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“
INSTRUCTION
DOES MUCH, BUT
ENCOURAGEMENT
IS EVERYTHING.
”

-JOHANN WOLFGANG
VON GOETHE

Chicken Soup
for the Soul.

Saturday, December 7, 2019

- 9 a.m. to Noon: Santa Day at Professional Management Services
- 11:00am: Basketball: Girls Varsity Jamboree vs. Warner @ Warner High School
- 11:00am: Basketball: Boys Varsity Jamboree vs. Warner @ Warner High School
- State Oral Interp at Yankton High School
- 10:00am: Wrestling: Varsity Tournament at Clark Junior-Senior High School
- 10:00am: Basketball: Girls 7th/8th Jamboree at Groton Area High School
- 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.: Olive Grove Tour of Homes
- 9:00pm- 11:30pm: FBLA Winter Semi-Formal at the GHS Gymnasium

Sunday, December 8, 2019

- 2:00pm- 6:00pm - Open Gym - Groton Area High School Arena
- 2:00-4:00 PM Grades JK-8 (Students must be accompanied by an adult) 4:00-6:00 PM Grades 6-12

Monday, December 9, 2019

- 7:00pm- 10:00pm: School Board Meeting

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

- Milbank Student Congress

Thursday, December 12, 2019

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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Upcoming Silver Skates Events

It's starting to feel like ice skating weather! Please mark your calendars for these upcoming dates.

Free skating clinic on Saturday, Dec. 28 (1:00-1:45 pre-school to 1st grade; 1:45-2:30 2nd to 4th grade; 2:30 - 3:15 5th to 8th grade; 3:15 - 4:00 9th to 12th grade)

Costume handout on Thursday, January 9 from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church (note the change in the typical location!) A reminder that all skaters must be in attendance for the costume handout, so proper fit can be confirmed. Thanks!

Dental Van coming to Aberdeen

The Delta Dental Van will be in Aberdeen again January 13-17, 2020. Dental Care is provided to children/young adults ages 0-21. This care includes evaluation and treatment.

If you have children who don't have a dental home and have not seen a dentist in two years or more in the Aberdeen area, you qualify. No child is turned away for inability to pay.

The Dental Van will be parked at 815 First Ave SE in front of the Avera Human Performance Center.

To schedule an appointment, dial 211 and the operators will get you scheduled. Appointments are required.



*Olive Grove's
4th Annual*

*Christmas
Tour
of Homes
& Holiday Party*

SATURDAY, DEC. 7, 2019

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

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

HOLIDAY PARTY - 4 P.M. TO CLOSE

A variety of snacks served
Silent Basket Items
Bidding Closes at 8:30 p.m.
Live Auction begins at 8:30 p.m.

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

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

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EarthTalk®

From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: What is climate gentrification and where is it happening? – Jamie B., Boston, MA

Climate gentrification is a relatively new term describing what happens when neighborhoods traditionally overlooked by wealthy people become more attractive—and expensive—given their siting in geographic areas that happen to be more resilient to climate-related threats such as stronger, more frequent hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, etc.

The already-classic case is in Florida's Miami-Dade County, where climate-related flooding and sea level rises are driving wealthy homeowners away from once pricey beach-front property and into the higher elevations surrounding areas like Little Haiti, Liberty City and Allapattah that have traditionally been home to struggling minority families. The result is greater density and higher home prices and rents in these recently poor neighborhoods. Meanwhile the locals move out, complaining that the transition is forcing them out of their beloved homes while sapping once vibrant cultural identities.

A recently released Harvard study of real estate values by elevation in the Miami area over the last five decades found that while home prices were rising in most parts of the 2,400-square-mile county, areas at higher elevations were experiencing larger increases. Properties located 2-4 meters above sea level rose 11.5x in value on average over the 1971-2017 study period, while those located at or within one meter of sea level rose 8x on average. Current climate projections of Florida's coastline in a warming world show that areas less than a foot above sea level will be underwater within another 50 years.

The Harvard study put the concept of climate gentrification in the public eye for the first time, but we can see examples of it just about everywhere. "In California, wildfires are becoming more common and forcing people to move, in some cases because their homes were destroyed, and in others because the threat of fire makes it difficult to get insurance or a mortgage," reports Aparna Nathan of Harvard's Science in The News blog. "Los Angeles, in particular, may see an influx of people from the coast (as sea levels rise) and further inland (as fires rage) into its traditionally working-class Eastside neighborhoods."

Another area where climate gentrification has become a problem is Arizona, where people are moving from the overheated Phoenix area to the cooler, higher elevation areas of northern Arizona. According to Nathan, this trend is disrupting communities and the real estate market, and widening socioeconomic gaps in the process. Jesse Keenan, lead author on the Harvard study, concurs, telling Bloomberg News that the situation in Miami "evokes matters of equity and justice that have very limited historical precedent."

Now that the issue is coming to the fore, environmental justice advocates hope that municipal planners and government officials start taking climate gentrification into account when developing master plans and drafting new zoning ordinances to make sure that even poor people have safe places to live in the face of increasing environmental torment. But as Nathan points out, housing is just one example of an overarching theme: "as the climate changes, it will be easier for those with more resources to adapt."

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at [HYPERLINK "https://emagazine.com"](https://emagazine.com) <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit [HYPERLINK "https://earthtalk.org"](https://earthtalk.org) <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: [HYPERLINK "mailto:question@earthtalk.org"](mailto:question@earthtalk.org) question@earthtalk.org.

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With record low unemployment, USDA finalizes rule to promote work

(Washington, D.C., December 6, 2019) – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue released the following statement regarding the latest jobs report released today by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The jobs report shows the economy added 266,000 new jobs in November with an unemployment rate of 3.5%, which remains at a record 50 year low. Earlier this week, at the direction of President Donald J. Trump, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a rule to help move more able-bodied recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) towards self-sufficiency and into employment. The rule restores the system to what Congress intended: assistance through difficult times, not a way of life.

"Today's jobs report is further proof that now in the midst of the strongest economy in a generation, we need everyone who can work, to work. To that end, USDA is laying the groundwork for the expectation that able-bodied Americans re-enter the workforce where there are currently more job openings than people to fill them," said Secretary Perdue. "Americans are generous people who believe it is their responsibility to help their fellow citizens when they encounter a difficult stretch. Government can be a powerful force for good, but government dependency has never been the American dream. We need to encourage people by giving them a helping hand but not allowing it to become an indefinitely giving hand."

More from Secretary Perdue can be found in his Arizona Daily Star oped: The dignity of work and the American Dream.

Background on USDA's Rule:

In 1996, when then President Bill Clinton signed welfare reform instituting the current work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) he said, "First and foremost, it should be about moving people from welfare to work. It should impose time limits on welfare... It [work] gives structure, meaning and dignity to most of our lives."

With a booming economy that has more jobs than workers to fill them and matches the lowest unemployment rate since 1969, now is the time for every work-capable Americans to find employment. In fact, the latest U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) figures show the unemployment rate is 3.5% and there are 7.0 million job openings. The longer an individual is out of the workforce, the harder it is to re-enter. Now is the time for these individuals to enter, reenter, and remain in the workforce.

To put things in perspective, in 2000, the unemployment rate was 4% and the number of Americans receiving SNAP benefits was just over 17 million. In 2019, during the longest economic expansion in history, the unemployment rate is 3.5% and yet the number of Americans receiving SNAP is over 36 million.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) final rule promotes work for able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 49 without dependents and does not apply to children and their parents, those over 50 years old including the elderly, those with a disability, or pregnant women.

Long-standing SNAP statute limits these adults to three months of benefits in a three-year period – unless they work or participate in work training for at least 20 hours per week. The law allows states to apply for waivers of this time limit due to economic conditions, but prior to the rule, counties with an unemployment rate as low as 2.5% were included in waived areas. Under USDA's rule, states retain their statutory flexibility to waive the time-limit in areas of high unemployment and to exempt a percentage of their ABAWD caseload. Even when working, those who qualify from an income perspective, will still receive their SNAP benefits.

There are multiple ways for individuals to engage and maintain their SNAP benefits, from working, to preparing for work, and volunteering. States have a responsibility to assess individuals as work-capable and must renew their focus on helping SNAP participants to find a path to self-sufficiency. There are a number of tools to assist with challenges. For example, states are provided funding to operate Employment and Training programs, which can provide everything from job training to necessary work supports, such as boots, uniforms, and transit subsidies. States also have access to programs and services provided by other Federal agencies, state and county governments, and local service providers.

S.D. Farmers Union Concerned About Decision that could Threaten Food Security for South Dakotans who Depend on SNAP to Eat

HURON, S.D. - South Dakota Farmers Union (SDFU) is concerned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) December 4, announcement that could impact some of the state's more than 93,000 citizens who depend upon Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to help them provide food for themselves and their families. Under the new SNAP regulations, an estimated 688,000 Americans will lose benefits.

"Is this who we are as Americans? I don't think so. We are not the kind of country who would do something like this to our poor and the needy. This decision puts some of our most vulnerable citizens at risk," says Doug Sombke, SDFU President and a fourth-generation Conde farmer. "As a grassroots organization made up of the family farmers and ranchers who are themselves in the midst of an economic crisis due to challenging weather and down markets, we understand what it is like when there's not enough money in the household budget to pay for groceries."

Are there some on SNAP who may not deserve the assistance? "Maybe. But should others be punished because of a couple bad actors? No. Look at the layoffs and business closures in our state's rural communities. Just because someone is able to work, does not mean there is work available – or work that pays a living wage," Sombke says.

Under the new SNAP regulations able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) can receive food assistance no more than three months out of every three years, unless they work at least 80 hours per month or meet other education or workforce training requirements. Previously, states could waive work requirements when jobs were unavailable or didn't match workers' skills, but the rule will make it more difficult to do so.

"This decision does not align with our organization's values – nor do I believe it aligns with the values of most South Dakotans. We take care of our neighbors," Sombke says. "I have a tough time understanding how tax cuts can be given to the 1 percent and government subsidy payments can be given to multinational corporations, like JBS a meat company from Brazil, while at the same time food security is taken away from American citizens."

Sombke's concerns were echoed by the vast majority of the more than 140,000 comments submitted to USDA in response to the rule, including those submitted by National Farmers Union (NFU). In a statement released December 4, NFU Vice President of Public Policy and Communications Rob Larew restated the organization's objections and emphasized the value of nutrition assistance programs.






"More than 37 million Americans will experience food insecurity this year, which is 37 million too many. But this number would be even higher without programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which help ensure that those in need can put food on their tables. There is no question that the nutrition safety net is essential and effective – yet this administration has done everything it can to slash gaping holes into that net, allowing hundreds of thousands of people to slip through the cracks. These work requirements, which will erode food security in rural and urban communities alike, are just another example of that."

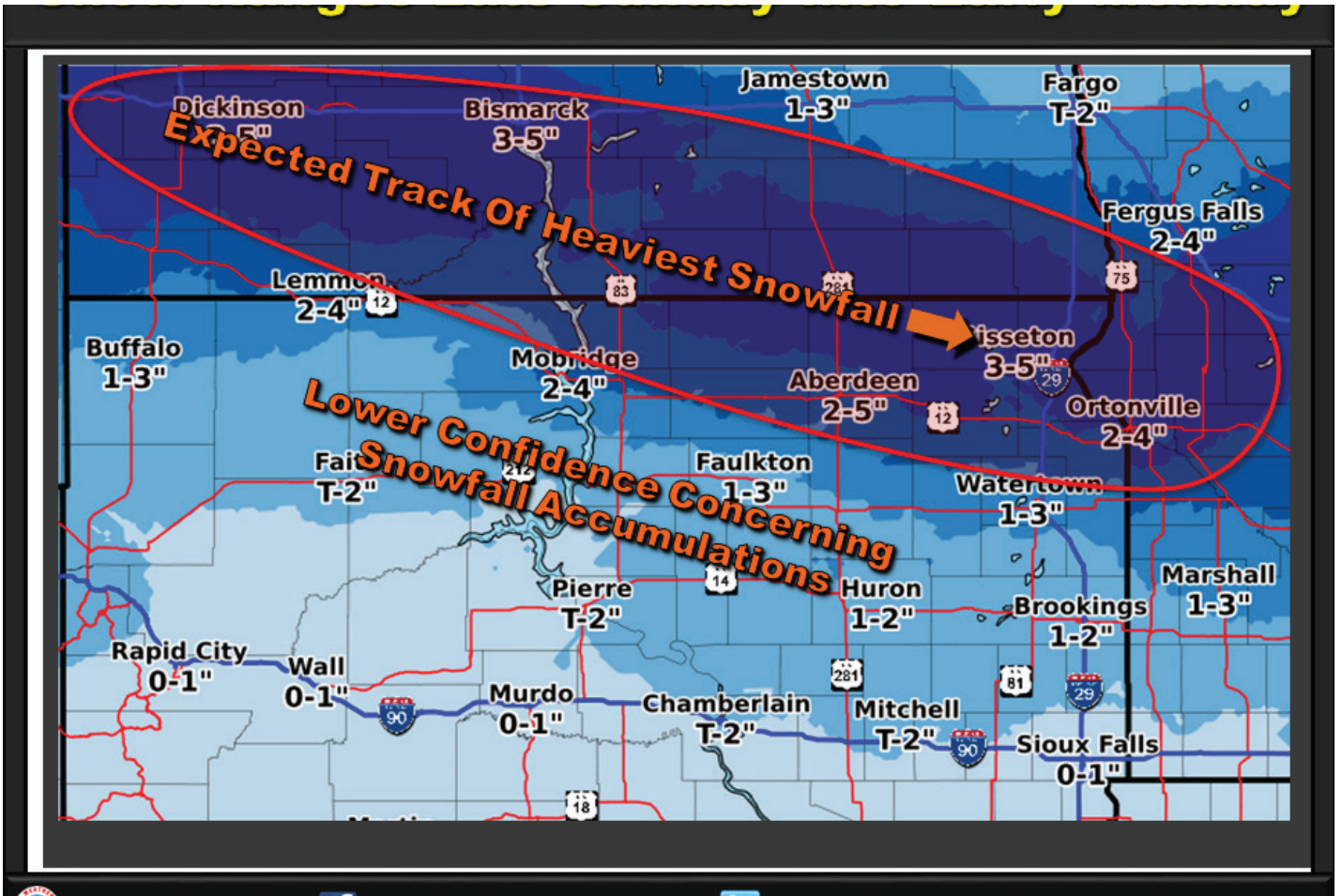
More about SNAP

SNAP funds are designed to supplement a grocery budget by about \$4 per-person-per-day. Because these funds are only designed to provide a percentage of the money necessary to feed an individual or family, many who rely upon SNAP, have a difficult time buying enough food for themselves and their families.

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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
				
Fog then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow	Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow then Chance Snow	Cold
High: 37 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 24 °F ↓	Low: -2 °F	High: 9 °F



Here are the expected accumulations ranges with this system Sunday into early Monday. Confidence for highest accumulations is right along the state line into western Minnesota. A word of caution however, as a slight shift in the track would place this band of higher amounts to the north or south, so all travelers and morning commuters should check back for updates.

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Today in Weather History

December 7, 1963: Winds of 50 to 60 mph resulted in blowing snow all day on the 7th, which reduced visibilities to near zero and produced snow drifts several feet deep in many areas. Snowfall in eastern South Dakota was generally from 3 to 7 inches with 1 to 2 inches in the western part of the state. Storm total snowfall included 8 inches at Sisseton, 5 inches at Watertown and Wheaton, 4 inches at Aberdeen, and 2 inches at Mobridge.

