise North Korea's human rights problems as it engages in negotiations to defuse the country's nuclear threat.

"My mission would be to hold North Korea responsible, to recover and discover their assets around the world," said Fred Warmbier, who was invited to a forum hosted by a Seoul-based group representing the families of South Koreans abducted by the North during the 1950-53 Korean War.

"We feel that if you force North Korea to engage the world in a legal standpoint, then they will have to ultimately have a dialogue. They are not going to come and have a dialogue with us any other way," he said.

The Warmbiers, who live in suburban Cincinnati, Ohio, have claimed that their college student son, Otto, was tortured by North Korea after being convicted in 2016 of trying to steal a propaganda poster and imprisoned for months.

The 22-year-old suffered severe brain damage and died shortly after being returned to the United States in a vegetative state in June 2017.

The North denied that it tortured or cruelly treated the University of Virginia student and called itself the "biggest victim" in his death while accusing Washington and Seoul of orchestrating a smear campaign.

In December last year, a U.S. federal judge ordered North Korea pay more than \$500 million in a wrongful death suit filed by the Warmbiers over their son, although they are unlikely to collect on the judgment.

The Warmbiers have been pushing legal action seeking the closure of a hostel operated on the grounds of the North Korean Embassy in Berlin and plan to go after other hostels the country operates in Europe, which they say are aimed at pressuring governments to tighten their enforcement of sanctions against Pyongyang.

"We cannot give up, we can't give them a pass. We have to fight with all of our power," Cindy Warmbier said.

She also expressed hope that the Trump administration would use its diplomatic opening with Pyongyang to address the North's human rights issues.

During the earlier part of his presidency, President Donald Trump strongly criticized North Korea over its dismal human rights record, inviting the Warmbiers to his State of the Union address last year where he lashed out at the "depraved character" of the government led by third-generation leader Kim Jong Un.

But Trump months later began playing down the severity of North Korea's human rights record and showering Kim with praises as they engaged in high-stakes nuclear summitry, which has so far led to three meetings but failed to produce substantial agreements on the North's nuclear disarmament.

Following his second summit with Kim in Vietnam in February, Trump said he takes Kim "at his word" that Kim was unaware of the alleged mistreatment of Otto Warmbier while he was imprisoned there.

Hong Kong court reinstates mask ban ahead of elections

By EILEEN NG and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A Hong Kong court that had struck down a ban on face masks at protests said Friday that the government could enforce it for one week, as police readied for any unrest during keenly contested elections this weekend.

The High Court granted the temporary suspension “in view of the great public importance of the issues raised in this case, and the highly exceptional circumstances that Hong Kong is currently facing.”

Anti-government protests have rocked the semi-autonomous Chinese city for more than five months. Protesters remained holed up on a university campus, refusing to turn themselves in for arrest after intense clashes with police last weekend.

The court had ruled Monday that the ban, imposed last month under rarely used emergency powers to prevent protesters from hiding their identity, infringed on fundamental rights more than was reasonably necessary.

China’s parliament rebuked the court ruling this week, in what some interpreted as an indication it might overrule the decision.

In granting the one-week reprieve, the High Court said it was giving the government time to appeal the decision and seek a longer suspension from the Court of Appeal.

Many protesters have defied the ban, and 632 people have been arrested under the regulation, of which 61 have been charged, the court’s latest ruling said.

During lunchtime rallies Friday, some protesters chanted “We have the right to wear masks.”

Anti-government rallies were held sporadically in the past two days. Riot police broke up minor scuffles between protesters and pro-Beijing supporters at a downtown bridge Friday, but there were no major clashes ahead of Sunday’s district council elections.

The city’s new police commissioner, Tang Ping-keung, told reporters police would be out in force at polling stations Sunday to respond to any outbreak of violence “without hesitation.”

City leaders have said they want to go ahead with the vote, seen as a bellwether of public support for the protests, but warned violence could make it impossible to hold a fair and safe election.

Asked if the police presence would make voters feel uncomfortable, Tang said it will make citizens “feel safe to go out and vote.”

Six masked protesters surrendered before dawn Friday, bringing to about 30 the number that have come out in the past day from a university campus surrounded by police.

The group emerged from a campus entrance and held hands as they walked toward a checkpoint around 3 a.m. Five wore the black clothing favored by the protest movement and the other was in a blue checked shirt.

Most of the protesters who took over Hong Kong Polytechnic University last week have left, but an unknown number have remained inside for days, hoping somehow to avoid arrest.

Tang Chun-Keung, head of the Hong Kong Association of the Heads of Secondary Schools, said the holdouts include minors, numbering less than 10, and they are emotionally unstable. Tang entered the campus Friday with some others but failed to find them.

“We have lawyers and social workers ready to provide assistance and we hope to persuade them to leave the campus. We are worried our work is getting more and more difficult because students are refusing to meet us,” he told reporters.

Police Commissioner Tang reiterated that those under 18 can leave, although they may face charges later, and pledged impartial treatment for all adults facing arrest.

“The condition is deteriorating and dangerous, there are many explosives and petrol bombs inside ... we hope to end the matter peacefully,” he said, adding police haven’t set any deadline to end the siege.

The anti-government protesters battled with police and blocked the nearby approach to a major road tunnel, which remains closed. It was the latest bout in more than five months of unrest. Protesters are demanding fully democratic elections and an investigation into alleged police brutality in suppressing the

demonstrations.

French women demand action amid high domestic violence rate

By **CLAIRE PARKER** Associated Press

LES MUREAUX, France (AP) — Sylvia. Dalila. Aminata. Céline. Julie. Their names are plastered on buildings and headlines across France, calling attention to their shared fate: Each was killed, allegedly by a current or former partner this year.

More than 130 women have died from domestic violence this year alone in France, according to activists who track the deaths.

European Union studies show France has a higher rate of domestic violence than most of its European peers. And frustrated activists have drawn national attention to a problem President Emmanuel Macron has called "France's shame."

Under cover of night, activists have glued posters with the names of the dead and calls to action to French city walls. "Complaints ignored, women killed," read the black block letters on one such sign. They have also posted anti-violence slogans, tagged with Macron's name.

By the hundreds, women have walked silently through city streets after each new death.

Two years after Macron made a campaign pledge to tackle the problem, his centrist French government has begun to act.

A Justice Ministry report released earlier this month acknowledged authorities' systematic failure to intervene to prevent domestic violence slayings. On Monday, the government will announce measures that are expected to include seizing firearms from people suspected of domestic violence, prioritizing police training and formally recognizing "psychological violence" as a form of domestic violence.

Women are not the only victims of domestic violence, but French officials say they make up the vast majority.

Lawyers and victims' advocates say women are too often disbelieved or turned away by French law enforcement. But they're encouraged by the new national conversation, which they say marks a departure from decades of denial.

"In France, we always have the impression that we are perfect," activist Caroline de Haas told The Associated Press.

A 2014 EU survey of 42,000 women across all 28 member states found that 26% of French women respondents said they been abused by a partner since age 15, either physically or sexually.

That's below the global average of 30%, according to UN Women. But it's 4 percentage points above the EU average and the sixth highest among EU countries.

Half that number reported experiencing such abuse in Spain, which implemented a series of legal and educational measures in 2004 that slashed its domestic violence rates.

Conversations about domestic violence have also ratcheted up in neighboring Germany, where activists are demanding that the term "femicide" be used to describe such killings.

In France, victims and advocates say government action is overdue — and that more training is needed for police who are often ill-prepared to protect women in danger.

Police inaction made national headlines in France after Macron visited a hotline call center in September and listened in on a call with a 57-year-old woman whose husband had threatened to kill her. He heard a police officer on the other end tell the woman he couldn't help her.

The hotline operator told Macron that such responses weren't unusual.

Police officers across Europe often dismiss domestic violence as a private matter and fail to intervene at crucial moments, an EU study found this year.

But France is particularly bad, said EU researcher Albin Dearing, who led a study this year that examined domestic violence in seven European countries, including France.

"When it comes to violence against women, it showed actually that police do very little to protect women who turn to them for protection," he said.

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It can take between three weeks and two months for authorities to act on a complaint, leaving the victim "in a very fragile situation," according to Frederique Martz, who runs anti-domestic violence organization Women Safe.

The Justice Ministry report this month found that 41% of "conjugal homicide" victims studied had previously reported incidents of domestic violence, and 80% of complaints sent to prosecutors went uninvestigated.

"Our system doesn't work to protect women," Justice Minister Nicole Belloubet told French TV channel LCI after another French woman was allegedly killed by her husband in Alsace last week.

But Maj. Fabienne Boulard of the national police said many officers respond appropriately to reports of domestic violence. Those who don't — the ones who react "clumsily" or ask the wrong questions — usually don't mean harm, she added; they just don't recognize domestic violence or know how to intervene.

This is particularly true when women receive threats but not yet physical blows, victims say.

Officers "absorb this violence into the category of violence between a couple that is going through a difficult period," said one woman whose ex-husband repeatedly threatened her and their children. She spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retaliation.

The woman divorced him after years of what she describes as psychological abuse that left her "terrified to cross him." His threats only grew worse from there, she said.

She filed multiple complaints, but she said police officers suggested she didn't seem like a victim or wasn't able to prove that she was in danger.

Earlier this month, Boulard led the first supplementary training on domestic violence for police in the Paris suburb of Les Mureaux. She emphasized to the eight officers there that among victims, "shame is an extremely strong feeling."

Participants traded stories of issues they had encountered: the surge in complaints on Sundays, the woman who retracts her complaint, the partner who insists everything is fine.

"We can't do anything," one female police officer complained.

Boulard told The AP that the three-hour session aimed to help officers understand the pressures that victims face and "why the victim is not what they imagined, why sometimes they don't correspond with the criteria they expect to see."

Trainings like Boulard's take place in some parts of France, but regional authorities can decide whether to hold them. Activists hope they'll become routine.

"A year or two ago, no one used the word 'femicide' apart from feminist organizations," Haas said. "There is very much a change in public consciousness."

Israel braces for bitter fight after Netanyahu indictment

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's indictment is expected to sharpen the battle lines in Israel's already deadlocked political system and could test the loyalty of his right-wing allies, Israeli commentators said Friday.

The serious corruption charges announced Thursday appear to have dashed already slim hopes for a unity government following September's elections, paving the way for an unprecedented repeat vote in March, which will be the third in less than a year.

In an angry speech late Thursday, Netanyahu lashed out at investigators and vowed to fight on in the face of an "attempted coup."

His main opponent, the centrist Blue and White party, called on him to "immediately resign" from all his Cabinet posts, citing a Supreme Court ruling that says indicted ministers cannot continue to hold office. Netanyahu also serves as minister of health, labor and Diaspora affairs, as well as acting minister of agriculture.

He is not legally required to step down as prime minister, but Netanyahu faces heavy pressure to do so,

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and it is unclear whether an indicted politician could be given the mandate to form a new government. Netanyahu has already failed to form a majority coalition of 61 seats in the 120-seat Knesset after two hard-fought elections this year.

"This will not be an election, it will be a civil war without arms," columnist Amit Segal wrote in Israel's Yediot Ahronot newspaper. "There is a broad constituency that believes what Netanyahu said yesterday, but it is far from being enough for anything close to victory."

Writing in the same newspaper, Sima Kadmon compared Netanyahu to the Roman emperor Nero, saying "he will stand and watch as the country burns."

Netanyahu was indicted on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust stemming from three long-running corruption cases. He has denied any wrongdoing and accused the media, courts and law enforcement of waging a "witch hunt" against him.

The corruption charges will weigh heavily on Netanyahu's Likud party in future elections, but it's unclear if any senior member has the support or willingness to replace him.

Hours before the indictment was announced, Gideon Saar, a senior Likud member, said a party primary should be held ahead of any future elections and that he would compete. In another sign of dissent, the right-leaning Jerusalem Post newspaper ran a front-page editorial calling on Netanyahu to resign.

"We know there are members of the Knesset who say that Netanyahu has become a liability and perhaps he should resign, but they are still afraid to come against him in the open," said Eytan Gilboa, a political science professor at Israel's Bar Ilan University.

"The only one who could do it is Gideon Saar," he added.

Some Likud members expressed support for Netanyahu after the indictment was announced, but most, including Saar and other prominent members, have remained silent.

"If the attorney general should indeed announce that Netanyahu can no longer form a government, will (Likud members) stand up openly and work to form an alternative government? For that to happen, they will have to sit together in one room and trust each other, which is something that has not happened for the past decade," Segal wrote.

Nevertheless, he concluded, "the great threat to Netanyahu is now posed from within."

Amid all the political machinations, Netanyahu will have to prepare to go on trial. He can battle the charges, or he might seek a plea bargain in which he agrees to resign in return for avoiding jail time or hefty fines. Either process could drag on for months.

Netanyahu is Israel's first sitting prime minister to be charged with a crime. His predecessor, Ehud Olmert, was forced to resign a decade ago ahead of a corruption indictment that later sent him to prison for 16 months.

"We've got a number of political and legal processes which are all going to be happening now simultaneously," Anshel Pfeffer, a Haaretz columnist and the author of a biography of Netanyahu, told The Associated Press.

"It's impossible to predict which one will bring about the end of Netanyahu's career," he said. "All these things are going ahead now, but slowly."

Analysis: Lots of impeachment evidence but one thing missing

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — After two weeks of riveting public hearings in the House impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump, there is a mountain of evidence that is now beyond dispute.

Trump explicitly ordered U.S. government officials to work with his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani on matters related to Ukraine, a country deeply dependent on Washington's help to fend off Russian aggression. The Republican president pushed Ukraine to launch investigations into political rivals, leaning on a discredited conspiracy theory his own advisers disputed. And both American and Ukrainian officials feared that Trump froze a much-needed package of military aid until Kyiv announced it was launching those probes.

Those facts were confirmed by a dozen witnesses, mostly staid career government officials who served

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both Democratic and Republican administrations. They relied on emails, text messages and contemporaneous notes to back up their recollections from the past year.

Stitched together, their hours of televised testimony paint a portrait of an American president willing to leverage his powerful office to push a foreign government for personal political help. That alone has many Democrats on the brink of voting to impeach Trump before the end of the year, potentially pushing toward a trial in the Senate.

Yet the witness accounts left one prominent hole that offered a lifeline for Trump and his GOP allies. None of the witnesses could personally attest that Trump directly conditioned the release of the \$400 million in military aid on a Ukrainian announcement of investigations into former Vice President Joe Biden and the Democratic National Committee.

Some Republicans suggested that even if that link could be made, it wouldn't be enough for them to support impeaching Trump and removing him from office. And without that link, Trump's wall of support among GOP lawmakers seems formidable.

"I have not heard evidence proving the president committed bribery or extortion," said Rep. Will Hurd, a moderate Republican from Texas who is retiring from Congress next year and would be a bellwether for any signs of weakness in GOP support for the president. Like some other Republicans, he made clear he found Trump's actions "inappropriate" — just not impeachable.

Democrats now face the prospect of a House impeachment vote split along party lines. That would mirror public polling, which shows Americans divided over whether Trump should be impeached for his dealings with Ukraine and removed from office.

With the public hearings complete, Democrats are now urgently plotting the way forward with a limited blueprint in just the nation's fourth impeachment proceeding.

They must first decide whether to begin drafting articles of impeachment based on what has been revealed to this point or to launch a long-shot bid for testimony from additional witnesses who could provide more direct evidence of Trump's actions.

There are indeed officials who would likely be able to fill in some of the blanks. Democrats have requested testimony from acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and former National Security Adviser John Bolton, men who spent hours alongside Trump in the West Wing and whose names popped up repeatedly in the recollections of other officials.

In a pointed moment in Thursday's testimony, former White House national security official Fiona Hill said she believes "those who have information that the Congress deems relevant have a legal and moral obligation to provide it."

Yet it appears unlikely that Bolton and Mulvaney will tell their stories to Congress. Citing executive privilege, both men have filed court cases to determine if they must appear. And House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Thursday that she didn't want the next steps in the inquiry to be "at the mercy of a court."

That's fine with many Democrats who say the bar for impeachment has already been cleared through the methodical case built over the past two weeks. The diplomats and national security officials testified that they repeatedly raised alarms over the administration's dealings with Ukraine and described urgent efforts to help leaders in Kyiv boost their standing with Trump in order to secure the military aid.

William Taylor, the top American diplomat in Kyiv who opened the hearings, vividly cast the security assistance as a matter of life or death for Ukrainian soldiers in a hot war with Russia. He said he was left deeply unsettled by the prospect of the Trump administration abandoning American partners abroad.

Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, a White House Ukraine adviser who testified in his Army uniform bedecked with medals, said he was shaken as he heard Trump ask Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to investigate Biden and the DNC in the July 25 phone call that launched the impeachment probe. Vindman, whose family fled Ukraine when he was 3, was forced to defend himself against charges from Trump allies that he had divided loyalties.

And U.S. Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland made clear the effort to extract investigations from Ukraine wasn't a secret within the administration. He declared, "Everyone was in the loop."

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The case Democrats plan to make in the coming days as they try to sway both Republicans and the American people is that the impeachment inquiry isn't just about Trump's future. It's about what Americans should expect from their president.

Asked what the consequences are if Congress allows an American president to ask a foreign government to investigate a political rival, Hill said simply, "It's a very bad precedent."

