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*It was a
Holy Night*
So special -
So calm -
So bright

Merry Christmas from
Krueger Brothers Road Maintenance, Dirt & Gravel
Dave: 397-8387 ~ Roger & Dan: 397-2618

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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Tuesday, Dec. 24 (Christmas Eve)

4:00 p.m.: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton

5:00 p.m.: Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance Church

5:00 p.m.: United Methodist Church, Groton

5:00 p.m.: St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton

6:30 p.m.: First Presbyterian Church, Groton

7:00 p.m.: United Methodist Church, Conde

7:00 p.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Groton

7:30 pm.: St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Turton

Wednesday, Dec. 25 (Christmas Day)

9:00 a.m.: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church

9:00 a.m.: Zion Lutheran Church, Andover



United Methodist Church
906 North First Street
Pastor Brandon Dunham



**St Elizabeth Ann Seton
Catholic Church**
107 East 7th Ave
Fr. Tom Hartman



Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Member ELCA
1006 North 2nd Street



First Presbyterian Church
300 North Main Street
Rev. Terry Kenny



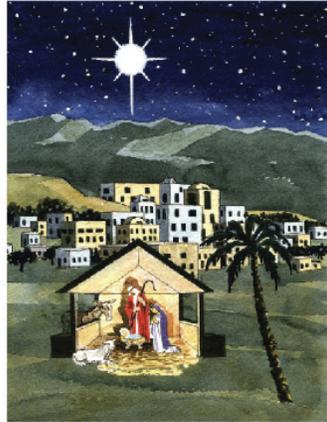
**Christian & Missionary
Alliance Church**
706 North Main Street
Rev. Josh Jetto



St. John's Lutheran Church
Member Missouri Synod
308 North 2nd Street
Rev Andrew Wolfgram

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Silent Night Holy Night

With exceeding great joy,
we bid all of our friends
and neighbors a most
joyous and harmonious
season.

For your belief in us, we feel truly blessed.



FULL CIRCLE AG

Tomorrow's Vision Today

AGRONOMY • ENERGY • FEED • GRAIN • CONSULTING



There are many layers of
Christmas, but the most
important one is Jesus.
His birth gave us the
promise of a heavenly
home!

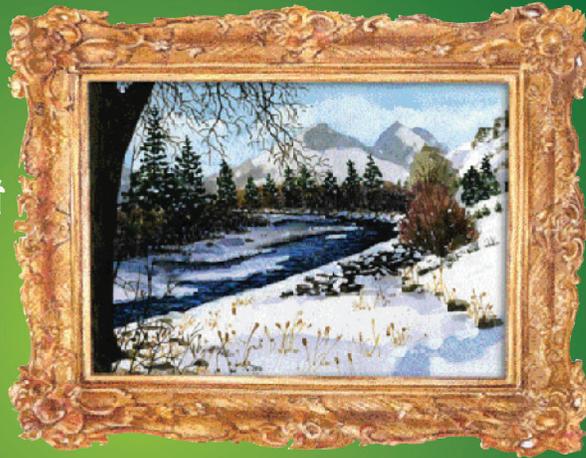
Merry Christmas!

**GDI News
GDI Fit
GDI Clean
GDILIVE
GDI Rent**

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Wishing You A
Picture-Perfect
Season!



Here's hoping your holiday is all you've dreamed of and more.
We thank you for your friendship and support.

Hanlon's Gravel & Manure Hauling

605/395-6531

GRINCH
CAN'T STEAL
MY
CHRISTMAS
:)



Kolker Law Office

102 N Main St.
(605)397-8464

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2020 Redfield Holiday Classic (January 11th, 2020)

11:00 am	Platte-Geddes Black Panthers	vs.	Stanley County Lady Buffaloes
12:30 pm	Groton Area Tigers	vs.	St. Francis Indian Indians
2:00 pm	Northwestern Wildcats	vs.	Wolsey-Wessington Lady Warbirds
3:30 pm	Sanborn Central-Woonsocket Blackhawks	vs.	Little Wound Lady Mustangs
5:00 pm	Langford Area Lions	vs.	Lyman Red Raiders
6:30 pm	Dupree Tigers	vs.	Redfield Pheasants

Last words should not be made public

By Aberdeen American News Editorial Board

The following editorial originally appeared in the Nov. 23 edition of the Aberdeen American News.

Charles Russell Rhines was executed Nov. 4 in Sioux Falls for the 1992 murder of Donnivan Schaeffer. The 63-year-old was the 20th person executed by the state of South Dakota, and the fifth since 2007. Jack McCall was the first person on record to be executed in Dakota Territory on March 1, 1877, for the murder of Wild Bill Hickok.

Whether you find justice in or disagree with capital punishment, one thing needs to change: executions should not include last statements made in public. Those being executed should say their final words in private to friends and/or family, clergy or to invited guests who want to listen.

This could be done in the days or hours leading up to the execution. Let the person who is being executed eat what they want and say what they want before the execution.

Those being executed can't take weapons to their execution, so why allow a public statement? Words certainly can be used as weapons in an attempt to inflict harm.

Before he was executed, Rhines was asked if he had anything to say. He spoke specifically to the parents of his victim Donnivan Schaeffer, Ed and Peggy. "Yes, I do," Rhines said, according to media witnesses. "Ed and Peggy Schaeffer, I forgive you for your anger and hatred toward me. I pray to God that he forgives you for your anger and hatred toward me. Thanks to my team. I love you all, goodbye. Let's go. That's all I have to say. Goodbye."

We can't know what Rhines intended or what was in his heart as he spoke those words. Each of you can decide for yourselves.

Pennington County State's Attorney Mark Vargo said he has stood next to Donnivan's family for 26 years as the case proceeded. "All that time, they have borne this tragedy and this loss with a grace that is simply inspiring," Vargo said.

Peggy Schaeffer said she let go of her anger a long time ago. "Anger and hate couldn't have got us anywhere," she said. "I gave it up to God. It takes a load off ... if I would start hating, I wouldn't be here. I wouldn't be who I am."

Rhines ended up on death row after the events at a doughnut shop in Rapid City on March 8, 1992. It was a shop where both Rhines and Donnivan Schaeffer had worked.

A few weeks after getting fired from the doughnut shop, Rhines burglarized the business. Schaeffer was delivering supplies to the shop when he walked in on Rhines, who then stabbed the 22-year-old to death.

Rhines was sentenced to death in 1993.

In the past, inmates about to be executed have attempted to use humor. Whatever their intentions, we don't believe the families of victims need to hear what an inmate has to say.

If a condemned person wants to say something to families of their victim or victims, and those families want to hear it, let it be done in private.

Whatever side you are on, we hope you would agree that public statements from the condemned at such events are unnecessary.

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JANUARY 2020
month/year

Senior Menu

SITE: GROTON / CONDE

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
		1 HOLIDAY NEW YEAR'S DAY	2 DRI-24 Hot Turkey Sandwich Macaroni Salad Mandarin Orange Dessert Cookie	3 DRI-9 Baked Fish AuGratin Potatoes 3-Bean Salad Blueberry Cobbler Whole Wheat Bread
6 DRI-17 Spaghetti/Meat Sauce Broccoli Garlic Toast Applesauce Sherbet	7 DRI-62 Stir Fry Beef w/Rice Oriental Blend Vegetables Honey Fruit Salad Whole Wheat Bread	8 Potato Soup Ham Salad Sandwich Tomato Spoon Salad Pineapple Tidbits	9 DRI-29 Oven Fried Chicken Mashed Potatoes Mixed Vegetables Buttermilk Biscuits Banana Pudding w/Bananas	10 Taco Salad Mexican Rice Fruit Breadstick
13 DRI-40 Ranch Chicken Breast Boiled Potato Squash Fruit Whole Wheat Bread	14 DRI-66 Sloppy Joe on Wheat Bun Oven Roasted Potatoes California Blend Veggies Fruit Sauce	15 DRI-44 Swiss Steak w/Mushroom Gravy/Mashed Potatoes Mixed Vegetables Pears Whole Wheat Bread	16 DRI-30 Ham Baked Potato/S.Cream Green Beans Peach Cake Whole Wheat Bread	17 DRI-26 Salmon Loaf Creamed Peas Fruit Brownie Whole Wheat Bread
20 DRI-33 Chili Cornbread Coleslaw Lime Pear Jello	21 DRI-59 Turkey Chow Mein Rice Broccoli Waldorf Salad Whole Wheat Bread	22 DRI-1 Roast Beef Potatoes/Gravy Carrots Peaches Dinner Roll	23 DRI-19 Baked Chicken Rice Pilaf Cauliflower/Pea Salad Tapioca Pudding Whole Wheat Bread	24 DRI-28 Scalloped Potato/Ham Peas Sunset Salad Cookie Whole Wheat Bread
27 DRI-36 Beef Stroganoff Noodles Mixed Vegetables Fruit Sauce Whole Wheat Bread	28 DRI-47 Ham and Bean Soup Egg Salad Sandwich Tomato Spoon Salad Cookie	29 Honey-Glazed Chicken Breast Parsley Buttered Potatoes Winter-Blend Vegetables Ambrosia Salad Whole Wheat Bread	30 DRI-3 Turkey & Dressing Mashed Potatoes/Gravy Broccoli Carrot Bar Whole Wheat Bread	31 DRI-27 Lemon Baked Fish Rice Pilaf California Blend Veggies Peach Crisp Whole Wheat Bread

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Today



Patchy Fog

High: 29 °F

Tonight



Patchy Fog

Low: 20 °F

Christmas Day



Patchy Fog then Cloudy

High: 29 °F

Wednesday Night



Chance Wintry Mix

Low: 21 °F

Thursday



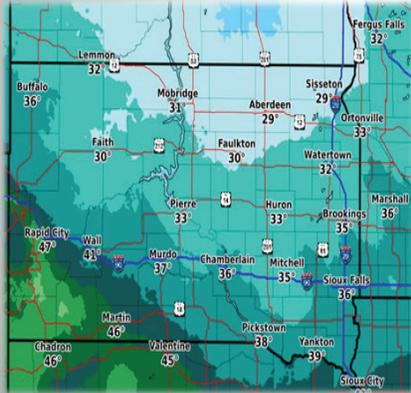
Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy

High: 26 °F

**Dry Christmas Eve –
Light Freezing Rain and Light Snow Christmas Day**

Christmas Eve: Mostly cloudy, light winds, dry. Highs 30-36°
Christmas Day: Light snow and light freezing rain possible Wednesday Evening. Snow accumulation less than 1". Highs 26-33°

Tuesday High Temperatures



City	High Temperature
Lemmon	32°
Buffalo	36°
Mobridge	31°
Aberdeen	29°
Sisseton	29°
Faith	30°
Faulkton	30°
Watertown	32°
Pierre	33°
Huron	33°
Brookings	35°
Marshall	36°
Rapid City	47°
Wall	41°
Murdo	37°
Chamberlain	36°
Mitchell	35°
Sioux Falls	36°
Martin	46°
Chadron	45°
Valentine	45°
Pickstown	38°
Yankton	39°
Sioux City	36°
Fergus Falls	32°



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

12/24/2019 6:11 AM

Christmas Eve continues to be dry and mild with some patchy dense fog in the morning. Christmas Day will bring the potential for light freezing rain and light snow later in the evening through Thursday morning. Snow accumulations are expected 1" or less for most areas.

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Today in Weather History

December 24, 1985: Snow fell over western South Dakota on December 23, with the greatest amounts in the northern Black Hills. Strong winds gusting to 50-60 mph developed over the western part of the state on the evening of December 23rd and continued into the morning of the 24th, with gusts to above 40 mph in the east. The winds caused ground blizzard conditions in the northern and central sections of South Dakota, and many vehicles were reported in ditches. Many people were stranded for a time in Martin in Bennett County. Several roads were blocked entirely during this time, such as Highway 248 near Murdo in Jones County.

December 24, 1992: A deep area of low pressure traveled across the United States/Canada border, dragging a cold front southward across South Dakota and Minnesota by Christmas Day. Southerly winds gusted up to 50 mph over western Minnesota on the 23rd in advance of the storm, causing ground blizzard conditions. As the arctic cold front swept across the area, temperatures tumbled from the 20s and 30s to well below zero by Christmas morning. Wind gusts were up to 50 mph behind the front, causing ground blizzard conditions and wind chill readings from 40 to 60 degrees below zero. A church that was under construction in Litchfield in Meeker County, Minnesota, was destroyed by strong winds. Many motorists were stranded on Christmas Eve and spent the night at area homes and motels. Interstate 94 from Alexandria to Moorhead, MN, was closed for nearly eight hours. High winds gusted up to 55 mph in the Watertown, SD area, causing a steel frame building under construction to collapse sometime between 9 and 10 pm CST.

December 24, 2009: A broad upper-level low-pressure area over the Upper Midwest associated with an intense surface low-pressure area brought widespread heavy snow along with blizzard conditions to central and northeast South Dakota as well as west-central Minnesota. The storm was a slow mover and produced several rounds of snow over three days. Total snowfall amounts were from 7 to as much as 25 inches. The heavy snow combined with winds of 25 to 40 mph with gusts to 50 mph brought widespread blowing and drifting snow with visibilities frequently less than a quarter of a mile. This blizzard ranked in the top three for South Dakota snowfall with a state average of 15.4 inches. Most of the state received 10 inches of snow or more with many locations with 20 inches or more. Pollock in north-central South Dakota set an all-time high three-day snowfall total with 17 inches. Before the onset of the storm, the Governor declared a state of emergency for South Dakota. Large portions of both Interstates 29 and 90 across South Dakota were closed late on Thursday, December 24th. Both Interstates were closed through Christmas Day and into Saturday, December 26th. There were some stranded holiday travelers due to the road closings, along with a few rescues. Most roads were reopened by Sunday morning, December 27th. There were also several vehicle accidents with nothing serious. Several airports were also closed throughout the storm, along with a few spotty power outages occurring in Lyman County in central South Dakota. Total snowfall amounts over the three days predominantly ranged from 1 to 2 feet. Snowfall amounts with a foot or more included; 12 inches at Mobridge, Eureka, Waubay, and Eagle Butte; 13 inches at Highmore and Miller; 14 inches at Castlewood, Summit, Watertown, Pierre, and Ree Heights; 15 inches at Groton, Gettysburg, Webster, Wilmot, Hayti, and McLaughlin; 16 inches at McIntosh, east of Hayes and east of Hosmer; 17 inches at Timber Lake, Britton, and Pollock; 18 inches near Victor; 20 inches near Keldron; 22 inches at Murdo; 23 inches at Sisseton and 25 inches at Kennebec. In west-central Minnesota Wheaton received 11 inches, Browns Valley received 15 inches with 16 inches at Ortonville and Artichoke Lake.