December 7, 1971: Heavy snow of 7 to 12 inches fell in north-central South Dakota on the 7th. Timber Lake and Eagle Butte each reported 12 inches of snow. Strong winds accompanied the snow and caused extensive drifting. Drifts up to 15 feet were reported in sheltered areas near Lemmon. Seven inches fell at Mobridge, and 11 inches fell at Selby. McIntosh received 4 inches.

December 7, 1740: By all accounts, the Merrimack River in New Hampshire flooded on this day. The flood is likely the first recorded in New Hampshire. "The snow melted, and a freshet occurred in the Merrimack River, nothing like it having been experienced there for seventy years. At Haverhill, the stream rose fifteen feet, and many houses were floated off." (Perley, Sidney, 1891, *Historic storms of New England* p. 49-51).

December 7, 2006: A rare tornado tore through Kensal Rise in London. This T4 on the TORRO scale, equivalent to an F2 on the Fujita scale, injured six people and damaged 150 homes. According to the BBC, the last tornado which caused significant damage in London was in December 1954, in West London.

1740 - In early December two weeks of mild and rainy weather culminated in the worst flood in fifty years in the Lower Connecticut River Valley. The Merrimack River swelled to its highest level, and in Maine the raging waters swept away mills, carried off bridges, and ruined highways. (David Ludlum)

1935 - Severe flooding hit parts of the Houston, TX, area. Eight persons were killed as one hundred city blocks were inundated. Satsuma reported 16.49 inches of rain. The Buffalo and White Oak Bayous crested on the 9th. (6th-8th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Heavy rain fell across eastern Puerto Rico, with 19.41 inches reported at Las Piedras. Flooding caused five million dollars damage. Another in a series of storms hit the northwestern U.S., with wind gusts above 100 mph reported at Cape Blanco OR. While snow and gusty winds accompanied a cold front crossing the Rockies, strong westerly winds, gusting to 93 mph at Boulder CO, helped temperatures in western Kansas reach the 60s for the sixth day in a row. Freezing drizzle in northeastern slowed traffic to 5 mph on some roads in Morrow County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - An outbreak of cold arctic air brought up to 18 inches of snow to the Colorado Rockies, with 14 inches at Boulder CO, and seven inches at Denver. Heavy snow blanketed New Mexico the following day, with 15 inches reported near Ruidoso. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A storm moving out of the Central Rocky Mountain Region spread snow across Kansas and Oklahoma into Arkansas and Tennessee. Snowfall totals ranged up to 7.5 inches at Winfield KS. Freezing rain on trees and power lines cut off electricity to 24,000 homes in northeastern Arkansas, and 40,000 homes in the Nashville TN area were without electricity for several hours. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

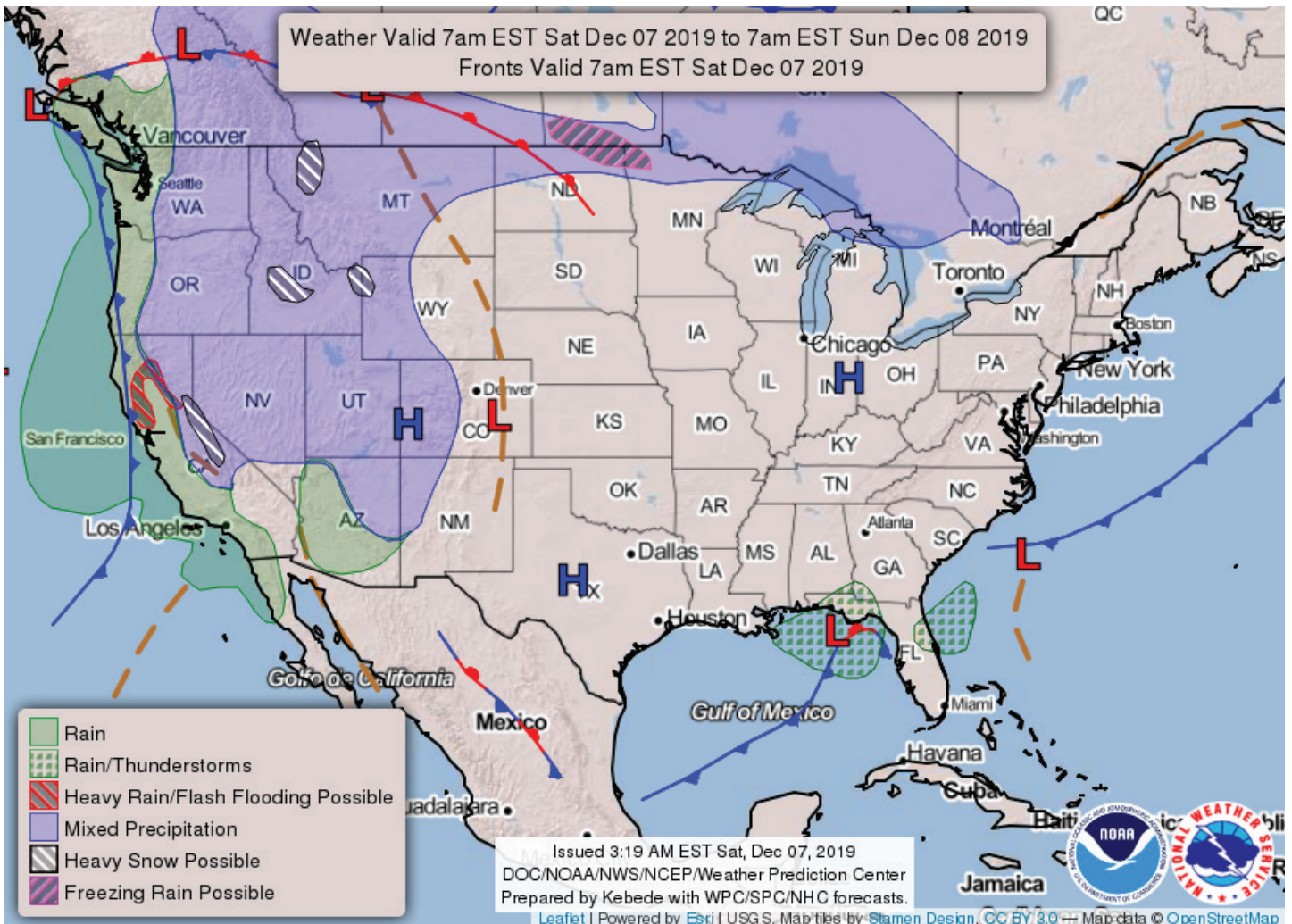
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 27 °F at 1:07 PM
Low Temp: 22 °F at 10:25 PM
Wind: 22 mph at 12:52 PM
Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 60° in 1918
Record Low: -27° in 1913
Average High: 28°F
Average Low: 9°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.11
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.31
Precip Year to Date: 27.95
Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:00 a.m.



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A GIFT FOR ETERNITY

Timothy did well in his first semester at college. A sense of excitement was building in the family as the day approached when he would be home for Christmas. His mother wanted to make it a special event, one he would remember for years to come.

"Let's give Timothy a wristwatch for Christmas," she said. "He's done so well and I want him to know how much we appreciate all of his hard work."

"But," protested his father, "what happened to that crush proof, waterproof, shockproof, scratchproof watch we gave him when he left for college?"

"He can't find it," said his mother.

In giving us the gift of His Son, God gave us Someone Who will be with us forever. A Gift that will be with us until the end of our lives and throughout eternity. An indestructible, unchanging, all-powerful, and ever-present Presence.

Jesus promised: "be sure of this – I am with you always and everywhere, even to the end of the age."

Some would ask, "What does it mean that He will be with us? Did he not leave His disciples when He ascended into heaven?" No, He didn't.

When He left them physically, He sent the Holy Spirit to be His presence with them personally. We know He was called "Immanuel – God with us" when He was born. We know He is with us now through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: It's easy, Father, to lose sight of You and Your messages at this time of the year. But help us to pause, pray frequently and sense Your presence within us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 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 Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

20-31-40-46-61, Mega Ball: 20, Megaplier: 5

(twenty, thirty-one, forty, forty-six, sixty-one; Mega Ball: twenty; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$285 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$130 million

Umude, Peterson carry South Dakota over Mount Marty 94-79

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Stanley Umude had 19 points and 14 rebounds as South Dakota beat Mount Marty 94-79 on Friday night. Tyler Peterson added 17 points, Cody Kelley scored 16 and Brandon Armstrong had 15 for the Coyotes. Peterson also had six rebounds for the Coyotes.

The 94 points were a season best for South Dakota (7-3).

Chris King had 23 points for the Lancers. Jordan Johnson added 16 points. Colby Johnson had 12 points and eight rebounds.

South Dakota plays Alabama State at home on Monday.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

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2 found dead after trailer fire near Pine Ridge

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — Two people were found dead after a trailer fire near Pine Ridge earlier this week.

The fire happened early Monday about three miles east of Pine Ridge. Oglala Sioux Police Chief Robert Ecoffey tells the Rapid City Journal that the trailer was totally engulfed by the time first responders arrived, and two people were found dead inside.

Ecoffey was waiting for results of DNA testing before releasing the identities of the victims.

The cause of the fire is being investigated by tribal police, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Wyoming governor criticizes university president's removal

LARAMIE, Wyo (AP) — A decision by the University of Wyoming Board of Trustees not to renew the contract of a former university president could have been handled better, but school officials have a satisfactory plan to hire her replacement, Gov. Mark Gordon said.

"I understand the frustration," Gordon told the Casper Star-Tribune when asked recently about the lack of transparency surrounding the decision not to renew Laurie Nichols' contract.

"I'm not trying to gloss over that," Gordon added. "But what I do think is important is that we have really an opportunity for the university to move forward from this moment."

The board announced in March that Nichols' contract would be allowed to run out on July 1. Board and university officials have not said why the contract was not renewed and have not fulfilled newspaper re-

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cords requests that might shed light on what happened.

When Nichols began the job in 2013, she was the university's fourth president in three years. She is now the interim president of Black Hills State University in Spearfish, South Dakota.

Nicholas has maintained nobody has told her why her contract wasn't renewed.

Gordon is a nonvoting member of the Board of Trustees. In September, Gordon publicly released a letter calling on the board to conduct a "thorough and transparent" search for a new president and resist the temptation to hire a "familiar face" for the job.

The departure of Nichols and President Robert Sternberg's resignation after just five months in the job in 2013 left UW with "black eyes," Gordon wrote.

He wrote the letter to make sure the board knew he wanted a transparent search that didn't involve a "fix" for a certain candidate, Gordon told the Star-Tribune.

"Anybody landing in that office with that kind of baggage is going to be compromised right from the start," Gordon said.

Neil Theobald is interim president and a candidate for the permanent position. Board members expect to make a hire in March.

Committee recommends reshaping high school football system

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Plans for a radical overhaul of South Dakota's high school football system are gaining some traction.

An advisory committee on Thursday advanced plans to reconfigure the seven-class system to five classes, a proposal to be considered by the state's athletic directors and ultimately the South Dakota High School Activities Association Board of Directors.

The committee took a look at the current system and considered trends across the state with respect to the increasing number of consolidations and co-ops, variances in enrollment and growth of the Sioux Falls metro.

"The committee took all those things and tried to balance it out," SDHSAA assistant executive director John Krogstrand explained. "(They) looked at what was best for everybody, and not just any one part."

The Argus Leader reports the five classes would be renamed 11AA, 11A, 11B, 9A and 9B, just as they were in 1999, the last time South Dakota had five football classes.

"It's kind of like the family inheritance. You're going to make somebody mad," Bon Homme coach Byron Pudwill laughed. "We were just lucky enough to be on the advisory board and be the ones everybody hates. Thankfully, they're going to be moving it up to the activities directors."

Life in prison for 2015 kidnapping, slaying of ex-girlfriend

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Sturgis man who ordered and helped plan the kidnapping and murder of his ex-girlfriend has been sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison.

Jonathan Klinetobe, 30, was sentenced Thursday by Judge Heidi Linngren who said he posed a lifelong and "significant danger to society."

Klinetobe pleaded guilty in September to aiding and abetting the first-degree manslaughter of Jessica Rehfeld, a 22-year-old from Rapid City. He was originally charged with first-degree murder and other crimes.

The sentencing came after four days of arguments and testimony at the state court in Rapid City from prosecutors and defense lawyers, a psychologist and psychiatrist hired by the defense, and Klinetobe and Rehfeld's family members, according to the Rapid City Journal.

Rehfeld's murder was "the very ultimate version of domestic violence," said Mark Vargo, Pennington County State's Attorney.

"It's a complete victory. He'll never be able to do this to another woman," Misty Rehfeld said after the sentencing while holding a framed photo collage of her sister.

Prosecutors said Klinetobe initially considered scaring or kidnapping Rehfeld after she broke up with him but decided she needed to be killed after he was served with a protection order.

In the weeks before the May 18, 2015 murder, Klinetobe subjected Rehfeld to “unspeakable” terror by threatening to kill her in texts, voicemails and social media, Linngren said.

Saudi student opens fire at Florida Naval base, killing 3

By **BILL KACZOR** and **BRENDAN FARRINGTON** Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP) —

U.S. officials investigating the deadly attack by a Saudi aviation student at a naval air station in Florida were working Saturday to determine whether it was motivated by terrorism.

An aviation student from Saudi Arabia opened fire in a classroom at the Naval Air Station Pensacola on Friday morning, killing three people. The assault, which prompted a massive law enforcement response and base lockdown, ended when a sheriff's deputy killed the attacker. Twelve people were hurt in the attack, including the two deputies, Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan said.

Florida U.S. Sen. Rick Scott issued a scathing statement calling the shooting an act of terrorism “whether this individual was motivated by radical Islam or was simply mentally unstable.”

Scott added that it was “clear that we need to take steps to ensure that any and all foreign nationals are scrutinized and vetted extensively before being embedded with our American men and women in uniform.”

However, a national security expert from the Heritage Foundation warned against making an immediate link to terrorism.

Charles “Cully” Stimson cautioned against assuming that “because he was a Saudi national in their air force and he murdered our people, that he is a terrorist.”

The shooter was a member of the Saudi military who was in aviation training at the base, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a news conference. DeSantis spokesman Helen Ferre later said the governor learned about the shooter's identity from briefings with FBI and military officials.

A U.S. official who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity identified the shooter as Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani. The official wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly. The official also said the FBI is examining social media posts and investigating whether he acted alone or was connected to any broader group.

During a news conference Friday night, the FBI declined to release the shooter's identity and wouldn't comment on his possible motivations.

“There are many reports circulating, but the FBI deals only in facts,” said Rachel L. Rojas, the FBI's special agent in charge of the Jacksonville Field Office.

Earlier Friday, two U.S. officials identified the student as a second lieutenant in the Saudi Air Force, and said authorities were investigating whether the attack was terrorism-related. They spoke on condition of anonymity to disclose information that had not yet been made public.

President Donald Trump declined to say whether the shooting was terrorism-related. Trump tweeted his condolences to the families of the victims and noted that he had received a phone call from Saudi King Salman.

He said the king told him that “the Saudi people are greatly angered by the barbaric actions of the shooter, and that this person in no way shape or form represents the feelings of the Saudi people who love the American people.”

