

Groton Daily Independent

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“THE POSSIBILITIES ARE
NUMEROUS ONCE WE DECIDE
TO ACT AND NOT REACT.”

-GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



**Where the coffee is always on!
Thank you for your business.**



Purina

Professional Management Services

111 N Main, Downtown Groton
605/397-FEED (3333)



Purina

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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School district revenue falls behind projections

Business Manager Michael Weber talked about the budget. He noted that the Capital Outlay fund is about \$900,000 short of where the district should be plus the General Fund is short \$140,000 and less than half of the Special Education Fund has been collected. Weber said that he is not sure of why the shortfall, except that maybe not all of the taxes have been paid yet.

Superintendent Joe Schwan reported that the Clean Diesel Grant has been applied for and that one of the applications was thrown out because the bus was too old, but the other one is a possibility. However, it was noted also that there are 40 applications across the state with the Clean Diesel Grant.

Schwan reported that the school lunch program looks very good. "We're in a much better shape," he said. The last two years the food service has been subsidized and Schwan said it would be nice if the district did not have to subsidize that program. There are more eating meals at the school this year compared to last year.

The board accepted the job description for a certified sign language interpreter. The district is also advertising the position state wide. "We did that to prove we made a good effort in trying to find someone," Schwan said. "It's going to be a tough position to fill."

Schwan then reported on the various adjustments that need to be done with the State Fire Marshall Inspection Report, and there are several potential changes on the horizon when it comes to special education guidelines.

Elementary Principal Brett Schwan reported that Lindsey DeHoet's name was drawn as a winner at the TIE Conference held in Rapid City. That means Steven Rokusek with South Dakota Public Broadcasting will be coming to the elementary school on February 28. He is known as Science Steve. Schwan said they tried to get him to come to Groton a few years back, but he's always booked. "We're excited to have him come to Groton," Schwan said.

Middle/High School Principal Kiersten Sombke reported there are a lot of students taking dual credit classes. There are 13 enrolled through NSU, 22 from LATI, three from SDSU, 6 from USD and 4 from BHSU. The E-Learning courses through NSU has six in World Geography, four in Government, three in Personal Finance, 13 in Spanish I, eight in Spanish II, and one in each Pre-Calculus and Physics.

The board set the date of the school board election for April 14 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Positions up this year are Grant Rix and Steven R. Smith.

Associated School Board has a number of recommended policy changes that the district will be adopting. First reading of the proposed changes was adopted.

The proposed 2020-21 School Calendar was presented. The start of school is proposed August 20th with the last day of school proposed at May 13, of course, it depends on number of snow days.

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Proposed

2020-2021 Groton Area School District

Drafted 12/18/2019

August 2020						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						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					

August	
18 - Faculty Inservice	
19 - Open House/Picnic (5:00-7:30)	
19 - Faculty Inservice	
20 - 1st Day of School	
Student Contact: 8 ; Inservice: 2	

January 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					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						

January	
1 - Christmas Break - NO SCHOOL	
4 - School Resumes	
15 - NCSEC Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 19 ; Inservice: 1	

September 2020						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		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			

September	
4 - NO SCHOOL	
7 - Labor Day - NO SCHOOL	
21 - Homecoming Coronation (7:30)	
25 - Homecoming FB vs. Redfield	
Student Contact: 20 ; Inservice: 0	

February 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	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						

February	
18 - Parent/Teacher Conferences - (1:30 - 8:30)	
19 - Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	
15 - President's Day - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 18 ; Inservice: 2	

October 2020						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				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

October	
8 - Parent/Teacher Conferences (1:30 - 8:30)	
9 - Lake Region Marching Festival	
12 - Native American Day - NO SCHOOL	
16 - Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	
21 - End of 1st Quarter (41)	
Student Contact: 20 ; Inservice: 2	

March 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	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			

March	
10 - End of 3rd Quarter (45)	
18-19 - Spring Break - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 21 ; Inservice: 0	

November 2020						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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					

November	
11 - Veterans Day Program	
25-27 - Thanksgiving - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 18 ; Inservice: 0	

April 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				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	

April	
2 - Good Friday - NO SCHOOL	
5 - Easter Monday - NO SCHOOL	
11 - Pops Concert (2:00 & 5:00)	
24 - PROM	
27 - Elementary Spring Concert (7:00)	
Student Contact: 20 ; Inservice: 0	

December 2020						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		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		

December	
10 - MS/HS Christmas Concert (7:00)	
22 - Elementary Christmas Concert (1:00)	
22 - Early Dismissal (2:00)	
22 - End of 1st Semester (41/82)	
23-31 Christmas Break - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 16 ; Inservice: 0	

May 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						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					

May	
4 - Middle School Spring Concert (7:00)	
6 - HS Concert/Awards Night (7:00)	
13 - End of 2nd Semester (42/87)	
14 - Faculty Inservice	
16 - Graduation (2:00)	
31 - Memorial Day	
Student Contact: 9 ; Inservice: 1	

Faculty Inservice
No School
Important Dates
End of Quarter/Semester
Early Dismissal

All make-up days will be added to the end of the school calendar.

Fall Academic Achievement Awards

The South Dakota High School Activities Association has announced the recipients of the fall academic achievement awards for 2019. Here are all of the varsity athletic and fine arts teams/groups who received a joint 'Grade Point Average' of 3.0 or higher.

The following teams were named for this award:

Groton Area: Boys Cross Country Team, Volleyball Team, Girls Soccer Team, All-State Chorus, Football Team, Oral Interpretation, Football Cheerleaders.

Langford Area: All-State Chorus, Oral Interpretation, Volleyball Team, Football Team, Football Cheerleaders

Warner: Football Cheerleaders, Volleyball Team, Football Team, All-State Chorus, Girls Cross Country Team, Oral Interpretation, Boys Cross Country Team.

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Principal's Report

MS/HS Building

January 13, 2020

1) Enrollment Update

- Grade 6= 47
- Grade 7=42
- Grade 8=44
MS Total= 133
- Grade 9= 45
- Grade 10= 44
- Grade 11= 51
- Grade 12= 42
HS Total= 182

Grade 6-12 Total= 315

2) Dual Credit Summary

- 13 courses from NSU
- 22 courses from LATI (only 8 courses are Transferable to another college, university, or technical school)
- 3 courses from SDSU
- 6 courses from USD
- 4 courses from BHSU
- **Registration for Dual Credit Courses is now Closed for Spring 2020 Semester**

3) E-Learning Courses Summary- Courses taken through NSU

- World Geography= 6
- Government= 4
- Personal Finance= 3
- Spanish I= 13
- Spanish II= 8
- Pre-Calculus= 1
- Physics= 1
- **Registration for E-Learning Courses is now Closed for Spring 2020 Semester**

4) Dual Credit Summer Courses

- Information will be available beginning in March regarding courses offerings for Summer Sessions 2020 and Fall 2020
- Please watch the bulletin for information regarding upcoming registrations for Dual Credit, E-Learning, and Local Courses
- Please stop to see Mrs. Jodi Schwan for more information or help in contacting any College, University, or Technical School to learn more about specific program preparation and requirements

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Board Report

Elementary Principal

1/13/2020

Enrollment:

- JK: 13
- KG: 49 (+1)
- 1st: 42
- 2nd: 44 (-1)
- 3rd: 39
- 4th: 48
- 5th: 45 (+2)
- Total: 280
- PS: 8
- EC: 1

Science Steve: Steven Rokusek with South Dakota Public Broadcasting will be coming to the elementary on Friday, February 28 in the afternoon. Lindsey DeHoet registered to win a Science Steve show during the TIE Conference in Rapid City and her name was selected.

South Dakota Comprehensive Needs Assessment: The team will be going to Watertown this Wednesday and Thursday to analyze data and continue with the process.

Teacher Observations: 2nd round of observations will begin this week. I have 17 informal observation and 11 formal observations to compete. My goal is to have everything completed by early to mid-March.

Title 1 Level 3 Monitoring: The Groton district is part of a Federal Title Programs Level 3 monitoring this school year. This requires the district to complete a differentiated compliance monitoring (offsite). Specific documents are required to be uploaded to Title I SharePoint (<https://doe.sd.gov/title/basic.aspx>). I will be meeting with our Title staff next week to go over the document checklist and also to update any forms. Most other documents required are policies.

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Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education

January 13, 2020

State Fire Marshal Inspection/Report. On December 10, 2019, the state fire inspector was on-site for our bi-annual inspection. Corrections at the elementary include removal of paper decorations from doorways, maintaining 3' clearance to doorways, replacing multi-plug cords with power strips, adjusting the exit door from the elementary gym, and inspection of the fire alarm panel (required annually – completed on December 16). Corrections at the MS/HS include replacement of several outlet and light switch covers, maintaining 3' clearance to doorways, room arrangement to allow for 24" of space between desks/rows, replacing ceiling tiles in men's restroom, cheer storage room, and the old concessions, replacing multi-plug cords with power strips, repairs to ceiling across from HS English rooms, installing weather stripping on interior doors between 2009 addition to elevator corridor, install heat/smoke detection in landing, repairing the heat/smoke detector in the cheer storage room. It is important to note that the written report received from the State Fire Marshal office made note that "classrooms are allowed 20 square feet per student as maximum occupancy for that room. Rooms in the 1934 building were close to being near capacity." This comes into play for scheduling of students and staff and determining staffing levels and assignments within our current facility constraints.

Special Education Review Corrective Action Plan (CAP). Tomorrow morning, the special education staff will meet with Roxana Uttermark, NCSEC School Psychologist to receive some training on writing Parental Prior Written Notice (PPWN) documents. This will fulfill the requirement from our special education review conducted by DOE last fall. Outside of this, three IEP-specific errors were identified and have been corrected by our teachers. I'm proud of our staff for their consistent work in writing good, compliant IEPs and being in compliance with IDEA regulations.

ESSA State Plan Revisions. DOE is taking public comments on potential revisions to its state plan to meet the federal requirements laid out in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) legislation. In June 2019, the ESSA workgroup specifically identified and discussed the specific issue causing Groton Area Middle School to have been identified as a TSI school. According to their meeting notes, "This is part of the issue causing schools who are high performing being flagged because of subgroups." Plan revisions call for the elimination of the so-called GAP group as well as the comparison of sub-groups to sub-groups. For example, our special education sub-group would be compared to other school's special education sub-groups rather than our all-student group. Potentially, the bottom 25% of each subgroup would be identified on a state-wide basis when ranked on performance for each indicator.

DOE Strategic Plan. The DOE has released its new strategic plan to support its vision of five primary components: Invest in Talent Development, Support Local Educators, Support the Whole Learner, Foster Research and Innovation, and Reinvent Accountability. A couple of priorities listed within the plan include attempting to close the "opportunity gap" for economically disadvantaged students and Native American students as well as enhancing civics education and providing more work-based learning. These priorities likely provide some insight into what we may see develop into statewide initiatives and/or policy.

Civics Education Plan. The DOE has issued a three year plan to "support civics K-12 education." Their working definition of civics education is "the knowledge, practice, and skills from geography, history, economics, government, and the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings which provide the foundational virtues needed to be moral and involved citizens." According to their document, the State will begin by hosting listening sessions and conduct surveys to determine current practices related to civics education and begin to host training for teachers.

Cyber Security Risk Assessment. We've been in contact with BIT (SD Bureau of Information and Telecommunications) to conduct a cyber-security risk assessment of our network and technology infrastructure. BIT has just recently announced their willingness and ability to conduct these analyses at no cost to school districts. The analysis will examine the physical infrastructure, software installations and usages and policies/protocols of our network and its components. Depending on their schedule, we would anticipate this taking place during the spring of 2020.

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General Fund Balance History

Budget Comments	Year End	Expenditure Budget	Actual Expenditures	Exp/Bud %	Revenue Budget	Actual Revenue	Rev/Bud %	Fund Balance	FB %	Student Enroll.	Certified Staff	Square Miles	Comp ACT
1,272,975.69	'08	4,040,939.00	3,820,365.48	0.945	3,802,172.00	3,765,847.67	0.990	1,218,457.88	31.9	624.00	51.75	785	22.3
	'09	4,260,887.00	3,966,179.28	0.931	3,832,949.00	3,876,920.06	1.011	1,129,198.66	28.5	626.00	52.75	785	23.5
ARRA, SB91	'10	4,254,235.00	3,942,528.03	0.927	4,072,291.00	4,211,943.76	1.034	1,398,614.39	35.5	623.00	54.45	871	23.1
8.6% Gov cut	'11	4,313,824.00	3,985,760.70	0.924	3,912,373.00	3,991,360.30	1.020	1,404,213.99	35.2	612.00	54.05	871	22.8
	'12	4,028,892.00	3,666,644.45	0.910	3,743,265.00	3,866,638.53	1.033	1,604,208.07	43.8	591.00	51.91	871	24.0
	'13	4,175,803.00	3,814,595.97	0.913	3,714,180.00	3,908,841.75	1.052	1,698,453.85	44.5	588.00	49.91	871	22.6
SB91 items in GF	'14	4,578,300.00	4,156,844.84	0.908	3,995,856.00	4,081,148.87	1.021	1,622,757.88	39.0	581.00	49.77	871	22.6
	'15	4,575,714.00	4,236,962.33	0.926	4,003,067.00	4,181,748.25	1.045	1,567,543.80	37.0	596.00	48.75	871	22.6
	'16	4,719,838.00	4,308,652.85	0.913	4,167,437.00	4,283,531.74	1.028	1,542,422.69	35.8	582.00	47.75	871	22.9
Governor's Plan	'17	5,020,123.00	4,818,605.99	0.960	4,434,298.00	4,671,571.79	1.054	1,395,388.49	29.0	589.00	49.00	871	21.9
Show Choir Major	'18	5,322,308.00	5,033,221.09	0.946	4,690,523.00	4,535,461.34	0.967	897,628.74	17.8	568.00	49.00	871	22.0
w/500K transfer	'19	5,268,301.00	4,947,209.61	0.939	4,973,177.00	5,229,727.13	1.052	1,180,146.26	23.9	578.87	48.00	871	22.4
w/500K transfer	'20	5,326,192.00	5,045,000.00	0.947	4,994,844.00	5,045,000.00	1.010	1,180,146.26	23.4	585.00	46.00	871	22.4
			3-year Average	0.948		3-year Average	1.024						

Capital Outlay Fund Balance History

Budget Comments	Year End	Expenditure Budget	Actual Expenditures	Exp/Bud %	Revenue Budget	Actual Revenue	Rev/Bud %	Fund Balance	FB %	Student Enroll.	Certified Staff	Square Miles	Comp ACT
294,619.19	'08	661,000.00	579,907.80	0.877	674,586.00	664,030.43	0.984	378,741.82	65.3	624.00	51.75	785	22.3
	'09	722,450.00	570,125.90	0.789	777,000.00	765,640.24	0.985	574,256.16	100.7	626.00	52.75	785	23.5
SB91 use CO	'10	1,059,750.00	968,418.09	0.914	932,150.00	947,482.79	1.016	553,320.86	57.1	623.00	54.45	871	23.1
8.6% Gov cut	'11	1,101,225.00	1,077,262.93	0.978	999,324.00	1,001,804.88	1.002	477,862.81	44.4	612.00	54.05	871	22.8
	'12	1,026,345.00	968,201.14	0.943	1,066,950.00	1,083,298.84	1.015	592,960.51	61.2	591.00	51.91	871	24.0
	'13	1,161,645.00	1,093,583.25	0.941	1,076,750.00	1,092,798.38	1.015	592,175.64	54.2	588.00	49.91	871	22.6
SB91 items to GF	'14	1,126,385.00	1,001,948.60	0.890	1,097,639.00	1,082,447.51	0.986	672,674.55	67.1	581.00	49.77	871	22.6
	'15	1,152,652.00	1,076,249.68	0.934	1,105,296.00	1,118,139.77	1.012	714,564.64	66.4	596.00	48.75	871	22.6
	'16	1,146,493.00	985,721.02	0.860	1,059,700.00	1,073,624.60	1.013	802,468.22	81.4	582.00	47.75	871	22.9
Governor's Plan	'17	1,128,443.00	1,039,463.92	0.921	1,030,550.00	1,040,009.45	1.009	803,013.75	77.3	589.00	49.00	871	21.9
	'18	1,486,180.00	1,459,415.62	0.982	1,282,651.00	1,145,835.95	0.893	489,434.08	33.5	568.00	49.00	871	22.0
w/500K transfer	'19	1,792,950.00	1,696,324.82	0.946	2,726,718.00	2,779,826.68	1.019	1,572,935.94	92.7	578.87	48.00	871	22.4
w/500K transfer	'20	1,959,145.00	1,858,000.00	0.948	1,720,032.00	1,730,000.00	1.006	1,444,935.94	77.8	585.00	46.00	871	22.4
			3-year Average	0.950		3-year Average	0.974						