1851: The Library of Congress caught fire. About 35,000 of the Library's 55,000 volumes were destroyed.

1963: At 0326 CDT on December 24th, 1963, a new all-time low for Memphis occurred with a reading of -13°F. The record still stands today.

1968: The crew of Apollo 8 took this photo, later dubbed "Earthrise," on December 24th, 1968. During a broadcast that night, pilot Jim Lovell said: "The vast loneliness is awe-inspiring, and it makes you realize just what you have back there on Earth."

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 31 °F at 4:45 PM

Low Temp: 23 °F at 8:35 AM

Wind: 20 mph at 2:56 AM

Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 50° in 1893, 1943

Record Low: -24° in 1996

Average High: 23°F

Average Low: 4°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.38

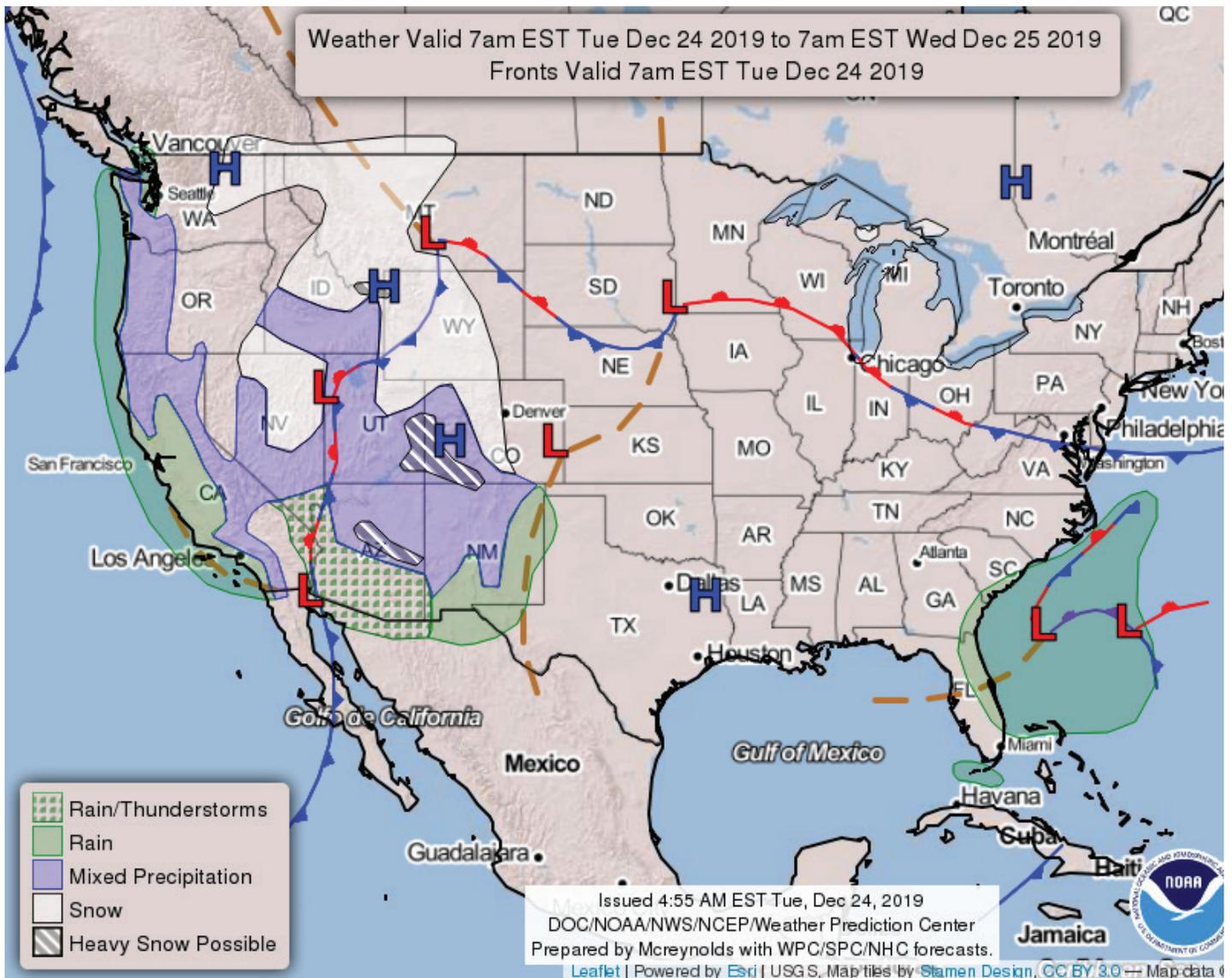
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.11

Average Precip to date: 21.58

Precip Year to Date: 28.06

Sunset Tonight: 4:55 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:12 a.m.





JOSEPH'S DREAM

"...Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. 'Joseph, son of David,' the angel said, 'do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

'Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means "God is with us."'

When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife."

When the Lord calls us to do His work, and we are faithful and obedient to Him, great things happen!

Prayer: Father, when You call us to do Your work in Your world, may we accept the challenge, knowing that great things will happen that will bless us and others, and Your Name glorified. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 1:18-24 For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

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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)

News from the Associated Press

Settlements grow in Dakotas prescribed burn that got away

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Two more settlements in a lawsuit arising from a 2013 prescribed burn that became a wildfire on the South Dakota and North Dakota border have taken the cost to the federal government to nearly \$900,000.

The latest settlements were filed last week in federal court, bringing the number of resolved claims to nine, the Rapid City Journal reported. The deals were for \$170,000 to the Diamond Acre Trust and \$7,500 to Jamie Herman.

More settlements are likely. The suit remains open for plaintiffs Eric and Laurie Casper, Robert and Connie Hermann, Ryan Hermann, and the Grand River Cooperative Grazing Association, all of whom were not able to agree terms during a settlement conference last month.

The U.S. Forest Service began the Pautre fire as a prescribed burn in April 2013 on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands in the Lemmon, South Dakota area. Prescribed burns are used to control grass and weeds, and to eliminate dry or dead vegetation that could fuel large wildfires.

The burn was intended to cover 210 acres (84 hectares) of federally owned land, according to a Forest Service report. Wind blew the flames beyond the intended area, and it became a wildfire that burned for several days, destroying grass that ranchers depended on for their cattle, crops and fences.

The fire burned 3,519 acres (1,424 hectares) of federally owned land and 7,160 acres (2,897 hectares) of privately owned land, for a total of nearly 17 square miles (44 square kilometers), according to court documents.

Affected landowners filed multiple lawsuits in 2015 that were eventually consolidated into one case. The lawsuits said the Forest Service made mistakes in its preparation and execution of the prescribed burn, including failing to heed vital weather information.

The government has not admitted any liability or fault in the nine settlement agreements that have been filed so far.

Report: Pine Ridge homicide victim shot in back of head

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man accused in a homicide on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation shot the victim in the back of the head after telling people about his desire to kill someone, according to the federal affidavit for his arrest.

Colton Bagola, 26, is charged with second degree murder in the death of Sloane Bull Bear, 30, in a Pine Ridge apartment on Dec. 17. Bagola was arrested Friday in Rapid City after a brief standoff with law enforcement.

The affidavit cites witnesses who said they heard Bagola tell people he was "wanting to kill somebody" and he "needed to take a soul," the Rapid City Journal reported. An autopsy showed that Bull Bear had been shot in the back of the head at close range.

An FBI agent responding to a 911 call found a shotgun underneath the kitchen table in the apartment and a trail of blood leading from the kitchen toward the living room. He found Bull Bear on the ground with his head and chest outside the doorway and the rest of his body inside the apartment.

Spearfish residents sentenced for dealing methamphetamine

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two South Dakota residents accused of dealing large quantities of methamphetamine have been sentenced in federal court.

Enrique Estrada Jr., 43, and Kari Lee Vaughn, 35, both of Spearfish, were convicted earlier this year of conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance, court documents show. They were indicted by a federal grand jury in September 2018.

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Estrada was sentenced to 20 years in prison, to be followed by five years of supervised released. Vaughn was sentenced to 15 years in prison, to be followed by 10 years of supervised release.

Estrada, Vaughn and others are accused of distributing multiple pounds of meth in western South Dakota between October 2017 and September 2018. Authorities say Estrada ran an operation to obtain methamphetamine from the state of Colorado, then transport it to South Dakota for distribution.

Governor announces staff changes

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem announced on Monday the departures of her Chief of Staff and Communications Director as well as a new hire for her office.

Joshua Shields is leaving the post of Chief of Staff after three months on the job. He has worked with Noem since her first congressional run in 2010.

Noem praised both Shields and departing Communications Director Emily Kiel in a statement and said, "Josh has been an integral part of my leadership team over the last year, and we will miss him."

Kiel worked as Noem's Communications Director since May. She previously worked at the state's Game, Fish and Parks Department.

The governor also announced that she is also hiring Maggie Seidel as Senior Advisor and Policy Director. Seidel previously worked at the American Property Casualty Insurance Association, an organization that lobbies for insurance companies.

Noem said that Tony Venhuizen, who previously served as Gov. Dennis Daugaard's Chief of Staff and is currently an outside legal counsel to Noem, will be taking on additional duties during the upcoming legislative session.

Renewables embraced by Standing Rock, other tribes

DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

CANNON BALL, N.D. (AP) — At the peak of protests against the Dakota Access pipeline in 2016 and 2017, when speakers needed help to be heard by the hundreds of demonstrators who had gathered near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, they grabbed a microphone powered by a mobile solar unit.

The sound system was one of several green energy examples that stuck with Cody Two Bears, a young Standing Rock leader who occasionally took the mic. After the protests ended without stopping the pipeline, Two Bears announced he was creating a nonprofit — Indigenized Energy — aimed at boosting development of renewable energy.

"There were a lot of people creating energy within that camp," Two Bears, 35, told The Associated Press. "I looked at my community and said if Standing Rock changed the world, maybe we can change within ourselves."

With publicity from the tumultuous protest still fresh in people's minds, Indigenized Energy and other nonprofits worked together in the last year to build and launch a solar farm on Standing Rock. In doing so, they became the latest American Indian tribe moving into green energy.

In Nevada, the Moapa Band of Paiutes is two years into a utility-scale solar project that's powering 110,000 homes in Los Angeles. In Arizona, the Navajo Nation this fall doubled the production of its own solar project to potentially power 36,000 homes. And in South Dakota, six Sioux tribes are partnering for a pair of massive wind farms projected to produce 570 megawatts by 2021 — enough to power 360,000 homes.

The tribal projects are often fostered by a network of nonprofits — many focused on combating climate change — that help with strategy, grant-writing and funding. Standing Rock's project drew \$370,000 of its \$470,000 cost from San Francisco-based GivePower, the nonprofit that provided the solar-powered sound system during the pipeline protests.

"Everybody wants energy independence," said Nick Tilsen, founder of NDN Collective, a Rapid City, South Dakota-based group working to help tribes develop green energy. "We believe that urgency exists for humanity."

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Hilary Tompkins, an attorney who worked on energy and economic development in the Department of Interior under President Barack Obama, said solar and wind can work well for many tribes since many reservations are in arid, sun-filled regions with vast, open spaces. The Obama administration enacted regulations to spur renewable development on tribal land and there are tax incentives, grants and rebates for such projects, she said.

Solar has benefited as equipment costs have fallen thanks to the rapid development of technology and the panels have become easier to install. The Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley estimated small-scale installation has fallen 60 percent in the last decade as efficiency has increased.

The Standing Rock project, which also was backed by a \$100,000 grant from the nonprofit Empower by Light and 1,000 donated solar panels from Jinko Solar, has allowed the tribe to sell energy to the state's grid and use the money to power a community center and event center, saving as much as \$10,000 a year, GivePower executive director Barrett Raftery said. The remaining profits go toward Indigenized Energy and Indigenized Youth and their programs, including a language school, sports for youth and future solar projects, he said.

The project's second phase includes rooftop solar panels on homes in Cannon Ball, which has about 900 people, though the timetable isn't set.

While Standing Rock is starting small, a few tribes are already making money.

The Moapa Band's project in Nevada was the first utility-scale project approved for tribal land, meaning the first aimed at producing energy beyond the reservation. First Solar Inc., which developed the plant and then sold it soon after it opened in 2017, said the project should generate millions for the tribe in lease payments, consulting fees and sale of goods and services.

The Navajo Nation retained ownership of its project in Kayenta, Arizona. The tribe projects about \$18 million in profits over the life of the project; building it provided jobs for more than 300 Navajo.

The U.S. Department of Energy says the largest wind energy project planned so far on reservation land is on the drawing board in South Dakota, where six Sioux tribes are launching the Oceti Sakowin Power Project with the help of a federal production tax credit. They're partnering with Apex Clean Energy, a Virginia-based private wind and solar project developer that will collect at least half of the profits.

The Office of Indian Energy, which is part of the Department of Energy, invested \$25 million in renewable projects on tribal lands between 2010 and 2016. A solar farm the agency is helping to fund on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Washington state is projected to drop utility bills for most homeowners from about \$240 a month to less than \$9, according to Department of Energy officials.

The DOE doesn't track the number of tribal green energy projects, but earlier this summer the agency awarded \$16 million to 14 reservation infrastructure ventures, most involving solar. That ranged from more than \$9 million to expand the power supply on the Colusa Indian Community in California to more than \$626,000 to the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana for solar panels on a new 50,000-square-foot wellness center.

