


Groton Daily Independent


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"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE I'VE KNOWN ARE THOSE WHO HAVE KNOWN TRIALS, HAVE KNOWN STRUGGLES, HAVE KNOWN LOSS, AND HAVE FOUND THEIR WAY OUT OF THE DEPTHS."
-ELISABETH KUBLER-ROSS

Chicken Soup
for the Soul



90th Birthday

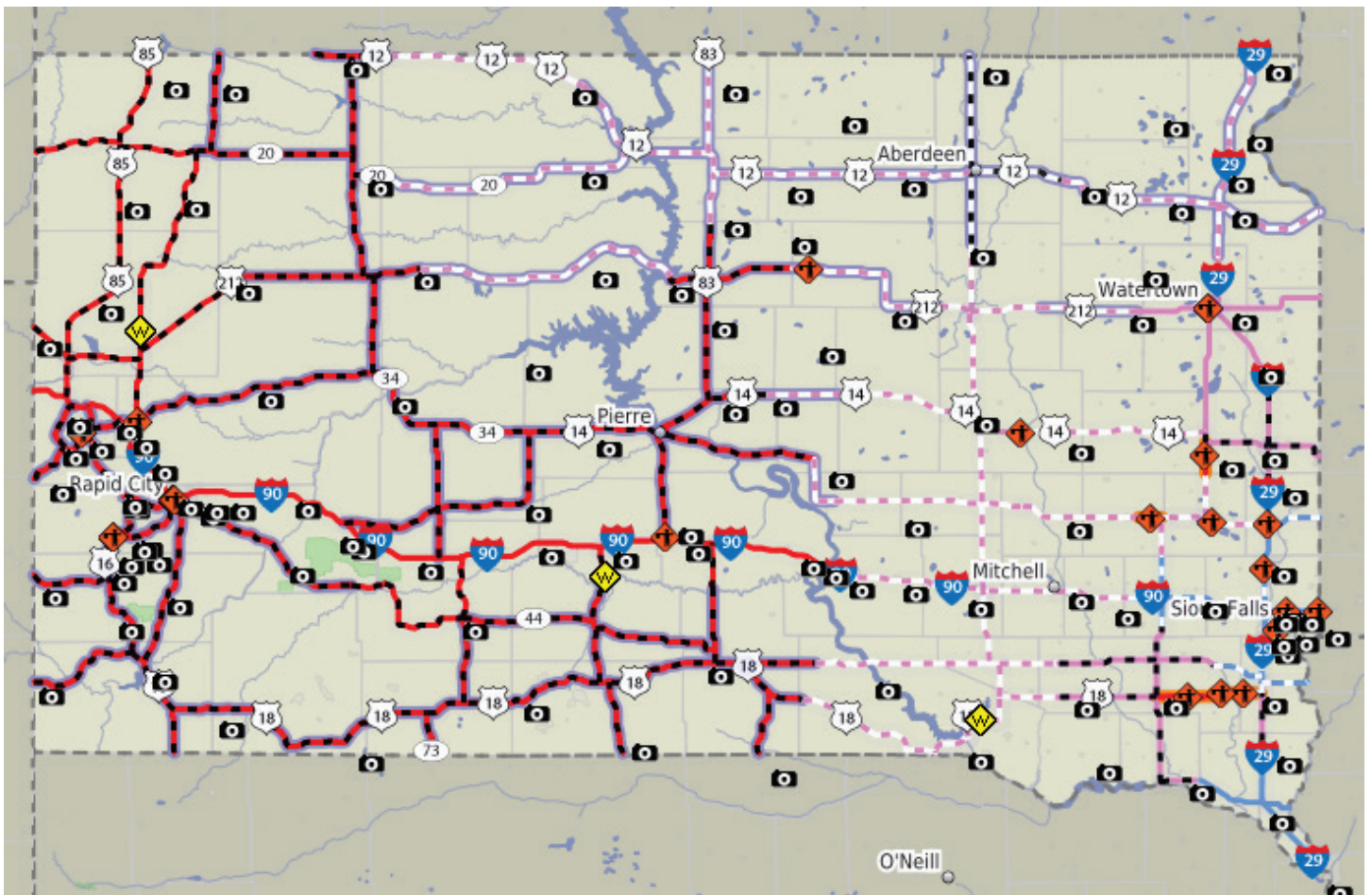
**Ilse Cameron
will celebrate her
90th birthday
on December 5, 2019.**





**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.

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-  Snow/Ice/Slippery
-  No Travel Advised
-  Closed/Blocked/Impassable
-  Scattered Snow/Slush

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It's a beautiful day to go no where out of town, so why not stop out at Lori's Pharmacy and Dollar General and shop for someone on the Angel Tree.



Snowy Roads

Drive to Conditions
or, if possible, consider
alternate travel plans and
avoid travel altogether



South Dakota

www.safetravelusa.com/sd

Minnesota

www.511mn.org/

North Dakota

www.dot.nd.gov/travel-info-v2/

Published on: 11/30/2019 at 1:37AM

Snow covered roads and reduced visibility can be expected, travel may be difficult or impossible.

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Winter Storm Warning

...WINTER STORM WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL NOON CST /11 AM MST/ SUNDAY...

* WHAT...Heavy mixed precipitation. Additional snow accumulations of 8 to 11 inches and ice accumulations of a light glaze. Winds gusting as high as 45 mph.

* WHERE...Portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota.

* WHEN...Until noon CST /11 AM MST/ Sunday.

* IMPACTS...Travel could be very difficult to impossible. Areas of blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. Gusty winds could bring down tree branches.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

If you must travel, keep an extra flashlight, food, and water in your vehicle in case of an emergency.

In Minnesota, the latest road conditions can be obtained at 511mn.org, or by calling 5 1 1.

In South Dakota, the latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.



*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
Olde 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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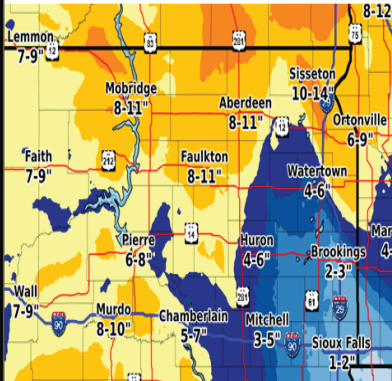
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Winter Storm Warning

Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
		 		
100%	100%	50%		
Heavy Snow and Areas Blowing Snow	Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow then Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 32 °F	Low: 20 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: 6 °F	High: 28 °F

Moderate to Heavy Snow Through Midday Light Snow This Afternoon-Tonight

Expected Snowfall Amounts Today-Tonight



Timing

- Through this morning. Tapering off later this afternoon and tonight.
- Patchy light freezing drizzle by late morning through afternoon across portions of northeast SD/west central MN.
- Increasing north-northeast winds through the day into tonight.

Impacts

- Blowing snow with reduced visibilities expected, especially in open country areas.
- Difficult travel conditions through the day into tonight due to the significant snowfall, light ice glaze and reduced visibilities.

Uncertainty

- Snowfall amounts dependent on amount of light freezing drizzle that develops in northeast SD/west central MN

National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/Aberdeen National Weather Service Aberdeen @NWSAberdeen Updated: 11/30/2019 5:38 AM Central

Published on: 11/30/2019 at 12:44 AM

A strong winter storm will continue to make its way through the region today. Bands of moderate to heavy snow will be possible through the morning hours into midday. Lighter snowfall is expected during the afternoon hours into tonight. Some light freezing drizzle will also be possible across east central South Dakota and west central Minnesota by late morning into the afternoon. A light glaze of ice is possible in these areas. Strong winds cranking up out of the north and northeast will cause blowing snow and reduce visibilities. The storm begins to wrap up overnight tonight into Sunday morning with more quiet conditions settling in toward the end of the weekend.

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Today in Weather History

November 30, 1981: A two-day winter storm, beginning as rain, changing to freezing rain and then to snow, completely paralyzed the eastern half of South Dakota, as well as west central Minnesota Monday, November 30 through Tuesday, December 1, 1981. Snow accumulations of between eight and twelve inches were common in South Dakota. Wind with gusts to near 50 mph whipped the snow into blizzard conditions. The Governor of South Dakota closed east-west Interstate 90 to all traffic. Hundreds of motorists were stranded. One person died during snow removal after the storm. Some storm total snowfall amounts included 8 inches at Kennebec, 7 inches at Pierre and Faulkton, 4 inches at Aberdeen, and 2 inches at Watertown. The winter precipitation was caused by a storm center that moved from Kansas Monday through Iowa Monday night and into Wisconsin Tuesday morning, December 1st. The same storm produced heavy snow and blizzard conditions over a large area of the central Plains. Travel was especially difficult because of the snow. Many roads were impassible and motorists were forced to find shelter.

November 30, 1991: The third major winter storm of the season moved from the central plains to eastern South Dakota. The storm generally dropped between 4 and 8 inches of snow over the eastern third of South Dakota from the 28th to the 30th. New snow accumulations of 2 to 5 inches occurred over most of the rest of the state. Some specific snow reports across the area included Aberdeen with 2 inches and Watertown with 3 inches. Five inches fell at Clear Lake and 3 inches fell near Summit. Strong winds developed after the snow fell, producing widespread blowing and drifting snow, especially across the northeast corner of South Dakota.

November 30, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 12 inches fell across a large part of northern South Dakota and into western Big Stone County in Minnesota, causing travel problems and school closings. Several accidents also occurred due to the slippery roads. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Milbank and Ortonville; 8 inches at McLaughlin, Ipswich, Summit, and Mellette; 9 inches northwest of Britton, Clear Lake, and Pollock; 10 inches at Leola and Faulkton; 11 inches at Aberdeen and Webster; and 12 inches at Houghton.

November 30, 1925: An extremely rare late November hurricane began to affect the west coast of Florida as it strengthened during the day. The storm made landfall very early on December 1st south of Tampa Bay, weakened to a tropical storm as it crossed central Florida, and exited around St. Augustine. The storm regained Hurricane strength off Jacksonville late on the 1st. Heavy rain continued over northeast Florida on the 2nd. Gale force winds were reported from the Keys to Jacksonville and over 50 people lost their lives, mostly on ships at sea. Damage along the coast south of Jacksonville was heavy and excessive rain and wind seriously damaged citrus and truck crops.

1875 - A severe early season cold wave set November records in the northeastern U.S. The temperature dipped to 5 above zero at New York City, 2 below at Boston MA, and 13 below at Eastport ME. (David Ludlum)

1957 - Lee slope winds enhanced by Hurricane Nina gusted to 82 mph at Honolulu, Hawaii, a record wind gust for that location. Wainiha, on the island of Kauai, was deluged with 20.42 inches of rain, and 35 foot waves pounded some Kauai beaches, even though the eye of the hurricane was never within 120 miles of the islands. (30th-1st) (The Weather Channel)

1967 - A record November snowstorm struck the Washington D.C. area. It produced up to a foot of snow in a 12 hour period. (David Ludlum)

1976 - MacLeod Harbor, AK, reported a precipitation total for November of 70.99 inches, which established a state record for any month of the year. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - Showers produced heavy rain in the northeastern U.S. Up to three inches of rain drenched the Brandywine Creek Basin of Pennsylvania, and rainfall totals in Vermont ranged up to two inches at Dorsett. Snow fell heavily across Upper Michigan as gale force winds prevailed over Lake Superior. A storm moving into the northwestern U.S. produced gale force winds along the northern and central Pacific coast. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 32 °F at 12:06 PM

Low Temp: 25 °F at 4:57 AM

Wind: 23 mph at 10:02 PM

Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 66° in 1995

Record Low: -27° in 1964

Average High: 31°F

Average Low: 12°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.71

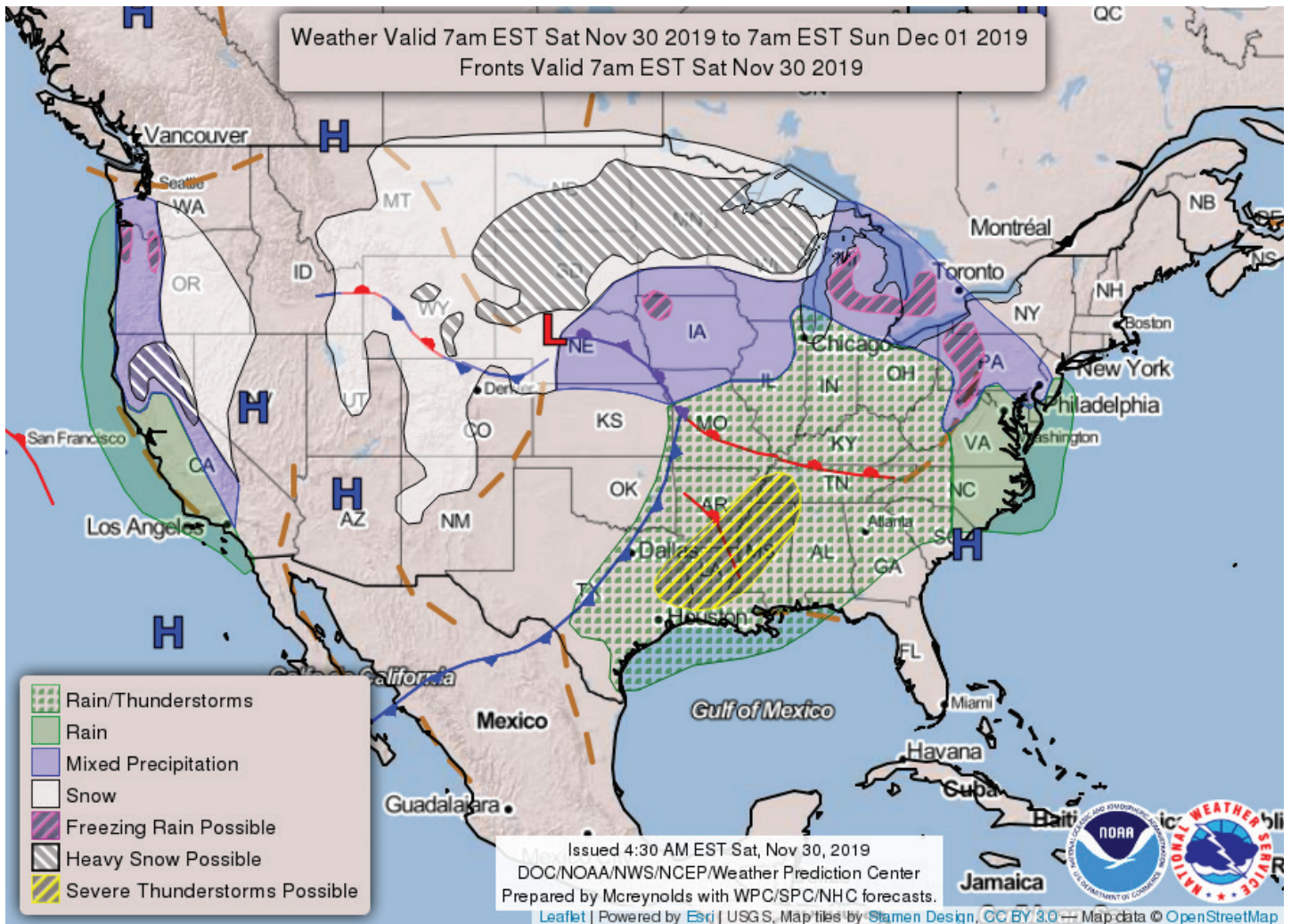
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.38

Average Precip to date: 21.18

Precip Year to Date: 26.95

Sunset Tonight: 4:53 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:52 a.m.



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WHO GETS THE CREDIT?

A Chinese farmer had only one son and one horse. Nothing else in life mattered to him. One night his horse ran away. His neighbors came to console him and said, "What bad luck!"

Later the horse returned and brought twelve wild horses with him. The neighbors, hearing the news, gathered at his home and rejoiced with him saying, "What good luck!"

While taming one of the wild horses, the son fell and severely broke his leg. The neighbors gathered once again and with remorse said, "What bad luck!"

Soon after this, their warlord was engaged in a battle and took all of the able-bodied men to war – except his son. None of the men returned. But the son, who was excused from going to war and was left behind, led a long and productive life.

Was it the Lord or was it luck?

