

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 1 of 61

- [2- Mustangs hand Lady Tigers first loss](#)
- [3- Skating Rink opens today](#)
- [4- Bowling Scores](#)
- [4- City Financial Report](#)
- [5- Noem Meets with President Trump, Vice President Pence in White House to Discuss Regulatory Reform](#)
- [6- Obit - Jack Walter](#)
- [7- Obit - Dale Cutler](#)
- [8- City passes salary ordinance](#)
- [9- Weather Pages](#)
- [12- Daily Devotional](#)
- [13- 2019 Groton Events](#)
- [14- News from the Associated Press](#)



Thursday, December 19, 2019

Boys Basketball hosts Redfield - JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game

Friday, December 20, 2019

Debate at Brookings High School (Brookings Bell Tournament)

End of Second Quarter

Elementary Christmas Concert at 1 p.m. at GHS Gym

School Dismisses for Christmas Vacation at 2 p.m.

Girls Basketball at Redfield

Combined 7th/8th Grade game 5 p.m.

Junior varsity game at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game

Saturday, December 21, 2019

Debate at Brookings High School (Brookings Bell Tournament) Brookings Bell

9:00am: Wrestling: Varsity Tournament at Madison

10:00am: Wrestling: Boys 7th/8th Tournament at Watertown HS Arena

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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Mustangs hand Lady Tigers first loss

Waubay/Summit handed the Lady Tigers their first loss of the season in a home game played Tuesday night, 54-31.

Groton Area led for most of the first quarter, holding an 8-4 lead and taking a 13-12 lead at the break. In the first quarter, Groton Area made five off 11 field goals for 45 percent and Waubay/Summit made five of 17 for 29 percent. Groton made only two points in the second quarter as the Mustangs took a 29-15 lead at half time. The Mustangs were five of 12 in shooting for 42 percent and the Tigers did not make a field goal with 11 attempted shots.

Waubay/Summit took a 43-21 lead at the end of the third quarter. The Tigers were two of eight in shooting for 25 percent and the Mustangs were four of 11 for 36 percent. In the fourth quarter, Groton Area made four of 12 shots for 33 percent and Waubay/Summit made three of 12 for 25 percent.

Allyssa Thaler led the Tigers with 10 points followed by Kaycie Hawkins with eight, Gracie Traphagen had five, Brooke Gengerke three and Allyssa Locke added a free throw.

Groton area made five of 12 free throws for 42 percent off of Waubay/Summit's 12 team fouls.

For the game, Groton Area made seven of 28 two-pointers for 25 percent and four of 15 three-pointers for 42 percent. Traphagen snatched down 10 of the team's 30 rebounds. Locke had three of the team's seven steals. Keith and three of the teams eight assists.

Waubay/Summit was led by Alyssa Barse with 16 points followed by Alexis Hopkins with 11, Victoria Zirbel nine, Emily Breske eight, Emily Ollerich seven and Eva Benike with three. Waubay/Summit made 11 of 15 free throws for 73 percent off of Groton Area's 13 team fouls.

Waubay/Summit made 17 of 49 field goals for 35 percent, had 30 rebounds with Hopkins having eight and eight steals with Zirbel having five.

Waubay/Summit is 3-0 on the season while Groton Area is 1-1.

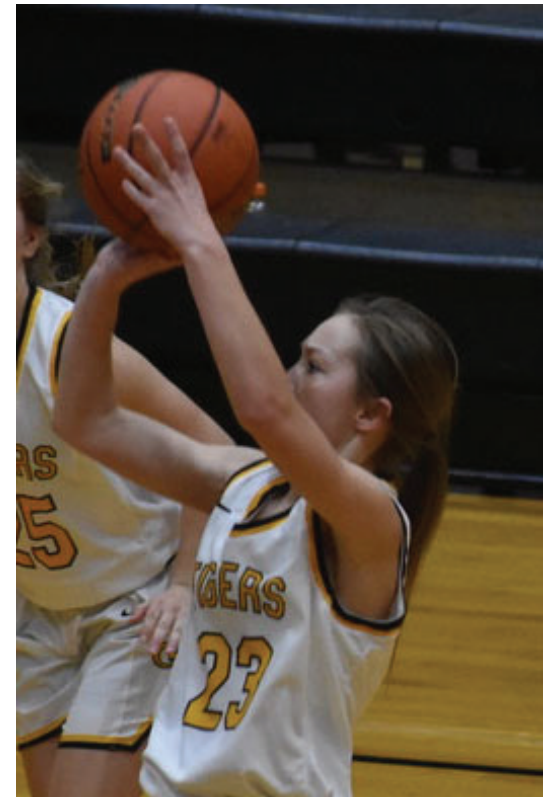
Groton Area had 15 turnovers while Waubay/Summit had seven.

Groton won the junior varsity game, 28-20. Scoring for the Tigers were Allyssa Thaler with 10, Brooke Gengerke, Aspen Johnson, Madeline Flihs and Trista Keith with four points apiece and Marlee Tollifson added two points.

- Paul Kosel



Allyssa Locke brings the ball up-court for the Tigers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Allyssa Thaler led the Tigers with 10 points including two three-pointers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Opening Today!

Groton Skating Rink Hours



Mon-Thurs: 4pm-9pm

Fri: 4pm-10pm

Sat: 10am-10pm

Sun: 1pm-9pm

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 4 of 61

Groton Coffee Cup

Dec. 17 Team Standings: Biker Chix 8, James Valley 3, Ten Pins 3, Kens 2

High Games: Sandi Bistedeau 203, Vickie Kramp 196, Sam Bahr 187

High Series: Vickie Kramp 498, Sam Bahr 493, Sandi Bistedeau 475

Conde National League

Dec. 16 Team Standings: Cubs 7, Giants 5, Tigers 4, Braves 4, Pirates 3, Mets 1

Men's High Games: Larry Frohling 236; Troy Lindberg 214, 211; Ryan Bethke 209; Butch Farnen 207

Men's High Series: Troy Lindberg 597, Larry Frohling 561, Ryan Bethke 553.

Women's High Games: Vickie Kramp 164, Mary Larson 159, Joyce Walter 156

Women's High Series: Vickie Kramp 449, Joyce Walter 449, Mary Larson 406.

Groton City Financial Report

November 2019

1st State Bank Checking Acct	\$ 991,569.38
General Cash	\$ 300.00
SD FIT Acct	\$ 1,445,284.80
1st State Bank Water CD	\$ 82,418.00
BB Trust CD	\$ 1,500.00
SD FIT CD	\$ 100,000.00
Cemetery Perp Care CD	\$ 32,876.69
Total	\$ 2,653,948.87

Invested In		
Cash	\$ 300.00	0.01%
1st State Bank	\$ 1,108,364.07	41.76%
SD Fit	\$ 1,545,284.80	58.23%
Total	\$ 2,653,948.87	100.00%

	Beginning Cash Balance	Receipts	Expenditures	Transfers	Ending Cash Balance
General	\$ 237,121.09	\$ 68,829.82	\$ 78,863.85		\$ 227,087.06
Bed, Board, Booze Tax	\$ 48,667.02	\$ 2,377.77	\$ -		\$ 51,044.79
Baseball Uniforms	\$ 1,710.20				\$ 1,710.20
Airport	\$ 468.20		\$ 3,995.27		\$ (3,527.07)
**Debt Service	\$ 317,957.34	\$ 3,308.94			\$ 321,266.28
Cemetery Perpetual Care	\$ 34,706.69				\$ 34,706.69
Water Tower	\$ 180,000.00				\$ 180,000.00
Water	\$ 174,959.92	\$ 33,498.19	\$ 43,500.07		\$ 164,958.04
Electric	\$ 1,196,488.98	\$ 135,621.67	\$ 86,376.84		\$ 1,245,733.81
Wastewater	\$ 220,359.45	\$ 16,930.66	\$ 12,871.96		\$ 224,418.15
Solid Waste	\$ 15,624.04	\$ 8,530.21	\$ 148.61		\$ 24,005.64
Family Crisis	\$ 6,858.14	\$ 10.00	\$ 5.00		\$ 6,863.14
Sales Tax	\$ 17,754.64	\$ 8,912.82	\$ 8,912.82		\$ 17,754.64
Employment	\$ 3,045.81	\$ -	\$ (5,731.45)		\$ 8,777.26
Utility Prepayments	\$ 70,118.12	\$ 1,835.52	\$ 107.59		\$ 71,846.05
Utility Deposits	\$ 76,959.58	\$ 500.00	\$ 510.00		\$ 76,949.58
Other	\$ 354.61	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 354.61
Totals	\$ 2,603,153.83	\$ 280,355.60	\$ 229,560.56	\$ -	\$ 2,653,948.87

**Debt to be Paid		
**2015 Refinance	\$ 2,533,062.50	by 12/1/2035
**West Sewer	\$ 95,123.83	by 10/15/2022
**RR Sewer Crossing	\$ 55,084.61	by 7/15/22
Total Debt	\$ 2,683,270.94	



Noem, Vice President Pence, and President Trump discuss regulatory reform at the White House on December 16.

Noem Meets with President Trump, Vice President Pence in White House to Discuss Regulatory Reform

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem yesterday met with President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, and six other governors at the White House to highlight South Dakota's deregulatory accomplishments and discuss further work to scale back regulations at the federal and state levels.

"I appreciate the President's commitment to streamlining occupational licensing and reciprocity," said Noem. "I'm committed to putting people over paperwork and eliminating unnecessary regulations in South Dakota."

This year, Noem signed HB1111 into law, which eases the professional licensing process for the spouses of military members assigned to Ellsworth Air Force base or other locations in South Dakota.

"More than 20 percent of military spouses cited state licensing regulations as one of their greatest challenges," said Noem. "The law we enacted this year changed that reality for South Dakota's military families, fast-tracking military spouses through the licensing process and expanding the experienced talent pool of South Dakota's workforce."

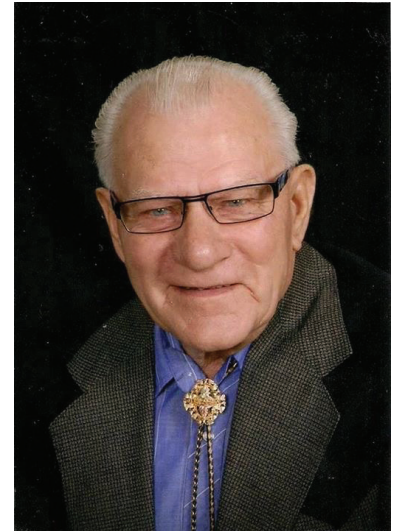
South Dakota is the second least-regulated state in the nation, with only 44,000 regulatory restrictions.

The Life of Jack Walter

John "Jack" Walter, 84, died peacefully December 17, 2019 at Dougherty House Hospice in Sioux Falls. Services will be 11:00 am Saturday, December 21 at St Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Groton, SD. Interment will be at a later date in the Groton Cemetery.

Jack Walter was born October 31, 1935 on the family farm to Merle and Ethel (Hendershott) Walter. He attended grade school with his 3 brothers in Riverside Township and graduated from Groton High School in 1954. He enlisted in the U.S. Army, and served 16 months on the DMZ in Korea where he was a radar operator and maintenance engineer.

In 1958, he married Helen Steenson of Aberdeen and together they raised five children on their family farm east of Groton. Jack and his brother David started Walter Angus Farm in 1952. Following the death of David, Jack moved forward with the registered Angus herd, raising premium Angus seedstock for over 50 years. When asked what he did for a living, Jack would always say he was a "bull shipper"! As his family grew, they were busy in 4-H, showing Angus cattle across the region and camping



Jack and Helen developed a love for traveling and visited all 48 contiguous states. They settled in Harlingen, TX, as their winter home for more than 25 years where they enjoyed dancing and the warm weather. In 2012, Jack & Helen retired to Mina Lake where Helen took joy in watching the water and Jack did his best to fish! Helen suffered a stroke in 2014 and passed away January 6, 2016.

In his youth, Jack was an active 4-H member and was president of the Brown County YCL. As an adult, Jack was active in Groton Jaycees, Brown County 4-H, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church and the Groton American Legion. He was a life-long member of the American Angus Association, Hub City Angus and North James Valley Angus Association. He was a strong supporter of FFA and was instrumental in restarting the Groton program in the late 70s.

Grateful for sharing his life are his five children, Kim (Mike) Jones, Cartersville, GA; Mark (Barb), Centerville, SD; Scott (Vicki), Tyler TX, Pam (Kent) Geppert, Kimball, SD; and Dani Bolte and friend Lance Danielson, Sioux Falls; 12 grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren, one sister-in-law, Jean Walter, Groton; one brother-in-law, Jim (Ruth) Steenson, Kalispell, MT and numerous nephews and nieces.

He is preceded in death by his parents, step-mother Alice; three brothers, Vernon, Donnie and David, and son-in-law Kurt Hill.

Miller Funeral Home in Sioux Falls, SD assisting with arrangements. For online obituary and guest register go to our website at www.millerfh.com.

The Life of Dale Cutler



Dale Lee Cutler, a lifelong Brown County resident, died peacefully at his Bethesda home in Aberdeen, SD, on Dec. 14, 2019.

Services will be 10:00 a.m., Thursday, December 19th at Aberdeen First United Methodist Church. Rev. Derek Baum and Rev. Eldon Reich will officiate. Burial will follow in Groton Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel on Wednesday from 5-7 p.m.

Dale was born January 8, 1926, at Claremont, SD, the second child of Howard and Sybil Cutler. He attended a nearby country school and later graduated from Claremont High School, where he had learned the most important thing of his lifetime: the name and address of Kathleen (Cassie) Gibbs. They were married in 1944, and together began a lifetime of farming, ranching,

and child rearing that lasted 55 years, until Cassie succumbed to ALS disease in 1999. Both Cassie and Dale were voracious readers, lifelong learners, and strongly believed in the value of education. Although neither had the opportunity to attend, they were proud that all 6 of their children graduated from college.

Dale's accomplishments were many, and his love of cattle led him to one of his favorite ventures. In the 1960's, he and a handful of other cattlemen determined that the commercial beef herds in the US, then primarily Angus and Herefords, needed some fresh genetics to bolster feedlot performance. Through study, research, and travel abroad, they decided that the Simmental cattle of Europe were the best breed to help improve cattle genetics at home. That group formed the American Simmental Association, a national association to promote the importation and use of these cattle. Dale was a founding member of the association and served as its president in 1973/4. He traveled throughout cattle country promoting the breed and helping organize various state associations. He and Cassie enjoyed seeing new places, but most of all cherished getting to know people who would end up being lifelong friends.

Another favorite venture began around their kitchen table, where several of us were complaining of the low corn prices in Claremont. That led to various discussions on value-added ag possibilities, which eventually led to the planning, fundraising, and construction of the Groton ethanol plant in 2003.

Dale was very sociable. He was gregarious and warm without having to be the center of attention. He had a fantastic memory for people and their names which came from genuinely loving to be around them. It seemed that he knew everyone in South Dakota.

We family members got to enjoy daily his humor, quick wit, and easy laugh. We also saw how he faced some of life's worst challenges, from the destruction of the farming economy to the loss of a spouse. Dale's resoluteness in the face of those losses, and his ability to remain positive, were an example of grace under pressure for all of us and a life lesson we will never forget.

Dad loved his family and would do anything for them. He loved his land, his livestock, his church, and his friends. He planted innumerable trees on his lands and particularly liked apple trees. Like the extended Cutler family, he loved the game of baseball and played or managed for most of his life. He was blessed to have a special friend, Joan Henry, who was his boon companion for many years. He was grateful for the excellent care provided by Bethesda, and especially Carole Greseth.

Grateful for sharing his life are his children and grandchildren: Dan and Diane Cutler (Dana, Dillon, and Dacey); Linda and Bill Richter (Allison, Becca, BJ, Gretchen and Emily); Bruce and Barb Cutler (Carley, Brock, and Grant); Pam and Tim Zoellner (Victoria, Alexandra, and Jackson); Mark and Kristen Cutler; and Mike and Tracy Cutler (Mackenzie, Madison, Michaela, and Dylan) and 31 great grandchildren. Dale was preceded in death by his wife Cassie, his parents, and two brothers, Keith and Verl. He is survived by three siblings; Lyle Cutler, Ann Carver, and Mary Lynn James.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 8 of 61

City employees get 2.6% raise

ORDINANCE NO. 732

An Ordinance entitled "The 2020 Salary Ordinance" to amend Ordinance No. 722, being an ordinance regulating the salaries of the elective and appointive officers and employees of the City of Groton.

BE IT ORDAINED BY The City Council of the City of Groton that the 2020 salaries and time of payment are as follows for the elected and appointed officers and employees:

Mayor	\$625.00 Monthly
Council Members	\$3,000.00 Yearly
	\$125.00 Per special City Council Meeting
Board of Equalization	\$200.00 Yearly
Planning & Zoning Commission	\$35.00 Per meeting
Planning & Zoning Commission	\$70.00 Per special meeting
Elected Officials	\$300.00 Per full day of additional authorized meetings
Elected Officials	\$100.00 Per half day of additional authorized meetings
Finance Officer	\$23.85 Hourly
Deputy Finance Officer	\$22.54 Hourly
Assistant Finance Officer & Police Secretary	\$22.10 Hourly
Public Works Coordinator & Street & Water Supt.	\$29.86 Hourly
Wastewater Supt.	\$29.56 Hourly
Asst Street Supt.	\$24.58 Hourly
Technology Specialist	\$25.96 Hourly
Electric Supt.	\$38.68 Hourly
Electric Lineman	\$33.45 Hourly
Police Chief	\$29.26 Hourly
Police Officer & Assistant Chief	\$26.43 Hourly
Police Officer Level 1	\$25.49 Hourly
Police Officer Level 2	\$25.39 Hourly

Full time permanent employee individual health insurance premium will be covered by the City of Groton, along with \$260 per month toward a dependant's insurance coverage provided by the City.

The city will contribute \$2 for every \$1 the employee contributes up to \$1000 to their health savings account under the HSA health insurance option.

The city will also contribute \$2 for every \$1 the employee contributes up to \$400 to their med flex account.

First Reading: 3-Dec-20

Second Reading: 17-Dec-19

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 9 of 61

Today



Partly Sunny

High: 27 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 11 °F

Thursday



Mostly Cloudy

High: 26 °F

Thursday
Night



Decreasing
Clouds

Low: 11 °F

Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 29 °F

Image Not Available from
the National Weather Service

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 10 of 61

Today in Weather History

December 18, 1985: On one of the coldest mornings of the year, most places in South Dakota experienced low temperatures of less than 20 degrees below zero. The coldest temperature was 30 below zero at Huron in Beadle County and Canton in Lincoln County. Aberdeen dropped to 22 below zero, Highmore and Mobridge fell to 23 below zero; Britton fell to 24 below zero, and Summit bottomed out at 25 below.

December 18, 1996: A powerful Alberta Clipper and a slow-moving deep Arctic high-pressure system brought widespread prolonged blizzard conditions to the entire region from the 16th to the 19th. The clipper dropped from 1 to 5 inches of snowfall on top of the already extensive snow cover of 1 to almost 4 feet. Across central and north central South Dakota, northerly winds increased to 25 to 40 mph with gusts to 55 mph late in the morning of the 16th. Temperatures also fell, and widespread blizzard conditions and dangerous wind chills of 40 to 70 below zero developed, prevailing through noon on the 18th. Across northeast South Dakota, conditions changed through late in the day of the 16th, with widespread blowing snow, falling temperatures, and dangerous wind chills. Widespread blizzard conditions developed on the morning of the 17th and continued into the evening of the 18th. Conditions changed throughout the afternoon of the 16th in west central Minnesota, with a full-fledged blizzard by the morning of the 17th.

North winds of 30 to 40 mph gusting to 50 mph brought visibilities to near zero and caused heavy drifting, making travel difficult. Many people had to be rescued from their vehicles after getting stuck in massive snowdrifts or going into ditches because of low visibilities. Some people had to wait to be rescued for many hours, for some over a day. Due to the massive amount of blowing snow, widespread heavy drifting occurred across the entire area, blocking roads, making travel difficult, and leaving some people stranded to wait out the storm. Some snowdrifts from the storm were as high as 15 feet with a few houses almost buried. A Burlington Northern locomotive became stuck in a 12-foot drift near Hazel and had to be dug out. Due to the weight of the snow, the roof of a hanger at the Gettysburg Airport collapsed on an airplane.

All schools were let out early on the 16th with some schools not reopening until the 20th. Several school buses went into the ditch or got stuck in drifts and had to be pulled out. There were several accidents, most with minor injuries; however, one accident in Dewey County resulted in serious injury. Most of the roads, state highways and Interstate 90 were closed for a day or two until road crews could get to them. Interstate 29 also received heavy drifting, with parts of it closed for a while during the storm. Most snow plows had to be called back because they could not see the roads or the roads would be drifted over shortly after they were plowed. Some county snow removal budgets were already depleted or were close to being consumed. Emergency personnel and road crews were working extended hours to keep up with the storm. Rescue vehicles had a difficult time responding to emergencies. In one case, a lady from Mobridge had to be brought to Aberdeen. The 100-mile trip took six hours. Also, a rural Westport man died because the rescue units could not get to him in time.

