

Groton Daily Independent

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Stone and Brick Work

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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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Sunday Extras



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.

GENESIS 7: 11,12

Detail of "The Flood" by Clare Leighton (1952)



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BIBLE TRIVIA by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Jonah in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. In Genesis 19, who escaped to Zoar on hearing wicked cities were going to be destroyed? *Gomorrah, Elijah, Lot, Shimei*

3. Who confessed to an angel, after beating his mule, that he had sinned? *Sodom, Balaam, Samuel, Daniel*

4. From Job 4, who was so frightened by a dream that his hair stood on end? *Eliphaz, Abraham, Ehud, Joseph*

5. Who had to parade his eight sons before a prophet as found in 1 Samuel? *Aaron, Jacob, Naboth, Jesse*

6. From Exodus 14, whose chariots were lost in the Red Sea? *Solomon's, Pharaoh's, Samson's, Ahab's*

ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Lot; 3) Balaam; 4) Eliphaz; 5) Jesse; 6) Pharaoh's

Comments? More Trivia? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com

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Comfort foods Made fast and healthy by Healthy Exchanges

Mediterranean Pizza

This is for all you feta cheese lovers. It's also for all you zucchini lovers. And all you pizza lovers, too!

- 1 (11-ounce) can purchased refrigerated crusty French loaf bread
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups (one 15-ounce can) tomato sauce
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups chopped unpeeled zucchini
- 3/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 3/4 cup shredded reduced-fat mozzarella cheese

1. Heat oven to 425 F. Spray a 10-by-15-inch rimmed baking sheet with olive oil-flavored cooking spray. Unroll French loaf and pat into prepared baking sheet. Bake for 5 minutes.

2. Stir Italian seasoning into tomato sauce. Evenly spread sauce mixture over partially baked crust. Arrange zucchini evenly over sauce. Sprinkle feta and mozzarella cheeses evenly over top.

3. Continue baking for 12 to 14 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Place baking sheet on a wire rack and let set for 5 minutes. Cut into 8 large pieces. Serves 8.

• Each serving equals: 173 calories, 5g fat, 9g protein, 23g carb., 758mg sodium, 2g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 starch, 1 meat, 1 vegetable.

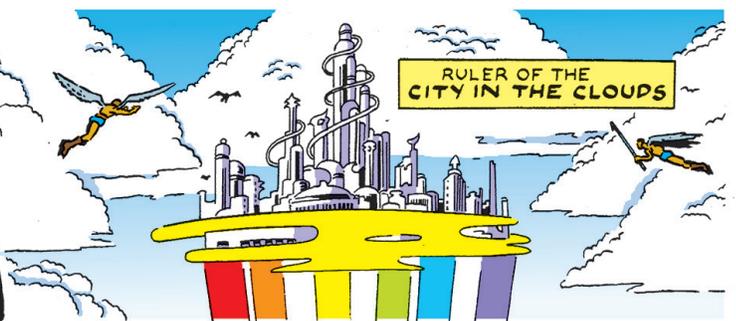
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Character Profile:
Vultan



RULER OF THE
CITY IN THE CLOUDS

FLASH GORDON BY JIM KEEFE

1-5

TRYING TO ESTABLISH PEACE ON A PLANET CONSTANTLY AT WAR ISN'T EASY---WITNESS A CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED REPUBLICS OF MONGO...

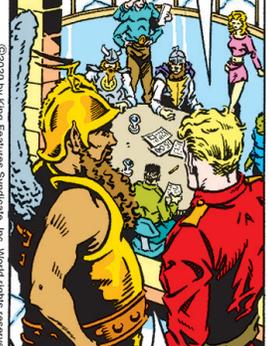
KING KALA'S SIDED WITH MING FOR YEARS, BARIN. IT'S SUICIDE TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO HIS KINGDOM!

HE HAS ACCEPTED OUR PEACE OFFERING. THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS NOW GIVE HIM THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE HIMSELF!



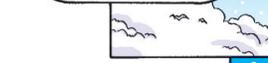
LOOKS LIKE THE COUNCIL'S DEADLOCKED.

MAYBE I SHOULD GO DOWN AND LEND BARIN MY SUPPORT.



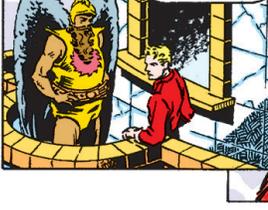
NO NEED. HE'LL SWAY THEM. MARK MY WORDS, A CONTINGENT WILL BE SENT.

IF BARIN DOESN'T NEED MY HELP, THEN WHY SUMMON ME HERE, VULTAN?



KALA'S NOT TO BE TRUSTED. I'M ASKING YOU TO ACCOMPANY THE DELEGATION AS MY DAUGHTER'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD.

THE ROYAL GUARD WILL BE ENOUGH, FATHER...



BECAUSE MY OWN DAUGHTER HAS BEEN CHOSEN TO BE ONE OF THE DELEGATES.



...I DON'T NEED A BABYSITTER TOO.

TO BE CONT'D..!

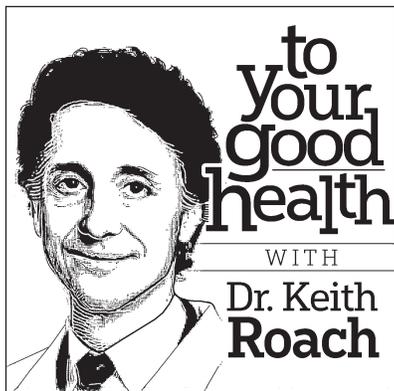
Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

GRASS INTERVENING BETWEEN CLUBFACE AND BALL AT IMPACT CAUSES THE BALL TO FLY LOWER AND ROLL FARTHER BY DECREASING BACK-SPIN.

ALLOW FOR THAT BY PLAYING MORE LOFTED CLUBS FROM "FLIER" LIES.

RECOGNIZE, TOO, THAT GRASS COMING BETWEEN CLUBFACE AND BALL MINIMIZES SIDESPIN, MAKING IT TOUGH TO FADE OR DRAW SHOTS PREDICTABLY.

SO PLAN AND PLAY FOR THE BALL TO FLY PRETTY STRAIGHT FROM ROUGH.



Is Overexercise Cause of 'Knots in the Back'?

DEAR DR. ROACH: My wife is 69 and in very good health, exercising at least two hours a day. She has suffered from "knots in the back" for over 10 years. It is extremely painful, often bringing her to tears. It comes on suddenly at any time of the day or night, and lasts hours, days and occasionally weeks. She has been to several physicians, whose recommendations are to "live with it." She has tried chiropractic, massage therapy, prescription and OTC painkillers, stretching and home massage, all to no avail. I cannot see the knots, but I can feel a tightness when I attempt to rub them out, which usually does nothing. A glass of wine is the only reliable relief, and it lasts only a few hours. Is there any recourse to this condition? — *J.P.*

ANSWER: I am sure you and your wife must be frustrated.

The fact that it comes on suddenly, can be felt as tightness and gets a bit better with alcohol makes me strongly suspect she is having muscle spasms. These most often come on in the legs and feet, but they can affect the back too.

Two hours a day of exercising sounds like a lot, and she may be overexercising some muscles, while possibly not exercising others. This can lead to imbalances in muscle strength.

Another common problem stemming from exercising is inadequate stretching. Stretching is the first place to start for many people with muscle cramps. A physical therapist or physiatrist may be of immense benefit, and your wife should explain in detail what her exercise regimen is. We are taught

to think carefully of the mechanism of injury, and I am concerned the exercise may be that injury.

Abnormalities in electrolytes (blood salts, especially potassium, sodium, magnesium and phosphate) are only rarely the cause, although many people write me that they have been helped by taking one or more of these. Primary muscle diseases, side effects from medications and inadequate hydration are possible, but also unlikely.

In absence of detailed knowledge about her exercise regimen, I'd recommend she try backing off a bit, maybe using ice after exercise, stretching the back under supervision and trying a hot bath or shower before bed.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a 78-year-old who runs 15-20 miles per week, with prostate gland enlargement and reduced urinary frequency with occasional use of Advil. As a runner, I have been reluctant to make ibuprofen a daily regimen because I have read that inflammation is part of the body's response to tissue damage, which is crucial to the healing process and is important for muscle growth. When ibuprofen's anti-inflammatory effect reduces symptoms, does it affect the healing process also? Can you comment on the pros and cons for runners? — *B.M.*

ANSWER: High-dose ibuprofen was shown to inhibit muscle protein synthesis following weightlifting exercise. This led to a suspicion that it might impair the gains in muscle strength that are made with exercise. However, a Canadian study showed that moderate doses of ibuprofen (400 mg after exercise) did not impair muscle growth or gains in strength. Using ibuprofen for occasional muscle soreness or for the purpose of reducing prostate inflammation should not adversely affect your performance in running.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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1. Which Hollywood Argyles song was inspired by a comic strip?
2. John Fred and the Playboys wrote "Judy in Disguise" as a parody of which song?
3. What did Janis Joplin and Otis Redding have in common?
4. Which Santana song topped the Billboard charts for a whopping 12 weeks?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "The arms I long for, will open wide, And you'll be proud to have me, right by your side."

Answers

1. "Alley Oop," in 1960. The comic strip started in 1932 and in 1995 was honored by a commemorative U.S. postage stamp.
2. "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," by the Beatles. Writer John Fred initially misheard the Beatles song and thought the words were "Lucy in disguise."
3. Both had No. 1 hits after their deaths: "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" for Redding and "Me and Bobby McGee" for Joplin.
4. "Smooth," beginning in October 1999. It featured Matchbox Twenty frontman Rob Thomas.
5. "One Fine Day," by the Chiffons in 1963. The song has been used in film soundtracks, including "The Flamingo Kid" (1984). Billboard lists it at No. 27 on the 100 Greatest Girl Group Songs of All Time.

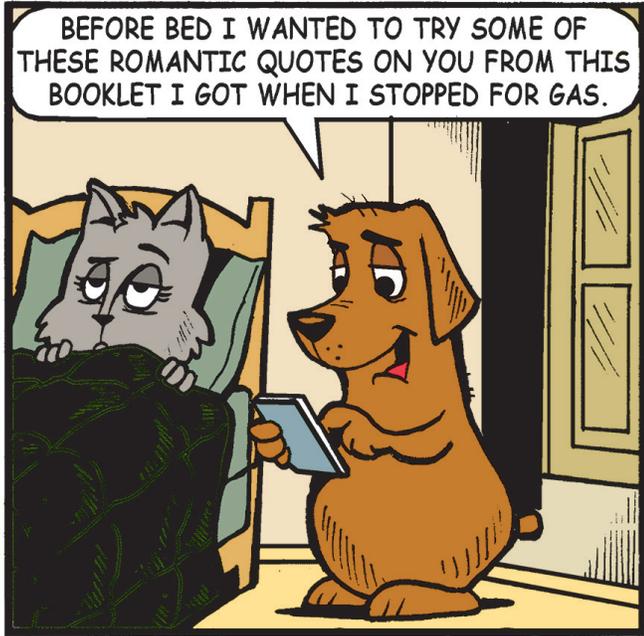
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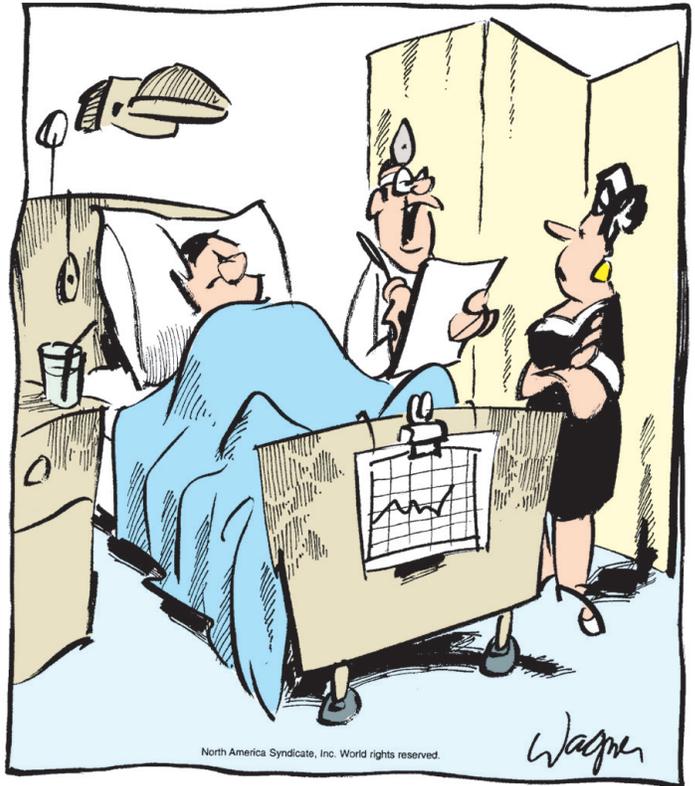
Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



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Wagner

"He'll live, but he'll be hard to live with."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTIHOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Lamp is different. 2. Curtain is shorter. 3. Rattle is moved. 4. Foot is showing. 5. Sleeve is longer. 6. Tissue is higher.



- To extend the shelf life of your bunch of bananas, try wrapping the stem tightly with a piece of plastic wrap. They also can be kept in the refrigerator if you don't mind cold bananas, like when you are slicing them into cereal or using them in a smoothie. The skins may brown, but the inside will not overripen to match.

- “If you have extra books hanging around, why not contact your local nursing homes to see if anyone would like some new reading material?” — *T. in South Carolina*

- H.W. in Massachusetts writes: “I use a bathroom chair in my tub and always wash the exterior. One day, a tip came off one of the legs and when I turned it over to replace it, I was horrified to see black mold underneath. I sprayed it with cleaner and it cleaned up perfectly. Please offer this tip to my fellow senior citizens. Mold is really bad.”

- Energy saving tip for the kitchen: Use pots and pans that are the correct size for the burner. There's no sense in using the big burner for a small pot, and a small burner will have to work twice as long to heat up a large pot of water. Also make sure your pots are flat (not warped) and clean, so heat can transfer more efficiently.

- “Many people have resolutions to eat healthier or to get more exercise. Why not connect with friends to be accountable to one another? You can cook together so that you will have healthy options for meals and snacks, and even if you cannot walk or go to the gym together, you can check in with each other a few times a week to make sure the person hasn't fallen off the wagon. Be an encourager!” — *F.L. in Oregon*

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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PUZZLE CARD

CARD A

BIDE
HOP
MINE
PORT

CARD B

PLANE
BOLT
PET
GRASS



One of the words in card B really belongs in card A. Can you figure out which one it is? The illustration is a hint.

The word is Pet. If you precede each word on Card A with the word CAR, you get four new words: Carbid, carhop, carmine, carport. Thus, pet would become carpet.

A CUTTING PROBLEM! Can you come up with a word that can be divided into five separate words? Hint: The word we came up with concerns the villain's actions toward the hero in literature.

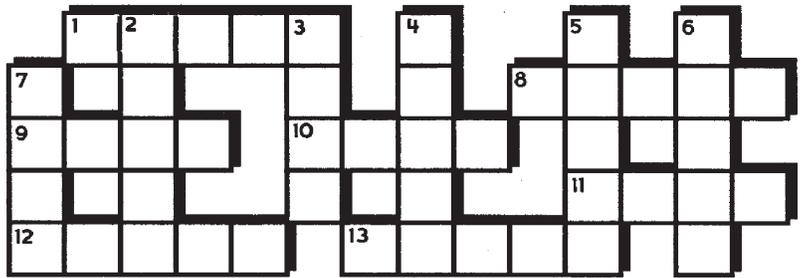
The word is ANTAGONISTIC. AN TAG ON IS TIC.

LINKUPS! Here's a list of 12 one-syllable words, divided into two columns. Turn them into six longer words by linking them. To do this, draw a line from one word in the left column to one word in the right.

Garbage, fobbed, haddock, kindled, leeward, impeach.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend



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LET'S GO FISHING!

Pictured above is a crossword puzzle grid. Below is a list of fishing-related words that you'll need to complete the puzzle, using the trial-and-error method.

4-letter words 5-letter words

CRAB
EELS
LINE
REEL
SHIP

BONES
BROIL
CHART
CHEST
CLEAN
SCALE
SONAR
TROUT



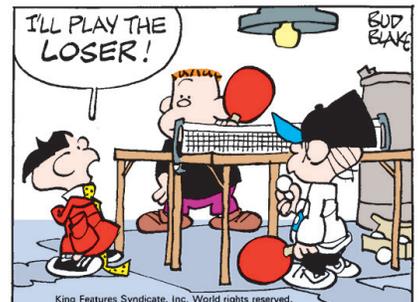
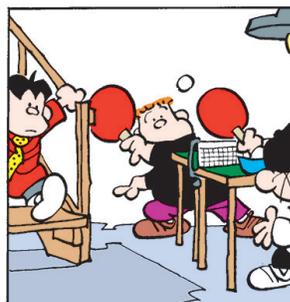
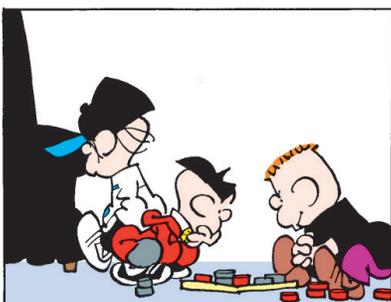
Answers: (Across) 1. Scale, 8. Chart, 9. Reel, 10. Line, 11. Ship, 12. Bones, 13. Trout, (Down) 2. Clean, 3. Eels, 4. Sonar, 5. Chest, 6. Broil, 7. Crab.

Illustrated by David Coulson

1. GARB	LED
2. FOB	WARD
3. HAD	EACH
4. KIND	BED
5. LEE	AGE
6. IMP	DOCK

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Cleans the floors
- 5 Pouch
- 8 One of the Three Bears
- 12 Admitting customers
- 13 Time of your life?
- 14 Change for a five
- 15 Draped dress
- 16 Sailor
- 17 Western state
- 18 Deceptive
- 20 Melody
- 22 Lengthwise, to 16-Across
- 26 In spades
- 29 Actress Farrow
- 30 Mai — (cocktail)
- 31 Exceptional
- 32 Corral
- 33 Check
- 34 Film trickery, for short
- 35 One of the Brady Bunch
- 36 Cartoonist Trudeau
- 37 Everywhere
- 40 Surround
- 41 Attachments
- 45 Blunder
- 47 Rowing need
- 49 Help in crime
- 50 Padlock fastener
- 51 Oilfield struc-

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18				19			20	21				
			22			23					24	25
26	27	28				29				30		
31					32				33			
34				35				36				
37			38				39					
		40					41			42	43	44
45	46				47	48			49			
50					51				52			
53					54				55			

- 8 100 pence
- 9 Enemy of an "army"?
- 10 Shade of green
- 11 Shade of blonde
- 19 Plaything
- 21 Actress Merkel
- 23 Make corrections
- 24 Equitable
- 25 Wee
- 26 St. Louis landmark
- 27 Creche trio
- 28 Annoyingly proper
- 32 Internet radio
- 33 Numbers to be crunched
- 35 Cookie container
- 36 Deity
- 38 Ballerina in "Fantasia"
- 39 Ginormous
- 42 Last write-up
- 43 "Finding —"
- 44 Flight component
- 45 That girl
- 46 Fond du —, Wis.
- 48 Have something

DOWN

- 1 Rolling stone's lack
- 2 Colorful fish
- 3 Graceful woman
- 4 Cold symptom
- 5 Attendant of Bacchus
- 6 — Khan
- 7 Foolproof

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

M	O	P	S		S	A	C		P	A	P	A
O	P	E	N		A	G	E		O	N	E	S
S	A	R	I		T	A	R		U	T	A	H
S	H	I	F	T	Y		T	U	N	E		
			F	O	R	E	A	N	D	A	F	T
A	M	P	L	Y		M	I	A		T	A	I
R	A	R	E		P	E	N		R	E	I	N
C	G	I		J	A	N		G	A	R	R	Y
H	I	G	H	A	N	D	L	O	W			
		G	I	R	D		A	D	D	O	N	S
S	L	I	P		O	A	R		A	B	E	T
H	A	S	P		R	I	G		T	I	M	E
E	C	H	O		A	L	E		A	T	O	P

LAFF - A - DAY



“How come she didn’t get busted for breaking and entering?”

Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas

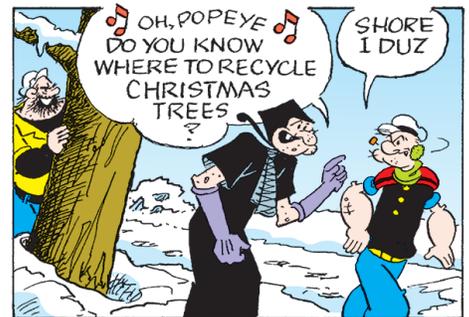
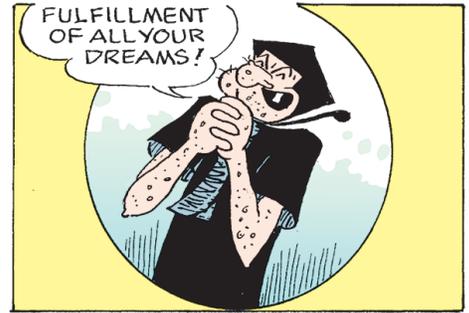
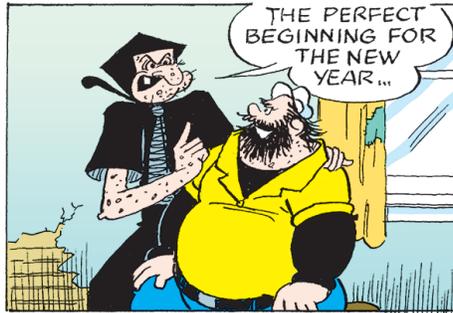
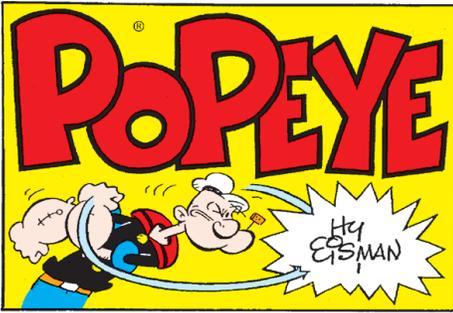
CHOOSE LIFE
THE WAY YOU
CHOOSE TABLE
WATER AT A
RESTAURANT...



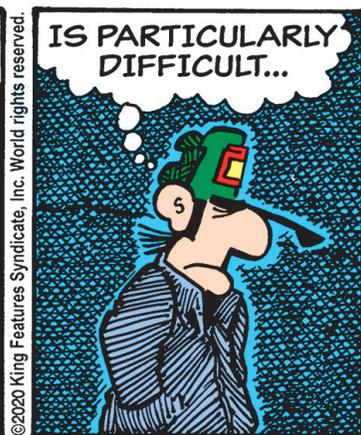
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R.F.D.



by Mike Marland



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MARLAND

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Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
By Gianni and Schultz

Our Story:

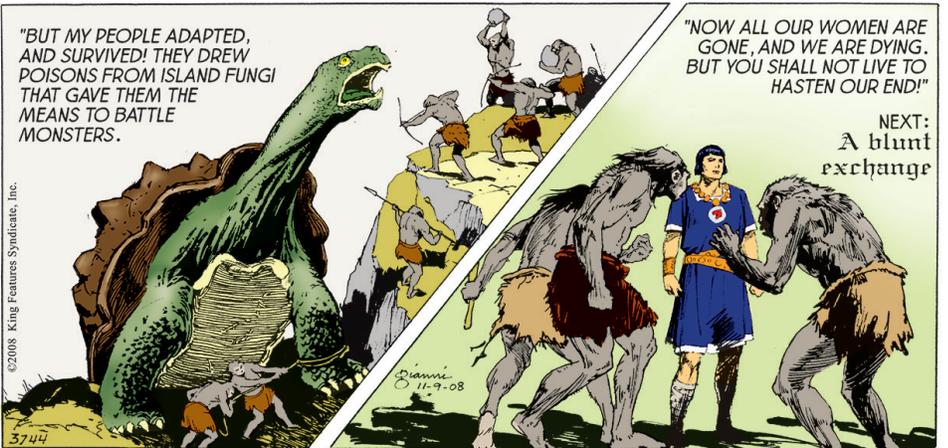
VAL'S CAPTORS CONTINUE THEIR TRIBE'S HISTORY:
"IT WAS CREATURES LIKE YOU WHO DROVE OUR
ANCESTORS FROM THEIR HOMELAND!"



"A FEW FAMILIES ESCAPED INTO THE WESTERN SEA. SEVERAL BOATS STAYED TOGETHER, DRIVEN FORWARD BY TERRIBLE STORMS. AFTER MANY DAYS, THEY CAME TO THIS LONELY PLACE, AT THE EDGE OF A HIDEOUS SEA OF WEED.



"THERE WAS GAME HERE TO BE HUNTED, AND THINGS THAT HUNTED THEM. OVER LONG YEARS, THE WEED SHIFTED AND SURROUNDED THE ISLAND, BRINGING ITS TERRORS WITH IT.



