

Groton Daily Independent

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POSTPONED

The Groton Area Girls' Basketball Game Scheduled for Monday, Jan. 20th in Groton with Langford has been postponed to Tuesday, Feb. 4th. It will be a double header.

Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5 p.m.

followed by girls varsity then boys varsity.

The junior high game scheduled for that Monday will be played in the old gym.

The Groton Area Boys Basketball games scheduled for Friday, Jan. 17 in Sisseton has been postponed.

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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Game Statistics Report Groton (Home) 33, Sisseton Girls Varsity (Away) 51

Game Statistics

Player	No.	2Pt	2PtA	2Pt%	3Pt	3PtA	3Pt%	FG	FGA	FG%	EFG%	FT	FTA	FT %	Pts	Layup	LayupA	Layup%
Flihs	15	1	1	100.0%	0	1	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	50.0%	0	1	0.0%	2	0	0	0.0%
Foertsch	33	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
Generke	25	1	2	50.0%	1	4	25.0%	2	6	33.3%	41.7%	0	0	0.0%	5	0	1	0.0%
Hawkins	53	2	3	66.7%	0	0	0.0%	2	3	66.7%	66.7%	0	2	0.0%	4	0	0	0.0%
Johnson	13	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
Keith	21	0	3	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0	4	0.0%	0.0%	1	3	33.3%	1	0	0	0.0%
Locke	11	2	4	50.0%	0	2	0.0%	2	6	33.3%	33.3%	0	0	0.0%	4	0	0	0.0%
Thaler	23	1	5	20.0%	1	7	14.3%	2	12	16.7%	20.8%	3	4	75.0%	8	0	0	0.0%
Tollifson	35	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
Traphagen	43	0	2	0.0%	3	13	23.1%	3	15	20.0%	30.0%	0	0	0.0%	9	0	1	0.0%
Groton Totals		7	20	35.0%	5	28	17.9%	12	48	25.0%	30.2%	4	10	40.0%	33	0	2	0.0%
Sisseton Girls Varsity Totals		15	37	40.5%	5	10	50.0%	20	47	42.6%	47.9%	6	11	54.5%	51	6	10	60.0%
Chanku	12	0	2	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	2	0.0%	0.0%	1	2	50.0%	1	0	1	0.0%
Goodhart	54	3	7	42.9%	0	0	0.0%	3	7	42.9%	42.9%	1	3	33.3%	7	1	3	33.3%
Hull	44	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
Jannesen		0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
Karst	52	1	1	100.0%	3	7	42.9%	4	8	50.0%	68.8%	0	0	0.0%	11	0	0	0.0%
Nelson	32	2	9	22.2%	1	1	100.0%	3	10	30.0%	35.0%	1	2	50.0%	8	1	1	100.0%
RedThunder	50	8	11	72.7%	1	2	50.0%	9	13	69.2%	73.1%	3	4	75.0%	22	4	5	80.0%
Rice		0	1	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
Silk	20	0	1	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
Swanson	30	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
Yammerino	14	1	5	20.0%	0	0	0.0%	1	5	20.0%	20.0%	0	0	0.0%	2	0	0	0.0%

Blizzard Warning

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service Aberdeen SD

348 AM CST Fri Jan 17 2020

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY NOW IN EFFECT UNTIL 9 PM CST THIS EVENING...

...BLIZZARD WARNING IN EFFECT FROM 9 PM THIS EVENING TO 6 PM CST SATURDAY...

* **WHAT...**For the Blizzard Warning, blizzard conditions expected. Winds gusting as high as 50 mph. For the Winter Weather Advisory, snow and blowing snow. Snow accumulations of up to three inches. Winds gusting as high as 45 mph.

* **WHERE...**Brown and Spink Counties.

* **WHEN...**For the Blizzard Warning, from 9 PM this evening to 6 PM CST Saturday. For the Winter Weather Advisory, until 9 PM CST this evening.

* **IMPACTS...**Plan on slippery road conditions. Areas of blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute. Gusty winds could bring down tree branches. The dangerously cold wind chills as low as 30 below zero could cause frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 10 minutes.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Travel should be restricted to emergencies only. If you must travel, have a winter survival kit with you. If you get stranded, stay with your vehicle.

Slow down and use caution while traveling.

The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

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Upcoming Events

Friday, January 17, 2020

Silver Bowl Debate at Sioux Falls

No School - Faculty Inservice

POSTPONED: 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

Moved to Feb. 4 - Double header with boys in Groton. Girls Basketball hosts Langford Area

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

GUN SHOW: Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association 18th Annual ABERDEEN Gun Show. Saturday, February 1, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, February 2, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dakota Event Center on LaMont East. Terry Ennen 701-391-2416.

Broton Daily Independent

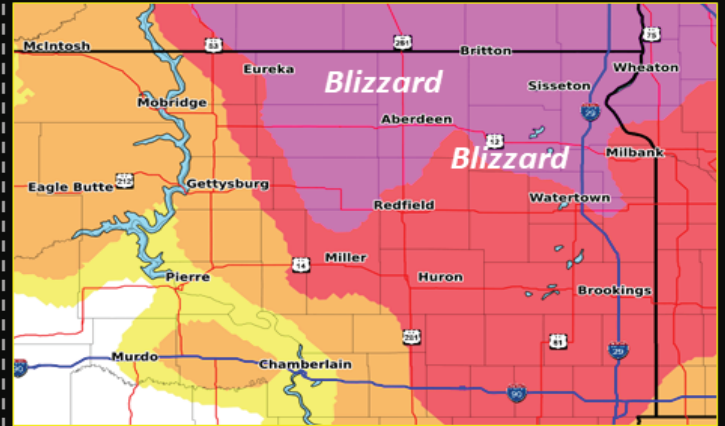
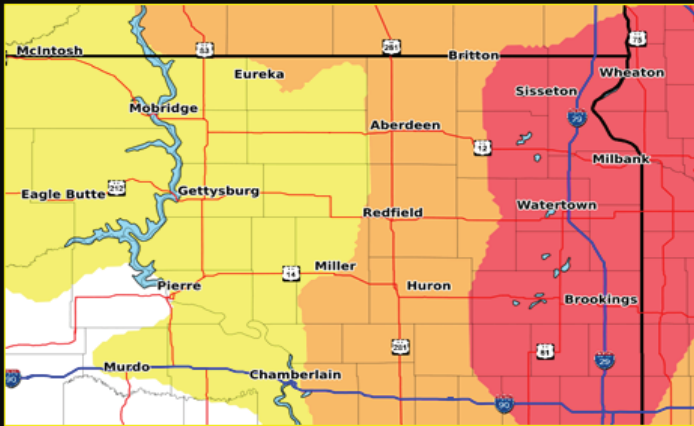
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Blowing Snow Potential

Today

9PM Friday to 6PM Sat



Minor ☃️
Patchy Blowing Snow with reduced visibilities expected

Moderate ☃️☃️
Areas of Blowing Snow with reduced visibilities expected

Significant ☃️☃️☃️
Widespread Blowing Snow and greatly reduced visibilities expected

Blizzard ☃️☃️☃️☃️
Significant Blowing Snow possible, travel may be impossible

What you should know:

Expect travel to become hazardous to potentially impossible Today into Saturday.

Falling snow and strong southerly winds will contribute to travel hazards today over northeast South Dakota. Strong northerly winds will spread across the area tonight and Saturday with blizzard conditions expected. Travel will be difficult to potentially impossible tonight & Saturday.

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD Updated: 1/17/2020 3:37 AM Central



Winter Weather Timeline

Today Through Saturday – A system moving across the region will bring complex winter weather hazards.

Focus Areas: Northeast South Dakota & Western Minnesota.

Threats: Snow, strong winds & blizzard conditions.

	6am Friday	Noon	6pm Friday	Midnight	6am Saturday	Noon	6pm Saturday
Ortonville & Wheaton areas	Low Blowing & Drifting Snow	Moderate Snow	Strong Winds Blizzard Conditions				
Sisseton & surrounding area	Localized Ground Blizzard Conditions	Moderate Snow	Strong Winds Blizzard Conditions				
Watertown & surrounding area	Low Blowing & Drifting Snow	Snow	Strong Winds Blizzard Conditions				
Aberdeen & surrounding area	Low Blowing & Drifting Snow	Light Snow	Strong Winds Blizzard Conditions				
Miller & surrounding area	Low Blowing & Drifting Snow	Light Snow	Strong Winds Blowing & Drifting				
Pierre & Mobridge areas	Low Blowing & Drifting Snow	Light Snow	Strong Winds Blowing & Drifting				






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

Updated: 1/17/2020 2:43 AM CT

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

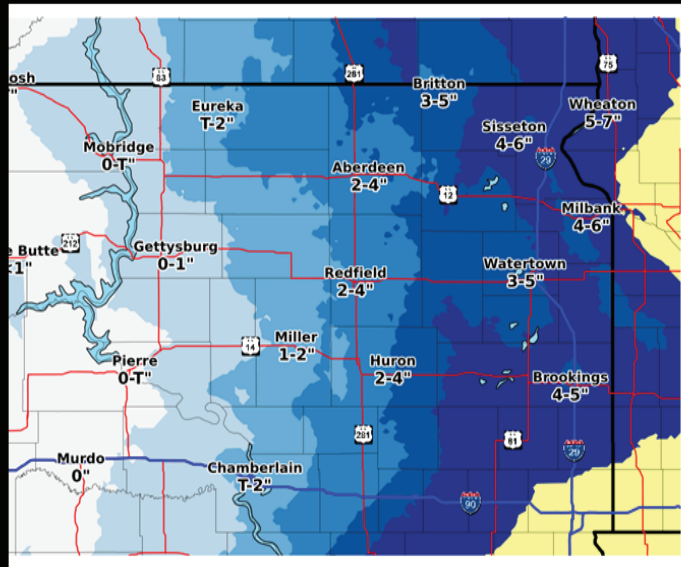
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Winter Weather Advisory		Blizzard Warning			
Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	
					
60% → 90%	90% → 60%				
Snow Likely and Blowing Snow then Snow and Blowing Snow	Snow and Blowing Snow	Blowing Snow and Windy	Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery then Mostly Clear	Cold	
High: 25 °F	Low: -1 °F	High: 3 °F ↓	Low: -10 °F	High: 0 °F	

❄️ Snowfall Today through Noon Sat ❄️

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
Updated: 1/17/2020 4:53 AM CT



Strong southerly winds today will continue to promote **blowing** and **drifting** snow across the region. Visibility could become especially low as light to moderate snow moves into the region later this morning and afternoon.

The snow will taper off overnight, but then winds will gradually turn north from west to east over the forecast area through tonight. The strong winds will likely cause **blizzard** conditions over the area, especially east of the Missouri Valley through Saturday.

Accumulating snow is forecast through noon Saturday. Gusty south winds today will become north tonight, and then increase from west to east with blizzard conditions expected thereafter.

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Today in Weather History

January 17, 1996: Two to as much as fifteen inches of snow, high winds from 40 to 60 mph, and cold arctic air resulted in blizzard conditions and extreme wind chills from 40 below to 70 below from the middle morning of the 17th to the early evening of the 18th. Most schools, federal, state, and county offices were closed. Various activities also canceled. Travel was tough due to the near zero visibility with some vehicles stranded. Highway 12 from Webster to the Minnesota border and Interstate-29 closed on the 18th. Hundreds of people were stranded with some people stranded in their vehicles. Some pheasants and wildlife were lost due to the snow packed so hard they could not dig out. Some snowfall amounts include; 2 inches at Highmore, 3 inches at Pierre and 9NE Reliance, 5 inches at Mobridge, Presho, Roscoe, 10SE Stephan, and Ree Heights, 6 inches at Tulare, 7 inches 12W Tulare and 5E 3S Faulkton, 8 inches 11E 2S Hosmer and at Doland, 9 inches at Mellette, Aberdeen, and Redfield, and 10 inches at Eureka and Britton, and 12 inches at Wilmot, Rosholt, and Ortonville, Minnesota. Fifteen inches occurred at Wheaton, Clinton, and Graceville. The extreme wind chills along with some blowing snow continued across central and north central South Dakota into the early evening of the 18th.

January 17, 2012: Below are some very rare lake effect waterspouts. Chris Westcott took these pictures in the vicinity of Lower Brule. The waterspouts form from the instability created when the air associated with the relatively warm open waters of the Missouri River interacts with the frigid air located just above the surface. These types of waterspouts have a very short lifespan and dissipate just as quickly as they form. Chris saw six of them at one time.

1490: On the night of January 17 through the 18th, a "certain fine rain, which froze whilst it fell, and make icicles upon trees" occurred in Florence, Italy. "There was such a quantity of it, that the weight bowed the trees down to the ground and broke the branches." The above is from "A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516" by Landucci, Luca. .

1837: The green flash was apparently first documented by Captain Back of the H. M. S. Terror while in the Arctic during its expedition of 1836-1837. He wrote: "In the morning however, at a quarter before ten o'clock while standing on an ice hummock about 17 feet high, and looking toward the east, I had observed the upper limb of the sun, as it filled a triangular cleft on the ridge of the headland, of the most brilliant emerald color, a phenomenon which I had not witnessed before in these regions."

1817 - A luminous snowstorm occurred in Vermont and New Hampshire. Saint Elmo's fire appeared as static discharges on roof peaks, fence posts, and the hats and fingers of people. Thunderstorms prevailed over central New England. (David Ludlum)

1893 - The mercury dipped to 17 degrees below zero at Millsboro, DE, to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1972 - A single storm unloaded 77.5 inches of snow at Summit, MT, to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - Strong chinook winds caused severe wind damage in Boulder, CO. Wind gusts to 118 mph was recorded on the roof of the Environmental Research Laboratories (ERL), and a wind gust to 137 mph was measured atop the roof of the NCAR building (in the southwest part of the city, 600 feet above ground level). The high winds uprooted trees and damage roofs. (Storm Data)

1987 - A winter storm spread snow from the Southern Rockies into the Middle Mississippi Valley and southwestern sections of the Great Lakes Region, and freezing rain across Texas and Oklahoma. Snowfall totals ranged up to 16 inches at Tulia TX, with 12 inches at Wellington KS. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A Pacific storm battered the southern coast of California. Winds gusting to 65 mph uprooted trees in San Diego. Los Angeles reported an all-time record low barometric pressure reading of 29.25 inches. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong chinook winds along the eastern slopes of the Rockies gusted to 90 mph near Rollinsville CO, and reached 94 mph near Big Timber MT. Heavy snow blanketed parts of the Upper Mississippi Valley, with eight inches reported in Douglas County WI. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