Every event that occurs in our lives is open for our personal interpretation. When the mind of Christ is at work within us, we will see God at work in everything.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to realize Your presence and power in our lives and see Your hand at work. Open our eyes, minds, and hearts to see You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 8:26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

11/29 & 30/2019 – Christmas at the Barn – Round TWO 10am-5pm, Front Porch 605 – 1506 W Aspen Ave

12/03/2019 – Christmas Open House 10am-4pm, James Valley Telecommunications

12/07/2019 – Santa Day 9am-12pm, Professional Management Services

12/07/2019 – Tour of Homes 4pm-7pm, Olive Grove Golf Course (Tickets available at Lori's Pharmacy, Groton Ford, Hair & Co (Aberdeen) and Vicki Walter (605) 380-0480)

12/19/2019 – Christmas Open House 10am-4pm, Wells Fargo Bank

12/20/2019 – Holiday Bake Sale & Open House 9am-4pm, Groton Community Transit

• 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 **AP** Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

06-08-31-50-65, Mega Ball: 9, Megaplier: 2

(six, eight, thirty-one, fifty, sixty-five; Mega Ball: nine; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$243 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$110 million

Powerful storm interrupts nation's busiest travel weekend

By **CLAIRE GALOFARO** Associated Press

A powerful storm making its way east from California is causing major disruptions during the year's busiest travel weekend, as forecasters warned that intensifying snow and ice could thwart millions of people across the country hoping to get home after Thanksgiving.

The storm caused the death of at least one person in South Dakota and shut down highways in the western U.S., stranding drivers in California and prompting authorities in Arizona to plead with travelers to wait out the weather before attempting to travel.

The storm was tracking into the Plains Friday and expected to track east through the weekend — into the Midwest by Saturday and the Northeast on Sunday — pummeling a huge portion of the country with snow, ice or flash flooding.

The National Weather Service said travel could become impossible in some places.

The weather could be particularly disruptive on Sunday, when millions of holiday travelers head home. Airlines for America, the airline industry's trade group, expects 3.1 million passengers during what could be the busiest day ever recorded for American air travel.

The weather service issued storm warnings Friday for a swath of the country stretching from Montana to



Street signs are covered in snow in north Flagstaff, Ariz., Friday, Nov. 29, 2019. A powerful storm making its way east from California is threatening major disruptions during the year's busiest travel weekend, as forecasters warned that intensifying snow and ice could thwart millions across the country hoping to get home after Thanksgiving. The storm has already killed at least one person and shut down highways in the western U.S., stranding drivers in California and prompting authorities in Arizona to plead with travelers to wait out the weather before attempting to travel. (Cody Bashore/Arizona Daily Sun via AP)

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Nebraska to Wisconsin, with heavy snow anticipated in parts of Utah, Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming. Gusts up to 90 mph (144.8 kph) were possible in mountains and foothills, and could reach 65 mph (104.6 kph) in the Plains, creating poor visibility.

One hopeful traveler asked the weather service Friday on Twitter whether it would be advisable to drive to Duluth, Minnesota, over the weekend. The agency warned: "If you are in Duluth by tonight, you will likely be stuck there until at least Sunday afternoon due to heavy snow and blizzard conditions."

Northern Michigan University reopened its residence halls, two days earlier than normal for a Thanksgiving weekend, to give students more options as forecasters predicted a foot or more of snow.

"We want to make people aware of what they could be driving into," campus police Chief Mike Bath said.

The airline industry group estimated a record 31.6 million people will travel over a 12-day holiday period. Airlines on Friday said they were so far operating as usual as they monitored the weather.

Delta said inclement weather could disrupt travel at airports in the upper Midwest on Saturday and the Northeast on Sunday and Monday. It offered to let customers reschedule or cancel flights. American Airlines issued similar waivers for Rapid City, South Dakota.

Sections of South Dakota were under a blizzard warning and could see howling winds and as much as 2 feet (0.6 meters) of snow. Authorities reported a fatal crash in the state after a driver lost control of his pickup on an ice-covered road. A 37-year-old passenger died after the truck slid into a ditch and rolled.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol posted a photo on Facebook of another crash — a semi-truck that veered from Interstate 90 near Rapid City. "Do not travel if you don't have to!" the agency wrote. Transportation officials said later Friday that much of I-90 throughout the state would shut down at midnight. Interstate 90 was also closed on the Montana and Wyoming border and roads throughout Wyoming were also shut down. Widespread freezing drizzle was causing icy roads across much of western and central North Dakota, the National Weather Service said.

Utah Highway Patrol troopers were dealing with a "huge smattering" of wrecks across the state starting Friday afternoon, Sgt. Brady Zaugg told the Salt Lake Tribune.

The National Weather Service announced on Friday evening that three tornados had hit parts of the Phoenix area early Friday. Bianca Hernandez, a meteorologist, said tornado warnings are highly unusual for Arizona any time of the year.

Fog forced delayed flights and cancelations at Denver International Airport Friday.

Karlee Wilkinson, a 22-year-old college student in Long Beach, California, missed a Thanksgiving weekend gathering entirely because of snow on the way to her destination.

She, her girlfriend and her roommate left Thursday for what was supposed to be a two-hour drive. But the snow started falling in flakes bigger than she'd ever seen, the highway became gridlocked, and their car kept overheating.

At first it seemed like an adventure: They made snowmen in the highway median. But when the sun set, the temperature dropped, and they decided to turn around and head home. Their Thanksgiving dinner was chicken nuggets from a fast food drive-thru.

"This is not how this is supposed to go, this is not what an American Thanksgiving is supposed to be," Wilkinson said. "It can only get better than this. I'll never have a worse Thanksgiving, knock on wood."

Galofaro reported from Louisville, Kentucky. Associated Press writers Stephen Groves in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Colleen Slevin in Denver; John Antczak in Los Angeles; Ed White in Detroit; Paul Davenport in Phoenix; and Lisa Baumann in Seattle contributed to this report.

Belated bill to help solve indigenous cold cases gains steam

By DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A bill originally meant to help law enforcement investigate cold cases of murdered and missing indigenous women that has floundered in Congress for two years may have the missing ingredients to become law — money and muscle.

The money comes from an appropriations subcommittee chaired by Alaska Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who told The Associated Press that for the first time funding is being directed specifically to murdered and missing indigenous people. The muscle comes from the White House and specifically the Department of Justice, which last week unveiled a plan that would investigate issues raised in the bill like data collection practices and federal databases.

It adds up to a strong outlook for Savanna's Act, which was originally introduced in 2017 by Murkowski, Democratic Nevada Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto and former North Dakota Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp. Murkowski and Heitkamp, longtime allies on issues affecting indigenous people, also created the Commission on Native Children, which recently held its first meeting.

"The great thing about Lisa's work has been her willingness to not just pass this law but make sure there's an appropriation for it," Heitkamp said Friday.

The bill is named for Savanna Greywind, a Native American North Dakota woman who was killed in 2017 when her baby was cut from her womb. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, chaired by North Dakota Republican John Hoeven, earlier this month advanced another version of bill to the full Senate for consideration.

Gloria Allred, an attorney for Greywind's family, said they are "encouraged by what appears to be the strong efforts of U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski's commitment to gather support for this bill in order for it to be signed into law one day."

Savanna's Act passed the Senate in 2018 but was blocked in the House by former Virginia Rep. Bob Goodlatte because he said it would hurt some agencies that have no link to tribal communities. Heitkamp said a new companion piece to the bill, the Not Invisible Act, has helped broaden the scope of the initiative and address concerns raised by Goodlatte.

"We are making some headway," Murkowski said. "Not fast enough, but I think we're making the efforts that are going to make a difference in the long haul. The legislative initiatives that we have used have



FILE - In a Monday, Aug. 28, 2017 file photo, a makeshift memorial to Savanna Greywind featuring a painting, flowers, candle and a stuffed animal is seen on Monday, Aug. 28, 2017, in Fargo, N.D., outside the apartment where Greywind lived with her parents. Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski from Alaska is taking up the cause for a bill aimed at helping law enforcement with cases of murdered and missing indigenous women. Former North Dakota Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp introduced and helped pass Savanna's Act in the Senate before she lost election, but it was blocked in the House by a retiring Republican. (AP Photo/Dave Kolpack, File)

successfully raised the issue of awareness.”

Savanna’s Act was introduced in the House earlier this year. Three of its co-sponsors are Native American — Sharice Davids of Kansas and Tom Cole and Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma.

Wintry weather back in the Dakotas after Thanksgiving break

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Travelers across the Dakotas and Minnesota braced for a return of wintry weather this weekend, with up to 2 feet of snow expected in the Black Hills.

The National Weather Service says a winter storm warning remained in effect in counties across the Great Plains from central Montana to northern Wisconsin. Freezing drizzle is expected to turn into heavy snow on Friday night. Winds as high as 60 mph may whip across the region, blowing snow and reducing visibility.

Hospitals in western South Dakota prepared to care for patients if the storm causes power outages. The South Dakota Highway Patrol reported one fatal accident on an icy road and posted photos on social media of cars that had careened off roads. Travelers are being asked to stay off the roads.

River watchers already wary about 2020 spring flooding

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — After a year that has seen some of the worst flooding ever in parts of the Midwest, concern is already rising that the spring of 2020 may bring more high water to places that still haven’t fully recovered.

Flooding ravaged much of the Missouri and Mississippi River basins and their tributaries earlier this year, reaching record levels and overwhelming levees in many places. Eight months later, parts of the Missouri River are slightly above flood stage at a time of the year when river levels traditionally run low.

Conditions are only slightly better on the Mississippi River, which is just a couple of feet below flood stage at several towns from Burlington, Iowa, south to near St. Louis.

High river levels aren’t the only worry. National Weather Service hydrologist Mark Fuchs cited two other factors that have him concerned: Soil is extremely saturated in northern states like Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Dakotas, and the long-range forecast offers a strong possibility of a wetter-than-normal winter.

“We’re worried about rivers in general, primarily the Missouri and Mississippi for the spring,” Fuchs, of the weather service’s suburban St. Louis office, said. “We’ll see how the winter plays out.”

Areas along the Missouri River in parts of Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri were particularly ravaged in the early spring, damaging hundreds of homes and businesses.



FILE - In a Wednesday, June 5, 2019 file photo, the Mississippi River flows over the breached Pin Oak levee flooding homes and buildings in Winfield, Mo., during historic flooding on the river. After a year that has seen some of the worst flooding ever in parts of the Midwest, concern is already rising that the spring of 2020 may bring more high water to places that still haven’t fully recovered. (David Carson/

St. Louis Post-Dispatch via AP, File)

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In Buchanan County, Missouri, some county roads were damaged on three separate occasions as floodwaters would rise, fall, and rise again. Emergency Management Director Bill Brinton said those roads have been fixed to the point of being passable but with the strong prospect of more potentially severe flooding next spring, full repairs will have to wait.

Levees that were overtopped and breached in spring and summer flooding also remain unrepaired, meaning that the next big flood could get back into the same homes damaged months ago.

"It's kind of scary for the spring," Brinton, whose county had about 150 homes damaged, said. "These people have had their lives impacted three separate times this year."

The Mississippi River reached near-record levels at several points, including the second-highest ever at St. Louis. Both the Mississippi and Missouri rivers dipped below flood stage by early fall, "then they turned around and went right back up in October with more rain in both basins," Fuchs said. "For both rivers, there really hasn't been much chance to recover."

Fuchs said soil moisture levels in many places to the north are at the 99th percentile for late fall.

"If you have rain, it's supposed to go into the ground," Fuchs said. "Well, there's just not room in the soil to accept rainfall or snowmelt."

Adding to the worry is the weather service's December-February forecast which shows a significant chance of above-normal precipitation in the upper Midwestern states that feed water into the Missouri and Mississippi rivers.

For now, all river communities can do is wait. Brinton said the holes in Buchanan County's levees are too big and plentiful to sandbag.

"I just don't see how it's not going to be a problem in the spring," Brinton said.

Tanker truck rolls in South Dakota; no spill reported

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say it appears no hazardous material spilled when a tanker truck carrying an additive substance to a pipeline pump in South Dakota rolled over on an icy road.

The truck was traveling south of Roswell Wednesday when it veered into a ditch. Miner County Sheriff Robert Egert says the liquid was contained within the tanker and no injuries were reported. Authorities shut down the road as a precaution.

A pumper truck was at the crash site on Friday as authorities cleared the site.

TC Energy, formerly known as TransCanada, operates the pipeline. The truck belonged to a company that transports hazardous material.

Science warnings, US retreat add urgency to UN climate talks

By ARITZ PARRA and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Mass protests, a last-minute venue change and talk of climate tipping points are adding some unplanned drama to this year's international talks on tackling global warming.

Delegates from almost 200 countries had hoped to put the finishing touches to the rules governing the 2015 Paris accord, ironing out a few wrinkles left over from last year's conference in Katowice, Poland, and setting the scene for a major review of their efforts in 2020.

But then Brazil pulled its offer of hosting the talks and stand-in Chile, rattled by anti-government protests, canceled five weeks before the meeting. Next, President Donald Trump served formal notice that the United States was quitting the Paris accord, delivering a symbolic blow to one of his predecessor's signature achievements.

And scientists? Well, they didn't have any good news either. Study after study published in recent months has underscored the rapid pace of global warming and the need to urgently cut emissions of greenhouse gases.

Against that backdrop, the Dec. 2-13 meeting in Madrid has gained fresh impetus.

"We have to do more in less time," said Spanish environment minister Teresa Ribera, whose country

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stepped in at short notice to host the talks, saying it wanted to support “constructive multilateralism” in the wake of Chile’s announcement and the U.S. withdrawal.

U.N. climate chief Patricia Espinosa said Saturday that “science tells us we are still in time” to tackle the climate crisis.

“That doesn’t mean changing the world by tomorrow, but we must make decisions today,” she said during a visit to the meeting venue.

Organizers expect around 25,000 visitors, including heads of state, scientists, seasoned negotiators and activists to attend the two-week meeting.

The main items on the agenda include finalizing rules on global carbon markets and agreeing how poor countries should be compensated for destruction largely caused by emissions from rich nations.

Proposals to create a worldwide market for emissions permits have been around for decades. The idea is that putting a price on carbon dioxide — the main greenhouse gas — and gradually reducing the available permits will encourage countries and companies to cut their emissions, notably by shifting away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy sources.

The European Union and some other jurisdictions already operate limited emissions trading systems, but efforts to roll these out worldwide have been hampered by fears that the lack of robust and transparent rules could corrupt the market.

“It would be great news to finalize this issue,” said Ribera. But she warned that the “solvency and integrity of the system” was a concern.

“If we cannot complete it correctly, it’s better to lay the ground for later completion,” said Ribera.

That view was echoed by Yamide Dagnet, a former EU climate negotiator now with the Washington-based environmental think tank World Resources Institute.

“Without proper oversight and robustness these mechanisms could severely undercut climate action by creating loopholes, letting countries off the hook for making meaningful emission cuts, resulting in double counting and jeopardizing environmental integrity,” she said.

The question of compensating poor countries for environmental destruction — technically referred to as loss and damage — is also likely to be sensitive, said Dagnet. Attributing specific weather disasters such as hurricanes and floods, or slow but irreversible changes like sea level rise and desertification, to climate change remains a delicate issue given the potential sums involved.

Concerns about the cost of climate change are growing on all fronts. Trump cited financial demands on the United States as one of the reasons for quitting the Paris accord; European countries have hesitated to raise fuel prices for fear of sparking yellow vest-style protests like those seen in France; meanwhile, businesses are beginning to consider the price not just of reducing emissions but also of failing to do so.

Scientists say the time to act is now, if the world wants to meet the goal set in Paris of keeping global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), ideally 1.5 C by the end of the century. By



Supporters of the climate movement Ende Gelaende protest in front of a coal-fired power station Lippendorf near Leipzig, Germany, Sunday, Nov. 24, 2019. Ende Gelaende is an action alliance for an immediate coal exit, climate justice and a fundamental system change. The alliance announces a mass action of civil disobedience in the Saxony and Lusatian coal mining area in Germany. (AP Photo/Jens Meyer)

some measures average temperatures have already increased by one degree Celsius since pre-industrial times, with the sharpest rise occurring in the last few decades.

"Global warming is going faster," said Johan Rockström, co-director of Germany's Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. "Climate impacts are occurring earlier and we are approaching potentially irreversible thresholds earlier than we previously thought."