Airports were closed or flights were canceled or delayed. Mail was delayed for some people up to several days with a massive backup of Christmas packages. Some government offices and many businesses were closed for several days. All sports and other activities were postponed or canceled. Farmers and ranchers had a difficult time getting feed to their livestock. Many cattle were loose and had to be found as they walked on snow drifts over fences. The storm also killed several animals and a countless number of pheasants with some buried in the snow. Several dairy producers had to dump thousands of pounds of milk because trucks could not get to them in time. Fortunately, there were only spotty power outages throughout the storm. For several hours on the night of the 16th in the extreme cold, 3000 people in Pierre were without power for several hours.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 11 of 61

Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 23 °F at 12:31 PM

Low Temp: 6 °F at 7:37 PM

Wind: 17 mph at 1:19 PM

Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 58° in 1979

Record Low: -37° in 2016

Average High: 25°F

Average Low: 5°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.28

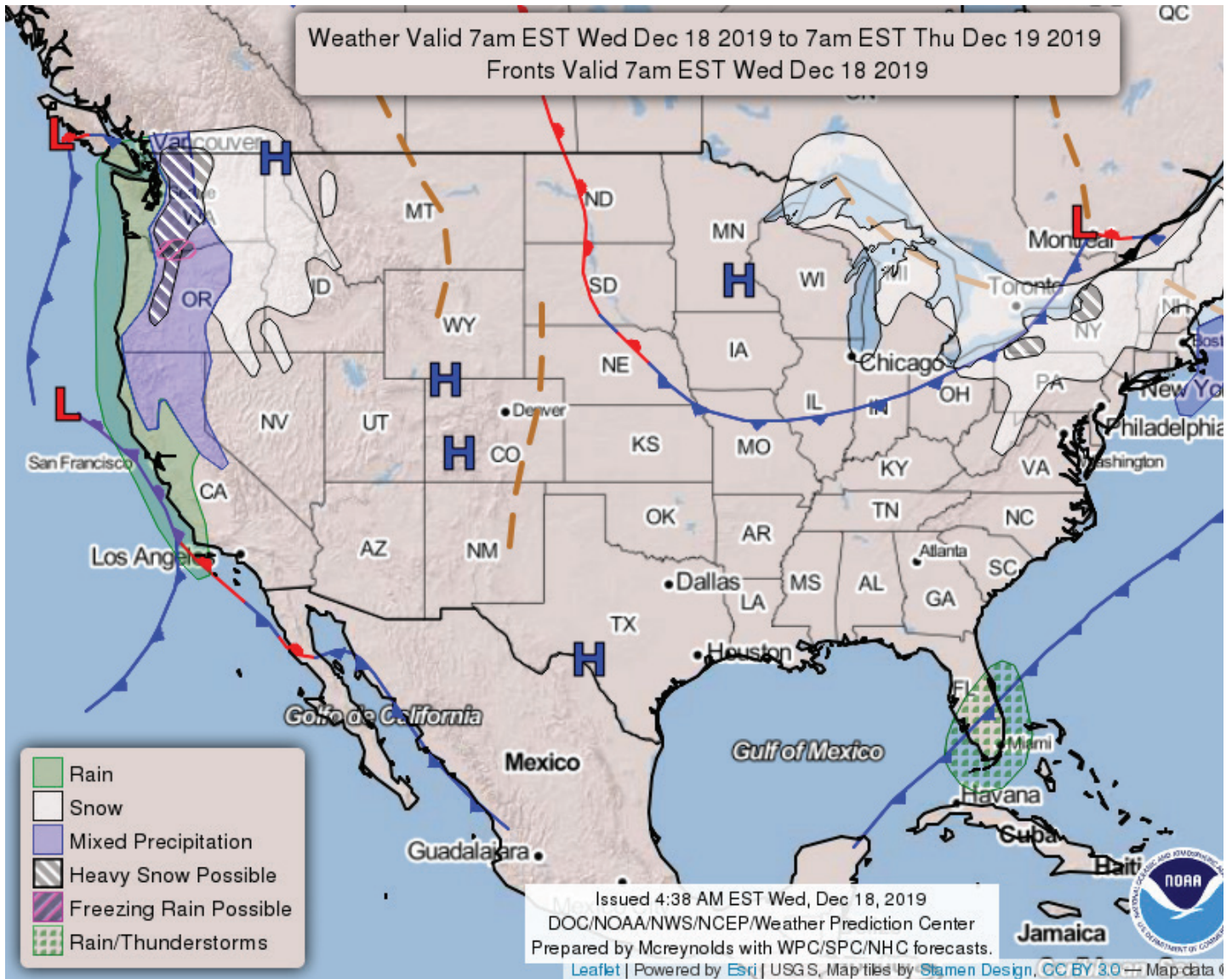
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.11

Average Precip to date: 21.48

Precip Year to Date: 28.06

Sunset Tonight: 4:52 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:09 a.m.





"YOU NEED TO CHANGE HER NAME!"

"Larry," says Bruce every time he sees me with my dog, "you need to change her name to 'Lucky.' I can't imagine anyone who would take better care of that dog than you. It's plain to me she's not Bella. She's 'Lucky' – really lucky she found you." Here's what happened...

One dark, stormy, cold, foggy night I opened the door to our carport. Sensing something at my foot, I looked down. There, looking up at me, was a small dog wagging her tail and wiggling all over as if to say, "I'm home!"

For weeks Mary and I searched for her owners but were unsuccessful. Then, we tried to find her another home. That didn't work either. Every time we gave her away, she eventually came back. So, we decided to keep her and named her "Bella," which means "beautiful."

When reading through Proverbs several months ago, I noticed a verse that had never registered in my mind: "The righteous care for the needs of their animals." Please understand that I am not claiming to be righteous, nor elevating animals to the level of humans. But notice this:

A distinct contrast is made by the author between a person who is righteous and one who is not: the one who is righteous has a gentleness that the wicked do not have. And, if one is truly righteous, it becomes obvious: if we as believers willingly give our hearts completely to God, He will remove every trace of "cruelty." He will control us and bless us and enable us to demonstrate how much we value every gift He gives us – even animals. We expose who we truly are by the way we care for each gift God gives us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, implant within us a gentle, gracious and loving heart. May we respect all of Your gifts. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Proverbs 12:10 The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 13 of 61

2019 Groton SD Community Events

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)
- 04/26/2020 Father/Daughter dance.
- 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)

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 14 of 61

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

22-30-53-55-56, Mega Ball: 16, Megaplier: 2

(twenty-two, thirty, fifty-three, fifty-five, fifty-six; Mega Ball: sixteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$372 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$160 million

Tuesday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Baltic 62, Parker 61

Brandon Valley 54, Sioux Falls Lincoln 45

Britton-Hecla 51, Wilmot 47

Burke 61, North Central, Neb. 52

Canton 56, Garretson 47

Chadron, Neb. 53, Hot Springs 15

Corsica/Stickney 78, Avon 38

Dakota Valley 87, Beresford 32

Dell Rapids St. Mary 56, Mitchell Christian 26

Faulkton 70, Sunshine Bible Academy 45

Gayville-Volin 46, Wausa, Neb. 35

Gregory 75, Chamberlain 72

Harrisburg 53, Brookings 49

Herreid/Selby Area 57, Timber Lake 40

Howard 58, Chester 30

Ipswich 62, North Central 36

Lead-Deadwood 67, Newell 34

Leola/Frederick 53, Langford 46, OT

Lyman 62, Sully Buttes 61

Madison 59, Tri-Valley 57

Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 58, Alcester-Hudson 42

Parkston 72, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 46

Potter County 64, Miller 35

St. Thomas More 72, Douglas 45

Tea Area 60, Flandreau 31

Wagner 62, Irene-Wakonda 55

West Central 75, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 43

Wolsey-Wessington 65, Lake Preston 49

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 61, Mobridge-Pollock 26

Alcester-Hudson 53, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 45

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 15 of 61

Baltic 42, Parker 30
Belle Fourche 42, Sturgis Brown 30
Beresford 60, Dakota Valley 53
Bison 35, Faith 33
Chadron, Neb. 54, Hot Springs 13
Clark/Willow Lake 63, Waverly-South Shore 60
Dell Rapids St. Mary 59, Mitchell Christian 54
Deubrook 45, Deuel 39
Douglas 58, Rapid City Christian 57
Ethan 61, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 28
Faulkton 77, Sunshine Bible Academy 13
Garretson 62, Canton 29
Harrisburg 67, Brookings 36
Howard 55, Chester 32
Huron 54, Pierre 52
Ipswich 45, North Central 43
Irene-Wakonda 51, Wagner 48
Kadoka Area 62, Jones County 46
Kimball/White Lake 45, Platte-Geddes 41
Lead-Deadwood 52, Newell 33
Lemmon 47, Dupree 44
Lyman 43, Sully Buttes 41
Madison 59, Tri-Valley 57
McCook Central/Montrose 57, Freeman 37
Miller 71, Potter County 39
Parkston 46, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 25
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 40, Hitchcock-Tulare 36
Scotland 48, Menno 46
Sioux Falls Christian 42, Dell Rapids 36
Sioux Falls Washington 68, Sioux Falls Lincoln 52
Tea Area 61, Flandreau 55
Viborg-Hurley 54, Bridgewater-Emery 52
Waubay/Summit 54, Groton Area 31
Wausa, Neb. 40, Gayville-Volin 37
Wessington Springs 36, Iroquois 25
West Central 57, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 39
Wilmot 46, Britton-Hecla 29
Wolsey-Wessington 62, Lake Preston 36

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Robbins scores 25 to carry Drake past Mount Marty 92-74

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Liam Robbins had a career-high 25 points plus 10 rebounds as Drake extended its home win streak to seven games, beating Mount Marty 92-74 on Tuesday night.

Roman Penn had 16 points and seven rebounds for Drake (9-3). Antonio Pilipovic added 11 points and Anthony Murphy contributed 10 points.

Colby Johnson had 19 points and six rebounds for the Lancers. Jordan Johnson added 19 points and seven rebounds. Chris King had 17 points.

Drake plays Air Force on the road on Saturday.

NTSB: Icy conditions during deadly South Dakota plane crash

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The pilot and a passenger of a small plane that crashed after taking off from a small South Dakota airport on Thanksgiving weekend, killing nine of 12 members of an Idaho family who were on board, spent three hours clearing snow and ice from the aircraft before departure, the National Transportation Safety Board said in a preliminary report released Tuesday.

The single-engine plane made it less than a mile from the airport in Chamberlain, South Dakota, and only 460 feet into the air before it crashed shortly after noon on Nov. 30, according to the report, which doesn't list a cause of the crash or the name of the pilot. Three of the plane's warning systems — the stall warning, stick shaker and stick pusher — activated within seconds of liftoff, the report states.

The crash killed nine members of the Hansen family, including the pilot. The family, which is from Idaho Falls, Idaho, flew to South Dakota for an annual pheasant-hunting trip. They were returning home when the plane crashed. Although the report did not name the pilot, Kirk Hansen had a private pilot certificate and his medical information was up to date with the Federal Aviation Administration.

The area was under a winter storm warning at the time of the crash and the airport's weather station reported conditions that were worsening by the minute. Snowfall increased from light to moderate, and visibility reduced from three-quarters of a mile to half a mile.

A witness who was about half a mile from the airport reported hearing the plane running well for a few seconds but was not able to see it because of snow and clouds.

Gary Robb, an aviation lawyer, said the weather should have dissuaded the pilot from taking off.

"It's not just a bright yellow caution," he said. "It's a big red stop sign."

Ice on the wings of a plane can make it more difficult to achieve the lift and thrust needed to fly, Robb said.

The plane was near its capacity weight, Robb said. The Pilatus PC12 is usually equipped with seating for seven passengers, but is rated on the weight it carries rather than the number of passengers.

Federal investigators recovered a "black box" data recorder from the crash site, which should help their investigation into the probably cause or causes of the crash. Their full investigation report will be released in a year or two.

Man sentenced to 30 years for charging officers with knives

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man who was shot by law enforcement after charging at them with knives outside of a jail earlier this year will spend decades in prison.

George Rinzy Jr., 44, was sentenced Tuesday to 30 years in the state penitentiary. Rinzy was shot by law enforcement outside the Minnehaha County Jail after causing a disturbance at the jail in May.

Rinzy pleaded guilty but mentally ill last month to three counts of aggravated assault against law enforcement.

Retired Brookings County Judge Timothy Tucker sentenced Rinzy to 30 years on each count, to run concurrently. Rinzy was given credit for the 207 days he's already spent in jail, the Argus Leader reported.

The judge told Rinzy that he was empathetic to Rinzy's mental illness, but that Rinzy's conduct was "highly dangerous."

Prosecutor Mandi Mowery said Rinzy's actions were a risk to the public, adding that the incident happened in the parking lot of a public building in the middle of a business day.

Rinzy had alcohol and methamphetamine in his system that day, Mowery said.

Deputy Craig Olson, who fired twice at Rinzy, said he and other law officers train and talk about the possibility of events that would force them to respond with lethal force.

"We hope we never have to," Olson said. "You charged at me in an aggressive manner. I did not want you to harm anyone." South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg later said Olson's actions were justified.

Rinzy apologized to law enforcement and their families.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 17 of 61

Trump on brink of impeachment as House readies historic vote

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is on the cusp of being impeached by the House, with a historic debate set Wednesday on charges that he abused his power and obstructed Congress ahead of votes that will leave a defining mark on his tenure at the White House.

Trump, who would be just the third U.S. president to be impeached, on Tuesday fired off a furious letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi denouncing the “vicious crusade” against him, but he also acknowledged he was powerless to stop the expected outcome.

“When people look back at this affair, I want them to understand it, and learn for it, so that it can never happen to another president again,” he wrote.

Early Wednesday, Trump tweeted his outrage: “Can you believe that I will be impeached today by the Radical Left, Do Nothing Democrats, AND I DID NOTHING WRONG! A terrible thing.”

Pelosi, who warned earlier this year against pursuing a strictly partisan impeachment, nonetheless has the numbers from Democrats to approve it. According to a tally compiled by The Associated Press, Trump is on track to be formally charged by a House majority.

“Very sadly, the facts have made clear that the President abused his power for his own personal, political benefit and that he obstructed Congress,” Pelosi wrote to colleagues, asking them to join in the morning as the House convenes.

“In America, no one is above the law,” she said. “During this very prayerful moment in our nation’s history, we must honor our oath to support and defend our Constitution from all enemies, foreign and domestic.”

The rare undertaking to impeach a president, set to unfold over more than six hours of debate Wednesday, is splitting the lawmakers in Congress much the way Americans have different views of Trump’s unusual presidency and the articles of impeachment against him.

From Alaska to Florida, tens of thousands of Americans marched in support of impeachment Tuesday evening, from a demonstration through a rainy Times Square to handfuls of activists standing vigil in small towns. They carried signs saying “Save the Constitution - Impeach!!!!” and “Criminal-in-Chief.”

“I really believe that the Constitution is under assault,” said one protester, 62-year-old Glenn Conway, of Holly Springs, North Carolina, attending his first political rally in 30 years. “I think we have a president at this point who believes he’s above the law.”

Trump implores Americans to “read the transcript,” but the facts of his July phone call with the Ukraine president were largely confirmed by witnesses in the impeachment inquiry. Trump asked Volodymyr Zelenskyy to investigate Democrats and his 2020 political rival Joe Biden. At the time, the newly elected Ukraine leader was hoping for a coveted White House visit to showcase his standing with the U.S., his country’s most important ally. He was also counting on nearly \$400 million in military aid as his country confronts a hostile neighbor, Russia.

The question for lawmakers, and Americans, is whether those actions, and the White House’s block on officials testifying for the House investigation, are impeachable offenses.

Trump appeared to intend his lengthy, accusatory message less for Pelosi than for the broad audience of citizens — including 2020 voters — watching history unfolding on Capitol Hill.

He accused the Democrats of acting out of “Trump Derangement Syndrome,” still smarting from their 2016 election losses. “You are the ones bringing pain and suffering to our Republic for your own selfish, personal political and partisan gain,” he wrote.

Portraying himself as a blameless victim, as he often does, Trump compared the impeachment inquiry to the “Salem Witch Trials.” Asked later if he bore any responsibility for the proceedings, he said, “No, I don’t think any. Zero, to put it mildly.”

But the House impeachment resolution says that Trump abused the power of his office and then tried to obstruct the investigation in Congress like “no other” president in history.

Trump “betrayed the Nation by abusing his high office to enlist a foreign power in corrupting democratic elections,” the resolution says. “President Trump, by such conduct, has demonstrated that he will remain

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 18 of 61

a threat to national security and the Constitution if allowed to remain in office.”

Centrist Democratic lawmakers, including many first-term freshmen who built the House majority and could risk their reelection in districts where the president is popular, have announced they would vote to impeach.

Many drew on the Constitution and the intent of the country’s founders as they considered the role of Congress to conduct oversight in the nation’s system of checks and balances.

Rep. Abby Finkenauer, D-Iowa, referred to the oath she took in January as she was sworn into office as guiding her decision. She announced support for both articles of impeachment to “honor my duty to defend our Constitution and democracy from abuse of power at the highest levels.”

Republicans disagreed, firmly.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell set the partisan tone for the next step, as attention will shift to the Senate which, under the Constitution, is required to hold a trial on the charges. That trial is expected to begin in January.

“I’m not an impartial juror,” McConnell declared. The Republican-majority chamber is all but sure to acquit the president.

Lawmakers crossing party lines face consequences. One freshman Democrat, Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey, is indicating he will switch parties to become a Republican after opposing impeachment. Earlier this year, Michigan conservative Rep. Justin Amash left the GOP when he favored impeachment.

One new Democrat congressman, Jared Golden of Maine, said he would vote to impeach on abuse of power but not obstruction.

Hoping to dispatch with lengthy Senate proceedings, McConnell rejected Senate Democrats’ push for fresh impeachment testimony and made a last-ditch plea that House Democrats “turn back from the cliff” of Wednesday’s expected vote.

“Impeachment is a political decision,” McConnell said. “The House made a partisan political decision to impeach. I would anticipate we will have a largely partisan outcome in the Senate. I’m not impartial about this at all.”

McConnell’s remarks Tuesday effectively slammed the door on negotiations for a deal proposed by the Democratic leader, Sen. Chuck Schumer, who wants to call top White House officials for the Senate trial.

Schumer’s proposal was the first overture in what were expected to be negotiations between the two leaders. Trump wants a relatively broad, perhaps showy, Senate proceeding to not only acquit but also vindicate him of the impeachment charges.

McConnell and most other GOP senators prefer a swift trial to move on from impeachment. Still, Schumer wants to hear from John Bolton, Mick Mulvaney and other current and former Trump officials who were instructed by the president not to appear for House proceedings.

“Why is the leader, why is the president so afraid to have these witnesses come testify?” asked Schumer from the Senate floor. “They certainly ought to be heard.”

Trump has promoted lawyer Rudy Giuliani’s investigation of Biden and a widely debunked theory that it was actually Ukraine, not Russia, that interfered in the 2016 election, a conspiracy-laden idea that most other Republicans have actively avoided.

Associated Press writers Laurie Kellman, Matthew Daly, Alan Fram and Amer Madhani in Washington and David Sharpe in Maine contributed to this report.

What to watch as Trump impeachment moves to House floor

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — American history is happening in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Democrats are driving President Donald Trump to the brink of impeachment Wednesday as the House takes up charges Trump abused his power and obstructed Congress in pressuring Ukraine to investigate political rivals and refusing to cooperate with the ensuing congressional probe.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 19 of 61

The nation's 45th president is on track to become only the third commander in chief to be impeached. But first, watch for a daylong showdown that's been boiling for years between Republicans loyal to Trump and Democrats who say his conduct toward Ukraine makes him unfit for office. Look, too, for legacy moments for Washington's political veterans on the eve of the 2020 election year.

What to watch during a historic day on Capitol Hill that begins at 9 a.m. EST and is expected to end with a final vote between 6:30 and 7:30 p.m.:

SPOILER ALERT

Trump is heading for impeachment. When the House opens debate, the outcome will have been known for some time.

A tally compiled by The Associated Press found that a majority of House members have said they will vote to approve the charges and send them to the Senate for a trial next month.

The GOP-led Senate is not expected to convict and remove Trump from office.

PARTISANS, MOSTLY

Expect most Democrats to vote for impeachment and all Republicans to vote against it.

But there are exceptions.

One freshman Democrat, Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey, has indicated he will oppose impeachment, then switch parties to become a Republican. Earlier this year, Michigan conservative Rep. Justin Amash left the GOP when he favored impeachment. He is expected to vote yes to impeach.

One new Democratic congressman, Jared Golden of Maine, said he would vote to impeach on abuse of power but not obstruction.

AMERICANS

Expect the House to take the nation's us-vs-them political culture out for a spin before a global audience. But it's not clear the proceedings are changing many minds.

Trump's approval ratings have held steady since a whistleblower report and a partial transcript revealed he had pressured Ukraine's president to investigate Democrats.

Wide shares of Democrats both disapprove of the president and support impeachment, while wide shares of Republicans approve of Trump and want him to remain in office.

New polls from The Washington Post/ABC News and CNN find support for impeachment and removal remains at about half of Americans.

'PROFOUND DISGRACE'

Impeachment will subject Trump to what former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter called a "profound disgrace" that stains a president's legacy forever. Only two presidents have been impeached: Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998.

Richard Nixon chose to resign instead.

Trump has mocked the articles of impeachment as weak.

TRUMP'S DAY

He's heading to Michigan, the Democratic state he flipped in 2016. Vice President Mike Pence is on a bus tour across the state and expected to join Trump at the rally in Battle Creek.

On the eve of the floor action, Trump gave a nearly six-page preview of his approach in a rambling letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. In which he cast himself as a victim and accused the Democrats of smarting over their election losses. "You are the ones bringing pain and suffering to our Republic for your own selfish, personal political and partisan gain."

PELOSI

It's legacy time for her, too.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 20 of 61

In her second turn as speaker, the House veteran of more than three decades says relentlessly that impeachment is a somber time, not one for celebration. She says the Clinton impeachment proceedings were too divisive for the county and resisted opening impeachment proceedings against President George W. Bush after the Iraq War.

She refused to launch impeachment proceedings against Trump over his obstruction of the Russia investigation, saying she'd be against doing so unless there was bipartisan sentiment for it.

That still doesn't exist for the impeachment articles now headed for passage. But Pelosi has said Trump's conduct toward Ukraine, while holding up military aid to that country, left her no choice.

"Very sadly, the facts have made clear that the President abused his power for his own personal, political benefit and that he obstructed Congress," Pelosi wrote to colleagues. "In America, no one is above the law."

