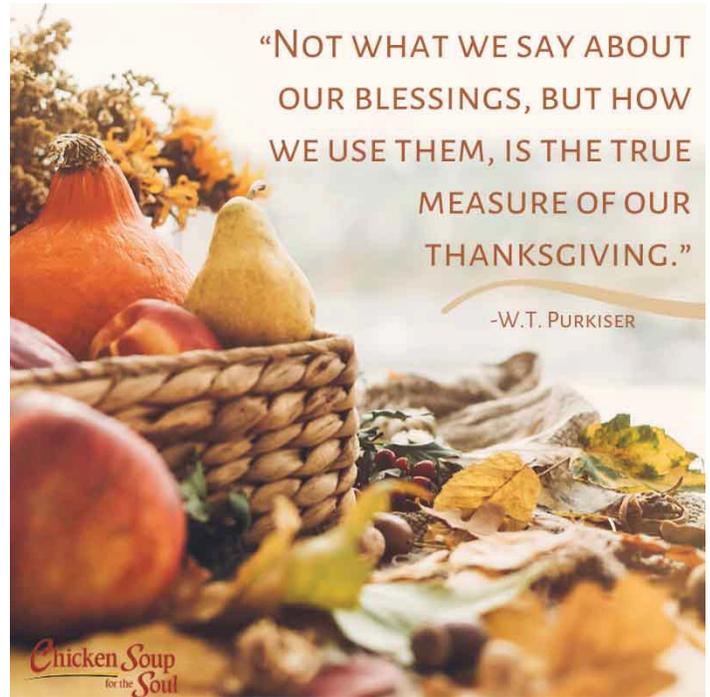


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## *90th Birthday*

Ilse Cameron  
will celebrate her  
90th birthday  
on December 5, 2019.

Greetings may be sent to  
1324 12th Avenue SE, Apt #36  
Aberdeen, SD 57401

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

## Lazy Farmers 4-H November Meeting

The Lazy Farmers 4-H Club meeting was called to order November 3, 2019 by Tessa Erdmann. Meeting was held at the K. O. Lee Library in Aberdeen S.D. Jarrett Erdmann led us in the U.S. flag pledge. Kayla Lehr led us in the 4-H flag pledge. Roll call was "Name something you are thankful for." Kody Lehr read the secretary's report. No treasurer report. The next meeting will in-tentatively be held December 7th for the Lazy Farmers 4-H Club Christmas Party. Travis Townsend adjourned the meeting. Kayla Lehr gave a talk on "The benefits of starting your 4-H book early."

Lazy Farmers Club Reporter: Lexi Osterman

## FEMA Denies South Dakota's Disaster Request Appeal

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Public Safety has announced that FEMA denied the state's appeal for a presidential disaster declaration covering severe weather damage done in six South Dakota counties from Aug. 2-11, 2019.

South Dakota officials had requested a disaster declaration for Public Assistance to damage done by severe storms, tornadoes and floods in the counties of Brule, Custer, Gregory, Lyman, Spink and Tripp. That request included Custer County which experienced flash flooding during the Sturgis Rally Aug. 2 and the town of Burke, which was struck by an EF-1 tornado on Aug. 6.

FEMA declined the initial assistance request and South Dakota appealed. That appeal was denied last week.

"We are disappointed both by the initial decision and now the denial of the appeal," said Noem. "These counties were impacted by severe weather and damage was done to public infrastructure such as roads and bridges."

In its denial, FEMA officials stated that none of the damage was "of the severity and magnitude" that it would prove too costly for the state and local governments to fund themselves.

"These counties, like the rest of the state, have been battered by storm after storm this year," Noem said. "The impact these damages have on the budgets of the six counties has been tremendous. These counties, many of them small, do not have the financial resources to do this response on their own."

Department of Public Safety Cabinet Secretary Craig Price said the department's Office of Emergency Management will continue to provide assistance as requested to the six counties.

"I am proud of the work done by department staff in putting together the information for the initial request and then the appeal," Price said. "As always, we remain available to assist counties as needed."

Price said assistance may be available to people with individual recovery needs through the South Dakota Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters. People with individual recovery needs can email [sdvoadpresident@outlook.com](mailto:sdvoadpresident@outlook.com) for more information.

South Dakota has received four disaster declarations this year and FEMA staff is working in the state on the declarations. Noem has designated the Department of Public Safety's Office of Emergency Management as the lead state government agency for the disaster recovery.

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*Happy Thanksgiving from the Groton Area Jr. Kindergartners*



Anniston Harry – Daughter of Kris and Alison Harry. I am thankful for my toy piggy, because he keeps me brave at night.



Aryanna Cutler – Daughter of Greyson Cutler and Gabriella Cutler. I am thankful for ice cream, because I love it a lot.



Chase Cleveland – Son of Justin and Gretchan Cleveland. I am thankful for my babies (Harper and Cruz), because I get hugs.



Emery Blackwood – Daughter of Katie Kesterson. I am thankful for our car, because we need to stay warm when it is cold outside.



Finley Gauer – Son of Alicia Gauer and Colin Burrer. I am thankful for my clothes, because I need to stay warm.



Haley Erickson – Daughter of Seth and Megan Erickson. I am thankful for food, because they fill our tummy.



Henry Pharis – Son of Kevin and Kara Pharis. I am thankful for the police, because they take care of the bad guys.



Jase Bahr – Son of Dion and Sam Bahr. I am thankful for my house, because if we don't have a blanket it keeps us warm in our beds.



Zojie Lord – Daughter of Randy and Alyssa Lord. I am thankful for my church, because I like to read books there.



Keenan Moody – Son of Eric and Darcie Moody. I am thankful for wrestling, because it is fun.



Maci Dunbar – Daughter of Michael and Kassie Dunbar. I am thankful for my family, because I love them.



Rae Flihs – Son of Tigh and Adrienne Flihs. I am thankful for dinosaurs, because they are my favorite.



Reagen Harry – Daughter of Jeff and Betsy Harry. I am thankful for my blankets, because they make me not scared in the night.

## Angel Tree cards still available

Groton's Angel Tree is at two locations this year. There are still a lot of cards left on the trees at Lori's Pharmacy and Dollar General. Why not help make someone's Christmas extra special by buying a gift for that someone. Some families have to decide between paying the bills or buying Christmas presents. Recipients in the past have been very grateful for the area's generosity. For questions on the Angel Tree, call/text Tina Kosel at 605-397-7285.



## **Bohnenkamp named All-Academic Team of Excellence**

Zach Bohnenkamp was named to the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference All-Academic Team of Excellence for his Northern State University Wolves football team.

To be eligible for the NSIC All-Academic Team of Excellence, a student-athlete must have a 3.60 cumulative GPA or higher, while NSIC All-Academic Team members must have a 3.20 cumulative GPA or higher.

Zach is a 5'-11" 190lb Sophomore DB and started all 11 games for the Wolves. He led the team in interceptions and was tied for 3rd in the NSIC. He is the son of Jeff & Susie Bohnenkamp of Tucson, AZ and the grandson Les & Carol Dohman.

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## Groton Prairie Mixed

**Team Standings:** Cheetahs 11, Shih Tzus 10, Chipmunks 10, Coyotes 10, Foxes 10, Jackelopes 9

**Men's High Games:** Roger Spanier 223, Mike Siegler 213, Brad Waage 212, 204

**Women's High Games:** Karen Spanier 179, Darci Spanier 172, Sue Stanley 164

**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage 572, Mike Siegler 547, Roger Spanier 535

**Women's High Series:** Michelle Johnson 449, Sue Stanley 432, Darci Spanier 427

## Conde National League

**Nov. 25 Team standings:** Mets 34, Pirates 25½, Cubs 24, Giants 23, Braves 20½, Tigers 17.

**Men's High Games:** Troy Lindberg 226, Ryan Bethke 222, Lance Frohling 196.

**Men's High Series:** Butch Farmen 546, Ryan Bethke 540, Lance Frohling 528.

**Women's High Games:** Mary Larson 191, 185; Michelle Johnson 162; Vickie Kramp 159.

**Women's High Series:** Mary Larson 519, Nancy Radke 438, Vickie Kramp 435.

*Olive Grove's  
4th Annual*

*Christmas  
Tour  
of Homes  
& Holiday Party*

**SATURDAY, DEC. 7, 2019**

**TOUR OF HOMES - 4-7 P.M.**  
Steve & Betty Dunker  
Brett & Anna Schwan  
Ryan & Jennifer Schelle  
Oldie Bank n' Café

**COFFEE, APPLE CIDER AND  
GOODIES AT THE CLUBHOUSE**

**HOLIDAY PARTY - 4 P.M. TO CLOSE**  
A variety of snacks served  
Silent Basket Items  
Bidding Closes at 8:30 p.m.  
Live Auction begins at 8:30 p.m.

**\$15 TICKETS AVAILABLE AT  
LORI'S PHARMACY, GROTON  
GROTON FORD  
HAIR & COMPANY, ABERDEEN**

**COME ON OUT FOR A FUN EVENING!**  
*Support your local golf course!*

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**...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM NOON TODAY TO NOON CST FRIDAY...**

**...WINTER STORM WATCH REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM FRIDAY EVENING THROUGH LATE SATURDAY NIGHT...**

- \* WHAT...For the Winter Weather Advisory, mixed precipitation expected. Total snow accumulations of up to one inch and ice accumulations of up to one tenth of an inch. For the Winter Storm Watch, heavy mixed precipitation possible. Total snow accumulations of 9 to 15 inches and ice accumulations of around one tenth of an inch possible. Winds could gust as high as 40 mph.
- \* WHERE...Portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota.
- \* WHEN...For the Winter Weather Advisory, from noon Thursday to noon CST Friday. For the Winter Storm Watch, from Friday evening through late Saturday night.
- \* IMPACTS...Travel could be very difficult to impossible. Falling and blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning and evening commute.

## PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

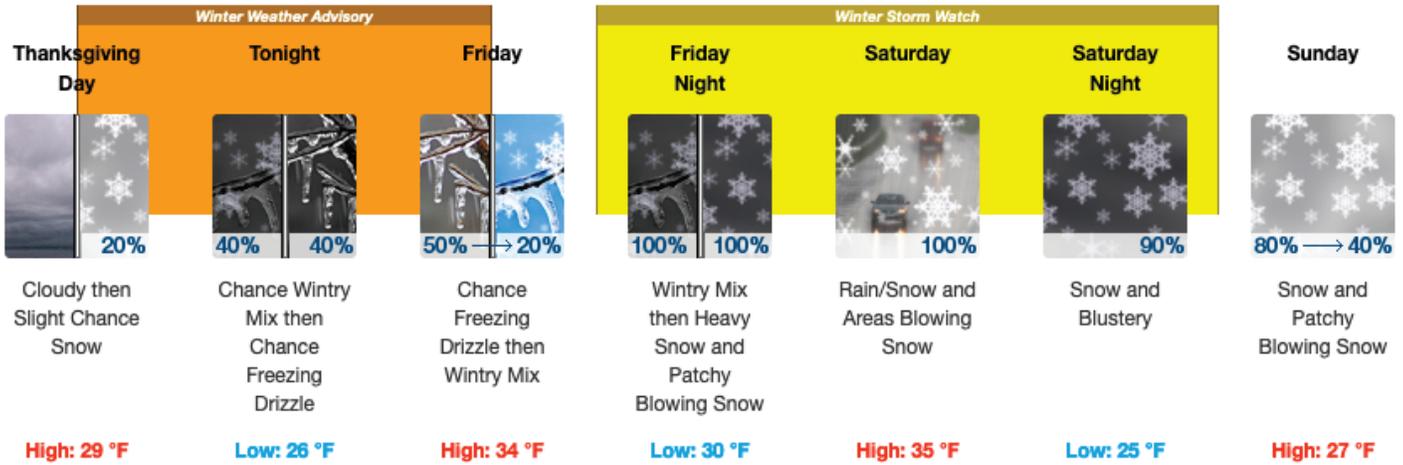
Slow down and use caution while traveling.

Monitor the latest forecasts for updates on this situation.

In Minnesota, the latest road conditions can be obtained at [511mn.org](http://511mn.org), or by calling 5 1 1. In South Dakota, the latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

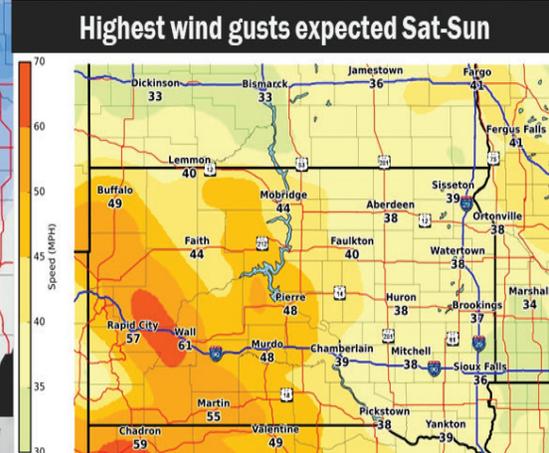
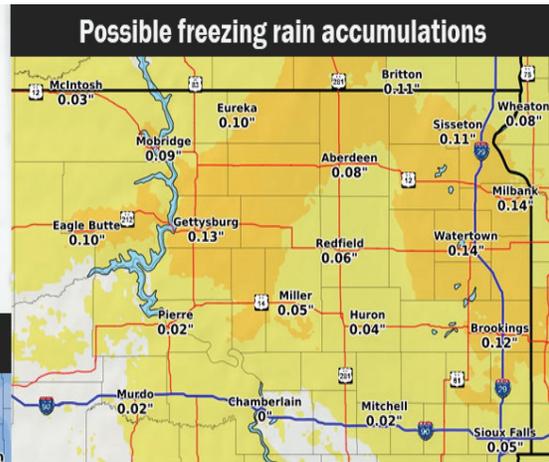
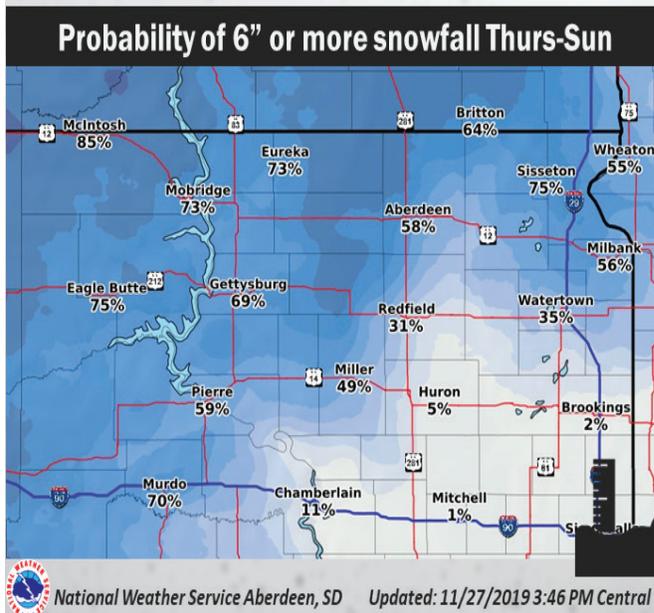
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## A look at this holiday storm

- Light snow possibly changing to freezing rain expected Thursday into Friday morning
- Light to heavy-at-times snow and wind gusts of 30-40+ mph Friday night through Saturday
- Travel will be difficult due to possible freezing rain, snow on roads, and reduced visibility from blowing snow while it falls



Published on: 11/27/2019 at 10:48 AM

It's a busy weekend for weather! Thanksgiving day may see some light snow changing over to freezing rain as the day progresses, less than an inch of snow is expected through Friday morning. Friday evening through Sunday we may see moderate to heavy snowfall and gusty winds up to 40-50 mph. Check the latest road conditions at [safetravelusa.com](http://safetravelusa.com) if you're considering traveling!

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## Today in Weather History

November 28, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches fell across parts of northeast South Dakota, causing travel difficulties and school closings. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Britton, Roy Lake, Webster, Waubay, Summit, and Wilmot; 8 inches at Columbia and south of Bristol; and 9 inches at Houghton.

November 28, 2005: A significant winter storm visited the region on November 27-29, 2005, producing a wide range of wintry precipitation across the area. Snow and blizzard conditions occurred across central and north central South Dakota, while freezing rain and ice accumulations took front stage in northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Across most of central and north central South Dakota, snow began in the late afternoon and early evening hours of the 27th, with significant snowfall accumulations occurring by the time the snow ended later in the day on the 28th. Snowfall accumulations ranged from as little as two inches to as much as 20 inches. Strong northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts to 70 mph, caused widespread blizzard conditions from the early morning until the late afternoon hours of the 28th. Visibilities were reduced to zero many times across the area with snowdrifts of 5 to 10 feet in some places. Some power lines were also brought down in the Pierre and Fort Pierre area due to snow accumulation and high winds. Many roads, including Interstate 90, were closed due to the treacherous travel conditions. Several accidents occurred during the storm, and many motorists were also stranded. Several people had to be rescued. Schools, businesses, government offices, and many other organizations were closed. FEMA, state officials, and the governor surveyed the storm damage. Some of the significant snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Eureka, 8 inches at Onaka, 10 inches at Onida and Fort Thompson, 11 inches near Presho, 16 inches at Highmore, and 21 inches at Kennebec. To the east of this heavy snow and blizzard area, widespread freezing rain began during the morning to early afternoon of the 27th, creating significant ice accumulations of 1 to over 2 inches. The freezing rain changed to snow on the 28th, and northwest winds increased to 30 to 40 mph, gusting to 60 mph. The high winds and heavy ice accumulations caused several thousand power poles (some steel), along with several thousand miles of power lines, to come down, resulting in widespread power outages. The ice and winds also damaged several hundred miles of high-voltage power lines and towers. Some power substations were also shut down by the ice and wind. Thousands of trees were also either damaged or downed due to the heavy ice accumulations and the wind. Many of the fallen trees and branches caused damage to homes and vehicles. The radio station in Milbank went off the air due to its collapsing radio tower. Tens of thousands of people in many communities and rural areas were without power for several days, with some people without power for as long as two weeks. Telephone and cellular phone service was also down for several days. Countless schools, businesses, government offices, and other organizations were closed for several days. FEMA, state officials, and the governor also toured this damaged area, resulting in a presidential disaster declaration. Hundreds of utility workers from South Dakota, Minnesota, and nine other surrounding states worked 14- to 18-hour days in cold conditions to bring power back to the area. The National Guard also helped with getting generators, cots, blankets, and meals to storm shelters. Generators supplied power to many communities and rural areas, while others continued without power. Shelters were set up for those who did not have generator power or another place to go. There were also problems with livestock with the water supplies cut off for some time. One electric cooperative stated that repairs to the infrastructure would continue for months and years to restore a system that took decades to build. Roads were treacherous with many accidents and rollovers, some resulting in injuries. Due to the icy road conditions, many roads were closed, including Interstate 29. Around noon on the 27th, on US Highway 212 two miles west of Zell in Faulk County, a 59-year old man was killed when his car spun out of control and hit an oncoming pickup truck. Around 1:30pm on the 28th, on Day County Road One about two miles south of Waubay, a 17-year old girl was killed and three others were injured when one vehicle spun out of control and struck a truck in the oncoming lane. Air traffic was also brought to a halt across much of the area. This was one of the largest ice storms in the region's history. One electric cooperative said it was the most damage they had in their 65 years of existence. After the icing came snowfall of 2 to 12 inches, which combined with the high winds to bring blizzard conditions and low wind chills to northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota from the morning of the 28th until the early morning of the 29th. Some of the significant snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Watertown, 8 inches at Waubay, 10 inches at Redfield, and 12 inches at Sisseton.