Rockström and several colleagues recently warned that the world is heading for several "tipping points" that could sharply accelerate the pace of climate change. They include deforestation in the Amazon and the decline of ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica.

Such messages resonate with environmental activists like Laura Laguna, a member of the Madrid chapter of Fridays for Future, one of the groups planning to protest during the climate talks, known as the 25th Conference of the Parties, or COP25.

"We are close to the point of no return on global warming," Laguna said. "Our generation's future depends on what we do now."

Ribera, whose formal title is interim minister for ecological transition, indicated that European Union leaders may try to send a strong signal during the meeting that the bloc is prepared to make sharper cuts to its emissions than previously pledged. A recent proposal to aim for "climate neutrality" by 2050 failed to win support from all of the EU's 28 member states — including the host of last year's talks, Poland.

Frank Jordans reported from Berlin. Dorothee Thiesing in Berlin, and Barry Hatton in Lisbon, Portugal, contributed to this report.

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UK police: Suspect in attack had served time for terrorism

By GREGORY KATZ Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — UK counterterrorism police on Saturday searched for clues into how a man imprisoned for terrorism offenses before his release last year managed to stab several people before being tackled by bystanders and shot dead by officers on London Bridge. Two people were killed and three wounded.

Neil Basu, London's police counterterrorism chief, said 28-year-old Usman Khan was attending a program that works to educate prisoners when he launched Friday's attack just yards from the site of a deadly 2017 van and knife rampage.

Basu said the suspect appeared to be wearing a bomb vest but it turned out to be "a hoax explosive device." Police said they were treating the stabbings as a terrorist attack and were not actively looking for other suspects.

Health officials said one of the wounded was in critical but stable condition, one was stable and the third had less serious injuries. Police have not named the two who died.

The attack raises difficult questions for Britain's government and security services. Police said Khan was convicted in 2012 of terrorism offenses and released in December 2018 "on license," which means he had to meet certain conditions or face recall to prison. Several British media outlets reported that he was wearing an electronic ankle bracelet at the time of the attack.

The former head of Britain's National Counter Terrorism Security Office, Chris Phillips, said it is wrong to ask police and security services to keep the country safe while letting people out of prison when they are still a threat.

"We're playing Russian roulette with people's lives, letting convicted, known, radicalized jihadi criminals walk about our streets," he said.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who visited the scene Saturday, said he had "long argued" that it was a "mistake to allow serious and violent criminals to come out of prison early." He said extra police patrols on the streets would be added "for reassurance purposes."

Khan had been convicted as part of a group that denied plotting to target major sites including Parlia-

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Forensic workers attend the scene on London Bridge in London, Saturday, Nov. 30, 2019. UK counterterrorism police on Saturday searched for clues into how a man imprisoned for terrorism offenses before his release last year managed to stab several people before being tackled by bystanders and shot dead by officers on London Bridge. Two people were killed and three wounded. (AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali)

Pezzali)

ment, the U.S. Embassy and individuals including Johnson, then the mayor of London, the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London and two rabbis.

Khan admitted to a lesser charge of engaging in conduct for the preparation of acts of terrorism. He had been secretly taped plotting attacks and talking about martyrdom as a possibility.

Khan and his accomplices had links to radical preacher Anjem Choudary. A mobile phone seized at the time contained material related to the banned group that Choudary founded. The preacher was released from prison in 2018 but is under heavy surveillance and a curfew.

Choudary for years has been one of the highest-profile faces of radical Islam in Britain, leading groups including al-Muhajiroun, Islam4UK and Muslims Against Crusades. Several people who attended his rallies have been convicted of attacks, including the two al-Qaida-inspired killers who ran over British soldier Lee Rigby and stabbed him to death in 2013.

Police on Saturday were searching an apartment block in Stafford, 150 miles (240 kilometers) northwest of London, for clues. Khan was believed to have lived in the area after his release from prison.

Britain's Parole Board said in a statement it had no role in releasing Khan, who "appears to have been released automatically on license (as required by law), without ever being referred to the board," it said.

The violence erupted less than two weeks before Britain holds a national election Dec. 12. The main political parties suspended campaigning in London as a mark of respect.

Metropolitan Police Chief Cressida Dick said officers were called just before 2 p.m. Friday to Fishmongers' Hall, a conference venue at the north end of London Bridge.

Learning Together, a Cambridge University-backed prison education program, was holding a conference at the hall. Cambridge Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope said he was "devastated" to learn that the attack may have targeted people attending an event organized by the university's Institute of Criminology.

Minutes after the stabbings, witnesses saw a man with a knife being wrestled to the ground by members of the public on the bridge before officers shot him dead.

One video posted on social media showed two men struggling on the bridge before police pulled a man in civilian clothes off a black-clad man on the ground. Gunshots followed. Another depicted a man in a suit holding a long knife that apparently had been taken from the attacker.

Karen Bosch, who was on a bus crossing the bridge, said she saw police "wrestling with one tall, bearded man" and then heard "gunshots, two loud pops."

She said the man "pulled his coat back which showed that he had some sort of vest underneath, whether it's a stab vest, or some sort of explosive vest, the police then really quickly moved backwards, away."

Footage from the attack showed several passers-by — including one armed with a narwhal tusk apparently taken from the hall and another with a fire extinguisher — fighting with the suspect before police arrived.

Queen Elizabeth II said in a statement that she and her husband, Prince Philip, were sending their thoughts to everyone affected by the "terrible violence." She thanked police and emergency services "as well as the brave individuals who put their own lives at risk to selflessly help and protect others."

Mayor Sadiq Khan praised the "breathtaking heroism of members of the public who literally ran towards danger not knowing what confronted him."

Security officials earlier this month had downgraded Britain's terrorism threat level from "severe" to "substantial," which means an attack is seen as "likely" rather than "highly likely." The assessment was made by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, an independent expert body that evaluates intelligence, terrorist capability and intentions.

It was based in part on a judgment that the threat of extremists returning from Syria to launch attacks in Britain had been slightly reduced.

The U.K.'s terror threat was last listed as "substantial" in August 2014; since then it has held steady at "severe," briefly rising to "critical" in May and September 2017.

Jill Lawless and Danica Kirka contributed to this report.

NY team helping immigrant runners realize American dream

By JAKE SEINER AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A no-name entrant at this month's New York City Marathon — literally, he didn't even qualify to have his name printed on his bib — Girma Bekele Gebre crashed the elite field and finished third in the largest 26.2-mile race in the world.

A week later, the Ethiopian runner sat in Bill Staab's Upper West Side apartment, smiling and nodding while Staab recounted details from his stunning podium finish.

"It's a life-changer," Staab said.

Staab, the 80-year-old president of the West Side Runners' Club, has helped numerous careers during his 42-year term, making the American dream possible for immigrants from all over. A longtime running enthusiast who is retired from his career in steel sales and administration, Staab has become an indispensable organizer for runners from South America and Africa. He's written hundreds of letters to support visa-seeking athletes, and he says he's spent nearly \$1 million of his own money on entry fees and memberships for West Side runners like Girma.

He doesn't pocket the winnings —



Bill Staab, right, talks with a group of Ethiopian runners after a short workout at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx borough of New York, Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2019. Girma Bekele Gebre stunned the elite field at the New York City Marathon by finishing third as a nonelite entrant in November. It was a life-changing performance for the Ethiopian runner, and one made possible because of his involvement with the West Side Runners' Club. Staab, the team president, has spent four decades helping immigrant runners acquire visas and gain entry to U.S. races, spending nearly \$1 million of his own money to cover fees. Bekele Gebre is his greatest success, but not nearly the only runner he's helped. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

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like the \$61,000 earned by Girma, or the \$10,000 that countryman Diriba Degefa Yigezu got for winning last weekend's Philadelphia Marathon. Staab helps the athletes cash those checks and use the money to fund their travels or support others back home.

"When I came here, I didn't have any family," Diriba said. "This person helped me. That's why I run for him."

Girma's success is a new level for West Side Runners. Prior to his breakthrough, he was "just another one of our runners," Staab said — one of his "basically minor league racers." Girma came to the U.S. for three to four months at a time, and Staab would arrange near-weekly races for him across the country. He'd make \$500 here, \$1,000 there — his biggest payday was \$8,000 — and he would send some of that back to his family, which is helping raise his 4-year-old daughter on their farm.

The routine was interrupted this year when one of Girma's six brothers died. He cut short his spring U.S. trip and returned to Ethiopia. Instead of grinding through half-marathons and 10Ks, he trained at altitude in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa.

New York was Girma's first race back in the U.S., and he posted a stunning time of 2 hours, 8 minutes, 38 seconds — more than five minutes faster than his previous personal best.

"If he had said, 'I'm going to run 2:08,' I would have said, 'That's crazy,'" Staab said.

Girma is thinking about putting the prize money into a house in Ethiopia. He's been contacted by agents and sponsors about potential deals, and Staab is hopeful Girma will be approved for a green card — an important step up from his P1 athlete visa that will make living and competing in the U.S. easier. He's eyeing the Boston Marathon for his next race, although it's uncertain if he'll crack the smaller field there. For now, he plans to spend time back home weighing his options. Among his goals: he wants to shave another few minutes off his personal best marathon time.

"Maybe 2:03," he said.

Staab hardly envisioned a success story like that when he took over West Side Runners. Originally a small club of local athletes from the West Side YMCA, the team first went international in 1980 when Staab helped three Colombian runners enter the NYC Marathon. Word spread that Staab could connect international runners to U.S. races, and athletes from Ecuador, Brazil, Mexico and other Latin American countries followed. West Side Runners became a powerhouse at local competitions — and a strikingly diverse one racing against mostly white teams stocked with post-collegiate runners.

"The other teams laughed at us," Staab said. "And then we began to beat them. Then they didn't laugh quite so much."

Staab, a former Peace Corps volunteer, turned managing West Side Runners into a full-time endeavor after retiring a decade ago. His commitment and capability struck some Ethiopian runners seeking a new team around that time, and now Ethiopians make up roughly a third of the club's roughly 350 members. Some come to the U.S. for a few months at a time, and some longer. Staab used to let runners stay in his apartment, but his co-op board recently outlawed that. Many runners have friends to stay with elsewhere in the city, and some share small apartments in the Bronx.

They're almost all full-time runners, with athlete visas that preclude them from taking on other jobs. Although they aren't world-renowned, they can earn enough to cover expenses and send money home, mostly because Staab can get them into nearly any mid-tier race in the country.

It's not a luxurious lifestyle. Diriba will end up running about 20 races this season — he might have completed more if not for an injury over the summer — and estimates he'll make about \$26,000. Barely enough to make rent in his shared Bronx apartment, but in Ethiopia, he says, "it's a lot of money."

Staab also uses the club to help runners get visas, estimating he writes about 100 letters per year to immigration vouching for potential racers.

One of those runners is Nuhamin Bogale Ashame. Formerly a junior world champion at 1,500 meters, Nuhamin fell off the international competitive scene due to injury but is trying to make her way back at longer distances. With Staab's help, she's raced everything from one mile to half-marathons in her first year in the U.S. The 26-year-old heard good things from other athletes about West Side Runners while she was in Ethiopia, and she hasn't been disappointed by Staab.

"For Ethiopian runners, he's like a father," she said. "We love him."

That much became clear to Staab last year, when 15 Ethiopian runners accompanied him to the hospital when he had to have a tumor removed from his bladder. Staab doesn't have any family in New York, so his runners remained with him overnight.

"When I went back for another operation, the nurses didn't remember me, but they remembered the Ethiopians," he said.

Staab bemoans that the immigration process has become more difficult since Donald Trump's election. He's stopped trying to get visas for Mexican runners "because you're not going to get them." Even for the Ethiopians, Staab has had a harder time since Girma got his P1 visa in 2013.

"They're from a shithole country, you know?" he said, wryly referencing Trump's reported comments from last year about some African nations.

Still, most of Staab's team members are immigrants. Their success is on display at his apartment, where dozens of trophies sit on a table in the entry. Runners often leave those prizes for him — they'd rather save room in their luggage for clothes, shoes and souvenirs, anyway.

"We've done well, but it's a lot of work," Staab said. "I'm kind of obsessed with it."

Albania's search for quake victims ends; death toll up to 51

By LLAZAR SEMINI Associated Press



In this photo taken on Friday, Nov. 29, 2019, rescuers from Serbia operate at a collapsed building after the 6.4-magnitude earthquake in Durres, western Albania. In the initial hours after a deadly pre-dawn earthquake struck Albania, pancaking buildings and trapping dozens of sleeping people beneath the rubble, the country's neighbors sprang into action. Offers of help flooded in from across Europe and beyond, with even traditional foes setting aside their differences in the face of the natural disaster. The 6.4-magnitude earthquake that struck Albania on Tuesday killed at least 49 people, injured 2,000 and left at least 4,000 homeless. (AP Photo/Visar Kryeziu)

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — The search and rescue operation for earthquake survivors in Albania has ended, the prime minister said Saturday, with the death toll at 51 and no more bodies believed to be in the ruins.

Prime Minister Edi Rama said preliminary figures showed more than 1,465 buildings in the capital, Tirana, and about 900 in nearby Durres were seriously damaged in Tuesday's 6.4-magnitude pre-dawn quake.

About 2,000 people were injured.

A woman in Tirana who had been in a coma died, the health ministry said Saturday. Local media reported the 20-year old was injured by a falling brick while leaving her apartment.

In Durres, hundreds of residents as well as Rama and President Ilir Meta attended the funeral of nine members of a single extended family who were killed when a four-story villa collapsed. One young man survived and has been sent to Italy for medical treatment.

Preliminary figures estimate at least 4,000 people are homeless.

About 2,500 people from damaged homes have been sheltered in hotels. Others have been taken to neighbor-

ing Kosovo or have moved to eastern areas of Albania.

The prime minister has pledged all homeless will be in "stronger homes" in 2020.

The first seriously damaged building has been demolished, and a dozen others are expected to follow. Assessment experts from Greece, France, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Latvia are involved.

A new draft law will sentence all investors, architects and supervisors to seven to 15 years in prison for violating construction norms. That and corruption in Albania's burgeoning building industry have been blamed for much of the quake's effects.

The government has set up financial compensations for families of the dead, including 1 million Lek (\$9,000) per family, special pensions for elders and scholarships for children.

Biden heads to Iowa looking for a rebound in key state

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and BILL BARROW Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Joe Biden's eight-day bus tour across Iowa comes with a message: Reports of his demise in the nation's first presidential caucus state have been greatly exaggerated.

Biden's aides acknowledge that he must sharpen his pitch before the Feb. 3 caucuses that launch Democrats' 2020 voting. Yet the former vice president's advisers reject any characterization of the 18-county swing that was beginning Saturday as a campaign reset, even with polls showing that Biden's standing in Iowa has slipped in recent months.

They frame the extended trip as an effort to demonstrate wide appeal and harden support across a Democratic electorate whose top priority is defeating President Donald Trump. Conversations with advisers and supporters reveal a quiet confidence that the 77-year-old candidate retains a broad base of support and is well-situated to recover lost ground.

"As people get closer and closer to February, they become more and more practical about this," said former Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack, who recently gave Biden his most high-profile Iowa endorsement yet. "He can make the strongest case, among all the candidates, that he is in a position to get things done, and he is in a position to win."

Iowa polls suggest that Biden, while a front-runner nationally, is in a jumble near the top. South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg appears to hold a narrow edge over Biden and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, 70, and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, 78. The senators have animated the party's left flank, while the 37-year-old Buttigieg joins Biden in Democrats' moderate wing but is calling for generational change.

Biden opened November with an underwhelming speech at the state party's "Liberty & Justice" gala. While Buttigieg and Warren roused thousands of supporters in a Des Moines arena, Biden ticked through his standard applause lines as whole sections of seats purchased by his campaign sat empty.

In southeast Iowa, the state party's Rural Caucus vice chairman says Biden's footprint isn't visible. "I know the names of the people who are supporting various other candidates," Glenn Hurst said. "But in terms of people out there knocking on doors, who attend other campaign events, district events, I can't name a member of the southeast Iowa Democrats who's supporting Joe Biden."

Fairly or not, Biden's national staff has fueled skeptical assessments with pronouncements that he doesn't have to win Iowa to win the nomination. Iowa is overwhelmingly white; Biden's national advantage leans heavily on non-white voters who help determine outcomes in Nevada, South Carolina and many March 3 Super Tuesday states.