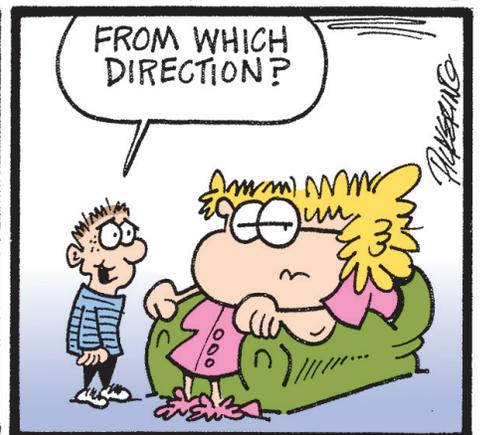
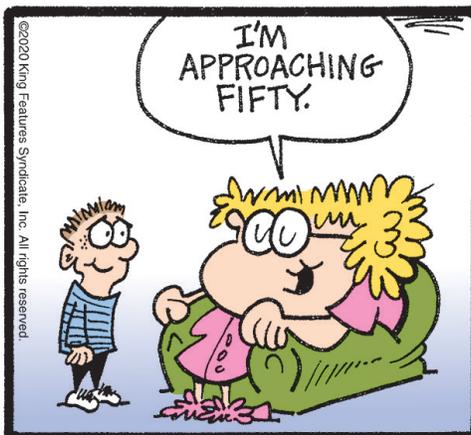
"BUT MY PEOPLE ADAPTED, AND SURVIVED! THEY DREW POISONS FROM ISLAND FUNGI THAT GAVE THEM THE MEANS TO BATTLE MONSTERS.

"NOW ALL OUR WOMEN ARE GONE, AND WE ARE DYING. BUT YOU SHALL NOT LIVE TO HASTEN OUR END!"

NEXT:
A blunt exchange

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Deciding Where to Retire

Bankrate's study of the best and worst states for retirement pegs Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, South Dakota and Florida as the top five. It's easy to just take a list such as this and call the movers, but it's the details that matter.

All 50 states in the study were ranked in terms of affordability, crime, culture, weather and wellness.

Nebraska, at the top of the list, had a rating of only 14 for affordability but did well on the other criteria.

Missouri, third on the list, was No. 1 for affordability, but only average or below average ratings on the other benchmarks.

Kentucky, at No. 6, came in at a respectable 9 for both affordability and crime. Its downfall was culture, which rated only a 46.

At the bottom of the list, while New York scored very high for culture, it had the worst affordability rating.

So, how to decide where to retire? Not with a list like this. To pinpoint a location where you'll be happy in retirement, you need to get to know the area in person.

Go there. Stay as long as you can, at least through a vacation. Make contacts. Call real estate agents and tour homes to see what you can get in your price range. Contact the medical center and see if they have what you need. (Check Hospital Compare on medicare.gov.) Read the local newspaper.

Visit the police department and ask about crime, as opposed to believing a study. Check the nearest college for senior classes. Drive around and look for depressed areas. Is there a senior center with interesting activities?

Do the math. Can you afford your new location? Are there part-time work options if you need more money?

Deciding where to retire really does mean visiting the location and doing your homework.

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1. True or false: Boston Red Sox great Ted Williams is not in the top 20 for highest slugging percentage in a single season.

2. In 2018, Ronald Acuna Jr. set an Atlanta Braves single-season record of eight leadoff homers. Who had held the team mark?

3. Place-kickers Adam Vinatieri (599) and Morten Andersen (565) are 1-2 in career NFL field goals made. Who is No. 3?

4. When was the last time before 2019 that Auburn's men's basketball team made it as far in the NCAA Tournament as the Elite Eight?

5. Who scored the overtime goal against New Jersey to send the New York Rangers to the 1994 Stanley Cup Finals?

6. Mikaela Shiffrin set a record in 2019 for most career World Cup slalom wins by any skier. Who had held the mark?

7. In 2019, golfer Viktor Hovland set a new mark for lowest total score by an amateur (280) at the U.S. Open. Who had the previous record?

Answers

1. False. He holds the 17th (.7346 in 1941) and 19th (.7310 in 1957) spots.

2. Marquis Grissom had seven lead-off homers in 1996.

3. Gary Anderson, with 538 field goals made.

4. It was 1986.

5. Stephane Matteau

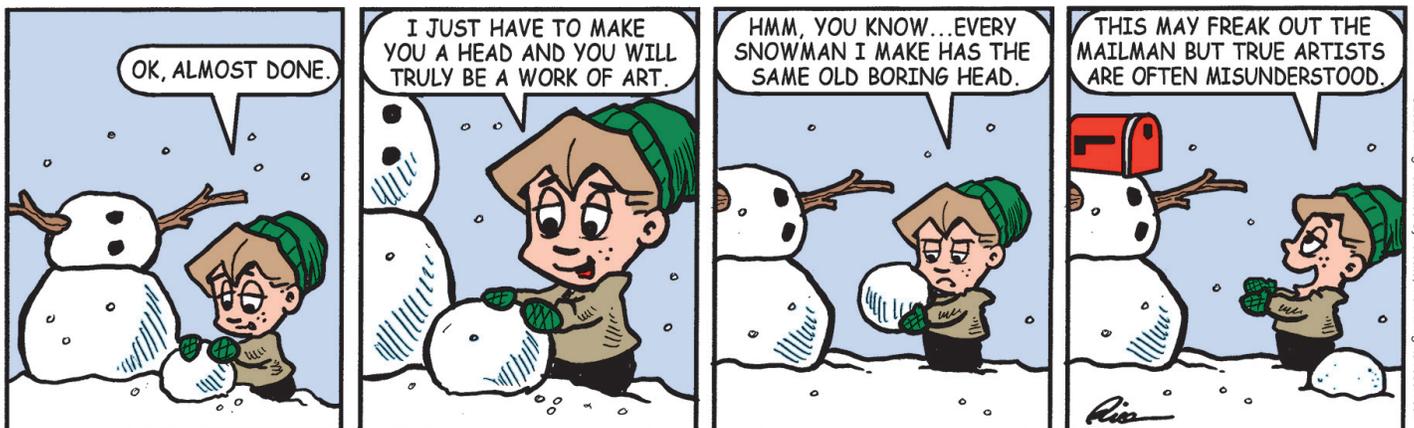
6. Sweden's Ingemar Stenmark, with 40 World Cup slalom wins (1974-87).

7. Jack Nicklaus had a 282 score as a U.S. Open amateur in 1960.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Securing the Border from South Dakota

Securing our border has been at the forefront of this administration's agenda and rightfully so. I traveled down to the southern border earlier this year and real progress is being made there, however, there is more work to be done.

In the last year, we experienced a true crisis on our southern border with unprecedented numbers of illegal border crossings. Congress and the administration have been focused on how best to combat this crisis, so I welcomed the opportunity to visit a business right here in South Dakota that is playing a key part in increasing security at our borders.

There are big things happening at Ehresmann Engineering in Yankton. Family owned and operated since 1983, this organization has been involved in border security for twenty years. Ehresmann produces remote video surveillance systems (RVSS) for use along our southern and northern border, with most of their towers utilized at the southern border.

When we think border security, most people think of the border wall. Of course, a physical barrier is a crucial part of the solution and many new miles of fencing and concrete wall are currently being built or updated. However, advanced technology and structures like the ones produced at Ehresmann play a key role in the solution to our border crisis. When I visited the border last year, one of my major takeaways was a variety of solutions are needed to ensure optimum security. When you pair physical structures with technology like Ehresmann's RVSSs, our border is better protected, and our patrol agents have a wider range of tools to monitor our borders to the best of their ability.

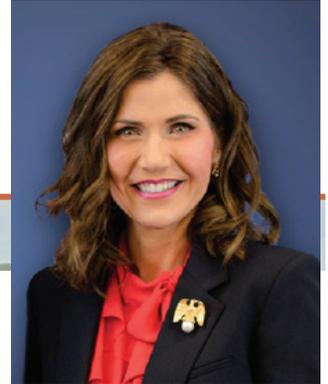
This past year, we made significant progress on the southern border. From May to September, we saw a 64 percent decrease in border apprehensions. That's unprecedented improvement, and it's in part thanks to the work of organizations like Ehresmann Engineering. I was proud to see during my visit that the hard work of South Dakotans is paying off in a big way for the security of our country. I look forward to seeing American innovation like what we are seeing in South Dakota continue to advance our border security.

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SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR
KRISTI NOEM



Four Guardrails: A Path Forward for Decriminalizing Industrial Hemp

Over the last year, we've had a long conversation about industrial hemp. I've been grateful to talk with folks about the topic and hear different perspectives at townhalls, coffee shops, basketball games, and everywhere in between.

And I've been outspoken that I don't think it's a good idea.

Last year, I vetoed a bill that didn't address concerns surrounding public safety, law enforcement, or funding. I asked the legislature to wait until we had direction from the federal government and a plan to address those concerns. Now since that time, things have changed. Federal guidelines have been put in place, a South Dakota tribe has been given the green light on production, and other states' actions mean we need to address hemp transportation through our state. The legislative summer study also did great work, and they included some good ideas.

On January 9, I outlined for the legislature a path forward – four guardrails, if you will – on hemp.

First, it must include reliable enforcement guidelines. This means the moment someone starts growing hemp, they would consent to an inspection and a search. This would all be done without liability to the law enforcement agency, and the actual costs of disposal would be paid by the grower or possessor. The bill must prohibit the sale or use of hemp and hemp derivatives for smoking. And it would include an annual, statistical report by the Attorney General to the legislature and me about the impact decriminalization is having on other criminal drug prosecutions.

Next, the bill must include responsible regulation regarding licensing, reporting, and inspections. This would include a minimum land area size and an appropriate fee structure for the application, annual license, and inspection.

Third, the law must require a permit and any other needed paperwork for all safe transportation of the product. And for those who transport it without appropriate documentation, there must be appropriate legal consequences.

And last, the law must have adequate funding. I believe decriminalization will cost about \$3.5 million (adding up one-time and ongoing costs), and there must be a plan to pay for it. A plan that doesn't include raising taxes.

These are the pieces I need to see in a bill in order to consider signing it into law. Given all that we need to accomplish this session, if we can get this done in the coming weeks, it would be a good way to kick off this year's legislative session.

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U.S.-Iran Relations: A Primer

For more than four decades, Iran has been a nefarious actor on the international stage. They've spent billions of dollars supporting terrorist activities across the globe, wreaking havoc in the Middle East and threatening to destroy the United States and our allies. We've seen this escalate in recent weeks as they killed an American contractor in Iraq and orchestrated the storming of the U.S. embassy in Iraq, putting American lives in danger.

President Trump made the bold decision to take out Qasem Soleimani, an Iranian military leader responsible for planning and executing Iran's terrorist activities. This necessary action was designed to protect Americans from anticipated attacks that he was directly involved in planning and let Iran know that threats to the U.S. and our partners will not be tolerated.

When the Iranian regime came to power in 1979 it was through a violent overthrow. For the past four decades, they've sought to spread their influence and extremist ideologies by assassinating rivals, arming terrorists and using unconventional warfare against their enemies. In 1979, Iran took 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. In 1982, they oversaw the creation of the terrorist group Hezbollah. Hezbollah and Iran worked hand-in-hand to orchestrate the bombings of the American embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, which killed 241 Americans. It is also believed that Iran and Hezbollah bombed the Israeli Embassy in Argentina in 1992, as well as a Jewish center in Buenos Aires in 1994.

Since 1998, these actions were led by Qasem Soleimani, a designated terrorist by both the United States and the United Nations. He is responsible for killing over 600 American troops in Iraq and was planning future attacks. Other than Osama Bin Laden, no other terrorist is responsible for killing more Americans over the past two decades than Soleimani. The world is a safer place without him in it.

In a recent briefing with top administration officials, we learned more about the events that led the president to take the decisive action to take out Soleimani. Following that briefing, it was clear to me that there was an imminent threat to U.S. interests and that President Trump acted appropriately to protect the lives of American citizens when he ordered the airstrikes that killed Qasem Soleimani. We also learned more about Iran's retaliatory airstrikes at two American bases in Iraq. We are grateful that there were no casualties from their attack. It would be in Iran's best interest to take this as an opportunity to de-escalate tensions between our two countries and stop any plans for future attacks.

We do not want war with Iran, and President Trump has made it clear that he wants to eliminate conflict in the Middle East. But he has also made clear that we won't back down when American lives are threatened. He drew a red line in the sand and when Iran threatened American lives, he took decisive action to let them know enough is enough. Iran must know that when we're provoked, we will use the resources we have to defend ourselves. As the situation with Iran continues to unfold, we will make sure the safety of Americans is the top priority.

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John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



New Year, Same Commitment to Fighting for South Dakota

President Ronald Reagan once said, "I've always thought New Year's Day was an especially American tradition, full of the optimism and hope we're famous for in our daily lives – an energy and confidence we call the American spirit."

Perhaps because we know we control our own destiny, we believe deep down inside that working together we can make each new year better than the old."

2019 was a productive and historic year in the Republican-led Senate. It never earned a "breaking news" banner, but it sure deserved one. We continued our effort to help transform the federal judiciary by confirming well-qualified judges – a lot of them. In fact, we've confirmed so many in the last few years that now one in four federal circuit court judges in the United States has been appointed by this president and confirmed by a Republican Senate. This is good news for Americans who want level-headed judges who simply call balls and strikes when it comes to interpreting the law.

In 2019, my bipartisan Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and Deterrence Act, or TRACED Act, became law. It puts those bad actors who are behind the annoying and illegal robocalls we all hate receiving on notice and provides a pathway for criminal prosecution. In other words, it sets the stage for creating a credible threat of spending time behind bars.

The Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement Act, or SECURE Act, also became law last year. I was proud to support this bipartisan effort, which takes several important steps that will help workers better prepare for retirement, including by expanding access to retirement savings accounts like 401(k)s.

The Senate also approved the National Defense Authorization Act, which authorized the full annual funding request for development of the B-21 bomber. We repealed costly Obamacare taxes, strengthened the border, and appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars for election security improvements, among a laundry list of other accomplishments. And on a personal note, after years of working to promote the advancement of next-generation technologies, it was humbling to see Sioux Falls become one of the first cities with an active 5G network last year.

As is always the case, the work is never complete, and 2020 provides a fresh opportunity to continue putting points on the board for the American people. At the top of the list is passing the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, a 21st century update to the decades-old trade pact between the three countries. Passing it would be a huge win for the U.S. economy, particularly the agriculture economy, which has disproportionately struggled in recent years.

In South Dakota, I'm excited for what's to come at our very own Ellsworth Air Force Base, and I'm committed to doing everything I can to ensure it's in the best possible position as it prepares to be the nation's first host of the B-21 bomber.

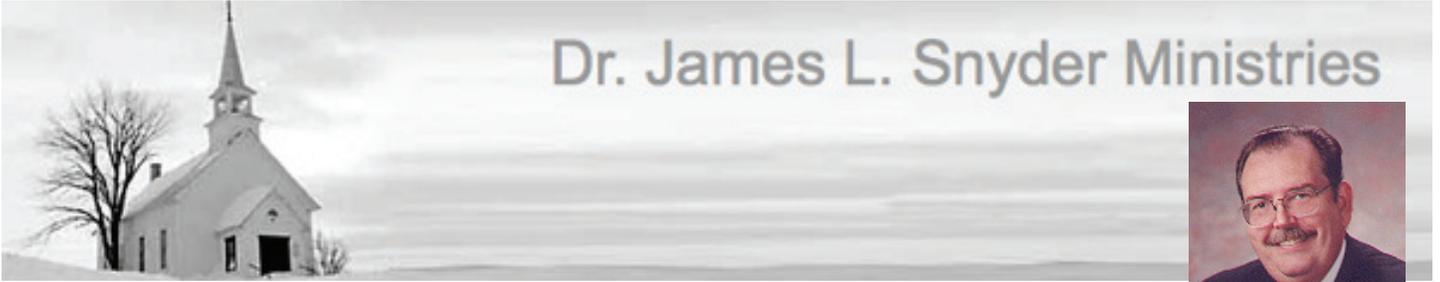
This year, I look forward to continue working with Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie, who has prioritized the needs of rural and tribal veterans. After encouraging him to visit Hot Springs, I'm glad he will soon make the trip. It's imperative for him to see "The Veterans Town" firsthand and meet with the community that supports this critical facility.

There are a number of additional opportunities this year, including efforts to reduce health care and prescription drug costs, develop our workforce, double down on my work to expand rural broadband and strengthen America's position in the race to 5G, and work on the next highway bill. During the last surface transportation bill debate, I served as chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and I was glad to play a role in ensuring South Dakota's priorities got the attention they deserved – something I will do again this year.

The Senate certainly has a lot on its plate this year, but I'm confident we'll be able to focus on the agenda the American people elected us to pursue. Like Reagan, I truly believe that in America, tomorrow will always be better than today, and as we enter this new year, I'm looking forward to doing my part to strengthen the American spirit by continuing that tradition.

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To One It's Monday to Another It's Wednesday

Time goes so fast at times that I do not always remember what day it is. I get so busy trying to get my work done that I forget if it's Monday or Friday.

It is a good thing I am getting older because I have a built-in excuse for forgetting what day it is.

Recently, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I spent some time in St. Augustine for some vacation days. We don't often get to have vacation days, but when we do, we try to enjoy it.

Just down a few blocks from our motel is a place we love dining. It's called the Village Inn. What I like about this restaurant is that on Wednesdays they always have free pie with anything you order even if it's just coffee.

Free is always a good thing with me. I know that nothing is free, but sometimes it is.

Anybody who knows me knows that I do not take many things seriously. I enjoyed being around people who are very seriously minded because I can get away with a lot of jokes with them. Some things are to be serious, but those are rather few in my book.

Even at my age, I love to have fun.

It was a Monday on our vacation that we went down to have lunch at the Village Inn.

Someone once asked me what my favorite pie was, and I gave them an answer that my uncle always gave, "The one I'm eating at the time." And this restaurant has very delicious pies.

It was Monday, however, and the pies were free only on a Wednesday. That did not stop me from trying, though.

The restaurant host escorted us to our table, and we sat down. Then the waitress came to take our order. It was then that I had a thought giggling at the top of my head. That is always a dangerous situation. I decided to go with it.

"Ma'am," I said as seriously as I possibly could, "I am a Yahooist, and according to our religion, your Monday is our Wednesday."

I am sure she never heard of a Yahooist because I never heard of one either. She looked rather strangely at me, and I continued, "Does that mean I can have the Wednesday free pie today?"

Looking at me for a few moments, she then broke out in laughter. I guess she knew I was joking.

"A Yahooist, you say." Then she took our order and went to the kitchen.

I heard some laughter coming from the kitchen area when she went back, and every waitress that walked by our table looked at me and said, "Yahoo."

One thing I strive for each day is making somebody smile if not laugh. There are so many sad people in this world that I am trying to get them from being so sad. I have found that it does not take very much to get some people to laugh.

Then the manager came to our table and said, "So, you're a Yahooist. How could I join that religion?"

Knowing that he was just having a little fun with me, I responded very seriously, "To join you must say 'Yahoo' three times in a row and then bring me a free piece of pie."

I do not let anything get past me if I can avoid it. The manager laughed rather heartily and then walked back to the kitchen.

Maybe I should think a little more seriously about creating a Yahooist group of people. We sure could

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make a lot of people smile and laugh that otherwise would not do any of that.

Then our waitress came back with our meal and greeted both of us by saying, "Yahoo." Then my wife and I shouted "Yahoo" back, and all of the customers around our table started to laugh and say, "Yahoo."

As my wife and I were eating our lunch, I thought that I had accomplished my purpose for the day. I love making people laugh and smile. That is what I call a good day. I know I can't make everybody smile or laugh, but I can make some people and those of the people I focus on.

As customers departed and passed our table, they all smiled and said, "Yahoo." I cannot remember when I had a better day.

As we were finishing our meal, the waitress brought our ticket to the table. She commented by saying, "It sure was nice to meet a real Yahooist. I hope you come back again." Then, as she left, she chirped, "Yahoo."

"You sure made an impression with her," my wife commented.

As I looked at the ticket, I noticed that the pie we ordered was not on our ticket. For some reason, she forgot to include it on our ticket. I called her back and asked about why the pie was not included on my ticket.

"Isn't today your Wednesday?" she said. "On Wednesday, the pie is always free." As she walked away, she cheerfully said, "Yahoo."

I have found that it always pays, and pays wonderfully, to make somebody smile.

The theme of my life is, "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" (Proverbs 15:13).

My goal is never to let a day go by without causing somebody to smile.

As enrollment and revenues at S.D. universities fall, worries rise over possible program and personnel cuts

By: Nick Lowrey

Total enrollment is on a steady decline in the public university system in South Dakota, forcing higher education officials to seek new sources of revenue, realign infrastructure and potentially cut programs or faculty positions.

At South Dakota State University in Brookings — the state school with the highest enrollment — an unexpected 4% decline in enrollment in the fall of 2019 caused university officials to begin working on a plan likely to include cutting faculty positions. The SDSU Faculty Senate has been discussing the issue for months, said David Clay, the organization's president.

"Much of the faculty are worried about their jobs," Clay said.



Final decisions about any cuts aren't expected until the spring of 2020, he said.

Any cuts will be doubly frustrating because the enrollment declines largely are due to circumstances outside of faculty members' and even university officials' control, Clay said. "It's like a perfect storm," he said.

Since 2010, overall enrollment at South Dakota public universities has fallen by more than 5%, or by almost 2,000 students. Long-term economic and demographic changes, as well as higher on-time graduation rates, are driving what has been a slow decline in the number of South Dakota residents seeking college degrees at the state's six public universities.

Some schools have seen enrollment increases, but those have been offset by larger losses at other universities, with SDSU seeing the largest percentage decline. The number of state residents enrolled part time or full time at the state's universities has fallen even faster. Between 2010 and 2019, resident enrollment fell from 25,800 to 21,400, a drop of around 17%.

The decline in overall enrollment represents a loss of millions of dollars in revenue for the university system which gets roughly 60% of its funding from tuition and fees.

State support for higher education, meanwhile, has largely remained flat outside of one-time funding for specific projects. As enrollment continues to decline, universities are being forced to rethink programs, staffing and teaching methods, said Paul Beran, executive director of the state Board of Regents.

"The reality is that every (university) president is looking at ways that they're going to become more efficient," Beran said. "They're looking at ways to take really hard looks at their workforce in three areas — staff, administration and faculty."

At least part of the decline in enrollment is due to economic expansion following the end of Great Recession of 2008, Beran said. During recessions, traditional students tend to stay in school longer in an effort to beef up resumes while non-traditional students enroll at higher rates because jobs are more scarce and require new skills. South Dakota's public university system started to see a recession-inspired enrollment spike in 2010 when the system headcount jumped from 33,779 in 2009 to 36,440, Beran said.

South Dakota isn't alone when it comes to college enrollment declines. National estimates have pegged the drop in four-year public college enrollments at about 7% between 2010 and 2017. Data compiled by

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the non-profit National Student Clearinghouse Research Center show a nationwide 1.3% decline in college and tech school enrollments between 2018 and 2019.

The news isn't all bad. Enrollment figures for fall 2019 in South Dakota show a system-wide head count of 34,520, higher than the system's pre-recession headcount, Beran said. The indication, he said, is that the system has been able to sustain growth over several decades despite the recent downturn.

"We actually had an increase ... if you take the bubble out," Beran said

Another issue South Dakota universities are grappling with is that there are fewer young South Dakotans to recruit into college. Demographic data compiled by the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education — a partnership between 15 western states and two U.S. territories focused on helping university systems share resources — shows that South Dakota went from graduating around 9,500 high school seniors in the early 2000s to graduating around 8,500 in 2019. Other Great Plains states have seen similar trends, the data show. The population of high school graduates in South Dakota is, however, projected to grow over the next decade.

In effect, South Dakota's universities have been competing regionally for fewer potential students and as the growth in costs outpaces the growth in state support, they are rapidly losing one of their chief advantages — lower prices. The total cost of a degree from a South Dakota university is low compared to the rest of the country. But because state support has lagged, students actually end up paying more for their degree than students in all but seven other states.

Low-income South Dakotans have been priced out of college, Beran said. In 2011 the state's universities enrolled more than 70% of students who qualified for free and reduced lunches at their high school and scored a 22 on the ACT. In 2019, just 51% of those students enrolled in college.

"We're producing education efficiently ... but our students are are paying a higher percentage of that cost," Beran said.

Declining enrollment and the tighter budgets that result will create more stress and hardship at the state's universities. But it may also give administrators a chance to make big changes in how they deliver education, Beran said.

"My theory is never waste a crisis. And because now you've got an opportunity to actually make changes, under the guise of fiscal realities ... and reshift your resources into areas that you really need to shift them to. And it's hard to do that in times of prosperity."

"The reality is that every (university) president is looking at ways that they're going to become more efficient. They're looking at ways to take really hard looks at their workforce in three areas - staff, administration and faculty."

-- Paul Beran, executive director of the South Dakota Board of Regents



Paul Beran, executive director of the South Dakota Board of Regents

The internet and efficiency

One opportunity South Dakota's universities are already beginning to embrace is a dramatic increase in the popularity of online learning. Increasingly, students are opting to take their classes online, even if they're living in a dorm on a university campus, said Black Hills State University President Laurie Nichols.