Editor's Note: Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for the AP since 2007. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

Hong Kong election a referendum on anti-government protests

By EILEEN NG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Cathy Yau remembers the first time she was called a "dirty cop" by Hong Kong's anti-government protesters, days after police deployed tear gas to repel tens of thousands of black-clad demonstrators blocking the legislature.

The former officer, exasperated at the increasing use of force to quell the unrest, quit in July after 11 years.

Now she is among scores of new faces vying for office Sunday in citywide elections that have become a referendum on public support for the protests, which have disrupted life for more than five months.

"Some residents still call me a rogue cop but there are others who tell me to keep it up as they want a change this year," said the 36-year-old Yau, who faces a tough battle against an incumbent who has served the constituency for years.

The election for the 452 seats on the city's 18 district councils usually gets little attention but this year has shaped up as a pivotal battleground for protesters anxious to seize the ballot box to legitimize their cause.

For the first time, all the seats are contested in Hong Kong's only fully democratic elections. The pro-democracy opposition hopes to win a decisive victory on the back of public anger against the government and police.

"The election this time serves as a political barometer. The pro-democracy camp certainly wants the results to demonstrate that its cause enjoys the support of the people to show to the world and to the Chinese leadership," said Joseph Cheng, a pro-democracy political commentator.

Those under 36, the backbone of protesters, account for about a quarter of 4.1 million voters — nearly 60% of the city's population.

A drubbing for the pro-establishment camp that dominates the councils would embarrass the city's government and nullify Beijing's narrative that a minority of radical separatists colluded with foreign "black hands" and don't enjoy majority support, he said.

Pro-government candidates concede they are the underdogs but are urging voters to choose stability over violence.

Calvin Sze To, 29, said citizens will need to choose if they "want a stable government or continue to make a mess in Hong Kong." No matter the outcome, he said the government has to look into ways to heal society wounds.

Cheung Ka Yan, a 26-year-old accountant, said she jumped into the fray because many young people who support free elections for the city's leader and legislature — one of the protesters' key demands — decry violence.

"You cannot win universal suffrage by committing arson, killing people and hurling bricks and gas bombs. We must be rational and take one step at a time to realize this goal," she said.

The poll has ripple effects in higher-level elections. The winning camp gets to elect 117 representatives to the 1,200-member panel that picks the city's leader. The pro-democracy camp has some 300 supporters on the panel, so another 117 seats would greatly expand its influence, though still be far short of a majority.

Beijing has recently said it would tighten its control over the selection of Hong Kong's chief executive,

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though it has not said how.

"The Chinese leadership has indicated that it will retain its hard line and it is unlikely that Beijing will make concessions to a mass movement. It is very concerned of the demonstration effect in mainland China," Cheng said.

Prominent activist Joshua Wong, a leader in 2014 protests for universal suffrage, was the only candidate barred from running on grounds that his party advocates independence.

Police will be deployed to tighten security at dozens of polling stations across the city that will stay open for 15 hours Sunday. Some stations have been moved away from university campuses that turned into combat zones with protesters shooting flaming arrows and petrol bombs in intense clashes last week.

The unrest started in June over a now-abandoned extradition bill that would send criminal suspects to mainland China for trials and is seen as an erosion of freedoms promised to the former British colony when it returned to Chinese control in 1997. It has since morphed into an anti-China movement with demands for universal suffrage and an independent probe on police conduct.

"I cannot accept the fact that tear gas is fired everywhere and police brutality is getting worse. I made the right choice to quit," Yau said while campaigning on a recent afternoon in the upscale Causeway Bay shopping area.

Graffiti across some walls in the city agree that "the ballot is stronger than the bullet."

Associated Press news assistant Nadia Lam contributed to this report.

The Trump impeachment hearings highlight immigrants' stories

By JILL COLVIN and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — One came from northeast England. Another came from the former Soviet Union. A third was born in Canada to parents who'd fled the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.

Several witnesses who testified in the House impeachment inquiry this week chose to highlight their immigrant backgrounds, sharing their families' stories in highly personal opening statements. They drew a connection to how those experiences led them to public service and a strong desire to safeguard U.S. national security.

Their stories offered a sharp counterpoint to President Donald Trump, who has often derided immigrants as a threat to American national security.

"I can say with confidence that this country has offered for me opportunities I never would have had in England," former National Security Council official Fiona Hill testified Thursday. She spoke in what she called a "very distinctive working-class" British accent that would have impeded her professional advancement at home, but that "never set me back in America."

On Tuesday, Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, an Army officer who works with the National Security Council, testified that his family fled to the U.S. from the Soviet Union when he was 3. He said in his opening statement that he and his brothers felt compelled to serve in the military to repay the country that had offered them refuge from authoritarian oppression.

"In Russia, my act of expressing concern to the chain of command in an official and private channel would have severe personal and professional repercussions, and offering public testimony involving the president would surely cost me my life," he told the committee. He expressed gratitude for his "father's brave act of hope 40 years ago and for the privilege of being an American citizen and public servant, where I can live free, free of fear for mine and my family's safety."

"Dad, I am sitting here today in the U.S. Capitol, talking to our elected professionals. Talking to our elected professionals is proof that you made the right decision 40 years ago," he added, assuring his father: "Do not worry. I will be fine."

It was a similar story for Marie Yovanovitch, the former ambassador to Ukraine, who immigrated to the U.S. at age 3 from Canada. Her father had fled the Soviets, while her mother had grown up in Nazi Germany.

"Their personal histories, my personal history gave me both deep gratitude towards the United States and

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great empathy for others like the Ukrainian people who want to be free," she told lawmakers, explaining that she joined the foreign service with "no agenda other than to pursue our stated foreign policy goals."

"My service is an expression of gratitude for all that this country has given to me and to my family," she said.

Another witness, Gordon Sondland, the president's ambassador to the European Union, described how his parents had fled Europe during the Holocaust, first moving to Uruguay and then settling in Seattle.

"Like so many immigrants, my family was eager for freedom and hungry for opportunity," he said.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., said after listening to Hill's opening statement that her story about fulfilling her father's dream of one day moving to America reminded him of Vindman's.

"The few immigrant stories that we have heard just in the course of these hearings are among the most powerful I think I've ever heard," Schiff said Thursday. "You and Colonel Vindman and others are the best of this country and you came here by choice. And we are so blessed that you did, so welcome."

Yet those immigrant roots also opened several witnesses to criticism. Republican members, for instance, raised the fact that Vindman, who appeared in his uniform, had been repeatedly offered the position of defense minister by the government of Ukraine. He reported the offers to his superiors and quickly dismissed them.

"I guess Mr. Castor is implying maybe you have got some dual loyalty, which is, of course, an old smear we have heard many times in our history," Rep. Sean Maloney, D-N.Y. said at one point, referring to Steve Castor, the committee's Republican attorney.

Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., said the line of questioning "may have come cloaked in a Brooks Brothers suit and in parliamentary language," but was "designed exclusively to give the right-wing media an opening to question your loyalties."

Hill was also asked about the attacks on Vindman and suggestions of dual loyalty.

"I think it's very unfortunate," she said, describing the country's immigrant history as "the essence of America."

With the exception of very few, she added: "Everyone immigrated to the United States at some time in their family history. And this is what, for me, really does make America great."

Pope urges Thais young and old to practice faith with joy

By PREEYAPA T. KHUNSONG and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Pope Francis ministered to Thailand's tiny Catholic community Friday, urging Thais young and old to practice their faith with joy and with "a Thai face and flesh" in an overwhelmingly Buddhist country.

Thousands of Thais welcomed Francis as he traveled to St. Peter's Parish, a Catholic community outside Bangkok, to pray at the sanctuary of Thailand's first martyred priest.

There, he told a few hundred priests and nuns that he read "with some pain" that for many Thais, Christianity is "a religion for foreigners."

"This should spur us to find ways to talk about the faith in dialect, like a mother who sings lullabies to her child," he said. "With that same intimacy, let us give faith a Thai face and flesh, which involves much more than making translations."

Children dressed as monks and nuns, as well as real clergy and ordinary Catholics, cheered him as he passed through the crowd outside the church in his popemobile and later on foot. "Viva il papa," or "Long live the pope," they shouted in Italian.

Later, Francis celebrated a Mass dedicated to young people in Bangkok's Cathedral of the Assumption. He urged them to look to the future, firmly rooted in their faith.

"Dear young people, you are a new generation, with new hopes, dreams and questions, and surely some doubts as well," he said. "I urge you to maintain your joy and to look to the future with confidence."

It was the first time in a generation that Thais have seen a pope up close, after St. John Paul II became

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the first pope to visit Thailand in 1984. And despite the relatively small number of Catholics in Thailand — some 400,000 in a country of 65 million — his reception has been remarkably enthusiastic and warm.

“It’s been 35 years so everyone is so very happy,” said Tuangsin Pureepaswong, a 60-year-old research engineer from Rayong province. “May the Holy Father pray to God for us all.”

Pornnutcha Kruprasert, a 14-year-old training to be a nun from southern Prachuap Khiri Khan province, said she was “excited and delighted” to see the pope.

“The pope always has good thoughts for all youths,” she said cheerfully. “We can bring his teachings into real life.”

Even King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida seemed taken by the 82-year-old Argentine.

Bidding farewell at their palace on Thursday evening, the royals paid their utmost respect to the pope, bringing their hands together and nodding their heads. The “wai” is a gesture of respect, usually initiated by young to old, and is shown by the king to the Buddhist patriarch, but not to other heads of state.

In addition, the gifts presented to Francis were of the highest level of royal gifts that the Thai king gives to a foreign monarch: a nielloware desk set, similar to what Vajiralongkorn’s late father, King Bhumibol, gave to Queen Elizabeth II.

And finally, after Queen Suthida curtsied to Francis, the royal couple walked down the stairs at the palace entrance to see Francis off in his car, a rare and personal touch.

More ordinary non-Catholics seemed to catch some of the excitement about Francis’ visit as well.

“He seems like a very kind, and nice, and merciful man and I wish him all the best,” said Benny Gulati, a member of the Sikh religion who attended Francis’ interfaith meeting Friday afternoon.

Ven. Napan Santibhaddo, a Buddhist monk, said Francis’ name says it all — a reference to his namesake St. Francis of Assisi, known for his ministry to the poor and outcasts.

“It means a lot: compassion for poor people, and women and everything and we appreciate that. I think it is a good sign that he can send a message for peace,” he said.

At the meeting, Francis highlighted care for the poor and the environment as areas where Catholics can cooperate with Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs and members of other Christian denominations.

“All of us are called not only to heed the voice of the poor in our midst: the disenfranchised, the down-trodden, the indigenous peoples and religious minorities, but also to be unafraid to create opportunities ... to work hand in hand,” he said. “For our part, we are asked to embrace the moral imperative of upholding human dignity and respecting the rights of conscience and religious freedom.”

The encounter featured a youth choir of Muslim, Buddhist and Christian students — a nod to Francis’ efforts to highlight Thailand’s tradition of religious tolerance.

Francis leaves Saturday for Japan for the second and final leg of his trip.

Associated Press producer Maria Grazia Murru contributed to this report.

Leading white Democrats court black votes; some find trouble

By **BILL BARROW, ERRIN HAINES and KATHLEEN RONAYNE** Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Coming out of their debate in a key center of black America, the leading Democratic presidential contenders aimed for the party’s crucial black and minority vote, with the scramble putting internal party tensions on display.

From black protesters disrupting Elizabeth Warren to the lone black woman in the race chiding white, upstart Mayor Pete Buttigieg, the dynamics in Atlanta highlighted the push for crucial black and other minority support with less than three months before primary voting begins. They further underscored some candidates’ vulnerabilities in trying to assemble the coalition necessary to win the nomination — and defeat President Donald Trump in the general election.

Warren electrified a raucous and racially diverse crowd in the Clark-Atlanta University gymnasium as she tries to expand her support beyond the white liberal base that boosted her in the primary polls this summer. But the Massachusetts senator had to endure protests of a black school-choice group that threatened

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to overshadow her message aimed squarely at black women — Democrats' most loyal faction.

Buttigieg, the South Bend, Indiana, mayor who leads caucus polls in overwhelmingly white Iowa, spent the day defending remarks relating his experience as a gay man to the systemic racism facing African Americans. Kamala Harris, the California senator and only black woman in the race, blasted his approach as "naive."

Like Buttigieg, Bernie Sanders invoked his biography, as the child of an immigrant family with casualties in the Holocaust, to connect with African Americans' struggle against oppression and white supremacy. Harris, still lagging the front-runners, has not criticized the way Sanders talks about race, but the Vermont senator still must prove he can get more black votes than he did in losing the 2016 nominating fight.

All those contenders are trying to catch Vice President Joe Biden, whose considerable lead among black voters leaves him atop most national polls. Biden spent Thursday meeting with black Southern mayors, led by Atlanta's Keisha Lance Bottoms, one of his top campaign surrogates. But it wasn't all smooth for Biden, as immigration activists interrupted him in South Carolina demanding he pledge to halt deportations on his first day in office. Biden refused.

For those chasing Biden, Warren offered perhaps the strongest display Thursday.

Before an energetic crowd at Clark-Atlanta, the senator called for a "full-blown national conversation about reparations" for slavery, and she praised black women for helping build the country and advancing social and economic justice. She bemoaned structural impediments beyond slavery, naming Jim Crow segregation, modern-day mass incarceration and red-lining practices that make it harder for minorities to get mortgage loans.

"Black history is American history," Warren said. "And American history teaches us that racism has for generations shaped every crucial aspect of our economic and political system."

She offered a litany of policy proposals: new spending at historically black schools, legalizing marijuana, overhauling federal housing policy, student loan debt forgiveness, even repealing the 1994 crime law — which Biden sponsored as a Delaware senator.

"I am not afraid," she said to roars. "And you cannot be afraid, either."

Yet for a time, it looked as if Warren might not be able to deliver the rare formal speech that aides had built up as a seminal moment in her campaign. Moments into her address, dozens of black protesters from a school-choice group interrupted. They stood down only after Massachusetts Rep. Ayanna Pressley took the microphone from Warren.

"The senator is here to talk about fighters like you," said Pressley, who is black. In drowning out Warren, she said, the group was keeping the senator from telling the story of black women already marginalized.

Buttigieg, meanwhile, found no such defender as he enjoys a newfound lead in Iowa, the first-caucus state, but shows negligible black support in more diverse primary states that follow. So, he was left to contend with Harris alone.

Their flap spun off the mayor saying Wednesday during a debate segment on race that he has "felt like a stranger" in his own country because his civil rights as a gay man were left to the whims of politicians.

During a post-debate event, Harris lambasted Buttigieg for comparing the struggles of black and LGBTQ communities. A Democrat who wants a winning coalition, she said, "should not be ... saying one group's pain is equal than or greater" than another's.

Buttigieg pushed back, telling reporters, "There's no equating those two experiences," and maintaining that he hadn't done so.

Sanders understands as well as any candidate that Democratic presidential politics demands more than just enthusiastic white support. The Vermont senator battled Hillary Clinton to a surprise draw in Iowa in 2016 and trounced her in New Hampshire, another mostly white Democratic electorate. Yet with overwhelming black support, Clinton then dominated Sanders in South Carolina and across the Deep South, building an early delegate lead she never relinquished.

This time, he's intent on building black support earlier in the campaign, and on Thursday, he noticeably leaned more on biographical details than he did for much of his 2016 campaign, even as he ticked through

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his usual list of progressive policy remedies.

Now 78, he told the crowd — gathered around a statue of Morehouse alumnus Martin Luther King Jr. — of his 1960s activism, describing himself and his fellow white students as “not quite so brave” as black citizens in the more dangerous Jim Crow South. But, Sanders said, “I was arrested and went to jail fighting housing segregation in Chicago.”

And he wanted them to know his family history.

“Some of you know, I’m Jewish,” Sanders said. “My father came to this country from Poland. He came fleeing anti-Semitism. A lot of people in my father’s family did not make it out of Poland.

“They were murdered by the father of white supremacy, Adolf Hitler,” Sanders continued. “So, I learned at a very young age what racism and white supremacy and Aryanism and all that crap is about.”

Far from the campaign trail, former President Barack Obama offered advice to Democrats considering those varied approaches. The first black president, speaking at a party fundraiser in California, warned against absolute judgments as candidates navigate a fraught issue.

“There’s a way of talking about race that says ‘we can be better,’ and there’s a way of talking about race that says ‘you are bad’ or that ‘you don’t get it,’” he said, later adding, “When we invite people to their better selves, we tend to bring people in.”

Ronayne reported from Sacramento, Calif. Associated Press writer Brian Slodysko in Los Altos Hills, Calif., and Meg Kinnard in Greenwood, S.C., contributed to this report.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, “Ground Game.”

Quid pro quo, domestic errands: Takeaways from impeachment

By **ERIC TUCKER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump asked a foreign country to investigate a political rival as he enters his reelection campaign. That has been established almost beyond doubt. But Republicans and Democrats agree on little else as they engage in on only the fourth impeachment inquiry in the nation’s history.

Here are key takeaways from two weeks of hearings.

THIS FOR THAT

In the most anticipated testimony, Gordon Sondland, the European Union ambassador, repeatedly described the administration’s dealings with Ukraine as a quid pro quo — one thing in return for another.

“I know that members of this committee have frequently framed these complicated issues in the form of a simple question: Was there a ‘quid pro quo?’ As I testified previously, with regard to the requested White House call and White House meeting, the answer is yes,” Sondland said.