NEXT STOP: SENATE

After votes on each of the two amendments, the House is expected to authorize Pelosi to name a team of prosecutors for the Senate trial. Lobbying for the jobs is well underway. The wagering begins with the two lead House impeachment chairmen, Adam Schiff of Intelligence and Jerrold Nadler of Judiciary, playing roles.

The trial is expected to begin in January, with Chief Justice John Roberts presiding.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer have begun negotiating, and sniping, over how the trial will be conducted.

McConnell set the partisan tone by declaring that he's "not an impartial juror."

Follow Kellman on Twitter at: <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman>

Fiat Chrysler and Peugeot sign deal for 50-50 merger

By COLLEEN BARRY and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — The boards of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and PSA Peugeot on Wednesday signed a binding merger deal creating the world's fourth-largest automaker with the scale to confront the challenges of stricter emissions regulations and the transition to new driving technologies.

The companies said in a joint statement the new group will be led by PSA's cost-cutting CEO Carlo Tavares, with Fiat Chrysler's chairman John Elkann as chairman of the merged company. Fiat Chrysler CEO Mike Manley will stay on, but it was not announced in what capacity.

No name for the new company has been decided, executives said in a conference call, but both Tavares and Manley insisted that it was not a "touchy subject."

The deal, which was unveiled in October, was announced as a 50-50 merger, but PSA has one extra seat at the board and Tavares at the helm, giving the French carmaker the upper hand in daily management.

The executives said they expect the deal to take 12-15 months to close. It will give birth to a group with revenues of nearly 170 billion euros (nearly \$190 billion) and producing 8.7 million cars a year — just behind Toyota, Volkswagen and the Renault-Nissan alliance.

Fiat Chrysler shares rose nearly 2% in Milan, while Peugeot shot up 4.2% in Paris trading.

The merger is expected to create 3.7 billion euros in annual savings, which will be invested in "the new era of sustainable mobility" and to meet strict new emissions regulations, particularly in Europe.

"The merged entity will maneuver with speed and efficiency in an automotive industry undergoing rapid and fundamental changes," the companies said in their statement.

New technologies includes electrified engines, autonomous driving and connectivity, part of what Tavares described as "the transition to a world of clean, safe and sustainable mobility."

No plants will be closed under the deal, the companies said. Savings will be achieved by sharing investments in vehicle platforms, engines and new technology, while leveraging scale on purchasing.

But the executives also said there would be cuts. Decisions on where those will come will be made after the deal closes.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 21 of 61

"There is room for sharing (a) significant amount of existing platforms and avoiding excess investments for the future," Tavares said.

Both the Peugeot and Fiat brands are strong on small-car technology, with significant overlap in Europe. Manley said that the convergence of platforms would be "an early target" that will likely take two years to achieve.

The company will be legally based in the Netherlands, and traded in Paris, Milan and New York.

The executives played down the significance of the new entity's name and headquarters location, but both are symbolic choices that go a long way to signalling who is in the driver's seat, where engineering and management brains will be based, and the relative importance of each entity in the new company.

The French and Italian governments as well as unions will be on the look-out for the responses, given the national significance of car-making to both economies. The French government helped bail out PSA Peugeot in 2014 and owns a 12% stake in the French company through the state investment bank.

While the merger of Fiat and Chrysler has been a success, with the Italian-American automaker thriving on the strength of the U.S. market and the executive prowess of longtime CEO Sergio Marchionne, the history of car mergers is littered with failed tie-ups. Most famous among those is the short-lived Daimler-Chrysler merger, which foundered on cultural differences between the German and U.S. entities.

Manley said the new name "is an exercise we're embarking on now. We have two very historied companies coming together. ... I don't think it will be a touchy subject, just an interesting process."

Tavares will be the company's first CEO for five years, but there was no word on succession. Manley, who took over as CEO of Fiat Chrysler just before Marchionne's death in July 2018, will work alongside him, Elkann said in an email to employees.

The new company will start with a strong base in Europe, where PSA is the second-largest carmaker, while Fiat makes most of its profits in North America and has a strong presence in Latin America. It will be looking to strengthen its position in China, where both PSA and FCA lag.

"That is part of the opportunities," Tavares said. "We are not happy with our performance there. We think we should be doing better in China."

Tavares said the deal has the support of its Chinese partner and investor Dongfeng, which "understood what needed to be done."

As part of the deal, Dongfeng's stake in the new company will be diluted from 6.2% to 4.5%, through the sale of 30.7 million shares.

Fiat Chrysler will pay its shareholders a 5.5 billion-euro (\$6.1 billion) premium, raising questions about whether the new company will be saddled with too much debt. Analysts estimate that Peugeot is paying a hefty 32% premium to take control of Fiat Chrysler.

Fiat Chrysler has long been looking for an industrial partner to shoulder investment costs as the industry faces a transition to electrified power trains and autonomous driving. A previous deal with French rival Renault last spring fell apart over French government concerns about the role of Renault's Japanese partner, Nissan.

Tavares said both the French government and unions backed the new deal from the beginning.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire issued a written statement calling it "very good news for France, for Europe and for our auto industry. It represents an important step in the creation of a European champion ... to face the challenge of sustainable mobility."

He said the government would monitor closely the location of decision-making centers, and to ensure that the new company preserves French jobs and confirm PSA's commitment to creating a European battery industry.

Italy's economy and finance minister, Roberto Gualtieri, likewise welcomed the deal, saying it "was a fundamental step in the consolidation of the car industry."

Charlton reported from Paris.

UK services industry sees little joy in post-Brexit world

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prime Minister Boris Johnson's decisive victory in last week's general election provided little comfort to Britain's once world-beating financial services industry, which has been battered by Brexit for more than three years.

While Johnson's triumph buoyed optimism that he would end the country's long-running political stalemate, it virtually guarantees the U.K. will leave the European Union on Jan. 31 and starts the clock on efforts to negotiate a trade deal with the bloc by the end of 2020.

As prime minister prepares to outline his government's priorities Thursday in a speech to lawmakers, the financial industry is seeking assurances that service businesses like theirs won't lose the unfettered access to European markets that has underpinned growth for more than four decades.

"Services are the lifeblood of the U.K. economy and vital to its growth," said Catherine McGuinness, policy chair at the City of London Corp., the historic base for the U.K. financial services industry. "Politicians across the spectrum should recognize that financial and professional services make a significant contribution, employing 2.3 million people across the country — two-thirds outside of London."

The U.K. financial industry, whose roots stretch back to the investors who financed the British Empire and insured its ships, has flourished as a gateway to Europe for companies from around the world. That helped make London the world's top financial center, before Brexit eroded its advantages.

New York moved past London into the top spot last year, according to a ranking of 114 financial centers compiled by Z/Yen, a London-based commercial think tank, and the China Development Group.

In the most recent rankings, published in September, London dropped further behind New York, with Hong Kong just behind in third place. The Global Financial Services Index is based on information provided by more than 3,300 financial professionals around the world.

"Respondents in London continue to be less optimistic than those in other centers, reflecting the continuing uncertainty about future trading relations with the E.U. and the rest of the world after Brexit," the report said.

Rather than wait to see the outcome of future discussions, firms ranging from the global investment bank Goldman Sachs to British insurance company Aviva have announced plans to relocate some operations to other EU countries to ensure they maintain a toehold in the bloc.

At least 332 firms in the U.K. banking and finance industry have prepared for Brexit by relocating part of their business, moving staff or setting up new entities in the EU, according to a study by New Financial, a London-based think tank. It also identified some 5,000 staff moves or local hires made in response to Brexit, stressing that the figures are likely to rise when the terms of Britain's departure become clear.

"Financial services have resigned themselves to have a fairly hard Brexit from their point of view," said Jonathan Portes, a senior fellow at The U.K. in a Changing Europe, a non-partisan think tank at King's College London. "What we will essentially see is a slow drift away from London being by far the most dominant financial center in Europe."

Johnson's Brexit deal covers only the so-called divorce issues, including payment of the U.K.'s financial obligations and citizen's rights. The future relationship between Britain and the EU, including a potential free-trade agreement, will be the subject of a second round of negotiations that the government wants to complete by the end of next year.

TheCityUK, which represents Britain's financial services, said that so far Brexit talks have largely focused on trade in goods, neglecting the services sector, which accounts for 80% of the economy.

"Ministers should seek to rectify this, consult widely, and focus their efforts on how the U.K.'s global leadership in services industries like ours can be sustained and enhanced over the course of this Parliament," Chief Executive Miles Celic said.

Financial services alone accounted for 6.9% of the U.K. economy and generated 29 billion pounds (\$38.6 billion) of tax revenue in the 2017-18 fiscal year. Related professional services such as accounting and legal services push the industry's total contribution to 10% of GDP.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 23 of 61

The EU has already rejected Britain's continued participation in the bloc's "passporting" system, which allows financial firms that are authorized in any EU country to do business across the European Economic Area, which comprises all 28 EU countries plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

That leaves Britain and the EU to determine so-called "equivalence" agreements, which would permit limited access to specified areas if both sides agree to align regulations. Such agreements can be canceled by either side, however, and are subject to wider political considerations.

"This is going to leave loads of uncertainty because these things are not going to be negotiated in a hurry," said Vicky Pryce, chief economic adviser at the London-based Centre for Economics and Business Research.

Johnson's government has said it is seeking a "Canada-style free-trade agreement," stressing that the EU's deal with Canada covers trade in services.

But experts question whether the U.K. can hammer out a similar deal by the end of next year. It took Canada more than five years to negotiate its agreement with the EU, plus two more for it to be approved by each EU country.

Johnson says he won't ask for an extension and will introduce legislation to rule one out, leaving open the possibility that Britain could still leave the EU without a trade deal in a little over a year. Economists forecast this would have tough consequences for jobs and investment.

"The most important thing to remember is that Brexit may get done from a legal point of view on Jan. 31, but that does not get Brexit done from an economic point of view," Portes said. "British businesses are going to have to face the fact that uncertainty is going to continue."

That has weighed on financial markets.

The FTSE 100, Britain's benchmark stock index, has gained 4% since last week's election, beating the S&P 500 in the U.S. and Germany's DAX. But the long-term picture is less positive. While the FTSE 100 has risen 14% since Britain voted to leave the EU in June 2016, the S&P 500 jumped 51% in the same period and the DAX 31%.

The pound jumped briefly after the election, adding to a rally that began in August on optimism Johnson would secure a deal with the EU. The currency is still down almost 10% since the referendum.

"Anyone hoping that the election would draw a line under Brexit was sadly mistaken," Craig Erlam, senior analyst at market research firm Oanda.com, said in a note to investors headlined "Christmas Gift or Exquisitely Wrapped Lump of Coal?"

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

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. **TRUMP ON BRINK OF IMPEACHMENT** The House will debate charges that he abused power and obstructed Congress ahead of votes that will leave a defining mark on his tenure at the White House.
2. **WHAT TO WATCH ON HISTORIC IMPEACHMENT VOTE** A daylong showdown that's been boiling for years between Republicans loyal to Trump and Democrats who say his conduct toward Ukraine makes him unfit for office.
3. **CANDIDATES TEST DIFFERENT PATHS IN CALIFORNIA** Bernie Sanders has hired 80 staffers to knock on doors and organize volunteers to promote a "political revolution," while Michael Bloomberg is spending millions of dollars on TV ads.
4. **AUTO COMPANY GIANTS MERGE** Fiat Chrysler and PSA Peugeot would create the world's fourth-largest automaker with the scale to confront the challenges of stricter emissions and the transition to new driving technologies.
5. **INDIA DELAYS CITIZENSHIP LAW HEARINGS** Critics say that the new law is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist-led government's agenda to marginalize India's 200 million Muslims.

6. 'WE DO WHAT WE CAN' A grassroots movement of health professionals and medical students from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border battle to keep asylum seekers healthy and safe, AP learns.

7. BREXIT STILL MENACES KEY UK INDUSTRIES Britain's financial services industry is seeking assurances from the government that they won't lose unfettered access to European markets.

8. FOR BRAZILIANS, DAM A MIXED BAG The hydroelectric dam in the Amazon bolstered the country's faltering electricity grid but displaced tens of thousands and failed to deliver on promised jobs and economic development, critics say.

9. 'RISE OF SKYWALKER' A SOUR END TO GRAND SAGA AP's film writer calls it a spirited, hectic and ultimately forgettable conclusion to the epic started 42 years ago by George Lucas.

10. BALTIMORE DOMINATES PRO BOWL ROSTERS Lamar Jackson and 11 Ravens teammates make the NFL's all-star showcase, tying the record for Pro Bowl players set by Miami in 1973.

India's Supreme Court delays hearing citizenship law pleas

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's Supreme Court on Wednesday postponed hearing pleas challenging the constitutionality of a new citizenship law that has sparked opposition and massive protests across the country. The court said it would consider the pleas on Jan. 22.

Protests and widespread condemnation have been growing against the Citizenship Amendment Act, with demonstrations erupting in India over the last week.

The new law applies to Hindus, Christians and other religious minorities who are in India illegally but can demonstrate religious persecution in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It does not apply to Muslims.

Critics say that the new law is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist-led government's agenda to marginalize India's 200 million Muslims, and that it goes against the spirit of the country's secular constitution. Modi has defended it as a humanitarian gesture.

The law's passage last week follows a contentious process in northeastern India's Assam state intended to weed out people who entered the country illegally known as the National Register of Citizens, or NRC. Nearly 2 million people in Assam were excluded from the list, about half Hindu and half Muslim, and have been asked to prove their citizenship or else be considered foreign. India is building a detention center for some of the tens of thousands of people the courts are expected to ultimately determine have entered illegally. Modi's home minister, Amit Shah, has pledged to roll out the exercise nationwide.

Some Indian Muslims fear it's a means by which Hindu nationalists can put them in detention or deport them from the country.

"Overthrow NRC!" protesters chanted Wednesday outside New Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia University.

The citizen law was also passed as an unprecedented crackdown continued in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority area, after the region was stripped of special constitutional protections and its statehood in August. Since then, movement and communications have been restricted in the region.

Students have led a week of protests since the law's passage, including at predominantly Muslim Jamia Millia University, where a march on Sunday descended into chaos when demonstrators set three buses ablaze. Police responded with rubber bullets and tear gas. Video showed officers chasing unarmed protesters and beating them with sticks.

Scores of students were injured. Police say they acted with restraint.

The police response to the protests has drawn widespread condemnation. It has also sparked a broader movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act. Demonstrations have erupted across the country, with thousands rallying in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka states on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, authorities tightened security restrictions, implementing a curfew in Assam, where ongoing protests have disrupted daily life in Gauhati, the state capital. They also restricted assembly in a Muslim neighborhood in New Delhi where demonstrators on Tuesday torched a police booth and several vehicles.

Review: 'Rise of Skywalker' is a sour end to a grand saga

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

Not much has caused a disturbance in the "Star Wars" galaxy quite like Rian Johnson's "The Last Jedi," an erratic but electric movie that, regardless of how you felt about it, was something worth arguing about. The same can't be said for J. J. Abrams' "Rise of Skywalker," a scattershot, impatiently paced, fan-servicing finale that repurposes so much of what came before that it feels as though someone searching for the hyperspace button accidentally pressed the spin cycle instead.

A laundry list of plot points cluster like an asteroid field in "Rise of Skywalker." It's a spirited, hectic and ultimately forgettable conclusion of the Skywalker saga begun 42 years ago by George Lucas.

It was also surely a lot to ask for. Abrams, having already ably and nimbly resuscitated Lucas' space opera with the far less cluttered "The Force Awakens," was brought back (like seemingly everyone is in "Star Wars," dead or alive) with the task of not only wrapping up a trilogy but repairing the divides stirred up by "The Last Jedi" and stabilizing the franchise's revolving door of directors. Abrams here took over for the jettisoned Colin Trevorrow, who retains a "story by" credit.

More significantly, "The Last Jedi" had to solve the underlying existential crisis in "Star Wars," a franchise in search of a reason beyond nostalgia (and, cough, billions of dollars) for continuing. The film, for sure, tries its damndest to come up with something. It is one busy, hardworking movie. But if anything has been proven by the many attempts to rekindle the magic of the original trilogy, it's that Lucas' cosmic amalgamation of Flash Gordon and Akira Kurosawa isn't so easily refabricated.

As the trilogy's third act, "Rise of Skywalker" takes the general shape of "Return of the Jedi," even resuscitating its villain: Emperor Palpatine (the very spooky Ian McDiarmid, now mostly a shadowy heap of CGI). He was last seen exploding in a Death Star air shaft, thrown to his apparent death by Darth Vader. Yet as "Star Wars," the most forever war there is, marches into its fifth decade, the undying demands of a pop culture phenomenon and corporate revenue generator has led to some unsettling resurrections.

This third "Star Wars" trilogy began with a plan: the first movie would belong to Han (Harrison Ford), the second to Luke (Mark Hamill) and the third to Leia (Carrie Fisher). Life interfered. Fisher, who along with Ford did more to enliven the original trilogy than any special effect, died of a heart attack in 2016. But she, too, has been brought back for "Rise of the Jedi," via bits and pieces of old footage. For an actress of such live-wire verve, the composite result — a handful of brief lines and gazes — is a hollow non-performance.

Palpatine, residing in a dark Sith lair, essentially sets the table. He summons Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) with an order to "kill the girl" (Daisy Ridley's Rey) and thereby inherit the throne. With the wave of his hand, Palpatine unearths an entire fleet of Star Destroyers. They rise from the depths, a new armada of doom for the First Order.

But this is only a piece of the movie's manic start. Abrams, who penned the screenplay with Chris Terrio ("Argo," "Justice League"), races to catch up with the many characters of the Resistance, among them Leia, Finn (John Boyega), Poe (Oscar Isaac), Rose (Kelly Marie Tran), Chewbacca (Joonas Suotamo) and C-3PO (Anthony Daniels). From the start, there's a rush to speed through a complex plot that sends a crowded Millennium Falcon in search of the hidden Sith base, a quest that includes a series of MacGuffins including — like a relic from a more earthbound adventure — a secret-wielding dagger.

"Star Wars" has never lacked for velocity but the pace here is schizophrenic. The movie can't sit still. Everyone's yelling and most of the bits of humor along the way are too blandly inserted. (C-3PO, at least, is in fine form.) Part of the rush, it seems, is to dismantle some of Johnson's groundwork and refocus the spine of the story on Rey's destiny and her complicated relationship with Ren. Whether that's a gesture to the toxic fandom unleashed by "Last Jedi" or not, some characters suffer for it, most notably Rose. She was the highlight of "The Last Jedi," which stirringly realigned the traditional power dynamics of "Star Wars." But she's regrettably sidelined for much of the action this time.

Some of the tropes that Johnson deconstructed have been reassembled. Poe, the Han Solo heir apparent, is again central. New worlds bring new friends — a Stormtrooper-turned-rebel played by Naomi Ackie; an

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 26 of 61

old rival of Poe's named Zorri Bliss (Keri Russell); a cute Muppet-like creature named Babu Frik — and old (Billy Dee Williams' Lando). Many of them make a good impression but the encounters proceed predictably.

To go too much into the narrative of "Rise of Skywalker" isn't necessary and, besides, I'm not totally sure I could explain it all, anyway. That, in itself, is one of the movie's most disappointing aspects: It's trying too hard. What the streaming spinoff "The Mandalorian" has proven (besides that people will go absolutely gaga over infant Jedi Masters) is that simplicity of story line pays in "Star Wars," just as it does in westerns. "Rise of Skywalker" aims for the brilliant parallel action of "Return of the Jedi" but ends up with mounted horse-like creatures charging on the wing of a Star Destroyer. Somewhere, Jar Jar Binks is celebrating. He might not be the most misplaced thing in the galaxy far, far away, after all.

But even if "Rise of Skywalker" has its fair share of missteps, it gets some things right. The grief of a Wookiee, for one. Kylo's new black helmet, laced with blood-red cracks, for another. A lightsaber fight amid the sea-strewn rubble of a Death Star swells with watery grandeur. And most of all, the anguished Rey-Ren duel finally takes on the mythical dimensions of earlier "Star Wars" tugs between good and evil.

Yet for a movie predicated on satisfying fans, "The Rise of Skywalker" is a distinctly unsatisfying conclusion to what had been an imperfect but mostly good few films. But hope springs eternal among "Star Wars" fans. Some will likely emerge from this latest installment paraphrasing Leia: "Help us, Baby Yoda. You're our only hope."

"Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker," a Walt Disney Co. release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for sci-fi violence and action. Running time: 142 minutes. Two stars out of four.

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

Judge OKs nearly \$25 billion for PG&E fire victims, insurers

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Business Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal bankruptcy judge on Tuesday approved two Pacific Gas & Electric settlements totaling \$24.5 billion to help pay the losses suffered by homeowners, businesses and insurers in the aftermath of catastrophic Northern California wildfires that sent the nation's largest utility into a financial morass.

The decision by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Dennis Montali at the end of a five-hour court hearing bolsters PG&E's chances of following its preferred path for getting out of bankruptcy by a make-or-break June 30 deadline. Montali also handed the utility another victory by rejecting attempts by a competing group to offer an alternative proposal to steer PG&E out of bankruptcy instead of the company's plan.

Despite the strides made Tuesday, PG&E still faces huge obstacles.

The most significant is California Gavin Newsom's recent conclusion that PG&E's plan to emerge from bankruptcy doesn't comply with state law, which the company must do to qualify for coverage in a wildfire fund approved by the California Legislature.

The company's plan relies on coverage from the fund created last summer to insulate PG&E and other utilities from losses caused by future wildfires that could be ignited by their transmission lines. That specter looms large, given that PG&E's outdated equipment and managerial negligence has been blamed for the series of deadly wildfires that raged through Northern California in 2017 and 2018, killing dozens.

PG&E sought refuge in bankruptcy in January as it grappled with \$36 billion in claims from people who lost homes, businesses and family members in those fires. Those claims will now be settled as part of a \$13.5 billion deal that PG&E worked out earlier this month with lawyers representing uninsured and underinsured victims of the past fires. Insurers had been threatening to try to recover the roughly \$20 billion in policyholder claims that they believe they will end up paying for losses in those fires. PG&E settled with the insurers for \$11 billion.