November 28, 1921: New England was in the midst of a four-day ice storm, their worst of record. Ice was more than three inches thick in many places following the storm, and property damage was in the millions of dollars. Northern New England received heavy snow with more than two feet reported in some areas. Overnight freezing rains continued through the day at Worcester, MA while the wind increased to a gale. Streets become impassable even on foot, and whole towns were plunged into darkness without communication. The storm caused 20 million dollars damage to power lines, telephone lines and trees.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 30 °F at 12:56 AM**

**Low Temp: 24 °F at 9:21 PM**

**Wind: 24 mph at 6:54 AM**

**Day Rain: 0.00**

**Record High: 59° in 1949**

**Record Low: -21° in 1985**

**Average High: 32°F**

**Average Low: 13°F**

**Average Precip in Nov.: 0.68**

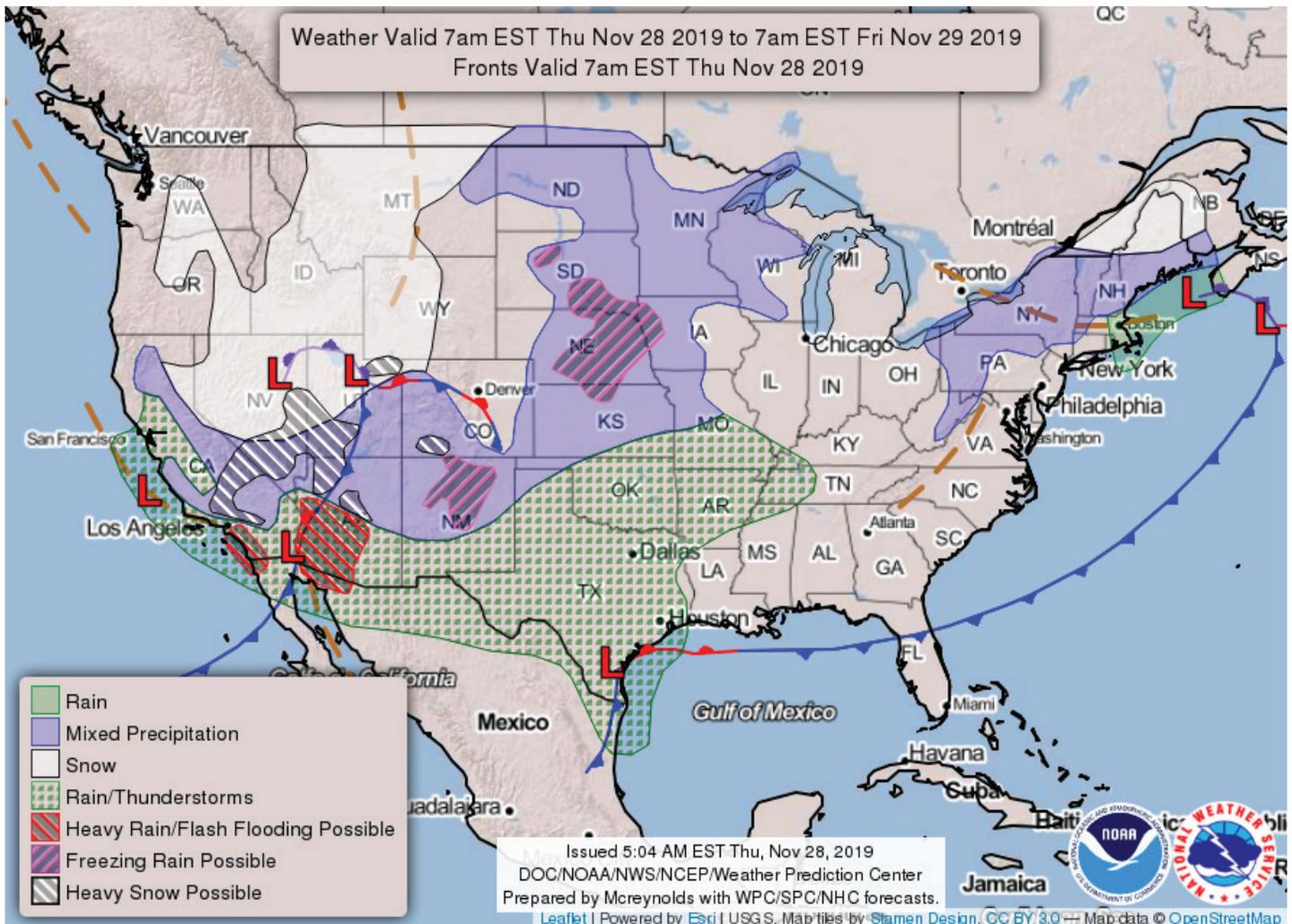
**Precip to date in Nov.: 0.38**

**Average Precip to date: 21.15**

**Precip Year to Date: 26.95**

**Sunset Tonight: 4:54 p.m.**

**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51 a.m.**





## WHAT WOULD HE THINK?

A mother lectured her daughter about the importance of keeping family secrets private. One day she got in trouble in school, and the principal called her mother to tell her about the trouble her daughter was in.

After scolding the girl, she said, "Now you must go to your room and ask God to forgive you."

Later, when the family sat down for dinner, she asked, "Sara, did you ask God to forgive you?"

"No, Mom, I didn't," said Sara. "I knew that you wouldn't want Him to know about our family scandals!"

Sara had no doubt that everything she did and everything she said – whether good or bad – was seen or heard by God.

It was true for Job. It is true for us. Nothing that we have done or will ever do will escape His notice because nothing can be hidden from Him. As Job was speaking of the life he lived in the presence of God, he was able to say, "I have not committed any sin in my heart against God or my neighbor." How many of us can repeat those words?

Prayer: Help us to realize, Lord, that we cannot hide anything from You. May we realize the importance of the way we live and strive to be like Your Son. In His Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Job 31:3-4 Isn't it calamity for the wicked and misfortune for those who do evil? Doesn't he see everything I do and every step I take?

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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

### Winter storm threatens to scramble Thanksgiving travel plans

By **JEFF BAENEN, COLLEEN SLEVIN and DAVID KOENIG** Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A day after bringing havoc to the Rocky Mountains, a powerful winter storm rolled across the Midwest on Wednesday, threatening to scramble Thanksgiving plans for millions of people during one of the busiest travel weeks of the year.

The storm, which was blamed for one death and hundreds of canceled flights, pushed east into South Dakota, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. It dropped close to a foot of snow in some areas even as the system weakened and headed toward New York and Pennsylvania.

But the West was not free of heavy weather. A “bomb cyclone” caused by a rapid drop in air pressure brought snow to the mountains and wind and rain along the California and Oregon coasts. Drivers on Interstate 5 near the Oregon-California border spent 17 hours or more in stopped traffic as blizzard conditions whirled outside. Some slept in their vehicles.

“It’s one of those things, you couldn’t make it up if you tried,” National Weather Service meteorologist Brent Hewett said of back-to-back storms forming around the holiday.

Christina Williams and her 13-year-old son, who live in Portland, Oregon, got stuck in the storm as they tried to drive to the San Francisco area for Thanksgiving. Williams said she and other stranded drivers connected on Twitter using weather-related hashtags and began to communicate to find out what conditions were like in other parts of the backup.

“There were spinouts everywhere. There were trucks that were abandoned. And every time we stopped and started moving again, there were people who couldn’t start moving again,” Williams said. “Every time we stopped I was like, ‘Is this it? Are we going to be here overnight?’”

It took more than 17 hours to reach Redding, California, where they got a hotel room, she said.

Snow and downed trees and power lines closed roads. Others were reduced to a single lane, transportation officials said.

Northbound lanes of Interstate 5, which runs parallel to the coast, were reopened later Wednesday from Redding, California all the way to the Oregon border. The southbound lanes at Ashland, Oregon, reopened earlier in the day.

Transportation officials and other agencies tried to communicate the seriousness of the storm, but many drivers were still caught by surprise, said Don Anderson, deputy director of the California Department of Transportation in Redding.

Minneapolis awoke to as much as 9 inches (23 centimeters) of snow. Drivers were warned to stay off the roads at least until the winds died down.

“If you can wait a little bit today, the better off you’ll be because the roads will be being cleared, and our snow is pretty much wrapping up,” said Tyler Hasenstein, a weather service meteorologist in Minneapolis.

At the city’s main airport, Delta Air Lines filled de-icing tanks, called in extra flight dispatchers and assigned some of its 20 in-house meteorologists to focus on the forecast.

Airport spokesman Patrick Hogan said three runways were open Wednesday, but Federal Aviation Administration data showed that travelers were still experiencing delays of more than an hour.

At Chicago’s O’Hare Airport, one of the nation’s busiest, the FAA said heavy traffic was causing delays of up to 30 minutes and rising. Airlines worried that things could get worse if winds picked up.

In the city’s Loop business district, high winds peeled a wooden sign off scaffolding at Willis Tower. The sign slammed into two vehicles and smashed a window, hurting a cab driver, who was taken to a hospital with an arm injury, police said.

The northern reaches of Wisconsin saw 7 to 10 inches (18 to 25 centimeters) of snow, with more coming down. The Milwaukee airport reported wind and rain, but there was no snow within a hundred miles of the city.

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On Tuesday, weather-related damage and delays were widespread.

About 10 inches (25 centimeters) of snow mixed with winds that limited visibility and canceled about 30% of the 1,600 average daily flights at Denver's main airport.

Southwest Airlines canceled about 200 flights. Spokesman Brad Hawkins said it would take a couple of days to rebook stranded passengers on other flights because there are few empty seats during the pre-Thanksgiving travel crush.

About 1,100 people spent the night at the airport, spokeswoman Alex Renteria said.

Airport workers handed out blankets, diapers, baby formula, toothbrushes and toothpaste to passengers who camped out on floors and in chairs.

One person was killed near the ski town of Vail when a tractor-trailer jackknifed and was hit by two other trucks on Interstate 70.

Before it's over, the system's effects could extend all the way to New England, where a chance of snow was possible over the weekend, the weather service said.

In New York, the windy forecast could mean disappointment for fans of the larger-than-life balloons flown at Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Organizers prepared for the possibility of grounding the iconic balloon characters because of expected 40 to 50 mph (64 to 81 kph) gusts. Rules adopted after several people were injured by a balloon years ago require the balloons to be flown lower or not at all if sustained winds exceed 23 mph (37 kph) and gusts exceed 34 mph (54 kph). The decision will be made on parade day.

Slevin reported from Denver. Koenig reported from Dallas. Associated Press writers Thomas Peipert in Denver; Bob Moen in Cheyenne, Wyoming; Olga R. Rodriguez in San Francisco; Gillian Flaccus in Portland, Oregon; Scott Sonner in Reno, Nevada, and Paul Davenport in Phoenix contributed to this report.

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

05-15-18-28-29

(five, fifteen, eighteen, twenty-eight, twenty-nine)

Estimated jackpot: \$330,000

Lotto America

16-25-27-33-44, Star Ball: 6, ASB: 3

(sixteen, twenty-five, twenty-seven, thirty-three, forty-four; Star Ball: six; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$5.31 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$243 million

Powerball

15-26-37-53-55, Powerball: 21, Power Play: 2

(fifteen, twenty-six, thirty-seven, fifty-three, fifty-five; Powerball: twenty-one; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$100 million

## Hagedorn scores 29, South Dakota holds off Calif. Baptist

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP) — Tyler Hagedorn hit 11 of 13 from the floor to total 29 points with 10 rebounds as South Dakota held off a California Baptist rally for an 84-83 victory on Wednesday night.

The Coyotes had a comfortable lead, 50-32, at the break but had to mount their own rally to come back for the win. After falling behind late, South Dakota charged back to go up 81-77 after Stanley Umude slammed home a dunk with 23 seconds remaining. Hagedorn added a free throw, then Ty Rowell answered with his third trey of the night to close to 82-80 with eight seconds remaining. South Dakota's Cody Kelley

made two free throws to seal the win. California Baptist's Milan Acquah drained a 3 for the final score. The Lancers, trailing 61-52 midway in the second half, had a 12-2 run to go out front 64-63 following consecutive 3-pointers by Rowell with 8:30 remaining. Umude totaled 18 points and Kelley added 12 for South Dakota (6-1). Acquah finished with a career-best 37 points, making 5 of 12 from distance, for the Lancers (3-4). South Dakota will travel to Northern Arizona Saturday for its next game. The Lancers will host UC Riverside on Wednesday.

## Wilson scores 30 to lift S. Dakota St. over Samford 86-77

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Douglas Wilson had 30 points and 10 rebounds as South Dakota State topped Samford 86-77 on Wednesday night.

Wilson made 10 of 12 free throws.

Noah Freidel had 20 points and seven rebounds for South Dakota State (6-3). Alex Arians added 12 points. Matt Dentlinger had eight rebounds for the hosts.

Brandon Austin had 19 points for the Bulldogs (4-4). Josh Sharkey added 16 points, nine assists and six steals. He also committed eight turnovers. Robert Allen and Jalen Dupree had 13 points apiece. Dupree led with 13 rebounds.

South Dakota State plays Indiana on the road on Saturday. Samford faces Louisiana Tech on the road on Saturday.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and [http://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](http://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

This was generated by Automated Insights, <http://www.automatedinsights.com/ap>, using data from STATS LLC, <https://www.stats.com>

## Man wanted for fatal hit-run arrested in Washington

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a man wanted in a hit-and-run crash that killed a baby in Rapid City last year has been arrested in Washington.

The Rapid City Journal reports 37-year-old George Matousek is being held in the Spokane County Jail on \$100,000 bond. Rapid City police say they are working to extradite Matousek.

He's wanted for fleeing from a car crash that killed 1-year-old Mackayla Dillon about a year ago. Police say Matousek was speeding when he hit two cars, killing the girl and injuring two others.

The Spokane County Jail contacted Rapid City police when Matousek was picked up there on an unrelated warrant.

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

## Probation for woman who took grandmother's federal benefits

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls woman has been sentenced to three years of probation for taking Social Security money meant for her grandmother who had died.

A federal judge Tuesday also ordered 32-year-old Sina Crowe to pay more than \$14,000 in restitution to the Social Security Administration. Crowe pleaded guilty to theft of government funds after taking payments made to Sharon Black Bear from the time she died in July 2017 until April 2019.

The Argus Leader reports Crowe would endorse the checks in her own name or forge her grandmother's name.

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

## 2 senators back revoking Wounded Knee medals for US soldiers

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Two Democratic senators plan to introduce a companion bill to a U.S. House measure to revoke Medals of Honor for soldiers who participated in the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

Medals of Honor were given to 20 soldiers for participating in the massacre that killed an estimated 250 Native Americans, many of whom were women and children.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Jeff Merkley of Oregon announced Wednesday they will sponsor the Remove the Stain Act. It was first introduced in the House by Democrats Denny Heck of Washington and Deb Haaland of New Mexico and Republican Paul Cook of California.

Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota has said he does not support the effort because “we’re now guessing” about the roles of individual soldiers.

## Seoul says North Korea has fired 2 short-range projectiles

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Thursday fired two short-range projectiles, likely from a “super-large” multiple rocket launcher, South Korea’s military said, adding to tensions three days after the North said its troops conducted artillery drills near its disputed sea boundary with South Korea.

The recent North Korea activities could indicate it wants to show what would happen if Washington fails to meet a year-end deadline set by its leader, Kim Jong Un, for the U.S. to offer a new proposal in their stalemated nuclear talks.

Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that the projectiles were launched toward the North’s eastern waters from northeastern South Hamgyong province.

Maj. Gen. Jeon Dong Jin, a senior operations officer at the JCS, said the projectiles flew about 380 kilometers (235 miles) at a maximum altitude of 97 kilometers (60 miles). He said South Korean and U.S. intelligence authorities were continuing to analyze the details.

“Our military expresses its strong regret over (the launches) and urges (North Korea) to immediately stop acts that escalate military tensions,” Jeon said in a televised briefing. He said the military is monitoring possible additional launches by North Korea.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe condemned the launches as a “serious challenge” to both Japan and the international community, even though the projectiles did not land inside Japanese territorial waters.

He said his government will “do its utmost” to protect the lives and assets of Japanese people.

The reported launches were the 13th major public weapons test by North Korea this year and the first since it conducted what it called a test-firing of a new “super-large” multiple rocket launcher late last month. That launcher is apparently the same system that South Korea’s military said was likely used in Thursday’s launches.

Abe called the projectiles “ballistic missiles.” Some experts have said that projectiles fired from the “super-large” multiple rocket launcher are virtually missiles or missile-class weapons.

On Monday, North Korea said leader Kim visited a front-line islet and ordered artillery troops there to practice firing near the sea boundary, the scene of several bloody naval clashes between the Koreas in past years. South Korea protested the drills, saying they violated an agreement last year aimed at lowering military animosity.

Seoul’s Defense Ministry said the artillery firing occurred on Nov. 23, the 9th anniversary of the North Korean shelling of a South Korean border island that killed four South Koreans in 2010.

With nuclear diplomacy with the United States largely deadlocked, North Korea has test-fired a series of newly developed weapons to pressure the U.S. while using the standstill in negotiations to upgrade its military capabilities. In early October, it conducted its first underwater launch of a ballistic missile in three years.

Attention is now focused on whether North Korea will resume long-range missile and nuclear tests which have been suspended since it conducted the third of three intercontinental ballistic missile tests in

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November 2017. President Donald Trump has called the suspension of those tests a major achievement of his North Korea policy.

Some experts say North Korea may restart those major weapons tests if the United States fails to meet the deadline. But others say North Korea is likely to begin with less serious provocations while attempting to improve cooperation with China and Russia, because ICBM and nuclear tests would completely derail diplomacy with the United States.

In recent weeks, high-level North Korean officials have issued statements via state media saying their country is not interested in diplomacy with the U.S. unless Washington abandons hostile policies toward the North.