The deal, he said, involved arranging a White House visit for Ukraine’s new president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in return for Zelenskyy’s announcing investigations of Burisma, a Ukrainian gas company, and a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine had interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Democrat Joe Biden’s son Hunter was a Burisma board member.

That proposed arrangement was pushed by Rudy Giuliani, Trump’s personal lawyer, who conveyed Trump’s wishes to multiple administration officials.

But in testimony that Republicans sought to exploit, Sondland said no one ever told him military aid to Ukraine was contingent on the country announcing investigations — though he said he came to presume that was the case.

‘EVERYONE WAS IN THE LOOP’

Sondland was central to Trump’s efforts to secure investigations by Ukraine.

But he insisted that this was no rogue effort, and he would not be a fall guy. He testified how officials across the government were aware of Trump’s demand that Ukraine commit to the investigations.

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Those officials, he said, included Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the White House's acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney.

"Everyone," Sondland said repeatedly, "was in the loop. It was no secret." That also included Vice President Mike Pence, he said.

Marc Short, Pence's chief of staff, disputed that account and said that Pence never spoke with Sondland "about investigating the Bidens, Burisma, or the conditional release of financial aid to Ukraine based upon potential investigations."

In Brussels, Pompeo dismissed Sondland's testimony, but didn't comment on specifics.

'DOMESTIC POLITICAL ERRAND'

Fiona Hill, a former White House adviser and Russia expert, recounted a tense relationship with Sondland. If other people were supportive of the ambassador's efforts, Hill very certainly was not among them.

Her testimony vividly outlined the diverging objectives of Trump's official staff and parallel effort led by Giuliani that also involved Sondland.

"He was being involved in a domestic political errand," Hill said of Sondland, "and we were being involved in national security foreign policy."

In one June blowup, when Hill confronted Sondland over his assertion that he was in charge of Ukraine policy, he replied that Trump had given him authority. She was angry and irritated over the lack of coordination and warned him that "this is all going to blow up."

"And," she pointedly added, "here we are."

WHAT DID UKRAINE KNOW, AND WHEN DID IT KNOW IT?

Sondland's appearance dominated the day, but a Defense Department official named Laura Cooper provided her own subtly tantalizing testimony.

She revealed that Ukrainian Embassy officials had asked about military aid on July 25, earlier than previously known. That could undercut a Republican argument that there couldn't have been a quid pro quo involving military aid because the Ukrainians didn't know that the aid was being held up.

She said she also has been recently informed that a Ukrainian Embassy contact had asked a member of her staff that same day "what was going on" with the aid.

The July 25 date is significant: it's the same day Trump spoke by phone with Zelenskiy and pressed for an investigation of Joe Biden.

Cooper told lawmakers she "cannot say for certain" that Ukraine knew the money was being withheld, but she said "it's the recollection of my staff that they likely knew."

'IT'S LIEUTENANT COLONEL VINDMAN, PLEASE'

With those words, Alexander Vindman, an Army officer and Purple Heart recipient, sought to shut down Republican attacks on his credibility.

Republicans went after him, nonetheless.

Republican Rep. Chris Stewart called Vindman's uniform a good reminder of his military service but also questioned why Vindman felt it necessary to wear it rather than a suit.

He wanted to know, too, if Vindman always insisted on being referred to by military rank rather than "Mr." as he did in an exchange earlier with Rep. Devin Nunes, the committee's top Republican. In that moment, he corrected Nunes and asked to be called "Lt. Col. Vindman, please."

The committee attacks mirrored the combative approach of the White House, which used its official Twitter account to retweet attacks on Vindman, who continues to work at the White House.

Some Republican attacks struggled to land. After Rep. Jim Jordan suggested that Vindman's peers questioned his judgment, Vindman read from a glowing performance review that called him "brilliant" and "unflappable."

Other attacks, including from the White House's director of social media, sought to imply that Vindman, a naturalized American citizen who was a toddler when his family fled Ukraine, may have dual loyalties.

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Under questioning from GOP impeachment counsel Steve Castor, Vindman revealed that he was offered three times the post of Ukraine's defense minister while attending Zelenskiy's inauguration, but "immediately dismissed these offers." He says he notified his chain of command and counterintelligence officials upon returning to the U.S.

Castor questioned whether that created the impression of a conflict, to which Vindman replied, "It's more important what my American chain of command thinks."

'VERY INTIMIDATING'

The testimony of Marie Yovanovitch, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine who last spring was abruptly recalled from Kyiv and directed to return home on the next possible flight, was barely underway when Trump ridiculed her on Twitter, saying without evidence that things "turned bad" wherever she went during her decades-long career.

Yovanovitch left no doubt that she interpreted some of the Trump's cryptic comments about her — "she's going to go through some things," he told Ukraine's president in the July phone call — in the most chilling way.

"It didn't sound good," she said. "It sounded like a threat."

She said the effect of the president's comments "is very intimidating" not just for her but for others who might be similarly inclined root out corruption.

Rep. Adam Schiff, the Democratic chairman of the House intelligence committee, read Trump's tweet to Yovanovitch and suggested it was part of a campaign of "witness intimidation."

"Well, I want to let you know, Ambassador, that some of us here take witness intimidation very, very seriously."

Trump, asked about it later, said, "I have the right to speak. I have freedom of speech."

'THE BIG STUFF'

The July 26 lunch on an outdoor terrace in a Kyiv restaurant started out social enough. There was a bottle of wine and affable chatter about marketing strategies for Sondland's hotel business.

Then, according to David Holmes, a counselor at the U.S. embassy in Kyiv, Sondland said he was going to call Trump to give him an update. The conversation Holmes overheard was loud — and memorable.

At one point, Holmes said, he heard Sondland tell Trump that Zelenskiy "loves your ass."

"I then heard President Trump ask, 'So, he's gonna do the investigation?' Ambassador Sondland replied that 'he's gonna do it.'" He said Sondland told Trump that Zelenskiy will do "anything you ask him to."

When the call ended, Holmes said he asked Sondland if it was true that Trump did not "give a s--t about Ukraine." Sondland said that it was indeed the case.

"I noted that there was 'big stuff' going on in Ukraine, like a war with Russia, and Ambassador Sondland replied that he meant 'big stuff' that benefits the president, like the 'Biden investigation' that Mr. Giuliani was pushing."

'FICTIONAL NARRATIVE'

The British-born Hill is a Russia expert who's written extensively on the Kremlin, and she made that clear from the outset when she scolded Republican lawmakers for propagating what she said was a "fictional narrative" — that somehow Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Those discredited theories have been advanced by Trump himself, who in a July 25 phone call at the center of the impeachment inquiry asked Ukraine's leader to investigate the possibility.

Hill said the unwillingness by some to accept Russia's role has profound consequences at a time when Russia's security services have "geared up to repeat their interference in the 2020 election." Putin, she said, deploys millions of dollars to "weaponize our own political opposition research and false narratives."

"When we are consumed by partisan rancor, we cannot combat these external forces as they seek to divide us against each another, degrade our institutions, and destroy the faith of the American people in

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our democracy," Hill said.

At another point, she implored impeachment investigators — and the country at large — to stop advancing fictions that she said distract from the attention needed to fight Russian interference.

"In the course of this investigation, I would ask that you please not promote politically driven falsehoods that so clearly advance Russian interests," Hill said.

"IT WAS CRAZY"

On the first day of hearings, Democrats called on Bill Taylor, a West Point graduate, Vietnam veteran and career diplomat who was recruited out of retirement to serve as a top diplomat in Ukraine.

Taylor was unsparing, and colorful, in his characterization of making military aid to Ukraine contingent on the country announcing investigations into the 2016 U.S. election.

He was presented with oversized images of a September text message exchange with two other envoys in which he said it would be "crazy" to withhold military assistance to Ukraine in exchange for that nation investigating Trump's political rival.

Those text messages were the among the first documentary pieces of evidence to become public as part of the House impeachment inquiry and established not only the possible contours of a quid pro quo but also laid bare diplomatic concerns about the Trump administration's dealings with Ukraine.

"It was counterproductive to all of what we had been trying to do, Taylor said. "It was illogical, it could not be explained, it was crazy."

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. MOUNTING IMPEACHMENT EVIDENCE BEYOND DISPUTE

But after two weeks of riveting public hearings with numerous Ukraine revelations, it's not enough yet to persuade Trump's supporters to vote to remove him from office, an AP analysis concludes.

2. ISRAEL BRACES FOR POLITICAL FIGHT

The indictment of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to sharpen the battle lines in Israel's already deadlocked political system and could test the loyalty of his right-wing allies.

3. 'PERFECT STORM OF SCREW-UPS'

That's what Attorney General William Barr tells the AP about Jeffrey Epstein's prison death, adding that prosecutors are making progress as they investigate allegations against the convicted pedophile.

4. 'WE FELT LIKE WE HAD TO TAKE WHAT WE COULD'

Two impoverished Mississippi men claim Catholic officials pressured them into signing nondisclosure agreements about alleged abuse by Franciscan missionaries and that they received a small financial settlement.

5. WHO'S TAKEN A STAR TURN IN THAILAND

Sister Ana Rosa Sivori, Pope Francis' second cousin, who has displayed confidence and chutzpah in an unprecedented role for a woman as papal whisperer and translator during his visit.

6. WHAT IS OFF-LIMITS IN OPIOIDS FIGHT

The U.S. government is explicitly barring federal dollars for opioid addiction treatment from being used by states for medical marijuana.

7. LEADING WHITE DEMOCRATS COURT BLACK VOTES; SOME FIND TROUBLE

The field of Democratic presidential candidates is scrambling for a share of the crucial black and minority vote, and that is putting internal party tensions on display.

8. ONLINE FRAUD ON THE RISE IN ICELAND

Modern translation apps have become good at Icelandic and the government has recently lifted limits on bank transfers out of the country that were imposed after the financial crisis.

9. WHERE ART AND RESISTANCE MEET

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An underpass running beneath Baghdad's Tahrir Square has become an ad hoc museum chronicling Iraq's massive anti-government protests.

10. BROWNS STAR FINISHED FOR SEASON

The NFL's indefinite suspension of Cleveland's Myles Garrett for smashing Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph over the head with a helmet has been upheld by an appeals officer.

AG Barr: Epstein's death was a 'perfect storm of screw-ups'

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

ABOARD A US GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT (AP) — Attorney General William Barr said he initially had his own suspicions about financier Jeffrey Epstein's death while behind bars at one of the most secure jails in America but came to conclude that his suicide was the result of "a perfect storm of screw-ups."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Barr said his concerns were prompted by the numerous irregularities at the Manhattan jail where Epstein was being held. But he said after the FBI and the Justice Department's inspector general continued to investigate, he realized there were a "series" of mistakes made that gave Epstein the chance to take his own life.

"I can understand people who immediately, whose minds went to sort of the worst-case scenario because it was a perfect storm of screw-ups," Barr told the AP as he flew to Montana for an event.

Barr's comments come days after two correctional officers who were responsible for guarding the wealthy financier when he died were charged with falsifying prison records. Officers Tova Noel and Michael Thomas are accused of sleeping and browsing the internet — shopping for furniture and motorcycles — instead of watching Epstein, who was supposed to be checked on every 30 minutes.

Epstein took his own life in August while awaiting trial on charges he sexually abused girls as young as 14 and young women in New York and Florida in the early 2000s.

His death cast a spotlight on the federal Bureau of Prisons, which has been plagued by chronic staffing shortages and outbreaks of violence. The indictment unsealed this week against the officers shows a damning glimpse of safety lapses inside a high-security unit at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York.

But the indictment also provided new details that reinforce the idea that, for all the intrigue regarding Epstein and his connections to powerful people, his death was a suicide — as the city's medical examiner concluded — and possibly preventable.

A lawyer for Thomas, Montell Figgins, said both guards are being "scapegoated."

The attorney general also sought to dampen conspiracy theories by people who have questioned whether Epstein really took his own life, saying the evidence proves Epstein killed himself. He added that he personally reviewed security footage that confirmed that no one entered the area where Epstein was housed on the night he died.

Epstein was placed on suicide watch after he was found July 23 on his cell floor with bruises on his neck but was taken off the heightened watch about a week before his death, meaning he was less closely monitored but still supposed to be checked on every 30 minutes. He was required to have a cellmate, but he was left with none after his cellmate was transferred out of the MCC on Aug. 9, the day before his death, the indictment said.

Epstein was found unresponsive in his cell when the guards went to deliver breakfast. One of the guards told a supervisor then that they hadn't done their 3 a.m. or 5 a.m. rounds, according to the indictment.

The Justice Department is still investigating the circumstances that led to Epstein's death, including why he wasn't given a cellmate.

"I think it was important to have a roommate in there with him and we're looking into why that wasn't done, and I think every indication is that was a screw-up," Barr said. "The systems to assure that was done were not followed."

Epstein's death ended the possibility of a trial that would have involved prominent figures and sparked widespread anger that he wouldn't have to answer for the allegations.

Even with his death, federal prosecutors in New York have continued to investigate the allegations against Epstein. Barr, who has vowed to aggressively investigate and bring charges against anyone who may have helped Epstein, said investigators were making good progress in the case.

"They are definitely pushing things along," Barr said. "I'll just say there is good progress being made, and I'm hopeful in a relatively short time there will be tangible results."

Isolated Iceland newly vulnerable to computer scams

By EGILL BJARNASON Associated Press

REYKJAVIK, Iceland (AP) — "Hi, I hope you are not busy?"

The treasurer of the Icelandic soccer club Afturelding got the email from his manager late in the afternoon, soon before banks were about to close. The words "Sent from my iPhone" were at the bottom, suggesting urgency, and through a series of exchanges, the manager asked that a quick payment be made.

It was a scam, perpetrated from someone posing as the club manager - and part of a sudden rush of online fraud that is catching Icelanders unprepared.

Online apps have now become good at translating the country's complex language, a version of Old Norse spoken only by about 400,000 people. And the government has lifted limits on money transfers out of the country that had been imposed since the financial crisis. The combination over the past two years has attracted scammers to target a population that has not developed the same habits of caution about online fraud as other such wealthy, high-tech countries.

"The trick is always the same, but the Icelandic gets better and better," said Audur Thorsteinsdóttir, manager of The Icelandic Youth Association, an umbrella organization regularly warning member clubs against fraud emails.

Large and small enterprises, from vehicle inspection companies to residents' associations, have been shaken this year by someone posing as the CEO or chairman seeking a swift payment. By using Google Translate or Microsoft's Translator - the two apps that can translate Icelandic - the criminals were able to sound credible, police say.

Known as "CEO fraud" - when criminals pose as high-ranking executives after thoroughly researching the company structure - the scams did not exist at Icelandic workplaces in the early days of online translators. Software offered poor, often comically inaccurate, results: Icelandic for "youth" for example, was translated as meaning "Youtube." The apps have since improved.

"The text has the kind of errors Google Translate makes," such as awkward capitalization and syntax, said police detective Dadi Gunnarsson. "But it reads remarkably well, and that fools many."

Recent scams have amounted to the largest thefts the island nation has ever seen. Geothermal energy company HS Orka recently lost \$1.5 million and a total of \$13 million has been lost to foreign scammers over the past twelve months, the police estimate.

In another case, a series of promoted ads on social media promised to explain how to bounce back from bankruptcy. The link brought users to a website mimicking a respected business paper, with its trademark pink background. It was a bitcoin scheme meant to defraud.

Icelandic was introduced to Google Translate in 2009, earlier than many other more widely spoken languages as a Reykjavik-born employee at the tech company wanted his mother tongue included as soon as possible. Dozens of students and faculty at Reykjavik University volunteered to help Google gather samples for voice recognition.

Still, the translations were incomplete and spotty for many years.

"The learning curve has been steep for Iceland," said Morten Tandle, director of the Nordic Financial Cert, a Norway-based organization coordinating cyber security responses between large companies in the region.

Experts say that as artificial intelligence improved, translation apps only really became good enough at Icelandic around 2018.

That was just months after the government removed limits on the amount of money that could be transferred out of the country that had been imposed since the financial crisis over a decade ago.

It was like foreign scammers had been waiting for the day, police said.

Cases of online fraud began piling up, with the number this year about six times higher than the year before, according to Landsbankinn, a large commercial bank. Victims rarely get their money back.

In most countries, Tandle said, people learn to be cautious online because someone around them has been scammed or hurt by messages with malicious software. The country's isolation from such trends until recently made its sudden exposure all the more painful.

The rule of thumb, experts advise, is to always respond to financial inquiries through a different medium, like replying to an email with a phone call.

Icelanders pride themselves on their sense of community and have one of the highest levels of "social trust" in surveys measuring people's belief in each other and in honesty and integrity.

"Social trust is the desired quality of every society," said Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson, a politics professor at the University of Iceland. "It makes the economy more dynamic, democracy stronger and people happier and healthier - in academic literature nothing bad is ever associated with healthy trust."

Yet police and cybersecurity experts note that online scammers successfully exploit it and are urging more caution.

"Digitalization of finance and public service needs to be followed by more awareness," said Jarno Lim-nell, a professor in cybersecurity at the Aalto University in Finland. "We should approach the internet like driving: Always on the alert."

Kristján Ásgeirsson, a fishing industry entrepreneur known as Fiskikóngurinn, "the King of Fish," made a splash in local media recently speaking about the shame and distrust he felt after falling for a scam.

Ásgeirsson received an email from what appeared to be a trusted American business associate asking for the next invoice to be paid to a separate account for tax purposes. Someone had hacked Ásgeirsson's inbox and was posing as his contact under a false email address. He lost \$68,000 and only discovered the scam weeks later.