Meanwhile, some tribes are looking beyond solar and wind to biomass, geothermal and hydro-power energy. A feasibility study by three California researchers found that a biomass plant on the Cocopah Reservation in southwestern Arizona, which has about 1,000 residents, could supply all the tribe's energy needs with a small combustion stoker boiler fed with crop residues from nearby agricultural lands.

Other sources of biomass are wood, animal manure and food waste, the latter of which supporters say could be easily collected from bars and restaurants at tribal casinos.

"You just never know what the next industry is going to be as we burn through fossil fuels," said Jennifer Irving, deputy director of the Thunder Valley Community Development Corp., which is managing a green energy project on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. "We're going to have to get more and more creative about where energy comes from."

AP researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

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Girl's Basketball Polls

By The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Sportswriters Association high school girl's preseason poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records, total points and last week's ranking.

Class AA

1. O'Gorman (18) 2-0 90 1

2. Stevens 4-0 69 3

T-3. Washington 2-1 41 4

T-3. Harrisburg 3-0 41 5

5. Lincoln 2-2 20 1

Receiving votes: Yankton 4, Aberdeen Central 3, Huron 2.

Class A

1. Winner (15) 3-0 87 1

2. Lennox (3) 3-0 75 2

3. St. Thomas More 2-0 54 3

4. West Central 2-0 28 4

5. McCook Central/Montrose 3-0 23 5

Receiving votes: Mobridge-Pollock 1, Aberdeen Roncalli 1, Crow Creek 1.

Class B

1. Corsica-Stickney (15) 3-0 87 1

2. Castlewood (2) 3-0 70 2

3. De Smet (1) 4-0 58 3

4. Ethan 3-0 33 5

5. White River 5-1 18 4

Receiving votes: Colman-Egan 3, Bridgewater-Emery 1.

Boy's Basketball Polls

By The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Sportswriters Association high school boy's poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records, total points and last week's ranking.

Class AA

1. Yankton (18) 3-0 90 1

2. Roosevelt 3-0 61 3

3. Brandon Valley 3-1 55 2

4. Huron 3-0 44 4

5. Lincoln 2-1 12 NR

Receiving votes: O'Gorman 5, Aberdeen Central 3.

Class A

1. St. Thomas More (18) 3-0 90 1

2. SF Christian 3-1 62 2

3. Dakota Valley 4-0 32 RV

4. Sioux Valley 2-0 26 RV

5. Lennox 2-1 19 5

Receiving votes: Crow Creek 16, Dell Rapids 10, Tea Area 6, Tiospa Zina 6, Rapid City Christian 2, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 1.

Class B

1. De Smet (13) 2-0 85 1

2. Viborg-Hurley (3) 2-0 72 2

3. White River (2) 5-0 58 4

4. Dell Rapids St. Mary 3-0 32 5

5. Canistota 3-0 8 RV

Receiving votes: Aberdeen Christian 7, Sully Buttes 5, Bridgewater-Emery 1, Warner 1, Lyman 1.

Editorial Roundup:

By The Associated Press undefined

Sioux Falls Argus Leader, Dec. 21

In extraordinary times, true statesmanship is needed

Four and a half months ago, this editorial board declared it past time for South Dakota's elected leaders to decide where they would draw the line. The "line" we referred to then was President Donald Trump's exhortations against four Congresswomen of color to "go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came."

We found the tepid public responses of the three men elected to represent South Dakotans to be inadequate. Senator Mike Rounds initially otherized Trump's targets, placing the blame for the president's comments on the women themselves, implying in a Twitter post that they were not patriots and did not love America.

Representative Dusty Johnson, who labeled Trump's comments "inappropriate" and not "helpful," took pains to indicate his close alignment with the president against the women's policy stances. Senator John Thune expressed mildly that the president "tone down the rhetoric... and focus on the issues that matter to the American people."

South Dakota's national leaders, all members of the GOP, have assumed stances similarly reluctant to allow a suggestion of daylight between themselves and the head of their party as the U.S. House of Representatives voted this week – for just the third time in our nation's history – to pass articles of impeachment against the occupant of the White House.

Johnson cast his party-line House vote against the two articles, saying that "impeachment is not in the best interest of this country, and in fact it has only deepened the partisan divide that truly plagues this country... I pray with all my heart that the anger and the division in this chamber will give way to an honorableness and a productivity and a time of working together."

Rounds dismissed revelations from the House hearings. His statement to the Argus Leader on Wednesday night stated "House Democrats have voted to impeach this president, and yet, they still have not provided the evidence to substantiate an impeachable offense. The Senate will execute its constitutional duty, bring this process to a close, and get back to doing the people's work."

Thune weighed in that "100 senators are being asked to consider undoing a national election...the Senate will fulfill its constitutional responsibility and approach this trial with the seriousness and fairness it deserves...the president will be afforded a fair and equal opportunity to participate – an opportunity that has been noticeably absent throughout the process thus far."

It should be noted that President Trump did not offer up defense testimony and instructed administration officials not to comply with House subpoenas to testify.

The charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, which passed the House on unfortunate but predictable partisan lines, do warrant earnest adjudication by the Senate. That the Senate has never voted to remove a president from office and the House has only voted to impeach a president on three occasions indicates the seriousness with which such proceedings should be approached.

So far, it does not appear that the Senate is inclined to conduct anything more than a show trial when and if the articles are sent from the House. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell made that clear when he announced immediately after the House vote that "everything I do during this, I'm coordinating with the White House counsel. There will be no difference between the president's position and our position."

We fully recognize that politics cannot be excised from this process. Neither do we suggest that Demo-

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crats have conducted themselves blamelessly. South Dakota's Tom Daschle, who was minority leader during former President Bill Clinton's Senate trial in early 1999, acknowledged that his staff had been in contact with members of the White House team throughout the process.

Some have criticized the House leadership's decision to move forward with impeachment, warning that it could backfire and significantly harm the Democratic Party's election prospects next fall. But the principles of our republic must not now be sacrificed to political expediency. Calls to "decide Trump's fate at the ballot box" ignore Congress's constitutional duty to check egregious executive abuses of power that could indeed encroach upon the integrity of the 2020 election.

This board harbors no illusion that our words will appeal to our federal legislators' better angels, moving them to honor their oath to defend the Constitution rather than march to the beat of polling numbers. Thune has displayed fleeting moments of self-awareness and independence, voicing doubts about Trump that he has walked back soon after. We expect that he, along with Rounds and Johnson, will continue to toe the party line as America hurtles toward a gravely important election year with partisan tempers aflame.

But they also take seriously, one must assume, the political gravity of their office in extraordinary times. The extent to which Thune and Rounds are willing to weigh evidence and make impartial judgments as jurors in a Senate trial could determine how history views their involvement at a time when statesmanship was needed above all.

Black Hills Pioneer, Dec. 21 **State needs to fund teacher pay increases**

Unfunded mandates.

By definition, an unfunded mandate is a statute or regulation that requires a state or local government to perform certain actions, with no money provided for fulfilling the requirements.

Such is the case of increasing teacher pay in South Dakota.

Since 2016, school districts in the state have been held accountable for increasing teacher pay, but other than the year one, the promised increases have been hard to come by when calculating their state aid.

Local school boards know that money is tight and board members can't decide to raise teacher salaries with money the state doesn't give them.

Under then-governor Dennis Daugaard, there was a major overhaul of the state aid funding formula in 2016 shifting the focus from funding based on the number of students a district has to funding based on student-teacher ratios.

The reform came with a half-cent increase in the state sales tax which was supposed to help fund the teacher pay increase. It did, and in that first year, teacher salaries increased an average of 8 percent.

That was the objective of a Blue Ribbon Task Force brought together by Daugaard in 2015 to address low teacher pay, a looming teacher shortage and school district financing.

One of the centerpieces of the 2016 K-12 Education Package was the goal of achieving a statewide average teacher salary of \$48,500. School districts are still responsible for meeting the state's target teacher salary, but the money to do so has dried up.

At a town-hall type meeting in Rapid City following Gov. Kristi Noem's 2021 budget address, Curt Pochart of the Rapid City School Board asked if schools are still going to be expected to meet the state's target salary for teachers even though there will be no increase in funds for the state's school districts.

"Is taking away that hammer part of not providing for the increase?" Pochart said.

Noem said nothing in statute has been changed concerning education funding.

"What would have to happen is that someone would have to bring a bill to change that," she said. "The budget is as proposed. We don't change statute in the budget. A bill would have to come to change the requirement to meet the minimum teacher salaries during the legislative session."

If South Dakota wants to compete regionally and nationally for quality teachers, it must commit to funding this program.

Come on Gov. Noem and legislators – pony up!

Melania Trump silently forges path through impeachment

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hillary Clinton spent the morning of her husband's impeachment visiting Capitol Hill to rally Democrats to his side. Pat Nixon kept assuring reporters her husband wouldn't quit — right up until he did. Eliza Johnson, frail from tuberculosis, kept watch over her husband during his impeachment while sitting in a room across from his White House office.

Melania Trump, just the fourth first lady forced to grapple with the threat of her husband's impeachment, is pressing on through the ordeal silently, showing no inclination to speak out publicly on behalf of her spouse.

While her husband recently broke his own record on daily tweets and delivered his longest-ever rally speech as he was being impeached, the first lady has largely held her tongue — with the exception of a sharp tweet scolding a law professor who invoked 13-year-old Barron's Trump name during an impeachment hearing.

"Like every first lady, she's sort of trying to forge her own path through this," said Tammy Vigil, a Boston University communications professor and author of a book about Melania Trump and Michelle Obama. "In this particular case, she doesn't really have a whole lot of history to look toward."

Melania Trump has said in the past that the president is the one the public needs to hear from since he was one elected.

And while the president has complained about the "great damage and hurt" the impeachment process has "inflicted upon wonderful and loving members of my family," the first lady's spokeswoman rejected the idea that Mrs. Trump has been somehow wounded.

"As always, Mrs. Trump is focused on being a mother and wife, and is busy serving our great nation," said Stephanie Grisham, her spokeswoman. "She is very strong, and after many years now, has become used to political harassment."

Trump is only the third U.S. president to be impeached, accused of pressuring Ukraine's leader to investigate Trump's political rivals as he withheld security aid approved by Congress. Trump is also accused of obstructing House efforts to investigate the matter.

The president, who insists he did nothing wrong, is unlikely to be removed from office by the Republican-controlled Senate.

A private person by nature, Melania Trump has rarely clued the public in on her thoughts, even as she weathered other difficult moments in her husband's presidency, including the special counsel's two-year investigation into possible collusion between Trump's presidential campaign and Russia.

Mrs. Trump also stayed silent after a former Playboy model and an adult film actress went public with claims of having extramarital affairs with Trump before he was president. Trump has denied having the relationships.

She has followed the same pattern during impeachment.

The first lady made her first solo visit to the Capitol in October on the same day that a group of House Republicans caused a ruckus by trying to barge into a secure briefing room where three committees were hearing depositions in the case against Trump.

Instead of canceling the appearance, she proceeded to mark the anniversary of legislation the president signed to help reduce opioid use, one of her signature issues.

As she departed after the event, the first lady ignored shouted questions about how impeachment was affecting her family.

Shortly after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced the beginning of a formal impeachment inquiry in late September, Melania Trump flew alone to Wyoming and spent two days promoting national parks and spending time in the outdoors for her "Be Best" youth initiative.

She has participated in numerous events since then in Washington and around the country: traveling to South Carolina with Karen Pence, the wife of Vice President Mike Pence, receiving the official White

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House Christmas tree and accompanying the embattled president to London, among them.

Amid the impeachment debate, she and the president also welcomed scores of lawmakers and other guests to White House Christmas receptions.

The two other presidents to be impeached, Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998, were both acquitted after trials in the Senate. Richard Nixon resigned before the House could vote to impeach him over the Watergate scandal.

Up until Nixon resigned, Pat Nixon would tell reporters that her husband wouldn't quit, said Mary C. Brennan, author of a biography about the late first lady.

"So much of her identity was tied up with his political career, so him quitting is like her quitting and that's not something that she would have done," said Brennan, dean of the history department at Texas State.

Pat Nixon often answered questions by saying she only knew what she read in the newspapers.

"My mother's greatest regret in the aftermath of Watergate was that my father did not consult her about the tapes before their existence became common knowledge," Julie Nixon Eisenhower wrote about her mother. "She would have urged that they be destroyed forthwith."

And at some point, Mrs. Nixon began scaling back her public appearances because "people were yelling questions to her about impeachment" everywhere she went, added Myra Gutin, who studies first ladies at Rider University in New Jersey.

Eliza Johnson stayed on top of her husband's impeachment, the byproduct of a post-Civil War clash with Congress. She closely read stories from a variety of newspapers and preserved them in scrapbooks, according to the National First Ladies' Library. She is said to have always believed he would be acquitted and was overtaken with emotion when she learned the verdict.

Hillary Clinton was active in her husband's defense in a case that revolved around his sexual relationship with a White House intern.

On the morning of the House vote in December 1998, she made a rare foray to the Capitol to privately rally Democrats. She joined the president and congressional Democrats for an appearance in the White House Rose Garden later that day after Clinton was impeached.

Hillary Clinton also used an unrelated White House appearance on the eve of the House vote to urge the nation to "practice reconciliation" and "end divisiveness."

AP news researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap>

Syrian army captures village, missile kills 8 civilians

By **BASSEM MROUE** Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A missile struck a school building in northwestern Syria on Tuesday morning, killing eight civilians, opposition activists said, as government forces captured a key village held by al-Qaida insurgents in the war-torn country's last rebel stronghold.

Syrian government troops also surrounded a Turkish observation post in the area, the activists said. They said the village of Jarjanaz was captured from al-Qaida late Monday.

Syrian forces launched a wide ground offensive last week into the northwestern province of Idlib, which is dominated by al-Qaida-linked militants. The offensive follows weeks of bombardment that has displaced tens of thousands of people.