North Korea says it wants the U.S. to lift international sanctions imposed on it and provide security guarantees before abandoning its advancing nuclear arsenal. But U.S. officials have said the sanctions on the North will remain in place until North Korea takes substantial steps toward denuclearization.

The nuclear negotiations broke down in February when Trump rejected Kim's demands for major sanctions relief in return for partial disarmament steps during their second summit in Vietnam. They held a third, impromptu meeting in late June at the Korean border village of Panmunjom.

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Associated Press writer Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

## **Iran condemns burning of its consulate by Iraqi protesters**

**By SAMYA KULLAB and MURTADA FARAJ Associated Press**

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iran on Thursday condemned the burning of its consulate in southern Iraq hours earlier, which came amid an escalation in Iraq's anti-government protests that erupted nearly two months ago.

Violence across southern Iraq had continued throughout the night, with security forces killing 16 protesters and wounded 90 since Wednesday. Protesters closed roads while a large number of police and military forces were deployed across key oil-rich provinces. Protesters had set fire to the Iranian consulate in the holy city of Najaf late Wednesday. The Iranian staff were not harmed, and escaped out the back door.

Anti-government protests have gripped Iraq since Oct. 1, when thousands took to the streets in Baghdad and the predominantly Shiite south. The largely leaderless movement accuses the government of being hopelessly corrupt, and has also decried Iran's growing influence in Iraqi state affairs.

At least 350 people have been killed by security forces, which routinely used live ammunition and tear gas to disperse crowds, sometimes shooting protesters directly with gas canisters, causing several fatalities.

Separately, the U.S. Embassy denounced a recent decision by Iraq's media regulator to suspend nine television channels, calling for the Communications and Media Commission to reverse its decision. Thursday's statement from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad also condemned attacks and harassment against journalists.

Local channel Dijla TV had its license suspended on Tuesday, and its office was closed and its equipment confiscated, according an official from one of the channels under threat. Other channels have been asked by the regulatory commission to sign a pledge "agreeing to adhere to its rules," said the official, who requested anonymity out of fear of reprisal.

The Islamic State group also claimed responsibility for Tuesday's coordinated bombings in three Baghdad neighborhoods, which killed five people. That was the first apparent coordinated attack since anti-government protests began. The bombings took place far from Baghdad's Tahrir Square, the epicenter of weeks of anti-government protests that have posed the biggest security challenge to Iraq since the defeat of IS.

Tehran called for a "responsible, strong and effective" response leadership to the incident from Iraq's government, said Abbas Mousavi, a foreign ministry spokesman, in statements to Iran's official IRNA news agency.

Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the torching of the consulate, saying it was perpetrated by "people outside of the genuine protesters," in a statement, adding that the purpose had been to harm bilateral relations between the countries.

One demonstrator was killed and 35 wounded when police fired live ammunition to prevent them from

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entering the Iranian consulate building. Once inside, the demonstrators removed the Iranian flag and replaced it with an Iraqi one, according to a police official who spoke on condition of anonymity, in line with regulations.

A curfew was imposed in Najaf after the consulate was burned. Security forces were heavily deployed around main government buildings and religious institutions on Thursday morning. The province is the headquarters of the country's Shiite religious authority.

The consulate attack comes after days of sit-ins and road closures with protesters cutting access to main thoroughfares and bridges with burning tires. Protesters have also lately targeted the state's economic interests in the south by blocking key ports and roads to oil fields.

In the oil-rich province of Nassiriya, sixteen protesters were killed overnight and 90 wounded by security forces who fired live ammunition to disperse them from a key bridge, security and medical officials said Thursday. Demonstrators had been blocking Nasr Bridge leading to the city center for several days. Security forces moved in late Wednesday to open the main thoroughfare. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

In Basra, security forces were deployed in the city's main roads to prevent protesters from staging sit-ins, with instructions to arrest demonstrators if they tried to block roads.

Basra's streets were open as of Thursday morning, but roads leading to the two main Gulf commodities ports in Umm Qasr and Khor al-Zubair remained closed. Schools and official public institutions were also closed.

Protesters had brought traffic in the oil-rich province to a halt for days by burning tires and barricading roads.

## On the Thanksgiving menu: Turkey, with a side of impeachment

By DAN SEWELL Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — Some people heading to Thanksgiving gatherings predict it's not just the turkey that will get roasted.

Already polarized over Republican Donald Trump's presidency, Americans are deeply split on a looming historic impeachment. Many families reflect the nation's divisions, setting up heated holiday debates in households with a taste for politics.

Bryan Wright, of Cincinnati, said "impeachment will definitely come up" as a divisive topic at his extended family's holiday meal. With a family representing a range of viewpoints including Trump supporters, he and his mother have been texting about the impeachment debate they expect.

"We would openly talk about that ... but we have different ways of coming at it," he said.

Wright is a longtime advocate of welcoming immigrants and helps lead Cincinnati's efforts, something that relatives who support Trump's push for a border wall with Mexico chalk up to his "liberal brainwashing," he said.

Wright — whose wife, University of Cincinnati psychology professor Farrah Jacquez, is of Mexican descent — will gather with her family and his relatives at his parents' home in Florence, Kentucky, after hosting two recent Thanksgivings.

That included 2016, right after Trump's hard-fought election, when there was family drama over whether Trump-backing relatives from Tennessee would be willing to come to his house. They did but some voiced "some pretty awful views on immigrants and immigration," he said.

Alex Triantafilou, an attorney and chairman of Hamilton County's Republican Party, also expects impeachment to be on the table at the holiday feast hosted by an older brother. While the swing state of Ohio has been trending Republican, Democrats have turned the GOP tide in his county.

Triantafilou, who is critical of the Democratic-led impeachment proceedings, said that his family backs Trump for the most part but that more viewpoints have been added as it has grown with new in-laws and friends.

"If somebody comes in and they're not on the Trump train, so to speak, they get a little bit of an airing," he said, adding that it's "usually in fun."

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But sometimes it goes past fun.

Wright recalls Thanksgivings with offensive comments that strained relations. Mindy Nagel, a physical therapist with liberal views, has unfriended her conservative brother on Facebook over his political posts and said she'll be "surrounded" by people who disagree with her politically at her in-laws' Thanksgiving.

"Politics is the elephant in the room," she said. Her hosts will probably turn off conservative Fox News while she's there, Nagel said, but there will likely be someone who "tries to stir the pot" by raising Trump and impeachment with her.

Elaine Swann, a Los Angeles-based etiquette coach, advises hosts to have a plan to deal with polarizing discussions amid "all this talk about impeachment" in the air, along with the aromas of oyster dressing and freshly baked pumpkin pies.

"I do think it's healthy for people to express themselves and to have those conversations," said Swann, who will host her family's Thanksgiving. "My advice is to take a route to allow some sort of platform, but with guidelines."

One tactic: sequester the debates. She'll have a room away from the dining table stocked with snacks for people who want to talk politics. She also suggests designating a calm family member as a combination moderator-peacekeeper.

Triantafilou, a former judge, said that role often falls to him, although he wouldn't mind taking a break from politics for the day.

"My preference would be to not have the conversations at Thanksgiving," he said. "I'd rather watch football and leave politics behind."

Swann, who will host around 30 people, said that if guests start tearing into one another like drumsticks, "make sure that in your arsenal as a host you have some family-building activity to get everybody out of it."

Games can be a good diversion or, Swann suggested, invite people to bring family photos to share that will stir warm memories.

If the debate starts getting out of hand Thursday, Wright said, someone will probably defuse things by asking: "How about those Bengals?"

Cincinnati's hapless pro football team is winless this season.

The bottom line, Swann said, is cherishing the time together.

"Although we may not agree politically, the one thing we are is family," she said. "The big takeaway that I encourage everyone to have is that love for family, because tomorrow is not promised to us, and you never know who is going to wake up the next day and who is not."

Wright will miss his uncle Tom Burnside, who died in 2018 after years of helping lead spirited discussions of politics "and B.S." that would go on into the wee hours. He and his pro-Trump uncle were on opposite ends of most political debates but would hear each other out.

"No one's hearts and minds were changed in these conversations," Wright said with a chuckle.

But Burnside knew how to get the final word: he'd leave behind pro-Trump mugs he sneaked into the cupboards of family critics.

Follow Dan Sewell at <https://www.twitter.com/dansewell>

## 3 hurt at Texas chemical plant hit by 2 massive explosions

PORT NECHES, Texas (AP) — Two massive explosions 13 hours apart tore through a Texas chemical plant Wednesday, and one left three workers injured.

The blasts blew out windows and doors of nearby homes and prompted a mandatory evacuation of a 4-mile (7-kilometer) radius from the plant in Port Neches in Southeast Texas, about 80 miles (129 kilometers) east of Houston. Officials say they have no estimate for how long the fire will burn.

The initial explosion at the TPC Group plant, which makes chemical and petroleum-based products, occurred around 1 a.m. It sent a large plume of smoke stretching for miles and started a fire.

The three workers hurt during the blast — two TPC employees and a contractor — were treated at hos-

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pitals and released, said Troy Monk, TPC's director of health, safety and security. About 30 employees working at the plant at the time of the explosion were all accounted for, according to TPC.

Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick, the top county official, told Beaumont TV station KFDM that it's a miracle no one died. He said one worker suffered burns and the others had a broken wrist and a broken leg.

Monk said the blast occurred in an area of the plant that makes butadiene, a chemical used to make synthetic rubber and other products. He said the plant has 175 full-time employees and 50 contract workers.

The second blast ripped through the plant about 2 p.m., sending a steel reactor tower rocketing high into the air. That prompted Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick, the top county official, to order a mandatory evacuation of Port Neches and neighboring Groves, Nederland and part of Port Arthur. Water cannons were trained on surrounding plant works and tanks to keep them cool and avoid further explosions.

At a Wednesday night news conference, Branick said a loss of power at the plant prevented any investigation into the cause of the explosions or how much damage was done to the facility. Likewise, he said there was no estimate yet for the amount of damage to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Monk said TPC would form an investigation team to determine what led to the explosions.

"We're staying focused on the safety of our emergency response personnel folks in and around in the community as well as trying to protect the environment," Monk said at a news conference.

Firefighters have not been able to fully assess the damage at the plant, he said.

Branick, who lives near the plant, said at the news conference that he was awakened at his home by the initial blast, which blew in his front and back doors, "damaging them pretty significantly."

Jefferson County Emergency Management coordinator Mike White told the Beaumont Enterprise that five residents were being treated for minor injuries, mostly related to shattered glass. He said state environmental officials were monitoring air quality but that no elevated chemical levels had been detected.

Texas has seen multiple petrochemical industry blazes this year, including a March fire that burned for days near Houston and another that killed a worker at a plant in nearby Crosby.

In the March fire, prosecutors filed five water pollution charges against the company that owns the petrochemical storage facility after chemicals flowed into a nearby waterway.

## Hopes fade for any more survivors in Albania quake; 40 dead

By LLAZAR SEMINI Associated Press

DURRES, Albania (AP) — Hopes were fading Thursday of finding anyone else alive beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings in Albania, two days after a deadly quake struck the country's Adriatic coast. The death toll stands at 40 after more bodies were pulled from the ruins.

Authorities said search and rescue operations were continuing in three collapsed buildings in the port city of Durres, 33 kilometers (20 miles) west of the capital Tirana. Searching had stopped, however, in the nearby town of Thumane, where no more people are believed to be buried in collapsed apartment buildings after six bodies were recovered from the rubble overnight.

The Health Ministry said Thursday that more than 750 people were injured in the 6.4-magnitude earthquake that struck before dawn Tuesday and has been followed by hundreds of aftershocks, including several with magnitudes of above 5.0, which have complicated rescue efforts.

Another aftershock with a preliminary magnitude of 5.1 rattled the area midday on Thursday, sending people fleeing into the streets in panic. At least one building suffered further damage from the aftershock, while mourners rushed from a building where they had gathered for the start of funeral ceremonies for some of the victims.

Rescue crews with specialized equipment, sniffer dogs and emergency supplies have flooded into the country from neighboring countries and other European nations to help in the search efforts and provide for those left homeless.

Many of those left without homes in Thumane spent a second night in tents, unwilling to head to hotels along the coast made available for their accommodation while the search operation continued. A total of about 2,100 people had spent Tuesday night in tents, and the government has vowed to provide new

homes during 2020 for all those left homeless.

Authorities have warned residents not to return to any buildings that could have been damaged until engineers can check the structures for safety.

## Sticky impeachment trial questions: How long? Who testifies?

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — What will the impeachment trial look like?

While a Senate trial of President Donald Trump now appears inevitable, details of how it will unfold remain unknown. How long will proceedings last? Can either party summon witnesses to make its points? Senators will have to decide these and other, potentially thorny questions.

Presiding will be Chief Justice John Roberts — that's in the Constitution — and theoretically he could issue key rulings on some of these questions. But Roberts is not likely to want to be in the spotlight, and a Senate majority could overrule him in any case.

Almost everything can be negotiated between Republicans and Democrats. That's what happened in 1999, when Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., and the Democratic leader, Tom Daschle of South Dakota, worked out agreements for how Bill Clinton's trial would run, including its length.

They never resolved their disagreement over witnesses, although in the end Senate Republicans approved calling just three people for testimony in private, far fewer than House Republicans who prosecuted the case wanted.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., hasn't publicly addressed the rules for a Trump trial, though he's said he "can't imagine a scenario" under which two-thirds of the Senate would vote to remove Trump for office.

A look at some issues that could arise:

### ROBERTS RULES

Roberts has the power under longstanding Senate rules to "rule on all questions of evidence." That means he could, in theory, allow the House Democrats serving as prosecutors to call the witnesses they want. Some lawyers suggest this could allow Democrats to bypass White House impediments to getting testimony from high-level administration officials.

But a ruling favoring Democrats, who want to present witnesses they say would describe Trump blocking military aid to Ukraine to gain political help at home, could prompt a vote to override. And Roberts will "want to avoid circumstances where the Senate is being asked to overrule him," said Michael Gerhardt, a University of North Carolina law professor and author of "Impeachment: What Everyone Needs to Know."

The standing rules give Roberts an escape clause: He can "submit any such question to a vote of the Members of the Senate."

Roberts would be the third chief justice to preside at a Senate impeachment trial, joining Salmon Chase, who oversaw the trial for President Andrew Johnson in 1868, and William Rehnquist, who presided at Clinton's trial in 1999.

"Chase had a fairly contentious relationship with the Senate," Gerhardt said.

Rehnquist, on the other hand, was unobtrusive save for the gold stripes on the sleeves of his judicial robe. Roberts is more likely to follow the quiet lead of Rehnquist, for whom he worked as a Supreme Court law clerk, said Neal Katyal, author of "Impeach: The Case Against Donald Trump."

Gerhardt agreed. "I don't think Roberts is going to walk in there and make any waves," he said.

### MAJORITY RULES

McConnell's approach to the trial could rest in part on whether the Senate's 53 Republicans are united. If they are, they can make their will felt in setting rules. If not, McConnell has a greater incentive to work something out with Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

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For Clinton's trial, Lott was committed to a bipartisan process, Gerhardt said. Lott convened a private meeting of the entire Senate in the old Senate chamber in the Capitol. Senators also tried to hash out disagreements over witnesses in closed-door sessions.

However, McConnell and Schumer are at a low point in their relationship, and the Senate is a far more partisan place than it was 20 years ago. Back then, veteran senators such as Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., and Phil Gramm, R-Texas, helped forge the agreement on how to commence the trial. There aren't a lot of obvious candidates to fill those roles now, which could keep the onus on Schumer and McConnell.

## HOW LONG?

Negotiations determined the length of the Clinton trial, which lasted just over a month, from the formal presentation of the articles of impeachment to votes acquitting the president. Democrats pushed for a short trial and some Republicans favored a longer one.

That dynamic generally will work in reverse this time. Republicans might want to short-circuit the trial, while Democrats could favor a drawn-out process that includes testimony from several witnesses.

Two wild cards: First, the five senators seeking the Democratic presidential nomination might not want to spend too much time in Washington with the first caucuses and primaries looming and the trial distracting voters. Second, Republicans have talked about calling Hunter Biden and other witnesses whom House Democrats refused to summon, portending a longer trial.

## WILL THERE BE WITNESSES?

This was among the most contentious disputes during Clinton's trial, and it promises to be a tempest again this time. It is not clear whether any Senate Republicans would vote to summon witnesses for Trump's trial.

When it came to a Senate vote in January 1999, there was a stark partisan division, with Republicans providing all the votes to issue subpoenas to former White House intern Monica Lewinsky, Clinton confidant Vernon Jordan and White House aide Sidney Blumenthal. They were questioned in private, with videotaped excerpts played during Clinton's trial.

Despite the party-line vote, the outcome was the product of long negotiations. The House Republicans who served as trial prosecutors wanted more witnesses and public testimony. The sexual relationship underlying Clinton's impeachment may have made senators wary of tawdry public testimony.

By comparison, 40 witnesses testified in public at Johnson's trial.

## EARLY DISMISSAL?

It takes 67 votes to convict in an impeachment trial, if all 100 senators vote. But a simple majority of the Senate could vote to end the trial quickly. This is yet another topic that could be hashed out in negotiations.

Republicans might want to bring the trial to a quick end, but several GOP senators from swing states are committed to a full, fair trial and may want to avoid any appearance of partisanship or taking sides on behalf of Trump.

In Clinton's trial, Lott and Daschle allowed Democratic Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia to move for dismissal a couple of weeks after the proceedings began, but his motion failed basically along party lines.

Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor in Washington and Bruce Schreiner in Manchester, Kentucky, contributed to this report.

## Time running out on North Korea's deadline to US on nukes

By FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump have signaled their affection for each other so regularly it might be easy to miss rising fears that the head-spinning diplomatic engagement of the past two years is falling apart.

Pyongyang has issued increasingly dire warnings to Washington to mind a year-end deadline to offer

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some new initiative to settle the nations' decades-long nuclear standoff.

Failure could mean a return to the barrage of powerful North Korean weapons tests that marked 2017 as one of the most fraught years in a relationship that has often been defined by bloodshed, deep mistrust and regular threats.

As the deadline approaches, and as the North's propaganda machine cranks up its warnings, here's a look at how high-stakes diplomatic wrangling in one of the most dangerous corners of the world might play out:

## THE DEADLINE: HOW SERIOUS IS IT?

North Korea has previously issued deadlines it doesn't follow through on as a way to try to get what it wants in negotiations.

But despite the usual skepticism, there are signs that Pyongyang means business this time.

South Korea's Yonhap News Agency has reported that Seoul is taking the year-end deadline seriously and is working on "contingency plans" with the United States, which has been trying, and failing, to get North Korea back into serious talks before time runs out.