Yet all the handwringing misses key variables in Iowa, according to Vilsack and other Biden supporters.

They contend that, public enthusiasm aside, Biden has the broadest range of support both demographically and geographically, especially in rural and small-town Iowa and among the growing minority population that, while small, could prove important with so many candidates dividing the overall caucus vote. Those Biden organizers that get so much criticism, the campaign says, spend their days not with local party officials, but with volunteers knocking on doors and making calls. Their focus: reliable caucus participants, plus disaffected Republicans and independents.

"The media seems to have picked up this narrative that the Biden campaign is not doing well or not as

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well as it should," said longtime party activist and Biden supporter Phyllis Hughes Ewing, daughter of a former Iowa governor and U.S. senator. "I'm on the phones with voters two nights a week for several hours at a pop. I'm a boot on the ground, and that's not what I'm seeing."

Collectively, it's a wide-net strategy the campaign predicts will yield a surprising delegate haul from Iowa's complex caucus process.

The bullishness starts with the viability threshold requiring candidates to get 15% support in a given precinct to have votes counted toward delegates. Biden's team believes he'll be viable in every one of the 1,679 precincts on caucus night, a reach even other leading candidates may not match. Then, they believe Biden will be a top beneficiary of "realignment" votes — subsequent ballots that allow voters who supported a nonviable candidate to choose another who's still standing.

That process could be a double boost for Biden, their theory goes. First, top contenders like Warren or Buttigieg whose support might be anchored in more liberal cities and suburbs would get no practical benefit from first-ballot votes in more rural precincts where they fall short of 15%. Second, several of the lower tier candidates running as moderates — Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, for example — could fall short of viability across much of the state. Biden advisers confirmed they already are mapping out realignment ballot strategy.

Two other key Democratic constituencies also are in play in Iowa, even if they aren't the dominant forces they are in other states: organized labor and minority voters.

Biden won the endorsement of the International Association of Fire Fighters at the outset of his campaign, and the organization already has tapped its locals across the state to canvass. "We understand what needs to be done to get people out to caucus," said Harold Schaitberger, the union's national president, adding that he already has representatives on the ground and will have organizers in precincts across the state on caucus night.

For minority outreach, the campaign recently hired state Rep. Ras Smith, a member of the Legislature's Black Caucus. He plans to hold caucus training events and outreach for minority voters who may be first-time participants. The campaign also is making an aggressive play for Latino voters, with more than a dozen bilingual organizers, including deputy political director Claudia Chavez.

Beyond the complexities of caucus rules and the nuances of turnout, Biden is perhaps leaning most strongly on an Iowa precedent for moderation. His preferred model is 2004, when Howard Dean wowed progressives for much of 2003, only to watch John Kerry come from behind as voters embraced the establishment favorite as the ideal to take on Republican President George W. Bush. Kerry to Bush.

"History does indicate that Iowans start out with a very progressive-leaning focus early in the race but come home to a pragmatic, presidential choice at the end," said Matt Paul, who ran Hillary Clinton's successful 2016 Iowa campaign.



Democratic presidential candidate former Vice President Joe Biden talks with World War II veteran Art Greenquist of Galesburg, Ill., after an event, Saturday, Nov. 23, 2019, in Des Moines, Iowa. (AP Photo/Justin Hayworth)

Among Kerry's key backers in 2016: the firefighters' union.

Schaitberger smiled as he recalled a newspaper headline in late fall of 2003: "Kerry dead in the water."

Follow Jaffe and Barrow at <https://twitter.com/ajjaffe> and <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP>.

Iraqi officials: 2 protesters dead in more violence

SAMYA KULLAB and MURTADA FARAJ Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi officials say two protesters have been shot dead and at least 26 wounded in Baghdad and southern Iraq in continued unrest after Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi announced he intended to resign.

Iraq's Cabinet said in a statement it convened an emergency session Saturday to discuss Abdul-Mahdi's stepping down and approved the resignations of key staff. Experts said parliament must approve Abdul Mahdi's resignation for it to be valid.

Security and hospital officials say two protesters were killed and 15 wounded early Saturday by security forces who fired live rounds at them in the holy city of Najaf, in southern Iraq.

The officials said at least 11 protesters were wounded near Baghdad's Ahrar Bridge when security forces fired live ammunition and tear gas to disperse demonstrators.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.



Anti-government protesters gather on Rasheed Street during clashes with security forces in Baghdad, Iraq, Friday, Nov. 29, 2019. (AP Photo/

Hadi Mizban)

Impeachment may complicate 2020 for lonely Michigan moderate

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

KALAMAZOO, Mich. (AP) — For more than 30 years and under five presidents, Republican Rep. Fred Upton easily won reelection to his southwest Michigan House seat by promoting "common-sense values" and bipartisan accomplishments.

Republicans and even many Democrats have appreciated his moderate views and the way he hustled around the district on his days back home, meeting people at schools and senior homes and doing weekly radio interviews.

But then came the hyperpolarized politics of the Donald Trump era. Now no one, including Upton, really knows what the future holds for him heading into the 2020 election.

For officeholders who were proud of holding the middle ground and working with the opposing party, big questions loom about whether being a moderate is still a viable political position, or whether the impeachment storm sweeping U.S. politics will force everyone to accept a new identity — pro-Trump or anti-Trump — and await voters' judgment on it.

What happens to this ever-shrinking group of politicians — a dozen or so left after a rash of retirements or midterm losses — could make a big difference in which party emerges on top when the televised

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hearings have ended and the votes are counted next November. Some of the seats are in key swing states like Michigan, typically in suburban or fast-growing areas like Upton's. His largely white district stretches from tourist destinations along Lake Michigan and across rural, Republican communities to more diverse Kalamazoo, home to Western Michigan University.

"There's no joy in Mudville," Upton said in a September statement about the inquiry.

Upton walked a careful line in that statement and others since, calling developments around Trump's dealings with Ukraine disconcerting but saying the proceedings are preventing progress on other issues. He joined other Republicans last month in voting against holding impeachment hearings.

Democrats have made Upton one of their top targets for 2020 after he survived his closest election in decades last year. He faces a state lawmaker from Kalamazoo, the district's Democratic base in its most populous county, and activists from outside the state already are coming in to provide reinforcements for local Democrats. Meanwhile, questions swirl about whether Upton, 66, may just opt to retire.

His office said he was unavailable for an Associated Press interview, but he told a local TV station that he has never announced his intentions as early as a year out from Election Day.

So far this cycle, Upton has raised almost \$1 million for his campaign fund, roughly the same amount as at this same time two years ago. His top opponent, Democratic state Rep. Jon Hoadley, has raised about \$525,000 — double the amount Upton's 2018 opponent had raised at this point in the last cycle.

Mark Miller, a former chairman of the 6th Congressional District Democrats who now serves as a local township clerk, believes Upton has been trying carefully to avoid angering Trump supporters or the independent voters and Democrats who helped give him double-digit victory margins over the years.

"I don't know how long he can keep that high-wire act going," Miller said, particularly as polls show support for impeachment growing among independents as well as Democrats.

"What we've heard year after year from those voters is 'Good old Fred. He's a good guy. He's OK by me,'" Miller said, adding that a vote against impeachment should peel off a number of those independents. "The question is: Will it be enough?"

John Gregory, an Air Force veteran who works in the aerospace industry, said that for most of his career, Upton has been in touch with the district, but that he's seemed to shift toward the right. He said he knows others — veterans and non-veterans — who are concerned about what they're hearing during impeachment proceedings and want Upton to "put his oath of office above party politics."

"He was elected because I think a lot of people here feel he's a good moderate and represents the



FILE - In this Oct. 4, 2019 file photo, Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., is seen at U.S. Capitol in Washington. For more than 30 years and under five presidents, Upton has easily won re-election to his southwest Michigan House seat by touting "common-sense values" and bipartisan accomplishments. But then came the hyper-polarized politics of the Trump era. Now no one, including Upton, really knows what the future holds for him heading into the 2020 election. (Anna Moneymaker/Pool via AP)

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district, but there are a lot of questions right now," the 57-year-old said.

Republicans argue Upton — described by Vice President Joe Biden last year as "one of the finest guys" he's worked with — has delivered for the district and is a better fit for the area than Hoadley. The National Republican Campaign Committee has called Hoadley an "open socialist" whose support for the Green New Deal would hurt Michigan's auto industry.

Trump and Republicans hope that rather than hurt GOP candidates, the impeachment effort will help rally the president's base. They're targeting vulnerable Democrats with TV and digital ads and holding protests outside their offices.

Democrats running in places like Upton's district, meanwhile, are far more muted on the topic — at least for now.

If voters ask his views, Hoadley says, he tells them the inquiry is both appropriate and necessary.

But the 36-year-old — who likes to mention he was 3 when Upton was first elected to Congress — is more focused on introducing himself to voters he says are "hungry for change."

On the campaign trail, Hoadley says he's talking about climate change, water quality and Upton's role in the Trump administration's attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act, the Obama-era health law.

Upton helped write an amendment to the GOP's repeal plan that expanded its coverage for preexisting conditions. The measure, which drew some bipartisan support, died in the Senate.

Upton said it was an example of how he's stood up to Trump when he felt it necessary.

Marj Halperin, a leader of the Chicago chapter of Indivisible, a progressive organization, said Democrats' efforts on the ground are focused on issues other than impeachment.

Halperin was among more than a dozen people who traveled to southwest Michigan last Saturday to bolster the push in a key 2020 state. The group knocked on more than 600 doors to identify voters, provide information about Michigan's new law allowing absentee voting for all registered voters, and talk about Hoadley and Democratic statehouse candidates.

"We aren't going to sit back and wait to see how an impeachment hearing works out," Halperin said.

But Upton likely won't be able to avoid the impeachment spotlight for long. Democrats are practically giddy about a photo of Upton with Trump that House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy tweeted last month.

In it, McCarthy, Upton and Rep. Tom Emmer, chairman of the House Republicans' campaign arm, sit at a table with a beaming Trump in the president's Washington hotel, platters of shrimp cocktail before them. McCarthy's tweet read "Great night with the President. Republicans are united!"

The photo, and the timing of it, is likely to be featured prominently in campaign ads next year.

Democrats say it's a reminder that Upton isn't really the moderate he says he is. It's also another sign of the deep political divide, when sharing a table with your party's president could become an election liability.

"That picture really did say 1,000 words," Hoadley said.

Hong Kong elders, youths vow to keep up pro-democracy fight

By EILEEN NG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hundreds of silver-haired activists joined young Hong Kong protesters for a unity rally Saturday, vowing that their monthslong movement will not fade away until there is greater democracy in the Chinese territory.

The rally at a park downtown was among several peaceful gatherings by protesters this week to keep up pressure on the government amid a lull in violence following a local election victory by the pro-democracy bloc and the gaining of U.S. support for their cause.

A local boys' band belted out songs to tell protesters that "the whole Hong Kong is supporting you." Speakers reminded the crowd that it wasn't time to celebrate and that the fight for real autonomy must persist.

The protesters are angry over creeping Chinese interference in Hong Kong that they say is eroding their rights promised when the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

"The government wants us to desert the front-liners and young protesters, but we will stick with them,"

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rally organizer Tam Kwok-sun, 64, said to loud cheers from the crowd. "Sometimes their actions are violent and aggressive, but we are more unhappy with the government's behavior."

Since the unrest broke out in June, protesters have disrupted traffic, smashed public facilities and pro-China shops, and hurled gasoline bombs in pitched battles with riot police who have responded with volleys of tear gas and water cannons.

The occupation of several universities by protesters earlier this month after fiery clashes with police capped one of the most violent chapters in the turmoil, which has contributed to the city's first recession in a decade.

Hong Kong's leader, Carrie Lam, has appealed for the current calm to continue but has refused to bow to protesters' demands, which include free elections for her post and the legislature as well as an independent probe into alleged police brutality.

"It's still a very early stage of the revolution," a masked activist, who gave her name as Mai, 26, said Saturday. "People are tired physically and mentally, so we are waiting for the right moment for a fightback."

Hong Kong police have arrested 5,890 people as a result of the protests.

"The government is still stubborn. Every one of us, young and old, must contribute in our own way. The movement will not stop," a woman, 63, who identified herself as Mrs. Tam, said as she distributed Japanese honey candies to slogan-chanting young activists at the park.

Protesters this week have urged Britain and other countries to follow U.S. footsteps in legislating laws to support its cause.

A new U.S. law prescribes sanctions on officials found guilty of human rights abuses and requires an annual review of a special trade status for Hong Kong. Another bans the export of certain nonlethal munitions to Hong Kong police.

China has warned of strong countermeasures and Hong Kong's government has slammed the U.S. move as unwarranted meddling in its affairs.

Chinese state media reported Saturday that Lee Henley, also identified as Hu Xiang and a citizen of an unidentified foreign country, was arrested on suspicion of "funding activities threatening China's national security, including allegedly conspiring with foreign forces to support Hong Kong riots."

The reports also said a Taiwanese man, Lee Meng Chu, was held for "allegedly spying and leaking China's national secrets" and backing the Hong Kong protests. Beijing had confirmed earlier that Lee was held after he went missing during a trip to mainland China in August, but didn't give details.

In August, a British Consulate employee in Hong Kong was arrested during a trip to the mainland and was freed 15 days later after confessing to soliciting prostitution. But Simon Cheng says it was a forced confession and that he was tortured by Chinese police and pressed for information about Hong Kong's



A protester waves a flag reading "Liberate Hong Kong, the Revolution of Our Times" during a rally for students and elderly pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong, Saturday, Nov. 30, 2019. Hundreds of Hong Kong pro-democracy activists rallied Friday outside the British Consulate, urging the city's former colonial ruler to emulate the U.S. and take concrete actions to support their cause, as police ended a blockade of a university campus after 12 days. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

activists.

More rallies are being planned in Hong Kong for Sunday, including an anti-tear gas protest and a gratitude march to the U.S. Consulate.

Dutch police continue hunt for attacker who stabbed 3

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press



Dutch police secure a shopping street after a stabbing incident in the center of The Hague, Netherlands, Friday, Nov. 29, 2019. Dutch police say multiple people have been injured in a stabbing incident in The Hague's main shopping street. (AP Photo/Phil Nijhuis)

in London, killing two, before he was fatally shot by officers. Police are treating it as a terrorist attack.

Dutch police say the motive for the stabbing in The Hague remains unknown. "We are keeping all scenarios open," their statement said.

The stabbing occurred around 7:45 p.m. in an area teeming with shoppers and close to the city's most popular nightlife centers.

Police cordoned off the area until deep into the night as forensics experts combed the street for clues. The street was opened again Saturday.

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Dutch police on Saturday continued looking for an attacker who stabbed three teens on a street in The Hague that was crowded with Black Friday shoppers.

The victims, two 15-year-old girls and a 13-year-old boy, were treated in a hospital and released late Friday. Police said in a statement that they did not know one another.

The victims have spoken to detectives.

"We are using all our available means — visible and unseen — to find the suspect in this stabbing as soon as possible," police said in a statement, as they appealed again for witnesses.

That included studying video footage from the area, where many surveillance cameras are located.

The attack in the Netherlands came hours after a man wearing a fake explosive vest stabbed several people

Vietnam receives last of 39 remains of trafficking victims

By HAU DINH Associated Press

DO THANH, Vietnam (AP) — The last remains of the 39 Vietnamese who died while being smuggled in a truck to England last month were repatriated to their home country on Saturday.

Photos by the official Vietnam News Agency showed the arrival at the Hanoi airport of 16 bodies and seven urns, which had been flown from London.

They were loaded into ambulances on a foggy morning for a trip to their hometowns in several provinces in northern and central Vietnam.

The bodies were found Oct. 23 in the English town of Grays, east of London. Police said the victims were aged between 15 and 44. While no cause of death has been officially established, the circumstances

suggested asphyxiation.

The 31 men and eight women are believed to have paid human traffickers for their clandestine transit into England. Several suspects have been arrested in the U.K. and Vietnam.

Shortly after noon on Saturday, the body of one victim, 19-year-old Bui Thi Nhung, arrived at Phu Tang church in the village of Do Thanh.

More than 100 Catholic villagers and family members waited for the body's arrival at a highway leading to the village. They held white flowers, standing by the side of the road as the ambulance carrying the body passed.