Newsom's rejection of PG&E's current plan late last week had threatened to blow up PG&E's deal with the fire victims because it initially required his approval. But the company and attorneys for the fire victims got around that problem by revising their agreement late Monday so the settlement no longer relied on

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 27 of 61

Newsom's blessing.

PG&E must still find a way to gain Newsom's support for its overall plan, but the judge's approval of the fire victims settlement buys the company more time to win him over. Among other things, Newsom is demanding PG&E replace its entire 14-member board of directors, including CEO Bill Johnson, and make it easier for state and local governments to launch a bid to take over the company and turn it into a customer-owned cooperative if it continues to operate in an unsafe or unreliable manner.

If the company can't placate Newsom ahead of the June 30 bankruptcy deadline, the settlements with both the fire victims and insurers could still fall apart.

Nancy Mitchell, an attorney representing Newsom at Tuesday's hearing, told Montali that PG&E seems determined to retool its plan to the governor's satisfaction.

"They have been tremendous on getting the plan closer" to meet Newsom's approval, she said. "We are not there." She said ensuring the fire victims get paid for their losses is one of the governor's "north stars."

PG&E considered Montali's decision on the settlements "a crossroads in the case," the utility's lawyer, Stephen Karotkin, told Montali. Without the settlements, Karotkin warned that PG&E would have been stuck in a litigation quagmire that would have eliminated any hope the company had of getting out of bankruptcy next summer.

Several other key issues still have to be worked out, including how the trust for the fire victims will be managed and the process for submitting claims. Attorneys for the victims told Montali Tuesday they hope to have those details ironed out by Jan. 20.

It wasn't all good news for PG&E on Tuesday, though. California regulators announced a proposed \$1.7 billion settlement that will punish the utility for sparking the fires in 2017 and 2018. The terms will stick the utility's shareholders with the responsibility for paying for the company's efforts to provide "safe and reliable service." It also figures to undercut PG&E's profits while sparing the utility's customers the indignity of further raising their prices for electricity, which already are among the highest in the U.S.

The agreement with the California Public Utilities Commission still needs Montali's approval. Besides preventing PG&E from billing customers for recovering the \$1.625 billion it expects to incur in legal costs from the fires, it requires the company to earmark an additional \$50 million to improve operations.

The settlement comes after the commission found the utility failed to sufficiently identify dead and dying trees, remove brush and dead trees that can spark wildfires, failed to patrol and maintain its electrical systems and disposed of maintenance evidence needed in the investigations.

In another development Tuesday, Montali gave approval for another group of victims to move forward with a civil trial against PG&E to determine its liability in the December 2016 "Ghost Ship" warehouse fire in Oakland, California, that killed 36 people.

Montali ruled that their lawsuits against PG&E can proceed, with the caveat that any damages would be capped at the amount of coverage remaining from the utility's 2016 insurance policies so the company won't have to drain its depleted finances even further. Attorneys for the fire victims suggested in court that as much as \$900 million could still be available under PG&E's 2016 insurance policies.

Sanders, Bloomberg test different paths to a California win

BY MICHAEL R. BLOOD and KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — One is spending millions of dollars flooding the airwaves from Los Angeles to Sacramento, highlighting his tenure as mayor of the nation's largest city and commitment to key Democratic causes. The other has hired 80 staff members to knock on doors, organize volunteers and promote his message of political revolution in at least seven languages.

No two Democratic presidential candidates are putting as many resources into the fight for California as Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire businessman and former New York mayor, and Bernie Sanders, the Vermont senator. Sanders is marshaling his passionate volunteers to win the biggest prize of the presidential primary season, while Bloomberg arrives with a virtually unlimited checkbook after a late entry in the race.

For now, they're deploying different strategies. Bloomberg is focused on television advertising, long

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 28 of 61

viewed as the best way to reach voters in the state that is home to 40 million people, while Sanders is focused on door-to-door campaigning on the ground. But they each have the resources and plans to do both, and earlier than most of their rivals.

As Bloomberg spokesman Jason Schechter put it: "California is extremely important to Mike."

Bloomberg, who entered the race last month, is bypassing the first four voting states and anchoring his strategy to California and other Super Tuesday states, hoping a strong showing will carry him to the top of the field. Sanders, meanwhile, has a grassroots infrastructure in place from four years ago and is treating California as importantly as earlier contests like Iowa and New Hampshire. He's vowing to win the race.

Bloomberg, though, will not be one of the seven candidates who will gather Thursday in Los Angeles for the sixth and final debate of 2019. He is unable to qualify for the contests because he is not accepting campaign donations. Sanders will be onstage alongside former Vice President Joe Biden, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, Minnesota Sen. Amy Kloubchar, businessman Andrew Yang and billionaire philanthropist Tom Steyer. Steyer will be the only Californian on stage after Sen. Kamala Harris suspended her campaign, opening a scramble for her home-state donors and support.

California moved its primary up to March in 2020, from June in 2016, in an effort to have more sway over the nominating process. However, it's possible that no candidate emerges from California with a decisive win because of the maze of rules used to divvy up the state's haul of 495 delegates, far more than any other state.

Still, the trajectory of the race in California, where roughly 14 million voters will be eligible to participate in the Democratic primary, largely mirrors what's happening nationally. Polls from the Public Policy Institute of California and CNN in November and December, respectively, show Biden, Warren and Sanders ahead of the rest of the field.

Buttigieg, who has reached front-runner status in Iowa and New Hampshire, remains in single digits.

Although California sends out mail-in ballots for early voting on Feb. 3, the same day as the Iowa caucuses, millions of voters will not cast ballots immediately and may be heavily influenced by what happens in earlier voting contests.

"I would not underestimate the ability of somebody breaking out in Iowa or New Hampshire," said John Emerson, who headed Bill Clinton's 1992 California campaign.

Whoever leads the pack in the early states "will look like a winner," said Emerson.

That was echoed by longtime Democratic National Committee member Bob Mulholland. "By the end of February, it could be Michael Bloomberg and two others standing," Mulholland said.

To win, Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, and Bloomberg, a moderate, are largely appealing to different slices of the electorate. Sanders' campaign sees its major fight not with Bloomberg but with Biden, as they both target older, white working-class voters and people of color.

Former U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer of California said she doesn't think Bloomberg's big spending will pay off. There's a history of wealthy, big-spending candidates falling short in California, including former eBay CEO Meg Whitman, who spent a record \$178 million in her failed bid to become governor in 2010, much of it from her personal fortune.

"I don't think Californians in general support someone trying to buy their way in," she said, though she added Bloomberg and Steyer are "fine on the issues."

Beyond Sanders and Bloomberg, the top national candidates are the only ones putting significant investments into California. Lower polling candidates such as Kloubchar and Yang have no paid staff on the ground, though they are working to mobilize volunteers. New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, who didn't qualify for the debate, has fundraising staff in California and plans to hire organizers in January, a campaign spokeswoman said.

Buttigieg has traveled to California regularly to attend high-dollar fundraisers with stars of Hollywood and the tech industry, but has only more recently been coupling that with public events. His campaign sees an opportunity for him to do well in the state's Central Valley, an agricultural region that they believe

will respond to Buttigieg's Midwestern roots.

Still, Buttigieg's troubles with nonwhite voters could hurt him in California, a majority-minority state.

Warren's campaign has opened several offices in California and has four dozen staff members on the ground, and Biden plans to open offices soon. But none of the other campaigns has announced plans to begin advertising on television.

Sanders, meanwhile, has been drawing on the well of support he built in 2016 to fuel his campaign the second time around. He has won the endorsement of prominent unions, including the powerful National Nurses United, and is fighting to ensure that Latino voters and young people cast ballots.

Bloomberg's advertising blitz is intended to tell the mayor's story to West Coast voters who might not know much about him — and before any rivals have a chance to define him. It's an early step in a campaign that will also blend in traditional retail campaigning by the candidate and a vast effort to identify and contact voters and get them to the polls, an investment the campaign predicts will be the largest in the state's history.

Bloomberg also intends to mine for votes in areas outside the big, heavily Democratic urban centers that are often overlooked in presidential contests, including the Central Valley and the one-time Republican stronghold of Orange County.

There will be multiple field offices and a mix of paid staff and volunteers "doing everything from phone banking to knocking on doors," Schechter, the spokesman, said.

Last week, Bloomberg made his first candidate visit to California, where he highlighted one of his centerpiece issues at a talk on climate change in San Francisco with former Gov. Jerry Brown. He also received the endorsement of 29-year-old Stockton Mayor Michael Tubbs, who had planned to support Harris.

Both Bloomberg, a former Republican and former independent, and Sanders, an independent senator, could benefit from votes among the state's 5.4 million independent voters, who are permitted to vote in the state's Democratic presidential primary.

Brazil's Amazon mega-dam: broken promises for distant power

By MARCELO DE SOUSA, DIANE JEANTET and ANDRE PENNER Associated Press

ALTAMIRA, Brazil (AP) — Edizangela Alves Barros believed that being forced to relocate to make way for a mammoth dam in Brazil's Amazon would mean a brighter future for her family.

Instead, their newly built settlement has more expensive electricity bills and intermittent public lighting -- a cruel irony for a community just 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the world's third-biggest hydroelectric dam.

"We left our wooden houses to live in concrete houses, but our economic situation got worse," Alves Barros, a mother of five, said in an interview.

She used to live by the Xingu River. Today, it is the site of the Belo Monte dam, a colossus built with enough concrete and steel to make 22 Eiffel Towers. Boats crossing the river beside it look like toys.

Belo Monte was conceived to bolster Brazil's faltering electrical grid. And three weeks into full operation, the dam has been a boon — at least to the people in cities more than 2,400 kilometers (1,500 miles) away.

There is a different view in the region where the dam was built. The project displaced some 40,000 people, according to civil society estimates, and it has dried up stretches of the Xingu River. Critics also say that promises of jobs and economic development to accompany the dam weren't met.

"There were a lot of promises — generate jobs, the region's economy was going to grow," said Sabrina Mesquita do Nascimento, a researcher with the Federal University of Para's Center for Advanced Amazonian Studies, who has spent years studying Belo Monte.

The promises either didn't materialize or evaporated once construction ended, she said.

"It was an ephemeral relationship. All the damages fell to these people," do Nascimento said.

Sitting in the northern state of Para, Belo Monte has the capacity to generate 11.2 gigawatts of power, less only than China's Three Gorges and Itaipu on Brazil's border with Paraguay. It required excavating a canal larger than the Panama Canal.

Entrepreneurs saw opportunity, and job seekers flocked to Altamira seeking one of the 60,000 promised

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 30 of 61

positions, which sent the city's population surging.

Residents who fished and bathed in the Xingu saw their lives take a dramatic turn.

One was Jair Teixeira da Costa, a fisherman who lives in a small wooden house with a makeshift dock where he plays with his six dogs. Today, fish are scarce and he picks up odd jobs to make ends meet. That isn't what he expected after hearing the plans outlined by the dam's builder for preserving local communities' customs.

Federal prosecutors have carried out 27 different investigations focused on Belo Monte. Among other things, they have accused companies and public agencies of not performing mandatory consultations with indigenous communities, or not fulfilling pledges to implement basic sewage for area residents.

In an email to The Associated Press, Norte Energia said local families eat more than three times the amount of fish suggested by the World Health Organization, and stressed that they had created a "cooperative" of fishermen to mitigate impacts on the river.

Norte Energia also said it did not force indigenous communities to relocate.

"The construction company didn't work out, not at all. It was just promises," said da Costa, who is still waiting to get electricity in his home.

A world away, in Rio de Janeiro, beachgoers on Ipanema applaud the sunset every evening. Lights come on across the city, illuminating the Christ the Redeemer statue, the Maracana soccer stadium and homes of 13 million city dwellers.

Few Rio residents realize their televisions and washing machines draw some power from the distant mega-dam. Recently, Belo Monte has been sending power along the world's longest 800 kilo-volt transmission line, which snakes for 2,534 kilometers (1,574 miles) through 81 cities and three ecosystems to a substation in Rio state.

The line to Rio state isn't a straight shot. The local subsidiary of a Chinese state-owned company built it with 435 kilometers (270 miles) of detours to avoid crossing indigenous land and keep local communities on board, said Anselmo Leal, vice president at State Grid Holding Brazil. The company also raised towers above tree-level to avoid cutting down a 120 yard-wide strip of forest along the way.

"People would be shocked at the amount of effort and investment that is necessary to give us the comfort of our daily lives," Leal said at the company's building in Rio's city center.

Transmission line construction was impeded by 2017 protests in Para state, and Brazil's government deployed national guard troops to ensure no delays in work that was considered essential for growth of the country's economy.

Brazil suffered big blackouts before 2010, some of them caused by faults at power plants. In 2009, a power failure threw Brazil's two largest cities into darkness, affecting millions.

People living in Brazil's biggest cities are largely unaware of Belo Monte's impact on the region where it was built.

That's because the wealthier southeast operates under an illusion of self-sufficiency, said Luiz Novoa, a professor at the Federal University of Rondonia who leads a research group on Amazon territories. They feel removed from Amazon exploitation -- whether a massive iron mine's exports or Belo Monte's energy, he said.

"Those excesses make their lives operate well in the metropolis, but they don't understand where it comes from, the socioeconomic cost of it," Novoa said.

Belo Monte caused pain for local communities that has only worsened as construction dust settled, said Marco Santana, a lawyer who has represented some of the people relocated.

Altamira's population has surged 48%, to 115,000 people from 77,000 in 2000. The loss of jobs brought by the dam's construction fueled an explosion in violence, experts believe.

"People lost their jobs and the city became a breeding ground for social problems," Santana said.

In 2008, before construction began, Altamira's homicide rate was 36 per 100,000 residents. By 2018, the rate almost quadrupled, making it Brazil's second-most violent city.

Hotels built to accommodate the once-booming workforce are empty, many small local companies have shuttered, and larger firms are caught up in the sprawling "Car Wash" corruption probe that revealed

bribery in Brazil's construction sector.

In November, President Jair Bolsonaro unveiled the inaugural plaque on Belo Monte's final turbine, #18, and the dam began full operation.

Still, maximum generation is lacking given low rainfall roughly half the year, and the fact that the plant was built with a "run of river" model rather than with a reservoir as a concession to environmentalists, said Adriano Pires, director of infrastructure consulting firm CBIE.

That being the case, the company that operates the dam, Norte Energia, is evaluating construction of a natural gas-fired power plant on the site, the newspaper Estado de S. Paulo reported last week. Norte Energia told The Associated Press in an emailed response only that it is developing projects to expand the power sector, without providing details.

"If there hadn't been a Belo Monte, the risk of (Brazil) lacking energy would have been enormous," Pires said by phone. "Even with all its problems, it is a project that will help the Brazilian electricity sector very much."

In the shadow of the dam, development for the national good is a perspective lost on local communities. The government and companies paid lip service to helping residents, who found their own voices stifled as they were stuck with hardship, critics say.

"A lot of money came through here," said Alves Barros, the woman who was forced to resettle. "Nothing remained that was permanent, that was concrete."

Associated Press writers Diane Jeantet and Marcelo de Sousa reported this story from Rio de Janeiro and AP photographer Andre Penner reported in Altamira. AP writer David Biller in Rio de Janeiro and AP video journalist Mario Lobao in Altamira contributed to this report.

Diane Jeantet on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/dianejeantet>

Marcelo de Sousa on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/msilvadesousa>

Television's 'Survivor' dealing with #MeToo-era issues

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The CBS game "Survivor" ends its 39th edition this week reeling from controversy over its first-ever forced removal of a contestant, a Hollywood agent sent packing after young women complained about inappropriate touching.

The abrupt exit of player Dan Spilo, for what CBS said was an off-camera incident, didn't end questions about whether the network fumbled a #MeToo-era issue that it knew about months ago.

CBS has the chance to address its decisions Wednesday, when it airs the traditional one-hour post-mortem discussion after the season's conclusion. Spilo has not been invited to participate. For the first time, that post-show discussion will be taped instead of live.

Acknowledging "things we could have done differently," CBS late Tuesday announced steps to avoid similar problems in future seasons.

Spilo's exit was announced at the end of last week's episode. CBS would not give details, but People magazine reported that he touched the thigh of a woman during a boat ride. Spilo said he had lost balance, but the staff member felt the touch lingered too long, said Steve Helling, senior writer at People.

It proved to be a last straw.

Midway through the season, contestant Kellee Kim, a 28-year-old student, cried on camera as she discussed incidents — often caught on camera — where Spilo, 48, would do things like touch her hair. She and another contestant, 24-year-old Missy Byrd, talked about Spilo wrapping an arm around someone's waist or touching the hip of a woman he was lying next to at night.

During the discussion, a producer broke in to tell Kim that she should come to him when something happens because "I don't want anyone feeling uncomfortable."

"It's super upsetting because, it's like, you can't do anything about it," she said onscreen. "There are

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 32 of 61

always consequences for standing up. This happens in real life, in work settings, in schools. You can't say anything because it's going to reflect your upward trajectory. It's going to affect how people look at you."

Kim was voted out of the game by fellow contestants while Spilo remained.

CBS said it spoke to cast members after that discussion, both individually and as a group, about respecting personal space. Some contestants have subsequently said they felt it was a general, not specific warning, and players seemed genuinely surprised when host Jeff Probst informed them that Spilo was out.

The incident also became part of the game, with contestants discussing Spilo's behavior, truthfully and untruthfully, in scheming about who would be voted off the island. One contestant, 59-year-old Janet Corbin, said she initially thought Spilo was an "old-school" guy who didn't know what he was doing, but she concluded, "I can't ignore what is going on with these girls."

Kim had complained about Spilo violating personal boundaries in the season's very first episode.

There was some question about how seriously it was initially taken. Dalton Ross, who blogs about the show for Entertainment Weekly, referred to Spilo as "Handsy McGee" and wondered after that first episode if he was "just doing his best Joe Biden impersonation or if he is naturally a touchy-feely kind of guy."

"Survivor" producers are generally loathe to interfere with their game, which is all about enduring hardships on a tropical island. They may have considered this just another obstacle. CBS did not comment on this story for the record.

James Poniewozik, television critic at The New York Times, criticized the "inept, shameful, evasive way" that "Survivor" handled the apparent sexual misconduct on its set.

"The reality that this season depicted is a depressing one: the reality of how women's complaints are downplayed and how a big-money operation can fail to do the right thing even when, literally, millions of eyes are watching," Poniewozik wrote.

People's Helling, who describes himself as a fan of the program, also said he believed CBS and show producers have handled the situation poorly.

"They will tell you they intervened — and they did — but it was not in a meaningful way," he said.

"Survivor" is known as a reality show, but it's a manufactured reality — producers craft a story out of footage they shoot. Given that serious issues about race, gender and sexuality were sometimes left out in previous years, they can be credited for making this part of their show, Helling said.

CBS announced on the eve of the finale's airing that in future seasons, it would not allow incidents of alleged harassment or unwelcome physical contact would not be allowed to be part of the game. The network said it would beef up training for its staff in handling such issues and hire someone so contestants can make complaints about behavior confidentially apart from show producers.

Spilo's behavior was also arguably tame compared to some past incidents on "Survivor," including one woman who complained about an aroused fellow cast member rubbing up against her, and original "Survivor" winner Richard Hatch's habit of competing while naked.

Spilo did not return a message sent by The Associated Press, but People said Tuesday he had sent a statement apologizing for his actions.

"I truly regret that anyone was made to feel uncomfortable by my behavior," Spilo said. "In my life, I have always tried to treat others with decency, integrity and kindness. I can only hope that my actions in the future can help me to make amends and show me to be the kind of father, husband, colleague and friend that I always aim to be."

Nearly two decades into its run on CBS, "Survivor" is a solid if not spectacular performer in the ratings. Its average viewership of 8.5 million people is down 10 percent from last season, according to the Nielsen company, but ratings are down for most broadcast shows. It is the 26th most popular show on Nielsen's prime-time list, up from 30th last year.

House nears impeachment as Trump decries 'vicious crusade'

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — On the eve of almost-certain impeachment, President Donald Trump fired off a

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 33 of 61

furious letter Tuesday to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi denouncing the "vicious crusade" against him, while Democrats amassed the votes they needed and Republicans looked ahead, vowing to defend Trump at next month's Senate trial.

Trump, who would be just the third U.S. president to be impeached, acknowledged he was powerless to stop Wednesday's vote. He appeared to intend his lengthy, accusatory message less for Pelosi than for the broad audience of citizens — including 2020 voters — watching history unfolding on Capitol Hill.

He accused the Democrats of acting out of "Trump Derangement Syndrome," still smarting from their 2016 election losses. "You are the ones bringing pain and suffering to our Republic for your own selfish, personal political and partisan gain."

Portraying himself as a blameless victim, as he often does, Trump compared the impeachment inquiry to the "Salem Witch Trials." Asked later if he bore any responsibility for the proceedings, he said, "No, I don't think any. Zero, to put it mildly."

Pelosi, who warned earlier this year against pursuing a strictly partisan impeachment, nonetheless has the numbers to approve it. According to a tally compiled by The Associated Press, Trump is on track to be formally charged by a House majority on Wednesday. Lawmakers were scheduled to convene at 9 a.m. EST with final votes anticipated by early evening.

"Very sadly, the facts have made clear that the President abused his power for his own personal, political benefit and that he obstructed Congress," Pelosi wrote to colleagues. "In America, no one is above the law."

"During this very prayerful moment in our nation's history, we must honor our oath to support and defend our Constitution from all enemies, foreign and domestic," she said.

No Republicans have indicated they will support the the two articles of impeachment, for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, setting up a close-to-party-line vote.

One by one, centrist Democratic lawmakers, including many first-term freshmen who built the House majority and could risk their reelection in districts where the president is popular, announced they would vote to impeach.

Rep. Abby Finkenauer, D-Iowa, referred to the oath she took in January as she was sworn into office as guiding her decision. She announced support for both articles of impeachment to "honor my duty to defend our Constitution and democracy from abuse of power at the highest levels."