"I felt like a complete idiot," Ásgeirsson said. "It can happen to everyone," he added, before pausing and revising his statement: "It is happening to everyone."

For all of AP's tech coverage, visit: <https://apnews.com/apf-technology>

Lawsuit: Church pressured victims into unfair settlements

By MICHAEL REZENDES Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Two impoverished Mississippi men who say they were sexually assaulted by Franciscan missionaries filed a federal lawsuit Thursday claiming that Catholic officials pressured them into signing settlements that paid them little money and required them to remain silent about the alleged abuse.

The lawsuit, filed in New York, claims the church officials drew up the agreements a year ago to prevent the men from telling their stories or going to court — a violation of a 2002 promise by American bishops to abandon the use of nondisclosure agreements, as part of an effort to end the cover-up of sexual abuse within the church.

"The confidentiality provisions contained in the disputed agreements were intended to silence" the two men "in direct contradiction" to the U.S. Catholic Church's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the lawsuit says.

The suit was filed by two cousins, La Jarvis Love, of Senatobia, Mississippi, and Joshua Love, of Greenwood, Mississippi, black men from the Mississippi Delta, both 36 years old.

The men say they were repeatedly abused by Franciscan brothers Paul West and the late Don Lucas while they were enrolled in a Catholic grade school in Greenwood, Mississippi.

The accusations made by the Love cousins and a third relative, Joshua's younger brother, Raphael, were first reported by The Associated Press in August.

West, who voluntarily left the Franciscan order and lives in Appleton, Wisconsin, did not return a call seeking comment. The Rev. James G. Gannon, leader of the Wisconsin Franciscans, and Stephen J. Car-

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mody, an attorney for the Jackson Diocese, also did not return messages seeking comment.

In the lawsuit, the Love cousins say West also abused them while on driving excursions from Mississippi to New York, where La Jarvis attended Camp Alvernia, a summer camp founded by the Franciscans in Centerport, New York. The lawsuit says West also abused them at a hotel in Manhattan.

"West separately abused" La Jarvis and Joshua Love "raping and sexually assaulting them, making them perform sex acts on him, and encouraging them to perform sex acts on each other," the lawsuit says.

Although clergy abuse claims are often filed in state courts, Paul J. Pennock, a New York attorney representing La Jarvis and Joshua Love, said the lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in New York City because of alleged violations of the federal Mann Act, which bars anyone from transporting minors across state lines for the purpose of having sex.

John F. Hawkins, a Mississippi attorney who also represents the Love cousins, said: "These guys have never received anything resembling justice. I'm hoping this lawsuit will bring these matters to light and provide them with a full measure of justice."

La Jarvis and Joshua Love reported their abuse separately to the Catholic Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, within the last two years. Like many other dioceses, the Jackson Diocese has issued a list of credibly accused priests and brothers that includes West and Lucas, though the diocese does not list the names of accusers.

According to the lawsuit, Gannon, the Franciscan leader, and Valerie McClellan, the victim assistance coordinator for the Jackson Diocese, met with Joshua Love last year and "and encouraged him to initially settle his claims for \$10,000."

During the meeting, the lawsuit says, "it was understood among the group that Joshua could not read and, therefore, was not able to understand the terms of the settlement other than the settlement amount."

After Joshua Love objected to the amount, Gannon agreed to increase the settlement to \$15,000.

McClellan, who is not named as a defendant, previously told the AP she never encouraged Joshua Love to take a settlement. She said she maintained appropriate boundaries between her dual roles as victim assistance coordinator and Joshua's therapist.

The lawsuit says La Jarvis Love was also encouraged to settle his claims for \$15,000 "and discouraged from hiring a lawyer."

During interviews with the AP, La Jarvis said he met with Gannon at an IHOP in Senatobia last January, accompanied by his wife and three children, and told Gannon he wasn't sure \$15,000 was enough.

"He said if I wanted more I would have to get a lawyer and have my lawyer call his lawyer," he said. "Well, we don't have lawyers. We felt like we had to take what we could."

Victims of Catholic sexual abuse who are represented by attorneys generally settle for much more than \$15,000. In 2006, the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, settled a handful of lawsuits with 19 victims, 17 of whom were white, for \$5 million, with an average payout of more than \$250,000 per survivor. More recent settlements have ranged far higher, including an average payment of nearly \$500,000 each for survivors in the St. Paul-Minneapolis Diocese.

Mark Belenchia, a clergy abuse survivor and the Mississippi leader of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said he was heartened by the lawsuit.

"These brave men were denied the opportunity to have a normal, healthy childhood and were further harmed after coming forward as adults by the Church leadership," he said. Belenchia hopes "they can receive justice and reach some closure to a lifetime of fear, doubt and shame."

Pope's cousin takes star turn in Thailand as papal whisperer

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — She made him wait for her while she chatted with Thailand's king and queen. She chided him for only visiting Bangkok and not the "real Thailand." And she got a chuckle out of "Jorge" when she took her time translating his off-the-cuff Spanish for local priests and nuns to understand.

Sister Ana Rosa Sivori has taken something of a star turn during her second cousin's visit to Thailand,

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assuming an unprecedented role for a woman as papal whisperer and translator, who doesn't seem fazed that her charge is Pope Francis.

Usually papal aides are men, and they stay in the shadows, showing wallflower-like deference to the leader of the 1.2-billion strong Catholic Church. Not so Sivori, who treats Francis with the respect owed a pope but nevertheless displays the confidence and chutzpah of a no-nonsense nun who has spent more than a half-century ministering to Thailand's faithful.

Sivori, a 77-year-old member of the Salesian order, is an assistant principal at a Salesian school in Udon Thani, in northeast Thailand. She arrived in the country in 1966 as a young sister from Argentina, where her father and Jorge Mario Bergoglio's mother were first cousins.

She has said her father knew early on that there was something special about "Jorge," a sentiment that spread to the rest of the family.

"He always said 'No one touches Jorge.' He had a special affection for him," Sivori told Italian journalists before the trip.

It's apparently mutual: Francis sends Sivori handwritten letters regularly, and he prepares packages of books for her to read, with envelopes that he addresses himself.

Sivori lamented that Francis would only visit Bangkok, saying its skyscrapers and luxury hotels were by no means representative of the rest of the country. The "real Thailand" was outside the capital, she said.

Francis set the tone of their time in Bangkok when he descended from his Alitalia charter on Wednesday afternoon.

Before even greeting Surayud Chulanont, the former prime minister and head of King Maha Vajiralongkorn's Privy Council who was dispatched to the airport to welcome him, Francis broke diplomatic protocol to give Sivori a kiss on each cheek as she waited at the foot of the stairs.

That informality carried through the rest of their time together, with Sivori taking the place of the local bishop in Francis' car as he went from appointment to appointment. Based on their body language, she was giving him pointers and details at each stop.

The visuals were striking, given Francis has no female advisers and usually has a cleric by his side whispering in his ear.

Francis has long insisted that the Catholic Church is "female" and that women should have a more prominent role in leadership positions.

That he finally let a woman upstage him a bit was remarkable, especially in a country known for the many women and girls who are trafficked and exploited.

Sivori's starring role peaked Thursday afternoon, when she joined Francis for his private meeting with King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida at the royal palace.

Sivori translated, and at one point even stepped in front of Francis to describe the gifts he had brought the king. Later during their talks, she cheerfully relayed to the pope what the king had said and appeared to even help out the king's own translator.

At the end of their visit, Francis bade the royals farewell and made his way down the stairs to the waiting car.

Sivori, though, remained at the palace entrance, chatting for nearly a minute with the royal couple while Francis waited for her.

Eventually, she finished her own goodbyes and took her place next to him in the back seat.

Francis appeared to rib her the next day when Sivori was translating his remarks to nuns and priests at St. Peter's Parish outside Bangkok.

As he tends to do when speaking to a religious audience, Francis deviated from his prepared text and urged the nuns to allow themselves to be "surprised" by the joys and sorrows of their vocation.

Sivori took a few seconds to write down his comments before beginning the translation. The delay prompted Francis to look at her, raise his eyebrows and gesture for her to get on with it.

Their silent exchange Friday drew laughs from the pews and a heartfelt chuckle from the pope, who apologized for not being able to speak directly to his flock.

Former White House aide Hill is no-nonsense Russia analyst

By LYNN BERRY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — They heard the measured testimony of career diplomats and the mind-boggling account of a first-time ambassador who declared he was in charge of President Donald Trump's Ukraine policy. On Thursday, House impeachment investigators got straight talk from Fiona Hill, a no-nonsense former White House national security adviser who was alarmed by what she saw unfolding around her.

Hill, who speaks rapid-fire and in the distinctive accent of the coal country of northeastern England where she grew up, testified about what she witnessed inside the White House as two men — Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland and Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani — carried out the policy of an unconventional president.

She is a distinguished Russia analyst who took a break from the think-tank world to serve as a national intelligence officer from early 2006 to late 2009. She took another leave from the Brookings Institution in early 2017 to join the National Security Council at the start of the Trump administration, a decision that raised eyebrows at the time.

Hill built her reputation on her insights into Russian President Vladimir Putin and her clear-eyed view of the threats posed by Russia, yet she went to work for a president who discounted Russian election interference and appeared to believe in Putin's good intentions.

In closed-door testimony last month, Hill testified that she spent an "inordinate amount of time" at the White House trying to coordinate with Sondland, whose donation to Trump's inauguration preceded his appointment as ambassador to the EU. On Thursday, she said it dawned on her while watching Sondland's testimony the day before that he wasn't coordinating with her because their missions had diverged. Hill said Sondland "was being involved in a domestic political errand, and we were being involved in national security foreign policy."

Sondland testified Wednesday that Trump and Giuliani sought a quid pro quo with Ukraine, and that he was under orders from the president to help make it happen. He said Trump wanted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to announce investigations of Democrats before he would agree to welcome him at the White House. As the push progressed, Trump also held up nearly \$400 million in military aid that Ukraine was counting on to fend off Russian aggression.

Hill's authoritative testimony appeared to flummox Republicans defending Trump. After she shared her new reading of Sondland in the afternoon session, few asked her further questions and instead used their time to make their own points.

In her closed testimony, she described Sondland as a counterintelligence risk because of his use of a personal cellphone, including in Ukraine, where the networks are easily hacked by Russia.

Sondland called Trump on his cellphone from a restaurant in Kyiv on July 26, the day after Trump had spoken with Zelenskyy. David Holmes, a U.S. diplomat in Kyiv, was sitting across the table and said he overheard Trump ask whether the Ukrainian president was going to do the investigations and Sondland tell him that he would. Holmes also testified on Thursday.

Unlike Sondland, who explained discrepancies in his testimony by saying he doesn't take notes, Hill is a meticulous note-taker. She says it was a habit she learned from the first grade because her town was so poor that pupils didn't have textbooks.

In her opening statement Thursday, she said her working-class accent would have impeded her in England in the 1980s and 1990s, but her poor background has never set her back in America, where she has lived since earning her doctorate at Harvard. She said her father, a coal miner since the age of 14, had dreamed of immigrating to the U.S. and always wanted someone in the family to make it to the country he saw as a "beacon of hope in the world." Hill became an American citizen in 2002.

She was asked about a story she tells friends from when she was 11, when a boy in her class set one of her pigtails on fire while she was taking a test. She extinguished the fire with her hands and finished the test. Hill said she tells the story because of its "unfortunate consequences." Afterward, her mother gave her a bowl haircut, and she "looked like Richard III."

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Hill left the administration about a week before the July 25 call in which Trump asked Zelenskiy to investigate his Democratic rival Joe Biden, Biden's son and a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 election. She learned the details only when the White House released a rough transcript in September and said she was shocked.

"I sat in an awful lot of calls, and I have not seen anything like this," she said.

But the call did not come out of the blue. It was an outgrowth of a July 10 meeting of U.S. and Ukrainian officials at the White House that Hill witnessed and described to lawmakers in vivid detail.

Hill said Sondland "blurted out" that he and Trump's acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, had worked out a deal for Ukraine's president to visit the White House in exchange for opening the investigations. Her boss, national security adviser John Bolton, "immediately stiffened" and ended the meeting.

When Sondland led the Ukrainians to a room downstairs in the White House to continue the discussions, Bolton sent Hill to "find out what they're talking about." As she walked in, Sondland was trying to set up the meeting between the two presidents and mentioned Giuliani. Hill cut him off.

She reported back to Bolton, who told her to tell an NSC lawyer what she had heard and to make clear that "I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this."

Sondland on Wednesday pushed back on Hill's account. He said he doesn't remember the meeting being cut short and denied that by carrying out Trump's Ukraine policy he was engaging in "some kind of rogue diplomacy."

Hill testified that she was frustrated by Sondland, particularly over his casual use of cellphones. He not only used his to call Trump and foreign officials, but he was also giving out her number as well. Officials from Europe would appear at the gates of the White House and call her personal phone, which was kept in a lockbox. She would later find messages from irate officials who had been told by Sondland that they could meet with her.

She is sensitive to security risks. While writing a book on Putin published in 2013, she said her phone and Brookings' computer system were repeatedly hacked.

During her deposition, Hill's temper flared when asked about conspiracy theories, including those espoused by Trump and his allies, seeking to deny Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election. The reason she joined the Trump administration, she said, was because the U.S. is "in peril as a democracy" as a result of interference by Russians and others.

She said Thursday that the questions so unnerved her that she devoted much of her opening statement to addressing the Russia threat.

Hill said the theory that Ukraine, not Russia, was responsible for the 2016 election interference "is a fictional narrative that has been perpetrated and propagated by the Russian security services themselves."

And the Russians are gearing up to repeat their interference in the 2020 election. "We are running out of time to stop them," she said. "In the course of this investigation, I would ask that you please not promote politically driven falsehoods that so clearly advance Russian interests."

US calls for Iran crackdown videos, internet slowly returns

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranian authorities slowly eased up their sweeping blockage of internet access on Friday, as U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called for Iranians to send the U.S. videos "documenting the regime's crackdown" on protesters.

"The U.S. will expose and sanction the abuses," Pompeo tweeted early Friday, as pockets of Iran saw internet over landlines restored.

Authorities have said the internet may be entirely restored soon, suggesting Iran's government put down the demonstrations that began Nov. 15 over government-set gasoline prices rising.

Amnesty International said Tuesday that protest unrest and a subsequent security crackdown killed at least 106 people. Iran disputes that figure without offering its own. A U.N. office earlier said it feared the unrest may have killed "a significant number of people."

The jump in gasoline prices represents yet another burden on Iranians who have suffered through a

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painful currency collapse. That's a result of the reimposition of crippling U.S. economic sanctions as part of President Donald Trump's maximum pressure campaign against Tehran, following his unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Iran's relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani has promised the fuel price increase will fund new subsidies for poor families. Rouhani declared victory Wednesday in the unrest, blaming "the Zionists and Americans" for the violence.

Abolhassan Firoozabadi, the secretary of Iran's Supreme Cyberspace Council, told journalists Thursday that he believed the internet would be turned on "within the next two days."

Authorities restored internet service Thursday in Iran's Hormozgan province, home to the port city of Bandar Abbas, the state-run IRNA news agency report. Semiofficial news agencies said service was being restored in other parts of the country on Thursday afternoon, something the internet watchdog NetBlocks also noted.

"At the current time national connectivity has risen further to 10%," NetBlocks said in a tweet.

Iran's state TV said Friday that air defense exercises were being carried out as part of its annual military drills. State TV showed footage of air defense missile systems being fired and a patrol by jet fighters in the northern Semnan province.

Iran operates a domestically built air defense system alongside the sophisticated S-300 defense system from Russia. In June, Iran shot down an unmanned U.S. drone over the strategic Strait of Hormuz for alleged violation of its airspace.

Meanwhile, activists said Thursday that six conservationists working to save the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah have been sentenced to prison on internationally criticized espionage charges in Iran.

The New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran said Thursday that the convicted members of the nonprofit Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation face six to 10 years in prison for "contacts with the U.S. enemy state." The conservationists found themselves arrested over their use of camera traps to track the cheetahs, a common tool of wildlife experts.

Hopkins has 2 TDs, Texans beat Colts 20-17 to top AFC South

By KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Determined to bounce back from an embarrassing loss, the Houston Texans used big performances from Deshaun Watson and DeAndre Hopkins and solid defense to beat the Indianapolis Colts and move into first place in the AFC South.

Watson threw two touchdown passes to Hopkins and finished with 298 yards to help the Texans to the 20-17 win Thursday night.

The Texans (7-4), who were routed by Baltimore 41-7 on Sunday, trailed by four early in the fourth quarter when Hopkins got in front of Pierre Desir and stretched out to haul in a 30-yard reception for a 20-17 lead. The Texans got things going on that drive with a 33-yard run by Carlos Hyde.

"It was a good team win," coach Bill O'Brien said. "Guys came in here on Monday to turn the page and were very focused ... this week and it showed up on the field."

Houston's defense stepped up after the touchdown by Hopkins, forcing a punt on the next drive before stopping the Colts (6-5) on fourth-and-7 with 3 minutes left. Jacoby Brissett threw for 129 yards, and came up a yard shy of a first down on Indy's fourth-down attempt late in the fourth quarter.

"There's still plenty of football left, and we're far from out of this thing," Colts coach Frank Reich said. "This was a playoff atmosphere. Obviously, it was a good opportunity for us to take sole possession and have a sweep of Houston, but it didn't work out that way."