After 15 minutes at the church, the mourners moved to Nhung's home nearby. One of Nhung's nieces held her portrait to lead the procession.

Nhung's coffin was placed in the middle of the living room of the one-story house, with the family weeping by the sides. Relatives and neighbors came into the home to place incense.

A funeral will be held for Nhung at her home on Sunday, followed by a ceremony at the church before the burial.

An initial batch of 16 bodies were handed over to their families on Wednesday, and funerals were held the following day.

The impoverished villages the victims hailed from have largely been left out of the economic development that has turned urban centers in Vietnam such as Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi into boom towns, sending many on a risky journey looking for a better life abroad.



Relatives of Bui Thi Nhung weep next to Nhung's casket at the family home on Saturday, Nov. 30, 2019 in the village of Do Thanh, Vietnam. The body of 19-year old Nhung was among the last remains of the 39 Vietnamese who died while being smuggled in a truck to England last month that were repatriated to their home country on Saturday. (AP Photo/Hau Dinh)

Peru's Keiko Fujimori leaves prison after top court ruling

By MAURICIO MUNOZ Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Supporters cheered late Friday as once-powerful opposition leader and two-time Peruvian presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori left the prison where she had been held while being investigated for alleged corruption. Peru's Constitutional Tribunal approved her release.

Smiling broadly, the daughter of jailed ex-President Alberto Fujimori walked out of the women's prison in the Lima district of Chorrillos and was handed a bouquet of roses by her husband, Mark Villanella, who had been on a hunger strike demanding her release.

Keiko Fujimori called her 13-month prison stay the "most painful time of my life, so the first thing I want to do now that I am on the street is thank God for giving me the strength to resist."

She was freed by the Constitutional Tribunal in 4-3 vote earlier this week. The magistrates noted the decision on a habeas corpus request does not constitute a judgment on her guilt or innocence with regards to accusations she accepted money from Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht. Fujimori could still be returned to a cell.

Dozens of riot police were present in case of protests by opponents who have called her release another

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blow for entrenched impunity for the corrupt in the South American country. But most of the people outside the prison were her supporters.

"The Constitutional Tribunal has corrected a great damage done to us in a process filled with abuses and arbitrariness," Fujimori said.

The 44-year-old, who was jailed in October 2018, faces a radically different political landscape outside of prison.

Her Popular Force party held a majority in congress until September, when President Martín Vizcarra dissolved the legislature in a popular move he described as necessary to uproot corruption. The conservative Popular Force will participate in January legislative elections, but Fujimori is not expected to be a candidate and analysts predict that her party could fare poorly in the voting.

As party leader, Fujimori helped fuel the impeachment of former President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski for lying about his ties with Odebrecht. But now Fujimori herself has been ensnared by a corruption scandal that has toppled political and businesses leaders around Latin America.

Corruption allegations have hit all of Peru's presidents between 2001 and 2016.

Prosecutors accuse Fujimori of laundering \$1.2 million provided by Odebrecht for her 2011 and 2016 presidential campaigns. They opened an investigation into the campaigns after seeing a note written by Marcelo Odebrecht, head of the Brazilian mega-company, on his cellphone that said: "increase Keiko to 500 and pay a visit."

Fujimori denies the accusations against her and says prosecutors and Peru's election body have received Popular Force's accounting books for inspection.

Her jailing capped a striking downfall for a politician who went from presidential daughter, to powerful opposition leader, to within a hair's breadth of the presidency.

Fujimori's father, a strongman who governed Peru from 1990 to 2000, remains a polarizing figure. Some Peruvians praise him for defeating Maoist Shining Path guerrillas and resurrecting a devastated economy, while others detest him for human rights violations. He is serving a 25-year sentence for human rights abuses and corruption.

She tried to follow in her father's presidential footsteps and forge a gentler, kinder version of the movement known as "Fujimorismo."

She finished second in the 2011 election and five years later lost in a razor-thin vote, coming within less than half a percentage point of defeating Kuczynski.



Keiko Fujimori, right, is embraced by her husband Mark Vito Villanela after she was released from Santa Mónica women's prison in Lima, Peru, Friday, Nov. 29, 2019. The Constitutional Tribunal narrowly approved a habeas corpus request to free Fujimori from detention while she is investigated for alleged accusations she accepted money from Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht. (AP Photo/Martin Mejia)

UK police: Bridge attacker had been jailed for terror crimes

By JILL LAWLESS and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press



A person is assisted after falling when Police evacuated people from Borough Market on the south side of London Bridge in London, Friday, Nov. 29, 2019. British police say several people have stabbed near to London Bridge, and a man has been detained. The news came after witnesses reported hearing gunshots in the area. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein)

victed in 2012 of terrorism offenses and released in December 2018 "on license," which means he had to meet certain conditions or face recall to prison. Several British media outlets reported that he was wearing an electronic ankle bracelet.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he had "long argued" that it was a "mistake to allow serious and violent criminals to come out of prison early."

"It is very important that we get out of that habit and that we enforce the appropriate sentences for dangerous criminals, especially for terrorists, that I think the public will want to see," he said.

Johnson, who chaired a meeting of the government's COBRA emergency committee late Friday, said more police would be patrolling the streets in the coming days "for reassurance purposes." Police said they were treating the stabbings as a terrorist attack and were not actively looking for any other suspects.

The violence erupted less than two weeks before Britain holds a national election Dec. 12. The main political parties temporarily suspended campaigning in London as a mark of respect.

Metropolitan Police Chief Cressida Dick said officers were called just before 2 p.m. to Fishmongers' Hall, a conference venue at the north end of London Bridge. The pedestrian and vehicle bridge links the city's business district with the south bank of the River Thames.

Learning Together, a Cambridge University-backed prison education program, was holding a conference there Friday. Cambridge Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope said he was "devastated to learn that today's hateful attack on London Bridge may have been targeted at staff, students and alumni attending an event organized by the University of Cambridge's Institute of Criminology."

Minutes after the stabbings, witnesses saw a man with a knife being wrestled to the ground by members of the public on the bridge before officers shot him dead.

Video images showed people spraying the fleeing suspect with a fire extinguisher, while another passer-

LONDON (AP) — A man imprisoned six years for terrorism offenses before his release last year stabbed several people in London on Friday, two fatally, before being tackled by members of the public and then fatally shot by officers on London Bridge.

Neil Basu, London's police counter-terrorism head, said 28-year-old Usman Khan was attending a program that works to educate prisoners when he launched the attack, killing a man and a woman and injuring three others just yards from the site of a deadly 2017 van and knife rampage. Basu said the suspect appeared to be wearing a bomb vest but it turned out to be "a hoax explosive device."

Health officials said one of the injured was in critical but stable condition, one was stable and the third had less serious injuries.

The attack raises difficult questions for Britain's government and security services. Police said Khan was con-

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by held what appeared to be a long white stick. Witness Amy Coop, who was at the Fishmongers' Hall, said it was a narwhal tusk the man had grabbed from a wall before going to confront the attacker.

One video posted on social media showed two men struggling on the bridge before police pulled a man in civilian clothes off a black-clad man on the ground. Gunshots followed. Another depicted a man in suit and overcoat holding a long knife that apparently had been taken from the attacker.

Karen Bosch, who was on a bus crossing the bridge, said she saw police "wrestling with one tall, bearded man" and then heard "gunshots, two loud pops."

She said the man "pulled his coat back which showed that he had some sort of vest underneath, whether it's a stab vest, or some sort of explosive vest, the police then really quickly moved backwards, away."

Another bus passenger, Amanda Hunter, told the BBC that the vehicle "all of a sudden stopped and there was commotion and I looked out the window and I just saw these three police officers going over to a man."

"It seemed like there was something in his hand, I'm not 100% sure, but then one of the police officers shot him."

Police confirmed that the man died at the scene.

Mayor Sadiq Khan praised the "breathtaking heroism of members of the public who literally ran towards danger not knowing what confronted him."

"They are the best of us," Khan said.

Cars and buses on the busy bridge stood abandoned after the shooting, with a white truck stopped diagonally across the lanes. Video footage showed police pointing guns at the truck before moving to check its container.

London Bridge station, one of the city's busiest rail hubs, was closed for several hours after the attack.

Scores of police, some armed with submachine guns, ushered office workers and tourists out of the area packed with office buildings, banks, restaurants and bars. Staff in nearby office blocks were told to stay inside.

As police cleared the streets, staff in shops and restaurants ushered customers into storerooms and basements. Some had been through similar traumatic events in June 2017, when eight people died in the van and knife attack launched by three people inspired by the Islamic State group. The attackers ran down people on the bridge, killing two, before fatally stabbing several people in nearby Borough Market.

Political leaders expressed shock and sorrow at Friday's attack.

"We will not be cowed by those who threaten us," Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said. "We must and we will stand together to reject hatred and division."

Both Labour and the Conservatives suspended campaigning in the city after the attack and the prime minister was also canceling political events for Saturday.

Security officials earlier this month downgraded Britain's terrorism threat level from "severe" to "substantial," which means an attack is seen as "likely" rather than "highly likely." The assessment was made by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, an independent expert body that evaluates intelligence, terrorist capability and intentions.

The U.K.'s terror threat was last listed as "substantial" in August 2014; since then it has held steady at "severe," briefly rising to "critical" in May and September 2017.

Trump to decide if he wants lawyers at impeachment hearings

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee asked President Donald Trump on Friday to say whether he'll send his attorneys to participate in impeachment proceedings before the panel.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler also is asking Republicans on his committee which witnesses they plan to ask permission to subpoena.

The letters from the New York Democrat came as the House impeachment probe enters a new phase with a hearing next week on whether Trump's actions might constitute impeachable offenses.

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Two weeks of Intelligence Committee hearings produced a mountain of testimony but didn't seem to move the needle on Capitol Hill, where not a single House Republican supported establishing the chamber's impeachment process.

Nadler instructed Trump and top panel Republican Doug Collins of Georgia to respond by the end of next week. The Judiciary Committee meets Wednesday in an informational hearing to examine the "constitutional grounds for presidential impeachment" and could move some time after that to hearings where witnesses testify about Trump's actions with Ukraine.

Trump has labeled the proceeding by House Democrats a sham, in part because he could not have his lawyers cross-examine intelligence committee witnesses during hearings and depositions.

The intelligence panel is slated to issue a report of its findings next week that are intended to form the basis of hearings at the Judiciary Committee, which would be responsible for drafting any articles of impeachment for a vote by the full House.

The panel can also seek further testimony. Nadler can deny witnesses sought by Republicans, who are likely to want subpoenas compelling testimony from Hunter Biden and the anonymous intelligence community whistleblower whose complaint sparked the impeachment proceedings.

At issue in the impeachment probe is whether Trump abused his office by pressing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to investigate the Bidens and baseless allegations that Ukraine interfered with the 2016 election.

Hunter Biden served on the board of a Ukrainian energy company when his father, then-Vice President Joe Biden, had some responsibility for the Obama administration's Ukraine policy.

Earlier scrutiny by Ukrainians uncovered no wrongdoing by the Bidens, but Trump, in July, asked Zelenskyy for an investigation as a "favor," while holding up military aid to that country for several months.



President Donald Trump gives thumbs up as he steps off Air Force One, accompanied by Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., at the Palm Beach International Airport, Friday, Nov. 29, 2019, in West Palm Beach, Fla. Trump is returning from a trip to visit the troops in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

Brazil's president criticizes DiCaprio over Amazon fires

By **DIANE JEANTET** Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Without offering proof, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Friday said actor Leonardo DiCaprio had funded nonprofit groups that he claimed are partly responsible for fires in the Amazon this year.

Bolsonaro's remarks about the American actor were part of a wider government campaign against environmental nonprofit groups operating in Brazil.

"DiCaprio is a cool guy, isn't he? Giving money to set the Amazon on fire," the president said to supporters in Brasilia.

DiCaprio's environmental organization Earth Alliance has pledged \$5 million to help protect the Amazon after a surge in fires destroyed large parts of the rainforest in July and August. But the actor and committed

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Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro flashes a thumbs up as he greets supporters after attending a Changing of the Guard at the Planalto Presidential Palace, in Brasilia, Brazil, Thursday, Nov. 28, 2019. (AP Photo/Eraldo Peres)

environmentalist said in a statement sent to The Associated Press Friday his group had not funded any of the two nonprofits named by investigators so far.

"While worthy of support, we did not fund the organizations targeted," the statement read. "The future of these irreplaceable ecosystems is at stake and I am proud to stand with the groups protecting them."

Some members of Bolsonaro's administration argue that civil society groups and environmental laws hinder economic development in the region.

Bolsonaro and Environment Minister Ricardo Salles are promoting development in some protected natural areas, even as intentional fires and deforestation in the Amazon have reached levels not seen in a decade.

The criticism of DiCaprio and environmental activists follows a police raid

at the headquarters of two nonprofit groups in the Amazonian state of Para earlier this week. Local police also arrested four volunteer firefighters and say they are investigating them for allegedly igniting fires to obtain funding from sympathetic donors.

The volunteer firefighters denied any wrongdoing and a judge ordered their release.

Federal prosecutors say their investigations point to land-grabbers as primary suspects for fires in the area, not nonprofits or firefighters.

Cattle ranchers, farmers and illegal loggers have long used fire to clear land in the Amazon.

This is not the first time Brazil's president has suggested, without evidence, that nonprofit groups are setting fires in the Amazon, or questioned warnings about climate change.

In August, in the midst of an international outcry over the Amazon fires, Bolsonaro blamed the "information war going on in the world against Brazil" and fired the head of the governmental space research institute that monitors deforestation.

Bolsonaro accused the institute's president, Ricardo Galvão, of manipulating deforestation data to make his administration look bad.

But when an annual deforestation report released in November, three months after the incident, confirmed a double-digit percent uptick in deforestation, the government acknowledged that deforestation had increased year-on-year.

Flames coach Bill Peters quits; accused of slurs, abuse

By JOHN WAWROW and STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writers

Bill Peters resigned as coach of the Calgary Flames after it was disclosed he directed racist slurs at a Nigerian-born player in the minors a decade ago and kicked and punched players behind the bench during his recent time with Carolina.

General manager Brad Treliving said he received a resignation letter from Peters on Friday that wraps up a weeklong investigation into the veteran coach's behavior. He refused to discuss whether Peters would continue to be paid, saying only, "He's no longer with the organization."

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"We consider the matter closed," Treliving said at a news conference in Calgary. "It's been a difficult time. But we are going to move forward."

Peters did not immediately respond to a text. He was in the second season of a three-year contract.

Assistant Geoff Ward takes over as interim coach with the Flames 12-12-4 and in ninth place in the Western Conference.

Peters has not been on the ice or behind the bench with his team since former player Akim Aliu leveled the accusations of racist slurs Monday night on Twitter.

Treliving said he had been in communication with the NHL this week. The league said Friday its review is ongoing and is scheduled to meet with Aliu and others in the coming days.

Peters went from helping the Flames win 50 games and the Pacific Division title in his first season to perhaps having his career and future in the sport come to an end over questions about his coaching methods.

Asked if he thought Peters would coach hockey again, Treliving said he'd rather not speculate.

The allegations about Peters began during Calgary's 2-1 overtime loss at Pittsburgh on Monday.

Aliu alleged Peters "dropped the N bomb several times towards me in the dressing room in my rookie year because he didn't like my choice of music." It happened during the 2009-10 season while the two were with the Chicago Blackhawks' top minor league affiliate in Rockford, Illinois.

"That type of behavior just has no place," Treliving said Friday.

The allegations led to stern rebukes from team officials and the NHL even before they concluded their investigations.

Treliving called the allegations "repulsive" and said, "This is subject matter that has no place in our organization." The NHL called the alleged behavior "repugnant and unacceptable."

In a letter addressed to Treliving on Wednesday, Peters said he regretted such conduct and apologized to anyone harmed by it. Aliu called Peters' statement "misleading, insincere and concerning."

Flames forward Matthew Tkachuk said news of Peters' resignation was expected.

"I think that it was most likely the best outcome for what the team had put into their investigation and with the allegations and everything," Tkachuk said. "I mean this investigation took however many days and I felt they did a good job of it."

Flames captain Mark Giordano said the past four days have been tough and the only escape for the players was on the ice.