Special Ed Fund Balance History

Budget Comments	Year End	Expenditure Budget	Actual Expenditures	Exp/Bud %	Revenue Budget	Actual Revenue	Rev/Bud %	Fund Balance	FB %	Student Enroll.	Certified Staff	Square Miles	Comp ACT
125,189.40	'08	693,794.00	598,151.26	0.862	578,890.00	573,992.93	0.992	101,031.07	16.9	624.00	51.75	785	22.3
	'09	750,167.00	615,074.50	0.820	647,113.00	641,236.51	0.991	127,193.08	20.7	626.00	52.75	785	23.5
ARRA funds	'10	830,626.00	689,133.45	0.830	729,844.00	759,562.52	1.041	197,622.15	28.7	623.00	54.45	871	23.1
IDEA to coop	'11	684,787.00	585,163.82	0.855	593,832.00	595,945.37	1.004	208,403.70	35.6	612.00	54.05	871	22.8
ARRA ends	'12	639,682.00	569,547.68	0.890	539,850.00	537,564.88	0.996	176,420.90	31.0	591.00	51.91	871	24.0
	'13	654,057.00	531,223.80	0.812	564,100.00	571,330.10	1.013	216,527.20	40.8	588.00	49.91	871	22.6
Sesquestration	'14	716,621.00	611,598.17	0.853	600,950.00	626,593.92	1.043	231,522.95	37.9	581.00	49.77	871	22.6
	'15	752,362.00	663,841.19	0.882	639,026.00	642,339.72	1.005	210,021.48	31.6	596.00	48.75	871	22.6
	'16	822,231.00	764,958.42	0.930	669,700.00	678,500.72	1.013	123,563.78	16.2	582.00	47.75	871	22.9
Governor's Plan	'17	879,333.00	818,261.89	0.931	754,250.00	769,975.03	1.021	75,276.92	9.2	589.00	49.00	871	21.9
	'18	928,526.00	851,751.37	0.917	871,050.00	788,780.68	0.906	12,306.23	1.4	568.00	49.00	871	22.0
	'19	895,557.00	822,885.84	0.919	920,910.00	1,004,018.75	1.090	193,439.14	23.5	578.87	48.00	871	22.4
	'20	928,409.00	856,000.00	0.922	918,150.00	924,000.00	1.006	261,439.14	30.5	585.00	46.00	871	22.4
			3-year Average	0.922		3-year Average	1.006						

OF-Fund Balance History.xls

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Upcoming Events

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

5 p.m.: Boys' basketball at Sisseton. C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and then Varsity

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

Monday, January 20, 2020

6:30pm: Girls Basketball hosts Langford Area with JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Tuesday, January 21, 2020

4 p.m.: Basketball Double Header with Ipswich here. Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5 p.m., Girls Varsity at 6 p.m. followed by boys varsity game.

4:00pm: Wrestling: Boys 7th/8th Tournament vs. Aberdeen Central @ Aberdeen Civic Arena

It's Boys' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Aberdeen
Christian
Knights** VS



Groton Area Tigers

Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2020 at the Aberdeen Civic Arena

Boys JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by Varsity

Varsity Broadcast Sponsored by the Aberdeen

Chrysler Center. JV by Jesse Zak

The Life of Marie E. Gengerke



Funeral service for Marie E. Gengerke, 94, Aberdeen were held Wednesday, January 8, 2020 at St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton, Rev. Andrew Wolfgram officiated. Burial at Groton Union Cemetery. Marie died Thursday, January 2 at Prairie Heights Healthcare.

Marie Sippel was born on February 17, 1925 at a farm near Groton to George and Lillian (Osman) Sippel. She attended grade school in rural areas and graduated from Groton High School with the class of 1943. On June 19, 1943 she was united in marriage to Marvin Gengerke at their farm. They made their home on a farm six miles north of Groton where Marvin grew up, and they farmed until they moved to an apartment in Groton on November 14, 1996. They were blessed with six children. Marvin passed away December 10, 2000.

Marie was a member of St. John's Lutheran Church and a member of the Nursery Circle from 1971 of which she held several offices. She enjoyed crocheting, embroidering dish towels, playing cards and bingo, cooking, canning, and freezing foods, besides being with family and friends.

Grateful for having shared Marie's Life are her six children: Art (Linda) Gengerke, Groton, Ev Fuehrer, Mitchell, Norm (Ellen) Gengerke, Groton, Shirley Guthmiller, Aberdeen, Howard Gengerke, Miramar Beach, Florida, and Pam (Alan) Davis, Bath, Thirteen grandchildren, twenty-five great grandchildren and four great-great grandchildren.

Preceding Marie in death are her parents, George and Lillian Sippel, her husband, Marvin Gengerke, three brothers, Melvin, Marvin, and Harry Sippel, two sisters, Myrtle Blondo and Mabel Hagele, two brothers-in-law, Walt Blondo and Albion Hagele, three sisters-in-law, Mary, Margaret and Lorraine Sippel, niece, MaryAnn Sippel and nephew Marty Sippel.

Casket bearers were her eight grandsons: Collin, Shawn, and Ryan Gengerke, Kevin and Tim Fuehrer, Matthew Guthmiller, and Tony and Andrew Davis. Honorary casket bearers are her granddaughters and great grandchildren.

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Today



Cold

High: 4 °F

Tonight



Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow

Low: -3 °F

Wednesday



Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow then Sunny

High: 2 °F ↓

Wednesday Night



Mostly Clear

Low: -19 °F

Thursday



Cold

High: 5 °F

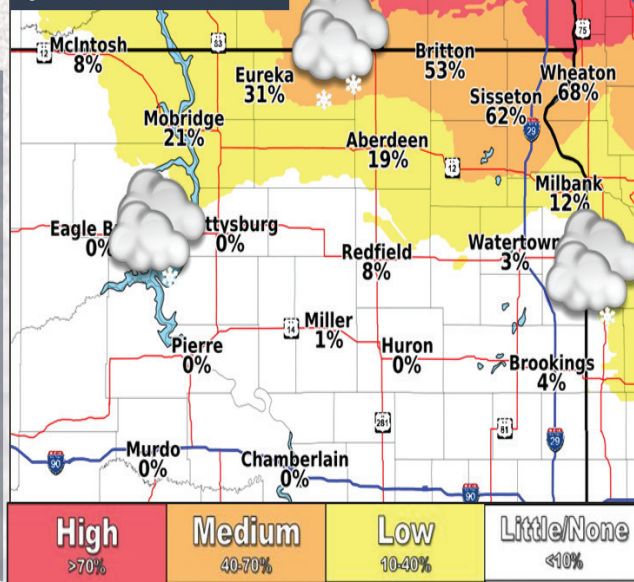


Snow Possible Tue PM – Wed AM

Generally light snow is possible across the area Tuesday evening into Wednesday. Cold air moves in Tuesday night as well.

Potential for 1 inch or more of snow

6pm Tues – Noon Wed



Tonight	Tuesday	Wednesday
Fog Breezy	*	COLD Breezy
Blowing snow and fog possible	Light evening and overnight snow possible	Light snow until around noon, blowing snow possible
LO: -2 to 10° Coldest north central SD	HI: 5 to 15° 15°+ S of Pierre LO: -10 to 2°	HI: 0 to 8° LO: -5 to -20°

Visit www.weather.gov/abr for a detailed local forecast

Updated: 1/13/2020 1:58 PM CT

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Areas of fog and blowing snow are possible tonight. Generally light snow is possible across the area Tuesday evening into Wednesday. Cold air moves in Tuesday night as well.

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Today in Weather History

January 14, 1916: Record cold continued on this date in weather history in 1916 across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota. Aberdeen, Kennebec, Mobridge, Timber Lake, Watertown, and Wheaton all set record lows. The record lows were 24 degrees below zero at Kennebec, 28 degrees below zero at Wheaton, 31 degrees below zero at Timber Lake, 35 degrees below zero at Mobridge, 36 degrees below zero at Aberdeen, and 38 degrees below zero at Watertown.

1882: A cold winter storm that started on 1/1 and ended on this day brought lots of snow to the lowlands. 15 inches of snow fell at San Bernardino. 3 feet of snow fell in Campo over four days and produced 8 foot drifts in spots. Two to five inches fell in outlying San Diego, including four inches along Poway Grade, 3 inches at El Cajon and one inch in Poway. 5 inches fell in Riverside. Light snow fell in Del Mar. Snowflakes fell, but did not stick at San Diego Lindbergh Field. Birds and livestock were killed, telegraph lines were knocked down and citrus crops were damaged.

1972: In Loma, Montana, the temperature soared from 54 degrees below zero to 49 degrees above zero on January 14-15, 1972. The 103 degree change is the greatest ever recorded in the world for a 24 hour period.

2009: In Washington State, freezing fog and freezing drizzle enveloped much the Inland Northwest during the period of 13-23 January 2009. The area most affected by this was the high plateau region along Highway 2 between Wenatchee and Spokane. Below are some of the pictures taken at the NWS Spokane office showing the accumulation of rime on various objects.

1863 - The greatest snowstorm of record for Cincinnati OH commenced, and a day later twenty inches of snow covered the ground. That total has remained far above the modern day record for Cincinnati of eleven inches of snow in one storm. (David Ludlum)

1882 - Southern California's greatest snow occurred on this date. Fifteen inches blanketed San Bernardino, and even San Diego reported a trace of snow. (David Ludlum)

1979 - Chicago, IL, was in the midst of their second heaviest snow of record as, in thirty hours, the city was buried under 20.7 inches of snow. The twenty-nine inch snow cover following the storm was an all-time record for Chicago. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Arctic cold invaded the north central U.S. By evening blustery northwest winds and temperatures near zero at Grand Forks ND were producing wind chill readings of 50 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary)

1988 - A powerful Pacific storm produced rain and high winds in the western U.S. In Nevada, a wind gust to 90 mph at Reno was an all-time record for that location, and wind gusts reached 106 mph southwest of Reno. A wind gust to 94 mph was recorded at nearby Windy Hill. Rainfall totals in Oregon ranged up to six inches at Wilson River. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A winter storm spread snow and sleet and freezing rain from the Middle Mississippi Valley to the northeastern U.S. Freezing rain in West Virginia caused fifteen traffic accidents in just a few minutes west of Charleston. Tennessee was deluged with up to 7.5 inches of rain. Two inches of rain near Clarksville TN left water in the streets as high as car doors.

1990 - A winter storm in the southwestern U.S. blanketed the mountains of southwest Utah with 18 to 24 inches of snow, while sunshine and strong southerly winds helped temperatures warm into the 60s in the Central Plains Region. Five cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including North Platte NE with a reading of 63 degrees. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

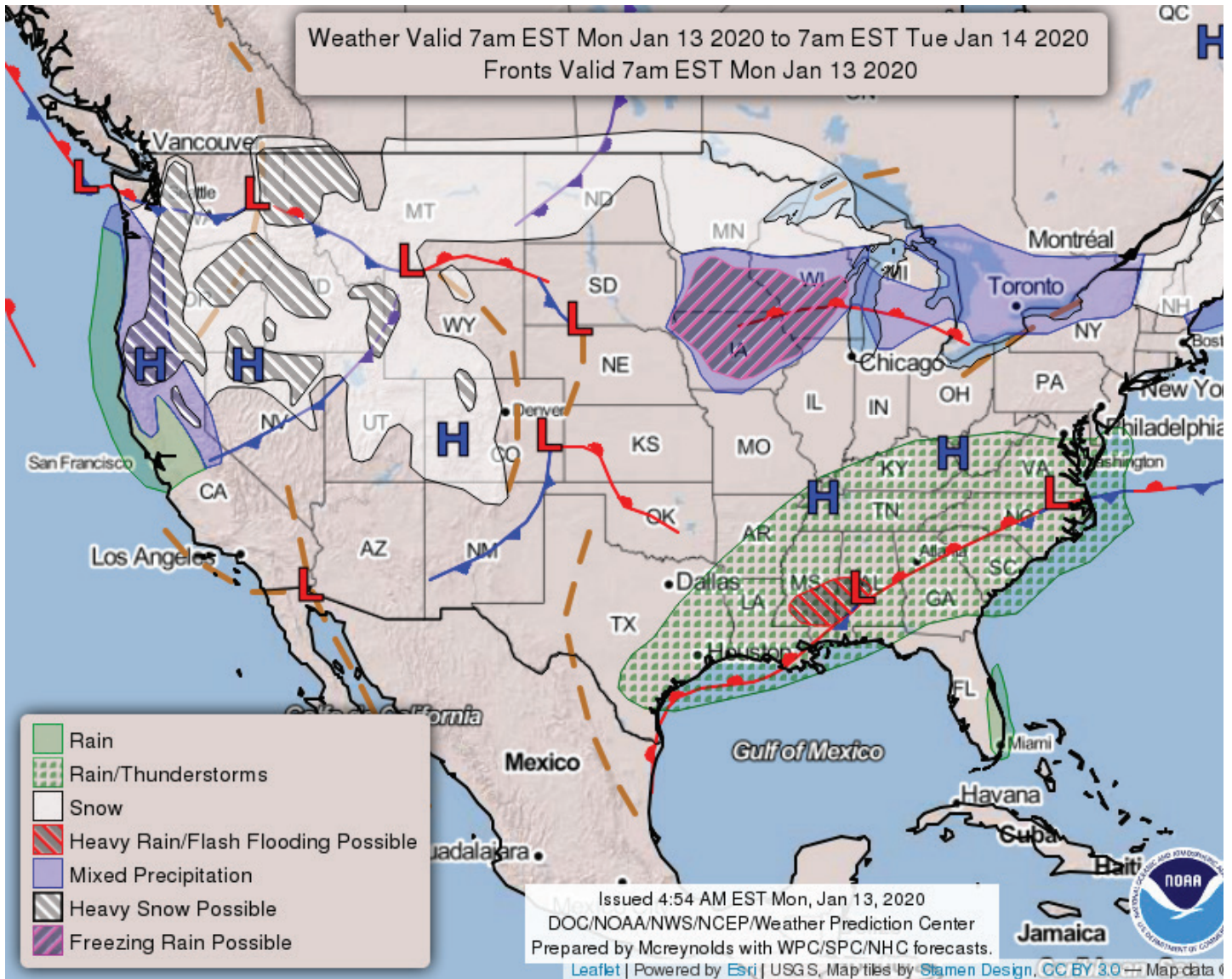
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 26 °F at 10:53 PM
Low Temp: 15 °F at 4:21 AM
Wind: 23 mph at 11:31 AM

Record High: 50° in 1901
Record Low: -36° in 1916
Average High: 22°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.23
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.23
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:15 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10 a.m.



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LOVE AND RESPECT

One evening a husband returned from work and found his home cluttered and un-kept. Calling his wife he asked, "What on earth happened today?"

"So," she responded thoughtfully, "every evening when you arrive home you ask, 'What did you do all day?' Well, now you know. I didn't do it."

When a man and woman become husband and wife, a unique relationship is formed: the two become one. And when the two are merged into one, a unique union is formed. From then on, whatever affects one certainly affects the other. It is as if there is no seam or separation.

Paul said that "each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." We know that a man "loves himself" if he takes care of himself as one who was created in God's image and for God's glory. If a man takes his obligation to God seriously, he will be concerned about his spiritual, mental and physical well-being. How? By developing his relationship with God, putting "good things" into his mind, and caring for his body. These are the "right" things to do. And, as he cares for himself, he must – willingly and consistently – also care for his wife the same way. A wife knows that her husband cares for her if he cares for himself as God intended him to. He will also want the same – what is best in God's sight and teachings – for her. Respect for the husband comes easily and naturally and freely and consistently when the wife knows she is being cared for the way God intended.