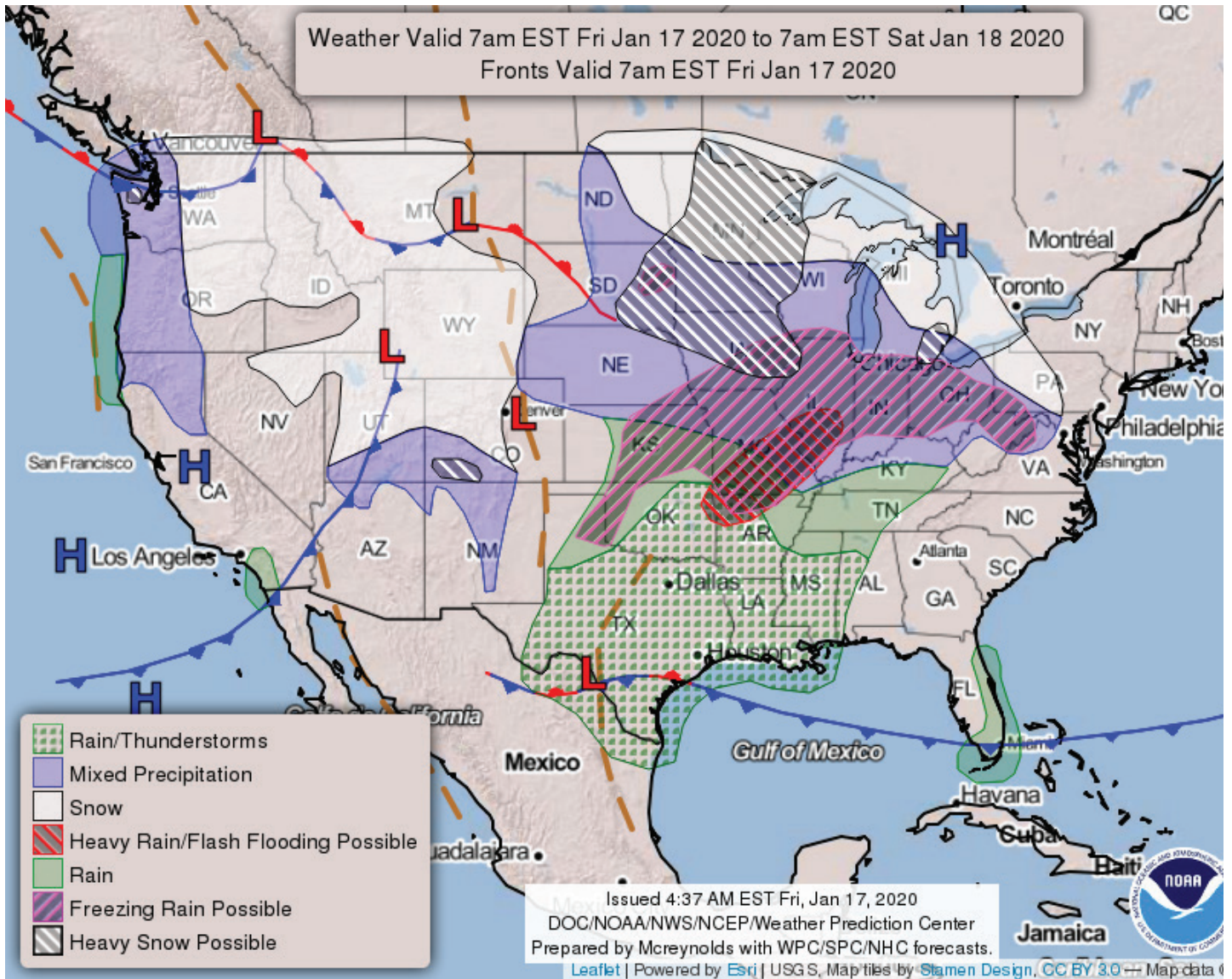
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 13 °F at 11:59 PM
Low Temp: -22 °F at 6:26 AM
Wind: 29 mph at 11:59 PM

Record High: 48° in 1947
Record Low: -32° in 1997
Average High: 22°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.27
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.27
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:19 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:08 a.m.





PREPARING FOR TEMPTATION

It was a very hot summer day. All the boys in the neighborhood decided to go swimming but there was no adult to go with them. Recognizing the danger that might occur, Johnny's mother forbade him to go with them. Later that day, he came home with wet hair.

"What happened?" asked his mother.

"I fell in the pond," came his reply.

"Well, why aren't your clothes wet?" she asked.

"I had a feeling I was going to fall in," he explained, "so I took them off."

The world has been, is, and always will be full of temptations and pressure to sin. So, Paul gave us a warning and an escape route. First, he said that we would be tempted, and then second, that God would always provide a way for us to escape temptation and to be victorious over sin. But we must do our part if we expect Him to do His. We must first prepare ourselves with His Word, and to recognize and avoid people, places and things that will lead us to sin. Then, if we are tempted, look to Him for strength to resist the temptation before we are overpowered and fall into sin.

Prayer: Grant us, Father, the courage to avoid situations that tempt us to sin. Empower us to ask for Your strength and power to turn from sin and live for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: 1 Corinthians 10:13 The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

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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

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 55, Akron-Westfield, Iowa 48
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 47, Mitchell Christian 46
Arlington 67, Estelline/Hendricks 42
Baltic 53, Chester 42
Bon Homme 40, Freeman 30
Castlewood 70, Great Plains Lutheran 51
Chamberlain 66, Todd County 58
Dakota Valley 92, Hartington Cedar Catholic, Neb. 66
Florence/Henry 49, Hamlin 33
Freeman Academy/Marion 67, Flandreau Indian 53
Hanson 60, Parker 37
Harding County 90, Rapid City Christian 89, OT
Harrisburg 67, Brookings 53
Hills-Beaver Creek, Minn. 55, Canton 52
Lemmon 71, Dupree 46
Lennox 60, Vermillion 56
Madison 58, Flandreau 42
Marshall, Minn. 55, Sioux Falls Lincoln 39
Milbank 59, Clark/Willow Lake 57
Mitchell 73, Pierre 40
Parkston 61, Wagner 45
Rapid City Central 61, Sturgis Brown 44
Redfield 61, Deuel 58
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 59, James Valley Christian 31
Scotland 46, Avon 40
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 61, Sioux Falls Washington 45
St. Thomas More 64, Custer 27
Sully Buttes 65, Miller 41
Tiospa Zina Tribal 72, Aberdeen Roncalli 38
Tri-Valley 44, Beresford 35
Viborg-Hurley 75, Gayville-Volin 40
Warner 49, Langford 46
Watertown 66, Brandon Valley 58
West Central 53, Garretson 32
Jones County Invitational=
First Round=
Jones County 57, Colome 33
Kadoka Area 71, Stanley County 51
Lyman 83, Philip 45
White River 88, Bennett County 39
West River Tournament=
First Round=
Faith 49, New Underwood 27

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Moorcroft, Wyo. 51, Hot Springs 27
Upton, Wyo. 63, Newell 24
Wall 68, Edgemont 43
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Herreid/Selby Area vs. Highmore-Harrold, ppd.
Tiospaye Topa vs. Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, ccd.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 56, Leola/Frederick 24
Aberdeen Roncalli 63, Tiospa Zina Tribal 29
Akron-Westfield, Iowa 64, Alcester-Hudson 28
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 44, Mitchell Christian 38
Avon 60, Scotland 54
Bison 41, McIntosh 20
Brandon Valley 58, Watertown 46
Burke 66, Colome 42
Castlewood 60, Great Plains Lutheran 22
Chester 50, Baltic 45
Clark/Willow Lake 59, Milbank 31
Corsica/Stickney 70, Marty Indian 29
Crofton, Neb. 54, West Central 51
DeSmet 39, Colman-Egan 35
Deubrook 52, Dell Rapids St. Mary 42
Elkton-Lake Benton 33, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 25
Estelline/Hendricks 35, Arlington 33
Flandreau Indian 50, Freeman Academy/Marion 12
Freeman 49, Bon Homme 40
Hamlin 60, Florence/Henry 32
Hanson 63, Parker 36
Harrisburg 65, Brookings 46
Hill City 60, Lead-Deadwood 43
Howard 64, Iroquois 38
Irene-Wakonda 68, Centerville 39
Kimball/White Lake 56, Gregory 49
Lennox 63, Vermillion 25
McCook Central/Montrose 76, Sioux Valley 29
Menno 48, Bridgewater-Emery 44
Miller 52, Sully Buttes 39
Parkston 58, Wagner 44
Pierre 52, Mitchell 36
Pine Ridge 75, Little Wound 66
Rapid City Central 54, Sturgis Brown 27
Redfield 58, Deuel 36
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 55, Sioux Falls Washington 51
Sisseton 51, Groton Area 33
Sundance, Wyo. 41, Harding County 37
Tea Area 59, Sioux Falls Christian 47
Tri-Valley 56, Beresford 38
Viborg-Hurley 62, Gayville-Volin 26
Waverly-South Shore 49, Wilmot 40
Webster 57, Britton-Hecla 49

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POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Tiospaye Topa vs. Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, ccd.

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

No. 25 South Dakota women beat North Dakota State 80-36

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Ciara Duffy scored 20 points on 7-of-11 shooting and grabbed eight rebounds to help No. 25 South Dakota beat North Dakota 80-36 on Thursday night.

Monica Arens added 18 points, making all seven of her shots including four 3-pointers. Hannah Sjerven chipped in 14 points.

South Dakota (16-2, 5-0 Summit League) led 72-20 after the third quarter and held the Bison to a season-best defensively for the game.

Ryan Cobbins led North Dakota State (3-13, 0-4) with 15 points and was the only Bison player to make more than one field goal. North Dakota State shot 25% from the field. South Dakota made 47.5% from the field.

It was South Dakota's fifth win in a row since a 73-60 loss to then-No. 5 South Carolina. North Dakota State lost its fourth in a row.

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

GOP group wants SD party chair to resign over Saudi lobbying

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A group of South Dakota Republicans wants the state party chairman to resign because of his lobbying work for Saudi Arabia.

The Fall River County Republicans' Central Committee unanimously approved a resolution on Tuesday night alleging that state GOP Chairman Dan Lederman has a conflict of interest because of his work lobbying "against American citizens on behalf of a foreign government."

Lederman tells the Argus Leader he's proud of his record as state Republican chairman, and that under his leadership, the Republican Party won every statewide office and returned a supermajority to the South Dakota Legislature.

"Distractions will not keep us from focusing on the 2020 election to re-elect President Donald J. Trump, and candidates up and down the ballot from U.S. Senate to city council. I plan on leading our party to victory again," Lederman said in a statement.

Lederman signed a contract last month to receive \$10,000 per month to lobby for Saudi Arabia.

The resolution has been sent to the party's State Central Committee for consideration. Lederman was re-elected last year to a second term as state party chairman.

Fall River County is in western South Dakota, and includes the town of Hot Springs.

Tribe official calls for better communication from lawmakers

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The chairman of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe on Thursday called on South Dakota lawmakers to improve communication with Native American communities, singling out bills passed last year that were aimed at expected protests of the Keystone XL pipeline.

"When relationships collapse, miscommunication, distrust, and dishonesty lead to failures in government action," Lester Thompson said in the annual State of the Tribes address at the South Dakota Capitol.

Thompson said that cooperation between state and tribal governments is necessary to move forward on a range of issues. He called for a requirement for pipeline companies to pay into a fund for oil spill

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cleanups, legislation to allow for charter schools focused on Native American culture, and for broader recognition of tribal identification cards.

"Legislation should not seek division but solutions," Thompson said.

A divide has been evident between South Dakota's government and the tribes since last year. The tribes particularly were upset with the passage of "riot boosting laws" pushed by Republican Gov. Kristi Noem. The Oglala Sioux Tribe responded by banning Noem from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, a move which they have since rescinded.

Parts of the laws that made it a crime to encourage or direct others to "riot" were nullified in a settlement with the American Civil Liberties Union, Native American activists, and environmental groups in October.

But Noem is planning to revive the topic in this legislative session. She has proposed revisions of the laws to allow for peaceful protests but still prosecute people who "urge" rioting when force is "imminent."

Thompson credited Noem for meeting with some tribal representatives last week to discuss upcoming legislation.

"Though we can disagree on policy objectives, any attempt to prevent our citizens voice from being heard we will continue to oppose," he said.

Thompson called himself a "realist" on the oil pipeline. He said that passing legislation to protect the environment in the event of an oil spill would prevent the need for "riot boosting" laws.

"We must learn from North Dakota's mistakes before they repeat in our own state," he said, referencing previous oil spills.

Thompson told the Legislature that extreme weather last year has particularly affected tribal lands and left families without access to emergency services and basic supplies. He also asked for lawmakers to adopt a resolution to ask Congress to repeal an 1863 law that forcibly removed Dakota people from Minnesota.

The annual speech is intended to promote cooperation between the tribal and state governments, but it became contentious after a dispute over who would deliver the speech. Noem's secretary of tribal relations, Dave Flute, was floated as a potential choice, but leaders of several tribes objected because he is a state employee. They threatened to boycott the speech and hold their own event.

Legislators scrambled to mend the dispute and invited Thompson to deliver the address. Representatives from all nine of South Dakota's tribes attended the State of the Tribes address.

The tribes' replacement event, called the Great Sioux Nation address, was rescheduled and held on the western side of the Missouri River in Fort Pierre, a significant location because some tribal leaders argue that it should be tribal land under treaty agreements.

At that event, each tribal leader took a turn speaking about the challenges facing their communities. Many vowed to oppose the Keystone XL pipeline.

"We need to do what we can to stop it because its going to destroy our way of life, our future," said Harold Frazier, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Many of the leaders said the event would spark unified action between the tribes to address a persistent problem for their communities: meth.

Harold White, chairman of the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, said the tribes should start suing the federal government for not living up to treaty obligations to fund health care, law enforcement and other services on reservations.

"After the Dakota Uprising we were split and exiled from Minnesota," said Tony Reider, president of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, referring to an 1860's conflict. "But we're not defeated, we're still here."

Survey of Plains, Western bankers says rural economy growing

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A new survey of bankers suggests the economy is growing in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states.

The overall economic index for rural parts of the region improved to 55.9 in January from December's weak 50.2 reading, according to the survey released Thursday. Any score above 50 suggests a growing economy, while a score below 50 indicates a shrinking economy.

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Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey, said only 18 percent of the bankers reported that their local area was in an economic downturn.

Hiring remains strong across the region. The employment index increased to 61.8 in January from December's 60.

The confidence index — a measure of economic optimism for the next six months — improved to 50 in January from December's 45.8.

Goss said he expects confidence to grow in the months ahead because of this week's signing of a trade deal with China and passage of a new North American trade agreement. Both those events took place after the January survey was completed.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

Trump talks about Mount Rushmore fireworks at trade ceremony

KEYSTONE, S.D. (AP) — President Donald Trump says he might attend a fireworks show that's returning to Mount Rushmore in South Dakota's Black Hills on July 4th.

Trump mentioned the fireworks display during a signing ceremony for the U.S.-China trade deal in Washington Wednesday.

Fireworks shows have not been held at Mount Rushmore since 2009 when a pine beetle infestation killed thousands of trees in the Black Hills, which created a fire hazard, according to the Rapid City Journal.

A recent U.S. Geological Survey report also cited past fireworks displays at the monument as the probable cause for elevated concentrations of contaminants in groundwater near the monument.

Trump brushed aside what he said were dubious environmental concerns that had previously prevented fireworks at Mount Rushmore.

"What can burn? It's stone. Nobody knew why," Trump said.

Republican Gov. Krisi Noem and federal officials announced last May that the fireworks show would resume.

'Days of God': A look at Iran's mounting crises

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's supreme leader says his nation is living through "days of God."

The Islamic Republic has been reeling from one crisis to another, from the targeted killing by the United States of its top general to the Revolutionary Guard's accidental shutdown of a passenger plane carrying scores of young people, most of them Iranians. U.S. sanctions have crippled its economy as tensions with America have soared.

In a rare Friday sermon in Tehran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stuck to the playbook Iran has relied on since 1979, blaming the country's woes on the U.S. and other Western powers, and proclaiming that Iranians still support the Islamic Revolution.

He pointed to the outpouring of grief after Gen. Qassem Soleimani, Iran's top general, was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad. Hundreds of thousands of Iranians attended funeral services across the country for Soleimani, who was revered by many as a war hero. But the funeral itself was marred by tragedy when 56 people died in a stampede of mourners in Soleimani's hometown of Kerman.

The moment of national unity was shattered days later, when Iranian forces accidentally shot down a Ukrainian jetliner, killing all 176 people on board, and then concealed their responsibility until they were confronted with mounting evidence from Western leaders.

Here's a look at the various crises Iran faces:

U.S. SANCTIONS

After unilaterally withdrawing from Iran's 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers, President Donald Trump began ratcheting up sanctions. The sanctions have exacerbated an economic crisis, sending the

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local currency into a freefall and wiping away many people's life savings.

The Institute of International Finance, a global association of financial institutions, estimates that Iran's economy will contract this fiscal year by more than 7%, mostly because of the drop in crude oil exports due to sanctions. The report found that as a result, Iran's reserves are expected to dip to \$73 billion by March, totaling nearly \$40 billion in losses over two years.

THE LOSS OF SOLEIMANI

As head of the Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds Force, Soleimani was the architect of Iran's regional military operations and its support for armed groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. He was blamed for the killing of hundreds of American soldiers by Iran-backed militias in the years after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. He also helped Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces battle rebels and Islamic extremists. In Iran, he was seen by many as a mythic figure who had defended the nation. Critics and supporters alike say he will be tough to replace.