The United Nations estimates that some 60,000 people have fled from the area, heading south, after the bombings intensified earlier this month. Thousands more have fled further north toward the Turkish border in recent days, where the U.N. has warned of the growing risk of a humanitarian catastrophe. Idlib province is home to some 3 million civilians.

More than 40 villages and hamlets have come under government control in southern parts of Idlib since Thursday, according to activists and Syrian Brig. Gen. Ali Mayhoub. The military statement called on civil-

ians to stay away from militant positions and asked them to come to government-held areas if they can.

The activists blamed Russia — Syrian President Bashar Assad's main ally in the war — for Tuesday's missile attack, which hit the Jobas village school. Among the eight killed were five children and a woman, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Syrian citizen journalist Hussein Khattab reported the same death toll. The school building was used by people displaced by violence in other parts of the country, the Observatory and Khattab said.

Syrian troops have been pushing toward the rebel-held town of Maaret al-Numan, which sits on a highway linking the capital, Damascus, with the northern city of Aleppo, Syria's largest. Assad's forces appear determined to eventually reopen the strategic highway, which has been closed by the rebels since 2012.

The Observatory said the troops are now about 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) from Maaret al-Numan, adding that government forces advancing from the east have surrounded the Turkish observation post near the village of Surman.

Turkey is a strong backer of Syrian rebels and has 12 observation posts in northwestern Syria as part of an agreement brokered last year with Russia. The post near Surman is the second that has been encircled by Syrian troops this year.

Democrats test whether voters will shrug off impeachment

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

GUTHRIE CENTER, Iowa (AP) — Rep. Cindy Axne happily talked about trade, health care and agriculture with about three dozen constituents who gathered in a farm bureau office the weekend before Christmas. Missing from the Iowa Democrat's talking points: her recent vote to impeach President Donald Trump.

Over the course of an hour, the issue that most clearly represents Washington's Trump-era polarization came up just once. And even then, it was from a questioner who thanked Axne for supporting the two articles that cleared the House last week in a party-line vote.

Axne seemed a little surprised by the muted reaction.

"I thought we'd have more," she told The Associated Press. "I get plenty of feedback, and we get plenty of calls into our office from folks who are on both sides."

It was a stark difference from one of the last times Axne was back in her congressional district, which stretches from the state capital Des Moines across rural, southwestern Iowa. During that trip over the Thanksgiving break, the crowd was testy about the prospect of impeachment and one constituent implored her to "get stuff done."

Axne's effort to stay laser-focused on policy may be the playbook vulnerable Democrats across the country deploy over the next year as they try to navigate the unpredictable political fallout from impeachment. Trump and his Republican allies insist voters will punish Democrats who backed impeachment. But the notable lack of protest at Axne's event could give Democrats hope they can survive one of the most controversial votes they've had to take in recent memory.

"Iowans care about the issues," Axne said. "They might not agree with my vote on impeachment, but they have bigger things to worry about."

Iowa's 3rd District went for President Barack Obama in 2012 by about 4 percentage points before Trump won it in 2016 by the same margin. It's one of more than two dozen districts that Trump carried in 2016 that are now represented by a Democrat.

Axne won the seat last year by about 2 percentage points — with less than 50% of the vote. Her district spreads across 16 counties and she prevailed by carrying just one of them: Polk, home to liberal voters in Des Moines, which is Iowa's largest city.

That makes Axne an enticing target for Republicans looking for any path to regain the House majority next year.

She's facing a potential rematch against David Young, the GOP incumbent she deposed. Republicans have been running impeachment-focused television ads against her since early October, and Vice Presi-

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dent Mike Pence appeared on a Des Moines television station last week to urge Axne to split with her party on the issue.

Young said the impeachment vote will be a potent one because it proves that "she's not who she said she'd be when she ran."

"She ran as a pragmatic, middle-of-the-road problem solver," and now votes with Democrats a majority of the time, he argued.

Iowans, he said, see impeachment as "a waste of money, a waste of time, a waste of an opportunity to take on those issues that really affect their lives."

Axne acknowledged the barrage of attacks Republicans have already launched against her. Republican groups have spent nearly \$300,000 on television ads attacking her on impeachment in her district.

"I'm going to be up against that for the next year. Do I think it will cost me my seat? That has yet to be seen," she said.

Glenn Hurst, the Democratic chair in Iowa's 3rd District, said he and other Iowa Democrats are concerned that impeachment could hurt them up and down the ballot.

"It'd be foolish not to have some concern, knowing that there are people who are really on both ends of the spectrum, as well as people in the middle, who aren't able to weed out the rightness of the action Trump took," he said.

Still, Hurst expressed optimism that Democrats have explained their case well enough, pointing to the response at the Saturday town hall as evidence.

"I think if we were gonna see backlash, we'd be seeing it now. It was almost a shrug of the shoulders here," he said.

Bryan Mowrer, a 64-year-old farmer who opened up the farm bureau's office for the town hall, said the tepid response was partly a result of timing. It was an unseasonably warm weekend afternoon just days before Christmas and farmers were about two months behind on their planting for the upcoming spring.

He said his phone had been "buzzing nonstop" with questions for Axne from farmers who couldn't attend. But most were focused on the recent trade deal Trump struck with Democrats. Mowrer himself asked Axne why the USMCA took so long to pass.

"I want to hear about policy. I don't want to hear about impeachment," he said.

Mowrer voted for Young in 2018, and considers himself a libertarian. He's undecided on who he'll support in 2020 — Axne "seems OK," he said, but "we'll see how bad the other side is."

While the crowd at Axne's town hall was mostly favorable, down the street at the only restaurant open in town on Saturday evening, the dinner crowd seemed more characteristic of the county overall.

"As a taxpayer, (impeachment is) a waste of time and money. The Democrats have not done anything in the last three years, and they could've done this USMCA a year ago but they didn't. They drug it out," said 68-year-old Clete Steensen, who came to enjoy dinner with his wife.

Steensen, a farmer himself, had been working all day "or I would've come in and given her a piece of my mind," he said of Axne's town hall.

There was also some evidence that impeachment could backfire on Democrats, as Republicans have argued, and fire up the GOP base.

Joyce Stracke, a 57-year-old nurse, called the impeachment proceedings a "witch hunt," language Trump has also used in describing the effort.

"I think it's ridiculous what the Democrats are doing," she said. "They're just for themselves. They're not worried about people."

Stracke didn't vote in 2016, but she's thinking seriously about it in 2020. She's been happy with Trump's presidency, and after watching the impeachment hearings, she thinks he deserves defending.

"It just made me feel stronger about Donald Trump," she said.

28 killed as bus plunges into ravine in Indonesia

PALEMBANG, Indonesia (AP) — A bus plunged into a ravine on Indonesia's Sumatra island after its brakes apparently malfunctioned, killing at least 28 people and injuring 13 others, police and rescuers said Tuesday.

The accident occurred just before midnight Monday on a winding road in South Sumatra province's Pagaralam district.

Palembang search and rescue operation chief Berty Kowaas said the bodies were taken to a hospital for identification, including that of a young boy who was pulled from a river near the crash site.

One of the injured was in critical condition, local police chief Dolly Gumara said.

Gumara said the bus plunged into a 80-meter (262-foot) -deep ravine and crashed into a fast-flowing river after the driver lost control of the vehicle in an area with a number of sharp declines.

Survivors told authorities that the vehicle's brakes apparently malfunctioned, but police were still investigating the cause of the accident, Gumara said.

The bus was headed for the provincial capital of Palembang from the neighboring city of Bengkulu.

Kowaas said the search for other passengers who might have been dragged away by the river was halted as darkness fell and would be resumed Wednesday morning.

The capacity of the bus was 52 passengers, but the number of passengers on board was unclear. The driver and two crew were among those killed.

Television video showed police and rescuers from the National Search and Rescue Agency evacuating injured victims and carrying the dead in blue body bags. Grieving relatives waited for information about their loved ones at the bus company's office in Bengkulu and at Pagaralam's Besemah hospital.

Road accidents are common in Indonesia because of poor safety standards and infrastructure.

Early last year, 27 people were killed when a packed tourist bus plunged from a hill in West Java province. Two months later, two accidents in West Java's hilly resort region of Puncak killed at least 15 people. In September last year, 21 were killed when a tourist bus plunged into a ravine in Bogor, another hilly area in West Java.

Christmas festivities begin in West Bank town of Bethlehem

By MOHAMMAD DARAGHMEH Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AP) — Thousands of Christian pilgrims descended on the West Bank town of Bethlehem, the traditional birthplace of Jesus, ahead of Tuesday's annual Christmas Eve celebrations.

The Church of the Nativity, where Christians believe Jesus was born, was set to host Palestinian dignitaries and pilgrims from around the world for a midnight Mass.

Uniformed Palestinian scouts wearing yellow and gold capes paraded past assembled visitors in Manger Square, bedecked with a large Christmas tree, playing drums and bagpipes.

Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the head Catholic cleric in the Holy Land, crossed an Israeli army checkpoint from Jerusalem to Bethlehem ahead of the holiday prayers, where he was greeted by prominent members of Bethlehem's Christian community.

Pizzaballa said that he draws hope from the "desire, especially in the youth, to do something for their societies, families."

"This is my hope, is that these people can make Christmas not just today, but everyday, because that's what we need," he said.

Christmas festivities are typically a boost for Bethlehem's flagging economy and for the Holy Land's dwindling Christian population, which has shrunk over the decades compared to the general population.

Palestinian Tourism Minister Rula Maaya said the number of foreign tourists visiting the West Bank rose to 3.5 million in 2019, from 3 million the previous year. At least 15,000 pilgrims were staying overnight in Bethlehem for Christmas, she said.

"All hotels in the city are full today," said Maaya, including hotels newly completed this year.

Most of Bethlehem is in the Palestinian-controlled area of the West Bank, but Israel's imposing separation barrier runs through part of the city and is a constant reminder of the complex political reality.

Home for the holidays: Prince Philip leaves hospital

By GREGORY KATZ Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Philip was discharged from a London hospital Tuesday and immediately taken by helicopter to join other senior royals at Queen Elizabeth II's rural retreat in time for a traditional family Christmas.

His arrival is a bit of welcome good news for the queen at the end of a year that she admits has been "bumpy." Her comments are thought to relate not just to Britain's difficult path toward Brexit but also setbacks experienced by the royal family in 2019.

Buckingham Palace did not reveal details about Philip's medical treatment and said that he wished to thank everyone who had sent good wishes during his four-night stay at the private King Edward VII hospital in London.

The palace had previously said that the 98-year-old prince was being hospitalized for planned treatment of a pre-existing condition. The fact that he did not go to the hospital by ambulance and that the queen did not change her plans to be by his side suggested it was not an emergency situation.

Philip, a man of great pride, walked out of the hospital on his own Tuesday morning even though many patients of that age use wheelchairs when they are discharged. The prince left the hospital on foot and entered a vehicle unaided. He was dressed elegantly with his tie in a Windsor knot and waved to a nurse as he departed the hospital.

The palace said he had been hospitalized as a "precautionary measure." Officials did not explain the nature of his treatment, which appeared to have been timed to allow him to receive the care he needed and return to the family in time for Christmas.

He has suffered from heart disease and other ailments including a bladder infection in recent years and has largely stepped out of the public eye since he announced his retirement from royal duties in 2017.

The Palace said at the time the decision was not health-related and was simply a reflection of his advanced years. "I've done my bit," Philip told friends when he stepped down after decades of royal events, often carried out silently one step behind the queen.

On Monday, Prince Charles said his father was faring well but was suffering from age-related problems. "When you get to that age, things don't work so well," he said.

Philip arrived at Sandringham in time for Christmas Eve, when the royals usually exchange small gifts.

It is not known if Philip will be strong enough to attend a Christmas morning church service traditionally attended by the queen and other senior royals. He did not attend last year.

The small church service near the queen's palatial home usually draws well-wishers hoping to get a glimpse of Elizabeth and her family and perhaps to exchange Christmas wishes with the royals.

Church is usually followed by a family lunch at Sandringham and then the broadcast of the queen's message to Britain and the Commonwealth countries. Excerpts released ahead of time reveal the queen plans to admit it has been a challenging year. It was recorded before Philip was hospitalized.

Talking about the need for reconciliation and forgiveness, Elizabeth says: "The path, of course, is not always smooth, and may at times this year have felt quite bumpy, but small steps can make a world of difference."

She is thought to be referring both to Britain's laborious exit from the European Union, which is now almost certainly going to happen on Jan. 31 after voters gave the pro-Brexit Conservative Party a comfortable majority in Parliament, and to the royal family's difficulties.

The problems facing the queen's family this year included Prince Andrew's retreat from public duties following a disastrous TV interview in which he defended his friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and failed to show empathy for Epstein's young female victims.

The family has also endured what many close observers think is a rift between Prince William and Prince

Harry, who has traveled with his wife Meghan and young son Archie to Canada rather than spend the Christmas holidays at Sandringham, as has long been customary for senior royals.

Both Harry and Meghan have complained about constant scrutiny by the media as they settle into family life with 7-month-old Archie.

Two Houston teenagers get Hopkins/Stills shopping spree

By KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Miracle Washington-Tribble didn't see much hope for her future.

At 16 and already a single mother to a baby boy, she wasn't going to school, had been in numerous fights and lacked ambition to turn her life around.

Then in August she was introduced to Eight Million Stories, a Houston program which helps 14 to 18-year-olds who have either quit or been kicked out of school continue their education, find employment and receive emotional support.

"At first I never saw myself getting a job or even finishing school," Washington-Tribble said. "I never went to school and I was doing bad stuff. But when I got here they motivated me to keep coming to school. I didn't see me having a future. But they help you with your dreams and goals. It motivated me and I see a future now."

In four short months, Washington-Tribble barely resembles that person. She has a job and is on track to receive her GED at the end of January. But most importantly, the petite teenager with the radiant smile now has hope for a better life.

"Miracle has turned her entire life around just being involved in this program," said Marvin Pierre, the program's co-founder and executive director. "Eight Million Stories filled a big gap in her life, which was love and finding a support system that she could tap into. And to see where she was in August and to see where she is now in terms of what she believes is possible for her future is just really a testament to the amazing staff that we have."