The Saudi government offered condolences to the victims and their families and said it would provide “full support” to U.S. authorities investigating the shooting.

DeSantis said Saudi Arabia needed to be held to account for the attack.

“Obviously, the government ... needs to make things better for these victims,” he said. “I think they're going to owe a debt here, given that this was one of their individuals.”

The U.S. has long had a robust training program for Saudis, providing assistance in the U.S. and in the kingdom. The shooting, however, shined a spotlight on the two countries' sometimes rocky relationship.

The kingdom is still trying to recover from the killing last year of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. Saudi intelligence officials and a forensic doctor killed and

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dismembered Khashoggi on Oct. 2, 2018, just as his fiancée waited outside the diplomatic mission.

One of the Navy's most historic and storied bases, Naval Air Station Pensacola sprawls along the waterfront southwest of the city's downtown and dominates the economy of the surrounding area.

Part of the base resembles a college campus, with buildings where 60,000 members of the Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard train each year in multiple fields of aviation. A couple hundred students from countries outside the U.S. are also enrolled in training, said Base commander Capt. Tim Kinsella.

The base is also home to the Blue Angels flight demonstration team, and includes the National Naval Aviation Museum, a popular regional tourist attraction.

All of the shooting took place in one classroom and the shooter used a handgun, authorities said. Weapons are not allowed on the base, which Kinsella said would remain closed until further notice.

The shooting is the second at a U.S. naval base this week. A sailor whose submarine was docked at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, opened fire on three civilian employees Wednesday, killing two before taking his own life.

—
Associated Press reporters Lolita Baldor, Ben Fox and Mike Balsamo in Washington; Jon Gambrell in Dubai; Tamara Lush in Tampa, Florida, and Freida Frisaro in Miami contributed to this report.

Tensions as yellow vests join French retirement protests

By **NADINE ACHOUI-LESAGE** and **MSTYSLAV CHERNOV** Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Paris police skirmished Saturday with yellow vest activists joining a wave of protest actions against the government's overhaul of France's national retirement system, as highway blockades and train stoppages disrupted weekend travel around the country.

A few thousand yellow vest protesters marched from the Finance Ministry complex on the Seine River through southeast Paris, pushing their year-old demands for economic justice — and adding the retirement reform to their list of grievances. Most marchers were peaceful but some threw projectiles or pushed riot officers, prompting repeated bursts of tear gas from police.

The marchers appear to be emboldened by the biggest national demonstrations in years Thursday that kicked off a mass strike-and-protest movement against President Emmanuel Macron's redesign of the pension system.

As the strikes entered a third day Saturday, tourists and shoppers faced shuttered subway lines around Paris and near-empty train stations.

Transportation workers are central to the strike, but other groups are joining the fray, too.

Truckers striking over a fuel tax hike disrupted traffic on highways from Provence in the southeast to Normandy in the northwest. A similar fuel tax is what unleashed the yellow vest movement a year ago, and this convergence of grievances could pose a major new threat to Macron's presidency.

The travel chaos is not deterring the government so far, though. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe plainly told the French in a nationwide address Friday: "You're going to have to work longer."

He will present details of the plan next week. The government says it won't raise the official retirement age of 62 but the plan is expected to include financial conditions to encourage people to work longer. Philippe did offer one olive branch, saying the changes would be progressive so that they don't become "brutal."

Macron says the reform, which will streamline a convoluted system of 42 special pension plans, will make the system more fair and financially sustainable.

Unions, however, see the plan as a threat to hard-fought workers' rights, and are digging in for what they hope is a protracted strike. They also plan new nationwide retirement protests Tuesday, despite the tear gas and rioting that marred the edges of the Paris march Thursday.

Emmanuel Buquet, an unemployed 51-year-old from Rouen, said the mass protests gave a new impetus to the waning movement.

"Yellow vests are back out in the streets," he told the AP. "It's getting worse and worse, we've obtained nothing since last year, just crumbs. The reforms are getting stronger and stronger."

In a society accustomed to strikes and workers rights, many people have supported the labor action, though that sentiment is likely to fade if the transport shutdown continues through next week.

"I knew it was going to last ... but I did not expect it to be that chaotic," Ley Basaki, who lives in the Paris suburb of Villemomble and struggles to get to and from work in the capital, told The Associated Press on Saturday at the Gare de l'Est train station. "There is absolutely nothing here, nothing, nothing. There is no bus, nothing."

Many travelers are using technology and social networks to find ways around the strike — working from home, using ride-sharing apps and riding shared bikes or electric scooters.

But some are using technology to support the strike: A group of activist gamers is raising money via a marathon session on game-streaming site Twitch. Their manifesto says: "In the face of powers-that-be who are hardening their line and economic insecurity that is intensifying in all layers of the population," they are trying to "occupy other spaces for mobilization and invent other ways of joining the movement."

Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

Impeachment collides with funding deadline, testing Congress

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The impeachment drama is dominating Washington, but leading figures such as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi still have their day jobs to do.

The California Democrat faces a testing over the next two weeks, toggling between the impeachment of President Donald Trump and past-ripe issues including North American trade legislation and a massive government-wide funding bill.

December is always a busy time in Congress as busted deadlines come due and must-pass legislation reaches the floor. But the poisonous atmosphere surrounding impeachment has raised questions about whether lawmakers can deliver their usual year-end bundle.

"American families deserve better than this partisan paralysis where Democrats obsess over impeachment and obstruct everything else," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., attacking Democrats for delays in the defense budget.

Behind the scenes, Pelosi is confronting a difficult set of issues that requires agreement with Republicans controlling the Senate, not to mention the signature of the very president she is working to impeach.

Topping the agenda is legislation to avoid another government shutdown. A government-wide funding bill expires on Dec. 20, leaving lawmakers little time to prevent a repeat of last winter's shutdown fiasco. A new battle over money for Trump's U.S-Mexico border wall, the same issue that started the last shutdown, remains unresolved.

Pelosi is also at the center of a long-sought deal on an updated North American trade pact. It is a top bipartisan priority but requires a delicate two-step involving the Mexican government, Democratic labor allies and the Trump administration.

Prospects are looking better on another front: The administration and Democrats have stuck an informal agreement on the annual defense policy measure, with a key add-on that would deliver up to 12 weeks of parental leave to federal workers.

But it is the funding measure that looms largest. Closing out a \$1.4 trillion catchall spending package before Christmas could be a long shot, though Pelosi says she is optimistic.

"I don't think we're headed for a shutdown. I don't think anybody wants that. I think the president and the Republicans learned in the last shutdown that ... there was no upside to it," Pelosi said in a CNN town hall on Thursday night. "And we're on a good path."

That path, however, is likely to lead to some split-the-differences agreements with Republicans that liberals will find frustrating, such as continued funding for Trump's border wall. Pelosi typically proceeds with care before committing to such deals, consulting with stakeholders inside the party such as the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

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House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., a Pelosi ally, said Friday she's hopeful that lawmakers could meet the Dec. 20 deadline to complete their work without resorting to a third government-wide stopgap spending bill.

"There's an overwhelming desire to be home for the holidays," Lowey said.

Pelosi said that if more time is needed she would only advance a short-term extension, a move that would require lawmakers to return to Washington early next month. That in itself could provide motivation for wrapping up before Christmas.

A positive sign came Thursday night as Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby, R-Ala., spoke with Trump about trying to wrap up the spending package. Shelby and other top lawmakers such as Pelosi prefer to avoid dealing with White House hard-liners and have reached out to more favored figures like Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

Similarly optimistic is House Ways and Means Committee Richard Neal, D-Mass., who along with Pelosi and other Democratic leaders is trying to bring the updated trade agreement with Mexico and Canada to a successful finish.

"I think we're really close," Neal said. "A couple of more issues and maybe a little bit of clarification, but we're really close."

Some lawmakers and lobbyists believe that impeachment is actually helping the trade deal talks because Democrats are facing pressure to show voters they are still legislating. It helps that the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade deal is a good fit for more moderate Democrats who will be running for reelection in Trump-leaning districts.

"I don't want to go home and just say we've voted on whatever happens on the impeachment and just go home with that," said Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas. "A lot of us need something to take back home. And the trade agreement is certainly one of them."

On Friday, Democrats controlling the House voted to update the Voting Rights Act and reduce voter suppression; next week features a vote on legislation to address sky-high prescription drug prices. The votes, on two major Democratic priorities, aren't getting much attention as the legislation joins a pile of Democratic bills that are dead in the GOP-held Senate.

The time crunch is exacerbated by a Senate impeachment trial that is likely to consume at least the month of January. That scenario has lawmakers eager to clear the decks now.

"Let's get as much done as we can, for crying out loud," said Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump and the people he forgets he knew

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When certain associates and acquaintances of President Donald Trump get into hot water, he forgets he ever knew them. Various figures from the Russia investigation and the Ukraine matter as well as a British prince have fallen out of familiarity with the president in this way.

For a few days, the stock market suffered a similar fate when it dipped too low for Trump to boast about it. But he rediscovered the market by the end of the week when it rose back up.

A look at some remarks by Trump from the NATO summit in London and from back home as the Democratic effort to impeach him moves ahead:

PRINCE ANDREW

TRUMP: "I don't know Prince Andrew. ... I don't know him." — remarks Tuesday with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

THE FACTS: Trump knows the British prince. Andrew hosted a breakfast for him in June, they toured Westminster Abbey together and photos spread over two decades capture some occasions when they've met. The prince stepped back from royal duties after his involvement with sex offender Jeffrey Epstein was exposed.

Trump also recently declared, repeatedly, that he did not know Gordon Sondland, his ambassador to the EU, "very well" and "I have not spoken to him much." Sondland provided some of the most damn-

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ing testimony in the House impeachment inquiry about how he had tried to carry out Trump's wishes to persuade Ukraine to investigate the president's political rivals in the U.S.

Sondland testified that he's had many conversations with Trump, who called the ambassador "a really good man and great American" before Sondland's problematic testimony.

Several people in prominent positions in the Trump campaign or known as close advisers were similarly marginalized — as mere volunteers, hangers-on or low-level functionaries — when it became troublesome during the Russia investigation to acknowledge their stature.

STOCK MARKET

TRUMP: "If the stock market goes up or down — I don't watch the stock market. I watch jobs." — remarks Tuesday during NATO summit after stocks fell sharply.

THE FACTS: This is not true. Trump watches the stock market, as he demonstrated Friday when the market rebounded and he tweeted precise percentages of how much the S&P, Dow and Nasdaq have gone up this year. "Stock Markets Up Record Numbers," he tweeted.

Trump uses the stock market as a leading barometer of his presidency, giving the subject a rest only when the market's performance is down.

It's an almost constant companion, through thick but not thin.

On a good day, he will tweet about it. Otherwise, his rally speeches and White House remarks are laced with references to the market's growth since he became president. He takes credit for gains and blames losses on other things, like Democrats.

Trump tweeted about the stock market more than a dozen times in November as it repeatedly edged into record highs.

On one occasion, his boastfulness became too much even for him. He tweeted: "Stock Markets (all three) hit another ALL TIME & HISTORIC HIGH yesterday! You are sooo lucky to have me as your President." Then he added: "(just kidding!)."

MACRON

TRUMP, on French President Emmanuel Macron's assertion that NATO is suffering "brain death": "He's taken back his comments very much so on NATO." — remarks Wednesday in London.

THE FACTS: No, Macron did not back off what Trump had called a "very, very nasty" statement about NATO. He conspicuously stood by it, before the summit, after it and when face to face with Trump in a tense joint news conference. If anything, Macron appeared to relish the provocation he had brought on.

"I do stand by it," he said Tuesday as Trump looked on. "I assume full responsibility for it," he said Wednesday. And Macron tweeted: "The comments I made about NATO prompted a debate among members of the alliance. This dialogue is a very good thing." He likened himself to an ice-breaker smashing through ice.

Macron characterized NATO as brain dead last month, citing a lack of U.S. leadership and confusion in the alliance about what its fundamental missions should be. He said the U.S. was turning its back on NATO and — in light of Trump's unexpected announcement in October that he would withdraw troops from Syria — not coordinating with allies on strategic decision-making.

On Wednesday, Macron mildly praised the summit as "constructive" while emphasizing that the fundamentals that sparked his complaint had not been resolved.

OCEAN DEBRIS

TRUMP: "I also see what's happening with our oceans, where certain countries are dumping unlimited loads of things in it. They float — they tend to float toward the United States. I see that happening, and nobody has ever seen anything like it, and it's gotten worse." — remarks Tuesday with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

THE FACTS: He's right that garbage from abroad has come to U.S. shores by sea. What he does not say, when making this repeated complaint, is that garbage from the U.S. also makes it over the ocean to

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other countries and that Americans have plenty to do with trashing their own shores.

Debris from Asia was most noticeable after the 2011 Japanese tsunami, said marine debris expert Kara Lavender Law of the Sea Education Association, "but the same can be said about debris entering the ocean from the U.S. and washing ashore in Asia." In fact, she said, most debris is not tracked to the country of origin.

The United States produces the largest amount of plastic waste in the world by weight, Law said.

"Most debris we find on the coast of the US is likely from the US," Denise Hardesty, a scientist who researches ocean trash for Australia's federal science organization, said by email.

Hardesty surveyed the U.S. West Coast from Washington to the California border with Mexico and found the dirtiest place was in Long Beach at the river mouth, where researchers found 4,500 items.

Marcus Eriksen, chief science officer and co-founder of the 5 Gyres Institute, which fights plastics pollution, said Asian fishing gear arrives as debris in Alaska and British Columbia because of north Pacific currents, a problem exacerbated by the lack of regulation of such gear. But in pointing the finger at Asia, Trump is ignoring "our own problems with plastic waste here at home."

IMPEACHMENT

TRUMP: "The word 'impeachment' is a dirty word, and it's a word that was only supposed to be used in special occasions: high crimes and misdemeanors. In this case, there was no crime whatsoever. Not even a little tiny crime. There was no crime whatsoever, and they know it." — remarks Wednesday with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte.

THE FACTS: That's a misrepresentation of the conditions for impeaching a president. The constitutional grounds for impeachment do not require any crime to have been committed. In setting the conditions, treason, bribery or high crimes and misdemeanors, the Founding Fathers said that a consequential abuse of office — crime or not — was subject to the impeachment process they laid out.

Months after the 1787 Constitutional Convention, Alexander Hamilton explained in the Federalist Papers that a commonly understood crime need not be the basis of impeachment. Offenses qualifying for that step "are of a nature ... POLITICAL, as they relate chiefly to injuries done immediately to the society itself," he wrote.

As they move toward drafting articles of impeachment, though, Democrats are alleging crimes involving obstruction of justice as part of their case that Trump abused his office.

TRUMP, on his July 25 call with Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy: "All you have to do is listen to the call or read the call. We had it transcribed perfectly. But he was — he said — no pressure, no nothing. There was no nothing." — remarks Wednesday with Conte.

TRUMP: "Breaking News: The President of Ukraine has just again announced that President Trump has done nothing wrong with respect to Ukraine and our interactions or calls ... case over!" — tweet Monday.

THE FACTS: Trump misleads in suggesting that Zelenskyy didn't have any concerns about the call. Nor was the call "transcribed perfectly;" only a rough transcript was released by the White House.