Hopkins finished with 94 yards receiving and his first TD reception came on a 35-yard grab in the second quarter.

Will Fuller, who returned after sitting out three games with a hamstring injury, had seven catches for 140 yards for the Texans.

"Anytime we have a healthy Will ... he's been a very productive guy," O'Brien said. "He's made chunk

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plays for us, touchdowns, and he's a great player. And when we get him as a part of our offense it really helps us and it opens up a lot of different things."

Watson was able to complete several long throws on Thursday including ones for 51 and 44 yards to Fuller. "I was able to put enough air on the ball and let our guys make plays and that's what they get paid to do, that's what they love do," Watson said. "Just give them a chance and most likely they're going to come down with it."

T.Y. Hilton had topped 100 receiving yards in four of his last six games against the Texans and entered averaging 133.3 receiving yards in seven career games at NRG Stadium. He wasn't a factor, finishing with just 18 yards receiving in his return after missing three games with a calf injury. Reich said Hilton was limited on Thursday and that they wanted to keep him under 30 plays.

There were about 6 minutes left in the third quarter when Jonathan Williams, who helped fill in for injured starter Marlon Mack, wriggled away from three defenders and dashed 13 yards for a touchdown to put the Colts up 17-10.

Fuller had a 51-yard reception on the first play of Houston's next drive, but the Texans couldn't move the ball after that and settled for a 36-yard field goal to cut the lead to four.

The Texans led 3-0 after a field goal early in the second quarter.

There were about 8 minutes left in the second when Kenny Moore tipped a pass from Watson and intercepted it. It was the first time Watson had thrown an interception at home since Oct. 14, 2018, against the Bills, a streak of 303 attempts which was the longest active run in the NFL.

The Colts cashed in on the mistake when Brissett scrambled 5 yards for a touchdown to make it 7-3.

There were 2 minutes left in the first half when Watson avoided the rush and found Hopkins wide open in the end zone for a 35-yard touchdown pass to put Houston back on top 10-7.

"I don't know where the safeties and the corners were, but they weren't in position, so I just kind of laid it out there," Watson said.

Indianapolis added a field goal at the end of the first half to leave it tied at 10-10 at halftime.

INJURIES

Houston ILB Dylan Cole injured his calf in the second half and didn't return. ... Texans DE Carlos Watkins left in the fourth quarter with a hamstring injury.

THEY SAID IT

Hilton on if a lack of practice contributed to his tough night: "Ain't got nothing to do with nothing. I just played bad. It's on me."

PILING UP TACKLES

Houston linebacker Zach Cunningham had a career-high 16 tackles to lead Houston's defense. It was the fourth time this season that the third-year player has had at least 10 tackles and he leads the team with 95 tackles.

UP NEXT

Colts: Host Tennessee on Dec. 1.

Texans: Host New England on Dec. 1.

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

Man found guilty of murdering British tourist in New Zealand

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — A New Zealand jury on Friday found a man guilty of murder in the death of 22-year-old British backpacker Grace Millane.

Millane died last December on her birthday after meeting the man through the dating app Tinder, going out for drinks with him, and then returning to his hotel apartment in central Auckland.

Prosecutors said the man strangled Millane to death. Defense lawyers claimed the death was accidental after the pair engaged in consensual erotic choking that went too far.

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But the jury didn't buy the defense. After the three-week trial, they deliberated for about five hours on Friday afternoon before returning the guilty verdict.

The name of the 27-year-old man is being kept secret for now by court order, a restriction that is sometimes imposed in the New Zealand judicial system. The man will likely face a mandatory life sentence, which comes with a minimum 10-year non-parole period. He is due to be sentenced Feb. 21.

After the trial, Millane's parents Gillian and David tearfully told media the verdict was welcomed by friends and family alike.

"It will not reduce the pain and suffering we have had to endure over the past year," David Millane said. "Grace was taken in the most brutal fashion a year ago and our lives have been ripped apart."

He said that "Grace was our sunshine and she will be missed forever."

Millane had been traveling through New Zealand as part of a planned yearlong trip abroad after graduating from university.

After the man killed Millane, he stuffed her body into a suitcase, drove to the Waitakere Ranges forest and buried her in a shallow grave, where police found her body a week later.

Her death shocked many in New Zealand, which prides itself on welcoming tourists and where many people travel abroad as well. Hundreds of people attended candlelight vigils after she died, and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern spoke about New Zealanders feeling "hurt and shame" that she was killed in their country.

Tourism is also one of New Zealand's largest industries, accounting for more than 20% of foreign exchange earnings and about 6% of the overall economy.

The case has been closely followed in Britain as well.

Among the key pieces of evidence for prosecutors was testimony from pathologists about the length of time, about five to 10 minutes, and amount of force it would take to kill somebody by strangling them.

Prosecutor Brian Dickey said that at some point, Millane would have lost consciousness, meaning the man would have needed to keep strangling her after she went lifeless under his grip, news organization RNZ reported.

One woman, who had previously dated the man, testified she feared for her life during a sexual encounter with him after the man sat on her face, restricting her breathing without her consent.

Prosecutors said the man took explicit photos of Millane after she died, RNZ reported, and used Google to search for "Waitakere Ranges" and "hottest fire" as he tried to figure out how to dispose of her body.

Defense lawyers argued Millane's death came down to two young, drunk and inexperienced people taking rough sex too far. The man told police that Millane had asked him to choke her and then encouraged him to use more force.

The defense argued the Google searches were random and it wasn't until the next morning when the man woke up that he realized Millane was dead and panicked, deciding to bury her rather than calling emergency services.

"It is natural for you to have sympathy for the Millane family and for Grace, who was here on what should have been a happy and exciting adventure," Auckland High Court Judge Simon Moore told jurors in his summing up, news organization Stuff reported.

But the judge said jurors couldn't let media reports or their emotions intrude on their "solemn task" of reaching a verdict based solely on the evidence presented in the courtroom.

Baghdad tunnel becomes a museum for Iraq's protest movement

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The images are both haunting and inspiring, transforming a once dreary, grim underpass into a vivid, colorful wall of art.

"We want a nation, not a prison," says one painting that depicts a man bursting free from behind bars. "Plant a revolution, and you will harvest a nation," reads another showing a hand flashing the victory sign over protesters heads.

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Some of the messages are less sentimental. "Look at us, Americans, this is all your fault," declares one. The Saadoun Tunnel has become an ad hoc museum for Iraq's massive anti-government protest movement. Along its walls, young artists draw murals, portraits and graffiti that illustrate the country's tortured past and the Iraq they aspire to.

The tunnel passes under Baghdad's Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the protests where thousands of people are camped out in a giant sit-in that has taken on the feel of a vibrant mini-city.

Almost daily, clashes erupt with security forces not far away firing tear gas, live rounds and stun grenades to prevent protesters from crossing bridges over the Tigris River to the Green Zone, the seat of Iraq's government. Tuk tuks — three-wheeled motorcycle transports — often zip back and forth through the Saadoun Tunnel, rushing wounded protesters from the front lines to medical clinics.

Saadoun Tunnel, the tuk tuks, the square and a nearby 14-story Saddam Hussein-era building on the Tigris that protesters took over have all become symbols of what has become the largest grassroots protest movement Iraq has seen. The protests erupted Oct. 1 over longstanding grievances at corruption, unemployment and a lack of basic services and quickly escalated into calls to sweep aside Iraq's sectarian system imposed after the 2003 U.S. invasion and its entire political elite.

Young protesters, men and women, throng the tunnel — actually a long underpass, most of which is open to the air except for enclosed portions directly beneath Tahrir — and pass time there hanging out or taking selfies in front of the murals. Caricatures on the walls mock Iraqi politicians; other paintings praise the tuk tuks; a woman with an Iraqi flag on her cheek flexes her bicep, recreating the famed U.S. "We Can Do It" poster; faces in drawings shout in anger or pain.

Haydar Mohammed said he and a group of other medical students were partly responsible for the murals. They met in Tahrir and saw the tunnels walls were a perfect medium to send a message to those who are suspicious of the protesters, he said.

"We are life-makers not death-makers," he said. "We decided to draw simple paintings to support our protester brothers and to express our message, which is a peace message."

Many of the murals carry calls for anti-sectarianism, peace and a free Iraq. In one painting, a little girl cries, declaring "They killed my dream," referring to the group of men behind her, some in religious clothes.

Another shows an Iraqi protester wearing a helmet against tear gas with the Arabic words: "In the heart is something that cannot be killed by guns, which is the nation." Nearby is scrawled, in English, "All What I want is life."

"Sitting in front of these portraits, people and candles is better than being in any coffeeshop. Every time I look at them I am hopeful that the revolution will not end," said Yahya Mohammed, 32, smoking a hookah in the tunnel and observing the scene.

"This tunnel gives me hope."

Associated Press journalist Ali Abdul-Hassan contributed.

Former Trump adviser undercuts GOP impeachment defenses

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former White House official said Thursday that President Donald Trump's top European envoy was sent on a "domestic political errand" seeking investigations of Democrats, stunning testimony that dismantled a main line of the president's defense in the impeachment inquiry.

In a riveting appearance on Capitol Hill, Fiona Hill also implored Republican lawmakers — and implicitly Trump himself — to stop peddling a "fictional narrative" at the center of the impeachment probe. She said baseless suggestions that Ukraine interfered in the 2016 election bolster Russia as it seeks to sow political divisions in the United States.

Testimony from Hill and David Holmes, a State Department adviser in Kyiv, capped an intense week in the historic inquiry and reinforced the central complaint: that Trump used his leverage over Ukraine, a young Eastern European democracy facing Russian aggression, to pursue political investigations. His al-

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leged actions set off alarms across the U.S. national security and foreign policy apparatus.

Hill had a front row seat to some of Trump's pursuits with Ukraine during her tenure at the White House. She testified in detail about her interactions with Gordon Sondland, saying she initially suspected the U.S. ambassador to the European Union was overstating his authority to push Ukraine to launch investigations into Democrats. But she says she now understands he was acting on instructions Trump sent through his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani.

"He was being involved in a domestic political errand, and we were being involved in national security foreign policy," she testified in a daylong encounter with lawmakers. "And those two things had just diverged."

It was just one instance in which Hill, as well as Holmes, undercut the arguments being made by Republicans and the White House. Both told House investigators it was abundantly clear Giuliani was seeking political investigations of Democrats and Joe Biden in Ukraine, knocking down assertions from earlier witnesses who said they didn't realize the purpose of the lawyer's pursuits. Trump has also said he was simply focused on rooting out corruption in Ukraine.

Giuliani "was clearly pushing forward issues and ideas that would, you know, probably come back to haunt us and in fact," Hill testified. "I think that's where we are today."

Hill also defended Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, the Army officer who testified earlier and whom Trump's allies tried to discredit. A previous witness said Hill raised concerns about Vindman, but she said those worries centered only on whether he had the "political antenna" for the situation at the White House.

The landmark House impeachment inquiry was sparked by a July 25 phone call, in which Trump asked Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for investigations into Biden and the Democratic National Committee. A still-anonymous whistleblower's official government complaint about that call led the House to launch the current probe.

After two weeks of public testimony, many Democrats believe they have enough evidence to begin writing articles of impeachment. Working under the assumption that Trump will be impeached by the House, White House officials and a small group of GOP senators met Thursday to discuss the possibility of a two week Senate trial.

There still remain questions about whether there will be additional House testimony, either in public session or behind closed doors, including from high-profile officials such as former Trump national security adviser John Bolton.

In what was seen as a nudge to Bolton, her former boss, Hill said those with information have a "moral obligation to provide it."

She recounted one vivid incident at the White House where Bolton told her he didn't want to be involved in any "drug deal" that Sondland and Trump's acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney were cooking up over the Ukrainian investigations Trump wanted. Hill said she conveyed similar concerns directly to Sondland.

"And I did say to him, 'Ambassador Sondland, Gordon, I think this is all going to blow up,'" she said. "And here we are."

Hill and Holmes both filled in gaps in previous testimony and poked holes in the accounts of other witnesses. They were particularly adamant that efforts by Trump and Giuliani to investigate the Burisma gas company were well-known by officials working on Ukraine to be the equivalent of probing the Bidens. That runs counter to earlier testimony from Sondland and Kurt Volker, the former Ukraine special envoy, who insisted they had no idea there was a connection.

Holmes, a late addition to the schedule, also undercut some of Sondland's recollections about an extraordinary phone call between the ambassador and Trump on July 26, the day after the president's call with Ukraine. Holmes was having lunch with Sondland in Kyiv and said he could overhear Trump ask about "investigations" during a "colorful" conversation.

After the phone call, Holmes said Sondland told him Trump didn't care about Ukraine but rather about "big stuff," meaning the "Biden investigation." Sondland said he didn't recall raising the Bidens.

During Thursday's testimony, the president tweeted that while his own hearing is "great" he's never been

able to understand another person's conversation that wasn't on speaker. "Try it," he suggested.

Republicans continued to mount a vigorous defense of Trump. And the top Republican on the panel was undeterred by Hill's warnings about advancing "fictions" on Ukraine. GOP Rep. Devin Nunes of California said Russian interference in the 2016 election didn't preclude Ukraine from also trying to swing the election to stop Trump's presidency.

"That is the Democrats' pitiful legacy," Nunes. He called it all part of the same effort, from "the Russia hoax" to the "shoddy sequel" of the impeachment inquiry.

Hill, the British-born coal miner's daughter who became a U.S. citizen in 2002, left the White House before the July phone call that sparked the impeachment probe. She worked for both Republican and Democratic administrations and said she joined the Trump White House because she shared the president's belief that relations with Russia needed to improve.

Still, she was adamant that Russia is gearing up to intervene again in the 2020 U.S. election, declaring: "We are running out of time to stop them."

She warned that political chaos in Washington plays into Moscow's hands.

"This is exactly what the Russian government was hoping for," Hill said. "They would pit one side of our electorate against the others."

Associated Press writers Colleen Long, Laurie Kellman, Zeke Miller, Matthew Daly, Andrew Taylor and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Snowboarding visionary Jake Burton Carpenter dies at 65

By **EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer**

Whether you had a gold medal hanging from your neck, were just learning how to stand on a snowboard, or were one of those flustered skiers wondering where all the kids in the baggy pants were coming from, you knew the name "Burton."

Jake Burton Carpenter, the man who changed the game on the mountain by fulfilling a grand vision of what a snowboard could be, died Wednesday night of complications stemming from a relapse of testicular cancer. He was 65.

In an email sent to the staff at Burton, CEO John Lacy called Carpenter "our founder, the soul of snowboarding, the one who gave us the sport we love so much."

Carpenter was not the inventor of the snowboard. But 12 years after Sherman Poppen tied together a pair of skis with a rope to create what was then called a "Snurfer," the 23-year-old entrepreneur, then known only as Jake Burton, quit his job in Manhattan, moved back to Vermont and went about dreaming of how far a snowboard might take him.

"I had a vision there was a sport there, that it was more than just a sledding thing, which is all it was then," Burton said in a 2010 interview with The Associated Press.

For years, Burton's snowboards were largely snubbed at resorts — their dimensions too untested, their riders too unrefined, their dangers all too real — and many wouldn't allow them to share the slopes with the cultured ski elite in Colorado or California or, heaven forbid, the Swiss Alps.

But those riders were a force of nature. And for all their risk-taking, rule-breaking, sidwinding trips down the mountain, they spent money, too. Throughout the last decade, snowboarders have accounted for more than 25% of visitors to mountain resorts in the United States. They have bankrolled a business worth more than \$1 billion annually — a big chunk of which is spent on Burton gear.

"People take it for granted now," said Pat Bridges, a longtime writer for Snowboarder Magazine, who has followed the industry for decades. "They don't even realize that the name 'Burton' isn't a company. It's a person. Obviously, it's the biggest brand in snowboarding. The man himself is even bigger."

In 1998, and with Carpenter's tacit blessing, the Olympics got in on the act, in hopes of injecting some youth into an older-skewing program filled with ski jumpers, bobsledders, figure skaters and hockey players.

As the years passed, Carpenter straddled the delicate line between the "lifestyle sport" he'd helped cre-

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ate — one that professed to value fun over winning, losing, money or Olympic medals — and the mass-marketing behemoth snowboarding was fast becoming.

"He saw himself as a steward to snowboarding," Bridges said. "I'm not saying he was infallible, or that he always made the right choices. But at least that was always part of his calculus: 'What impact is this decision going to have on snowboarding?'"

Though Burton is a private company that does not release financials, its annual sales were north of \$500 million as of 2015. In addition to the hundreds of retail stores that sell the company's merchandise, Burton has 30 flagship shops in America, 11 more in Europe and another 11 spread across the Pacific and Asia — a burgeoning market that Carpenter started developing a decade ago, during a time when the IOC was beginning the process of awarding three straight Winter Games to the continent.

At a bar in Pyeongchang, South Korea, not far from where snowboarding celebrated its 20th anniversary at the Olympics last year, there was a wall filled with Burton pictures and memorabilia — as sure a sign as any of the global reach of a company that remains headquartered not far from where it was founded in Carpenter's garage, in Londonderry, Vermont.

For all his financial success, folks were always more likely to run into Carpenter wearing a snowsuit than a sportscoat. He was a fan of early morning backcountry rides, and he had to stay in good shape to keep up with some of the company he rode with.

Burton sponsored pretty much every big name in the business at one time or another— from Seth Wescott to Shaun White, from Kelly Clark to Chloe Kim.