"What we're learning is that those students love taking courses online," she said. "With online classes,

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you can get around course scheduling conflicts and they're easier to fit into work schedules."

If not for strong enrollment in online classes, university headcounts would be down closer to 10%. At Northern State University in Aberdeen, for example, online enrollment has risen nearly 60% since 2010 while on-campus enrollment has fallen 30%. At BHSU in Spearfish, on-campus enrollment fell by 32% between 2010 and 2019 but online enrollment held relatively steady with .3% growth. The good news for schools such as BHSU is that online courses, for the most part, aren't any less expensive than taking a class in person, Nichols said.

High school students also have come to account for a significant portion of online college course enrollments thanks to South Dakota's dual-credit program. The program uses tax dollars to help pay for high school students to earn college credits through online courses that also count toward high school graduation requirements. The number of high school students enrolled in on-line college courses through the South Dakota Board of Regents has increased from 721 in 2013 to more than 3,400 in 2019.

"That's an area that we have really jumped into with both feet the past couple of years. We've really enhanced our dual-credit opportunities for students. And we've seen some really great growth in that area. And really, that is all about time to degree and lowering the cost of education," said Sydney Chapman, assistant director of financial aid at SDSU.

Still, SDSU has seen its headcount drop about 10% since 2010. In fall 2019, the regents reported that SDSU had seen a larger than expected 4% year-over-year decline in enrollment including drops in both on-campus and online enrollment. Such sharp declines bring new urgency to yearly planning efforts aimed at "right-sizing" the school's course offerings and spending, said SDSU Provost Dennis Hedge.

"We do work very hard at South Dakota State to drive efficiencies throughout the organization as much as we possibly can," Hedge said.

Faculty members worry that "right-sizing" will mean students lose out on the well-rounded education they are promised. Clay, the SDSU faculty senate president said cuts usually target smaller programs with lower enrollments, many of which still provide courses for students who don't major in the subject but still benefit from learning about it.

"We need diversity in education, we need some of these low-enrollment programs," said Clay. "People need to know about citizenship, they need to know how to write."

Efforts to improve the university system's efficiency, such as promoting dual credit, have likely contributed to the decline in enrollment. South Dakota's public university students, some of whom are showing up on campus with nearly a full semester's worth of credits, are graduating faster than they used to, Beran said.

The state Board of Regents has also developed programs to help students make better decisions about what to major in, which reduces the number of credits a student ends up taking before earning their degree. The Board of Regents also cut the number of credit hours required for most of its bachelor's degree programs from 128 to 120. University systems around the U.S. have made the same move in order to cut the cost of their degrees and make their programs more efficient. Now many students are completing their required coursework one or two years earlier than students 10 years ago, Beran said.

"We've had a much better and stronger retention rate and a higher graduation rate. And so what that means is you have fewer students hanging around taking classes into their seventh, eighth year," Beran said. "We're making a very concerted effort to get them graduated four years."

The problem is, with fewer students taking fewer credit hours and having a smaller pool of college bound

ENROLLMENT BY UNIVERSITY FROM 2010 TO 2019

Here is a look at student enrollment at the six public universities in South Dakota over the past decade, including in the system overall.

School	Fall 2010	Fall 2019	% change
BHSU	4,722	3,958	- 18.3%
DSU	3,101	3,268	+ 5.4%
NSU	3,296	3,427	+ 4.0%
SDSMT	2,354	2,529	+ 7.4%
SDSU	12,816	11,518	- 10.1%
USD	10,251	9,920	- 2.3%
TOTAL	36,440	34,520	- 5.3%

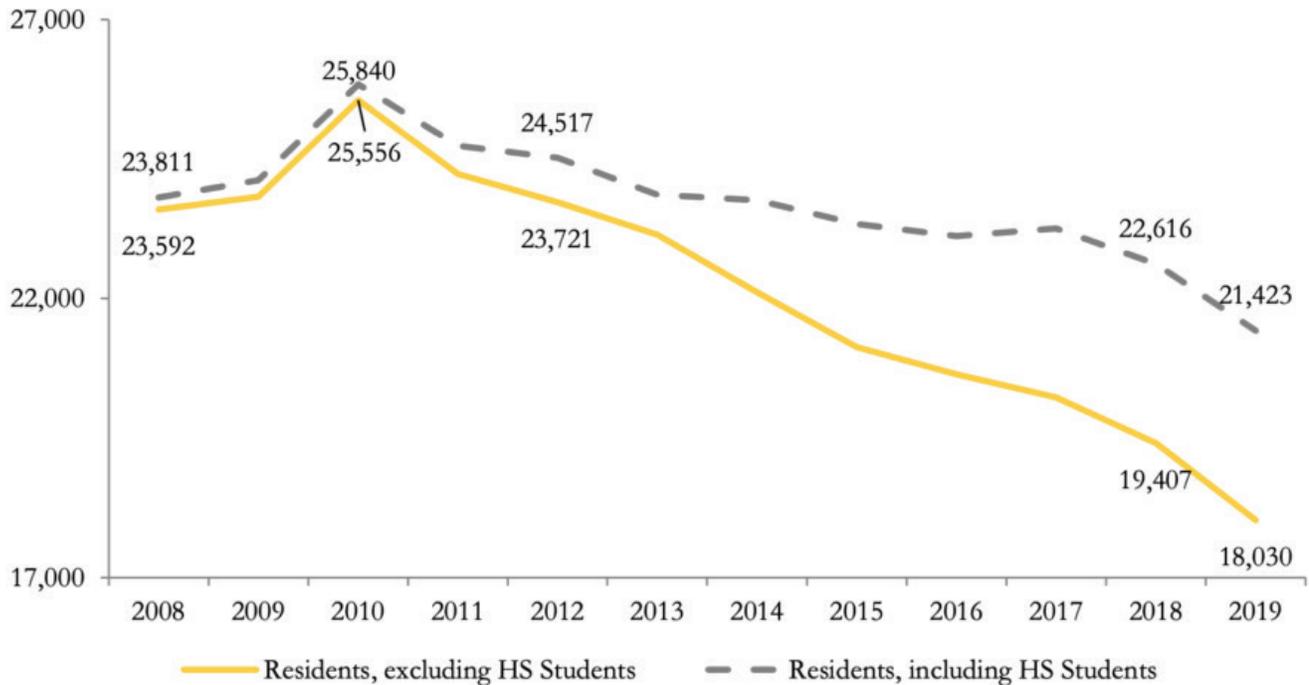
Source: South Dakota Board of Regents

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students to recruit from, South Dakota's universities have been forced to look beyond the state's borders to boost enrollment.

University System Headcount, Residents



Fewer South Dakota residents are seeking degrees from the state's universities according to the state Board of Regents, which governs the university system. The decline in college enrollment has, however, been tempered by a surge in the popularity of the state's dual credit program, which allows high school students to enroll in college courses at one of the state's six public universities and earn credit toward both their high school diploma and a college degree. The yellow line in this chart shows the decline in South Dakota public university enrollment if high school students enrolled in dual credit courses aren't counted. The grey line shows the decline in enrollment when high school students aren't counted.

Tech programs attracting non-resident students

South Dakota's universities have spent years stepping up efforts to recruit students from outside the state as a way to offset the decline in resident high school graduates. Their efforts are bearing fruit. The number of nonresident students in the university system has increased more than 23%, rising from 10,600 in 2010 to 13,097 in 2019.

At SDSU, the number of nonresident students has increased by 942. At USD, nonresident enrollment is up by 632 students and the number of nonresident students climbed by 638 at Dakota State University in Madison, an increase of more than 94% over 10 years. At the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology in Rapid City, nonresident enrollment was up 43%, or 425 students. Only Northern State University has shown a decrease in nonresident enrollments.

Despite rising costs and largely stagnant state support South Dakota universities still offer nonresident

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Jim Moran, provost at Dakota State University

students a pretty good deal price-wise compared to many states, said SDSM&T interim provost Lance Roberts. The School of Mines has another advantage in that the school has routinely been rated in national media as having the best bang for the buck when it comes to degrees in science, technology, engineering and math, Roberts said. At one point, the school's graduates were reportedly earning higher starting salaries than some Ivy League graduates.

Such flattering national media attention helps SDSM&T recruiters in Colorado and Minnesota appeal to science and engineering minded students, Roberts said. Enrollment at SDSM&T has actually increased 7.5% since 2010.

"We have a good product, we focus on STEM fields and there are a lot of jobs out there in those fields and starting salaries are really good," he said.

Dakota State University, the only other state university to see its enrollment rise over the last decade, has a similar set of advantages, said Jim Moran, DSU provost.

"We've kind of become the designated technology university in South Dakota," Moran said.

Specialized programs in cyber security, partnerships with federal agencies such as the Department of Defense and the National Security Agency as well as a new business incubation center combined with comparatively low costs have spurred a 5% increase in DSU's enrollment. Enrollment growth at the university has actually outpaced the growth of university housing, Moran said.

"We see the future as very bright," he said.



ABOUT NICK LOWREY

Nick Lowrey, based in Pierre, S.D., is an investigative staff reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A South Dakotan for more than 20 years, he is a former editor of the Pierre Capital Journal.

Hoop varsity teams go 2-1 to finish the week

Groton Area's basketball teams went 2-1 on Friday and Saturday. The boys remain undefeated with a 60-47 win over Hamlin. The girls lost to Hamlin, 65-39, and then came back to beat St. Francis on Saturday at Redfield, 33-27.

Hamlin came to Groton on Friday as part of the double header. The girls junior varsity team lost, 24-14. Alyssa Thayer led the Tigers with four points followed by Trista Keith and Brooke Gengerke with three each and Allyssa Locke and Shallyn Foertsch with two each. Taylor Koisti led Hamlin with seven points.

Hamlin won the boys junior varsity game, 27-23. Tristan Traphagen led the Tigers with six points followed by Lane Tietz, Chandler Larson and Jordan Bjerke with four each, Lucas Simon had three and Tate Larson added two points. Hamlin was led by Breeman Keszler with 11 points.

Girls: Hamlin, 65, Groton Area 39

The girls varsity game was played next. Groton had the early lead in the game. The game was tied four times and there were three lead changes before Hamlin took a 20-13 lead at the end of the first quarter. Groton Area shot four of 12 in the first quarter for 33 percent while Hamlin was six of 10 for 60 percent. Hamlin opened up a 37-21 lead at half time. In the second quarter, Groton Area was three of 13 in shooting for 23 percent and Hamlin was seven of 11 for 64 percent. The Chargers gained an additional three-point advantage and took a 50-31 lead at the end of the quarter. In the third quarter, Groton Area made three of nine field goals for 33 percent and Hamlin was six of 12 for 50 percent. Hamlin would go on to win, 65-39. In the fourth quarter, Groton Area was three of nine in shooting for 33 percent and Hamlin was six of 10 for 60 percent.

Alyssa Thaler was the leading scorer with 16 points. Allyssa Locke was the leading rebounder with six and had the most assists with three. Trista Keith led the team in steals with two.

For the game, Groton Area was 13 of 43 in shooting for 30 percent while Hamlin was 25 of 43 for 58 percent. Groton Area was six of nine in free throws for 67 percent off of Hamlin's 12 team fouls. Hamlin was four of five from the line for 80 percent off of Groton Area's 11 team fouls. Hamlin had eight turnovers with four of them being steals. The Tigers had 15 turnovers.

Others adding to the Tiger score were Gracie Traphagen with 10, Brooke Gengerke eight, Allyssa Locke and Kaycie Hawkins with two each and Trista Keith had a free throw. Thaller was four of five in three-pointers while Gengerke made two three-pointers and Traphagen one.

Kylee Wadsworth led the Chargers with 17 points with five three-pointers, Kami Wadsworth had 16 points with three three-pointers, McKenna Prouty and Logan Kessler each had nine points, Ally Abraham had eight, Brylie Arnold had a three-pointer and Taylor Koisti had two points.

Boys: Groton Area 60, Hamlin 47

In the final game of the night, the boys varsity team, four players hit double figures as the Tigers remain un-



Gracie Traphagen launches a three-pointer. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Kaycie Hawkins eyes the basket. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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defeated with a 60-47 win over Hamlin. Groton Area applied full court trapping defense and the players stuck to their assigned player like glue giving the Chargers all kinds of problems during the night.

Groton had a 16-point rally in the first half to pull away from a close game. The early part of the game was tied three times, but Hamlin never led. After the game was tied at eight, Groton Area went on a 16-point run to take a 24-8 eight. Groton Area led, 12-8 at the end of the first quarter and led, 34-16 at half time. The Tigers led at the end of the third quarter, 46-32. Hamlin closed to within 11 at 55-44, but the Tigers scored five straight to pull away for the win.

The Tigers shot 56 percent in the first half and cooled down to 34 percent in the second half. Hamlin shot 38 percent in the first half and warmed up to 47 percent in the second half.

Kaden Kurtz led Groton Area with 17 points. Brodyn DeHoet had 15 points and led in three other categories with six rebounds, five assists and four steals. Cade Guthmiller made three three-pointers and finished with 12 points. Jonathon Doeden had 11 points while Isaac Smith and Tristan Traphagen each had two points and Austin Jones made a free throw.

Groton Area was 17 of 30 in two-pointers for 57 percent, five of 18 in three-pointers for 28 percent and was 11 of 18 from the line for 61 percent off of Hamlin's 17 team fouls. Hamlin had 21 turnovers, 14 of which were steals. Groton Area had 12 assists, 11 turnovers and 13 rebounds. Having one block each were DeHoet, Doeden, Kurtz and Traphagen.

Hamlin was led by Nathan Holida with 15 points followed by Jackson Noem with 10, Booker Noem had nine, Nicholai Arbach had four, Kyler Swenson three and Sage Arnold and Brennan Kessler each had two points. For the game, Hamlin made 15 of 36 field goals for 42 percent and was 14 of 17 from the line off of Groton Area's 16 team fouls.

Girls: Groton Area 33, St. Francis 27

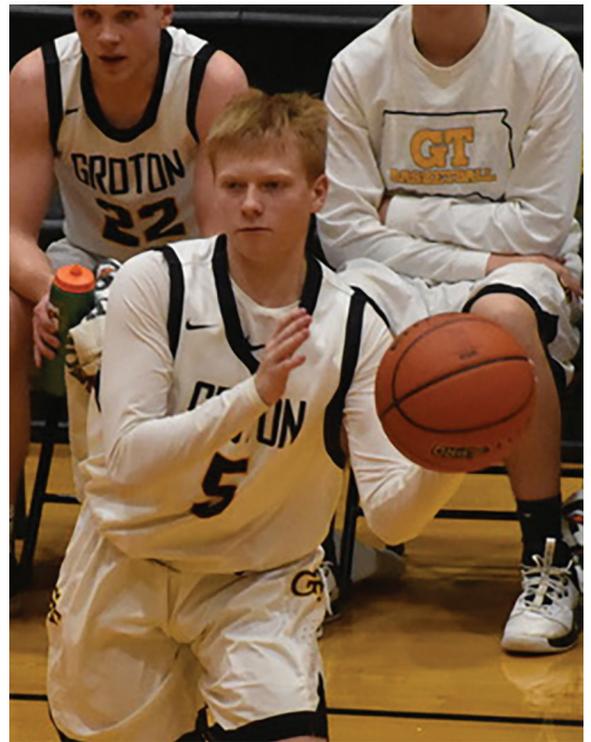
Then the Lady Tigers loaded up on the bus Saturday morning to head to Redfield to play St. Francis Indian School as part of the Redfield Holiday Classic. Groton Area scored the last nine points of the game to come from behind to win the game, 33-27.

St. Francis held a 13-4 lead at the end of the first quarter. The Tigers made one of eight shots for 13 percent while St. Francis was five of 15 for 33 percent, but the Lady Warriors were one of eight from the line. Groton area scored eight straight points to open the second quarter to take a 15-13 lead. The lead changed hands twice and the game was tied once before Groton Area held a 17-16 lead at half time. In the second quarter, Groton Area was three of 14 in shooting for 21 percent and was four of seven from the line. St. Francis was one of seven in shooting for 14 percent.

The third quarter was a low scoring event with Groton Area making one of 12 shots and St. Francis made three of nine. The game was tied twice and St. Francis took a 22-20 lead at the end of the third quarter.

Groton area tied the game at 24 and then would score the final nine points to secure the win. In the fourth quarter, Groton Area was five of 15 in shooting for 33 percent and St. Francis was two of 10 for 20 percent.

Gracie Traphagen had a double-double to lead the Tigers with 18 points and 11 rebounds. Alyssa Thaler had five points followed by Allyssa Locke and Kaycie Hawkins with four apiece and Madeline Flihs had two points. Groton Area was six of 34 in two-pointers for 18 percent and was four of 15 in three-pointers for 27 percent. The Tigers were nine of 16 in free throws for 56 percent off of St. Francis' 18 team fouls.



Jayden Zak passes the ball to a teammate. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The Tigers had 40 rebounds, eight assists with Gengerke having five, eight steals with Locke having three and two blocks with Hawkins and Gengerke each having one.

St. Francis had 12 turnovers, eight of which were steals with Locke having three. Groton Area had 17 turnovers.

Scoring for St. Francis were Jazlea Arcoren with 16 points followed by Share Kills In Sight with five and adding two points each were Deja Roberts, Gracie Charing Hawk and Cante Anderson.

All of the varsity games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM. The Hamlin game sponsors were Broadcast Sponsors: Allied Climate Professionals, Blocker Construction, Groton Dairy Queen, Jark Real Estate, John Sieh Agency, Milbrandt Enterprises and Tyson DeHoet Trucking. The St. Francis game sponsor was the South Dakota Army National Guard.

The Lady Tigers are 3-4 on the season and will be hosting Sisseton on Tuesday. The boys team goes to 5-0 and will be playing Aberdeen Christian on Tuesday at the Aberdeen Civic Arena.

Dwight ties scoring record

This was the 18th annual Redfield Holiday Classic and one of the games of interest was Langford Area, now 7-0 on the season, beating Lyman County, 50-39. In that game Langford's Ady Dwight scored 35 points to tie a record of most points scored in one game. She moved up from eighth place last year with 27 points. She will now share the record with Mclaughlin's McKenna Vetter, who also had 35 points in 2014. Interesting enough, Langford Area did not make any three-pointers while Lyman made five.

- Paul Kosel

Upcoming Events

Sunday, January 12, 2020

2:00pm- 6:00pm: Open Gym at GHS Arena

2:00-4:00 PM Grades JK-8 (Students must be accompanied by an adult) 4:00-6:00 PM Grades 6-12

Monday, January 13, 2020

6 p.m.: Junior high basketball games at Warner. 7th grade at 6 p.m., 8th grade at 7 p.m.

6 p.m.: Junior high wrestling tournament in Groton

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 14, 2020

5:15 p.m.: Combined 7th/8th grade boys basketball game vs. Aberdeen Christian at the Aberdeen Civic Arena

6:30 p.m.: Boys' basketball game vs Aberdeen Christian High School at the Aberdeen Civic Arena. Junior varsity at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Wednesday, January 15, 2020

8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.: MathCounts at Aberdeen Simmons Middle School

Thursday, January 16, 2020

6:30 p.m.: Girls' Basketball hosts Sisseton. JV game at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Friday, January 17, 2020

Silver Bowl Debate at Sioux Falls

No School - Faculty Inservice

6 p.m.: Boys' basketball at Sisseton. JV game at 6 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Saturday, January 18, 2020

Silver Bowl Debate in Sioux Falls

10:00am: Basketball: Boys 7th/8th Jamboree @ Groton Area High School

10:00am: Wrestling: Varsity Tournament at Potter County (Gettysburg)

Sunday, January 19, 2020

2:00pm- 6:00pm: Open Gym at GHS Arena

2:00-4:00 PM Grades JK-8 (Students must be accompanied by an adult) 4:00-6:00 PM Grades 6-12

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Three wrestlers place at Miller Tournament

Three Groton Area grapplers placed at the Miller/Highmore-Harrold Invitational Wrestling Tournament held Saturday in Miller. Groton Area placed 12th in a field of 19 teams.

Dragr Monson took first at 113 pounds, Grady O'Neill took second place at 285 pounds and Christian Ehresmann placed seventh at 106 pounds.

106: Christian Ehresmann (8-6) placed 7th and scored 10.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 8-6 won by fall over Cale Mohling (Wessington Springs/Woonsocket/Wolsey-Wessington) 5-14 (Fall 5:01)

Quarterfinal - Gunnar Kvistad (Clark/Willow Lake) 15-3 won by major decision over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 8-6 (MD 9-0)

Cons. Round 2 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 8-6 won by fall over Carter Schulte (Faulkton Area) 6-11 (Fall 2:03)

Cons. Round 3 - Jhett Breen (Wagner) 19-4 won by fall over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 8-6 (Fall 2:32)

7th Place Match - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 8-6 won by major decision over Jackson Bauld (Burke/Gregory) 9-15 (MD 14-1)

113: Dragr Monson (15-5) placed 2nd and scored 22.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 15-5 won by fall over Quinlan Olesen (Parker) 1-6 (Fall 1:16)

Quarterfinal - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 15-5 won by fall over Gunner Brueggeman (Miller/Highmore/Harrold) 19-11 (Fall 1:05)

Semifinal - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 15-5 won by decision over Jagger Tyler (Wagner) 4-1 (Dec 7-5)

1st Place Match - Owen Hansen (Burke/Gregory) 22-0 won by fall over Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 15-5 (Fall 0:36)

152: Cole Bisbee (0-9)

Champ. Round 1 - Landon Schumacher (Linton/HMB) 9-10 won by fall over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 0-9 (Fall 1:08)

Cons. Round 1 - Jensen Fitch (Philip Area) 3-5 won by fall over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 0-9 (Fall 2:08)

182: Lane Krueger (10-8)

Champ. Round 1 - Tucker Even (Burke/Gregory) 10-8 won by fall over Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 10-8 (Fall 3:05)

Cons. Round 1 - Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 10-8 received a bye () (Bye)

Cons. Round 2 - Tony Bruguier (Wagner) 10-9 won by tech fall over Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 10-8 (TF-1.5 3:56 (15-0))

285: Grady O'Neill (10-10) placed 2nd and scored 20.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Grady O'Neill (Groton Area) 10-10 received a bye () (Bye)

Quarterfinal - Grady O'Neill (Groton Area) 10-10 won by fall over Jason Ebeling (Parker) 1-6 (Fall 0:24)

Semifinal - Grady O'Neill (Groton Area) 10-10 won by decision over Gavin Nichols (Redfield Area) 8-5 (Dec 4-1)

1st Place Match - Kellen Cassidy (Mt. Vernon/Plankinton/Corsica/Stickney) 14-5 won by fall over Grady O'Neill (Groton Area) 10-10 (Fall 3:34)

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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 12 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 6 °F↑

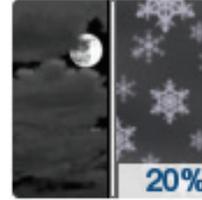
Monday



Mostly Cloudy

High: 22 °F

Monday
Night



Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Snow

Low: 5 °F

Tuesday



Cold

High: 10 °F

Today
10 to 25°
warmest over south central SD

Tonight
3 to 11°
patchy Fog over central SD

Brief Return to near Average Temperatures Monday & Monday Night

www.weather.gov/abr
National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
Created: 1/12/2020 2:41 AM

The Dry and Cold conditions continue through tonight. Monday and Monday night will bring a brief return to near average temperatures, with highs in the 20s and lows in the single digits above and below zero.

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Today in Weather History

January 12, 1912: The all-time coldest temperature ever recorded at Aberdeen and Timber Lake were 46 degrees below zero on this date in 1912. On February 8th, 1895, 46 degrees below zero was also recorded in Aberdeen. The record low for this date was also set at Watertown with 38 degrees below zero.

January 12, 1997: On January 12th, 1997, some of the greatest snow depths were recorded across central and northeast South Dakota. Ipswich had 29 inches on the ground, Aberdeen had 30 inches, Timber Lake had 31 inches, Mobridge had 34 inches, and Waubay had 38 inches. Some of the highest snow depths were recorded at Summit, Sand Lake, and at Eureka. Summit had 42 inches of snow on the ground on January 12th, Sand Lake had 47 inches, and Eureka had a snow depth of 50 inches. The snow depth at Aberdeen was the all-time record snow depth and Mobridge was just an inch shy of their 35-inch record snow depth.

1886: With a reading of 26 degrees below zero, Bowling Green Kentucky recorded its coldest temperature on record.

1890: A tornado touched down at St. Louis, MO and crossed the Mississippi River, ending just south of Venice. The worst damage from this tornado occurred in St. Louis. Further east and northeast, one tornado in McLean County passed through downtown Cooksville, destroying at least a dozen buildings, while a tornado in Richland County destroyed four homes northeast of Olney. In all, over 100 homes and other buildings were unroofed or damaged. The storm caused four deaths and 15 injuries.

1985: A record snowstorm struck portions of western and south-central Texas. All snowfall records dating back to 1885 were easily broken. Austin measured 3.6 inches, and Del Rio received 8.6 inches. San Antonio saw a record-setting 13.5 inches from this event.