While Zelenskyy initially said there was no discussion of a quid pro quo, he said in an interview Monday with Time that Trump should not have blocked military aid to Ukraine. Zelenskyy also criticized Trump for casting the country as corrupt, saying it sends a concerning message to international allies.

On that call discussing military aid, Trump asked Zelenskyy to investigate Trump's political rivals in the U.S.

"Look I never talked to the president from the position of a quid pro quo," Zelenskyy said. "But you have to understand. We're at war. If you're our strategic partner, then you can't go blocking anything for us. I think that's just about fairness."

On corruption, Zelenskyy said it unfairly undermines support for the country.

"Everyone hears that signal," he said. "Investments, banks, stakeholders, companies, American, European, companies that have international capital in Ukraine, it's a signal to them that says, 'Be careful, don't invest.' Or, 'Get out of there.'"

It's true that in early October, Zelenskyy had told reporters "there was no pressure or blackmail from the

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U.S.” But he did not state Trump had done “nothing” wrong, even as he let his criticisms simmer before surfacing them.

In any event, Zelenskiy knew months before the call that much-needed U.S. military support might depend on whether he was willing to help Trump by investigating Democrats.

TRUMP: “For the hearings, we don’t get a lawyer.” — remarks Tuesday with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

THE FACTS: Trump is wrong about being deprived of an attorney in the House Judiciary Committee hearings. The committee invited Trump and his lawyers to appear if he wishes, but the White House refused.

In a letter early in the week to Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., White House counsel Pat Cipollone declined the invitation for the president’s counsel to appear at Wednesday’s hearing while Trump was at the NATO summit, insisting that the inquiry violates “basic due process rights.”

For hearings in the coming week, Trump had until Friday to decide whether he would take advantage of due process protections afforded to him under House rules adopted in October. He was offered an opportunity to ask for witness testimony and to cross-examine the witnesses called by the House. But he decided not to participate in that round, too.

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.

RONNA MCDANIEL, Republican National Committee chairwoman, on Democrats who said the Russia investigation should be part of the basis for impeaching Trump, not just his actions with Ukraine: “Are you kidding me? They lied for 2 years about collusion & POTUS was exonerated.” — tweet Thursday, using POTUS as an abbreviation of president of the U.S.

THE FACTS: She’s wrong to suggest that special counsel Robert Mueller’s report cleared the Trump campaign of collusion with Russia. Nor did the report exonerate Trump on the question of whether he obstructed justice.

Instead, the report factually laid out instances in which Trump might have obstructed justice, leaving it open for Congress to take up the matter or for prosecutors to do so once Trump leaves office.

Mueller’s two-year investigation and other scrutiny revealed a multitude of meetings with Russians. Among them: Donald Trump Jr.’s meeting with a Russian lawyer who had promised dirt on Clinton.

On collusion, Mueller said he did not assess whether that occurred because it is not a legal term.

He looked into a potential criminal conspiracy between Russia and the Trump campaign and said the investigation did not collect sufficient evidence to establish criminal charges on that front.

Mueller noted some Trump campaign officials had declined to testify under the Fifth Amendment or had provided false or incomplete testimony, making it difficult to get a complete picture of what happened during the 2016 campaign. The special counsel wrote that he “cannot rule out the possibility” that unavailable information could have cast a different light on the investigation’s findings.

Mueller also did not reach a conclusion as to whether the president obstructed justice or broke any other law.

He said his team declined to make a prosecutorial judgment on whether to charge Trump, partly because of a Justice Department legal opinion that said sitting presidents shouldn’t be indicted.

TRADE

TRUMP: “We won, in the World Trade Organization, we won seven and a half billion dollars. We never used to win before me, because, before me, the United States was a sucker for all of these different organizations.” — remarks Tuesday with Stoltenberg.

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THE FACTS: He is wildly wrong to state that the U.S. never won victories in disputes taken to the trade organization before him.

The U.S. has always had a high success rate when it pursues cases against other countries at the WTO. In 2017, trade analyst Daniel Ikenson of the libertarian Cato Institute found that the U.S. won 91% of the cases it took to the Geneva-based trade monitor.

As Ikenson noted, countries bringing complaints to the organization tend to win because they don't bother going to the WTO in the first place if they don't have a strong case.

As for Trump's claim that the U.S. "won" \$7.5 billion from the WTO, that's not quite right.

Trump was referring to a WTO decision in October siding with the U.S. on imposing tariffs on \$7.5 billion worth of European imports annually. The value of the tariffs on those imports is much less than \$7.5 billion.

The WTO announcement culminated a 15-year fight over EU subsidies for Airbus — a fight that began long before Trump was in office.

ISLAMIC STATE

TRUMP: "We have a tremendous amount of captured fighters, ISIS fighters over in Syria. And, they're all under lock and key, but many are from France, many are from Germany. Many are from U.K. They are mostly from Europe." — remarks Tuesday with Macron.

MACRON: There are "very large number of fighters ... ISIS fighters coming from Syria, from Iraq and the region." Those from Europe are "a tiny minority of the overall problem."

THE FACTS: Trump is incorrect to say the Islamic State fighters who were captured and held by the Kurds in Syria are mostly from Europe.

Of the more than 12,000 IS fighters in custody in Kurdish areas, only 2,500 are from outside the region of the conflict, some from Europe, some from other parts of the world. Most of the captured fighters — about 10,000 — are natives of Syria or Iraq.

European nations have indeed been reluctant to take detainees who came from Europe, frustrating Trump. But such detainees are far fewer than the majority he frequently claims.

TRUMP, on protecting oilfields in Syria: "We have the oil, and we can do with the oil what we want." — remarks Tuesday with Stoltenberg.

THE FACTS: That's not true. The oil in Syria belongs to Syria and the U.S. can't do anything it wants with it.

As secretary of state, Rex Tillerson reviewed whether the U.S. could make money off the oil-rich areas and concluded there was no practical way to do so, said Brett McGurk, Trump's former special envoy to the global coalition to defeat IS. "Maybe there are new lawyers now, but it was just illegal for an American company to go and seize and exploit these assets," McGurk told a panel on Syria held in October by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Stephen Vladeck, a national security law professor at the University of Texas at Austin, said there is no solid legal argument the Trump administration could make if it sought to claim Syria's oil.

While Trump has said he will withdraw the bulk of roughly 1,000 American troops from Syria, he's made clear he will leave some military forces in the country to help secure the oil from any IS resurgence.

The Pentagon has said it is committed to sending additional military forces to eastern Syria to "reinforce" control of the oil fields and prevent them from "falling back to into the hands of ISIS or other destabilizing actors."

BRITAIN'S HEALTH CARE

TRUMP, speaking about claims that Britain's state-funded health care system would be part of future U.K.-U.S. trade talks: "I don't even know where that rumor started. We have absolutely nothing to do with it and we wouldn't want to. If you handed it to us on a silver platter, we want nothing to do with it." — remarks Tuesday with Stoltenberg.

THE FACTS: He's referring to his own past statements as a "rumor."

Asked about the National Health Service during a visit to Britain in June, he said "when you're dealing

in trade, everything's on the table. So, NHS or anything else."

The service, which provides free health care to all Britons, could in fact be a bargaining chip in U.S.-U.K. trade talks. U.S. health-services companies can already bid for contracts if they have European subsidiaries. A future government could increase the amount of private-sector involvement or let U.S. companies bid directly.

As well, the U.S. could demand during trade talks that Britain pay American pharmaceutical companies more for drugs. Medicines became a big issue in negotiations on a revamped North American free trade deal, as the U.S. pushed successfully for tighter restrictions on the development in Canada and Mexico of generic versions of U.S.-patented drugs.

Leaked documents from preliminary talks between U.S. and U.K. negotiators over two years from July 2017 — released by the Labour Party last week — said "patent issues" around "NHS access to generic drugs will be a key consideration" in talks.

It's an overstatement to say the national health service as a whole would be up for sale, as Labour has alleged will happen if Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservatives win the Dec. 12 election and try to strike a post-Brexit trade deal with the U.S. Britain would not be "selling off" the health service, as Labour asserts, because taxpayers would still be footing the bill.

But it's also improbable to think U.S. negotiators would "want nothing to do" with Britain's health care market, despite Trump's words.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker, Seth Borenstein, Darlene Superville and Paul Wiseman in Washington, Jill Lawless in London and Sylvie Corbet in Paris contributed to this report.

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Lebanon's journalists suffer abuse, threats covering unrest

By **BASSEM MROUE** Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanese journalists are facing threats and wide-ranging harassment in their work — including verbal insults and physical attacks, even death threats — while reporting on nearly 50 days of anti-government protests, despite Lebanon's reputation as a haven for free speech in a troubled region.

Nationwide demonstrations erupted on Oct. 17 over a plunging economy. They quickly grew into calls for sweeping aside Lebanon's entire ruling elite. Local media outlets — some of which represent the sectarian interests protesters are looking to overthrow — are now largely seen as pro- or anti-protests, with some journalists feeling pressured to leave their workplaces over disagreements about media coverage.

The deteriorating situation for journalists in Lebanon comes despite its decades-old reputation for being an island of free press in the Arab world. Amid Lebanon's divided politics, media staff have usually had wide range to freely express their opinions, unlike in other countries in the region where the state stifles the media.

The acts of harassment began early in the protests. MTV television reporter Nawal Berry was attacked in central Beirut in the first days of the demonstrations by supporters of the militant group Hezbollah and its allies. They smashed the camera, robbed the microphone she was holding, spat on her and kicked her in the leg.

"How is it possible that a journalist today goes to report and gets subjected to beating and humiliation? Where are we? Lebanon is the country of freedoms and democracy," Berry told The Associated Press.

Outlets like MTV are widely seen as backing protesters' demands that Lebanon's sectarian political system be completely overturned to end decades of corruption and mismanagement.

Rival TV stations and newspapers portray the unrest — which led to the Cabinet's resignation over a

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month ago — as playing into the hands of alleged plots to undermine Hezbollah and its allies. Many of those outlets are run by Hezbollah, President Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement and the Amal Movement of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. These media regularly blast protesters for closing roads and using other civil disobedience tactics, describing them as "bandits."

For Berry, the media environment worsened as the unrest continued. On the night of Nov. 24, while she was covering clashes between protesters and Hezbollah and Amal supporters on a central road in Beirut, supporters of the Shiite groups chased her into a building. She hid there until police came and escorted her out.

"I was doing my job and will continue to do so. I have passed through worse periods and was able to overcome them," said Berry, who added she is taking a short break from working because of what she passed through recently.

Hezbollah supporters also targeted Dima Sadek, who resigned last month as an anchorwoman at LBC TV. She blamed Hezbollah supporters for stealing her smartphone while she was filming protests, and said the harassment was followed by insulting and threatening phone calls to her mother, who suffered a stroke as a result of the stress.

"I have taken a decision (to be part of the protests) and I am following it. I have been waiting for this moment all my life and I have always been against the political, sectarian and corrupt system in Lebanon," said Sadek, a harsh critic of Hezbollah, adding that she has been subjected to cyberbullying for the past four years.

"I know very well that this will have repercussions on my personal and professional life. I will go to the end no matter what the price is," Sadek said shortly after taking part in a demonstration in central Beirut.

On Friday night, a video was widely circulated on social media of a Shiite cleric harshly criticizing Sadek during a sermon in southern Lebanon, describing her as a person "fighting God and his prophet." The cleric then says Sadek is a bandit and that according to Islamic law, she should be either "crucified" or have her right arm and left leg amputated or be sent into exile.

"I'm speechless," Sadek said when asked about the video.

Protesters have also targeted journalists reporting with what are seen as pro-government outlets. OTV station workers briefly removed their logos from equipment while covering on the demonstrations to avoid verbal and physical abuse. The station is run by supporters of Aoun's FPM.

"The protest movement has turned our lives upside down," said OTV journalist Rima Hamdan, who during one of her reports slapped a man on his hand after he pointed his middle finger at her. She said the station's logo "is our identity even though sometimes we had to remove it for our own safety."

Television reporters with Hezbollah's Al-Manar and Amal's NBN channels were also attacked by protesters in a town near Beirut, when they were covering the closure of the highway linking the capital with southern Lebanon. In a video, an NBN correspondent is seen being attacked, while troops and policemen stand nearby without intervening.

"This happens a lot in Lebanon because some media organizations are politicized. No one sees media organizations as they are but sees them as representing the political group that owns them," said Ayman Mhanna, director of the Beirut-based media watchdog group SKeyes.

"The biggest problem regarding these violations is that there is no punishment," Mhanna said. Authorities usually fail to act even when they identify those behind attacks on journalists, he added.

Coverage of the protests also led to several journalists resigning from one of Lebanon's most prominent newspapers, Al-Akhbar, which is seen as close to Hezbollah, and the pan-Arab TV station Al-Mayadeen, which aligns closely with the policies of Iran, Syria and Venezuela.

Joy Slim, who quit as culture writer at Al-Akhbar after more than five years, said she did so after being "disappointed" with the daily's coverage of the demonstrations. She released a video widely circulated on social media that ridiculed those who accuse the protesters of being American agents.

Sami Kleib, a prominent Lebanese journalist with a wide following around the Middle East, resigned from Al-Mayadeen last month. He said the reason behind his move was that he was "closer to the people

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than the authorities.”

“The Lebanese media is similar to politics in Lebanon where there is division between two axes: One that supports the idea of conspiracy theory, and another that fully backs the protest movement with its advantages and disadvantages,” Kleib said.

No. 13 Oregon ends No. 5 Utah’s playoff hopes with 37-15 win

By JOSH DUBOW AP Sports Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — The one constant all season for Utah was the ability to control the trenches against any opponent.

With a possible playoff berth and first Pac-12 title in school history on the line, the Utes more than met their match against Oregon.

CJ Verdell ran for 208 yards and broke open the game with two long touchdown runs in the fourth quarter, and No. 13 Oregon spoiled No. 5 Utah’s playoff hopes with a 37-15 victory in the Pac-12 championship game Friday night.

“Unfortunately we came up short tonight,” coach Kyle Whittingham said. “Disappointing thing is we lost in the one area we’ve been undefeated this year: line of scrimmage. We didn’t win the line of scrimmage for the first time all season, which is, like I say, disappointing. Surprising really.”

The Utes (11-2, No. 5 CFP) came into the game hoping to make a case for one of the four playoff spots with a conference title but instead got overmatched by Oregon (11-2, No. 13 CFP) and lost their second straight Pac-12 championship game.

Utah held 11 of 12 opponents to less than 100 yards rushing and led the nation by allowing 56.3 yards rushing per game, prompting plenty of pregame talk about how the Utes’ physical dominance could be the determining factor.

The Ducks took that personally and responded.

“Definitely put a little chip on our shoulders,” Verdell said. “We try not to focus on the outside noise too much. Hearing they’re the most physical team in the Pac-12 made us want to come out here and work even harder.”

The Utes fell into a 20-0 hole in the first half and then gave up a 70-yard TD run to Verdell after cutting the deficit to 23-15, paving the way for the winner of the Big 12 title game between Oklahoma and Baylor to get into the playoff as long as No. 1 LSU beats No. 4 Georgia for the SEC championship.

“We didn’t really think far ahead but it’s obvious what was at stake, more than just the Rose Bowl,” left tackle Darrin Paulo said. “It’s disappointing. I can’t really wrap my head around it right now. We knew that Oregon was a good team and we knew that we can’t overlook them so we didn’t look beyond that but we knew, everyone knew, what was at stake besides the Rose Bowl.”