Prayer: Lord, we pray that in our homes and in our lives we will live the true love that comes only from You. Help us to live love and show love as Your Son did. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Ephesians 5:33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

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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

Monday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL=

Bridgewater-Emery 55, Colman-Egan 41
Ortonville, Minn. 62, Sisseton 60
Tri-State, N.D. 57, Waverly-South Shore 44
Viborg-Hurley 82, Alcester-Hudson 35
Wakpala 59, Dupree 49

GIRLS BASKETBALL=

Castlewood 58, Florence/Henry 38
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 49, St. Francis Indian 34
Corsica/Stickney 62, Platte-Geddes 29
Dupree 79, Wakpala 42
Howard 52, Elkton-Lake Benton 37
Lake Preston 48, Iroquois 42
Lennox 67, Dell Rapids 27
Mobridge-Pollock 37, Standing Rock, N.D. 20
Viborg-Hurley 60, Alcester-Hudson 39
Waubay/Summit 66, Webster 50
Wilmot 35, Great Plains Lutheran 28

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

South Dakota townships face financial woes after 2019 floods

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Townships in South Dakota are facing economic difficulties as 2019 flood repair costs mount.

Townships primarily depend on their taxpayers for funds to repair more than 31,000 miles (50,000 kilometers) of roads while they wait for reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Counties and states can access state and federal programs for money to fix major roadways.

Dustin Leiseth, president of the South Dakota Towns and Townships Association, said townships had received \$544,000 from FEMA as of December for disasters that caused around \$31.6 million in damages, the Argus Leader reported.

The 2019 Vermillion River flooding in Turner Township washed away 3 miles (5 kilometers) of road, causing an estimated \$250,000 in damage. Repairs will cost five times more than the township's annual \$70,000 budget. The township took out a \$200,000 bank loan to pay for the repairs while it waits for FEMA funds, township Supervisor Michael Stevens said.

The flood damage has caused more than financial problems. Terry Sletten, the association's executive director, said townships usually do not have paid employees, which puts pressure on township supervisors because they are the only go-to person for perturbed residents.

"It's another complicated challenge that supervisors in rural America find themselves in," she said.

In her budget address in December, Gov. Kristi Noem suggested a new state loan program for cities, counties, townships and tribes to help cover the expenses associated with fixing infrastructure damaged during the 2019 natural disasters while the entities wait to receive the money from FEMA.

"We've experienced the largest natural disaster our state has ever seen, and public infrastructure was among the hardest hit," she said.

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Noem's Infrastructure Disaster Recovery Program is being swiftly implemented and the South Dakota Office of Emergency Management has started accepting applications for the loans.

FEMA repays townships for 75% of public infrastructure repairs, while the state pays for 10% and the township covers 15% of the outstanding costs. The new loan program will advance township money to cover 90% of the costs and the state keeps 75% of the FEMA reimbursement as payment on the loan. The township then has seven years to pay back its 15% portion at a 2% interest rate.

Lawmakers already at work in Capitol ahead of 2020 session

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The 2020 legislative session doesn't officially start until Tuesday, but the halls of the Statehouse were already buzzing with activity on Monday.

Many lawmakers were holding meetings to review session rules, examine the budget, and gain support for prospective bills. The session kicks off when Gov. Kristi Noem delivers the State of the State address. The Republican governor plans to use the speech to emphasize the benefits of doing business in South Dakota and outline her plan to aggressively grow the state's economy.

Lawmakers are watching the budget figures closely after a year of tight revenues. They want to find room to fund pay raises for teachers, state employees and medical providers.

The Joint Committee on Appropriations met on Monday and got a bit of good news — the state's revenue's were \$8.4 million higher than estimates.

Lawmakers are looking for a way to raise pay for teachers and state employees.

Lawmakers are also looking to revise several laws that prosecuted "riot boosting." Noem is pushing laws that would make it illegal to directly "urge" people to use force or violence ahead of potentially disruptive demonstrations against the Keystone XL pipeline.

A law that was passed by the Legislature last year was nullified in a legal settlement with the American Civil Liberties Union in October. But Noem has floated legislation to lawmakers that would clarify "riot boosting" and attempts to protect the right to peacefully protest.

The governor has sought input from lawmakers and Native American tribes this time around. She met with leaders and representatives of some of South Dakota's tribes on Friday to get their input.

With just 37 days in the legislative session, lawmakers said they will be busy in Pierre. They are looking to expand mental health resources to rural areas to help prevent suicide and legalize industrial hemp.

Girl's Basketball Polls

By **The Associated Press**

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

Class AA

Rank-School	FPV	Record	TP	Prv
1. Sioux Falls O' Gorman	(18)	7-0	90	1
2. Stevens (-)	9-0	72	2	
3. Harrisburg (-)	8-0	51	3	
4. Washington (-)	4-1	37	4	
5. Lincoln (-)	4-2	20	5	

Others receiving votes: None.

Class A

Rank-School	FPV	Record	TP	Prv
1. Winner (13)	8-0	84	1	
2. Lennox (4)	8-0	76	2	
3. St. Thomas More	(1)	7-0	55	3
4. MC-Montrose (-)	5-0	33	4	

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5. Crow Creek (-) 9-0 19 5
Others receiving votes: West Central 2, Aberdeen Roncalli 1.

Class B

Rank-School	FPV	Record	TP	Prv
1. Corsica-Stickney (16)	6-0	88	1	
2. De Smet (2)	7-0	71	2	
3. Ethan (-)	6-0	54	3	
4. White River (-)	6-1	31	5	
5. Castlewood (-)	4-2	14	4	

Others receiving votes: Faulkton Area 9, Langford Area 2, Howard 1.

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Boy's Basketball Polls

By The Associated Press

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

Class AA

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Brandon Valley (13)	(13)	6-1	80	1
2. Yankton (2)	6-2	64	2	
3. Huron (2)	5-1	57	3	
4. O'Gorman (1)	6-2	49	5	
5. Roosevelt -	5-2	18	4	

Others receiving votes: Lincoln 2.

Class A

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. St. Thomas More	(17)	7-0	89	1
2. Sioux Falls Christian	(1)	6-1	70	2
3. Sioux Valley -	8-0	48	4	
4. Dakota Valley -	6-1	37	3	
5. Lennox -	6-1	15	5	

Others receiving votes: Crow Creek 8, Tiospa Zina 3.

Class B

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Viborg-Hurley (13)	(13)	4-0	84	1
2. De Smet (4)	5-1	70	2	
3. White River (1)	6-0	60	3	
4. Aberdeen Christian (4)	(4)	7-1	20	T5
5. Lyman -	6-1	16	T5	

Others receiving votes: Dell Rapids St. Mary 11, Howard 6, Canistota 3.

School district settles lawsuit filed by former student

ELK POINT, S.D. (AP) — A school district in South Dakota has agreed to pay \$65,000 to settle a sexual discrimination lawsuit brought by a former honor student who said her high school principal punished her for using a phrase her male peers used without retribution.

Addison Ludwig said former Elk Point-Jefferson High School principal Travis Aslesen singled her out after she was featured in the student newspaper "The Husky" in 2017 describing how she enjoys "Netflix n' Chill

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with my boyfriend." Ludwig said she didn't know it was a term used to describe casual sexual encounters until Aslesen brought it to her attention. She had believed the term referred to watching movies on the video streaming service.

Aslesen revoked her senior privileges and honors study hall, forced her to write a letter of apology and removed her as editor of the newspaper. Ludwig said in her lawsuit that male students who used the term had not been disciplined, including a boy who had used the term in a profile in the publication that same year.

District Superintendent Derek Barrios released a copy of the settlement to the Argus Leader.

"The parties agree that the execution of this agreement is solely to avoid the ongoing cost and expense of litigation and is not an admission of liability, and that defendants, individually and collectively, affirmatively deny any liability or wrongdoing," the settlement said.

Ludwig graduated from Elk Point-Jefferson in May 2018.

Attorney general neutral on Indian Child Welfare Act

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's attorney general won't sign a brief in support of the Indian Child Welfare Act, unlike 27 other attorneys general across the country.

A federal lawsuit could determine the future of the law aimed at keeping Native American families together.

Several states, a biological mother, and three non-indigenous couples interested in fostering and adopting Native American children are challenging the constitutionality of the law.

Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg decided to stay neutral on the matter because of an ICWA federal case in South Dakota, according to the Rapid City Journal.

The law was created in response to states removing Native American children from their families at disproportional rates and usually placing them with non-indigenous families.

Iran announces arrests over downing of plane that killed 176

By NASSER KARIMI and AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's judiciary said Tuesday arrests have been made for the accidental shootdown of a Ukrainian passenger plane that killed all 176 people on board just after takeoff from Tehran last week.

The announcement came amid an upswell of anger and protests by Iranians in recent days over the downing of the jetliner last Wednesday and apparent attempts by senior officials in Iran to cover-up the cause of the crash.

Iran, which initially dismissed allegations that a missile had brought down the plane, acknowledged only on Saturday — three days after and in the face of mounting evidence — that its Revolutionary Guard had shot down the plane by mistake as the force braced for a possible military confrontation with the United States.

Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said "extensive investigations have taken place and some individuals are arrested." His statement on the judiciary's website did not say how many individuals had been detained or name them.

Iran's president on Tuesday also called for a special court to be set up to probe the incident.

"The judiciary should form a special court with a ranking judge and dozens of experts," President Hassan Rouhani said in a speech televised in Iran. "This is not an ordinary case. The entire the world will be watching this court."

Rouhani called the incident "a painful and unforgivable" mistake and promised that his administration would pursue the case "by all means."

"The responsibility falls on more than just one person," he said, adding that those found culpable "should be punished."

"There are others, too, and I want that this issue is expressed honestly," he said, without elaborating.

Iran shot down the plane as its forces were on alert for possible U.S. retaliation after Iran launched

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ballistic missiles on two military bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq. No one was hurt in that attack, which was carried out in response to the stunning killing of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in an American airstrike in Baghdad.

While Rouhani pointed to mistakes and negligence, he also repeated the government's line that the tragedy was ultimately rooted in U.S. aggression.

"It was the U.S. that made for an agitated environment. It was the U.S. that created an unusual situation. It was the U.S. that threatened and took our beloved (Soleimani)," he said.

Rouhani called the government's admission that Iranian forces shot down the plane a "first good step."

He added that Iranian experts who retrieved the Ukrainian plane's flight recorder, the so-called black box, have sent it to France for analysis.

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. There were several children among the passengers, including an infant.

Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the head of the Guard's aerospace division, said over the weekend his unit accepts full responsibility for the shutdown. He said when he learned about the downing of the plane, "I wished I was dead."

The incident raised questions about why Iran did not shut down its international airport or airspace the day it was on alert for U.S. military retaliation.

The shutdown and the lack of transparency around it has reignited anger in Iran at the country's leadership. Online videos appeared to show security forces firing live ammunition and tear gas to disperse protests in the streets.

Also Tuesday, Iran's judiciary said that 30 people had been detained in the protests, and that some were released, without elaborating further. An Iranian film director who'd called for protests in Tehran's Azadi, or Freedom, Square is among those released.

Iranian authorities briefly arrested British Ambassador Rob Macaire on Saturday evening. He's said he went to a candlelight vigil to pay his respects for the victims of the Ukrainian plane shutdown and left as soon as the chanting began and it turned into a protest.

Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned the British ambassador on Sunday to protest what it said was his presence at an illegal protest. Britain, in turn, summoned Iran's ambassador on Monday "to convey our strong objections" over the weekend arrest.

Batrawy reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Philippine volcano trembles more, spews lava half-mile high

By JOEAL CALUPITAN and JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

TAGAYTAY, Philippines (AP) — A volcano near the Philippine capital spewed lava into the sky and trembled constantly Tuesday, possibly portending a bigger and more dangerous eruption, as tens of thousands of people fled villages darkened and blanketed by heavy ash.

Government work was suspended and schools were closed in a number of towns and cities, including Manila, because of the health risks from the ash. Hundreds of flights were canceled or delayed, affecting tens of thousands of passengers.

The continuous restiveness of the Taal volcano and several new fissures cracking the ground nearby likely means magma is rising and may lead to further eruptive activity, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

The volcano was spurting fountains of red-hot lava 800 meters (half a mile) into the sky, and the massive column of ash and volcanic debris at times lit up with streaks of lightning.

The alert level since the eruption began Sunday has been 4, indicating a hazardous eruption is possible in hours to days. Level 5, the highest, means such an eruption is underway.

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About 50 volcanic earthquakes were detected over eight hours Tuesday, indicating rising magma, the institute said. It also warned heavy and prolonged ash fall was possible in nearby villages.

"The speed in the rise of magma is important (in determining) when the volcano will have a strong eruption and if it will slow down and freeze," said Renato Solidum, who heads the institute. "As of now, we don't see activities slowing down and the earthquakes still continue."

The picturesque volcano in the middle of a lake in Batangas province south of Manila rumbled to life Sunday in a powerful explosion that blasted a 15-kilometer (9-mile) column of ash, steam and rock into the sky. Clouds of volcanic ash blowing over Manila, 65 kilometers (40 miles) to the north, closed the country's main airport Sunday and part of Monday until the ash fall eased.

More than 500 international and domestic flights were canceled or delayed due to the overnight airport closure, affecting about 80,000 passengers, airport manager Ed Monreal told The Associated Press.

"Hopefully wind direction does not change. As long as the ash fall does not reach us, then we can be back to normalcy," Monreal said.

The disaster-response agency counted more than 40,000 evacuees in Batangas and nearby Cavite provinces who took shelter in nearly 200 evacuation centers. Officials expected the number to swell.

Solidum warned residents from returning to high-risk villages based on perceptions that the eruption was easing. He warned of pyroclastic flows, super-heated material from the volcano that can travel at great speed and incinerate anything in its path.

Solidum said it would take time for Taal's restiveness to ease and the lives of affected villagers to return to normal but added it's difficult to predict Taal's behavior with certainty.

"We have to make sure that people understand and, of course, government, that this is not an activity that will just be in a short while," Solidum told a news conference.

President Rodrigo Duterte planned later Tuesday to visit volcano-devastated areas in Batangas, which has been declared a calamity zone for faster disbursement of emergency funds, his spokesman said.

The government disaster-response agency has not provided details of damage but journalists saw dozens of houses that have been ruined by heavy ash and frequent quakes in two Batangas areas.

At least six people have been brought to a hospital in Tagaytay city in Cavite due to respiratory ailments caused by the ash, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said.

The eruption has not directly caused deaths or major damage. The death of a driver in a crash on an ash-covered road was linked to slippery conditions.

The small island where the 1,020-foot (311-meter) volcano lies has long been designated a "permanent danger zone," though fishing villages have long existed there. Those villages were all evacuated, though volcanology officials have called for a total evacuation of endangered communities within a 14-kilometer (8.7-mile) radius of Taal.

Taal's last disastrous eruption, in 1965, killed hundreds of people. It is the second-most restive of about two dozen active volcanoes in the Philippines, which lies along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," where most of the world's seismic activity occurs.

A long-dormant volcano, Mount Pinatubo, blew its top north of Manila in 1991 in one of the biggest volcanic eruptions of the 20th century, killing hundreds of people.

Gomez reported from Manila. Associated Press journalists Celine Rosario and Kiko Rosario in Manila and Aaron Favila in Tagaytay contributed to this report.

Burrow, LSU cap magical season, beat Clemson 42-25 for title

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — From small-town Ohio kid to Louisiana legend, Joe Burrow capped his record-breaking, Heisman-winning season by bringing a national championship to LSU.

Burrow threw five touchdown passes, ran for another score and finished off one of the most accomplished seasons in college football history by leading the top-ranked Tigers to a 42-25 victory against No.

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3 Clemson on Monday night in the playoff final.

"He's one of the greatest players in LSU history," Tigers coach Ed Orgeron said. "He's done so much for the state of Louisiana and LSU. We are so grateful to Joe Burrow."