And last week Washington-Tribble and fellow Eight Million Stories participant Jadon Cofield received a Christmas surprise for their newfound success: The two went on a shopping spree with Houston Texans receivers DeAndre Hopkins and Kenny Stills.

The students knew about the shopping spree when they arrived at the Houston Galleria last week, but the teenagers had no idea that Hopkins and Stills would be joining them for a day of fun. When the two walked in, the teenagers beamed and gasped with excitement before sharing handshakes and hugs with the players.

Both Hopkins and Stills have been working with Eight Million Stories and raved about the importance of the program.

"You can actually see the difference that they're making in kids," Hopkins said. "It gives kids a second chance. A lot of times when kids get in trouble they might get labeled or judged for mistakes that they made at a young age. This program right here gives kids an opportunity to better themselves after messing up or doing something that kids might do."

Cofield has been involved with the program since May and has gotten back on track after struggling with negative influences and not succeeding in traditional schools. He is also scheduled to receive his GED at the end of January, and his involvement in the program has helped nurture his love of music. Cofield recently penned a song about Hopkins and was thrilled when Hopkins FaceTimed him at Eight Million Stories so he could perform the song for his favorite receiver.

"Whatever you want to push forward they help you build that and do that because they know that's important to you," Cofield said. "Like me with my music, they've been helping me with putting effort toward music and gave me an opportunity to make a song for DeAndre Hopkins ... and when I did it for him it just felt amazing."

Eight Million Stories, a local organization that opened in 2017, is working to grow and help more students, one of the reasons Stills wants to help.

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"It's really important to me to work with organizations that are grassroots, that are not really getting much funding, that aren't really getting much attention, and trying to use the platform that we have to really uplift the work that they're doing and work together," he said. "Sometimes, especially organizations like this when they're just starting out, it's like you could possibly feel like no one notices the work that you're doing or you feel like you're not really making an impact, and they are."

Stills knows how vital it is for teenagers to see strong role models and is invested in helping young people avoid pitfalls that could derail their success.

"I was running around, I was a teenager causing trouble like everyone else, and there could have been plenty of times where I could have found myself in jail for things that I was doing," he said. "So I was lucky enough to make it by, and it's important for me to come back and talk to young people and try and mentor being that I come from a similar background and I could have been in the same position as them."

On the day of the shopping trip, Hopkins and Stills spent almost two hours with the students, putting together outfits and collaborating to see what looked best.

There were times when Hopkins, who has been featured in GQ magazine as one of the league's most fashionable stars, would grab a dress or shirt, only to have Washington-Tribble shake her head and explain why that look wouldn't work. But other times he'd suggest something a bit more edgy than her selections and she'd grab the outfit and agree to give it a try.

After filling two racks with clothing ranging from casual to dressy, the group took over an entire dressing room at H&M. Hopkins then cranked up some rap music on his phone to give their time trying on clothes the festive feel of a fashion show.

Cofield pulled back the green curtain and sheepishly emerged from a dressing room wearing slim black pants and a grey plaid jacket — to cheers of approval from Hopkins and Stills. Hopkins then approached Cofield and told him he needed to button each button of the jacket he wore to get the proper silhouette.

It was then that Washington-Tribble came out of her stall wearing a black overall dress with a cropped pink top underneath. She walked out of the room and strutted through the hall before stopping to strike a pose as everyone raved about her look.

Hopkins loved seeing the happiness on the faces of the teenagers as they modeled their new threads, and said there was nothing he'd rather be doing on his day off.

"Your clothes make you feel good," he said. "There's something about putting on a new pair of shoes or a new shirt that gives you a new joy. It's like on the first day of school that's the happiest you're going to be because you're wearing a new outfit. So I think your clothes and the way you present yourself definitely helps your morale."

After the teenagers loaded up on clothes, the group walked across the mall to a shoe store where they could complete their looks. During the walk the players chatted with the students about everything from school and parenthood to football and fashion.

"It was great just to have that experience," Cofield said. "Just chilling with a big-time NFL star and knowing it came from him. The love was real, the atmosphere was cool. Everything was great all around."

As the group, now loaded with bags and bags overflowing with goodies, approached the exit to the mall and the students thanked the players for the day, it wasn't goodbye but rather see you later. One more exciting treat awaited.

While the students got practical things such as nonslip shoes for work and jeans for everyday wear, the players made sure they both came away with one special outfit.

And on Sunday afternoon the group will meet again. The students will wear those expertly picked ensembles and the players will be in what they promised to be: coordinating gear. Then the students will enter NRG Stadium with Hopkins and Stills, walking through the tunnel and being photographed to show off the clothes they worked so hard to earn.

"It's just going to be so amazing," Washington-Tribble said. "I never thought that I would be with an NFL player walking through the tunnel."

Added Cofield: "I can't wait for the opportunity. I need Sunday to come now."

Hopkins is also eager for Sunday to come, but does have one concern.

"I know they're going to look cool because I helped them pick out some of their clothes. But they might look better than me coming into this last game," he said with a laugh.

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

San Francisco cafes are banishing disposable coffee cups

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A new cafe culture is brewing in the San Francisco area, where a growing number of coffee houses are banishing paper to-go cups and replacing them with everything from glass jars to rental mugs and BYO cup policies.

What started as a small trend among neighborhood cafes to reduce waste is gaining support from some big names in the city's food and coffee world.

Celebrated chef Dominique Crenn, owner of the three-star Michelin restaurant Atelier Crenn, is opening a San Francisco cafe next year that will have no to-go bags or disposable coffee cups and will use no plastic. Customers who plan to sip and go at Boutique Crenn will be encouraged to bring their own coffee cups, says spokeswoman Kate Bittman.

On a bigger scale, the Blue Bottle coffeehouse chain, which goes through about 15,000 to-go cups a month at its 70 U.S. locations, says it wants to "show our guests and the world that we can eliminate disposable cups."

Blue Bottle is starting small with plans to stop using paper cups at two of its San Francisco area branches in 2020, as part of a pledge to go "zero waste" by the end of next year. Coffee to-go customers will have to bring their own mug or pay a deposit for a reusable cup, which they can keep or return for a refund. The deposit fee will likely be between \$3 and \$5, the company said.

Blue Bottle's pilot program will help guide the company on how to expand the idea nationwide, CEO Bryan Meehan said in a statement.

"We expect to lose some business," he said. "We know some of our guests won't like it — and we're prepared for that."

Larger coffee and fast-food chains around the U.S. are feeling a sense of urgency to be more environmentally friendly, and will no doubt be watching, said Bridget Croke, of New York-based recycling investment firm Closed Loop Partners, which is working with Starbucks and McDonald's to develop an eco-friendly alternative to the disposable coffee cup.

Despite the name, today's conventional paper cups for hot drinks aren't made solely from paper. They also have plastic linings that prevent leakage but make them hard to recycle, Croke said. She says it's unlikely large national chains will banish disposable cups, in the immediate term, or persuade all customers to bring mugs, so they're looking for other solutions.

Starbucks and McDonald's chipped in \$10 million to a partnership with Closed Loop to develop the "single-use cup of the future" that is recyclable and compostable.

"They know there are business risks to not solving these problems. And the cup is the tip of the spear for them," said Croke, adding that Blue Bottle's choice of San Francisco for its test run is clearly the right market.

Starbucks, which has more than 15,000 U.S. cafes and about 16,000 internationally, plans to test newly designed recyclable cups in five cities next year: San Francisco, Seattle, New York, Vancouver and London, spokeswoman Noelle Novoa said.

California cities have long been leaders in recycling and passing laws to encourage eco-friendly habits.

This year, the state became the first to ban restaurants from automatically handing out plastic straws with drinks. It was also the first, in 2014, to prohibit stores from providing disposable plastic grocery bags to shoppers, and bags at checkout now cost 10 cents.

Also this year, San Francisco International Airport became the nation's first major airport to stop selling water in plastic bottles. Water is now sold in glass bottles and aluminum cans, and travelers are encour-

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aged to bring their own empty bottles to fill up for free.

Starting in January, cafes and restaurants in Berkeley will charge 25 cents for disposable cups, and San Francisco is considering similar legislation.

Anticipating the fee, a group of about a dozen Berkeley cafes teamed up in a mug-sharing program, where customers can rent a stainless steel cup from one cafe and drop it off at any of the others. Vessel, the Colorado start-up that provides the cups, has a similar program running in Boulder.

Many coffee drinkers in the San Francisco area are taking Blue Bottle's announcement in stride.

"Of course it's a good idea," said freelance writer Tracy Schroth, at a Blue Bottle cafe in Oakland. "It's such a small step to ask people to bring their own cup. People just have to get into the mindset."

At a Blue Bottle in San Francisco, electrician Jeff Michaels said he does love the coffee but doesn't want to pay more if he forgets a mug.

"I paid almost \$7 for this coffee," Michaels said, sipping a cafe mocha. "How much are people willing to pay for a coffee?"

Small-cafe owner Kedar Korde is optimistic that one day it will become trendy for coffee drinkers to carry around reusable mugs, just like stainless steel water bottles have become a must-have accessory in the San Francisco area.

Korde's Perch Cafe in Oakland ditched paper and plastic cups in September, along with lids and straws.

"We now offer a glass jar that comes in a 12 ounce (350 milliliters) or 16 ounce (470 milliliters) size," Korde said. Customers put down a 50 cent deposit and can return it for a refund or keep it and get 25 cents off future drinks. The cafe also sells 50 cent reusable sleeves for the jars.

Korde says he's been surprised by how quickly customers have adapted. He was inspired to make the change after his 9-year-old daughter's school did a cleanup project at Lake Merritt, across from his cafe, and found their disposable cups in the water.

His daughter joked that she shouldn't have to clean her room if he couldn't keep his stuff out of the lake, but he took it more seriously.

"We're a small coffee shop. We're not going to save the world," Korde said. But at least "our cups are no longer winding up in the lake."

Follow Jocelyn Gecker on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/jgecker>

It takes a tech village to track Santa on Christmas Eve

By **JAMES ANDERSON** Associated Press

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. (AP) — Depending on which country they're from, the kids may ask about Father Christmas, Papa Noel, Saint Nick or Santa Claus.

But they all want to know one thing: where in the world the jolly old man and his sleigh full of gifts are on Christmas Eve.

For the 64th time, a wildly popular program run by the U.S. and Canadian militaries is providing real-time updates on Santa's progress to millions around the globe.

And this year, the North American Aerospace Defense Command is offering even more high-tech ways for children and parents to follow along.

Operation NORAD Tracks Santa has evolved from a misdirected telephone call in 1955, to a trailer parked outside the command's former lair deep inside Cheyenne Mountain, to NORAD's modern-day headquarters at Colorado's Peterson Air Force Base.

Along the way, the tens of thousands of telephone calls fielded by NORAD volunteers each year have been augmented by an explosion of technology that lets millions track St. Nick's journey from the North Pole to the Pacific and Asia, from Europe to the Americas.

This year's portals include Alexa, OnStar, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and 3-D apps developed for mobile devices by Cesium, a Philadelphia-based IT and defense contractor. The apps integrate geospatial and satellite-positioning technology with high-resolution graphics that display the actual positions of the

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stars, sun and moon and the shadows they cast at any point in Santa's journey.

It takes a village of dozens of tech firms — including Google, Microsoft, Hewlett Packard and Bing Maps — to deliver the immersive effect for global Santa trackers, with some 15 million visits to the website alone last year.

And it takes a village of 1,500 volunteers to field emails and the 140,000 or so telephone calls to 1-877-HI-NORAD (1-877-446-6723). They staff phone banks equipped with monitors inside a building at Peterson, which offers a view of snow-capped Pikes Peak to the west.

More volunteers and firms donate food, water and coffee to those on Santa Watch.

"Hi Santa Trackers! Lots of kids are waiting to ask you about Santa," a sign reads.

Volunteers are equipped with an Operations Center Playbook that helps ensure each and every caller can go to sleep happy and satisfied on Christmas Eve.

Longtime Santa trackers are familiar with the NORAD-Santa story.

In 1955, Air Force Col. Harry Shoup — the commander on duty one night at NORAD's predecessor, the Continental Air Defense Command — fielded a call from a child who dialed a misprinted telephone number in a newspaper department store ad, thinking she was calling Santa.

A fast-thinking Shoup quickly assured his caller that he was. And a tradition was born.

Today, most early calls come from Japan and Europe. The volume soars in the U.S. and Canada, said program manager Preston Schlachter. United Kingdom callers ask about Father Christmas. Those in France generally seek Papa Noel's whereabouts.

For team members, once "Big Red" — Santa's code name — is airborne, Schlachter said, "it's off to the races."

"I've never had a block of time move so quickly," he said.

Packers clinch NFC North with 23-10 win over Vikings

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Pro Football Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Sporting fresh division title shirts that few expected them to wear this year, the Green Bay Packers had the message printed across their chests in the jubilant visitors' locker room: "The North is not enough."

With Aaron Rodgers taking a back seat while the ground game and the pass rush led the way, the Packers became NFC North champions for the first time in three years and delivered Minnesota's first defeat at home this season.

Aaron Jones rushed for 154 yards and two second-half touchdowns, Za'Darius Smith had five tackles for loss to lead a stifling performance by the defense, and the Packers beat the Vikings 23-10 on Monday night.

"There's really nothing like checking that first box on the goal list," said Rodgers, who was picked off without throwing a touchdown pass for the first time in 18 games.

The Packers (12-3) made Matt LaFleur the 10th rookie coach in NFL history to reach 12 victories, winning for the first time in four tries at U.S. Bank Stadium with a dominant finish after trailing 10-9 at halftime. Green Bay stayed in position for a first-round bye in the playoffs, and the top seed — with home-field advantage until the Super Bowl — is still in sight.

"Like I've been telling the guys the last few weeks, the only thing I want for Christmas is a hat and a T-shirt, and they came through with it, man," said Smith, the team's top free agent signing. "My Christmas gift is here already. I'm happy."