1888 - A sharp cold front swept southward from the Dakotas to Texas in just 24 hours spawning a severe blizzard over the Great Plains. More than 200 pioneers perished in the storm. Subzero temperatures and mountainous snow drifts killed tens of thousands of cattle. (David Ludlum)

1912 - The morning low of 47 degrees below zero at Washta IA established a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - A record snowstorm struck portions of western and south central Texas. The palm trees of San Antonio were blanketed with up to thirteen and a half inches of snow, more snow than was ever previously received in an entire winter season. (Weather Channel) (Storm Data)

1987 - Twenty-seven cities in the Upper Midwest reported new record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 72 degrees at Valentine NE and 76 degrees at Rapid City SD set records for the month of January. (National Weather Summary)

1988 - Parts of North Dakota finally got their first snow of the winter season, and it came with a fury as a blizzard raged across the north central U.S. Snowfall totals ranged up to 14 inches at Fargo ND, winds gusted to 65 mph at Windom MN, and wind chill readings in North Dakota reached 60 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A dozen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s. Fort Myers FL reported a record high of 86 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - Gale force winds produce squalls with heavy snow in the Great Lakes Region. Totals in northwest Pennsylvania ranged up to eleven inches at Conneautville and Meadville. Barnes Corners, in western New York State, was buried under 27 inches of snow in two days. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

Friday

High Temp: 11 °F at 12:08 AM

Low Temp: -10 °F at 10:58 PM

Wind: 18 mph at 7:44 AM

Day Precip: 1/2 Snow

Saturday

High Temp: 10 °F at 8:58 PM

Low Temp: -18 °F at 7:00 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 4:53 PM

Record High: 58° in 1987

Record Low: -46° in 2012

Average High: 22°F

Average Low: 1°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.19

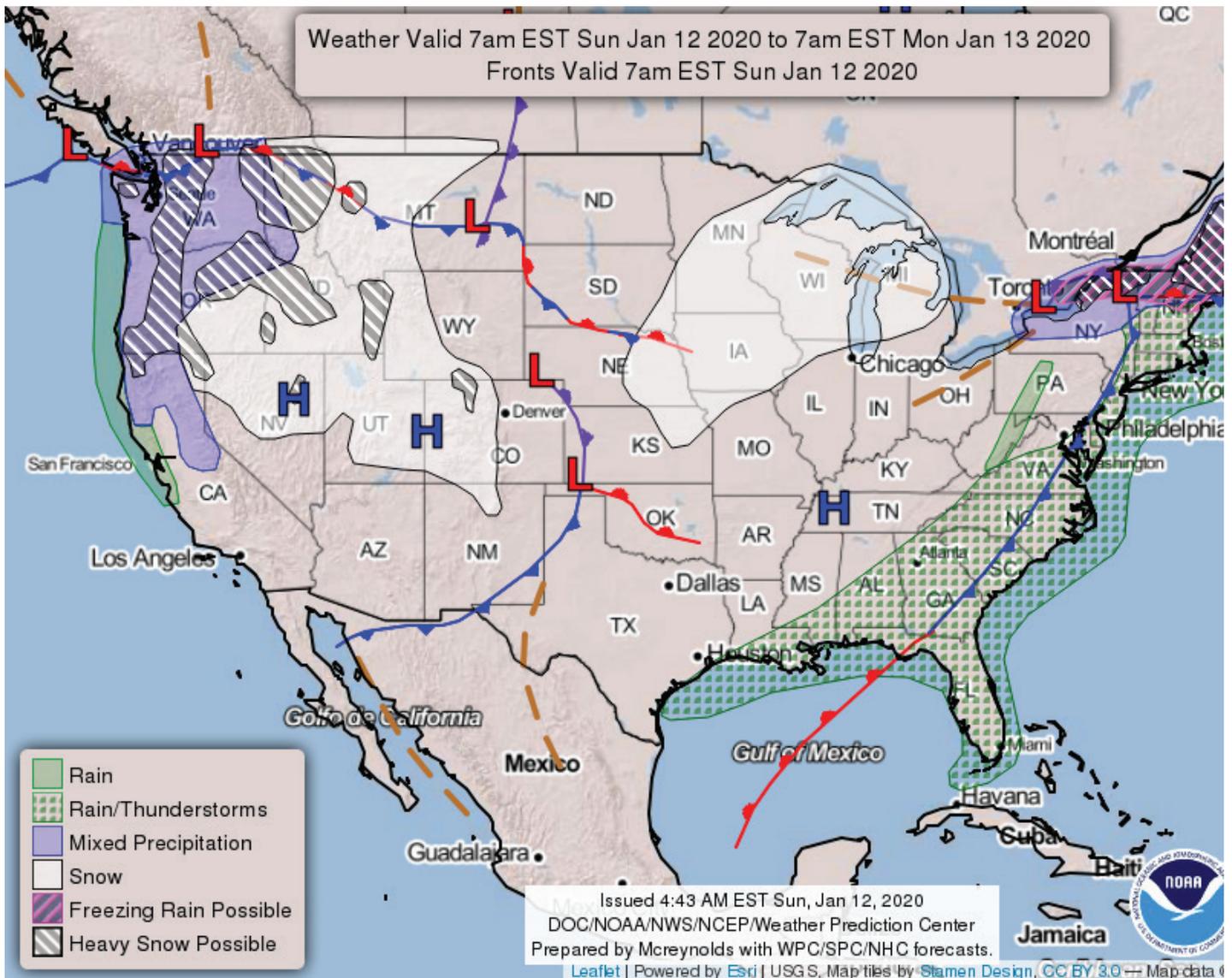
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.19

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:13 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:11 a.m.



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ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING!

A poor widow had two sons. She was extremely consumed with their success and feared that they would fail. Both were self-employed. One sold umbrellas and the other one sold fans.

The first thing she would do each morning was to run to the window to check the weather. If it was raining, she would sigh and say, "Oh, me, no one will want to buy fans today. It's going to be cool." And, if it was sunny, she would fret and say, "Oh my, no one will need an umbrella because it's not raining."

One day a friend said to her, "Listen, if the sun is shining, someone will buy a fan and if it's raining, someone will buy an umbrella. The weather is always changing so someone will always buy one or the other."

Many of us allow the conditions around us to control the attitude that is in us. It's "what's out there" that controls "what's in here." How unfortunate! We have things backward. When we are "in Christ," we need to go to Him and ask Him to fill our hearts with thanksgiving and joy for all that we have "in Him." We have all of His promises available to us in His Word. And, if we accept them and act on them, rain or sun, come what may – God is in control and will give us what we need. "Greater is He who is within you than he who is in the world!"

Prayer: Lord, help us to see things through Your eyes, and believe that Your care for us exceeds every need we will ever have. May we accept Your promises. In Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture For Today: 5:16-17 Always be joyful. Never stop praying. 1 Thessalonians

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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)

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News from the  Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

02-12-19-27-28

(two, twelve, nineteen, twenty-seven, twenty-eight)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

01-21-25-30-34, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 3

(one, twenty-one, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-four; Star Ball: seven; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$7.03 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$91 million

Powerball

03-21-23-31-59, Powerball: 3, Power Play: 2

(three, twenty-one, twenty-three, thirty-one, fifty-nine; Powerball: three; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$277 million

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 63, Ipswich 29

Baltic 55, Beresford 54

Central Lyon, Rock Rapids, Iowa 69, West Central 65

Chamberlain 63, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 57

Chester 51, Garretson 38

Clark/Willow Lake 67, Wilmot 45

Corsica/Stickney 69, Wagner 47

Custer 45, Sturgis Brown 41

Deuel 50, Aberdeen Roncalli 49

Elkton-Lake Benton 52, Alcester-Hudson 43

Faith 52, Harding County 40

Faulkton 65, North Central Co-Op 37

Flandreau 66, McCook Central/Montrose 56

Florence/Henry 50, Deubrook 40

Freeman Academy/Marion 54, Mitchell Christian 46

Huron 53, Mitchell 39

Lemmon 53, New Underwood 29

Lennox 44, Pipestone, Minn. 31

Leola/Frederick 70, Waverly-South Shore 50

Oelrichs 75, Philip 53

Pine Ridge 68, Lower Brule 39

Potter County 63, Strasburg-Zeeland, N.D. 50

Rapid City Central 57, Pierre 48

Rapid City Stevens 74, Aberdeen Central 63

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Red Cloud 43, Belle Fourche 36
Sioux County, Neb. 52, Edgemont 25
Sioux Falls Christian 75, Unity Christian, Iowa 67
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 69, Tea Area 54
Spearfish 56, Douglas 55
Sully Buttes 63, James Valley Christian 35
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 56, Kimball/White Lake 52
Winner 63, Gregory 52
Yankton 57, Sioux Falls Lincoln 38
Kadoka Area Kougat Classic=
Kadoka Area 62, Crazy Horse 28
Rapid City Christian 56, Jones County 41
Sunshine Bible Academy 77, Dupree 49
Timber Lake 47, Hot Springs 16

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 76, Deuel 21
Alcester-Hudson 37, Elkton-Lake Benton 19
Chamberlain 54, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 53
Clark/Willow Lake 59, Wilmot 40
Corsica/Stickney 54, Wagner 46
Custer 42, Sturgis Brown 39
Faith 66, Harding County 34
Faulkton 68, North Central Co-Op 35
Mitchell 60, Huron 52
Mitchell Christian 40, Freeman Academy/Marion 10
Pine Ridge 67, Lower Brule 41
Potter County 47, Strasburg-Zeeland, N.D. 36
Rapid City Central 50, Pierre 47, OT
Rapid City Stevens 46, Aberdeen Central 30
Red Cloud 59, Belle Fourche 29
Sioux County, Neb. 43, Edgemont 36
Sioux Falls Lincoln 69, Yankton 37
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 56, Watertown 36
Sisseton 51, Lisbon, N.D. 44
Spearfish 48, Douglas 45
St. Thomas More 56, Bridgewater-Emery 27
Sully Buttes 49, James Valley Christian 31
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 45, Kimball/White Lake 41
Unity Christian, Iowa 56, Sioux Falls Christian 26
Waverly-South Shore 50, Leola/Frederick 20
West Central 62, Central Lyon, Rock Rapids, Iowa 39
Winner 70, Gregory 40
CNOS Classic=
Ponca, Neb. 52, Dakota Valley 39
Kadoka Area Kougat Classic=
Kadoka Area 65, Crazy Horse 31
Rapid City Christian 51, Jones County 32
Mustang Seeds/DSU Classic=
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 31, Freeman 25, OT
Colman-Egan 41, Dell Rapids 32

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Dell Rapids St. Mary 50, Ipswich 45
Flandreau 56, Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. 33
Hamlin 56, Tri-Valley 38
Lennox 55, Crofton, Neb. 45
Viborg-Hurley 50, Arlington 37
Redfield Holiday Classic=
Langford 50, Lyman 39
Redfield 50, Dupree 42
Wolsey-Wessington 56, Northwestern 35

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

Wingett lifts S. Dakota St. past Purdue Fort Wayne 70-61

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP) — David Wingett had a career-high 21 points as South Dakota State beat Purdue Fort Wayne 70-61 on Saturday night.

Matt Dentlinger had 13 points for South Dakota State (13-7, 4-1 Summit League), which won its fourth straight game. Douglas Wilson added 13 points. Noah Freidel had eight rebounds for the visitors.

Brian Patrick had 16 points and six rebounds for the Mastodons (9-10, 2-2). DeMierre Black added 13 points. Jarred Godfrey had 13 points.

South Dakota State faces North Dakota at home on Wednesday. Purdue Fort Wayne takes on Oral Roberts at home next Saturday.

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

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

Umude scores 27 to lead South Dakota past Omaha 91-81

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Stanley Umude tied his season high with 27 points as South Dakota defeated Nebraska Omaha 91-81 on Saturday.

Tyler Hagedorn had 19 points, eight rebounds and five assists for South Dakota (11-7, 2-2 Summit League). Tyler Peterson added 14 points. Cody Kelley had 12 points for the hosts.

South Dakota entered halftime trailing narrowly, 45-43, but the Coyotes were able to outscore the Mavericks 48-36 in the second half to pull away for the victory. The Coyotes' 48 points in the second half were a season best for the team.

KJ Robinson had 20 points for the Mavericks (10-9, 3-1), whose four-game win streak ended with the loss. Wanjang Tut added 13 points. JT Gibson had 12 points.

South Dakota takes on North Dakota State on the road on Wednesday. Nebraska Omaha plays Denver on the road next Saturday.

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

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

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Duffy, Sjerven lead No. 22 South Dakota women to 77-44 win

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Ciarra Duffy and Hannah Sjerven combined for 14 points in a pivotal third quarter and No. 22 South Dakota beat Omaha 77-44 on Saturday for the Coyotes' fourth straight win

The Coyotes (15-2, 4-0 Summit League) extended a two-point first-quarter lead to 13 at halftime and then outscored the Mavericks (6-11, 1-3) 21-4 in the third quarter. Duffy had eight points and Sjerven six. Omaha was only 2-of-11 shooting in the third quarter with six turnovers.

Duffy finished with 16 points, a career-high 10 assists and six rebounds. Sjerven had 12 points, nine rebounds and three blocks, Taylor Frederick added 11 points and Chloe Lamb 10.

The Mavericks didn't have a player in double figures, going 3 of 15 from the arc and giving up 20 points off 21 turnovers.

The Coyotes re-entered the Top 25 this week. They have won 20 of the last 22 games in their series with Omaha.

More AP women's basketball: <https://apnews.com/Womenscollegebasketball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Man pleads not guilty in intoxicated hit-and-run death

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The man accused in the hit-and-run death of a Rapid City father of five has pleaded not guilty.

Zachary Fegueroa, 25, pleaded not guilty Friday to vehicular homicide, hit and run, and driving under the influence in Dec. 6 death of Joseph Martinez.

The Rapid City Journal reports if Fegueroa is convicted of all charges and found to be a habitual offender for a 2017 drug ingestion charge, he could be sentenced to up to 31 years in prison.

Martinez, 34, was struck and killed while walking in Rapid City.

The victim's wife, Timber Martinez, described her husband in court as a family man and hard worker. The couple have a 12-year-old, 7-year-old, twin 2-year-olds and a 2-month-old baby.

Prosecutors say a field sobriety test given to Fegueroa after he was located found he had a 0.13% blood alcohol content, well above the legal limit of .08%.

Prosecutors had also charged Fegueroa with marijuana possession, but the grand jury decided there wasn't enough evidence for that count.

Fegueroa has several other pending cases and multiple convictions related to unsafe driving dating back to 2011, court records show.

He recently pleaded guilty to his first DUI, failure to report an accident and eluding after multiple witnesses reported that he crashed into the Rapid City Public Library on May 24 and swerved as he drove away, court and police records show.

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Arlington 71, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 49

Brandon Valley 60, Brookings 35

Bridgewater-Emery 82, Freeman 35

Burke 71, Centerville 53

Crazy Horse 57, New Underwood 51

Crow Creek 81, McLaughlin 57

DeSmet 63, Dell Rapids St. Mary 44

Dell Rapids 60, Chamberlain 51

Elkton-Lake Benton 62, Colman-Egan 41

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Ethan 66, Wessington Springs 56
Faulkton 63, Hitchcock-Tulare 33
Gayville-Volin 51, Irene-Wakonda 48
Hill City 50, Edgemont 48
Jones County 48, Philip 40
Lake Preston 66, Estelline/Hendricks 61
Langford 55, Herreid/Selby Area 49
Madison 77, Tea Area 62
Menno 34, Alcester-Hudson 33
Northwestern 56, Britton-Hecla 45
Rapid City Central 64, Aberdeen Central 59
Rapid City Stevens 51, Pierre 46
Redfield 57, Aberdeen Roncalli 44
Sioux Falls Christian 72, Watertown 42
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 65, Sioux Falls Washington 54
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 63, Scotland 42
Vermillion 70, Parkston 52
Warner 46, North Central Co-Op 28
Waubay/Summit 58, Great Plains Lutheran 44
White River 90, St. Francis Indian 54
Big East Conference Tournament=
Consolation Semifinal=
Baltic 47, Chester 35
Beresford 45, Garretson 41
Semifinal=
Parker 53, Flandreau 50
Sioux Valley 80, McCook Central/Montrose 64

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 57, Brookings 43
Burke 45, Centerville 35
DeSmet 52, Dell Rapids St. Mary 33
Ethan 53, Wessington Springs 19
Faith 50, Bowman County, N.D. 38
Hamlin 65, Groton Area 39
Highmore-Harrold 52, Sully Buttes 46
Hill City 58, Edgemont 18
Irene-Wakonda 56, Gayville-Volin 25
Iroquois 50, Sunshine Bible Academy 27
Langford 63, Herreid/Selby Area 50
McCook Central/Montrose 40, Beresford 32
Menno 55, Alcester-Hudson 42
New Underwood 37, Lead-Deadwood 23
Rapid City Central 47, Aberdeen Central 39
Rapid City Stevens 81, Pierre 46
Sisseton 51, Milbank 29
St. Thomas More 55, Elk Point-Jefferson 26
Vermillion 51, Parkston 49
Wagner 61, Bon Homme 23
Waubay/Summit 57, Great Plains Lutheran 14

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Webster 48, Deuel 42

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

Lawmakers ready for 'fast and furious' session

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Figuring out how to fund delayed pay raises, clamping down on pipeline protesters, and legalizing hemp in a way to prevent people from getting stoned will top South Dakota lawmakers' agenda this year.

Lawmakers won't have much time to act. They are scheduled to be in session just 37 days over two months, meaning Republicans who control the Legislature will have to reach deals quickly with Gov. Kristi Noem.

"It's pretty fast and furious," Senate Majority Leader Kris Langer, R-Dell Rapids, said. "It's a really packed, crazy session."

With limited time in the Capitol, many lawmakers have put issues familiar from last year at the top of their to-do lists,

Lawmakers have also spent the last year studying the state's mental health and addiction resources and have several bills aimed at expanding treatment in rural areas, where they say there is an alarming rate of suicide. Looming over the session will be the ongoing struggles from some of the worst flooding in state history last year.

STATE BUDGET

When Gov. Kristi Noem presented her proposed budget in December, she warned the Legislature that things were looking lean. She recommended the state hold off on raising salary funding for teachers, state employees and medical providers. But lawmakers said they are looking for a way to give raises.

Lawmakers said they will be watching the revenue figures closely throughout the session. They've already received some good news — revenue is now \$5.1 million over estimates.

It will cost more than that to fund the pay increases. The Bureau of Finance and Management estimates that each percentage-point increase in funding will cost about \$16 million.

That may be tough to find in the budget. The state will receive about \$20 million less starting in July when the state can no longer tax internet access because of a congressional mandate. The state's agriculture industry is coming off a difficult year of flooding and trade uncertainty.

The state overhauled its education funding formula three years ago to boost teacher pay. The new law included a half-cent increase in sales tax and promised to increase funding every year by 3% or the inflation rate, whichever is less. For the last two years, though, the state has not met those requirements due to cash flow problems.

Democratic legislative leaders argue that the law requires the funding increases. Republicans are often quick to point out that the state's constitution requires a balanced budget.

Noem is also requesting funding for treatment of meth addiction, a Health Sciences building at the University of South Dakota, an upgrade of the state's emergency-response radio system, and grants to expand broadband internet access. She has proposed a \$4.94 billion budget, one of the smallest state budgets in the nation.

HEMP

The nearly year-long fight between the governor and lawmakers over industrial hemp may resolve quickly in the session.

Noem, until now a hemp opponent, has said she won't veto a bill legalizing industrial hemp if lawmakers can meet four "guardrails" for the law. She wants hemp to be tightly regulated and for legislators to come up with a way to pay for the hemp program. She also wants law enforcement to have the ability to search hemp fields and facilities.

Lawmakers said their plan already meets most of Noem's criteria and they would be ready to bring it up

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early in the session. The bill would allow farmers to grow hemp as long as they plant more than 5 acres and keep the THC content of the plant below 0.3%. THC is the compound that produces a high in marijuana.

The proposed law would also allow hemp to be processed into CBD oil and other products. Producers would need to obtain a license from the state and a permit to transport it.

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE AND 'RIOT-BOOSTING' LAWS

The Legislature will take on another issue of last year as it addresses potential demonstrations against the Keystone XL pipeline.

Noem has resurrected the topic of "riot boosting" after parts of a law created last year were nullified by legal proceedings. Many Republicans say they will support her renewed push to prosecute those who "urge" riots.

The Legislature last year passed two bills in a matter of days to address potentially disruptive demonstrations against the pipeline. One of the laws aimed to prosecute people who directed or encouraged rioting, known as "riot boosting."

The American Civil Liberties Union sued the state, arguing that the 2019 legislation violated freedom of speech. A federal judge in September blocked portions of the statutes, and the state agreed not to enforce parts of the laws in a settlement.

Noem has already floated draft bills that she says would permit free speech while prosecuting people who "urge" force or violence if it is "imminent." The proposed legislation would get rid of language the ACLU argued was too broad and could have been used against people encouraging rioters on social media. Instead, Noem's draft legislation attempts to limit riot boosting prosecution to people who directly urge force or violence and provides protection for peaceful protests.

Last year, the riot boosting laws sparked blowback from Native American groups that felt they were being targeted due to their opposition to the pipeline. Noem and lawmakers have said they will be taking more time this year to dig into the legislation and hear from people affected by the bills.

A proposal to create an emergency fund for cleanup in the event of a spill is also in the works. The company operating the pipeline would have to pay for the fund.

TREATING MENTAL HEALTH

Lawmakers say they are alarmed at South Dakota's suicide rate, especially in rural areas. They will bring a series of bills aimed at improving the state's mental health resources.

The bills aim to make mental health care available across the state through virtual consultations. Lawmakers want to make it possible for counselors or mental health care professionals to help people through phone calls, text, or video consultations. In order to do that, they say they will need broadband internet access in rural communities.

Farmers have indicated that many are struggling financially after a rough year of weather and international trade disruptions. South Dakota led the nation in unplanted acres last year after storms and flooding hit many parts of the state. Lawmakers said they will be looking for ways to help farmers recover and encourage growth in the state's economy.

Meet some key players in South Dakota's Statehouse

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A quick look at some key players in Pierre as the Legislature prepares to open its 2020 session:

GOV. KRISTI NOEM

Heading into her second session as governor, Noem says she'll work on communicating more clearly with lawmakers after some raised it as an issue. Noem described herself as "teachable."

Noem butted heads with the Legislature last year on hemp, vetoing legislation aimed at legalizing industrial production and getting the industry rolling in South Dakota. It looked like she was prepared to make the same fight this year until last week, when Noem said she would consider legislation if it met her criteria for tight regulation.

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Any state's governor has a strong hand, but Noem also should enjoy a benefit from making several appointments to fill vacancies in both House and Senate. In fact, she promoted two House members into the Senate and appointed three more members of that chamber — amounting to more than 10 percent of the body. The governor's power of appointments is laid out in the constitution, but it has some lawmakers grumbling.

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER KRIS LANGER

Langer, a Republican from Dell Rapids, is back in the role for her second session. She has often aligned with Noem, including on last year's hemp vote. She said she is in regular touch with the governor's office and will be working to make sure the Senate's priorities are on the governor's agenda. Her duties include organizing Republicans.

Langer is a real estate agent.

PRESIDENT PRO TEM BROCK GREENFIELD

Greenfield, R-Clarke, enters his 20th year, making him one of the most senior members. Clark decides who sits on which committee and assigns bills to committees, giving him some sway on their path to the floor.

He also sits on the Joint Committee on Appropriations, which handles the budget.

HOUSE SPEAKER STEVE HAUGAARD

Haugaard, a Republican from Sioux Falls, holds the post for the second year. Haugaard, an attorney, has championed the traditional GOP value of fiscal restraint; for example, last year he opposed a Noem proposal to spend \$1 million to expand pheasant habitat.

He has also staked out more ideological positions. He criticized a proposed council to boost preschool attendance, calling it a "transformational approach to instilling a more socialist agenda into the system." He also was a prominent voice in pushing free speech and intellectual diversity initiatives on college campuses that supporters said were necessary to foster conservative thought. Haugaard said the law was needed to counter "an increasing amount of socialism" on campuses nationwide.

HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER LEE QUALM

Qualm, a Republican from Platte, has demonstrated that he's willing to spar with the governor. He led the charge on legalizing industrial hemp over Noem's objections.

As a rancher, Qualm will also be a key voice from the agricultural community. After a year of floods and trade uncertainty, legislators said they will be looking for ways to help South Dakota farmers.

SENATE MINORITY LEADER TROY HEINERT

Heinert, a Democrat from Mission, is one of the leaders of a party that is at its lowest ebb in the Statehouse since the 1950s. But Heinert, a member of the Rosebud Sioux, has been instrumental in brokering cooperation between Indian tribes and the state government.

AG asks Legislature again to rein in presumptive probation

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg is again asking lawmakers to limit the circumstances in which judges are required to sentence low-level felons to probation rather than prison.

The proposal to rein in so-called "presumptive probation," part of a legislative package Ravnsborg announced Friday, amounts to a second try after the Legislature rejected the idea last year.

The presumptive probation law requires judges to give probation to certain nonviolent, lower-level felonies, including drug possession and use, unless there's a "significant risk" to the public. Ravnsborg made repealing it a cornerstone of his election campaign, but the effort died in the Legislature when it was estimated the repeal would cost the state \$54 million over ten years.