The chief U.S. nuclear negotiator warned recently that the North could turn to provocations if the deadline is unmet.

When diplomacy broke down at a Trump-Kim summit last February after North Korea didn't win broad sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities, it began staging a series of short-range weapons tests. On Thursday, North Korea fired two projectiles likely from a multiple rocket launcher, South Korea's military said, the first such major weapons test in about a month.

The North has also suggested it will not hold another summit with Trump unless it gets something substantial for its efforts.

"The U.S. only seeks to earn time, pretending it has made progress in settling the issue of the Korean Peninsula," Kim Kye Gwan, a senior adviser to the North's foreign ministry, said last week. "As we have got nothing in return, we will no longer gift the U.S. president with something he can boast of."

## A RETURN TO ICBMs?

If North Korea makes the determination that it can win little from Trump — amid congressional impeachment proceedings and 2020 presidential election jockeying — it might return to the nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests that made 2017 such a dangerous year.

Some outside observers, however, believe that Kim, despite his frustration with the Trump administration, has yet to give up on negotiations that have won a level of U.S. engagement that has eluded North Korean leaders for decades.

"As we enter 2020, the strategic window to make some kind of compromise with the U.S. will close rapidly, making sanctions more permanent" and hampering Kim's promise of economic relief for his people, according to Stephen Robert Nagy, an Asia expert and professor at the International Christian University in Tokyo.

Kim may also try to further bolster ties and secure aid from China — North Korea's most important ally and economic lifeline — and Russia while testing shorter-range missiles, according to Moon Seong Mook, an analyst at the Korea Research Institute for National Strategy in Seoul.

But more powerful tests aren't out of the question.

If the North decides to give up on talks and launches an ICBM, for instance, it will most likely be at "a time that would inflict the biggest pain on Trump," said Go Myong-Hyun, an analyst at the Seoul-based Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

## ANY HOPE?

Sue Mi Terry, a former senior CIA analyst on Korea, wrote earlier this month that amid unrealistic expectations in Pyongyang, the U.S. might have "only two bad options" — give the North massive sanctions relief up front in return for little in return, or watch Pyongyang return to more powerful weapons tests

after the expiration of the year-end deadline.

"The North Koreans' plan is to stall: show up, talk, break off talks," Terry wrote. "And while they play this game, they are improving and expanding their nuclear and missile programs."

Christopher Hill, chief U.S. negotiator with North Korea in the George W. Bush administration, said he feels that Pyongyang is "going to really press (Trump) to get something by the end of the year."

"And if the Trump administration holds firm, then they're going to have to recalibrate. And they will recalibrate, because they know they need Trump," Hill said.

Moon Jae-in, the liberal South Korean president who has held summits with Kim and who yearns for deeper engagement, might be the last best hope for diplomacy, according to Robert Kelly, a Korea expert at South Korea's Pusan National University.

Moon, Kelly wrote, must strike "a deal which re-engages Trump's interest at a busy time for him and finally pulls a concession out of the North which is meaningful enough to silence the growing chorus of conservative criticism in Seoul and Washington, yet simultaneously offers North Korea enough to halt its countdown."

But, Kelly added, "it is unclear if Moon — or anyone — can thread such a narrow needle."

Associated Press writers Edith Lederer at the United Nations and Hyung-jin Kim and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, South Korea, contributed to this report.

Foster Klug is the AP's news director for the Koreas, Japan, Australia and the South Pacific and has covered North Korea since 2005. Follow him at [www.twitter.com/apklug](http://www.twitter.com/apklug)

## UN says armed attacks in eastern Congo kill Ebola responders

By **AL-HADJI KUDRA MALIRO** and **CARA ANNA** Associated Press

BENI, Congo (AP) — Rebels have attacked and killed Ebola response workers in eastern Congo, the World Health Organization chief said Thursday, an alarming development that could cause the waning outbreak to again pick up momentum in what has been called a war zone.

"We are heartbroken that our worst fears have been realized," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Twitter.

Three health workers were killed when Mai-Mai fighters attacked a center run by the United Nations health agency overnight in Biakato, local official Salambongo Selemani told The Associated Press. One resident also was killed and Congolese forces killed one attacker and captured two others, Selemani said.

Warnings had been posted earlier demanding that the health workers leave or face "the worst," the official said.

This is not the first time that health workers trying to contain the second-worst Ebola outbreak in history have been targeted. Some have called this outbreak more complicated than any other. Several rebel groups are active in the region, and local officials say some believe Ebola is nothing but a political ploy.

"Imagine, a doctor leaves home in the U.S. or elsewhere to come sleep in a tent to help save us from this scourge of Ebola and yet poorly educated young people want to attack him. ... It is very deplorable," said Fiston Kamango, a youth leader in Biakato.

In a second attack, Allied Democratic Forces rebels killed a civilian overnight in Mangina, a rural community in Beni territory, territory administrator Donat Kasereka Kibwana said. The target was not the Ebola center but the local population, the official said.

The latest attacks come after days of deadly unrest in the city of Beni, where residents outraged by repeated rebel attacks stormed the local U.N. peacekeeping base, demanding more protection. WHO evacuated 49 of its staffers there, leaving 71 in place.

Ebola response work was put on lockdown in Beni, dismaying health experts who say every attack hurts crucial efforts to contain the deadly virus. Most of the recent new cases have been reported in the newly targeted communities of Biakato, Mangina and Beni.

The number of cases had been dropping in the yearlong outbreak which has killed more than 2,100 people and was declared a rare global health emergency earlier this year. Several days this month, zero cases were reported. Previously, cases have surged after attacks on health workers and facilities.

In one example of how any pause can sharply affect Ebola containment efforts, WHO has said no one in Beni could be vaccinated against the virus on Monday. The health agency previously could trace more than 90% of contacts of infected people in the city but now that figure is just 17%, a U.N. spokesman said Tuesday.

Residents accuse Congolese and U.N. forces of not doing enough to protect civilians from the rebels who fight for control of the region's vast mineral wealth. The ADF alone is blamed for the murders of more than 1,500 people in and around Beni in the past four years.

The latest rebel attack outside Beni killed 19 people, the U.N. said Wednesday.

After an emergency meeting Monday, President Felix Tshisekedi decided to allow joint operations between Congolese and U.N. forces in Beni following the protests that also burned the town hall.

Far from the capital, Kinshasa, some traumatized residents in the densely populated border region near Uganda and Rwanda are wary of outsiders, further complicating the Ebola containment work in a part of Congo that had never recorded the virus before.

Despite two promising new Ebola vaccines, health workers continue to battle misinformation and reluctance to seek treatment for the virus that is largely spread via close contact with the bodily fluids of infected people, including the dead.

In addition, many local health workers have been recruited by the "well-paying" Ebola response, leading to shortages of trained people to deal with other serious health issues such as an even deadlier measles outbreak and malaria, the medical charity Doctors Without Borders said in a statement.

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Anna reported from Johannesburg.

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## **Furious, China summons US ambassador over Hong Kong bills**

**By YANAN WANG Associated Press**

BEIJING (AP) — China reacted furiously Thursday to President Donald Trump's signing two bills aimed at supporting human rights in Hong Kong, summoning the U.S. ambassador to protest and warning the move would undermine cooperation with Washington.

Hong Kong, a former British colony that was granted special autonomy when China took control in 1997, has been rocked by six months of sometimes violent pro-democracy demonstrations.

Trump's approval of the bills was not unexpected. Neither was the reaction from Beijing, given China's adamant rejections of any commentary on what it considers an internal issue.

Nevertheless, the clash comes at a sensitive time and could upset already thorny trade negotiations between the two nations.

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng told U.S. Ambassador Terry Branstad that the move constituted "serious interference in China's internal affairs and a serious violation of international law," a foreign ministry statement said.

Le called it a "nakedly hegemonic act." He urged the U.S. not to implement the bills to prevent greater damage to U.S.-China relations, the ministry said.

In a statement about the meeting, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing said "the Chinese Communist Party must honor its promises to the Hong Kong people."

The U.S. "believes that Hong Kong's autonomy, its adherence to the rule of law, and its commitment to protecting civil liberties are key to preserving its special status under U.S. law," it said.

The U.S. laws, which passed both chambers of Congress almost unanimously, mandate sanctions on Chinese and Hong Kong officials who carry out human rights abuses in Hong Kong, require an annual

review of Hong Kong's favorable trade status and prohibit the export to Hong Kong police of certain non-lethal munitions.

"I signed these bills out of respect for President Xi, China, and the people of Hong Kong," Trump said in a statement. "They are being enacted in the hope that Leaders and Representatives of China and Hong Kong will be able to amicably settle their differences leading to long term peace and prosperity for all."

Since the Hong Kong protests began in June, Beijing has responded to expressions of support for the demonstrators from the U.S. and other countries by accusing them of orchestrating the unrest to contain China's development. The central government has blamed foreign "black hands" bent on destroying the city.

C.Y. Leung, a former chief executive of Hong Kong, said at a talk at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Hong Kong that he doubts the U.S. or supporters of the bills "ever had the interest of Hong Kong in mind."

He suggested Hong Kong was being used as a "proxy" for China and the legislation was a way to hit back at Beijing.

While China has repeatedly threatened unspecified "countermeasures," it's unclear exactly how it will respond. Speaking on Fox News, Trump called the protests a "complicating factor" in trade negotiations with Beijing.

At a daily briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang responded to a question about how Trump's endorsement of the legislation might affect the trade talks by saying it would undermine "cooperation in important areas."

Asked Thursday if the U.S. legislation would affect trade talks with Washington, a Chinese Commerce Ministry spokesman said he had no new information to share.

Recently both sides expressed confidence they were making headway on a preliminary agreement to avert a further escalation in a tariff war that has hammered manufacturers in both nations.

Associated Press writers Eileen Ng in Hong Kong and Elaine Kurtenbach in Beijing contributed to this report.

## Fired Navy Secretary Spencer criticizes Trump in SEAL's case

By **ROBERT BURNS** and **JULIE WATSON** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Richard Spencer, who was fired as Navy secretary for his handling of a SEAL war crimes case championed by President Donald Trump, wrote that the commander in chief "has very little understanding" of how the American military works.

The extraordinary accusation came in an opinion piece published on The Washington Post's website Wednesday evening, three days after he was fired. Spencer called Trump's intervention in the case of Navy Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher "shocking" and unprecedented.

Spencer was fired Sunday by Defense Secretary Mark Esper for working a private deal with the White House to ensure that Gallagher be allowed to retire without losing his SEAL status.

In his Post article, Spencer acknowledged his mistake but also asserted that Trump's actions were detrimental to the military.

Spencer said Trump had involved himself in the Gallagher case "almost from the start," by telephoning Spencer even before the SEAL's court martial started to ask that Gallagher be moved out of confinement at a Navy brig. Spencer said he resisted Trump because the presiding judge had decided that confinement was important. Nonetheless, Trump ordered Spencer to transfer Gallagher from the brig to the equivalent of an enlisted barracks.

Spencer said he believes Trump's interest in the case stemmed partly from the way Gallagher's defense lawyers and others "worked to keep it front and center in the media."

After Gallagher was acquitted of most charges but convicted of posing with the corpse of an Islamic State extremist in Iraq, he submitted his request to retire. In Spencer's telling, that raised three questions for the Navy, including whether Gallagher should be allowed to retire at his current rank. The military jury had said he should be demoted.

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Trump, who had tweeted support for Gallagher and stated that his case had been "handled very badly from the beginning," short-circuited the Navy's administrative review of Gallagher's status by ordering Spencer to restore Gallagher's rank.

"This was a shocking and unprecedented intervention in a low-level review," Spencer wrote. "It was also a reminder that the president has very little understanding of what it means to be in the military, to fight ethically or to be governed by a uniform set of rules and practices."

Last week, Trump tweeted that Gallagher must be allowed to keep his Trident pin, the medal that designates a SEAL member. The Navy had planned to let an administrative board review the question starting Monday, but eventually Esper decided to stop that process and let Gallagher retire as a SEAL, as Trump had ordered.

Earlier Wednesday, the Navy announced that it had canceled the peer-review boards for three SEAL officers who supervised Gallagher during the Iraq deployment that gave rise to the war crimes charges.

Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said the case was becoming a distraction for the commando force, known for its quiet professionalism but recently roiled with controversy.

The decision was the latest twist in the Gallagher matter. Trump has made no mention of the three SEAL officers also ordered to be reviewed. All three had overseen Gallagher during his 2017 deployment to Iraq.

But Modly said there were better ways to address any "failures in conduct, performance, judgment, or professionalism exhibited by these officers."

He directed the chief of naval operations to end the review process for Lt. Cmdr. Robert Breisch, Lt. Jacob Portier and Lt. Thomas MacNeil.

"The United States Navy, and the Naval Special Warfare Community specifically, have dangerous and important work to do," Modly said in a statement. "In my judgment, neither deserves the continued distraction and negative attention that recent events have evoked."

Modly said his decision should not be interpreted as loosening the standards he expects of SEALs. He said ongoing efforts will continue to address problems within the SEAL community, which has had numerous allegations of misconduct in recent months.

"Navy uniformed leaders have my full confidence that they will continue to address challenging cultural issues within the Naval Special Warfare community, instill good order and discipline, and enforce the very highest professional standards we expect from every member of that community," he said.

Portier was Gallagher's platoon commander and was charged with failing to report the killing of the captive. He denied the charges and they were dropped after the jury acquitted Gallagher of murder.

Portier's attorney, Jeremiah Sullivan, said Portier was happy to learn he would be allowed to keep his trident, a pin designating SEAL status.

"Lt. Portier is extremely grateful for the unwavering support of President Trump," Sullivan said.

Attorneys for Breisch and MacNeil did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Watson reported from San Diego.

## Hong Kong activists call for global support after US laws

By EILEEN NG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Chanting "Stand with Hong Kong," pro-democracy activists on Thursday urged the world to follow U.S. footsteps by passing laws backing human rights in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory, as police teams began a cleanup of a Hong Kong university earlier occupied by demonstrators.

Prominent activist Joshua Wong, who was among democracy supporters who lobbied for the new U.S. laws, called them a "remarkable achievement," with human rights triumphing over crucial U.S.-China trade talks.

President Donald Trump signed the two bills into law on Wednesday. One of the laws prescribes economic sanctions on Asia's top financial hub and diplomatic action on Hong Kong and Chinese officials found guilty of human rights abuses. The other bans the export of certain nonlethal munitions to Hong Kong police.

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Wong said he hopes the laws will spur Britain and other Western nations to follow suit. He said he would participate in a parliamentary hearing in Italy via Skype later Thursday to press for further global support. "Now is the time for the Western world to stand with Hong Kong," he said.

Echoing Wong's call, dozens of office workers and activists chanted "This is what democracy looks like" and other slogans during a daily lunchtime rally downtown. Some urged Washington to penalize the city's embattled leader, Carrie Lam, over the government's handling of the crisis.

A protester held a placard saying "Thank You Mr. Trump, Sanction #1 Carrie Lam."

More than 5,000 people have been detained since the unrest began in June over a China extradition bill seen as an erosion of freedoms promised when the former British colony returned to Chinese control in 1997. The movement has since expanded its demands to include democratic elections and an independent investigation of police conduct.

China reacted furiously to the U.S. laws. Hong Kong's government also denounced the U.S. legislation as "unreasonable" meddling, saying it sends the wrong signal to protesters and won't help to ease the crisis.

C.Y. Leung, Hong Kong's chief executive for five years until 2017, said the U.S. legislation was targeted at containing China's growth. He said Beijing promised Hong Kong a "high degree of autonomy," not full autonomy, and warned the city risks losing even this freedom with the foreign intervention.

"The world is seeing a singular view of Hong Kong events through the lens of those who wish to destroy its parent where the only possible outcome is to completely sacrifice the child," Leung said.

The U.S. legislation followed a stunning election victory by the pro-democracy camp in local elections on Sunday, in a stinging rebuke to Carrie Lam.

Willy Lam, a political expert at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said U.S. support will place more pressure on Hong Kong's government and make Beijing "think twice" about using harsher tactics to quell the unrest.

"It is a major turning point in the protest movement," he said.

Many protesters feel it's premature to celebrate because Carrie Lam has not offered any new concessions to their demands. Violence has declined since the polls but protesters plan to hold a "thanksgiving" rally Thursday night with more gatherings over the weekend.

Earlier Thursday, about 100 personnel, including hazmat teams and explosive disposal experts, fanned out across the vast Polytechnic University to clear stockpiles of hazardous materials including gasoline bombs and corrosive liquid.

Television video showed officers searching buildings. Police said they removed more than 600 gasoline bombs and other items.

The move came after the university's administration said it believed no one remained inside after a two-day search ended Wednesday. Faculty teams found only a young woman in weak condition.

The university has been ringed by police for 11 days as protesters retreated into the campus after blocking a major tunnel and setting toll booths on fire during clashes with police. Some 1,100 protesters have left or have been arrested.

Hours before the police operation, a masked protester came out from hiding and told reporters there were fewer than 20 others holed up inside. The protester, who identified himself as Ah Bong, said they distrusted the police and opposed the operation.

Police said any holdouts found will not be arrested but will be coaxed into seeking medical treatment, with their details taken down for possible action later.

Police official Chow Yat Ming said the priority of the operation is to remove dangerous items that are a threat to public safety and gather evidence of "malicious" damage to campus facilities.

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Associated Press journalist Joael Calupitan contributed to this report.

## Davis' 41 points lead Lakers past Pelicans, 114-110

By **BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer**

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Anthony Davis shrugged off a constant cascade of boos and reminded a packed crowd exactly what it lost when the six-time All-Star's trade request was finally fulfilled.

Davis capped a 41-point performance in his return to New Orleans by intercepting Jrue Holiday's inbound pass with 5 seconds left and making a pair of game-sealing free throws, and the Los Angeles Lakers extended their winning streak to nine with a 114-110 victory over the Pelicans on Wednesday night.

"Obviously, the emotions was high," Davis said. "I think this game was circled on both calendars. And they came out guns blazing and we were able to come out with the win."

An energetic crowd booed Davis during introductions and virtually every time he handled the ball, only to see him and new teammate LeBron James take over in the fourth quarter.

James had 29 points and 11 assists, scoring 15 points in the final period, when Kyle Kuzma added nine of his 16 points to help the Lakers erase a 10-point deficit.

"My teammates kept telling me, 'AD, don't worry about it. We're going to get this win. We'll find a way to win it for you,'" said Davis, who spent his first seven years in New Orleans.

Kuzma gave the Lakers the lead for good when he hit a 3-pointer from the left corner with 1:07 to go, making it 111-109.