The Utes got back into the game with TD passes from Tyler Huntley to Zack Moss and Samson Nacua in the third quarter to cut the deficit to 23-15.

Utah then drove into Oregon territory before Huntley was sacked by Keyvon Thibodeaux on second down, leading to a punt on fourth-and-4 from the 40.

Verdell struck with his big run five plays later and added a 31-yard score later in the fourth against the nation’s top-ranked run defense to put the game out of reach.

That gave quarterback Justin Herbert and the rest of the senior class a Rose Bowl berth after starting their careers with a 4-8 mark in 2016.

“It’s validation,” coach Mario Cristobal said. “It’s validation for all that they’ve done. I don’t know if anyone here has been through a 4-8 season. I’ve been through one of those. It’s about as horrible and miserable as it gets. It causes some people to break down, some people to quit, some people to leave. Then there’s a core that just puts their foot in the ground and says, ‘We’re going to change things.’”

The Ducks sent the tone early when they stuffed Moss for no gain on two short-yardage attempts from the Oregon 33 on the opening drive. Oregon drove down and took the lead for good on Verdell’s 3-yard run.

The Utes kept making more mistakes and the Ducks only added to the lead. After forcing a three and

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out, Oregon got a field goal on the next drive, then blocked a punt after Utah committed a false start on fourth-and-1 before Brady Breeze intercepted a pass in the end zone.

Oregon then struck on a 45-yard strike from Herbert to Johnny Johnson III and led 20-0 at the break.

THE TAKEAWAY

Utah: The Utes were seeking their biggest win since joining the Pac-12 in 2011. Instead, they had a second straight disappointing performance in the conference title game after losing 10-3 to Washington last year. Now instead of a playoff berth or even a spot in the Rose Bowl, the Utes must hope to stay high enough in the playoff rankings to get into a New Year's Six game.

Oregon: The victory left as many questions for the Ducks as answers. Had Oregon not blown a 21-6 second-half lead to Auburn in the opener or come out flat in a 31-28 loss at Arizona State two weeks ago, the Ducks could have been the team with a case for a playoff berth. Instead they will have to settle for the Rose Bowl.

FOURTH DOWN DECISION

After getting stopped on three fourth and shorts and committing a false start to squander another chance, Whittingham opted to punt on fourth down in Oregon territory with less than 10 minutes to play. The Utes pinned the Ducks at the 10 but the move backfired when Oregon drove the length of the field thanks to Verdell's long run.

"I would have bet the house that our defense would have been able to get a stop," Whittingham said. "Number one run defense in the country. Had a lot of confidence in them at that point. They just creased us on one. That was something we couldn't recover from."

THIBODEAUX'S DAY

Thibodeaux came into the season as one of the most heralded recruits in the country and delivered on the biggest stage he's played on so far. He had 2 1/2 of Oregon's six sacks and also blocked a punt.

"I'm going to continue to get better," he said. "You could say it's only up from here, as long as I keep putting in the work, should see good results."

UP NEXT

Utah: Bowl game to be determined.

Oregon: The Rose Bowl against a Big Ten team on Jan. 1.

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/tag/Collegefootball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

PG&E says it has reached \$13.5 billion wildfire settlement

By JOHN ROGERS Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Pacific Gas and Electric announced Friday it has reached a tentative \$13.5 billion settlement resolving all major claims related to the deadly, devastating Northern California wildfires of 2017-2018 that were blamed on its outdated equipment and negligence.

The utility says the deal, which still requires court approval, represents a key step in leading it out of Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

The deal is expected to resolve all claims arising from a series of deadly 2017 Northern California wildfires and the 2018 Camp Fire, which killed 85 people and all but incinerated the town of Paradise. It also resolves claims from the 2015 Butte Fire and Oakland's 2016 Ghost Ship Fire.

"From the beginning of the Chapter 11 process, getting wildfire victims fairly compensated, especially the individuals, has been our primary goal," Bill Johnson, PG&E Corporation's CEO and president, said in a statement Friday. "We want to help our customers, our neighbors and our friends in those impacted areas recover and rebuild after these tragic wildfires."

In most cases the 2017 and 2018 fires were blamed on power lines, and two attorneys representing more than 5,000 Northern California fire victims hailed the settlement.

"I think it's a fantastic result," said attorney Rich Bridgford of Bridgford, Gleason & Artinian, adding it will not only compensate thousands of devastated fire victims but also require PG&E to put billions into

overhauling its infrastructure to prevent future disasters.

"You have to be mindful of the fact that PG&E is in bankruptcy," he added. "This means they are required to perform a delicate balancing act aimed at achieving dual goals of deterring bad past behavior on the one hand and on the other hand keeping the utility financially viable so that it can function and keep power flowing. We believe the settlement achieves this delicate balance."

The 2018 Camp Fire was California's deadliest and destroyed nearly 18,000 structures. The series of wildfires that spread across a wide stretch of Northern California in 2017 killed dozens and burned tens of thousands of structures.

"The goal of the litigation from the very beginning has been to change their behavior, and that is their lack of safety standards and the way they manage and maintain their equipment," attorney James Frantz said of PG&E.

The settlement is still subject to a number of conditions involving PG&E's Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization plans, which must be completed by June 30, 2020.

Friday's proposal responds to pressure from Gov. Gavin Newsom to give wildfire victims more than the utility originally offered, but it still relies on the bankruptcy judge's approval as part of the proceedings. A February hearing at which an official estimation of losses will be made still looms for the utility and could upend any settlement deals.

"We appreciate all the hard work by many stakeholders that went into reaching this agreement," PG&E's Johnson said. "With this important milestone now accomplished, we are focused on emerging from Chapter 11 as the utility of the future that our customers and communities expect and deserve."

PG&E said the proposed settlement is the third it has reached as it works through its Chapter 11 case. The utility previously reached a \$1 billion settlement with cities, counties and other public utilities and an \$11 billion agreement with insurance companies and other entities that have paid claims relating to the 2017 and 2018 fires.

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AP Exclusive: 629 Pakistani girls sold as brides to China

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP) — Page after page, the names stack up: 629 girls and women from across Pakistan who were sold as brides to Chinese men and taken to China. The list, obtained by The Associated Press, was compiled by Pakistani investigators determined to break up trafficking networks exploiting the country's poor and vulnerable.

The list gives the most concrete figure yet for the number of women caught up in the trafficking schemes since 2018.

But since the time it was put together in June, investigators' aggressive drive against the networks has largely ground to a halt. Officials with knowledge of the investigations say that is because of pressure from government officials fearful of hurting Pakistan's lucrative ties to Beijing.

The biggest case against traffickers has fallen apart. In October, a court in Faisalabad acquitted 31 Chinese nationals charged in connection with trafficking. Several of the women who had initially been interviewed by police refused to testify because they were either threatened or bribed into silence, according to a court official and a police investigator familiar with the case. The two spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared retribution for speaking out.

At the same time, the government has sought to curtail investigations, putting "immense pressure" on officials from the Federal Investigation Agency pursuing trafficking networks, said Saleem Iqbal, a Christian activist who has helped parents rescue several young girls from China and prevented others from being sent there.

"Some (FIA officials) were even transferred," Iqbal said in an interview. "When we talk to Pakistani rulers, they don't pay any attention."

Asked about the complaints, Pakistan's interior and foreign ministries refused to comment.

Several senior officials familiar with the events said investigations into trafficking have slowed, the investigators are frustrated, and Pakistani media have been pushed to curb their reporting on trafficking. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared reprisals.

"No one is doing anything to help these girls," one of the officials said. "The whole racket is continuing, and it is growing. Why? Because they know they can get away with it. The authorities won't follow through, everyone is being pressured to not investigate. Trafficking is increasing now."

He said he was speaking out "because I have to live with myself. Where is our humanity?"

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China's Foreign Ministry said it was unaware of the list.

"The two governments of China and Pakistan support the formation of happy families between their people on a voluntary basis in keeping with laws and regulations, while at the same time having zero tolerance for and resolutely fighting against any person engaging in illegal cross-border marriage behavior," the ministry said in a statement faxed Monday to AP's Beijing bureau.

An AP investigation earlier this year revealed how Pakistan's Christian minority has become a new target of brokers who pay impoverished parents to marry off their daughters, some of them teenagers, to Chinese husbands who return with them to their homeland. Many of the brides are then isolated and abused or forced into prostitution in China, often contacting home and pleading to be brought back. The AP spoke to police and court officials and more than a dozen brides — some of whom made it back to Pakistan, others who remained trapped in China — as well as remorseful parents, neighbors, relatives and human rights workers.

Christians are targeted because they are one of the poorest communities in Muslim-majority Pakistan. The trafficking rings are made up of Chinese and Pakistani middlemen and include Christian ministers, mostly from small evangelical churches, who get bribes to urge their flock to sell their daughters. Investigators have also turned up at least one Muslim cleric running a marriage bureau from his madrassa, or religious school.

Investigators put together the list of 629 women from Pakistan's integrated border management system, which digitally records travel documents at the country's airports. The information includes the brides' national identity numbers, their Chinese husbands' names and the dates of their marriages.

All but a handful of the marriages took place in 2018 and up to April 2019. One of the senior officials said it was believed all 629 were sold to grooms by their families.

It is not known how many more women and girls were trafficked since the list was put together. But the official said, "the lucrative trade continues." He spoke to the AP in an interview conducted hundreds of kilometers from his place of work to protect his identity. "The Chinese and Pakistani brokers make between 4 million and 10 million rupees (\$25,000 and \$65,000) from the groom, but only about 200,000 rupees (\$1,500), is given to the family," he said.

The official, with years of experience studying human trafficking in Pakistan, said many of the women who spoke to investigators told of forced fertility treatments, physical and sexual abuse and, in some cases, forced prostitution. Although no evidence has emerged, at least one investigation report contains allegations of organs being harvested from some of the women sent to China.

In September, Pakistan's investigation agency sent a report it labeled "fake Chinese marriages cases" to Prime Minister Imran Khan. The report, a copy of which was attained by the AP, provided details of cases registered against 52 Chinese nationals and 20 of their Pakistani associates in two cities in eastern Punjab province — Faisalabad, Lahore — as well as in the capital Islamabad. The Chinese suspects included the 31 later acquitted in court.

The report said police discovered two illegal marriage bureaus in Lahore, including one operated from an Islamic center and madrassa — the first known report of poor Muslims also being targeted by brokers. The Muslim cleric involved fled police.

After the acquittals, there are other cases before the courts involving arrested Pakistani and at least another 21 Chinese suspects, according to the report sent to the prime minister in September. But the Chinese defendants in the cases were all granted bail and left the country, say activists and a court official.

Activists and human rights workers say Pakistan has sought to keep the trafficking of brides quiet so as not to jeopardize Pakistan's increasingly close economic relationship with China.

China has been a steadfast ally of Pakistan for decades, particularly in its testy relationship with India. China has provided Islamabad with military assistance, including pre-tested nuclear devices and nuclear-capable missiles.

Today, Pakistan is receiving massive aid under China's Belt and Road Initiative, a global endeavor aimed at reconstituting the Silk Road and linking China to all corners of Asia. Under the \$75 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, Beijing has promised Islamabad a sprawling package of infrastructure develop-

ment, from road construction and power plants to agriculture.

The demand for foreign brides in China is rooted in that country's population, where there are roughly 34 million more men than women — a result of the one-child policy that ended in 2015 after 35 years, along with an overwhelming preference for boys that led to abortions of girl children and female infanticide.

A report released this month by Human Rights Watch, documenting trafficking in brides from Myanmar to China, said the practice is spreading. It said Pakistan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea and Vietnam have "all have become source countries for a brutal business."

"One of the things that is very striking about this issue is how fast the list is growing of countries that are known to be source countries in the bride trafficking business," Heather Barr, the HRW report's author, told AP.

Omar Warriach, Amnesty International's campaigns director for South Asia, said Pakistan "must not let its close relationship with China become a reason to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses against its own citizens" — either in abuses of women sold as brides or separation of Pakistani women from husbands from China's Muslim Uighur population sent to "re-education camps" to turn them away from Islam.

"It is horrifying that women are being treated this way without any concern being shown by the authorities in either country. And it's shocking that it's happening on this scale," he said.

Associated Press writers Munir Ahmed and Shahid Aslam in Islamabad contributed to this report.

Warren, Buttigieg scrap puts Democratic divide on display

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Elizabeth Warren has spent weeks absorbing attacks from moderate rivals looking to blunt her surging campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. Now, as the Massachusetts senator risks losing momentum, she's starting to hit back.

After a Democratic Party fundraiser in Boston on Thursday night, Warren blasted Pete Buttigieg, who is emerging as a leading moderate candidate in the lead-off Iowa caucuses set for Feb. 3. She criticized the South Bend, Indiana, mayor for holding closed-door fundraisers with big donors.

"I think that Mayor Pete should open up the doors so that anyone can come in and report on what's being said," Warren said. "Those doors shouldn't be closed, and no one should be left to wonder what kind of promises are being made to the people that then pony up big bucks to be in the room."

Like Warren, Buttigieg has spent much of the past year presenting himself as someone uninterested in political squabbling. But that didn't stop his senior adviser, Lis Smith, from chiding Warren for not being forthcoming about her past legal work representing corporate clients.

"If @ewarren wants to have a debate about transparency, she can start by opening up the doors to the decades of tax returns she's hiding from her work as a corporate lawyer — often defending the types of corporate bad actors she now denounces," Smith tweeted.

Warren responded by suggesting to reporters in New Hampshire on Friday that Buttigieg was trying to "deflect" the issue, adding, "But he's going to be in New York next week, and he's going to do three big fundraisers with rich people."

While testy exchanges are to be expected with voting now looming, this one reflects the deep divides over the Democratic Party's philosophical direction. The progressive populism that helped fuel Warren's rise over the summer has become something of a liability as moderates including Buttigieg and former Vice President Joe Biden question the feasibility of her approach — and find voters are receptive to that skepticism.

"I think there's no doubt that the center approach is getting another look right now," said Mitch Landrieu, a former mayor of New Orleans who was once mentioned as a possible 2020 contender and believes the country wants a "transition" away from President Donald Trump rather than a full political "transformation."

The latter is exactly what Warren has been pitching voters for the better part of the past year, championing a wealth tax, a "Medicare for All" plan giving government-sponsored health care to every American

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and canceling trillions in college debt. Those issues dominated the primary for months but are now starting to be edged out by questions about whether a more practical approach will be needed to topple Trump in the general election.

Biden is aggressively pitching a more pragmatic center-left agenda, emphasizing his decades in the Senate. "The Medicare for All option may be a nice idea, but it is very, very, very difficult to get done," Biden said this week in Iowa. "I don't think the bulk of the enthusiasm of the Democratic Party is for Medicare for All."

Billionaire Michael Bloomberg, the former New York City mayor, has joined the race betting he also can be a more-moderate alternative — and Warren has similarly critiqued him. Appearing this week on his own network, Bloomberg TV, Warren said of the ex-mayor: "I don't think, as a Democratic Party, that we should say that the only way you're going to get elected, the only way you're going to be our nominee, is either if you are a billionaire or if you're sucking up to billionaires."

Warren's polls began to stall in late October, when she announced plans to spend \$20.5 trillion over a decade to implement Medicare for All but then unveiled a more gradual "transition plan." The senator said that she'd push to get the full proposal through Congress by the end of her third year as president and, in the meantime, use existing, public insurance options to expand health care coverage.