Ravnsborg isn't seeking a full repeal this year, but wants it restricted. He is introducing bills that would disqualify people from presumptive probation if they do not cooperate with law enforcement investigations and if they have more than two offenses in a 10-year period.

"Another year has passed with presumptive probation continuing to be a failed program," Ravnsborg said in a statement.

The attorney general also wants a centralized state clearinghouse to track missing people. The state's current website does not detail all the people who have gone missing in the state.

Ravnsborg is asking the Legislature to give him tools to track tobacco retailers and cigarette importers. He also wants to increase court costs to fund the 911 system and to make people over the age of 21 who make child pornography have to register as sex offenders.

Judge: Ballot petition circulators law is unconstitutional

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge has ruled a new state law that requires people who circulate ballot petitions to register and be included in a directory is unconstitutional.

In a written ruling Thursday, a federal judge in Aberdeen said the measure violates free speech rights enshrined in the First Amendment. The judge said the law placed "burdensome" regulations and discriminated against people supporting ballot initiatives.

The law required petition circulators to apply with the secretary of state for an identification number, provide personal information and be included in a directory. The South Dakota Legislature passed the law last year, and was to have gone into effect in July.

SD Voice, a grassroots ballot question committee operated by Cory Heidelberger of Aberdeen, challenged the law in federal court. A one-day trial took place in Aberdeen last month.

Heidelberger said he was thrilled with the ruling and called it a victory for the constitutional rights of South Dakotans, Aberdeen American News reported.

Heidelberger is a frequent proponent of liberal causes that clash with Republicans who control the Legislature and governor's office.

"The Legislature doesn't want change, and they want to knock people in the teeth if they want to make change," he said.

In South Dakota, initiatives and referendums can be placed on general election ballots if petitioners can collect the signatures of at least 5% of the total number of voters in the last gubernatorial election.

Rep. Jon Hansen, a Republican from Dell Rapids, sponsored the bill to regulate petitioners last year. He disagreed with the ruling and said the law was intended to prevent out-of-state petitioners from influencing South Dakota laws.

A representative from the Attorney General's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In a separate ruling released on Thursday, the same federal judge ruled that the state had to pay legal fees totaling over \$112,000 in two other lawsuits that challenged the constitutionality of South Dakota laws. Heidelberger and the South Dakota Newspaper Association, along with several other free speech groups, challenged a ban on out-of-state contributions to ballot measure committees.

The judge ruled in May that the law was unconstitutional because it discriminated against people from out-of-state who wanted to fund free speech activities in South Dakota. The judge also ruled it violated the Commerce Clause to the Constitution by interfering with the free flow of money.

New construction in Sioux Falls tops \$700 million again

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — New construction in Sioux Falls has topped \$700 million for the fourth consecutive year.

The city says 7,355 building permits were issued in 2019 with a total value of about \$771,500.

Construction included 635 single family homes with a total value of about \$150 million, 363 townhouses with nearly \$65 million in value and 643 multifamily dwellings valued at \$65 million.

Topping the list of the bigger projects are the \$68 million Jefferson High School, the nearly \$28 million Ben Reifel Middle School and the \$23 million First Premier Bank.

Australia turns from defense to offense in wildfire battle

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

BODALLA, Australia (AP) — Crews battling Australia's wildfires said Sunday that they have been able to turn from defense to offense for the first time in weeks thanks to a break in the weather.

Dale McLean, who is helping manage the response to a fire near the town of Bodalla in New South Wales state, was part of team that was bulldozing down small trees and burning scrub ahead of the fire's projected path to try to stop it from reaching a major highway by starving it of fuel.

"This fire took a major run about seven or eight days ago, and with the weather changing now, the weather settling down, the fire has settled down," he said. "The fire behavior has changed. So we're able to get in front of the fire now, get on the offensive."

Other workers echoed McLean's comments, saying cooler temperatures and mild winds have finally offered them a chance to make progress. The weather is expected to remain benign for the next week, although any deterioration in conditions after that could see the wildfires flare up again.

The progress came after a firefighter was killed by a falling tree. Bill Slade — one of the few professionals among mainly volunteer brigades battling blazes across southeast Australia — died on Saturday near Omeo in eastern Victoria state, Forest Fire Management Victoria Executive Director Chris Hardman said.

The 60-year-old married father of two was commended in November for 40 years of service with the forestry agency.

"Although we do have enormous experience in identifying hazardous trees, sometimes these tree failures can't be predicted," Hardman said. "Working on the fire ground in a forest environment is a dynamic, high-risk environment and it carries with it significant risk."

The tragedy brings the death toll to at least 27 in a crisis that has destroyed more than 2,000 homes and scorched an area larger than the U.S. state of Indiana since September. Four of the casualties have been firefighters.

The crisis has brought accusations that Prime Minister Scott Morrison's conservative government needs to take more action to counter climate change, which experts say has worsened the blazes. Thousands of protesters rallied Friday in Sydney and Melbourne, calling for Morrison to be fired and for Australia to take tougher action on global warming.

The prime minister said Sunday that his government was building resilience to the fire danger posed by climate change.

He said the government was developing a national disaster risk reduction framework within the Department of Home Affairs that will deal with wildfires, cyclones, floods and drought.

"This is a longer-term risk framework model which deals with one of the big issues in response to the climate changing," Morrison said.

He said his government accepted that climate change was leading to longer, hotter and drier summers, despite junior government lawmaker George Christensen posting on social media over the weekend that the cause of the latest fires was arson rather than man-made climate change. Another junior lawmaker, Craig Kelly, has also publicly denied any link between climate change and fire crisis.

State authorities have said a minority of fires are deliberately lit.

"The government's policy is set by the Cabinet. Our party group has a broad range of views," Morrison said of those within government ranks who reject mainstream climate science.

Morrison also announced that 76 million Australian dollars (\$52 million) would be spent on providing psychological counseling for firefighters and fire-affected communities as part of a previously announced AU\$2 billion (\$1.4 billion) recovery fund.

"There has been a deep scar in the landscape that has been left right across our country," Morrison said. "But I am also very mindful, as is the government, of the very real scars that will be there for quite a period of time to come for those who've been exposed to the trauma of these bushfires."

While the fire threat is most acute in rural communities, wildfire smoke that has choked some of Australia's largest cities is a reminder to many urban Australians of the unfolding disaster.

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Associated Press writer Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia, contributed to this report.

Are child crusaders, heroes fair game for adult critics?

By **LEANNE ITALIE** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The point where childhood ends and adulthood begins isn't as straightforward as it seems. Add the limelight and things can get complicated for young people who either voluntarily or through circumstances live very public lives.

Those public lives often come with heaping helpings of adult-size sniping. But are children and adolescents who find themselves under global microscopes still entitled to age-appropriate protection from the harshness of public discourse? And, more importantly, can they handle it?

Children and teens, in this era of blurred boundaries, have at their disposal mobile megaphones — for the first time in human history — to reach the entire world. That allows them to be heard, and potentially taken seriously, by hundreds of millions of people, all the way up to heads of state who include the president of the United States.

But does it give those who hear them the right to slap back? At what point does the imperative to treat children more gently collide with their decision to enter the marketplace of ideas — and what happens when it does?

In 2012, 16-year-old gymnast Gabby Douglas became the first African American woman — and woman of color of any nationality — to win Olympic gold in the individual all-around. The feat was joyous, but some on social media bemoaned that her hair wasn't perfect.

The teen clapped back: "Are you kidding me? I just made history. And you're focusing on my hair?"

When climate activist Greta Thunberg, who just turned 17, was named Time magazine's 2019 person of the year, President Donald Trump took to Twitter to call her choice "ridiculous," going on to say: "Greta must work on her Anger Management problem, then go to a good old fashioned movie with a friend! Chill Greta, Chill!"

To that, Thunberg responded by changing her Twitter profile to mock the president's words. She told The Intercept: "Honestly, I think it's funny."

Since Serena Williams was a teen, when Malala Yousafzai won the Nobel Peace Prize after being shot in the face, with the ascent of 18-year-old pop star Billie Eilish and in the aftermath of the mass school shooting in Parkland, Florida, that turned young survivors into gun control activists, the treatment of young people in the public eye has had its ups and downs.

"For anyone who shares public opinions about civic and social issues, like Greta Thunberg and the Parkland teens have done, it can cut both ways. It can be empowering for young people to use their voices in such a public way. Young people can also be especially effective in changing public conversations about important issues. People listen to young people in a different way," said Dr. Parissa Ballard, a developmental psychologist at Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

"At the same time, public political engagement can be very stressful and can put young people in a vulnerable position when they receive criticism or people publicly disagree," said Ballard, whose research focuses on the intersection of civic engagement and adolescent health and wellness.

Students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School who began speaking out for gun reform soon after the shooting there were already in a devastating position when they faced accusations that some were "crisis actors" and the group was under the manipulation of gun control advocates.

The teens were unfazed.

"There are people who are going to be putting us down. It doesn't matter. Everything we're doing, it can't be stopped," Diego Pfeiffer, an 18-year-old senior at the time, told The Miami Herald in February 2018. "We are children and we have a message. They are bashing survivors of a school shooting. You can go ahead, but our message is going to be heard loud and clear."

Development psychologists prefer to speak of stages when describing life's slide from childhood into adolescence and on to young adulthood, such as the onset of biological changes and shifts in social roles.

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Some use more rigid measures, considering childhood to extend through age 12, with adolescence roughly between 12 and 18 and young adulthood the period between 18 and 25.

Richard West, an Emerson College communications professor who focuses on family, bullying and identity, said that's only part of the story for young people who prematurely find themselves in adult spaces.

"These are individuals who are emotionally driven and passionately obsessed with having a dialogue," he said. "I don't feel that they should be held to a standard that we hold, for instance, a president or an ambassador."

Finding that line isn't easy.

"We all need to jump in. It's not just Greta's family. It's not the Parkland kids' families. It should be all of us jumping in when we see something or hear something that might be completely out of line with the values of this country," West said. "We don't have the value as a country of attacking young people who might be activists."

Jumping in is exactly what former first lady Michelle Obama did on Twitter after Trump's "chill" tweet about Greta.

"Don't let anyone dim your light," Obama urged Greta. "Like the girls I've met in Vietnam and all over the world, you have so much to offer us all. Ignore the doubters and know that millions of people are cheering you on."

Eilish, who grew popular in 2016 with her SoundCloud single Ocean Eyes, has long been surrounded by family in her entourage, including her parents and her older brother and collaborator, Finneas Baird O'Connell. But fame has had its rough spots nonetheless.

"I forget sometimes that they're not literally my friends," she told Variety of her fans. "It's weird, like, that's probably the biggest con in it all: that people I've never met think I'm really close friends with them. And then they forget that I'm not, and sometimes say stuff at meet-and-greets or post things that are joking or sarcastic about how bad I look in (a certain) photo, and I'm like, wow, that's so mean. But then I remember that it's just part of being friends — you make fun of your friends as a joke, and they make fun of you back — so it's all love, and I really, really don't want it to change."

Ballard, too, sees a key role for supportive adults when public young people face detractors, especially those like Greta and the Parkland survivors who are up against grown-ups with immense power and resources.

"Adults can support young activists by helping them understand the range of possible reactions they might get and to help manage their expectations about public political engagement," she said.

Daryl Van Tongeren, an associate professor of psychology at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, specializes, in part, on questions of morality.

"I think sadly in our society they do sometimes forfeit their childhoods, but I don't think that they should have to," he said. "I think as a society we view them as no longer being children and somehow we now have rights to kind of put them in a different realm, put them in a different category. It's a moment for us to pause and say, just because this is happening, does that mean that it's good or it's healthy or it's right?"

Williams, who is now 38 and owns 23 Grand Slam singles titles, knows some of the issues well.

"People have been talking about my body for a really long time," she told The Fader in 2016. "Good things, great things, negative things. People are entitled to have their opinions, but what matters most is how I feel about me, because that's what's going to permeate the room I'm sitting in."

Titans stun Ravens, head to AFC title game with 28-12 win

By BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer

BALTIMORE (AP) — With his bright red shoes and relentless running, Derrick Henry grabbed the spotlight and wouldn't let go.

When he was done leading Tennessee into the AFC championship game Saturday night, he did a lengthy victory lap around the Baltimore Ravens' home, slapping hands and taking selfies with Titans fans.

It has been quite a two-week ride.

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"It's not just me," Henry said after rushing for 195 yards and throwing a 3-yard touchdown pass in a 28-12 upset of the NFL's top team Saturday night. "It's a team effort. We're all playing collectively as an offense, as a whole. We're just locked in. We believe in each other. We communicate. It's working out there."

The Titans fear no one, and why should they with Henry rushing — and even throwing — the ball, and a big-play defense making clutch stops and turnovers?

One week after dominating defending Super Bowl champion New England, the Titans (11-7) eliminated Baltimore (14-3). The Ravens had won their last 12 games, with quarterback Lamar Jackson setting records and looking unstoppable.

On Saturday night, it was Henry who was unstoppable, despite Baltimore stacking eight men up front on almost two-thirds of his runs. At times, Henry used power to create space, at others the holes the line provided were huge.

"Watch us work," said Henry, the NFL's leading rusher this season. "We don't do too much talking. We just go work and believe in each other. That's our mentality. We're going to come in here and work. ... Focus on finishing."

Tennessee's defense had two interceptions of All-Pro QB Jackson, who also lost a fumble, and the Titans twice stopped Baltimore on fourth-and-1.

Henry's jump-pass to Corey Davis displayed yet another of his skills. He has completed three throws in four attempts in his career.

"I put it perfect, man," he said with a smile. "I haven't done that pass since high school. I feel I like I still got it."

But it's the way he plows over and through opponents that makes Henry — and the Titans — dangerous. Next week, they will go after their second Super Bowl trip and first since the 1999 season, either at Kansas City or Houston. The last sixth seed to get to the big game was Green Bay in the 2010 season; the Packers won it all.

Tennessee scored all of its points off takeaways or fourth-down stops.

Ryan Tannehill's throws to Jonnu Smith and Kalif Raymond, who missed the last two games in concussion protocol, gave Tennessee a 14-point edge.

Tennessee's first score came after tight end Mark Andrews, the Ravens' top receiver this season, mistimed his leap and had Jackson's pass deflect into the air. Safety Kevin Byard was there to pick it off.

Byard scooted 31 yards down the left side, and with a 15-yard personal foul penalty on Jackson added, the Titans were at the Baltimore 35. The hushed crowd then saw five straight Titans runs to the 4 before Earl Thomas came free untouched for an 8-yard sack.

Tennessee simply shrugged and Smith made a juggling catch in the left corner of the end zone. Replay determined he landed barely in bounds for a 7-0 lead.

A fourth-down stop with less than a yard to go — the first time in nine tries all season the Ravens failed on fourth-and-1 — set up Tennessee's next touchdown. Tannehill made it 14-0 with his gorgeous long pass that floated over Raymond's shoulder into his arms behind All-Pro defensive back Marcus Peters for a 45-yard touchdown. That throw accounted for just over half of Tannehill's yards passing for the entire game: 88.

The folks in the stands dressed in purple, who hadn't seen their team in such a deep hole since the end of September, had gone silent.

They did wake up for Baltimore's 12-play second-quarter drive that included a 30-yard completion to rookie Marquise Brown on third down. But the drive netted only Jason Tucker's 49-yard field goal.

Brown again was instrumental on a late 91-yard drive to Tucker's 22-yarder as he made a spectacular one-handed grab of a 38-yard pass, also on third down. Getting within one score in a half they were generally outplayed gave the Ravens little boost, though.

"We just beat ourselves," Jackson said. "I had a lot of mistakes on my behalf. Three turnovers. That shouldn't happen."

Henry's 66-yard romp on third-and-1 led to his passing TD on a direct snap in the third quarter, followed

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one play later by Jurrell Casey forcing Jackson's fumble, recovered by rookie Jeffery Simmons. Tannehill's 1-yard run made it 28-6.

"They were beating people with shock and awe in the first quarter," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said of the Ravens' winning streak. "We knew we had to do it with some turnovers and fourth-down stops. That's the only way you can do it. Make Tucker kick some field goals."

MORE HENRY

Henry's TD pass was the first by a running back in the playoffs since 1987, when Allen Rice of Minnesota managed it.

Henry is the first player with two games of 175 rushing yards or more in the same postseason. He has set the postseason single-game rushing record for the Titans in consecutive weeks.

He also has the most yards rushing through his first four postseason games, coming in with 366 and now is at 561, beating Hall of Famer Terrell Davis and Arian Foster, who were tied with 515 through their first four.

"It's going to be grind, grind, grind and then he's going to bust one," Vrabel said.

LAMAR'S LAMENT

Jackson's superb season ended with a major thud. He finished with gaudy numbers — 31 of 59 for 365 yards, 20 carries for 143 yards — and a 15-yard TD pass to Hayden Hurst. But the Ravens flopped ignominiously.

Jackson was better than in his previous playoff game, a wild-card loss to the Chargers last year. At halftime in that one, Jackson was 2 of 8 for 17 yards and an interception for a 0.0 quarterback rating. He came on in helping Baltimore make that one close in the second half.

"I don't care about what they say," Jackson said about the likely criticism of his postseason showings. "This is my second year in the league. I've got a great team with me. We're going to keep going and get ready for next year."

UP NEXT

Titans: On to either Kansas City or division rival Houston in the AFC title game.

Ravens: Their superb season and 3 1/2 months of winning are over and they head into the offseason way early than expected.

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

Storms sweep southern US, Midwest as death toll rises to 11

By JUAN A. LOZANO undefined

HOUSTON (AP) — Severe storms sweeping across southern portions of the U.S. and up into the Midwest were blamed Saturday in the deaths of at least 11 people, including two first responders, as high winds, tornadoes and unrelenting rain battered large swaths of the country.

Storm-related fatalities were reported in Texas due to icy weather, in Alabama from a deadly tornado and in Louisiana, where winds were so strong that a trailer home was lifted off its foundation and carried several hundred feet. A man drowned in Oklahoma and the storms even touched the Midwest with at least one death on an icy highway in Iowa. Hundreds of thousands of people were left without power from Texas to Ohio, parts of highways were closed in Oklahoma and Arkansas due to flooding and hundreds of flights were canceled at Chicago's international airports.

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson declared a state of emergency to assist crews working to restore power around the state.

Two first responders were killed and another was critically injured in Lubbock, Texas, Saturday morning after they were hit by a vehicle while working the scene of a traffic accident in icy conditions, officials said.

Police Officer Nicholas Reyna, 27, who had been with the department for one year, died at the scene. Firefighter Lt. David Hill, 39, was taken to a local hospital where he later died. Firefighter Matthew Dawson, 30, was hospitalized in critical condition.

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Lubbock Police Chief Floyd Mitchell called it an "extremely tragic day" for the city.

"If people would respect road conditions, things like this wouldn't have to happen," said Lubbock Fire Chief Shaun Fogerson.

Another person had died in Texas Friday night when a car flipped into a creek in Dallas as severe thunderstorms passed through. Lightning from Friday's stormy weather was suspected of causing fires that burned two houses but caused no injuries in the North Texas cities of Burleson and Mansfield.

A man drowned near Kiowa, Oklahoma, after he was swept away in floodwaters, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol said Saturday. Randall Hyatt, 58, of Wardville, was overwhelmed by rushing water while getting out of his stalled truck.

The Iowa State Patrol said roads were caked with ice early Saturday when a semitrailer on Interstate 80 overturned, killing a passenger in the truck east of Iowa City.

In Alabama, three people were confirmed killed near Carrollton in Pickens County, the National Weather Service in Birmingham tweeted. The Alabama Emergency Management Agency said the deaths were caused by an "embedded tornado within a long line of intense thunderstorms."

Earlier Saturday, in northwestern Louisiana, firefighters found the bodies of Jerry W. Franks, 79, and Mary Sue Franks, 65, near their demolished trailer in Benton, the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office said via Facebook. The winds were so strong the home of the couple, who were the in-laws of a parish deputy, was moved 200 feet (61 meters) from its foundation.

Willie Davis owns a barn near where the Franks lived. He told KTBS-TV that this wasn't the first time he'd seen storms like this.

"Four or five times that I've known that (storms) have been through they hit, tearing down trees and the barn and stuff like that," Willie Davis said. "But that's about all it normally does every time, ... this is the first time we've had any casualties."

The National Weather Service in Shreveport said a tornado with winds of around 135 mph (217 kph) had touched down in Bossier Parish. Drone footage showed smashed buildings, a large vehicle flipped on its side, toppled trees and debris scattered over a large area.

Also in Louisiana, Raymond Holden, 75, was killed in his bed when a tree fell on his home in Oil City, crushing him, according to the Caddo Parish Coroner's Office.

About 67,000 customers were without power in Alabama on Saturday night, according to Alabama Power. PowerOutage.us said Georgia had about 98,000 power outages Saturday evening, with tens of thousands of outages also reported in Mississippi and Louisiana. Outages occurred from Texas to Ohio.

In Tennessee, damage was widespread throughout Shelby County, the state's most populous county, which includes Memphis. There were numerous downed trees and power poles, some of which will need to be replaced, according to the utility.

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation said portions of several highways in the southeastern part of the state were closed due to flooding. The Arkansas Department of Transportation reported that portions of several state highways across the state, particularly in southeastern Arkansas, were closed due to downed trees, power lines and flooding.

Many streams were already at or near flood levels because of earlier storms, and heavy rains could lead to flash flooding across the region, forecasters said. Parts of Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois and Indiana were under flash flood warnings or watches on Saturday.

The storm, bringing the threat of ice and snow to the Chicago area, prompted the cancellation of more than 1,200 flights Saturday at Chicago's two main airports. Most cancellations occurred at Chicago's O'Hare International, according to the Chicago Department of Aviation's online flight-tracking website.

The weather service issued a winter weather advisory, flood watch and lakeshore flood warning for the Chicago metropolitan area for Saturday and a winter storm warning for adjacent areas of northwestern Illinois.

AP writer Rick Callahan contributed from Indianapolis.

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49ers win 1st playoff game in 6 years, 27-10 over Vikings

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — Richard Sherman anticipated the route for an interception and then watched the San Francisco 49ers run eight straight times for the touchdown that put them in control of their first playoff game in six years.

The dominant defense and powerful running game that carried the Niners to an 8-0 start this season delivered a 27-10 victory over the Minnesota Vikings in the divisional round Saturday.

"People keep disrespecting us. At the end of the day, all you can do is go out and execute," Sherman said. "It felt good. That's what we look like when we're totally healthy."

The return of injured defensive starters Dee Ford, Kwon Alexander and Jaquiski Tartt had the Niners (14-3) playing as they did in the first half of the season as they set a franchise playoff record by allowing only 147 yards.

Jimmy Garoppolo threw a TD pass on his opening drive as a playoff starter and then mostly watched his defense and running game take over from there. The top-seeded 49ers turned a pair of second-half turnovers by Minnesota (11-7) into 10 points.

"They're pretty good right?" tight end George Kittle said of his defense. "It's such a blast just to watch them, how they work together. ...

"If our defense keeps playing like that, all we have to do is not turn the ball over to win games"

Sherman set up Tevin Coleman's second short touchdown run of the game when he beat Adam Thielen to the spot to intercept Kirk Cousins for his third career playoff interception.

Coleman had five of the eight carries on the 44-yard drive as part of a 105-yard rushing performance.

"Those guys did very well," Coleman said of his offensive line. "They moved the guys back so I had clear holes to run through. So, yeah, they did a real good job."

Marcus Sherels' fumbled punt later in the third quarter led to a field goal that made it 27-10 early in the fourth quarter.

San Francisco didn't allow Minnesota to gain a first down for more than 27 minutes of game action starting late in the second quarter.

The Niners will host the NFC championship game next week against the winner of Sunday's game between Seattle and Green Bay.

Garoppolo threw an interception deep in his own territory late in the first half and then spent most of the second half handing the ball off to Coleman and Raheem Mostert.

There was little reason for coach Kyle Shanahan to take chances the way his defense completely bottled up talented runner Dalvin Cook. That took away Minnesota's play-action game and forced Cousins into becoming a drop-back passer.

"We didn't do enough offensively to give ourselves a chance to win the game," Cousins said. "It hurts right now. It's so raw right now, just falling short."

Cousins finished 21 for 29 for 172 yards with his only big play coming on a 41-yard TD pass to Stefon Diggs in the first quarter.

Cook was held to 18 yards on nine carries as the Niners defense was back to its dominant early season form as the bye week helped the defense get healthy again.

"That was the No. 1 emphasis all week," defensive lineman Nick Bosa said of the Minnesota running game. "We knew we were facing probably the best back we've faced all year with Dalvin, and we knew we had to earn the right to pass rush. So, that's what we did. We took the run as serious as we could, shut it down and then we ate."

San Francisco had six sacks and held Minnesota to 81 yards until late in the fourth quarter.

TAKE IT AWAY

Eric Kendricks intercepted a pass from Garoppolo late in the first half to give the Vikings the ball at the San Francisco 29. Minnesota couldn't capitalize with Ford getting a third-down sack in his return to the lineup from a hamstring injury. Dan Bailey's 39-yard field goal cut the Niners lead to 14-10 at the half. The

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interception was the 19th turnover this season by Garoppolo, who had the most giveaways in the regular season of any player who made the playoffs.