New Orleans trimmed it to 111-110 when Josh Hart hit one of two free throws, and after a turnover by James as he was swarmed in the paint, JJ Redick's open 3 for the lead rimmed out. The Pelicans were forced to foul Davis, who missed one of two free throws, giving the Pelicans 5 seconds to run a play for the tie or lead. But that's when Davis sealed it, stepping in front of Brandon Ingram for his third steal.

"We were going to try to run JJ off a screen and back off," Pelicans coach Alvin Gentry said. "If not, we were going to try to get the ball to Brandon to try and dribble and create something. AD just made a great defensive play."

Holiday had 29 points and 12 assists, and Ingram had 23 points and 10 rebounds for the Pelicans, who have lost three straight.

"It was a great atmosphere. I thought the energy was our way," Holiday said. "Toward the end of the game we had some execution issues, but we still gave ourselves a chance."

After trailing by 16 in the third quarter, the Lakers seized momentum with a 9-0 run to open the fourth, trimming New Orleans' lead to 89-88. Los Angeles tied the game at 91 on Kuzma's third 3.

New Orleans briefly went back up by four before Davis, who'd received treatment after banging his right elbow at the end of the third quarter, returned to the game and threw down an alley-oop feed from James.

"Any time you go back to a place where you've made a mark, where you started your career ... and gave a lot to the community and the franchise, you want to come back and play well and win," James said. "We knew that as his brothers and we wanted to try and fulfill that goal."

The Lakers took their first lead since the opening five minutes of the game when James hit a jumper over Ingram, pulling up as the Pelicans forward glanced over his shoulder to see if a screen was being set.

"It's just winning time for me," James said. "Fourth quarter, no matter how much of a deficit we're in, or however the game is going, I believe once I start the fourth I can make a push and see what happens."

Davis missed his first shot and three of his first four to the delight of the crowd, but still scored 27 points by halftime on his way to the most points by a player in his first game against his former team, according to Elias.

"It was a tough environment. Every time he touched the basketball, he was going against a guy — a bunch of guys — that know him, playing against a coach that knows him," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. "He put all that stuff aside. Blocked out the noise and rose to the challenge."

Davis executed about every move New Orleans fans knew and loved when he wore the No. 23 in blue, red and gold, from soaring alley-oop dunks to turnaround baseline fades. Only this time, he wore a gold jersey with a purple No. 3, and it was his misses that drew roars from the crowd.

The Pelicans appeared buoyed by the partisan energy permeating the arena, going up 38-25 on Holiday's

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step-back 3 as the first quarter expired.

New Orleans led 64-54 at halftime, thanks in large part to Holiday's 10-of-15 shooting to that point, including his 4-of-4 mark from 3-point range. And the Pelicans maintained a double-digit lead until early in the fourth quarter.

## TIP-INS

Lakers: Shot 8 of 24 from 3-point range and missed seven of 25 free throws. ... Scored 62 points in the paint. ... Dwight Howard had nine points on four dunks and a free throw.

Pelicans: Turned the ball over 20 times, leading to 19 Lakers points. ... Shot 17 of 40 (42.5%) from 3-point range. ... Redick made five 3s and finished with 18 points. ... Kenrich Williams scored 11 points.

## CATCHING UP

Before Davis changed out of his uniform, he went to the Pelicans locker room to give Holiday a signed jersey and wound up lingering a bit to catch up with old teammates and coaches.

"We've got a bond off the floor that will continue no matter the circumstances. It was a fun night," Davis said. "Everybody thinks I've got a vendetta against New Orleans or something like that. ... I have no ill will toward anybody. I'm in a happy place. They're in a happy place. And we're just here to play basketball."

## UP NEXT

Lakers: Begin a two-game homestand against Washington on Friday night.

Pelicans: Visit Oklahoma City on Friday night in the first of a home-and-home with the Thunder, with the second leg on Sunday.

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/NBA> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## 5 dead, 3 hurt in 'devastating' Minneapolis high-rise fire

By **AMY FORLITI** and **JEFF BAENEN** Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Five people died and three were injured when a fire broke out on the 14th floor of a public housing high-rise in a heavily immigrant neighborhood of Minneapolis early Wednesday.

While the cause of the blaze was still under investigation, Fire Chief John Fruetel told reporters that investigators believe the fire was an accident, but he didn't explain why. The building is in part of Minneapolis known as Little Mogadishu for the many Somali immigrants who have settled there.

Fruetel said the fire had been burning for a while and had blown out windows by the time firefighters arrived. A fire alarm was sounding throughout the building, and from a distance, flames could be seen extending 10 to 15 feet (3 to 4.5 meters) from windows on the 14th floor.

With those open windows and winds whipping in from an overnight wintry storm, the scene was "an extreme environment of heat and wind-driven fire," he said.

"I can't express more about how precarious that scenario was to those firefighters," Fruetel said. "They encountered a lot of heat ... It was very similar to a blast furnace."

The chief called it "a very chaotic scenario," and said firefighters had to climb multiple flights of stairs while people were coming down. He said residents on floors above the fire were told to shelter in place.

Abdi Warsame, a City Council member who toured the floor that burned, expressed amazement that more people weren't killed. The 25-story building caters to seniors and singles.

"It was absolutely gutted," said Warsame, who is Somali-American. "It was horrendous."

On Wednesday evening, the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's office identified four of the five people who died: Amatalah Adam, 78; Maryan Mohamud, 69; Nadifa Mohamud, 67, all women; and a man, Jerome Stuart, 59. All four died of smoke inhalation at the scene, the medical examiner's office said. The name of the fifth victim was not released, but authorities said all the people who died were adults.

Three other people were injured and are being treated at local hospitals. Authorities have not released details of their conditions. A firefighter was treated for an exertion-related injury.

The fire broke out around 4 a.m. on the 14th floor of the Cedar High Apartments. Fruetel said firefighters found heavy smoke on the 16th and 17th floors as residents were evacuated through the stairwells.

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Mayor Jacob Frey, in a Facebook post in English and Somali, called the fire “devastating.”

The building is part of a complex known as The Cedars. Minneapolis Public Housing Authority spokesman Jeff Horwich said Cedar High has 191 apartments, all one-bedroom or studio units. There were 198 residents living in the building at the time of the fire.

Abdirahman Shire, 53, of Minneapolis, said his 74-year-old mother lives alone on the 13th floor. She told him that she was alerted to the fire by the smell of smoke, and that she ran down the stairs to escape.

When she reached the lobby, only six other people were there.

“She said, ‘I open the door and I smelled, and I hear the noise and I run,’” Shire said.

Hours later, Tracey Scott, the interim executive director of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, said most residents had been allowed back into their apartments. Fewer than nine units were deemed uninhabitable and those residents were temporarily placed into other public housing units. The Red Cross was also on hand to help victims.

Several family members streamed into the building on Wednesday to check on loved ones, some of them in tears.

Though the building sits in a heavily Somali section of Minneapolis, it’s a melting pot of new arrivals in the city. When residents gathered after the fire for a meeting, organizers arranged Somali, Korean, Spanish and Oromo interpreters.

Warsame, the City Council member, said he knew one victim was a Somali grandmother, and her children and grandchildren were at the building on Wednesday trying to track down more information.

Fire department spokesman Bryan Tyner said four of the victims were located on the 14th floor and another in a stairwell, and it was unknown if any of them were related or came from the same unit.

Casper Hill, a city spokesman, said the main floor and lower mechanical rooms had partial sprinkler coverage but the rest of the building did not have a sprinkler system. Horwich said the building was built in 1969 and wasn’t required to have a sprinkler system due to its age. He referred follow-up questions to another Housing Authority official who did not immediately respond to messages.

City officials said public housing inspections are handled by federal agencies, and that the city inspected the building only to respond to specific complaints. They said their records showed just a few inspections in recent years. The most recent, in 2016, was for failure to clean exhaust hoods “contaminated by grease-laden vapors” every six months; the inspector’s report said the last record of maintenance was four years earlier.

Calls to the Housing and Urban Development office in Minneapolis were referred to Chicago, where a message was not returned. According to the most recent data posted on HUD’s website, the building received a physical inspection score of 95 out of 100 in February of 2015. The data doesn’t say what the score means or provide any details.

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Associated Press writers Gretchen Ehlke in Milwaukee and Doug Glass in Minneapolis contributed to this report.

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This story has been corrected to show that the building has 25 stories, not 24, and that one of the interpreters at a community meeting speaks Oromo, not Aramaic.

## Trump knew of whistleblower before releasing Ukraine aid

By **JONATHAN LEMIRE, MARY CLARE JALONICK and DARLENE SUPERVILLE** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump was briefed on the whistleblower complaint about his dealings with Ukraine before the White House released nearly \$400 million in military aid to Kyiv, officials say, shedding new light on events that triggered the impeachment inquiry.

Trump was told about the complaint in late August in a briefing by White House counsel Pat Cipollone and John Eisenberg, an attorney with the White House National Security Council, according to two officials

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not authorized to publicly discuss the matter.

The lawyers told the president about the complaint, explaining that they were trying to determine whether they were legally required to give it to Congress, the officials said. The aid was released on Sept. 11 amid growing pressure from lawmakers.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The White House has claimed there was no link between the military aid suspension and the president's request for Ukraine to investigate his political rival Joe Biden and his family.

But it was his request to Ukraine's president in a July phone call that prompted the government whistleblower's complaint about a link. The assertion of such a link has since been corroborated by a parade of witnessed testifying on Capitol Hill.

The August briefing with Trump was first reported by The New York Times.

The revelation comes just days before the House Judiciary Committee takes over the impeachment probe, scheduling a hearing for next week as it pushes closer to a possible vote on charges of "high crimes and misdemeanors."

The Judiciary panel scheduled the hearing as the Intelligence Committee on Tuesday released two last transcripts from its depositions, including from a White House budget official who detailed concerns among colleagues as Trump ordered them, through intermediaries, to put a hold on military aid to Ukraine.

Trump and his lawyers have been invited to attend the hearing and make a request to question witnesses, according to Democratic rules approved by the House last month. The committee released a letter from committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., to the Republican president, saying he hopes Trump will participate, "consistent with the rules of decorum and with the solemn nature of the work before us."

The White House said Wednesday no decision had been made whether to send a representative.

"But what is obvious to every American is that this letter comes at the end of an illegitimate sham partisan process," press secretary Stephanie Grisham said.

Meanwhile, State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus reaffirmed in a statement the U.S. commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. She urged Russia to begin the process of peacefully restoring Ukraine's full sovereignty over areas in Eastern Ukraine that have been the scene of fighting between Russian-backed rebels and Ukraine forces since 2014.

The statement echoed concerns laid out by William Taylor, the top U.S. envoy to Ukraine, as well as Fiona Hill, a former National Security Council official in the Trump administration, during their testimony before House impeachment panel.

Trump tweeted an image of his head superimposed on the muscular body of a champion boxer. He regularly tells his supporters at campaign rallies and in videos that Democrats are "trying to stop me because I'm fighting for you and I'll never let that happen."

Multiple government witnesses testified in impeachment hearings held by the Intelligence panel this month that Trump directed his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani to take the lead on Ukraine policy and that Giuliani pushed an "irregular" diplomatic channel.

The Intelligence Committee is wrapping up its investigative phase of the probe and preparing its report for the next. Committee Chairman Adam Schiff has said the report could be released soon after the House returns from its Thanksgiving break.

The initial Judiciary hearing on Dec. 4, the day after lawmakers return, will feature legal experts who will examine questions of constitutional grounds as the panel decides whether to write articles of impeachment against Trump.

Democrats are aiming for a final House vote by Christmas, which would set the stage for a likely Senate trial in January.

Trump, meanwhile, tried to put distance between himself and Giuliani in a radio interview Tuesday. Asked by host Bill O'Reilly what Giuliani was doing on his behalf in Ukraine, Trump said, "I don't even know," adding that Giuliani had other clients as well.

Asked directly if he had directed Giuliani to go to Ukraine on his behalf, Trump said, "No." Giuliani did

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not respond to requests for comment on Wednesday.

In a phone call to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy on July 25, Trump said several times he would have Giuliani contact Zelenskiy. "Rudy very much knows what's happening and he is a very capable guy," Trump said to Zelenskiy, according to a rough transcript released under pressure by the White House.

It's unlikely that the president himself would attend next month's hearings, as Trump is scheduled to be in England on Dec. 4 for a summit with NATO allies — a split screen showing leadership that Trump's allies might find favorable.

If Democrats stay on schedule, the committee will introduce articles of impeachment, debate them and then hold a vote, a process that could take several days. If charges are approved by the end of the second week of December, the House could hold a formal impeachment vote the third week of the month just before leaving for the holidays.

The charges are expected to mostly focus on Ukraine. Democrats are considering an overall "abuse of power" article against Trump, which could be broken into categories such as bribery or extortion. That article would center on the Democrats' assertion, based on witness testimony, that Trump used his office to pressure Ukraine into politically motivated investigations.

Democrats also are expected to include an article on obstruction of Congress that outlines Trump's instructions to officials in his administration to defy subpoenas for documents and testimony.

Though several government officials called by Democrats cooperated with the committee, other key witnesses — including acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Energy Secretary Rick Perry and former National Security Adviser John Bolton — refused, following Trump's orders.

Lastly, Democrats could include an obstruction of justice article based on special counsel Robert Mueller's report released earlier this year.

When and if the House approves articles of impeachment, the Republican-controlled Senate would be expected to hold a trial in early 2020. Unless political dynamics change drastically, Trump would have the backing of majority Republicans in that chamber and be acquitted.

In a transcript of closed-door testimony released Tuesday, Office of Management and Budget official Mark Sandy, a career employee, told lawmakers that his office was notified as early as July 12 by the White House chief of staff's office that Trump was withholding the military aid. That was two weeks before Trump asked Ukrainian President Zelenskiy to investigate Democrats.

Sandy testified that Trump himself requested additional information about the aid on July 19 after seeing an unidentified "media report." The office then started the official process of withholding the money on July 25, the day of the call between Trump and Zelenskiy, Sandy said.

He also testified that he knew of two people who left the agency who had voiced concerns over the handling of the Ukraine aid.

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Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaró, Matthew Daly, Andrew Taylor, Alan Fram, and Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

## Trump signs bills in support of Hong Kong; China furious

BEIJING (AP) — China reacted furiously to President Donald Trump's signing of two bills on Hong Kong human rights and said the U.S. will bear the unspecified consequences.

A foreign ministry statement Thursday repeated heated condemnations of the laws and said China will counteract. It said all the people of Hong Kong and China oppose the move.

It's still unclear, however, how China will respond exactly.

Trump signed the bills, which were approved by near unanimous consent in the House and Senate, even as he expressed some concerns about complicating the effort to work out a trade deal with China's President Xi Jinping.

"I signed these bills out of respect for President Xi, China, and the people of Hong Kong," Trump said in

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a statement. "They are being enacted in the hope that Leaders and Representatives of China and Hong Kong will be able to amicably settle their differences leading to long term peace and prosperity for all."

Congress approved the bills last week following months of unrest in the semi-autonomous Chinese city. Before Wednesday's signing announcement, Trump would only commit to giving the measures a "hard look."

China's foreign ministry called the laws a "naked hegemonic action" that seriously interfered in Hong Kong and China's internal affairs, violated international law and "fundamental norms of international relations."

"The U.S. side ignored facts, turned black to white, and blatantly gave encouragement to violent criminals who smashed and burned, harmed innocent city residents, trampled on the rule of law and endangered social order," the statement said.

The laws' basic intent is to undermine Hong Kong's prosperity and stability along with the "historical progress of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

It called the measures "extremely evil in nature and dangerous in motive."

"We advise the U.S. not to act incautiously, otherwise China will be required to counteract resolutely and all the consequences created by this will have to be borne by the U.S. side," the statement said.

The two countries are currently locked in a trade war and have deep differences over China's claims to the South China Sea and Taiwan, human rights issues and accusations of Chinese industrial espionage.

The first bill Trump signed mandates sanctions on Chinese and Hong Kong officials who carry out human rights abuses and requires an annual review of the favorable trade status that Washington grants Hong Kong.

Another bill prohibits export to Hong Kong police of certain nonlethal munitions, including tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, water cannons, stun guns and tasers.

The munitions bill was passed unanimously, while Republican Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky was the sole House member to oppose the human rights bill.

Trump acknowledged last week that he was weighing the ramifications of signing the bill.

"Look, we have to stand with Hong Kong," Trump said in an interview on "Fox & Friends." He continued: "But I'm also standing with President Xi. He's a friend of mine. He's an incredible guy."

Democratic and Republican lawmakers applauded the signing of the bills. Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., said it "finally sends a clear and unequivocal message to the people of Hong Kong: We are with you."

Sen. Jim Risch, an Idaho Republican and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the bills are "an important step forward in holding the Chinese Communist Party accountable for its erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy and its repression of fundamental human rights."

Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., who sponsored the House human rights bill, said Xi "should understand that the U.S. is not kidding about human rights. Beating, torturing and jailing of democracy activists is wrong and this historic legislation lets China know that respecting fundamental human rights is paramount."

Activists hailed Trump's action.

"I know that many people in Hong Kong are happy that the U.S. government has passed a new bill," said Figo Chan, a 23-year-old Hong Kong protester who was honored with the John McCain Prize for Leadership at the Halifax International Security Forum in Canada last weekend.

"No one wants to die and no one wants to be hurt," Chan said. "I hope that citizens of many different countries can in their own way fight for democracy."

Associated Press writers Aamer Madhani in Washington and Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

## Utah hearing for Hawaii suspect in extreme cyberstalking

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and BRADY McCOMBS Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A man arrested in Hawaii will be sent to Utah, where he's accused of tormenting a family for more than year by sending more than 500 people to their house for unwanted services including food deliveries, repairs, tow trucks, locksmiths, plumbers and prostitutes.

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Loren Okamura was in Honolulu's federal courthouse Wednesday, for a scheduled detention hearing. His federal defender, Sharron Rancourt, said he wants to have that hearing in Utah.

He was indicted in Utah last month on charges of cyberstalking, interstate threats and transporting people for prostitution, court documents show. He was arrested at a Honolulu supermarket last week.

A magistrate judge ordered Okamura detained in Honolulu until he's transported to Utah. It's unclear when the hearing will be, but he would have had to face the charges in Utah eventually. Morgan Early, an assistant U.S. attorney in Honolulu, didn't object to having the hearing in Utah, as long as Okamura continues to be detained.

Okamura, 44, targeted a father and his adult daughter, sending the woman threatening messages and posting her picture and address online, authorities said. One posting said the homeowner wanted drugs and prostitutes at the house in a quiet, middle-class neighborhood in a Salt Lake City suburb.

The Gilmore family was "tormented" during the year-plus that the "extreme cyberstalking" took place, U.S. Attorney John Huber told reporters Tuesday.