THE PLANE TRAGEDY

In response to the killing of Soleimani, Iran launched a wave of ballistic missiles at U.S. bases in Iraq. No one was seriously wounded, though several soldiers were screened for concussions and sent to Germany for medical treatment. As Iran braced for a counterattack, the Revolutionary Guard shot down a passenger plane shortly after it took off from Tehran's international airport last week, mistaking it for a U.S. cruise missile. Most of those killed were Iranians.

Iranian authorities concealed their role for three days, initially blaming a technical failure, until Western leaders said they had mounting evidence that a surface-to-air missile had brought the plane down. Iranian officials have apologized and promised to punish those responsible, but have widespread criticism and international demands to pay compensation to victims' families.

STREET PROTESTS

As the economic crisis has worsened, Iran has seen wave after wave of sporadic, leaderless protests. The protests are usually sparked by economic grievances but rapidly escalate into calls to overthrow the Islamic Republic. The demonstrations have often turned violent, and security forces have responded with force. Amnesty International says more than 300 people were killed in protests in November over a hike in gasoline prices, when authorities shut down the internet for several days.

The Revolutionary Guard's announcement on Saturday that it was responsible for shooting down the plane sparked days of protests in the streets and on university campuses. Security forces dispersed some of the crowds with tear gas and live ammunition.

THE UNRAVELING NUCLEAR DEAL

Iran continued to comply with the nuclear deal despite U.S. sanctions until last summer, when it said it would no longer fully abide with the agreement if it received no economic benefits. Iran began openly breaching certain limits set by the deal, and after the killing of Soleimani said it was no longer bound by any of the agreement's restrictions.

Britain, France and Germany, which also signed the deal along with China and Russia, have been trying to salvage it. They have searched for a mechanism that would allow them to keep trading with Iran but have been unable to find one that would protect their companies from U.S. sanctions.

Earlier this week, the European nations triggered a dispute mechanism in the nuclear deal in an attempt to bring Iran back into compliance. They say they are committed to saving the agreement, but the dispute process could potentially result in the snapback of international sanctions, further compounding Iran's woes.

Iran's top leader strikes defiant tone amid month of turmoil

By AMIR VAHDAT and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

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TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's supreme leader lashed out at Western countries as he led Friday prayers in Tehran for the first time in eight years, dismissing "American clowns" who he said pretend to support the Iranian nation but want to stick their "poisoned dagger" into its back.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei used his rare appearance at the weekly prayers to deliver a fiery address in which he insisted Iran would not bow to U.S. pressure after months of crushing sanctions and a series of recent crises — from the killing of a top Iranian general to the accidental shutdown of a Ukrainian passenger plane.

Khamenei said the mass funerals for Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in a U.S. airstrike earlier this month, show that the Iranian people support the Islamic Republic despite its recent trials. He said the "cowardly" hit on Soleimani had taken out the most effective commander in the battle against the Islamic State group.

In response to Soleimani's killing, Iran launched a barrage of ballistic missiles targeting U.S. troops in Iraq, without causing serious injuries. Khamenei said the strike had dealt a "blow to America's image" as a superpower. In the part of his sermon delivered in Arabic, he said the "real punishment" would be in forcing the U.S. to withdraw from the Middle East.

After the missile strike, as Iran's Revolutionary Guard braced for an American counterattack that never came, it mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian jetliner shortly after takeoff from Tehran's international airport, killing all 176 passengers on board, mostly Iranians.

Authorities concealed their role in the tragedy for three days, initially blaming the crash on a technical problem. When it came, their admission of responsibility triggered days of street protests, which security forces dispersed with live ammunition and tear gas.

Khamenei called the shutdown of the plane a "bitter accident" that he said had saddened Iran as much as it made its enemies happy. He said Iran's enemies had seized on the crash to question the Islamic Republic, the Revolutionary Guard and the armed forces.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko said on Friday that his country wants Iran to issue a formal document admitting its guilt. Ukraine, Canada and other nations whose citizens died in the crash have demanded Iran pay compensation to the victims' families.

Khamenei also lashed out at Britain, France and Germany after they triggered a dispute mechanism to try and bring Iran back into compliance with the unraveling 2015 nuclear agreement. Iran began openly breaching certain limits under the agreement last summer, more than a year after President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal and began imposing sanctions. After the killing of Soleimani, Iran said it was no longer bound by the nuclear deal.

"These contemptible governments are waiting to bring the Iranian nation to its knees," Khamenei said. "America, who is your elder, your leader and your master, was not able to bring the Iranian nation to its knees. You are too small to bring the Iranian nation to its knees."

Khamenei has held the country's top office since 1989 and has the final say on all major decisions. The 80-year-old leader openly wept at the funeral of Soleimani and vowed "harsh retaliation" against the United States.

Thousands of people attended the Friday prayers, occasionally interrupting his speech by chanting "God is greatest!" and "Death to America!"

Tensions between Iran and the United States have steadily escalated since Trump withdrew from the nuclear accord, which had imposed restrictions on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions.

The U.S. has since imposed crippling sanctions on Iran, including its vital oil and gas industry, pushing the country into an economic crisis that has ignited several waves of sporadic, leaderless protests. Trump has openly encouraged the protesters — even tweeting in Farsi — hoping that the protests and the sanctions will bring about fundamental change in a longtime adversary.

Khamenei mocked those efforts, dismissing "these American clowns who falsely and despicably say that they are standing with the Iranian people." He did not refer to Trump by name, but was clearly referring

to him and his administration.

"You are lying," he said. "If you do stand with the Iranian people it is because you want to stick your poisoned dagger into the back of the Iranian nation. Of course you haven't been able to do that so far, and you won't be able to do a damn thing."

Khamenei was always skeptical of the nuclear agreement, arguing that the United States could not be trusted. But he allowed President Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate, to conclude the agreement with President Barack Obama. Since Trump's withdrawal, he has repeatedly said there can be no negotiations with the United States.

Khamenei last delivered a Friday sermon in February 2012, when he called Israel a "cancerous tumor" and vowed to support anyone confronting it. He also warned against any U.S. strikes on Iran over its nuclear program, saying the U.S. would be damaged "10 times over."

Krauss reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writer Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed.

Trump campaign tries robust outreach to expand his appeal

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Selfies on a "Women for Trump" bus tour through Iowa. Volunteer training at a "Black Voices for Trump" organizing session in Philadelphia. A vice presidential headliner at a "Latinos for Trump" event in Florida.

President Donald Trump's surrogates fanned out across the country Thursday in a show of force that is part of an aggressive — and uphill — effort to stretch his appeal beyond the base of working-class white voters who propelled him to victory in 2016.

With a recognition that Trump will need to turn out new voters in November to be reelected, his campaign has dramatically stepped up outreach efforts to various constituencies, including African Americans, Hispanics and women, building a coalition operation that officials believe is the most robust of any Republican campaign in history.

The outreach marks a dramatic departure from 2016, when Trump's volunteer "National Diversity Coalition" struggled to make an impact.

"There's no comparison between 2016 and now," said Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh of the effort. He described the outreach effort as "a significant department unto itself," complete with dedicated staff, resources and a budget that is expected to reach tens of millions of dollars.

"These are all well-financed, well-organized coalitions intended to reach out to the voters that they're targeting. And we know that no Republican campaign or president has ever had as muscular a coalitions outreach," he said.

The operation was in full force Thursday when the president's daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, senior campaign adviser Mercedes Schlapp and press secretary Kayleigh McEnany began a two-day "Women for Trump" bus tour through Iowa aimed at engaging women with training sessions, round tables and panel discussions. The tour comes less than three weeks before Democrats will begin to cast their first nominating ballots in the state's kickoff caucuses.

Meanwhile, in must-win Florida, Vice President Mike Pence headlined a "Latinos for Trump" event in Kissimmee at Nación de Fe, an evangelical church with a mostly Latino congregation as part of his own bus tour.

"We're going to get four more years and Latinos for Trump are going to lead the way," he told the about 400 people in attendance, emphasizing the country's low Hispanic unemployment rate and the administration's anti-abortion stance.

Around the same time in battleground Pennsylvania, a few dozen people filled the pews of First Immanuel Baptist Church in Philadelphia for a "Black Voices for Trump" discussion focused on Trump's impact on the African American community ahead of a volunteer training session. The church's pastor opened with

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a call to “make Pennsylvania great again.”

The flurry of activity, long before Democrats have settled on their nominee, underscores just how dramatically different Trump’s campaign is this time around. While much of Washington has been focused on the upcoming Senate impeachment trial and the ongoing contest between Democrats, the president’s campaign has been on the ground, trying to make the case to voters who may have passed on Trump in 2016.

There is plenty of room for improvement.

Trump won just 6% of black voters last time, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of people who participated in its polls and were confirmed to have voted. And polling shows that African Americans continue to be overwhelmingly negative in their assessments of the president’s performance, with his approval hovering around 1 in 10 over the course of his presidency, according to Gallup.

He also lost by wide margins among Hispanics and women, who continue to lag behind men in their support for the president.

Nonetheless, Trump allies insist that the president’s support has grown since 2016 in ways that aren’t reflected in traditional polling.

“I believe that you cannot look at these polls as an indicator because they’re missing people,” said Paris Dennard, a member of the campaign’s black outreach coalition who led Thursday’s “Black Voices for Trump” discussion at the Philadelphia church.

“I think there’s a movement going on,” he said.

While critics have accused the president of being racist and not caring about black communities, Dennard pointed to the campaign’s significant investment in his coalition — beginning with its kickoff event in Atlanta in November, which was attended by the president, vice president, the secretary of housing and urban development and other senior officials — as a “testament” to the commitment the president has made.

Indeed, the campaign has already spent more than \$1 million on black outreach, including radio, print and online advertising in dozens of markets since the coalition’s launch to help Trump build support in a community that has long leaned overwhelmingly Democratic, the campaign said.

While Trump’s message to black voters in 2016 boiled down to the question: “What have you got to lose?” supporters now say they have a record to point to, including the low black unemployment rate, investments in historically black colleges and universities, and criminal justice reform in the form of the bipartisan “First Step Act” Trump signed into law.

And the campaign insists it’s working.

“He’s expanding his pool of voters, without question,” said Murtaugh. “We see movement already.”

In addition to its outreach to Hispanics, African Americans and women, the campaign has also launched groups focused on veterans and evangelical voters — two groups where support for Trump is strong.

On Thursday, his administration took a series of steps aimed at maintaining his standing among white evangelical Christians, with Trump reaffirming students’ rights to pray in public schools and nine Cabinet agencies acting to remove “regulatory burdens” placed on religious organizations participating in federal programs.

“We will not let anyone push god from the public square,” Trump said at an Oval Office event with school prayer advocates. “We will uphold religious liberty for all.”

Jacob Frost, 21, who drove two hours to Kissimmee, Florida, to see Pence speak after being turned away from an crowded afternoon rally in Tampa, said he couldn’t resist being part of history and seeing the vice president speak the same day that the House formally delivered its impeachment articles the Senate.

“The pro-choice stance really turns me off from the Democrats,” he said

About 8 in 10 self-identified white evangelical protestants approved of Trump’s performance as president, according to AP-NORC polling last month.

Associated Press writers Tamara Lush in Kissimmee and Elana Schor in Philadelphia contributed to this report.

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

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. **POLITICAL STAKES HIGH AS IMPEACHMENT TRIAL LOOMS** The trial, only the third such undertaking in U.S. history, is unfolding at the start of the election year, a time of deep political division in the nation.
2. **'PRESIDENT TRUMP KNEW EXACTLY WHAT WAS GOING ON'** Lev Parnas, a close associate of Rudy Giuliani, claims Trump was directly involved in the effort to pressure Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden. When asked if Parnas was lying, Giuliani said "I'm not responding yet."
3. **WHO CALLED TRUMP A 'CLOWN'** Iran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says the U.S. president only pretends to support the Iranian people but will "push a poisonous dagger" into their backs.
4. **TRUMP CAMPAIGN TRIES ROBUST OUTREACH** The president's surrogates are fanning out across the country as part of an aggressive effort to stretch his appeal beyond the base of working-class white voters who propelled him to victory in 2016.
5. **ROYAL RIFT WILL SHRINK BRITISH MONARCHY** Buckingham Palace is changing with the scandal surrounding Prince Andrew, and with Prince Harry's decision to break away, leaving fewer senior royals working to support Queen Elizabeth II.
6. **'I KNEW I WAS BEING ASSAULTED'** Evelyn Yang, wife of Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang, says she was sexually assaulted by an obstetrician while she was pregnant with the couple's first child.
7. **WORLD'S BIGGEST YEARLY HUMAN MIGRATION BEGINS** As the Lunar New Year approaches, Beijing estimates that 3 billion trips will be made by Chinese travelers.
8. **RAIL TECHNOLOGY COULD CUT TRAIN CREWS** A \$15 billion automatic railroad braking system will bolster the industry's argument for just one crew member in most locomotives, raising safety concerns by labor groups.
9. **MARA ON THE MOVE** The five-decade-old Asian elephant will soon leave her obsolete enclosure at an Argentine zoo to be moved to a special sanctuary in neighboring Brazil.
10. **WHAT EMINEM IS ADVOCATING FOR** The Detroit rapper again drops a surprise album, releasing "Music to Be Murdered By," along with a video that calls for changes to gun laws.

Andrew Yang's wife details alleged sexual assault by doctor

WASHINGTON (AP) — The wife of Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang says she was sexually assaulted by an obstetrician while she was pregnant with the couple's first child.

Evelyn Yang said in an interview televised Thursday by CNN that the assault happened in 2012 and that she was initially afraid to tell anyone. She and 31 other women are now suing the doctor and the hospital system, saying they conspired and enabled the crimes.

Yang said she was encouraged to speak out after seeing the positive reception she and her husband had been getting on the campaign trail by being open about their son's autism.

"Something about being on the trail and meeting people and seeing the difference that we've been making already has moved me to share my own story about it, about sexual assault," she told CNN.

Yang said she first began seeing Dr. Robert Hadden in New York in early 2012. As the months went on, Yang said, Hadden began asking her inappropriate questions about her sexual activity and spent more time conducting examinations.

When she was seven months pregnant, Yang said, she believed her appointment was done and she was getting ready to leave when the doctor told her abruptly that he thought she might need a cesarean section. She said Hadden pulled her to him and undressed her, then used his fingers to examine her internally.

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"I knew it was wrong. I knew I was being assaulted," she said.

But Yang said she "just kind of froze" and didn't react. "I remember trying to fix my eyes on a spot on the wall and just trying to avoid seeing his face as he was assaulting me, just waiting for it to be over," she told CNN.

After the doctor left the room, she left the practice and didn't return.

Hadden's lawyer has denied Yang's allegations in legal filings. His attorney declined a request to be interviewed by CNN.

Yang said she initially didn't tell anyone what had happened to her. She said she blamed herself, thinking she must have done something to "invite this kind of behavior."

Months later, after the couple's son was born, Yang got a letter in the mail saying Hadden had left the practice. Curious, she looked him up online and saw that another woman had made a police report accusing him of assaulting her.

She said she realized then that she wasn't to blame for his actions.

"This was a serial predator, and he just picked me as his prey," she told CNN.

She said only then was she able to reveal the abuse to her husband.

In a statement Thursday, Andrew Yang said he was "proud" of his wife and no one deserves to be treated as she was.

"When victims of abuse come forward, they deserve our belief, support, and protection," Yang said. "I hope that Evelyn's story gives strength to those who have suffered and sends a clear message that our institutions must do more to protect and respond to women."

He later tweeted, "I love my wife very very much."

Evelyn Yang said several women came forward with similar stories about Hadden, and she learned the Manhattan district attorney's office had an open case against him.

In 2016, she said, the DA's office agreed to a deal with Hadden in which he pleaded guilty to one count of forcible touching and one count of third-degree sexual assault. He also lost his medical license and had to register as the lowest level of sex offender.