BLOCKING BACK

Garoppolo showed he has skills beyond his throwing. He threw a lead block on 255-pound linebacker Anthony Barr on a reverse by Deebo Samuel in the second quarter.

"Sometimes you have to remember you're not just a quarterback, you're a football player too," Garoppolo said.

Samuel fumbled the ball on the play but replay ruled his knee was down, negating the turnover. That proved especially important when Coleman capped the drive with a 1-yard TD run.

BURNED AGAIN

The Vikings scored on their second drive of the game when Diggs outmaneuvered Ahkello Witherspoon for a 41-yard TD catch. It was the fifth TD pass allowed by Witherspoon in the past three games and he was replaced at cornerback the following drive by Emmanuel Moseley.

INJURIES

Vikings: RT Brian O'Neill left with a head injury after a blindside block from Nick Bosa in the third quarter following Cousins' interception.

49ers: Mostert (calf) and Coleman (elbow) both got hurt in the second half.

UP NEXT

Vikings: The offseason.

49ers: NFC championship game next Sunday against either Seattle or Green Bay.

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

Under pressure, Iran admits it shot down jetliner by mistake

By **NASSER KARIMI** and **JOSEPH KRAUSS** Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — In the face of mounting evidence, Iran on Saturday acknowledged that it shot down the Ukrainian jetliner by accident, killing all 176 people aboard. The admission by Iran's Revolutionary Guard undermined the credibility of information provided by senior officials, who for three days had adamantly dismissed allegations of a missile strike as Western propaganda.

It also raised a host of new questions, such as why Iran did not shut down its international airport or airspace on Wednesday when it was bracing for the U.S. to retaliate for a ballistic missile attack on two military bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq. No one was hurt in that attack, carried out in retaliation for the killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in an American airstrike in Baghdad.

Iran's acknowledgment alters the narrative around its confrontation with the U.S. in a way that could anger the Iranian public. Iran had promised harsh revenge after Soleimani's death, but instead of killing American soldiers, its forces downed a civilian plane in which most passengers were Iranian.

On Saturday night, hundreds gathered at universities in Tehran to protest the government's late acknowledgement of the plane being shot down. They demanded officials involved in the missile attack be removed from their positions and tried. Police broke up the demonstrations.

President Donald Trump tweeted messages of support to Iranians who back protests of the government, saying he and his administration are behind them. In the tweets, Trump called on the Iranian government to allow human rights groups to monitor the protests and expressed support for the "brave, long-suffering people" of Iran.

Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the head of the Guard's aerospace division, said his unit accepts full responsibility for the shootdown. In an address broadcast by state TV, he said when he learned about the downing of the plane, "I wished I was dead."

He said he raised the possibility to his superiors that his forces shot down the plane as early as Wednesday morning because "the simultaneous occurrence of the launch and crash was suspicious."

Hajizadeh said Guard forces ringing the capital had beefed up their air defenses and were at the "high-

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est level of readiness," fearing that the U.S. would retaliate. He said he suggested Tehran should close its airspace but no action was taken.

He said the airline's pilot and crew had done nothing wrong, but an officer made the "bad decision" to open fire on the plane after mistaking it for a cruise missile.

"We were prepared for an all-out conflict," he said.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, expressed his "deep sympathy" to the families of the victims and called on the armed forces to "pursue probable shortcomings and guilt in the painful incident."

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy thanked the U.S, Britain, Canada and others for information about the crash and their support. He said that "undoubtedly helped" push Iran to acknowledge its responsibility for the crash. Zelenskiy said the crash investigation should continue and the "perpetrators" should be brought to justice.

The Ukrainian airline criticized Iran's decision to leave its airspace open despite the hostilities.

"It's absolutely irresponsible," Ukraine International Airlines vice president Ihor Sosnovskiy told reporters. "There must be protection around ordinary people. If they are shooting somewhere from somewhere, they are obliged to close the airport."

The plane, en route to the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, was carrying 167 passengers and nine crew members from several countries, including 82 Iranians, 57 Canadians — including many Iranians with dual citizenship — and 11 Ukrainians, according to officials.

Iranians had rallied around their leaders after the killing of Soleimani, who was seen as a national icon for building up armed groups across the region that project Iranian influence and battle the Islamic State group and other perceived enemies.

Hundreds of thousands had attended funeral processions across the country in a show of support for the Islamic Republic just weeks after authorities had quashed protests ignited by a hike in gasoline prices. Iran has been in the grip of a severe economic crisis since Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed crippling sanctions.

The shutdown of the plane and the lack of transparency around it, along with the restrained response to the killing of Soleimani, could reignite anger at the country's leadership.

President Hassan Rouhani acknowledged Iran's responsibility but blamed the downing of the plane in part on "threats and bullying" by the United States after the killing of Soleimani. He expressed condolences, calling for a full investigation and the prosecution of those responsible.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also deflected some of the blame, tweeting that "human error at time of crisis caused by US adventurism led to disaster."

The jetliner, a Boeing 737, went down on the outskirts of Tehran early Wednesday shortly after taking off from Imam Khomeini International Airport.

The U.S. and Canada, citing intelligence, said they believed Iran shot down the aircraft with a surface-to-air missile, a conclusion supported by videos verified by The Associated Press.

"This is the right step for the Iranian government to admit responsibility, and it gives people a step toward closure with this admission," said Payman Parseyan, a prominent Iranian-Canadian in western Canada who lost a number of friends in the crash.

"I think the investigation would have disclosed it whether they admitted it or not. This will give them an opportunity to save face."

As recently as Friday, Ali Abedzadeh, the head of the national aviation department, had told reporters "with certainty" that a missile had not caused the crash.

On Thursday, Cabinet spokesman Ali Rabiei dismissed reports of a missile, saying they "rub salt on a painful wound" for families of the victims.

Iran has invited Ukraine, Canada, the United States and France to take part in the investigation of the crash, in keeping with international norms. The Boeing 737 was built in the United States and the engine was built by a U.S.-French consortium.

Ukraine's president said its team of investigators, who are already on the ground in Iran, should continue their work with "full access and cooperation."

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Rouhani spoke Saturday with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and said the investigation was progressing rapidly. His website quoted him accusing the United States of driving the situation in the Middle East to a "dangerous level" and said all should try to return "full stability and security" to the region.

After the call, which was unusual because Canada severed diplomatic relations with Iran in 2012, Trudeau said Iran's acknowledgment was a first step but "many more steps must be taken." He demanded a complete investigation and for Iran to take full responsibility for shooting down the plane, including the payment of compensation to the families of the dead.

While the dead included 57 Canadians, a total of 138 of the passengers were headed to Canada, many of them international students.

The Ukrainian president, who also spoke with Rouhani on Saturday, said his government will also push Iran to compensate victims' families.

Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported that the supreme leader on Friday morning had ordered top security officials to review the crash and announce the results.

"If some individuals, in any position, were aware of the issue but made statements contradicting the reality or hid the truth for any reason, they should be named and tried," said Fars, which is close to the Guard.

Others speculated that the security forces may have concealed information from civilian authorities.

"Concealing the truth from the administration is dreadful," Mohammad Fazeli, a sociology professor in Tehran, wrote on social media. "If it had not been concealed, the head of civil aviation and the government spokesmen would not have persistently denied it."

Late Saturday, Britain accused Iran of violating international law after its ambassador was arrested and briefly detained during protests in Tehran. Iranian media said ambassador Rob Macaire was arrested outside a university and detained for more than an hour before being released.

U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said "the arrest of our ambassador in Tehran without grounds or explanation is a flagrant violation of international law."

Krauss reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai, Rob Gillies in Toronto, Jim Heintz and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow and Yuras Karmanau in Kyiv, Ukraine, contributed to this report.

'Holy Grail' digital effects rewinding the clock for actors

By MATT KEMP Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — With Martin Scorsese's "The Irishman" expected to battle "Once Upon a Time in... Hollywood" and "1917" for the best picture Oscar in February, all eyes are on the special effects team that made the sprawling crime epic possible.

"The Irishman" unfolds over decades, with the 76-year-old Robert De Niro and his co-stars playing their characters from their 30s into retirement age, a feat that's made the film one of 2019's most acclaimed movies.

It's all possible through new digital de-aging techniques that in the past year in cinemas have shaved decades from Samuel L. Jackson's face and turned back the clock to the 1990s for Will Smith. When Monday's Academy Award nominations are announced, "Captain Marvel" and "Gemini Man" could see their names called along with "The Irishman" in the visual effects category.

Each film has arrived at its reverse aging trick through a different technique, leading some to call 2019 a monumental year for de-aging in film.

To many, "The Irishman" stands out from the field, thanks to its complete avoidance of "tracking markers" — dots painted onto actors faces which allow computers to mathematically replicate facial movements and manipulate them as the director sees fit.

The youthful transitions of "The Irishman" are the work of Pablo Helman, visual effects supervisor at Industrial Light and Magic, who's an Oscar nominee for his work on "Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones" and "War of the Worlds."

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Helman says the decision to forgo tracking markers came directly from Scorsese and De Niro.

"He's not going to wear a helmet with little cameras in there," says Helman. "He's going to want to be in the moment with Joe Pesci and Al Pacino on set, with no markers on him. So, if you're going to capture the performance, how are you going to do that?"

Enter the "three-headed monster," a unique camera rig that has a director camera in the center and two "witness" cameras on either side shooting infrared footage. That allowed Helman to eliminate shadows created by on-set lighting. The shadows could potentially interfere with the geometric facial shapes constructed by de-aging software.

"You're not interrupting the director's thread of thinking," explains Helman. "You're not changing the light on set, but the computer can see in a different spectrum."

While the team at Industrial Light and Magic was working on "The Irishman," another group of technical wizards were experimenting with de-aging at director Peter Jackson's Weta Workshop in New Zealand, creating an entirely digital, 23-year-old version of Smith for the action movie "Gemini Man."

"Since I started visual FX 25 years ago it's been the Holy Grail," says Bill Westenhofer, one of the film's VFX supervisors.

"You have that many years of expertise of looking at a human face and knowing what's wrong. So, to try and get all the different things together and get it to pull off right, that's been the challenge."

To create the character of Junior — a younger clone of Smith's assassin Henry Brogan — the superstar wore the traditional gray tracksuit, complimented by a head rig with two cameras capturing his facial expressions via tracking markers.

"We decided (on) a ground up approach to build everything from scratch — from the skull all the way to the skin pores, all the way to the animation and the final kind of oil in the eyes was really the best approach we could take," says Stu Adcock, head of facial motion at Weta.

Before filming commenced on both "Gemini Man" and "The Irishman," the teams at ILM and Weta drew up test footage to show the films' directors that what they were suggesting was possible.

For "Gemini Man" it was a clip from the 1995 movie "Bad Boys" into which they inserted two shots of their new, digital Will Smith and asked Ang Lee to spot the "fake."

For "The Irishman," De Niro also returned to the 1990s, performing the Pink Cadillac scene from "Goodfellas" before being de-aged in post-production — convincing an initially skeptical Scorsese that he could bring the long-gestating project to life.

Helman and his team then spent two years looking through old movies and cataloging the targeted ages that De Niro, Pacino and Pesci would appear in "The Irishman." They created a program — similar to that used to create online "deepfake" videos where one actor's face is swapped for another's — which would check their work on the movie was heading in the right direction, with the system "spewing out" hundreds of images for cross-referencing.

Creating Junior required Smith to spend time in a photogrammetry booth where multiple cameras captured his likeness as numerous lights fired in different sequences, giving a base scan of the actor and analyzing the structure of his face from a skin pore level.

Ironically, considering Scorsese's vocal criticism of Marvel movies as "not cinema," a similar system was used to de-age Jackson in "Captain Marvel." A young Nick Fury was created by comparing footage from old Jackson movies with the work the actor did on set — again, using tracking markers.

"I looked at that face as, you know, maybe 'The Negotiator' face," says Jackson, referring to his 1998 movie of the same name, "Fortunately for them and for me, I had enough stuff from that period in my life that they could use a bunch of different facial expressions and films to put that face together that made sense to people who knew me from that time."

Darren Hendler, director of the Digital Human Group at Digital Domain and the man responsible for turning Josh Brolin into "Avengers" supervillain Thanos, was impressed by Jackson's appearance in the movie.

"That's more of a 2D-image based approach where they're taking the actor's performance and then they're painting and tracking certain frames. They're still using some of the actor's performance directly,

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but they're modifying it. It was very believable. It may not have been exactly what the young Samuel Jackson looked like, but it definitely looked de-aged."

"The de-aging of Samuel L. Jackson is absolutely fantastic," agrees Weta's Guy Williams, adding, "different approaches suit different requirements. It's not a one-size-fits-all kind of situation."

That's a sentiment echoed by Helman, who believes that 2019 was a watershed year for VFX.

"It's not by chance that we have several movies that have motion capture performance, facial performance, in three or four different ways. That shows that we're all thinking about digital humans.

"I mean, we all stand on each other's shoulders," Helman says. "I can't wait for somebody to pick this up and do something else with it, you know?"

Four dead as severe storm sweeps through southern US

The Associated Press undefined

BENTON, La. (AP) — Authorities say at least four people have died as severe storms sweep across parts of the U.S. South, bringing high winds and unrelenting rain.

The Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office in Louisiana said on Facebook that firefighters found the bodies of an elderly couple Saturday near their demolished trailer. The winds were so strong that the home was moved 200 feet from its foundation.

The deaths of the victims, who were the in-laws of a parish deputy, brings the storm-related toll in the state to three after a man was killed when a tree fell on his home in Caddo Parish on Friday.

Bossier Parish Sheriff Julian Whittington told The Associated Press that a truck driver and a Benton police officer had a close call after being shocked by a downed power line.

"A power line was hanging across the road and a eighteen wheeler truck ran into it and got hung up in it and the Benton officer got there to help him," Whittington said. Both were expected to survive.

Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas on Saturday morning were clear of the severe thunderstorms that had passed through the night before. One person died Friday night in Texas when a car flipped into a creek in Dallas. Additionally, lightning from Friday's stormy weather is suspected of causing two house fires in the North Texas cities of Burleson and Mansfield. Officials said no one was injured.

Homes were damaged or destroyed in Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas on Friday, but no injuries were reported. Downed trees and power lines were widespread.

According to PowerOutage.us, Louisiana and Mississippi had more than 54,000 power outages. Entergy Arkansas reported nearly 42,000 power outages Saturday morning, mostly in the southeastern part of the state. Southwestern Electric Power Co. reported nearly 5,000 customers in East Texas were without power Saturday morning.

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation reported Saturday morning that portions of several highways in the southeastern part of the state were closed due to flooding. The Arkansas Department of Transportation reported that portions of several state highways across the state, particularly in the southeastern portion of Arkansas were closed due to downed trees and power lines and to flooding.

On Alabama's Gulf Coast, Baldwin County canceled school activities including sporting events for Saturday. The National Weather Service warned of high winds and flooding and the potential for 10-foot-high (3-meter-high) waves on beaches, where northern visitors escaping the cold are a common sight during the winter.

Many streams already are at or near flood levels because of earlier storms, and heavy rains could lead to flash flooding across the region, forecasters said. Parts of Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois and Indiana were under flash flood warnings or watches on Saturday.

The storm, bringing the threat of ice and snow to the Chicago area, prompted the cancellation of about 1,000 flights Saturday at Chicago's two main airports.

The Chicago Department of Aviation's online flight-tracking website showed that as of 10:30 a.m. Saturday about 950 flight cancellations were reported at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport and more than 50 flights had been canceled at Midway International Airport.

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Delays at O'Hare and Midway were averaging around 15 minutes, the department said.

The weather service issued a winter weather advisory, flood watch and lakeshore flood warning for the Chicago metropolitan area for Saturday and a winter storm warning for adjacent areas of northwestern Illinois.

The weather service said rain, possibly mixed with snow, freezing rain and sleet was expected through Saturday afternoon in the Chicago area before changing by evening over to snow and sleet, possibly mixed with freezing rain.

Breezy conditions were forecast with gusts as high as 45 mph (72 kph).

AP writer Juan A. Lozano contributed to this report from Houston. Rick Callahan contributed from Indianapolis.

Trump goes out of his way to take a bow, again

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was wonderful news: Researchers reported this past week the largest-ever one-year decline in the U.S. cancer death rate during 2017. And President Donald Trump didn't miss the chance to take a bow.

Trump tweeted: "U.S. Cancer Death Rate Lowest In Recorded History! A lot of good news coming out of this Administration."

While many presidents have acted as the cheerleader in chief for the good things that happened on their watch, the cancer tweet showed how the president has taken the art of self-marketing to a whole new level.

From foreign policy initiatives to the choice of music at White House events, from the prevalence of "Merry Christmas" greetings to the title of the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade deal (USMCA), Trump is happy to give himself a public pat on the back — repeatedly — for his great ideas.

As for cancer, the record drop occurred during Trump's first year in office and was part of a long-running drop that began nearly three decades ago as declining smoking rates and advances in treatment have led to falling rates of lung cancer illnesses and deaths.

But for the president, it was another message well received by his throngs of Twitter followers, with more than 161,000 people liking his tweet and another 25,000 retweeting it as of Friday.

It was all a bit much for Democratic Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, a breast cancer survivor. "Cancer rates dropped before you took office. Hopefully they keep dropping because Congress rejected your cruel research budgets, which sought billions in CUTS to @NIH and the National Cancer Institute. This is good news despite you - not because of you," she tweeted.

The president has supported cutting funding for the agency that oversees health research, although Congress has rejected his recommendations. In the current fiscal year, Trump recommended cutting more than \$4.5 billion in funding from the National Institutes of Health. In the end, he signed into law a \$2.6 billion boost.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, said there is a sound strategy to the president's efforts.

"To the extent that basically everything in the world that you like he's taking credit for, he's making more salient that your world is filled with positive things while he's president, whether he deserves credit or not," Jamieson said.

Trump also extended credit-taking this past week to international affairs.

At a rally Thursday, Trump said he had a hand in the latest Nobel Peace Prize, which went to Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

"I made a deal, I saved a country," Trump said without mentioning the country by name. "And I just heard the head of that country is now getting the Nobel Peace Prize for saving the country. ... Did I have something to do with it? Yeah. But that's the way it is."

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Ahmed accepted the prize in December for making peace with longtime rival Eritrea and other reforms. A senior Ethiopian official told The Associated Press the remarks referred to a different issue — preventing further tensions between Ethiopia and Egypt over a massive dam that Ethiopia is completing on the Nile river. Egypt says the dam threatens its water supply. Ethiopia says it's needed for development.

The official asserted that Egypt's president lobbied Trump over the disputed dam project, leading to the U.S. taking a role in the discussions. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media on the matter.

"President Trump really believes he avoided a war as such ... but that was not the case," the official said.

The president can cite strong economic numbers to go with his presidency — and does he ever.

The stock market regularly hits new records. The unemployment rate is low. Economic progress is the kind of bread-and-butter boasting all presidents do, regardless of how much responsibility they ultimately bear for that progress.

Jamieson said that fits with the public traditionally giving the incumbent credit when the economy is doing well and blame when it's not — regardless of whether it's deserved. She said that by veering into categories such as cancer, which has touched and scarred virtually every family at some point, he runs the risk of the many voters doing a double-take and asking what specifically he did.

"By taking credit for things that he obviously does not deserve credit for, such as the drop in the cancer death rate, you raise the possibility that the public will say, 'What else is he taking credit for that he should not get credit for?'" Jamieson said.

While Jamieson sees strategy in the president's credit-taking, others see a personality trait — and not necessarily a healthy one.

Wayne Fields, author of "Union of Words: A History of Presidential Eloquence," said he couldn't think of another president who approaches Trump's level when it comes to self-congratulation.

Fields said: "Some will say this is just part of his routine, this is just part of his act. It may be, but I also think it's part of his character and part of his need."

Associated Press writer Elias Meseret in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, contributed to this report.

Oman state TV says Haitham bin Tariq Al Said is Oman's new sultan after the death of longtime ruler Qaboos bin Said

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Oman state TV says Haitham bin Tariq Al Said is Oman's new sultan after the death of longtime ruler Qaboos bin Said.

Trump ups Iran accusations, says 4 US embassies targeted

By BEN FOX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Confronted by persistent questions about his military action in the Middle East, President Donald Trump and his top officials offered a string of fresh explanations Friday, with Trump now contending Iranian militants had planned major attacks on four U.S. embassies.

Just hours earlier, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had said the U.S. didn't know when or where attacks might occur. Trump and other officials insisted anew that Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani had posed an imminent threat to the U.S., but they rebuffed repeated attempts to explain what they meant by "imminent."

Trump, meanwhile, announced additional sanctions against Iran, which he had promised after a barrage of missiles fired by the Islamic Republic against American bases in Iraq earlier this week.

Those Iranian missiles, which caused no casualties, were prompted by the U.S. drone strike that killed Gen. Qassem Soleimani last week in Baghdad. That U.S. assault set off a chain of events that included the unintentional downing of a Ukrainian jetliner by the Iran military, and calls by the Iraqi government to expel U.S. troops from their country.

At the White House, Trump issued an executive order adding additional U.S. sanctions to the already long list his administration had imposed in an effort to force Iran to accept a new agreement that would

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curb its nuclear program and to halt support for militant groups throughout the Middle East.

Trump declared the U.S. was holding Iran responsible for attacks against the United States as well as a threat to U.S. service members, diplomats and civilians — an apparent reference to the justification for killing Soleimani.

"The United States will continue to counter the Iranian regime's destructive and destabilizing behavior," he said.

But Trump and others faced continuing questions over their claims of an "imminent" threat. Members of Congress said Pompeo and other officials did not provide sufficient detail or justification in briefings this week.

Define what you mean by imminent, Pompeo was asked Friday at a White House news conference.

"I don't know exactly which minute," Pompeo said. "We don't know exactly which day it would have been executed, but it was very clear. Qassem Soleimani himself was plotting a broad, large-scale attack against American interests and those attacks were imminent."

Both Pompeo and Trump had said U.S. embassies were threatened. The secretary of state broadened it to include "American facilities," including military bases throughout the region. "This was going to happen, and American lives were at risk," he said.

Trump gave a more worrisome number but still no specifics in a later comment.

"I can reveal that I believe it probably would've been four embassies," he told Fox News in an interview taped Friday.

He spoke amid revelations by U.S. officials that the American military had tried, but failed, to kill another senior Iranian commander on the same day that Soleimani was killed. The targeting of Abdul Reza Shahlai was apparently part of an effort to cripple the leadership of Iran's Quds Force, which the U.S. has designated a terror organization along with the larger Islamic Revolutionary Guard Force.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the killing of Soleimani "provocative and disproportionate," and other members said they were unconvinced after a closed-door briefing on the intelligence.

"President Trump recklessly assassinated Qasem Soleimani," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, a Washington state Democrat. "He had no evidence of an imminent threat or attack."

The new sanctions were in immediate response to Iran's firing of a barrage of missiles at American bases in neighboring Iraq this week after the killing of Soleimani. No one was injured. The larger U.S. goal is to force Iran to negotiate a new agreement on limiting its nuclear program.

In 2018, Trump withdrew from the nuclear agreement signed under President Barack Obama that traded curbs on the program for the easing of sanctions. Since then, the administration has added additional economic measures that have created hardship in Iran and brought its oil revenue to historic lows but have failed to bring the Iranian government to the negotiating table.

The sanctions added Friday include measures aimed at eight senior Iranian officials involved in what Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin called "destabilizing" activities throughout the Middle East as well as Tuesday's missile barrage.

Those measures, which would freeze any assets the officials have in U.S. jurisdiction and prohibit financial transactions with them, are largely symbolic since such senior figures are unlikely to have assets under American control after decades of hostility between the two nations.

But other measures announced Friday could have a significant effect on strategically important sectors of the Iranian economy, said Ben Davis, chief research officer at research and data analytics firm Kharon.

The executive order grants the administration power to place anyone involved, even indirectly, in the construction, manufacturing, textile or mining sector on a global financial blacklist. It also targets 17 of the largest steel and iron manufacturers — one of the few growth spots in the hobbled Iranian economy — along with three foreign companies, including two based in China, under secondary sanctions.

"It sends a signal to other foreign firms that continue to do business with Iranian steel producers that this is off limits," said Davis, a former Treasury Department official.

Adnan Mazarei, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said the sanctions will hurt an Iranian economy that was forced to cut fuel subsidies earlier this year, triggering nationwide

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protests, but they also will make it harder for government to negotiate with the U.S.

"This will be seen as another sign that the U.S. government cannot be taken at its word when it says it wants to negotiate," Mazarei said.

Mnuchin insisted the sanctions are working and have deprived Iran of tens of billions of dollars. "They would be using that for terrorist activities throughout the region and to enable them to do more bad things," he said. "And there's no question, by cutting off the economics to the region, we are having an impact."

Associated Press writer Chris Rugaber contributed to this report.

Pelosi to send impeachment to Senate for historic trial

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the House will take steps next week to transmit the articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, ending a three-week standoff but confronting the Senate with only the third trial in U.S. history to remove a chief executive.