Investigators had been focused on Okamura as the suspect since January when the Gilmores were granted a protective injunction from him in Utah. It took investigators time to gather enough evidence to charge Okamura because of his use of encryption and apps that made him appear anonymous, Huber said.

"For all the good that technology offers us in our modern lifestyles, there is also a darker, seedier side to it," Huber said. "That's what you have here."

Huber declined to disclose the relationship between the victims and Okamura, but said it was not random. He noted that most stalkers have had previous relationships with their victims and said, "those dynamics are present in this case."

A sealed indictment was issued on Oct. 2, but Okamura wasn't arrested until Friday as police struggled to find him because he doesn't have a permanent address or job and authorities said he was "savvy" with technology used to mask his phone's location.

A team of Utah officers flew to Honolulu and teamed with FBI agents on a 15-hour search that ended when they arrested him at the supermarket, said Sgt. Jeff Plank of the Utah Department of Public Safety, who was assigned to the FBI's cybercrime task force.

Okamura, wearing an inmate's jumpsuit, didn't say anything in court Wednesday beyond, "Yes, Your Honor."

Rancourt said he's mourning his wife, who died earlier this year. "He's been grieving and his family has been grieving," she said. She didn't elaborate and declined to comment after the hearing.

Prosecutors say Okamura's online stalking began sometime in 2018 and he sent as many as 500 unwanted people to the house.

Utah police went to the North Salt Lake house more than 80 times over a four-month period from November 2018 to February 2019. The activities affected the entire neighborhood, prosecutors have said.

Okamura also sent the woman extensive and repeated texts and voicemails, authorities said.

In May, the woman received an email telling her she should "sleep with one eye open and keep looking over her shoulder." The email also said: "You should just kill yourself and do your family a favor," charging documents show.

Prosecutors have said they have records from Okamura's cellphone and Apple ID to support the charges.

Walt Gilmore did not immediately return messages seeking comment Tuesday.

McCombs reported from Salt Lake City.

## Judge upholds charges that could put Weinstein away for life

By MICHAEL R. SISK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York judge has rejected Harvey Weinstein's bid to throw out the most serious charges in his sexual assault case, dealing a big blow to the disgraced movie mogul as he sought to limit the scope of his looming trial and any potential punishment.

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The ruling made public Wednesday clears the way for prosecutors to bolster their case with testimony from actress Anabella Sciorra who says Weinstein raped her in 1993 or 1994. It also leaves open the possibility of a life sentence if he is convicted at his trial, set to begin Jan. 6.

Weinstein's spokesman said his lawyers didn't have an immediate comment.

Weinstein, 67, has pleaded not guilty to charges he raped a woman in a Manhattan hotel room in 2013 and performed a forcible sex act on a different woman in 2006. He is free on \$1 million bail and maintains that any sexual activity was consensual.

In recent court filings, Weinstein's lawyers objected to two of the five counts against him — both stemming from a charge called predatory sexual assault, which carries a maximum life sentence and requires prosecutors to show a pattern of misconduct.

Weinstein's lawyers argued those counts should be thrown out because prosecutors are choosing to use Sciorra's allegation to show he's a sexual predator who committed sex crimes against multiple women, even though that alleged attack predates the charge being enacted into law in 2006.

Burke, however, ruled that such a strategy is allowed under state law. While Sciorra's allegation is too old to be the basis for criminal charges, prosecutors can use it as part of showing a pattern of alleged predatory behavior, Burke wrote.

Weinstein's lawyers also argued that prosecutors failed to provide enough information for him to defend himself against Sciorra's allegation. On a disclosure form, prosecutors listed the approximate date of the alleged incident as "the winter season spanning 1993-1994," and said it happened at "nighttime" in "a location in New York City."

Burke rejected that, too, saying that prosecutors have shown they made diligent efforts to narrow down the date of the alleged rape and that Weinstein's lawyers were previously provided with the specific location.

Sciorra, known for her work on "The Sopranos," alleges Weinstein forced himself inside her Manhattan apartment, threw her on the bed and raped her after she starred in a film for his movie studio.

Sciorra did not go to the authorities because she feared reprisal from Weinstein, prosecutors said. She told the story to The New Yorker in October 2017, but prosecutors said she didn't speak with them until after Weinstein's arrest in May 2018.

Burke also ruled against Weinstein on several other fronts.

The judge rejected Weinstein's claim that emails obtained with a search warrant from two movie studio accounts and one private account are privileged and can't be used as evidence at trial.

Burke denied Weinstein's demand for access to the personnel file of a police detective whose alleged witness coaching led prosecutors to drop a charge last year.

He denied the defense's request to unseal the identities of the two women whose allegations led to charges against Weinstein.

And he reiterated a previous ruling that psychiatrist Dr. Barbara Ziv can take the stand as a prosecution expert in the field of sexual assault and rape trauma syndrome.

Suburban Philadelphia prosecutors called Ziv as their first witness at Bill Cosby's April 2018 trial. She told jurors that it is common for victims to be reluctant to go to police and normal for them to maintain contact with perpetrators.

She said the use of drugs and alcohol can lead to clouded memories and prevent victims from giving a clear account of what happened to them.

In a win for Weinstein, Burke said the defense could call two experts of its own dealing in the subject of human memory.

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## No more menthol cigarettes: New ban on tobacco, vape flavors

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Massachusetts became the first state to ban flavored tobacco and nicotine vaping products, including menthol cigarettes, after Republican Gov. Charlie Baker signed into law on Wednesday a bill that's meant to reduce the appeal of the products to young people amid a rash of illnesses and deaths linked to vaping.

Anti-smoking groups hailed the ban, which restricts sale and consumption of flavored vaping products immediately and does the same for menthol cigarettes starting June 1, 2020.

"The Massachusetts law is a major milestone in the fight to reverse the worsening e-cigarette epidemic and stop tobacco companies from targeting and addicting kids with flavored products," said Matthew Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

But the New England Convenience Store and Energy Marketers Association, which opposed the legislation, said it's exploring challenging the new law in court, or seeking other ways to change it.

"Public health and safety has been dealt a blow by anti-tobacco crusaders exploiting a youth vaping crisis, and by lawmakers bypassing prudent policy-making," the group said in a statement.

In recent months, Massachusetts and other states, including Michigan, Montana, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah and Washington, have temporarily banned or restricted the sale of vaping products. But Massachusetts is now the first with a broad, permanent ban in place on all flavored tobacco or nicotine vaping products, anti-smoking groups say.

The new law specifically restricts sale of the products to licensed smoking bars such as cigar bars and hookah lounges, where they'll only be allowed to be consumed on-site. The restriction extends to menthol cigarettes and flavored e-cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco and chewing tobacco.

It also places a 75% excise tax on nicotine vaping products, gives public health officials new authority to regulate the products and requires health insurers cover tobacco cessation counseling.

Baker said he hopes other states adopt similar restrictions but argued that the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration are the only ones that can address the issue comprehensively for the nation.

"Sometimes someone has to go first," he said. "It's pretty clear there isn't going to be a federal policy on this anytime soon. So, in the absence of that, we had to act."

President Donald Trump has promised for months to approve a national ban on most flavored e-cigarettes. But in recent weeks his administration has walked back that promise, cancelling a planned announcement of a ban in favor of private meetings with the vaping industry and medical professionals.

Massachusetts' decision to extend the ban to menthols is unique. The mint flavor has typically been exempt from such restrictions because it's long been one of the most popular flavors.

Menthols were omitted from legislation passed by the New York City Council on Tuesday after advocates, including the Rev. Al Sharpton, argued their inclusion could lead to harsh police enforcement in the black community.

Studies have shown menthol cigarettes are consumed disproportionately by young people and minorities, and anti-tobacco groups and health experts have argued menthol has been marketed to African Americans.

But there have been recent signs that reluctance to address menthols is waning.

Boston health officials earlier this week prohibited the sale of menthols in convenience stores, and dozens of other communities in Massachusetts and California have taken steps to restrict menthols and other flavored cigarettes.

State Attorney General Maura Healey and other supporters said that restricting menthols and other flavored tobacco products is critical because they've contributed to growth in the traditional smoking market, which in turn prompted the creation of flavored vaping products targeted at youths.

The American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network said it hoped the new law sends a message to the industry.

"More than 80% of teens who have ever used a tobacco product started with a flavored product, and the tobacco industry knows this," the organization said in an emailed statement.

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The legislation responds to growing concern about the health effects of vaping products, including deaths whose exact cause is still being investigated.

Massachusetts health officials say there have been more than 200 suspected cases of vaping-related lung injury and three confirmed deaths in the state.

In September, Baker declared a public health emergency and ordered a temporary ban on the sale of all vaping products — flavored and unflavored.

Baker said Wednesday he'll lift that ban a few weeks early on Dec. 11, when state health officials are expected to roll out additional regulations.

The Tobacco Merchants Association, an industry group, didn't respond to an email seeking comment.

But the Vapor Technology Association, which has challenged Massachusetts' temporary vaping ban in state court, said a better strategy than the ban would be raising the age to purchase tobacco and nicotine vapor products to 21 and to impose stricter marketing standards on companies.

"A ban will drive people back to combustible cigarettes, the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the U.S., or lead to illegal sales with a new and larger black market," the organization said in a statement.

Associated Press editor William J. Kole contributed to this report.

## Wind could ground big balloons at NYC's Thanksgiving parade

By **MICHAEL R. SISK** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Smokey Bear might feel like he's battling Santa Ana winds — if he even gets a chance to fly.

New York City's big Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will take place Thursday amid strong winds that could potentially ground the giant character balloons, which have caused mishaps and injuries in the past when gusts have blown them off course.

The New York City Police Department is monitoring wind gauges along the 2.5-mile (3.2-kilometer) parade route and will order the 16 helium-filled balloons to a lower altitude or have them removed entirely if wind speeds reach dangerous levels.

That's only happened once, in 1971.

The National Weather Service is projecting sustained winds of up to 24 mph (39 kph) with gusts to 40 mph (64 kph) during the parade.

The iconic characters that soar between Manhattan skyscrapers will be grounded if sustained winds exceed 23 mph (37 kph) and gusts exceed 34 mph (54.7 kph) under city rules implemented after wind blew a "Cat in the Hat" balloon into a lamp post near Central Park in 1997, critically injuring a woman.

"It'll be a game-day decision on what we're going to do with the balloons," Chief of Department Terence Monahan said at a Wednesday briefing on the police department's parade safety measures.

If they're allowed to fly this year, the intensity of the wind will determine how high they soar. Each balloon has a distinct risk profile, which factors in its size and weight and details the optimal altitude for a given wind speed.

The character balloons can go as high as 55 feet (16 meters) off the ground and as low as 10 feet (3 meters), said Chief of Patrol Rodney Harrison, who has the final say on whether the balloons fly.

If the wind picks up and handlers struggle to keep control of a balloon, potentially putting spectators in harm's way, Harrison said it will be taken to a side street off the parade route and safely deflated.

"At the end of the day, public safety is paramount, and we want everybody to enjoy the event," he said.

Strong winds were also a concern last year, but they ended up staying calm enough to let the balloons fly — albeit some at noticeably lower-than-usual heights. The outstretched hand of the "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" balloon, for one, was so low it appeared to hit some of his handlers on their wool cap-covered heads.

One bright spot in this year's forecast: the temperature is expected to hit a high of about 53 degrees Fahrenheit (12 degrees Celsius).

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Last year was one of the city's coldest Thanksgivings in decades. A temperature of 21 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 6 degrees Celsius) at the start of the parade prompted spectators to bundle up in blankets and sleeping bags.

In addition to giant balloons of Snoopy, Spongebob, anti-wildfire warrior Smokey and others, the parade features about 8,000 marchers, performances from bands and singers such as Idina Menzel of "Frozen" fame, Kelly Rowland and Chicago, two-dozen floats and a finale with Santa Claus.

The NYPD will have thousands of officers stationed along the parade route. They include counterterrorism teams with long guns, plainclothes officers mixed in with the crowd and about three dozen explosive detection K-9s. The department also plans to fly a drone to monitor the parade route.

All spectators will be screened with metal detectors at security checkpoints. Certain areas near the start and finish are off-limits or will have space taken up by staging for NBC's live broadcast.

Police cars and sand-filled sanitation trucks are being positioned to stop vehicles from driving into the crowd and technology is being used to detect drones, which are illegal to fly over crowds in New York City.

Counterterrorism Chief James Waters said the technology detected several drones flying in the vicinity of the United Nations General Assembly gathering in September. They were all non-hostile, he said.

There are no known, credible threats to the city, police said.

A threat posted over the weekend on Reddit threatening to bomb Times Square was deemed not credible, the police department said, though it did increase counterterrorism deployments to the area out of what it said was an abundance of caution.

Big crowds are expected to line the parade route, which runs 46 blocks from the outskirts of Central Park to Macy's flagship store in midtown Manhattan.

In the past, spectators have lined up as many as 15 deep in some places. In 2017, four activists briefly disrupted things when they jumped over barriers and sat down in the street to protest changes in U.S. immigration policy.

In recent years, though, wind has been the biggest threat.

In 2005, eight years after the "Cat and the Hat" went off course, an M&Ms balloon smacked into a lamp post in Times Square, causing cuts and bruises to a woman in a wheelchair and her 11-year-old sister.

In 2017, a gust on an otherwise calm day sent a smaller balloon into a tree branch. That one popped and fell harmlessly onto the crowd.

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## Amnesty: Egypt uses prosecution branch to crush dissent

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt's government is using a secretive judicial agency designed to fight terrorism to detain peaceful protesters, journalists and critics on trumped-up charges without trial, Amnesty International said in a report released Wednesday.

The 60-page report by the London-based rights group details how Egypt's Supreme State Security Prosecution, or SSSP, has become increasingly central to President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi's sweeping crackdown on dissent.

"In Egypt today, the Supreme State Security Prosecution has stretched the definition of 'terrorism' to encompass peaceful protests, social media posts and legitimate political activities," said Philip Luther, the group's Middle East and North Africa director.

Concertgoers were accused of terrorism for waving rainbow-colored flags. A journalist charged with "broadcasting false news" was detained repeatedly for three years. A human rights lawyer was arrested for joining a protest he says he didn't attend. Several Christians were imprisoned for "aiding a terrorist group," a reference to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood organization.

"Ridiculous" prosecutions have proliferated, said report author Hussein Baoumi.

Citing these cases and over a hundred others, Amnesty International said the SSSP, a secretive agency comprised of just a few hand-picked judges, is abusing its legal powers as a counterterrorism branch to

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stifle political dissent.

"There's no judicial oversight. We're talking about a completely closed circuit," Baoumi said. "If these cases were referred to trial, people would be acquitted at once," as the state's accusations are based on confidential police reports, he added.

Egyptian security forces carried out a harsh crackdown in September to stamp out small but rare anti-government protests. The SSSP played a critical role in sweeping up thousands of people on charges of terrorism, the report said.

The prosecution agency renews people's detentions for months and years without evidence, denying them access to lawyers and a fair chance to appeal, it added.

Amnesty said SSSP investigations into allegations of torture and enforced disappearance by the police intelligence division amount to a whitewash. The SSSP routinely buries evidence of police abuse and gives credence to confessions extracted with torture, it said, drawing on court documents and interviews with dozens of witnesses.

Under el-Sissi, Egypt has seen a "meteoric rise" in cases prosecuted by SSSP, according to Amnesty. The report drew attention to the expansion of the branch's covert role since a court declared indefinite administrative detention unconstitutional in 2013.

There was no immediate comment from the government on Amnesty's report, but authorities have repeatedly denied charges of violations or police brutality. Authorities say they are fighting terrorism and have accused rights groups of working with foreign entities to undermine the state.

El-Sissi led the military's removal of the country's first democratically elected president in 2013 after his one-year rule proved divisive, sparking nationwide protests.

The general-turned-president has overseen an unprecedented political crackdown, silencing critics and jailing thousands.

"Our goal with this report is to make it very clear that when someone is accused of terrorism in Egypt, the international community cannot take it at face value," Baoumi told The Associated Press. "More likely, that person was arrested for peacefully expressing an opinion."

Late on Tuesday, police made six new arrests — including three journalists — in central Cairo. Mohamed Saad Abdel Hafiz, a board member of Egypt's journalists' association, wrote a post on social media about the arrests, listing the journalists as Solafa Magdy, Hossam el-Sayyad and Mohamed Salah.

Prosecutors on Wednesday ordered the three journalists to remain in detention for 15 days pending an investigation into allegations of taking part and joining in activities of a terrorist group and disseminating false news, according to lawyer Nabeh el-Ganadi. The remaining three were workers in a coffee shop and were released.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters Friday that the United Nations is "obviously concerned" about the whereabouts of Magdy, who was recently at U.N. headquarters in New York participating in the U.N.-sponsored Reham Al Farra Fellowship for young working journalists from developing countries.

An Egyptian Christian activist, Ramy Kamel, was also arrested and accused of joining a "terror" group and spreading false news when security forces stormed his home early Saturday, his lawyer Said Fayez said.

The SSSP interrogated him for several hours before transferring him to temporary custody in Cairo's Tora prison, where he remains.

In Washington, a senior State Department official called on Egypt "to ensure journalists can work without threats of imprisonment and intimidation." Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker told reporters Tuesday that "as part of our long-standing strategic partnership, we continue to raise the fundamental importance of respect for human rights."

For decades, the U.S. has been Egypt's largest weapons supplier, with over a billion dollars in military aid each year.

## **Officials: Iraq protesters burn down Iran consulate in Najaf**

**SAMYA KULLAB and MURTADA FARAJ Associated Press**

BAGHDAD (AP) — Anti-government protesters burned down an Iranian consulate building in southern Iraq on Wednesday, while six protesters were killed by security forces who fired live rounds amid ongoing violence in the country, Iraqi officials said Wednesday.

Protesters torched the consulate in the holy city of Najaf in the evening. One protester was killed and at least 35 people were wounded when police fired live ammunition to prevent them from entering the building, a police official said.

The demonstrators removed the Iranian flag from the building and replaced it with an Iraqi one. Iranian staff were not harmed and escaped the building from the back door and authorities imposed a curfew in Najaf. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The incident marked an escalation in the demonstrations that have raged in Baghdad and across the mostly Shiite southern Iraq since Oct. 1. The protesters accuse the Shiite-led government of being hopelessly corrupt and complain of poor public services and high unemployment. They are also decrying growing Iranian influence in Iraqi state affairs.

Protesters previously attacked the Iranian consulate in Karbala earlier this month, scaling concrete barriers running the building.

Security forces have fired bullets, tear gas and smoke bombs on a near daily basis since the unrest began. At least 350 people have been killed and thousands wounded in what has become the largest grassroots protest movement in Iraq's modern history.