Some saw that as too similar to "public option" plans being championed by Biden and Buttigieg, who argue that candidates backing Medicare for All will spook general election voters who aren't ready to fully scrap their private, usually employer-based health insurance plans.

Kevin A. Nathan, a 48-year-old cybersecurity administrator who attended a recent Warren event in Raleigh, North Carolina, said Warren may need a "strong undercard" in her choice of running mate — should she be the Democratic nominee — to reassure those afraid she's too liberal to beat Trump.

"I think if people took time to dive into her policies rather than let others tell them about who she is she'd be electable," Nathan said.

The race's other leading progressive voice belongs to Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who has remained among its front-runners despite having a heart attack — even when it looked like Warren might run away with the most liberal wing of the party over the summer.

Sanders has lately reminded voters that he plans to send a Medicare for All bill to Congress during his first week as president — drawing a stark contrast with Warren over a progressive issue on which the pair otherwise agree and countering the notion that the primary will come down to a center-against-left dogfight.

"There's a corporate wing of the party who are desperate to hold onto power," said Jeff Weaver, Sanders' chief strategist. "It's not moderate vs. liberal or progressive vs. moderate. It's progressive vs. corporate, and progressive is going to win."

Warren's campaign spent only about \$520,000 on TV advertising in Iowa through mid-November but says it has reserved \$4.7 million worth of television airtime there and in the states that vote next: New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina in January and February. Her backers note that none of the candidates bunched near the top of the polls has begun pulling away — meaning there's still time to make up ground.

"Fundamentally, most Democratic primary voters are progressive," said Adam Green, a leading liberal activist and Warren ally. "They want someone with big ideas, and they also want to defeat Trump."

Green said Warren getting months of attacks has frightened primary voters and affected her polling — but that it won't last as candidates including Buttigieg face the added scrutiny that comes with their own rises.

"By January," he said, "it starts to stabilize."

That's already beginning to happen. Buttigieg is under scrutiny for refusing to discuss the three years he spent working for the consulting firm McKinsey & Co., pointing to a nondisclosure agreement he signed. A voter pressed Buttigieg on the issue Friday as he campaigned in New Hampshire.

"It's not like I was running the place," he said. "It was my first job out of school." He added that the company "basically reflects what's wrong with corporate America."

Associated Press writers Hunter Woodall in Concord, N.H., and Bill Barrow in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, con-

tributed to this report.

'All roads lead to Putin': Impeachment ties Ukraine, Russia

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats are bringing the impeachment focus back to Russia as they draft formal charges against President Donald Trump.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi is connecting the dots — “all roads lead to Putin,” she says — and making the argument that Trump’s pressure campaign on Ukraine was not an isolated incident but part of a troubling bond with the Russian president reaching back to special counsel Robert Mueller’s findings on the 2016 election.

“This has been going on for 2 1/2 years,” Pelosi said Friday.

“This isn’t about Ukraine,” she explained a day earlier. “It’s about Russia. Who benefited by our withholding of that military assistance? Russia.”

The framing is taking on greater urgency and importance, both as a practical matter and a political one, as Democrats move seriously into writing the articles of impeachment.

It’s an attempt to explain why Americans should care that Trump pushed Ukraine to investigate rival Joe Biden while withholding \$400 million in military aid that Congress had approved for the struggling Eastern European ally fighting a border war with Russia.

“Sometimes people say, ‘Well I don’t know about Ukraine. I don’t know that much about Ukraine,’” Pelosi said Thursday after announcing the decision to draft formal charges. “Well, our adversary in this is Russia. All roads lead to Putin. Understand that.”

At the same time, tracing the arc of Trump’s behavior from the 2016 campaign to the present, stitches it all together. And that helps the speaker balance her left-flank liberals, who want more charges brought against Trump, including from Mueller’s report, and centrist Democrats who prefer to keep the argument more narrowly focused on Ukraine.

Pelosi and her team are trying to convey a message that impeachment is indeed about Ukraine — Trump’s asking-for-a-favor phone call that sparked the probe — but also about a pattern of behavior that could stoke renewed concern about his attitude toward Russia ahead of the 2020 election.

“It shows that a leopard doesn’t change his spots,” said Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif., a member of the Intelligence Committee, which drafted the 300-page report on the Ukraine inquiry that serves as the foundation for the impeachment proceedings.

With articles of impeachment coming in a matter of days and votes in the House expected by Christmas, Trump’s team is hardening its argument that the president did nothing wrong. They say voters will stick with him at the Democrats’ expense next November.

Late Friday, White House Counsel Pat Cipollone informed the Judiciary Committee that the administration would not be participating in upcoming hearings, decrying the proceedings as “completely baseless.”

And Trump’s campaign announced new rallies taking the case directly to voters — as well as a new email fundraising pitch that claims the Democrats have “gone absolutely insane.”

“The Democrats have NO impeachment case and are demeaning our great Country at YOUR expense,” Trump wrote in the email to supporters. “It’s US against THEM.”

Democratic lawmakers and aides are working behind closed doors over the weekend as the articles are being drafted and Judiciary Committee members are preparing for hearings and votes expected next week.

The articles are likely to encompass two major themes — abuse of office and obstruction — as the drafters strive to reach the Constitution’s bar of “treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors.” But they could be divided up into multiple articles.

Democrats argue that Trump abused his office when he asked Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for a “favor” during a July 25 phone call congratulating the newly-elected comedian-turned-president. Trump wanted Ukraine to announce it was investigating Democrats including Biden, according to a rough

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transcript released under pressure by the White House.

They might also include a charge of "bribery," based on Trump's decision to withhold the military aid and stall on granting Zelenskiy a coveted White House visit the new president was seeking as a show of support from the U.S., its most important ally. The money was eventually released once Congress began investigating in September. The meeting never happened.

Obstruction articles could include obstruction of Congress, as the White House ordered officials not to comply with House subpoenas for testimony or documents in the impeachment inquiry. They could also include obstruction of justice, based on Mueller's report on the original Trump-Russia investigation.

There is still robust internal debate among House Democrats over how many articles to write and how much to include — and particularly whether there should be specific mention of Mueller's findings from his two-year investigation into Trump's possible role in Russia's 2016 election interference.

The special counsel could not determine that Trump's campaign conspired or coordinated with Russia. However, Mueller said he could not exonerate Trump of obstructing justice in the probe and left it for Congress to determine.

Pelosi is particularly protective of the views of the new class of freshman lawmakers, who won elections in 2018 to give Democrats the House majority and will be up for re-election in 2020.

Many of those Democrats who supported launching the impeachment probe have yet to say whether they will vote to impeach.

"I can't say if I'd vote for or against something until I see it," said freshman Rep. Joe Cunningham, D-S.C. "Some of it seems connected. Some of it doesn't."

Freshman Anthony Brindisi, D-N.Y., narrowly elected to a district Trump carried by 12 percentage points, said he's right in the middle: "I'm totally undecided."

Democrats expect there will be two to four articles of impeachment against the president. Merging the Mueller findings into the overall charges by making the direct link to Ukraine might be one way to reach all sides.

Said Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., a member of the Judiciary Committee, "You know we have to explore the possibility that the Ukraine episode is not some kind of aberrational outburst but rather reflective of a continuing course of misconduct."

Associated Press writers Alan Fram, Jill Colvin and Laurie Kellman contributed to this report.

No malarkey: Biden courts Iowans, balances national campaign

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

STORM LAKE, Iowa (AP) — Minutes after Joe Biden met Cathy Buxengard, he commandeered her cell-phone to talk with her 99-year-old mother about her service as a World War II nurse and how worried she is about the United States today.

"You took care of 'em, Mom. ... Thank you, thank you, thank you," the former vice president, born during the war, said to Jo Strube as her daughter looked on, eyes welling.

Days later, near the end of his eight-day Iowa bus tour that concludes Saturday, the Democratic presidential contender stood alongside the man who, 15 years ago, won the nomination Biden now seeks. "Never has there been a moment more important for a person like Joe Biden to sit behind that desk in the Oval Office," John Kerry declared.

The breadth of Biden's most intense campaign blitz since he launched his campaign in April showcased the 77-year-old's potential reach across a disparate and diverse Democratic electorate. Yet it also highlighted the needle-threading and sometimes-contradictory effort that Biden is attempting as he grasps a third time for the presidency. Polls suggest he remains a national front-runner, but he is in a cluster with Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders in Iowa and the first primary state of New Hampshire.

His advisers insist that he doesn't have to win Iowa to claim the Democratic nomination, with his support

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among minority voters giving him options in later states. But the emphasis on Iowa reflected a campaign that doesn't want to start the 2020 nominating calendar with a bad showing on Feb. 3. "It's getting cuttin' time here," Biden said Friday.

Biden focused the 18-county itinerary on Iowa's rural and small towns, places that he called "the forgotten soul of America" and that his advisers believe will play an underappreciated role in the nominating fight and a hypothetical general election match-up against President Donald Trump. Yet on two evenings, the former vice president traded his "No Malarkey"-emblazoned bus for a private jet to attend high-dollar campaign fundraisers in New York and Chicago.

In the first setting, Biden recounted his upbringing in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and Claymont, Delaware. "I was raised just like you were," he said in county after county, even if rural Iowans "think of Delaware as just an East Coast state." In those big-city venues, meanwhile, Biden mingled with some of the deepest Democratic pockets. One effort reminded voters of Biden's "Middle-Class Joe" nickname, the other that he trails Buttigieg, Warren and Sanders in fundraising and needs the help of wealthy donors to get past them and face Trump.

Biden rarely mentioned his 14 opponents for the Democratic nomination other than as a good-natured laugh line -- "They're good people, all 900 of 'em." Showing surprise when an aide told him Kamala Harris had dropped out of the race, he praised the California senator who'd savaged him in a June debate. But he couldn't resist digs at Buttigieg.

"He stole it," Biden said of Buttigieg's health plan, which he contends borrows from his "public option" outline. Of Warren, he asked: "Where's the enthusiasm?" He later softened both observations, clarifying that he means he's the Democrats' best combination of pragmatism and experience. "The next Democratic nominee has to be able to get something done in Congress," he said plainly in Decorah.

Explaining why the opening days of his tour didn't include public question-and-answer sessions with voters, Biden told reporters he's a "tactile politician," prioritizing time on the rope lines where voters can talk to him one-on-one. That allowed him moments with voters like Buxengard, who reinforced one of Biden's campaign pillars: the argument that Trump perverts the nation's character. Her mother, Buxengard said, insists that "everything those boys fought for" in World War II, Trump is "just throwing away."

It gave Biden a chance to connect with Bobbie Moore, a Council Bluffs nurse who is volunteering for him and wants to help corral voters on caucus night. He chatted for more than five minutes with undecided voter Gary Riesselman, a Carroll County farmer who asked detailed questions about how Biden would handle China and Trump's trade war. An independent who doesn't like Trump, Riesselman walked away saying he'd at least consider caucusing for Biden. That same open access offered new grist for progressives who oppose Biden's candidacy. An activist from the environmental group Sunrise Movement asked Biden on camera why he wouldn't ban fracking immediately. After a back-and-forth volley, Biden told the young man: "Vote for somebody else." When Biden started taking questions later in the week, he had an even sharper exchange with an older voter who questioned Biden's advancing age and peddled unsubstantiated claims championed by Trump that Biden and his son Hunter engaged in Ukrainian corruption while the elder Biden was vice president. Defending himself and his son, Biden called the man "a damn liar," issued a pushup and IQ challenge, and ordered the man: "Get your words straight, Jack!" As his bus, emblazoned with his "No Malarkey" motto, traversed the Iowa backroads, Biden chatted with national reporters and sat for one-on-one interviews with CNBC, Axios' HBO campaign show and Telemundo, a leading Spanish-language network. Alongside the repetition of his rural economic initiatives, Biden talked foreign policy, repeatedly blasting Trump for "treating NATO like a protection racket" during the same week that the president traveled to London for a NATO summit. And perhaps the defining juxtaposition of Biden's campaign was that folksy manner and workman's persona alongside an unabashed show of political force and establishment muscle: the endorsements from big names like Kerry and former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, the steady stream of local Iowa politicians who introduced and vouched for him, the army of aides traveling with him, including several who worked alongside him in the West Wing when he was vice president. Whatever the scenario, Biden aides said the candidate came away better.

"What we know from a long history of Joe Biden is that him meeting with voters and speaking to them

is really his strongest suit," said Mike Donilon, who first worked for Biden in 1981.

The candidate himself added that when voters "get to know me, they like me." Through the seemingly scattershot approach, the core Biden pitch emerged: "Ready on Day One." The Scranton roots that connect him to working Americans, the personal loss of burying two children, learning Delaware's ag industry as a U.S. senator, decades of foreign policy globe-trotting as a senator and vice president, cutting deals on budgets, crime bills, the Affordable Care Act — they add up to a president. Biden said it. Kerry said it. Vilsack said it. Some would-be caucusgoers said it. But Biden knows Iowa could be either a launching pad or another barrier.

"Where I come from, you ask for help," he said in Waverly. "I fully respect anybody who does not support me, but I'm asking you ... help me out."

Pearl Harbor shooting unfolded in 23 seconds in packed area

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — The U.S. Navy sailor who fatally shot two people at Pearl Harbor before killing himself was unhappy with his commanders and had been undergoing counseling, a military official said Friday.

Gabriel Romero, 22, also faced non-judicial punishment, which is a lower-level administrative process for minor misconduct, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss personnel matters not made public. He used his two service weapons in the attack, the official said.

Romero also wounded a 36-year-old man in the attack Wednesday at the naval shipyard within the storied military base before turning the gun on himself, authorities said. That victim is in stable condition at a hospital.

In a second attack at a Navy base this week, a shooter opened fire in a classroom building Friday at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida — leaving four people dead, including the assailant, and multiple people wounded.

The Pearl Harbor shooting came just days before a ceremony to remember those who perished in the Japanese bombing 78 years ago that propelled the U.S. into World War II.

Security will be beefed up as usual for the annual event that is expected to draw survivors, veterans, dignitaries and others Saturday to honor the more than 2,300 Americans killed on Dec. 7, 1941.

Military officials said Friday at a news conference that they had not found a motive yet for the shooting but that there's no evidence of domestic terrorism. They said the isolated attack, witnessed by shipyard employees in an area with thousands of workers, unfolded in about 23 seconds.

Romero, who was from Texas and enlisted in the Navy two years ago, was dead when authorities arrived, and he was armed for his job standing watch and providing security for the fast attack submarine USS Columbia, which is at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam for maintenance, officials said.

Retired Army Col. Gregory Gross, a former military judge, said that just because Romero faced non-judicial punishment doesn't automatically mean he should have been taken off watch duty.

"It could have been something as simple as you were late for work," said Gross, who presided over part of the court-martial for the 2009 shooting at Fort Hood in Texas.

But if the misconduct were something like assault, then it would have been easy to take Romero off watch duty and take away his weapons, Gross said.

"All it takes is for the commander to say, 'You're not getting a weapon,' and he would be taken off that watch," he said.

It was not known if Romero knew his victims, Roldan Agustin, 49, and Vincent Kapoi Jr., 30.

Agustin was born in Laoag City, Philippines, and moved to Hawaii when he was 2, according to his mother, Aida Agustin.