Republicans disagreed, firmly.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell set the partisan tone for the next step, as attention will shift to the Senate which, under the Constitution, is required to hold a trial on the charges. That trial is expected to begin in January.

"I'm not an impartial juror," McConnell declared. The Republican-majority chamber is all but sure to acquit the president.

From Alaska to Florida, tens of thousands of Americans marched in support of impeachment Tuesday evening, from a demonstration through a rainy Times Square to handfuls of activists standing vigil in small towns. They carried signs saying "Save the Constitution - Impeach!!!!" and "Criminal-in-Chief."

"I really believe that the Constitution is under assault," said one protester, 62-year-old Glenn Conway, of Holly Springs, North Carolina, attending his first political rally in 30 years. "I think we have a president at this point who believes he's above the law."

Trump is accused of abusing his presidential power in a July phone call in which he asked the newly elected president of Ukraine, a U.S. ally facing an aggressive Russia at its border, to "do us a favor" by investigating Democrats, including his potential 2020 rival Joe Biden. At the time, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was hoping for a coveted White House meeting that would bolster his standing with Ukraine's most important ally. He also was counting on nearly \$400 million in military aid Congress had approved to counter Russia. The White House had put the money on hold — as leverage, the Democrats say.

In his letter on Tuesday, Trump defended his "absolutely perfect" phone call that sparked the impeachment inquiry. He also tried to justify anew the Ukrainian investigations he wanted into Biden. And he disputed the charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress' investigation.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 34 of 61

Conceding the House vote, he said he wanted to set his words down "for the purpose of history."

Asked on CNN about Trump's lengthy complaints about his treatment, Democratic Rep. Eric Swalwell of California dismissed what he called a "childish, whiny letter."

House Democrats continued to march toward Wednesday's debate and votes.

"It's unfortunate that we have to be here today, but the actions of the president of the United States make that necessary," said Chairman Jim McGovern, D-Mass., gaveling the Rules Committee, which met through the day, with lawmakers arguing over the parameters for the debate.

McGovern said, "Every day we let President Trump act like the law doesn't apply to him, we move a little closer" to rule by dictators.

The top committee Republican, Tom Cole of Oklahoma, said, "When half of Americans are telling you what you are doing is wrong, you should listen."

Lawmakers crossing party lines face consequences. One freshman Democrat, Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey, is indicating he will switch parties to become a Republican after opposing impeachment. Earlier this year, Michigan conservative Rep. Justin Amash left the GOP when he favored impeachment.

One new Democratic congressman, Jared Golden of Maine, said he would vote to impeach on abuse of power but not obstruction.

Hoping to dispatch with lengthy Senate proceedings, McConnell rejected Senate Democrats' push for fresh impeachment testimony and made a last-ditch plea that House Democrats "turn back from the cliff" of Wednesday's expected vote.

"Impeachment is a political decision," McConnell said. "The House made a partisan political decision to impeach. I would anticipate we will have a largely partisan outcome in the Senate. I'm not impartial about this at all."

McConnell's remarks Tuesday effectively slapped the door shut on negotiations for a deal proposed by the Democratic leader, Sen. Chuck Schumer, who wants to call top White House officials for the Senate trial.

Schumer's proposal was the first overture in what were expected to be negotiations between the two leaders. Trump wants a relatively broad, perhaps showy, Senate proceeding to not only acquit but also vindicate him of the impeachment charges.

McConnell and most other GOP senators prefer a swift trial to move on from impeachment. Many centrist House Democrats also are ready to vote and move on. Still, Schumer wants to hear from John Bolton, Mick Mulvaney and other current and former Trump officials who were instructed by the president not to appear in the House proceedings.

"Why is the leader, why is the president so afraid to have these witnesses come testify?" asked Schumer from the Senate floor. "They certainly ought to be heard."

Trump "betrayed the Nation by abusing his high office to enlist a foreign power in corrupting democratic elections," the impeachment resolution says. "President Trump, by such conduct, has demonstrated that he will remain a threat to national security and the Constitution if allowed to remain in office."

Trump has promoted lawyer Rudy Giuliani's investigation of Biden and a widely debunked theory that it was actually Ukraine, not Russia, that interfered in the 2016 election, a conspiracy-laden idea that most other Republicans have actively avoided.

Associated Press writers Laurie Kellman, Matthew Daly, Alan Fram and Darlene Superville in Washington, David Eggert in Rochester, Mich., Gary Robertson in Raleigh, N.C., and Steve Karnowski in Minnesota contributed to this report.

Baltimore Ravens tie Pro Bowl record with 12 selections

By The Associated Press undefined

Twelve Baltimore Ravens, including second-year quarterback Lamar Jackson, and seven New Orleans Saints, highlighted by league-leading receiver Michael Thomas, have made the Pro Bowl.

Baltimore tied the record for Pro Bowl players set by Miami in 1973. The NFL released the rosters Tuesday

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 35 of 61

night for the game in Orlando, Florida, on Jan. 26.

Joining Jackson from the Ravens, who at 12-2 have the league's best record, are tight end Mark Andrews, long snapper Morgan Cox, cornerbacks Marcus Peters and Marlon Humphrey, running back Mark Ingram, linebacker Matthew Judon, fullback Patrick Ricard, tackle Ronnie Stanley, safety Earl Thomas, kicker Justin Tucker, and guard Marshal Yanda.

"This honor is all about my teammates and our coaches, because without them, the success we've had as a team wouldn't be possible," Jackson said. "I'm also grateful for all the fans who continue to support us and who have helped make this season so special. Ultimately, it's about winning, and we still have a lot of work to do before we accomplish our biggest goals."

Thirty teams had at least one player selected and 24 clubs had multiple players chosen. The New York Giants and Miami Dolphins failed to get any Pro Bowlers. Players on the two Super Bowl teams will withdraw from the Pro Bowl and be replaced.

Twenty-five of the players selected made it for the first time, including three rookies: San Francisco defensive end Nick Bosa, Kansas City return specialist Mecole Hardman and New Orleans return specialist Deonte Harris.

The Pro Bowl coaching staffs will be from the losing teams in the AFC and NFC divisional playoffs with the best regular-season records.

Other AFC quarterbacks are Patrick Mahomes of Kansas City and Deshaun Watson of Houston. The NFC QBs are Drew Brees of New Orleans, Aaron Rodgers of Green Bay and Russell Wilson of Seattle.

Perhaps the most star-studded spot on offense is tight end with San Francisco's George Kittle, Philadelphia's Zach Ertz, Kansas City's Travis Kelce and Baltimore's Andrews.

Defensive standouts include Buffalo's Tre'Davious White, who is tied for the league lead with New England's Stephon Gilmore with six interceptions. They are the top AFC cornerbacks.

NFL sacks leader Shaquil Barrett of Tampa Bay is on the NFC squad, along with perennial Pro Bowlers Aaron Donald of the Rams and Richard Sherman of the 49ers.

"To make the Pro Bowl, it's a dream come true," Barrett said. "That's the best way I can sum it up. I dreamed of this growing up. It's a huge honor and I can only hope that I'll have more to follow."

Two other Buccaneers, wide receivers Mike Evans and Chris Godwin, were chosen.

"This is a special moment, and while I've worked hard to get to where I am in my career, I wouldn't have been able to do this without my teammates and coaches," Godwin said. "I've had the chance to play alongside some of the best in the NFL, including Mike Evans, and sharing the honor with Mike makes it even better. I'm extremely grateful for this opportunity."

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

Splintered US moves to subject Trump to 'profound disgrace'

By NANCY BENAC and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump stands on the threshold of what two ex-presidents called the "profound disgrace" of impeachment, a permanent stain on his legacy.

Of what Alexander Hamilton set out in the Federalist Papers as the apt remedy for "the misconduct of public men."

Or what Trump mockingly dismisses as impeachment lite.

The leader who has sliced a scythe through institutions and thrives in disruption stands unrepentant as a splintered nation prepares to impeach a president for only the third time in history.

Yet the weight of history is at hand.

So is a certain numbness among we the people as a process once granted the gravity of exorcism — an awakening from a "national nightmare" — plays out for a public that consumes daily provocations from this unusual president and can read only so many tweets in a day.

The U.S. may be witnessing the trivialization of impeachment for charges that are anything but trivial,

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 36 of 61

said Jeffrey A. Engel, a presidential historian and lead author of a book on impeachments that has found its way into the hands of senators as they prepare to hold a January trial on the House's expected indictment.

"Our extraordinary partisanship has trivialized it," he said in an interview. "We're in a remarkably partisan time."

Look closely, though and you can see that Trump, for all his shrugs and dismissive taunts, knows he is on the verge of making a list of presidential infamy. Impeachment, he said in a lengthy letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Tuesday protesting his innocence, is a "very ugly word."

Trump is to join Bill Clinton, impeached 21 years ago for lying under oath about sex, and Andrew Johnson, impeached 151 years ago for defying Congress on Reconstruction.

Impeachment is not likely to engender an impulse of contrition for Trump, and it might not even sully his political future. For every American who thinks Trump is a constitutional criminal, another American thinks he's being railroaded.

Yet, for all time, there will be no erasing the ultimate presidential black mark.

"Make no mistake, the judgment of history does matter," two former presidents, Republican Gerald Ford and Democrat Jimmy Carter, wrote in an op-ed after the House impeached Clinton in 1998.

Ford and Carter were, in turn, the presidents who picked up the shattered pieces of Richard Nixon's presidency after Watergate, the searing episode by which all presidential corruption scandals have been measured since. Nixon only avoided impeachment because he quit on the cusp of it.

In their joint article, Ford and Carter pleaded for Congress to skip Clinton's trial in the Senate because, they said, profound disgrace from the House impeachment would follow him forever. They wanted him censured instead.

The Senate went ahead with the trial and acquitted him, just as it did with Johnson and as it is highly likely to do with Trump.

Clinton and Nixon were halfway through their second terms, approaching the twilight of their presidencies when they faced the threat of impeachment. Trump is standing for reelection, giving his impeachment the flavor of the kind of dramatic showdown he professes to relish.

Raging at his accusers, the Democrats, while stonewalling them, Trump says he takes no responsibility for all that has transpired and is yet to come.

"Zero, to put it mildly," he said Tuesday, accusing Democrats of "cheapening" the very idea of impeachment.

To presidential historian Robert Dalleck, the consequences are far-reaching.

"The miracle of America has been that it's been able to hold together," he said. "To sink into this national division that exacerbates these differences and tension is to open the way to the collapse of American democracy, I think."

During the Clinton impeachment, constitutional scholar Michael Gerhardt was the only expert witness called by both parties to testify. Democrats summoned him again in the House Judiciary Committee hearings in the Trump impeachment.

"The president is really denying the legitimacy of the Constitution and of inquiry," he said in an interview, tracing what he sees as distinctive about this president and this impeachment.

"President Clinton accepted the legitimacy of the Constitution, and he didn't object to the inquiry. He did object to the merits. Trump has described his own conduct as 'perfect' as well as beyond the law and impeachment, something neither Clinton nor Nixon claimed."

This president, Gerhardt said, "seized the divisiveness and just makes it worse."

To be sure, the Clinton impeachment unfolded with a script flipped from today as Democrats railed about an attempted "coup," just as Republicans now assail the Trump impeachment as a "sham."

Yet within the ranks of each party, some members agonized over what to do and sagged as if under a great weight.

As the House debated impeachment 21 years ago Wednesday, Republican Rep. Thomas Davis of Virginia said his heart wasn't in the effort to remove a president and "I didn't want to get out of bed this morning."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 37 of 61

Another Republican, Rep. Tom Campbell of California, delivered his argument in favor of impeachment in a near whisper and close to tears.

The impeachment took savagely partisan turns. Yet Donald Ritchie, an official Senate historian then and for many years, said key norms were respected as the upper chamber tried and acquitted the Democrat.

Procedural rules were approved unanimously, he said, and everyone had a chance to speak. "The Senate operated in a very dignified, fair and impartial manner."

Democrats acknowledged Clinton's wrongdoing, just as Republicans acknowledged Nixon's culpability as the damning evidence became overwhelming a quarter century earlier.

In the Clinton case, many Democratic lawmakers wanted their president to be censured, a lesser punishment but also one for the history books. They argued that Clinton's lying to a grand jury to cover personal misbehavior did not meet the standard for removal from office. But they did not deny the underlying facts.

Similarly in the Nixon crisis, Ritchie said, "Everybody was listening to the evidence."

Engel is director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University. In his multi-author book, "Impeachment: An American History," he details the Founding Fathers' debate over how and when to invoke that extraordinary power against a president's malfeasance.

He said the refusal by Trump and Republican lawmakers in the House hearings to acknowledge the basic facts of this case distinguishes the Trump impeachment from the proceeding against his predecessors. "We've not had a president so unconcerned with basic facts and truth as this president," he said.

Trump has stuck to his story that he had a "perfect" phone call with Ukraine's president and asserted repeatedly that people only need to "read the transcript" to know of the call's perfection.

But a rough transcript of the call reveals his explicit interest in having Ukraine's leader announce an investigation into Trump's potential reelection rival, Joe Biden, and into a baseless conspiracy theory that Ukrainians and Democrats colluded against his 2016 election.

Engel suggested people read another sort of rough transcript, too, from July 20, 1787, as delegates to the Constitutional Convention wrestled with the terms of impeaching a president.

"Shall any man be above Justice?" George Mason asked, according to the minutes. Benjamin Franklin suggested impeachment was a better alternative than assassination "for the regular punishment of the Executive where his misconduct should deserve it."

James Madison thought impeachment "indispensable" for dealing with a president's "incapacity, negligence or perfidy."

"He might pervert his administration into a scheme of speculation or oppression," he said, according to the minutes. "He might betray his trust to foreign powers."

From such debate came the standard of treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors. In the era of Trump, that standard is on trial as well.

Puerto Rico to approve cockfighting, defy federal ban

By DANICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico will defy the U.S. government and approve a law to keep cockfighting alive in a bid to protect a 400-year-old tradition practiced across the island despite a federal ban that goes into effect this week, officials told The Associated Press on Tuesday night.

The move brought cautious rejoicing in the cockfighting business despite concerns that the U.S. territory is trying to override a federal law that President Donald Trump signed a year ago.

"We are certainly challenging a federal law. We know what that implies," Rep. Gabriel Rodríguez Aguiló, who co-authored the bill, told the AP.

He said that Gov. Wanda Vázquez was scheduled to sign the bill Wednesday morning and that he expected the fight to end up in federal court.

As word spread, those in the cockfighting industry cheered the news.

"There's going to be work!" exclaimed Domingo Ruiz, who owns more than 30 cocks and has spent more than half a century in the business. "We're going to keep the fight alive."

Cockfighting generates an estimated \$18 million a year and employs some 27,000 people, according to the bill approved by Puerto Rico's House and Senate.

Puerto Rico has 71 cockfighting establishments in 45 municipalities licensed by the island's Department of Sports and Recreation, said Secretary Adriana Sánchez. She defended the cockfighting tradition and contended the U.S. government banned fights for economic and not animal welfare reasons.

"Their instinct is to fight," she said of people in the business. "The people who dedicate themselves care for them and train them."

Animal rights activists have long pushed to end cockfights in U.S. territories, saying they are cruel and noting they are illegal in all 50 U.S. states.

Wayne Pacelle, founder of the Washington-based Animal Wellness Action, said he doesn't believe the statistics on Puerto Rico cockfighting.

"They are widely exaggerating the economic value," he said. "Watching animals slash each other just for human entertainment and gambling is not judged as a legitimate enterprise by mainstream people."

The measure says it is legal for Puerto Rico to host cockfights as long as people don't export or import cocks or any goods or services related to cockfighting. The latter actions would violate the federal law, based on how Puerto Rico officials interpret it.

"It remains to be seen whether that's how federal authorities understand it," said Rep. Luis Vega Ramos.

Vega sought unsuccessfully to amend the measure to add authorization for local officials to not cooperate with federal agents in prosecuting people for cockfighting. But several municipalities, including the capital of San Juan, have authorized municipal police not to crack down on cockfighting.

Secretive FISA court rebukes FBI over errors in Russia probe

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The chief judge of a secretive surveillance court said Tuesday that the FBI provided "unsupported" information when it applied to eavesdrop on a former Trump campaign adviser and directed the bureau to report back by next month on what steps it was taking to fix the problems.

The four-page order from Judge Rosemary Collyer followed a harshly critical Justice Department inspector general report that said the FBI had withheld key information when it submitted four applications in 2016 and 2017 to monitor the communications of Carter Page.

The order is a rare public statement from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which operates mostly in secret as it receives applications from the FBI and Justice Department to eavesdrop on American soil on people they suspect of being agents of a foreign power. The directive could prompt fundamental changes in the FBI's use of a powerful surveillance tool that supporters see as vital to thwarting terrorism and espionage but that detractors say is vulnerable to abuse.

"The frequency with which representations made by FBI personnel turned out to be unsupported or contradicted by information in their possession, and with which they withheld information detrimental to their case, calls into question whether information contained in other FBI applications is reliable," Collyer wrote.

Without complete and accurate information, the judge added, the court "cannot properly ensure that the government conducts electronic surveillance for foreign intelligence purposes only when there is a sufficient factual basis."

She directed the FBI to report by Jan. 10 on what it has done and what it plans to do to ensure the accuracy of information it submits in its wiretap applications.

In a statement, the FBI called the surveillance warrants an "indispensable tool in national security investigations" and said it was committed to working with the Justice Department and the court "to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the FISA process."

The government's surveillance authorities have long been scrutinized by Democrats and civil libertarians who object to the court's highly secretive nature and view it as a virtual rubber-stamp for FBI requests, the overwhelming majority of which are approved. Most surveillance warrants do not result in criminal prosecutions, and even when they do, there is no automatic right for a defendant to see the underlying

application.

In the last week, Republicans who have previously been supportive of the Justice Department's robust surveillance powers have called for change and seized on allegations that a campaign aide to Donald Trump was treated unfairly.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a Trump ally and the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he was pleased to see the court "condemn" the FBI.

He said he would work with Republicans and Democrats "to make changes to better protect civil liberties while maintaining our ability to monitor foreign surveillance directed against our economic and national security interests."

The FBI relied in large part for its surveillance applications on opposition research compiled by Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence operative whose investigations into ties between Russia and Trump were funded by Democrats.

Inspector General Michael Horowitz said his office had identified at least 17 significant errors and omissions during the application process, including the altering of an email by an FBI lawyer.

The inspector general said that as the FBI sought to renew those warrants, it withheld from the Justice Department — and, in turn, the surveillance court — key information that the watchdog said cut against the premise that Page was a Russian asset. Page has denied all wrongdoing and was never accused of a crime.

For instance, Horowitz said the FBI omitted from its application questions about the reliability of Steele's reporting, and omitted the fact that Page had a prior relationship with another government agency.

FBI Director Christopher Wray told The Associated Press in an interview last week that the report had identified problems "unacceptable and unrepresentative of who we are as an institution." He said the bureau was taking more than 40 corrective actions to deal with the issues.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

House passes \$1.4T government spending bill amid impeachment

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democratic-controlled House voted Tuesday to pass a \$1.4 trillion government spending package, handing President Donald Trump a victory on his U.S.-Mexico border fence while giving Democrats spending increases across a swath of domestic programs.

The hard-fought legislation also funds a record Pentagon budget and is serving as a must-pass legislative locomotive to tow an unusually large haul of unrelated provisions into law, including an expensive repeal of Obama-era taxes on high-cost health plans, help for retired coal miners, and an increase from 18 to 21 in the nationwide legal age to buy tobacco products.

The two-bill package, some 2,371 pages long after additional tax provisions were folded in on Tuesday morning, was unveiled Monday afternoon and adopted less than 24 hours later as lawmakers prepared to wrap up reams of unfinished work against a backdrop of Wednesday's vote on impeaching Trump.

The House first passed a measure funding domestic programs on a 297-120 vote. But one-third of the Democrats defected on a 280-138 vote on the second bill, which funds the military and the Department of Homeland Security, mostly because it funds Trump's border wall project.

The spending legislation would forestall a government shutdown this weekend and give Trump steady funding for his U.S.-Mexico border fence, a move that frustrated Hispanic Democrats and party liberals. The year-end package is anchored by a \$1.4 trillion spending measure that caps a difficult, monthslong battle over spending priorities.

The mammoth measure made public Monday takes a split-the-differences approach that's a product of divided power in Washington, offering lawmakers of all stripes plenty to vote for — and against. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., was a driving force, along with administration pragmatists such as Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who negotiated the summertime budget deal that it implements.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 40 of 61

The White House said Tuesday that Trump will sign the measure.

"The president is poised to sign it and to keep the government open," said top White House adviser Kellyanne Conway.

The bill also offers business friendly provisions on export financing, flood insurance and immigrant workers.

The roster of add-ons grew over the weekend to include the permanent repeal of a tax on high-cost "Cadillac" health insurance benefits and a hard-won provision to finance health care and pension benefits for about 100,000 retired union coal miners threatened by the insolvency of their pension fund. A tax on medical devices and health insurance plans would also be repealed permanently.

The cost of the package grew as lawmakers added the repeal of three so-called "Obamacare" taxes and extended expiring tax breaks. Those policy changes will add \$428 billion to the deficit over 10 years.

The legislation is laced with provisions reflecting divided power in Washington. Republicans maintained the status quo on several abortion-related battles and on funding for Trump's border wall. Democrats controlling the House succeeded in winning a 3.1% raise for federal civilian employees and the first installment of funding on gun violence research after more than two decades of gun lobby opposition.

Late Monday, negotiators unveiled a scaled-back \$39 billion package of additional business tax breaks, renewing tax breaks for craft brewers and distillers, among others. The so-called tax extenders are a creature of Washington, a heavily lobbied menu of arcane tax breaks that are typically tailored to narrow, often parochial interests like renewable energy, capital depreciation rules and racehorse ownership. But a bigger effort to trade refundable tax credits for the working poor for fixes to the 2017 GOP tax bill didn't pan out.