Two protesters were killed and 35 wounded when security forces fired live rounds to disperse them from Baghdad's historic Rasheed Street, security and hospital officials said.

The street, which is adjacent to the strategic Ahrar Bridge, has been the focus of violence for a full week, with near daily incidents of deaths as a result of security forces using live ammunition and tear gas to keep demonstrators from advancing beyond a concrete barrier.

Protesters are occupying three key bridges in central Baghdad - Jumhuriya, Ahrar and Sinar - in a stand-off with security forces. On Wednesday, they also burned tires on Ahrar Bridge to block security forces from accessing the area.

The burning of the Iranian consulate followed tense days in southern Iraq, where protesters have burned tires and cut access to main roads in several provinces.

In Karbala, four protesters were killed by live fire from security forces in the previous 24 hours.

Three of the anti-government protesters were killed when security forces fired live rounds to disperse crowds in the holy city of Karbala late Tuesday, security and medical officials said. One protester died of wounds suffered when a tear gas canister struck him in clashes earlier in the day.

Protesters have largely kept away from threatening Iraq's economy, but in the southern city of Basra daily closures of the two main Gulf commodities port has caused disruptions to trade activity, a port official said.

Protesters continued to cut major roads to Umm Qasr and Khor al-Zubair ports on Wednesday, reducing trade activity by 50%, according to the port official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reporters.

Protesters also blocked roads leading to major oil fields in West Qurna and Rumaila. A senior oil ministry official said crude production was not impacted by the closures.

Three simultaneous explosions rocked Baghdad late Tuesday, killing five people and wounding more than a dozen, Iraqi officials said, in the first apparent coordinated attack since anti-government protests erupted. The bombings took place far from Baghdad's Tahrir Square, the epicenter of weeks of anti-government protests that have posed the biggest security challenge to Iraq since the defeat of the Islamic State group.

## The small-town movie house braces for an unexpected threat

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Callicoon Theater is a single-screen cinema along the banks of the Delaware River in the Catskills, in rural upstate New York. It has an art-deco facade and 380 seats. “We never sell out,” its box-office phone line promises. There’s not another theater for 30 miles.

Kristina Smith last year moved up from Brooklyn and bought the Callicoon, becoming only its third owner. The Callicoon, she says, is more than a place to see “Frozen 2” or “Parasite.” It’s a meeting place, a Main Street fixture, a hearth.

“It’s been like that for a really long time. All the locals up here, from third-generation farmers to school teachers and families, they kind of rely on it,” says Smith. “In some of these rural areas in America, a little movie theater is kind of a little beating heart of a town.”

Somehow, the Callicoon has managed to operate continuously for 71 years. It has survived television. It has survived the multiplex. It has survived Netflix. But, like a lot of small-town movie houses with one or two screens, the Callicoon is facing a new uncertainty. This time it’s not because of something new but the eradication of something old.

The Justice Department last week moved to terminate the Paramount Consent Decrees, the agreement that has long governed the separation of Hollywood studios from movie theaters. Hatched in the aftermath of a 1948 Supreme Court decision that forced the studios to divest themselves of the theaters they owned, the Paramount Decrees disallowed several then-common practices of studio control, like “block-booking,” or forcing theaters to take a block of films in order to play an expected hit.

Their dissolution isn’t assured. Courts will review the Justice Department’s arguments and ultimately decide their fate. But the potential crumbling of a bedrock Hollywood tenet has led to widespread consternation from one corner of the movie world more than any other: small, independent theaters. The fallout for major studios and large theater circuits is less certain. But in interviews with people on all sides of the movie business, one takeaway is agreed upon: It’s bad news for small-town movie houses like the Callicoon.

“There is a heavy amount of push back and unease on the part of mid-size and small exhibitors and, frankly, there should be,” said a studio distribution executive who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to speak on his company’s behalf. “The smaller exhibitors will get hurt. And that’s really a shame. It’s disturbing that the showmanship of the smaller towns will disappear in the event of this happening.”

The Paramount Decrees may sound like a relic from a bygone time. They were signed when most movie theaters were single-screen studio-controlled cinemas, when TVs had yet to invade most homes, when Gene Kelly and Humphrey Bogart were top stars. But the decrees have played a massive role in the history of American movies, shaping what, where and how moviegoers see what they see.

While more general antitrust laws would still apply, theaters stand to lose legal protection on issues regarding block booking and price setting — issues that can have an outsized effect on smaller movie houses. Studios already sometimes mandate a three-to-four week run for a popular picture. If a studio turns around and says that in order to play one surefire blockbuster, a theater must also take a less popular film for an extended run, that could have dire effects on a movie house with only so many screens.

“Because of the population size, I don’t have enough people up here to withstand a four-week run of a picture. I don’t care what movie it is, by week four, I’m losing money,” says Smith. “Tether that to a less popular picture, you could probably only do that two or three times to the Callicoon Theater before we close our doors.”

During the Justice Dept.’s review of the decrees, the loudest protest came from small theaters and drive-ins. They are smaller in number than they once were, but they’re still out there. Regal, AMC and Cinemark account for roughly half of the 41,000 screens in the U.S., giving them plenty of leverage in negotiations with studios. The 91 remaining single-screen venues and the few hundred houses with a handful of screens, naturally, have far less bargaining power.

“Without these decrees, larger circuits could make business more difficult for theaters like mine. The

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movie studios are not as motivated to work with our needs and would prefer to streamline their product to large circuits that will offer exclusivity," argued the two-screen, circa 1927 Falls Theatre in Falls River, Wisconsin, in the DOJ's public comments.

These are also theaters that, catering to rural, less affluent areas, don't sell premium \$15 or higher ticket prices. So the prospect of studios setting a nationwide ticket price on a movie is also worrisome to them.

"The removal of the decree on resale price maintenance is another step in the death knoll of the independent, regional chains, and small theaters in rural and metropolitan areas," said the Trinity Theater in Weaverville, California.

Most smaller independent theaters are already just squeaking by. Funneling as much as 65% of a movie's box office back to distributors, any profits mostly come from concessions. And they feel like they know their audience better than distant corporations. The United Drive-In Theater Owners Association, for example, noted that they have their own programming considerations separate from "indoor cinema."

The Justice Department and Makan Delrahim, head of its antitrust division, nevertheless decided the decrees "have served their purpose," adding that "their continued existence may actually harm American consumers by standing in the way of innovative business models for the exhibition of America's great creative films."

Under President Donald Trump, the Justice Department has been moving to terminate numerous legacy decrees. AMC and Regal didn't publicly object to repealing the Paramount Decrees but they are challenging plans to eliminate the ASCAP-BMI decrees which have wide-ranging implications for music rights.

The Justice Department's current deregulatory approach has already played a role in reshaping the landscape of Hollywood. It quickly rubber stamped the Walt Disney Co.'s acquisition of 21st Century Fox, which by combining two of the industry's most storied studios, created one of its most dominant distributors ever. Nearly a third of all tickets sold this year belong to Disney.

But University of Pennsylvania Law School professor Herbert Hovenkamp, an expert of antitrust law, says the market is much more competitive now than it was in the late '40s. There are TV and streaming entertainment options and the majority of movie houses are multiplexes carrying a variety of product.

"There could be some small towns that have a single theater or two theaters and they may lose out on something like this," says Hovenkamp. "But the fact is there are many, many more markets that are much more competitive and many screens. Freeing up the market would make more available to them."

The theatrical business has larger problems. It's facing increased competition over its traditional theatrical exclusivity window from streaming services like Netflix, Amazon and Apple. (None were ever part of the decrees, nor was Disney. It was considered a less consequential upstart in 1948.)

Ticket sales this year are down nearly 7% from last year, according to data firm Comscore. Meanwhile, the top studios are all busy rolling out their own streaming services. Those, in effect, already combine production, distribution and exhibition — the vertical integration the decrees once aimed to stop.

The fate of little old movie houses is pretty far down the list of the industry's concerns. Smith knows studios, shed of the Paramount Decrees, won't have much reason to make exceptions for theaters like the Callicoon. Still, she's hoping that different regulations can be set for theaters with three or less screens. Their survival, she says, matters.

"We need more places in this country right now where we can come together and share space with one another and breath the same air. Those places in modern society are disappearing," says Smith. "You've got your town hall. You've got church. And, sometimes, you have your local movie theater."

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Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

## Study: For babies born with HIV, start treatment right away

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — When babies are born with HIV, starting treatment within hours to days is better than waiting even the few weeks to months that's the norm in many countries, researchers reported Wednesday.

The findings, from a small but unique study in Botswana, could influence care in Africa and other regions hit hard by the virus. They also might offer a clue in scientists' quest for a cure.

The Harvard-led team found super early treatment limits how HIV takes root in a newborn's body, shrinking the "reservoir" of virus that hides out, ready to rebound if those youngsters ever stop their medications.

"We don't think the current intervention is itself curative, but it sets the stage" for future attempts, said Dr. Daniel Kuritzkes of Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, who co-authored the study.

Giving pregnant women a cocktail of anti-HIV drugs can prevent them from spreading the virus to their unborn children, a step that has dramatically reduced the number of babies born with the virus worldwide. Still, some 300 to 500 infants are estimated to be infected every day in sub-Saharan Africa.

Doctors have long known that treating babies in the first weeks to months of life is important, because their developing immune systems are especially vulnerable to HIV. But an infant dubbed the "Mississippi baby" raised a critical question: Should treatment start even earlier? The girl received a three-drug combination within 30 hours of her birth in July 2010, highly unusual for the time. Her family quit treatment when she was a toddler — yet her HIV remained in remission for a remarkable 27 months before she relapsed and restarted therapy.

The Botswana study was one of several funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health after doctors learned of the Mississippi baby, to further explore very early treatment.

The findings are encouraging, said Dr. Deborah Persaud, a pediatric HIV specialist at Johns Hopkins University who wasn't involved with the Botswana study but helped evaluate the Mississippi baby.

"The study showed what we hypothesized happened in the Mississippi baby, that very early treatment really prevents establishment of these long-lived reservoir cells that currently are the barrier to HIV eradication," Persaud said.

She cautioned: "Very early treatment is important, but prevention should still be our top priority."

In Botswana, researchers tested at-risk newborns, enrolling 40 born with HIV, treating them within hours to a few days, and tracking them for two years. On Wednesday, they reported results from the first 10 patients, comparing them with 10 infants getting regular care — treatment beginning when they were a few months old.

Medication brought HIV under control in both groups. But the children treated earliest had a much smaller reservoir of HIV in their blood, starting about six months into treatment, the researchers reported in *Science Translational Medicine*.

The earliest-treated children also got another benefit: more normal functioning of some key parts of the immune system.

One big question: Did the HIV reservoir shrink enough to make a long-term difference? To find out, next year the researchers will give these children experimental antibodies designed to help keep HIV in check, and test how they fare with a temporary stop to their anti-HIV drugs.

In the U.S., Europe and South Africa, it's becoming common to test at-risk infants at birth. But in most lower-income countries, babies aren't tested until they're 4 to 6 weeks old, said study co-author Dr. Roger Shapiro, a Harvard infectious disease specialist.

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

## In Lebanon, financial collapse and security concerns loom

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **ZEINA KARAM** Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Hundreds of Lebanese women marched across a former front line in the Lebanese capital Wednesday carrying white roses and Lebanese flags to denounce overnight clashes between rival groups that injured dozens of people. They pledged no return to civil war.

But amid a political impasse after 40 days of protests, sectarian and political rivalries are awakening, with scuffles breaking out daily, including in areas that were deadly front lines during the country's 1975-90 conflict.

The tiny Mediterranean country is also reeling under the worst financial crisis in decades with unprecedented capital controls, and as tempers flare, there are real concerns Lebanon could be sliding toward a prolonged period of instability.

"We are standing before two dangers that are racing with each other, the danger of financial collapse and the danger of security collapse. It is an unprecedented situation," said Nabil Bou Monsef, deputy editor-in-chief of the An-Nahar newspaper.

The overnight clashes — mostly fistfights and stone throwing between supporters and opponents of Lebanese President Michel Aoun — erupted in cities and towns across the country, injuring dozens of people, and 16 people were detained for their involvement, the Lebanese Red Cross and the army said.

President Michel Aoun has yet to hold consultations with parliamentary blocs on choosing a new prime minister after the government resigned a month ago.

Outgoing Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who was Aoun's and the militant Hezbollah's favorite to lead a new Cabinet, withdrew his candidacy for the premiership, saying he hoped to clear the way for a solution to the political impasse after over 40 days of protests. Protesters have resorted to road closures and other tactics to pressure politicians into responding to their demands for a new government.

The most recent violence first began Sunday night after supporters of the two main Shiite groups, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, attacked protesters on Beirut's Ring Road. During the civil war, that thoroughfare had connected predominantly Muslim neighborhoods in the city's west with Christian areas in the east.

Intense clashes took place Tuesday night between people in the Shiite suburb of Chiyah and the adjacent Christian area of Ein Rummaneh, where stones were hurled between supporters of Hezbollah and rival groups supporting the right-wing Christian Lebanese Forces. A shooting in Ein Rummaneh in April 1975 triggered the 15-year civil war that killed nearly 150,000 people.

Also on Tuesday night, supporters and opponents of Aoun engaged in fistfights and stone throwing in the northern city of Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest, injuring 24 people. Seven were hospitalized.

In the mountain town of Bikfaya, 10 people were injured, including five who were hospitalized, after scuffles and stone throwing between Aoun's supporters and supporters of the right-wing Christian Lebanese Phalange Party, according to the Red Cross. The violence broke out after a convoy of dozens of vehicles carrying Aoun supporters drove into the town, which has been historically a Phalange stronghold.

On Thursday, about 300 women marched on the former front line between Ein Rummaneh and Chiyah after meeting each other in the middle and exchanging white roses. Some held banners that read: "All one nation" and "All one pain."

"No to civil war!" they shouted.

But in the absence of a government and any political solution, analysts say more turmoil and instability is inevitable.

"I expect more chaos. As long as the country is without political cover, it is subjected to dangers. There is no government and there is complete failure in the constitutional process of forming a government," Bou Monsef said.

The growing security concerns also reflect a fast deteriorating financial crisis in a country that is among the most indebted in the world. Amid dollar shortages, Lebanese banks have imposed unprecedented financial controls to preserve liquidity, further paralyzing the country and forcing up prices amid fears of

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financial collapse.

Businesses and households have been thrown into disarray. Residents say they don't know how they will come up with dollar payments needed to pay for tuition, health insurance and housing loans. Companies are struggling to transfer salaries to staff, others have cut salaries or are simply laying off employees.

Some experts have suggested that a so-called haircut, in which the state takes a cut of depositors' money to cover its debts, is inevitable to deal with the crisis. Central Bank Gov. Riad Salameh has denied this was an option.

On Wednesday, dozens of protesters gathered outside the Central Bank in Beirut's commercial Hamra district, calling for fiscal measures that will not affect small depositors and the poor. Next to them, barbers and hairdressers were giving men and women free haircuts amid concerns about depositors' savings.

"They are imposing on us certain restrictions where people are not able to purchase medicine, and are unable to go to the hospital, while the big businessmen are able to transfer their money," said Rebecca Saadeh, a protester, as a hair dresser cut her hair.

"People are desperate to get dollars to pay their rent or to buy food, which is spiking fabulously and then they accused us of protesting," she said.

The Lebanese army said in a statement that 16 people involved in the violence were detained, adding that 33 troops were injured in Tripoli after soldiers were hit with stones and molotov cocktails. It added that 10 other soldiers were injured as they separated crowds in Chiyah and Ein Rummaneh, while eight were injured in Bikfaya.

Clashes between Lebanese protesters and Hezbollah supporters are putting Lebanon's military and security forces in a delicate position, threatening to crack open the country's dangerous fault lines amid a political deadlock.

Hariri had resigned Oct. 29 in response to the mass protests ignited by new taxes and the severe financial crisis. His resignation met a key demand of the protesters but plunged the country into uncertainty, with no clear path to resolving its economic and political problems.

Hariri had insisted on heading a government of technocrats, while his opponents, including Hezbollah, want a Cabinet made up of both experts and politicians.

Bou Monsef said Hezbollah believes that a Cabinet comprised of technocrats that excludes the group would be a gift for America, which wants to keep it out of government.

"Some are betting, especially the parties of the state, that the more the uprising is weakened the conditions that Hariri has put will weaken as well," said Mustafa Alloush, an official with Hariri's Future Movement.

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Associated Press writers Hussein Malla and Fadi Tawil contributed reporting.

## **In Florida and elsewhere, GOP pressured over climate change**

**By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Since taking office in January, Florida's Republican governor has appointed a science officer, established a climate change czar and pledged to spend billions of dollars to restore the Everglades and combat the pollutants that spawn blue-green algae and red tides.

A top Republican lawmaker in the state, meanwhile, recently stood on the House floor and implored his party "to stop being afraid of words like 'climate change' and 'sea level rise.'"

While President Donald Trump and his administration reject the urgency of the threat, leading Republicans in Florida and other states find themselves under political pressure to address the immediate impacts of climate change. As a result, these leaders are increasingly changing their message, and in some cases their policies, to acknowledge climate science and discuss mitigation, even as the Trump administration dismisses both.

In the Southeast, where Republicans in South Carolina and Georgia control the legislature or occupy the governor's mansion, the GOP is acknowledging, even if begrudgingly, sea level rise and the growing threat from intensifying hurricanes.

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Nowhere is the break from Trump's path clearer than in Florida, his adopted home state, where Gov. Ron DeSantis is a close ally and where Republicans are sounding the alarm about the harm that rising oceans pose to coastal communities.

With its 1,350 miles of coastline, Florida faces some of the starkest risks from rising oceans. Higher global temperatures bring extreme weather conditions, including more intense and destructive hurricanes. Miami and other cities could find themselves submerged as glaciers melt into the oceans.

While it's hardly the dramatic call to action that environmentalists and scientist say is needed, the shift signals a new pragmatism among many Republicans, especially in states where their constituents already are grappling with the consequences of a warming planet.

"This isn't about the next election. This is about the next several decades and what our environment is going to look like for our children and grandchildren," said GOP state Rep. Chris Sprowls. At 35, he is poised to lead Florida's House of Representatives next fall. His district northwest of Tampa lies along the Gulf Coast.

"We shouldn't fall into the same trap on the environment, where we allow the national conversation to dictate and hamstring us from accomplishing practical goals that truly protect our water and make our state beautiful for decades to come," Sprowls said in an interview. "We're playing the long game here."

Still, there is political motivation. The new messaging comes as Democrats saw success in 2018 running on a promise to combat climate change and hammering Republicans as the party of deniers.

The White House declined to comment.

Forty-six percent of Florida midterm voters said they were very concerned about climate change, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 3,700 midterm voters in Florida. Among Florida independents, 51% expressed great concern, slightly higher than independents nationally.