Indeed, it is virtually impossible to avoid the name "Burton" once the snow starts falling at any given mountain around the world these days. The name is plastered on the bottoms of snowboards, embroidered on jackets, stenciled into bindings and omnipresent in the shops around the villages.

The Burton U.S. Open, held each winter in Vail on a rider-friendly halfpipe traditionally recognized as the best on the circuit, remains a signature event on the snowboarding calendar.

"I had no clue whatsoever that you'd be building parks and halfpipes and that kind of thing," Burton said in his 2010 interview, when asked about the reach his modest little snowboard had had over the decades. "We're doing something that's going to last here. It's not like just hitting the lottery one day."

His final years were not the easiest.

Not long after being given a clean bill of health following his 2011 cancer diagnosis, Carpenter was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disease, Miller Fisher Syndrome, that left him completely paralyzed for a short time.

After a long rehab, he was back on the mountain, and in 2018, he was standing near the finish line to watch White win his third Olympic gold medal.

"Jake embraced me and told me how proud he was of me and my career, and I'll never forget that," White said late Thursday in an Instagram post. "I will do what I can to help carry his legacy forward."

This month, Carpenter sent an email to his staff: "You will not believe this, but my cancer has come back," he said, while outlining his intention to fight the good fight.

Not two weeks later, Lacy sent out another email, notifying employees that Jake had died peacefully. The email included one, simple directive.

"I'd encourage everyone to do what Jake would be doing tomorrow, and that's riding," Lacy wrote. "It's opening day at Stowe, so consider taking some turns together, in celebration of Jake."

Garrett's suspension for helmet attack upheld after appeal

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Myles Garrett's goal was to be NFL's top defensive player this season. He won't finish it.

Garrett's indefinite suspension for smashing Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph over the head with a helmet was upheld Thursday by an appeals officer who decided the severe penalty on the Cleveland Browns star defensive end is fair.

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One of the league's most dominant edge rushers, Garrett is banned for the final six regular-season games and playoffs — if Cleveland qualifies — for pulling off Rudolph's helmet and cracking him with it in the closing seconds of the Browns' 21-7 win over their AFC North rival last week.

On Wednesday, Garrett attended his appeals hearing in New York and made his case to former player James Thrash for a reduction of his penalty, which will damage Cleveland's season and stain the 24-year-old's budding career.

Thrash didn't find enough compelling evidence to lessen Garrett's punishment, which will keep him off the field until 2020 — at the earliest.

As part of his historic suspension for using his helmet "as a weapon," Garrett must also meet with Commissioner Roger Goodell's office before he can be reinstated. He's been fined \$45,623.

Appeals officer Derrick Brooks, a Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker, did reduce the suspension for Steelers center Maurkice Pouncey from three games to two for punching and kicking Garrett following the shocking assault on Rudolph, who earlier this week said he "should have done a better job keeping my composure in that situation."

Brooks also upheld a \$35,096 fine for Pouncey, who will miss the Steelers' rematch with the Browns on Dec. 1 at Heinz Field, where the atmosphere is intense for every game between Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

Garrett's violent act — he pulled Rudolph's helmet off and clobbered him with it — on national TV and its aftermath have been a dominant topic since it happened. The story took a new twist when ESPN, using anonymous sources, first reported that Garrett told the league during his meeting with Thrash that Rudolph used a racial slur just before the brawl erupted.

Steelers spokesman Burt Lauten said Rudolph "vehemently denies" the report. Rudolph had been scheduled to speak to reporters after practice but declined shortly after the report surfaced.

NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said the league investigated Garrett's claim and "found no such evidence." Garrett stood by his claims about Rudolph in a posting on his Twitter account.

"I was assured that the hearing was space that afforded the opportunity to speak openly and honestly about the incident that led to my suspension," he wrote. "This was not meant for public dissemination, nor was it a convenient attempt to justify my actions or restore my image in the eyes of those I disappointed.

"I know what I heard. Whether my opponent's comment was born out of frustration or ignorance, I cannot say. But his actions do not excuse my lack of restraint in the moment, and I truly regret the impact this has had on the league, the Browns and our devoted fans."

Browns tackle Sheldon Richardson was one of several players who said Garrett didn't mention anything about Rudolph making a disparaging comment.

"I wouldn't doubt it, though," said Richardson, who felt Rudolph deserved to be suspended. "Had to be something to get him out of his body. ... I know he wouldn't lie on nothin' like that."

The Browns are sticking by Garrett.

"As we've consistently stated, our organizational support for Myles will continue," general manager John Dorsey said in a statement released hours after Thrash's ruling. "He is a man of high character and unquestionable integrity. He was open and honest with us about the incident from the start. He has taken accountability for his actions on Thursday night and this situation will not define him.

"As an organization, our focus going forward remains on the task-at-hand, which is preparing for the Miami Dolphins."

Garrett will lose \$1.14 million in salary and his absence is a significant setback to the Browns (4-6), who will be without their best defensive player as they try to end a postseason drought dating to 2002.

The suspension is the longest issued for a single on-field behavior. Tennessee defensive lineman Albert Haynesworth was suspended five games in 2006 for stomping on the face Cowboys center Andre Gurode in 2006.

Garrett's stunning behavior was out of character for the soft-spoken Pro Bowler who likes to write poetry. His teammates were shocked by what happened, and several wondered if Rudolph, who avoided suspension but will be fined, did something to trigger the outburst.

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"Whatever the actions were, this is a guy I've never seen anything like that," wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. said moments before Thrash's decision was announced. I'm just praying there's a resolution for him. He's a very good dude and we all miss him."

Browns guard Joel Bitonio didn't condone Garrett's behavior, but never imagined seeing his teammate lose control.

"It's still one of those things where you can't really swing a helmet like a weapon," he said. "It's tough to justify that no matter what's happening. Obviously in the heat of the moment it could anger you even more if that's what was said, and you could see why he was kind of upset out there. ... That's the crazy part with life is you have two people and you're probably never going to find out the exact truth. It's always somewhere in between usually."

Browns defensive tackle Larry Ogunjobi was suspended one game for shoving a helmet-less Rudolph to the ground. Thrash upheld his suspension but rescinded a \$10,527 fine on Wednesday.

Several players from both teams are expected to be fined for leaving their respective sidelines as the officials tried to restore order during the game's chaotic ending. Those penalties will be released Saturday.

The Browns and Steelers organizations were each fined \$250,000 for their roles in the incident. Both released statements stating regret.

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

Teen used 'ghost gun' in California high school shooting

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The 16-year-old boy who fatally shot two fellow students and wounded three others last week at a Southern California high school used an unregistered, untraceable "ghost gun," Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva said Thursday.

Villanueva told media outlets that Nathaniel Berhow's .45 caliber, 1911-model replica semi-automatic pistol was assembled from gun parts and did not have a serial number.

Such weapons are a growing problem for law enforcement around the country because the parts are easy to obtain and the guns take limited expertise to build. In Southern California, federal authorities say one-third of all the firearms seized are ghost guns.

California has among the strictest gun laws in the country, but they are based on traditional firearms that are made by manufacturers and labeled so ownership can be traced.

"Congress and state legislatures enact all these crimes about gun registration but now the gun industry is creating a way to just bypass the entire thing by creating a mechanism to manufacture weapons yourself," Villanueva said.

It's legal to purchase gun kits and assemble them at home. That method allows the purchaser, sometimes a minor or other person prohibited from owning firearms, to avoid background checks required to purchase ready-made guns from licensed dealers.

Thomas Groneman, a detective sergeant with the Suffolk County Police Department in New York, said his agency built their own Glock-replica handgun from parts they ordered online as an experiment earlier this year.

"It was ridiculously easy to do it," he said. "It's scary because anybody — convicted felons, people with psychological issues — can order it online."

Several high-profile crimes in recent years have involved ghost guns. For instance, a Northern California gunman built his own rifles — despite a court order prohibiting him from having guns — and killed his wife and four others in a 2017 rampage.

While hobbyists have long been able to use spare parts to create a firearm, modern technology has made it far easier to build a deadly weapon.

Adam Winkler, a gun policy expert and professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, said that means more criminals will use them and it will be more difficult for police to solve crimes.

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"Anytime you can trace a gun, you have a little bit more information," he said. "How did this gun get here? Who sold it, who was the gunmaker, who was the first person they sold it to and what happened?"

Police don't yet know where and when Berhow got the handgun he used to shoot students at Saugus High School in the Los Angeles suburb of Santa Clarita. As the school day was starting on Nov. 14, he pulled the gun from his backpack in an open-air quad and in 16 seconds shot five students at random, police said.

Berhow counted his rounds, saving the last bullet for himself, investigators said. He died from a head wound the next day.

Anne Muehlberger, 15, and Dominic Blackwell, 14, were killed. The other three students were hospitalized and the last of them went home earlier this week.

Berhow's father was an avid hunter who died two years ago. He had six registered guns, but officials found several other unregistered firearms in the family home after the shooting and are working to determine their history.

The sheriff said Berhow's motive remains a mystery, even after investigators searched his home and interviewed 45 people. Berhow's mother had no idea of her son's plans, Villanueva said.

Authorities said Berhow had shown no signs of violence and didn't appear to be linked to any ideology or terrorist group. He ran cross country, was a Boy Scout and had a girlfriend.

The sheriff's department is working with federal authorities to unlock Berhow's cellphone, Villanueva said.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump, GOP claims on Ukraine corruption

By HOPE YEN and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and his GOP allies pressed a defense Thursday that he acted appropriately in withholding military aid to Ukraine out of concern over the country's corruption and claimed the House impeachment hearings amounted to a rogue process.

The claims don't match up with known facts.

A look at some of the remarks on Day 5 of public hearings in the impeachment inquiry by the House Intelligence Committee and Trump's response:

CALIFORNIA REP. DEVIN NUNES, the top Republican on the committee: "President Trump had good reason to be wary of Ukrainian election meddling against his campaign."

THE FACTS: That's not credible. The theory that Ukrainians interfered in the U.S. election and that Democrats cooperated in that effort is unsubstantiated.

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.

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 was cooked up by or with the help of Ukrainians. But the evidence points conclusively to Russia, not Ukraine.

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

NUNES: Trump also has good reason to be wary "of widespread corruption in that country."

THE FACTS: He's pointing to an oft-made defense by Trump and GOP allies that he withheld military aid to Ukraine because of concerns about corruption. But the hearings have produced bountiful testimony that Trump was singularly focused on making Democrats the target of Ukrainian investigations.

The committee is reviewing whether Trump pressed Ukraine for a political "favor" to investigate Democrats in exchange for the aid, as a whistleblower alleges and others have testified.

In his first phone call with Ukraine's new leader, in April, the White House said at the time that Trump

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discussed his interest in having Ukraine rein in widespread corruption. But in the recently released rough transcript of the call, he did not mention corruption at all.

Trump had \$391 million in congressionally approved U.S. assistance withheld from Ukraine from July to September.

The Defense Department had already certified to congressional committees on May 23 that Ukraine had made enough progress on reducing corruption to receive the military assistance. Before the July hold on the aid, the Trump administration had approved sending aid to Ukraine nearly 50 times without holding it because of corruption concerns.

Witnesses testified that Trump did not articulate concerns about corruption in Ukraine other than expressing interest into investigations that would benefit him politically.

In his July 25 call, Trump told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as they discussed military aid, "I would like for you to do us a favor, though" and investigate Joe Biden, his son and Democrats going back to the 2016 U.S. election, citing in part the discredited conspiracy theory involving Ukraine in that election.

Trump ultimately released the aid, on Sept. 11, after Congress became aware of what he had done. A few days earlier, congressional committees had begun looking into the matter, aware that a whistleblower had a complaint in motion.

REP. ADAM SCHIFF, Democratic committee chairman: "I think the American people can be forgiven if they have the same impression, listening to some of the statements of my colleagues during this hearing, that Russia didn't intervene in our election. It was all the Ukrainians."

FIONA HILL, former special adviser to Trump on National Security Council: "Based on questions and statements I have heard, some of you on this committee appear to believe that Russia and its security services did not conduct a campaign against our country and that perhaps somehow for some reason Ukraine did. This is a fictional narrative that is being perpetrated and propagated by the Russian security services themselves."

REP. ELISE STEFANIK, Republican of New York: "Not a single Republican member of this committee has said that Russia did not meddle in the 2016 elections. ... To have our Democratic colleagues say these untruthful statements just reeks of political desperation."

THE FACTS: Stefanik may be right that Republicans on the committee did not explicitly deny that Russia attacked the U.S. election. Yet Schiff and Hill may also be right in saying that Republicans left that impression at the hearings.

Some Republicans on the committee repeatedly gave credence to the conspiracy theory that connects Ukraine, not Russia, to the 2016 interference and the hacking of the Democratic National Committee. To buy into this theory is to minimize Russian culpability at the very least, if not to discount it entirely.

Trump himself lent credence to the notion in his phone call with Ukraine's president, pressing for an investigation into a theory that senior advisers had told him much earlier was groundless. "The server, they say Ukraine has it," he said on the call.

A 2018 report by the then-Republican majority of the House Intelligence Committee agreed with U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia interfered in the election, but disagreed with parts of the agencies' assessment that said Russia did so to help Trump.

TRUMP: "Keep fighting tough, Republicans, you are dealing with human scum who have taken Due Process and all of the Republican Party's rights away from us." — tweet Thursday.

THE FACTS: He's off base. The House is conducting a hearing, not a trial, so no constitutional rights are being violated here. Trump would be afforded rights more akin to those in a criminal trial in later stages of the impeachment process if it proceeds.

The process also is unfolding as outlined in the Constitution, which gives the House the sole power to impeach and the Senate the sole power to remove a president from office.

Trump currently hasn't been charged with anything and so has no constitutional right to be represented

by a lawyer in this proceeding.

The hearings led by the House Intelligence Committee resemble the investigative phase of criminal cases, generally conducted in private and without the participation of the person under investigation.

In future House Judiciary Committee hearings that presumably would result in the drafting of impeachment articles, Trump would be invited to attend and his lawyers could question witnesses and object to testimony and evidence, similar to the process in the impeachment proceedings against Presidents Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton.

If there is a Senate trial, Trump's legal team would defend the president against impeachment articles approved by the House in an environment that would look like a typical trial in some respects.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

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AP: Catholic boards hailed as fix for sex abuse often fail

By REESE DUNKLIN, MITCH WEISS and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

Facing thousands of cases of clergy sex abuse, U.S. Catholic leaders addressed their greatest crisis in the modern era with a promised reform: Mandatory review boards.

These independent panels with lay people in each diocese would review allegations fairly and kindly. And they would help bishops ensure that no abusive priests stayed in ministry.

But almost two decades later, an Associated Press investigation of review boards across the country shows they have broadly failed to uphold these commitments. Instead, review boards appointed by bishops and operating in secrecy have routinely undermined sex abuse claims from victims, shielded accused priests and helped the church avoid payouts.

The AP also found dozens of cases in which review boards rejected complaints from survivors, only to have them later validated by secular authorities. In a few instances, board members were themselves clergy accused of sexual misconduct. And many abuse survivors told the AP they faced hostility and humiliation from boards.

When a victim in Florida went before a board, a church defense attorney there grilled him about his abuse until he wept. When another man in Ohio braced to tell a panel of strangers how a priest had raped him, one of them, to his disbelief, was knitting a pink sweater. And when a terrified woman in Iowa told her story of abuse, one member was asleep; the board's finding against her was later thrown into doubt by a court ruling in her favor.

The AP checked all the roughly 180 dioceses in the U.S. for information, reviewed thousands of pages of church and court records and interviewed more than 75 abuse survivors, board members and others to uncover a tainted process where the church hierarchy holds the reins of power at every stage.

Bishops have appointed church defense attorneys and top aides to boards. Bishops choose which cases go to the board, what evidence members see and what criteria is used to decide if an allegation is "substantiated" or "credible." And sometimes, the AP found, even where boards did find cases credible, bishops still sided with the priest and ignored the findings.

"It's a fraud. It's a sham. It's a cover-up," said David Lasher, 56, the owner of a furniture design company who told the review board in St. Petersburg, Florida, in April about his sexual abuse by a priest. "There's no one on the board that cares for the victim...it's all about protecting the church."

The board ruled against Lasher, and the diocese stopped paying for his counseling. AP does not typically name sex abuse victims, but Lasher and others opted to be identified.

Several bishops contacted by the AP, including St. Petersburg's Gregory Parkes, did not respond to requests for comment. Some referred the AP to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which also did not respond to interview requests. Others, such as Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore, said that while

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improvements are possible, review boards are living up to the promises of the reforms mandated in 2002.

"They are critical to regaining the trust and confidence of our people, who rightly believe in increased lay involvement in such matters," said Lori, who served on the conference's sex abuse committee when the reforms were passed.

The Baltimore archdiocese names its board members, which, Lori said, "inspires confidence in the process," and it does not include high-level church officials. An annual report that the board produced this year at Lori's direction didn't say how members ruled, but noted that in 11 cases, one priest was removed and 10 others were already disciplined or deceased. The victims were offered counseling.

"Diocesan Review Boards have come a long way," added Lafayette, Indiana, Bishop Timothy Doherty, who has been serving as head of the conference's child protection committee. "Our level of professionalism is up tremendously."

However, at least a dozen reports by government investigators and outside consultants with access to church documents have questioned the independence of boards, their treatment of victims or their thoroughness. These include at least seven grand jury and state attorney general reports.