In a letter to her Democratic colleagues, Pelosi said Friday she was proud of their "courage and patriotism" and warned that senators now have a choice as they consider the charges of abuse and obstruction against the president.

"In an impeachment trial, every Senator takes an oath to do 'impartial justice according to the Constitution and laws,'" Pelosi wrote. "Every Senator now faces a choice: to be loyal to the President or the Constitution."

The trial could begin next week. The Constitution gives the House the sole power to impeach a president, but the Senate the ability to render a verdict when it convenes as the Court of Impeachment.

Pelosi was particularly upbeat Friday as she strode through the Capitol, despite the mounting pressure on her to quit delaying the trial. Her decision to end the showdown with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell does not fully bring closure to the question of whether the Senate will consider new witnesses, as some want, shifting pressure on senators to decide.

Trump swiftly signaled his intention of blocking any testimony from John Bolton, the brash former national security adviser who could be a wildcard witness in the trial. Bolton has said he would appear before the Senate if he received a subpoena.

At the same time, a key centrist GOP Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, whose vote is among those most watched, announced Friday she was in discussions with other Republicans on a strategy that would allow the Senate to hear new testimony.

While the rules of Senate trial remain unsettled, the outcome is not. Trump is widely expected to be acquitted of the charges that he abused power by pressuring Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden, then obstructed Congress in its investigation. No president has ever been removed by the Senate.

"Ridiculous," Trump told Fox News' Laura Ingraham about the speaker's gambit. "Nancy Pelosi will go down as the least successful speaker of the House in the history of our nation," he said.

Asked if he would invoke executive privilege to block Bolton's testimony, Trump said, "Well I think you have to for the sake of the office."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who has been working closely with the White House on strategy, said Friday afternoon that the Senate is "anxious to get started."

Republicans have the leverage, with a slim 53-47 Senate majority, if McConnell can keep GOP senators on board with his strategy. So far, they are supportive of modeling the trial after the one used in the last presidential impeachment, of Bill Clinton, 20 years ago. It set out a path for starting the trial and voting on witnesses later.

Despite McConnell's wishes for a speedy trial, some Republicans in his caucus have indicated that they are open to witnesses. It takes just 51 senators to set the rules, and Democrats have been trying to win over wavering GOP senators to vote with them on hearing new testimony.

"I am hopeful that we can reach an agreement on how to proceed with the trial that will allow the op-

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portunity for witnesses for both the House managers and the President's counsel if they choose to do so," Collins said. "It is important that both sides be treated fairly."

Since the House vote on Dec. 18 to impeach the president, the showdown between Pelosi and McConnell, the two power centers in Congress, has consumed Capitol Hill and scrambled the political dynamics.

The speaker declined to send the articles to the Senate until she knew there would be a fair trial with witness testimony. She also asked McConnell for details on the trial structure she could decide who to appoint as impeachment managers. McConnell rebuffed all over her demands.

On Friday, Pelosi ended the stalemate by saying she had asked House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler to be prepared to bring to the floor next week a resolution to appoint managers and transmit the articles of impeachment to the Senate. She did not announce a date for the House vote.

McConnell indicated Friday the trial would start soon. "We'll get about it as soon as we can," he said.

Transmittal of the documents and naming of House impeachment managers are the next steps needed to start the Senate trial. Yet questions remain in the Senate on the scope, format and duration.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer is eager to test Senate Republicans, especially those like Collins who are up for re-election in 2020, with votes to compel testimony from Bolton, acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and others who have so far resisted appearing before Congress.

"Senate Democrats are ready for the trial to begin and will do everything we can to see that the truth comes out," Schumer said.

Bolton, who was present for several of the internal White House discussions about Ukraine policy that were at the heart of the Democrats' impeachment case, is among the most compelling of four witnesses suggested by Schumer.

The former national security adviser clashed with the president's Ukraine policy, saying he didn't want to be part of any "drug deal" being cooked up. He called Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, who others have testified was orchestrating an alternative foreign policy outside of official channels, a "grenade" that was going to go off.

Chuck Cooper, an attorney for Bolton, declined to comment.

The House impeached Trump in December on the charge that he abused the power of his office by pressuring Ukraine's new leader to investigate Democrats, using as leverage \$400 million in military assistance for the U.S. ally as it counters Russia at its border. Trump insists he did nothing wrong, but his defiance of the House Democrats' investigation led to an additional charge of obstruction of Congress.

On a July telephone call with Ukraine's new president, Trump asked his counterpart to open an investigation into Democrat Joe Biden, who is running for his party's presidential nomination, and his son Hunter while holding up military aid for Ukraine. A Ukrainian gas company had hired Hunter Biden when his father was vice president and the Obama administration's point man on Ukraine. There is no evidence of wrongdoing by either Biden.

It's still unclear who Pelosi will appoint as impeachment managers to prosecute the case in the Senate.

Nadler, D-N.Y., and House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., will most likely lead the team.

What was more certain is that the group will be more diverse than the 1999 team in Clinton's trial, who were all male and white. Pelosi is expected to ensure the managers are diverse in gender and race, and also geographically.

Associated Press writers Laurie Kellman, Alan Fram, Andrew Taylor, Darlene Superville and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

White House considering dramatic expansion of travel ban

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, LISA MASCARO and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is considering dramatically expanding its much-litigated travel ban to additional countries amid a renewed election-year focus on immigration by President Donald Trump, according to six people familiar with the deliberations.

A document outlining the plans — timed to coincide with the third anniversary of Trump's January 2017 executive order — has been circulating the White House. But the countries that would be affected if it moves forward are blacked out, according to two of the people, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the measure has yet to be finalized.

It's unclear exactly how many countries would be included in the expansion if it proceeds, but two of the people said that seven countries — a majority of them Muslim — would be added to the list. The most recent iteration of the ban includes restrictions on five majority-Muslim nations: Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, as well as Venezuela and North Korea.

A different person said the expansion could include several countries that were covered in the first iteration of Trump's ban, but later removed amid rounds of contentious litigation. Iraq, Sudan and Chad, for instance, had originally been affected by the order, which the Supreme Court upheld in a 5-4 vote after the administration released a watered-down version intended to withstand legal scrutiny.

Trump, who had floated a banning all Muslims from entering the country during his 2016 campaign, criticized his Justice Department for the changes, tweeting that DOJ "should have stayed with the original Travel Ban, not the watered down, politically correct version they submitted to S.C."

The countries on the proposed expansion list include allies that fall short on certain security measures. The additional restrictions were proposed by Department of Homeland Security officials following a review of security protocols and "identity management" for about 200 countries, according to the person.

White House spokesman Hogan Gidley declined to confirm the plan, but praised the travel ban for making the country safer.

"The Travel Ban has been very successful in protecting our Country and raising the security baseline around the world," he said in a statement. "While there are no new announcements at this time, common-sense and national security both dictate that if a country wants to fully participate in U.S. immigration programs, they should also comply with all security and counter-terrorism measures -- because we do not want to import terrorism or any other national security threat into the United States."

Several of the people said they expected the announcement to be timed to coincide with the third anniversary of Trump's first, explosive travel ban, which was announced without warning on Jan. 27, 2017 — days after Trump took office. That order sparked an uproar, with massive protests across the nation and chaos at airports where passengers were detained.

The current ban suspends immigrant and non-immigrant visas to applicants from the affected countries, but it allows exceptions, including for students and those who have established "significant contacts" in the U.S.. And it represents a significant softening from Trump's initial order, which had suspended travel from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen for 90 days, blocked refugee admissions for 120 days and suspended travel from Syria.

That order was immediately blocked by the courts, prompting a months-long effort by the administration to develop clear standards and federal review processes to try to withstand legal muster. Under the current system, restrictions are targeted at countries the Department of Homeland Security says fail to share sufficient information with the U.S. or haven't taken necessary security precautions, such as issuing electronic passports with biometric information and sharing information about travelers' terror-related and criminal histories.

The new proposal was also quickly drawing sharp criticism.

"Different Muslim Ban — same xenophobic Administration," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash. "An expanded Muslim Ban will worsen our relationships with countries around the world. It won't do anything to make our country safer. It will harm refugees, alienate our allies and give extremists propaganda for

recruitment.”

An official with Refugees International, a nonprofit that advocates for the displaced worldwide, said the news was very disappointing.

“The news that President Trump is planning to add countries to his travel ban should be heartbreaking to all Americans,” said U.S. Senior Advocate Yael Schacher. “Thousands of people have been cruelly and unreasonably separated from relatives because of the already existing ban. They have been stranded in conflict zones like Syria, Yemen, and Somalia. This is a shameful attempt by the President to misuse his power to expand a ban that principally impacts individuals from the Muslim world.”

Under the existing order, Cabinet secretaries are also required to update the president regularly on whether countries are abiding by the new immigration security benchmarks. Countries that fail to comply risk new restrictions and limitations, while countries that comply can have their restrictions lifted.

The discussions come as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi prepares to transmit to the Senate the articles of impeachment the Democratic-led House passed against Trump late last year, launching a formal impeachment trial just as the 2020 election year gets underway. Trump in December became just the third president in history to be impeached by the House. The Republican-controlled Senate is not expected to remove him from office.

Trump ran his 2016 campaign promising to crack down on illegal immigration and spent much of his first term fighting lawsuits trying to halt his push to build a wall along the southern border, prohibit the entry of citizens from several majority-Muslim countries and crack down on migrants seeking asylum in the U.S., amid other measures.

He is expected to press those efforts again this year as he ramps up his reelection campaign and works to energize his base with his signature issue, inevitably stoking Democratic anger.

Just this week, a coalition of leading civil rights organizations urged House leaders to take up the No Ban Act, legislation to end Trump’s travel ban and prevent a new one.

The bill introduced last year by Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif., with Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., in the Senate, would impose limits on the president’s ability to restrict entry to the U.S. It would require the administration to spell out its reasons for the restrictions and specifically prohibit religious discrimination.

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writers Matthew Lee and Colleen Long contributed to this report from Washington.

Texas governor to reject new refugees, first under Trump

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Texas will no longer accept the resettlement of new refugees, becoming the first state known to do so under a recent Trump administration order, Gov. Greg Abbott said Friday.

Abbott’s announcement could have major implications for refugees coming to the United States. Texas has large refugee populations in several of its cities and has long been a leader in settling refugees, taking in more than any other state during the 2018 governmental fiscal year, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Since the 2002 fiscal year, Texas has resettled an estimated 88,300 refugees, second only to California, according to the Pew Research Center.

In a letter released Friday, Abbott wrote that Texas “has been left by Congress to deal with disproportionate migration issues resulting from a broken federal immigration system.” He added that Texas has done “more than its share.”

Abbott argued that the state and its non-profit organizations should instead focus on “those who are already here, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless — indeed, all Texans.”

It wasn’t clear how Abbott’s letter might affect any currently pending refugee cases.

Refugee groups sharply criticized the Republican governor. Ali Al Sudani, chief programs officer of Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, predicted that some refugees with longstanding plans to come to

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Texas would have flights rescheduled or delayed. Al Sudani settled in Houston from Iraq in 2009 and now works to resettle other refugees.

"You can imagine the message that this decision will send to them and to their families," Al Sudani said. "It's very disappointing and very sad news, and honestly, this is not the Texas that I know."

Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins said he had met refugees in Dallas who had previously served as interpreters or aides for U.S. soldiers.

"You have people who are fleeing violence, people who are assisting us in the war on terror, who are having the door slammed in their faces," said Jenkins, a Democrat who is the county's chief administrative official.

President Donald Trump announced in September that resettlement agencies must get written consent from state and local officials in any jurisdiction where they want to help resettle refugees beyond June 2020. Trump has already slashed the number of refugees allowed into the country for the 2020 fiscal year to a historic low of 18,000. About 30,000 refugees were resettled in the U.S. during the previous fiscal year.

Governors in 42 other states have said they will consent to allowing in more refugees, according to the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, which works with local agencies throughout the U.S. to resettle refugees. The governors who haven't chimed in are all Republicans and are from Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Wyoming.

Fierce debates have occurred in several parts of the country, including North Dakota and Tennessee, over whether to opt into refugee resettlement under the executive order. Many Republican governors have been caught between immigration hardliners and some Christian evangelicals who believe helping refugees is a moral obligation.

LIRS is also part of a lawsuit challenging the order. A federal judge on Wednesday heard arguments on a request by resettlement agencies to prevent the Trump administration from enforcing it.

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, LIRS' CEO, called Abbott's decision "a devastating blow to a longstanding legacy of refugee resettlement in the state." Local officials in Houston, Dallas, and other cities will not be able to take in refugees over the governor's objection, she said.

"There are some refugee families who have waited years in desperation to reunite with their family who will no longer be able to do so in the state of Texas," she said.

Abbott has tried to stop refugees before, declaring in 2015 that Texas would not welcome people from Syria following the deadly Paris attacks that November. At the time, the administration of former President Barack Obama continued to send refugees to Texas and other states led by Republican governors who were opposed to it.

Al Sudani, of Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, pointed out that even if refugees are resettled in a different state, they can travel freely within the U.S. and move wherever they choose.

"Literally you can take the bus the next day and come to Texas," he said.

This version corrects the month that President Donald Trump issued his executive order to September.

US blames Iran for Ukrainian jetliner downing, pledges probe

By **NASSER KARIMI, JOSEPH KRAUSS and ZEKE MILLER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. promised "appropriate action" Friday in response to its assessment that an Iranian missile was responsible for downing a Ukrainian jetliner that crashed outside Tehran, as the Iranian government denied playing a role in the killing of all 176 people on board.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo became the highest-level U.S. official to directly pin the blame on Iran, after Canadian, Australian and British leaders announced similar intelligence conclusions Thursday. "We do believe it is likely that that plane was shot down by an Iranian missile," he said.

Pompeo said an investigation would continue into the incident and that once it was complete he was "confident that we and the world will take appropriate action as a response." Leaders said the plane appeared to have been unintentionally hit by a surface-to-air missile.

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Earlier Friday, Iran denied Western allegations that one of its own missiles downed the jetliner that crashed early Wednesday outside Tehran, hours after Iran launched more than a dozen ballistic missiles at two U.S. bases in Iraq to avenge the killing of its top general in an American airstrike last week.

"What is obvious for us, and what we can say with certainty, is that no missile hit the plane," Ali Abedzadeh, head of Iran's national aviation department, told a press conference.

"If they are really sure, they should come and show their findings to the world" in accordance with international standards, he added.

Hassan Rezaeifar, the head of the Iranian investigation team, said recovering data from the black box flight recorders could take more than a month and that the entire investigation could stretch into next year. He also said Iran may request help from international experts if it is not able to extract the flight recordings.

The ballistic missile attack on the bases in Iraq caused no casualties, raising hopes that the standoff over the killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani would end relatively peacefully, though Iran has sent mixed signals over whether its retaliation is complete.

If the U.S. or Canada were to present incontrovertible evidence that the plane was shot down by Iran, even if unintentionally, it could have a dramatic impact on public opinion in Iran.

The Iranian public had rallied around the leadership after the killing of Soleimani last Friday, with hundreds of thousands joining the general's funeral processions in several cities, in an unprecedented display of grief and unity.

But sentiments in Iran are still raw over the government's crackdown on large-scale protests late last year sparked by an economic crisis exacerbated by U.S. sanctions. Several hundred protesters were reported to have been killed in the clampdown.

Those fissures could quickly break open again if Iranian authorities are seen to be responsible for the deaths of 176 people, mainly Iranians or dual Iranian-Canadian citizens. Iran still points to the accidental downing of an Iranian passenger jet by U.S. forces in 1988 — which killed all 290 people aboard — as proof of American hostility.

U.S., Canadian and British officials said Thursday it is "highly likely" that Iran shot down the Boeing 737, which crashed near Tehran early Wednesday. U.S. officials said the jetliner might have been mistakenly identified as a threat.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose country lost 57 citizens in the downing, said "we have intelligence from multiple sources including our allies and our own intelligence."

"The evidence indicates that the plane was shot down by an Iranian surface-to-air missile," he said.

The U.S. officials did not say what intelligence they had that pointed to an Iranian missile, believed to be fired by Russian Tor system, known to NATO as the SA-15. But they acknowledged the existence of satellites and other sensors in the region, as well as the likelihood of communication interceptions and other similar intelligence.

Western countries may hesitate to share information on such a strike because it comes from highly classified sources.

Videos verified by The Associated Press appear to show the final seconds of the the ill-fated airliner, which had just taken off from Iran early Wednesday.

In one video, a fast-moving light can be seen through the trees as someone films from the ground. The light appears to be the burning plane, which plummets to the earth as a huge fireball illuminates the landscape.

Someone off-camera says in Farsi: "The plane has caught fire. ... In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. God, please help us. Call the fire department!"

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said "the missile theory is not ruled out, but it has not been confirmed yet."

In a Facebook post, he reiterated his call "on all international partners" — the U.S., Britain and Canada in particular — to share data and evidence relevant to the crash. He also announced plans to discuss the investigation with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo later on Friday.

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Pompeo also called Canadian Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne to offer his condolences for the Canadians who perished in the crash and offered "U.S. support for full cooperation with any investigation," the State Department said.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko tweeted that he and the president met with U.S. Embassy officials Friday and obtained "important data" about the crash. The minister didn't specify what kind of data it was, but said it would be "processed by our specialists."

In an interview with Fox News' Laura Ingraham that aired late Thursday, Pompeo said commercial airliners need to know if it is safe to fly into and out of Tehran.

"If the international community needs to shut down that airport, so be it," he said. "We need to get to the bottom of this very, very quickly."

Germany's Lufthansa airline said it and subsidiaries are canceling flights to and from Tehran for the next 10 days as a precautionary measure, citing the "unclear security situation for the airspace around Tehran airport." Other airlines have been making changes to avoid Iranian airspace.

Britain's Foreign Office has advised against all travel to Iran, and against all air travel to, from or within the country.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi as saying Iran "has invited both Ukraine and the Boeing company to participate in the investigations." He later said a 10-member Canadian delegation was heading to Iran to assist victims' families.

Iran had initially said it would not allow Boeing to take part in the probe, going against prevailing international norms on crash investigations. It later invited the U.S. accident-investigating agency to take part in the investigation.

The National Transportation Safety Board said late Thursday that it would "evaluate its level of participation," but its role could be limited by U.S. sanctions on Iran. U.S. officials have also expressed concern about sending employees to Iran because of the heightened tensions.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Friday that his department would grant licenses to allow global investigators to travel to Iran and participate in the investigation.

Under rules set by a United Nations aviation organization, the NTSB is entitled to participate because the crash involved a Boeing 737-800 jet that was designed and built in the U.S.

The French air accident investigation agency, known by the French acronym BEA, is also taking part in the probe. The plane's engine was designed by CFM International, a joint company between French group Safran and U.S. group GE Aviation.

A preliminary Iranian investigative report released Thursday said that the airliner pilots never made a radio call for help and that the burning plane was trying to turn back for the airport when it went down.

The Iranian report suggested that a sudden emergency struck the Boeing 737, operated by Ukrainian International Airlines, just minutes after taking off from Imam Khomeini International Airport early Wednesday.

Those findings are not inconsistent with the effect of a surface-to-air missile. Such missiles are designed to explode near aircraft, shredding them with shrapnel. There is no need to score a direct hit, and a stricken plane may look like it is turning back when in fact it is disintegrating.

Abedzadeh, the senior aviation official, said authorities have recovered two black box flight recorders, saying they are "damaged" but readable. They may shed further light on what caused the crash.

Krauss reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates and Karimi reported from Tehran. Associated Press writers Daria Litvinova in Moscow, Yuras Karmanau in Minsk, Belarus, Nadia Ahmed in London and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed.

Boeing papers show employees slid 737 Max problems past FAA

By DAVID KOENIG and TOM KRISHER AP Business Writers

Lawmakers on Capitol Hill lashed out at Boeing on Friday after the release of a batch of emails and text messages in which company employees questioned the safety of the now-grounded 737 Max, called the aircraft a "joke" and talked about how they concealed problems from regulators.

In the messages, released nearly a year after two deadly Max crashes plunged the vaunted aircraft manufacturer into the biggest crisis in its history, employees also called proposed pilot training on the jet a "turd," wrote that few of those on the Max team were interested in the truth, and bragged about using a "Jedi mind trick" to sway some regulators.

Some of the discussion centered on problems with the company's flight simulators, which are used to develop new planes and then train pilots on them.

"Would you put your family on a MAX simulator trained aircraft?" one employee asked another. "I wouldn't." The other employee responded: "No."

The documents, made public Thursday by Boeing at the urging of Congress, fueled allegations that the company put speed and cost savings ahead of safety in rolling out the Max. Boeing has been engulfed in turmoil since the two crashes involving an Indonesian airliner and an Ethiopian jet five months apart killed 346 people.

Investigators believe the crashes were caused when the jetliners' brand-new automated flight-control system mistakenly pushed the planes' noses down.

Boeing is still struggling to fix the software and get the plane back in the air, and it is unclear when that might happen. Last month, it fired its CEO and announced it is suspending production of the Max. Federal prosecutors in the meantime have opened a criminal investigation.

On Friday, two Democrats on the House Transportation Committee, chairman Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., and Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Wash., reacted to the batch of messages by accusing Boeing of a pattern of deception and said they will introduce legislation to strip the company of all or part of its authority to help approve its own aircraft as safe to fly.

Larsen said that if Boeing had been more honest sooner, "potentially we could have saved the lives of 346 people." DeFazio put the blame on pressure from higher-ups inside the company "to save money and make it more marketable."

The 117 pages of internal messages include a message chain from May 2018 in which an employee wrote: "I still haven't been forgiven by god for covering up (what) I did last year."

It was not clear exactly what the cover-up involved. The documents contain redactions and are full of Boeing jargon. The employees' names were removed.

"This is a joke," one employee said in September 2016, six months before the plane was certified by the Federal Aviation Administration to fly. "This airplane is ridiculous."

"I'd be shocked if the FAA passes this turd," one employee wrote in 2018, apparently referring to simulator training requested by an airline.

Employees also groused about Boeing's senior management: "This airplane is designed by clowns who in turn are supervised by monkeys."

In response, Boeing said that it is confident the flight simulators work properly. But it said it is considering disciplinary action against some employees: "These communications do not reflect the company we are and need to be, and they are completely unacceptable."

FAA spokesman Lynn Lunsford said the simulator mentioned in the conversations has been checked three times in the past six months, and "any potential safety deficiencies identified in the documents have been addressed."

In one email message from 2015, an employee who apparently is a test pilot wrote that he crashed the first few times he flew the Max in simulator testing. "You get decent at it after 3-4 tries, but the first few are ugly," the employee wrote.

In a 2015 message, a chief technical pilot said Boeing would push back hard against requirements that

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pilots undergo simulator training before flying the Max. One of the plane's biggest selling points, as Boeing saw it, was that pilots of the old 737 could easily switch to the new model with only a small amount of computer-based training, saving airlines money.

Critics have said the FAA should have required simulator training so pilots knew how to handle malfunctions with the new flight-control software, known as MCAS. Initially Boeing didn't disclose to airlines and pilots that the software was on the planes.

Also on Friday, the FAA said it would fine Boeing \$5.4 million for installing substandard parts on the wings of some Max planes — a violation apparently unrelated to the crashes.

In addition, with the company already under fierce attack on Capitol Hill, Boeing disclosed in documents filed Friday that its ousted CEO, Dennis Muilenburg, will get \$62.2 million in stock and pension awards plus some stock options.

Muilenburg was fired after alienating regulators, Boeing's airline customers and the crash victims' families with his handling of the disaster and his overly optimistic predictions of when the plane might fly again.

The grounding of the Max will cost the company billions in compensation to the families of those killed in the crashes and to airlines that canceled thousands of flights.

Boeing's current chairman, David Calhoun, will try to right the company when he takes over as CEO on Monday. He will get a base salary of \$1.4 million, an annual incentive worth up to \$2.5 million, and long-term stock incentives worth up to \$14 million, some of which depend on meeting milestones such as getting the Max back into the air.

Cathy Bussewitz contributed from New York, while Krisher reported from Detroit.

US employment remains strong, 145,000 jobs added in December

By JOSH BOAK AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers added 145,000 jobs in December and the unemployment rate held steady at 3.5%, signaling that the job market remains strong at the start of 2020 even if hiring and wage gains have slowed somewhat more than a decade into an economic expansion.

Friday's snapshot from the Labor Department showed hiring slipped from robust gains of 256,000 in November, which were given a boost by the end of a strike at General Motors. For the year, employers added an average of roughly 175,000 jobs per month, compared with about 223,250 per month in 2018.

Annual wage growth fell in December to 2.9%, down from an annualized average of 3.3% a year earlier, a possible sign that some slack remains in the labor market and that unemployment could fall even further from its current half-century low.

The picture of a slowly-but-steadily improving economy — plus low inflation — likely gives the Federal Reserve comfort in keeping interest rates low, which has been a boon to stock markets. The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed Friday with a slight loss of 0.3% after briefly climbing to a record-level of 29,000 in the morning.

"We're starting 2020 in very good shape," said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial Services. "We should see continued economic expansion throughout 2020 driven by consumers."