"He's a good man," she told The Associated Press through tears.

"I'm so sorry, anak ko, I'm still shaking," she added Friday, using the phrase "my child" in Ilocano, a Filipino language.

Family members said Roldan Agustin served in the Navy and retired from the Army National Guard, then

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became a metals inspector at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard.

In a statement, his brother said Agustin enjoyed working on cars with his friends and spending time with family.

"We will forever remember Roldan to be humble and honest, and a generous and patient man," the statement said.

Tara Kapoi said her husband, Vincent, grew up in Waianae, a town on the west side of Oahu.

"We don't know what happened," she said Thursday, asking for privacy.

A family statement described him as an "easy-going, fun-loving, 'let's do this' man." Services were scheduled for Dec. 15.

He was a metals inspector apprentice, the Navy said.

College roommate Daniel Vu described Kapoi as a soft-spoken and hardworking "family guy" who woke up at 3 a.m. to work at the fishing docks to pay for tuition. Kapoi graduated from the University of San Francisco in 2011 and was proud of his Native Hawaiian and Filipino heritage, Vu told news website Honolulu Civil Beat.

"He was very giving, very generous and willing to sacrifice a lot," Vu said.

Jamie Hiranaka, president of the union representing the three workers, said they were all inspectors who checked welding and other work.

The union, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 121 Hawaii, said it's trying to help employees get through the shooting that produced "fear, terror, sadness and grief."

"Some were witnesses, others heard the gunshots, others locked down into the closest building they could find, but most were locked in their offices not knowing (what) was happening," a union statement said.

Mass shootings and gun violence are rare in Hawaii. The state had the lowest gun death rate among U.S. states in 2017, according to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. The islands have strict firearms laws, including a ban on assault weapons and large-capacity ammunition magazines.

The Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard repairs, maintains and modernizes the ships and submarines of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, which is headquartered at Pearl Harbor. The base is the home for 10 destroyers, 15 submarines and Air Force units.

Baldor reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Caleb Jones and Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu, Mark Thiessen in Anchorage, Alaska, and researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show a victim's mother is spelled Aida, not Ida.

Elon Musk cleared of defamation in 'pedo guy' tweet trial

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Elon Musk defeated defamation allegations Friday from a British cave explorer who claimed he was branded a pedophile when the Tesla CEO called him "pedo guy" in an angry tweet.

Vernon Unsworth, who participated in the rescue of 12 boys and their soccer coach trapped for weeks in a Thailand cave last year, had sought \$190 million in damages for the shame and humiliation caused by the man his lawyer called a "billionaire bully."

It took less than an hour for an eight-person jury in Los Angeles federal court to reject Unsworth's claim after a four-day trial.

Musk said the verdict restored his faith in humanity as he quickly left the court with his security detail.

Musk — who deleted the tweet and later apologized for it — had asserted the expression was nothing more than a flippant insult that meant "creepy old man," not pedophile.

Unsworth had provoked the attack by belittling Musk's contribution to the rescue -- a miniature sub his engineers built that was never used -- as ineffective and nothing more than a "PR stunt." He further earned the ire of the tech whiz by suggesting Musk stick the sub "where it hurts."

On Friday, it was Unsworth who felt the pain.

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"I accept the jury verdict, take it on the chin, and move on," Unsworth said outside court.

Jury foreman Joshua Jones said the panel decided Unsworth's lawyers failed to prove their case. He said they spent too much time trying to appeal to jurors' emotions and not concentrating on the evidence.

"The failure probably happened because they didn't focus on the tweets," Jones said after the verdict was announced. "I think they tried to get our emotions involved in it."

Attorney Lin Wood, in an impassioned and at times emotional closing argument, suggested the jury should award \$190 million. Wood said \$150 million of that figure should be a "hard slap on the wrist" to punish Musk for what he said was akin to dropping an atomic weapon on his client that would create problems for years like radioactive fallout.

He suggested the figure would be reasonable given that Musk testified his stock in Tesla and SpaceX is worth about \$20 billion. But Musk's lawyer, Alex Spiro, ridiculed the suggested verdict as "numbers being thrown out like 'The Price is Right.'"

Wood said it was important to challenge Musk's tweet in court even if they didn't win. Unsworth had said the statement would appear true if he didn't sue.

"Anybody that knows this man knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that Elon's accusations were false," Wood said outside court. "This was not the justice that he deserved under the evidence."

While Musk was cleared of liability, the trial was just the latest incident where he's faced legal problems because of troublesome tweets.

Musk and Tesla reached a \$40 million settlement with the Securities and Exchange Commission last year over allegations he misled investors with a tweet declaring he had secured financing to buy out the electric car maker. Earlier this year, the SEC sought to hold him in contempt of court for tweeting a misleading projection of how many cars Tesla would manufacture. That led to a new agreement imposing tight controls on Musk's tweets about the company.

The day after Musk's tweet about Unsworth, Tesla stock price fell 3% and shareholders and people within the company were urging him to apologize. Musk said he resisted at first because he didn't want to look "foolish and craven" by doing so right after the stock dropped.

Musk's lawyer told the jury the tweet did not rise to the level of defamation and cases over insults didn't belong in federal courtrooms.

Spiro said Unsworth had tried to profit off his role in the cave rescue and basked in the many accolades he received.

Unsworth had been honored by the queen of England and the king of Thailand, had his photo taken next to British Prime Minister Theresa May and been asked to speak at schools and contribute to a children's book, which showed that no one took Musk's insult seriously.

"People accused of pedophilia don't get celebrated by world leaders," Spiro said. "Kings and queens and prime ministers don't stand next to pedophiles."

Unsworth hadn't demonstrated actual damage to his reputation other than asserting over a couple minutes of emotional testimony delivered with his voice cracking that he felt isolated, ashamed and dirtied, Spiro said. There was no supporting testimony from his girlfriend or other friends who could discuss the impact they witnessed, no evidence he had lost business or relationships as a result of the tweet and he hadn't sought psychological counseling or medication.

Spiro mocked Unsworth's claims that the tweet was like a life sentence without parole, noting that many people are serving such terms in actual prisons.

He urged jurors to return a verdict that would make clear no reasonable person would conclude Musk had called him a pedophile.

"Tell Mr. Unsworth once and for all, 'You are not a pedophile,'" Spiro said. "With our verdict, we free you, we free you from parole."

Associated Press editor Michelle Monroe in Phoenix contributed to this report.

US digs into Saudi shooting suspect motive in Navy shooting

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. law enforcement officials were digging into the background of the suspected Florida naval station shooter Friday, to determine the Saudi Air Force officer's motive and whether it was connected to terrorism.

As questions swirled about the shooting, which left four people dead, including the attacker, officials identified the suspect as 2nd Lt. Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani, an aviation officer in the Saudi Air Force. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation.

Alshamrani was attending the aviation school at Naval Air Station Pensacola, one of hundreds of international military members who are receiving training there. The shooter opened fire in a classroom building on Friday morning.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper said in a statement that the Pentagon was continuing to monitor the Pensacola incident and was gathering additional facts on the shooting earlier this week at Pearl Harbor, when a young Navy sailor gunned down two people and then shot himself.

Esper said he is "considering several steps to ensure the security of our military installations and the safety of our service members and their families." He provided no details.

In a separate statement, Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, said it has been a "devastating week" for the Navy.

The U.S. has long had a robust training program for Saudis, providing assistance in the U.S. and in the kingdom. As of this week, there are more than 850 Saudis in the United States for various training activities. They are among more than 5,000 foreign students from 153 countries in the U.S. going through military training.

The Pentagon said Friday that Alshamrani was in the U.S. as part of an Air Force military sales training course, and his participation was funded by Saudi Arabia. His training began in August 2017 and was scheduled to conclude next August, and it included initial pilot training, basic aviation and English-language instruction.

Foreign nationals participating in U.S. training go through a vetting process. The Pentagon said it includes screening for any illicit drug activities, support for terrorist organizations, corruption and criminal conduct. Those who fail to pass the approval process are not issued international travel orders.

The Trump administration has been aggressively helping Saudi this year, sending Patriot missile batteries and hundreds of troops there in the wake of attacks on the kingdom that officials blame on Iran.

On Friday, President Donald Trump said he got a call from Saudi King Salman, who expressed "his sincere condolences" and sent sympathies to the families of those involved.

"The King said that the Saudi people are greatly angered by the barbaric actions of the shooter, and that this person in no way shape or form represents the feelings of the Saudi people who love the American people," said Trump in a tweet.

The shooting, however, shined a spotlight on what has been a sometimes rocky relationship with the kingdom.

The U.S. earlier this year agreed to send three Patriot missile batteries, dozens of fighter jets and other aircraft to Saudi Arabia. And in October, Esper visited Prince Sultan Air Base to see one of the batteries and talk about efforts to get other allies to contribute to the defense of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region to counter threats from Iran.

But the kingdom's reputation is still damaged after the killing last year of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. Saudi intelligence officials and a forensic doctor killed and dismembered Khashoggi on Oct. 2, 2018, as his fiancée waited outside the diplomatic mission.

Khashoggi, long a royal court insider, had been in self-imposed exile in the U.S. while writing critically of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, son of the oil-rich nation's King Salman.

Lawsuit challenges speedy reviews of asylum claims

ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A new effort to speed up initial reviews of asylum claims to within three days denies asylum-seekers rights to consult attorneys, according to the latest legal challenge to the Trump administration's immigration enforcement policies and practices.

The federal lawsuit filed in Washington, D.C., challenges fast-track procedures introduced in El Paso, Texas, in early October that U.S. officials say may be expanded to other parts of the U.S. border with Mexico after a trial period.

Asylum-seekers are held in a U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility with a window of up to about an hour to call family and attorneys, and they have no guarantee of confidentiality, according to the lawsuit filed Thursday. No callback numbers are provided.

CBP facilities are "legal black holes," according to the lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center and several asylum-seekers who were deported to El Salvador or Mexico after failing an initial screening, known as a credible fear interview.

The fast-track efforts "systematically undermine the procedural safeguards guaranteed to those seeking asylum by rocketing asylum seekers through the credible fear process with no access to counsel," the lawsuit states. "Congress provided for protections for people in credible fear proceedings in order to prevent the United States government from erroneously sending asylum seekers back to places where they face persecution, torture, and possibly death."

The government has processed hundreds of asylum-seekers in El Paso under two pilot programs, one for Mexicans and one for non-Mexicans, according to the lawsuit. The program for non-Mexicans, called Prompt Asylum Case Review, processed 392 people as of Nov. 26 and the one for Mexicans, called Humanitarian Asylum Review Process, processed 137 as of Nov. 27.

The Justice Department declined to comment Friday on the lawsuit. But administration officials have defended a series of new policies that aim to limit asylum claims, many of which they say are frivolous. The U.S. became the world's top destination for asylum-seekers in 2017, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency.

Robert Perez, Customs and Border Patrol's deputy commissioner, said in October that the experiment in El Paso would handle initial screenings within 10 days — including time to appeal an asylum officer's denial to an immigration judge. The goal, he said, was to complete cases within 72 hours, the agency's target for maximum time in custody.

The administration's shifts on asylum policy are being challenged in court on several fronts.

On Friday in San Diego, advocacy groups asked a federal judge to temporarily narrow the scope of recent agreements with Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to send asylum-seekers there. Under the bilateral pacts, the U.S. would send asylum-seekers back to those countries if they didn't seek protection there on their way to the U.S. border with Mexico.

The Southern Poverty Law Center and other groups want a temporary restraining order that would exempt anyone from the ban who arrived at the U.S. border before Nov. 19 — when the agreements took effect — but had to wait in Mexico because U.S. authorities said they didn't have enough resources to immediately process their claims.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard arguments Oct. 1 on another policy to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico while their cases wind through U.S. immigration courts, which U.S. authorities say has been crucial to a sharp drop in border arrests from a 13-year high in May. The same day, the court heard arguments on a ban on asylum to anyone who crossed the Mexican border illegally, which has been on hold for about a year.

US firms keep hiring, easing worries of weakening economy

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — American businesses have complained for years that they can't find the workers they need to fill available jobs. November's robust hiring gain suggests that at least some have found a way to do so.

With the unemployment rate now at a half-century low of 3.5%, many economists have also warned that hiring would soon slow simply because there are fewer unemployed workers available.

That day may still come, but it didn't in November. Employers added 266,000 jobs last month, the most since January. Monthly hiring has, in fact, picked up since earlier this year: It averaged 205,000 for the past three months, up from a recent low of 135,000 in July.

Friday's jobs report largely squelched fears of a recession that had taken hold in the summer. Steady job growth has helped reassure consumers that the economy is expanding and that their jobs and incomes remain secure. That should boost spending and growth in the months ahead.

President Donald Trump seized on the strong jobs report as he tries to focus voters' attention on the state of the economy rather than the impeachment inquiry being led by House Democrats. The latest numbers also come as Trump's trade war with China had prompted companies to cut back on their investments in plants and industrial equipment, slowing growth.

"Without the horror show that is the Radical Left, Do Nothing Democrats, the Stock Markets and Economy would be even better, if that is possible, and the Border would be closed to the evil of Drugs, Gangs and all other problems! #2020," the president tweeted.

He returned to the report later Friday, tweeting: JOBS, JOBS, JOBS!"

Employers seemed to be shrugging off economic concerns, adding jobs at a solid clip. And other risks to the global economy, such as a disorderly Brexit for the U.K., have faded in the past month. Given all that, the economy could provide a boost for Trump in next year's election.

Investors cheered the report, sending the Dow Jones industrial average up 340 points in afternoon trading.

The new job numbers were released as companies have been getting more creative about enticing workers as the ranks of the unemployed dwindle. Some are willing to hire people who are less qualified and train them, while others are raising pay to attract more applicants. Still others are offering flexible work schedules or have dropped some drug-testing requirements.

These efforts have lifted the proportion of Americans with jobs and lowered the unemployment rate by much more than many economists thought possible.

"Companies have somehow achieved continued success in luring job candidates," said Stephen Stanley, chief economist at Amherst Pierpont Securities.

Some recruiters have overhauled their approach to hiring and retention as the competition for workers has tightened. Beth Thress, vice president of human resources at a Cincinnati-based company that owns two senior living centers, said it became harder to retain nursing aides and housekeepers once such retailers as Walmart and Target increased their pay.

So Thress went to the board of Maple Knoll Communities, a nonprofit that employs 675 people, and won approval to raise starting pay. She also offered more flexible schedules and set up an emergency fund for employees.

"There's just a lot more competition, you've got meet their needs in some form or fashion," she said. "It's been a real shift in mentality."

The changes are working so far, Thress said. The company has reduced turnover from about 40% in 2017 to just 8% so far this year.

Wages overall still aren't growing as quickly as they have in previous expansions, but there are signs of improvement. Average hourly pay for workers, excluding managers and supervisors, which covers about 80% of the workforce, rose 3.7% in November from a year ago. That's just a tick lower than October's figure, which was the highest since the recession.

The higher pay is coaxing workers off the sidelines and back into the job market. The proportion of

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Americans in their prime working years, aged 25 through 54, with a job was 80.3% last month, matching October's level as the highest since January 2007.

Companies are also offering bigger raises to entice potential candidates who are working elsewhere. People who switched jobs saw their pay rise 4.3% from a year earlier, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, the biggest gain since the recession and a full percentage point higher than the pay increase for those who stayed.