Yang said she felt betrayed by the plea deal, which allowed the doctor to avoid jail. The counts he pleaded to didn't involve her case, she said.

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. said in a statement to CNN, "Because a conviction is never a guaranteed outcome in a criminal trial, our primary concern was holding him accountable and making sure he could never do this again -- which is why we insisted on a felony conviction and permanent surrender of his medical license."

Yang and 31 other women are now suing Columbia University, where Hadden worked, along with its affiliates and the doctor itself, saying they "actively concealed, conspired, and enabled" Hadden's crimes, according to CNN.

The lawsuit claims that medical assistants who worked with the doctor knew of the abuse but didn't intervene because of a power imbalance and lack of training, CNN said.

Hadden has denied the additional allegations in court papers, CNN reported. Columbia University and the hospital system are fighting the lawsuit on procedural grounds, according to CNN.

A university spokeswoman told CNN in response to a detailed list of questions that the accusations are "abhorrent" and they "deeply apologize to those whose trust was violated."

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

Ukrainian prime minister submits resignation after tapes

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's prime minister submitted his resignation Friday, days after he was caught on tape saying the country's president knows nothing about the economy.

In a Facebook post, Oleksiy Honcharuk said that he had given his resignation to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

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"I took this post to implement the president's program. He is an example of transparency and decency to me," he said.

"However, in order to dispel any doubts about our respect and trust for the president, I have written a resignation letter and submitted it to the president for introduction to parliament," Honcharuk's statement read.

Earlier this week an audio recording surfaced in which Honcharuk appeared to make disparaging comments about Zelenskiy's understanding of economics. He called Zelenskiy "a layman" in economics and said the president should be better educated about the national currency.

Honcharuk said that the recording was a compilation of "fragments of recorded government meetings" and blamed unidentified "influential groups" for making it look like he doesn't respect the president. "It is not true," the prime minister insisted.

On Thursday, lawmakers from the opposition party Opposition Platform-For Life demanded Honcharuk's resignation, saying he and his cabinet discredit Ukraine's president and exacerbate the economic crisis in the country. Members of the ruling Servant of the People party said there were no grounds for Honcharuk to resign.

The Rada, Ukraine's parliament, must vote on whether to accept the resignation. Zelenskiy's office confirmed that it had received the letter and said the president would take it under consideration.

Iryna Herashchenko, a lawmaker in the Rada, said that Honcharuk should have submitted his resignation to the parliament and not to the president — otherwise it doesn't bear any legal consequences and is merely "private political correspondence."

"In Ukraine, the parliament appoints the Cabinet," she argued, adding that so far the parliament hasn't received any documents related to the prime minister's resignation.

The scandal involving Honcharuk shows that different political forces have started a fight for the position of prime minister, Volodymyr Fesenko, head of the Penta think tank, told The Associated Press.

However, he added that the resignation is unlikely to be accepted: "Zelenskiy doesn't want to dismiss Honcharuk."

Trump's trial begins at the start of an election year

By LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Senate opened the impeachment trial of President Donald Trump with quiet ceremony Thursday — senators standing at their desks to swear an oath of "impartial justice" as jurors, House prosecutors formally reciting the charges and Chief Justice John Roberts presiding.

The trial, only the third such undertaking in American history, is unfolding at the start of the election year, a time of deep political division in the nation. Four of the senators sitting in judgment on Trump are running for the Democratic Party's nomination to challenge him in the fall.

"Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye!" intoned the Senate's sergeant at arms, calling the proceedings to order just past noon.

Senators filled the chamber, an unusual sight in itself, sitting silently under strict rules that prohibit talking or cellphones, for a trial that will test not only Trump's presidency but also the nation's three branches of power and its system of checks and balances.

The Constitution mandates the chief justice serve as the presiding officer, and Roberts made the short trip across the street from the Supreme Court to the Capitol. He has long insisted judges are not politicians and is expected to serve as a referee for the proceedings. Senators rose quickly when he appeared in his plain black robe.

"Will all senators now stand, and remain standing, and raise their right hand," Roberts said.

"Do you solemnly swear that in all things appertaining to the trial of the impeachment of Donald John Trump, president of the United States, now pending, you will do impartial justice according to the Constitution and laws, so help you God?"

The senators responded they would, and then they lined up to sign an oath book.

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Trump faces two charges after the House voted to impeach him last month. One, that he abused his presidential power by pressuring Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden, using military aid to the country as leverage. Trump is also charged with obstructing Congress' ensuing probe.

The president insists he did nothing wrong, and he dismissed the trial anew on Thursday at the White House: "It's totally partisan. It's a hoax."

Eventual acquittal is expected in the Republican-controlled Senate. However, new revelations are mounting about Trump's actions toward Ukraine.

The Government Accountability Office said Thursday that the White House violated federal law in withholding the security assistance to Ukraine, which shares a border with hostile Russia.

At the same time, an indicted associate of Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, Lev Parnas, has turned over to prosecutors new documents linking the president to the shadow foreign policy being run by Giuliani.

The developments applied fresh pressure to senators to call more witnesses for the trial, a main source of contention that is still to be resolved. The White House has instructed officials not to comply with subpoenas from Congress requesting witnesses or other information.

"What is the president hiding? What is he afraid of?" asked Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer.

"The gravity of these charges is self-evident," he said. "The House of Representatives has accused the president of trying to shake down a foreign leader for personal gain."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the new information from Parnas demands an investigation, which she doesn't expect from Trump's attorney general. "This is an example of all of the president's henchmen, and I hope that the senators do not become part of the president's henchmen."

Before the swearing-in, House Democrats prosecuting the case stood before the Senate and Rep. Adam Schiff of the Intelligence Committee formally read the articles of impeachment.

Seven lawmakers, led by Schiff and Rep. Jerrold Nadler of the Judiciary Committee, made the solemn walk across the Capitol for a second day.

All eyes were on Schiff as he stood at a lectern in the well of the chamber, a space usually reserved for senators.

"House Resolution 755 Impeaching Donald John Trump, president of the United States, for high crimes and misdemeanors," he began, reading the nine pages.

The other House prosecutors stood in a row to his side.

Senators said later that when Roberts appeared the solemnity of the occasion took hold. Security was tight at the Capitol.

"I thought this is a historic moment, and you could have heard a pin drop," said Republican John Cornyn of Texas. "And so I think the gravity of what are undertaking I think was sinking in for all of us."

Republican House Majority Leader Mitch McConnell took a far different view of the charges and proceedings.

He opened the chamber decrying Pelosi's decision to hand out "souvenir pens" on Wednesday after she signed the resolution to transmit the charges to the Senate.

"This final display neatly distilled the House's entire partisan process into one perfect visual," McConnell said. "It was a transparently partisan process from beginning to end."

GOP Sen. James Inhofe was absent, home in Oklahoma for a family medical issue, but plans to take the oath when he returns as the full trial begins next week, his office said.

The Senate will issue a formal summons to the White House to appear, with the president's legal team expected to respond by Saturday. Opening arguments will begin on Tuesday.

The president suggested recently that he would be open to a quick vote to simply dismiss the charges, but sufficient Republican support is lacking for that.

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Muslim millennial's site dispels stereotypes for millions

By **LUIS ANDRES HENAO** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Today she travels the world, attends a red-carpet movie premiere and sits on panels with astronauts, former presidents and feminist icons.

But in the years after 9/11, Amani Al-Khatahtbeh was just a New Jersey teenager, writing a blog from her bedroom. She used the blog to connect with other young Muslim girls and defy stereotypes. At the time, the only reflections of herself in the news seemed to be men in orange jumpsuits who looked like her father and women who seemed silent and oppressed, she said.

"Being bombarded with those headlines growing up and never feeling represented by them, I did what any millennial would do, which was to turn to social media," Al-Khatahtbeh said. "I decided to put my own place out there and create that space for us to talk back."

A decade later, her MuslimGirl.com site is an online magazine with a global audience writing about how it feels to be the only woman in a hijab at a kickboxing class, offering beauty tips and covering stories of teenagers fighting Islamophobia. Last year, the domain that she bought for \$7 had more than 2 million visitors.

The site "is the biggest English-language online platform for Muslim women voices," the tech entrepreneur, now 27, said at her family's video game store in New Jersey. "Our goal is to reclaim our narrative."

She was 9 when the airliners struck the World Trade Center towers, and she remembers the warning of her Jordanian immigrant father: "They're going to blame us."

In the aftermath, she was bullied. People threw eggs at her home and slashed her mother's tires. Her family faced such a backlash that her father temporarily relocated them to Jordan.

While she is proud of being "born and raised a Jersey girl," it was only in Jordan that she began to take pride in her roots. She learned Arabic and appreciated Middle Eastern food and hospitality. When she returned to the U.S., she began to wear a headscarf as an act of defiance against a rising anti-Muslim tide.

"I lost a lot of friends, people started treating me differently," she said. But she also became an ambassador for her faith. Students, even teachers, stopped her in school and asked about the Quran and Islam.

"I had to learn as much as I possibly could about my own religion, the ins and outs of it, what Islamo-

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phobes were saying about it, so that I could understand how to respond," she said.

Eventually, she concluded that if the people around her had those questions, so did many others.

She started the blog at 17 with help from friends at her local mosque. Most of the work is still a grassroots effort. Her younger brother, Ameer, a journalism student at Rutgers University, helps run communications. Although the site pays a group of editors, most articles are written by Muslim women volunteers.

Muslim Girl has also partnered up with companies like ORLY for the creation of a halal nail polish and received support from the Malala Fund. Most recently, VaynerMedia founder Gary Vaynerchuk became an investor.

The site's topics — in categories like #woke, #fit and #fierce — range widely. Posts include a list of the top 10 most beautiful verses from the Quran, a look at Marvel's newest Muslim superhero and a story about how hijab-wearing Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad has a Barbie doll made in her likeness.

The site and its founder have attracted a legion of devoted fans who follow her on social media under the hashtag "#muslimgirlarmy. She also has detractors who say she is too Americanized or too progressive. Some question her appearance, such as the way she wears her hijab or shows her arms. She also has tattoos, an eyebrow ring and long manicured nails.

"A lot of times, at any given moment, I can have like two completely different, opposing parties be bonded by their criticism of us," Al-Khatahtbeh said,

These days, she divides her time between Los Angeles and New York, attending meetings for potential business partners and live-recording moments of her life for Instagram and Twitter.

In recent years, Forbes magazine chose her for its "30 Under 30" list of top achievers. Michelle Obama asked her to speak at the United State of Women Summit. She was also part of a panel that included female astronaut Cody Coleman and was moderated by former President Bill Clinton. Most recently, she served on an advisory committee for the live-action remake of Disney's "Aladdin" and attended the premiere.

"It was such a full-circle moment for me, because when I was a little girl, Princess Jasmine was one of the only representations that I had growing up," she said.

Being on the committee allowed her "to try to course-correct some of the problematic stereotypes" in the first movie, including some that she did not notice as a child.

She pointed to two examples: The opening song talked about a faraway place that is "barbaric." And Jasmine was dressed in a belly dancing outfit and chains in a "hyper-sexualized and oppressive way."

On her site, Al-Khatahtbeh is especially proud of stories that deal with race and sexuality. "Of course, female sexuality is honored within our religion, and it shouldn't be something we shy away from or think of as a taboo."

Most of the site's visitors live in the U.S. and Britain, and an estimated 70% are Millennials and Gen Z ages 15 to 32. One of the site's most controversial stories was written by a Muslim transgender convert.

"We want to push the envelope that way by creating that space and reminding people that they have a place within our religion," she said. "I'm really proud of that, because one thing Muslim Girl does really well is we attract youth. They want to come in, and they want to learn more about Islam because of the way that we put it out there. We always say that our language is the Millennial tongue."

Trump's trial begins, senators vowing 'impartial justice'

By LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Senate opened the impeachment trial of President Donald Trump with quiet ceremony Thursday — senators standing at their desks to swear an oath of "impartial justice" as jurors, House prosecutors formally reciting the charges and Chief Justice John Roberts presiding.

The trial, only the third such undertaking in American history, is unfolding at the start of the election year, a time of deep political division in the nation. Four of the senators sitting in judgment on Trump are running for the Democratic Party's nomination to challenge him in the fall.

"Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye!" intoned the Senate's sergeant at arms, calling the proceedings to order just past noon.

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Senators filled the chamber, an unusual sight in itself, sitting silently under strict rules that prohibit talking or cellphones, for a trial that will test not only Trump's presidency but also the nation's three branches of power and its system of checks and balances.

The Constitution mandates the chief justice serve as the presiding officer, and Roberts made the short trip across the street from the Supreme Court to the Capitol. He has long insisted judges are not politicians and is expected to serve as a referee for the proceedings. Senators rose quickly when he appeared in his plain black robe.

"Will all senators now stand, and remain standing, and raise their right hand," Roberts said.

"Do you solemnly swear that in all things appertaining to the trial of the impeachment of Donald John Trump, president of the United States, now pending, you will do impartial justice according to the Constitution and laws, so help you God?"

The senators responded they would, and then they lined up to sign an oath book.

Trump faces two charges after the House voted to impeach him last month. One, that he abused his presidential power by pressuring Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden, using military aid to the country as leverage. Trump is also charged with obstructing Congress' ensuing probe.

The president insists he did nothing wrong, and he dismissed the trial anew on Thursday at the White House: "It's totally partisan. It's a hoax."

Eventual acquittal is expected in the Republican-controlled Senate. However, new revelations are mounting about Trump's actions toward Ukraine.

The Government Accountability Office said Thursday that the White House violated federal law in withholding the security assistance to Ukraine, which shares a border with hostile Russia.

At the same time, an indicted associate of Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, Lev Parnas, has turned over to prosecutors new documents linking the president to the shadow foreign policy being run by Giuliani.

The developments applied fresh pressure to senators to call more witnesses for the trial, a main source of contention that is still to be resolved. The White House has instructed officials not to comply with subpoenas from Congress requesting witnesses or other information.

"What is the president hiding? What is he afraid of?" asked Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer.

"The gravity of these charges is self-evident," he said. "The House of Representatives has accused the president of trying to shake down a foreign leader for personal gain."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the new information from Parnas demands an investigation, which she doesn't expect from Trump's attorney general. "This is an example of all of the president's henchmen, and I hope that the senators do not become part of the president's henchmen."

Before the swearing-in, House Democrats prosecuting the case stood before the Senate and Rep. Adam Schiff of the Intelligence Committee formally read the articles of impeachment.

Seven lawmakers, led by Schiff and Rep. Jerrold Nadler of the Judiciary Committee, made the solemn walk across the Capitol for a second day.

All eyes were on Schiff as he stood at a lectern in the well of the chamber, a space usually reserved for senators.

"House Resolution 755 Impeaching Donald John Trump, president of the United States, for high crimes and misdemeanors," he began, reading the nine pages.

The other House prosecutors stood in a row to his side.

Senators said later that when Roberts appeared the solemnity of the occasion took hold. Security was tight at the Capitol.

"I thought this is a historic moment, and you could have heard a pin drop," said Republican John Cornyn of Texas. "And so I think the gravity of what are undertaking I think was sinking in for all of us."

Republican House Majority Leader Mitch McConnell took a far different view of the charges and proceedings.

He opened the chamber decrying Pelosi's decision to hand out "souvenir pens" on Wednesday after she signed the resolution to transmit the charges to the Senate.

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"This final display neatly distilled the House's entire partisan process into one perfect visual," McConnell said. "It was a transparently partisan process from beginning to end."

GOP Sen. James Inhofe was absent, home in Oklahoma for a family medical issue, but plans to take the oath when he returns as the full trial begins next week, his office said.

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Starbucks, home of the \$4 latte, is moving into poor areas

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Starbucks has a point to prove: There's more to the company than selling \$4 lattes to rich people.

The Seattle-based coffee giant that has cultivated a reputation for being socially responsible said Thursday it is expanding its effort to put more coffee shops — and create more jobs — in poor neighborhoods.