In Illinois, for example, where the attorney general's probe remains under way, investigators have turned up evidence that dioceses scoured victims' personal lives to discredit them. In Colorado, an investigator jointly appointed by the state and church said Denver's board showed too much bias in support of the archdiocese and little understanding of sexual assault and trauma. And in Pennsylvania, a 2016 grand jury investigating the Altoona-Johnstown diocese called the board's work a cover-up cloaked "in the guise of advocacy," with members focused on "fact-finding for litigation" in case the victim sued.

The review board was an attempt to convince the public "that the days of a mysterious bishop deciding how to handle a scandalous and heinous report of child molestation and sodomy were over," the jury wrote. "In reality," it added, a board is "only as real as any bishop may want it to be."

Even reports by the bishops' conference have dinged dioceses for ignoring boards — sometimes leaving them dormant for more than a year — and have repeatedly warned of "complacency." Review board members past and present told AP about dioceses gaming the process, from failing to keep them informed to using aides to steer deliberations.

"It's all internal. That's the problem," said the Rev. James Connell, who served nearly a decade on a review board in Milwaukee. "It's the church thinking the church is gonna fix the church. It's not that the review board didn't do what the review board was asked to do. It's that it's the whole wrong approach."

PICKING THE BOARDS

Clergy sex abuse has cost more than \$4 billion and implicated at least 5,100 priests by the church's own count since 2002, when the crisis erupted nationwide. Despite promises of accountability, the church has again been forced to reckon with abuse after a damning grand jury report last year on generations of assaults and cover-ups in Pennsylvania spurred investigations across the country.

The review board path is supposed to give victims the opportunity to get validation from the church, especially for cases old enough that statutes of limitations prevent them from being tried in court. While dioceses are expected to report possible crimes to authorities, review boards and their findings are entirely separate from secular law enforcement.

The secrecy that is a trademark of many boards starts with how bishops and their administrators select members — perhaps where they exert the most influence.

More than half of the dioceses in the country don't reveal the names of members of their review boards on their websites. A few published them instead in the Official Catholic Directory, a thick book of church listings retailing for nearly \$400. Some dioceses like St. Louis said they didn't identify members as a "professional courtesy," and others like Dallas said members could go public if they wanted.

"They know my deepest secret, and I can't even know what their names or titles are?" said abuse survivor Becky Ianni, who couldn't get details about board members in Richmond, Virginia. "When you don't know their names, it's like going into this darkness."

Ianni eventually was allowed to speak before a different board in Arlington, Virginia, where member

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identities were revealed. She called the ordeal in 2007 "pure hell," and said one member fell asleep and another flipped through a magazine.

The Arlington board ultimately found in Ianni's favor. The diocese said every survivor that comes before the board must be "listened to with great respect and sincerity."

Even the official names of boards can mask what they do: the "Independent Fitness Review Board," the "Conduct Response Team" and the "Ethics and Integrity in Ministry Review Board" are a few.

When board members' identities do become known, there's often cause for concern.

In 2002, when mandatory boards were first announced at a bishops' meeting in Dallas, the proposal called for five or more people of "outstanding integrity and good judgment," most of them not employed by the diocese. But that policy was watered down due to Vatican-dictated rewrites that stated boards must be "confidential," they must have at least five members "in full communion with the church" and their duties "may" include advising bishops on abuse allegations.

Over the next year, outsiders foreshadowed problems. The head of a national lay advisory group that bishops created to monitor reforms, former Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating, warned: "We will look rather unkindly at a lawyer for the diocese, a head of Catholic Charities, being on a board – someone who appears to be joined at the hip with the bishop."

Yet at least 40 bishops have put on boards high-ranking aides and attorneys who defended the church or its priests in sex-assault cases, based on AP's review of the roughly 80 dioceses that posted member names. That means the same person who reports to the bishop and possibly handles abuse cases for the church could be hearing victims' allegations, creating a potential conflict of interest. AP found the connections by viewing lawsuits, online biographies and news archives.

In the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, the seven-member panel includes two priests and two deacons. In Montana, a voting member handles most of the Helena diocese's legal affairs and guided it through a 2014 bankruptcy spurred by a crush of sex-abuse claims. In West Virginia, another diocesan attorney with voting power this year defended former Wheeling-Charleston Bishop Michael Bransfield against an employee's assault allegations.

AP even found three cases of clergy serving on boards who themselves faced allegations of sexual misconduct. Two had left the board by the time they were publicly accused. But one joined after a review board in the same diocese had dismissed a complaint against him as "not credible," and served until a lawsuit named him years later.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

Some bishops and review board members disagree that having attorneys and aides involved is a conflict of interest.

In Louisville, Kentucky, where four out of nine board members were church officials or clergy, a consultant this year urged the archdiocese to cut down the number of church employee members to "emphasize the board's independence." But Archbishop Joseph Kurtz said through a spokesperson that he didn't see a problem, especially since one clergy member who served recently was an advocate for victims, and another was himself a survivor. Nonetheless, he said he would follow the recommendation and replace one of two church officials.

John Laun, the review board chair in Louisville and a retired state court judge, said church officials don't direct the conversation, and noted that the consultant found the archdiocese hadn't withheld anything. He estimated the board handles four to five cases a year and deems most credible.

"We have always been independent," Laun said. "The lay members are all strong-willed people from the get-go."

That was not the experience of Matt Connolly, a survivor and a former member of the Covington, Kentucky, review board. Connolly said he saw a shift in the board's approach to cases once the diocese became the target of a class-action lawsuit. Its attorney began interjecting, cutting off discussions and cautioning members not to broach subjects the diocese feared could be raised in court.

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Members were also discouraged from writing notes or leaving with documents. In many dioceses, AP found, members are required to sign non-disclosure agreements, and some policies don't allow them to take or keep detailed minutes of meetings.

"They've got people who are going to follow the line and keep it secret," Connolly said. "Everybody's a tool of the bishop."

Ultimately, for reasons Connolly does not know, he and all his colleagues were replaced in a single swoop around 2009.

The AP asked the Covington diocese for a response from Bishop Roger Foys. The diocese instead directed a reporter to Bill Burleigh, a former news executive who now chairs the review board. Burleigh described its members as "independent thinking," adding that characterizations of them as pawns of the hierarchy are "not the board I'm familiar with."

Burleigh defended Foys as a strong bishop. He added that some Catholic laypeople have tried to speak as frankly as possible to the church hierarchy, but recognize that final judgment is up to the bishops, "some of whom have acquitted themselves and some of whom have fallen short."

Some attorneys and aides on boards have votes, while others are consultants. But either way, their presence at meetings can make for a grueling experience for victims.

Lasher, the furniture design company owner, said the chairwoman of the St. Petersburg board interrupted him as he tried to recount how a priest had molested him as a boy in his own home, taken him to bath houses and forced oral sex.

"We already know it," he quoted her as saying.

Then the church's defense attorney started pelting questions: Did he remember the color of the bath houses' walls? Could he name anyone there?

Others joined in. It became so intense that Lasher cried.

"It was like a corporate meeting," he recalled, "and I'm the one being fired."

Near the end, according to Lasher and three others in the room, the church attorney told members there was no evidence the now-deceased priest had abused others, and a bishop's aide on the board called the cleric "beloved."

A month later, a letter from the attorney said the board thought his testimony was articulate and believable, but members "could not conclude anything to substantiate the allegation." The diocese left the priest off its list of "credibly" accused clergy.

"David goes in and bares his soul, thinking....Jesus is merciful, and Jesus wants the right thing for everyone," said legal advocate Peter Schweitzer, a former priest who works with dozens of survivors and was at the meeting. "And that doesn't happen."

The attorney for the St. Petersburg diocese, Joseph DiVito, said he couldn't discuss the specifics of Lasher's case, but that he wasn't mistreated by the board.

"My recollection is very different," DiVito said. "Look, the review board met at 6:30. They're all volunteers. They hadn't been home to eat dinner. He probably saw some plates and food. But I assure you it wasn't a party."

DiVito said when the accused is dead, it's considered an unsubstantiated case because there's no way to determine what happened.

Some abuse survivors say clergy are not always an obstacle to justice on the review boards. Ann Phillips Browning filed a formal complaint in 2010 to the Kalamazoo, Michigan, diocese about her abuse as a teen decades ago by a visiting cleric from India. She said a local priest who was also a licensed counselor informed review board members about trauma, positively influenced the bishop and "made all the difference in the world."

"Without fail, everyone who asked a question was very, very kind, very trauma informed, very affirming," Browning said.

The diocese ultimately found her report credible, records show. The cleric was criminally charged months ago as part of a Michigan attorney general probe.

Dr. Jim Richter, a survivor of priest abuse, also praised the St. Paul-Minneapolis board he serves on.

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However, he said he has become convinced that some boards are full of “unqualified, well-meaning, but ultimately incompetent” members.

“It is absolutely possible that you could be walking into, at worst, a den of wolves,” he said.

CONTROLLING THE PROCESS

Bishops and their aides decide whether to investigate a complaint at all based on a “semblance of truth” — a term that is interpreted differently by dioceses and allows room to drop cases, records show.

In Illinois, for example, preliminary findings from the attorney general’s probe said the process used in the state’s six dioceses ranges from too complex to too general, is “a mystery” to survivors and lets dioceses operate in a “non-transparent manner.” Dead priests there commonly get a pass, even if their victims are still suffering, and cases against those accused by a single person aren’t pursued aggressively despite “reason to believe that survivor.”

In Missouri, the Kansas City-St. Joseph diocese didn’t always tell the review board about complaints against priests or give members all the evidence, according to an outside report commissioned by the diocese in 2011. Such failures enabled one priest to stay on duty for several months after church workers found child pornography on his computer. In the end, he was caught again with more pornography and arrested, and Bishop Robert Finn was convicted of a misdemeanor charge of failing to report child abuse to secular authorities. Finn was sentenced to two years of probation.

In Philadelphia, then-chair Ana Maria Catanzaro said she was stunned when a 2011 grand jury named 37 accused priests who had remained in ministry and slammed her review board for disregarding “very convincing evidence,” leading to decisions “devoid of common sense.” Catanzaro said the archdiocese had sent the board allegations for only 10 priests, and did not share information such as priests’ psychological evaluations. She left the board in 2012.

“Little did I know they were lying to my face,” Catanzaro said of the church hierarchy. “They lied to me just like they lied to everyone else.”

The archdiocese did not respond to requests for comment.

The evidence brought before the board is key to the outcome of a case, said Jennifer Haselberger, a canon lawyer and former top official for three dioceses in the Midwest. She raised concerns about whether officials at the St. Paul-Minneapolis archdiocese were telling the board everything they knew, enabling some troubled priests to stay in ministry.

She resigned in 2013 after her efforts went nowhere. An internal task force created months later by the archdiocese issued a report that backed many of her concerns, including that church officials had “sometimes failed to inform the clergy review board of allegations.”

Boards remain at the mercy of the dioceses, Haselberger said — and “that’s really the problem.”

How bishops exert their power over the board varies from diocese to diocese.

Some use professional investigators to look into cases, and have demanded survivors’ counseling, school, bank and even gynecological records, along with information on how often they attended Mass. Some restrict questioning of victims by board members. At least one diocese — Springfield, Mass. — explicitly bars survivors involved in lawsuits from bringing their attorneys to board meetings.

Bishops may even decide whether victims appear before the board at all.

Riley Kinn was assured he’d have that opportunity after he brought his report of abuse by a priest at his high school to the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, in 2017. A contracting job in 2015 had taken him back to the rectory where it happened, triggering a panic attack. He suffered a recurring nightmare where the priest waited in a school hallway trying to pull him into an empty classroom.

The diocese sent a retired police detective to interview him, and the investigator took names of others who could back his account. Kinn reiterated that he wanted to speak to the board. But months later, he learned by letter that the board had found his allegations “unsubstantiated” - without hearing from him or any other possible victims he named.

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"I was like, really? Unsubstantiated?" Kinn said. "I asked myself, 'What kind of investigation did they do?'"

The decision was especially perplexing because the same priest had already been found credibly accused in another case in 2003, and the diocese had paid a settlement. In a January meeting, Bishop Daniel Thomas said he "can't go into details," according to a recording Kinn secretly made and shared with AP.

"It's like they didn't care," said Kinn, who spiraled emotionally and two months later checked himself into a hospital with suicidal thoughts. "Now I'm even more traumatized."

The bishop declined to comment on the case. In a written statement, Toledo Diocese spokeswoman Kelly Donaghy said the review board, whose member names aren't posted, doesn't promise victims they can testify, but examines each case in turn.

When survivors of abuse do come before the board, they frequently emerge from the process scarred. Joseph Capozzi, who reported his abuse in 2005, was pressed by the board in Newark, N.J., on everything from the appearance of the pills he was drugged with to particulars about the pornography the priest showed him.

"The church needs to stay out of any of this," Capozzi said. "They have shown themselves, time and time again, to not be able to deal with the truth."

QUESTIONABLE OUTCOMES

The criteria board members use to substantiate an allegation are set by the bishops and vary: "believable and plausible," "more likely than not," or "strong suspicion." It's difficult to know how often boards decide for or against victims in general because of their secretiveness. The bishops' conference collects some national statistics about review boards that is self-reported by dioceses, but does not make the information public and declined to share the numbers with AP.

Illinois' attorney general, in a preliminary report last year, found three out of four allegations in the state either were not investigated or not substantiated by review boards. Outside investigators found this year that the Denver archdiocese similarly failed to investigate or substantiate dozens of reports.

Through interviews and documents, AP found dozens of other cases where review boards rejected cases later affirmed by courts and authorities.

In Pittsburgh, a priest who had remained active despite multiple allegations of sex assault was only removed from ministry when a 2018 grand jury identified him as an offender.

In Philadelphia, grand jurors in 2011 cited the case of a former altar boy who described his molestation with precision, backed by the testimony of others, and whose complaint echoed one brought a year earlier. The review board, unconvinced, rejected the case as "unsubstantiated." But the conclusion from jurors was simple: "Obvious credibility."

Less than a year after the review board ruling, the former altar boy killed himself. His mother said that in a lifetime scarred with pain, the ruling stood out for her son.

And in Iowa, Katie Bowman's case exemplifies how a secular review can draw a different conclusion from the same facts.

Bowman's parents welcomed into their religious home three priests who molested her, she said, starting when she was around 4.

The horror would drive her later to bite her tongue until she bled, and cut herself. The clues remain today, with her left arm pockmarked by cigarette burns, and the underside of her right wrist bearing the word "resilient" tattooed in black script. She has survived four suicide attempts, and not wanting to die is still a new feeling for her.

In 2011, the 54-year-old social worker reported the abuse to the church. An investigator for theavenport diocese interviewed Bowman's therapists, and a friend vouched that she had revealed the abuse a decade before. She also signed more than a dozen releases allowing access to her pediatrician, school and employee records.

"I thought you were investigating the priest, not me," she remembered thinking.

In January 2012, Bowman and her husband went to diocesan headquarters to meet the review board,

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passing by a monument for sex-abuse victims.

Because Davenport was in bankruptcy proceedings, Bowman also had to meet with a court-appointed arbitrator, Richard Calkins. He has assessed claims from about a thousand victims nationwide and found a "preponderance of evidence" proved she was abused. He authorized the maximum payout under the bankruptcy settlement: \$83,114.53.

"When you do enough of these, you can almost sense when they're true," Calkins said in an interview.

Two months later, in Bowman's mailbox, was a letter from the Davenport review board chairwoman.

"There is no doubt in the minds of any of us on the review board that you suffered abuses," the letter said. "We are not saying that we don't believe you -- we do."

The board still ruled against her. It would take a judge to force the diocese to add Bowman's three abusers to its list of credibly accused clergy, as part of a bankruptcy process.

Board chairwoman Chris McCormick Pries stood behind the finding in an interview. She said Bowman was the lone accuser and when priests are deceased, as hers were, the diocese applies a higher standard of proof — "clear and convincing."

McCormick Pries, who has chaired the board nearly 15 years, said she's disgusted by the church's abuse problem, too. She said review boards are a positive step and, like other members, treats the work as "a sacred trust."

"Can anyone police themselves from the inside? I think the answer is yes," she said. "Who better to solve the problems of the church than those who love the church?"

Joey Piscitelli disagrees. The board in San Francisco deemed his abuse allegations not credible in 2004 without contacting him. After he questioned the outcome, he was told the investigation was reopened, but the same thing happened. A jury later awarded him \$600,000.

"They're playing judge, jury and God and who gives them that authority?" he asked. "You know who could play judge and jury? An actual court."

CHURCH VETO

Even when a review board affirms a victim's case, the bishop does not have to follow its ruling.

Erin Brady was raped by a priest when she was a third-grader, and won a \$2 million settlement from the archdiocese of Los Angeles. In 2009, after the priest transferred to Santa Rosa, California, Brady pushed for his removal there. The review board was impressed by her clarity and precision, one member recalled, and recommended the priest's ouster.

"She was eminently believable," psychologist Tony Madrid said. "She was telling the truth."

But Bishop Daniel Walsh did nothing. He retired in 2011, and a message left at the San Francisco church where he lives was not returned.

Walsh's successor, Bishop Robert Vasa, said he found his review board "extremely responsive and attentive" and didn't know why his predecessor made the decision he did.

"It's a difficult decision-making process and fairness and equity have to be a part of it," he said.

Brady's abuser remained a priest in good standing until he retired two years later. It wasn't until January, five years after the priest died, that Santa Rosa published a list of "credibly" accused clergy with his name on it.