The senior quarterback from The Plains, Ohio, led the Tigers (15-0) to their first national title since 2007 and fourth overall, breaking a few more records along the way in what was already an historic season. His five TD passes and 463 yards passing are the most for a BCS or College Football Playoff title game as were his six total touchdowns.

"This is what I wanted to do from the time I was 5 years old, was hoist this trophy, and bringing it back to Louisiana," Burrow said, then caught himself. "I guess we're in Louisiana, but staying in Louisiana, we weren't going to let someone come in here and steal this from us in our home state.

"We have a great fan base that came out and supported us. We were going to keep this thing right here."

Under a shower of sparkling white, gold and purple confetti, Burrow raised the CFP championship trophy toward the Superdome roof. The party was on — no doubt already raging on nearby Bourbon Street.

Burrow became the first major college quarterback to throw 60 touchdown passes in a season as LSU snapped defending national champion Clemson's 29-game winning streak. For the first time in his college career, Clemson star quarterback Trevor Lawrence was on the losing team.

"I hate how it finished," Lawrence said. "But man, we did some really amazing things."

The Tigers (14-1) had won his first 25 starts.

"It's been a long time since I've stood in front of a team after a loss," Clemson coach Dabo Swinney said.

On this night, Lawrence (18 for 37 for 234 yards) was no match for Burrow — the Ohio State transfer who threw all of 16 TD passes last season with LSU.

His ascent has been dizzying and unprecedented. Running a version of the New Orleans Saints' offense that was brought to LSU by 30-year-old assistant coach Joe Brady, Burrow and an array of talented receivers transformed these Tigers into one of the most prolific offenses college football has ever seen.

The Saints' Drew Brees, Burrow's idol growing up, could not have done it better.

This was Orgeron's vision for LSU when he was promoted from interim coach in 2016. There was plenty of skepticism when LSU tabbed the Cajun who had failed in his first crack as a head coach with Mississippi.

Orgeron has proved to be the perfect fit for LSU. Just like Burrow.

After tossing his fifth touchdown pass of the night, a perfectly placed jumped ball to Terrace Marshall Jr. from 24 yards out to make it 42-25 with 12:08 left in the fourth, Burrow signaled TD and strolled to the sideline.

The Superdome is LSU's dome away from home, about 80 miles from the Tigers Baton Rouge campus, and it was rocking.

The LSU band broke out its unofficial anthem, "Neck," and as the Tigers bounced and waved towels on the sideline, Burrow just sat on the bench, bobbing his head and waving one arm.

Joe Cool. Just doing his thing. Next stop: The NFL draft, where he will likely be the first pick in April.

The final score was lopsided, but it was far from easy for LSU and Burrow.

Clemson pushed LSU into the deepest hole it had to climb out of this season in the first half. Two weeks after Lawrence ran for a career-best 107 yards against Ohio State, he opened the scoring with a 1-yard jaunt around right end in the first quarter.

After B.T. Potter kicked a career-long 52-yard field goal for Clemson to make it 10-7, the Tigers sprung receiver Tee Higgins on a 36-yard reverse for a score to make it 17-7.

It took LSU 5:19 to wipe that out and take the lead, with Burrow and his favorite receiver, Ja'Marr Chase, doing most of the damage. The Heisman winner hit the Biletnikoff Award winner with a long ball to set up a quarterback draw from 3 yards out to make it 17-14.

Burrow and Chase hooked up for a 14-yard touchdown with 5:19 left in the second quarter and LSU fans erupted as their Tigers took the lead for the first time, 21-17. They never looked back.

Chase finished with nine catches for 221 yards.

The SEC Tigers weren't done. Burrow led LSU on a 95-yard drive, taking a hard shot on a long run before

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finding Thaddeus Moss, son of former NFL star receiver Randy Moss, standing alone in the end zone. That made it 28-17 with 10 seconds left in the half.

Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables flummoxed LSU for most of the first quarter, with tight coverage and hard-to-decipher blitzes. Burrow, Chase and Co. put up 269 yards in the second quarter.

"Coach Venables is great at what he does, it just took us a while to get it figured out," Burrow said.

Did they ever. LSU dropped 628 yards and six touchdowns on a Clemson team that came in allowing 264 yards and 11.5 points per game.

"Weapons all over the field. We've been seeing it all year," LSU safety Grant Delpit said. "Just seeing how many weapons we had on offense is just crazy."

Over the last three games of his spectacular season, against Georgia in the Southeastern Conference championship game and Oklahoma and Clemson in the playoff, Burrow passed for 1,305 yards and 16 touchdowns. LSU won those games by a combined score of 142-63.

When it was all over, Burrow puffed on a victory cigar as he made his way from the locker room to the postgame news conference. No one was about to tell him he couldn't smoke inside.

This season, the LSU hero has done just about whatever he wants."

"I don't know about the whole hero thing," Burrow said, "but I know this national championship will be remembered for a long time in Louisiana."

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Iraqis worry US-Iran tensions are eclipsing their protests

By **SAMYA KULLAB** and **QASSEM ABDUL-ZAHRA** Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Young Iraqis who drove mass protests demanding sweeping political reforms are worried that the conflict between the U.S. and Iran, which is playing out in part on Iraqi soil, is killing their momentum.

Even before the U.S. drone attack that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the 4-month-old protests against government corruption, poor services and rising Iranian influence in state affairs were beset by internal divisions. A violent security crackdown heightened tensions, leading to hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries as well as targeted killings of sympathizers.

And in the stormy aftermath of the U.S. drone strike that also killed top Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, avoiding another war in Iraq became a top priority for state officials as they scrambled to contain hostilities between Washington and Tehran.

"We are afraid that the uprising is being forgotten and (officials) are focusing on things we don't want, not our main goals," said Noor, an activist in Baghdad's Tahrir Square who asked to be identified only by her first name, fearing reprisal, like all other protesters interviewed for this story. "On the other hand, we are trying to be calm and keep people on the street to make the point that we are not with the Americans or the Iranians. We are with Iraq."

There are hopeful signs as Iran and the U.S. appeared to back down — at least in the short term — after Tehran retaliated for Soleimani's killing by firing missiles at two Iraqi bases housing American troops. No one was seriously injured and Iran was unexpectedly forced to shift gears to manage the fallout from its accidental downing of a Ukrainian airliner filled with Iranians.

Nevertheless, the issue of U.S. troop withdrawal in response to the attack that killed Soleimani minutes after he landed at Baghdad airport has monopolized Iraqi politics, with caretaker Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi openly calling for their ouster.

"Everyone is busy with America and Iran, but we are still facing attacks on the street," said Zaid, a pro-

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tester in Baghdad. "Now we've become an easy goal for the militias; they can harm us because no one is focusing on them."

The rejection of Iranian influence over Iraqi state affairs was a core component of the protest movement and demonstrators fear that as tensions between Tehran and Washington ease, Iranian-backed militias will turn on them for vengeance.

The protests began Oct. 1, when thousands took to the streets in Baghdad and in the country's predominantly Shiite south. Since then, about 500 people have been killed, most of them shot by security forces who also used tear gas to disperse crowds.

While Friday protests brought out thousands countrywide, the turnout was lower than expected. Adding to their worries, two local journalists known for their coverage of the anti-government protests were found shot dead in a car parked near a Basra police station. And more people were wounded in clashes Saturday between protesters and security forces in Karbala, in southern Iraq, when police fired into the crowd.

"Protesters are certainly more afraid now than they were a few weeks ago but at the same time they want to maintain their ground," said Ruba Ali Hassan, a researcher at York University in Toronto. "They've had such great momentum over the past three plus months and there's great fears this momentum might die down. People are trying to show great support and make sure that the protesters can still move forward but they're on shaky ground unfortunately."

A growing concern among protesters is their belief that Iran-backed militias are seizing on some demonstrators' refusal to grieve over Soleimani as an excuse to attack them. In turn, the attacks fuel the differences of opinion over Soleimani, deepening the rifts between the demonstrators and distracting them from their original purpose.

In the southern city of Nasiriyah, for instance, protesters refused to let a symbolic funeral procession for the Iranian general enter the square where they were camped. Violence broke out and at least one protester was killed and three wounded when an Iran-backed militia fired on crowds. Demonstrators then burned the headquarters of Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella organization for multiple militia groups and part of the Iraqi security forces.

"Political parties and militias have attempted to create discord within the demonstration square in the center of Nasiriyah — they took advantage of the rifts between protesters," said Ali, a protester based in the city. "We have concerns the emotions arising from his death will rob the protests of its true aims."

The events in Nasiriyah have spooked protesters in Baghdad's Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the movement, who fear similar attacks, several activists said.

Since Soleimani's death, protest organizers have been trying to refocus attention on their movement, three activists said. With that in mind, they issued a statement last week saying their goals had not changed.

At the top of their list is preventing Abdul-Mahdi, who has headed a caretaker government since his resignation in December, from being renamed prime minister, which many suspect the country's political elites would like.

"All the news is about America and Iran, and the elites are trying to make the people forget about the protests in Iraq, and our goal for change and we don't want that," said the protester, Noor. "We are trying to be calm and study what is going on around us. We are telling everyone, stay with Iraq. This is not our war."

Associated Press writer A. J. Naddaff in Beirut contributed to this report.

Idea to dismiss articles of impeachment cools in Senate

By LISA MASCARO, ALAN FRAM, MARY CLARE JALONICK and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans signaled they would reject the idea of simply voting to dismiss the articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump as the House prepares to send the charges

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to the chamber for the historic trial.

"I think our members, generally are not interested in the motion to dismiss. They think both sides need to be heard," Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., who is part of GOP leadership, said Monday.

It will be only the third presidential impeachment trial in American history, a serious and dramatic endeavor coming amid the backdrop of a politically divided nation and the start of an election year.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi has not set the timing for the House vote that will launch the Senate action. Trump was impeached by the Democratic-led House last month on charges of abuse of power over pushing Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden and obstruction of Congress in the probe. Democrats said the vote could be Wednesday.

With the impeachment trial starting in a matter of days, senators are still debating the rules of the proceedings. GOP senators are conferring privately about whether to allow a motion to dismiss the charges against the president or to call additional witnesses for testimony.

Trump suggested over the weekend he might prefer simply dismissing the charges rather than giving legitimacy to charges from the House, which he considers a "hoax."

It was an extraordinary suggestion, but one being proposed by Trump allies with support from some GOP senators, including Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

But it is clear McConnell does not have the votes needed from his GOP majority to do that.

One key Republican, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, said she too would oppose a motion to dismiss the charges.

Collins is leading an effort among some Republicans, including Sens. Mitt Romney of Utah and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, to ensure the ground rules include plans to eventually consider voting to call witnesses.

"My position is that there should be a vote on whether or not witnesses should be called," Collins said.

Romney said he wants to hear from John Bolton, the former national security adviser at the White House, who others have said raised alarms about the alternative foreign policy toward Ukraine being run led by Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani.

"I've said I'd like to hear from John Bolton," Romney told reporters Monday. "I expect that barring some kind of surprise, I'll be voting in favor of hearing from witnesses after those opening arguments."

Democrats have been pushing Republicans, who have the majority in the Senate, to consider new testimony, arguing that fresh information has emerged during Pelosi's monthlong delay in transmitting the charges.

McConnell is drafting an organizing resolution that will outline the steps ahead. Approving it will be among the first votes senators take after they are sworn as jurors by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts for the Court of Impeachment.

Republicans control the chamber, 53-47, and are all but certain to acquit Trump. McConnell is hesitant to call new witnesses who would prolong the trial. He prefers to model Trump's trial partly on the process used for then-President Bill Clinton's trial in 1999.

It takes just 51 votes during the impeachment trial to approve rules or call witnesses. Just four GOP senators could form a majority with Democrats to insist on new testimony. It also would take only 51 senators to vote to dismiss the charges against Trump.

Most Republicans appear willing to go along with McConnell's plan to start the trial first then consider witnesses later, rather than upfront, as Democrats want.

Collins is pushing to have at least the promise of witness votes included in the organizing resolution. She and the others appear to be gathering support.

"I've been working to make sure that we will have a process that we can take a vote on whether or not we need additional information, and yes, that would include witnesses," Murkowski told reporters.

McConnell is expected to huddle privately with senators at their weekly lunch Tuesday.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer told reporters the House vote might come Wednesday. "Could be," he said.

Associated Press writers Matthew Daly, Andrew Taylor and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

McConnell's challenge: Shaping a trial amid Trump's demands

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump needs Mitch McConnell more than ever.

With Trump finally facing his impeachment trial, this promises to be a defining moment for both men. They started their relationship unevenly three years ago when Trump stunned Washington with his sweep to power but have since fallen into an easy partnership that will be put to its biggest test.

The leader of the Republican-majority Senate has already put his imprint on virtually every aspect of the upcoming trial. He corralled the GOP senators behind his strategy to brush back Democratic demands for new witnesses and testimony. On Monday, McConnell and Senate Republicans were trying to decide whether to include a motion to simply dismiss the charges against Trump outright, as the president wants, in the organizing resolution for the trial, according to a person familiar with the matter but unauthorized to discuss it.

The Kentucky Republican is working hand in hand with the White House. He doesn't pretend to be an impartial arbiter.

"The House has done enough damage," McConnell said Monday as he opened the chamber. "The Senate is ready to fulfill our duty."

As the Senate is about to convene for the landmark undertaking, only the third presidential impeachment trial in American history, perhaps no one is more important to Trump's defense than the Republican leader.

The Democratic-run House is set to transmit the articles of impeachment to the Senate in a matter of days. Trump faces two charges approved by the House. First, that he abused power by pushing Ukraine to investigate his Democratic political rival Joe Biden, holding back U.S. military funds to the country as leverage. And second, that he then obstructed Congress by blocking witnesses and testimony in the House probe.

The challenge for McConnell will be to balance Trump's appetite for full vindication, accompanied by humiliation of Democrats, with a more measured trial that fits the legal expectations of the Constitution and won't expose Senate Republicans to a spectacle that could hurt them in elections.

"The president and Senator McConnell have learned to trust each other's judgment," said Josh Holmes, a former top McConnell aide who remains close to the leader. "They've been through an awful lot over three years."

Republicans hold the majority in the Senate, 53-47, and there is nowhere near the 67 votes needed for Trump's removal.

The president has given mixed messages about what he wants in a trial — first suggesting calling witnesses including Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff and the still anonymous government whistleblower, whose complaint about Trump's July phone call with Ukraine sparked the impeachment inquiry.

But over the weekend Trump said the Senate should simply dismiss the case against him, rather than legitimize the House charges by sending them for trial. It was an extraordinary suggestion that now appears to be under consideration.

As Pelosi prepared to release her hold on the charges, Trump tweeted yet again on Monday that the House impeachment inquiry "was the most unfair witch-hunt in the history of Congress!" Making it personal, McConnell is calling the holdup Pelosi's "one-woman blockade."

The president continues to review his options, according to one senior White House official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

The person described the president's talk of dismissal as simply covering the possibilities as the White House continues to work closely with Republicans on Capitol Hill. Simply dismissing the charges against Trump is unlikely, though Republicans are circulating a proposed resolution.

McConnell, who has gained the president's trust in Senate matters, now needs to deliver.

The two sparred early in Trump's presidency, most sharply when McConnell's Senate GOP was unable

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to repeal the Affordable Care Act, a signature Trump campaign promise.

But once the GOP leader muscled through the confirmations of Trump's Supreme Court nominees, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, the relationship warmed. The two men talk regularly.

The leader's proximity to Trump helps him back home, where he is up for reelection in the Bluegrass State this year alongside Trump. His likely Democratic opponent will be former Marine Corps officer Amy McGrath, who flew combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the House launched the impeachment inquiry, McConnell was able to convince Trump not to tweet against Senate Republicans who showed signs of straying and instead focus attention on the House.

McConnell's goal during the House proceeding was to create a party-line outcome that would diminish the case as it came to the Senate, Holmes said.

The groundwork for the Senate trial was laid months ago as McConnell built GOP support for modeling it partly on rules devised for President Bill Clinton's impeachment trial in 1999. That would mean starting the proceedings and voting only later on hearing new testimony.