The sweeping legislation, introduced as two packages for political and tactical purposes, is part of a major final burst of legislation that's passing Congress this week despite bitter partisan divisions and Wednesday's likely impeachment of Trump. Thursday promises a vote on a major rewrite of the North American Free Trade Agreement, while the Senate is about to send the president the annual defense policy bill for the 59th year in a row.

The core of the spending bill is formed by the 12 annual agency appropriations bills passed by Congress each year. It fills in the details of a bipartisan framework from July that delivered about \$100 billion in agency spending increases over the coming two years instead of automatic spending cuts that would have sharply slashed the Pentagon and domestic agencies.

The increase in the tobacco purchasing age to 21 also applies to e-cigarettes and vaping devices and gained momentum after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell signed on. But anti-smoking activists said the provision didn't go far enough because it failed to ban flavored vaping products popular with teenagers.

"The evidence is clear that flavored e-cigarettes are driving the youth epidemic," said Matthew Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "As long as flavored e-cigarettes remain available, kids will find ways to get them and this epidemic will continue."

Other add-ons include a variety of provisions sought by business and labor interests and their lobbyists in Washington.

For business, there's a seven-year extension of the charter of the Export-Import Bank, which helps finance transactions benefiting U.S. exporters, as well as a renewal of the government's terrorism risk insurance program. The financially troubled government flood insurance program would be extended through September, as would several visa programs for both skilled and seasonal workers.

Labor won repeal of the so-called Cadillac tax, a 40% tax on high-cost employer health plans, which was originally intended to curb rapidly growing health care spending. But it disproportionately affected high-end plans won under union contracts, and Democratic labor allies had previously succeeded in temporary repeals.

Democrats controlling the House won increased funding for early childhood education and a variety of other domestic programs. They also won higher Medicaid funding for the cash-poor government of Puerto Rico, which is struggling to recover from hurricane devastation and a resulting economic downturn.

While Republicans touted defense hikes and Democrats reeled off numerous increases for domestic

programs, most of the provisions of the spending bill enjoy bipartisan support, including increases for medical research, combating the opioid epidemic, Head Start, and child care grants to states.

Democrats also secured \$425 million for states to upgrade their election systems, and they boosted the U.S. Census budget \$1.4 billion above Trump's request. They won smaller increases for the Environmental Protection Agency, renewable energy programs and affordable housing.

"I am so proud that we are able to do so much good for children and families across the country and around the world," said House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey, D-N.Y.

The outcome in the latest chapter in the long-standing battle over Trump's border wall awards Trump with \$1.4 billion for new barriers — equal to last year's appropriation — while preserving Trump's ability to use his budget powers to tap other accounts for several times that amount. That's a blow for liberal opponents of the wall but an acceptable trade-off for pragmatic-minded Democrats who wanted to gain \$27 billion in increases for domestic programs and avert the threat of simply funding the government on autopilot.

"Many members of the CHC will vote against it," said Congressional Hispanic Caucus Chairman Joaquin Castro, D-Texas. "It's true that there are a lot of good things and Democratic victories in the spending agreement. I think everybody appreciates those. What members of the Hispanic Caucus are concerned with is the wall money, the high level of detention beds, and most of all with the ability of the president to transfer money both to wall and to detention beds in the future."

The bill also extends a long-standing freeze on lawmakers' pay despite behind-the-scenes efforts this spring to revive a cost-of-living hike approved years ago but shelved during the Obama administration.

Because dozens of Democrats oppose the border wall, Pelosi paired money for the Department of Homeland Security with the almost \$700 billion Pentagon budget, which won more than enough GOP votes to offset Democratic defections.

US senator proposes money, oversight to boost dam safety

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand on Tuesday called for more federal money and oversight to shore up the nation's aging dams following an Associated Press investigation that found scores of potentially troubling dams located near homes and communities across the country.

Gillibrand said new legislation in the works should ensure that federal standards are in place to make dams more resilient to extreme weather events that are becoming more common because of a changing climate. She also called for greater funding for federal grants to fix unsafe dams that pose a risk to the public.

"We should not wait for a catastrophic dam failure or major flooding event to spur us to action," Gillibrand, a Democrat from New York, said in a letter to leaders of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which is crafting a new water resources bill. Gillibrand is a member of the committee.

She cited an AP analysis published last month that used federal data and state open records laws to identify at least 1,688 high-hazard dams rated in poor or unsatisfactory condition as of last year in 44 states and Puerto Rico. The AP analysis noted that the actual number is almost certainly higher, because some states haven't rated all their dams and several states declined to release full data.

The AP's investigation focused on high-hazard dams — which could kill people if they were to fail — that were found by inspectors to be in the worst condition. Georgia led the way with 198 high-hazard dams in unsatisfactory or poor condition, followed by North Carolina with 168 and Pennsylvania with 145. New York had 48 such dams.

Inspection reports cited a variety of problems: leaks that can indicate a dam is failing internally; unrepaired erosion from past instances of overtopping; holes from burrowing animals; tree growth that can destabilize earthen dams; and spillways too small to handle a large flood.

The nation's dams are on average more than a half-century old, but there is no national standard for inspecting them. That's led to a patchwork of state regulations in which some high-hazard dams are in-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 42 of 61

spected annually while others wait up to five years.

Gillibrand said states should be required to inspect all high hazard dams yearly.

She said lawmakers should “proactively address dam safety” in the next Water Resources Development Act, which authorizes programs overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies related to levees and dams.

“We have to set a uniform national dam safety standard that takes into account the projected effects that climate change will have on our infrastructure,” Gillibrand told reporters in a conference call.

A spokesman for the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee said its chairman, Republican Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming, will consider Gillibrand’s request while working on the legislation next year.

The 2016 version of the federal water resources law authorized \$445 million in grants over 10 years to repair, improve or remove high hazard dams that have failed safety standards and pose an unacceptable risk to the public. But Congress didn’t fund the \$10 million annual allotment for 2017 or 2018, and funded just \$10 million of the \$25 million authorized for 2019.

A 2020 spending plan unveiled this week by House leaders would again allot \$10 million for the program — well short of the \$40 million authorized for this year under the 2016 law. The program’s authorization is to rise to \$60 million in 2021.

Gillibrand said she will push for full funding for the program in 2021 while seeking to ensure that its regulations are flexible enough to channel aid to dam owners. She wants the Army Corps to be able to assist with the planning, design and construction of non-federal dam rehabilitation projects, especially if the dams were originally built by the Corps.

In 2019, the Federal Emergency Management Agency distributed a portion of the grant money to 26 states that applied. But the grants were limited to paying for preliminary steps such as risk assessments and engineering designs, not actual repairs. State or local entities were required to provide a 35% match.

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Bill to raise tobacco age has unlikely allies: Altria, Juul

By **MATTHEW PERRONE** and **RICHARD LARDNER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress is moving to pass the biggest new sales restrictions on tobacco products in more than a decade, with support from two unlikely backers: Marlboro-cigarette maker Altria and vaping giant Juul Labs.

The legislation would raise the minimum age to purchase all tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, from 18 to 21 nationwide, a step long-sought by health advocates. But in the past year Juul and Altria have emerged as the biggest supporters of the measure, blanketing Capitol Hill with lobbyists and advertisements touting their support for a national “Tobacco 21” law.

Tobacco critics contend the companies’ support is calculated to head off even harder-hitting government action: a ban on all flavored tobacco products, including fruit and dessert e-cigarettes. Their stance puts them in the unusual position of criticizing a move they long supported, arguing that the sales restriction isn’t enough.

“Altria and Juul clearly support this in order to argue that no other action is necessary,” said Matthew Myers of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “If you don’t eliminate the flavors that the industry has used to fuel the epidemic, you won’t solve the youth e-cigarette crisis.”

The bipartisan legislation, supported by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, has been attached to a package of must-pass spending bills that will keep the government running into next year.

Juul and Altria — the vaping company’s biggest investor — threw their support behind the bill earlier this year amid a backlash against e-cigarettes at the local, state and national levels.

E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that typically heat a flavored nicotine solution into an inhalable aerosol. Current federal law prohibits sales of e-cigarettes and all other tobacco products to those under 18. But more than one in four high school students report vaping regularly, according to the latest

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 43 of 61

government figures. And health officials have called the vaping trend an “epidemic.”

Until September, Juul argued that its sweet flavors — including mango, mint and fruit — could help adult smokers switch from traditional cigarettes to vaping. But the company dropped that message as President Donald Trump announced plans to remove virtually all vaping flavors from the market, due to their appeal to children. The Silicon Valley company has halted sales of all but two of its flavors, menthol and tobacco, and pledged not to oppose Trump’s plan.

But momentum for the nationwide ban has faded amid pushback from vaping advocates and some conservative groups. And Trump has voiced support for alternative approaches to keep e-cigarettes away from kids, including raising the purchase age to 21. The age hike is expected to limit the supply of all vaping and tobacco products in high schools by putting them out of reach to 12th graders.

Myers’ group and other health advocates say Congress should both raise the age limit and ban all “kid-friendly” flavors.

Even with most of Juul’s flavors off the market, smaller companies continue to market an array of flavored products, including “grape slushie,” “strawberry cotton candy” and “sea salt blueberry.” And the industry’s main trade association is suing to keep e-cigarettes, including flavors, widely available.

Altria, the nation’s largest tobacco company, said it supports a “clean” Tobacco 21 bill — focused exclusively on raising the age limit — because it is the “quickest and most effective” way to address the recent surge in teen vaping. For decades previously, Altria and other tobacco companies aggressively defended the 18-year-old minimum purchase age.

Juul has similarly supported legislation that raises the purchase age without touching flavors. And while the companies say they lobby separately, both quickly backed the Tobacco 21 bill introduced in May by McConnell and Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine.

The companies’ support sapped attention away from other proposals that would have gone much further. For example, a bill from New Jersey Democratic Rep. Frank Pallone would have raised the purchase age to 21 and banned flavors from all vaping and tobacco products — including menthol cigarettes — and prohibited online sales. The bill was endorsed by a dozen health groups including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association.

“Flavors attract kids and kids are the tobacco industry — including the e-cigarette industry’s — future,” said Erika Sward, a vice president with the American Lung Association.

But efforts to advance flavor restrictions in the Senate fell flat, including a bill sponsored by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, and Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., that was withdrawn from committee consideration at the last minute.

“Because I wasn’t certain that I had the votes at the time,” Murkowski told The Associated Press. “You don’t want to lose.”

The logic for hiking the purchase age for cigarettes is clear: most underage teens who use tobacco get it from older friends. An estimated 90 percent of smokers start before age 18.

Delaying access to cigarettes is expected to produce major downstream health benefits, with one government-funded report estimating nearly 250,000 fewer deaths due to tobacco over several decades.

Still, anti-tobacco experts say age restrictions are only effective when they are vigorously enforced, and tobacco sales can fall through the cracks amid a patchwork of local, state and federal law enforcement. They point to underage drinking as an example of the limited impact of age-based restrictions.

State laws banning tobacco sales to those under 18 evolved over several decades and were reinforced by a federal law in 2009. The same law banned all flavors from traditional cigarettes except menthol, which received a special exception at the behest of tobacco lobbyists.

More than a third of U.S. states — including California, Illinois, New York and Texas — and the District of Columbia have already raised their minimum purchase age to 21. Anti-smoking groups have tracked the trend with measured support, noting the role of Juul and Altria lobbyists behind many of the efforts.

In several cases, anti-tobacco advocates have flagged provisions that they say undercut the state laws’ effectiveness. These provisions, known as pre-emption, can stop city and county officials from imposing

stricter tobacco sales limits that go beyond the state law.

Juul and Altria said they supported all state Tobacco 21 laws passed this year, regardless of whether they included such provisions.

In Washington, D.C., Juul's lobbying budget ballooned to more than \$3.1 million in the first 9 months of 2019 year, nearly twice the company's spending for all of 2018.

Altria has spent \$7.4 million in 2019, roughly even with its lobbying budget for 2018. The company's political action committee and employees have given \$37,000 to McConnell's 2020 re-election campaign, according to federal records compiled by the non-profit Center for Responsive Politics.

Among those lobbying on Juul's behalf are Jim Esquea, who worked during the Obama administration at the Department of Health and Human Services, and Ted McCann, who was a top policy aide to former House Speaker Paul Ryan.

Juul also has directly hired a number of former federal and state government officials as full-time staffers, including Tevi Troy, a former HHS deputy secretary under George W. Bush, and Martha Coakley, the former attorney general of Massachusetts.

"Whether you're a Trump fan or a traditional Republican conservative or a liberal Democrat, they've got someone you know," Myers said.

Halting 737 Max production will hit suppliers, airlines

By TOM KRISHER AP Business Writer

As Boeing prepares to shutter much of a huge factory near Seattle that builds the grounded 737 Max jet, the economic hit is reverberating across the United States in places such as Wichita, Kansas, Stamford, Connecticut, and Cincinnati.

Those cities are home to some of 900 companies worldwide that supply parts for the troubled plane, which analysts say is the largest manufactured product exported from the U.S.

Boeing does not currently plan to lay off any of the 12,000 workers at its factory in Renton, Washington. But smaller parts companies like Wichita-based Spirit AeroSystems might not have that luxury. They could be forced to cut employees, and some might even get pushed out of business.

With 13,500 workers, Spirit is the largest employer in Kansas' biggest city. It gets half of its revenue from making fuselages for the 737.

Even though Max production had slowed earlier in the year, Spirit and other suppliers continued to crank out parts, putting many of them in storage. As of Friday, Spirit had 90 fuselages on a ramp adjacent to nearby McConnell Air Force Base.

The Max was grounded worldwide in March after the second of two deadly crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia that killed a total of 346 people. For months, Boeing used the parts to build about 400 Max planes that it could not deliver to airlines.

On Monday, the aerospace company announced that it would halt Max production in January with no date for it to resume, a realization that regulators will not clear the plane for takeoff anytime soon.

Getting the jet back in the air depends largely on the Federal Aviation Administration, which is evaluating Boeing's effort to fix flight-control software that was a major factor in the crashes. Investigators have found that software designed to stop an aerodynamic stall was a huge problem for pilots, and Boeing is updating the code to make it less aggressive.

The FAA will not give a date for when the Max can return to the skies, and last week the agency said Boeing had an unrealistic expectations for putting the plane back into service. New FAA Administrator Stephen Dickson has said the decision will be on the agency's timetable, not Boeing's, indicating that it will take longer than Boeing had expected.

CFM International, a joint venture between General Electric and France's Safran SA, which makes the Max engines, also faces uncertainty.

The Cincinnati-based company said Tuesday it's working with customers and other suppliers "to mitigate the impact of the temporary shutdown of the 737 Max production."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 45 of 61

The company, which has more the 80 manufacturing sites worldwide with about 50,000 workers, said it can move people and manufacturing across multiple engine programs. That may hold off any layoffs. CFM produces other engines for commercial and military aircraft.

Stamford-based Hexcel, which makes composite materials used on the 737 Max frame and engines, already was reporting lower sales after Boeing slowed the rate of Max production. On Tuesday, the company tried to sound hopeful, saying it's confident in the airplane's long-term success and looks forward "to its return to flight and gradual ramp-up in production during 2020."

The 737 Max is such a big product that by itself, the production hiatus will shrink the U.S. gross domestic product by around 0.5% in the first three months of 2020, predicted JP Morgan Economist Michael Feroli.

That could cut the U.S. economy's growth rate by a roughly a quarter, to 1.5%.

Joseph Brusuelas, chief economist for RSM, a tax advisory and consulting firm, predicted layoffs by suppliers and wrote in a note that some may have trouble staying in business. At an event his firm hosted in Wichita last summer, one executive from a midsize company indicated that if the Max grounding turned into a production halt, "it would be an existential risk" to that firm.

"It cannot be overstated just how important the domestic and global supply chains associated with Boeing are to the small- and medium-sized firms," Brusuelas wrote.

If parts supply companies stop production, it will be difficult for them to quickly restart their factories, and that could further delay any startup of Boeing's assembly lines.

Spirit AeroSystems CEO Tom Gentile said in October during the Kansas Economic Outlook Conference that it would take a long time to come back if production were reduced.

Boeing's situation is so important that it has been discussed at the White House, top presidential adviser Kellyanne Conway said Monday.

Asked if President Donald Trump might intervene, she said: "Boeing knows the president is watching. He's met with them. Obviously, the Defense Department has met with them. The Department of Transportation, I'm sure, has met with them. When you say he intervenes and gets involved, it's to protect American interests. Safety first when it comes to airlines."

The ripple effects of the Max grounding already have hit airlines, which have been forced to delay putting the Max into their flight schedules. That has cut the number of available seats, pushing prices up. But analysts say it also has stopped airlines from adding routes and expanding.

Southwest Airlines, which was counting on the Max to update its fleet, pushed back any hope of restoring the plane to service by five weeks, to April. American Airlines did the same last week. United, which already pulled the Max from its schedules through March 4, said it will keep monitoring the process to determine when the aircraft can safely fly again.

Heather Hollingsworth in Kansas City, Kansas, Pat Eaton-Robb in Hartford, Connecticut, and Darlene Superville and Christopher Rugaber in Washington contributed to this report.

Why some cities and states balk at face recognition tech

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (AP) — Police departments around the U.S. are asking citizens to trust them to use facial recognition software as another handy tool in their crime-fighting toolbox. But some lawmakers — and even some technology giants — are hitting the brakes.

Are fears of an all-seeing, artificially intelligent security apparatus overblown? Not if you look at China, where advancements in computer vision applied to vast networks of street cameras have enabled authorities to track members of ethnic minority groups for signs of subversive behavior.

American police officials and their video surveillance industry partners contend that won't happen here. They are pushing back against a movement by cities, states and federal legislators to ban or curtail the technology's use. And the efforts aren't confined to typical bastions of liberal activism that enacted bans this year: San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley and the Boston suburbs of Somerville and Brookline.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 46 of 61

Take the western Massachusetts city of Springfield, a former manufacturing hub where a majority of the 155,000 residents are Latino or black, and where police brutality and misconduct lawsuits have cost the city millions of dollars. Springfield police say they have no plans to deploy facial recognition systems, but some city councilors are moving to block any future government use of the technology anyway.

At an October hearing on the subject, Springfield City Councilor Orlando Ramos said he doesn't want to take any chances. "It would only lead to more racial discrimination and racial profiling," he said, citing studies that found higher error rates for facial recognition software used to identify women and people with darker skin tones.

"I'm a black woman and I'm dark," another Springfield councilor, Tracye Whitfield, told the city's police commissioner, Cheryl Clapprod, who is white. "I cannot approve something that's going to target me more than it will target you."

Clapprod defended the technology and asked the council to trust her to pursue it carefully. "The facial recognition technology does not come along and drop a net from the sky and carry you off to prison," she said, noting that it could serve as a useful investigative tool by flagging wanted suspects.

The council hasn't yet acted, and the Springfield mayor has threatened to veto the proposal that Ramos plans to re-introduce in January.

Similar debates across the country are highlighting racial concerns and dueling interpretations of the technology's accuracy.

"I wish our leadership would look at the science and not at the hysteria," said Lancaster, California, Mayor R. Rex Parris, whose city north of Los Angeles is working to install more than 10,000 streetlight cameras Parris says could monitor known pedophiles and gang members. "There are ways to build in safeguards."

Research suggests that facial recognition systems can be accurate, at least under ideal conditions. A review of the industry's leading facial recognition algorithms by the National Institute of Standards and Technology found they were more than 99% accurate when matching high-quality head shots to a database of other frontal poses.

But trying to identify a face from a video feed — a potentially useful technique for detectives — can cause accuracy rates to plunge. NIST found that recognition accuracy could fall below 10% when using ceiling-mounted cameras commonly found in stores and government buildings.

The agency hasn't studied the performance of facial recognition on body camera footage, although experts generally believe that its often-jumpy video will render the technique even less reliable.

In October, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a temporary ban on police departments using facial recognition with body cameras. Some other states have similar restrictions.

While California's three-year moratorium was opposed by law enforcement groups, companies that provide video-surveillance equipment have mostly reacted with shrugs. Many businesses were already moving carefully before subjecting themselves to the legal, ethical and publicity risks of a technology that is facing backlash from privacy, civil liberties and racial justice advocates, not to mention bipartisan concern in Congress.

Axon, which supplies body-worn cameras to most of California's big cities and is the biggest provider nationwide, had already formed an AI ethics board of outside experts that concluded facial recognition technology isn't yet reliable enough to justify its use on police cameras. False identification could lead someone to be hurt or killed, said Axon CEO Rick Smith.

Even if facial recognition software was perfectly accurate, Smith said in an interview, the ability to track people's whereabouts raises constitutional and privacy concerns. "Do we want everybody who walks near a police officer to get their face identified and logged in a database?" he said.

Microsoft last year turned down an unnamed California police agency's request to equip all police cars and body cameras with Microsoft's facial recognition software, the company's president and chief legal officer Brad Smith wrote in a new book on tech policy. He said police wanted to match a photo of anyone pulled over, even routinely, against a database of suspects for other crimes.

Smith said the technology would wrongly identify too many people, especially women and people of

color. The executive has warned that unregulated facial recognition could unleash “mass surveillance on an unprecedented scale,” though he’s opposed to an outright ban. Microsoft in November hired an attorney to speak out against a proposed ban in Portland, Maine.

Other companies including Amazon, which markets a face identification system called Rekognition to law enforcement, have shown fewer qualms about selling their technology to police. Some law enforcement agencies feed images from video surveillance into software that can search government databases or social media for a possible match.

Todd Pastorini, general manager at biometric forensics company DataWorks Plus, said it’s important to distinguish between real-time crowd surveillance — which is rare in the U.S. — and the “extremely effective” method of running images through a pool of known police mugshots or driver’s license photos to help identify a suspect.

“Society and the public are going to get frustrated” if governments block law enforcement from adopting a technology that keeps improving, he said.

Among his South Carolina company’s biggest face-matching clients are Detroit and New York City, the latter of which first adopted facial recognition in 2011 and also uses software from French company Idemia.