Becky Frankiewicz, president of Manpower Group North America, says her organization often tells its corporate clients to consider loosening their job listing criteria.

"We are counseling companies to look at the requirements they set for a job and ask if they are really mandatory or just nice to have," she said.

Frankiewicz pointed to the fact that nearly 90% of the technology jobs listed at Manpower require a college degree in computer science, but less than half the people working in the field have one.

Rebecca Hamilton, co-CEO of Badger Balm, a skincare company, said the firm's generous pay and benefits have made it easy to fill jobs, even though it is based in a small town of 700 near Keene, New Hampshire.

The 90-person company offers health and retirement benefits, but also an on-site gym, yoga classes and massages, and a free organic lunch every day.

"We don't have any trouble whatsoever finding really good, talented people," Hamilton said.

Still, it's not clear how long companies will be able to keep hiring at November's blowout pace. The fact that wages gains are accelerating suggests that companies aren't just luring in new workers, but fighting for a smaller pool of applicants.

"It's an indication that we are starting to reach the limits of the job market," said Joe Song, an economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

Officials list pot vape brands reported in US outbreak

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Health officials investigating a nationwide outbreak of vaping illnesses have listed, for the first time, the vape brands most commonly linked to hospitalizations.

Most of the nearly 2,300 people who suffered lung damage had vaped liquids that contain THC, the high-inducing part of marijuana.

In a report released Friday, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention listed the products most often cited by patients, noting that some of them said they vaped more than one.

Dank Vapes was the brand used by 56% of the hospitalized patients nationwide.

Dank is not a licensed product coming from one business, it is empty packaging that can be ordered from Chinese internet sites. Illicit vaping cartridge makers can buy the empty packages and then fill them with whatever they choose.

Other product names at the top of the list from CDC were TKO (15%), Smart Cart (13%) and Rove (12%).

"It's not likely that a single brand is responsible for this outbreak," said Brian King, a senior CDC official on the investigation.

Some of the brands cited by the CDC are sold in states with legalized marijuana. But counterfeits of those legitimate brands have flooded the market around the country, forcing some to redesign their packaging.

Bill Loucks, co-founder of TKO Products, said his company sells only to licensed dispensaries in California, but the company gets emails asking about TKO-branded cartridges purchased elsewhere.

"If you bought them outside of California ... you are the proud owner of fakes," Loucks said in an email.

The CDC also said Friday that the worst of the outbreak may be over. Preliminary data indicates hospitalizations peaked in mid-September and have been declining since, officials said.

Investigators want more data until they feel certain the outbreak is waning. If it is, there may be more than one reason, including growing public caution about vaping or perhaps a change in what cartridge makers are putting into them, King said.

But cases are still coming in, with 2,291 reported this year — including 176 that joined the tally in late

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November. Every state has reported cases, and 25 states and the District of Columbia have reported a total of 48 deaths.

Symptoms include trouble breathing, chest pain, fatigue and vomiting. About half the patients are people in their teens or early 20s.

The outbreak appears to have started in March. CDC officials have gradually come to focus their investigation on black-market THC cartridges.

An analysis of about 1,800 of the hospitalized patients found about 80% said they used at least one THC product. Last month, CDC officials said they had narrowed in on a culprit — a chemical compound called vitamin E acetate that has been commonly found in the lungs of sick patients and in the products they vaped.

Vitamin E acetate is a thickening agent that's been added to illicit THC vaping liquids. But it's possible it also may have been added to vaping liquids containing CBD, another cannabis extract, King said. About 1% of the patients said they had vaped CBD products only.

The agency is recommending that people do not use any electronic cigarettes or vaping products that contain THC, especially those obtained from friends, family members or black market dealers.

However, 13% of patients said they vaped only nicotine. CDC officials are continuing to look at nicotine-containing vapes, and to advise caution about all types of vaping products until the investigation is concluded, King said.

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Let's cancel 'OK Boomer' in 2020, and the humblebrag, too

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Either loudly sing your own praises or don't in the new year, but let's leave the humble brag behind, along with a few other oversaturated, cloying or just plain silly cultural quirks that deserve a big goodbye.

Among them are pop-up shops, cancel culture and the ever-present "OK Boomer" retort on social media. With much ado about something, here's our annual Over It list of things that should remain in 2019:

DOUBLE-WRISTING

Wearing two timepieces has been around since the 18-century dandy and his double pocket watches, intended to culturally elevate as opposed to making sure he was really, really on time. Later, Marlon Brando pulled off the two-wrist tango but, you know, he was Brando. Young celebs have caught on, Chris Pratt, Johnny Depp and Drake included. These days it's all about the digital add-on, plus a statement piece. Can you see our side eyes?

EMAIL RECEIPTS

Firstly, huge thanks for your out of office responses. Those are gold, but please stop asking for receipts. Learn to live with the suspense like the rest of us as to when we read or do not read your missives, either email, text or otherwise. The same goes for when we most likely do or perchance do not delete said missives at our convenience. Our inbox. Our rules. Keep your curiosity and aggressive email tactics to yourself.

HUMBLE-BRAGATHON

For the truly humble, we appreciate you. For the passive-aggressive, not so much. Merriam-Webster sums up the humblebrag nicely: "To make a seemingly modest, self-critical, or casual statement or reference that is meant to draw attention to one's admirable or impressive qualities or achievement." Just own yourself. The dictionary titans say the term has been around since 2002. It was later popularized by the comedian, TV producer and writer Harris Wittels, who died in 2015.

POP-UPS

There's one for ketchup. There's one for ice cream. There's one for "Friends." There are tons with the sole mission of selling you merch, as opposed to selling you merch while also being mildly entertaining.

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The Business of Fashion notes that Amazon and other digital disruptors have contributed to traditional retailers closing thousands of stores. The prime but empty real estate is up for grabs on short-term leases for ever-rotating tenants. Pop-ups are now a "strategy" on both ends, from commercial land barons to the sellers of goods, luxury to goofy. Some aren't mad about it. We're all popped out.

CANCEL THE CANCELERS

There's nothing wrong with calling out bad behavior, a bad person or bad practices, especially the kind that are truly threatening and make people feel unsafe. There is most definitely something wrong with the mob mentality that swirls on social media unchecked. The cancel culture is often stoked by sheeple with no interest in drilling down to truths. Mean for mean's sake or 100 percent willing to gulp gossip is not cool. We say, think before you cancel. We need cancel truth. Unite!

BOOMER BACKLASH

Once upon a time in Memeland there was an older dude who trashed Millennials and Gen-Zers for Peter Pan syndrome. For that, younger folks have declared 2019 the year of "OK, Boomer," as in Baby Boomer. Not that the yoots and their pejorative for intransigence, intolerance and tech phobia among their elders is entirely wrong, mind you. It's just time to calm down a bit. The phrase "OK, Boomer" has a richer history. As the legend goes, it surfaced on Reddit in 2009 and on 4chan in 2015. According to The Boston Globe, TikTok videos with the "OkBoomer" tag have been watched more than 44 million times and counting.

INFLUENCER FATIGUE

Is it the end of the line for influencers? Greg Petro, writing for Forbes.com, declared in November: "Consumers, especially younger ones, are losing trust in paid influencers and looking instead to organic grassroots communities where their like-minded peers are sharing content and commentary about brands and products they actually love." Rock on, Greg! Side note, exactly how many followers does one need to score an influencer gig? Asking for a friend.

REVIEWS AND SURVEYS

Everybody is looking for feedback of all kinds, all the time. Don't be so needy! Just send the toilet brush. Your survey doesn't just take "a minute." You have all the reviews you need. If we had something to say, we'd say it. We're putting the incessant requests for service and purchase reviews and surveys high on the annoying list alongside the onslaught of robocalls.

SPOUSAL GUSHING

It's your anniversary. It's your wife's birthday. We get it. You're married or you have an otherwise significant other and you want your social media world to know all about how you actually feel about the big day, the big event, so you post a pic, and your words go something like this: "To my angel spouse, the perfect love of my life. You complete me." The reality at home might be more like this: "If you eat my leftovers, I will end you!" Or maybe true love is alive and flourishing. Love is grand, but in the words of 4-year-olds the world over: "Ewwwww." In the words of far more cynical grown ups, "Get a room!"

AP's top songs of 2019: Jhene Aiko, Sam Smith, Normani

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The top 10 songs of the year by Associated Press Music Editor Mesfin Fekadu.

1. Jhené Aiko, "Triggered (freestyle)": Jhené Aiko brilliantly captures so many emotions in one song on "Triggered (freestyle)," as she rapidly spits out lyrics in a raw way that range from "I HATE YOU SO MUCH RIGHT NOW" to "Sup, you up?" She's a ball of emotions, but she's direct and honest, and those lyrics are piercing and appealing, and make for a great song — rather, the song of the year. She's trying to move on, but she needs closure. She's saying I hate what you did, but I can't still be with anyone else intimately yet. She's angry. And bitter. And hurt. And healing. Overall, she's human. And she's a beast of a songwriter.

2. Sam Smith and Normani, "Dancing With a Stranger": Sam Smith's recent songs have been a batch of dance-flavored bops, and we need more of it.

3. H.E.R., "Make It Rain — Live at Austin City Limits": H.E.R. is one of the best live performers of our time, and her rendition of Foy Vance's "Make It Rain" is heavenly. Her magical guitar playing mixed with

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her powerful voice — and the voices of her groundbreaking background singers — make this track one of the best of the year.

4. Lewis Capaldi, "Someone You Loved": The award for the song most likely to make you cry goes to breakthrough singer Lewis Capaldi, who bares it all on "Someone You Loved," one of the songs we loved all year long.

5. Daddy Yankee and Snow, "Con Calma": Though the contemporary Latin music world has been dominated by young and emerging acts, Daddy Yankee has continued to shine brightly, and even outshined most of his counterparts. Long after blazing the charts with "Gasolina," he's still putting out hits, and this year it was with the anthemic "Con Calma." And we're talking about the original version featuring rapper Snow, not the gentrified one with Katy Perry.

6. Kehlani featuring Ty Dolla \$ign: Kehlani and Ty Dolla \$ign are the prom king and queen of R&B thanks to this hella addictive track.

7. Chris Brown featuring Gunna, "Heat": Chris Brown's "Indigo" has 32 tracks, but "Heat" is the hottest.

8. City Girls, "Act Up": Wake up. Brush teeth. Wash face and body. Listen to "Act Up." Leave the house feeling untouchable.

9. Rosalía and Ozuna, "Yo x Ti, Tu x Mi": Rosalía. Can. Do. No. Wrong.

10. Normani, "Motivation": I probably account for 70 million of the 72 million views Normani's fun, striking and eye-popping "Motivation" has on YouTube. The song and video is just the beginning for this future icon.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Dec. 7, the 341st day of 2019. There are 24 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 7, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on the U.S. Navy base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii as part of its plan to conquer Southeast Asian territories; the raid, which claimed some 2,400 American lives, prompted the United States to declare war against Japan the next day.

On this date:

In 43 B.C., Roman statesman and scholar Marcus Tullius Cicero was slain at the order of the Second Triumvirate.

In 1787, Delaware became the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1796, electors chose John Adams to be the second president of the United States.

In 1909, in his State of the Union address, President William Howard Taft defended the decision to base U.S. naval operations in the Pacific at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, instead of in the Philippines.

In 1911, China abolished the requirement that men wear their hair in a queue, or ponytail.

In 1917, during World War I, the United States declared war on Austria-Hungary.

In 1972, America's last moon mission to date was launched as Apollo 17 blasted off from Cape Canaveral. Imelda Marcos, wife of Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos, was stabbed and seriously wounded by an assailant who was shot dead by her bodyguards.

In 1982, convicted murderer Charlie Brooks Jr. became the first U.S. prisoner to be executed by injection, at a prison in Huntsville, Texas.

In 1987, 43 people were killed after a gunman aboard a Pacific Southwest Airlines jetliner in California apparently opened fire on a fellow passenger, the pilots and himself, causing the plane to crash. Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev set foot on American soil for the first time, arriving for a Washington summit with President Ronald Reagan.

In 1988, a major earthquake in the Soviet Union devastated northern Armenia; official estimates put the death toll at 25-thousand.

In 2004, Hamid Karzai (HAH'-mihd KAHR'-zeyeh) was sworn in as Afghanistan's first popularly elected president.

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In 2017, Democratic Sen. Al Franken said he would resign after a series of sexual harassment allegations; he took a parting shot at President Donald Trump, describing him as "a man who has bragged on tape about his history of sexual assault." Republican Rep. Trent Franks of Arizona said he would resign, after revealing that he discussed surrogacy with two female staffers.

Ten years ago: The Obama administration took a major step toward imposing the first federal limits on pollution from cars, power plants and factories the same day an international conference on climate change opened in Copenhagen, Denmark. Manager Whitey Herzog and umpire Doug Harvey were elected to the baseball Hall of Fame by the Veterans Committee.

Five years ago: Six prisoners held for 12 years at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, arrived in Uruguay amid a new push by President Barack Obama to close the U.S. prison. Britain's Prince William and his wife, Catherine, arrived in New York City on their first official visit to the U.S. Ken Weatherwax, who'd played Pugsley on "The Addams Family" television series in the 1960s, was found dead at his home in Box Canyon, California; he was 59.

One year ago: The man who drove his car into counterprotesters at a 2017 white nationalist rally in Virginia was convicted of first-degree murder; a state jury rejected defense arguments that James Alex Fields Jr. acted in self-defense. President Donald Trump announced that he would nominate William Barr to succeed Jeff Sessions as attorney general. (Barr would be confirmed and sworn-in in February.) Trump said he would nominate State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert to be the next U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. (Nauert withdrew from consideration two months later; congressional aides said she would have faced tough Senate questions about her relative lack of foreign policy experience.) Kendrick Lamar picked up a leading eight Grammy nominations, including seven for his musical companion to the hit film "Black Panther."

Today's Birthdays: Linguist and political philosopher Noam Chomsky is 91. Bluegrass singer Bobby Osborne is 88. Actress Ellen Burstyn is 87. Broadcast journalist Carole Simpson is 79. Baseball Hall of Famer Johnny Bench is 72. Actor-director-producer James Keach is 72. Country singer Gary Morris is 71. Singer-songwriter Tom Waits is 70. Sen. Susan M. Collins, R-Maine, is 67. Basketball Hall of Famer Larry Bird is 63. Actress Priscilla Barnes is 62. Former "Tonight Show" announcer Edd (cq) Hall is 61. Rock musician Tim Butler (The Psychedelic Furs) is 61. Actor Patrick Fabian is 55. Actor Jeffrey Wright is 54. Actor C. Thomas Howell is 53. Actress Kimberly Hebert Gregory (TV: "Kevin (Probably) Saves the World") is 47. Producer-director Jason Winer is 47. Former NFL player Terrell Owens is 46. Rapper-producer Kon Artis is 45. Pop singer Nicole Appleton (All Saints) is 44. Latin singer Frankie J is 43. Country singer Sunny Sweeney is 43. Actor Chris Chalk is 42. Actress Shiri Appleby is 41. Pop-rock singer/celebrity judge Sara Bareilles (bah-REHL-es) is 40. Actress Jennifer Carpenter is 40. Actor Jack Huston is 37. Singer Aaron Carter is 32.

Thought for Today: "O tempora! O mores!" (Oh the times! Oh the customs!) — Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 B.C.-43 B.C.).

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