"At the end of the day all we can do as players is move forward. We know in society there's no place for that and the decision, however they came to it, was made," he said. "I think they did a good job."



FILE - In this April 23, 2018, file photo, new Calgary Flames NHL hockey team head coach Bill Peters speaks to the media in Calgary, Alberta. Calgary Flames general manager Brad Treliving said the team is looking into an accusation that head coach Bill Peters directed racial slurs toward a Nigerian-born hockey player a decade ago in the minor leagues, then arranged for the player's demotion when he complained. Akim Aliu tweeted Monday, Nov. 25, 2019, that Peters "dropped the N bomb several times towards me in the dressing room in my rookie year because he didn't like my choice of music." (Jeff McIntosh/The

Canadian Press via AP, File)

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Earlier this week, Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour confirmed Peters physically abused his players behind the bench during his four years in Carolina. Brind'Amour, a member of Peters' staff, said "for sure that happened" in backing former Hurricanes defenseman Michal Jordan saying the coach kicked him and punched other players.

Brind'Amour said Peters' abuse stopped after players and support staff voiced their concerns to team officials. Peters coached the Hurricanes from 2014-2018.

Treliving oversaw the investigation this week and spoke to Aliu at least twice, among others.

Aliu acknowledged he rebelled against Peters and said the coach eventually asked Blackhawks executives John McDonough and Stan Bowman to send him to a lower minor league level.

The Blackhawks said nothing had previously been brought to their attention regarding Peters and Aliu before Monday. The team added it had no effect on any player personnel decisions involving Aliu.

The 54-year-old Peters made the jump to Rockford after leading the Western Hockey League's Spokane Chiefs to a Memorial Cup championship in 2008.

Aliu played under Peters during the 2008-09 and 2009-10 seasons. He was demoted to the Toledo Wall-eye of the ECHL during the 2009-10 season. Aliu, who was born in Africa but raised in the Ukraine and Canada, later played seven NHL games over two seasons with Calgary.

The 30-year-old Aliu has had a transient career since being selected by Chicago in the second round of the 2007 draft.

He's not playing this season after appearing in 14 games with Orlando of the ECHL last season. The Solar Bears were Aliu's 11th team over a six-year span, which included stops in Russia, Sweden and Slovakia.

Aliu's tweets came after reports surfaced of how poorly Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock dealt with his players in Toronto before he was fired several days ago. Forward Mitch Marner confirmed that during his rookie season Babcock asked him to rank Maple Leafs players in order of how hard they worked. Babcock then shared Marner's list with numerous players.

Aliu noted Peters was Babcock's protege.

"For me it really hasn't sunk in yet and it's going to take a little bit of time," Ward said after Calgary's first home practice since the controversy began. "I'm still reeling from it myself. Our focus right now is trying to prepare to play the Ottawa Senators and all the other stuff for us has to stay in the background."

With files from The Canadian Press.

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

Elite US climber Gobright dies rappelling down rock face

By MARK STEVENSON and STEFANIE DAZIO undefined

MEXICO CITY (AP) — California rock climber Brad Gobright reportedly reached the top of a highly challenging rock face in northern Mexico and was rappelling down with a companion when he fell to his death.

Climber Aidan Jacobson of Phoenix, Arizona, told Outside magazine he was with Gobright, and said they had just performed an ascent of the Sendero Luminoso route in the El Potrero Chico area near the northern city of Monterrey. Jacobson also fell, but a shorter distance, after something went wrong in the "simul-rappelling" descent, the magazine said.

The technique involves two climbers balancing each other's weight off an anchor point. In online forums, many climbers described the technique as difficult and potentially dangerous.

Civil defense officials in Nuevo Leon state said Gobright, 31, fell about 300 meters (328 yards) to his death on Wednesday. The magazine account described the fall as 600 feet (about 200 meters). Jacobson suffered minor injuries, officials said.

Gobright's body was recovered Thursday. The publication Rock and Ice described Gobright as "one of the most accomplished free solo climbers in the world."

Friends on Friday described him as a dedicated climber who would travel the West Coast, living out of

his Honda Civic, following the weather on a diet of gas station food.

"In some ways, I think he was such a fixture of the climbing community and such a big character on the scene, I feel like I've always known him," said his friend Alex Honnold, who was the first person to ascend Yosemite National Park's granite wall known as El Capitan without ropes or safety gear.

"He spent almost every day of his life doing exactly what he wanted to be doing."

Jacobson said the pair might not have evened out the length of the 80-meter (88-yard) rope between them, to ensure each had the same amount, because Gobreight's end was apparently tangled in some bushes near a ledge below them.

That might have caused Gobreight to essentially run out of rope; without the balancing weight of the other climber, both would fall. Jacobson fell through some vegetation and onto a ledge they were aiming for, injuring his ankle.

The duo did not tie knots at the end of the rope that would have prevented Gobreight from rappelling off the end of it, Jacobson told Outside magazine.

Honnold said he'd often climb with Gobreight as they discussed weighty topics such as the rise of China and would trade books about the evolution of humankind.

"He was just interested in the world," Honnold said.

Samuel Crossley, a climber and photographer, said he first met Gobreight about three years ago while filming "Safety Third," a film chronicling Gobreight's life as a free solo climber.

Crossley said Gobreight took the photographer's needs and perspective into his climbs, taking direction well so they could make good photographs during sunrise or sunset that would become some of Crossley's favorites.

Despite being an elite climber, Crossley said Gobreight enjoyed living out of his sedan, noting other elite climbers lived out of vans.

"Brad was Brad, that was the beauty of it," Crossley said. When you're hanging out with Brad, you're typically climbing and having a good time."

Dazio reported from Los Angeles.



In this Wednesday, Nov. 27, 2019 handout photo released by Nuevo Leon State Civil Defense Agency, survivor Aidan Jacobson sits inside an ambulance after he was rescued after falling from the El Potrero Chico peak in Hidalgo, Mexico. Jacobson was climbing with California free solo climber Brad Gobreight who died in the fall, civil defense officials in northern Mexico reported Thursday. (Nuevo Leon

State Civil Defense Agency via AP)

Cardinals' Josh Shaw suspended for betting on NFL games

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

Arizona Cardinals cornerback Josh Shaw has been suspended through at least the end of the 2020 season for betting on NFL games on multiple occasions this season, the first time in more than 35 years a player has been banned for gambling.

The little-known Shaw hasn't played for the Cardinals this season after being placed on injured reserve following an injury during the preseason.

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His suspension comes as the NFL — and other U.S. sports leagues — enter an era when legal sports gambling is spreading across the country and gaining mainstream acceptance. For pro sports to coexist with gambling, they must avoid the scandal that would arise from betting by players and others who can directly affect the outcome of games.

“The continued success of the NFL depends directly on each of us doing everything necessary to safeguard the integrity of the game and the reputations of all who participate in the league. At the core of this responsibility is the longstanding principle that betting on NFL games, or on any element of a game, puts at risk the integrity of the game, damages public confidence in the NFL, and is forbidden under all circumstances,” Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a statement. “If you work in the NFL in any capacity, you may not bet on NFL football.”

The league announced the suspension Friday. Shaw was banned for at least the rest of this season and the entire 2020 season. He can petition for reinstatement on Feb. 15, 2021.

According to the NFL, a league investigation found no evidence that Shaw used inside information or compromised any games. Shaw hasn't been in uniform since he suffered a shoulder injury in the pre-season opener.

The league also said it found no evidence that teammates, coaches or other players were aware of Shaw betting on games.

The Cardinals didn't comment on the suspension, referring to the NFL's statement.

The NFL did not say where Shaw placed his bets. Sports betting is now legal in 13 states after a Supreme Court decision in 2018 struck down the federal law that had limited full-scale legal sports betting to Nevada. The NFL has long been opposed to the expansion of legal gambling but since the decision has softened its stance and entered into limited partnerships with sportsbook operators.

The league also approved the Oakland Raiders' move to the gambling mecca of Las Vegas, where the franchise will play starting in 2020.

Suspensions of NFL players for betting are rare. The highest-profile case was in 1963 when Paul Hornung of the Green Bay Packers and Alex Karras of the Detroit Lions were banned for the entire season. Both were reinstated the following season and Hornung went on to make the Hall of Fame.

In the most recent case, Baltimore Colts quarterback Art Schlichter was suspended in 1983 for betting on NFL games and other sporting events. He, too, was reinstated the following year.

The 27-year-old Shaw was a fourth-round draft pick by the Cincinnati Bengals out of USC in 2015. He spent three seasons with Cincinnati — starting 12 games in 2016 — and was cut at the start of last season. He played four games last year for Kansas City and four games for Tampa Bay.



FILE - In this July 30, 2019, file photo, Arizona Cardinals' Josh Shaw runs drills during the teams' NFL football training camp in Glendale, Ariz. Shaw has been suspended indefinitely for betting on NFL games on multiple occasions this season, the first time in more than 35 years a player has been banned for gambling. He has now been suspended through at least the end of the 2020 season. The league announced the suspension on Friday, Nov. 29, 2019. (AP Photo/Matt York, File)

Shaw was signed by the Cardinals in the offseason to a one-year deal. If he wants to appeal his suspension, he has three days to file notice with the league.

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

Head start on holiday deals tempers Black Friday frenzy

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Retail Writers



People shop at Macy's department store during Black Friday shopping, Friday Nov. 29, 2019, in New York. Black Friday shoppers fought for parking spots and traveled cross-state to their favorite malls, kicking off a shortened shopping season that intensified the mad scramble between Thanksgiving and Christmas. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

NEW YORK (AP) — Black Friday enthusiasts woke up before dawn and traveled cross-state to their favorite malls in search of hot deals, kicking off a shortened shopping season that intensified the scramble between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

But the ever-growing popularity of online shopping and holiday discounts that started weeks earlier dampened the frenzy. This year, more people got a head start on gift-hunting, lured by deals from retailers trying to compensate for the shorter season.

The shopping season is the shortest since 2013 because Thanksgiving fell on the last Thursday in November — the latest possible date it could be.

Shoppers up since the wee hours slept in chairs at Nashville's Opry Mills mall, known for its outlet stores. Outside, deal-seekers were still fighting for parking spots by midmorning.

Haley Wright left Alabama at 4 a.m. to arrive at the Tennessee mall by 7 a.m. She makes the annual trip because she says the stores offer better deals and a more fun environment than the shops back home.

"I let my husband do the online shopping; I do Black Friday," she said.

The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, baked the shorter season into its forecast, but it says the real drivers will be the job market. It forecasts that holiday sales will rise between 3.8% and 4.2%, an increase from the disappointing 2.1% growth in the November and December 2018 period that came well short of the group's prediction.

NRF expects online and catalog sales, which are included in the total, to increase between 11% and 14% for the holiday period.

Last year's holiday sales were hurt by turmoil over the White House trade policy with China and a delay of nearly a month in data collection because of a government shutdown.

Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst at market research firm NPD Group Inc., says he doesn't believe a shorter season will affect overall sales, but early discounts will likely diminish Black Friday's impact. In terms of the busiest day of the year, it will be a toss-up between Black Friday and the last Saturday before Christmas.

"We still have the same amount of money to spend regardless of whether the season is longer or shorter," he said.

More than half of consumers started their holiday shopping early this year, and nearly a quarter of purchases have already been made, according to the annual survey released by the NRF and Prosper

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Insights & Analytics.

Kara Lopez and Jeremy Samora arrived at Denver's Cherry Creek Shopping Center as soon as it opened Friday to snag deals on candles and lotions at Bath & Body Works.

A half-hour later, they sat with their purchases sharing a thermos of hot chocolate, a tradition Lopez started years ago when she had to wait in line for the store to open and the first shoppers inside got gifts like stuffed animals. It's more relaxed these days, but Lopez likes it that way.

"I like the mall but not when it's full of people," she said.

Adobe Analytics predicts a loss of \$1 billion in online revenue from a shortened season. Still, it expects online sales will reach \$143.7 billion, up 14.1% from last year's holiday season.

Adobe Analytics said Thanksgiving Day set records for online shopping. Consumers spent \$4.2 billion on Thanksgiving, a 14.5% increase from the holiday a year ago. Black Friday was on track to hit \$7.4 billion.

As online sales surged, some retailers including Costco.com and H&M grappled with brief outages, according to technology company Catchpoint.

Target reported Friday that 1 million more customers used its app to shop Black Friday deals compared with last year. The discounter said customers bought big ticket items like TVs, Apple iPads and Apple Watches.

Walmart worked to ease long lines with technology allowing shoppers to check out with sales associates in the aisles. The retail giant said its most popular deals included TVs, Apple AirPods and "Frozen" toys.

In Europe, though, Black Friday drew a backlash from activists, politicians and even consumers who criticized the U.S. shopping phenomenon as capitalism run amok. Climate demonstrators blocked a shopping mall near Paris and gathered in front of Amazon's headquarters. Workers at Amazon in Germany went on strike for better pay. Some French lawmakers called for banning Black Friday altogether.

In the U.S., attention Friday turned to malls, which are fighting for traffic as online shopping grows.

At Mall of America, the country's largest shopping mall, crowds were expected to exceed the 240,000 count on Black Friday from a year ago, said Jill Renslow, senior vice president at the Bloomington, Minnesota-based mall.

Maria Mainville, a spokesman at Taubman Centers, which operates a little over 20 malls in the U.S., says that its centers reported strong customer traffic since earlier this week. That's different from last year when Black Friday and Thanksgiving drew the majority of the crowds for the period.

At some malls, some shoppers were surprised at the relatively thin crowds.

Two Bath & Body Works saleswomen wearing reindeer antler headbands shouted about promotions at a trickle of shoppers walking through Newport Centre in Jersey City, New Jersey.

"It looks empty for Black Friday," said Latoya Robinson, a student who lives in New York and planned to stop by Forever 21 and Macy's to shop for herself.

In Kansas, Kassi Adams and her husband drove 50 miles (80 kilometers) to Town East Mall in Wichita, even though the couple were nearly done with their holiday shopping. They were surprised to see how few people were there and even boasted about getting a choice parking spot.

"There is really not much of a crowd to fight," she said.

AP writers Joseph Pisani in Jersey City, New Jersey, Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee, Roxana Hegeman in Wichita, Kansas, Colleen Slevin in Denver contributed to this story.

Who made the new drapes? It's among high court's mysteries

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The lack of transparency at the Supreme Court begins with the heavy red drapes that frame the courtroom on all sides. The court replaced the drapes this summer, but would not reveal the name of the company that did the work.

The Supreme Court's role in a bitterly divided Washington and nation may be more important than ever, yet basic details about how the court operates remain obscured. The court is not subject to the federal

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Freedom of Information Act and the justices are not bound by most ethics rules that apply to all other federal judges.

Its arguments aren't televised. The justices decide for themselves how much to tell the public about travel plans, speaking engagements or health issues. They typically don't disclose their reasoning when they decide to sit out cases that may pose conflicts of interest. And beyond the secrecy surrounding the drapes are other questions about the building, including which groups have been allowed to use the taxpayer-funded structure for after-hours parties.

These developments have led to a raft of reform proposals, many with scant chance of success. There are calls for the justices to adopt an ethics code, enhance disclosure of travel and other gifts and allow broader access to court proceedings.

"We're at a moment when trust in American institutions is declining across the board and the court itself has taken a hit in that trust. It's important for the court to be a leader on ethics," said Alicia Bannon, managing director of the democracy program at New York University's Brennan Center. She is co-author of a report advocating for a Supreme Court code of ethics, explanations of decisions to sit out cases and enhanced travel and gift disclosures.

The justices have generally opposed the changes. Several have said over the years that the court is the most transparent branch of government because their written opinions explain the decisions they have reached and why, while dissents often point out in exacting detail where one side believes the other has gone wrong.

The majestic building at the top of Capitol Hill is first and foremost a public office building, open to the public on weekdays. But it also serves as a coveted, after-hours event space, used 30 to 50 times a year by private groups, if they are sponsored by a justice.

One of those groups is the conservative Federalist Society, which held a reception in July 2018 that was attended by Justice Samuel Alito. The group posted photos from the event on its Facebook page.

The court would not provide a comprehensive list of groups, events or sponsoring justices. "The court does not maintain public records of organizations holding events," spokeswoman Kathy Arberg said. But groups that use the building typically have a connection to the court or the law, and they pay up to \$6,000 for an event, Arberg said.