That allowed McConnell to turn back Democrats' demands for agreement on new testimony, particularly from former White House national security adviser John Bolton, who has indicated he will defy Trump's orders and appear if subpoenaed.

Democrats still hope to force votes on Bolton and other witnesses they say can provide new evidence for the case against Trump. McConnell is trying to prevent any votes that will prolong the trial and split his party, particularly vulnerable senators up for reelection in 2020.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer warned Monday that failing to call new witnesses and testimony would turn the Senate trial into a "farce."

One Republican, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, is working with GOP colleagues on a process that would allow them to hear more testimony, as Democrats want. McConnell is trying to give her and the others room to see if they can make a deal, the person familiar with the matter said.

Trump has yet to decide on his legal team and whether it will grow to include some of his fiercest defenders from the ranks of House Republicans.

Alan Dershowitz, the former Harvard University professor whom the president is considering adding to his defense team, said that the president has a "good team" with White House Counsel Pat Cipollone and personal attorney Jay Sekulow.

Dershowitz said Monday that no final decision had been made by the president.

Trump is scheduled to attend the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, early next week - just as the Senate trial is expected to be underway in Washington.

The opening will be in McConnell's hands.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Jill Colvin, Darlene Superville, Aamer Madhani and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

Russians hacked company key to Ukraine scandal: researchers

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — A U.S. cybersecurity company says Russian military agents have successfully hacked the Ukrainian gas company at the center of the scandal that led to President Donald Trump's impeachment.

Russian agents launched a phishing campaign in early November to steal the login credentials of employees of Burisma Holdings, the gas company, according to Area 1 Security, a Silicon Valley company that specializes in e-mail security.

Hunter Biden, son of former U.S. vice president and Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden, previously served on Burisma's board.

It was not clear what the hackers were looking for or may have obtained, said Area 1's CEO, Oren Falkowitz, who called the findings "incontrovertible" and posted an eight-page report. But the timing of the operation suggests that the Russian agents could be searching for material that damaging to the Bidens.

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The House of Representatives impeached Trump in December for abusing the power of his office by enlisting the Ukrainian government to investigate Biden, a political rival, ahead of the 2020 election. A second charge accused Trump of obstructing a congressional investigation into the matter.

"Our report doesn't make any claims as to what the intent of the hackers were, what they might have been looking for, what they are going to do with their success. We just point out that this is a campaign that's going on," said Falkowitz, a former National Security Agency offensive hacker whose company's clients include candidates for U.S. federal elected offices. In an earlier interview, he told The Associated Press that top candidates for the U.S. presidency and House and Senate races in 2020 have in the past few months each been targeted by about a thousand phishing emails.

Falkowitz did not name the candidates. Nor would he name any clients.

Russian hackers from the same military intelligence unit that Area 1 said was behind the operation targeting Burisma have been indicted for hacking emails from the Democratic National Committee and the chairman of Hillary Clinton's campaign during the 2016 presidential race.

Stolen emails were released online at the time by Russian agents and WikiLeaks in an effort to favor Trump, special counsel Robert Mueller determined in his investigation.

Area 1 discovered the phishing campaign by the Russian military intelligence unit, known as the GRU, on New Year's Eve, said Falkowitz, who would not discuss whom he notified prior to going public. He said he followed the industry standard process of responsible disclosure, which would include notifying Burisma.

In the report, he said the GRU agents used fake, lookalike domains in the phishing campaign that were designed to mimic the sites of real Burisma subsidiaries.

Falkowitz said the operation targeting Burisma involved tactics, techniques and procedures that GRU agents had used repeatedly in other phishing operations, matching "several patterns that lots of independent researchers agree mimic this particular Russian actor." Area 1 says it has been tracking the Russian agents for several years.

The discovery's timing — just weeks before presidential primaries begin in the United States — highlights the need to protect political campaigns from targeted phishing attacks, which are behind 95 percent of all information breaches, said Falkowitz.

"This is a real specific, timely case that has real implications," he said. "To discover it and potentially get out in front of it is a significant departure from what's typical in the cyber security community, where someone just tells you, yeah, you're dead."

In phishing, an attacker uses a targeted email to lure a target to a fake site that resembles a familiar one. There, unwitting victims enter their usernames and passwords, which the hackers then harvest. Phished credentials allow attackers both to rifle through a victim's stored email and masquerade as that person.

Area 1 said its researchers connected the phishing campaign targeting Burisma to an effort earlier last year that targeted Kwartal 95, a media organization founded by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

In this case, the Russian military agents, from a group security researchers call "Fancy Bear," peppered Burisma employees with emails designed to look like internal messages.

In order to detect phishing attacks, Area 1 maintains a global network of sensors designed to sniff out and block them before they reach their targets.

In July, the U.S. Federal Elections Commission gave Area 1 permission to offer its services to candidates for federal elected office and political committees at the same low rates it charges non-profits.

Hinch, GM fired for Astros sign stealing after MLB bans pair

By RONALD BLUM and KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writers

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Astros' sign-stealing scandal cost manager AJ Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow their jobs, and Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora could be next.

Hinch and Luhnow were fired Monday after being suspended by Major League Baseball for the team's illicit use of electronics to steal signs during Houston's run to the 2017 World Series title and again in the 2018 season.

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In U.S. sports' largest scandal since the New England Patriots' "Spygate," MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred announced the discipline and strongly hinted that Cora — the Astros bench coach in 2017 — will face equal or more severe punishment. Manfred said Cora developed the sign-stealing system used by the Astros. The Red Sox are under investigation for stealing signs in Cora's first season as manager in 2018, when Boston won the World Series.

Houston was fined \$5 million, the maximum allowed under the Major League Constitution, as punishment. The Astros will also forfeit their next two first- and second-round amateur draft picks.

The investigation found that the Astros used the video feed from a center field camera to see and decode the opposing catcher's signs. Players banged on a trash can to signal to batters what was coming, believing it would improve the batter's odds of getting a hit.

Sign stealing is a legal and time-honored part of baseball as long as it is done with the naked eye — say, by a baserunner standing on second. Using technology is prohibited.

Astros players disputed whether knowing the pitches seconds in advance helped batters. Houston had fewer wins at home than on the road, winning 94 home games and 110 on the road during the two seasons. There was no sign-stealing system on the road.

"While it is impossible to determine whether the conduct actually impacted the results on the field, the perception of some that it did causes significant harm to the game," Manfred said.

Manfred, in his most significant action since becoming commissioner five years ago, said Hinch failed to stop the sign stealing and Luhnow was responsible for the players' conduct even though he made the dubious claim he was not aware. Manfred said owner Jim Crane was not informed.

An hour after MLB announced its punishment, Crane opened a news conference by saying Hinch and Luhnow were fired.

"I have higher standards for the city and the franchise, and I'm going above and beyond MLB's penalty," he said. "We need to move forward with a clean slate."

Both Luhnow's and Hinch's suspensions for the 2020 season were to be without pay. Crane said he will look outside the organization and internally for candidates to replace Luhnow. If he hires internally, the most likely candidate would be Pete Putila, who was promoted to assistant general manager this offseason.

Crane, who said he learned of the discipline this weekend, was visibly upset during Monday's news conference and insisted that Houston's championship, which culminated in a seven-game World Series over the Los Angeles Dodgers, was not tainted.

"We want to be known as playing by the rules," he said. "We broke the rules. We accept the punishment and we're going to move forward ... if you read the report neither (Luhnow or Hinch) implemented this or pushed it through the system and (it) really came from the bottom up."

Hinch's penalty was among the longest for an MLB manager. Brooklyn's Leo Durocher was suspended for one year by Commissioner Happy Chandler in April 1947 for the "accumulation of unpleasant incidents" detrimental to baseball, and Cincinnati's Pete Rose was banned for life by Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti in August 1989 for betting on Reds' games while managing the team.

Houston was a big league-best 204-120 during the two years in question, winning its first title. Hinch, a 45-year-old former catcher with a degree from Stanford, was the most successful manager in the history of the Astros, who have won two of the last three AL pennants and came within one victory of another World Series title last year against Washington. Luhnow, 53, earned an MBA at Northwestern and fostered an analytic-based culture during eight seasons as Astros GM, but also a toxic one with high turnover.

"It is very clear to me that the culture of the baseball operations department, manifesting itself in the way its employees are treated, its relations with other clubs, and its relations with the media and external stakeholders, has been very problematic," Manfred wrote in a nine-page statement. "At least in my view, the baseball operations department's insular culture -- one that valued and rewarded results over other considerations, combined with a staff of individuals who often lacked direction or sufficient oversight, led ... finally, to an environment that allowed the conduct described in this report to have occurred."

Crane, who hired Luhnow weeks after buying the Astros, denied a widespread problem, saying "I think there was some isolated situations."

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Luhnow said in a statement that he accepts responsibility "for rules violations that occurred on my watch as president of baseball operations and general manager of the Astros" and apologized to the team and fans for "the shame and embarrassment this has caused."

Then Luhnow defended himself.

"I am not a cheater," the statement said. "Anybody who has worked closely with me during my 32-year career inside and outside baseball can attest to my integrity. I did not know rules were being broken. As the commissioner set out in his statement, I did not personally direct, oversee or engage in any misconduct: The sign-stealing initiative was not planned or directed by baseball management; the trash-can banging was driven and executed by players, and the video decoding of signs originated and was executed by lower-level employees working with the bench coach. I am deeply upset that I wasn't informed of any misconduct because I would have stopped it."

Hinch issued a statement through the Astros, saying he was "disappointed in our club's actions within this timeline, and I accept the Commissioner's decision.

"As a leader and major league manager, it is my responsibility to lead players and staff with integrity that represents the game in the best possible way," the statement said. "While the evidence consistently showed I didn't endorse or participate in the sign-stealing practices, I failed to stop them and I am deeply sorry."

Manfred said Hinch was aware of the system but did not tell Luhnow.

"As the person with responsibility for managing his players and coaches, there simply is no justification for Hinch's failure to act," Manfred said.

The GM told Major League Baseball he was unaware of the system, but Manfred held him accountable for the team's actions.

"Although Luhnow denies having any awareness that his replay review room staff was decoding and transmitting signs, there is both documentary and testimonial evidence that indicates Luhnow had some knowledge of those efforts," Manfred's report said.

Baseball's response was far greater than that of the NFL to a similar infraction. New England coach Bill Belichick was fined \$500,000 in 2007 and the Patriots were penalized \$250,000 for using video to capture an opponent's signals. The Patriots also were stripped of a first-round draft choice for punishment in the scandal known as "Spygate." They were penalized again for \$1 million eight years later for deflating footballs used in the AFC championship game. The NFL took away a first-round draft pick and suspended quarterback Tom Brady for four games.

Current New York Mets manager Carlos Beltrán, then a player with the Astros, was among the group involved. Manfred said no Astros players will be disciplined because he decided in September 2017 to hold a team's manager and GM responsible for sign-stealing infractions.

"Virtually all of the Astros' players had some involvement or knowledge of the scheme, and I am not in a position based on the investigative record to determine with any degree of certainty every player who should be held accountable."

Baseball's investigation began when former Astros pitcher Mike Fiers, now with Oakland, made the allegations in a report by The Athletic on Nov. 12.

Sign stealing has a long history in baseball — the New York Giants used a military field scope and buzzer during their 1951 tiebreaker playoff against the Brooklyn Dodgers. While decoding with the naked eye is allowed, MLB has enacted increasingly stringent prohibitions in recent years against the use of electronics to spy on opponents.

MLB's Department of Investigations interviewed 68 witnesses, including 23 current and former Houston players, and reviews tens of thousands of emails, Slack communications, text messages, video clips and photographs.

Astros employees in the team's video replay room started to decode signs using a center field camera at the start of the 2017 season. A player would act as a runner to bring the information to the dugout, where a runner on second would be signaled. The runner would decode the catcher's sign and signal the batter. At times, an employee in the replay room would convey the information by text message to the

watch or phone of a staff member in the dugout.

Cora began calling the replay room for the information early in the season. After a group of players that included Beltrán discussed how to improve the system about two months into the season, Cora arranged for a video monitor of a center field camera to be installed next to the dugout, and players would communicate pitches by banging a bat or massage gun on a trash can. Two bangs usually were used for off-speed pitches and no sound for fastballs.

Manfred said the banging system was not used in 2018 but that signs were stolen by the replay room and communicated to the dugout in person during at least part of that season. There was no evidence signs were stolen during the 2018 playoffs.

The Mets and Beltrán declined to comment, spokesman Harold Kaufman said.

Manfred left it to the Astros whether to discipline lower-level employees found to be involved in the sign stealing.

"Lower-level employees were taking direction from senior, either players or coaches," Crane said. "And so in my opinion it can be difficult to hold them to the same standard we hold to the leaders. But we'll review that ... and deal with that shortly."

Also Monday, former Astros assistant GM Brandon Taubman was suspended through the World Series for his conduct during last year's AL Championship Series, when his profane remarks directed at female reporters led to his firing by Houston, which at first denied the incident and later apologized.

Taubman can apply to Manfred for reinstatement after the World Series. Any future violations of Major League Rules by Hinch, Luhnow or Taubman would lead to a lifetime ban.

Blum reported from New York.

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

Sanders didn't think woman could win presidency, Warren says

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Elizabeth Warren said Monday that fellow Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders told her he didn't think a woman could win the White House when they met privately in 2018.

Sanders has denied telling Warren that a woman couldn't win. But the Massachusetts senator said in a statement that during their two-hour meeting to discuss the 2020 election, "among the topics that came up was what would happen if Democrats nominated a female candidate. I thought a woman could win; he disagreed."

The dispute marked an extraordinary turning point in a Democratic primary that, with few exceptions, has been characterized by genial differences over domestic issues such as health care. The feud brewing between Warren and Sanders will likely change the tone of the campaign going into Tuesday's debate and comes less than three weeks before the Iowa caucuses launch the Democratic contest. It also marks a jarring split between the two longtime progressive allies, potentially giving an opening for a more moderate rivals such as former Vice President Joe Biden to attempt unifying the party.

In her statement, Warren said she and Sanders "have far more in common than our differences on punditry."

"I'm in this race to talk about what's broken in this country and how to fix it -- and that's what I'm going to continue to do," she said. "I know Bernie is in the race for the same reason. We have been friends and allies in this fight for a long time, and I have no doubt we will continue to work together to defeat Donald Trump and put our government on the side of the people."

CNN first reported Sanders' comment earlier Monday, based on the accounts of anonymous people with knowledge of the meeting. That drew a swift and strong denial from Sanders, a Vermont senator, who said, "It is ludicrous to believe that at the same meeting where Elizabeth Warren told me she was going to run for president, I would tell her that a woman couldn't win."

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Sanders aides then accused Warren's campaign of leaking what they said was an inaccurate description of what was said during the meeting.

That helped prompt Warren's statement hours later. Jeff Weaver, a senior adviser to Sanders, then seemed to try and defuse the situation, refusing to refute Warren's version and instead saying only on CNN on Monday night that "those conversations can sometimes get misconstrued."

Still, the controversy is likely to revive anxiety among Democrats about whether — nearly four years after Hillary Clinton lost her White House bid — voters are willing to support another woman running for president. Such questions have dogged Warren and other female candidates throughout the 2020 campaign.

Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard tweeted Monday night that she had also met with Sanders before announcing her presidential campaign. "In that meeting, he showed me the greatest respect and encouragement, just as he always has," Gabbard wrote.

The clash between Sanders and Warren comes on the eve of a Democratic presidential debate in Iowa, the last before that state kicks off the Democratic primary with its leadoff caucuses on Feb. 3. Warren and Sanders, both of whom support universal health care, tuition-free public college and raising the minimum wage, have for months competed for their party's most liberal wing while refraining from attacking each other.

But following a Politico story over the weekend that reported the Sanders campaign had instructed some volunteers to characterize Warren as a candidate for wealthy and well-educated voters in conversations with undecided voters, Warren issued a rare critique of her opponent. She said she was "disappointed" Sanders was instructing staffers to "trash" her.

That set the stage for Monday's hours of additional squabbling -- and may well spell a lively debate Tuesday.