Starbucks plans to open or remodel 85 stores by 2025 in rural and urban communities across the U.S. Each store will hire local staff, including construction crews and artists, and will have community event spaces. The company will also work with local United Way chapters to develop programs at each shop, such as youth job training classes and mentoring.

The effort will bring to 100 the number of "community stores" Starbucks has opened since it announced the program in 2015.

"All of these programs are with the intent of being purposeful and profitable," said John Kelly, Starbucks executive vice president of public affairs and social impact.

Starbucks opened its first community store in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2016, two years after the riots that

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broke out over the shooting of an unarmed black 18-year-old by a white police officer. It has added 13 more locations since then, including stores in Baltimore, Chicago, Dallas, New Orleans and Jonesboro, Georgia. Another one will open this spring in Prince George's County, Maryland. Starbucks estimates the shops have created more than 300 jobs.

The project could help the company overcome lingering mistrust in some communities after the furor that erupted in 2018 when two black men waiting to meet someone in a Philadelphia Starbucks were arrested for not ordering anything. Starbucks mandated racial bias training at its 8,000 company-owned stores in response to that incident.

Kelly said the stores reflect Starbucks' core belief in responsible capitalism. The coffee shops are profitable, he said, and have the same menu as regular Starbucks stores.

Prices vary, but not by much. A grande coconut milk latte in Ferguson costs \$4.95, according to Starbucks' app. Six miles away, a Starbucks in University City charges \$5.25 for the same drink. In Jonesboro, a grande coffee is \$2.25. It's \$2.45 at a Starbucks in downtown Atlanta.

"This is not charity. These are successful stores," Kelly said, acknowledging neighbors' skepticism. "We're defying a lot of the stereotypes and we're proud to do so."

The Starbucks in Jonesboro lies on a busy road with strip malls and numerous chain restaurants. Business was brisk on Thursday afternoon, with a dozen or so customers inside and a steady stream of cars at the drive-thru.

A man who was walking by the store and gave his name as Leroy Z said he is glad Starbucks is giving locals another choice for coffee beyond the fast-food restaurants in town. But he was skeptical about how much Starbucks cares about the community and how much the store will bolster the local economy.

"They wouldn't be here if they didn't think they could make money," he said. "They're here because this is a main drag to Atlanta."

In the Englewood neighborhood on Chicago's South Side, Starbucks opened a community store in 2016; a Whole Foods opened nearby the following year. But across the busy intersection is an old, abandoned building.

Englewood resident Princess Thomas, 60, frequents Kusanya Cafe, a neighborhood nonprofit coffee shop. When it's closed, she goes to the Starbucks a mile away.

Thomas said she appreciates Starbucks employing local residents, but hopes its support for the community goes beyond "lip service."

"A lot of people in this area have had their benefits cut. They can't afford to feed their families. So when you say you're doing something for the community, what can you do for those people, instead of just seeing them as customers?" she said.

Brett Theodos, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute who studies economic development, said he has visited Starbucks' community stores in Chicago and Baltimore, and they seemed to be providing a service — and, more important, jobs — that those neighborhoods wouldn't otherwise have.

"I can't think either of a retailer, especially one that has more of a discretionary, higher-end purchase, being willing to push into neighborhoods and markets that have less purchasing power," Theodos said. "Starbucks usually appears when a neighborhood has the purchasing power to support it."

He also applauded Starbucks' plan to add community rooms in the stores, since low-income neighborhoods often don't have many places to gather.

But he thinks the impact will be limited. One Starbucks store won't cause a neighborhood to gentrify, he said.

The program is unusual for a big chain. Starbucks has one advantage: Unlike McDonald's, which relies on franchisees, Starbucks owns its standalone U.S. stores and can open them wherever it wants to.

Panera Bread opened a few pay-what-you-can cafes starting in 2010, but all have closed. They weren't profitable.

Starbucks said most of the 85 shops will be new, while some will be existing stores that have been remodeled. The company will consider various factors, including youth unemployment rates and low household income, in deciding where to build them, and will give priority to economically distressed areas.

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In New Orleans on Thursday, around 20 people were eating, drinking and working on computers at the Starbucks community store, which sits near a vacant clothing shop. A sign behind the counter read, "This store stands for this community" and "Local contractors / Local partners / Local love."

Starbucks already offers tuition-free online college courses to employees and gives grants to those who come up with ideas for helping their communities. In 1998, it worked with former NBA star Magic Johnson to open stores in urban neighborhoods, but some struggled and closed. Starbucks said it learned from the experience.

Thomas Shinick, a business professor at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York, said he would rather see manufacturing companies or trade schools setting up shop in distressed areas so young people could learn skills beyond the service industry.

"We don't need more coffee servers," he said.

Associated Press writers Janet McConnaughey in New Orleans, Sudhin Thanawala in Jonesboro and Noreen Nasir in Chicago contributed.

New Mets manager Beltrán out amid sign-stealing scandal

By MIKE FITZPATRICK AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Carlos Beltrán, called out on a curveball again.

So for the second time since they last threw a pitch, the New York Mets are in the market for a new manager.

Sign of the times.

Beltrán's 2 1/2-month tenure as Mets manager ended Thursday before he spent a single game on the bench, the latest fallout from the Houston Astros' sign-stealing scandal that has rocked Major League Baseball.

The Mets announced the decision in a news release, saying Beltrán and the team "agreed to mutually part ways." The move came two days after Boston cut ties with manager Alex Cora, who was Houston's bench coach in 2017 when Beltrán played for the Astros.

A day before that, manager AJ Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow were fired by Houston soon after they were suspended for the 2020 season by Commissioner Rob Manfred for their roles in the cheating scheme.

Next to fall was Beltrán, the only Astros player mentioned by name Monday when MLB issued its findings from an investigation into the club's conduct. No players were disciplined, but the nine-page report said Beltrán was among the group involved in the team's illicit use of electronics to pilfer signs during Houston's run to the 2017 World Series championship.

"Over my 20 years in the game, I've always taken pride in being a leader and doing things the right way, and in this situation, I failed," Beltrán said in a statement issued through agent Dan Lozano.

"As a veteran player on the team, I should've recognized the severity of the issue and truly regret the actions that were taken. I am a man of faith and integrity and what took place did not demonstrate those characteristics that are so very important to me and my family. I'm very sorry. It's not who I am as a father, a husband, a teammate and as an educator. ... I hope that at some point in time, I'll have the opportunity to return to this game that I love so much."

Mets general manager Brodie Van Wagenen and Chief Operating Officer Jeff Wilpon met with MLB deputy commissioner Dan Halem and Bryan Seeley, who headed the investigation, on Wednesday morning in New York, then with Beltrán at the team's spring training complex in Florida on Wednesday night and Thursday morning.

"Considering the circumstances, it became clear to all parties that it was not in anyone's best interest for Carlos to move forward as manager of the New York Mets," Van Wagenen and Wilpon said in a statement.

"We believe that Carlos was honest and forthcoming with us. We are confident that this will not be the final chapter in his baseball career."

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On a later conference call, Wilpon said the team had heard in advance "from sources" that Beltrán wasn't going to be suspended by MLB.

"I think the change was when the report did come out, how prominent he was in it," Wilpon said.

The commissioner's office did not pressure the Mets to fire Beltrán, Wilpon said, telling executives it was the club's decision.

"This has been a difficult week. Make no mistake, it's been difficult for everyone involved," Van Wagenen said.

"When we met with Carlos, we had to make an assessment of, where do we go from here? And in Carlos' thought process as well as ours, we both agreed that it was going to be incredibly challenging and incredibly difficult to do the job in a way in which he intended and the way in which he could utilize the best of his abilities."

The Mets said they will consider a number of internal and external candidates to be their next manager, and they hope to choose one soon.

With spring training less than a month away, there isn't much time to pick a successor. Options could include new bench coach Hensley Meulens and ESPN analyst Eduardo Pérez, who interviewed for the job last fall.

The 42-year-old Beltrán, with no managerial experience, was hired to replace Mickey Callaway as Mets skipper on Nov. 1. The former New York slugger was given a three-year contract with a club option for 2023 and introduced three days later during a news conference at Citi Field.

"I'm grateful to them for giving me the opportunity, but we agreed this decision is in the best interest of the team," Beltrán said in the Mets' statement. "I couldn't let myself be a distraction for the team."

Beltrán becomes the first manager to be let go without managing a game since Wally Backman, who was hired by Arizona in November 2004 and fired four days later after legal and financial problems were revealed.

The Mets are one of 10 teams to change managers since opening day last year — and now they are doing it twice.

"Yes: there's a lot of craziness in the baseball world right now," tweeted Mets first baseman Pete Alonso, who led the majors with 53 home runs and was the NL Rookie of the Year.

When they hired Beltrán last fall, Van Wagenen said: "We can trust Carlos, and that goes a long way."

A nine-time All-Star during his playing days, Beltrán signed a \$119 million, seven-year contract with the Mets in January 2005 and helped them win the NL East in 2006. But the switch-hitting outfielder took a curveball for strike three with the bases loaded against Adam Wainwright that October, ending New York's 3-1 loss to St. Louis in Game 7 of the NL Championship Series.

Beltrán played the last of his 20 big league seasons with the Astros in 2017. Manfred said that year Cora was "an active participant" and developed the sign-stealing system used by the team, strongly hinting he will face severe penalties. Even though Cora was subsequently let go, the Red Sox remain under investigation for stealing signs during Cora's first season as manager in 2018, when they won the World Series.

In a Nov. 12 report by The Athletic, ex-Astros pitcher Mike Fiers, now with Oakland, went public with allegations that Houston players used a camera to steal signs in 2017. The report said Beltrán played a "key role in devising" the scheme.

That prompted baseball's investigation, which found the Astros used a video feed from center field to see and decode the opposing catcher's signs. Players banged on a trash can to signal batters what kind of pitch was coming, believing it would improve their chances of getting a hit.

Beltrán told the New York Post in a text message he was "not aware of that camera." He told The Athletic the Astros "took a lot of pride" in studying pitchers via computer before games but insisted "that is the only technology that I use." He said he didn't consider his actions cheating.

At the general managers' meetings that week, Van Wagenen sounded confident the probe wouldn't affect Beltrán's status with the Mets.

"Anything that happened, happened for another organization with Houston," Van Wagenen said then.

"At this point, I don't see any reason why this is a Mets situation."

There have been further rumblings that Astros players wore small, electronic buzzers under their uniforms that tipped them off to certain pitches.

"MLB explored wearable devices during the investigation but found no evidence to substantiate it," the commissioner's office said in a statement Thursday.

Beltrán played for the Mets from 2005-11 before they traded him to San Francisco. He finished his career with a .279 batting average, 435 home runs, 1,587 RBIs and 312 stolen bases for Kansas City, Houston, the Mets, San Francisco, St. Louis, the Yankees and Texas. He interviewed to become New York Yankees manager after the 2017 season, when Aaron Boone was hired, and spent the 2019 season as an adviser to Yankees general manager Brian Cashman.

AP Baseball Writers Ronald Blum and Ben Walker, and AP Sports Writer Jake Seiner contributed to this report.

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

AP visits immigration courts across US, finds nonstop chaos

By KATE BRUMBACK, DEEPTI HAJELA and AMY TAXIN Associated Press

LUMPKIN, Ga. (AP) — In a locked, guarded courtroom in a compound surrounded by razor wire, Immigration Judge Jerome Rothschild waits -- and stalls.

A Spanish interpreter is running late because of a flat tire. Rothschild tells the five immigrants before him that he'll take a break before the proceedings even start. His hope: to delay just long enough so these immigrants won't have to sit by, uncomprehendingly, as their futures are decided.

"We are, untypically, without an interpreter," Rothschild tells a lawyer who enters the courtroom at the Stewart Detention Center after driving down from Atlanta, about 140 miles away.

In its disorder, this is, in fact, a typical day in the chaotic, crowded and confusing U.S. immigration court system of which Rothschild's courtroom is just one small outpost.

Shrouded in secrecy, the immigration courts run by the U.S. Department of Justice have been dysfunctional for years and have only gotten worse. A surge in the arrival of asylum seekers and the Trump administration's crackdown on the Southwest border and illegal immigration have pushed more people into deportation proceedings, swelling the court's docket to 1 million cases.

"It is just a cumbersome, huge system, and yet administration upon administration comes in here and tries to use the system for their own purposes," says Immigration Judge Amiena Khan in New York City, speaking in her role as vice president of the National Association of Immigration Judges.

"And in every instance, the system doesn't change on a dime, because you can't turn the Titanic around."

The Associated Press visited immigration courts in 11 different cities more than two dozen times during a 10-day period in late fall. In courts from Boston to San Diego, reporters observed scores of hearings that illustrated how crushing caseloads and shifting policies have landed the courts in unprecedented turmoil:

--Chasing efficiency, immigration judges double- and triple-book hearings that can't possibly be completed, leading to numerous cancellations. Immigrants get new court dates, but not for years.

--Young children are everywhere and sit on the floor or stand or cry in cramped courtrooms. Many immigrants don't know how to fill out forms, get records translated or present a case.

-- Frequent changes in the law and rules for how judges manage their dockets make it impossible to know what the future holds when immigrants finally have their day in court. Paper files are often misplaced, and interpreters are often missing.

In Georgia, the interpreter assigned to Rothschild's courtroom ends up making it to work, but the hearing sputters moments later when a lawyer for a Mexican man isn't available when Rothschild calls her to appear by phone. Rothschild is placed on hold, and a bouncy beat overlaid with synthesizers fills the room.

He moves on to other cases -- a Peruvian asylum seeker, a Cuban man seeking bond -- and punts the

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missing lawyer's case to the afternoon session.

This time, she's there when he calls, and apologizes for not being available earlier, explaining through a hacking cough she's been sick.

But by now the interpreter has moved on to another courtroom, putting Rothschild in what he describes as the "uneasy position" of holding court for someone who can't understand what's going on.

"I hate for a guy to leave a hearing having no idea what happened," he says, and asks the lawyer to relay the results of the proceedings to her client in Spanish.

After some discussion, the lawyer agrees to withdraw the man's bond petition and refile once she can show he's been here longer than the government believes, which could help his chances.

For now, the man returns to detention.

In a federal building in downtown Manhattan, the docket lists stretch to a second page outside the immigration courtrooms. Crowds of people wait in the hallways for their turn to see a judge, murmuring to each other and their lawyers, pressing up against the wall to let others through.

Security guards pass through and chastise them to stay to the side and keep walkways clear.

Immigration judges hear 30, or 50, or close to 90 cases a day. When they assign future court dates, immigrants are asked to come back in February or March -- of 2023.

The country's biggest immigration caseload is in New York City, spread over three different buildings. One in 10 immigration court cases are conducted there, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.

On average, cases on the country's immigration docket have been churning through the courts for nearly two years. Many immigrants have been waiting much longer, especially those who aren't held in detention facilities.

With so many cases, immigrants are often double- and triple-booked for hearings. That can turn immigration court into a high-stakes game of musical chairs, where being the odd man out has far-reaching consequences.

Rubelio Sagastume-Cardona has waited two years for a New York judge to consider whether he should get a green card.

The Guatemalan had a hearing date in May but got bumped by another case. On this day, he finds himself competing for his space on Judge Khan's calendar with someone else's case -- a space Sagastume-Cardona only nabbed because his lawyer switched him with another client, who now must wait until 2023 for a hearing.

"It's been more difficult to get my client's case heard than to litigate" it, says his attorney, W. Paul Alvarez. "It's kind of crazy."

The protracted delays are agonizing for many immigrants and their relatives, who grapple anxiously with the uncertainty of what will happen to their loved ones -- and when.

And it isn't confined to New York. In myriad courtrooms, similar scenes play out as immigrants and their lawyers jockey for space on too-cramped calendars.

Courts in San Francisco and Los Angeles each have more than 60,000 cases. And cases have been pending an average of more than two years in courts from Arlington, Virginia to Omaha, Nebraska, according to TRAC.

In Boston, Audencio Lopez applied for asylum seven years ago. The 39-year-old left a Guatemalan farming town to cross the border illegally as a teenager in 1997 and soon found a job at a landscaping company where he still works, maintaining the grounds at area schools. But it was just this past November that he headed to the imposing Boston courthouse to learn his fate.