The state of the job market has become a pivotal division between President Donald Trump and his Democratic challengers. Trump can campaign on the low unemployment rate and job growth as he seeks a second term. Democrats, seeking to oust him, will point to wages that have not taken off in a meaningful way for many Americans coping with high costs for medical care and higher education.

This is the last jobs report before the Iowa caucus in February that will serve as a first step for choosing the Democratic presidential nominee.

The prospect of a stable job market, a pick-up in global growth, supportive central banks, an easing of trade tensions and U.S. economic growth of around 2% should be a positive for this year.

"We really have the wind at our backs going into 2020," said Julia Pollak, a labor economist at the employment marketplace ZipRecruiter.

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Yet job growth has failed so far to translate into substantially better hourly pay. There is the potential that wages jumped in January as many states adjusted their minimum wages.

Some businesses in competitive industries are already taking steps to prepare for wage competition this year. The Big Blue Swim School based in Chicago vies with day cares, learning centers and gyms for its instructors. The chain has five sites employing on average 30 people and plans to open five more schools this year and 17 in 2021. But it had to dramatically boost wages in order to attract staff for that expansion.

"We gave all of our front-line employees a 10% or 11% raise because of the fear we have about the wage pressures in the economy," said CEO Chris Kenny. "We can't meet our business goal without great staff."

Irina Novoselsky, CEO of the jobs site CareerBuilder, said that more employers are offering non-wage benefits such as the chance to work remotely to potential workers and becoming less focused on educational credentials when hiring.

"The major fact that is pushing the trend is the labor shortage in America," she said. "Companies are being forced to provide that flexibility."

The U.S. economy added 2.1 million jobs last year, down from gains of nearly 2.7 million in 2018. Hiring may have slowed because the number of unemployed people seeking work has fallen by 540,000 people over the past year to 5.75 million. With fewer unemployed people hunting for jobs, there is a potential limit on job gains.

The steady hiring growth during the expansion has contributed to gains in consumer spending. Retail sales during the crucial holiday shopping improved 3.4% compared to the prior year, according to Mastercard SpendingPulse. This likely contributed to a surge of hiring in retail as that sector added 41,200 jobs in December.

The leisure and hospitality sector — which includes restaurants and hotels — added another 40,000 jobs. Health care and social assistance accounted 33,900 new jobs.

Still, the report suggests a lingering weakness in manufacturing.

Factories shed 12,000 jobs in December, after the end of the GM strike produced gains of 58,000 in November. Manufacturing companies added just 46,000 jobs in all of 2019.

Manufacturing struggled last year because of trade tensions between the United States and China coupled with slower global economic growth.

Safety problems at Boeing have also hurt orders for aircraft and parts and that could restrict hiring at factories in 2020. While the jobs report painted a healthy picture of the economy, the manufacturing sector took a blow Friday as the Boeing supplier Spirit AeroSystems announced layoffs for 2,800 workers in Kansas.

George Nicolau dies at 94, arbitrator in MLB collusion cases

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — George Nicolau, who ruled against baseball owners in two collusion cases and served as president of the National Academy of Arbitrators, has died. He was 94.

Nicolau died Jan. 2 at Lenox Hill Hospital, Gene Orza, the former chief operating officer of the Major League Baseball Players Association, said Friday.

Nicolau took over as the independent chairman of Major League Baseball's arbitration panel in 1986 after owners fired Thomas Roberts, who ruled teams acted in concert against free agents after the 1985 season. Nicolau decided teams acted in concert against free agents after the 1986 and 1987 seasons. The cases were settled in 1990 when management agreed with the players' union to pay those players affected \$280 million.

In another notable decision, Nicolau decided in 1987 to cut short a season-long suspension of free agent pitcher LaMarr Hoyt to 60 days. Hoyt had been penalized for his involvement in three illegal drug incidents during 1986.

Nicolau decided to reinstate Steve Howe in November 1992, overturning a lifetime ban imposed by Commissioner Fay Vincent the previous June. The pitcher was suspended seven times for infractions related

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to drug or alcohol use. Nicolau determined Howe had a psychiatric disorder and the commissioner's office didn't adequately test him.

In a case with impact for many players, he ruled in 1986 against pitcher Dennis Lamp's grievance that Toronto held him out of games so he could not accumulate bonuses hinged to his games played.

"George Nicolau was an outstanding professional, a true giant among labor arbitrators," said Commissioner Rob Manfred, who often appeared before Nicolau as a management lawyer. "He deftly handled many difficult cases in baseball and always had the respect of both parties."

Nicolau also served as the independent arbitrator for the NBA and the National Basketball Players Association from 1979-81 and the NHL and the NHL Players Association from 1993-96.

"He was intelligent, fearless and incisive, always presiding with dignity, grace and humor," said former baseball union head Donald Fehr, who now is head of the NHL union. "He wielded power of the written word to convey both understanding of the issues and the justice of the result as well as anyone ever has. Above all, he always acted with consummate integrity and gravitas that inspired all who worked with him to rise above the short term and seek out common ground."

Nicolau remained baseball's panel chairman until 1995, when he was replaced by Nicholas Zumas. Nicolau's term is the second longest in baseball behind Shyam Das, who served from 1999-2012.

"Players owe a great debt of gratitude to George Nicolau," current union head Tony Clark said in a statement, adding the arbitrator "helped preserve the integrity of free agency."

A Detroit Tigers fan, Nicolau was a son of Greek immigrants who ran restaurants in Detroit and Jackson, Michigan. He kept Hank Greenberg's picture hanging in the kitchen of his Manhattan townhouse.

"He became a friend, with all the attributes you'd want in one," Orza said. "He was generous, witty, smart, principled, and kind. ... He'd have made a great novelist."

Nicolau was born in Detroit on Feb. 14, 1925, then moved with his family to Jackson when he was about 5. He went into the Army Air Corps as a second lieutenant, flew four missions in B-17 Flying Fortresses over Germany as a bomber navigator during World War II and lost a leg during his service. On the second mission, the plane was to bomb an airfield in Evreux but went off course and wound up over Nazi-occupied Paris. But the pilot refused to believe it.

"I know the Eiffel Tower when I see it," Nicolau said during a 1990 interview with The Associated Press, recalling what he told the pilot.

During his fourth mission, Nicolau got hit with flak en route to Leipzig, Germany. His left leg was badly injured.

"It was hanging by a thread two days later," he said. "The bone was shattered."

After a year's convalescence, he attended the University of Michigan. He went on to Columbia Law School and became a labor lawyer for 12 years.

At his first law firm, Sheehan & Harold, he represented locals of the International Typographical Union, the Printing Pressman and the Atomic Energy Workers. In 1954, he joined Cooper, Ostrin and DeVarco, where he represented the Newspaper Guild, the Communications Workers of America, the National Maritime Union and Actors Equity. He was one of the advisers who led Equity through its initial strike in 1960.

He was made a partner at the firm but left in 1962 he left to work for R. Sargent Shriver as deputy director for special projects in the U.S. Peace Corps' Washington Office. Nicolau prepared on annual reports and congressional testimony and also did field work in Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic.

"What made me decide to do that is John Kennedy, it was as simple as that," he said.

After spending 1963-65 at the Peace Corps, he became deputy regional director of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity from 1965-66, the first commissioner of New York City's Community Development Agency from 1966-68 and executive director of the Fund for the City of New York from 1968-70.

He shifted to executive director of the Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution from 1970-80 at the behest of noted mediator Theodore Kheel and started hearing arbitration cases part-time in 1970. He joined the National Academy of Arbitrators in 1975, saying he was influenced do to so by Peter Seitz, who headed baseball's arbitration panel at the time and would go on to strike down the reserve clause that

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December in the Andy Messersmith-Dave McNally case.

Nicolau ruled in disputes involving ABC, NBC and the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians, then became a full-time arbitrator in 1980. He became the NBA's arbitrator after he met former New York Knicks player Bill Bradley, who introduced him to NBA union head Larry Fleischer, who in turn took him to speak with NBA Commissioner Larry O'Brien.

Nicolau also was the arbitrator for the Major Indoor Soccer League.

In addition to sports and television, Nicolau arbitrated disputes in aviation, communications and entertainment. He joined the board of governors of the National Academy of Arbitrators in 1986 and served as president in 1996-97.

Nicolau was hearing cases and issuing decisions through 2019, ruling last August in an airline dispute.

"He knows the subject matter and he is able and he's got integrity," Kheel said. "Knowledge, ability and integrity. Those are the three things you need and George has got 'em all."

His wife, the former Siobhan Oppenheimer, died at 82 from cancer in 2013.

He is survived by sons Brien and Tony, and step-daughter Trudy Oppenheimer and step-sons David and John Oppenheimer, and six grandchildren.

A memorial service will be scheduled.

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

US dismisses Iraq request to work on a troop withdrawal plan

By **SAMYA KULLAB** and **QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA** Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's caretaker prime minister asked Washington to work out a road map for an American troop withdrawal, but the U.S. State Department on Friday bluntly rejected the request, saying the two sides should instead talk about how to "recommit" to their partnership.

Thousands of anti-government protesters turned out in the capital and southern Iraq, many calling on both Iran and America to leave Iraq, reflecting their anger and frustration over the two rivals — both allies of Baghdad — trading blows on Iraqi soil.

The request from Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi pointed to his determination to push ahead with demands for U.S. troops to leave Iraq, stoked by the American drone strike on Jan. 3 that killed top Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani. In a phone call Thursday night, he told U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that recent U.S. actions were unacceptable breaches of Iraqi sovereignty and a violation of their security agreements, his office said.

He asked Pompeo to "send delegates to Iraq to prepare a mechanism" to carry out the Iraqi Parliament's resolution on withdrawing foreign troops, according to the statement.

"The prime minister said American forces had entered Iraq and drones are flying in its airspace without permission from Iraqi authorities, and this was a violation of the bilateral agreements," the statement added.

Abdul-Mahdi signaled he was standing by the push for U.S. forces to leave despite signs of de-escalation by Tehran and Washington after Iran retaliated for Soleimani's death by firing missiles that hit two Iraqi bases where American troops are based but caused no casualties.

Iraqis feel furious and helpless at being caught in the middle of the fighting. Abdul-Mahdi has said he rejects all violations of Iraqi sovereignty, including both the Iranian and U.S. strikes.

The State Department flatly dismissed Abdul-Mahdi's request, saying U.S. troops are crucial for the fight against the Islamic State group and it would not discuss removing them.

Pompeo indicated Friday the troops would remain, adding that the U.S. would continue its mission to help train Iraqi security forces and counter the Islamic State group.

"We are happy to continue the conversation with the Iraqis about what the right structure is," Pompeo said at the White House during an unrelated appearance.

"Our mission set there is very clear. We've been there to perform a training mission to help the Iraqi security forces be successful and to continue the campaign against ISIS, to continue the counter-Daesh

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campaign," he said, using alternate acronyms for the militant group.

"We're going to continue that mission but, as times change and we get to a place where we can deliver upon what I believe and what the president believes is our right structure with fewer resources dedicated to that mission, we will do so," Pompeo said.

He said a NATO team was at the State Department working on a plan "to get burden-sharing right in the region, as well, so that we can continue the important missions to protect and defend, and keep the American people safe" while reducing costs and burdens borne by the U.S.

Earlier in the day, Pompeo's spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said any delegation sent to Iraq would be dedicated to "discussing how to best recommit to our strategic partnership - not to discuss troop withdrawal, but our right, appropriate force posture in the Middle East."

Iraqi lawmakers passed a resolution Sunday to oust U.S. troops, following the U.S. drone strike that killed Soleimani and senior Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis at Baghdad's airport. The nonbinding vote put the responsibility on the government to formally request a withdrawal. Abdul-Mahdi urged lawmakers at the time to take "urgent measures" to ensure the removal of the troops.

In speaking to Pompeo, Abdul-Mahdi stopped short of requesting an immediate withdrawal, allowing time to draw up a strategy and timeline for departure.

In its initial readout of the call, the State Department made no mention of Abdul-Mahdi's request on the troops. It said Pompeo, who initiated the call, reiterated the U.S. condemnation of the Iranian missile strikes and underscored that President Donald Trump "has said the United States will do whatever it takes to protect the American and Iraqi people and defend our collective interests."

There are some 5,200 U.S. troops in Iraq assisting and providing training to Iraqi security counterparts to fight IS. An American pullout could deeply set back efforts to crush remnants of the group amid concerns of its resurgence during the political turmoil.

Both the U.S. and Iran have fought to defeat IS, and neither wants to see it stage a comeback.

IS gloated in its first comments on Soleimani's slaying, saying his death "pleased the hearts of believers," in an editorial in the group's al-Nabaa online newspaper. It carried a photo of Soleimani and al-Muhandis, saying that "God brought their end at the hands of their allies."

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State David Schenker said future talks between Baghdad and Washington were expected to focus on the nature of their strategic relationship,

"We provide assets that no other coalition ally can provide. ... If the United States wasn't in Iraq, it's hard to imagine the coalition being in Iraq," he told reporters in Dubai at the end of a visit to the region in which he met with Iraqi officials in the northern Kurdish region.

Schenker added that the U.S. and its partners have provided \$5.4 billion to the Iraqi military in the last four years.

Ortagus said the U.S. and Iraqi governments need to talk about security as well as "our financial, economic and diplomatic partnership." She did not elaborate.

Iraq is highly dependent on Iran sanctions waivers from Washington to continue importing Iranian gas to meet electricity demands, and the U.S. has consistently used this as leverage. The current waiver expires in February, and without a new one, Iraq could face severe financial penalties.

The demand for a troop withdrawal is not universal among Iraqis. Sunni and Kurdish lawmakers, who oppose the Parliament resolution, see the U.S. presence as a bulwark against domination by the majority Shiites and Iran. Kurdish security forces have benefited from U.S. training and aid.

Protesters criticized the ongoing crisis involving Iraq, the U.S. and Iran in demonstrations across the capital and in the southern provinces.

Thousands massed in Baghdad's Tahrir square, the epicenter of the protest movement, and many chanted "Damn Iran and America!" Large demonstrations also were held in Basra, Dhi Qar, Najaf and Diwanieh provinces as the movement seeks to regain momentum after regional tensions overshadowed the uprising.

Amid the protests in Basra, Iraqi journalist Ahmed Abdul Samad was found dead in his car outside a police station from a gunshot wound to the head, according to a security official who requested anonymity in line with regulations. A photographer covering the protests was injured and is in critical condition.

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Meanwhile, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani urged rival political factions to unite and put private interests aside, saying they risked creating more unrest. The factions have yet to agree on a nominee to replace the outgoing Abdul-Mahdi, who resigned in December under pressure from the protesters.

"Everyone is required to think carefully about what this situation will lead to if there is no end to it," he added.

Kullab reported from Beirut. Associated Press writer Joe Krauss in Dubai and Darlene Superville in Washington contributed.

Meghan, Harry miles apart as they start new independent life

By JILL LAWLESS and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry and his wife Meghan were taking the first steps into their new independent life thousands of miles apart on Friday, as a friend of the couple pushed back against accusations they blindsided Queen Elizabeth II with the announcement they would be stepping down from royal duties.

As Meghan flew back to Canada, where the couple spent a six-week Christmas break out of the public eye, Harry stayed in England, where the royal family sought to contain the crisis sparked by the couple's decision to effectively quit as senior royals.

The queen moved quickly to take control of the situation, ordering royal courtiers to sort out a future role for the couple within days. British media reported Friday that the monarch, who is at her Sandringham estate in eastern England, held a conference call with her son Prince Charles and grandsons Prince William and Prince Harry.

The royal family is said to be "hurt" by Harry and Meghan's decision to step down from their royal role, with reports claiming they were not told of the statement beforehand. But the queen, Charles and William have told their teams to work with government and the couple to sort out a solution.

In the meantime, Buckingham Palace confirmed Friday that Meghan had returned to Canada, where the couple and 8-month-old son Archie spent the holiday season at a secluded luxury home on Vancouver Island. The former actress is American but has longstanding ties to Canada, having lived in Toronto while filming the popular TV show "Suits."

The crisis talks were triggered by the pair's "personal message" Wednesday evening saying they were stepping back from being senior members of Britain's royal family, would work to become financially independent and would "balance" their time between the U.K. and North America.

Harry, 35, is sixth in line to the British throne, behind his father, older brother William and his brother's three children. The former British army officer is one of the royal family's most popular members and has spent his entire life in the public eye.

Before marrying the prince in a wedding watched around the world in 2018, the 38-year-old Meghan had carved out a successful career as an actress and lifestyle "influencer" with a popular blog, the now-defunct The Tig.

A friend of the couple, broadcaster Tom Bradby, said Harry and Meghan were made aware while in Canada over the holidays that the monarchy's future focus would be on those at the top of the line of succession. An image of the queen and the three next in line to the throne — Charles, William and his son George — underscored the message of who the Windsors see as their core members.

"It had been made clear to them in their absence there was going to be a slimmed down monarchy and they weren't really a part of it," said Bradby, an ITV television anchor who filmed revealing interviews with Harry and Meghan while they were in Africa last year.

Bradby described the royal split as inevitable. He said the wish by the couple, also known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, to leave the grind of front-line royal duty had been known, though the timing of their announcement was not.

"It's certainly not true to say the palace were blindsided by this," Bradby told ITV.

The royal rift has exposed more divisions within the British monarchy, which was rocked in November by

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Prince Andrew's disastrous television interview about his relationship with the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Andrew, the queen's second son, has relinquished royal duties and patronages after being accused by a woman who says she was an Epstein trafficking victim who slept with the prince.

Harry and Meghan have faced a barrage of criticism from the British press over their decision. They have long complained of intrusive media coverage and accused some British media commentators of racism towards the biracial Markle. This week they slammed the country's long-standing arrangements for royal media coverage and insisted that from now on they prefer to communicate directly with the public through social media.

Many in Britain, though, expressed sympathy for the royal couple. Labour Party lawmaker Clive Lewis told backers Friday at his campaign launch that he understood their decision.

"It is extremely unfortunate and a sign of the media we have that they feel they have to do this," he said. "I know it is not the only reason. But if you look at the intrusion on their lives, if you look at the racism that Meghan Markle has experienced in the British media, then I can understand why."

The couple's statement on Wednesday left many questions unanswered — such as what they plan to do and how they will earn private income without tarnishing the royal image. At the moment, they are largely funded by Harry's father, Prince Charles, through income from his vast Duchy of Cornwall estate.

The couple said they plan to cut ties to the British taxpayer support given each year to the queen for official use, which currently covers 5% of the costs of running their office. But commentators have questioned whether the royal couple have misunderstood their true cost to the country, arguing their statement doesn't appear to cover some of the expenditures embedded in royal life, such as security.

Harry and Meghan have considerable assets of their own. Harry inherited an estimated 7 million pounds (\$9.1 million) from his late mother, Princess Diana, as well as money from his great-grandmother. Meghan has money from a successful acting career.

Follow full AP royal coverage at <https://www.apnews.com/PrinceHarry>

Verified videos show plane in Iran struck before fiery crash

TAMER FAKAHANY

LONDON (AP) — In the pitch black, pre-dawn sky on the outskirts of the Iranian capital Tehran, a tiny fast-moving light can be seen racing up through the trees, as someone films from the ground. Then there is a flash of light as it seems to collide with something in the air.

It is the ill-fated Ukrainian International airliner which had taken off Wednesday just hours after Iran had fired missiles at U.S. bases in Iraq in retaliation for the slaying of its top military man, Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

Western leaders have said the plane seemed to have been unintentionally brought down by a surface-to-air missile near Tehran. Iran denies that a missile was to blame for the crash.

Videos verified by The Associated Press show the final seconds of the jet and what likely brought it down, killing all 176 people on board.

One video seems to show the impact. Buildings can be seen from ground level below the darkened sky as the tiny light arches upward, then the flash. The scene is silent, except for a dog barking nearby. Then 10 seconds later, there is a frightening boom, like loud thunder.

A second video appears to show the plane on fire and crashing. A white blaze plummets downward across the black sky, sometimes letting off sparks. Then it disappears behind trees, and a huge fireball lights up the sky as it hits the earth.

Someone off-camera says in Farsi "The plane has caught fire. Shahriar. Ferdosieh. In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful. God please help us. Call the fire department!" The names are two suburbs of Tehran near the airport.

Another clip, filmed from inside a traveling car at distance, shows a pinpoint fiery light moving at speed. This footage then shows the plane exploding far on the horizon, illuminating the darkened sky.

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As part of the verification process, the AP compared buildings in view with map locations and in the precise context of where the jet went off the radar.

Associated Press journalist Nadia Ahmed in London contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Jan. 12, the 12th day of 2020. There are 354 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 12, 1828, the United States and Mexico signed a Treaty of Limits defining the boundary between the two countries to be the same as the one established by an 1819 treaty between the U.S. and Spain.

On this date:

In 1519, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I died.

In 1915, the U.S. House of Representatives rejected, 204-174, a proposed constitutional amendment to give women nationwide the right to vote.

In 1932, Hattie W. Caraway became the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate after initially being appointed to serve out the remainder of the term of her late husband, Thaddeus.

In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma, unanimously ruled that state law schools could not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race.

In 1959, Berry Gordy Jr. founded Motown Records (originally Tamla Records) in Detroit.

In 1965, the music variety show "Hullabaloo" premiered on NBC-TV with host-of-the-week Jack Jones; guests included Joey Heatherton, the New Christy Minstrels and Woody Allen.

In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson said in his State of the Union address that the U.S. military should stay in Vietnam until Communist aggression there was stopped. The TV series "Batman," starring Adam West and Burt Ward as the Dynamic Duo, premiered on ABC, airing twice a week on consecutive nights.

In 1969, the New York Jets of the American Football League upset the Baltimore Colts of the National Football League 16-7 in Super Bowl III, played at the Orange Bowl in Miami.

In 1971, the groundbreaking situation comedy "All in the Family" premiered on CBS television.

In 1995, Qubilah Shabazz (keh-BEE'-lah shuh-BAZ'), the daughter of Malcolm X, was arrested in Minneapolis on charges she'd tried to hire a hitman to kill Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan (the charges were later dropped in a settlement with the government).

In 2000, in a 5-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Illinois v. Wardlow, gave police broad authority to stop and question people who run at the sight of an officer.

In 2006, Mehmet Ali Agca (MEH'-met AH'-lee AH'-juh), the Turkish gunman who shot Pope John Paul II in 1981, was released from an Istanbul prison after serving more than 25 years in Italy and Turkey for the plot against the pontiff and the slaying of a Turkish journalist.

Ten years ago: Haiti was struck by a magnitude-7 earthquake; the Haitian government said 316,000 people were killed, while a report prepared for the U.S. Agency for International Development suggested the death toll may have been between 46,000 and 85,000. U.S. and Mexican authorities announced the capture of Teodoro Garcia Simental, a high-ranking member of the Tijuana cartel known as "El Teo."

Five years ago: France deployed thousands of troops to protect sensitive sites, including Jewish schools and neighborhoods, in the wake of terror attacks that killed 17. Ezekiel Elliott rushed for 246 yards and four touchdowns as Ohio State won the first national title in college football's playoff era, running over Oregon, 42-20.

One year ago: The partial government shutdown extended into a 22nd day, making it the longest such closure in U.S. history. Officials at Miami International Airport closed a terminal for parts of the weekend because of a staff shortage related to the partial government shutdown. Former Obama Cabinet member Julian Castro joined the 2020 Democratic presidential race, announcing his candidacy in his hometown

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of San Antonio, Texas. A powerful explosion apparently caused by a gas leak blew apart a Paris bakery, killing three people and injuring dozens.

Today's Birthdays: The Amazing Kreskin is 85. Country singer William Lee Golden (The Oak Ridge Boys) is 81. Actor Anthony Andrews is 72. Movie director Wayne Wang is 71. Actress Kirstie Alley is 69. Political commentator Rush Limbaugh is 69. Legal affairs blogger Ann Althouse is 69. Writer Walter Mosley is 68. Country singer Ricky Van Shelton is 68. Radio-TV personality Howard Stern is 66. Writer-producer-director John Lasseter is 63. Broadcast journalist Christiane Amanpour is 62. Actor Oliver Platt is 60. Basketball Hall of Famer Dominique Wilkins is 60. Entrepreneur Jeff Bezos is 56. Rock singer Rob Zombie is 55. Actor Olivier Martinez is 54. Rapper TBird (B-Rock and the Bizz) is 53. Model Vendela is 53. Actress Farrah Focuse is 52. Actress Rachael Harris is 52. Rock singer Zack de la Rocha is 50. Rapper Raekwon (Wu Tang Clan) is 50. Actress Zabryna Guevara is 48. Singer Dan Haseltine (Jars of Clay) is 47. Rock musician Matt Wong (Reel Big Fish) is 47. Singer Melanie Chisholm (Spice Girls) is 46. Contemporary Christian singer Jeremy Camp is 42. Actress Cynthia Addai-Robinson is 40. Rhythm-and-blues singer Amerie is 40. Actress Issa Rae is 35. Actress Naya Rivera is 33. Actor Will Rothhaar is 33. Actor Andrew Lawrence is 32. Rock singer ZAYN is 27. Pop/soul singer Ella Henderson (TV: "The X Factor") is 24.

Thought for Today: "Necessity does the work of courage." — Nicholas Murray Butler, American educator and Nobel laureate (1862-1947).

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