Stephanie Taylor and Adam Green, co-founders of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, which has at times praised both Warren and Sanders, released its own statement Monday night saying they "believe that a back-and-forth about this private meeting is counter-productive for progressives."

"In this pivotal moment of the campaign, progressives must work together to defeat Donald Trump," Taylor and Green said.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

Trump's fate rests with McConnell in impeachment trial

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump needs Mitch McConnell more than ever.

With Trump finally facing his impeachment trial, this promises to be a defining moment for both men. They started their relationship unevenly three years ago when Trump stunned Washington with his sweep to power but have since fallen into an easy partnership that will be put to its biggest test.

The leader of the Republican-majority Senate has already put his imprint on virtually every aspect of the upcoming trial. He corralled the GOP senators behind his strategy to brush back Democratic demands for new witnesses and testimony. On Monday, McConnell and Senate Republicans were trying to decide whether to include a motion to simply dismiss the charges against Trump outright, as the president wants, in the organizing resolution for the trial, according to a person familiar with the matter but unauthorized to discuss it.

The Kentucky Republican is working hand in hand with the White House. He doesn't pretend to be an impartial arbiter.

"The House has done enough damage," McConnell said Monday as he opened the chamber. "The Senate is ready to fulfill our duty."

As the Senate is about to convene for the landmark undertaking, only the third presidential impeachment trial in American history, perhaps no one is more important to Trump's defense than the Republican leader.

The Democratic-run House is set to transmit the articles of impeachment to the Senate in a matter of

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days. Trump faces two charges approved by the House. First, that he abused power by pushing Ukraine to investigate his Democratic political rival Joe Biden, holding back U.S. military funds to the country as leverage. And second, that he then obstructed Congress by blocking witnesses and testimony in the House probe.

The challenge for McConnell will be to balance Trump's appetite for full vindication, accompanied by humiliation of Democrats, with a more measured trial that fits the legal expectations of the Constitution and won't expose Senate Republicans to a spectacle that could hurt them in elections.

"The president and Senator McConnell have learned to trust each other's judgment," said Josh Holmes, a former top McConnell aide who remains close to the leader. "They've been through an awful lot over three years."

Republicans hold the majority in the Senate, 53-47, and there is nowhere near the 67 votes needed for Trump's removal.

The president has given mixed messages about what he wants in a trial — first suggesting calling witnesses including Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff and the still anonymous government whistleblower, whose complaint about Trump's July phone call with Ukraine sparked the impeachment inquiry.

But over the weekend Trump said the Senate should simply dismiss the case against him, rather than legitimize the House charges by sending them for trial. It was an extraordinary suggestion that now appears to be under consideration.

As Pelosi prepared to release her hold on the charges, Trump tweeted yet again on Monday that the House impeachment inquiry "was the most unfair witch-hunt in the history of Congress!" Making it personal, McConnell is calling the holdup Pelosi's "one-woman blockade."

The president continues to review his options, according to one senior White House official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

The person described the president's talk of dismissal as simply covering the possibilities as the White House continues to work closely with Republicans on Capitol Hill. Simply dismissing the charges against Trump is unlikely, though Republicans are circulating a proposed resolution.

McConnell, who has gained the president's trust in Senate matters, now needs to deliver.

The two sparred early in Trump's presidency, most sharply when McConnell's Senate GOP was unable to repeal the Affordable Care Act, a signature Trump campaign promise.

But once the GOP leader muscled through the confirmations of Trump's Supreme Court nominees, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, the relationship warmed. The two men talk regularly.

The leader's proximity to Trump helps him back home, where he is up for reelection in the Bluegrass State this year alongside Trump. His likely Democratic opponent will be former Marine Corps officer Amy McGrath, who flew combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the House launched the impeachment inquiry, McConnell was able to convince Trump not to tweet against Senate Republicans who showed signs of straying and instead focus attention on the House.

McConnell's goal during the House proceeding was to create a party-line outcome that would diminish the case as it came to the Senate, Holmes said.

The groundwork for the Senate trial was laid months ago as McConnell built GOP support for modeling it partly on rules devised for President Bill Clinton's impeachment trial in 1999. That would mean starting the proceedings and voting only later on hearing new testimony.

That allowed McConnell to turn back Democrats' demands for agreement on new testimony, particularly from former White House national security adviser John Bolton, who has indicated he will defy Trump's orders and appear if subpoenaed.

Democrats still hope to force votes on Bolton and other witnesses they say can provide new evidence for the case against Trump. McConnell is trying to prevent any votes that will prolong the trial and split his party, particularly vulnerable senators up for reelection in 2020.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer warned Monday that failing to call new witnesses and testimony would turn the Senate trial into a "farce."

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One Republican, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, is working with GOP colleagues on a process that would allow them to hear more testimony, as Democrats want. McConnell is trying to give her and the others room to see if they can make a deal, the person familiar with the matter said.

Trump has yet to decide on his legal team and whether it will grow to include some of his fiercest defenders from the ranks of House Republicans.

Alan Dershowitz, the former Harvard University professor whom the president is considering adding to his defense team, said that the president has a "good team" with White House Counsel Pat Cipollone and personal attorney Jay Sekulow.

Dershowitz said Monday that no final decision had been made by the president.

Trump is scheduled to attend the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, early next week - just as the Senate trial is expected to be underway in Washington.

The opening will be in McConnell's hands.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Jill Colvin, Darlene Superville, Amer Madhani and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

Anger in Iran over jet's downing; gunfire disperses protests

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Popular anger swelled Monday in Iran over the accidental shootdown of a Ukrainian jetliner and the government's attempt to conceal its role in the tragedy, as online videos appeared to show security forces firing live ammunition and tear gas to disperse protests in the streets.

Iranians, already suffering under crippling U.S. sanctions, expressed shock and outrage over the plane crash that killed scores of young people. They also decried the misleading statements from top officials, who only admitted responsibility three days later in the face of mounting evidence.

The country began last week engulfed in mourning after a U.S. drone strike killed Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who led Iran's regional military interventions. Then on Jan. 8, it responded with a ballistic missile attack on two bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq, although there were no casualties. Hours after that barrage, as it braced for a U.S. counterattack that never came, Iranian forces accidentally shot down the Ukraine International Airlines jetliner, killing all 176 people aboard shortly after it took off from Tehran for Kyiv.

For a growing number of critics — from ordinary citizens to notable athletes and artists — the events have revealed a government that is incapable of following through on its incendiary rhetoric and willing to mislead its own people about a national tragedy in order to avoid embarrassment.

Those sentiments first boiled over late Saturday, shortly after the Revolutionary Guard admitted shooting the plane down by mistake. A candlelight vigil at a university rapidly turned into an anti-government demonstration.

"They are lying that our enemy is America! Our enemy is right here!" students shouted.

On Sunday night, protesters massed in Tehran's Azadi, or Freedom, Square.

Videos sent to the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran and later verified by The Associated Press show a crowd of demonstrators near Azadi Square fleeing as a tear gas canister lands among them. People cough and sputter while trying to escape the fumes, with one woman calling out in Farsi: "They fired tear gas at people! Azadi Square! Death to the dictator!"

Another video shows a woman being carried away in the aftermath of the violence, a trail of blood visible on the ground. Those around her cry out that she has been shot in the leg.

"Oh my God, she's bleeding nonstop!" one person shouts. Another shouts: "Bandage it!"

Photos and video after the incident show pools of blood on the sidewalk.

Tehran's police chief, Gen. Hossein Rahimi, later denied that his officers opened fire.

"Police treated people who had gathered with patience and tolerance," Iranian media quoted Rahimi as saying. "Police did not shoot in the gatherings since broad-mindedness and restraint has been the agenda of the police forces of the capital."

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The semi-official Fars news agency reported that police had "shot tear gas in some areas."

Fars, which is close to the Revolutionary Guard, carried videos purportedly shot Sunday night showing demonstrators chanting: "We are children of war. Fight with us, we will fight back." Another Fars video showed demonstrators in Tehran tearing down a poster of Soleimani.

On Sunday, authorities deployed forces across Tehran — police, members of the Revolutionary Guard on motorcycles and plainclothes security men. The heavy security presence continued into Monday, when protests were largely confined to universities and there were no reports of clashes.

President Donald Trump has openly encouraged the demonstrators, even tweeting messages of support in Farsi and warning the government not to fire on them. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas tweeted that "we are following the protests in Tehran very attentively," adding that Iranians "have a right to free expression without repression and persecution."

But earlier, larger waves of protests going back to the 1979 Islamic Revolution have been crushed by security forces. Amnesty International says more than 300 people were killed in November during days of protests sparked by an increase in gasoline prices.

Most of the people aboard the Ukraine International Airlines jet were Iranians and Iranian-Canadians. For three days, Iranian officials ruled out any attack on the plane, suggesting the crash of Flight 752 was caused by a technical failure. Only on Saturday did authorities acknowledge shooting it down, as evidence mounted and after Western leaders accused Iran of culpability.

The U.N. agency that regulates civil aviation said it had accepted an invitation from Tehran to provide "expert advice" to the crash investigation. The Montreal-based International Civil Aviation Organization said in a statement it had appointed senior and technical staff to serve as advisors and observers. It did not elaborate.

Several activists in Ukraine rallied in front of the Iranian Embassy in Kyiv on Monday, expressing solidarity with protesters and condemning Iran's "dictatorship."

The European Union's aviation agency has since advised carriers against overflight of Iran "at all altitudes" until further notice. Several airlines have already canceled flights to and from Iran and rerouted flights to avoid Iranian airspace.

Ali Rabiei, a government spokesman, insisted Iran's civilian officials learned only on Friday that the Revolutionary Guard had shot down the plane. The Guard answers directly to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"The point is that we did not lie," Rabiei said. He went on to blame the U.S. for "spreading the shadow of war over Iran."

Ebrahim Raisi, the head of Iran's judiciary, issued a warning to protesters, saying "the agents of America and agents of foreign countries" want to use anger over Flight 752 to "compromise" Iran's security. Iran often blames anti-government protests on foreign conspiracies.

On Saturday, Iranian authorities briefly arrested British Ambassador Rob Macaire, who said he went to the candlelight vigil to pay his respects and left as soon as the chanting began.

Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned the British ambassador Sunday to protest what it said was his presence at an illegal protest. Britain, in turn, summoned Iran's ambassador on Monday "to convey our strong objections" over the weekend arrest.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman, James Slack, said the envoy's detention was "an unacceptable breach of the Vienna Convention."

"We are seeking full assurances from the Iranian government that it will never happen again," he said.

In addition to the street protests, Iran's government has also faced harsh criticism from prominent artists, athletes and journalists.

A number of artists, including famed director Masoud Kimiai, withdrew from an upcoming international film festival. Two state TV hosts resigned in protest over the false reporting about what happened to Flight 752.

Taraneh Alidoosti, one of Iran's most famous actresses, posted a picture of a black square on Instagram

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with the caption: "We are not citizens. We are hostages. Millions of hostages."

Saeed Maroof, the captain of Iran's national volleyball team, also wrote on Instagram: "I wish I could be hopeful that this was the last scene of the show of deceit and lack of wisdom of these incompetents but I still know it is not."

He said that despite Iran's national team qualifying for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics after years of effort, "there is no energy left in our sad and desperate souls to celebrate."

Associated Press writers Joseph Krauss in Dubai, Jill Lawless in London, Frank Jordans in Berlin and Yuras Karmanau in Kyiv, Ukraine, contributed.

Booker ends presidential bid after polling, money struggles

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Democrat Cory Booker dropped out of the presidential race Monday, ending a campaign whose message of unity and love failed to resonate in a political era marked by chaos and anxiety.

His departure now leaves a field that was once the most diverse in history with just one remaining African American candidate, former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, who is struggling to register in the polls amid a late entry into the race.

Since launching his campaign last February, Booker, a U.S. senator from New Jersey, struggled to raise the type of money required to support a White House bid. He was at the back of the pack in most surveys and failed to meet the polling requirements needed to participate in Tuesday's debate. Booker also missed last month's debate and exits the race polling in low single digits in the early primary states and nationwide.

In an email to supporters, Booker said that he "got into this race to win" and that his failure to make the debates prevented him from raising the money required for victory.

"Our campaign has reached the point where we need more money to scale up and continue building a campaign that can win -- money we don't have, and money that is harder to raise because I won't be on the next debate stage and because the urgent business of impeachment will rightly be keeping me in Washington," he said.

For African Americans, Booker's exit is more meaningful than just being one less option to consider.

"It means that we don't count," said Helen Moore, a member of the Detroit-based Keep the Vote-No Takeover grassroots organization. "Now, we can't look forward to any black candidate being considered from now until it's time to vote. They are completely out of the picture."

Patrick, campaigning in New Hampshire on Monday, congratulated Booker on his "terrific campaign" and said he believed the senator had a "continued bright future" in politics.

"At the same time," Patrick said, "I'll say, look, America needs to know that America is not going to see itself on that debate stage, and sadly, I think the debates have become a marker of the progress of campaigns." He said he hopes the Democratic Party leadership reconsiders the rules for qualifying for the debates.

Booker had warned that the looming impeachment trial of President Donald Trump would deal a "big, big blow" to his campaign by pulling him away from Iowa in the final weeks before the Feb. 3 Iowa caucuses. He hinted at the challenges facing his campaign last week in an interview on The Associated Press' "Ground Game" podcast.

"If we can't raise more money in this final stretch, we won't be able to do the things that other campaigns with more money can do to show presence," he said.

In his email to supporters, Booker pledged to do "everything in my power to elect the eventual Democratic nominee for president," though his campaign says he has no immediate plans to endorse a candidate in the primary.

It's a humbling finish for someone who was once lauded by Oprah Winfrey as the "rock star mayor" who helped lead the renewal of Newark, New Jersey. During his seven years in City Hall, Booker was known

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for his headline-grabbing feats of local do-goodery, including running into a burning building to save a woman, and his early fluency with social media, which brought him 1.4 million followers on Twitter when the platform was little used in politics. His rhetorical skills and Ivy League background often brought comparisons to President Barack Obama, and he'd been discussed as a potential presidential contender since his arrival in the Senate in 2013.

Now, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren has mastered the art of the selfie on social media. Another former mayor, Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana, is seen as the freshest face in the field. Former Vice President Joe Biden has built a strong base of support with black voters. And Booker's message of hope and love seemed to fall flat during an era characterized perhaps most strongly by Democratic fury over the actions of the Trump administration.

An early focus on building out a strong and seasoned campaign operation in Iowa and South Carolina may have hampered his campaign in the long run, as the resources he spent early on staff there left him working with a tight budget in the later stages of the primary, when many of his opponents were going on air with television ads. That meant that even later in the campaign, after he had collected some of the top endorsements in Iowa and visited South Carolina almost more than any other candidate, a significant portion of the electorate in both states either said they were unfamiliar with his campaign or viewed him unfavorably.

On the stump, Booker emphasized his Midwestern connections — often referencing the nearly 80 family members he has still living in Iowa when he campaigned there — and delivered an exhortation to voters to use "radical love" to overcome what he considered Trump's hate. But he rarely drew a contrast with his opponents on the trail, even when asked directly, and even some of Booker's supporters worried his message on Trump wasn't sharp enough to go up against a Republican president known for dragging his opponents into the mud.

Booker struggled to land on a message that would resonate with voters. He's long been seen as a progressive Democrat in the Senate, pushing for criminal justice reform and marijuana legalization. And on the campaign trail, he proposed establishing a \$1,000 savings account for every child born in the U.S. to help close the racial wealth gap.

He was among the first candidates to release a gun control plan, and at the time it was the most ambitious in the field, as it included a gun licensing program that would have been seen as political suicide just a decade before. He also released an early criminal justice reform plan that focused heavily on addressing sentencing disparities for drug crimes.

But he also sought to frame himself as an uplifting, unifying figure who emphasized his bipartisan work record. That didn't land in a Democratic primary that has often rewarded candidates who promised voters they were tough-minded fighters who could take on Trump.

Booker's seat is up for a vote this year, and he will run for reelection to the Senate. A handful of candidates has launched campaigns for the seat, but Booker is expected to have an easy path to reelection.

Booker's exit from the presidential race further narrows the once two dozen-strong field, which now stands at 12 candidates.