"Republicans have figured out that if you get caught crossways on the environment, you could very well lose an election. That's how important the issue is to Floridians of all stripes," said Susan MacManus, a former political science professor at the University of South Florida.

The state's rising population is pushing development and asphalt deeper into once-rural areas. Fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals are flowing into creeks, rivers, lakes and eventually into the waters that surround the Florida peninsula, further damaging coral reefs and putting sensitive ocean life at risk.

One sign of Republicans' shift is former Gov. Rick Scott, now a U.S. senator. Many environmental groups accuse him of mostly ignoring the issue during his eight years in Tallahassee. In February, Scott acknowledged in an opinion piece that climate change "is real and requires real solutions."

More recently, U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., joined the Senate Climate Solutions Caucus, a fledgling bipartisan group launched in October.

Even Republican firebrand U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz, a fierce ally of the president, has espoused cleaner energy.

"I think that more of my colleagues need to realize that the science of global warming is irrefutable," Gaetz said last spring while offering his "Green Real Deal," a counterpoint to the "Green New Deal" backed by some Democrats.

While Trump has discouraged federal agencies from prioritizing preparation for changes, DeSantis has cast himself as Florida's environmentalist-in-chief.

Two days after taking office, the new governor pledged to invest \$2.5 billion during his four-year term — a billion dollar increase from his predecessor's final four years in office — to protect water resources and help restore the Everglades, the largest ecosystem restoration project in the United States. He issued an executive order mobilizing action against algae blooms and the pollutants that taint the state's lakes, waterways and coastlines.

Thus far, the governor has gotten much of what he's requested from the Republican-dominated Legislature, an indication of the political muscle he's put behind his environmentalism.

Florida's environment — its beaches, swamps, woods and abundant sunshine — is a fundamental pillar of the state economy, generating billions in tourism and agriculture dollars, said Noah Valenstein, the

secretary of Florida's Department of Environmental Protection.

"What you see in Florida is an independent streak, a belief that the environment is important," Valenstein said. "We as a state have determined that this is a top issue and we're going to take that on."

The conversation in Florida may be shifting, but action isn't moving fast enough and policy discussions are not broad enough for critics.

Land conservation groups note that while DeSantis talks about conservation, he also supports 340 miles of new toll roads that could permanently alter some of the state's most pristine landscapes. These groups want DeSantis to boost funding for Florida Forever, the state's land preservation program, which is projected to get \$100 million instead of the \$300 million that had been historically allocated.

"Even though he has now talked about climate change for the first time, it's all about mitigation," said Sierra Club Florida director Frank Jackalone. He wants the governor to emphatically say that "climate change is caused by all the pollution we have in the atmosphere and that we need to do something about it."

Mitigation projects, including sea walls, only address the symptoms of climate change, Jackalone said, but do little to combat the root causes — namely the continued reliance on fossil fuels that produce greenhouse gases and the escalating deforestation of the planet.

The only money that DeSantis is proposing for reduced carbon emissions is Florida's \$166 million slice from a \$14.7 billion emissions settlement U.S. regulators reached with the European automaker Volkswagen. The money will be used to expand the state's fleet of electric transit vehicles, install electric charging stations along major highways and cut diesel emissions.

Still, Florida derives three-quarters of its electricity by burning carbon-emitting natural gas — a cleaner alternative to sooty coal that still powers parts the state.

"It's not enough to appoint a science officer and chief resilience officer, and it's terrific that they're going to use the VW settlement money to help," said Susan Glickman, the Florida director for the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. "That's a far cry from the bold action that we need if Florida really wants a future. We have to deploy clean energy solutions."

But it's a start, said state Rep. Ben Diamond, a Democrat who represents a Tampa-area district and who is giving the governor and other Republicans the benefit of his doubt.

"We may come from different political parties, but we all recognize that this is the biggest and most immediate threat to Florida," Diamond said. "It's time for us to get past this whole partisanship and make some real progress here."

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Associated Press writer Hannah Fingerhut in Washington contributed to this report.

## US economy looking durable despite risks from trade conflict

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A series of government reports Wednesday cast a picture of a steadily growing U.S. economy, fueled by solid consumer spending and defying threats — at least for now — from a U.S.-China trade war and a global slowdown.

The Commerce Department estimated that the economy grew at a moderate 2.1% annual rate over the summer, slightly better than it had previously estimated. Other reports showed stronger consumer spending and a rebound in orders for big-ticket manufactured goods.

For the July-September quarter, the rise in the gross domestic product, the economy's total output of goods and services, exceeded the government's initial estimate a month ago of a 1.9% annual rate. A key reason is that businesses didn't cut back on investment spending as much as first estimated.

The economy had begun the year with a sizzling 3.1% GDP rate, fueled largely by the now-faded effects of tax cuts and increased government spending.

Many analysts worry that GDP growth is slipping in the current October-December quarter to a 1.4% annual rate or less as business investment weakens further. But most say the slowdown won't likely be as severe as it might have been because consumers, who drive about 70 percent of the economy, are

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signaling that they will likely keep spending through the holiday shopping season and into next year. That spending is being supported by rising incomes and an unemployment rate that is near the lowest levels in a half century.

Consumer spending gained some momentum entering the final three months of the year, with spending rising by a 0.3% annual rate in October, the fastest monthly pace in three months.

And in the U.S. manufacturing sector, which has been struggling with global economic weakness and damage from the Trump administration's trade conflicts, orders for high-cost items rebounded in October by a 0.6% annual rate after having declined in September.

Economists said the flurry of reports depict an economy that is regaining its footing after absorbing threats this year, from the global slowdown to the intensifying trade war with China, which has perpetuated uncertainties for businesses. Many companies have suspended plans to expand and invest.

Still, the stock market has set record highs on optimism that at least a preliminary U.S.-China trade agreement can be reached soon.

"We still expect GDP growth to slow a little further over the coming months, but the latest data suggest that the slowdown in the fourth quarter won't be quite as bad as we had previously feared," analysts at Capital Economics said in a note Wednesday.

The GDP report showed that business investment fell at a 2.7% annual rate in the July-September period, the second consecutive decline. Yet that drop was offset by a solid 2.9% gain in consumer spending.

Residential investment did rebound to an annual growth rate of 5.1% after six consecutive quarters of falling home investment. Analysts attribute that rebound in part to falling mortgage rates.

For the full year, economists think GDP will expand 2.3%, down sharply from a 2.9% GDP gain in 2018. Last year's increase had been fueled by the \$1.5 trillion tax cut that President Donald Trump pushed through Congress and billions in additional spending for the military and domestic programs.

For 2020 as a whole, many economists envision growth of around 2%. That would be roughly the annual average that has prevailed since the Great Recession ended in 2009. But it is well below the 3%-plus economic growth rates that Trump pledged to achieve with his program of tax cuts, deregulation and America-first trade policies.

As recently as several months ago, as U.S.-China trade tensions were escalating, global growth was slowing and financial markets were suffering losses, many analysts worried that the economy might be on the verge of recession.

But the Federal Reserve, which had raised rates four times in 2018, began cutting rates in July, giving a boost to interest-rate sensitive sectors of the economy. This month, after its third rate cut of the year, the Fed signaled that it would likely keep rates unchanged in coming months unless it saw signs of significant economic weakness.

In a speech Monday, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell expressed an optimistic view about the economy, saying with unemployment near a 50-year low of 3.6%, there's still "plenty of room" for wages to rise and for more Americans to join the workforce.

Trump has attacked Powell and his colleagues for raising rates last year and for being slow to cut them this year. Heading into the 2020 presidential election, Trump may keep up his Fed attacks, seeing the central bank as a convenient target if the economy starts to falter.

But the Fed is widely thought to have achieved its goal of a soft landing in which it's slowed growth enough to keep the tightest job market in a half century from igniting inflation but not so much as to cause a downturn.

"We are in sort of a Goldilocks situation, with an economy that is not too hot or too cold," said Sung Won Sohn, a professor of economics and finance at Loyola Marymount University. "We are sailing along at a nice pace, and we should enjoy it."

## Companies struggle to grow profits, look ahead to 2020

By DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Corporate profits continued their yearlong slide during the third quarter and analysts expect another decline this quarter before the numbers start improving.

Companies have been hindered by slower global economic growth, worsened by the U.S.-China trade war, in their efforts to increase profits from a year ago. Many with international supply chains have faced higher costs, and several sectors have seen declining global revenue.

U.S. companies are also having a tougher year by comparison to 2018, when sharply lower corporate tax rates helped goose profits.

Analysts expect profits to resume growing in the new year, starting slowly in the first quarter and accelerating after that. Much of the optimism centers around hopes for a resolution to the trade war and companies getting a clearer picture of where the global economy is headed.

Wall Street has taken this year's quarterly profit contractions in stride, largely because companies, for the most part, have managed to beat already low forecasts. Analysts came into the third quarter expecting profits for the S&P 500 to fall 4%. With 97% of companies in the index reporting, profits are expected to have declined by 2.3%, with three-quarters of the companies topping expectations.

Reassured by those results, investors have instead focused on the broader U.S. economy and the Federal Reserve's moves to lower interest rates. Consumer spending remains strong, with unemployment close to a five-decade low. Inflation is also restrained. Those have contributed to steady, if not spectacular, economic growth around 2%.

Fears of a U.S. recession, tied largely to a drop in manufacturing activity, have recently subsided.

"There's no question earnings are challenged," said David Kelly, chief global strategist at JPMorgan Asset Management. "The market is to some extent coasting off good stable job performance."

Investors have been in a buying mood all year. The S&P 500 is hovering around a 25% gain for the year, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq is on track for a 30% gain.

Companies that beat analysts' forecasts in the third quarter saw an average price increase of 2.2% within the four-day period surrounding their report, according to John Butters, senior earnings analyst at FactSet. That is well above the five-year average price increase of 1% during that same window.

Investors have also been taking it relatively easy on companies that fell short of the mark, according to Butters. Companies that fell short of expectations saw an average price decline of 1.7% during that four-day window. That's smaller than the five-year average price decrease of 2.6% during that same window for companies falling short of expectations.

Katie Nixon, chief investment officer at Northern Trust Wealth Management, said investors have been responding more to economic data and policy, along with trade developments.

"We are in jet propulsion mode right now as investors focus on the holy trinity of low, but positive growth, low inflation and accommodative central banks," she said.

## Asian shares retreat after Trump approval of Hong Kong bill

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Asian shares were mostly lower on Thursday after President Donald Trump signed a bill expressing support for human rights in Hong Kong.

China reacted with indignation to the legislation, which Congress passed with overwhelming support. The government issued multiple statements threatening unspecified countermeasures.

In Hong Kong, where sometimes violent protest have dragged on for nearly six months, the Hang Seng index edged 0.1% lower to 26,937.64. The Shanghai Composite index lost 0.3% to 2,894.33.

Trump's move did not come as a surprise. But it's unclear if the human rights bill, which Beijing views as "meddling" in China's internal affairs, might derail recent progress in trade talks with Washington.

"We urge the U.S. to not continue going down the wrong path, or China will take countermeasures, and

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the U.S. must bear all consequences," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Markets appeared to be taking the developments in stride, said Stephen Innes of AxiTrader, "on the assumption that the U.S. legislation is unlikely to torpedo phase one. But of course, it does provide a stark reminder that on one level or another, U.S.-China frictions are always going to be a thorn in the markets' side."

Japan's Nikkei 225 index edged 9.29 points higher to 23,448.00 while the Kospi in Seoul lost 0.3% to 2,122.43. Australia's S&P ASX 200 gained 0.2% to 6,865.40. Shares fell in Taiwan and Singapore and were flat in Bangkok.

U.S. figures were modestly lower, with the contracts for both the Dow Jones Industrial Average down 0.2% and that for the S&P 500 0.3% lower.

U.S. markets will be closed Thursday for Thanksgiving. They'll be open for a half day on Friday.

On Wednesday, investors capped a day of light trading on Wall Street ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday by serving up another set of stock market record highs.

The S&P 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average and Nasdaq composite closed at all-time highs for the third straight day Wednesday. And the Russell 2000 index of smaller companies hit its highest level in a year.

A batch of positive U.S. economic data helped spur the broad rally, extending the market's recent string of gains.

Stock indexes have been breaking records in recent weeks as the U.S. and China signaled that negotiations aimed at resolving their costly trade war were going well.

The latest economic data helped keep investors in a buying mood. The Commerce Department said Wednesday that the economy grew at a 2.1% rate last quarter, outpacing forecasts. The government also reported a surprisingly good increase in orders to U.S. factories and a pickup in consumer spending.

"This is an environment where we continue an economic expansion, albeit at a somewhat slower rate," said Bill Northey, senior investment director at U.S. Bank Wealth Management. "There is a very positive sentiment around U.S. equity markets."

The S&P 500 index rose 0.4% to 3,153.63. The Dow picked up 0.2% to 28,164. The Nasdaq climbed 0.7% to 8,705.18, while the Russell 2000 added 0.6%, to 1,634.10.

Boeing fell 1.5% after federal safety regulators indicated that they will keep full control over approvals of each new 737 Max built. The Federal Aviation Administration's decision affects more than 300 finished Max jets currently sitting in storage.

The key question in China-U.S. trade negotiations is whether they will be able to reach a deal before Dec. 15, when new tariffs are set to kick in on many Chinese-made items, including smartphones and laptops.

Pressure is building on both sides to complete a limited "phase one" deal before the deadline, though the Trump administration could end up postponing it, as it did in October, to allow more time for talks.

Benchmark crude oil lost 27 cents to \$57.84 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It fell 30 cents to settle at \$58.11 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude oil, the international standard, gave up 20 cents to \$62.81 per barrel.

The dollar slipped to 109.46 Japanese yen from 109.54 yen on Wednesday. The euro was steady at \$1.1006.

AP Business Writers Alex Veiga and Damian J. Troise contributed.

## Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Nov. 28, the 332nd day of 2019. There are 33 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 28, 1942, fire engulfed the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Boston, killing 492 people in the deadliest nightclub blaze ever. (The cause of the rapidly-spreading fire, which began in the basement, is in

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dispute; one theory is that a busboy accidentally ignited an artificial palm tree while using a lighted match to fix a light bulb.)

On this date:

In 1520, Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan reached the Pacific Ocean after passing through the South American strait that now bears his name.

In 1861, the Confederate Congress admitted Missouri as the 12th state of the Confederacy after Missouri's disputed secession from the Union.

In 1905, Sinn Fein (shin fayn) was founded in Dublin.

In 1919, American-born Lady Astor was elected the first female member of the British Parliament.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Josef Stalin began conferring in Tehran during World War II.

In 1961, Ernie Davis of Syracuse University became the first African-American to be named winner of the Heisman Trophy.

In 1964, the United States launched the space probe Mariner 4 on a course toward Mars, which it flew past in July 1965, sending back pictures of the red planet.

In 1975, President Ford nominated Federal Judge John Paul Stevens to the U-S Supreme Court seat vacated by William O. Douglas.

In 1979, an Air New Zealand DC-10 en route to the South Pole crashed into a mountain in Antarctica, killing all 257 people aboard.

In 1994, serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer was slain in a Wisconsin prison by a fellow inmate. Sixties war protester Jerry Rubin died in Los Angeles, two weeks after being hit by a car; he was 56.

In 2001, Enron Corp., once the world's largest energy trader, collapsed after would-be rescuer Dynegy Inc. backed out of an \$8.4 billion takeover deal. (Enron filed for bankruptcy protection four days later.)

In 2004, NBC Sports chairman Dick Ebersol was injured, his 14-year-old son Teddy among three people killed, when a charter plane crashed during takeoff outside Montrose, Colorado.

Ten years ago: A conservative Iranian legislator warned his country might pull out of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty after a U.N. resolution censuring Tehran. For a second straight day, Tiger Woods was unavailable to speak to the Florida Highway Patrol about an accident involving his SUV that sent him to the hospital with injuries.

Five years ago: French President Francois Hollande (frahn-SWAH' oh-LAWN'D') brought a message of hope to Guinea, where thousands of residents turned out to catch a glimpse of the first Western leader to visit a country hard hit by Ebola. Pope Francis urged Muslim leaders to condemn the "barbaric violence" being committed in the name of Islam against religious minorities in Iraq and Syria as he arrived in neighboring Turkey for a visit aimed at improving interfaith ties. A gunman fired more than 100 rounds at downtown buildings in Austin, Texas, and tried to set the Mexican Consulate ablaze before he died during a confrontation with police.

One year ago: Democrats overwhelmingly nominated Nancy Pelosi to become House speaker when Democrats took control of the House in January. Stocks surged to their biggest gain in eight months after Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell hinted that the Fed might not raise interest rates much further; the Dow soared 617 points higher. President Donald Trump told the New York Post that a pardon for former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort was "not off the table," prompting critics to fear that Trump would use his executive power to protect friends and supporters caught up in the Russia probe.

Today's Birthdays: Recording executive Berry Gordy Jr. is 90. Former Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., is 83. U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is 82. Singer-songwriter Bruce Channel is 79. Singer Randy Newman is 76. CBS News correspondent Susan Spencer is 73. Movie director Joe Dante is 72. Former "Late Show" orchestra leader Paul Shaffer is 70. Actor Ed Harris is 69. Former NASA astronaut Barbara Morgan is 68. Actress S. Epatha (eh-PAY'-thah) Merkerson is 67. Former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff is 66. Country singer Kristine Arnold (Sweethearts of the Rodeo) is 63. Actor Judd Nelson is 60. Movie director Alfonso Cuaron (kwahr-OHN') is 58. Rock musician Matt Cameron is 57. Actress Jane Sibbett is 57. Comedian Jon Stewart is 57. Actress Garcelle Beauvais (gar-SEHL' boh-VAY') is 53. Actor/comedian

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Stephnie (cq) Weir is 52. Rhythm-and-blues singer Dawn Robinson is 51. Actress Gina Tognoni is 46. Hip-hop musician apl.de.ap (Black Eyed Peas) is 45. Actor Malcolm Goodwin is 44. Actor Ryan Kwanten is 43. Actress Aimee Garcia is 41. Rapper Chamillionaire is 40. Actor Daniel Henney is 40. Rock musician Rostam Batmanglij (bot-man-GLEESH') is 36. Rock singer-keyboardist Tyler Glenn (Neon Trees) is 36. Actress Mary Elizabeth Winstead is 35. R&B singer Trey Songz is 35. NHL goalie Marc-Andre Fleury (marhk-ahn-dray FLOOR'-ee) is 35. Actress Scarlett Pomers is 31. Actor-rapper Bryshere Gray is 26.

Thought for Today: "Knowledge is proud that it knows so much; wisdom is humble that it knows no more." — William Cowper, English poet (1731-1800).

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