“I’d absolutely be opposed to a ban,” New York City Police Commissioner James O’Neill told reporters this fall.

O’Neill, who retired in early December, added that facial recognition hits are just one part of an investigation. “There is so much video in New York City today that to not use facial recognition would be irresponsible,” he said.

Fifth fired Google worker files federal labor complaint

By RACHEL LERMAN AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A fifth former Google worker has filed a complaint with federal regulators accusing the company of improperly firing employees for labor organizing activity.

Kathryn Spiers, a security engineer, said Google fired her after she created a pop-up notification for employees to inform them of their labor rights.

In late November, Google fired four other workers for what the company said were violations of its data security policy. Those workers say they don’t believe they violated company policies and that Google was really firing them because they were all involved in various organizing activities at the company. Google disputes that.

Google is known for having one of the most outspoken workforces in tech. Employees have pushed back on issues ranging from the company’s handling of sexual misconduct allegations to its contracts with federal agencies.

But lately, some workers say, the company has been losing patience with its traditionally open culture and is cracking down on labor organizing.

Spiers wrote in a post published on Medium that part of her job was to create browser notifications to remind employees of company policies. After The New York Times published a report revealing that Google had hired a consulting firm traditional known for being anti-union, Spiers created a pop-up that told employees they were allowed to participate in “protected concerted activities.”

The notification showed up when employees visited the consulting group’s website.

Google says Spiers was fired because she “misused a security and privacy tool to create a pop-up that was neither about security nor privacy,” according to an email sent by vice president Royal Hansen and provided by a Google spokesperson.

Spiers did not have authorization for the pop-up, Hansen wrote, and said that the “decision would have been the same had the pop-up message been on any other subject.”

Under a settlement Google reached with the National Labor Relations Board in September, the company agreed to post notices to remind employees of their federal rights.

Spiers’ notification did just that, she wrote.

"During my time on the security team, I've had many conversations about the importance of maintaining user trust," Spiers wrote. "My code — a small notification about employee rights — does not reduce trust."

Spiers had been involved in organizing at Google, she wrote on Twitter, including employee resistance to the company working with Customs and Border Patrol.

The five workers have filed unfair labor practice complaints with the NLRB.

Venezuelan politicians resort to virtual lawmaking

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Opposition lawmakers in Venezuela who say they fear persecution by President Nicolas Maduro's government can now cast their votes though the cloud, the National Assembly decided Tuesday.

The opposition-led congress adopted a rules change that allows its members to virtually cast their votes and participate in debates. They can now participate in sessions from outside Venezuela or domestically without revealing their location.

It precedes a key vote on Jan. 5, when members of the National Assembly will decide whether opposition leader Juan Guaido will remain head of the body, allowing him to continue to claim to be interim president of Venezuela in his bid to oust Maduro.

Lawmakers loyal to Maduro walked out of the debate. They called the measure unconstitutional, vowing to take their case to the country's Supreme Court, which is stacked with the socialist president's allies. The pro-Maduro politicians said the change protects "fugitives of justice."

The change stems from a struggle for control of Venezuela between Maduro and Guaido, who launched a campaign early this year with U.S. backing seeking to remove the leader and end the nation's political confrontation.

Guaido, who presides over the National Assembly, said the measure will help the opposition "rebuild the republic" in the face of Maduro's administration, which he said seeks to dismantle the only branch of government not under the leader's control.

A day earlier, the National Constituent Assembly, a rival legislative body that Maduro's government formed to circumvent the opposition-led congress, stripped four lawmakers of parliamentary protection from prosecution.

The Supreme Court then opened a case filed against the lawmakers, bringing to 23 the number of opposition lawmakers who have been charged with crimes this year.

Of 112 deputies belonging to opposition parties, roughly 30 have fled the country, or they have sought refuge inside foreign embassies in Caracas, fearing criminal prosecution and jail.

Among the targeted politicians is Edgar Zambrano, the assembly's No. 2 official, who was arrested earlier this year by heavily armed officers from the intelligence police that surrounded his car outside his political party headquarters. They towed Zambrano to jail when he refused to step out. He was released four months later.

Archaeologists in Greece find 3,500-year-old royal tombs

By NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — American archaeologists have discovered two monumental royal tombs dating from about 3,500 years ago near a major Mycenaean-era palace in Greece's southern Peloponnese region, the Greek culture ministry said Tuesday.

A ministry statement said the dome-shaped roofs of both tombs near the Bronze Age palace of Pylos collapsed during antiquity, and the chambers became filled with so much earth and rubble that grave robbers couldn't get in to plunder them.

Nevertheless, the tombs were disturbed during the period of their use over several generations — unlike another Mycenaean grave found nearby in 2015 that yielded a stunning hoard of gold and silver treasure, jewelry and bronze arms buried with a man presumed to have been an early ruler of Pylos.

Recovered grave goods from the two tombs included a golden seal ring and a golden amulet of an ancient Egyptian goddess, highlighting Bronze Age trade and cultural links. The ministry said the discovery was particularly important as it shed light on the early phases of Greece's Mycenaean civilization.

The Mycenaean era, between roughly 1650-1100 B.C. provided the material for many of the myths and legends of ancient Greece including that of the Trojan War.

The larger of the two tombs had a diameter of 12 meters (36 feet) at floor level and its stone walls survived to a height of 4.5 meters (15 feet) — less than half its original height. The other was about two-thirds of that size and its walls now stand two meters high. Both belong to the tholos type of tomb, massive domed underground constructions reserved for Mycenaean royalty that could reach roughly 15 meters (45 feet) in height.

They were excavated over the past two years by University of Cincinnati archaeologists, who also discovered the nearby rich burial that is known as the Griffin Warrior grave, after some of the ornaments found in it.

All three graves, together with another tholos tomb found nearby decades ago, were built earlier than the sprawling palace whose ruins lie close by, and which features in Homer's *Odyssey* as the seat of the wise King Nestor.

5 years after detente with US, Cubans say hope has dwindled

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — At midday on Dec. 17, 2014, the sound of church bells echoed in Havana as presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro announced that the United States and Cuba would reestablish diplomatic relations and end nearly 60 decades of hostility.

Five years later, it feels almost as if that historic moment never happened, Cubans said in interviews in the capital Tuesday.

President Donald Trump has spent roughly as much time undoing detente as Obama spent constructing it, and relations between the two countries are at one of their lowest points since the end of the Cold War.

Trump has cut back U.S. visits to Cuba — barring cruise ships, flights to most cities and unguided educational travel — the most popular form of American trip to Cuba. The U.S. Embassy in Havana has been reduced to skeleton staffing after diplomats reported a string of health problems whose source remains a mystery. The closure of the embassy's visa section, and end of special five-year visas for Cubans this year, means travel to the U.S. has become near-impossible for many Cubans who used to fly regularly to South Florida to see family and buy supplies for businesses.

The Cuban economy is stagnant, with tourism numbers flat and aid from Venezuela far below its historic peak as Cuba's oil-rich chief ally fights through its own long crisis.

In 2014, Obama and Castro's announcement felt like the end of a dark era for Cuba and the start of something positive and new, people said in Havana. Now, the two years of detente under Obama feel like a temporary break in a long history of tension and struggle that has no end in sight, they said.

"There was hope, thinking that there would be an opening with Obama," said Alfredo Piñera, a 37-year-old construction worker. "And with Trump, it's like a child's dream, gone up in smoke."

Piñera works in Mexico, and returns to Cuba regularly to see his wife and sons, ages 16, 11, and 9. He said he hoped that the end of hostilities with the U.S. would bring a better life for him, his family and the entire country.

"I felt good," he said. "There was hope for improvement, for change in this country, economically, politically, socially."

He said he and his family were surviving in the hard times, which were far from the depths of the post-Soviet "Special Period" of the 1990s. But he said the optimism they felt five years ago had suffered a heavy blow.

"All of those hopes that so many Cubans went crashing to the round," said Piñera as he sat on a curb connecting his phone to a public WiFi access point outside the baseball stadium where Obama and Castro

watched an exhibition game during the U.S. president's historic 2016 visit to Havana.

The Cuban government celebrated Tuesday as the anniversary of the return of three of five Cuban agents arrested as they carried out infiltration of anti-Castro emigre groups. The swap of the agents for U.S. contractor Alan Gross and a jailed spy was an essential precursor to the re-establishment of relations, but the larger context was barely mentioned in Cuban state media on Tuesday.

The Trump administration says it is trying to cut off the flow of cash and oil to the Cuban economy in order to force the communist government to end its support for Venezuela.

Carlos Fernández de Cossio, the director of U.S. affairs for the Cuban Foreign Ministry, said some influential interests in the United States were working to end diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba, and the island's government was prepared.

"I don't think there will be a break-off in relations, frankly I don't know if that will happen. I do know that there's a group of powerful people that have that intention," he said. "Cuba can't be taken by surprise by that reality if it occurs."

Elizabeth Alfonso, 21, left school after she got pregnant at 14. She has spent the last six years raising her son and working as a waitress in a state cafeteria and maid in other Cubans' homes.

Still a child herself when Obama and Castro made their announcement, she has only vague memories of the two years of improved relations, but she knows things felt better.

"I thought things would get better. That's what everybody thought," said Alfonso, who sat in a park near the U.S. Embassy, waiting to start her shift as a maid in a nearby home.

She said she planned to return to school next year to get the equivalent of a high-school diploma, but had few hopes for improvement in Cuba. Many of her friends and relatives want to leave the country, she said, but that had become far more difficult due to Obama's ending of near-automatic residency for Cuban immigrants and Trump's increased deportations of people who once were guaranteed entry at the border.

Alfonso said she was waiting for the return of a cousin who crossed Mexico to get to the southern U.S. border but was detained and is awaiting deportation.

Antoin Ugarte, a 42-year-old father of three who rents a three-wheeled covered scooter known as a Cocotaxi from a state-run agency, said the post-Trump decline in tourism had hit him hard.

Detente, he said, "was a great step forward for Cuban society. Things developed and you started to see different perspectives, a different vision of economic improvement for your family, the conditions you live in."

Now, he said, "I barely make enough to put food on the table."

Associated Press journalist Andrea Rodríguez contributed to this report.

Mormons pulling 400,000 youths out of struggling Boy Scouts

By BRADY McCOMBS and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

KAYSVILLE, Utah (AP) — For decades, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was one of Boy Scouts of America's greatest allies and the largest sponsor of troops. But on Jan. 1, the Utah-based faith will deliver the latest blow to the struggling organization when it pulls out more than 400,000 young people and moves them into a new global program of its own.

The change brings excitement and some melancholy for members of the faith and may push the Boy Scouts closer to the brink of bankruptcy as it faces a new wave of sex abuse lawsuits.

Losing the church will mean about an 18% drop in Boy Scout youth membership compared with last year's numbers and mark the first time since the World War II era that the figure will fall below 2 million. At its peak in the 1970s, more than 4 million boys were Scouts.

Wayne Perry, a church member who is a past president of Boy Scouts of America and a current member of its national board, said the end of the long-term alliance will sting and force many regional councils in the U.S. West to lay off employees and sell some camps.

However, Perry said he's hopeful the Boy Scouts can eventually bring back at least 20% of the Latter-day Saints Scouts who liked the experience and want to keep pursuing merit badges in activities ranging

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 51 of 61

from camping and lifesaving to citizenship.

The church's new youth program will weave in camping and other outdoor activities in parts of the world where that's feasible, but there won't be uniforms or a chance to earn the coveted Eagle Scout rank — the highest in Scouting — that was long seen as a key milestone for teenage boys in the church. The focus will be squarely on religion and spiritual development, with youth working toward achievements that earn them rings, medallions and pendants inscribed with images of church temples.

Perry understands why the faith widely known as the Mormon church wants a program it can use world-wide because more than half its members live outside the U.S. and Canada, where the Boy Scouts isn't available. But he predicts that a heavy emphasis on the gospel may leave some young church members who already go to two-hour church services each Sunday and other Bible studies longing for Boy Scouts.

"One of the advantages we always had with Scouting is that it wasn't 'churchy,'" Perry said. "They were getting the Scout oath and the Scout law, which are incredibly compatible with the church's philosophies and views, but they weren't reading out of the Book of Mormon."

"I think there will be a boomerang effect as parents see that there is still a place for Scouting," he added.

The split between the Boy Scouts and church ends a nearly century-old relationship between two organizations that were brought together by shared values but have diverged in recent years. Amid declining membership, the Boy Scouts of America opened its arms to openly gay youth members and adult volunteers as well as girls and transgender boys, while the church believes that same-sex intimacy is a sin.

"The reality there is we didn't really leave them; they kind of left us," high-ranking church leader M. Russell Ballard recently said about the split.

His comment upset Boy Scout officials, Perry said, because the organization went to great lengths to ensure the faith still had robust religious liberty protections after the Scouts welcomed openly gay troop members and leaders — even allowing the church to craft the language.

Perry said the organization will now focus on pitching the benefits of Boy Scouts in parts of the U.S. West with many church members, including Utah, Idaho and Arizona. Previously, every congregation had a Boy Scout troop and boys were automatically signed up.

"We're going to have to earn our kids," Perry said.

Church leader Ronald A. Rasband said in an October speech that the faith's association with Boy Scouts will be an "important legacy."

That legacy runs deep in the Francis family in Utah, who are longtime members of the faith. Mark Francis, his two oldest sons, his brothers and his father all have been Eagle Scouts.

He and his wife, Nettie Francis, couldn't imagine not giving their three youngest sons the same opportunity, so they launched a new Boy Scout troop earlier this year to carry on the tradition after the church alliance ends. Most of its 40 boys are church members and also will participate in the faith's new youth program.

Nettie Francis said she's not worried about juggling it all.

"This is like any other extracurricular activity: We make time for things that are important to us," she said. "For our family, the skills and the leadership opportunities that Scouting offers are just tremendous."

At a recent troop meeting on a cold, rainy night in Kaysville, Utah, the boys gathered in a barn behind the Francis family's house and started with a prayer. They closed their eyes and folded their arms as is typical for Latter-day Saints. After belting out the Pledge of Allegiance and Scout oath, they prepared Dutch oven peach cobbles and then went to a nearby assisted living center to sing "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Jingle Bells" and other Christmas carols.

Baden Francis, 12, said he's happy he can keep going to camp, have fun with friends and hopefully one day become an Eagle Scout like his big brothers.

Mark Francis called the split a good move for both sides. The church gets the global youth program it long wanted, and the Boy Scouts of America gets rid of kids who didn't like it.

"Scouting will be smaller, but stronger," he said.

As of 2013, there were more than 430,000 Latter-day Saint boys in the Boy Scouts. The latest tally of the Scouts' total youth membership was about 2.2 million last year, and its press office confirmed that the

church exodus would push that number close to 1.8 million.

The Scouts declined to estimate the financial repercussions of the faith's departure, saying the church paid a flat fee that varied from year to year, rather than paying based on individual membership fees.

Boy Scout membership has been declining steadily for several decades, due to a variety of factors, including the allure of video games and the proliferation of youth sports leagues. Even with the admission of 150,000 girls, and the extension of the Cub Scout program to kindergartners, there's been no sign that the decline will end soon.

The split with the church comes at a challenging time for the Boy Scouts, which for years has been entangled in costly litigation with men accusing Scout leaders of abusing them as children. Hundreds of new lawsuits loom after New York, New Jersey, Arizona and California enacted laws making it easier for victims of long-ago abuse to seek damages.

The organization, headquartered in Irving, Texas, says it's exploring "all available options" to maintain its programs and has not ruled out the possibility of filing for bankruptcy.

Seeking to ease some of the financial pressure, the Scouts announced in October that the annual membership fee for its youth members will rise from \$33 to \$60, while the fee for adult volunteers will rise from \$33 to \$36. The news dismayed many local Scout leaders, who had already started registration for the coming year.

Last month, the Scouts confirmed it had mortgaged one of its most spectacular properties, the vast Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico, to help secure a line of credit. The organization said it had no plans to sell and is using the land as collateral to help meet financial needs, including rising insurance costs related to sex abuse litigation.

The Scouts says similar liens are in place for its other national properties, including its headquarters in Texas and "high adventure" bases in Minnesota, Florida and West Virginia.

Crary reported from New York.

Pope removes shroud of secrecy from clergy sex abuse cases

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis abolished the use of the Vatican's highest level of secrecy in clergy sexual abuse cases Tuesday, responding to mounting criticism that the rule of "pontifical secrecy" has been used to protect pedophiles, silence victims and prevent police from investigating crimes.

Victims and their advocates cheered the move as long overdue, but cautioned that the proof of its effectiveness would come when the Catholic hierarchy is forced to respond to national inquiries, grand jury subpoenas and criminal prosecutors who are increasingly demanding all internal documentation about abusers.

"The carnival of obscurity is over," declared Juan Carlos Cruz, a prominent Chilean survivor of clergy abuse and advocate for victims.

In a new law, Francis decreed that information in abuse cases must be protected by church leaders to ensure its "security, integrity and confidentiality." But he said the rule of "pontifical secrecy" no longer applied to abuse-related accusations, trials and decisions under the Catholic Church's canon law.

The Vatican's leading sex crimes investigator, Archbishop Charles Scicluna, said the reform was an "epochal decision" that will facilitate coordination with civil law enforcement and open up lines of communication with victims.

While documentation from the church's in-house legal proceedings will still not become public, Scicluna said, the reform now removes any excuse to not cooperate with legitimate legal requests from prosecutors, police or other civil authorities.

Francis also raised from 14 to 18 the cutoff age below which the Vatican considers pornographic images to be child pornography. The reform is a response to the Vatican's increasing awareness of the prolific spread of online child porn that has frequently implicated even high-ranking churchmen.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 53 of 61

The new laws were issued Tuesday, Francis' 83rd birthday, as he struggles to respond to the global explosion of the abuse scandal, his own missteps and demands for greater transparency and accountability from victims, law enforcement and ordinary Catholics alike.

"The reforms are long overdue but symbolize an important step in the right direction," said SNAP, the victims advocacy group. "Still right now they are only words on paper and what needs to happen next is concrete action."

The new norms are the latest amendment to the Catholic Church's in-house canon law — a parallel legal code that metes out ecclesial justice for crimes against the faith — in this case relating to the sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable people by priests, bishops or cardinals. In this legal system, the worst punishment a priest can incur is being defrocked, or dismissed from the clerical state.

When he was a cardinal, Pope Benedict XVI had persuaded St. John Paul II to decree in 2001 that these cases must be handled by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and be dealt with under the "pontifical secret" rule. The Vatican had long insisted that such confidentiality was necessary to protect the privacy of the victim, the reputation of the accused and the integrity of the canonical process.

However, such secrecy also served to keep the scandal hidden, prevent law enforcement from accessing documents and silence victims, many of whom often believed that the "pontifical secret" rule prevented them from going to the police to report their priestly abusers.

While the Vatican has long tried to insist this was not the case, it also never mandated that bishops and religious superiors report sex crimes to police, and in the past it has also encouraged bishops not to do so.

According to the new instruction, which was signed by the Vatican secretary of state but authorized by the pope, the Vatican still doesn't mandate reporting the crimes to police, saying religious superiors are obliged to do so where civil reporting laws require it.

But it goes further than the Vatican has gone before, saying: "Office confidentiality shall not prevent the fulfillment of the obligations laid down in all places by civil laws, including any reporting obligations, and the execution of enforceable requests of civil judicial authorities."

The Vatican has been under increasing pressure to cooperate more with law enforcement, and its failure to do so has resulted in unprecedented raids in recent years on diocesan chanceries by police from Belgium to Texas and Chile.

But even under the threat of subpoenas and raids, bishops have sometimes felt compelled to withhold canonical proceedings given the "pontifical secret" rule, unless given permission to hand documents over by the Vatican. The new law makes that explicit permission no longer required.

"The freedom of information to statutory authorities and to victims is something that is being facilitated by this new law," Scicluna told Vatican media.

Robert Hoatson, a survivor and founder of the clergy abuse advocacy group Road to Recovery, said the change was long overdue and a "hopeful sign that the church will finally hold itself accountable for the centuries-old scandal."

The Vatican in May issued another law explicitly saying victims cannot be silenced and have a right to learn the outcome of their canonical trials. The new document repeats that and expands the point by saying not only the victim, but any witnesses or the person who lodged the accusation cannot be compelled to silence.

"Excellent news," tweeted prominent Irish survivor Marie Collins, a founding member of Francis' sex abuse advisory commission who noted that the reform was one of the first proposals of the commission.

"At last a real and positive change," she wrote.

Lawyers for victims and accused priests have also advocated for a change to the pontifical secret rule, since it restricted their access to documentation from the case. Scicluna said the reform now facilitates making documents available to "interested parties" in a penal case, although it is not clear if these lawyers will still only be able to view the documents — as is currently the case — or can now make and keep copies of them, under the understanding that they remain confidential.

In recent years, individual abuse scandals, national inquiries, grand jury investigations, U.N. denunciations and increasingly costly civil litigation have devastated the Catholic hierarchy's credibility across the

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 54 of 61

globe, and Francis' own failures and missteps in dealing with particular cases have emboldened his critics.

In February, he summoned the presidents of bishops' conferences from around the globe to a four-day summit on preventing abuse, where several speakers called for a reform of the pontifical secrecy rule. Francis himself said he intended to raise the age for which pornography was considered child porn.

The move is significant and an indication that Francis has learned a lesson after one of his Argentine proteges, Bishop Gustavo Zanchetta, was accused of inappropriate conduct with seminarians after gay porn — said to involve youngsters but not boys — was found on his cellphone.

"To date, the church has been especially lenient towards priests who offend against older children" with pornography, said Anne Barrett Doyle of the online resource BishopAccountability. "Extending the pornography ban sends a message that this vulnerable group of minors must be protected too."

The Vatican's editorial director, Andrea Tornielli, said the new law is a "historical" follow-up to the February summit and a sign of openness and transparency.

"The breadth of Pope Francis' decision is evident: The well-being of children and young people must always come before any protection of a secret, even the 'pontifical secret,'" he said in a statement.