He brings his wife and three children into the courtroom, including a baby girl who munches on Cheerios while sitting on her mother's lap until his case is called.

Lopez tells the judge about his devout Christianity and Bible studies, his kids' education at a charter school and dreams of going to college, his fear of having to move his children to a dangerous place they've never been.

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He's hoping to stay in the country under a provision for immigrants who have lived in the country more than a decade and have American children who would suffer if they were they gone.

After about an hour of questioning, Judge Lincoln Jalelian tells Lopez he'll take the case under advisement. The government attorney says she won't oppose granting Lopez a visa due to his "exemplary" record and community service, which means he'll likely be able to stay.

But even as he dreams of his family's future in America, Lopez admits the hope and joy are tempered by uncertainty because his wife's status is still unresolved. She applied separately for asylum five years ago and has yet to have her immigration court hearing.

"It's a good first step," Lopez says a week later. He praises God, "but we hope He can show us another miracle."

A toddler's gleeful screams fill the immigration courtroom in a Salt Lake City suburb as he plays with toy cars while his mother waits for her turn to go before the judge.

Ninety minutes later, the boy is restless, and the 32-year-old woman from Honduras is still waiting. She pulls out her phone, opens YouTube and plays children's songs in Spanish to calm his cries.

There are many children in the immigration courts, though the courts are hardly a place for kids.

In Chicago, a plastic box of well-worn books in English and Spanish sits in the corner of the court waiting room. But the chairs don't move and there are no changing tables in the bathrooms, leading a mom to change her newborn's diaper on a narrow counter between sinks.

Many children have immigration cases of their own. AP reporters saw appearances by children as young as 3. They sit on wooden benches with their parents, grandparents or foster families.

Teenagers scroll through smartphones; a toddler with a superheroes backpack swings his tiny, sneakered feet.

There are also American-born kids tagging along with immigrant parents the government seeks to deport.

The number of children in these courts has swelled since the Obama administration and continues to grow under Trump, with border arrests -- many of them children and families -- soaring in May to a 13-year high.

Now, nearly one in 10 cases in the immigration courts is a child who came to the country without parents, court data shows. Since September 2018, another 118,000 cases involving parents and children were placed in fast-tracked proceedings aimed at deciding cases in a year.

The administration aggressively tried to slow the arrival of young migrants by separating families -- a policy that was later reversed -- and tightening rules for relatives to get them out of detention. But thousands still arrive each month and end up in immigration courts -- sometimes, into adulthood.

Veronica Mejia left El Salvador as a young teen and has now lived a third of her life in the United States.

And it took her that long to get her day in a Los Angeles immigration court.

Now 20, Mejia raises her right hand and vows to tell the truth. She says she was barely a teen when a classmate who belonged to the MS-13 gang pressured her to be his girlfriend. After being assaulted and harassed by gang members, she moved to live with her adult sister in a new city and her family later decided to send her north.

Six years later, she has a job in a California warehouse, a boyfriend and an 8-month-old daughter with chubby cheeks and pierced ears waiting down the hall.

Immigration Judge Ashley Tabaddor asks why she didn't stay with her sister. The government lawyer questions Mejia's credibility.

The hearing ends, and Tabaddor takes a five-minute break. Mejia sits and waits in the courtroom, tears streaming down her face.

When Tabaddor returns, she says she believes Mejia. But she says she doesn't qualify for asylum under the law and issues an order for her to return to El Salvador.

Mejia walks down the hall with her lawyer. Her boyfriend hands her the baby.

"We're going to appeal," she says, sitting down to nurse the wide-eyed infant. "For her -- how am I going to leave her here?"

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A piece of toast with jam sits on the desk in Tabaddor's office, half-eaten from the morning's breakfast though it is nearly lunchtime.

On her computer, there are eight color-coded dashboards showing how close she is to meeting goals set by the Department of Justice for the country's 440 immigration judges. Like many, she's nowhere near completing the annual case completion target, and her dashboard is a deep red.

"So far, everyone has told us they're failing the measure," says Tabaddor, speaking in her capacity as president of the immigration judges' union.

While they wear black robes and preside over hearings, immigration judges are employees of the Department of Justice and don't have the same power or autonomy as criminal court judges.

The Trump administration has made that clear, issuing new quotas and rules for the judges and placing them under tight scrutiny in a push to move cases more quickly through the clogged courts.

The measures have pitted the judges against the agency in a full-on fight. The judges' union has called for the courts to be made independent and free of government influence. In turn, the Department has asked federal labor authorities to put an end to the union.

"All of this is frankly psychological warfare," Tabaddor says. "I've had so many people say, 'I have a mortgage; I have a child who needs braces. I don't want to fight.'"

In the immigration courts, the friction has taken its toll. Judges are overbooking calendars to try to meet quotas, while the Trump administration has limited their ability to manage dockets as they see fit, adding to the mounting backlog.

Officials also issued rulings making it tougher for immigrants fleeing gangs or domestic violence to win asylum, leading to more denials and potentially more appeals.

In a glass building overlooking the Potomac River from Fall Church, Virginia, officials at the Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review try to find ways to stay ahead of the ever-growing backlog.

They're adding interpreters in Spanish and Mandarin, judges and clerks. They've started special centers to handle video hearings for immigrants on the U.S.-Mexico border, while smaller cities like Boise, Idaho, that were once served by traveling judges are now video-only.

They're moving to an electronic system to try to put an end to the heaps of paper files hoisted in and out of courtrooms.

The entire effort is a quest for efficiency, though director James McHenry acknowledges "we're still getting outpaced" by new cases.

The agency hopes tightening the system can make proceedings more efficient, while remaining fair to all. "We are trying to break down the false dichotomy between fair and efficient," he says.

The attorneys for Immigration and Customs Enforcement tasked with upholding the country's immigration laws also feel the crunch. Their numbers haven't changed even as the docket has swelled, says Tracy Short, the agency's principal legal adviser.

They're in court four days a week with caseloads that have doubled from a decade ago, leaving minimal time to prep for hearings.

"I feel like I'm already stretching them to the breaking point," says Wen-Ting Cheng, who oversees the agency's 100 trial attorneys in New York.

The disorder stretches well beyond the bustling courts of the country's cities. A lawyer takes a red eye from Los Angeles to Houston, then flies to Louisiana, rents a car and drives for an hour to reach a remote detention facility.

Michael Navas Gomez, a political activist from Nicaragua, is wearing a jail jumpsuit, and ready for his day in court after being detained five months. He and attorney Joshua Greer watch a video monitor for their hearing before an immigration judge who sits 1,000 miles away in Miami, Florida, along with the government's attorney.

But the stack of documents recounting how Navas Gomez was captured, beaten and burned by pro-government forces is missing. The judge searches for the files while Navas Gomez's lawyer scrambles to

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get them sent again so the judge can read them.

The system requires careful choreography among judges, lawyers and language interpreters. Immigration attorneys travel long distances to reach remote courts and follow clients shuffled to different detention facilities, while interpreters crisscross the country to provide translation to immigrants when and where they need it.

There's so much chaos it's hard to keep track. At times, an interpreter is missing, or stumbles over dialects or local slang. Video systems fail.

And there are papers everywhere -- except, sometimes, where they are supposed to be.

Adding to the problem is that many immigrants don't have lawyers, and there's no requirement for the government to provide any for them. So oftentimes, immigrants wind up arguing their cases on their own in an incredibly complex area of law.

At the facility in Lumpkin, Georgia, most attorneys' offices are hours away from the town, which has more detainees than residents. Immigrants have no access to email or fax machines and the phones don't always work. When they do, immigrants must pay for expensive calls to relatives to ask for help finding records to back up their cases.

And that's also the case in other detention facilities like the Louisiana one where Navas Gomez has his hearing.

The 30-year-old is lucky to have a lawyer who gets a detention officer to scan and email his files in time. The judge steps out to read them, and his hearing goes ahead.

Navas Gomez tells the judge how his captors scalded him with boiling water, leaving a scar, and released him days later in a remote sugarcane field. The judge agrees to consider his case, and nearly a month later, he is granted asylum and leaves the detention center a free man.

"It was truly beautiful, thank God," he says weeks later, living in Los Angeles.

Not all are so fortunate. At the Stewart facility in Georgia, a Honduran man who wants to apply for asylum isn't sure he'll be able to get the documents he will need to make his case. His mother fled to Costa Rica, and his daughter is here with him.

He asks the judge if there's way for him to let the court know if he decides before his next hearing that he'd rather just be deported.

Judge Jeffrey Nance tells him he can request deportation by putting a note in a box by the facility's cafeteria, and he'll call the man back to court.

The man nods and returns to take his seat in the gallery, his cheeks damp with tears.

The stakes are high for those vying to remain in the country. Some want to stay under a provision that opens the door for those without legal papers who have American relatives.

Others, who arrived recently, are seeking asylum to protect them from violence or persecution.

Those hearings are especially daunting, and most asylum seekers don't win.

The rest are mostly slated for deportation and often have little chance of being able to stay legally in the United States -- at least for now.

Their fate often depends on the luck of the draw in a system with extreme disparities from judge to judge. There are judges who reject 99 percent of asylum cases before them; others approve more than 90 percent, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.

The Trump administration last year started forcing some asylum seekers to wait in Mexico until the day of their hearings, and families often stay in ramshackle border cities for weeks with their children, with virtually no shot at finding a lawyer. Many of them appear in tent courtrooms on the border that are closed to the public and difficult for lawyers to access.

In El Paso, Texas, immigrants waiting in Mexico show up on the border before dawn and are loaded U.S. government vans and driven to a downtown federal building for their hearings. They appear in courtrooms so crowded the government has barred observers from attending, and immigration detention guards patrol the hallways and escort immigrants on trips to the bathroom.

Immigration Judge Lee O'Connor, who hears these cases in San Diego, snaps at a Honduran mom

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whose infant bangs on audio devices in court and warns a Salvadoran woman she'll be at a disadvantage without a lawyer.

"I can't defend myself because I don't know anything about the law," she tells him, sobbing.

Miguel Borrayo, a 40-year-old mechanic who sits before an immigration judge in a courtroom outside Salt Lake City, tried to find a lawyer to help him argue he should be allowed to stay in the country with his American children, despite lacking legal papers.

But he was told it would cost up to \$8,000, and he didn't have a strong case.

So he goes it alone.

Borrayo tells the judge he never had any trouble with the law since slipping across the border from Mexico in 1997 until he turned his car into a McDonald's parking lot on a family outing for ice cream and came close to a man who was passing by.

The man was an immigration agent. Shortly after pulling into the drive-thru, Borrayo was arrested.

But Immigration Judge Philip Truman spends little time on how Borrayo ended up in his courtroom. He asks about the immigrant's two teenage children.

Borrayo tells Truman they are both healthy and good students. His 16-year-old daughter dreams of someday becoming a veterinarian. His 13-year-old son wants to become a mechanic, like his dad.

His wife, the teens' mother, works part-time so she can care for them.

Ironically, this all dooms his case. Truman says it doesn't seem like his children would suffer tremendously if Borrayo returned to Mexico. Regrettably, he must deport him.

He's given a month to leave the country — one last Christmas in his family's home surrounded by snow-capped mountains.

He shrugs off the loss and leaves the courtroom. But days later, he wonders what went wrong.

"I just tried to tell the truth so that they would help me," he says.

The Associated Press' immigration team sent journalists based around the country to courts from Nov. 12, 2019 to Nov. 22, 2019. Those contributing reporting to the project include:

Philip Marcelo, Boston, @philmarcelo; Sophia Tareen, @sophiatareen, and Noreen Nasir, @noreensnasir, Chicago; Cedar Attanasio, El Paso, Texas, @viaCedar; Nomaan Merchant, Houston, @NomaanMerchant; Amy Taxin, Los Angeles, @ataxin; Kate Brumback, Lumpkin, Ga., @katebrumback; Adriana Gomez Licon, Miami, @agomezlicon; Deepti Hajela, New York, @dhajela; Astrid Galvan, Phoenix, @astridgalvan; Brady McCombs, West Valley City, Utah, @BradyMcCombs; Elliot Spagat, San Diego, @elliotspagat, and Colleen Long, Falls Church, Virginia, and @ctlong1.

Watchdog: White House violated law in freezing Ukraine aid

By **ANDREW TAYLOR** and **ZEKE MILLER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House violated federal law in withholding security assistance to Ukraine, an action at the center of President Donald Trump's impeachment, a federal watchdog agency said Thursday.

The Government Accountability Office said in a report that the Office of Management and Budget broke the law in holding up the aid, which Congress passed less than a year ago, saying "the President is not vested with the power to ignore or amend any such duly enacted law."

The aid in question was held up last summer on orders from Trump but was released in September after Congress pushed for its release and a whistleblower's complaint about Trump's July call with the Ukrainian leader became public.

The independent agency, which reports to Congress, said OMB violated the Impoundment Control Act by delaying the security assistance for "policy reasons," rather than technical budgetary needs.

"Faithful execution of the law does not permit the President to substitute his own policy priorities for those that Congress has enacted into law," wrote the agency's general counsel, Thomas Armstrong, in the report.

Capitol Hill Democrats seized on the report as evidence of a lawless White House. led by acting chief of

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staff Mick Mulvaney, who is a key figure in the impeachment investigation of Trump.

"The OMB, the White House, the administration broke — I'm saying this — broke the law," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

Democrats want Mulvaney, who is still officially the OMB director, to be subpoenaed as a witness in Trump's impeachment trial. The Senate opened the trial Thursday, with opening arguments set to begin next week.

"Congress makes funding decisions, and the Trump Administration's illegal impoundment of these vital national security funds was a brazen assault on the checks and balances inherent to our democracy," said House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey, D-N.Y. "Given that this illegal conduct threatened our security and undermined our elections, I feel even more strongly that the House has chosen the right course by impeaching President Trump. No one is above the law."

OMB has argued the hold was appropriate and necessary.

"We disagree with GAO's opinion. OMB uses its apportionment authority to ensure taxpayer dollars are properly spent consistent with the President's priorities and with the law," said OMB spokeswoman Rachel Semmel.

Trump was impeached last month on charges of abusing his power for pressuring Ukraine to investigate Democratic rivals, as he was withholding the aid, and for obstructing Congress' ensuing probe. The Senate will decide whether to convict him on either charge, which would result in his removal from office. A two-thirds vote is required for conviction.

The GAO finding concludes that the White House budget office "withheld the funds for an unauthorized reason in violation" of the Impoundment Control Act, a federal law that requires the executive branch to spend money that is appropriated by Congress.

The impoundment control law is rigorously adhered to by career officials in agency budget offices, who can face severe trouble for violating it.

Putin fast-tracks effort to extend his rule in Russia

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — President Vladimir Putin on Thursday fast-tracked work on constitutional changes that could keep him in power well past the end of his term in 2024 while lawmakers quickly sealed his choice for new prime minister.

Speaking to a working group created to draft constitutional changes, Putin cast his proposals as a way to strengthen parliament and to bolster democracy. Kremlin critics described the proposed changes as an attempt by Putin to secure his rule for life.

The Russian leader proposed the sweeping amendments to the country's constitution in Wednesday's state of the nation address. Hours later, he fired Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who had the job for eight years, and named tax chief Mikhail Mishustin to succeed him.

The Kremlin-controlled lower house, the State Duma, quickly approved Mishustin in a unanimous vote Thursday.

The reshuffle has shaken Russia's political elites, who were left wildly speculating about Putin's intentions and future Cabinet appointments.

A constitutional reform announced by Putin indicated he was working to carve out a new governing position for himself after his current six-year term ends in 2024, although it remains unclear what specific path he will take to stay in charge.

The former KGB operative has been in power for more than 20 years, longer than any other Russian or Soviet leader since Josef Stalin, who led from 1924 until his death in 1953. Under the law now in force, Putin must step down when his current term ends.

Alexei Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition leader, tweeted that Putin's proposals reflected the 67-year-old president's intention to "rule until he dies."