Associated Press writers Corey Williams in Detroit and Hunter Woodall in Stratham, N.H., contributed to this report.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

US drops designation of China as currency manipulator

By **MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is dropping its designation of China as a currency manipulator in advance of the signing Wednesday of a Phase 1 U.S.-China trade agreement.

The preliminary pact that the two sides are set to sign this week includes a section that's intended to

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prevent China from manipulating its currency to gain trade advantages.

The action announced Monday comes five months after the Trump administration had branded China a currency manipulator — the first time that any country had been so named since 1994 during the Clinton administration.

Even while removing China from its currency black list, the Treasury Department does name China as one of 10 countries it says require placement on a watch list that will mean their currency practices will be closely monitored. In addition to China, the countries on that list are Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Switzerland and Vietnam.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the administration had dropped China's designation as a currency manipulator because of commitments in the Phase 1 trade agreement that President Donald Trump is to sign with China on Wednesday at the White House.

"China has made enforceable commitments to refrain from competitive devaluation, while promoting transparency and accountability," Mnuchin said in a statement accompanying the currency report.

Some critics of China's trade practices criticized the administration's decision Monday.

"China is a currency manipulator — that is a fact," said Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader in the Senate. "When it comes to the president's stance on China, Americans are getting a lot of show and very little results."

The Treasury Department is required to report to Congress twice a year in April and October on whether any countries are manipulating their currencies to gain unfair trade advantages against U.S. businesses and workers. When a country manipulates its currency to keep it artificially low, its goods become comparatively less expensive overseas — and other countries' goods become relatively more expensive.

The new report is technically three months late, apparently because the Trump administration had delayed its release until it had achieved the currency Phase 1 commitments from China.

The initial decision to brand China as a manipulator had come in a surprise announcement in August, reversing a Treasury finding in May that no country was manipulating its currency. The United States had not put any country on the manipulation blacklist since the Clinton administration branded China a manipulator 26 years ago. Trump had long accused China of manipulating its currency, even though most independent experts concluded that Beijing had stopped doing so years ago.

The designation was largely symbolic. It obliged the United States to enter into negotiations to resolve the currency problem that could ultimately lead to the imposition of economic sanctions such as higher tariffs on Chinese goods — something the Trump administration was already doing in its tit-for-tat trade war with China.

Trump is scheduled to sign the Phase 1 agreement on Wednesday after which administration officials said the text of the deal will be made public.

In a fact sheet on the deal released Dec. 13, the administration said the agreement would address "unfair currency practices by requiring high-standard commitments to refrain from competitive devaluations and targeting of exchange rates."

The signing of the Phase 1 agreement caps a rocky two-years of trade conflict between the two nations in which punitive tariffs were imposed on billions of dollars of products from each nation. The battle escalated uncertainty and caused businesses to pull back on their investments, slowing global growth. It also roiled financial markets with fears that the trade war could become serious enough to push the U.S. economy into a recession.

AP Economics Writer Paul Wiseman contributed to this report.

Queen agrees to let Harry, Meghan move part time to Canada

By DANICA KIRKA, JILL LAWLESS and FRANK AUGSTEIN Associated Press

SANDRINGHAM, England (AP) — Britain's pragmatic queen brokered a deal Monday to secure the future

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of the monarchy, charting a course for Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, that allows them to live part time in Canada while still remaining firmly tied to the House of Windsor.

The decision followed a summit at Queen Elizabeth II's Sandringham estate in eastern England that sought to resolve the conundrum of what to do with royals who only want the job part time. The British monarch said in a statement that the summit of senior royals was "constructive," and that it had been "agreed that there will be a period of transition" to sort things out during which Meghan and Harry will spend time in both Canada and the U.K.

"My family and I are entirely supportive of Harry and Meghan's desire to create a new life as a young family," the queen said in a statement that offered a demonstrably soft tone. "Although we would have preferred them to remain full-time working members of the Royal Family, we respect and understand their wish to live a more independent life as a family while remaining a valued part of my family."

Royal statements are usually sticklers for protocol, but the queen referred to "my grandson and his family" and "Harry and Meghan" rather than using the couple's formal title, Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

The summit marked the first face-to-face talks with Harry since he and Meghan unveiled their controversial wish last week to step back from their royal roles, become financially independent and split their time between Britain and North America. The meeting reflected the queen's desire to contain the fallout from the independence announcement, which prompted hurt feelings among senior family members not told in advance of the decision.

But by midday Monday, the House of Windsor showed signs of pulling together. Princes William and Harry issued a joint statement slamming a newspaper report describing a severe strain in their relationship, calling the story offensive and potentially harmful.

Though the statement did not name the newspaper, the Times of London has a front page story about the crisis in which a source alleged that Harry and Meghan had been pushed away by the "bullying attitude" from William. The joint statement insisted that the story was "false."

"For brothers who care so deeply about the issues surrounding mental health, the use of inflammatory language in this way is offensive and potentially harmful," the statement said.

The queen said after Monday's meeting that these were "complex matters for my family to resolve, and there is some more work to be done, but I have asked for final decisions to be reached in the coming days."

One of the trickier questions that needs to be worked out is precisely what it means for a royal to be financially independent and what activities can be undertaken to make money. Other royals who have ventured into the world of commerce have found it complicated.

Sophie, the countess of Wessex, sought to keep her public relations firm going after her marriage to the queen's third son, Prince Edward, only to find herself embroiled in controversy when she was tricked by the "Fake Sheikh" — an undercover reporter offering a lucrative contract for her firm.

Sophie hinted that if the "sheikh" paid for the firm's services he would get greater publicity because of her royal role. In the end, both Sophie and Edward, who ran a television company, gave up their businesses to become full-time royals in 2002.

Prince Andrew, who was a UK trade envoy, has faced heated questions about his relationship with the late convicted sex offender and financier, Jeffrey Epstein, whom Andrew has said was beneficial to making useful contacts. 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 also face questions about paying for security, which is currently taxpayer-funded. Home Secretary Priti Patel refused to comment, but said safety was a priority and added that "royal family themselves need some time and space for them to work through the current issues that they're dealing with."

Meghan, who is American, has longstanding ties to Canada, having lived in Toronto while filming the popular TV series, "Suits." On Friday, she returned to Canada, where the couple and 8-month-old Archie spent a six-week holiday break out of the public eye.

Bob Morris, honorary senior research associate at University College London's Constitution Unit, said that the crux of the matter lies in the difference between being a celebrity and having royal status.

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"Royal status sets you apart, it gives you special role in our society," he said. "It is very difficult for you to put the hat on and take it off. You cannot be half royal or royal part of the time. You can switch it off and on, and it seems to me the royal identity would always be the dominant one."

Some of the challenges are enshrined in the law devised some 20 years ago after an inquiry that followed Sophie's, brush with the fake sheikh. The rules are aimed at ensuring working royals do not exploit their status to profit in business.

Under the guidelines, the royals must consult the most senior member of the royal household before taking on a business activity — a measure that would encroach on Harry and Meghan's independence.

Last week's statement by the couple, who are also known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, pushed the issue out into the open and touched off a royal crisis. Tom Bradby, a TV journalist who is close to Harry and Meghan, warned in the Sunday Times that the royal family badly needed a peace deal to prevent "a protracted war" that could damage the monarchy.

"I have some idea of what might be aired in a full, no-holds-barred, sit-down interview (by Harry and Meghan) and I don't think it would be pretty," he wrote in the Sunday Times.

With much at stake, the queen's decision safeguarded the peace — for now. Royal expert Penny Junor said it was vital for the stability of the royal family to keep Meghan and Harry happy.

"What is absolutely imperative, in my view, is that Harry and Meghan do not go away feeling angry and hurt and rejected, because an angry, hurt, rejected Harry and Meghan could cause absolute havoc for the royal family," she said. "If they don't care anymore, if they want to show them, if they want to get their own back, it could get very nasty. They could go completely rogue."

Kirka and Lawless reported from London. Associated Press writer Helena Alves contributed to this report.

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US troops in Iraq got warning hours before Iranian attack

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ALI ABDUL-HASSAN Associated Press

AIN AL-ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq (AP) — American troops were informed of an impending missile barrage hours before their air base in Iraq was struck by Iran, U.S. military officials said Monday, days after the attack that marked a major escalation between the longtime foes.

At 11 p.m. on Jan. 7, U.S. Lt. Col. Antoinette Chase gave the order for American troops at Ain al-Asad air base in western Iraq, to go on lockdown. Military movements froze as her team, responsible for emergency response at the base, sent out alerts about the threat. At 11:30 p.m., she gave the order to take cover in bunkers.

The first strike landed sometime after 1:35 a.m. on Jan. 8 and the barrage continued for nearly two hours. Half way through the attack, Chase learned the missiles were being launched from Iran.

No American soldiers were killed or wounded, the U.S. has said, although several troops were treated for concussions from the blast and are being assessed, said Col. Myles Caggins, a spokesman at the base for the U.S. coalition fighting the Islamic State group.

"The reason why we pushed it at 2330 is because at that point in time all indications pointed to something coming," she told reporters touring the base. "Worst case scenario — we were told was it's probably going to be a missile attack. So we were informed of that."

The Iranian attack was in retaliation for the U.S. drone strike near Baghdad airport that killed top Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani on Jan. 3.

An Associated Press crew touring the Ain al-Asad base saw large craters and damaged military trailers. Forklifts lifted rubble and loaded it onto trucks from an area the size of a football stadium. U.S. soldiers inspected portable housing units destroyed in the attack.

The sprawling complex in western Anbar province is about 180 kilometers (110 miles) west of Baghdad and is shared with the Iraqi military. It houses about 1,500 members of the U.S. military and the U.S.-led

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coalition fighting the Islamic State militant group.

The Iranian attack — the most direct assault on America since the 1979 seizing of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran — raised fears of a wider conflict although both sides have since indicated that they won't seek further retaliation, at least in the short term.

"There were more than 10 large missiles fired and the impact hit several areas along the airfield," Caggins said. At least 15-30 minutes passed between successive strikes, Chase said.

The attack destroyed facilities that house dozens of soldiers and one missile hit near an airstrip where six drones were parked but caused no damage, he said.

The base received a notification that the missiles were on their way, thanks to early warning systems, Caggins said, and troops were moved out of harm's way. He described soldiers who lived through the attack as "warriors."

Because of the long intervals between barrages, a few curious soldiers peered out to inspect the damage.

"After the first boom, I was confused and so I stuck my head out to see what it was," said Capt. Jeffrey Hansen, 30, from North Carolina. "The second boom blew a bunch of debris on my face."

The Ain al-Asad air base was first used by American forces after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein. Facilities at the base were split with Iraqi forces when U.S. troops returned in 2014 leading a multi-national coalition to defeat IS militants.

President Donald Trump went to the air base in December 2018, making his first presidential visit to troops in the region. Vice President Mike Pence has also visited.

On Monday, most soldiers walked around the base without any body armor, amid large tents and street signs written mostly in English. The base was ringed by large concrete barriers blackened by the bombardment.

Chase said troops had conducted a drill the week before the attack and that they had received some warnings earlier in the day that had prompted them to move troops around the base.

"I had zero casualties and everybody is alive to tell the tale. So as far as I'm concerned, I couldn't be happier and I couldn't be prouder of the actions that the soldiers and the coalition forces took that night," she added.

This corrects dates of warning and attack to Jan. 7 and Jan. 8 respectively, not Jan. 6 and Jan. 7.

Design of AR-15 could derail charges tied to popular rifle

By **JAKE BLEIBERG** and **STEFANIE DAZIO** Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — A subtle design feature of the AR-15 rifle has raised a technical legal question that is derailing cases against people who are charged with illegally buying and selling the gun's parts or building the weapon.

At issue is whether a key piece of one of America's most popular firearms meets the definition of a gun that prosecutors have long relied on.

For decades, the federal government has treated a mechanism called the lower receiver as the essential piece of the semiautomatic rifle, which has been used in some of the nation's deadliest mass shootings. Prosecutors regularly bring charges based on that specific part.

But some defense attorneys have recently argued that the part alone does not meet the definition in the law. Federal law enforcement officials, who have long been concerned about the discrepancy, are increasingly worried that it could hinder some criminal prosecutions and undermine firearms regulations nationwide.

"Now the cat is out of the bag, so I think you'll see more of this going on," said Stephen Halbrook, an attorney who has written books on gun law and history. "Basically, the government has gotten away with this for a long time."

Cases involving lower receivers represent a small fraction of the thousands of federal gun charges filed each year. But the loophole has allowed some people accused of illegally selling or possessing the parts,

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including convicted felons, to escape prosecution. The issue also complicates efforts to address so-called ghost guns, which are largely untraceable because they are assembled from parts.

Since 2016, at least five defendants have challenged the government and succeeded in getting some charges dropped, avoiding prison or seeing their cases dismissed entirely. Three judges have rejected the government's interpretation of the law, despite dire warnings from prosecutors.

Federal regulations define a firearm's "frame" or "receiver" as the piece considered to be the gun itself. But in an AR-15, the receiver is split into upper and lower parts — and some of the components listed in the definition are contained in the upper half. That has led judges to rule that a lower receiver alone cannot be considered a gun.

The lower receiver sits above the pistol grip, holds the trigger and hammer, and has a slot for the magazine. By itself, it cannot fire a bullet. But by treating the piece as a firearm, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is able to regulate who can obtain it. Because authorities consider the part to be a gun, people prohibited from having firearms have been charged for possessing them.

In 2018, prosecutors said a ruling against the government would "seriously undermine the ATF's ability to trace and regulate firearms nationwide." CNN first reported the case and its implications.

Last month, a federal judge in Ohio dealt the latest blow, dismissing charges against two men accused of making false statements to buy lower receivers.

"Any public citizen would be concerned about this loophole that we exploited," said attorney Thomas Kurt, who represented defendant Richard Rowold. "As a citizen, I hope the ATF corrects this. As Mr. Rowold's attorney, I'm grateful the judge followed the law in getting to the correct result."

The gun industry estimates there are more than 17 million AR-15-style rifles in circulation, and the National Rifle Association once dubbed it "America's rifle." AR-15-style weapons were used in attacks in Newtown, Connecticut, Las Vegas and Parkland, Florida.

In the case of Rowold, who is prohibited from buying or possessing firearms because of felony convictions, the government claimed that he used another man as a proxy to purchase 50 lower receivers. The 2018 indictment also charged him with having 15 lower receivers. Kurt declined to comment on why his client had the parts.

The case rested on the ATF's claim that the components were legally firearms. Judge James Carr called that a "plainly erroneous" reading of the law and said the agency has a duty to fix the problem.

"Misapplying the law for a long time provides no immunity from scrutiny," Carr wrote in his order to dismiss.

Federal prosecutors in Rowold's case and several others declined to comment. An ATF spokeswoman would not answer questions posed by The Associated Press but said the agency is "keenly assessing" Carr's decision.

The problem has attracted attention at the highest levels of law enforcement.

In 2016, then-Attorney General Loretta Lynch wrote a letter to House Speaker Paul Ryan after a judge dismissed a case in Northern California involving a man with a felony record who was accused of buying an unmarked AR-15 lower receiver from an undercover agent.

Prosecutors argued that the case against Alejandro Jimenez should proceed even if the part "does not perfectly fit" the legal definition. The judge dismissed the charges.

The decision prompted Lynch to write that if the ATF wants an AR-15 lower receiver to be considered a firearm under the law, then it should pursue "regulatory or administrative action." But there's no public record of the ATF taking such a step.

"I can't imagine why no one has taken the initiative to correct this," said Dan O'Kelly, a former senior ATF agent and director of a gun-training company known as International Firearm Specialist Academy. His testimony has guided several defense attorneys.

Since Lynch's letter, such prosecutions have continued to secure prison sentences.

In April, for instance, an Oklahoma man was charged with illegally possessing a firearm after police who pulled him over found loaded high-capacity magazines and the lower receiver of an AR-15-style rifle in his truck.

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Jason Scott Pedro, a 37-year-old with a felony record for domestic violence, was sentenced in November to seven years in prison.