"I knew they wouldn't do anything," Brady said.

When a bishop accepts the board's recommendation, church law still allows a priest to pursue his case with the Vatican.

Browning, the woman who praised the Kalamazoo review board for finding in her favor in 2010, was later let down by the Vatican. In Rome, officials said the priest was in bad health and simply instructed him to say a prayer each Friday for victims, according to Browning.

"I don't want his prayers, thank you very much," Browning said. "I just wanted to puke."

Despite the Kalamazoo diocese's intervention with the Vatican on Browning's behalf, the priest has continued to preside at celebrations and make public appearances over the past eight years, as shown in

online videos. The Vatican didn't do anything.

"I get the impression," Browning said, "it is not a priority."

This story corrects a previous version that transposed the boards to which Becky Ianni was referring.

Medicare drug plan finder can steer seniors to higher costs

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Medicare's revamped prescription plan finder can steer unwitting seniors to coverage that costs much more than they need to pay, according to people who help with sign-ups as well as program experts.

Serving some 60 million Medicare recipients, the plan finder is the most commonly used tool on Medicare.gov and just got its first major update in a decade. The Trump administration has hailed the new version and Medicare Administrator Seema Verma says it will empower beneficiaries to take advantage of their coverage options.

But as open enrollment goes into the home stretch Thanksgiving week, critics say the new tool can create confusion by obscuring out-of-pocket costs that seniors should factor into their decisions.

"I want to make sure people are given the most accurate information and they're making the best decision — because they are the ones stuck with it," said Ann Kayrish, senior program manager for Medicare at the National Council on Aging, a nonpartisan organization that advocates for seniors and provides community services.

Government programs mixing health care and technology have faced struggles. Despite billions spent to subsidize electronic medical records, getting different systems to communicate remains a challenge. The Obama administration's launch of HealthCare.gov resulted in an embarrassing debacle when the website froze up the first day.

The leading Democrat on the Senate Aging Committee said he's hearing concerns from constituents and organizations that assist Medicare beneficiaries. Pennsylvania Sen. Bob Casey said he will ask Medicare to grant seniors who've had problems a second chance to sign up, called a "special enrollment period."

"It's obviously an effort that needs a lot more work to meet the legitimate expectations of seniors," said Casey. "Especially when you launch something new, (it) can go awry. People steered in the wrong direction should get a measure of fairness."

The Medicare plan finder's issue stems from a significant change the agency made for 2020.

The plan with the lowest premium now gets automatically placed on top, with the monthly premium displayed in large font.

Medicare's previous plan finder automatically sorted plans by total cost, not just premiums.

But premiums are only one piece of information.

When out-of-pocket expenses such as copays are factored in, the plan with the lowest total annual cost is often not the first one shown by the plan finder.

It takes extra work for a Medicare enrollee to discover that.

"If they pick the plan based solely on the premium they are likely getting a plan that could cost them thousands more in a calendar year," said Christina Reeg of the Ohio Department of Insurance. She heads a program that helps Medicare enrollees try to find the right plan.

In a statement, Medicare said the monthly premium is a cost that consumers understand and will always be an important decision factor.

But the agency also said total cost paid out-of-pocket is at least equally, if not more important, particularly for people who take prescription drugs — as do most seniors. Medicare said it's testing ways to encourage consumers to look at total costs, such as a pop-up.

The agency said it chose to prominently display premiums because user testing showed that's what consumers are familiar with. The total annual cost is included, but in smaller font.

That's puzzling to Kayrish. The lowest premium "doesn't necessarily translate to lowest cost over the

year," she explained.

Consumers using the plan finder first enter their medications and dosages. To get it to find plans by lowest total annual cost, they must take a few more steps, said Kayrish.

After the screen displays initial search results, consumers should look for the drop-down menu on the right of the screen. Next, she said, select the feature that lets you re-sort plans by "lowest drug + premium cost."

A reporter's sample search on a list of six medications for high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes returned 29 plans in the Washington, D.C., area, topped by a lowest-premium option for \$13.20 a month.

But after re-sorting for the lowest total cost, the best deal was a plan with a monthly premium of \$25.80.

When out-of-pocket expenses were factored in, the second plan cost about \$5,800 less a year than the initial lowest-premium option the plan finder displayed.

Costs can vary so much because plans have different coverage designs and they don't pay the same prices to drugmakers.

And Kayrish said there's another issue: The new plan finder can return options that don't cover all of a patient's medications.

If a low-premium plan has very high out-of-pocket costs, it's a clue that some of your drugs may not be covered. Check plan details.

Some academic experts compared the old and new versions of the Medicare plan finder and confirmed the problems flagged by hands-on users.

Their review also found improvements. Among them:

— Consumers can enter their Medicare number and the new plan finder automatically fills in all the medications the program paid for. (Consumer advocates recommend double-checking this list.)

— The new tool can be used more easily on mobile devices and tablets.

— The revamped plan finder allows consumers to compare across Part D drug plans and Medicare Advantage medical plans.

"The new plan finder is in many ways improved, but it did take a meaningful step backward by not doing more to highlight its most useful output—the total cost estimate," said Brian McGarry, an assistant professor at the University of Rochester in New York. He's the lead author of a recent online article about the plan finder for Health Affairs.

Seniors have until Dec. 7 to pick or switch "Part D" prescription drug plans or, if they're seeking comprehensive medical care through a private insurer, a Medicare Advantage plan. Coverage takes effect Jan. 1.

Tesla edges into pickup truck market with electric model

By RACHEL LERMAN and CATHY BUSSEWITZ AP Writers

Tesla is aiming for the heart of the auto industry's profit machine with its own version of the heavy pickup truck.

Rolling onstage before a wall of lasers and flame at the Los Angeles Auto Show, the introduction of Tesla's sharp-angled, stainless-steel "cybertruck" was not a quiet one.

Nor was it without surprises.

The vehicle, which Tesla CEO Elon Musk said will cost \$39,900 and up, will have an estimated battery range of between 250 miles (402.3 kilometers) to more than 500 miles.

The electric pickup truck will be in production in 2021, Musk said Thursday in Los Angeles.

With the launch Tesla is not only edging into the most profitable corner of the U.S. auto market, it's also gunning for buyers with fierce brand loyalty.

Many pickup truck buyers stick with the same brand for life, choosing a truck based on what their mom or dad drove or what they decided was the toughest model, said Erik Gordon, a professor at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business.

"They're very much creatures of habit," Gordon said. Getting a loyal Ford F-150 buyer to consider switching to another brand such as a Chevy Silverado, "it's like asking him to leave his family," he said.

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The event in Los Angeles was intended to set Tesla's version apart from all others. The truck's doors were pummeled with a sledgehammer that did not make a dent.

A demonstration of the vehicle's "armor glass" did not appear to go so smoothly. Metal balls hurled at the car cracked two windows — though it did not completely shatter.

We'll "fix it in post," said Musk, who appeared caught off guard with cameras rolling.

The cybertruck starts at \$39,900 for a single motor model, with a base price of \$69,900 for a tri motor all-wheel drive model. Production for the latter is planned for late 2022.

Tesla's pickup is more likely to appeal to weekend warriors who want an electric vehicle that can handle some outdoor adventure. And it could end up cutting into Tesla's electric vehicle sedan sales instead of winning over traditional pickup truck drivers.

"The needs-based truck buyer, the haulers, the towers at the worksites of the world, that's going to be a much tougher sell," said Akshay Anand, executive analyst at Kelley Blue Book.

However, it will help Musk fill out his portfolio and offer a broader range of electric vehicles.

"Elon Musk is trying to not be one-dimensional when it comes to automotive," said Alyssa Altman, transportation lead at digital consultancy Publicis Sapient. "He doesn't want to look like he only has a small selection. He wants to build a brand with a diverse offering and in doing that he wants to see where he could enter in the market."

Musk stands to face competition when his truck hits the market. Ford, which has long dominated the pickup truck landscape, plans to launch an all-electric F-150 pickup. General Motors CEO Mary Barra said its battery-electric pickup will come out by the fall of 2021.

Rivian, a startup based near Detroit, plans to begin production in the second half of 2020 on an electric pickup that starts at \$69,000 and has a battery range of 400-plus miles (643.7-kilometers). The Rivian truck will be able to tow 11,000 pounds (4,989.5 kilograms), go from zero to 60 mph (96.6 kph) in three seconds and wade into 3 feet (0.91 meters) of water, the company said. Ford said in April it would invest \$500 million in Rivian.

Tesla has struggled to meet delivery targets for its sedans, and some fear the new vehicle will shift the company's attention away from the goal of more consistently meeting its targets.

"We have yet to see Tesla really make good on some of the very tight deadlines they imposed on themselves, and this has the added challenge of having architecture that is going to be challenging because we haven't seen an EV pickup before," said Jeremy Acevedo, manager of industry analysis at Edmunds.

Asian shares mostly higher despite US-China trade anxiety

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Stocks logged modest gains Friday in Asia after a lackluster overnight session on Wall Street ended with the market's third straight drop.

Reports suggesting Chinese Vice Premier Liu He, Beijing's lead trade negotiator, has invited U.S. officials to China for talks helped alleviate worries over progress in resolving the tariff war between the two largest economies.

On Thursday, China's Commerce Ministry sought to bat away rumors that the trade talks were in trouble, with a spokesman saying Beijing was committed to continuing discussions on core concerns.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index gained 0.4% to 23,130.31 while the Hang Seng in Hong Kong picked up 0.2% to 26,524.88. South Korea's Kospi edged 0.2% higher to 2,100.38 and the S&P ASX 200 in Australia advanced 0.5% to 6,707.90. The Shanghai Composite index lost 0.6% to 2,886.47, while shares rose in Bangkok and Singapore but fell in Taiwan and Jakarta.

Overnight, stocks closed modestly lower on Wall Street in the third straight day of declines after a mostly listless day of trading.

Losses in technology stocks, companies that rely on consumer spending and other sectors outweighed gains elsewhere in the market.

Energy sector stocks were the biggest winners, benefiting from another pickup in crude oil prices. Health

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care and communication services companies also rose.

Investors have turned cautious this week amid concerns that the U.S. and China will fail to make a trade deal before the year is over.

The world's largest economies have been negotiating a resolution to their trade war ahead of new tariffs set to hit key consumer goods on Dec. 15. Investors have been hoping for a deal before that happens, as the tariffs would increase prices on smartphones, laptops and many common household goods.

"That Dec. 15 deadline on tariffs still weighs on the market," said Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial. "The market needs a sense that there won't be an escalation in the trade war."

The benchmark S&P 500 index dropped 0.2% to 3,103.54 and is on track to snap a six-week winning streak. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.2% to 27,766.29.

The Nasdaq slid 0.2% to 8,506.21 while the Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks lost 0.5%, to 1,583.96.

Stocks are likely to remain choppy and risky as long as the trade war and threat of new tariffs looms over Wall Street, said Barry Bannister, head of institutional equity strategy at Stifel.

"We don't want to see tariffs on consumer goods that get passed on directly to retail purchasers because they're the last leg on which the economy is standing right now," Bannister said.

Bannister warned that the market could be in for a significant decline before the end of the year if the U.S. and China can't make progress. He also said the risk of a larger recession has not disappeared.

Technology stocks took some of the heaviest losses Thursday. Many chipmakers and companies that make hardware rely on China for sales and supply chains. Advanced Micro Devices slid 3.6% and Lam Research fell 3.7%.

Consumer product makers also fell broadly. Kraft Heinz dropped 2.7%.

In energy trading Friday, benchmark U.S. crude oil lost 39 cents to \$58.19 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It rose \$1.57 to settle at \$58.58 a barrel on Thursday. Brent crude oil, the international standard, declined 37 cents to \$63.60 per barrel.

The dollar was flat at 108.63 Japanese yen. The euro rose to \$1.1065 from \$1.1061 on Thursday.

AP Business Writers Damian J. Troise and Alex Veiga contributed.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Nov. 22, the 326th day of 2019. There are 39 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 22, 1963, John F. Kennedy, the 35th president of the United States, was assassinated while riding in a motorcade in Dallas; Texas Gov. John B. Connally, in the same car as Kennedy, was seriously wounded; a suspect, Lee Harvey Oswald, was arrested; Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as president.

On this date:

In 1862, Giuseppe Verdi's opera "La Forza del Destino" had its world premiere in St. Petersburg, Russia.

In 1935, a flying boat, the China Clipper, took off from Alameda, California, carrying more than 100,000 pieces of mail on the first trans-Pacific airmail flight.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek (chang ky-shehk) met in Cairo to discuss measures for defeating Japan. Lyricist Lorenz Hart died in New York at age 48.

In 1955, comic Shemp Howard of "Three Stooges" fame died in Hollywood at age 60.

In 1967, the U.N. Security Council approved Resolution 242, which called for Israel to withdraw from territories it had captured the previous June, and implicitly called on adversaries to recognize Israel's right to exist.

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In 1977, regular passenger service between New York and Europe on the supersonic Concorde began on a trial basis.

In 1980, death claimed actress Mae West at her Hollywood residence at age 87 and former House Speaker John W. McCormack in Dedham, Mass. at age 88.

In 1990, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, having failed to win re-election of the Conservative Party leadership on the first ballot, announced she would resign.

In 1995, acting swiftly to boost the Balkan peace accord, the U-N Security Council suspended economic sanctions against Serbia and eased the arms embargo against the states of the former Yugoslavia.

In 2004, Tens of thousands of demonstrators jammed downtown Kiev, denouncing Ukraine's presidential runoff election as fraudulent and chanting the name of their reformist candidate, Viktor Yushchenko (yoo-SHEN'-koh), who ended up winning a revote the following month.

In 2005, Angela Merkel (AHN'-geh-lah MEHR'-kuhl) took power as Germany's first female chancellor. Ted Koppel hosted his final edition of ABC News' "Nightline."

In 2017, former sports doctor Larry Nassar, accused of molesting at least 125 girls and young women while working for USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University, pleaded guilty to multiple charges of sexual assault. Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb general whose forces carried out the worst massacre in Europe since World War II, was convicted of genocide and other crimes by the United Nations' Yugoslav war crimes tribunal and sentenced to life behind bars.

Ten years ago: Iran said it had begun large-scale air defense war games aimed at protecting its nuclear facilities from attack. Michael Jackson posthumously won four American Music Awards; Taylor Swift was named artist of the year; Adam Lambert's sexually provocative performance drew complaints.

Five years ago: Twelve-year-old Tamir (tuh-MEER') Rice was shot and mortally wounded by police outside a Cleveland recreation center after brandishing what turned out to be a pellet gun. (A grand jury declined to indict either the patrolman who fired the fatal shot or a training officer.) Somalia's extremist al-Shabab rebels attacked a bus in northern Kenya, singling out and killing 28 passengers who could not recite an Islamic creed and were assumed to be non-Muslims.

One year ago: After a Thanksgiving night shooting at an Alabama shopping mall wounded two people, a responding officer shot and killed a 21-year-old black man, Emantic Bradford Jr., who police initially said had shot a teen at the mall; they later acknowledged that Bradford, who they said was fleeing the scene with a handgun, was not the triggerman. (A state investigation determined that the officer was justified in shooting Bradford because Bradford carried a weapon and appeared to pose a threat.) President Donald Trump used a Thanksgiving Day call to troops deployed overseas to air grievances about the courts, trade issues and migrants heading to the southern border. Spectators bundled up for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York; a temperature of 21 degrees at the start of the parade made it one of the coldest Thanksgivings in the city in decades. Nissan fired chairman Carlos Ghosn (gohn), who'd led the Japanese automaker for nearly two decades, after his arrest for alleged financial improprieties.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Michael Callan is 84. Actor Allen Garfield is 80. Animator and movie director Terry Gilliam is 79. Actor Tom Conti is 78. Singer Jesse Colin Young is 78. Astronaut Guion (GEYE'-uhn) Bluford is 77. International Tennis Hall of Famer Billie Jean King is 76. Rock musician-actor Steve Van Zandt (a.k.a. Little Steven) is 69. Rock musician Tina Weymouth (The Heads; Talking Heads; The Tom Tom Club) is 69. Retired MLB All-Star Greg Luzinski is 69. Actress Lin Tucci is 68. Rock musician Lawrence Gowan is 63. Actor Richard Kind is 63. Actress Jamie Lee Curtis is 61. Alt-country singer Jason Ringenberg (Jason & the Scorchers) is 61. Actress Mariel Hemingway is 58. Actor Winsor Harmon is 56. Actor-turned-producer Brian Robbins is 56. Actor Stephen Geoffreys is 55. Rock musician Charlie Colin is 53. Actor Nicholas Rowe is 53. Actor Michael Kenneth Williams is 53. Actor Mark Ruffalo is 52. International Tennis Hall of Famer Boris Becker is 52. Actress Sidse (SIH'-sa) Babett Knudsen is 51. Country musician Chris Fryar (Zac Brown Band) is 49. Actor Josh Cooke is 40. Actor-singer Tyler Hilton is 36. Actress Scarlett Johansson is 35. Actor Jamie Campbell Bower is 31. Singer Candice Glover (TV: "American Idol") is 30. Actor Alden Ehrenreich is 30. Actor Dacre Montgomery is 25. Actress Mackenzie Lintz is 23.

Thought for Today: "A man does what he must — in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles

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and dangers and pressures — and that is the basis of all human morality.” — President John F. Kennedy (1917-1963).

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