The nine justices are in high demand as speakers around the country because they issue momentous rulings that touch all corners of American society. But they decide when to provide advance word of their speaking engagements and sometimes let sponsoring organizations close their talks to news coverage.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh's recent Federalist Society speech was open to reporters, but Kavanaugh did



FILE - In this June 24, 2019, file photo, the empty courtroom is seen at the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington. The lack of transparency at the Supreme Court begins with the heavy red drapes that frame the courtroom on all sides. The court replaced the drapes this summer, but it would not reveal the name of the company that did the work. The Supreme Court's role in a bitterly divided Washington and nation may be more important than ever, yet basic details about how the court operates remain obscured. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite, File)

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not allow video cameras at his talk to more than 2,000 people at Washington's Union Station.

The choice also is left to each justice when it comes to stepping aside from pending court cases. Recusals rarely come with explanations. The public is left to piece together the reason from the justices' yearly financial disclosures, work histories and sometimes, family trees.

When health issues arise, each justice decides what to tell the public and when.

Eighty-six-year-old Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has provided ample details of her many medical issues, but the court waited until her summer radiation treatment had ended before announcing she had a tumor on her pancreas. More recently, Ginsburg was taken to a Washington hospital with fever and chills on a Friday, but the court didn't say anything for 24 hours.

But that was far quicker than with news about then-Justice Anthony Kennedy's heart procedure. The court waited 10 months to reveal that doctors had inserted a stent in one of Kennedy's arteries, saying something only when the stent had to be replaced in 2006.

The justices' annual reports list who pays for their travel but does not include the cost of transportation, hotels and meals. Legislation written by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., a frequent court critic, and Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., would require the justices and all federal judges to fill in those details within 15 days after they return home.

"To avoid conflicts of interest, the American people ought to know what hospitality, travel, and other emoluments justices and judges receive," Whitehouse said. Similar past efforts aimed at court transparency, including proposals to have court proceedings televised, have languished in congressional committees.

The federal judiciary says it does not post judges' financial reports online for security reasons, though media and interest organizations often do.

In July, Ginsburg and Justice Sonia Sotomayor traveled to Portugal for an New York University conference. There was no advance word of the trip, which the justices presumably will include on their 2019 financial reports that won't be made public until June 2020.

The public knows about the travel now only because Ginsburg talked about it in her eulogy for the late Justice John Paul Stevens, who died at age 99 less than a week after returning from the same trip.

When the court hears cases, the courtroom is open to the public, only a couple hundred people are lucky enough to be admitted on any given day. The justices refuse to allow the broader public to watch arguments or even listen to them as they happen.

Chief Justice John Roberts has so far this term denied requests to provide streaming or same-day audio for two of the biggest cases, about protections for LGBT people from workplace discrimination and immigrants brought to the United States as children. Audio recordings are made available a few days after the arguments.

By contrast, the federal appeals court that meets in the courthouse less than one-half mile from the Supreme Court livestreams the audio of all its arguments. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco regularly provides live video of its arguments. Internationally, when Britain's highest court ruled in September that Prime Minister Boris Johnson's shuttering of Parliament was illegal, the decision was read live on camera by U.K. Supreme Court President Brenda Hale.

"The Supreme Court should be leading the judiciary in openness and accountability, but by and large, it's fallen behind," said Gabe Roth, executive director of the court watchdog group Fix the Court.

This story has been corrected to remove an incorrect reference to Kavanaugh breaking with past practice at his speech. Past practice did not always dictate that video cameras be allowed to record at dinners featuring justices and other prominent political figures.

Iraqi prime minister to resign in wake of deadly protests

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press



FILE - in this Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2019 file photo, Anti-government protesters hold an effigy of Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel-Mahdi during ongoing protests in Baghdad, Iraq. Celebrations have erupted in Iraq's Tahrir Square, Friday, Nov. 29, where anti-government protesters have been camped out for nearly two months following an announcement by Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi, would be resigning. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed, File)

BAGHDAD (AP) — A day after more than 40 protesters were killed by security forces, Iraq's prime minister announced Friday that he would submit his resignation to parliament, a step that carried uncertainty for the entire government and stirred fears of a possible political crisis.

The move by Adel Abdul-Mahdi came 13 months after he took office and followed calls by Iraq's top Shiite cleric for lawmakers to withdraw support. At least four protesters were killed in the hours after the announcement in continuing violence in Baghdad and southern Iraq.

Word of the planned resignation triggered celebrations by anti-government protesters who have been camped out for nearly two months in Baghdad's Tahrir Square. Young men and women broke into song and dance under the sparkle of fireworks crackling from every corner of the plaza, the epicenter of their leaderless protest movement, which seeks an end to sectarian government and election

and anti-corruption reforms.

But amid the mirth, protesters said Abdul Mahdi's decision was a single victory in the long and difficult war aimed at dismantling the post-2003 political system, a common refrain among demonstrators.

"The political system will replace him with someone exactly the same," said Taif, a 39-year-old protester, as jubilant demonstrators waved flags behind. "Until this sick system is destroyed, we won't leave."

On the street near the teeming square, another protester named Mortada, 21, watched the fanfare from a distance. "We want true electoral reforms. We want real change," he said. "It's not one man, it's the whole system that needs to resign."

Both Taif and Mortada declined to give their full names, fearing retaliation.

Protesters in the teeming square sang Iraq's national anthem. One man held up a sign: "I cry blood for our martyrs."

Nearly 400 people have been killed in the bloody crackdown on protests since Oct. 1, most of them young demonstrators who were shot or hit by exploding tear gas canisters fired by security forces.

In a statement, Abdul-Mahdi said he "listened with great concern" to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's sermon and made his decision in response to the cleric's remarks.

"I will submit to parliament an official memorandum resigning from the current prime ministry so that the parliament can review its choices," he said. Abdul-Mahdi was appointed Iraq's fifth prime minister since 2003 as a consensus candidate following months of political wrangling between rival political blocs.

If accepted when put to vote, Abdul-Mahdi's resignation would signal a return to square one in those slow-moving negotiations, Iraqi officials and experts said.

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He would be the second prime minister in an Arab country to be forced out by mass protests recently. In Lebanon, the resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri a month earlier, on Oct. 29, led to further political gridlock and uncertainty.

Abdul-Mahdi's rise to power was the product of a provisional alliance between parliament's two main blocs — Sairoon, led by cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, and Fatah, which includes leaders associated with the paramilitary Popular Mobilization Units headed by Hadi al-Amiri.

In the May 2018 election, neither coalition won a commanding plurality that would have enabled it to name the premier, as stipulated by the Iraqi constitution. To avoid political crisis, Sairoon and Fatah forged a precarious union with Abdul-Mahdi as their prime minister.

Now, with his resignation, unresolved disputes between the coalitions threaten to re-emerge, two Iraqi officials said.

Abdul-Mahdi had alluded to this challenge implicitly in earlier statements, saying he would resign, but only if an alternative candidate was found for the premiership.

Officials also questioned Abdul-Mahdi's decision to submit his resignation via the more time-consuming route of parliament, requiring MPs to vote, rather than sending it directly to the president, who has the power to accept it immediately and demote the government to caretaker status until a new one is formed.

An Iraqi official said one of two things could happen: "There's going to be a lot of horse-trading going on, or it could be paralysis, and nothing changes." The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because officials were not authorized to speak to media.

The resignation also creates legal uncertainties as the constitution does not provide clear procedures to guide lawmakers in the event of a premier stepping down, experts said. The key issue was how long Abdul-Mahdi's government could maintain caretaker status in the event of protracted political negotiations.

"To my understanding there is no clause (in the constitution) that says how long he can remain in the post once his resignation is accepted," said Sajad Jiyad, the managing director of Bayan Center, an Iraq-based think tank.

The federal Supreme Court might have to step in, he added, if the caretaker government stays for too long and if parliamentary blocs are unable to come to an understanding.

In his weekly Friday sermon delivered via a representative in the holy city of Najaf, Al-Sistani said parliament, which elected the government of Abdul-Mahdi, should "reconsider its options" - a clear sign he was withdrawing his support for the prime minister. His comments prompted political parties to issue calls for the government to step down.

Forty protesters were shot dead by security forces in Baghdad and the southern cities of Najaf and Nasiriyah on Thursday, in a sharp escalation of violence that continued Friday.

In Baghdad, one protester was shot dead by security forces on the historic Rasheed Street, a recent focus of clashes, near the strategic Ahrar bridge partly occupied by demonstrators.

Six protesters were killed by live ammunition and tear gas in the city of Nasiriyah when demonstrators attempted to enter the city center to resume their sit-in, security and hospital officials said. Security forces had fired live rounds the previous day to disperse protesters from two key bridges, killing 31 people.

A former oil and finance minister and an ex-vice president, the 77-year-old Abdul-Mahdi was seen as a political independent when he took the post in October 2018. He was Iraq's first prime minister from outside the Dawa party in 12 years.

His administration's policies were characterized by small gains to improve the day-to-day lives of Baghdadis. He moved his offices out of Baghdad's highly secure Green Zone on the first day of his term, saying he wanted to bring his government closer to the people, while removing wartime cement barriers that had closed Iraqis off from much of the city.

In the halls of power in Baghdad, his office worked behind the scenes to streamline the administration and improve decision-making. But the effects of those efforts were not visible to an Iraqi public impatient for reform.

Abdul-Mahdi was also often caught in the middle of rising tensions between the U.S. and Iran, with many perceiving his government and certain staffers as being close to Tehran. Reducing Iraq's reliance

on Iranian electricity imports to meet consumer demand was a key concern of Washington.

Protesters widely reject growing Iranian influence over Iraq state affairs. In Baghdad on Friday, demonstrators gathered around the historic Rasheed Street near the strategic Ahrar Bridge and burned the Iranian flag, chanting "Iran out!"

Associated Press Writer Murtada Faraj in Baghdad contributed to this report.

Disputing harassment claims, Domingo says he's a gentleman



Opera star Placido Domingo performs during a concert at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg on Wednesday, No. 27, 2019. (Christian Charisius/dpa via AP)

MADRID (AP) — Placido Domingo is disputing allegations of sexual harassment against him, saying he has always behaved like a gentleman but that "gallant gestures are viewed differently nowadays."

The 78-year-old Spanish opera legend told the Spanish online newspaper El Confidencial in an interview published Friday that he feels strong despite the accusations, which he called a "nightmare." He said he intends to continue performing at least until the end of his planned engagements running through 2021.

The Associated Press reported in August and September that more than 20 women who worked with Domingo in the opera world accuse him of sexual harassment or inappropriate, sexually charged behavior, including unwanted touching and sudden attempts to kiss them, and

of sometimes damaging their careers if they rejected him.

In statements responding to the AP's reporting, Domingo said the allegations were "in many ways, simply incorrect." Domingo said at the time he believed his "interactions and relationships were always welcomed and consensual," though he noted that "rules and standards" have changed.

In El Confidencial interview, Domingo again stopped short of flatly denying what the women allege, but insisted he had never behaved improperly.

He said Spaniards are naturally "warm, affectionate and loving."

"I have been gallant, but always within the limits of gentlemanliness, respect and sensitivity," he was quoted as saying.

He added: "Gallant gestures are viewed differently nowadays."

He insisted he "never behaved in the aggressive, stalking and vulgar manner that (the accusers) described."

U.S. opera houses canceled Domingo's upcoming performances following the accusations. Domingo resigned from the Los Angeles Opera, where he had been general director since 2003. The L.A. Opera is conducting an investigation into his alleged behavior.

Domingo said he felt he has been unfairly treated.

He said that the "credibility given to the accusations is automatic ... And I've felt prematurely judged, sentenced and convicted," though he has not been charged with a crime.

He said he had never abused his position of power. "I never promised a role in return for favors," he said. Domingo said he had been through "the most difficult months of my life."

"Everything happened so quickly," he said. "I was able to sit back and reflect on it all only a few weeks ago."

The interview was published just days before Domingo is due to star in Giuseppe Verdi's "Nabucco" at Valencia's Palau de les Arts, starting Monday.

The sexual harassment allegations against Domingo have rocked the opera world in the United States, where he no longer has any appearances scheduled. But European theaters have stood behind him, maintaining all his scheduled dates.

Domingo told *El Confidencial* he has drawn strength from the support of European theaters and fans, and from family and friends who have stood by him.

"They have been difficult times but things have died down a bit. I'm keeping on working, studying, rehearsing and performing. That has provided me with the calm I need to face this nightmare," he said.

"I still feel strong and healthy."

This story has been corrected to show that Domingo is 78, not 80.

Evacuation order lifted as huge Texas plant fire 'contained'

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Officials lifted evacuation orders Friday for around 50,000 people on the Texas Gulf Coast, determining a massive fire was finally under control at a chemical plant rocked by two major explosions two days earlier.

"We are in a position to say it's contained. We feel comfortable with the efforts that have been made by our firefighters," Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick said at a news conference in Port Neches, about 80 miles (129 kilometers) east of Houston.

But the area around the TPC Group plant remained dangerous. Several isolated fires were still blazing and visible at the facility, which makes chemical and petroleum-based products. Officials said they could not predict when those would be fully extinguished.

The explosions began early Wednesday morning and were so big that nearby homes captured the bright balls of fire on front-porch security cameras. The blasts shattered windows and ripped doors off hinges. Three workers were injured, and when a second blast erupted 13 hours after the initial overnight explosion, evacuation orders covered a 4-mile (6.4-kilometer) radius around the plant took effect.

Debris thrown across Port Neches — and potentially neighboring towns — by the sheer magnitude of Wednesday's explosions also posed risks to families returning home. Branick, the top county official,



Smoke from an explosion at the TPC Group plant is seen Wednesday, Nov. 27, 2019, in Port Neches, Texas. Two massive explosions 13 hours apart tore through the chemical plant Wednesday, and one left several workers injured.

(Marie D. De Jesús/Houston Chronicle via AP)

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cautioned that construction on the plant began in the 1940s and that asbestos could have been hurled into people's yards. He urged homeowners to steer clear of any "white, chalky substance" and call health officials if any are found.

Branick said it may be several months before the cause of the explosions is known. He said the air quality posed no threat to residents.

"There's still going to be smoke in the air. There's still going to be flames visible at night," said Troy Monk, the director of health safety and security for the TPC Group. "I would love to tell you we're going to be done by the end of the day. I would not be telling you the truth if I made that statement. It's very difficult for us to quantify in days how long this is going to take."

The explosion was the latest in a series of high-profile accidents this year up and down the Texas Gulf Coast, which is home to the highest concentration of oil refineries in the nation. In July, an explosion at an ExxonMobil refinery in Baytown left more than dozen people with minor injuries and put nearby residents under a shelter-in-place for three hours.

Toby Baker, the head of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, called it an "unacceptable trend of significant incidents" this week and said the petroleum industry must be accountable.

But environmental groups for years have accused Baker's agency of being a toothless watchdog that provides inadequate oversight and slaps highly profitable corporations with only meager penalties. The TPC Group plant had been labeled a "high priority" violator by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency following its last inspection in 2017 and had been cited multiple times in recent years for clean air violations.

Environmentalists were also quick to point out that the TPC Group explosion occurred just a week after the Trump administration scaled back chemical safety plant measures that had been prompted by a 2013 explosion at a Texas fertilizer storage facility that killed 15 people. The rollback included eliminating a required public access to information about dangerous chemicals companies keep on site.

Officials have said the first blast occurred around 1 a.m. Wednesday in an area of the plant that makes butadiene, a chemical used to make synthetic rubber and other products. It sent a large plume of smoke stretching for miles and started a fire. The second blast ripped through the plant about 2 p.m., sending a steel reactor tower rocketing high into the air.

The plant has 175 full-time employees and 50 contract workers.

This story has been corrected to show the explosions took place two days ago, not three.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's Ukraine defense collides with facts

By HOPE YEN and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's defense of his actions with Ukraine collides with the known facts and the testimony of witnesses on multiple fronts as the impeachment inquiry moves into a new phase this coming week.

In recent days, Trump has cried foul in ways angry and profane as Democrats set the stage for House Judiciary Committee hearings likely to produce articles of impeachment.

A review of rhetoric on this and other matters over the past week:

IMPEACHMENT

TRUMP: "We had a great two weeks watching these crooked politicians not giving us due process, not giving us lawyers, not giving us the right to speak and destroying their witnesses. It fell apart. Those were their witnesses. We weren't allowed any rights." — Florida rally Tuesday.