Putin suggested amending the constitution to allow lawmakers to name prime ministers and Cabinet

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members. The president currently holds the authority to make those appointments.

Speaking to the group that will draft the amendments, Putin emphasized that the changes are intended to "strengthen the role of civil society, political parties and regions in making key decisions about the development of our state."

"The role of parliament will grow, and the interaction between parliament and the Cabinet will strengthen," he said.

At the same time, Putin argued that Russia would not remain stable if it were governed under a parliamentary system. The president should retain the right to dismiss the prime minister and Cabinet ministers, to name top defense and security officials, and to be in charge of the military and law enforcement agencies, he said.

In his address, Putin said the constitution must also specify the authority of the State Council, a body that consists of regional governors and top federal officials.

Observers speculated that Putin might try to stay in charge by shifting into the prime minister's seat again after increasing the powers of parliament and the Cabinet and curtailing presidential authority.

Others suggested that he could continue pulling the strings as head of the State Council, similar to what the longtime ruler of Kazakhstan did last year. Nursultan Nazarbayev resigned as president and had a protege elected to the post, but the 79-year-old retained his grip on power by securing a prominent position as head of the nation's security council.

Another potential option is a merger with neighboring Belarus that would create a new position of the head of a new unified state. That prospect has been rejected by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, an autocratic ruler who has been in power for more than quarter century, but the Kremlin has kept pushing him to accept stronger integration.

Few observers expect Putin to follow the example of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who in 2017 had term limits abolished, which would effectively keep him in power for life. Putin, a law faculty graduate, appears to favor more intricate ways of staying in charge that have a democratic veneer.

Among other amendments suggested by Putin is a proposal to give the constitution a clear priority over international law — a tweak seen as a reflection of the Kremlin's irritation over the European Court of Human Rights' rulings that held Russia responsible for human rights violations.

Putin charged Thursday that the Strasbourg-based court had made some "unlawful" decisions, calling the situation when Russia is obliged to unconditionally follow its verdicts "unacceptable."

Putin said that the constitutional changes need to be approved by the entire nation, but it wasn't immediately clear how such a popular vote would be organized.

Upper house speaker Valentina Matviyenko said that lawmakers will work on amending the constitution and complete it in the spring.

Observers say that Putin's move to modify the constitution four years before the end of his term may reflect the Kremlin's concerns that his popularity may suffer amid an anemic economy and stagnant living standards. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2021, but some speculated that an early vote could be held.

Putin has kept his longtime ally Medvedev in his close circle, appointing him to the newly created post of deputy head of the presidential Security Council. Medvedev's popularity has suffered in recent years amid Russia's economic troubles. Mishustin also joined the council on Thursday.

Medvedev served as president from 2008 to 2012, keeping the seat warm for Putin who continued calling the shots as prime minister when he was forced to step down from the top job due to term limits. Under Medvedev, the constitution was amended to extend the presidential term from four years to six, although it limits the leader to two consecutive terms.

The 53-year-old Mishustin is a career bureaucrat who has worked as the tax chief for the past 10 years, keeping a low profile and showing no political ambitions. He has won a good reputation among experts who praised him for boosting tax collection and streamlining Russia's rigid tax administration system.

Mishustin vowed to focus on social issues and improve living standards.

"The president wants the Cabinet to spearhead economic growth and help create new jobs," he said. Raising real incomes is a priority for the government."

Associated Press writer Daria Litvinova contributed.

Ukraine opens probe of possible surveillance of ambassador

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Police in Ukraine are investigating whether the U.S. ambassador came under illegal surveillance by an unknown party before the Trump administration recalled her from Kyiv, Ukrainian authorities said Thursday.

The announcement came two days after Democratic lawmakers in the United States released documents and text messages that showed an associate of President Donald Trump's personal lawyer communicating with Rudy Giuliani about Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch's removal.

In announcing the investigation, the Ukrainian Interior Ministry said the country's police "are not interfering in the internal political affairs of the United States" by conducting the probe.

The ambassador's firing last spring was at the center of the inquiry launched by House Democrats that led to the president's impeachment. But it was the trove of newly released information from smartphones belonging to Giuliani associate Lev Parnas that prompted the Ukrainian police investigation.

In text messages to Parnas, Republican congressional candidate Robert F. Hyde gave updates on Yovanovitch's location and cellphone use. Hyde suggested in a tweet this week that the messages that made it sound like the ambassador was being watched were a joke.

Parnas has said Hyde's texts shouldn't be taken seriously, but officials in Ukraine indicated they have a legal obligation to determine if the former ambassador was subject to surveillance by an unknown party.

"The published messages contain facts of possible violations of Ukrainian law and of the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations, which protect the rights of diplomats on the territory of another state," the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

The Interior Ministry said it has asked the FBI to provide relevant materials. Interior Minister Arsen Avakov also "suggested that the U.S. side take part in the investigation," the statement said.

There was no immediate comment from the State Department — which one former diplomat assessed as extraordinary.

"This has to be a first in American history," Nick Burns, who rose to become the third-ranking official at the State Department before his retirement, wrote on Twitter. "A foreign government rushing to the defense of a senior U.S. career ambassador to defend her from people deputized by the President of the United States. And the Secretary of State refuses to say one word in her defense."

Democrats in the House of Representatives released the documents, text messages and photos from Parnas' phones this week as they prepared to send articles of impeachment to the Senate for Trump's trial.

The communications included Hyde and Parnas' exchanges about Yovanovitch.

"She's talked to three people. Her phone is off. Her computer is off," Hyde wrote in one message. He said the ambassador was under heavy security and "we have a person inside."

Hyde texted: "They are willing to help if we/you would like a price," and "guess you can do anything in Ukraine with money ... is what I was told."

Parnas texted back: "lol."

In another move touching on the Trump impeachment, Ukraine said it was opening an investigation into reports that Russian hackers gained access to computers of the Ukrainian gas company Burisma.

Hunter Biden, the son of Trump opponent and former U.S. vice president Joe Biden, was on the board of that company. The impeachment inquiry began with allegations that Trump had tried to pressure Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy into investigating Burisma by withholding promised military aid.

The FBI also has been invited to take part in the Burisma hacking investigation, the Ukrainian Interior Ministry said.

Jim Heintz in Moscow and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this story.

Buttigieg decision on police chief shadows presidential run

By MICHELLE R. SMITH Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP) — Karen DePaepe had been waiting all day for a call back from Pete Buttigieg. It was March 2012, and the 30-year-old mayor of South Bend, Indiana, had just decided to replace the city's first African American police chief over complaints that he illegally wiretapped police officers' phone calls.

DePaepe, who oversaw the department's phone system, had called the mayor to try to talk him out of removing the popular chief. She wanted to tell him the situation was not that simple. It was DePaepe who discovered a mistakenly recorded phone line, and, she says, heard white police officers making racist comments. She said in an interview with The Associated Press that she reported what she heard to the chief, and the recording continued.

Buttigieg — who's now competing for the Democratic nomination for president — never called her back. When DePaepe's phone finally rang, she says, it was the young mayor's chief of staff, who told her she, too, had to go. Federal prosecutors, he told her, had suggested that she and the chief could be indicted if they weren't removed.

DePaepe hung up, crying and in disbelief. She called one of the prosecutors, who she says told her she was not in trouble and should not quit.

"Who do I believe? I'm being told two different stories," DePaepe recalled thinking, adding, "Someone is lying to me."

Buttigieg's demotion of Chief Darryl Boykins and firing of DePaepe has shadowed his presidential campaign, giving rise to complaints he has a blind spot on race and raising questions about whether he can attract the support of African Americans who are crucial to earning the Democratic nomination. It's also reinforcing skepticism that the 37-year-old former mayor has the wisdom or experience to handle the demands of the Oval Office.

Black Lives Matter activists have been protesting at his campaign events in recent days, spurred in part by his handling of the case.

Buttigieg has defended his actions, saying he was responding to a "thinly veiled" message from federal prosecutors. In his telling, he saved two people from criminal charges and took the political heat for getting rid of a well-liked chief.

But interviews with more than 20 people with direct or indirect knowledge of the events, along with a review of documents and contemporaneous news reports, paint a more complicated picture that is not as flattering to Buttigieg. While some said they believed the young mayor was trying to do the right thing, others told the AP that his lack of experience led him to take actions that weren't well thought out, and that his explanations don't ring true. His subsequent failure to include African American people in positions of power further damaged his standing in the community.

"It left a really, really bad taste in my mouth," said Pastor Wendy Fultz, who is black and a leader of the local chapter of the activist group Faith In Indiana.

RECORDED CALLS, ALLEGED RACISM

The story begins before Buttigieg was elected.

The South Bend Police Department had a long-standing practice of recording certain telephone lines, including front desk lines, 911 calls and the phone lines of most division chiefs. In 2010, some of those phone lines were switched, and a detective's line began being mistakenly recorded, according to a federal investigation.

DePaepe said she learned of the mix-up in February 2011. She was troubleshooting a problem when she says she heard what she describes as racist comments by officers and discussion about something she considered possibly illegal.

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She reported it to the chief weeks later. He was shocked, she recalled, but didn't immediately tell her to do anything, and the recording continued.

Just before Christmas, the chief asked her to make tapes of what she heard.

Boykins, who did not respond to messages seeking comment, listened to at least one tape and made copies of some of them. He confronted an officer about his "loyalty," then told him he would take the tapes to the mayor, according to a November 2012 FBI report on the case obtained by the AP through a Freedom of Information request.

A 2015 investigation by a special prosecutor in Indiana found Boykins' motivation for continuing the recordings was to gather evidence of disloyalty, rather than to expose racism. However, the prosecutor declined to bring charges.

Shortly after Buttigieg was sworn in, multiple officers complained to the U.S. attorney's office in northern Indiana, alleging that their phone calls were being illegally recorded and that Boykins had threatened to use the information to fire or demote them, according to FBI records obtained by the AP. The FBI launched an investigation of possible violations of the federal Wiretap Act.

The tapes have never been released, despite repeated calls from the community. Buttigieg says he hasn't heard them, and DePaepe won't discuss details of what she heard, citing a settlement that bars her from doing so.

The South Bend Common Council — the community's city council — sued to release the tapes, and the lawsuit is pending. The next hearing is Jan. 22. At the heart of the lawsuit is whether the calls were recorded legally.

Boykins and DePaepe, who is white, denied wrongdoing, and no one was charged.

A lawyer for several officers who sued the city says the tapes were made illegally and were an invasion of privacy. He says his clients made no racist comments, and some had their jobs threatened by the chief.

But Buttigieg, within months of becoming mayor, was faced with the dual challenge of a federal investigation into the police department and officers accused of racism.

THE MEETING

Buttigieg was sworn in on Jan. 1, 2012.

In his memoir, he writes that he believed there were problems with the management of the police department and that cleaning it up would be a major task. Still, he reappointed the chief, who had the support of both the Fraternal Order of Police and the NAACP, and was known for his work with youth and in city neighborhoods.

"He is liked and respected for very good reasons. And I have a lot of respect for him," Buttigieg told the AP last month.

But the decision to keep him on, Buttigieg wrote in his memoir, became his "first serious mistake as mayor."

Weeks after Buttigieg took office, three officers complained to his chief of staff, Mike Schmuhl, that Boykins was recording and listening to their phone conversations, according to a 2013 deposition of Schmuhl obtained by the AP through a public records request and first reported by the website The Young Turks. Schmuhl relayed the information to Buttigieg.

A few days later, then-U.S. Attorney David Capp called Schmuhl to say his office was looking into it, Schmuhl said in his sworn testimony. Soon after, Schmuhl told Buttigieg about the investigation, campaign spokesman Sean Savett said.

But what Schmuhl told him didn't seem to make an impression.

"I remember there were rumors going around about the internal politics inside the police department, and it might have had something to do with people recording each other, but not a way that I really understood and pieced together until that meeting with the prosecutors," Buttigieg told the AP.

On March 23, 2012, at Capp's request, South Bend officials met with federal law enforcement.

Buttigieg sent Schmuhl, a high school friend who is now managing his presidential campaign, along with acting city attorney Aladean DeRose and Rich Hill, an outside lawyer Buttigieg hired for advice.

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Capp brought then-Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald Schmid, two other federal prosecutors and an FBI agent.

What happened at that meeting is hotly contested. It's also the key to much of the acrimony that arose in the days and weeks afterward, and it has raised questions about Buttigieg's management style and his forthrightness.

Three days after that meeting, according to a lawsuit Boykins later filed alleging racial discrimination and defamation, Schmuhl met with the police chief to pressure him to resign, which he did three days later.

The response was explosive: Angry members of the Common Council joined the next day with community leaders for a meeting attended by more than 100 people to demand Boykins' reinstatement. The mayor refused.

Local news reported over the following days that DePaepe had found recordings of officers making racist comments. More than a week later, on April 10, she, too, was fired.

Buttigieg's memoir glosses over that timeline, omitting the fact that he fired DePaepe well after racism allegations were reported.

The mayor initially refrained from publicly justifying his decisions, but as rumors swirled across South Bend, he began to explain. He told the South Bend Tribune that "charges were not filed because we acted to satisfy federal authorities."

"It was still the right thing to do to prevent them from getting into deeper trouble, even if they were going to hate me for it," he told the newspaper.

He repeated that explanation in his memoir, published in 2019, and went on to question the U.S. attorney's motives.

"Why should a U.S. attorney shoulder the responsibility of taking down a beloved African-American police chief, if he can get the mayor to do it for him by removing him from his position?" he wrote.

In an interview with the AP, Hill, one of the city's lawyers in the meeting, backed up Buttigieg's account. He said federal officials explicitly told them the city needed to take "personnel action."

"The U.S. attorney said, you have problems with two people and ... if you address the issues with those two people satisfactorily, then there would not be prosecution," Hill said.

Leaving the meeting, Hill said they all had the same understanding.

"There was no difference in interpretation. There was no discussion about what we heard," Hill said. "We were all three equally clear of what the message was that we needed to deliver to the mayor."

Schmuhl, through the Buttigieg campaign, declined interview requests but agreed to answer written questions. He said that it was clear the city needed to act to ensure the police department complied with the law and that "the people whose actions prompted a federal investigation into the police department could not remain in their positions." In his 2013 deposition, Schmuhl said authorities gave them 60 days to address those issues.

But he also said in the deposition that during the 30-minute meeting, the U.S. attorney never overtly said anyone had to be fired.

"IT'S JUST WHAT HAPPENED"

Several people involved in the case have cast doubt on Buttigieg's story.

"I don't feel he's being accurate at all," DePaepe told the AP. "When I listen to him speak, and somebody asks him a question, he sort of talks in circles."

DePaepe said she spoke three times with Schmid, the prosecutor who handled the investigation and who attended the March meeting. She said she asked him whether she was in trouble and needed a lawyer.

"He said, 'No, you're a witness to a complaint,'" she told the AP.

After Schmuhl told her she and Boykins could be indicted, she said she called Schmid and he told her she should not quit her job.

Boykins' lawyer, Tom Dixon, told the AP that three of the federal prosecutors who were in the March 23 meeting assured him that, as a matter of policy, the office does not involve itself in personnel decisions of local government.

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Dixon recalled they told him: "We just want to reiterate that we never get involved, regardless of what you hear on the news."

On May 31, 2012, Capp wrote in a letter to the city that during the March meeting, "We advised that our primary concern was that (South Bend Police Department) practices comply with federal law."

After reviewing the situation in South Bend, he concluded, "It is our opinion that no federal prosecution is warranted."

Buttigieg has pointed to the letter as proof that he made the right decision, but others have said the letter shows investigators were not planning to charge Boykins or DePaepe to begin with.

The U.S. attorney's office and current and former federal officials who attended the March 23 meeting either did not comment or did not respond to messages seeking comment.

Former federal law enforcement officials who reviewed details of the case at the request of the AP agreed it would be unlikely for a U.S. attorney to suggest they would not pursue criminal charges in a public corruption case if a mayor fired or demoted staff.

Brian Kelly, who specialized in public corruption as a federal prosecutor, said Buttigieg inherited a "fiasco involving inappropriate taping" but said any personnel decisions he made were his own.