Also Tuesday, Francis accepted the resignation of the Vatican's ambassador to France, Archbishop Luigi Ventura, who is accused of making unwanted sexual advances to young men.

Ventura turned 75 last week, the mandatory retirement age for bishops, but the fact that his resignation was announced on the same day as Francis' abuse reforms didn't seem to be a coincidence.

Scientists seeking cause of huge freshwater mussel die-off

By TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

KYLES FORD, Tenn. (AP) — On a recent late fall afternoon at Kyles Ford, the white branches of sycamore trees overhung the banks of the Clinch River, leaves slowly turning yellow. Green walnuts covered the ground. The shallow water ran fast and cold over the rocky bottom, but it was littered with the white shells of dead mussels.

Freshwater mussels range from about the size of a large button to the size of a billfold, but the work they do for ecosystems is enormous. They can filter around 8-10 gallons of river water each day, cleaning it of algae, silt and even heavy metals and making the whole river a better environment for fish, amphibians, plants and bugs. Mussels also benefit the people who use their rivers as a source of drinking water.

That's why scientists are working quickly to discover the cause of a massive mussel die-off on the Clinch and understand whether it is related to similar die-offs on at least five U.S. rivers and another in Spain.

The Clinch River, winding 300 miles through Appalachia, is home to 133 species of fish and is one of the most important rivers for freshwater mussels in the world, with 46 different species — more than in all of Europe.

"I always try to get people to call this area a temperate Amazon, because the biodiversity here really is off the charts," biologist Jordan Richard, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said recently as he stood in waders, surveying the mussel population at Kyles Ford, a rural community of around 525 near the Virginia border.

Richard slogged through thigh-deep water in search of pheasantshell mussels, until recently one of the most abundant species on the river. He spots them easily although to the untrained eye, they aren't so obvious. Mussels bury themselves in the riverbed, digging in with their single foot and leaving only a crescent of their shells visible.

In 2016, Richard noticed the pheasantshells were dying in large numbers — the population dropping from 94,000 in 2016 to less than 14,000 this year on a 200-meter (219-yard) stretch. He estimates hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, have died in the larger river.

Richard found reports of similar die-offs over the years in rivers around the world, but he didn't find many answers.

Over the past century, mussel populations everywhere have declined steeply due to pollution, habitat loss and climate change, yet the current decline looks to be something different.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 55 of 61

Richard and a team of scientists suspect an infectious disease. By comparing healthy pheasantshell mussels with dying ones, the team is narrowing down a list of suspected pathogens.

"All living things are chock-full of microorganisms, and we don't have any sort of map for what is healthy inside a mussel," Richard said.

University of Wisconsin epidemiologist Tony Goldberg is helping with the investigation. He specializes in wildlife diseases of unknown cause — and recently he's been busy.

"Along with invasive species, we're seeing invasive pathogens," Goldberg said. "Often it's the coup de grace for a species that is holding on by a thread."

Disease is a big part of the global extinction crisis, he said. For example, white nose syndrome was first discovered in a single New York cave in 2007 and has since killed millions of bats, and chytrid fungus is responsible for the demise of tree frogs and about 200 other amphibian species worldwide.

But Goldberg is hopeful the freshwater mussel team, which includes scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey and a nonprofit conservation group, will be able to find the cause of the mussel die-offs and a way to stop them.

"I see it as a race against time, not an impossible task," Goldberg said. "We're all motivated by the sinking realization that if we lose these mussels, the rivers we all love are never going to be the same."

The Clinch, which is relatively pristine on its upper reaches, has seen 10 mussel species go extinct — it used to have 56. Another 20 species there are endangered, including mussels with evocative names such as fluted kidneyshell, snuffbox, birdwing pearlymussel, and shiny pigtoe.

Preliminary results indicate that whatever is killing the pheasantshell mussels on the Clinch is not the culprit in other die-offs under investigation in Wisconsin, Michigan, the Pacific Northwest and Spain.

"There's not some mussel Ebola sweeping across the world to take out every mussel everywhere," Goldberg said.

That also means there's no single cure for what's killing them.

In Spain, biologist Rafael Araujo is working with Goldberg to figure out what is killing the last of the endangered Spengler's freshwater mussels in the Imperial Canal on the Ebro River.

"We know that the problem is environmental (dams, water pollution, excess fertilizers, pesticides, exotic species, lack of water, etc.), but we also think that there could be a pathogen (bacteria and/or virus) that is making things worse," Araujo wrote in an email.

In Oregon and Washington, Emilie Blevins is studying the die-off of western pearlshell mussels in her role as a biologist with the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

Blevins likens mussel beds to coral reefs in terms of their diversity and contributions to other aquatic life. But she acknowledges, "They just don't get the spotlight of some other big, beautiful species. A big part of all of our work is ... spotlighting how important they are because if we don't value them, they're not going to be around."

This story has been updated to correct the spelling of Xerces.

Trump conservative critics launch PAC to fight reelection

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Politics Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A small group of President Donald Trump's fiercest conservative critics, including the husband of the president's own chief adviser, is launching a super PAC designed to fight Trump's reelection and punish congressional Republicans deemed his "enablers."

The new organization, known as the Lincoln Project, represents a formal step forward for the so-called Never Trump movement, which has been limited largely to social media commentary and cable news attacks through the first three years of Trump's presidency. Organizers report fundraising commitments exceeding \$1 million to begin, although they hope to raise and spend much more to fund a months-long advertising campaign in a handful of 2020 battleground states to persuade disaffected Republican voters to break from Trump's GOP.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 56 of 61

The mission, as outlined in a website that launched Tuesday coinciding with a New York Times opinion piece, is simple: "Defeat President Trump and Trumpism at the ballot box."

The group is led by a seven-person advisory council that features some of the GOP's most vocal Trump critics. Most, but not all, have already left the Republican Party to protest Trump's rise.

The principals include former John McCain adviser Steve Schmidt, former Ohio Gov. John Kasich adviser John Weaver, former New Hampshire GOP chair Jennifer Horn, veteran Republican operative Rick Wilson and George Conway, a conservative attorney and husband of Trump's chief counselor Kellyanne Conway.

In an interview, George Conway said he encouraged the new super PAC to involve Anonymous, an unnamed Trump administration official who authored a recent book warning the public against Trump's reelection. The rest of the group ultimately decided not to take Conway's suggestion.

"I think the more the merrier," George Conway told The Associated Press. "And I hope maybe he — he or she, I don't know who Anonymous is — will come out someday and join the effort. Because everyone who believes as we do that Donald Trump is a cancer on the presidency and on the Constitution needs to help and join this effort."

Asked about the super PAC, Kellyanne Conway acknowledged her husband's involvement and said: "It's kind of disappointing to see some of the people who are involved, but not surprising."

The inception of the Lincoln Project is significant, but to say it represents a minority of Trump's Republican Party would be an understatement. Roughly 9 in 10 Republican voters approved of the president's job performance and have all year, according to Gallup. And with very few exceptions, Trump has the public backing of virtually every Republican member of Congress.

Yet recent elections suggest that Trump's party is losing ground with educated voters and women, particularly in America's suburbs, which have traditionally leaned Republican. This new group hopes to push those voters further toward the Democrats.

Kellyanne Conway dismissed the group as a collection of failed campaign managers.

"They never got a president elected into the White House. I'm sure that hurts, very much. But they never really accommodated the growing Republican Party and understood how to beat Democrats and we did," she told reporters at the White House.

Tim Murtaugh, the communications director for Trump's reelection campaign, called the effort a "pathetic little club of irrelevant and faux 'Republicans' who are upset that they've lost all of their power and influence inside the Republican Party."

The Lincoln Project is very much a work in progress, despite Tuesday's official launch. While the core players don't yet have titles, day-to-day operations will be led by Horn and Reed Galen, a veteran Republican operative who worked for McCain but left the GOP after Trump's nomination in 2016.

The group begins as a super PAC, which means it can raise and spend unlimited sums of money and must disclose its donors.

"You're seeing a shift from talk into action," said Galen, describing the launch as "a big turning point for the political season and for the president's reelection."

Specifically, the group plans to focus on blocking Trump's reelection and defeating Trump-allied Senate candidates in a handful of key 2020 battlegrounds. To do so, it's targeting a narrow but important slice of the electorate: disaffected Republicans and Republican-leaning independents.

While there is no concrete road map, Weaver said the organizers plan to fight the president's reelection in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin along with Arizona and North Carolina. Their Senate efforts likely would focus on Arizona, Colorado, North Carolina, Maine and possibly Kansas and Kentucky.

Weaver said the group is already reviewing scripts for new ads, which are expected to begin running early next year.

"This is organic, and we're going to be flexible," he said. "We have to go out and prove ourselves and prove that we can be efficient and effective."

Meanwhile, George Conway, who formally left the GOP last year, said he likely would serve in a "cheerleader" capacity for the new organization because of his limited political experience.

"I'm not a fundraiser or political consultant, but if I could help in that way and learn how to do that — even to raise a nickel or two — I'll do it because it's important," he said. "For this, I think I can make an exception."

He suggested the Lincoln Project would pay particular attention to Congress' impeachment proceedings. "If he's not removed by the Senate, he needs to be removed at the ballot box," he said of Trump. "The people in Congress who are enabling him, either actively or passively, they, too, are violating their oaths of office. ... And they need to be removed, too."

AP writer Darlene Superville in Washington contributed to this report.

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

Protests of India's citizenship law grow, along with clashes

By EMILY SCHMALL and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Protests spread Tuesday across India against a new law that provides a path to citizenship for non-Muslims entering illegally from several neighboring countries, with angry demonstrators clashing with police.

Police fired tear gas in the Seelampur area of New Delhi to push back demonstrators who burned a police booth and two motorbikes after throwing stones and swarming barricades.

Roads leading to the Muslim-majority neighborhood were littered with stones, tear gas canisters and broken glass.

"We are protesting against the new citizenship law. They are saying if you don't have any proof (of citizenship) ... they will send us out of India," said 15-year-old Mohammad Shehzad.

Protests also were reported in the states of West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka and elsewhere of the law, which was passed in Parliament last week. On Sunday, a march by students at New Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia University descended into chaos when demonstrators set three buses ablaze. Police responded with rubber bullets and tear gas. Video showed officers chasing unarmed protesters and beating them with sticks.

Hanjala Mojibi, an English major at the predominantly Muslim school, said that when he and others saw police enter the campus, they walked toward them with their hands up to indicate the protest was nonviolent.

"The police made all 15 of us kneel and started beating us. They used lots of abusive words. One of them removed my prescription glasses, threw (them) on the ground, broke them and told me to look down," Mojibi said through tears at a news conference.

Also on Sunday, police stormed Aligarh Muslim University in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, firing tear gas and injuring five people participating in a student-led demonstration, university spokesman Rahat Abrar said.

Shahid Hussain, a 25-year-old history major, said police broke windows in his dormitory and lobbed a tear gas canister inside. After fleeing the building to escape the fumes, police pushed him against a tree and beat him with sticks, he said.

Police spokesman Sunil Bainsla denied the account, calling allegations of police brutality "lies."

The police response to the protests has drawn widespread condemnation. It also has sparked a broader movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act, with demonstrations erupting across the country.

The new law applies to Hindus, Christians and other religious minorities who are in India illegally but can demonstrate religious persecution in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It does not apply to Muslims.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has described the law as a humanitarian gesture.

While it was being debated in Parliament, Home Minister Amit Shah said it was "not even .001% against

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 58 of 61

minorities. It is against infiltrators." Modi told an election rally in eastern Jharkhand state that no Indian citizen would be affected by the law. Speaking about Sunday's protests, he accused the opposition Congress party of using students for political purposes.

"The decisions made by the government should be discussed and any voice should be raised in a democratic manner. This government understands your concerns but some people use your shoulder for firing a gun," he said. "I dare Congress, its friends, to publicly declare they are prepared to accord Indian citizenship to all Pakistanis."

Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi met President Ram Nath Kovind as the head of an opposition delegation and asked that the citizenship law be withdrawn.

Talking to reporters, Gandhi said she fears "the situation may spread further."

"I think you all have seen that the Modi government seems to have no compassion when it comes to shutting down people's voices and implementing legislation," she said. Critics of the government say the law is intended to help the ruling party transform a multicultural and secular India into a Hindu "rastra," or distinctly Hindu state and further marginalize India's 200 million Muslims, one of the largest Muslim populations of any country in the world."

India is 80% Hindu and 14% Muslim, which means it has one of the largest Muslim populations of any country in the world.

Police spokesman M.S. Randhawa said 10 people were arrested at Sunday's protest at Jamia Millia Islamia University from nearby Jamia Nagar, a Muslim neighborhood.

"We found out that the arrested men had instigated the crowds and were also responsible for vandalizing public property," Randhawa said.

Students said police lobbed tear gas inside the campus, broke down the doors of the library and yanked students out to assault them. Dozens of students were treated at hospitals.

Police said they acted with restraint.

The new law follows a contentious citizenship registry process in northeastern India's Assam state intended to weed out people who entered the country illegally.

Nearly 2 million people in Assam were excluded from the list, about half Hindu and half Muslim, and have been asked to prove their citizenship or else be considered foreign. India is building a detention center for some of the tens of thousands of people the courts are expected to ultimately determine have entered illegally.

Shah, the home minister, has pledged to roll out the program nationwide, promising to rid India of "infiltrators."

The Citizenship Amendment Act could provide protection and a fast track to naturalization for many of the Hindus left off Assam's citizenship list, while explicitly leaving out Muslims.

The backlash to the law came as an unprecedented crackdown continued in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority area, which was stripped of special constitutional protections and its statehood in August. Since then, movement and communications have been restricted.

"Our country is not just for Hindus," said Chanda Yadav, 20, a Hindi literature student who was participating in a sit-in Monday at Jamia Millia Islamia University. "I feel it is my moral right to protest against something which divides us as a community."

Associated Press writer Chonchui Ngashangva contributed.

US proposes new rules to increase organ transplants

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government is overhauling parts of the nation's transplant system to make sure organs from the dead no longer go to waste — and to make it easier for the living to donate.

The rules proposed Tuesday aim to ease an organ shortage so severe that more than 113,000 Americans linger on the transplant waiting list — and about 20 die each day.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 59 of 61

Part of the reason: An Associated Press analysis recently found some of the groups that collect organs at death secure donors at half the rate of others, missed opportunities that could have saved lives. But the government currently has little way to directly compare organ collection agencies and force poor performers to improve.

"No life-saving organ should go to waste," Medicare chief Seema Verma said in announcing stricter standards to hold those agencies more accountable.

At the same time, the administration also aims to spur more living donors by allowing them to be reimbursed for lost wages and child care or elder care expenses incurred during their hospitalization and recovery.

"When an American wishes to become a living donor, we don't believe their financial situation should limit their generosity," said Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, whose father received a kidney transplant from a living donor.

The rules come after President Donald Trump in July ordered a revamping of care for kidney disease, including spurring transplants of kidneys and other organs. The proposals are open for public comment for 60 days.

Transplant advocates praised the move.

"Patients are dying, and they deserve better," Jennifer Erickson, a former Obama administration staffer who worked on transplant policy, said of the crackdown on "organ procurement organizations," or OPOs.

And the association that represents those organ collection groups pledged to work with Medicare, which regulates the nonprofits, to implement the tougher standards.

The new rules are "an opportunity to drive meaningful changes that will increase the availability of organs for transplant and save more lives," Kelly Ranum, CEO of Louisiana's OPO and president of the association, said in a statement.

Today, the country is divided into 58 zones, each assigned an OPO to essentially be a matchmaker — rapidly collecting organs from willing donors at death and getting them to the right transplant center, even if a hospital calls with a potential donor at 3 a.m. It's hard to tell how well they do the job. They self-report to the government success rates without any way to tell how many potential donations were left behind, or why. And current rules give little incentive for retrieving less-than-perfect organs, such as those from older donors.

"For countless patients, an imperfect organ is better than no organ at all," Verma said.

Under the proposal, Medicare will calculate each OPO's donation and transplantation rates using federal death records that show the entire pool of potential donors each has to draw from — anyone 75 or younger who dies in a hospital of conditions that wouldn't automatically preclude donation.

For the first time, that would allow Medicare to rank OPO performance. Verma promised yearly evaluations, saying any organ agency that didn't do as well as the top quarter of their competitors would be pushed to improve.

"This is a great first step," said Greg Segal of the advocacy group Organize, whose father waited five years for a heart transplant. "Now the government needs to implement the rule as strongly and quickly as possible."

Verma estimated the change could spark another 5,000 transplants a year. A 2017 study by University of Pennsylvania researchers had estimated that a better-functioning system could yield as many as 28,000 additional organs.

Deceased donors make up most transplants but people lucky enough to receive a kidney or part of a liver from a living donor not only cut their wait, but those organs tend to survive longer. Yet fewer than 7,000 of the 36,529 transplants performed last year were from living donors.

Currently, the transplant recipient's insurance pays the donor's medical bills. But donors are out of work for weeks recuperating and not all employers allow some form of paid time off. The new proposal aims to ease that economic hurdle; still to be determined is exactly who will qualify.

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Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 60 of 61

Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 18, the 352nd day of 2019. There are 13 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 18, 2000, the Electoral College cast its ballots, with President-elect George W. Bush receiving the expected 271; Al Gore, however, received 266, one fewer than expected, because of a District of Columbia Democrat who'd left her ballot blank to protest the district's lack of representation in Congress.

On this date:

In 1787, New Jersey became the third state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1865, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery, was declared in effect by Secretary of State William H. Seward.

In 1916, during World War I, the 10-month Battle of Verdun ended with French troops succeeding in repulsing a major German offensive.

In 1917, Congress passed the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibiting "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" and sent it to the states for ratification.

In 1940, Adolf Hitler signed a secret directive ordering preparations for a Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. (Operation Barbarossa was launched in June 1941.)

In 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the government's wartime evacuation of people of Japanese descent from the West Coast while at the same time ruling that "concededly loyal" Americans of Japanese ancestry could not continue to be detained.

In 1956, Japan was admitted to the United Nations.

In 1957, the Shippingport Atomic Power Station in Pennsylvania, the first nuclear facility to generate electricity in the United States, went on line. (It was taken out of service in 1982.)

In 1969, Britain's House of Lords joined the House of Commons in making permanent a 1965 ban on the death penalty for murder.

In 1972, the United States began heavy bombing of North Vietnamese targets during the Vietnam War. (The bombardment ended 11 days later.)

In 1998, the House debated articles of impeachment against President Bill Clinton. South Carolina carried out the nation's 500th execution since capital punishment resumed in 1977.

In 2003, two federal appeals courts ruled the U.S. military could not indefinitely hold prisoners without access to lawyers or American courts.

Ten years ago: The infamous iron sign bearing the Nazis' cynical slogan "Arbeit Macht Frei" (Work Sets You Free) that spanned the main entrance to the former Auschwitz death camp in Poland was stolen. (The sign was later recovered; six suspects in the theft were later jailed.) Jon and Kate Gosselin officially divorced after 10 years of marriage, eight children and a year of tabloid headlines.

Five years ago: Sternly warning the West it could not defang the metaphorical Russian bear, President Vladimir Putin promised to shore up the plummeting ruble and revive the economy within two years. Mandy Rice-Davies, 70, a key figure in the "Profumo Scandal" that rocked Cold War Britain, died in London. Actress Virna Lisi, 78, died in Rome. "The Colbert (kohl-BEHR') Report" came to an end after nine years on Comedy Central (host Stephen Colbert went on to become the host of CBS' "Late Show.")

One year ago: President Donald Trump's charitable foundation reached a deal with New York's attorney general for the foundation to go out of business, even as Trump continued to fight allegations that he misused the foundation's assets. (In November 2019, a New York state judge ordered Trump to pay \$2 million to an array of charities as a fine for misusing his foundation to further his political and business interests.) The Trump administration banned bump stocks, the firearm attachments that allowed semi-automatic weapons to fire like machine guns, and gave gun owners until late March to turn in or destroy the devices. The president authorized the Defense Department to create a new Space Command, an effort

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 170 ~ 61 of 61

to better organize and advance the military's operations in space. Arizona's governor appointed U.S. Rep. Martha McSally to replace Sen. Jon Kyl in the seat that had belonged to the late John McCain, sending the GOP congresswoman back to Washington just a month after she lost a tight race for the state's other U.S. Senate seat.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Cicely Tyson is 95. Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark is 92. Actor Roger Mosley is 81. Rock singer-musician Keith Richards is 76. Writer-director Alan Rudolph is 76. Movie producer-director Steven Spielberg is 73. Blues artist Rod Piazza is 72. Movie director Gillian Armstrong is 69. Movie reviewer Leonard Maltin is 69. Rock musician Elliot Easton is 66. Actor Ray Liotta is 65. Comedian Ron White is 63. R&B singer Angie Stone is 58. Actor Brad Pitt is 56. Professional wrestler-turned-actor "Stone Cold" Steve Austin is 55. Actor Shawn Christian is 54. Actress Rachel Griffiths is 51. Singer Alejandro Sanz is 51. Actor Casper Van Dien is 51. Country/rap singer Cowboy Troy is 49. Rapper DMX is 49. International Tennis Hall of Famer Arantxa Sanchez Vicario is 48. DJ Lethal (Limp Bizkit) is 47. Pop singer Sia is 44. Country singer Randy Houser is 43. Actor Josh Dallas is 41. Actress Katie Holmes is 41. Actor Ravi Patel is 41. Singer Christina Aguilera is 39. Christian rock musician Dave Luetkenhoelter (Kutless) is 37. Actress Ashley Benson is 30. NHL defenseman Victor Hedman is 29. Actress-singer Bridgit Mendler is 27. Atlanta Braves outfielder Ronald Acuña Jr. is 22. Electro-pop singer Billie Eilish is 18. Actress Isabella Cramp is 15.

Thought for Today: "Whoever wants to be a judge of human nature should study people's excuses." — Christian Friedrich Hebbel, German poet and dramatist (1813-1863).

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