The Packers stormed back from three first-half turnovers, including the rare interception by Rodgers, to silence the deafening crowd and seal the Vikings (10-5) into the sixth playoff seed. The green-and-gold-clad fans in attendance squeezed some "Go, Pack, Go!" chants in during the ample down time as the Packers took control in the second half.

Kirk Cousins was sacked five times, with a whopping 3 1/2 by Smith, and he threw an interception in the third quarter that set up the first score by Jones, who leads the league with 16 rushing touchdowns. The Vikings had 132 total yards, as Cousins fell to 0-9 in his career in Monday night games.

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"When you don't convert third downs, go three-and-out, you just don't have that many plays. You don't have many bites at the apple to get going," Cousins said. "We certainly did not play well enough from start to finish."

The Vikings had only seven first downs and never netted a drive longer than 31 yards in this concerning regression. They wasted a fine performance by their defense, which has produced 10 turnovers in the last two games.

"Give Green Bay some credit. They did some good things, and that's what happens when you don't play as good as you can," Vikings coach Mike Zimmer said.

Minnesota's frustration over a stalled offense that averaged nearly 30 points over the previous 10 games only increased in the second half. Stefon Diggs caught a 28-yard pass on third-and-18 in the third quarter, but Cousins was intercepted later on the drive when Diggs was tangled up with Jaire Alexander and Kevin King made a leaping grab before a 39-yard return.

The Vikings punted on fourth-and-1 from their 45 to white-flag their ensuing possession.

Cousins cost Minnesota the completion of a comeback from a three-touchdown deficit at Green Bay on Sept. 15, when his second interception of the game, also by King, came on an off-balance throw into end-zone coverage on first-and-goal late in the fourth quarter of a 21-16 defeat. Since that iffy first month of the season, Cousins had played as well as nearly any quarterback in the league to help the Vikings clinch a spot in the playoffs when the Los Angeles Rams lost on Saturday. That was by far the best thing to happen to them this weekend.

"It's pretty frustrating that we lost, regardless if we're in the playoffs or not. You want to win games convincingly," said Diggs, who caught a second-quarter touchdown pass from Cousins three plays after Anthony Harris picked off Rodgers by darting in front of Davante Adams.

Packers defensive coordinator Mike Pettine again schemed awfully well against Cousins and the Vikings, keeping his outside linebackers extra wide to prevent the rollouts and screens that Cousins excels with. Third-string running back Mike Boone, in his first NFL start with Dalvin Cook and Alexander Mattison both out with injuries, was mostly bottled up. Cousins was just 4 for 12 for 39 yards in the first half.

"The defense played out of their minds. Za'Darius, I don't even know what to say," said Adams, who had 116 yards on 13 catches.

ROUGH START

With a plus-59 scoring margin in the first quarter entering this game, Rodgers and the Packers have often raced out of the gates this season, hitting their snags later in games. This start was bumpy, though.

Jones fumbled when Anthony Barr wrangled him down on a short catch at on the first drive, and Eric Kendricks returned it to the Green Bay 10-yard line. Adams lost a fumble and later dropped a pass in the end zone right before halftime, forcing the Packers to settle for Mason Crosby's third field goal.

Rodgers threw 30 passes in the first half and gained just 158 yards off them. His streak of 277 consecutive attempts without an interception was the longest in the league this season, dating to the Oct. 14 game against Detroit.

INJURY REPORT

Packers: Backup FS Will Redmond (hamstring) was hurt in the second quarter and did not return. ... Backup RB Jamaal Williams (shoulder) was injured in the third quarter.

Vikings: Kendricks (quadriceps) departed after his second fumble recovery late in the second quarter. ... Barr limped off with an injury to his left leg, right before the second touchdown by Jones.

UP NEXT

Packers: Visit Detroit on Sunday. They've lost their last two road games against the Lions.

Vikings: Host Chicago on Sunday, their fourth consecutive regular-season finale at home against the Bears.

Roberts will tap his inner umpire in impeachment trial

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's last prolonged look at Chief Justice John Roberts came 14 years ago, when he told senators during his Supreme Court confirmation hearing that judges should be like baseball umpires, impartially calling balls and strikes.

"Nobody ever went to a ballgame to see the umpire," Roberts said.

His hair grayer, the 64-year-old Roberts will return to the public eye as he makes the short trip from the Supreme Court to the Senate to preside over President Donald Trump's impeachment trial. He will be in the national spotlight, but will strive to be like that umpire — doing his best to avoid the partisan mire.

"He's going to look the part, he's going to play the part and he's the last person who wants the part," said Carter Phillips, who has argued 88 Supreme Court cases, 43 of them in front of Roberts.

He has a ready model he can follow: Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who never became the center of attention when he presided over President Bill Clinton's Senate trial.

As Roberts moves from the camera-free, relative anonymity of the Supreme Court to the glare of television lights in the Senate, he will have the chance to demonstrate by example what he has preached relentlessly in recent years: Judges are not politicians.

He has stuck to his mantra even as he and his fellow, Republican appointees hold a firm 5-4 conservative majority on the Supreme Court. Roberts has a solidly conservative voting record on the court, with a couple of notable exceptions that include sustaining President Barack Obama's health care law.

Trump has been among Roberts' critics, blasting the chief justice for his health care votes. While Roberts ignored those remarks, at least publicly, he clashed with the president last year when Trump lashed out at an "Obama judge" who ruled against the president's migrant asylum policy.

It's not as though there isn't plenty of controversy brewing in his regular place of work. Before the end of June, the justices are expected to decide cases involving guns, abortion, subpoenas for Trump financial records, workplace protections for LGBT people and the fate of an Obama-era program that shields young immigrants from deportation. It's possible the court will be asked to hear yet another case on the health care law before the term ends.

The high court has moved to the right with the addition of two Trump appointees, Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, a development that has made Roberts the justice closest to its ideological center and most able to decide how far the court will move to the right, or left, in any case that otherwise divides liberals and conservatives.

In the Senate, though, the chief justice's powers are limited because any ruling he makes can be overriden by a majority vote.

He is not likely to put himself in the position of inviting reversal, said Paul M. Collins Jr., a political scientist and director of legal studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

"Any controversial rulings in support of either party will threaten the viewpoint that the court should be above politics. Democrats would perceive any ruling for Republicans as partisan and if he ruled against the president, Republicans would allege he is holding a grudge," Collins said. The Senate's impeachment rules allow Roberts to put questions to a Senate vote, without first ruling himself.

Rehnquist looked back on his role in the Clinton trial with a smile. "I did nothing in particular and I did it very well," Rehnquist recalled two years after the trial, borrowing a line from a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta.

Like Rehnquist, Roberts has virtually no experience running a trial, as opposed to the appellate proceedings at the Supreme Court. "I would be shocked if he suddenly becomes a very rigid jurist with respect to technical evidentiary rules," Phillips said.

The mechanics of the trial are not yet clear. Rehnquist had his top aide at the court, James Duff, and at least one law clerk on hand. He regularly consulted with the Senate parliamentarian before announcing rulings.

Roberts runs a more flexible Supreme Court than Rehnquist, who would cut off lawyers mid-sentence when the red light came on to show their time was up.

Whenever Roberts appears in public, inside the courtroom or elsewhere, he exudes a calm confidence that comes at least in part from preparation. As a leading Supreme Court advocate earlier in his career, Roberts would practice for high court arguments with his main points on five index cards. He rehearsed so that he could make those points in any order and be ready to answer 1,000 questions, even if he might only face 80 to 100 queries during a typical 30-minute argument, he told author Bryan Garner in an interview early in his tenure as chief justice.

He also has a quick wit that he has used to settle confusing situations. When the lights dimmed and then went out during arguments in 2016, Roberts quipped, "I knew we should have paid that bill."

Soon after he became chief justice, a light bulb exploded in the courtroom, startling the crowd, justices and court police included. Roberts helped restore calm by calling the incident "a trick they play on new chief justices all the time."

Residents of NW Syria flee new government offensive

By **BASSEM MROUE Associated Press**

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian government forces pressed ahead Monday with a new military assault on the country's last rebel stronghold that began last week, an offensive that has set off a mass exodus of civilians fleeing to safer areas near the Turkish border.

Under the cover of airstrikes and heavy shelling, Syrian troops have been pushing into the northwestern province of Idlib toward a major rebel-held town, Maaret al-Numan. The town sits on a key highway linking the capital Damascus with the northern city of Aleppo, Syria's largest.

The immediate goal of Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces appeared to be reopening the highway, which has been closed by the rebels since 2012.

Idlib province is dominated by al-Qaida-linked militants. It's also home to 3 million civilians, and the United Nations has warned of the growing risk of a humanitarian catastrophe along the Turkish border. The United Nations says over half of the civilians in Idlib have been internally displaced following continuing reports of airstrikes in the area.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is alarmed by the escalation of fighting and is calling for an immediate halt to hostilities, his spokesman said late Monday.

The spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said earlier that a U.N.-negotiated six-hour humanitarian pause had enabled safe passage for more than 2,500 people to flee.

Over the past three days, some 39 communities were reportedly been affected by shelling in northern Hama, southern Idlib and western Aleppo governorates, while 47 communities were reportedly hit by airstrikes, Dujarric said.

"The U.N. urges all parties to ensure the protection of civilians, and to allow sustained and unhindered access by all humanitarian parties to provide life-saving assistance to all in need," the U.N. spokesman said.

Residents of villages and towns in southern parts of Idlib province have been fleeing with their belongings in trucks, cars and on motorcycles.

The government's ground offensive resumed last week after the collapse of a cease-fire, in place since the end of August.

Before this latest bout of violence, the U.N. reported that some 60,000 Idlib residents had already been displaced since the government's bombing campaign began late last month.

The pro-government Al-Watan newspaper said Syrian troops were a few kilometers (miles) away from Maaret al-Numan, adding that the town "might surrender to the army without fighting."

The opposition's Syrian Civil Defense, also known as the White Helmets, said Maaret al-Numan and the nearby town of Sarqeb were almost empty after tens of thousands of civilians left to escape heavy aerial and ground bombardment.

"As you can see the destruction is massive. Residents were forced to flee this area," said a member of the White Helmets in a video as he walked through Maaret al-Numan. "They had to choose between

death or fleeing to the unknown further north.”

Syrian troops have also nearly surrounded a Turkish observation post near the village of Surman in Idlib province, according to Al-Watan and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor.

Turkey is a strong backer of some rebel fighters, and has 12 observation posts in northwestern Syria as part of an agreement. The deal was brokered last year along with Russia, one of Assad’s main backers.

The Observatory, which has a network of activists in Syria, said government troops have captured approximately 35 villages and hamlets near Maaret al-Numan in the past few days.

Also Monday, a vehicle rigged with explosives blew up in a market in a northern Syrian town controlled by Turkey-backed opposition fighters, killing five people and wounding others, state media and opposition activists said.

State news agency SANA said the blast occurred in the village of Suluk near the Turkish border, putting the death toll at five people and reporting that several more were injured.

A similar death toll was also given by the Turkey-based Syrian National Coalition and the Observatory, which also said 20 people were wounded.

Suluk is near the Syrian border town of Tal Abyad in Raqqa province. Turkish troops and Turkey-backed fighters captured Tal Abyad and Suluk from Kurdish-led fighters in October. Turkey’s invasion of northeastern Syria pushed back Syrian Kurdish fighters from some border areas.

Explosions in north Syria areas controlled by Turkey-backed opposition fighters killed scores of people in recent weeks.

Turkey blames Syrian Kurdish fighters for these attacks, a claim that the Kurds deny.

Separately, Russia’s military said insurgents used drones to attack its Hmeimeem air base on Syria’s Mediterranean coast a day earlier. The two drones were shot down and caused no damage or injuries, said Maj.-Gen. Yuri Borenkov of the Russian Center for Reconciliation of the Opposing Sides in Syria.

Associated Press writers James Heintz in Moscow and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Biden’s new endorsement reflects battle for Latino support

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

Joe Biden’s presidential bid got a boost Monday from one of the leading Latinos in Congress, with the chairman of the Hispanic Caucus’ political arm endorsing the former vice president as Democrats’ best hope to defeat President Donald Trump.

“People realize it’s a matter of life and death for certain communities,” Rep. Tony Cárdenas, D-Calif., told The Associated Press in an interview, explaining the necessity of halting Trump’s populist nationalism, hard-line immigration policies and xenophobic rhetoric that the California congressman called cruel.

Cárdenas’ is the chairman of Bold PAC, the political arm of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

His announcement follows presidential candidate Bernie Sanders’ weekend of mass rallies with Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a freshman congresswoman from New York who has become a face of the progressive movement and a key supporter for the Vermont senator’s second White House bid.

The dueling surrogates highlight a fierce battle for the Hispanic vote between Sanders and Biden, whose campaigns each see the two candidates as the leading contenders. Biden leads the field among Democratic voters who are non-white, a group that includes Democratic voters who are Hispanic, with Sanders not far behind, according to national polling. Another top national contender, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, draws less support from non-white voters. There are few recent national polls with a sufficient sample of Hispanic Democratic voters to analyze them independently.

The dynamics also demonstrate the starkly different approaches that Biden and Sanders take to the larger campaign. Biden is capitalizing on his 36-year Senate career and two terms as Barack Obama’s vice president to corral Democratic power players across the party’s various demographic slices. Cárdenas

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joins four other Hispanic caucus members who've already backed Biden, a show of establishment support in contrast to some Latino activists who've battered Biden over the Obama administration's deportation record. Sanders, true to his long Capitol Hill tenure as an outsider and democratic socialist, eschews the establishment with promises of a political revolution, just as he did when he finished as runner-up for Democrats' 2016 nomination.

Together, it's an argument on politics and policy at the crux of Democrats' 2020 nominating fight.

Sanders and his supporters like Ocasio-Cortez argue that existing political structures cannot help working-class Americans, immigrants or anyone else. That argument, they insist, can draw enough new, irregular voters to defeat Trump in November.