"It's not surprising that a local mayor would try to deflect blame to the U.S. attorney's office for a decision that was unpopular," he said. "But ultimately, the U.S. attorney's office would have nothing to do with the hiring and firing of people."

Buttigieg, in an interview with the AP, stood by his story. "It's just what happened."

Boykins, he insisted, had to go because he "failed to tell me that he was under federal investigation." DePaepe had to go, he said, "because her actions led to a federal felony investigation into the police department."

But even that is disputed. Boykins' lawyer said investigators told Boykins he was not under investigation.

Buttigieg said he should have insisted on getting something from prosecutors in writing "so that years later, there wouldn't be a need to defend my account of what I believe happened, but that we would have a document that we could point to that was clear."

But Buttigieg also acted without having the city do its own investigation.

DePaepe says she was never given the chance to explain what happened. Boykins told her and others who spoke with the AP he wasn't either.

Janice Hall, then the city's head of human resources, told the AP that she was not consulted.

"I would have wanted to hear the facts" from DePaepe, Hall said. "There was so much secretiveness involved in the whole process."

That failure had an important side effect. Buttigieg wrote in his memoir that he didn't know about the purportedly racist comments until after he removed Boykins, allegations he called "explosive, and serious" if true. But his book leaves out DePaepe and fails to address why he went ahead with her firing with no internal investigation, even after local media reported on the comments on the recordings.

Buttigieg said he didn't think they were in a position to second-guess the FBI, and even if they did their own investigation, "the main investigative resource we would have had would be the police department, which obviously would not be able to conduct this one."

Tom Price, a top aide to Buttigieg's predecessor, said, "It seemed like a quick reaction that wasn't well thought through."

NO BLACK LEADERS

Buttigieg's response raised questions about his age and ability to manage, questions that are echoed in his presidential run. It also damaged his relationship with the African American community in South Bend, a rift that has led to doubts about whether he can attract the support of black voters nationwide.

Former Councilman Oliver Davis, a vocal critic of Buttigieg who has endorsed Joe Biden, said people understood he would pick his own chief, but the way he went about it brought disrepute on one of South Bend's most respected African American leaders.

"The issue is not that he removed and demoted the chief. You can change people around all you want

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to. But you disgraced him. You disgraced him for your own political good," Davis said.

Boykins was at that time the only African American in a senior position in city government.

The previous mayor had three black men in top-level positions: Boykins, the fire chief and a senior mayoral adviser.

When Buttigieg took over, the adviser left. The fire chief, Howard Buchanon, retired because Buttigieg chose another chief. That appointee was a white man.

Buchanon told the AP that after the Boykins situation blew up, Buttigieg asked to meet to discuss it.

"I said, 'You led us to believe that a lot of minorities were going to be in your administration,'" Buchanon recalled telling him. "But Mayor Pete, I don't see that."

He recalled asking the mayor where black and Hispanic leaders were in his administration: Buttigieg's head dropped — a tacit acknowledgement that there were none.

Pastor J.B. Williams, a leader in Faith In Indiana, told the AP: "We did not see a plan to have minorities involved in decision-making processes. That, to me, was a big mistake."

Asked about the criticism, Buttigieg highlighted his 2013 appointment of an African American woman as the city's top lawyer — an appointment made more than a year after Boykins' demotion.

Among the steps Buttigieg took to address allegations of racism in the department, his campaign said, were requiring all officers to take civil rights and implicit bias training, and installing a majority-minority civilian police board.

South Bend's population is 53% non-Hispanic white, and more than one-quarter black. But more than three-quarters of the people Buttigieg chose as top advisers or department heads during his eight years in office — including two police chiefs — were white, according to an AP analysis of information provided by the campaign.

Buttigieg's defenders say he knew there would be implications within the black community if he removed Boykins, but he had to do "the right thing."

"There was never a good choice," said Mark Neal, Buttigieg's first city controller. "Like any good leader, you live with the consequences of that."

His critics are unmoved.

Buchanon said if Buttigieg's record in South Bend is any indication of how he'd run the White House, "I don't see any black person in leadership for him."

"He had the opportunity to change some things," Buchanon said. "And he didn't."

Around South Bend, opinions about Buttigieg's tenure and abilities are as varied as the people who hold them.

Many people say he entered the mayor's office with good intentions but not enough experience — less than three years as a consultant at McKinsey, a position he recently described as mostly doing research and analysis. He was also an intelligence analyst in the Navy Reserve and in his memoir referred to himself as "a more junior employee ... rather than the boss."

Hall, the former HR director, said Buttigieg got poor advice from people he depended on, including Schmuhl, who now runs his campaign.

"They had not had a lot of experience," Hall said.

Davis and others noted Buttigieg got rid of veteran leadership, instead going with what Davis called a "millennial crowd" that had "no muscle memory" for how things worked.

Price, who supported Buttigieg in the past, said his experience running a city of just 100,000 doesn't make him ready for the White House. "I think he's massively underqualified to be president," Price said. "I think he would be a dreadful mistake for our country, and for the Democratic Party."

Buttigieg told the AP he has learned from the Boykins affair, which he calls a "no-win" situation. Sometimes, he said, you can't find a perfect answer — only an approach that's going to involve "the least harm."

When you're young and encounter a problem, Buttigieg said, people who disagree will say you did it because you were young.

"If you were older, they would still disagree," Buttigieg said. "They just wouldn't say it had to do with being young."

AP writer Stephen Braun in Washington and researcher Jennifer Farrar in New York contributed to this report.

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

1st malaria vaccine tried out in babies in 3 African nations

By CARA ANNA and LAURAN NEERGAARD Associated Press

TOMALI, Malawi (AP) — A pinch in the leg, a squeal and a trickle of tears. One baby after another in Malawi is getting the first and only vaccine against malaria, one of history's deadliest and most stubborn of diseases.

The southern African nation is rolling out the shots in an unusual pilot program along with Kenya and Ghana. Unlike established vaccines that offer near-complete protection, this new one is only about 40% effective. But experts say it's worth a try as progress against malaria stalls: Resistance to treatment is growing and the global drop in cases has leveled off.

With the vaccine, the hope is to help small children through the most dangerous period of their lives. Spread by mosquito bites, malaria kills more than 400,000 people every year, two-thirds of them under 5 and most in Africa.

Seven-month-old Charity Nangware received a shot on a rainy December day at a health clinic in the town of Migowi. She watched curiously as the needle slid into her thigh, then twisted up her face with a howl.

"I'm very excited about this," said her mother, Esther Gonjani, who herself gets malaria's aches, chills and fever at least once a year and loses a week of field work when one of her children is ill. "They explained it wasn't perfect, but I feel secure it will relieve the pain."

There is little escaping malaria -- "malungo" in the local Chichewa language -- especially during the five-month rainy season. Stagnant puddles, where mosquitoes breed, surround the homes of brick and thatch and line the dirt roads through tea plantations or fields of maize and sugar cane.

In the village of Tomali, the nearest health clinic is a two-hour bike ride away. The longer it takes to get care, the more dangerous malaria can be. Teams from the clinic offer basic medical care during visits once or twice a month, bringing the malaria shot and other vaccines in portable coolers.

Treating malaria takes up a good portion of their time during the rainy season, according to Daisy Chikonde, a local health worker.

"If this vaccine works, it will reduce the burden," she said.

Resident Doriga Ephrem proudly said her 5-month-old daughter, Grace, didn't cry when she got the malaria shot.

When she heard about the vaccine, Ephrem said her first thought was "protection is here." Health workers explained, however, that the vaccine is not meant to replace antimalarial drugs or the insecticide-treated bed net she unfolds every night as the sun sets and mosquitoes rise from the shadows.

"We even take our evening meals inside the net to avoid mosquitoes," she said.

It took three decades of research to develop the new vaccine, which works against the most common and deadly of the five parasite species that cause malaria. The parasite's complex life cycle is a huge challenge. It changes forms in different stages of infection and is far harder to target than germs.

"We don't have any vaccines against parasites in routine use. This is uncharted territory," said Ashley Birkett, who directs PATH's Malaria Vaccine Initiative, a nonprofit that helped drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline develop the shot, brand-named Mosquirix.

The bite of an infected mosquito sends immature parasites called sporozoites into the bloodstream. If they reach the liver, they'll mature and multiply before spewing back into the blood to cause malaria's debilitating symptoms. At that point, treatment requires medicines that kill the parasites.

Mosquirix uses a piece of the parasite — a protein found only on sporozoites' surface — in hopes of blocking the liver stage of infection. When a vaccinated child is bitten, the immune system should recog-

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nize the parasite and start making antibodies against it.

Scientists also are searching for next-generation alternatives. In the pipeline is an experimental vaccine made of whole malaria parasites dissected from mosquitoes' salivary glands but weakened so they won't make people sick. Sanaria Inc. has been testing its vaccine in adults, and is planning a large, late-stage study in Equatorial Guinea's Bioko Island.

And the U.S. National Institutes of Health soon will start initial tests of whether injecting people periodically with lab-made antibodies, rather than depending on the immune system to make them, could offer temporary protection during malaria season. Think of them as "potentially short-term vaccines," NIH's Dr. Robert Seder told a recent meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

For now, only babies in parts of Malawi, Kenya and Ghana are eligible for the Mosquirix vaccine. After the vaccine was approved in 2015, the World Health Organization said it first wanted a pilot roll-out to see how well it worked in a few countries — in real-world conditions — before recommending that the vaccine be given more widely across Africa.

"Everyone is looking forward to getting it," said Temwa Mzengeza, who oversees Malawi's vaccine programs. Those eager for the shots include her husband, whom she had to stop from trying to get them, she said.

Mzengeza used to come down with malaria several times a year until she started following her own advice to sleep under a net every night. Unlike many other kinds of infections, people can get malaria repeatedly, building up only a partial immunity.

In the pilot program that began last year, 360,000 children in the three countries are meant to be vaccinated annually. The first dose is given at about age 5 months and the final, fourth booster near the child's second birthday.

Experts say it is too early to know how well the vaccine is working. They're watching for malaria deaths, severe infections and cases of meningitis, something reported during studies but not definitively linked to the vaccine.

"To do something completely new for malaria is exciting," said researcher Don Mathanga, who is leading the evaluation in Malawi.

The rainy season has brought new challenges, making some rural roads impassable and complicating efforts to track down children due for a shot. So far in Malawi, the first dose reached about half of the children targeted, about 35,000. That dropped to 26,000 for the second dose and 20,000 for the third.

That's not surprising for a new vaccine, Mzengeza said. "It will pick up with time."

At the health clinic in Migowi in Malawi's southern highlands, workers see signs of hope. Henry Kadzuwa explains the vaccine to mothers waiting at the clinic. He said there was a drop in malaria cases to 40 in the first five months of the program, compared to 78 in the same period in 2018.

Even though he wishes his 3-year-old daughter, Angel, could receive the vaccine, "it's protecting my community. It also makes my work easier," Kadzuwa said. The Migowi area has one of the country's highest rates of malaria, and a worn paper register in the clinic's laboratory lists scores of cases.

At the clinic, Agnes Ngubale said she had malaria several years ago and wants to protect her 6-month-old daughter, Lydia, from the disease.

"I want her to be healthy and free," she said. "I want her to be a doctor."

And she has memorized the time for Lydia's second dose: "Next month, same date."

Neergaard reported from Washington.

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Today in History
By The Associated Press undefined

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Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 17, the 17th day of 2020. There are 349 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Jan. 17, 1995, more than 6,000 people were killed when an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.2 devastated the city of Kobe (koh-bay), Japan.

On this date:

In 1806, Thomas Jefferson's daughter, Martha, gave birth to James Madison Randolph, the first child born in the White House.

In 1916, the Professional Golfers' Association of America had its beginnings as department store magnate Rodman Wanamaker hosted a luncheon of pro and amateur golfers in New York City. (The PGA of America was formally established on April 10, 1916.)

In 1917, Denmark ceded the Virgin Islands to the United States for \$25 million.

In 1945, Soviet and Polish forces liberated Warsaw during World War II; Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, credited with saving tens of thousands of Jews, disappeared in Hungary while in Soviet custody.

In 1955, the submarine USS Nautilus made its first nuclear-powered test run from its berth in Groton (GRAH'-tuhn), Connecticut.

In 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered his farewell address in which he warned against "the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex."

In 1977, convicted murderer Gary Gilmore, 36, was shot by a firing squad at Utah State Prison in the first U.S. execution in a decade.

In 1984, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Sony Corp. of America v. Universal City Studios, Inc., ruled 5-4 that the use of home video cassette recorders to tape television programs for private viewing did not violate federal copyright laws.

In 1994, the 6.7 magnitude Northridge earthquake struck Southern California, killing at least 60 people, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

In 1996, Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman and nine followers were handed long prison sentences for plotting to blow up New York-area landmarks.

In 1997, a court in Ireland granted the first divorce in the Roman Catholic country's history.

In 2001, faced with an electricity crisis, California used rolling blackouts to cut off power to hundreds of thousands of people; Gov. Gray Davis signed an emergency order authorizing the state to buy power.

Ten years ago: Pope Benedict XVI paid a visit to a Rome synagogue, where he and Jewish leaders sparred over the World War II-era record of Pope Pius XII. Erich Segal, author of the best-selling novel "Love Story," died in London at age 72. At the Golden Globes, top honors went to James Cameron's "Avatar" as well as the TV series "Glee" and "Mad Men."

Five years ago: Pope Francis braved an approaching tropical storm to travel to the far eastern Philippines to comfort survivors of the deadly Typhoon Haiyan. Bill Cosby performed to a welcoming Denver audience, despite a protest by some 100 people chanting "Rape is not a joke!" and "No means no!" outside the Buell Theatre.

One year ago: As House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other lawmakers were set to depart on a previously undisclosed trip to Afghanistan and Brussels, President Donald Trump denied use of a military plane for the trip, calling it a "public relations event" and saying it would be best if Pelosi stayed in Washington to negotiate an end to the government shutdown; the move came a day after Pelosi called on Trump to postpone his State of the Union address due to the shutdown. A judge in Chicago acquitted three police officers of trying to cover up the fatal 2014 police shooting of black teenager Laquan McDonald. Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver, known for her rapturous odes to nature and animal life, died at her Florida home; she was 83.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Betty White is 98. Former FCC chairman Newton N. Minow is 94. Actor James Earl Jones is 89. Talk show host Maury Povich is 81. Pop singer Chris Montez is 78. Rhythm-and-blues singer William Hart (The Delfonics) is 75. Actress Joanna David is 73. Actress Jane Elliot is 73. Rock musician Mick Taylor is 72. Rhythm-and-blues singer Sheila Hutchinson (The Emotions) is 67. Singer Steve Earle is 65.

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Singer Paul Young is 64. Actor-comedian Steve Harvey is 63. Singer Susanna Hoffs (The Bangles) is 61. Movie director-screenwriter Brian Helgeland is 59. Actor-comedian Jim Carrey is 58. Actor Denis O'Hare is 58. Former first lady Michelle Obama is 56. Actor Joshua Malina is 54. Singer Shabba Ranks is 54. Rock musician Jon Wysocki is 52. Actor Naveen Andrews is 51. Electronic music DJ Tiesto is 51. Rapper Kid Rock is 49. Actor Freddy Rodriguez is 45. Actor-writer Leigh Whannel is 43. Actress-singer Zooey Deschanel is 40. Dancer Maksim Chmerkovskiy (TV: "Dancing with the Stars") is 40. Singer Ray J is 39. Actor Diogo Morgado is 39. Country singer Amanda Wilkinson is 38. Former NBA player Dwyane Wade is 38. Actor Ryan Gage is 37. DJ-singer Calvin Harris is 36. Folk-rock musician Jeremiah Fraites is 34. Actor Jonathan Keltz is 32. Actress Kelly Marie Tran (Film: "Star Wars: The Last Jedi") is 31. Actress Kathrine (cq) Herzer is 23.

Thought for Today: "The only thing wrong with immortality is that it tends to go on forever." — Herb Caen, American newspaper columnist (1916-1997).

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