RONNA MCDANIEL, Republican National Committee chairwoman: "Sham impeachment hearings with due process denied to our president." — to Fox News.

THE FACTS: Trump was not deprived of constitutional rights during the House Intelligence Committee hearings because the committee was conducting an investigation, not a trial.

Although the same will be true of the next round of hearings, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee has invited Trump and his lawyers to appear if he wishes and to make a request to question

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witnesses.

Trump is also incorrect that the Intelligence Committee hearings only brought forward witnesses hand-picked by the Democrats. Several were invited at the request of Republicans on the committee.

More broadly, each stage of the impeachment inquiry has been guided by majority vote or by long-established institutional practices of Congress as interpreted by the Democratic majority elected by the voters.

It's also unfolding as outlined in the Constitution, which gives the House the sole power to impeach and the Senate the sole power to remove a president from office.

The Judiciary Committee hearings will be similar to the process seen in impeachment proceedings that began against Presidents Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton. Nixon resigned, heading off a House impeachment vote; Clinton was impeached by the House and acquitted by the Senate.

If the House impeaches Trump, the Senate trial will look like a normal trial in some respects, with senators as the jury. Arguments would be heard from each side's legal team for and against Trump's removal from office.

The Intelligence Committee hearings, in contrast, were like the investigative phase of criminal cases, conducted without the participation of the person under investigation.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

TRUMP: "They've been working on this for years and years. And I'm curious, why wasn't it done a long time ago, and also — well, I guess the answer to that is because now I'm president, and we get things done." — remarks Monday, signing a law to produce a \$1 coin commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote.

THE FACTS: It wasn't "done a long time ago" because the centennial being commemorated wasn't a long time ago. It's coming up in nine months. Legislation providing for the coin sped through Congress with bipartisan support.

There is no history here of a president achieving what past presidents failed to do.

UKRAINE

TRUMP: "I held back the money from Ukraine because it is considered a corrupt country." — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: There's scant evidence that Trump voiced concern about systemic corruption in Ukraine until he knew that word had gotten out about his request for a political favor from that country's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy

After his first phone call with Zelenskyy, in April, the White House said at the time that Trump had discussed his interest in having Ukraine rein in widespread corruption. But in the recently released rough transcript of the call, he actually did not mention corruption at all.

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



In this Nov. 26, 2019, photo, resident Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally in Sunrise, Fla. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

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September as he and his aides pressed Ukraine to investigate Democrats, former Vice President Joe Biden and Biden's son Hunter, who was on the board of an energy company there.

Before Trump froze the aid, the Pentagon had already certified to congressional committees Ukraine had made enough progress on reducing corruption to receive the military assistance. The administration had already approved sending aid to Ukraine nearly 50 times without holding it because of corruption concerns.

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

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

TRUMP: "I wanted to know why nearby European countries weren't putting up money also." — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: He's incorrect that European countries weren't putting up aid for Ukraine.

European Union institutions have provided far more development assistance than the \$204 million from Washington. Specific EU members, Japan and Canada also contribute significantly.

Since 2014, the EU and European financial institutions have mobilized more than \$16 billion to help Ukraine's economy, counter corruption, build institutions and strengthen its sovereignty against further incursions by Russia after its annexation of Crimea.

The U.S. is a heavy source of military assistance. But NATO also contributes a variety of military-assistance programs and trust funds for Ukraine. In most such cases, the programs are modest and NATO countries other than the U.S. take the lead.

ISLAMIC STATE

TRUMP: "As you know, we captured 100% of the ISIS caliphate." — remarks Monday honoring Conan, the U.S. military dog taking part in the raid that killed Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi:

THE FACTS: Trump's suggestion of a 100% defeat is misleading because his own military commanders say IS still poses a threat. Nor does the death of al-Baghdadi in the Oct. 26 raid mean the threat is gone.

It's true that IS has lost its caliphate — the large swath of territory it once controlled in parts of Syria and Iraq. But the group remains a threat to reemerge if the conditions that allowed its rise, such as the civil war in Syria and a lack of effective governance in Iraq, are not corrected.

U.N. experts warned in August that IS leaders are aiming to consolidate and create conditions for an "eventual resurgence in its Iraqi and Syrian heartlands." Gen. Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, said after Baghdadi's death that it would be a mistake to conclude that IS has been defeated.

"It will take them some time to re-establish someone to lead the organization, and during that period of time their actions may be a little bit disjointed," McKenzie said. "They will be dangerous. We suspect they will try some form of retribution attack, and we are postured and prepared for that."

The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency warned this month in an inspector general's report that IS was expected to rebuild its capability to attack the West now that counterterrorism efforts by U.S. and allied-Syrian Kurdish forces have been reduced.

OBAMA

TRUMP: "I get elected and I beat the Bush dynasty. ... I get elected and we beat the Clinton dynasty. Right? And then we beat Barack Hussein Obama and whatever the hell dynasty that is." — Florida rally on Tuesday.

THE FACTS: No, Trump didn't beat Obama. And there's no familial Obama dynasty to take on.

Trump beat Jeb Bush in the 2016 GOP primaries, a defeat for a family that produced two presidents, and ensured Hillary and Bill Clinton would not return to the White House when he defeated her in the general election. But he's never run against Obama.

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CNN

TRUMP: "By the way CNN's ratings are terrible. Oops. Look, their light just went off. The lights just went off. ... I shouldn't do it, because we lose a small audience when that happens." — Florida rally.

THE FACTS: This is a made-up story.

Trump is suggesting that CNN turned off its camera lights the moment he criticized the news media, stopping live TV coverage of his rally. But CNN was not broadcasting the event live.

MEDICARE

TRUMP: "The Democrat Party is determined to ... eviscerate Medicare and put every single senior citizen at risk." — Florida rally.

THE FACTS: He's incorrect that Democrats would seek to "eviscerate Medicare." Trump appears to be referring to Democratic proposals to provide "Medicare for All," but the options that would allow younger people to buy into a Medicare-like plan don't involve overhauling the current program.

The plan by Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent, would be a fundamental change, expanding Medicare to cover almost everyone in the country. But current Medicare recipients would get improved benefits. Sanders would eliminate Medicare deductibles and almost all copays, and provide coverage for dental and vision care, as well as hearing aids. His plan would also provide home and community based long-term care.

The issue is whether the U.S. can afford to convert to a new government-run health care system, not that older Americans would be left uncovered. The Democratic proposals call for new taxes to help pay for expanded Medicare coverage.

APPLE MANUFACTURING PLANT

TRUMP, looking back at his recent trip to Austin, Texas: "Then on Monday I flew to Texas, the great state of Texas and I opened up an Apple computer plant." — Florida rally.

THE FACTS: He didn't do that, and it wasn't on Monday. He visited an Austin factory on Nov. 20, a Wednesday, that's been making the Mac Pro for Apple since 2013.

He made the same claim in a tweet the day of his visit: "Today I opened a major Apple Manufacturing plant in Texas that will bring high paying jobs back to America."

Apple announced in September that it would continue having the Mac Pro line made in Austin, after the Trump administration agreed to waive tariffs on certain computer parts from China. It said on the day of his trip that it has started construction of its new campus in the city.

Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed to this report.

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US stocks close out half-day session with broad losses

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

Stocks fell broadly on Wall Street Friday following a shortened trading session a day after the Thanksgiving holiday that left the market slightly below its record highs.

Technology, health care and industrial stocks accounted for a big slice of the selling. Several big retailers also dragged the market lower as traders watched for signs that Black Friday got off to a strong start. Energy stocks took the heaviest losses as crude oil prices fell sharply. Bond yields rose.

Even with the pullback, the S&P 500 notched its seventh weekly gain in eight weeks. The benchmark index also closed out November with its strongest monthly gain since June.

"You had three solid days, plus the S&P was at an all-time high as of the close on Wednesday," said Tom

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Martin, senior portfolio manager with Globalt Investments. "Really, from early October until now, it's been almost like a ruler straight up."

The S&P 500 index dropped 12.65 points, or 0.4%, to 3,140.98. The index hit all-time highs the first three days of the week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 112.59 points, or 0.4%, to 28,051.41. The Nasdaq slid 39.70 points, or 0.5%, to 8,665.47. The Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks gave up 9.60 points, or 0.6%, to 1,624.50. Trading volume was lighter than usual with the markets open for only a half day.

Bond prices fell. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 1.77% from 1.76% late Wednesday.

The three major stock indexes have notched multiple record highs in recent weeks. That helped drive their gains in November. The S&P 500 ended the month with a 3.4% gain, while the Dow rose 3.7%. The Nasdaq, which is weighted heavily with technology stocks, gained 4.5%.

The stock market has been grinding mostly higher after shaking off recession fears that helped knock stocks into a skid this summer.

Better-than-expected corporate earnings, solid economic data and interest-rate cuts by the Federal Reserve helped fuel the market's fall rally. Investors have also grown more optimistic about the prospects for a trade deal between the U.S. and China.

New U.S. tariffs are set to kick in on many Chinese-made products as of Dec. 15, but negotiators have said they might soon have a preliminary deal that could avert that.

Chipmakers were among the biggest decliners in the technology sector Friday. Lam Research and Qualcomm each fell 1.5%.

Drugmakers helped pull the health stocks lower. Bristol-Myers Squibb dropped 1.1%.

Energy stocks were the biggest losers as the price of U.S. crude oil slid 5.1%. Devon Energy dropped 2.8% and Helmerich & Payne fell 2.3%.

Benchmark crude oil fell \$2.94 to settle at \$55.17 a barrel. Brent crude oil, the international standard, dropped \$1.44 to close at \$62.43 a barrel.

Shares in several big retailers declined as Black Friday, traditionally the kickoff for the holiday shopping season, got underway. Macy's fell 1%, Gap dropped 1.8%, Kohl's slid 2.7% and Nordstrom slipped 0.4%.

Some bucked the downward trend. J.C. Penney rose 1.8%, Walmart added 0.3% and TJX, parent of T.J. Maxx, Marshalls and other stores, gained 0.3%.

This year retailers have less time to woo consumers because Thanksgiving fell on the fourth Thursday in November, making the holiday shopping season six days shorter.

The National Retail Federation baked the shorter season into its forecast, which calls for holiday sales to rise between 3.8% and 4.2%, an increase from the disappointing 2.1% growth seen in the November and December 2018 period.



A currency trader watches computer monitors at the foreign exchange dealing room in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, Nov. 29, 2019. Shares extended losses in Asia on Friday after Japan and South Korea reported weak manufacturing data that suggest a worsening toll from trade tensions. (AP

Photo/Lee Jin-man)

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"Black Friday really starts on Nov. 1 and goes all the way until the end of December, so you have this two-month period that you really have to look at before you really see how well companies are doing," Martin said.

Traders bid up shares in Tech Data after Apollo Global Management raised its offer to buy the technology company to \$145 per share in cash from \$130. The stock surged 12.3%.

U.S. Steel fell 5.8% following reports that a water pipe burst at the company's steel mill in Gary, Indiana.

In other commodities trading, wholesale gasoline fell 8 cents to \$1.60 per gallon. Heating oil declined 7 cents to \$1.88 per gallon. Natural gas dropped 22 cents to \$2.28 per 1,000 cubic feet.

Gold rose \$11.90 to \$1,472.70 per ounce, silver gained 5 cents to \$17.11 per ounce and copper fell 3 cents to \$2.66 per pound.

The dollar fell to 109.48 Japanese yen from 109.53 yen on Thursday. The euro strengthened to \$1.1017 from \$1.1009.

Major stock indexes in Europe ended broadly lower.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 30, the 334th day of 2019. There are 31 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 30, 1782, the United States and Britain signed preliminary peace articles in Paris for ending the Revolutionary War; the Treaty of Paris was signed in Sept. 1783.

On this date:

In 1835, Samuel Langhorne Clemens — better known as Mark Twain — was born in Florida, Missouri.

In 1874, British statesman Sir Winston Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace.

In 1900, Irish writer Oscar Wilde died in Paris at age 46.

In 1936, London's famed Crystal Palace, constructed for the Great Exhibition of 1851, was destroyed in a fire.

In 1960, the last DeSoto was built by Chrysler, which had decided to retire the brand after 32 years.

In 1965, "Unsafe at Any Speed" by Ralph Nader, a book highly critical of the U.S. auto industry, was first released in hardcover by Grossman Publishers.

In 1981, the United States and the Soviet Union opened negotiations in Geneva aimed at reducing nuclear weapons in Europe.

In 1982, the Michael Jackson album "Thriller" was released by Epic Records. The motion picture "Gandhi," starring Ben Kingsley as the Indian nationalist leader, had its world premiere in New Delhi.

In 1988, Kohlberg Kravis Roberts and Co. was declared the winner of the corporate free-for-all to take over RJR Nabisco Inc. with a bid of \$24.53 billion.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton signed the Brady Bill, which required a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases and background checks of prospective buyers.

In 2000, Al Gore's lawyers battled for his political survival in the Florida and U.S. Supreme Courts; meanwhile, GOP lawmakers in Tallahassee moved to award the presidency to George W. Bush in case the courts did not by appointing their own slate of electors.

In 2013, Paul Walker, 40, the star of the "Fast & Furious" movie series, died with his friend, Roger W. Rodas, who was at the wheel of a Porsche sports car that crashed and burned north of Los Angeles.

Ten years ago: Retired Ohio auto worker John Demjanjuk (dem-YAHN'-yuk) went on trial in Munich, Germany, accused of helping to kill 27,900 Jews as a Nazi death camp guard. (Demjanjuk was convicted in May 2011 of being an accessory to murder; he was sentenced to five years in prison, but was released while his conviction was under appeal; he died in March 2012 at age 91.) In Geneva, the Large Hadron Collider, the world's largest atom smasher, broke a world record for proton acceleration. Serena Williams was fined a record \$82,500 for her tirade at a U.S. Open line judge. Tiger Woods withdrew from his own

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golf tournament, citing injuries from a car crash near his Florida home.

Five years ago: Pope Francis and the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, issued a joint declaration at the end of Francis' visit to Turkey demanding an end to violent persecution of Christians in the Middle East and calling for dialogue with Muslims. Anthony Marshall, 90, a decorated World War II veteran, diplomat and Broadway producer who saw his aristocratic life unravel as he was convicted in 1990 of raiding the fortune of his socialite mother, Brooke Astor, died in New York.

One year ago: Former President George H.W. Bush, a World War II hero who rose through the political ranks to the nation's highest office, died at his Houston home at the age of 94; his wife of more than 70 years, Barbara Bush, had died in April. On the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires, President Donald Trump and the leaders of Canada and Mexico signed a revised North American trade pact. (The agreement hasn't yet been approved by U.S. lawmakers.) The Marriott hotel chain announced that hackers had stolen credit card and other information on as many as 500 million guests over a period of four years. A white former Dallas police officer was indicted on a murder charge, nearly three months after she fatally shot an unarmed black neighbor whose apartment she said she entered by mistake. (Amber Guyger was convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison.)

Today's Birthdays: G. Gordon Liddy is 89. Country singer-recording executive Jimmy Bowen is 82. Movie director Ridley Scott is 82. Screenwriter Geoffrey C. Ward is 79. Movie writer-director Terrence Malick is 76. Rock musician Roger Glover (Deep Purple) is 74. Playwright David Mamet (MA'-meht) is 72. Actor Mandy Patinkin is 67. Musician Shuggie Otis is 66. Country singer Jeannie Kendall is 65. Singer Billy Idol is 64. Historian Michael Beschloss is 64. Rock musician John Ashton (The Psychedelic Furs) is 62. Comedian Colin Mochrie is 62. Former football and baseball player Bo Jackson is 57. Rapper Jalil (Whodini) is 56. Actor-director Ben Stiller is 54. Rock musician Mike Stone is 50. Music producer Steve Aoki is 42. Singer Clay Aiken is 41. Actor Billy Lush is 38. Actress Elisha Cuthbert is 37. Actress Kaley Cuoco (KWOH'-koh) is 34. Model Chrissy Teigen (TY'-gihn) is 34. Actress Christel Khalil is 32. Actress Rebecca Rittenhouse is 31. Actress Adelaide Clemens is 30.

Thought for Today: "Civilization is the limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessities." — Mark Twain (1835-1910).

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