"We need to be honest here," retorted Texas Rep. Vicente Gonzalez, a Biden supporter whose congressional district includes part of the U.S.-Mexico border. "If Joe Biden loses the primary, Democrats will lose in 2020."

It's impossible for polling almost a year ahead of a general election to affirm that view, but the contention echoes Biden's consistent arguments about Electoral College math.

Texas Rep. Filemon Vela, also a border-district congressman who backs Biden, was not so absolute. But he said Biden is best positioned for a general election on immigration because of his plans to roll back Trump's immigration restrictions and boost the asylum process, while stopping short of decriminalizing all border crossings. Sanders supports making all border crossings civil offenses, rather than criminal, a position first pushed by the lone Hispanic presidential candidate and former Obama housing secretary Julian Castro.

"In some swing states, that might not go over well," Vela said, even as he, Gonzalez and Cárdenas said the distinction is more important to political pundits than to Hispanic voters.

Said Cárdenas: "There is activist language and there are litmus tests; and there are hard-working people around the country who just want fairness."

He added another key plank of Biden's case: that meaningful change, from reversing Trump's migrant family separation policy to expanding health care coverage, requires not only winning in November but then achieving some semblance of consensus in Congress.

Hispanic voters are a rapidly growing portion of the U.S. population and electorate, though they have consistently had lower election-participation rates than African Americans and non-Hispanic whites. At the least, Hispanics will play key roles in the Nevada caucus (third in the Democratic nominating process) and the Texas and California primaries, the two largest sources of delegates on the March 3 Super Tuesday slate.

Sanders leads Biden among younger voters generally, according to national polling, and Biden aides say that could carry over to Hispanics. The variable is seemingly on display when comparing Biden's campaign crowds with those like Ocasio-Cortez drew this weekend in California and Nevada.

Immigrants-rights advocates picketed outside Biden's Philadelphia campaign headquarters shortly after its opening. Castro used Democratic debates to challenge Biden on why he didn't stop more deportations when he was vice president.

Last month, members of the Movimiento Cosecha, which describes itself as an immigrant-led group pushing for "permanent, protection and respect" for immigrants, confronted Biden during a campaign event in South Carolina. One of them, Carlos Rojas, asked Biden to answer for deportations under Obama and to commit to an outright moratorium on all deportations — a position Sanders supports. Biden declined. After Rojas pressed him, Biden said, "You should vote for Trump."

Gonzalez called it "ridiculous" to question Biden's commitment to immigrants, but said the skepticism demonstrates that the Latino community vote is not monolithic, with a range of national origins and philosophical differences.

Vela agreed, adding that Sanders' rallies and Ocasio-Cortez's social media following shouldn't obscure Biden's standing among the "traditionalist Democrats" he said constitute the majority of Hispanic voters. Vela recalled an unplanned campaign stop he made recently with Biden at Mi Tierra, an iconic restaurant in San Antonio, Texas, after a campaign event with several hundred people.

"He went table to table," Vela said, "people getting up, 'Joe Biden is here' and 'There's Joe Biden.' The response was overwhelming."

Woman accused in racist attack is charged in 2nd hit-and-run

CLIVE, Iowa (AP) — An Iowa woman who told police she intentionally ran over a teenager because she believed the girl was Mexican has been charged with another hit-and-run crash that hurt a 12-year-old boy.

Nicole Franklin, who also goes by the name Nicole Poole, was charged Monday by Des Moines police with attempted murder in connection with a Dec. 9 crash that occurred less than an hour before another crash in suburban Clive.

In the latest charge, Franklin was accused of leaving a roadway, travelling onto a sidewalk and hitting a 12-year-old boy in an apartment complex in Des Moines. The boy suffered minor injuries.

In the other incident, Franklin was charged with attempted murder after a sport utility vehicle hit Natalia Miranda as the 14-year-old was walking to school to watch a basketball game. Miranda suffered a concussion and severe bruising and was hospitalized for two days.

Franklin made derogatory statements about Latinos during a police interview in which she admitted intentionally running over the teenager.

Separately, Franklin was charged Sunday with assault in violation of individual rights and with operating under the influence, second offense. Those charges came after Franklin allegedly went to a convenience store where she threw items at a clerk and directed racial epithets at him and customers.

Franklin's attorney didn't return a call Monday from The Associated Press.

On Sunday, Domingo Garcia, national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, called for a hate crime charge against Franklin in the attack on Miranda.

Joe Henry, who is president of the group's Des Moines branch, echoed Garcia's call and told The Des Moines Register that it would be wrong if prosecutors did not charge her with a hate crime.

"It would give the green light to anybody to do this type of terrible thing," Henry said.

Polk County Attorney John Sarcone said a hate crime charge enhances other charges, such as arson and assault, but doesn't apply to attempted murder.

"It may sound nice, but it doesn't help anything," Sarcone said. "When it's appropriate to enhance, we'll do it."

Queen Elizabeth II to admit 'bumpy' year in Christmas speech

By GREGORY KATZ Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Queen Elizabeth II plans to acknowledge that both Britain and her family have endured a difficult year by saying during her Christmas message that it has been a "bumpy" time.

The pre-recorded message will be broadcast in Britain and the Commonwealth nations on Christmas Day. It was recorded before the queen's husband, Prince Philip, was hospitalized in London as a precautionary measure.

Excerpts released by Buckingham Palace before the speech show the queen admits difficulties during the course of the year.

Talking about the need for reconciliation and forgiveness, Elizabeth says: "The path, of course, is not always smooth, and may at times this year have felt quite bumpy, but small steps can make a world of difference."

She is thought to be referring both to Britain's tortuous path out of the European Union, which led to a lengthy political stalemate broken only earlier this month when voters gave the pro-Brexit Conservative Party a comfortable majority in Parliament, and to the royal family's setbacks.

The problems facing the queen's family this year included Prince Andrew's retreat from public duties because of a disastrous TV interview in which he defended his friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The family has also endured a public rift between Prince William and Prince Harry, who has traveled with his wife Meghan and young son Archie to Canada rather than spend the Christmas holidays at Sandringham Estate — the queen's rural retreat, as has long been customary for senior royals.

Both Harry and Meghan have complained about constant scrutiny by the media as they settle into family life with 7-month-old Archie.

The health of 98-year-old Philip has been a constant concern. He has been hospitalized in London for several days, but may still be able to return to Sandringham in time for Christmas. Details about his condition haven't been made public.

When Prince Charles was asked about Philip's health during a visit to a flooded visit in South Yorkshire, Charles said Monday his father was, "Alright. When you get to that age things don't work so well."

McConnell not ruling out witnesses in impeachment trial

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Monday that he was not ruling out calling witnesses in President Donald Trump's impeachment trial — but indicated he was in no hurry to seek new testimony either — as lawmakers remain at an impasse over the form of the trial by the GOP-controlled Senate.

The House voted Wednesday to impeach Trump, who became only the third president in U.S. history to be formally charged with "high crimes and misdemeanors." But the Senate trial may be held up until lawmakers can agree on how to proceed. Minority Leader Chuck Schumer is demanding witnesses who refused to appear during House committee hearings, including acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney, and former national security adviser John Bolton.

McConnell, who has all-but-promised a swift acquittal of the president, has resisted making any guarantees, and has cautioned Trump against seeking the testimony of witnesses he desires for fear of elongating the trial. Instead, he appears to have secured Republican support for his plans to impose a framework drawn from the 1999 impeachment trial of President Bill Clinton.

"We haven't ruled out witnesses," McConnell said Monday in an interview with "Fox and Friends." "We've said let's handle this case just like we did with President Clinton. Fair is fair."

That trial featured a 100-0 vote on arrangements that established two weeks of presentations and argument before a partisan tally in which Republicans, who held the majority, called a limited number of witnesses. But Democrats now would need Republican votes to secure witness testimony — and Republicans believe they have the votes to eventually block those requests.

In a letter Monday to all Senators, Schumer argued that the circumstances in the Trump trial are different from that of Clinton, who was impeached after a lengthy independent counsel investigation in which witnesses had already testified numerous times under oath. Schumer rejected the Clinton model, saying waiting until after the presentations to decide on witnesses would "foreclose the possibility of obtaining such evidence because it will be too late."

Schumer also demanded that the Senate, in addition to receiving testimony, also compel the Trump administration to turn over documents and emails relevant to the case, including on the decision to withhold military assistance from Ukraine.

Schumer told The Associated Press on Monday that he stands ready to negotiate with McConnell, and that he hopes questions about witnesses can be settled "right at the beginning." Without witnesses, he said, any trial would be "Kafkaesque."

"Let's put it like this: If there are no documents and no witnesses, it will be very hard to come to an agreement," Schumer said.

If McConnell won't agree, "We can go to the floor and demand votes, and we will," he added.

Schumer told AP the Democrats aren't trying to delay the proceedings, saying the witnesses and the documents his party is asking for are directly relevant to the charges in the House impeachment articles.

Meanwhile, the White House is projecting confidence that it will prevail in a constitutional spat with

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Democrats. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has delayed sending the articles of impeachment to the Senate in hopes of giving Schumer more leverage in talks with McConnell. But the White House believes Pelosi won't be able to hold out much longer.

"She will yield. There's no way she can hold this position," Marc Short, the chief of staff to Vice President Mike Pence, told "Fox News Sunday." "We think her case is going nowhere."

And in another move, the White House announced an expanded role for Rob Blair, a senior adviser to Mulvaney and one of the four current and former officials Schumer has called to testify.

The White House announced Blair will serve as special representative for international telecommunications policy, in addition to his role advising Mulvaney, helping to implement next-generation telecommunications infrastructure, including 5G wireless technology.

The impasse between the Senate leaders leaves open the possibility of a protracted delay until the articles are delivered.

Trump has called the holdup "unfair" and claimed that Democrats were violating the Constitution, as the delay threatened to prolong the pain of impeachment and cast uncertainty on the timing of the vote Trump is set to claim as vindication.

"Pelosi gives us the most unfair trial in the history of the U.S. Congress, and now she is crying for fairness in the Senate, and breaking all rules while doing so," Trump tweeted Monday from his private club in Palm Beach, Fla., where he is on a more than two-week holiday vacation. "She lost Congress once, she will do it again!"

Short called Pelosi's delay unacceptable, saying she's "trampling" Trump's rights to "rush this through, and now we're going to hold it up to demand a longer process in the Senate with more witnesses."

"If her case is so air-tight ... why does she need more witnesses to make her case?" Short said.

White House officials have also taken to highlighting Democrats' arguments that removing Trump was an "urgent" matter before the House impeachment vote, as they seek to put pressure on Pelosi to send the articles of impeachment to the Senate.

At one point, Trump had demanded the testimony of witnesses of his own, like Democrats Joe Biden and his son Hunter, and the intelligence community whistleblower whose summer complaint sparked the impeachment probe. But he has since relented after concerted lobbying by McConnell and other Senate Republicans who pushed him to accept the swift acquittal from the Senate and not to risk injecting uncertainty into the process by calling witnesses.

The Constitution requires a two-thirds majority in the Senate to convict in an impeachment trial — and Republicans have expressed confidence that they have more than enough votes to keep Trump in office.

A separate but related fight flared Monday in the courts, where the House Judiciary Committee held open the possibility of adding to the articles of impeachment against Trump depending on whatever testimony it can obtain from former White House counsel Don McGahn. The committee also said that testimony from McGahn could be useful in any impeachment trial in the Senate.

A federal appeals court is set to hear arguments on Jan. 3 on whether to force McGahn to comply with the subpoena.

Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo in Hudson Falls, New York, AP Radio Correspondent Julie Walker in New York and AP writers Hope Yen and Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

This story has been correct to say Republicans were in the majority, not minority, in the Senate during the Clinton impeachment trial.

US awards immigration detention contracts in California

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Trump administration awarded billions of dollars in contracts for private companies to operate immigration detention centers in California — less than two weeks before a new state

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law takes effect to prohibit them.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill in October to ban contracts for for-profit prisons starting Jan. 1. Supporters hoped the law would force U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to look elsewhere after current contracts expire.

A federal website posted long-term awards on Friday worth a combined \$6.8 billion for detention facilities in San Diego, Calexico, Adelanto and Bakersfield. The sites will house about 4,000 detainees, with capacity to expand in the future.

ICE said the contracts were not subject to the new state law, deflecting criticism that the timing was meant to circumvent it.

Paige Hughes, an agency spokeswoman, said ICE believed the new contracts will limit transfers of detainees outside California, where they would be farther from family, friends and legal representatives.

"State laws aimed at obstructing federal law enforcement are inappropriate and harmful," Hughes said.

Vicky Waters, a spokeswoman for Newsom, said Monday that ICE was trying to get around the law, which she called a historic step to address excessive incarceration, including detention of immigrants and asylum-seekers.

"For-profit prisons, including ICE-contracted facilities, run contrary to our values and have no place in California," Waters wrote in an email. "This effort to circumvent California's authority and federal procurement rules that safeguard the American taxpayers must be addressed by congressional oversight."

A state Senate analysis of Assembly Bill 32 said the Trump administration would likely sue to block the law, partly by arguing that it is preempted by federal immigration law. The analysis predicted the state would prevail in court.

The GEO Group Inc. won two five-year extensions — one to operate the detention center in Adelanto, with capacity for 2,690 beds, and another to run the facility in Bakersfield, with capacity for 1,800 beds. The two contracts are worth more than \$3.7 billion,

GEO said Monday the contracts would provide more than \$200 million in annual revenue and 1,200 jobs.

CoreCivic Inc. won an extension worth \$2.1 billion to operate an immigration detention center in San Diego, with capacity for 1,994 beds. Management & Training Corp. won a contract for \$679 million to operate a facility in Calexico with capacity for 704 beds.

California, with its large immigrant populations and border with Mexico, is a major priority for ICE, which has found itself increasingly unwelcome under state laws. As the number of ICE detainees nationwide topped 56,000 earlier this year, the agency held more people in central Louisiana.

From New York to Moscow, Holocaust survivors share memories

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Holocaust survivors sang at Jerusalem's Western Wall, danced in Paris and lit candles in other cities to celebrate Hanukkah together, recalling Nazi horrors that Jewish community leaders fear are fading from the world's collective memory.