There's no evidence in court records that Pedro's lawyer challenged whether the lower receiver was rightly considered a gun. The attorney did not respond to requests for comment but has filed a notice of appeal.

"I think the criminal defense bar has kind of let their clients down for letting this go on for all these years," Halbrosk said.

In one case, an ATF expert testified that the same principle could apply to many other firearms. Prosecutors worry that more rulings against the government could allow people prohibited from having guns to purchase weapons piece by piece with no regulation or background check.

Franklin Zimring, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law, is skeptical of that claim and said the same behavior could often be prosecuted under state laws.

The AR-15 is a popular model for gun enthusiasts to legally build at home. The rifles are sometimes constructed out of partially machined receivers, often called "80% receivers," which can be bought and sold without background checks and need not have serial numbers because they are unfinished.

If federal officials want to maintain control in this growing do-it-yourself gun market they need to first establish functional regulation of lower receivers, said Kristen Rand, legislative director at the Washington, D.C.-based Violence Policy Center.

"From a public safety standpoint," she said, "this is very important and isn't just an in-the-weeds legal definitional problem."

Dazio reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press Writer Lisa Marie Pane in Boise, Idaho, and researcher Jennifer Farrar in New York City contributed to this report.

2020 Democratic race is wide open in Iowa as caucuses near

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Presidential candidates have swarmed Iowa's rolling landscape for more than a year, making their pitch to potential supporters on campuses, county fairgrounds and in high school gymnasiums. But three weeks before the caucuses usher in the Democratic contest, the battle for the state is wide open.

A cluster of candidates, including Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, along with former Vice President Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, enters the final stretch with a plausible chance of winning Iowa's caucuses. A poll released Friday by The Des Moines Register and CNN found them all with similar levels of support.

For two decades, Iowa has had a solid record of backing the ultimate Democratic nominee. A clear victory in its caucuses next month could set the tone for the races that follow in New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina.

But an inconclusive result or one in which several candidates are bunched together near the top could preview a long, brutal fight ahead. Some Democrats fear the nominee might not be determined until the party convenes in Milwaukee this summer to formally declare its candidate to take on President Donald Trump.

The unusually fluid dynamic raises the stakes for the leading candidates heading into Tuesday's debate, which will be the final televised gathering for the White House hopefuls before the caucuses. Their closing arguments in Iowa could be complicated by Trump's impeachment trial, which would require senators in the race to return to Washington. And the fallout from Trump's surprise decision to launch a strike last week to kill a top Iranian general could steal attention from the candidates.

It's against that backdrop that candidates must win over people like Barb Cameron, a 76-year-old who attended a recent Warren event in the river town of Burlington.

"I'm undecided," she said. "I want to vote for a woman. But, more than that, I want to vote for someone with real leadership capability."

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"I like Pete, though I don't know enough," Cameron added. "And I don't think Biden can beat Trump." If other voters agree, Biden's candidacy could face steep headwinds in Iowa. The former vice president began as the early favorite, in large part because of a sense that he is best positioned to defeat Trump. If that falters, the central rationale for his campaign risks being undermined.

Biden faces a far more favorable climate in later contests, especially South Carolina, where support from black voters has given him a substantial lead over his rivals.

And the focus on global affairs after the Iranian conflict could lift Biden, who built a resume over decades in Washington as a leading voice on foreign policy. JoAnn Hardy, chairwoman of the Cerro Gordo County Democrats in northern Iowa, said a shift in voter focus would be an advantage.

But even that prediction came with a caveat.

"I think there's a lot of support, but for most people it's not enthusiastic support," Hardy said. "It's like, we've gotta do what we've gotta do to beat Trump."

While Biden is positioning himself as a steady hand in the face of international instability, the Iranian episode leaves an opening for Sanders to draw a sharp contrast with Biden over the Iraq War, which Sanders opposed. The Vermont senator is looking to appeal to white working-class voters, particularly in rural areas, who Sanders' advisers believe may be open to his message of taking on the rich and powerful.

Without naming him, Sanders kept pressure on Biden on Sunday, reminding a forum in Davenport that he opposed the 2002 authorization for military force in Iraq.

Sanders' campaign volunteers have also reportedly been instructed to tell voters that are leaning toward Warren that her supporters are "highly educated, more affluent people" and that she's failing to expand her support. Those tactics brought a rare broadside against the senator from Warren, who said Sunday that she was "disappointed" in Sanders and suggested he's too divisive to defeat Trump.

Still, Sanders' position in Iowa is improving and he's attracting large crowds. His campaign says he spoke to nearly 6,000 people across 16 events in the state earlier this month.

But some Sanders supporters say they want to see the senator's team more active on the ground in Iowa. Suzanne Costello, a farmer from Kellogg, Iowa, is a longtime Sanders supporter and volunteer, knocking on doors in Poweshiek County, a county the senator won in 2016.

"I think they mis-gauged the trajectory of the race," she said. "I don't think they came out in force enough in our area soon enough, so now I feel like we're kind of playing catch-up" in organizing.

Costello said she had complained to the Sanders campaign for months about the lack of resources in her area, and now she feels they're finally sending more staff and resources to help knock on doors.

Indeed, Sanders' campaign says they have one of the biggest teams in Iowa, with more than 250 staffers on the ground and 23 offices across the state. That significant staff footprint coupled with the consistently large crowds has Sanders' advisers privately predicting victory in Iowa.

Warren's campaign is still seen as one of the most seasoned and best-organized in the state, as she's had organizers holding intimate local events with potential caucusgoers across Iowa for nearly a year. Her aides will only disclose that they have more than 100 paid staff and more than 20 offices in Iowa, but most operatives on the ground believe her team is nearly twice that size. On a cold Sunday morning, with snow blanketing the ground, she turned out around 300 people to an elementary school gymnasium in Marshalltown.

There, she was introduced by former Housing Secretary Julián Castro, who endorsed her last week after exiting the presidential race. He made an electability pitch, arguing that Warren "can unify Democrats to beat Donald Trump."

Buttigieg has also assembled a robust statewide organization that puts him in a strong position for someone who was virtually unknown nationally a year ago. He consistently draws larger crowds than his rivals who have been in politics for decades.

Since September, the 37-year-old Buttigieg — touting a message of generational change, civility and Midwestern pragmatism — has been drawing a significant share of first-time caucusgoers into his ranks, including about a third of the 50 caucus leaders who turned out in Ottumwa for caucus training Thursday

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evening.

Despite the hopeful tone and intellectual depth, Buttigieg has struggled with some in his own generation looking for more overhaul in Washington than the moderate from Indiana espouses.

"I really like his temperament and his style," said Parthi Kandavel, a Des Moines middle school teacher who recently traveled to Burlington with his wife, Anu, to see Buttigieg. "My concern is his commitment to addressing income inequality."

And though Iowa's population is 90% white, Buttigieg's struggle to attract support from minority voters has crept into his Iowa campaign. During a rally Sunday in Des Moines, Black Lives Matter supporters interrupted Buttigieg, shouting and chanting, before being escorted out by police.

In another warning sign for Buttigieg, he dropped 9 percentage points from November in the Register/CNN Iowa poll.

Still, the final weeks leading up to the caucuses are often marked by unpredictability: Candidate support is known to shift even in the final days, and the polling leader three weeks out is by no means assured a win.

That leaves room for an unexpected candidate to break ahead. Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar has attracted growing crowds in recent weeks and has had a fundraising surge that helped her invest in her operation in Iowa. She now has more than 100 staffers on the ground and 19 field offices across the state — fewer than most of the top-tier candidates, but a healthy infusion at a key time.

But it remains to be seen whether Klobuchar's late investment can compete with the seasoned staffers of campaigns like Warren's.

"Now, their challenge is how you take these people that are now seriously kicking Klobuchar's tires and turn them into precinct captains and have them help recruit other people for you," said veteran Iowa Democratic Party operative Jeff Link, who is unaffiliated with any campaign. "I think she can."

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

Lava gushes from volcano near Manila; tens of thousands flee

By JOEAL CALUPITAN and JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

TAGAYTAY, Philippines (AP) — Red-hot lava spewed from a volcano near the Philippine capital of Manila on Monday as tens of thousands of people fled through heavy ash and frightening tremors, and authorities made plans to evacuate hundreds of thousands more for fear of a bigger eruption.

Clouds of ash from the Taal volcano reached Manila, 65 kilometers (40 miles) to the north, on Sunday, forcing the shutdown of the country's main airport, with more than 500 flights canceled. The airport partially reopened Monday after the ashfall eased.

There were no immediate reports of any deaths or major damage directly blamed on the eruption. A truck, however, skidded out of control on an ash-blanketed road, killing the driver and injuring three companions in Laguna province in an accident police said may have been linked to slippery conditions.

The government's disaster-response agency and other officials reported more than 30,000 villagers fled their homes in the hard-hit province of Batangas and nearby Cavite province. Officials expected the number to swell.

Some residents could not immediately flee their ash-blanketed villages because of a lack of transportation and poor visibility. Others refused to leave their homes and farms.

"We have a problem — our people are panicking due to the volcano because they want to save their livelihood, their pigs and herds of cows," Mayor Wilson Maralit of the town of Balete told DZMM radio. "We're trying to stop them from returning and warning that the volcano can explode again any time and hit them."

Maralit, whose town lies along the shoreline of Taal Lake, which surrounds the erupting volcano, appealed for troops and more police to stop people from sneaking back to their villages.

After a cleanup and a shift of ash-laden winds away from Manila, officials partially reopened the main airport and allowed planes to take off. President Rodrigo Duterte's aircraft was able to land in Manila on

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Monday from his hometown of Davao, his spokesman said, adding he saw the extent of the disaster from the plane.

Taal suddenly rumbled back to life on Sunday, blasting steam, ash and pebbles up to 10 to 15 kilometers (6 to 9 miles) into the sky, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

On Monday, the ash and steam column reached a height of 2 kilometers (about a mile), with lava fountains spurting less than half of that height before falling into the lake waters surrounding the main crater. Lava also spurted from another vent north of the main crater, said Renato Solidum, who heads the institute.

Frequent tremors and a buildup of pressure of the 1,020-foot (311-meter) volcano, one of the world's smallest, however, indicated a major and much more dangerous eruption could still happen, he said.

The government volcano-monitoring agency raised the danger level around Taal three notches on Sunday to Level 4, indicating a hazardous eruption within hours to days was possible. Level 5, the highest, means such an eruption is underway.

The volcano's last disastrous eruption happened in 1965, when more than 200 people were killed.

Irene de Claro, a mother of four, worried about her father, who stayed behind in their village in Agoncillo while the rest of the family fled.

"My father is missing. We don't know, too, what happened to our house because the ash was up to our knees, it was very dark and the ground was constantly shaking when we left," de Castro said at a school in the town of Lemery. "Most likely there's nothing for us to return to. We're back to zero."

The small island where the volcano lies has long been designated a "permanent danger zone," though fishing villages have existed there for years. Those residents were all evacuated, volcanology officials said, adding that there should be a total evacuation, too, of endangered communities within a 14-kilometer (8.7-mile) radius of Taal,

Government work was suspended and schools closed in a wide swath of towns and cities, including Manila, because of the health risks from the ash.

Taal is regarded as the second-most restive of about two dozen active volcanoes in the Philippines, which lies along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," a region prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. A long-dormant volcano, Mount Pinatubo, blew its top north of Manila in 1991 in one of the biggest volcanic eruptions of the 20th century, killing hundreds of people.

About 20 typhoons and other major storms each year also batter the Philippines, making it one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.

Gomez reported from Manila. Associated Press journalists Kiko Rosario in Manila and Aaron Favila in Tagaytay contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 14, the 14th day of 2020. There are 352 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 14, 1994, President Bill Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed an accord to stop aiming missiles at any nation; the leaders joined Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk in signing an accord to dismantle the nuclear arsenal of Ukraine.

On this date:

In 1784, the United States ratified the Treaty of Paris ending the Revolutionary War; Britain followed suit in April 1784.

In 1914, Ford Motor Co. greatly improved its assembly-line operation by employing an endless chain to pull each chassis along at its Highland Park, Michigan, plant.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and French General Charles de Gaulle opened a wartime conference in Casablanca.

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In 1954, Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio were married at San Francisco City Hall. (The marriage lasted about nine months.)

In 1963, George C. Wallace was sworn in as governor of Alabama with the pledge, "Segregation forever!" — a view Wallace later repudiated.

In 1964, former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy, in a brief televised address, thanked Americans for their condolences and messages of support following the assassination of her husband, President John F. Kennedy, nearly two months earlier.

In 1968, the Green Bay Packers of the NFL defeated the AFL's Oakland Raiders, 33-14, in the second AFL-NFL World Championship game (now referred to as Super Bowl II).

In 1969, 27 people aboard the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise, off Hawaii, were killed when a rocket warhead exploded, setting off a fire and additional explosions.

In 1970, Diana Ross and the Supremes performed their last concert together, at the Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas.

In 1975, the House Internal Security Committee (formerly the House Un-American Activities Committee) was disbanded.

In 1989, President Ronald Reagan delivered his 331st and final weekly White House radio address, telling listeners, "Believe me, Saturdays will never seem the same. I'll miss you."

In 2004, former Enron finance chief Andrew Fastow (FAS'tow) pleaded guilty to conspiracy as he accepted a ten-year prison sentence. (He was actually sentenced to six years and was released in Dec. 2011.)

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama and the U.S. moved to take charge in earthquake-ravaged Haiti, dispatching thousands of troops along with tons of aid. Iraq's electoral commission barred 500 candidates from running in March 2010 parliamentary elections, including a prominent Sunni lawmaker, deepening sectarian divides.

Five years ago: The al-Qaida branch in Yemen claimed responsibility for the attack on the satirical Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris. Eight inmates and two corrections officers died when a prison bus skidded off an icy West Texas highway, slid down an embankment and collided with a passing freight train. A pair of Americans, Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgeson, completed what had long been considered the world's most difficult rock climb, using only their hands and feet to scale the 3,000-foot Dawn Wall on El Capitan, the forbidding granite pedestal in Yosemite National Park.

One year ago: President Donald Trump rejected a suggestion to reopen the government for several weeks while negotiations would continue over his demand for billions of dollars for a border wall. Trump hosted the college football champion Clemson Tigers at the White House, serving fast-food burgers that he said he had paid for himself because of the partial government shutdown. Los Angeles teachers walked off the job for the first time in three decades, pressing for higher pay and smaller class sizes. House Republican leaders announced that veteran GOP lawmaker Steve King of Iowa would be blocked from committee assignments for the next two years, after he lamented that white supremacy and white nationalism had become offensive terms. Actress Rose McGowan pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor drug charge in Virginia after cocaine was found in a wallet she had left behind at Dulles International Airport two years earlier.

Today's Birthdays: Blues singer Clarence Carter is 84. Singer Jack Jones is 82. Actress Faye Dunaway is 79. Actress Holland Taylor is 77. Actor Carl Weathers is 72. Singer-producer T-Bone Burnett is 72. Movie writer-director Lawrence Kasdan is 71. Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Maureen Dowd is 68. Rock singer Geoff Tate (Queensryche) is 61. Movie writer-director Steven Soderbergh is 57. Actor Mark Addy is 56. Former Fox News Channel anchorman Shepard Smith is 56. Actor/producer Dan Schneider is 56. Rapper Slick Rick is 55. Actress Emily Watson is 53. Actor-comedian Tom Rhodes is 53. Rock musician Zakk Wylde is 53. Rapper-actor LL Cool J is 52. Actor Jason Bateman is 51. Rock singer-musician Dave Grohl (Foo Fighters) is 51. Actor Kevin Durand is 46. Actress Jordan Ladd is 45. Actor Ward Horton is 44. Actress Emayatzy Corinealdi is 40. Retro-soul singer-songwriter Marc Broussard is 38. Rock singer-musician Caleb Followill (Kings of Leon) is 38. Actor Zach Gilford is 38. Rock musician Joe Guese (The Click Five) is 38. Actor Jake

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Choi is 35. Actor Jonathan Osser is 31. Actor-singer Grant Gustin is 30. Singer/guitarist Molly Tuttle is 27.
Thought for Today: "If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind." — John Stuart Mill, English philosopher (1806-1873).
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