An 86-year-old man in Moscow described being forced by Nazi occupiers into a ghetto as a child. Elderly survivors in New York shared stories Sunday at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty.

They worry that today's youth in many countries don't recognize names of Nazi death camps, fall prey to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, or don't realize that 6 million Jews were killed in Hitler's World War II extermination campaign.

Lighting the Hanukkah candelabra, France's chief rabbi, Haim Korsia, told survivors in Paris, "What you are, each of you, is exactly like the light. ... We will never put out the first flame. When we transmit the knowledge, your experience and when we transmit it to others, it takes nothing from us and it gives to others."

With folk dancing, festive songs and shared meals, the ceremonies Sunday and Monday also aimed to combat the solitude and other difficulties many survivors face in old age.

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Some 400,000 Holocaust victims are estimated to still be alive, about half of them in Israel — and as many as 40% are living in poverty, said Ruediger Mahlo of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which organized the events.

"We want to make this public in order to help them and in order that other people help them as well," he told The Associated Press.

With tears in their eyes, survivors sang Israel's national anthem together at the Western Wall, the holiest site in the world where Jews can pray. The mood turned joyous by the time candles were lit, with survivors joining hands, dancing in circles and laughing.

"For me, the holiday of Hanukkah is a holiday of victory, and it's very important for me to see the light of victory," said Amnon Elkiev, a survivor originally from the Netherlands who came to the ceremony with his wife.

Renowned Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld was among those attending a bittersweet ceremony in Paris, where young and old sang and prayed together.

Anna Sterman described being "hunted ... like mice" as a child near Lyon. Sarah Saragoussi, whose parents were deported to camps, said: "We thought they would come back nonetheless. We didn't think they were leaving to their deaths."

The gathering in New York included some 200 survivors, some wearing winter caps, others wearing kippas. Some smiled as they listened to speeches; others looked on pensively. They touched on recent anti-Semitic attacks in the U.S. and on concerns that younger generations of Americans know little about what they went through.

Hand-in-hand with a rabbi, survivor Mikhail Spektr said a prayer and lit a Hanukkah candelabra in Moscow. He then took the microphone and sang for members of Russia's Jewish community, accompanied by a fiddler and accordion player.

As a child when the war began, Spektr said, he didn't realize what was going on.

When the Nazis came, he recalled his grandfather telling him that they were "a civilized nation, they wouldn't do anything to us."

But he and his family were taken to a ghetto on Ukraine's western edge and held there from 1941 until the Red Army liberated it in 1944.

"We were all sleeping on the floor. We lived on the territory (of the ghetto), isolated from the city by barbed wire. The entrance was guarded by Nazi soldiers and policemen," he said. "People who dared (to leave) were indeed shot."

Bearing witness is ever more important as survivors die out. French survivor Suzanne Bakon said, "We are doing everything while we are living so that (the memory) remains."

Associated Press journalists Patty Nieberg in Jerusalem, Konstantin Manenkov in Moscow and Craig Ruttler in New York contributed to this report.

Boeing ousts its CEO after two deadly 737 Max crashes

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ and DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Boeing ousted CEO Dennis Muilenburg on Monday with no end in sight to the crisis that has engulfed the vaunted American aircraft manufacturer since the crash of two of its 737 Max airliners.

The Boeing board had supported Muilenburg for months despite calls for his resignation from lawmakers and relatives of the passengers killed. When it became clear in recent days that federal regulators would not certify the grounded Max to fly again by year's end as Muilenburg had hoped, the board finally abandoned him.

Board members decided to remove him on a conference call Sunday, according to a person familiar with the events who discussed the private deliberations on condition of anonymity.

The move came after another bad week for Boeing. The aerospace giant had announced it would temporarily halt production of the Max because it wasn't clear when it could deliver the planes. And Boeing's

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new Starliner space capsule went off course during a bungled, unmanned test flight to the International Space Station.

The company said Muilenburg departed immediately and its current chairman, David Calhoun, will take over as CEO on Jan. 13.

Boeing said it decided it needed new leadership to regain the confidence of regulators. The company — which has been criticized over the design of the Max, Boeing's failure to tell pilots about a new flight-control system on the plane, and its handling of the crisis after the first crash — promised a "renewed commitment to full transparency."

Boeing declined to make Calhoun or other executives available for comment.

Muilenburg had been CEO since mid-2015. The company's stock soared during most of his tenure, as Boeing benefited from strong demand for new planes to meet the growing demand for travel around the world, although the shares have fallen 24% since peaking just before the second crash.

Boeing began designing the Max in 2011 to compete with a new plane from Airbus that was cutting into sales of Boeing's venerable 737. Critics, including members of Congress, say that Boeing, with the Federal Aviation Administration's help, rushed the plane into production and minimized safety risks.

In October 2018, a brand-new Max operated by Indonesia's Lion Air crashed into the sea near Jakarta. Five months later, in March, an Ethiopian Airlines Max went down shortly after takeoff from Addis Ababa. All 346 people aboard the two planes were killed.

Muilenburg was faulted for Boeing's initial response to the accidents, when he and the company seemed to blame the foreign pilots. Criticism of Muilenburg grew in recent months as news reports and congressional investigations disclosed internal Boeing documents that revealed concern within the company about key design features on the Max, especially the new automated MCAS flight-control system that investigators say played a role in the two crashes.

A faulty sensor caused the system to activate before the two disasters, pushing down the nose of both planes. Boeing had not told pilots about MCAS until after the Lion Air crash, and regulators at the FAA didn't know much about it either.

Earlier this month, the House Transportation Committee disclosed an internal FAA analysis made after the first crash, which estimated that there would be 15 more fatal crashes over 45 years until Boeing fixed MCAS. Yet the FAA did not ground the plane until the second crash.

Ababu Amha, who lost his wife, a flight attendant, in the Ethiopian Airlines crash, welcomed Muilenburg's departure.

"This is something that we have been asking and struggling for quite some time," he said. "The CEO reluctantly and deliberately kept the aircraft in service after the Lion Air crash. The Ethiopian Airlines crash was a preventable accident." He added: "What they did was a crime."

Democratic Rep. Peter DeFazio of Oregon, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, said the CEO's ouster was long overdue.

"Under his watch, a long-admired company made a number of devastating decisions that suggest profit took priority over safety," DeFazio said. "Furthermore, reports that Muilenburg attempted to pressure FAA into rushing the Max back into service are highly troubling."

FAA Administrator Stephen Dickson expressed concern this month that Boeing was pushing for an unrealistically quick return of the Max.

The worldwide grounding of the Max in the wake of the two crashes has undercut orders and deliveries of new planes and caused Boeing to burn cash. With Boeing in turmoil, European rival Airbus has surged far ahead of the Chicago-based company this year.

The shutdown in Max production is likely to ripple through the Pacific Northwest and Boeing's vast network of 900 companies that make engines, bodies and other parts for the plane.

The Max debacle has put the spotlight on Boeing's culture, which some current and former employees say changed from one driven by engineering to a top-down management system in which containing costs and maximizing profit — and driving the stock price higher — became an obsession.

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Peter Lemme, an engineer at Boeing for 16 years before leaving in 1997, said the shift began more than two decades ago, culminating with the 1997 acquisition of McDonnell Douglas.

"It was really the Douglas management that infiltrated the Boeing philosophy," Lemme said.

Pilot unions, still seething over being kept in the dark about MCAS, said they want more openness from the new Boeing leadership.

"It's the perfect time to step back from the spreadsheet and focus on the reason airplanes fly, and that's to safely carry human beings around the globe," said Dennis Tager, a 737 pilot and spokesman for the pilots union at American Airlines.

Boeing stock gained 2.9% following the news of Muilenburg's departure.

Muilenburg was eligible for \$39 million in cash severance, stock and bonuses based on Boeing's stock price of \$322.50 at the end of last year, according to a Boeing securities filing. The stock closed Monday at \$337.55.

Analysts said it was unclear whether the change in CEOs will make any difference in how quickly Boeing can win approval to get the Max flying again.

The grounding has led airlines around the world to cancel tens of thousands of flights. In the U.S., Southwest has been hit the hardest; its pilots union is suing Boeing. Without the planes, airlines had to scale back on plans for more flying.

Boeing has estimated it will spend at least \$9 billion to compensate airlines and adjust the Max production schedule. Analysts suspect that figure will go much higher.

Many analysts believe that when the Max is allowed to fly again, the sudden increase in planes and seats will cause fares to dip.

To rebuild trust, Boeing has to repair its relationship with the FAA and other authorities and must be transparent with the traveling public, said Mark Dombroff, an aviation expert and partner with the law firm Fox Rothschild.

"I've heard it said that 'If it ain't Boeing, I ain't going,'" Dombroff said. "I think that's something Boeing's taken great pride in, in my view justifiably, and I think they can get there again if they address these priorities."

Replacing Muilenburg will help Boeing distance itself from some of the problems, he added. "Mr. Muilenburg had become, rightly or wrongly, something of a lightning rod for controversy," Dombroff said.

Calhoun, 62, formerly ran General Electric's jet-engine business and later was CEO of Nielsen, the television-ratings company. He has been a Boeing board member since 2009 and became chairman in October, when the board stripped Muilenburg of that title.

As for whether passengers will feel comfortable flying the Max, that remains to be seen.

"As long as they figured out what caused the crashes and they can solve that, then I'm fine with that, I guess," Southwest passenger Troy Brasher said at the Oakland, California, airport.

Koenig reported from Dallas. Associated Press writers Matt Ott in Washington, Terry Chea in Oakland, Calif., and Elias Meseret in Addis Ababa contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 24, the 358th day of 2019. There are seven days left in the year. This is Christmas Eve.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 24, 1968, the Apollo 8 astronauts, orbiting the moon, read passages from the Old Testament Book of Genesis during a Christmas Eve telecast.

On this date:

In 1809, legendary American frontiersman Christopher "Kit" Carson was born in Madison County, Ken-

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tucky.

In 1814, the United States and Britain signed the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812 following ratification by both the British Parliament and the U.S. Senate.

In 1865, several veterans of the Confederate Army formed a private social club in Pulaski, Tennessee, that was the original version of the Ku Klux Klan.

In 1913, 73 people, most of them children, died in a crush of panic after a false cry of "Fire!" during a Christmas party for striking miners and their families at the Italian Hall in Calumet, Michigan.

In 1914, during World War I, impromptu Christmas truces began to take hold along parts of the Western Front between British and German soldiers.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower supreme commander of Allied forces in Europe as part of Operation Overlord.

In 1980, Americans remembered the U.S. hostages in Iran by burning candles or shining lights for 417 seconds — one second for each day of captivity.

In 1984, actor Peter Lawford, 61, died in Los Angeles.

In 1990, actor Tom Cruise married his "Days of Thunder" co-star, Nicole Kidman, during a private ceremony at a Colorado ski resort (the marriage ended in 2001).

In 1992, President Bush pardoned former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and five others in the Iran-Contra scandal.

In 1993, the Rev. Norman Vincent Peale, who blended Christian and psychiatric principles into a message of "positive thinking," died in Pawling, New York, at age 95.

In 1994, militants hijacked an Air France Airbus A-300 at the Algiers airport; three passengers were slain during the siege before all four hijackers were killed by French commandos in Marseille two days later.

Ten years ago: The Senate passed health care legislation, 60-39, in the chamber's first Christmas Eve vote since 1895. Sean Goldman, a 9-year-old boy at the center of a five-year custody battle on two continents, was finally turned over to his American father, David Goldman, in Brazil. A woman jumped barriers in St. Peter's Basilica and knocked down Pope Benedict XVI as he was walking down the main aisle to begin Christmas Eve Mass; the pope was unhurt.

Five years ago: Sony Pictures broadly released "The Interview" online — an unprecedented counterstroke against the hackers who'd spoiled the Christmas opening of the comedy depicting the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. A Jordanian pilot, Lt. Mu'ath al-Kaseasbeh, was captured by the Islamic State group after his warplane crashed in Syria; he was later killed. TCU's Gary Patterson was named The Associated Press college football coach of the year. Western Kentucky held on to defeat Central Michigan 49-48 in a wild inaugural Bahamas Bowl.

One year ago: An 8-year-old boy from Guatemala died while in the custody of U.S. Customs and Border Protection; he was the second immigrant child to die in December while in the agency's care. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump took Christmas Eve calls from children anxious to find out where Santa was on his gift-giving journey; Trump asked one 7-year-old girl if she still believed in Santa and added, "Because at 7, it's marginal, right?" An hours-long coordinated attack on a public welfare building in the Afghan capital of Kabul left at least 40 people dead, as gunmen held out for eight hours against security forces. A federal judge ordered North Korea to pay more than \$500 million in a wrongful death suit filed by the parents of Otto Warmbier, an American college student who died shortly after being released from that country.

Today's Birthdays: Author Mary Higgins Clark is 92. Federal health official Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., is 79. Recording company executive Mike Curb is 75. Actress Sharon Farrell is 73. Former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions is 73. Actor Grand L. Bush is 64. Actor Clarence Gilyard is 64. Actress Stephanie Hodge is 63. The former president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai (HAH'-mihd KAH'R'-ze), is 62. Rock musician Ian Burden (The Human League) is 62. Actor Anil Kapoor (ah-NEEL' kuh-POOR') is 60. Actress Eva Tamargo is 59. Actor Wade Williams is 58. Rock singer Mary Ramsey (10,000 Maniacs) is 56. Actor Mark Valley is 55. Actor Diedrich Bader is 53. Actor Amaury Nolasco is 49. Singer Ricky Martin is 48. Author Stephenie

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Meyer is 46. TV personality Ryan Seacrest (TV: "Live With Kelly & Ryan") is 45. Actor Michael Raymond-James is 42. Actor Austin Stowell is 35. Actress Sofia Black-D'Elia is 28. Rock singer Louis Tomlinson (One Direction) is 28.

Thought for Today: "Christmas comes, but once a year is enough." — American proverb.

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